

# Buddhist religious counsellors and the development of competencies for Buddhist sunday school teachers in south Lampung regency

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**Abstract:** This study aims to determine the influence of Buddhist Religious Counsellors in developing the competence of Buddhist Sunday School teachers in South Lampung Regency. The background of this study is based on the low level of competence of BSS teachers, which covers four main aspects, namely pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competence. These suboptimal competencies have a direct impact on the quality of the teaching and learning process and on students' understanding of Buddhist teachings. One of the factors contributing to the low level of teacher competency is the limited number of Buddhist religious instructors, the lack of ongoing training, and the lack of supervision or guidance in teaching practice in the field. This study used a quantitative approach with a simple linear regression analysis method to test the influence between the role of instructors and teacher competency. Data was collected through a closed questionnaire administered to 35 Buddhist Sunday School teachers from 11 temples spread across the South Lampung Regency. The results showed that there was a positive influence between the role of Buddhist instructors and the development of Buddhist Sunday School teacher competency. This is evidenced by an  $R^2$  value of 0.40, which indicates that the role of counsellors contributes significantly to improving teacher competency. Based on these findings, this study recommends optimising the role of Buddhist counsellors through continuous coaching programmes, professional training, and cooperation between counsellors, teachers, and Buddhist religious education institutions. In addition, support from government agencies and religious organisations is essential to improve the quality of human resources in Buddhist education. Thus, the learning process in Buddhist Sunday Schools is expected to be more effective, contextual, and meaningful in accordance with Buddhist values, as well as capable of shaping students' characters in a holistic and balanced manner.

**Keywords:** Buddhist Religious Counsellors, Teacher Competence, Buddhist Sunday School

## 1. Introduction

There are very few Buddhist religious counsellors, especially in remote areas, and some monasteries do not even have counsellors due to limited human resources (HR),

which requires the government to pay more attention to how to provide a specific perspective to continue government regulations on Buddhist counselling in the wider community [1]. Based on the Regulation of the Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia Number 6 of 2022 concerning amendments to the Regulation of the Minister of Religion Number 19 of 2019 concerning the organisation and work procedures of vertical agencies of the Ministry of Religion (State Gazette of the Republic of Indonesia Year 2022 Number 288). Based on the Decree of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Buddhist Community Advisor for Lampung Province, dated 29 December 2023, concerning the Appointment of Non-Civil Servant Buddhist Religious Advisors for the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Lampung Province for 2024, in order to improve guidance and counselling services to the people of Lampung province, it is necessary to appoint Non-Civil Servant Buddhist Religious Counsellors and Law No. 17 of 2023 concerning State Finances.

Buddhist education in Indonesia, especially in areas with a relatively small number of Buddhists such as South Lampung, faces quite complex challenges [2]. One of the main challenges is the limited number of competent Buddhist religious counsellors and the low level of competence of Buddhist Sunday School (SMB) teachers. This condition has an impact on the quality of learning and the sustainability of the development of Buddhist teachings among the younger generation [3]. Buddhist religious instructors have a strategic role as motivators, guides, and supporters in the religious life of Buddhists. The existence of instructors is very much needed to motivate, maintain faith, and broaden the insight and knowledge of Buddhists. Adequate competence of religious teachers will greatly assist in providing guidance, training, and assistance to SMB teachers, so that they can optimally carry out their duties in nurturing students [4]. In addition, SMB teachers themselves often do not have a formal educational background in Buddhist education. Many of them only rely on personal experience or basic knowledge obtained informally. This results in teaching methods that are still simple and tend to be one-way, without innovation or the use of learning media that is relevant to the needs of the times [5]. The lack of training, supervision, and periodic evaluation also causes stagnation in the development of SMB teacher competencies.

External factors such as institutional support, availability of teaching materials, geographical barriers and resource constraints also affect the effectiveness of SMB teacher training programmes. On the other hand, internal factors such as enthusiasm, motivation and interest among the younger generation in becoming Buddhist religious instructors remain low. A lack of knowledge about the profession of counsellor, minimal family support, and increasingly high educational requirements are obstacles to the regeneration of Buddhist counsellors [6].

Religious counsellors are individuals who have knowledge about certain religious teachings and are tasked with conveying religious messages in an effort to help the community face and resolve various social and moral issues [7]. The main duties and functions [8] of these religious instructors are closely related to addressing issues within the community and assisting with other activities in their work area or the temples they serve, whether in family guidance, Buddhist organisations, youth groups and Sunday

schools in the temples under their guidance, in accordance with the main duties and functions of Sunday School Teachers in South Lampung. However, to date, many are still unable to contribute as expected, as evidenced by the fact that many Sunday School Teachers are still not sufficiently familiar with Buddhist religious education in accordance with their duties. In fact, it is often found that they only reside in the vicinity of the monastery and only teach according to their own knowledge without using the procedures or even the existing curriculum in accordance with the directives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Referring to the provisions of Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, teacher competence consists of four competencies, namely Pedagogical, Personality, Social, and Professional, so that these four competencies are used as a competency model in Competency Reflection [9]. Teacher competence in teaching is very important to supervise. This ability is closely related to the teacher's ability to teach in the classroom [10]. This includes the ability to manage the classroom and the teacher's ability to interact with students. The purpose of this study is to analyse several teacher competencies, including pedagogical competence, personality competence, social competence, and professional competence [11]. The research method used a qualitative descriptive analysis approach. The results showed that teachers had applied pedagogical competence, personal competence, social competence, and professional competence in classroom learning, but there was still room for improvement [12]. This was indicated by data on syllabus and RPS preparation competence in the good category, but competence in its application in learning was still in the poor category. It is recommended that teachers improve their competencies in classroom learning by participating in various competency development training programmes [13].

Based on the results of observations and dynamics in the field, the researcher sees that the challenges faced by teachers in the current era, especially in the context of Buddhist education in Sunday Buddhist Schools (SMB), are increasingly complex. Teachers no longer only play the role of conveying material, but are required to be learning facilitators who are able to present material in a relevant, specific, concise, and quick manner. This is in line with the characteristics of the millennial generation, who are hungry for information, critical, and tend to seek independent learning resources if the learning provided is considered irrelevant to their needs. Therefore, the researcher was interested in further examining the influence of religious instructors on the pedagogical skills of SMB teachers in South Lampung Regency.

## **2. Method**

This study uses a quantitative approach with the aim of analysing the relationship between variables descriptively and inferentially. The focus of the study is directed at measuring the level of influence of independent variables on dependent variables based on the empirical data collected. The research instrument was designed in the form of a questionnaire to obtain concrete data according to the research needs. The questionnaire contained a number of statements developed based on the indicators of each variable, which were then tested to ensure their validity and reliability before being used in the main data collection. This approach was chosen so that researchers could obtain a

measurable and objective picture of the relationship between variables, so that the results obtained could be tested statistically and interpreted scientifically [14]. The population in this study was Buddhist Sunday School (SMB) teachers in South Lampung Regency. The research design was developed to describe the sampling procedure, data collection techniques, and analysis methods used. This procedure was designed so that the research process could be carried out effectively and efficiently, while ensuring that each variable studied could be analysed systematically in accordance with the research objectives [15]. The research design included observation, background preparation, problem identification, and research conclusion. The researcher also developed a theoretical basis relevant to the scientific approach to determine the research variables and prepare the research instruments. The data were grouped based on all respondent variables and then analysed to answer the questions and test the hypotheses. The research analysis was supported by SPSS 27.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

#### **3.1. Results**

Based on the instrument trial conducted on Buddhist Sunday School Teachers in East Lampung, the results showed that out of 40 statement items, 39 items were valid and 1 item was invalid. The invalid item was number 1 with a calculated  $r$  value of 0.162, which was smaller than the table  $r$  value of 0.308 (with 44 respondents and a significance level of 0.05), so it was declared to not meet the validity criteria. Thus, the number of items used in this study was 39 statements. Furthermore, the results of the variance homogeneity test using the Levene test showed that the data variance in the Sunday School variable was homogeneous or uniform between the groups being compared. This was proven by the significance value in all Levene testing methods being greater than 0.05, namely in the test based on the mean, a Levene Statistic value of 1.407 was obtained with a significance of 0.240; in the test based on the median, the value was 1.044 with a significance of 0.310 (the same value was also obtained for the median with freedom degree adjustment); and in the test based on the trimmed mean, the value was 1.397 with a significance of 0.241. Based on these results, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in variance between groups, so the assumption of variance homogeneity is fulfilled. Fulfilling this assumption ensures that the data obtained is suitable for analysis using parametric statistical techniques such as  $t$ -tests or ANOVA, so that the results of hypothesis testing can be interpreted more accurately and scientifically justified.

**Table 1.** Tests of Homogeneity of Variances

| Tests of Homogeneity of Variances |                                      |           |     |        |      |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|-----|--------|------|
|                                   |                                      | Levene    |     |        |      |
|                                   |                                      | Statistic | df1 | df2    | Sig. |
| VAR0000                           | Based on Mean                        | 1,407     | 1   | 72     | ,240 |
| 1                                 | Based on Median                      | 1,044     | 1   | 72     | 310  |
|                                   | Based on Median and with adjusted df | 1,044     | 1   | 70,571 | .310 |
|                                   | Based on trimmed mean                | 1,397     | 1   | 72     | 241  |

Source: SPSS 27 data output

Table *Tests of Homogeneity of Variances* shows that all Levene's tests (based on mean, median, median with df adjustment, and trimmed mean) produced significance values above 0.05. This indicates that the variance of the data between the groups being compared is homogeneous, so that the assumption of variance homogeneity is met and parametric statistical analysis requiring this assumption can be continued.

**Table 2.** One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

| One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test |                         |             |          |         |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|----------|---------|
|                                    |                         | N           | X<br>37  | Y<br>37 |
| Normal                             | Mean                    |             | 71.0270  | 74.7568 |
| Parametersa,b                      | Standard Deviation      |             | 10.95568 | 9.50849 |
| Most Extreme Differences           | Absolute                |             | .128     | 0.098   |
|                                    | Positive                |             | ,077     | ,097    |
|                                    | Negative                |             | -.128    | -.098   |
|                                    | Test Statistic          |             | 0.128    | 0.098   |
|                                    | Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)c |             | .131     | .200e   |
| Monte Carlo Sig. (two-tailed)d     | Sig.                    |             | .123     | .475    |
|                                    | 99% Confidence Interval | Lower Bound | ,114     | .462    |
|                                    |                         | Upper Bound | .131     | ,487    |

a. The test distribution is normal.

b. Calculated from data.

c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

d. Lilliefors' method based on 10,000 Monte Carlo samples with starting seed 2,000,000.

The results of the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test in the table show that the significance value for variable X is 0.131 and for variable Y is 0.200 (Lilliefors Significance Correction), both of which are greater than 0.05. This means that the data on both variables are normally distributed, so the normality assumption is fulfilled and parametric analysis can be performed.

**Table 3.** Description of Indicators in the Counsellor Variable

| X              | N  | Range | Min.   | Max. | Mean    | Standard Deviation | Variance |
|----------------|----|-------|--------|------|---------|--------------------|----------|
| Valid N (list) | 37 | 4500  | 47,000 | 92   | 71.0270 | 10,955.58          | 120,027  |

Source: SPSS 27 output

Based on the descriptive table, variable X has a total of 37 valid respondents, with a range of 45.00, a minimum value of 47.00, and a maximum value of 92.00. The mean is 71.0270 with a standard deviation of 10.95558 and a variance of 120.027. This indicates that there is considerable variation in the data among respondents, but the mean value is in the middle range of the scores obtained.

Based on the results of data processing using SPSS 27, it is known that the Extension Worker variable (X), which was measured through a questionnaire and completed by 37 respondents, had a score range of 45, a minimum score of 47, and a maximum score of 92. The average value was 71.02, the standard deviation was 10.955, and the variance was 120. The Extension Worker variable consists of 39 statement items divided into three indicators. The following presents the criteria for each indicator along with a summary of the results for the Extension Worker variable. The following presents the criteria for each indicator and a summary of the Extension Worker variable:

Based on the descriptive analysis results, it shows that the majority of respondents were in the High category, namely 17 people or 45% of the total 37 respondents. Furthermore, there were 10 respondents (47%) who were in the Medium category, which shows that almost half of the respondents had scores in the middle range. Nine respondents (5%) fall into the Very High category, reflecting a very optimal level of achievement. Meanwhile, only 1 respondent (2%) was in the Low category, and there were no respondents (0%) in the Very Low category. This data illustrates that, in general, most respondents had high and medium scores, with a very small number in the low or very low categories.

### 3.2. Discussion

The role of Buddhist religious instructors in developing the competence of Buddhist Sunday School teachers in South Lampung Regency is very important. Buddhist religious instructors are tasked with guiding teachers in understanding Buddhist teachings, providing training and preparation, providing teaching media, encouraging creativity in teaching, setting an example, and helping to overcome challenges in teaching [16]. Buddhist religious instructors are responsible for providing guidance to Sunday school teachers in understanding Buddhist teachings correctly. This includes basic teachings such as the Four Noble Truths, the Middle Way, and the virtues that must be taught to children. Religious counsellors can help Sunday school teachers deepen their understanding and provide more accurate explanations of these teachings [17].

In addition, Buddhist religious instructors are often the main source of training for Sunday school teachers. They provide practical knowledge on how to teach Buddhist teachings to children, as well as appropriate techniques for explaining religious values to

them. This training includes how to teach meditation, introduce Buddhist moral and ethical teachings, and appropriate methods for interacting with children in a religious context. Buddhist religious instructors are also responsible for providing teaching materials that are relevant and easy to understand for children attending Sunday school. These teaching materials can be storybooks, teaching texts, or other teaching aids that help Sunday school teachers convey Buddhist teachings in a fun and easy-to-understand way for children.

In the context of Sunday school, teachers are expected to be able to teach Buddhist teachings in a way that is interesting and appropriate for the age of the children. Buddhist religious instructors provide guidance and encouragement to develop creativity in teaching, such as using storytelling methods, games, or other activities that can attract children's interest and help them understand Buddhist teachings [18]. As Buddhist religious instructors, they are also expected to be role models for Sunday school teachers in terms of attitude, behaviour, and religious understanding. By setting a good example, Buddhist religious instructors can inspire and motivate Sunday school teachers to instil virtues and moral values in their teaching.

Sometimes, Sunday school teachers face challenges in teaching children, both in terms of conveying teachings and dealing with children who are not very interested. Buddhist religious instructors can provide advice and solutions on how to overcome these problems, such as through a more personal approach, the use of visual aids, or in a more interactive and fun way. With these roles, Buddhist religious instructors can greatly assist Sunday school teachers in improving the quality of their teaching and ensuring that Buddhist teachings are conveyed in a way that is effective and meaningful to children.

#### The Influence of Buddhist Religious Instructors on the Competence of Sunday School Teachers

Based on the results of the study, there is a positive and significant influence between Buddhist religious instructors and Sunday school teachers. This shows that the better the role of Buddhist religious instructors, the higher the development of Sunday school teachers' competence as demonstrated in their implementation. The magnitude of the influence of Buddhist religious instructors on the development of Sunday school teachers' competence in South Lampung Regency is shown by the coefficient of determination value. The results of this study imply that the role of counsellors has moral and ethical values that can be a motivator or significant change to create a conducive and productive environment. This is in line with previous research findings which show that the role of counsellors can improve the competence of Sunday School Teachers with moral and spiritual behaviour to support the development of Buddha Dhamma, especially at an early age.

The results of this study have an impact on Sunday School Teachers in developing Teacher Competence to improve efficient and enjoyable learning methods for SMB students in South Lampung Regency. Strategies of Buddhist Religious Extension Workers in Improving SMB Teacher Competence. The strategies used by Buddhist religious counsellors include training, mentoring, group discussions, or comparative studies, as well as evaluating the effectiveness of each strategy, which can also support

the creativity of Sunday School teachers. These strategies have proven to be effective in improving the competence of Sunday School teachers in terms of pedagogy, personality, social skills, and professionalism.

The training provided by Buddhist religious counsellors includes materials on Buddhist teachings, interesting teaching methods, and the use of relevant learning media [19]. Mentoring is carried out regularly to ensure that Sunday school teachers can apply the knowledge they have acquired in the classroom learning process. Group discussions and comparative studies are also effective strategies for improving the competence of Sunday school teachers. Through group discussions, Sunday school teachers can exchange experiences and knowledge, while comparative studies provide new insights into teaching methods that can be applied in their respective schools. Internal and External Factors Affecting the Success of the Extension Programme [20].

The success of the outreach programme cannot be separated from the internal and external factors that influence its implementation. Internal factors include the enthusiasm and motivation of SMB teachers, their mental and physical readiness, and their willingness to learn and develop. External factors include institutional support, the availability of teaching materials, and geographical barriers or resource constraints. Institutional support is very important in supporting the success of extension programmes. The availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure will make it easier for SMB teachers to participate in extension programmes and apply the knowledge they have gained in the classroom learning process. Geographical barriers or resource constraints are also factors that need to be considered in the implementation of extension programmes. SMB teachers who are located in remote areas or have limited access to educational resources require special attention so that they can participate in extension programmes properly.

### *3.2.1. Impact of Collaboration between Buddhist Religious Counsellors and BSS Teachers*

The impact of the relationship or collaboration between Buddhist religious instructors and SMB teachers is significant in terms of improving the competence of SMB teachers. This collaboration creates a conducive and productive learning environment and increases the motivation and enthusiasm of SMB teachers to develop themselves. The reforms also greatly influence existing concepts or developments in teaching, so that SMB teachers are also beginning to develop in terms of teaching Buddhism in their Sunday School classes.

The collaboration between Buddhist religious teachers and SMB teachers also has a positive impact on students, namely the creation of a fun, effective, and meaningful learning process. Students become more active and enthusiastic in participating in learning, and are able to understand Buddhist teachings well. As the Buddha said in the Samyutta Niyaka Maha Kaccana Sutta, "Just as a blazing fire can be seen from afar, so too can the teachings of that I give be clearly seen and understood by many people. That is why a religious teacher must explain the Dhamma in a simple manner and in accordance with their level of understanding." (S.VI.11). The role of religious teachers also greatly



influences development, especially in terms of the competence of Sunday school teachers, so that they can help continue the learning that takes place in Sunday schools in monasteries, thereby enriching scientific knowledge and spiritual development to obtain useful knowledge and also helping to foster belief in Buddha Dhamma and Sangha as the foundation of Buddhists in particular. The Role of Buddhist Religious Teachers towards Buddhist Sunday School Teachers [21].

### *3.2.2. The Influence of Buddhist Religious Counsellors on the Competence of Sunday School Teachers*

Based on the results of the study, there is a positive and significant influence between Buddhist Religious Counsellors and Sunday School Teachers. This shows that the better the role of Buddhist Religious Counsellors, the higher the development of SMB Teacher competencies as demonstrated in their implementation.

The extent of the influence of Buddhist Religious Counsellors on the competency development of Sunday School Teachers in South Lampung Regency is indicated by the coefficient of determination. The results of this study imply that the role of counsellors has moral and ethical values that can be a motivator or significant change to create a conducive and productive environment. This is in line with previous research findings which show that the role of counsellors can improve the competence of Sunday School Teachers with moral and spiritual behaviour to support the development of Buddha Dhamma, especially at an early age.

The results of this study have an impact on Buddhist Sunday School teachers in developing teacher competence to improve efficient and enjoyable learning methods for SMB students in South Lampung Regency.

### *3.2.3. Strategies of Buddhist Religious Counsellors in Improving BSS Teacher Competence*

The strategies used by Buddhist religious instructors include training, mentoring, group discussions, or comparative studies, as well as evaluating the effectiveness of each strategy to support the creativity of Sunday School teachers. These strategies have proven to be effective in improving the competence of Sunday School teachers in terms of pedagogy, personality, social skills, and professionalism.

The training provided by Buddhist religious instructors includes Buddhist teachings, interesting teaching methods, and the use of relevant learning media. Assistance is provided on a regular basis to ensure that Sunday School teachers can apply the knowledge they have acquired in the classroom learning process. Group discussions and comparative studies are also effective strategies for improving the competence of Sunday School teachers. Through group discussions, Sunday School teachers can exchange experiences and knowledge, while comparative studies provide new insights into teaching methods that can be applied in their respective schools.

The effectiveness of the strategy is evaluated on a regular basis to measure the extent of improvement in SMB teachers' competencies after participating in the extension

programme. The evaluation results show a significant improvement in SMB teachers' competencies in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study proves that the instruments used to measure the role of Buddhist Religious Counsellors on the competence of Sunday School Teachers have an adequate level of validity and reliability, with 39 valid statements out of a total of 40 items. Statistical assumption tests show that the data meet the criteria of normality and homogeneity, making them suitable for analysis using parametric methods. The results of the study show a positive and significant influence between the role of Buddhist Religious Counsellors and the improvement of the competence of Buddhist Sunday School Teachers in South Lampung Regency. This role includes guidance in understanding Buddhist teachings, pedagogical training, provision of teaching materials, mentoring, and creative teaching strategies. The majority of teachers are in the medium to high competence category, indicating that the counselling programme has been effective.

The implications of this study emphasise the importance of strengthening the role of counsellors as strategic partners of teachers in Buddhist religious education, particularly through continuous training, group discussions, comparative studies, and routine evaluations. Institutional support and the provision of adequate learning facilities are important factors for the success of this programme. The limitations of this study are its limited scope and relatively small number of respondents, so the results cannot be generalised broadly. Further research is recommended involving more diverse regions and populations and considering other contextual variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

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