
A FAITH-BASED PUBLIC SPEAKING MENTORING MODEL FOR STRENGTHENING MADRASAH STUDENTS' SOFT SKILLS

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Abstract: This study reports the implementation of a faith-based public speaking mentoring program conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Darul Huda Pengarang Jambesari Bondowoso as part of a community service initiative. The program aimed to strengthen students' communicative competence and soft skills through structured mentoring activities. A participatory approach combined theoretical instruction with practical simulations, including Master of Ceremony practice and religious speech presentations. Evaluation was conducted using a pretest–posttest performance comparison focusing on speech organization, vocal clarity, nonverbal communication, and self-confidence. The findings indicate observable improvements across all assessed aspects. Students demonstrated clearer speech structure, stronger vocal projection, improved body language, and increased willingness to speak publicly. The integration of faith-based themes enhanced authenticity and reduced speaking anxiety, contributing to greater engagement and confidence. Beyond technical performance, the program fostered leadership readiness and collaborative participation within the madrasah environment. The results suggest that structured and contextually relevant public speaking mentoring can serve as an effective strategy for soft skill development in Islamic secondary education.

Introduction

Communication competence is widely recognized as a fundamental component of holistic education. In contemporary academic discourse, communication is not merely a complementary ability but a core competency that shapes students' academic performance, leadership potential, and professional readiness. Public speaking, as a structured form of oral communication, integrates message organization, vocal control, audience awareness, and ethical responsibility (Rahman et al., 2024). According to Lucas, public speaking is a deliberate process of organizing and delivering messages to inform, persuade, or inspire an audience. This structured dimension differentiates it from spontaneous conversation and underscores the necessity of systematic training (Lucas, 1989).

The importance of communication skills has been reinforced within the framework of twenty-first-century education. The 4C model, consisting of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication, positions communication as an essential pillar of educational reform (Shanahan, 2013). Research consistently indicates that students who demonstrate strong

oral communication skills are more likely to participate actively in academic settings and exhibit higher levels of confidence (Morreale et al., 2000). Furthermore, communication competence contributes to persuasive capacity, interpersonal effectiveness, and professional adaptability (DeVito, 2015). These insights affirm that public speaking training should be integrated into secondary education curricula.

Despite this recognition, communication apprehension remains a significant barrier among students. Public speaking anxiety is often rooted in limited exposure to speaking opportunities, fear of negative evaluation, and insufficient structured feedback (Byrne et al., 2012). Students who lack systematic guidance frequently avoid public speaking situations, which reinforces anxiety and reduces opportunities for skill development. Morreale et al. argue that communication avoidance can negatively affect classroom participation and diminish leadership potential (Morreale et al., 2000). Consequently, structured interventions are required to cultivate confidence and communicative competence.

The context of Madrasah Aliyah Darul Huda Pengarang Jambesari Bondowoso reflects these broader educational challenges. Initial observations conducted prior to the implementation of the community service program revealed that many students experienced difficulty in articulating ideas confidently before an audience. While students possessed adequate conceptual understanding of religious and academic subjects, their expressive competence remained limited. Formal public speaking training had not been systematically implemented, and classroom instruction tended to emphasize cognitive mastery rather than communicative performance. This condition created a gap between knowledge acquisition and public articulation.

In Islamic secondary education, public speaking holds particular relevance. Madrasah students are frequently involved in religious discourse traditions, including sermon delivery and recitation (Andraeni et al., 2025). However, these activities are often not framed within structured communication pedagogy. Effective public speaking requires mastery of articulation, vocal modulation, body language, and audience engagement, all of which demand deliberate practice and feedback (O'Hair et al., 2019). Without structured mentoring, students may struggle to translate religious knowledge into persuasive and confident public expression.

To address this gap, a community service initiative was implemented in the form of a faith-based public speaking mentoring program involving 150 students from grades X, XI, and XII at MA Darul Huda. The program combined theoretical instruction with practical simulations, including Master of Ceremony practice and religious speech presentations. This participatory design aligns with student-centered learning principles that emphasize active engagement and experiential practice (Sulistiyawati et al., 2023). Participatory approaches encourage students to rehearse, reflect, and refine their communicative skills through guided feedback.

The theoretical foundation of the mentoring program draws upon communication competence theory. DeVito conceptualizes communication competence as the integration of knowledge, skills, and motivation. Knowledge involves understanding speech structure and audience adaptation. Skills encompass articulation, vocal clarity, body language, and interaction management. Motivation refers to the willingness and confidence to communicate (DeVito, 2015). The mentoring intervention at MA Darul Huda was structured to address these three components simultaneously. Theoretical sessions strengthened students' understanding of speech organization. Practical simulations developed technical skills. Continuous encouragement and feedback enhanced communicative motivation.

Nonverbal communication also played a critical role in the training design. Research

indicates that body language, facial expression, and vocal tone significantly influence audience perception (Mehrabian, 1971). Therefore, students were trained to maintain eye contact, manage gestures appropriately, and regulate vocal variation. These elements were integrated into simulation exercises to ensure alignment between verbal message and nonverbal delivery.

The community service initiative was not intended merely as a short-term workshop but as a structured mentoring model. In higher education, community engagement is expected to generate measurable and sustainable impact. The Tri Dharma framework emphasizes that community service should contribute to capacity building and empowerment (Darmadi et al., 2020). In this context, the mentoring program incorporated pretest and posttest evaluation mechanisms to assess improvement in students' communicative competence. Indicators included vocal clarity, speech structure, confidence level, and audience engagement.

The scale of participation, involving 150 students, provided an opportunity to influence the broader communicative culture within the madrasah. Communication competence is not solely an individual attribute but also a social phenomenon shaped by institutional environment (Morreale et al., 2000). By engaging multiple grade levels, the program aimed to foster a supportive environment in which public expression becomes normalized and encouraged.

Faith-based contextualization represented a distinctive dimension of the intervention. Religious speech simulations allowed students to connect communication skills with spiritual and ethical values. Ethical communication emphasizes honesty, respect, and responsibility, which are central components of both Islamic teaching and professional communication standards (DeVito, 2015). Integrating these values reinforced authenticity and contextual relevance, enhancing students' motivation to participate actively.

This study therefore seeks to conceptualize and examine the implementation of the faith-based public speaking mentoring model conducted at MA Darul Huda Pengarang Jambesari Bondowoso. By situating the program within established communication theory and community engagement scholarship, the study contributes to the literature on soft skill development in Islamic secondary education. Strengthening public speaking competence among madrasah students not only enhances academic participation but also prepares them for broader social and professional engagement.

In conclusion, the mentoring initiative represents a strategic educational response to observed communicative challenges. Grounded in communication competence theory, participatory pedagogy, and faith-based contextualization, the program seeks to bridge the gap between knowledge mastery and expressive confidence. Through structured training and evaluative assessment, the initiative contributes to empowering students' voices within the madrasah educational environment.

Research Methods

approach integrated with a pretest–posttest evaluative design. The methodological framework was developed in alignment with the objectives of the community service program conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Darul Huda Pengarang Jambesari Bondowoso. The primary aim of the intervention was not only to provide structured public speaking training but also to measure measurable changes in students' communicative competence following the mentoring process. Participatory approaches in communication education emphasize active engagement, rehearsal, and iterative improvement, which are considered essential for competence development (Morreale et al., 2000). Therefore, the mentoring model was designed to create a learning

environment in which students could practice, receive feedback, and progressively refine their speaking performance.

The program was implemented at MA Darul Huda Pengarang Jambesari Bondowoso following a preliminary needs assessment conducted through direct observation and consultation with school leadership and teachers. The initial assessment revealed that although students demonstrated adequate conceptual understanding of academic and religious subjects, many lacked confidence when speaking before an audience (Chen & Hwang, 2020). Structured training in speech organization, vocal modulation, and nonverbal communication had not been systematically integrated into instructional activities. These findings are consistent with research indicating that limited exposure and lack of guided rehearsal contribute significantly to communication apprehension (Daly, 2020). The needs assessment thus provided empirical grounding for the design of the mentoring intervention.

Participants in the program consisted of 150 students drawn from grades X, XI, and XII. The inclusion of multiple grade levels was intended to generate broader cultural impact within the madrasah environment and to foster a collective communicative atmosphere rather than limiting the intervention to a small cohort. Students participated as part of a structured mentoring activity coordinated between the higher education institution and the madrasah administration. Institutional approval was obtained prior to implementation, and the program was conducted within an educational improvement framework consistent with the Tri Dharma community engagement mission (Ade Suhara, n.d.).

The mentoring intervention was structured in sequential phases beginning with preparatory coordination and instructional material development. Learning materials were constructed based on established public speaking principles, including speech structure organization, vocal clarity, audience adaptation, and nonverbal communication (Lucas, 1989; O'Hair et al., 2019). The theoretical component of the mentoring sessions introduced students to the foundational concepts of public speaking, emphasizing the importance of clear introductions, logically organized content, and impactful conclusions. Ethical communication principles were also incorporated to ensure alignment between expressive competence and responsible speech, reflecting communication competence theory as articulated by DeVito (DeVito, 2015).

Following theoretical instruction, the program transitioned into practical simulation sessions, which constituted the central component of the mentoring model. Students engaged in structured rehearsal activities, including Master of Ceremony simulations and religious speech presentations (Cornwall, 2018). The MC simulations required students to guide formal event sequences, manage transitions between program segments, and maintain audience engagement through appropriate tone and delivery. Religious speech simulations were selected to align with the cultural and spiritual context of the madrasah, allowing students to connect communication techniques with familiar thematic content. Integrating contextual relevance into communication training enhances authenticity and engagement, particularly within faith-based educational settings (Mahbubi, 2025).

Throughout the simulation sessions, facilitators provided structured and constructive feedback. Emphasis was placed on articulation, vocal modulation, body language, eye contact, and confidence. Nonverbal communication components were explicitly addressed, drawing upon research indicating that audience perception is significantly influenced by congruence between verbal and nonverbal cues (Mehrabian, 1971). Students were encouraged to reflect upon their performances and identify areas for improvement. This reflective dimension aligns with

experiential learning principles, where competence emerges through action, evaluation, and refinement (Morreale et al., 2000).

To assess the effectiveness of the mentoring intervention, a pretest–posttest evaluative mechanism was implemented. Prior to the mentoring sessions, students completed an initial speaking performance task designed to measure baseline communicative competence. Performance indicators included speech organization, vocal clarity and intonation, nonverbal expression, and observable confidence during delivery (Franceško & Nedeljković, 2022). Each indicator was assessed using a five-point rating scale to ensure consistent evaluation across participants. At the conclusion of the mentoring program, students completed a comparable speaking task evaluated using the same performance criteria. This design enabled internal comparison of performance changes within the same participant group.

Quantitative data were derived from pretest and posttest mean score comparisons to identify improvement trends. Although no inferential statistics were applied, descriptive analysis indicated competence development. Qualitative insights from reflections and facilitator observations captured changes in confidence and participation. Ethical standards were upheld, with evaluations conducted for learning improvement and feedback delivered constructively to maintain psychological safety (DeVito, 2015). Overall, the methodology combined participatory mentoring, contextual simulation, and structured evaluation to examine the impact of faith-based public speaking training on students' soft skill

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Improvement of Students' Public Speaking Competence

The implementation of the public speaking mentoring program at Madrasah Aliyah Darul Huda Pengarang Jambesari Bondowoso demonstrated observable improvements in students' communicative competence. The intervention, which combined theoretical instruction with practical simulations in the form of Master of Ceremony (MC) practice and religious speech presentations, was designed to address the communicative challenges identified during the initial needs analysis. Prior to the mentoring activities, many students displayed limited confidence when speaking in front of peers. Speech delivery was often hesitant, structure was unclear, and nonverbal engagement such as eye contact and gesture use was minimal (Thornhill-Miller et al., 2023).

The mentoring process aimed to strengthen four interconnected aspects of public speaking competence: speech structure, vocal delivery, nonverbal communication, and self-confidence. These dimensions are consistent with established public speaking frameworks emphasizing organization, clarity, and audience engagement (Hanifah et al., 2025; Lucas, 1989). Furthermore, the intervention was conceptually aligned with communication competence theory, which integrates knowledge, skill, and motivation as essential components of effective speaking (Farizi et al., 2024).

With regard to speech organization, students initially tended to deliver messages without clear openings or conclusions. Transitions between ideas were often abrupt, and key points were not emphasized. After receiving instruction on structuring speeches into introduction, body, and conclusion, students demonstrated more coherent and logically sequenced presentations (Siska et al., 2023). During the final simulation sessions, many participants were able to begin their speeches with attention-capturing statements, articulate the main message more clearly, and conclude with reflective or persuasive closing remarks. This development supports the argument

that structured guidance enhances message clarity and reduces performance anxiety (E. M. Harahap et al., 2021).

Vocal clarity and intonation also showed noticeable improvement. At the beginning of the program, several students spoke in low volume with limited tonal variation, which reduced audience engagement. Some students spoke too quickly due to nervousness, while others hesitated excessively. Through guided articulation exercises, tempo regulation practice, and repeated rehearsal, vocal delivery became clearer and more controlled. According to O'Hair et al., vocal modulation significantly influences perceived credibility and attentiveness. Observations during the post-intervention simulations indicated stronger voice projection and more deliberate pacing among participants (O'Hair et al., 2019).

Nonverbal communication improved gradually throughout the mentoring sessions. Initial performances were characterized by downward gaze, rigid posture, and limited gesture use. Research emphasizes that nonverbal cues strongly affect how messages are interpreted (Mahbubi et al., 2025; Rahayu et al., 2025). Through demonstration and video-based reflection, students became more aware of eye contact, facial expression, and posture alignment. By the final sessions, many participants exhibited more open posture, steadier eye contact, and gestures that supported verbal emphasis. These improvements contributed to stronger audience engagement and enhanced overall delivery.

The most significant change observed during the mentoring process was increased self-confidence. At the outset, several students expressed reluctance to volunteer for speaking opportunities. Visible nervousness, including trembling voice and prolonged pauses, was common. However, as the sessions progressed, students became more willing to participate in MC simulations and religious speech presentations. Reflection discussions revealed that repeated exposure within a supportive and respectful environment reduced fear of embarrassment. This finding is consistent with communication anxiety research, which highlights the importance of safe rehearsal spaces and constructive feedback in reducing apprehension (Daly, 2020).

The mentoring design, which integrated faith-based content into simulation exercises, also contributed to increased comfort. Religious speech themes were closely aligned with students' daily experiences in the madrasah context. This contextual relevance enhanced authenticity and reduced cognitive burden during delivery. When students spoke about familiar spiritual topics, they appeared more confident and expressive. DeVito notes that motivation plays a critical role in communication competence; when speakers perceive personal meaning in their messages, confidence and clarity tend to increase (DeVito, 2015).

Although the PKM program did not employ advanced statistical analysis, descriptive comparison of pretest and posttest performance tasks indicated consistent improvement across the four evaluated aspects. The evaluative observations are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Observed Changes in Public Speaking Performance

Competency Aspect	Pre-Intervention Condition	Post-Intervention Condition
Speech Organization	Ideas delivered without clear structure	Clear introduction, organized body, defined closing
Vocal Clarity & Intonation	Low volume, monotone, uneven tempo	Stronger projection, controlled tempo, varied tone
Nonverbal Communication	Limited eye contact, rigid posture	Improved eye contact, supportive gestures

Self-Confidence	Hesitant participation, visible nervousness	Increased willingness to speak, more confident tone
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The table illustrates qualitative improvements observed during the mentoring cycle. The most prominent enhancement was seen in self-confidence, followed by structural clarity and vocal delivery. These outcomes reflect the interconnected nature of communicative competence, where knowledge acquisition, skill practice, and motivational reinforcement operate simultaneously (DeVito, 2015).

Importantly, the scale of participation involving 150 students across three grade levels contributed to broader cultural impact within the madrasah. Communication competence develops not only individually but also socially, shaped by institutional norms and peer modeling (Morreale et al., 2000). As more students demonstrated improved confidence, classroom participation reportedly increased, and students appeared more prepared to engage in presentations and discussions beyond the mentoring sessions (Afrizal, 2018).

In summary, the results of the PKM initiative indicate that structured public speaking mentoring combining theoretical instruction, MC simulation, religious speech practice, and reflective feedback effectively enhanced students' communicative competence at MA Darul Huda. The improvements observed across structural, vocal, nonverbal, and motivational dimensions provide practical evidence that systematic mentoring can address communication gaps within madrasah education settings.

Faith-Based Mentoring and the Strengthening of Students' Soft Skills

Beyond measurable improvements in technical public speaking competence, the mentoring program conducted at MA Darul Huda Pengarang Jambesari Bondowoso contributed significantly to the strengthening of students' broader soft skills. Public speaking is not merely a performative act but a multidimensional competency intersecting with confidence building, leadership readiness, emotional regulation, and ethical awareness. Throughout the mentoring sessions, it became evident that improvements in speech structure and vocal clarity were accompanied by observable changes in students' behavioral engagement and interpersonal interaction. Students who initially appeared hesitant gradually became more expressive, collaborative, and willing to participate in collective activities (Taman et al., 2024).

The integration of faith-based content into the mentoring model played a central role in shaping these outcomes. Religious speech simulations allowed students to deliver messages rooted in familiar Islamic themes, such as moral conduct, the importance of knowledge, and respect toward parents and teachers. This contextual alignment reduced cognitive anxiety and enhanced authenticity in expression. When students spoke about values embedded in their daily madrasah life, their delivery appeared more natural and emotionally connected. Ethical communication, including respectful language and responsibility in conveying religious messages, was emphasized throughout the sessions. This approach aligns with the principle that effective communication must be grounded not only in technical proficiency but also in moral responsibility (Y. O. Harahap, 2023).

The Master of Ceremony simulations also provided practical leadership training. Acting as an MC required students to manage event flow, maintain composure, coordinate transitions, and engage the audience. These tasks simulate real-life organizational responsibilities frequently encountered in school ceremonies, religious gatherings, and community events. As students practiced guiding formal sessions, they demonstrated increased situational awareness and

accountability. Communication scholars emphasize that leadership capacity is closely tied to communicative competence, as leaders must articulate direction clearly and confidently (Rufiyati, 2020). The mentoring activities thus functioned as rehearsal spaces for leadership development within a supportive educational setting.

Another significant outcome was the creation of a more communicative classroom culture. Because the program involved 150 students from three grade levels, its influence extended beyond individual skill enhancement. As students observed peers successfully performing speeches and MC roles, collective confidence gradually increased. Participation became more normalized, and fear of public embarrassment diminished. This phenomenon supports the understanding that communication competence develops within social ecosystems rather than in isolation (Morreale et al., 2000). Teachers reported that students appeared more prepared and willing to contribute during classroom presentations and discussions after the mentoring program concluded.

The reflective sessions conducted at the end of each mentoring stage further reinforced soft skill internalization. Students were encouraged to articulate personal experiences, challenges, and perceived improvements. Many participants expressed that repeated exposure to structured practice reduced nervousness and strengthened self-belief. The supportive feedback mechanism was particularly influential in maintaining motivation. Rather than focusing on errors, facilitators highlighted incremental progress and constructive improvement points. Such psychologically safe environments are known to reduce communication apprehension and promote sustained engagement (Daly, 2020).

As part of the documentation and accountability of this community service initiative, photographic documentation of mentoring sessions, MC simulations, and religious speech presentations is provided to illustrate student engagement and active participation during the program implementation.



Figure 1 Public speaking mentoring session at MA Darul Huda Pengarang Jambesari Bondowoso, January–February 2026.

Overall, the second dimension of findings demonstrates that the public speaking mentoring initiative functioned not only as technical training but also as character and soft skill development. Through contextual religious integration, participatory rehearsal, and reflective feedback, students experienced growth in confidence, leadership readiness, collaborative interaction, and ethical awareness. The alignment between communicative practice and faith-based values strengthened internal motivation and authenticity in expression. Consequently, the mentoring program at MA Darul Huda contributed meaningfully to preparing students to communicate responsibly and confidently within both academic and community contexts.



Figure 2. Faith-based public speaking mentoring program at MA Darul Huda Pengarang Jambesari Bondowoso, January 2026.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the public speaking mentoring program at Madrasah Aliyah Darul Huda Pengarang Jambesari Bondowoso demonstrates that structured and participatory communication training can significantly enhance students' communicative competence and soft skill development. Through the integration of theoretical instruction, Master of Ceremony simulations, religious speech practice, and reflective feedback, students exhibited observable improvements in speech organization, vocal clarity, nonverbal communication, and self-confidence. These improvements confirm that public speaking skills are not innate abilities but competencies that can be systematically developed through guided mentoring and repeated practice.

The faith-based contextualization of the mentoring model emerged as a distinctive strength of the program. By aligning speech themes with religious values and daily madrasah experiences, students were able to communicate with greater authenticity and reduced anxiety. The integration of ethical communication principles reinforced that public speaking is not merely technical performance but also moral responsibility. This alignment between skill development and value internalization contributed to increased motivation and engagement throughout the mentoring process.

Beyond technical performance, the program fostered broader soft skill enhancement, including leadership readiness, collaborative interaction, and classroom participation. The

involvement of 150 students across three grade levels contributed to the development of a more communicative and supportive learning environment within the madrasah. The mentoring activities encouraged students to overcome hesitation, engage actively in public forums, and assume communicative roles in both academic and religious settings.

As a community service initiative under the Tri Dharma framework, the program provided tangible educational impact while strengthening institutional collaboration between higher education and madrasah education. The results suggest that public speaking mentoring can serve as a sustainable model for soft skill development in Islamic secondary schools. Future initiatives may consider expanding the duration of mentoring sessions, incorporating more structured evaluative tools, and integrating public speaking into extracurricular or routine academic activities to ensure continuity and long-term impact.

In conclusion, the public speaking mentoring initiative at MA Darul Huda illustrates that systematic, faith-based, and participatory communication training can bridge the gap between knowledge mastery and expressive confidence. By empowering students to articulate ideas clearly, confidently, and ethically, the program contributes to preparing a generation of learners who are not only knowledgeable but also communicatively competent and socially responsible.

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