

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS AMONG 9th GRADE STUDENTS OF MADRASAH TSANAWIYAH MA'HAD AL-ZAYTUN THROUGH MUHADHARAH ACTIVITIES

Mufti Khairul Zain<sup>1</sup>, Supriadi.M<sup>2</sup>, Ahmad Asrof Fitri<sup>3</sup>

<sup>123</sup>Institut Agama Islam Al-Zaytun Indonesia, Indramayu

**Abstract.** *Public speaking is an important aspect of character formation and self-confidence development among students, especially within Islamic boarding schools that emphasize da'wah education. The Muhadharah activity at Ma'had Al-Zaytun serves as a structured and continuous forum to train students in public speaking skills. This study aims to describe the organization of the Muhadharah activity and to analyze its role in developing the public speaking skills of ninth-grade students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Ma'had Al-Zaytun.*

*This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach with data collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings show that Muhadharah activities are systematically implemented with active participation from students and supervisors. The activities significantly improve students' confidence, message organization, intonation, and expression. Continuous involvement in Muhadharah contributes to gradual enhancement of public speaking competence, communication ethics, and da'wah character.*

**Keywords:** *public speaking, Muhadharah, students, character building, communication*

**Abstrak.** *Keterampilan berbicara di depan umum (public speaking) merupakan aspek penting dalam pembentukan karakter dan kepercayaan diri santri, khususnya dalam lingkungan pesantren yang menekankan pendidikan dakwah. Kegiatan Muhadharah di Ma'had Al-Zaytun berfungsi sebagai wadah terstruktur dan berkelanjutan untuk melatih kemampuan berbicara santri di hadapan publik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan pelaksanaan kegiatan Muhadharah dan menganalisis perannya dalam mengembangkan kemampuan public speaking santri kelas 9 Madrasah Tsanawiyah Ma'had Al-Zaytun.*

*Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kegiatan Muhadharah dilaksanakan secara sistematis dengan keterlibatan aktif dari santri dan pendamping. Kegiatan ini meningkatkan kepercayaan diri, kemampuan menyusun pesan, intonasi, dan ekspresi berbicara. Partisipasi berkelanjutan santri dalam kegiatan ini berkontribusi pada peningkatan kemampuan public speaking serta pembentukan karakter dakwah.*

**Kata Kunci :** *public speaking, Muhadharah, santri, kepercayaan diri, komunikasi*

## Introduction

Communication is a fundamental human need that cannot be separated from daily life. Since birth, humans have sought to build relationships with their surroundings through various forms of communication, both verbal and nonverbal. Through communication, individuals can exchange ideas, express feelings, and build social relationships with others (Rahman & Hamdan, 2024). Communication serves as an essential means of creating shared understanding, fostering trust, and achieving collective goals within society (Aldina, 2018).

As social beings, humans continuously interact and adapt through communication processes. These activities occur in various contexts at home, school, workplace, and within social environments. Through communication, human knowledge develops, and social relationships are well established (Muhandis et al., 2018). Therefore, effective communication skills become a key factor for success in education, career, and social life.

One form of communication that requires a high level of skill is public speaking. Public speaking is defined as the ability to deliver messages orally before an audience with the purpose of informing, influencing, or inspiring listeners. According to Charles Bonar Sirait, the ability to speak in public is an important asset that can open many opportunities in social and professional life. However, this skill is not innate; it is developed through practice, courage, and accumulated communication experience.

Public speaking requires mastery of several key aspects, including message organization, body language, voice intonation, and audience interaction. A good speaker not only delivers information but also builds an emotional connection with the audience. Thus, success in public speaking is determined not only by mastery of the material but also by the ability to establish trust and personal appeal (Silooy, Rakhmawati, & Tyas, 2023).

In the context of Islamic education, public speaking skills carry a broader meaning because they relate to the mission of dakwah (Islamic preaching). Santri (Islamic boarding school students) as future preachers need to possess the ability to deliver religious messages clearly, engagingly, and wisely. This skill is vital so that

dakwah is not only informative but also communicative and touches the hearts of the audience. Unfortunately, many santri still feel nervous, lack self-confidence, or struggle to organize their dakwah messages coherently.

To address this need, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) generally provide communication training platforms, one of which is through Muhadharah activities. Muhadharah is a speech practice activity regularly conducted in pesantren as a means of developing students' speaking abilities. Through this activity, santri are trained to organize ideas, manage intonation and expression, and build confidence in speaking before an audience. Moreover, Muhadharah also functions as a medium for character formation, discipline, and dakwah ethics based on Islamic values.

At Ma'had Al-Zaytun, Muhadharah activities are carried out systematically and continuously usually every week under the direct guidance of teachers and mentors. Students practice speaking in various languages – Indonesian, Arabic, and English which indirectly strengthens their linguistic competence and self-confidence. This activity demonstrates how speech training can be integrated with character and leadership education.

An interesting phenomenon observed is the gradual development of students' abilities through Muhadharah activities. At the initial stage, students could only read their scripts stiffly; later, they learned to memorize and deliver speeches with better intonation; and finally, they were able to speak confidently without text in front of an audience. This gradual process illustrates that continuous training has a significant impact on improving students' public speaking skills.

Based on the above background, this study aims to describe the implementation of Muhadharah activities at Ma'had Al-Zaytun and analyze how these activities contribute to the development of public speaking skills among 9th grade students of Madrasah Tsanawiyah. This research is expected to contribute to the development of communication training strategies in Islamic educational institutions, particularly in shaping santri who are communicative, confident, and possess dakwah-based character. The objectives of this study are:

1. To describe the implementation of Muhadharah activities at Ma'had Al-Zaytun.

2. To analyze how these activities contribute to the development of students' public speaking skills.

## Literature Review

### 1. Communication

The term communication derives from the Latin word *communis*, meaning "same" or "shared meaning." Communication is a process of exchanging messages between a sender and a receiver through symbols, language, or gestures with the aim of achieving mutual understanding (Purwantoro in Ramadani, 2020). According to Wahlstrom (in Dyatmika, 2020), communication occurs not only verbally but also through facial expressions, body language, and meaningful appearance.

Communication plays a vital role in building social relationships and enhancing the effectiveness of human interaction (Bahruddina et al., 2021). It serves as the foundation for the formation of a dynamic society, as communication allows ideas to flow, relationships to form, and social values to develop (Amey & Warren, 2024). Therefore, effective communication skills are a fundamental competency that every individual should possess, including santri as agents of dakwah (Islamic preaching).

### 2. Public Speaking

Etymologically, public speaking means speaking in front of the public (Echols & Sadily, 2003). Since ancient Greece, the art of public speaking has been known as rhetoric – the art of speaking to influence an audience (Julijanti & Quraisyin, 2012).

According to Mustamu (in Anggaraeni et al., 2021), public speaking is the ability to express ideas before the public by integrating four essential elements: knowledge, skills, art, and character. This skill requires logical thinking, message organization, body language management, and the ability to build emotional connections with listeners.

In the context of pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), public speaking becomes an important skill for santri because it is closely related to their ability to deliver dakwah messages effectively. Santri who can speak clearly, convincingly, and ethically are more likely to be accepted by the community (Al-Fajar, 2023).

### 3. The Benefits of Public Speaking

Public speaking skills offer numerous benefits in both personal and professional life. According to Putri (2018), public speaking helps increase self-confidence, develop self-worth, and shape a person into a competent communicator.

Through continuous speaking practice, individuals can improve diction, intonation, and expressive delivery – allowing them to communicate more clearly and engagingly. In the context of dakwah, public speaking is not only about delivering messages but also about demonstrating proper manners and communication ethics (Noor, Suyurno, & Sairi, 2022). Thus, public speaking serves as a medium for character formation, leadership development, and social sensitivity.

### 4. Elements of Public Speaking

According to Adam (2023), the elements of public speaking include:

- a. Speaker: the source of the message responsible for conveying information clearly and convincingly.
- b. Message: symbols or ideas delivered verbally or nonverbally.
- c. Medium: the channel or tool used to convey messages, such as voice, microphones, or digital media.
- d. Listener: the receiver who interprets the message.
- e. Feedback: verbal or nonverbal responses that indicate audience understanding.
- f. Noise: any interference that hinders message transmission.
- g. Situation: the context of place and time in which communication occurs.

These seven elements serve as a guide for speakers to structure and deliver messages effectively to their audience.

### 5. Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory

Aristotle defined rhetoric as the art of discovering the best means of persuasion.

He introduced three fundamental elements of rhetoric:

- a. Ethos: the speaker's credibility and integrity.
- b. Pathos: the ability to evoke the audience's emotions.
- c. Logos: the logical strength and reasoning of the message.

Aristotle's rhetorical principles are highly relevant to public speaking training in pesantren, as they help santri understand how to deliver dakwah messages rationally, emotionally, and ethically. These three elements are evident in Muhadharah practices, where santri learn to display speaking ethics, engage the audience emotionally, and construct logical arguments.

## 6. Muhadharah

Etymologically, Muhadharah comes from the Arabic word *hāḍara-yuḥāḍiru*, meaning "to teach" or "to speak before others" (Munawir, 1984). In the context of Islamic education, Muhadharah refers to speech or oratory training routinely conducted by santri in pesantren (Abror, 2023).

According to Hasyim (in Fauziyati, 2022), Muhadharah is a speech activity aimed at developing santri's communication skills, courage, and logical thinking. Furthermore, this activity serves as a medium for fostering moral integrity and dakwah ethics.

Typically held once a week, Muhadharah in pesantren includes various activities such as Qur'an recitation, short sermons (kultum), discussions, and educational entertainment (Jumadil, 2020). This activity serves not only as a platform for public speaking practice but also as a means of cultivating religious and communicative character among santri.

From the theories above, it can be concluded that communication and public speaking are fundamental skills in building self-confidence and santri's effectiveness in dakwah. Muhadharah activities, as a form of speech training in pesantren, represent the practical application of communication and rhetorical theories, where santri learn to integrate ethos, pathos, and logos in real practice. Therefore, Muhadharah holds strategic value in developing santri's communication competence comprehensively in terms of knowledge, skills, and character.

## Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of how Muhadharah activities contribute to the development of santri's public speaking skills at Ma'had Al-Zaytun. This approach is

grounded in the post-positivist paradigm, in which the researcher acts as the primary instrument for data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation.

The research was conducted at Ma'had Al-Zaytun, located in Mekarjaya Village, Gantar District, Indramayu Regency, West Java. The institution was chosen because it has a well-structured tradition of Muhadharah activities that play an essential role in the development of students' communication abilities.

The research population consisted of all 9th-grade students of Madrasah Tsanawiyah Ma'had Al-Zaytun, totaling 550 students (divided into 9 Nisa [female] classes and 11 Rijal [male] classes), along with 10 supervising teachers (ustadz/ustadzah). The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with criteria including students and supervisors who were active and experienced in Muhadharah activities. From the population, 20 students (10 Rijal and 10 Nisa) and 10 teachers (5 males and 5 females) were selected as research informants.

The data were obtained from two sources: primary and secondary data.

- a. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with students and supervisors, direct observation of Muhadharah sessions, and documentation such as photographs, videos, and activity notes.
- b. Secondary data were gathered from institutional archives, activity reports, and relevant supporting literature.

Data analysis was conducted inductively and interactively through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, as proposed by Miles and Huberman (in Sugiyono, 2016). The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through method and source triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing, in order to maintain the validity and reliability of the findings (Rukajat, 2018).

Through this method, the study aims to provide a comprehensive depiction of both the process and the outcomes of developing santri's public speaking skills through Muhadharah activities at Ma'had Al-Zaytun.

## **Results and Discussion**

The Muhadharah activity at Ma'had Al-Zaytun has been an integral part of the pesantren educational system since 1999. From the outset, this activity was designed

as a medium for communication training and character formation, aiming to prepare santri to speak confidently before an audience. As the curriculum evolved, *Muhadharah*, which was originally conducted every Thursday evening after dinner, has now been integrated into the formal class schedule every Friday during the 5th and 6th periods. This change reflects the institution's commitment to positioning *Muhadharah* as part of the formal learning process rather than merely an extracurricular activity. Its implementation is directly supervised by homeroom teachers and mentors, who ensure student readiness, orderliness of the activity, and the quality of speeches in accordance with the values of *dakwah* and *pesantren* education.

From a technical perspective, *Muhadharah* is organized in small rotating groups of 5–8 students per class. This rotation system ensures that all santri receive equal opportunities to perform, providing each student with direct experience in public speaking. In its implementation, students are required to deliver speeches in three languages Indonesian, English, and Arabic on a rotating monthly schedule. This multilingual system not only enhances public speaking proficiency but also strengthens linguistic competence and broadens students' intercultural communication awareness. The selection of Friday as the designated day also holds symbolic meaning, as it is regarded as a day of blessings, making the activity not only academic but also spiritual and *dakwah*-oriented.

The training process in *Muhadharah* is conducted systematically and progressively. Students are guided through stages beginning with drafting a speech, understanding its structure and content, practicing intonation and expression, and finally delivering the speech without notes. Teachers play an active role in providing guidance and evaluation both before and after each session. After the students perform, assessments are conducted on linguistic aspects, message clarity, mastery of the topic, and stage presence. This evaluation process helps students identify their strengths and weaknesses, encouraging continuous self-improvement. This approach aligns with the principles of active learning, where students become active subjects in the learning process, and with Vygotsky's scaffolding theory, which emphasizes the importance of gradual guidance until learners can perform independently.

The findings of this study indicate that *Muhadharah* has a significant impact on improving santri's speaking skills and personal development. Students who initially felt anxious and lacked confidence showed noticeable progress in controlling intonation, facial expressions, body language, and audience engagement. They also became more courageous in expressing opinions and more organized in their speech delivery. Psychologically, the activity helps students manage anxiety, develop self-confidence, and strengthen emotional resilience. Socially, *Muhadharah* fosters communicative, empathetic, and open-minded attitudes. These findings align with Aristotle's rhetorical theory, which emphasizes the balance among *logos* (logical content), *ethos* (speaker's character), and *pathos* (emotional engagement). Thus, *Muhadharah* not only enhances speaking skills but also cultivates integrity, emotional intelligence, and social competence among santri.

Beyond developing public speaking skills, *Muhadharah* also plays a crucial role in shaping the identity and character of santri. Through public speaking experiences, students learn to recognize their potential, develop self-awareness, and build self-esteem. Positive feedback from teachers and peers strengthens their motivation to improve. Regular participation also instills values of leadership, responsibility, and discipline, as students take turns not only as speakers but also as activity coordinators. Therefore, *Muhadharah* serves as a comprehensive form of character education, integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions within a single contextual learning activity.

Overall, *Muhadharah* at Ma'had Al-Zaytun represents an effective form of experiential learning that shapes santri into communicative, confident, and ethical individuals. This activity successfully bridges academic and spiritual aspects, integrating communication theory and *dakwah* practice into a concrete learning environment. Through *Muhadharah*, santri not only practice effective speaking but also learn to understand their audience, manage emotions, and deliver persuasive and meaningful religious messages. Hence, *Muhadharah* can be regarded as a communication laboratory that nurtures a generation of intelligent, confident, and socially responsible santri who are ready to become agents of positive change in society.

## Conclusion

The Muhadharah activity at Ma'had Al-Zaytun has proven effective in developing the public speaking skills of 9th-grade students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah. Through structured and continuous training, santri were able to enhance their confidence, speaking competence, and communication ethics rooted in dakwah values.

This activity not only produces fluent speakers but also shapes individuals who are disciplined, communicative, and possess strong moral character. For further development, it is recommended that Muhadharah activities be expanded through multilingual approaches and integration of digital media, to better prepare santri for the demands of modern communication in the digital era.

## References

- Adam. 2023. Pengembangan Metode Public Speaking Santri dalam Program Muhadharah di Pondok Pesantren Darul Arqam Muhammadiyah Gombara Makassar.
- Al-Fajar, A. H. 2023. Pelatihan Public Speaking Melalui Ekstrakurikuler Muhadharah pada Pondok Pesantren Modern Daar El-Fikri.
- Amey, R. C., dan M. R. Warren. 2024. "Neurological Insights into Communication and Synchrony between Others: What Animal and Human Group Communication Can Tell Us." *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*.
- Anggaraeni, D., D. Saryanti, I. Rahmadani, dan N. Herawati. 2021. *Seni Berbicara: Yuk Belajar Public Speaking*. Yogyakarta: Guepedia.
- Anggito, A., dan J. Setiawan. 2018. *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Sukabumi: CV Jejak.
- Bahrudina, U., M. F. Ramadhan, dan W. Bahrudin. 2021. "Improvement of Speaking Skills through the Use of Arabic as an Introduction Language." *Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education*.

- Demir, S., dan M. Kan. 2025. "Developing the Public Speaking Anxiety Scale (PSAS) for Adolescents: The Mediating Role of Dysfunctional Emotion Regulation in the Effect of Irrational Beliefs on Public Speaking Anxiety." *Behavioral Sciences* 2.
- Dunar, H. 2015. *My Public Speaking*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Echols, J. M., dan H. Sadily. 2003. *Kamus Inggris-Indonesia*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia.
- Fauziyati, W. R. 2022. "Strategi Peningkatan Kemampuan Public Speaking Santri melalui Kegiatan Muhadharah di Madrasah Diniyah Bani Salim Ponorogo." *Journal of Communication Studies*.
- Fikry, A. 2020. "Representasi Konsep Retorika Persuasif Aristoteles dalam Pidato Ismail Haniyah untuk Umat Islam Indonesia." *Jurnal Al-Azhar Indonesia Seri Humaniora*.
- Insani, H. 2025. "Strategi Efektif untuk Meningkatkan Keterampilan Berbahasa pada Anak Usia Dini Pemalu melalui Pendekatan Teori Zona Perkembangan Proksimal (ZPD) Vygotsky." *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* 3.
- Julijanti, D. M., dan D. Quraisyin. 2012. *Buku Ajar Public Speaking*. Madura.
- Jumadil, M. 2020. *Penerapan Latihan Muhadharah dalam Membentuk Mental Santri di Pondok Pesantren Ishlaah Al-Ummah Batu Mulik Lombok Barat NTB*.
- Kriyantono, R. 2006. *Riset Komunikasi*. Jakarta: Kencana.
- Mursyid, M. Y. 2022. "Efektivitas Program Muhadharah terhadap Peningkatan Kemampuan Public Speaking Siswa di Majelis Ta'lim Riyadul Hasanka Kebon Kopi." *Jurnal Abdi Dosen, Universitas Ibn Khaldun Bogor*.
- Munawir, A. W. 1984. *Kamus Al-Munawir Arab-Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Progresif.
- Noor, M., S. Suyurno, dan F. Sairi. 2022. "Konsep Komunikasi Dakwah Non-Verbal Badiuzzaman Said Nursi berdasarkan Kitab Rasail An-Nur." *Journal of Fatwa Management and Research*.
- Pahrudin, P. 2020. *Pengantar Ilmu Public Speaking*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit ANDI.
- Putri, E. A. 2018. "Pentingnya Keterampilan Public Speaking bagi Sekretaris." *Jurnal Sekretari dan Manajemen*.

- Rahman, M., dan M. Hamdan. 2024. "Meneroka Hadis-Hadis Etika Komunikasi yang Boleh Diselaraskan terhadap Orang Kurang Upaya Mental di Malaysia." *JQSS: Journal of Quran Sunnah Education and Special Needs*.
- Rukajat, A. 2018. *Pendekatan Penelitian Kualitatif*. Yogyakarta: CV Budi Utama.
- Saleh, S. 2017. *Analisis Data Kualitatif*. Bandung: Pustaka Ramadhan.
- Silooy, A. J., D. Rakhmawati, dan A. Tyas. 2023. "Pengaruh Kepercayaan Diri Terhadap Komunikasi Interpersonal Siswa Kelas X DPIB SMK Negeri 4 Semarang." *Jurnal Edukasi: Jurnal Bimbingan Konseling*.
- Sugiono. 2016. *Memahami Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Susanti, S., T. Arianto, M. Tawil, N. Dewi, D. Misnawati, S. Ariani, dan Septriani. 2024. *Retorika dalam Public Speaking*. Padang: CV Gita Lentera.