

Enhancing Public Speaking Skills through Role-Playing: A Case Study at Riyadlotul Athfal Al-Ghozali Islamic Boarding School

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ABSTRACT

Public speaking is an essential communication skill for students in Islamic boarding schools, particularly for supporting religious learning, public preaching, and social participation. However, many students still experience anxiety, limited confidence, and difficulty organizing ideas when speaking before an audience. This study examines the use of role-playing as a holistic learning method to support students' public speaking development at Riyadlotul Athfal Al-Ghozali Islamic Boarding School. This study employed a qualitative case study design involving 18 students and 3 teachers selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation during public speaking and *pesantren* learning activities. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, with source and technique triangulation applied to enhance credibility. The findings indicate that role-playing provided students with repeated opportunities to practice realistic communication situations. Students showed improvement in confidence, speech organization, audience engagement, eye contact, vocal variation, and body language. Teachers also observed greater student participation, spontaneity, and willingness to speak in front of peers. Role-playing supports public speaking development by integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions of learning. In the *pesantren* context, this method is relevant because scenarios can be aligned with Islamic values and daily communication practices, such as religious speeches and group discussions. The study suggests that role-playing can be systematically integrated into *pesantren*-based public speaking instruction, although broader studies are needed to examine its application across different Islamic educational settings.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Public speaking skills are very important. More than just conveying data, good public speaking includes the ability to convey ideas clearly, establish rapport with listeners, and deliver messages convincingly. These skills are increasingly needed in various aspects of life, from education and professional careers to involvement in the wider community. Public speaking skills are not merely practical skills, but rather a multidimensional competency that involves mastery of material, delivery

techniques, and psychological understanding of the audience (Swestin & Primasanti, 2015). In the context of education, this skill plays a crucial role in supporting the success of the teaching and learning process, where teachers are required to be able to deliver material effectively and interestingly (Lucas, S. E., 2015). In addition, public speaking is also an important asset for students in facing the world of work and social life, where they will often be faced with situations that require good communication skills in front of an audience (Lucas, S. E., 2015). The ability to communicate verbally with others is a skill that enables a person to achieve various goals (Mardiningrum & Wirantaka, 2021). In today's fast-paced and competitive world, public speaking skills are becoming increasingly relevant and sought after.

Islamic boarding schools, as traditional Islamic educational institutions, play a central role in shaping the character and intellectuality of the younger generation of Muslims. Amidst the tide of globalization and modernization, Islamic boarding schools are required to be able to adapt and equip students with skills that are relevant to the needs of the times, without abandoning the noble values of religion and tradition. One effort that can be made is to integrate innovative and interactive learning methods, such as role playing, into the *pesantren* education curriculum. Role playing is a learning method that involves students in a simulation of real situations, where they play certain roles and interact with each other according to a predetermined scenario (Sudaryanto, 2022).

This method offers various potentials in developing students' public speaking skills, as it requires them to think critically, improvise, and communicate effectively in challenging situations. In the context of education, public speaking can improve teachers' ability to deliver lessons communicatively, which in turn can improve student achievement in the classroom (Lucas, S. E., 2015). In the context of education, mastery of public speaking plays a crucial role in supporting student learning success and personal development. The ability to give presentations, participate actively in discussions, and express views systematically is a valuable asset for students. Moreover, for students at Islamic boarding schools, public speaking skills have added value as a medium for preaching, spreading religious teachings, and leading religious activities in the community.

Various methods and strategies have been tried to improve the quality of public speaking instruction. One method that is considered effective in developing communication skills is role-playing. This method provides students with the opportunity to practice various communication situations directly, fostering the ability to act spontaneously and understand different points of view. Through role-playing, students can learn to overcome nervousness when speaking, improve their improvisational skills, and sharpen their ability to convey messages in a more engaging and interactive way. In addition to the use of appropriate learning methods, a holistic view of education is believed to have a major influence on the overall development of students. This approach not only focuses on cognitive aspects, but also pays attention to the affective, psychomotor, social, and spiritual domains. In the context of public speaking, a holistic approach can help students build self-confidence, control their emotions when speaking, understand the principles of communication ethics, and internalize religious values in conveying messages.

In this study, a holistic approach refers to an educational approach that integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions simultaneously in the learning process. In the context of public speaking, this approach emphasizes not only students' mastery of speech content but also emotional readiness, self-confidence, ethical awareness, and non-verbal communication skills. The importance of public speaking is often underestimated and taken for granted, even though it is an important skill that can influence the growth of an organization (Lucas, S. E., 2015). In the Western world, progress is not only supported by mathematics, physics, or chemistry, but also by rhetoric or public speaking. The ability to speak in public is the key to communicating directly with the community (Hapsari et al., 2021). This study aims to examine in depth the relevance of role playing in triggering public speaking skills at the Riyadlotul Athfal Al-Ghozali Islamic Boarding School, with a focus on a case study of the implementation of this method in daily learning activities.

Islamic boarding schools, as educational institutions characterized by dormitories, have daily activities in the form of deepening, appreciating, and practicing Islamic values that emphasize religious morality as a guide for behavior (Riswanto et al., 2020). Islamic boarding schools have a strategic role

in stemming the emergence of radical thinking. Pesantren play an important role in efforts to mainstream moderate ideas and attitudes in religion that are in accordance with the noble values of Islam as *rahmatan lil alamin* (Rusmiati et al., 2022). Through this case study, it is hoped that a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of role playing in improving the public speaking skills of *santri* (Islamic boarding school students) can be obtained, as well as the factors that influence the successful implementation of this method. The findings of this study are expected to contribute significantly to the development of a more adaptive and responsive *pesantren* education curriculum that meets the needs of the times, as well as to inspire other educational institutions to adopt innovative learning methods to improve students' public speaking skills.

As an Islamic educational institution, Pondok Pesantren Riyadlotul Athfal Al-Ghozali has an obligation to equip its students not only with religious understanding, but also with various skills that are important for life, including public speaking. Initial observations show that although there are various activities that involve verbal communication, the systematic and comprehensive development of public speaking skills still requires further attention. A number of students may show a lack of self-confidence, difficulty in organizing ideas, or be ineffective in conveying messages in front of an audience.

Although previous studies have discussed role-playing and public speaking separately, limited research has specifically examined the integration of role-playing and holistic approaches within the context of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). Most prior studies focus on formal school environments and emphasize cognitive communication skills without deeply exploring affective and psychomotor dimensions. Therefore, this study contributes theoretically by proposing a holistic conceptualization of role-playing in *pesantren*-based public speaking education and contributes practically by providing empirical evidence from Islamic boarding school learning contexts. Therefore, this study aims to comprehensively investigate the use of role-playing methods combined with a holistic approach in public speaking learning in the Riyadlotul Athfal Al-Ghozali Islamic Boarding School environment. Through this case study, it is hoped that the application of these two elements can contribute to improving the public speaking skills of students, as well as the obstacles and opportunities that arise during the implementation process. A deep understanding of this issue is expected to contribute to the development of a more effective public speaking curriculum and teaching strategy in Islamic boarding schools and other educational institutions.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The case study approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied in the natural context of Islamic boarding schools. The qualitative approach allows researchers to explore the experiences, perceptions, and interactions of participants comprehensively (Creswel, 2014 in Atqia & Abdullah, 2021). The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of role playing and its relevance in triggering public speaking skills at the Riyadlotul Athfal Al-Ghozali Islamic Boarding School. Case studies were chosen to provide a comprehensive and in-depth picture of the implementation of role playing in the context of Islamic boarding schools.

Research participants consisted of 18 students (*santri*) and 3 teachers from Riyadlotul Athfal Al-Ghozali Islamic Boarding School, Pakis, Malang. The participants were selected using purposive sampling techniques based on their active involvement in public speaking and role-playing learning activities. The students involved were aged between 15–18 years and had participated in *pesantren* communication activities such as speeches, religious lectures (*kultum*), and discussion forums.

Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation analysis. Observations focused on students' verbal and non-verbal communication performance during role-playing sessions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students and teachers to explore their perceptions, experiences, and challenges related to role-playing activities. Documentation included activity schedules, students' performance notes, and photographs of learning activities.

The study was conducted over a period of three months, from January to March 2025, during regular public speaking and *pesantren* learning activities. The main research instrument was the researcher supported by observation sheets, interview guidelines, and field notes. The observation sheet focused on indicators such as students' confidence, speech organization, audience interaction, body language, vocal variation, and anxiety management during presentations. Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation were coded and categorized to identify recurring themes related to students' public speaking development through role-playing activities. To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation and technique triangulation. Information obtained from students was compared with teachers' perspectives and observational findings. In addition, interview data were cross-checked with documentation and field notes to enhance research credibility. Ethical considerations were applied throughout the research process. All participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the study and were informed about the purpose of the research. Participants' identities were kept confidential, and all collected data were used solely for academic purposes.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study explores the use of *role-playing* with a holistic approach in *public speaking* learning at the Riyadlotul Athfal Al-Ghozali Islamic Boarding School. The results of the study indicate that the use of role-playing is effective in improving the communication skills of students in the *pesantren* environment, particularly through the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects.

The Riyadlotul Athfal Al-Ghozali Islamic Boarding School integrates *role-playing* methods into learning activities as an effort to improve the *public speaking* skills of students. The implementation of *role playing* is carried out in a structured and systematic manner, covering several important stages, starting with careful planning, preparation of materials and resources, implementation of *role playing* activities, and evaluation of results (Suyitno & Setyawan, 2021). The success of *role playing* in triggering *public speaking* skills at the Riyadlotul Athfal Al- Ghozali Islamic Boarding School was influenced by several factors, both internal and external. Internal factors included the motivation and interest of the students, the ability of teachers to facilitate *role playing*, and support from the boarding school. External factors include a conducive social and cultural environment at the boarding school, as well as the availability of adequate resources.

3.1 The Relevance of Role Playing in Stimulating Public Speaking Skills

Role playing has been proven to have significant relevance in stimulating the *public speaking* skills of students at the Riyadlotul Athfal Al-Ghozali Islamic Boarding School. Improvement of Cognitive Aspects in *Public Speaking*. The holistic application of *role- playing* facilitates an increase in students' cognitive understanding of the concepts and structure of *public speaking*.

Understanding Speech Structure, where students demonstrate a better understanding of speech structure, from an interesting opening, logical content development, to a memorable closing. Through various *role-playing* scenarios, they directly practice how to construct arguments, provide examples, and string sentences together coherently.

Mastery of Material, where students become more skilled at organizing ideas and information to be conveyed. Scenarios relevant to their daily lives, such as "speaking in front of an audience" or "presenting activity proposals," help them identify key points and convey messages clearly.

Vocabulary and Rhetoric Development: *Role-playing* interactions encourage students to enrich their vocabulary and use language styles appropriate for *public speaking* contexts. They learn to choose the right words to convey messages effectively and persuasively, as well as practice varying intonation and speaking speed.

3.2 Strengthening Affective Aspects (Self-Confidence and Anxiety Management)

A holistic approach to *role-playing* significantly contributes to the affective aspects of students, particularly in building self-confidence and managing anxiety when speaking in public. Reduced

Speaking Anxiety The safe and simulated environment in *role-playing* allows students

"Before participating in role-playing activities, I was afraid to speak in front of my classmates to practice speaking without excessive pressure. One student stated: because I worried about making mistakes. However, after several role-playing sessions, I became more confident and able to speak more calmly." (Student A, Interview, February 2025)

A teacher also explained:

"Role-playing helps students practice real communication situations. They become more active, expressive, and willing to participate during public speaking activities." (Teacher 1, Interview, February 2025). They can try out different styles and test audience reactions without fear of making fatal mistakes. This gradually reduces the nervousness and anxiety that often arise when facing a real audience.

Through repeated experiences of playing various roles and receiving constructive feedback, students feel an increase in self-confidence. They become more courageous in taking the initiative to speak and express their opinions in front of an audience. Finally, empathy and *audience awareness* show that students also develop empathy for their audience. When playing the role of the audience, they learn to feel how messages are received, so they can adjust their communication style and presentation material to be more relevant and interesting to listeners.

3.3 Development of Psychomotor Aspects (Non-Verbal Skills)

Psychomotor aspects, which include nonverbal skills, also experience significant improvement through *role-playing*. Students learn to optimize the use of gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact. They realize that positive and appropriate body language can reinforce the message being conveyed and attract the audience's attention. This is what is referred to as Effective Body Language.

Then, *role-playing* exercises provide opportunities for students to adjust their intonation, volume, and speaking speed to be more varied and interesting. They learn when to emphasize a word or phrase, when to slow down to create a dramatic effect, and when to raise their voice to emphasize a point. At this point, the stage is Vocal Use (*Intonation, Volume, Speed*).

Even in a simulated setting, students practice moving effectively in front of an audience, utilizing the available space to strengthen their presentation, and avoiding unnecessary or distracting movements. In this context, it becomes a form of Stage Space Management.

Based on classroom observations, students initially showed signs of anxiety such as avoiding eye contact, speaking with low volume, and long pauses during presentations. However, after repeated *role-playing* practices, students demonstrated better audience interaction, clearer articulation, and more confident body language. Several students who previously refused to participate in speech activities gradually became willing to deliver short presentations and moderate small group discussions. Teachers also observed improvements in students' spontaneity and responsiveness during communication exercises.

Table 1. Categories of Findings on Students' Public Speaking Development

Category	Initial Condition	After Role-Playing	Category
Self-confidence	Nervous and passive	More confident and active	Self-confidence
Speech organization	Ideas difficult to arrange	More systematic presentations	Speech organization
Eye contact	Avoided audience	Better audience engagement	Eye contact
Vocal delivery	Low voice and monotone	More varied intonation	Vocal delivery
Participation	Limited involvement	Active participation	Participation

Source: Researcher, 2025

3.4 The Relevance of a Holistic Approach in the Islamic Boarding School Environment

The use of *role-playing* with a holistic approach is very relevant in the environment of the Riyadlotul Athfal Al-Ghozali Islamic Boarding School because;

- a. Integration of Islamic Boarding School Values. *Role-playing* scenarios can be tailored to the religious and ethical values of Islamic boarding schools, allowing students to practice *public speaking* in an Islamic context, such as delivering religious lectures (*kultum*), speeches

commemorating important Islamic holidays, or moderating religious events.

- b. Active and Participatory Learning. This method encourages active and participatory learning, in line with the needs of students who often learn more effectively through hands-on practice than just listening to lectures.
- c. Character Development. In addition to *public speaking* skills, *role-playing* also indirectly develops the character of students, such as a sense of responsibility, teamwork, and adaptability.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the use of *role-playing* with a holistic approach is a very promising method for optimizing *public speaking* learning at the Riyadlotul Athfal Al-Ghozali Islamic Boarding School. This method not only improves technical skills in public speaking, but also builds confidence, reduces anxiety, and reinforces the positive values of students.

The results of this study clearly show that the use of *role-playing* with a holistic approach is very effective in developing *public speaking* communication skills in the environment of the Riyadlotul Athfal Al-Ghozali Islamic boarding school. This discussion will elaborate on these findings, relate them to relevant theories, and explain their implications in the context of Islamic boarding school education.

A holistic approach, which integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, has been proven to be fundamental in shaping competent and characterful *public speakers*. These findings are in line with the views of communication experts (e.g., Lucas, 2015) who emphasize that *public speaking* is not only about conveying information, but also about building emotional connections with the audience and using effective body language.

Cognitive Aspects as the Foundation of Understanding. The improvement in students' understanding of speech structure, mastery of material, and development of rhetoric shows that *role-playing* is not just empty practice, but a stimulus that deepens theoretical understanding. When students actively construct messages in real scenarios, they internalize the principles of effective communication, such as coherence, relevance, and persuasion. This overcomes the limitations of *public speaking* learning, which often focuses too much on theory without direct practice.

The Affective Aspect as the Heart of Courage. Reduced anxiety and increased self-confidence are among the most crucial effects of *role-playing*. A safe and simulated environment allows students to practice "failing" without real consequences, thereby reducing the psychological burden that often hinders public speaking skills. The theory of *communication apprehension* supports this finding, stating that repeated positive experiences in controlled situations can reduce fear (McCroskey, 1970). These experiences build the emotional resilience and courage necessary to perform in public.

Psychomotor aspects become manifestations of skills. Nonverbal skills such as body language, vocal use, and stage management are vital components of *public speaking* that are often overlooked in conventional learning methods. *Role-playing* inherently requires students to move, express themselves, and adjust their voices according to the roles they play. This is experience-based learning that allows students to internalize these skills motorically, not just cognitively.

The context of Islamic boarding schools often emphasizes traditional learning. However, the results of this study confirm that *role-playing* successfully bridges the gap between the *public speaking* theory taught and the practical skills of the students. Scenarios relevant to boarding school life, such as kultum speeches or Maulid event speeches, make learning more meaningful and applicable. Students not only learn "what to say," but also "how to say it" in the context of the culture and values they hold dear. The ability to *role-play* and simulate real-life situations is crucial. It provides a platform for students to experiment with different communication styles, receive instant feedback from peers and teachers, and adapt their strategies in *real time*. This iterative process accelerates the learning curve and allows students to independently identify their strengths and areas for improvement.

3.5 Implications in the Islamic Boarding School Environment

The use of *role-playing* with a holistic approach has significant implications for the Riyadlotul Athfal Al-Ghozali Islamic Boarding School and other religious educational institutions, namely the Development of an Innovative Curriculum, which will encourage the integration of *role-playing* as a core method in the *public speaking* curriculum. The curriculum can be designed with a series of

progressive scenarios that become increasingly complex, in accordance with the level of the students' abilities.

Student empowerment shows that this method empowers students to become active and autonomous learners. They are not just recipients of information, but producers and practitioners of communication. Character Building and Da'wah is a form that goes beyond the technical aspects of *public speaking*. *Role-playing* also facilitates character development such as empathy (through understanding the audience), responsibility (when playing a character), and courage (in facing challenges). These strong communication skills are very important in the context of da'wah and spreading good values in society. Becoming an Adaptive Learning Model. This approach can be adapted to various other subjects in Islamic boarding schools that require practice and simulation, such as counseling, leadership, or even teaching classical Islamic texts using the debate method.

However, the success of *role-playing* depends heavily on careful scenario design, competent teacher guidance, and an environment that supports experimentation. Potential challenges include time constraints, large numbers of students, and the need for continuous creativity in developing new scenarios. Overall, this study confirms that *role-playing* with a holistic approach is a valuable investment in developing students' communication potential, going beyond mere verbal skills to shape confident, adaptive individuals who are able to contribute effectively to society.

4 CONCLUSION

This study is limited to one Islamic boarding school context; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized broadly. Future studies are recommended to involve multiple pesantren and apply mixed-method approaches to obtain more comprehensive findings regarding the effectiveness of role-playing in public speaking education. This study shows that the use of *role-playing* with a holistic approach is very effective in optimizing the potential of *public speaking* communication at the Riyadlotul Athfal Al-Ghozali Islamic Boarding School. This approach successfully integrates and improves three fundamental aspects of *public speaking*: Students demonstrated a deeper understanding of speech structure, material organization, and effective use of rhetoric. Relevant *role-playing* scenarios helped them apply theory in practice, strengthening their conceptual understanding of *public speaking*. There was a significant decrease in the level of anxiety when speaking in public and a substantial increase in the confidence of the students. The safe simulated environment allowed them to practice and face challenges gradually, building the emotional resilience that is crucial for a speaker.

Students showed clear improvement in nonverbal skills, such as body language, facial expressions, eye contact, and variation in intonation, volume, and speaking speed. Hands-on training through *role-playing* helped them master the physical aspects of presenting. Overall, *role-playing* with a holistic approach is not just a teaching method, but a transformative strategy that enables students to develop into competent, confident, and characterful speakers, in line with the values and communication needs of the pesantren environment. This method is worthy of wider implementation in *public speaking* learning programs in similar educational institutions.

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