

Enhancing Teachers' Popular Scientific Writing Competence through Religious Moderation Perspectives

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Article history

Submitted: 2026/07/16; Revised: 2026/08/17; Accepted: 2026/09/07

Abstract

Scientific writing competence is essential for knowledge production and academic development. However, many teachers in Islamic educational institutions face challenges in developing scientific writing skills, limiting their participation in scholarly discourse. This article describes a community engagement program aimed at enhancing teachers' capacity for popular scientific writing at Madrasah Diniyah B-05 Sidogiri Pesantren Miftahul Ulum Bengkak, Wongsorejo, Banyuwangi. The program employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, involving teachers in identifying needs, designing activities, implementing training, and evaluating outcomes. Thirteen teachers participated, with ten successfully producing articles. Six articles met general eligibility criteria, and two were published in online media outlets. These results indicate that the program strengthened teachers' competencies in producing popular scientific writing and increased their engagement in knowledge dissemination. The integration of religious moderation perspectives also encouraged participants to develop more inclusive and moderate religious narratives. The program demonstrates that participatory writing training can improve teachers' writing capacity while promoting religious moderation in Islamic educational settings. This initiative contributes to educational and community-based efforts to strengthen religious moderation and support teachers' participation in academic and public discourse.

Keywords

community engagement; enhancing teachers' capacity, islamic education; participatory action research; popular scientific writing.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Education, including Islamic education, has often been understood and practiced not as a field of knowledge in its own right but rather as an instrument for the transmission of knowledge. Recent studies of Islamic education have noted the persistence of transmission-oriented and teacher-centered pedagogies, in which religious knowledge is predominantly delivered as established doctrine rather than explored through critical and inquiry-based learning processes (Faishol et al., 2026; Tambak & Sukenti, 2024). Such an understanding is philosophically problematic because education fundamentally represents an endeavor to humanize human beings. Consequently, it should not be treated merely as a vehicle for knowledge transfer but should be recognized as an autonomous domain of scholarly inquiry (Moore, 2010).

Within this framework, efforts to strengthen educational institutions have largely been confined to routine agendas, such as improving instructional design and pedagogical practices, enriching curricula, enhancing institutional management, or merely upgrading educational administration (Assegaf, 2011). Ironically, educational practice itself often follows a similar logic by placing disproportionate emphasis on cognitive and affective development while giving comparatively less attention to the cultivation of practical skills. Recent empirical studies support this concern. Research by Virman et al. (2024) found that teachers continue to face substantial difficulties in scientific writing, primarily due to limited writing competence, time constraints, and low motivation. Likewise, a systematic review by Martina et al. (2026) revealed that teachers' scientific publication competence remains relatively low, largely because professional development initiatives tend to prioritize pedagogical and administrative responsibilities over academic writing and publication skills. One notable example is the neglect of popular scientific writing, a genre that is considerably more accessible and less demanding than formal academic writing such as journal articles, theses, and dissertations.

The development of popular scientific writing skills has been largely overlooked in contemporary educational practice, despite writing being an indispensable dimension of creativity and a crucial component of knowledge development alongside reading and scholarly discussion (Taufik, 2012). Indeed, recent evidence suggests that teachers' scientific writing productivity remains relatively low, constrained by limited writing competence, insufficient research capacity, and inadequate institutional support (Mulyaningsih et al., 2024; Virman et al., 2024; Martina et al., 2026). More concerning, this neglect is not limited to students but also affects teachers themselves.

This condition is commonly found in many pesantren-based educational institutions, including the community engagement partner selected for this program, namely Madrasah Diniyah B-05, Sidogiri Branch, Pesantren Miftahul Ulum Bengkak, Wongsorejo, Banyuwangi (hereafter referred to as MADIN). Preliminary observations involving 13 teachers (*asātidz* and *ustadzāt*) indicated that none had published popular scientific articles during the previous year, while only two teachers reported having experience writing short educational reflections for internal institutional purposes. Interviews further revealed three major challenges: limited understanding of popular scientific writing conventions, difficulty transforming educational experiences into publishable manuscripts, and the absence of structured mentoring or writing forums within the institution. Instead, they were predominantly occupied with routine teaching responsibilities, which gradually diminished opportunities to develop their writing capacities. As a consequence, knowledge transmission remained largely confined to conventional oral instruction within the limited space and time of the classroom, while the dissemination of knowledge to broader communities through written media received little attention as part of their intellectual commitment as educators.

This situation becomes particularly problematic considering the significant role teachers play as primary sources of knowledge and guidance for both students and the wider community. Teachers are active contributors to the advancement of knowledge, and education should therefore be understood not merely as a process of transmitting existing knowledge but also as a practice of knowledge enrichment and production. Within such a perspective, writing skills constitute an essential competency through which educators can extend, preserve, and disseminate knowledge beyond the boundaries of the classroom.

The situation appears even more paradoxical given that, since 2017, the pesantren overseeing the institution has maintained an official website (mifulbengkak.net) that could serve as a platform for teachers to disseminate their ideas and scholarly writings (Hantono, 2025). However, this potential has remained largely underutilized. Limited writing productivity among teachers has constrained the availability of content, resulting in persistent difficulties in maintaining article publication and, more recently, a noticeable decline in the website's activity, particularly in the section dedicated to popular scientific writing. According to the head of the madrasah (*rais al-madrasah*) (Asmoni, 2025), the primary obstacle was not a lack of motivation but rather inadequate writing skills and limited knowledge of how to produce well-structured articles. Under these circumstances, an intervention in the form of

mentoring and training in popular scientific writing became both necessary and urgent to strengthen the participants' capacities and enrich their writing competencies.

Furthermore, the integration of religious moderation perspectives was intended to enrich the substance of participants' writings by encouraging them to engage with contemporary socio-religious issues through balanced, inclusive, and evidence-based arguments. This approach is particularly relevant given the growing recognition of religious moderation as a strategic framework for fostering tolerance, social cohesion, and inclusive religious understanding within Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia (Mukhibat et al., 2024; Muslih et al., 2024). Empirical studies have further demonstrated that educational interventions centered on religious moderation can strengthen teachers' awareness of diversity, promote inclusive pedagogical orientations, and enhance their capacity to communicate moderation values effectively (Purwanto et al., 2024; Muslih et al., 2024). Accordingly, integrating religious moderation into popular scientific writing training not only improves participants' writing competence but also enables them to produce socially relevant and intellectually meaningful works while actively contributing to the wider dissemination of moderation values through written communication (*bi al-kitābah*).

It was against this backdrop of conceptual considerations, empirical realities, and the need for meaningful intervention that this research-based community engagement program was undertaken. Selecting MADIN as its partner institution, the program focused on strengthening teachers' capacity for popular scientific writing through the integration of religious moderation perspectives. The initiative began by identifying the underlying factors contributing to limited writing capacity and the resulting low level of productivity in popular scientific publications among teachers. It then proceeded with the implementation of a strategic mentoring and training model in popular scientific writing, followed by an evaluation of its implementation and outcomes.

A distinctive feature of this initiative was the integration of religious moderation into popular scientific writing training for teachers. While teacher writing programs commonly focus on technical writing skills, the present program combined writing competence with the capacity to address contemporary socio-religious issues through balanced, inclusive, and evidence-based perspectives. Recent studies suggest that digital media and literacy practices play an increasingly important role in disseminating religious values and shaping public religious discourse within Islamic educational settings (Maemonah et al., 2023). Likewise, research has shown that teachers' digital literacy competencies are instrumental in strengthening religious

moderation and promoting inclusive religious understanding (Ma'arif et al., 2025), while digital religious content can significantly contribute to the formation and dissemination of moderation values among broader audiences (Amirudin et al., 2025). Through the publication of moderation-oriented popular scientific articles on pesantren-based digital media, the program therefore contributed not only to strengthening teachers' writing capacities but also to expanding literacy-based community engagement and the wider dissemination of religious moderation. s

A considerable body of community engagement literature has highlighted training in scientific writing as an effective strategy for strengthening teachers' professional competencies and academic engagement. Most existing initiatives, however, have focused on teachers and students in formal schools or higher education institutions (Bachtiar & Wafi, 2019; Ula, 2023; Rizal, 2023), while relatively few have involved participants from pesantren-based educational settings (Ready, 2021). Even among the latter, scientific writing has generally been approached broadly, with limited attention to popular scientific writing as a distinct form of scholarly communication for wider public audiences. Consequently, little attention has been given to teachers in *madrasah diniyah* or pesantren, particularly through programs that integrate religious moderation as a substantive perspective within writing instruction. This gap is noteworthy given that previous studies consistently demonstrate the positive contribution of writing training to teachers' professional development and writing competence (Fadila et al., 2024). Building upon these findings, the present program sought to strengthen teachers' popular scientific writing capacities at Madrasah Diniyah B-05 Sidogiri Pesantren Miftahul Ulum Bengkak, Wongsorejo, Banyuwangi, while simultaneously integrating religious moderation into the writing process.

Popular scientific writing is understood as a form of scholarly communication disseminated through print and digital media that translates academic knowledge into accessible and engaging narratives for broader audiences (Qotrun, 2025). Unlike formal academic writing, which primarily targets scholarly communities and follows rigid conventions, popular scientific writing employs more flexible structures and accessible language, thereby expanding the public reach of knowledge (Greetham, 2001; Wijaya & Gischa, 2023). A distinctive feature of this initiative was the integration of religious moderation into training in popular scientific writing for teachers. While teacher writing programs commonly focus on technical writing skills, the present program combined writing competence with the capacity to address contemporary socio-religious issues through balanced, inclusive, and evidence-based perspectives.

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The concept of religious moderation adopted in this program refers to the formulation developed by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, which defines moderation as a balanced and just religious orientation that avoids extremism while fostering tolerance, human dignity, public welfare, justice, balance, constitutional obedience, non-violence, national commitment, and respect for local traditions (Affairs, 2019; Wahid, 2021). This framework was selected not only because of its conceptual clarity but also because it has been institutionally embedded within Indonesia's national development agenda through the Strengthening Religious Moderation (*Penguatan Moderasi Beragama* [PMB]) program. Within this context, integrating religious moderation into popular scientific writing was expected to enable teachers to function not merely as educators but also as public intellectuals capable of contributing to social cohesion, knowledge dissemination, and community literacy through written communication.

2. METHODS

This community engagement program was implemented using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach (A. Faishol, 2006). The selection of PAR was aligned with the program's objective of strengthening teachers' capacities in popular scientific writing through a collaborative and participatory learning process. Rather than positioning participants as passive recipients of training, PAR actively involved teachers in identifying their writing challenges, reflecting on their experiences, developing solutions, and applying newly acquired skills in practice. This approach was particularly relevant because the program sought not only to improve individual writing competence but also to foster sustainable writing habits and strengthen a culture of knowledge production within the institution. Accordingly, the intervention followed five interrelated and cyclical stages characterized by continuous movement

between reflection and action, undertaken collaboratively with participating teachers (Afandi, 2022).

The first stage was social preparation, conducted from 15–30 April 2025. This phase involved program socialization meetings, preliminary observations, informal discussions, and a needs assessment involving 13 participating teachers to identify their writing experiences, challenges, and expectations. Its primary objective was to prevent misunderstandings that could undermine program implementation or generate resistance among participants. As an entry point to the intervention, this stage enabled the community engagement team to establish mutual understanding regarding the program's objectives, implementation strategies, and participants' roles. More importantly, it fostered familiarity and mutual trust between the facilitators and participants, thereby creating a conducive foundation for subsequent activities.

The second stage consisted of a participatory needs assessment. This process involved mapping participants' needs and identifying the principal challenges they faced, particularly regarding their capacity and skills in popular scientific writing. Through this collaborative assessment, both facilitators and participants were able to identify problems that were collectively experienced rather than merely individual concerns. Operationally, this stage was conducted through a series of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving all 13 teachers (*asātidz* and *ustadzāt*) of Madrasah Diniyah B-05, thereby ensuring comprehensive representation of the target community. The discussions explored participants' prior writing experiences, perceived barriers to publishing popular science articles, expectations for the training program, and opportunities to integrate perspectives on religious moderation into their writing practices. The findings of this stage subsequently informed the design of the training materials, mentoring activities, and follow-up interventions implemented throughout the program.

The FGDs also served to validate and refine the findings of the preliminary study. After being introduced to the program objectives, participants were divided into small groups to critically examine identified issues and explore additional challenges that may not have emerged during the initial research stage. All discussions were audio-recorded and supplemented by facilitator field notes, discussion summaries, and participant worksheets. The data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring issues, priority needs, and potential solutions related to popular scientific writing and the integration of perspectives on religious moderation. The findings were subsequently discussed in plenary sessions and refined through problem-tree and

objective-tree analyses, providing the basis for developing training materials, mentoring strategies, and subsequent program activities.

The third stage involved program design and planning. Building upon the findings of the participatory assessment, additional FGDs were conducted to facilitate: (1) problem analysis through the development of a problem tree, (2) objective analysis through the formulation of an objective tree, and (3) the preparation of a comprehensive action plan (Afandi, 2022). In accordance with PAR principles, the participating teachers were positioned as the principal decision-makers throughout this process, while the community engagement team functioned primarily as facilitators. Participants played a central role not only in designing the intervention but also in evaluating its implementation and exercising oversight over the entire program. This participatory arrangement ensured that the intervention remained closely aligned with their actual needs and aspirations regarding the enhancement of popular scientific writing skills informed by religious moderation perspectives.

The fourth stage was action implementation. The collaboratively developed action plan was translated into a series of practical activities designed to address the identified challenges. During this stage, participants remained active agents in the implementation process, while the facilitators assumed supportive and mentoring roles. The intervention was conducted from October to December 2025 and consisted of three interrelated components: (1) a two-day workshop on popular scientific writing and the integration of religious moderation perspectives, (2) a three-month mentoring program employing an andragogical approach, and (3) intensive writing-clinic sessions providing individualized consultation and feedback. Participants received continuous guidance throughout the writing process, from topic selection and idea development to manuscript drafting, revision, and finalization, until their articles were ready for publication on the pesantren's online media platform (mifulbengkak.net) and its affiliated media outlets (Bondowoso Network).

The fifth stage consisted of reflection and evaluation. This stage was intended to assess both the implementation process and the outcomes of the program while generating recommendations for future improvement. Evaluation data were collected through observation sheets, participant feedback forms, writing portfolios, and assessments of participants' manuscripts. Changes in participants' writing competence were assessed by comparing the quality of their initial writing samples with the final manuscripts produced during the program. The assessment focused on several indicators, including topic selection, organization of ideas, clarity of argumentation, use of supporting evidence, language accuracy, and conformity with the characteristics of popular scientific writing. Program effectiveness was further evaluated based on participants' engagement throughout the activities, the completion

of writing assignments, and the successful publication of articles on the pesantren's digital media platforms. The evaluation results were subsequently discussed collaboratively with participants to identify achievements, remaining challenges, and potential follow-up actions, thereby ensuring that reflection became an integral component of the PAR cycle.

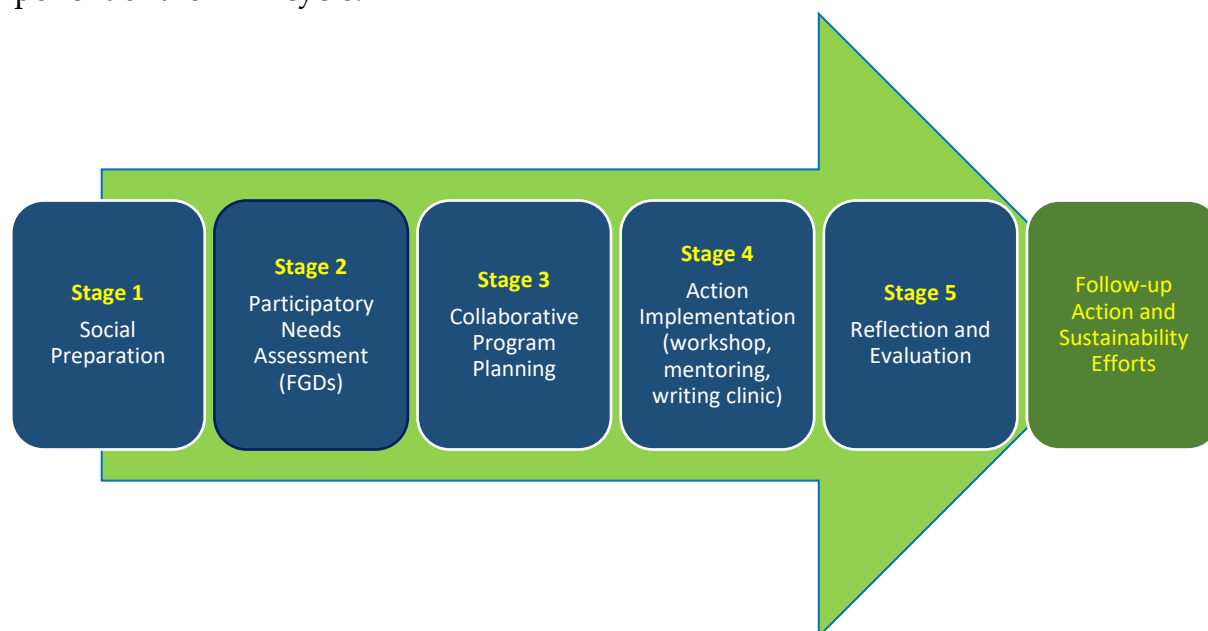


Figure 1. PAR stages implemented in this program

The decision to employ PAR was informed by a preliminary analysis encompassing problem, objective, and program dimensions. The analysis identified low productivity in popular scientific writing among teachers at Madrasah Diniyah B-05 Sidogiri as the principal issue. Although participants possessed substantial religious knowledge, limited competence in organizing and articulating ideas in written form constrained their ability to disseminate that knowledge through popular scientific writing. Addressing this challenge became the primary focus of the intervention. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the program. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and institutional permission was granted by the leadership of Madrasah Diniyah B-05 Sidogiri Pesantren Miftahul Ulum Bengkak.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The community engagement program focused on strengthening the capacity of teachers at Madrasah Diniyah B-05 Sidogiri Pesantren Miftahul Ulum Bengkak, Wongsorejo, Banyuwangi in producing popular scientific writings informed by the perspective of religious moderation. The program was implemented in two main phases: (1) October–November 2025 and (2) December 2025, involving thirteen teachers as participants.

Before implementation, a preliminary assessment was conducted to examine the participants' existing conditions and identify their primary needs. The findings

revealed that the teachers were predominantly engaged in routine classroom teaching responsibilities, leaving limited opportunities to develop their writing potential. Consequently, their intellectual activities remained largely confined to oral transmission of knowledge in classroom settings, resulting in limited documentation and dissemination of their ideas beyond their immediate educational environment. As a result, valuable intellectual contributions that could potentially enrich broader public discourse remained largely inaccessible to wider audiences.

This situation was particularly problematic given that the Pesantren had maintained an official online platform since 2017 that could have functioned as a strategic medium for scholarly dissemination and public engagement. In practice, however, the platform had not operated optimally due to the limited quantity and quality of teachers' written contributions. Testimony from the head of the madrasah, Ust. Asmoni further corroborated these findings, indicating that the primary obstacle was not a lack of interest in writing but rather insufficient technical competence in producing popular scientific articles.

The persistence of this condition had broader implications for the teachers' intellectual engagement and professional development. Their scholarly activities remained constrained both spatially and temporally. Intellectual contributions were largely restricted to classroom instruction, reducing teaching to a routine activity with limited impact on a relatively small audience of students and lasting only during classroom interactions. The participants themselves recognized that writing offered a means of transcending these limitations by enabling knowledge to be documented, preserved, and disseminated to wider audiences. As one participant remarked, "The issue is not a lack of interest in writing; rather, it is our limited competence and confidence in producing written works."

At the same time, these limitations also affected the Pesantren's online media platform, *mifulbengkak.net*, which experienced persistent difficulties in obtaining popular scientific articles on religious and social issues, both in terms of quantity and quality. Consequently, public access to the teachers' perspectives on socio-religious matters—an area that constitutes a central component of their intellectual expertise—remained highly restricted. This situation persisted despite the existence of an official digital platform capable of facilitating broader public engagement with their ideas and scholarly contributions. The problem tree analysis presented below summarizes the key issues identified during the preliminary assessment.

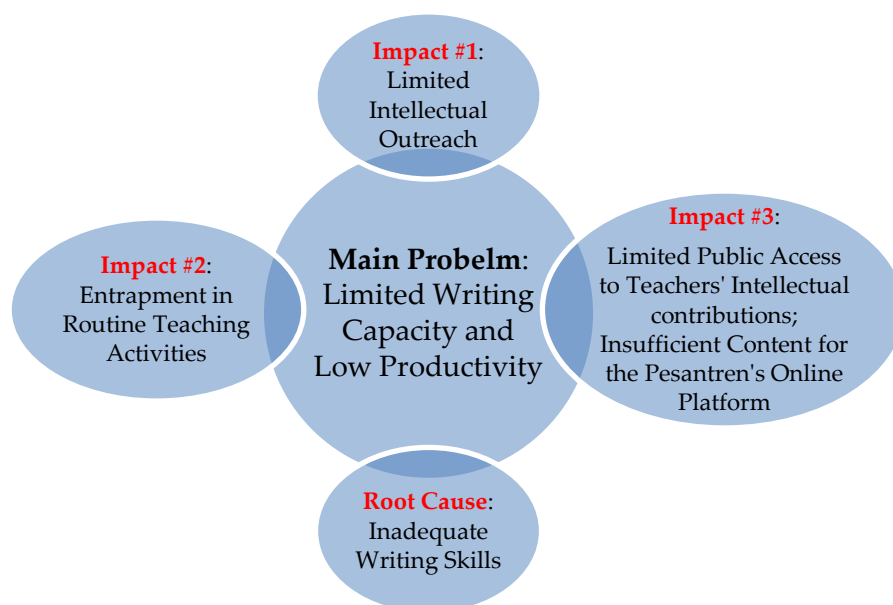


Figure 2. Main Problem and Impacts of Teachers' Limited Writing Skills

Subsequently, based on the results of the problem hierarchy analysis, the community engagement program was implemented as a practical manifestation of the previously formulated objective hierarchy. In this framework, the primary problem was addressed through a capacity-building intervention designed to strengthen teachers' writing potential and improve their competence in producing popular scientific writings. Enhancing participants' writing skills constituted the central objective of the program.

More specifically, the intervention sought to achieve this objective by integrating religious moderation discourse as a thematic framework for writing activities. The participating teachers considered this approach particularly valuable, not only for enriching their knowledge and fostering greater awareness of the importance of moderate religiosity, but also for facilitating the production of articles informed by perspectives on religious moderation. Such writings were intended for publication on the Pesantren's online media platform and partner media outlets, thereby expanding the dissemination of moderate religious narratives to broader audiences.

The objective hierarchy derived from this intervention strategy is presented in the following objective tree diagram.



Figure 3. Program Framework for Enhancing Teachers' Popular Scientific Writing Competence

The foregoing analysis clearly reveals a substantial gap between the existing conditions and the desired outcomes. The participating teachers at MADIN likewise acknowledged this disparity. Consequently, strengthening teachers' capacity for popular scientific writing emerged as a strategic, solution-oriented intervention capable of addressing this gap while fostering sustainable improvement.

In this context, enhancing writing competence was viewed not merely as a means of improving individual technical skills but also as a mechanism for expanding teachers' intellectual engagement, increasing scholarly productivity, and broadening the dissemination of knowledge beyond the classroom environment. The intervention was therefore designed to bridge the discrepancy between the participants' current limitations and the expected conditions envisioned through the program.

In designing the intervention, four strategic dimensions were identified as the program's foundational elements. These included: (1) human resources, encompassing participating teachers, the community engagement team, resource persons, and relevant stakeholders; (2) institutional capacity, represented by Madrasah Diniyah B-05, Sidogiri Branch, and its collaborating stakeholder institutions; (3) infrastructural support, referring to the availability of instructional materials, facilities, and other resources necessary for effective program implementation; and (4) program governance, which was guided by the implementation framework established by the Institute for Research and Community Service (LP2M) of UIN KHAS Jember and by the technical guidelines for community engagement programs issued by the Directorate General of Islamic Education through Decrees No. 1502 and No. 1503 of 2024.

These four dimensions served as the principal framework for designing and implementing the intervention, ensuring that the program addressed not only participants' individual competencies but also the institutional, infrastructural, and

managerial factors necessary to support sustainable capacity development in popular scientific writing.

The following gap analysis matrix illustrates the differences between the existing conditions and the desired outcomes for strengthening the capacity for popular scientific writing among the participating teachers.

Table 1. Needs Assessment of Teachers' Popular Scientific Writing Competence

Dimension	Current Condition	Desired Condition	Gap/Intervention Needs
Knowledge	Teachers' knowledge of writing practices and religious moderation remains limited, reflecting a weak writing capacity that requires further development	Teachers possess a strong understanding of writing practices, particularly popular scientific writing, as well as adequate knowledge of religious moderation as a writing perspective	Enhancement of knowledge regarding writing practices, especially popular scientific writing, accompanied by a deeper understanding of religious moderation
Skills	Teachers generally demonstrate potential in scientific writing; however, this potential has not yet developed into a practical competency due to limited familiarity with the structure and style of popular scientific writing	Teachers possess the skills required to produce popular scientific writings, particularly those incorporating religious moderation perspectives. They are capable of designing, developing, and composing well-structured articles while effectively utilizing data and relevant references	Training and intensive mentoring in popular scientific writing are required, particularly in integrating religious moderation perspectives into written works
Motivation	Interest and motivation to write popular scientific articles are generally	Teachers demonstrate strong interest and motivation to engage in popular scientific	Motivation should be strengthened through capacity-building initiatives

	present; however, they remain relatively weak due to limitations in writing-related knowledge and skills	writing, supported by adequate knowledge of writing practices and writing competencies	focused on writing skills development, complemented by institutional incentives such as recognition and appreciation for published works
Support	Access to resources, mentoring, and a supportive environment for writing remains limited, despite the availability of an online media platform managed by the pesantren	Teachers have easy access to resources, mentors, and supportive environments, including writing workshops, writing discussion groups, and publication opportunities through both pesantren-based and public online media platforms	Greater availability of resources and stronger institutional support are needed to facilitate the development of teachers' capacity and competencies in scientific writing, particularly popular scientific writing

Based on these findings, the community engagement program was subsequently implemented through a workshop-based intervention encompassing three principal components: (1) strengthening participants' ability to identify and critically engage with contemporary social issues, (2) developing competencies in popular scientific writing techniques, and (3) enriching participants' understanding of religious moderation perspectives. These components were designed to address the knowledge, skills, and motivational gaps identified during the preliminary assessment and participatory planning stages.

Following the workshop sessions, participants received intensive mentoring throughout the writing process. This assistance covered the entire cycle of article development, including topic selection, manuscript drafting, collaborative peer review, revision, and ultimately the submission and publication of articles in online media platforms. Such mentoring was intended not only to improve participants' technical writing skills but also to ensure that the knowledge acquired during the workshops could be effectively translated into tangible writing outputs.

Consistent with the principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR), each stage of the intervention was accompanied by participatory monitoring, evaluation, and

theorization. Through this iterative process of action, reflection, and refinement, participants and facilitators collaboratively assessed progress, identified challenges, and formulated strategies for continuous improvement. This cyclical approach ensured that the program remained responsive to participants' needs while fostering the sustainable development of their capacity to produce popular scientific writings informed by perspectives on religious moderation.

During the first workshop session, the training focused on developing participants' ability to identify and critically engage with issues emerging in mass media, as well as on the fundamentals of opinion writing. Participants were introduced to media monitoring strategies, trend analysis, information verification techniques, and methods for constructing evidence-based arguments. This component was designed to help teachers understand how social realities and contemporary issues can be transformed into ideas suitable for popular scientific writing.

The subsequent writing session provided practical guidance on the essential elements of article development, including topic selection, title formulation, introductory techniques, content organization, and the preparation of reflective conclusions. Particular emphasis was placed on using accessible, engaging language while maintaining the rigor and credibility expected of scientific writing.

The second workshop meeting focused on mentoring activities and reinforcing previously delivered materials, including integrating perspectives on religious moderation into the writing process. Participants were introduced to religious moderation as an intellectual framework emphasizing balance, tolerance, inclusivity, and openness. They were then encouraged to employ this framework as an analytical lens in developing popular scientific articles addressing contemporary social and religious issues.

Participant responses to the program were overwhelmingly positive. Their enthusiasm was evident in active engagement during discussions, participation in practical exercises, and commitment to attending the entire series of activities. Such engagement constituted an important indicator that the intervention was closely aligned with the participants' needs and expectations.

Despite this positive response, the follow-up writing assignment revealed that not all participants were able to complete the assignment. Of the thirteen teachers who participated in the program, six (46.2%) completed and submitted manuscripts, all of which subsequently underwent revision and editorial mentoring before being deemed suitable for publication. The remaining participants reported difficulties in initiating and organizing their writing and expressed a lack of confidence in the quality of their work. The six submitted manuscripts underwent intensive mentoring and revision until they met publication standards and were deemed suitable for publication on *mifulbengkak.net* and the Bondowoso Network. This mentoring process was conducted online and continued beyond the two formal workshop sessions.

These findings, together with the overall implementation process, suggest that training and mentoring delivered through workshop formats alone are insufficient to

develop participants' writing competencies fully. Nevertheless, the program successfully achieved a crucial initial outcome: fostering participants' awareness of and motivation for writing, particularly in the genre of popular science writing.

The findings further indicate that the challenges encountered by participants extend beyond technical writing skills and are closely associated with the limited development of a literacy culture within their institutional environment. From the perspective of literacy as a social practice (Lea & Street, 1998) Writing competence cannot be understood merely as an individual cognitive ability; rather, it is shaped by the social and cultural contexts in which individuals are situated. The MADIN teachers operate within an educational environment that traditionally prioritizes oral transmission of religious knowledge over written production. Consequently, although they possess substantial religious knowledge and intellectual capacity, opportunities to cultivate and practice writing as a mode of scholarly communication have remained relatively limited.

This finding may also be interpreted through the lens of academic literacy theory (Lea & Street, 1998), which conceptualizes writing not simply as a technical skill but as a socially situated practice involving identity formation, meaning-making, and participation in particular knowledge communities. From this perspective, the participants' difficulties in producing written works were not solely attributable to deficiencies in writing techniques. Rather, they reflected limited experience in engaging with the conventions, expectations, and communicative practices associated with scholarly writing. The reluctance expressed by several participants to submit their manuscripts further suggests that confidence and authorial identity constitute important dimensions of writing development, particularly among educators whose professional activities have historically centered on oral instruction.

The findings can also be understood through the framework of Communities of Practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Within this perspective, learning occurs through active participation in a community that shares common practices, values, and goals. Before the intervention, opportunities for teachers to engage in collaborative writing practices were largely absent. The workshop and mentoring activities, therefore, functioned as an emergent community of practice in which participants could collectively learn, exchange ideas, receive feedback, and gradually develop their identities as writers. The positive responses observed during discussions and mentoring sessions indicate the importance of creating supportive scholarly communities as a prerequisite for sustainable writing development.

In this regard, the community engagement program served not merely as a technical training initiative but as a strategic intervention to transform literacy practices within the institution. By encouraging teachers to shift from predominantly oral modes of knowledge transmission to written forms of scholarly communication, the program initiated a cultural change within the educational environment. Nevertheless, participants themselves recognized that such transformation cannot be achieved through short-term interventions alone. Sustainable improvement requires

continuous practice, institutional support, mentoring mechanisms, and the cultivation of a writing community capable of reinforcing literacy practices over the long term.

These findings suggest that efforts to strengthen teachers' writing capacity should be approached as a comprehensive process involving skill development, identity formation, and community participation. Accordingly, future capacity-building initiatives should move beyond one-off training activities and instead focus on establishing sustainable ecosystems of academic and popular writing within religious educational institutions.

The findings are broadly consistent with previous community engagement studies demonstrating that scientific writing training can enhance teachers' writing competence, motivation, and professional development (Ready, 2021; Rizal, 2023; Ula, 2023). However, the present program extends these findings in two important respects. First, it specifically emphasizes popular scientific writing, a genre that remains underexplored in teacher capacity-development initiatives despite its strategic role in bridging scholarly knowledge and public discourse. Second, it integrates religious moderation as a substantive analytical perspective, thereby enabling participants not only to improve their writing competence but also to contribute to the dissemination of balanced, inclusive, and socially relevant religious narratives.

A distinctive contribution of this program lies in integrating religious moderation into training in popular scientific writing. Whereas most teacher writing initiatives primarily focus on technical aspects of writing, the present intervention combined the development of writing competence with the capacity to critically engage with contemporary socio-religious issues through evidence-based, balanced, and inclusive perspectives. This approach positions writing not merely as a technical skill but as a medium for intellectual engagement, civic participation, and the promotion of religious moderation within the public sphere.

Furthermore, the finding that many participants experienced difficulties in initiating the writing process suggests that literacy extends far beyond the basic abilities to read and write. Rather, it encompasses the capacity to think critically, organize ideas systematically, and transform personal experiences into meaningful written discourse. This observation resonates with Freire's (1993) conception of critical literacy, which positions literacy not merely as a technical competence but as a means through which individuals interpret, question, and ultimately transform social reality. Within this framework, writing becomes an intellectual act that enables individuals to engage critically with contemporary social issues and contribute to public discourse.

From an andragogical perspective, the positive changes observed in participants' motivation may be attributed to the alignment between the learning design and adult learners' characteristics. Knowles (1984) argues that adults are more likely to engage in learning when they perceive its relevance to their personal and professional lives. Contemporary studies similarly emphasize that adult learners demonstrate stronger engagement when learning activities are closely connected to their professional roles,

immediate needs, and opportunities for practical application (Njenga, 2023; St. Clair, 2024). In the present program, writing was framed not simply as a pedagogical exercise but as a medium for intellectual expression, professional development, and social contribution. Such positioning enabled participants to recognize the practical significance of writing and strengthened their willingness to engage in the learning process.

Equally important, participants' professional experiences as teachers functioned as valuable learning resources throughout the program. Rather than merely serving as recipients of knowledge, participants were encouraged to reflect on their classroom experiences critically and to transform them into written narratives and analytical reflections. This finding supports the central premise of andragogy that adult learning is most effective when it builds upon learners' prior experiences and existing knowledge structures. Nevertheless, the challenges several participants encountered in producing complete manuscripts indicate that motivation alone is insufficient to foster writing competence. Consistent with Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory, shifts in perspective and awareness do not automatically translate into behavioral or competency changes without sustained opportunities for practice, reflection, and reinforcement.

The significance of the PAR approach is likewise evident in the level of participant engagement observed throughout the program. Unlike conventional training models that position participants primarily as recipients of knowledge, PAR actively involves participants in identifying problems, designing interventions, implementing actions, and evaluating outcomes. This collaborative process aligns with Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon's (2014) view of PAR as a transformative methodology aimed at generating change through iterative cycles of action and critical reflection. In the present study, these cycles were manifested through the collective identification of writing-related challenges, participation in training and mentoring activities, and continuous reflection on the outcomes achieved.

At the same time, the finding that only six of the thirteen participants completed and submitted manuscripts indicates that literacy development is inherently a long-term process. While the intervention succeeded in stimulating motivation and enhancing participants' awareness of the importance of writing, developing sustainable writing practices requires repeated cycles of learning, practice, feedback, and reflection. From this perspective, the present program should be viewed not as a completed intervention but as the initial phase of a broader capacity-building process.

The findings also reinforce the argument that literacy development should be understood as a socially situated process rather than an exclusively individual endeavor. Consistent with Lea and Street's (1998) conception of literacy as a social practice, participants' writing challenges were closely linked to the institutional culture in which they operate. The educational environment of the *madrasah* has historically emphasized oral transmission of religious knowledge, while opportunities for scholarly writing have remained relatively limited. Consequently, the difficulties

experienced by participants were not merely technical but reflected broader cultural patterns that have historically privileged oral over written forms of knowledge dissemination.

This interpretation is further supported by the Academic Literacies framework proposed by Lea and Street (1998), which conceptualizes writing as a socially embedded practice involving identity formation, meaning-making, and participation in specific knowledge communities. From this perspective, participants' hesitation and lack of confidence in producing written works may be understood not merely as deficiencies in writing skills but as indications of their limited participation in communities where writing constitutes a routine intellectual practice. Writing competence, therefore, involves not only mastering textual conventions but also developing an identity as a legitimate contributor to scholarly and public discourse.

Similarly, the findings may be interpreted through the lens of the Communities of Practice theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The workshop and mentoring activities functioned as an emergent community of practice in which participants engaged in collaborative learning, exchanged experiences, received feedback, and gradually developed confidence as writers. The positive interactions observed throughout the program suggest that establishing supportive writing communities may be as important as technical training itself in fostering sustainable literacy development among teachers.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the program's effectiveness is derived from the integration of three mutually reinforcing dimensions: literacy, andragogy, and participatory engagement. Literacy framed writing as a social and intellectual practice, andragogy aligned learning activities with the needs of adult learners, and PAR fostered meaningful participation, empowerment, and collective ownership of the learning process. The convergence of these dimensions enabled participants not only to acquire new knowledge and skills but also to develop a more reflective understanding of writing as part of their professional identity.

Participant reflections and post-program discussions indicated notable improvements in knowledge and self-efficacy related to popular scientific writing. Participants demonstrated a stronger understanding of article structure, audience engagement, writing conventions, and evidence-based argumentation. Moreover, several participants successfully produced manuscripts deemed suitable for publication in public media outlets, including Bondowoso Network and mifulbengkak.net. These outcomes suggest that the intervention enhanced not only writing competence but also participants' confidence in disseminating ideas beyond the classroom.

Nevertheless, several challenges remained. Participants frequently reported limited familiarity with religious moderation discourse, making it relatively demanding to integrate into popular scientific writing. Many also indicated the need for greater access to relevant literature and additional time for drafting and revising manuscripts. These findings reflect variations in participants' prior experiences and

competencies, highlighting the need for differentiated mentoring strategies. To address these challenges, the program provided supplementary reading materials and individualized feedback throughout the mentoring process.

Table 2. Key Outcomes of the Popular Scientific Writing Capacity-building Program

No.	Indicator	Before Program	After Program
1.	Number of participants	13 teachers	13 teachers
2.	Knowledge of popular scientific writing	Limited understanding of article structure, argumentation, and publication practices	Improved understanding of popular article structure, audience engagement, argumentation, and evidence-based writing
3.	Understanding of religious moderation as a writing perspective	Limited familiarity with religious moderation discourse	Enhanced understanding and ability to incorporate religious moderation perspectives into writing
4.	Writing motivation and confidence	Interest in writing existed, but was constrained by low confidence and limited competence	Increased motivation, confidence, and willingness to engage in writing activities
5.	Writing outputs	No popular scientific articles produced	10 complete manuscripts successfully produced
6.	Publication readiness	No manuscripts available for publication	6 manuscripts revised and prepared for publication, and 2 manuscripts published during the program in two online media outlets (mifulbengkak.net and Bondowoso Network)
7.	Access to mentoring and writing support	No structured mentoring mechanism	Three-month mentoring program and intensive writing clinic assistance implemented
8.	Utilization of the institutional	Limited use of the pesantren website for	Increased use of digital media as a platform for

media platform	scholarly dissemination	disseminating teachers' writings; articles prepared for publication in mifulbengkak.net and Bondowoso Network
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Despite these constraints, the program achieved an important outcome: strengthening participants' awareness of writing as an intellectual and professional responsibility. From a capacity-development perspective, this awareness represents a form of social and intellectual capital that may support the long-term institutionalization of literacy practices within the pesantren environment. Accordingly, the program's most significant contribution lies not merely in the number of articles produced but in fostering the conditions necessary to develop a sustainable writing culture.

Several limitations should be noted. The program involved only thirteen participants from a single pesantren-based institution, limiting the transferability of the findings. In addition, the three-month mentoring period was insufficient to assess long-term changes in writing productivity. At the same time, the evaluation relied primarily on writing outputs, participant reflections, observations, and mentoring records rather than standardized assessments. Future initiatives should therefore involve larger participant groups, longer mentoring periods, and more systematic measures of writing competence and publication outcomes.

Several practical implications emerge from these findings. Literacy development among MADIN teachers should be supported through sustained mentoring rather than one-off training activities. The establishment of a teacher writing community is particularly important for facilitating peer mentoring, collaborative writing, manuscript review, and regular publication activities. Equally important are the optimization of pesantren-based digital media as publication platforms and the provision of institutional support, including editorial assistance, incentives, and recognition mechanisms. Collectively, these measures can strengthen individual writing competencies, sustain writing productivity, and foster the long-term development of a literacy ecosystem and writing culture within Islamic educational institutions.

4. CONCLUSION

This community engagement program revealed that teachers at Madrasah Diniyah B-05 generally demonstrated limited competence in scientific writing, particularly in producing popular scientific articles. The workshop and mentoring activities enhanced participants' awareness of the importance of writing and strengthened their motivation to disseminate knowledge through written media. These findings reaffirm the need for targeted interventions to address the persistent

gap in teachers' capacity for scientific writing within pesantren-based educational institutions.

The program further demonstrates that integrating training in popular scientific writing with contemporary educational discourses, such as religious moderation, constitutes a promising approach to fostering academic engagement and strengthening teachers' intellectual roles beyond classroom instruction. Although the intervention successfully stimulated motivation and interest in writing, its relatively short duration limited its impact on the development of substantive writing competence.

Accordingly, sustained mentoring and practice-oriented capacity-building programs are recommended to support the long-term development of teachers' scientific writing skills. Such initiatives are essential for cultivating a sustainable culture of scholarly writing and expanding teachers' contributions to knowledge production and public intellectual discourse within Islamic educational institutions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors gratefully acknowledge the support of the LP2M UIN KHAS Jember for facilitating the community engagement program underlying this article. Appreciation is also extended to the academic community of Pesantren Miftahul Ulum Bengkak, particularly the teachers of Madrasah Diniyah B-05 Sidogiri, for their cooperation, participation, and support throughout the program.

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