

# Bridging The Publication Gap Through A Mentor–Mentee Program in Islamic Higher Education

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## ABSTRACT

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Publication performance remains a significant challenge in private Islamic universities, where limited academic guidance and inadequate writing support hinder faculty members' scholarly productivity. This community service program was designed to bridge the publication gap by implementing a structured Mentor-Mentee model targeting early-career faculty members in Islamic religious colleges—the three-month intervention integrated diagnostic assessments, intensive writing workshops, individual mentoring, and simulated peer review. A mixed-methods approach was used to evaluate the program's effectiveness, combining rubric-based pre- and post-writing assessments with qualitative reflection and submission tracking. Findings demonstrated substantial improvements in manuscript structure, referencing accuracy, and methodological clarity. By the end of the program, half of the participants had produced full-length manuscripts, and more than half had submitted them to nationally accredited journals. Feedback revealed increased confidence and a stronger scholarly identity among the mentees. This initiative not only improved technical writing skills but also fostered a collaborative academic culture within the institution. The Mentor-Mentee model has proven effective in addressing systemic barriers to publication and offers a scalable solution for other under-resourced Islamic universities seeking to build sustainable research capacity. Its successful implementation contributes to broader efforts in strengthening academic output and institutional accreditation in the Indonesian higher education context.

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## INTRODUCTION

The ability to write and publish scientific articles in reputable journals has become a fundamental competency for lecturers in higher education, especially in the context of Indonesia's performance-based academic culture. Government regulation mandates the publication of scholarly work as a criterion for career advancement and institutional accreditation. However, structural challenges such as limited access to academic writing training (Getahun et al., 2021; Wilkins et al., 2021), weak research culture (Fernandes & Singh, 2022; Trinh et al., 2022), and the absence of sustained mentoring continue to hamper the scientific productivity of lecturers in Islamic private universities (Doğan & Arslan, 2024; Haq & Tanveer, 2020; Nor et al., 2024).

The emphasis on the publication of scholarly work as a criterion for career advancement and institutional accreditation serves both individual and systemic purposes within the higher education ecosystem. For individual lecturers, especially those in early career stages, publishing in reputable journals not only fulfils formal requirements for promotion and tenure but also establishes their academic reputation and contributes to knowledge production in their field (Halat et al., 2023; Ngoc & Tien, 2023; Abdullah, 2022). From an institutional perspective, a strong publication record is increasingly tied to national accreditation rankings and funding eligibility, positioning the university as a competitive and credible academic institution (Sukoco et al., 2021; Kawuryan et al., 2022). In the Indonesian context, where government evaluation frameworks such as *BAN-PT* and *SINTA* prioritise measurable outputs, scholarly publications function as a key performance indicator. Therefore, the ability to produce high-quality research articles is no longer a supplementary skill but a strategic necessity that directly impacts professional trajectories and institutional legitimacy.

At STAI Ki Ageng Pekalongan, an Islamic private higher education institution in Central Java, an internal capacity mapping exercise conducted in 2023 identified 16 permanent lecturers across two academic programs: Islamic Education Management and Sharia Economics. Despite the relatively small faculty size, the institution faces a substantial publication gap, as only 14.3% of lecturers have published in nationally accredited journals, and fewer than 5% have international publications. Pre-research revealed that most lecturers were highly motivated to improve their scholarly output but lacked confidence and technical proficiency, particularly in structuring manuscripts using the IMRaD format, adhering to citation standards, and navigating online journal systems. Nevertheless, the institution holds significant potential for academic growth. Many young lecturers possess master's and doctoral degrees, exhibit strong collegiality, and show openness to professional development. The campus also benefits from its urban location, which provides adequate digital infrastructure to support both synchronous and asynchronous learning. These favourable conditions provide a strategic foundation for implementing a contextual

academic mentoring program. This initiative was therefore designed to address the core challenge: how can lecturers at STAI Ki Ageng Pekalongan enhance their capacity to write and publish scientific articles? The objective of this community service program is to operationalise a structured Mentor–Mentee model to support sustainable academic writing development.

Recent studies have emphasised the efficacy of academic mentoring models in enhancing lecturers' scholarly communication skills, particularly within under-resourced institutions (Olivier & Burton, 2020; Kanyopa et al., 2024). The *Mentor–Mentee* approach, characterised by dialogical (Garcia & Doyle, 2021), reflective (Moloney et al., 2023a), and hands-on interactions (Alm & Bailey, 2021), fosters incremental skill-building through tailored feedback and peer learning (Alenezi, 2023). Mentoring not only enhances individual competencies but also cultivates a productive institutional academic culture.

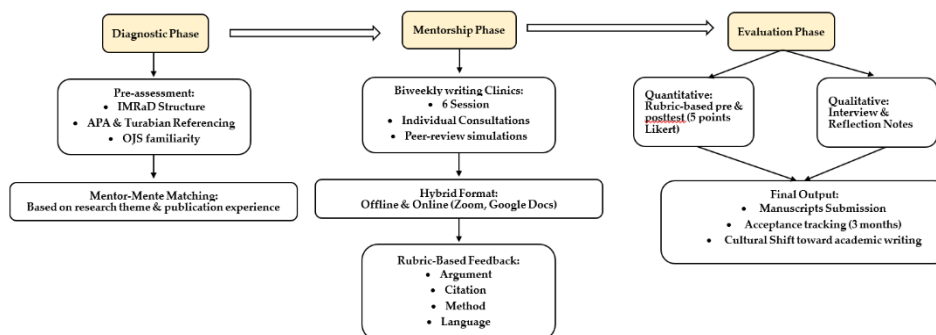
This community engagement initiative builds upon prior research by the authors that identified key barriers to publication among lecturers in Islamic universities, including limited mentoring, weak writing infrastructure, and low confidence in academic communication. The primary objective of this program is to enhance the scientific writing competence of early-career lecturers through a structured Mentor–Mentee model tailored to the institutional context of STAI Ki Ageng Pekalongan. The initiative aims to achieve two key outcomes: (1) short-term improvements in manuscript quality, submission readiness, and lecturer motivation; and (2) long-term institutional gains, including the establishment of sustainable mentoring networks and the integration of scholarly writing practices into faculty development agendas. As such, this program contributes both practically by equipping lecturers with essential academic writing skills and theoretically by offering a scalable model for capacity-building in under-resourced higher education settings.

## METHOD

This community service program was conducted at STAI Ki Ageng Pekalongan, a private Islamic higher education institution located in Central Java, Indonesia. The institution was selected as the program site due to its documented challenges in academic publication performance, including low research output and limited access to structured writing mentorship. A preliminary institutional assessment in early 2023 revealed that less than 15% of its lecturers had published in nationally accredited journals, making it a representative case for under-resourced Islamic universities seeking to improve scholarly communication.

The program adopted an academic mentoring model using a structured Mentor–Mentee approach. The intervention spanned a three-month period from March to May 2024 and involved 20 lecturers who had never published in nationally or internationally indexed journals. Participants were recruited through open invitations and selected based on their voluntary registration and

formal commitment to completing a manuscript by the program's end (Butcher, 2022). Figure 1 shows the structured stages and main components of the program design and implementation flow intervention.



**Figure 1. Flowchart of Community Service Model**

The implementation was carried out in three sequential phases:

1. **Diagnostic Phase:** All participants completed a pre-assessment test to establish baseline knowledge in scientific writing. The test included components on IMRaD structure, referencing styles (APA and Turabian), and use of Open Journal Systems (OJS).
2. **Mentorship Phase:** This phase involved six biweekly intensive writing clinics, supported by one-on-one consultations and asynchronous peer-review simulations. Activities were conducted in a hybrid format offline for local participants and online via Zoom and Google Docs for those working remotely. Each mentee received personalized feedback based on a standardized rubric that evaluated argumentation logic, citation accuracy, methodological clarity, and language quality. Tools such as Grammarly, Mendeley, and collaborative Google Drive folders were utilized to streamline document sharing and editing.
3. **Evaluation Phase:** Data collection was conducted using a mixed-methods approach. Quantitatively, participants were assessed using pre- and post-intervention rubric scores across five indicators: abstract clarity, literature review coherence, methodological precision, citation style, and overall manuscript structure (scored on a 5-point Likert scale). Qualitatively, semi-structured interviews and reflection notes were gathered to explore shifts in self-efficacy, motivation, and publication readiness.

Data analysis was carried out in two stages: (1) Descriptive statistics to compare pre-post rubric scores (Nusantara et al., 2021), and (2) Thematic analysis of qualitative data using open coding techniques to identify recurring patterns in participant narratives (Hall & Liebenberg, 2024). Manuscript submission records were also tracked for three months post-program to assess real publication outcomes. This methodological framework allowed for a holistic evaluation of the program's effectiveness not only in enhancing individual writing

competence, but also in promoting cultural and institutional shifts toward sustainable academic productivity.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### Quantitative Percentage

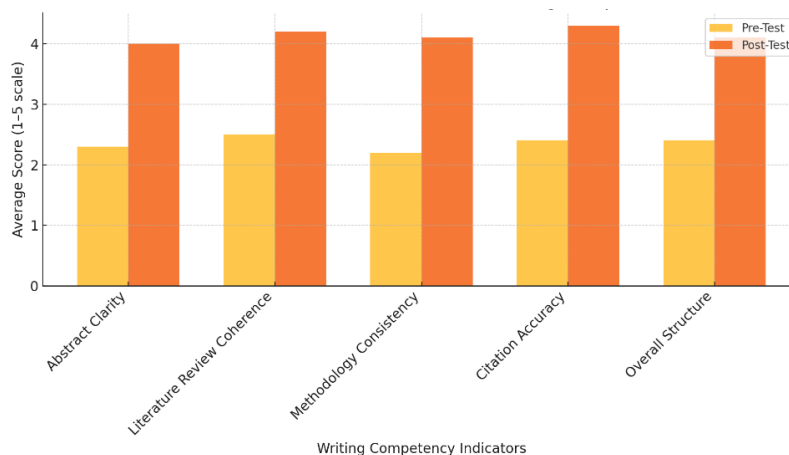
The implementation of the *Mentor–Mentee* program at STAI Ki Ageng Pekalongan successfully addressed the primary problem identified in the diagnostic phase namely, the limited capacity of lecturers in writing scientific manuscripts aligned with journal publication standards. Over the three-month program, notable short-term outcomes were observed, both at the individual and institutional levels. These included measurable improvements in writing skills, increased awareness of the publication process, and enhanced academic confidence among participants.

The quantitative assessment revealed a substantial increase in participants’ academic writing competencies. Based on rubric-based evaluations, the average manuscript structure score rose from 2.4 (pre-test) to 4.1 (post-test) on a 5-point scale. Improvements were particularly prominent in the clarity of abstracts, coherence of the literature review, logical consistency of methodology sections, and accuracy in referencing. Table 1 below presents the detailed comparison of pre- and post-test scores across the five assessed indicators of writing competence.

**Table 1. Pre- and Post-Test Scores of Academic Writing Competencies (N = 20)**

Indicator	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score
Abstract Clarity	2.3	4.0
Literature Review Coherence	2.5	4.2
Methodology Consistency	2.2	4.1
Citation Accuracy	2.4	4.3
Overall Structure	2.4	4.1

Figure 2 shows a comparison between pre-test and post-test scores across key indicators of writing competency improvement.



**Figure 2. Pre and Post-Test Scores of Scientific Writing Competencies**

## Feedback of Implementation Program

Qualitative feedback, gathered through reflection notes and follow-up interviews, indicated that participants felt more confident in navigating the journal submission process, with several expressing readiness to act as future peer mentors. This psychological shift was evident in the way participants described their evolving self-perception as academic writers. One participant stated, “Before this program, submitting to a journal felt intimidating and unclear. Now, I feel equipped not only with technical skills, but with the mindset of a scholar who contributes to knowledge” (Participant 07, interview, May 2024).

Another lecturer highlighted the importance of structured guidance in overcoming mental blocks related to academic writing: “The feedback I received from my mentor helped me see writing as a process, not a product. That changed everything. I now review my colleagues’ drafts and give suggestions something I never imagined doing before” (Participant 11, reflection note, May 2024).

Several participants also emphasised the community dimension of the intervention, noting that they no longer felt alone on their writing journey. As one mentee described, “What made the difference was not just the technical instruction, but the sense of being part of a writing community. It motivated me to keep going and help others do the same” (Participant 03, interview, May 2024). These reflections highlight a broader cultural shift, positioning academic writing not as an isolated obligation but as a collaborative and sustainable practice within the institution.

Out of 20 mentees, 14 participants (70%) completed full manuscripts by the end of the program, and nine manuscripts (45%) were submitted to nationally accredited journals (Sinta 2–4) within one month following the program’s conclusion. Two manuscripts received revision requests, and one was accepted for publication, demonstrating tangible progress toward the goal of increasing publication output. These results signify a shift not only in technical capability but also in behaviour, as lecturers transitioned from passive to active contributors in the academic publishing ecosystem.

The completion and submission of manuscripts represent a significant achievement considering the participants’ initial baseline. Prior to the intervention, many lecturers expressed difficulty in completing drafts beyond the introduction and literature review sections. The structured guidance and iterative feedback from mentors helped participants overcome common barriers such as formulating research problems, articulating methodology, and applying proper referencing styles. Furthermore, the use of collaborative tools (e.g., Google Docs, Grammarly, and Mendeley) allowed real-time review, which accelerated writing fluency and increased manuscript quality.

Participants reported a noticeable increase in confidence and clarity regarding publication procedures, including journal selection, handling reviewer comments, and utilising submission platforms such as Open Journal Systems (OJS). This shift in understanding was not only technical but also psychological,

with many lecturers stating that the mentorship experience demystified the publication process and replaced anxiety with motivation.

Institutionally, the production of draft manuscripts has strategic value for accreditation and the development of lecturers' careers. The outputs from this program directly contribute to the fulfilment of standard research performance indicators as required by BAN-PT and KOPERTAIS X. The initial success of this publication readiness phase has prompted the leadership at STAI Ki Ageng Pekalongan to consider integrating structured mentoring into regular faculty development programs. In this regard, the community service initiative has laid the groundwork for a more sustainable academic writing ecosystem at the institutional level.

Beyond individual outcomes, the initiative fostered an emerging academic writing culture within the institution. Peer collaboration, open critique, and manuscript sharing became routine practices among lecturers, indicating a significant behavioural shift. During the program, participants regularly exchanged manuscript drafts, provided mutual feedback, and developed an increased willingness to revise based on collegial input. These dynamics signify a departure from the previously isolated approach to academic writing toward a more communal and iterative scholarly process.

This cultural transformation aligns with the normative framework of academic capacity-building, which highlights mentorship and collegiality as foundational to institutional growth. The Mentor–Mentee model functioned not only as a pedagogical tool but also as a catalyst for reshaping academic norms within the campus. Informal mentoring relationships continued beyond the scheduled program, and some mentees began mentoring junior colleagues, thus initiating a virtuous cycle of knowledge transmission. This emergent mentoring network reflects the growing academic maturity of the institution and its readiness to embrace research-driven development.

One of the most tangible institutional outcomes was the establishment of an internal writing consortium named “SCOPUS Team” in a WA Group. The community was formed organically by participants who expressed the need for sustained engagement beyond the program’s conclusion. The group meets biweekly to discuss progress, exchange strategies for manuscript improvement, and share calls for papers from targeted journals. The consortium also plans to organise internal writing retreats and invite external reviewers to enrich manuscript quality. This initiative institutionalises the culture of academic productivity and embeds scholarly writing into the professional identity of the faculty.

In response to the perceived success of the program, institutional leaders have expressed commitment to embedding writing mentorship into the annual faculty development agenda. Discussions are underway to formally recognise mentoring contributions in the lecturer performance evaluation system (BKD). These policy-level endorsements further signify a cultural shift from perceiving

writing as an individual burden to embracing it as a shared institutional priority. Ultimately, the program has contributed not only to the upskilling of individual lecturers but also to the gradual transformation of STAI Ki Ageng Pekalongan into a research-oriented higher education institution.

## Discussion

While the mentoring program achieved notable successes in enhancing novice lecturers' academic writing capacity, several challenges were identified that warrant attention for future iterations. A key issue was the difficulty of synchronising schedules between mentors and mentees, given their diverse teaching loads, administrative responsibilities, and personal obligations. This mismatch was particularly evident during one-on-one feedback sessions, often causing delays in manuscript progress. These findings align with Jacob et al. (2023), who emphasise the role of scheduling flexibility in the success of academic mentoring initiatives. Implementing shared digital calendars and adaptive consultation slots could help alleviate these coordination challenges. Such behavioural transformation is essential for creating long-term publication habits and aligns with findings from previous studies on mentoring effectiveness in higher education (Giraldo et al., 2020)

A second major constraint was the disparity in digital literacy among participants. While some mentees demonstrated fluency in using tools such as Google Docs, Mendeley, and OJS submission systems, others struggled with basic operations, including reference hyperlinking and document formatting. This digital divide impeded equitable participation and reflects broader patterns observed in faculty development research (Fang et al., 2019). To address this, future programs should incorporate differentiated technical training sessions and assign institutional IT support staff to assist with digital tasks throughout the program lifecycle.

The three-month program duration also proved insufficient for participants with limited prior writing experience. Despite structured scaffolding, mentees with lower confidence or slower writing rhythms required more time to revise and internalise the mentor's feedback (Moloney et al., 2023b). The zone of proximal development suggests the need for tiered mentoring models (Atenas et al., 2023; Faiz et al., 2023). Such models could combine core mentoring cycles with optional extensions for participants needing prolonged support to achieve publication readiness.

Furthermore, challenges arose in aligning manuscript topics with the journal's scopes. Several submissions were rejected not for quality but for thematic misalignment with target journals. This highlights the importance of explicit training on journal targeting strategy, as supported by Seals (2023), who advocate for early integration of scope analysis and audience consideration in the writing process. Involving journal editors or peer reviewers as guest speakers

may also provide mentees with insights into editorial expectations and review criteria.

Lastly, the absence of formal recognition or tangible incentives for mentors affected the consistency of their engagement. Although most mentors displayed strong intrinsic motivation, the lack of BKD credit (teaching load acknowledgement) or official assignments (e.g., *SK Penugasan*) reduced the sustainability of mentoring efforts. Culpepper et al. (2021) argue that institutionalising mentoring roles through formal performance appraisal and workload conversion is essential for long-term program continuity. Accordingly, integrating mentorship contributions into institutional reward systems could ensure mentor commitment and elevate the institutional value of academic writing mentorship.

The evidence of success generated by this pilot indicates that the *Mentor–Mentee* model is well-suited for dissemination across Islamic private higher-education institutions (PTKIS) that share similar resource constraints. Scaling efforts should begin with a formal needs-assessment survey to map lecturers' publication capacities, digital-literacy levels, and disciplinary concentrations across prospective partner campuses (Fernandes & Singh, 2022). Such baseline mapping will ensure that subsequent mentoring interventions are context-responsive rather than one-size-fits-all, thereby increasing program relevance and cost-effectiveness.

Institutionalisation is the next critical step. University leaders are advised to embed mentoring activities within existing faculty development frameworks and to create explicit workload conversion or credit-point schemes that reward both mentors and mentees. Recognising mentoring hours in the *Beban Kerja Dosen* (BKD) rubric would incentivise sustained participation. At the same time, small competitive research-writing grants could further motivate lecturers to complete manuscripts and cover article-processing charges for open-access journals. Long-term sustainability also depends on strategic partnerships beyond the institution (Getahun et al., 2021). Collaborative networks of this nature expand mentees' academic visibility and provide insiders' perspectives on editorial expectations, an advantage that anecdotal mentoring alone cannot readily supply.

Digital infrastructure should be leveraged to widen reach and reduce logistical barriers. Developing a cloud-based mentoring portal that integrates asynchronous discussion forums, version-controlled manuscript repositories, and plagiarism-checking tools will enable geographically dispersed lecturers to participate without extensive travel costs. Incorporating AI-assisted language and style checkers, such as GPT-powered writing aids, can further streamline the revision process (Olivier & Burton, 2020), allowing mentors to focus on higher-order issues of argumentation and methodological rigour.

Program evaluation must evolve in tandem with scale-up efforts. Institutions should adopt a mixed-methods monitoring framework that tracks not only quantitative outputs, such as submission and acceptance counts, but also

qualitative indicators, including shifts in writing self-efficacy, collaborative norms, and institutional research culture (Sukoco et al., 2021). Periodic Delphi panels, involving mentors, mentees, journal editors, and policymakers, can be convened to refine key performance indicators and ensure alignment with national accreditation standards.

Financial resource mobilisation constitutes another essential pillar for expansion. Potential funding streams include the Ministry of Religious Affairs' competitive research grants, corporate social-responsibility programs targeting education, and international capacity-building funds (e.g., Erasmus+ or USAID's Higher Education Initiative). Diversifying funding sources will buffer the program against budget fluctuations and foster a multidimensional support ecosystem encompassing training, technology, and publication subsidies (Hermanu et al., 2024). Regional consortia of PTKIS could adopt a hub-and-spoke model, wherein a well-resourced "mentor hub" institution provides centralised training modules, while surrounding "spoke" campuses focus on localised implementation and contextual adaptation. Such an architecture promotes knowledge diffusion, peer benchmarking, and collective bargaining power when negotiating discounted article-processing charges with publishers.

This community engagement initiative contributes a replicable and scalable model of academic mentoring tailored to the unique challenges faced by under-resourced Islamic higher education institutions. Unlike generic training programs, the Mento-Mentee model developed through this initiative integrates structured diagnostics, culturally responsive mentoring, and sustained peer networks following the program. As a form of service-learning, it offers not only direct benefit to participants but also a strategic template that other PTKIS can adopt to enhance their research outputs and accreditation readiness. Its alignment with national education goals, specifically improving the scientific productivity of Islamic lecturers, positions this model as a reference framework for future faculty development initiatives across Indonesia.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this community service program confirm that a structured Mentor–Mentee model can effectively enhance the scientific writing skills of lecturers in Islamic private higher education institutions. Through intensive mentoring, collaborative writing clinics, and personalised feedback, participants demonstrated measurable improvements in manuscript quality and publication readiness. The outcomes of this program underscore the transformative potential of mentorship-based approaches in closing the publication gap in under-resourced higher education contexts. To strengthen sustainability, universities should seek collaborative partnerships with journal editors, professional associations, and research funders that can provide ongoing guidance and resources to support their efforts. Furthermore, expanding the program through regional consortia would allow the replication of best practices while respecting

local academic ecosystems. From a theoretical standpoint, this program contributes to a deeper understanding of how targeted academic interventions can catalyse not only technical capacity-building but also cultural transformation within educational institutions. Future community service efforts may build upon this model by exploring longitudinal impacts and cross-institutional learning frameworks.

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