

Rhetorical Practices of Imams in Delivering the Friday Khutbah: Challenges and Coping Strategies

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Abstract

This study explored the rhetorical practices of Imams during the delivery of the Friday Khutbah, focusing on the communicative challenges they encounter and the coping strategies they employ in selected Muslim communities in Zamboanga and Tawi-Tawi. Although religious discourse has received increasing scholarly attention, limited qualitative research has examined how Imams prepare for and negotiate the rhetorical demands of khutbah delivery within the Philippine Muslim context. Employing a descriptive qualitative research design, the study involved eight (8) purposively selected Imams who regularly deliver Friday sermons. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that the rhetorical practices of Imams are shaped by three major challenges: congregational expectations, theological responsibility in communicating Islamic teachings, and the need for linguistic precision during sermon delivery. These challenges influenced the participants' emotional readiness, cognitive organization, and physical composure while delivering the khutbah. To sustain effective religious communication, the Imams employed integrated preparation strategies that included spiritual grounding through *du'a* and *dhikr*, cognitive preparation through reflection, visualization, and message internalization, and behavioral preparation through rehearsal, content mastery, controlled breathing, and deliberate pacing. The study concludes that effective khutbah delivery is sustained through the integration of spiritual commitment, theological understanding, and communicative competence.

Keywords: rhetorical practices, Friday Khutbah, Islamic communication, Imams, religious discourse, spiritual leadership

1. Introduction

The Friday khutbah is one of the most significant forms of religious communication in Islam, serving not only as a weekly sermon but also as a medium through which Imams guide, educate, and influence their congregations. Unlike ordinary public speaking, the khutbah requires the integration of theological knowledge, rhetorical competence, linguistic precision, and ethical responsibility within a highly structured religious discourse. Although public speaking has long been examined as a communicative phenomenon, real-world speaking situations continue to demand greater communicative competence and impose more complex psychological and rhetorical demands than controlled or simulated speaking environments (Zuardi, de Souza Crippa, Cecilio Hallak,

& Gorayeb, 2013). Within the context of the Friday khutbah, these demands extend beyond effective speech delivery to include the accurate transmission of Islamic teachings and the faithful representation of religious values.

Studies on rhetorical performance and communication have further demonstrated that effective public discourse relies not only on knowledge but also on deliberate preparation and communicative strategies. Techniques such as vocal and bodily training, breathwork, rehearsal, and embodied or gesture-based practices have been shown to enhance delivery, confidence, and overall communicative effectiveness among speakers and performers (Merritt, 2001; Garcia-Monge, 2023). These findings suggest that rhetorical competence is developed through intentional preparation and adaptive communicative practices. In religious settings, however, these rhetorical demands become more complex because sermon delivery requires speakers to balance persuasive communication with ritual fidelity, doctrinal accuracy, and spiritual responsibility.

The Friday khutbah represents a distinct form of religious discourse characterized by unique rhetorical structures, directive speech acts, and community-oriented messages (Wardoyo, 2016). Unlike secular public addresses, khutbah delivery requires Imams to communicate religious principles with clarity, eloquence, and theological precision while remaining faithful to Islamic teachings. The effectiveness of the khutbah therefore depends not only on the content of the sermon but also on the rhetorical practices employed by the Imam in organizing ideas, selecting appropriate language, delivering Qur'anic verses and Hadith accurately, and engaging diverse congregations. Although previous studies have extensively examined the discourse structure and communicative functions of khutbahs, considerably less attention has been devoted to understanding how Imams themselves experience the rhetorical demands of sermon delivery and the strategies they employ to navigate these communicative responsibilities.

Beyond sermon delivery, Imams serve as spiritual leaders, educators, counselors, and community representatives whose communication extends well beyond the mosque. Empirical studies have shown that Imams frequently function as first-line mental health gatekeepers by providing spiritual guidance and psychosocial support despite having limited formal counseling preparation (Ali, Milstein, & Marzuk, 2005). Similarly, Ibrahim and Mojab (2022) documented the significant responsibility assumed by Canadian Imams in supporting the psychosocial well-being of immigrant and refugee Muslim communities. These diverse leadership roles further elevate the importance of effective religious communication, as the credibility and influence of Imams are often established through their ability to communicate religious teachings accurately, compassionately, and persuasively. Nevertheless, much of the existing literature has concentrated on their pastoral and counseling responsibilities while giving comparatively limited attention to the communicative and rhetorical practices that characterize their leadership during the Friday khutbah.

Research in psychology and religious studies likewise indicates that faith-based practices—including prayer, Qur'anic recitation, remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*), and communal worship—promote emotional regulation, resilience, and psychological well-being (Bano, Akram, Umm E Habiba, & Arshad, 2025). Within the context of khutbah delivery, these religious practices may also function as rhetorical preparation strategies that enable Imams to organize their thoughts, strengthen their confidence, maintain composure, and effectively communicate religious messages before and during sermon delivery. Despite this plausible relationship, empirical evidence remains limited regarding how Imams integrate these spiritual practices into their rhetorical preparation, how they negotiate communicative challenges during sermon delivery, and how these strategies contribute to effective religious discourse.

Taken together, three bodies of literature reveal a significant research gap. First, studies on public speaking emphasize the complex communicative and psychological demands associated with authentic speaking situations (Zuardi et al., 2013; Merritt, 2001; Garcia-Monge, 2023). Second, research on khutbah discourse establishes that Friday sermons constitute a specialized form of religious rhetoric requiring linguistic, rhetorical, and theological competence (Wardoyo, 2016). Third, studies on Imams highlight their extensive spiritual and community leadership responsibilities while providing limited insight into the rhetorical practices they employ in fulfilling these roles (Ali et al., 2005; Ibrahim & Mojab, 2022). Despite these growing bodies of literature, little is known about the rhetorical practices of Imams during the Friday khutbah, particularly the communicative challenges they encounter and the coping strategies they adopt to sustain effective and meaningful religious discourse. This study therefore sought to explore the rhetorical practices of Imams during the Friday khutbah by examining the challenges they experience and the coping strategies they employ in delivering religious sermons within Muslim communities.

2. Literature

2.1. Rhetorical Practices in Public Speaking Contexts

Public speaking has long been recognized as a complex communicative activity that requires speakers to integrate linguistic competence, rhetorical organization, audience awareness, and effective message delivery. Authentic speaking situations demand greater communicative precision and adaptability than simulated speaking environments because speakers must respond to real audiences, immediate feedback, and contextual expectations (Zuardi, de Souza Crippa, Cecilio Hallak, & Gorayeb, 2013). Within communication studies, these authentic contexts demonstrate that effective rhetorical performance extends beyond content knowledge and encompasses the speaker's ability to organize ideas, sustain audience engagement, and deliver messages with confidence and clarity.

Communication scholars likewise recognize that rhetorical performance is shaped by speakers' perceptions of audience evaluation and communicative expectations. McCroskey (1977) described communication apprehension as a condition that influences individuals' willingness and effectiveness in communicating across various social and professional contexts. Similarly, Dwyer and Davidson (2012) emphasized that authentic public-speaking environments require speakers to simultaneously manage message delivery, audience engagement, and communicative performance under demanding circumstances. Gallego and McHugh et al. (2021) further argued that rhetorical performance involves cognitive, behavioral, and physiological dimensions that collectively influence how speakers communicate in live settings. Similarly, a qualitative study on English language teachers employing translanguaging found that effective professional communication requires navigating self-doubt, contextual expectations, and adaptive coping strategies. These findings suggest that rhetorical performance is shaped not only by communicative competence but also by the ability to manage professional responsibilities and contextual demands (Biri et al., 2026). These perspectives collectively suggest that effective public speaking is a multidimensional communicative practice requiring the integration of linguistic competence, rhetorical effectiveness, and adaptive communication strategies.

Studies on communication training further demonstrate that rhetorical competence can be intentionally cultivated through systematic preparation and performance strategies. Merritt (2001) reported that vocal and physical training improved speakers' delivery, confidence, and overall communicative effectiveness. Likewise, García-Monge (2023) found that body-oriented interventions emphasizing posture, breathing, and embodied communication enhanced speakers' presence and delivery during public presentations. These findings indicate that rhetorical effectiveness is developed through deliberate preparation and adaptive communicative practices. Such perspectives are particularly relevant in religious contexts, where speakers are expected not only to communicate persuasively but also to uphold ritual integrity, theological accuracy, and ethical responsibility throughout sermon delivery.

2.2. Imams, Khutbah Delivery, and Religious Communication

Within Islamic communities, the communicative responsibilities of Imams extend far beyond the act of preaching. Ali, Milstein, and Marzuk (2005) found that Imams frequently serve as community counselors and spiritual advisors despite receiving limited formal preparation in mental health and counseling. Similarly, Abu-Ras, Gheith, and Cournos (2008) highlighted the significant contribution of Imams in promoting psychological well-being, emotional resilience, and community guidance. These findings demonstrate that the Friday khutbah represents more than a religious obligation; it serves as an important form of religious communication through which Imams educate, persuade, and provide moral leadership. Consequently, sermon delivery requires the integration of theological knowledge, communicative competence, and rhetorical effectiveness to address the diverse spiritual and social needs of Muslim communities.

The rhetorical demands of khutbah delivery are likewise influenced by the cognitive and linguistic processes involved in effective communication. Eysenck et al. (2007) explained through the Attentional Control Theory that communicative performance is affected by an individual's ability to regulate attention, organize thoughts, and maintain message coherence under demanding speaking conditions. Likewise, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) emphasized that language-related concerns may influence fluency, spontaneous expression, and communicative confidence during oral performance. Within the context of the Friday khutbah, these communicative demands require Imams to organize religious messages coherently, accurately convey Qur'anic verses and Hadith, and maintain rhetorical clarity while addressing their congregations. These communicative processes highlight the intricate relationship among language, rhetoric, and religious leadership during sermon delivery.

Beyond these communicative processes, Imams also encounter distinctive rhetorical demands rooted in the nature of Islamic religious discourse. Wardoyo (2016) examined khutbah discourse and found that directive speech acts, including commands, reminders, and exhortations, constitute the dominant rhetorical features of Friday sermons, reflecting their instructional and persuasive functions. Such findings suggest that khutbah delivery requires not only theological competence but also rhetorical precision, effective audience engagement, and purposeful language use. Examining the rhetorical practices of Imams therefore provides valuable insight into how religious

leaders negotiate the communicative, linguistic, and spiritual demands of sermon delivery while sustaining meaningful religious discourse within their communities.

2.3. Faith-Based Preparation and Rhetorical Competence

Religious and spiritual practices have long been recognized as important resources that support effective communication, emotional regulation, and psychological resilience in demanding speaking contexts. Moulaei et al. (2023) reported that Qur'anic recitation and listening significantly reduced physiological stress and enhanced emotional regulation, suggesting that spiritual engagement contributes to greater composure during communicative tasks. Similarly, Salari et al. (2025) demonstrated that individuals who recited or listened to the Qur'an prior to surgery experienced lower levels of anxiety, reinforcing the calming and restorative effects of faith-based practices. Similarly, Biri et al. (2026) found that Imams relied on *du'a*, *dhikr*, visualization, message internalization, and content mastery to prepare for the Friday khutbah. The study highlighted that these practices strengthened communicative confidence, reinforced spiritual commitment, and supported effective sermon delivery, illustrating that rhetorical preparation in Islamic contexts integrates both faith-based devotion and deliberate communicative practice. Within the context of the Friday khutbah, these findings suggest that practices such as *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), *du'a* (supplication), and *tawakkul* (trust in Allah) may function not only as expressions of devotion but also as preparatory practices that strengthen rhetorical readiness and communicative confidence before sermon delivery.

Methodological investigations have likewise contributed to understanding communicative performance across diverse speaking contexts. Mörtberg et al. (2018) validated the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) as a reliable instrument for assessing communicative experiences in public-speaking situations across cultures. Although the present study adopted a qualitative approach rather than a psychometric framework, such work highlights the multidimensional nature of oral communication by acknowledging the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral factors that shape public discourse. Collectively, these international studies provide valuable foundations for examining how Imams prepare for and negotiate the rhetorical demands of delivering the Friday khutbah through the integration of linguistic competence, spiritual preparation, and communicative practice.

Communication scholars have also emphasized that effective rhetorical performance develops through systematic preparation and strategic communicative practices. Alkhaldi (2023) discussed instructional approaches such as systematic desensitization, cognitive restructuring, and communication skills training that strengthen speakers' effectiveness in demanding oral situations. Likewise, Aripin et al. (2025) demonstrated that thorough preparation, mastery of content, and repeated rehearsal contribute significantly to confident and effective speech delivery. Complementing these findings, Hatzigeorgiadis et al. (2011) identified visualization and positive self-talk as cognitive strategies that improve communicative focus and rhetorical confidence during public performances. These perspectives suggest that Imams likewise employ deliberate cognitive and communicative strategies to organize sermon content, strengthen message delivery, and sustain rhetorical effectiveness while addressing their congregations.

Beyond communication training, religious and psychological scholarship provides additional perspectives for understanding how speakers prepare for demanding communicative responsibilities. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) explained through the Stress and Coping Theory that individuals employ both problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies when responding to challenging situations. Within the context of khutbah delivery, these approaches may be reflected in spiritual preparation through prayer, meditation, reflection, and reliance upon divine guidance, alongside deliberate rhetorical preparation and message organization. Saleh, Ayman, and Basri (2021) similarly demonstrated that faith-based resilience enables Muslim educators to maintain confidence and composure while performing leadership responsibilities. Complementing these perspectives, Madale (2016) emphasized that Islamic traditions in the Philippines continue to shape communicative behavior, leadership practices, and religious responsibilities among Muslim communities, illustrating the close relationship between spirituality, rhetoric, and religious communication.

2.4. Public Speaking and Communicative Performance in the Philippine Context

In the Philippine context, several studies have examined communication apprehension and oral communication performance among students and professionals. Christy et al. (2021) identified communicative challenges experienced by communication students during formal speaking engagements, highlighting the demands associated with effective public discourse. Giray et al. (2022) likewise observed that English majors with lower language proficiency experienced greater communicative difficulty, suggesting that linguistic competence substantially influences oral performance. Ong (2021) further demonstrated that structured communication training improved speakers' competence and confidence in public-speaking situations. Collectively, these studies underscore the importance of communicative preparation, language proficiency, and rhetorical competence in successful oral communication. Although conducted primarily in educational settings, they provide useful

perspectives for understanding the communicative demands encountered by Imams during the delivery of the Friday khutbah.

2.5. Islamic Communication and Cultural Contexts in Mindanao

Although studies specifically examining the rhetorical practices of Imams remain limited in the Philippine context, existing literature provides valuable insight into their communicative and leadership roles. Madale (2016) emphasized that Imams in Mindanao perform dual responsibilities as religious leaders and moral educators, with the Friday khutbah serving as a primary avenue for community instruction and spiritual guidance. Likewise, *Selected Khutba: A Guide to Social Development for Muslim Communities in the Philippines* (Local Governance Support Program in ARMM, n.d.) documented sermon themes promoting moral development, civic responsibility, and social awareness, illustrating that khutbahs function simultaneously as religious discourse and instruments of community development. These works highlight the importance of effective rhetorical practices, demonstrating that an Imam's ability to communicate religious teachings clearly, accurately, and persuasively contributes significantly to religious engagement and social cohesion within Muslim communities.

Faith-centered preparation has likewise been recognized as an essential element of leadership and communication among Filipino Muslims. Alonto (2024) found that Islamic religiousness and gratitude positively contribute to emotional well-being and resilience, while Abdulraof and Guro (2025) advocated for integrating Islamic spirituality into counseling and support practices by recognizing faith as both a therapeutic and motivational resource. These findings suggest that spiritual practices such as prayer, Qur'anic recitation, reflection, and remembrance of Allah may also strengthen the rhetorical preparation of Imams by reinforcing confidence, composure, and purposeful communication during sermon delivery.

Although international scholarship has examined public speaking, religious communication, and faith-based preparation across diverse contexts, qualitative investigations focusing on the rhetorical practices of Imams in the Philippine setting remain limited, particularly within Muslim communities in Zamboanga and Tawi-Tawi. Existing literature has generally explored public-speaking performance, faith-based resilience, and Islamic communication as separate domains, with limited attention given to how these dimensions converge during the delivery of the Friday khutbah. Consequently, this study sought to address this gap by exploring the rhetorical practices of Imams during the Friday khutbah, focusing on the communicative challenges they encounter and the coping strategies they employ within the socio-religious context of Mindanao. In doing so, the study contributes to the growing body of scholarship on religious rhetoric, Islamic communication, and spiritual leadership while extending discussions on rhetorical practice within faith-based settings.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to examine the rhetorical practices, communicative challenges, and coping strategies of Imams during the delivery of the Friday khutbah. The descriptive qualitative approach was appropriate because it sought to present a comprehensive and detailed account of participants' lived experiences while remaining close to their own descriptions of sermon preparation, delivery, and communication. As Sandelowski (2000) explained, descriptive qualitative research aims to provide a rich summary of events in everyday language, allowing findings to reflect participants' perspectives with minimal abstraction. Through this approach, the study captured how Imams described the rhetorical demands of khutbah delivery, the communicative challenges they encountered, and the strategies they employed to sustain effective religious discourse while fulfilling their spiritual responsibilities.

The descriptive qualitative design likewise provided sufficient flexibility to explore multiple dimensions of rhetorical practice through participants' narratives and observations. According to Lambert and Lambert (2012), descriptive qualitative research is particularly appropriate for studies seeking to understand real-world phenomena and present straightforward descriptions of participants' experiences. In the present study, the researcher documented how Imams prepared, organized, delivered, and reflected upon their Friday sermons while negotiating the linguistic, rhetorical, and spiritual demands associated with religious communication. The descriptive nature of the design ensured that the voices and lived experiences of the Imams remained central to the interpretation of the findings.

3.2. Population and Sampling

The study population consisted of ten (10) Imams from selected Muslim communities who regularly delivered the Friday khutbah. The participants were selected because of their active involvement in religious communication and sermon delivery, making them well-positioned to provide rich insights into the rhetorical practices associated with the Friday khutbah. The study employed purposive sampling, a widely accepted qualitative sampling strategy

used to identify individuals possessing firsthand knowledge and extensive experience of the phenomenon under investigation. As Palinkas et al. (2015) explained, purposive sampling enables researchers to select information-rich participants capable of providing detailed and meaningful accounts of the research topic. This sampling strategy ensured that the selected Imams could comprehensively describe the communicative challenges they encountered and the coping strategies they employed during sermon preparation and delivery.

Approximately eight (8) Imams ultimately participated in the study, with the final sample determined through data saturation, wherein no new themes or meaningful information emerged from subsequent interviews. Guest, Namey, and Chen (2020) emphasized that data saturation serves as an important criterion for establishing adequate sample size in qualitative research by ensuring sufficient depth and completeness of the collected data. To ensure the credibility and relevance of the participants' experiences, the following inclusion criteria were established: (1) the participant must be a male Imam actively delivering the Friday khutbah within a mosque in the selected Muslim community; (2) must have at least two years of experience delivering Friday sermons; (3) must have firsthand experience with the communicative and rhetorical demands associated with khutbah delivery; (4) must voluntarily agree to participate by providing informed consent; and (5) must be able to articulate experiences in either English or a local language understood by the researcher. Overall, the use of purposive sampling ensured that the selected participants possessed substantial experience in delivering the Friday khutbah and could provide authentic narratives regarding their rhetorical practices, communicative challenges, and coping strategies within religious discourse.

3.3. Research Locale

The study was conducted in selected Muslim communities in Zamboanga City and Tawi-Tawi, both located in the Mindanao region of the Philippines. These locations were selected because of their strong Islamic presence and the regular observance of the Friday khutbah across various mosques. Zamboanga City, recognized for its cultural and linguistic diversity, served as an urban research setting where Imams frequently addressed large and heterogeneous congregations. In contrast, Tawi-Tawi, regarded as one of the centers of Islamic faith in the Philippines, provided a rural context in which khutbah delivery remained deeply embedded in community life and religious traditions. Conducting the study in these two settings enabled the researcher to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the rhetorical practices of Imams across different communicative, cultural, and congregational contexts.

The selection of these research sites was likewise justified by their historical and cultural significance in the development of Islamic education and religious leadership in southern Philippines. According to Madale (2016), Muslim communities in Mindanao continue to preserve strong religious traditions in which the Imam assumes a central role in promoting faith, moral guidance, and social cohesion. The study captured variations in rhetorical practices influenced by audience composition, cultural expectations, linguistic diversity, and access to religious education and training. These contextual differences contributed to richer data regarding the communicative challenges and coping strategies employed by Imams during the delivery of the Friday khutbah.

3.4. Instrument

The primary instrument employed in this study was a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide. The instrument was designed to elicit detailed narratives regarding the rhetorical practices of Imams, the communicative challenges they encountered, and the coping strategies they employed during the delivery of the Friday khutbah. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions that encouraged participants to describe their preparation, message organization, language use, sermon delivery, and communicative experiences before, during, and after delivering the khutbah. As Kallio et al. (2016) explained, semi-structured interviews provide sufficient flexibility to explore participants' lived experiences while ensuring that the major topics relevant to the research objectives are systematically addressed.

To ensure clarity, relevance, and content validity, the interview guide underwent expert validation by specialists in qualitative research and Islamic studies. Minor revisions were incorporated based on their recommendations to improve the wording, sequence, and clarity of the interview questions. Turner (2010) emphasized that carefully designed interview protocols contribute to consistency, credibility, and reliability while preserving the conversational nature that characterizes qualitative inquiry. Table 1 presents the interview guide utilized in the study.

Table 1. Instrument of the study.

Objectives	Interview questions	Participants
To explore the rhetorical challenges experienced by Friday khutbah Imams during the delivery of the Friday khutbah.	1. What particular aspects of delivering the Friday khutbah do you find most challenging during sermon preparation or delivery? How do these communicative or rhetorical challenges influence your sermon delivery before or during the khutbah?	
To examine the personal, spiritual, and communicative coping strategies employed by the Friday khutbah Imams to sustain effective khutbah delivery.	1. What personal or spiritual practices do you engage in to prepare yourself before delivering Khutbahs? How do you prepare yourself mentally and communicatively to deliver the khutbah effectively despite the challenges you encounter?	Imams delivering Khutbahs in Muslim Communities

3.5. Data Gathering Procedure

The data for this study were gathered through individual semi-structured interviews with selected Imams who satisfied the established inclusion criteria. Prior to data collection, formal permission was secured from the appropriate religious authorities and mosque administrators. Each participant was informed of the objectives, procedures, and ethical considerations of the study before voluntarily signing an informed consent form. The interviews were conducted in quiet and comfortable settings to ensure privacy, minimize distractions, and encourage participants to openly discuss their experiences. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasized that establishing a safe and trusting interview environment enables participants to share authentic and meaningful accounts of their lived experiences.

Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was conducted in either English or a local language familiar to the participants. With the participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded to facilitate accurate transcription and subsequent analysis. Field notes were likewise maintained to capture nonverbal behaviors, vocal expressions, contextual observations, and other communicative cues that complemented the interview data. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved, wherein no new themes or substantial information emerged from succeeding interviews (Guest, Namey, & Chen, 2020). All audio recordings, transcripts, and field notes were securely stored in password-protected files and were utilized solely for academic and research purposes.

3.6. Data Analysis

The data gathered from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes that reflected the rhetorical practices, communicative challenges, and coping strategies of Imams during the delivery of the Friday khutbah. The analysis began with the verbatim transcription of all audio-recorded interviews, followed by repeated readings of the transcripts to achieve familiarity with the data. Meaningful statements were subsequently coded and organized into broader categories that represented the central ideas emerging from the participants' narratives. Braun and Clarke (2006) explained that thematic analysis provides a systematic yet flexible approach to organizing qualitative data by identifying recurring patterns and underlying meanings that accurately represent participants' lived experiences.

Throughout the analytical process, the researcher ensured the credibility and accuracy of the findings by continuously comparing codes, categories, and emerging themes with the participants' original narratives. Reflective memos and analytic notes were maintained to document coding decisions, theme development, and interpretive reflections throughout the analysis. To further strengthen the trustworthiness of the study, peer debriefing and member checking were conducted, allowing selected participants to review the interview transcripts and verify the accuracy of the interpreted themes. As Nowell et al. (2017) emphasized, maintaining transparency, consistency, and reflexivity throughout thematic analysis contributes to the credibility, dependability, and trustworthiness of qualitative research findings.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to established ethical principles governing qualitative research to safeguard the dignity, rights, and well-being of all participants. Prior to data collection, formal permission to conduct the interviews was

obtained from mosque administrators and the appropriate religious authorities. Each participant received an informed consent form that clearly explained the purpose of the study, research procedures, potential risks and benefits, measures for maintaining confidentiality, and participants' rights, including voluntary participation and the freedom to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. According to Orb, Eisenhauer, and Wynaden (2001), informed consent is fundamental in ensuring that participants make voluntary and well-informed decisions regarding their involvement in research.

Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Participants' identities were protected through the use of codes and pseudonyms, while all interview recordings, transcripts, field notes, and research documents were securely stored in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher. Given the religious nature of the investigation, the researcher exercised cultural sensitivity, respect, and professional integrity throughout the interview process to ensure that participants' beliefs, traditions, and religious responsibilities were appropriately acknowledged and respected. As Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasized, ethical qualitative research requires researchers to uphold transparency, trust, respect, and integrity while protecting participants' welfare throughout the entire research process.

4. Results

Research Objective 1. To explore the rhetorical challenges experienced by Imams during the delivery of the Friday Khutbah.

Through careful analysis of the interview transcripts, three major themes emerged from the participants' narratives. These themes illustrate that the rhetorical practices of Imams are shaped by a convergence of congregational expectations, doctrinal accuracy, and linguistic demands associated with religious discourse. Rather than representing isolated communication concerns, these challenges reflect the multifaceted responsibilities that Imams negotiate while delivering the Friday khutbah. Each theme demonstrates how rhetorical practice within Islamic sermon delivery extends beyond effective speech to encompass religious leadership, doctrinal responsibility, and meaningful engagement with the congregation.

Question No. 1. What particular aspects of delivering the Friday Khutbah do you find most challenging during sermon preparation or delivery?

Through careful analysis of the interview transcripts, three major themes emerged from the participants' narratives. These themes illustrate that the rhetorical practices of Imams are shaped by a convergence of congregational expectations, spiritual accountability, and linguistic demands associated with religious discourse. Rather than representing isolated communication concerns, these challenges reflect the multifaceted responsibilities that Imams negotiate while delivering the Friday khutbah. Each theme demonstrates how rhetorical practice within Islamic sermon delivery extends beyond effective speech to encompass religious leadership, doctrinal responsibility, and meaningful engagement with the congregation.

Theme 1. Congregational Expectations

One of the most prominent challenges described by the Imams was meeting the expectations of the congregation during khutbah delivery. The Friday khutbah is regarded as a sacred act of guidance, and members of the congregation closely observe the Imam's ability to deliver a coherent, inspiring, and doctrinally accurate sermon. Participants explained that the awareness of being evaluated by scholars, elders, and younger members of the congregation heightened their sense of responsibility and influenced how they organized and delivered their sermons.

"When I stand before the congregation, I feel hundreds of eyes watching me, not just to listen but to judge. Some expect me to quote verses perfectly, others wait for practical lessons. I start thinking—what if I forget something important or mispronounce an Arabic term? The pressure builds even before I climb the pulpit."

These experiences demonstrate that rhetorical practice within the Friday khutbah is strongly influenced by audience expectations and communicative accountability. McCroskey's (1977) concept of communication apprehension explains how perceived audience evaluation shapes communicative performance. Within the religious setting, however, audience expectations extend beyond speech effectiveness to include doctrinal accuracy, moral credibility, and the faithful communication of Islamic teachings. Consequently, the rhetorical practices of Imams are continually shaped by their responsibility to communicate with clarity, authority, and spiritual integrity.

Theme 2. Doctrinal Accuracy

Another recurring challenge emerged is communicating Islamic Teachings with doctrinal accuracy associated with delivering the Friday khutbah. Participants emphasized that their greatest concern was not merely speaking before an audience but accurately communicating Qur'anic teachings and Hadith while fulfilling their religious

obligation. They regarded sermon delivery as a sacred trust in which every statement carried theological significance and moral consequence.

"Every time I deliver the Khutbah, I ask myself—am I worthy to speak on behalf of Islam today? What if I interpret something wrong? The fear of saying something that contradicts the teaching of our Prophet makes my heart beat faster. It's not stage fright; it's a fear of being accountable before Allah for my words."

This narrative illustrates that the rhetorical practices of Imams are deeply embedded in spiritual accountability rather than merely communicative performance. The challenge lies not only in delivering an effective sermon but also in faithfully transmitting Islamic teachings with theological precision and moral responsibility. Similar observations were reported by Ali, Milstein, and Marzuk (2005), who emphasized that Imams carry significant pastoral and doctrinal responsibilities within their communities. Consequently, rhetorical practice during the Friday khutbah becomes an expression of religious stewardship in which effective communication is inseparable from spiritual leadership and accountability.

Theme 3. Linguistic Precision in Qur'anic and Sermon Delivery

A third theme that emerged was the linguistic precision encountered by Imams, particularly in the use of Arabic and classical Islamic expressions during sermon delivery. Many participants described the demands of accurate pronunciation, fluency, and effective rhetorical delivery, especially when addressing congregations that included individuals with formal Islamic education. These linguistic concerns often influenced their confidence and concentration, making the accurate communication of religious messages a significant aspect of their rhetorical practice.

"Sometimes I prepare my sermon days before, but when the time comes, my tongue stiffens. Arabic is not my first language, so when I recite verses, I fear mispronouncing them. Some members of the congregation are hafiz or scholars, and I imagine them silently correcting me. That thought alone makes me lose focus on my message."

This narrative reflects the complex relationship between language competence and rhetorical performance during the Friday khutbah. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) observed that language-related apprehension frequently influences communicative confidence, particularly in multilingual settings where speakers navigate multiple linguistic systems simultaneously. For Imams in Mindanao—where Arabic is delivered alongside local languages such as Tausug, Sama, and Chavacano—the responsibility of shifting between sacred and vernacular languages introduces additional rhetorical and communicative demands. Consequently, effective khutbah delivery requires not only theological knowledge but also linguistic competence, rhetorical precision, and the ability to communicate religious teachings accurately across diverse linguistic contexts.

The findings demonstrate that the rhetorical practices of Imams are shaped by the intersection of congregational expectations, spiritual responsibility, and linguistic competence. Unlike conventional public-speaking situations, the Friday khutbah requires Imams to balance effective communication with doctrinal accuracy, religious leadership, and spiritual accountability. The communicative challenges described by the participants—including maintaining composure, organizing ideas, selecting appropriate language, and accurately conveying Qur'anic verses and Hadith—illustrate that rhetorical practice in Islamic sermon delivery extends beyond persuasive speech to encompass the faithful transmission of religious knowledge and moral guidance. These findings underscore that effective khutbah delivery is fundamentally a rhetorical and spiritual undertaking in which language, leadership, and religious responsibility converge in serving both Allah and the Muslim community.

Question No. 2. How do the communicative and rhetorical challenges of delivering the Friday Khutbah influence your emotional, cognitive, and physical preparedness?

Analysis of the participants' narratives revealed three interconnected dimensions that shaped their rhetorical practices during the Friday khutbah: (1) Emotional Readiness and Spiritual Self-Evaluation, (2) Cognitive Demands of Theological and Linguistic Accuracy, and (3) Physiological Responses During Sermon Delivery. Rather than functioning as isolated reactions, these dimensions illustrate how emotional regulation, cognitive preparation, and physical composure collectively influence the effective delivery of religious discourse. The findings demonstrate that rhetorical practice among Imams extends beyond speech performance, requiring continuous regulation of emotions, thought processes, and physical presence while communicating Islamic teachings.

Theme 1. Emotional Readiness and Spiritual Self-Evaluation

Participants consistently described the period preceding the Friday khutbah as a time of emotional preparation characterized by self-reflection, spiritual evaluation, and personal accountability. Rather than simply experiencing nervousness, the Imams questioned their readiness to fulfill the responsibility of conveying Allah's message faithfully and meaningfully to the congregation. Many reflected on whether their sermon would inspire listeners, whether they possessed sufficient religious knowledge, and whether they were spiritually worthy of occupying

the pulpit. These internal evaluations became an integral component of their rhetorical preparation, shaping both their confidence and sense of responsibility before sermon delivery.

“Before the Khutbah, my heart feels heavy, and I start questioning myself—‘Will my message touch them? Am I worthy to speak on Allah’s words today?’ Sometimes I even feel guilt for not being as knowledgeable as others. It’s not just nervousness; it’s emotional exhaustion that starts even before I reach the mosque.”

These experiences reflect that emotional readiness among Imams is closely intertwined with spiritual accountability and leadership responsibility. Dwyer and Davidson (2012) observed that authentic public-speaking situations often involve anticipatory emotional demands, while Ali, Milstein, and Marzuk (2005) emphasized that Imams occupy leadership positions carrying significant pastoral and religious responsibilities. Within the context of the Friday khutbah, emotional preparation therefore becomes an essential rhetorical process through which Imams evaluate their readiness to communicate Islamic teachings with sincerity, conviction, and spiritual integrity.

Theme 2. Cognitive Demands of Theological and Linguistic Accuracy

Participants likewise emphasized the substantial cognitive demands involved in preparing and delivering the Friday khutbah. Many described continuously monitoring the accuracy of Qur’anic verses, Arabic terminology, Hadith citations, and theological explanations while simultaneously organizing the overall structure of the sermon. They explained that maintaining doctrinal accuracy, linguistic precision, and logical flow required sustained concentration throughout the sermon, particularly when addressing congregations that included knowledgeable scholars and hafiz.

“Sometimes my mind goes blank while delivering the sermon. I have my notes in my head, but suddenly they vanish. I think of whether I’m using the right Arabic phrase or quoting the verse correctly. The more I think about avoiding mistakes, the more my mind gets clouded.”

These accounts demonstrate that effective khutbah delivery requires the simultaneous management of multiple communicative demands. Eysenck et al. (2007) explained that demanding speaking situations place considerable pressure on attentional control and working memory, while Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) highlighted the influence of language-related concerns on communicative performance. For the participating Imams, cognitive preparation extended beyond remembering sermon content to ensuring that every Qur’anic citation, Arabic expression, and theological explanation was communicated accurately and coherently. Consequently, rhetorical practice during the khutbah depends heavily on sustained cognitive organization, doctrinal precision, and linguistic competence.

Theme 3. Physical Composure During Religious Discourse

Participants also described the importance of maintaining physical composure throughout khutbah delivery. Many acknowledged experiencing trembling hands, changes in vocal stability, increased heart rate, dry throat, and controlled breathing, particularly during the opening moments of the sermon. Rather than viewing these responses solely as signs of nervousness, participants regarded them as bodily reactions to the solemn responsibility of standing before the congregation as representatives of Islamic teachings. Maintaining composure therefore became an important aspect of their rhetorical practice, enabling them to communicate with confidence, clarity, and authority despite the physical demands of sermon delivery.

“When I hold the microphone, my hands sometimes shake. My voice quivers in the first few minutes. I feel my heartbeat pounding, and I keep taking deep breaths to calm myself. Once I see that the congregation is listening silently, I start to regain control, but those first moments are always the hardest.”

Previous studies likewise recognize that authentic speaking situations produce measurable physiological responses during oral performance. Zuardi et al. (2013) reported that real public-speaking situations elicit stronger physiological reactions than simulated speaking tasks, while Mörtberg et al. (2018) noted that physiological responses frequently accompany cognitively demanding communicative situations. Within the context of the Friday khutbah, however, these physical responses also reflect the gravity of delivering religious discourse, where effective rhetorical performance requires composure, presence, and reverence while communicating sacred teachings.

The findings indicate that the rhetorical practices of Imams are influenced by three interrelated dimensions: emotional readiness rooted in spiritual self-evaluation, cognitive demands associated with theological and linguistic accuracy, and physical composure maintained during sermon delivery. These dimensions collectively shape how Imams prepare for, organize, and deliver the Friday khutbah while fulfilling their responsibilities as religious communicators. Rather than representing isolated reactions to public speaking, these experiences demonstrate that effective khutbah delivery requires the integration of spiritual leadership, doctrinal precision, rhetorical competence, and communicative discipline. Collectively, the findings position the Friday khutbah as a

form of religious discourse in which emotional regulation, cognitive preparedness, and physical composure function as essential components of effective rhetorical practice.

Research Objective 2. To examine the personal, spiritual, and communicative coping strategies employed by Imams to sustain effective khutbah delivery.

Question No. 1. What personal or spiritual practices do you engage in to prepare yourself before delivering the Friday Khutbah?

Analysis of the participants' narratives revealed that preparation for the Friday khutbah extends beyond sermon writing and memorization. The Imams described a holistic process of rhetorical preparation that integrates spiritual devotion, cognitive organization, and deliberate behavioral routines to ensure that they communicate Islamic teachings with clarity, composure, and sincerity. Three major themes emerged: (1) Spiritual Grounding through Dhikr and Du'a, (2) Cognitive Preparation through Reflection and Message Internalization, and (3) Behavioral Preparation for Effective Khutbah Delivery. Collectively, these themes demonstrate that rhetorical practice among Imams is sustained through the integration of faith, disciplined preparation, and purposeful communication.

Theme 1. Spiritual Grounding Through Dhikr and Du'a

Participants consistently identified spiritual preparation as the foundation of their rhetorical practice before delivering the Friday khutbah. Rather than immediately rehearsing their sermons, they intentionally engaged in dhikr (remembrance of Allah), du'a (supplication), Qur'anic recitation, and moments of personal reflection to cultivate inner calmness and spiritual focus. These practices enabled them to redirect their attention away from personal concerns and toward their responsibility of conveying Allah's message faithfully. For many participants, spiritual grounding established the appropriate mindset from which effective sermon delivery could begin.

"Before the Khutbah, I isolate myself for a few minutes. I recite dhikr, asking Allah for calmness and wisdom. When I say, 'Bismillah,' I feel the burden ease a little. I remind myself that I am only an instrument, and the message belongs to Allah, not me."

These experiences highlight that spiritual preparation functions as both devotional practice and rhetorical preparation. Moulai et al. (2023) demonstrated that Qur'anic recitation contributes to emotional regulation and reduced stress, while Abu-Ras, Gheith, and Cournos (2008) emphasized that Imams frequently rely upon spiritual practices to strengthen their effectiveness in fulfilling community responsibilities. Within the context of the Friday khutbah, dhikr and du'a therefore serve not merely as coping mechanisms but as foundational practices that cultivate humility, spiritual dependence, and communicative readiness before sermon delivery.

Theme 2. Cognitive Preparation Through Reflection and Message Internalization

Participants likewise emphasized the importance of mentally preparing themselves before ascending the pulpit. This preparation involved reviewing sermon outlines, reflecting on the intended moral message, organizing the logical flow of ideas, and reminding themselves that sincerity outweighed rhetorical perfection. Rather than focusing exclusively on eloquence, the Imams concentrated on ensuring that the message accurately reflected Islamic teachings and would meaningfully reach the congregation. Such reflective preparation enabled them to strengthen their confidence while maintaining focus on the spiritual purpose of the khutbah.

"I used to feel nervous because I wanted to impress people with my words. But now, I tell myself that sincerity is more important than eloquence. I review my topic and pray that it will touch hearts. When I think that way, the anxiety becomes smaller—it turns into motivation."

These narratives demonstrate that cognitive preparation extends beyond memorization toward the internalization of religious messages. García-Monge (2023) reported that reflective preparation strengthens communicative confidence through increased self-awareness, while Lazarus and Folkman (1984) explained that cognitive appraisal enables individuals to reinterpret demanding situations in constructive ways. Among the participating Imams, reflection functioned as a process of aligning sermon content, spiritual intention, and rhetorical purpose, thereby reinforcing both confidence and communicative effectiveness during khutbah delivery.

Theme 3. Behavioral Preparation for Effective Khutbah Delivery

Participants also described a variety of deliberate behavioral routines that prepared them physically and mentally before delivering the Friday khutbah. These routines included arriving at the mosque well before the sermon, observing the congregation, reviewing Qur'anic verses, practicing controlled breathing, maintaining proper posture, and quietly rehearsing portions of the sermon. Such preparatory behaviors enabled the Imams to establish familiarity with the environment, regulate their physical composure, and transition gradually into their role as religious communicators.

"I come early and sit inside the mosque to feel its atmosphere. I breathe slowly and review the flow of my message in my mind. When I finally climb the pulpit, I already feel that I belong to the moment. The nervousness is still there, but it no longer controls me."

These behavioral practices illustrate that effective khutbah delivery is supported by intentional preparation that extends beyond sermon content alone. Merritt (2001) found that structured physical preparation, including breath control and posture, contributes to more effective oral performance, while Dwyer and Davidson (2012) observed that behavioral rehearsal enhances speakers' sense of preparedness and communicative control. For the participating Imams, these routines fostered confidence, strengthened physical composure, and facilitated a smoother transition from preparation to sermon delivery, thereby supporting effective rhetorical performance during the Friday khutbah.

The findings demonstrate that the rhetorical practices of Imams are sustained through an integrated process of spiritual grounding, cognitive preparation, and behavioral readiness. Spiritual practices such as dhikr, du'a, and Qur'anic recitation cultivate humility and dependence upon Allah before sermon delivery. Reflection and message internalization enable Imams to organize theological content while reinforcing sincerity and communicative purpose. Meanwhile, structured behavioral routines establish physical composure and readiness for public religious discourse. Collectively, these preparation strategies illustrate that effective khutbah delivery is not solely dependent upon rhetorical skill but emerges from the harmonious integration of faith, disciplined preparation, and communicative competence. Rather than serving merely as techniques for overcoming anxiety, these practices constitute essential components of the rhetorical preparation through which Imams faithfully communicate Islamic teachings to their congregations.

Question No. 2. How do you mentally prepare yourself to deliver the Friday Khutbah effectively?

The participants described mental preparation as an indispensable component of their rhetorical practice before delivering the Friday khutbah. Rather than relying solely on memorization or spontaneous speaking, the Imams deliberately engaged in cognitive and spiritual preparation that enabled them to communicate Islamic teachings with confidence, clarity, and sincerity. Their narratives revealed that effective sermon delivery begins long before ascending the pulpit, involving intentional reflection, mental rehearsal, and mastery of religious content. Three themes emerged from the data: (1) Reaffirming Divine Purpose in Sermon Delivery, (2) Mental Rehearsal Through Visualization and Positive Self-Talk, and (3) Internalizing Religious Knowledge for Confident Communication. Collectively, these themes illustrate how mental preparation strengthens rhetorical competence while reinforcing the spiritual responsibilities of religious leadership.

Theme 1. Reaffirming Divine Purpose in Sermon Delivery

Participants consistently explained that their primary form of mental preparation involved reaffirming the spiritual purpose of the Friday khutbah. Rather than approaching the sermon as a public performance, they intentionally reminded themselves that they were entrusted with communicating Allah's message to the congregation. This perspective redirected their attention away from personal concerns and toward their responsibility as religious leaders, allowing them to approach sermon delivery with greater humility, conviction, and clarity of purpose.

"Before I face the congregation, I tell myself that this Khutbah is not about me—it is about Allah's words. When I remember that I am only His servant delivering a message, the fear becomes lighter. I feel more at peace knowing that I am fulfilling a duty, not trying to impress people."

These narratives demonstrate that reaffirming divine purpose serves as a cognitive and spiritual foundation for rhetorical preparation. Abu-Ras, Gheith, and Cournos (2008) emphasized that religious leaders frequently draw upon their spiritual mission to sustain their effectiveness in fulfilling community responsibilities. Likewise, Saleh et al. (2021) found that faith-centered purpose strengthens emotional regulation and leadership resilience among Muslim educators. Within the context of the Friday khutbah, reaffirming divine purpose enables Imams to communicate with authenticity by placing religious responsibility above personal performance.

Theme 2. Mental Rehearsal Through Visualization and Positive Self-Talk

Participants likewise described visualization and positive self-talk as important components of their mental preparation. Prior to delivering the khutbah, many mentally rehearsed the sequence of the sermon, imagined themselves communicating confidently, and visualized the congregation attentively receiving the message. They also engaged in positive internal dialogue that reinforced preparedness and reminded them of Allah's guidance throughout the sermon. These strategies enabled them to organize their thoughts, strengthen communicative confidence, and approach the pulpit with greater composure.

"I picture the people listening quietly, nodding, learning. I say to myself, 'You've studied, you're ready, Allah is with you.' I imagine the flow of my speech until it feels natural. When I finally stand before them, it's like I've already done it before."

These findings illustrate that mental rehearsal contributes directly to effective rhetorical performance. Hatzigeorgiadis et al. (2011) demonstrated that visualization enhances confidence by mentally preparing speakers for challenging communication situations. Similarly, Alkhalidi et al. (2023) explained that positive self-talk promotes constructive thinking and encourages speakers to approach communication as an opportunity rather than a threat. For the participating Imams, these strategies supported a disciplined mental rehearsal process that integrated communicative preparation with spiritual reliance.

Theme 3. Internalizing Religious Knowledge for Confident Communication

Participants further emphasized that confidence in delivering the Friday khutbah depended largely on thoroughly understanding the religious content of the sermon. Rather than memorizing individual lines, they intentionally studied the meanings of Qur'anic verses, Hadith, and supporting explanations until they could communicate them naturally and accurately. This process of internalization enabled them to adapt their delivery when necessary while preserving theological accuracy and rhetorical coherence throughout the sermon.

“When I truly understand what I am preaching, the fear lessens. I study the meaning of each verse, and I reflect on it until I feel it in my heart. That way, even if I forget a line, I can still speak from understanding. Knowledge gives me calmness.”

These narratives indicate that rhetorical confidence is grounded in deep intellectual engagement with religious knowledge rather than reliance on memorization alone. Aripin et al. (2025) identified subject mastery as a significant contributor to effective oral communication, while Merritt (2001) noted that familiarity with speech content strengthens delivery by reducing uncertainty during public presentations. Among the participating Imams, mastery of religious knowledge allowed them to communicate with greater flexibility, authenticity, and theological precision, thereby strengthening both the substance and delivery of the Friday khutbah.

The findings demonstrate that the mental preparation of Imams is anchored in three complementary processes: reaffirming divine purpose, mentally rehearsing sermon delivery, and internalizing religious knowledge. These strategies collectively strengthen rhetorical practice by enabling Imams to approach the Friday khutbah with spiritual conviction, cognitive organization, and communicative confidence. Rather than relying solely on technical speaking skills, participants emphasized that effective sermon delivery emerges from the integration of faith, disciplined mental preparation, and deep understanding of Islamic teachings. Consequently, rhetorical competence during the Friday khutbah is sustained through a holistic preparation process that aligns spiritual commitment, intellectual mastery, and purposeful religious communication.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the rhetorical practices of Imams during the delivery of the Friday khutbah through a descriptive qualitative approach. The findings revealed that the rhetorical practices of Imams are shaped by the convergence of congregational expectations, theological responsibility, and linguistic precision, all of which define the unique communicative demands of religious leadership. The study identified three major rhetorical challenges: responding to congregational expectations, ensuring theological accuracy in sermon delivery, and maintaining linguistic precision while communicating Qur'anic teachings and Hadith. These challenges influenced the emotional readiness, cognitive organization, and physical composure of the Imams, demonstrating that effective khutbah delivery requires the integration of spiritual commitment, communicative competence, and disciplined rhetorical preparation. Rather than functioning solely as barriers to communication, these challenges reflected the profound responsibility of faithfully conveying Islamic teachings while leading the congregation in worship and moral guidance.

The findings likewise demonstrated that effective rhetorical practice is sustained through a holistic process of spiritual grounding, cognitive preparation, and behavioral readiness. Spiritual practices such as *du'a*, *dhikr*, Qur'anic recitation, and reliance upon Allah established the spiritual foundation from which sermon delivery emerged. Cognitive preparation through reflection, visualization, message internalization, and reaffirmation of divine purpose enabled the Imams to organize theological content with clarity and confidence. Behavioral practices—including early arrival at the mosque, rehearsal, controlled breathing, and deliberate pacing—further strengthened their composure and communicative effectiveness during the khutbah. Collectively, these preparation strategies illustrate that successful sermon delivery extends beyond rhetorical skill alone, emerging from the harmonious integration of faith, theological understanding, and disciplined communicative practice.

Beyond its empirical contributions, this study addressed an important gap in the literature by shifting attention from public-speaking anxiety toward the rhetorical practices of Imams within Islamic religious discourse. While previous studies have extensively examined public speaking in educational, organizational, and psychological settings, comparatively little research has explored how Imams prepare for and negotiate the communicative demands of delivering the Friday khutbah, particularly within the Philippine Muslim context. By documenting

the lived experiences of Imams in Zamboanga and Tawi-Tawi, the study contributes a culturally grounded understanding of religious rhetoric, Islamic communication, and spiritual leadership. The findings further demonstrate that spiritual practices function not only as expressions of religious devotion but also as integral components of rhetorical preparation that strengthen communicative effectiveness and religious leadership. Consequently, the study expands current scholarship on religious discourse while providing an empirical foundation for future leadership formation, imam development programs, and communication training initiatives that integrate rhetorical competence with Islamic spirituality.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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