EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION BRIDGE BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY: PUBLIC RELATIONS OF THE AL IHSAN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL, PASER REGENCY

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Abstract:

Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School faces the challenge of bridging the strong Islamic boarding school tradition with religious values and the needs of modernity in the digital era. As the spearhead of communication, Public Relations has a strategic role in creating synergy between tradition and modernity through an effective communication approach. This research aims to analyze the Public Relations strategy of the Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School in building a communication bridge between these two dimensions. The method used is qualitative research with interview techniques, observation and documentation. The research results show that Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School Public Relations implements strategies based on traditional values, such as honesty, trustworthiness and friendship, combined with modern communication technology, such as social media and websites. This collaboration produces communication that is relevant to modern society without losing the Islamic boarding school's identity. The conclusion of this research confirms that an effective communication bridge between tradition and modernity can be realized through innovation based on Islamic boarding school values, thereby strengthening the image of Islamic boarding schools in the eyes of the public.

Keywords: *Effective Communication, Tradition, Modernity, Public Relations, Islamic Boarding School*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools as traditional Islamic educational institutions have a strategic role in maintaining and transmitting religious values and local culture (Sadali, 2020). However, the development of the digital era and modernity brings new challenges that require Islamic boarding schools to adapt to the needs of the times without abandoning their traditional roots. This is where the important role of Public Relations (Public Relations) is as a communication mediator that bridges the traditional values of Islamic boarding schools and the demands of modernity (Andriani, 2024).

Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School Public Relations, as the front guard in building the image of the institution, not only functions as a transmitter of information, but also as a facilitator of dialogue between Islamic boarding school traditions and modern society (Fatika, 2022). In an increasingly digitally connected world, Public Relations needs to manage communications effectively by utilizing modern technology, such as social media and digital platforms, while still upholding Islamic boarding school values, such as honesty, trustworthiness and ukhuwah.

However, creating an effective communication bridge is not easy. This requires a strategy that is able to harmonize two seemingly contradictory entities: tradition which is synonymous with conservatism and modernity which tends to be progressive

(Anggraini, 2022). Therefore, this research is important to explore how Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School's public relations communication strategy can be a model in building synergy between tradition and modernity, as well as its impact on strengthening the image of Islamic boarding schools in the eyes of the public.

It is hoped that this research can contribute both practically and theoretically to the management of Islamic boarding school communication in the modern era, as well as being a guide for other Islamic boarding schools in facing similar challenges.

Islamic boarding schools are one of the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia which function as centers for learning religious knowledge and moral development (Nikmah & Yusnita, 2020). The existence of Islamic boarding schools is not only a guardian of Islamic traditions, but also a guardian of unique local cultural values. However, as time goes by, Islamic boarding schools are faced with various modern challenges, including the need to adapt to technological developments, social changes, and the dynamic expectations of modern society. In this context, the need arises to bridge the Islamic boarding school tradition which is full of conservative values with modernity which is synonymous with openness, technology and efficiency.

Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School is one of the Islamic boarding schools that is committed to maintaining Islamic traditions while responding to the challenges of modernity. As an institution that interacts with various levels of society, Pondok Pesantren Al Ihsan realizes the importance of effective communication to build a positive image, maintain relationships with the public, and strengthen its role in modern society. In this case, Public Relations (Public Relations) plays a strategic role as the main liaison between Islamic boarding schools and the wider community, both through conventional media and digital media. The role of kiai is no less important in this case because kiai are people who have an influence in building character with exemplary (uswah) (Muali et al., 2021). Kiai leadership and communication are important factors in maintaining the existence of Islamic boarding schools in society (Muadin & Zamroni, 2020). Islamic boarding schools that are large and managed by the community in mutual cooperation are expected to have high levels of independence. Therefore, kiai's communication skills are very important, because as leaders, kiai need to have these skills so that the community can be actively involved in supporting the continuity of the Islamic boarding school.

Public Relations of the Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School has a big responsibility to combine two dimensions that are often considered contradictory, namely tradition and modernity. On the one hand, Islamic boarding schools must maintain core values such as ukhuwah Islamiyah, trust, and honesty. On the other hand, Islamic boarding schools need to utilize information and communication technology to answer the needs of modern society, such as the use of social media, official websites, and digital-based applications to convey information quickly and relevantly.

However, building a communication bridge between tradition and modernity is not a simple task. This involves adjusting strategies, creative approaches and innovations that remain based on Islamic boarding school values. Inappropriate communication strategies can give rise to wrong perceptions of Islamic boarding schools, both among traditional and modern communities. Therefore, it is important to identify the strategies used by Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School Public Relations in building synergy between tradition and modernity, as well as evaluating the impact on the image of the Islamic boarding school in the eyes of the community.

This research aims to analyze the role of Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School Public Relations in bridging tradition and modernity through effective communication. The focus of this research includes the strategies implemented, the obstacles faced, and their impact on strengthening the image of Islamic boarding schools. Thus, it is hoped that this research can contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of communication strategies for Islamic boarding school institutions, so that Islamic boarding schools can remain relevant in the midst of changing times without losing their traditional identity.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach to explore the Public Relations strategy of the Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School in building effective communication between tradition and modernity. A qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on in-depth understanding of social phenomena and human interactions in cultural and organizational contexts (Handoko et al., 2024). The following are details of the research methodology used:

Type of Research; This research is a qualitative descriptive research. The aim is to describe in depth the communication strategy implemented by the Public Relations of the Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School, the obstacles faced, and the impact on the image of the Islamic boarding school. Research Location, The research location is the Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School, Paser Regency. The choice of location was based on the uniqueness and relevance of the Islamic boarding school in maintaining traditions while responding to the challenges of modernity. Research Subjects, Research subjects include: Internal parties at the Islamic boarding school: Public Relations Manager, Islamic boarding school caretaker, ustaz/ustazah, and senior students. External parties: Surrounding communities, Islamic boarding school guardians, and Islamic boarding school communication media audiences such as social media followers or website visitors. The subject selection technique was carried out using purposive sampling, namely selecting informants who were deemed to have relevant information to the research focus (Nur & Utami, 2022). Data Collection Techniques The data in this research was collected through: In-depth interviews, namely interviews conducted with public relations managers, Islamic boarding school caregivers, students, and the community to understand communication strategies, traditional values that are maintained, and adaptation to modernity (Ere & Blegur, 2021). Participatory observation. Researchers directly observed Islamic boarding school public relations activities, such as social media management, public relations activities, and Islamic boarding school interactions with the community (Data, 2019). Documentation study. Documentation includes archives of PR communications, such as publications on social media, Islamic boarding school websites, bulletins, or documentation of Islamic boarding school activities. Data Analysis Techniques, Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman interactive model which consists of three stages (Maryani & Sayekti, 2023): Data Reduction: Filtering and summarizing data that is relevant to the research focus. Data Presentation: Arranging data in the form of narrative descriptions, tables, or diagrams to facilitate analysis. Drawing Conclusions: Interpreting data to answer research questions and produce findings. Data Validity, To ensure the validity of the data, triangulation techniques were used (Susanto & Jailani, 2023), including: Source triangulation: Comparing data from various informants. Method triangulation: Comparing the results of interviews, observations and documentation. Theoretical triangulation: Checking findings with communication theory, tradition, and modernity. Research Procedures, The research steps were carried out as follows: Develop a research design, including focus, objectives, and methods. Conduct initial observations to understand the context of the Islamic boarding school. Collect data through interviews, observation and documentation. Analyze data in stages according to the Miles and Huberman model. Draw conclusions and develop recommendations based on research findings. With this methodology, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the role and strategy of Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School Public Relations in bridging tradition and modernity through effective communication.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research reveals various findings that show how the Public Relations of the Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School carries out its role in bridging Islamic boarding school traditions and modernity. The research results are described based on the main themes which include communication strategies, obstacles faced, and the impact on the image of Islamic boarding schools.

Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School Public Relations Communication Strategy

Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School Public Relations uses a traditional values-based communication approach combined with modern technology. The main strategies implemented include: Strengthening Traditional Values, Honesty and trustworthiness values: All information conveyed through official Islamic boarding school media is guaranteed to be accurate and consistent with Islamic principles. Direct friendship: Public Relations regularly holds meetings with student guardians, local communities and religious figures to strengthen personal relationships that reflect the values of ukhuwah Islamiyah. Conveying Islamic boarding school values in digital content: The content produced, such as video lectures or inspirational writing, always prioritizes Islamic teachings and Islamic boarding school etiquette. Utilization of Modern Technology, Social Media: Public Relations actively uses platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp to convey information related to Islamic boarding school activities, registration openings, and other official announcements. Official Website: Pesantren has a website that functions as an information center and digital archive. This website is equipped with interactive features, such as an online registration form and a religious consultation forum. Inclusive Approach, Public Relations tries to involve all parties, both internal (students, caregivers, ustaz/ustazah) and external (guardians of students, the general public). With this approach, communication becomes more open and responsive to the needs of all parties.

Obstacles Faced by Public Relations

In carrying out its duties, Public Relations faces several obstacles, including: Differences in perception between tradition and modernity: some internal parties in Islamic boarding schools are skeptical about the use of modern technology, such as social media, because they are worried that it will damage the traditional values of Islamic boarding schools. Limited resources: digital media management is still hampered by limited staff who are competent in the field of information technology. Unequal access to technology: some communities, especially in remote areas, still find it difficult to access digital-based information. Criticism from the public: content published on social media sometimes receives criticism from the public who do not fully understand the value of Islamic boarding schools.

Impact of Communication Strategy on the Image of Islamic Boarding Schools

This research found that the communication strategy implemented by Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School Public Relations had a significant impact on strengthening the image of the Islamic boarding school, both internally and externally: Internal Islamic Boarding School, Technological advances have had a positive impact on the Islamic boarding school environment, especially in terms of digital literacy. The use of technology, especially in daily communication, encourages students and teachers to be more technologically literate. This broadens their horizons about the digital world and improves their skills in utilizing technology productively. Apart from that, publicizing Islamic boarding school activities via social media also plays a role in fostering a sense of pride and togetherness among students and staff. By documenting and disseminating information about various Islamic boarding school activities, the identity and contributions of Islamic boarding schools become better known, thereby strengthening the collective spirit within the community. External Islamic Boarding School, Strategic use of digital media has provided various benefits for Islamic boarding schools, especially in building a positive image in society. Information conveyed transparently through digital platforms, such as social media and websites, has succeeded in increasing public trust in Islamic boarding schools. The community feels more confident in the Islamic boarding school's commitment to providing quality education and maintaining Islamic values. Apart from that, this digital strategy also contributed to increasing the number of registrants. Social media and websites allow Islamic boarding schools to reach prospective students from various regions, including distant areas, so that more and more families are interested in enrolling their children in Islamic boarding schools. On the other hand, Islamic boarding schools have also succeeded in strengthening relations

with the surrounding community through inclusive communication. Direct meetings supported by interaction through digital media create a harmonious relationship between the Islamic boarding school and the surrounding environment, strengthening mutual trust and support between the two.

CONCLUSION

The research results show that Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School Public Relations has succeeded in creating an effective communication bridge between tradition and modernity by combining strong Islamic boarding school values and modern communication technology. The strategy implemented is able to maintain the Islamic boarding school's identity while responding to the needs of modern society. Despite facing various obstacles, the innovations carried out have had a positive impact on strengthening the image of Islamic boarding schools and their relevance in the digital era.

This research recommends that Islamic boarding schools continue to improve the digital competence of Public Relations staff, expand access to information to underserved communities, and strengthen inclusive communication approaches so that the bridge between tradition and modernity can be well maintained.

This research concludes that Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School Public Relations plays a strategic role in bridging the rich traditions of Islamic boarding schools with religious values and modernity that demands technological adaptation. By integrating traditional value-based approaches and the use of modern communication technology, Public Relations has succeeded in building communication that is relevant to community needs without ignoring the Islamic boarding school's identity.

Main Conclusion : Effective Communication Strategy, Public Relations combines Islamic boarding school values such as honesty, trustworthiness and ukhuwah Islamiyah with modern technology, such as social media, websites and digital applications. This approach creates a harmonious bridge between tradition and modernity. Strengthening personal relationships through direct friendship is also an important element in maintaining public trust in Islamic boarding schools. Positive Impact on the Image of Islamic Boarding Schools, The use of digital media has had a positive impact on Islamic boarding schools, especially in increasing their visibility among modern society. Through digital platforms such as social media and websites, Islamic boarding schools are able to introduce themselves more widely, which is reflected in increasing public trust and the number of new registrants. People now have easier access to information about Islamic boarding schools, which makes it easier for them to make decisions about choosing them as a place of education. Apart from that, this strategy also helps Islamic boarding schools strengthen their identity as institutions that are adaptive to current developments, without sacrificing traditional values that have long been upheld. In this way, Islamic boarding schools can maintain their characteristics while opening themselves up to technological advances that support educational progress.

Obstacles to Overcome, One of the main challenges faced by Islamic boarding schools in facing the digital era is the difference in perception between internal parties who are more traditional and the need for modernity. Some groups in Islamic boarding schools feel that the use of technology, such as social media and other digital platforms, can disrupt the traditional values that have been maintained. On the other hand, there is a need to adapt to current developments so that Islamic boarding schools remain relevant and can reach a wider community. Apart from that, limited human resources and technology are also obstacles in optimizing Islamic boarding school digital media management. Not all Islamic boarding schools have staff skilled in information technology, as well as adequate facilities to make maximum use of technology. This certainly affects the effectiveness of Islamic boarding schools in carrying out communications and promotions through digital media.

To increase the effectiveness of Islamic boarding school communication and maintain this success and overcome existing obstacles, Al Ihsan Islamic Boarding School needs to do several things, including several important steps that need to be taken. One

way is to increase digital literacy training for public relations staff and Islamic boarding school communities. With better digital skills, they can be more efficient in managing information and communicating with the public, especially through digital media platforms. Apart from that, it is also important to expand communication access to communities less accessible to technology. This can be done by providing various alternative communication channels, such as using print media or direct meetings, so that Islamic boarding school messages can still reach those who are not familiar with technology. On the other hand, adopting more inclusive and interactive communication strategies is also very necessary. By responding to increasingly diverse public needs, Islamic boarding schools can build stronger and more open relationships with all levels of society, ensuring that all voices and needs can be heard and met in an appropriate manner.

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