



OPTIMIZATION OF STUDENT MANAGEMENT IN ENHANCING THE BRAND IMAGE OF MADRASAH

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Abstract:

This study examines the optimization of student management in enhancing the *brand image* of madrasah through a library research approach. It aims to describe and analyze the planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling of student management that contribute to the improvement of the madrasah's image. Data were collected through documentation of primary literature (scholarly journals published 2020–2025) and secondary literature (textbooks published 2015–2025 and education policy documents), then analyzed using the content analysis technique of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings indicate that: (1) effective planning involves collective discussion, a focus on service quality and student admission, and continuous evaluation; (2) organizing is carried out according to job descriptions, cultivates a problem-solving discussion culture, and builds external cooperation; (3) actuating includes providing direction, role modelling, and support for teaching staff's professional development; (4) controlling is conducted through academic supervision using standardized instruments accompanied by constructive feedback. The study concludes that the systematic and integrated optimization of the four student management functions contributes significantly to strengthening the madrasah's *brand image*.

Keywords: *Student Management; Brand Image; Madrasah*

INTRODUCTION

Student management is one of the key components in the education system that determines the success of an educational institution. In the era of global competition, educational institutions are not only required to focus on the quality of learning, but also on how to build a positive *brand image* in the eyes of the community. Madrasah as Islamic-characteristic educational institutions have a strategic role in shaping generations that are academically excellent and morally upright, and are therefore required to provide quality educational services while building a positive image in society, since a good image will enhance public trust, interest from prospective students, and support from various stakeholders (Oki, 2018; Lutfi Setya Prayogi, 2024).

Knezevich (1969) defines student management (*pupil personnel administration*) as a service that focuses on the regulation, supervision, and services for students both inside and outside the classroom, encompassing recognition, registration, individual services, and the overall development of students' abilities, interests, and needs. This definition is reinforced by Suarnaya

(2020), who asserts that student management is not merely administrative data management, but a holistic process oriented toward the optimal development of students' potential. On the other hand, Kotler, Keller, and Chernev (2022) define *brand image* as a set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions a person holds toward a brand, formed through the accumulation of perceptions from direct experiences, marketing communications, and word-of-mouth information. In the educational context, Firmansyah (2023) refers to a *brand* as a name, symbol, or distinguishing characteristic that differentiates an institution from its competitors, while Susanto and Wijarnako (2022) affirm that a deeply embedded *brand image* is the result of consistent performance over the years, intensive communication, and significant investment.

Research by Zakaria, Yuniati, and Puspitasari (2023) shows that brand-building strategies can significantly enhance the competitiveness of educational institutions, while Mulitawati and Retnasary (2020) identify the role of marketing communication through social media in forming a positive image in the public eye. Muawanah (2021) further adds that effective student management contributes to improvements in academic and non-academic achievement, discipline, and character formation. Mutohar (2017) formulates four management functions as the operational framework for student management, namely planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling (POAC), which in this study serve as the analytical framework for examining the contribution of student management to the *brand image* of madrasah.

In reality, there are still madrasah that have not fully optimized their student management. Poorly structured administrative processes, suboptimal talent and interest development, and a lack of strategies for publicizing student achievements are factors that impede the formation of a strong *brand image*, even though student success is one of the primary indicators of institutional quality that can enhance the competitiveness of madrasah (Tuti Herawati, 2023). Optimizing student management through a selective and transparent admission system, character development grounded in Islamic values, potential development through extracurricular activities, and effective achievement publication are strategic steps to strengthen the positive image of madrasah in society (Sakinah & Nurmila, 2024; Kholil & Fadholi, 2022).

A review of prior research reveals consistent patterns but also significant gaps. Afandi (2019) explored the branding strategy of excellent madrasah but focused more on positioning and visual identity without delving into the internal management processes that support it. Hidayat (2020) discussed educational marketing management comprehensively but did not specifically link it to student management. Ramdhan, Iskandar, and Aminah (2022) examined marketing communication in building *brand image* in the era of Society 5.0, but were more oriented toward external communication channels without analyzing how internal management excellence forms the credibility foundation of such communication. Meanwhile, Irfan, Wiyono, and Benty (2013) studied student management in integrated madrasah but focused on operational technical aspects without exploring its impact on institutional image.

From this review, a research gap is identified: the majority of studies tend to separate student management from brand research, so there is not yet a comprehensive study that integrates the four student management functions with the outcome of enhanced *brand image* (Citraningsih, 2023; Munjiah, 2024). The novelty of this research lies in the holistic approach that integrates planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling of student management with the outcome

of *brand image* enhancement, while simultaneously building a conceptual bridge between educational management theory and brand theory, thereby providing theoretical and practical contributions in the form of a student management model that can be adopted by other educational institutions.

Based on the foregoing, this study aims to describe and analyze the planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling of student management in enhancing the *brand image* of madrasah. This research is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of educational management concepts, particularly regarding the relationship between student management and *brand image*, and to serve as a practical reference for madrasah principals in designing effective student management strategies to enhance institutional competitiveness and image amid increasingly intense competition.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a library research method (*library research*) with a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach. This method was chosen because the study aims to examine and analyze the concept of optimizing student management in enhancing the *brand image* of educational institutions based on relevant literature (Zed, 2008). The qualitative approach allows researchers to explore various theoretical and practical perspectives related to student management and *brand image* in a comprehensive and holistic manner (Creswell, 2019).

Data sources consist of two categories. Primary data sources are scholarly journals published in the last five years (2020–2025) addressing student management, *brand image*, and educational management, accessed from academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and SINTA. Secondary data sources include textbooks published in the last ten years (2015–2025) as well as official documents such as education legislation and madrasah management guidelines. Literature selection criteria include relevance to the research topic, source credibility, and publication recency.

The data collection technique employs the documentation method (Suharsimi Arikunto, 2013), through several stages: literature search with keywords including student management, *brand image*, school brand, and educational management; literature selection based on relevance, credibility, and recency; recording of key information from selected literature; and data organization according to the four research foci, namely planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling of student management in enhancing *brand image*.

The data analysis technique employs content analysis (*content analysis*), a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data within its context (Krippendorff, 2018). The analysis process follows the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) model, comprising data condensation (selecting, focusing, and simplifying information), data display (organizing information into narrative and thematic forms), and conclusion drawing and verification (interpreting data to discover meaning, patterns, and causal relationships). To ensure analytical validity, the researcher applied source triangulation by using various types of literature, member checking by discussing analytical results with educational management practitioners, and audit trail by systematically documenting the entire analytical process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the optimization of student management in enhancing *brand image* requires the systematic and integrated implementation of management functions. The results of the literature synthesis are presented and discussed according to the four research foci — planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling — which are then integrated to explain their contribution to strengthening the *brand image* of madrasah.

Planning of Student Management as the Foundation of Brand Image

The literature review shows that effective student management planning involves all components of the madrasah through collective discussion. Planning is developed based on evaluations of the previous year with a focus on improving service quality and student admission, while the madrasah principal plays a primary leadership role while still prioritizing collective decision-making. Another pattern identified is the emphasis on continuous evaluation through routine evaluation meetings to monitor short-term and long-term planning progress, prioritizing human resource development and service quality.

This finding aligns with Mutohar's (2017) theory, which states that planning is the process of determining what should be achieved and how to realize it. The involvement of all madrasah components in planning creates a sense of collective ownership and increases commitment to program implementation. Accordingly, planning that is based on collective discussion, prioritizes *brand image* development, and conducts continuous evaluation will enhance the effectiveness of student management, as planning guided by the madrasah's vision and objectives ensures that every program has a clear and measurable direction.

Adaptive and Competency-Based Organizing

The organizing of student management is carried out by considering the competencies and main tasks and functions (*tupoksi*) of each personnel, applying the principle of the right person in the right place through a task grouping system based on the expertise and experience of teaching staff. The madrasah principal extends full trust to the new student admission committee, forms a rigorous selection team, cultivates discussion in problem-solving, and remains open to constructive criticism.

This approach aligns with organizing theory that emphasizes the importance of proper task grouping and delegation of authority to achieve organizational effectiveness (Wardhana, 2024). A culture of discussion and openness to suggestions creates a democratic organizational climate, so that organizing according to job descriptions, cultivating problem-solving through discussion, and providing productivity development support will enhance the effectiveness of the institution's *brand image*.

Actuating Based on Role Modelling and Human Resource Development

The implementation of student management programs demonstrates a strong commitment to human resource development through the provision of direction, guidance, and role modelling by the madrasah principal, including professional development, dispatching educators to trainings, workshops, and Subject Teacher Discussion Groups (MGMP). The principal's support in the form of providing opportunities, facilities, and even financial assistance for advanced education reflects a long-term investment in institutional quality, while the

recruitment of committees and teaching staff is carried out based on clear criteria according to institutional needs.

The role modelling of the madrasah principal is a key factor in motivating educators and committees. Implementation that provides direction and guidance, supports advanced education, encourages participation in training, conducts criteria-based recruitment, and demonstrates concrete examples will improve work quality as well as the institution's *brand image*.

Constructive and Continuous Controlling

The controlling of student management is carried out systematically using standardized academic supervision instruments to ensure objectivity of assessment, combined with an informal approach through casual discussions outside the classroom to build emotional closeness and understand the challenges faced by educators. The results of supervision are always followed up with constructive suggestions and polite reprimands, along with efforts to build communication and cordial relations with all members of the madrasah community.

Controlling with standardized instruments, provision of constructive feedback, and continuous implementation will enhance the effectiveness of *brand image*, as educational supervision reflects the principle of development that builds communication and trust, not merely an administrative control function.

Integration of Management Functions in Enhancing Brand Image

The findings of this study demonstrate that enhancing the *brand image* of an educational institution cannot be achieved through a single management aspect alone, but requires the integration of all management functions. Participatory planning, competency-based organizing, human resource development-oriented actuating, and constructive controlling must operate synergistically. Nguyen and LeBlanc (2001) explain that the institutional image (*institutional image*) of an educational institution is formed from two components: *functional image*, relating to tangible attributes such as facilities, academic programs, and teaching staff, and *affective image*, relating to students' emotional evaluation of the institution; both are shaped by the quality of internal management, including student management.

The key success factor is the madrasah principal's leadership that is democratic, participatory, and exemplary, acting not only as a manager who regulates, but also as a leader who inspires and mobilizes all members of the madrasah community to contribute to improving institutional quality. This research contributes to the development of educational management theory by producing the proposition that the systematic and continuous optimization of student management functions will enhance the *brand image* of educational institutions, and can serve as a reference for other educational institutions in developing quality improvement and competitiveness strategies.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion regarding the optimization of student management in enhancing the *brand image* of madrasah, it can be concluded that enhancing the *brand image* of madrasah educational institutions requires the systematic, integrated, and continuous implementation of management functions. The four management functions — planning, organizing, actuating,

and controlling — must operate synergistically to achieve an optimal *brand image*.

Effective planning is reflected in a formulation process involving all madrasah components through collective discussion and continuous evaluation. Organizing is carried out by placing personnel according to their job descriptions and competencies, cultivating problem-solving through discussion that is open to constructive criticism. Actuating is realized through the provision of direction, guidance, and role modelling by the madrasah principal, accompanied by a strong commitment to human resource development. Controlling is implemented systematically through standardized supervision instruments combined with an informal approach that builds communication and cordial relations.

Overall, this research proves that a strong *brand image* of an educational institution is formed through the optimization of student management encompassing all management functions in an integrated manner, with the madrasah principal's democratic, participatory, and exemplary leadership as the key success factor in mobilizing all members of the madrasah community to contribute to improving institutional quality.

This research has limitations in that it is library-based and therefore does not directly involve field data. Subsequent research is recommended to conduct field studies, both single-case and multi-site studies, to empirically test the propositions generated in this research, and to develop more operational madrasah *brand image* measurement instruments for educational institution administrators.

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