PUBLIC RELATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY IN IMPROVING THE IMAGE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract:
This research aims to examine the public relations management strategies implemented by Islamic educational institutions to improve their image in the digital era. The development of information technology, especially social media and digital platforms, has brought significant changes in the way educational institutions communicate with the public. This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study method, focusing on the implementation of public relations strategies in an Islamic educational institution. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with the madrasa head, deputy head of the madrasa for public relations, students' parents and alums. The research results show that the use of social media and websites as the main communication channels, quick response to negative issues through transparent clarification, and collaboration with stakeholders through digital technology are the main strategies implemented to improve the image of the institution. Public relations management in Islamic educational institutions also focuses on building close relationships with parents, alums and the community to obtain greater support. Overall, this research finds that digital technology-based public relations management strategies can significantly improve the image of Islamic educational institutions as long as they are carried out with effective communication, transparency and ongoing collaboration.

Keywords: *Public Relations Management, Institutional Image, Digital Era.*

INTRODUCTION

Along with the rapid development of information and communication technology, public relations management (public relations) in the world of education faces significant new challenges and opportunities (Hakim & Rozi, 2024). Especially in Islamic educational institutions, such as Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 1 Situbondo, the role of public relations becomes increasingly crucial in forming and improving the institution's positive image in the eyes of the public. Public relations not only serves as a guardian of reputation, but also as a liaison between educational institutions, students, parents and the wider community. In this connected digital era, an effective public relations strategy must be able to utilize various digital platforms to strengthen the image of the institution and build more transparent and interactive communication (Taryana, 2023).

MAN 1 Situbondo, as an educational institution that integrates Islamic values with the general education curriculum, needs to face challenges to introduce and maintain its positive image amidst global competition and technological developments (Inayati et al., 2023). An appropriate public relations management strategy will help this

institution maximize the use of social media, official websites, and various other digital platforms to convey relevant information, build good relationships with the community, and demonstrate the institution's commitment to quality education.

Apart from that, in dealing with communication crises or negative issues that can damage the image, public relations must also have a strong mitigation strategy to maintain public trust. Therefore, it is important for MAN 1 Situbondo to develop a public relations strategy that is not only based on conventional communication, but also one that is adaptive to developments in digital media (Nisar & Saleem, 2024). This strategy is expected to create a positive image, increase community involvement, and support the success of education based on moderate and inclusive Islamic values.

This has been revealed through previous research by Sarait (2021) which stated the impact of using social media in building the image of Madrasas (Sirait et al., 2021). The results show that social media, such as Instagram and Facebook, can improve the image of Madrasas by showing authentic and interesting content. The use of social media to interact with parents and prospective students has also proven effective in strengthening the positive image of the Madrasah. Abdullah and Maisyaroh (2024) examine how public relations management in madrasas can manage negative issues that arise in the digital era. The results emphasize the importance of responding quickly to inaccurate news or issues (Abdullah & Maisyaroh, 2024). Success in responding to issues transparently and accountably helps maintain the image of the institution, which can be applied by MAN 1 Situbondo in facing similar challenges. Meanwhile, Hidayah (2023) expressed his thoughts and examined the role of Madrasah websites in strengthening the image of Islamic education (Hidayah et al., 2023). The research results show that a well-managed website, with complete and interactive information, can increase public trust in educational institutions. The website not only functions as a source of information, but also as a means to build community between Madrasas, students and parents.

The three studies above show that effective public relations management strategies in the digital era involve the use of social media and websites. MAN 1 Situbondo can adopt these findings to improve the institution's image through transparent, interactive and technology-based communication (Nisar & Saleem, 2024). In this research, we will discuss how the public relations management strategy at MAN 1 Situbondo can be optimized to improve the image of the institution in the digital era. The main focus of this research is to analyze best practices in implementing public relations in the world of Islamic education and identify key factors that influence the success of these strategies.

The implementation of a public relations management strategy that integrates various digital platforms, such as social media, websites and communication applications to improve the image of MAN 1 Situbondo as a modern Islamic educational institution is a novelty from this research (Zhou & Xu, 2022). This approach emphasizes transparent communication based on moderate Islamic values, as well as quick responses to negative issues through digital-based crisis management. In addition, this research also highlights the importance of collaboration with stakeholders using technology, such as parents and alumni, to build stronger relationships and improve the image of the institution. This novelty offers a practical solution in optimizing public relations in the digital era for Islamic education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study type to explore and describe in depth and comprehensively how public relations management strategies are implemented at MAN 1 Situbondo to improve the institution's image in the digital era (Hidayah et al., 2023). The case study approach was chosen because it allows this research to analyze phenomena specifically and in detail in the context of educational institutions that carry Islamic values and are adapting to developments in digital technology in the era of industrial revolution 4.0 (Ratnaningtyas et al., 2023). This research aims to describe the various public relations strategies used by MAN 1 Situbondo, such as the use of social media, official websites and other digital

communication applications. Researchers will collect data through in-depth interviews with the head of the Madrasah, deputy head of public relations, and several related parties, such as parents and alumni, to get a comprehensive view of how the public relations strategy is implemented and how it impacts the image of educational institutions (Kardini et al ., 2023). In addition, documentation and observations of public relations activities, both online and offline, will be used to support the analysis. Accuracy data was obtained from several informants who were able to inform and describe phenomena in the field objectively (Tracy, 2024). Several informants who provided an overview of field conditions can be seen in table 1.1. following belowTabel 1.1 Data Informan Penelitian

No	Informant	Amount	Initials
1	Head of Madrasah	1	SH
2	Public Relations	1	RF
3	Student Parents	3	JF, ED, BM
4	Alumni	5	RT, MJB, UB, SM, FFF

It can be seen in the table above that the source of information was received from ten informants including the madrasa head, then the deputy head of the madrasa for public relations, then the students' parents and finally alumni as supervisors. The data analysis technique refers to the theory of Miles, Huberman and Saldana which is carried out with an initial process of data collection through observation, interviews and documentation (Jailani, 2023). The second step in data condensation is selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming. The third step is presenting the data which means some of the information is arranged which provides the possibility of drawing conclusions. The fourth step is drawing conclusions or verifying the data studied by cross-checking it with evidence that has been found in the field (Ratnaningtyas et al., 2023).

It is hoped that the results of this research will provide a clear picture of best practices in public relations management in Islamic educational institutions, as well as how digital-based public relations strategies can contribute to improving the public's image and trust in MAN 1 Situbondo. This research will also provide insight into the challenges and opportunities faced by educational institutions in utilizing digital technology to strengthen relationships with stakeholders and improve the quality of institutional communication (Pahleviannur et al., 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research involved four groups of primary research subjects that were relevant to analyzing public relations management strategies at MAN 1 Situbondo (Mey, 2022). The research subjects consisted of the head of the madrasa (SH), deputy head of the madrasa for public relations (RF), parents (JF, ED, BM), and alumni (RT, MJB, UB, SM, FFF) as supervisors. The data obtained will be presented based on in-depth interviews conducted with each subject, as well as the results of observations and related documentation (Jailani, 2023). The following is a presentation of the research data that has been carried out in the form of table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Presentation of qualitative research data on public relations management strategiesin improving the image of institutions in the digital era

ResearchSubjects	Statements/Views
Head of Madrasah (SH)	Emphasizing the importance of transparency and continuity of communication to build a positive image through social media and websites. Focus on Islamic values.
Deputy Head of Madrasah for Public Relations (RF)	Manage social media (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube) to build a positive image. The challenge of managing

	content that appeals to diverse audiences. Quick response to negative issues.
Student Parents (JF, ED, BM)	Appreciate the use of social media and websites to get the latest information. Valuing transparent and responsive communication increases parental involvement.
Alumni (RT, MJB, UB, SM, FFF)	Assessing that social media and digital platforms strengthen alumni relationships with madrasas. Appreciating the development of modern and adaptive madrasahs to technology.

Through descriptive qualitative research, data collection has been carried out, in this case a case study at MAN 1 Situbondo, the researcher analyzed the data (data analysis) that had been collected and carried out data condensation, it is known that there are several main factors in the implementation of public relations management strategies in educational institution in question. Several points that researchers can describe in the form of table 1.3 are as follows.

Table 1.3 Main Analysis Results regarding Public Relations Management Strategies in improving the Institution's image in the digital era

Theme	Description
Communication Transparency and Sustainability	All parties agree that open and honest communication between madrasas and stakeholders is very important to build and maintain a positive image of the institution.
Utilization of Social Media and Websites	Social media and madrasa websites are considered effective in disseminating information about school activities, achievements and Islamic values applied in madrasas.
Quick Response to Negative Issues	Quick and clear responses to negative issues on social media are considered important to maintain the madrasa's reputation and prevent image damage.
Parent and Alumni Involvement	The involvement of students' parents and alumni through digital platforms strengthens their emotional connection with the madrasa, impacting the positive image of the institution.

The table above provides an overview of how each research subject contributes to the understanding of public relations management strategies at MAN 1 Situbondo, as well as the main findings that are relevant to improving the institution's image through the use of digital technology. Based on research data obtained through interviews with various research subjects at MAN 1 Situbondo, the following is an elaboration of 3 main points regarding Public Relations Management Strategies in Improving the Image of MAN 1 Situbondo in the Digital Era.

The public relations management strategy implemented in educational institutions in order to improve the image or institutional branding can be presented in a beginning form so that it is easy to understand comprehensively. The public relations management strategy chart for improving the image of Islamic educational institutions in the digital era can be seen starting below.

Figure 1.1 Public Relations Management Strategy Chart for Improving the Image of Educational Institutions

Based on the above, researchers can describe that the public relations management strategy in improving the image of educational institutions begins with the use of social media and digital platforms as the main information channels. The use of social media such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and official websites allows madrasas to reach a wider audience. Through this platform, information about school activities, student achievements, superior programs, and important announcements can be conveyed directly and efficiently to the community. This also strengthens two-way communication between madrasahs and parents, alumni and the general public.

Furthermore, responding to negative issues through quick and transparent clarification is very important to maintain the image of the institution. Public relations management must be able to handle issues that arise on social media or other media by providing clear, fast and objective explanations to prevent the spread of misinformation. This will help maintain public trust in madrasas and ensure that negative perceptions can be quickly corrected.

Collaboration with stakeholders through digital technology is also an important aspect of this strategy. Technology makes it easier for madrasas to collaborate more closely with parents, alumni and the community. Through social media groups, communication applications, or other platforms, madrasas can continue to build more active relationships with stakeholders, inviting them to participate in school activities and providing input or support for existing programs.

Apart from that, building close relationships with parents, alumni and the community is also the main goal in the public relations management strategy. Trust and support from parents and alumni can have a positive impact on the reputation of the madrasa. By establishing good and open communication, madrasas can strengthen their relationships with related parties and obtain the support needed to improve the quality of education.

Overall, this strategy aims to create a positive institutional image by prioritizing transparency, effective communication and intensive collaboration with stakeholders. With these steps, madrasas can maintain and even improve their good image in the eyes of the community, which will lead to improved educational quality and the long-term success of the institution.

Utilization of Digital Platforms for Effective Communication

In an effort to improve the institution's positive image, MAN 1 Situbondo consistently utilizes social media and the official website as the main channels communication (Riccomini et al., 2024). An interview with the Deputy Head of the Madrasah for Public Relations (RF) revealed that social media, such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, are used to convey various information related to academic activities, student achievements, and superior madrasah programs (Firman, 2024). RF explained that the use of this digital platform helps madrasas to reach a wider audience, including parents of students who actively follow their children's development through published information. This is also supported by recognition from student parents (JF, ED, BM) who appreciate the easy and open access to information via the madrasa website and social media (Al Farisi & Setiawan, 2023). Thus, effective communication through digital platforms has succeeded in strengthening the image of madrasas in the eyes of the public.

The use of digital platforms at MAN 1 Situbondo as an effective communication channel has proven to play an important role in improving the image of the madrasa. Through social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, as well as official madrasah websites, information regarding academic activities, student achievements, and superior programs can be easily accessed by the community, parents of students, and prospective students (Aljumah et al., 2023). The Deputy Head of the Madrasah for Public Relations (RF) explained that the use of social media allows madrasahs to reach a wider audience, including parents of students who actively follow their children's progress. Well-organized management of social media accounts also allows madrasas to convey messages consistently, introduce Islamic values applied in madrasas, and show student achievements in various fields, both academic and non-academic (Anisa & Saparudin, 2022) .

In addition, parents (JF, ED, BM) expressed that they felt more involved in their children's academic lives thanks to easy access to information through the digital platform (Saleh, 2024). The existence of a madrasah website which is continuously updated with the latest information also makes it easier for parents to follow school developments and establish better communication with the madrasah (Brockhaus et al., 2023)(Gregory & Willis, 2022). Thus, the use of digital platforms not only increases the visibility of madrasas in the eyes of the public, but also strengthens relationships with parents and strengthens the image of madrasas as modern, transparent, progressive and responsive Islamic educational institutions in the digital era.

Transparency and Responsiveness to Negative Issues
One of the key elements in a public relations management strategy in the digital era is the ability to respond to negative issues quickly and transparently (Hakim & Rozi, 2024). According to the Head of Madrasah (SH), transparency in communication is a top priority for building trust with the public, especially in facing challenges or issues that can affect the image of the institution (Rachmad, 2024). The Deputy Head of the Madrasah for Public Relations (RF) also emphasized that a quick response to negative issues on social media is part of the strategy implemented to maintain the reputation of the madrasah. This can be seen in the madrasah's efforts to provide timely clarification and prevent the spread of inaccurate information. For example, when an issue or controversy occurs related to madrasa activities, public relations immediately provides a statement or clarification via social media and the official website, to avoid misunderstandings that could damage the image of the institution (Hidayah et al., 2023). Alumni (RT, MJB, UB, SM, FFF) also admitted that the success of public relations management in maintaining open and responsive communication made them feel more confident in madrasa management, which had an impact on the institution's positive image.

Transparency and responsiveness to negative issues are important elements in the public relations management strategy at MAN 1 Situbondo to maintain the institution's reputation in the digital era. The Head of the Madrasah (SH) emphasized that in facing challenges or issues that arise, the madrasah tries to always provide honest

and open explanations to the public (Inayati et al., 2023)(Kardini et al., 2023). One way to do this is to respond quickly to every issue or negative news circulating on social media and other digital platforms. This is done to prevent misinformation that could damage the image of the madrasa. Through timely and communicative clarification, madrasas can demonstrate their commitment to transparency and maintaining public trust. The Deputy Head of the Madrasah for Public Relations (RF) also added that a quick response to negative issues serves to show that the madrasah has full control over the narrative developing in society.

The quick response to this negative issue also received appreciation from Alumni (RT, MJB, UB, SM, FFF) who assessed that the madrasa demonstrated professionalism in managing communication and maintaining good relationships with stakeholders (Nuseir et al., 2022). They feel that with transparency in dealing with various issues, madrasas can still maintain a positive image in the eyes of society. Apart from that, the students' parents (JF, ED, BM) felt calmer because they saw that the madrasa always tried to explain every problem wisely and openly. This creates a sense of mutual trust between the madrasa and the students' parents, and strengthens the image of the madrasa as a responsible and reliable institution in providing quality education (Taryana, 2023).

Collaboration with Stakeholders through Technology

Strong collaboration with stakeholders, such as parents and alumni, is an integral part of the public relations management strategy at MAN 1 Situbondo. Parents of students (JF, ED, BM) expressed that they felt more connected to the madrasa thanks to the use of technology, which facilitated closer and more intense communication between parents and the school (Mahoney & Tang, 2024). The madrasah, as stated by the Deputy Head of the Madrasah for Public Relations (RF), has developed digital communication channels that involve parents in various aspects of their children's academic lives. This includes providing information about school activities, important announcements, and extracurricular activities that parents can participate in. Apart from that, Alumni (RT, MJB, UB, SM, FFF) expressed that through digital platforms, they can continue to stay in touch with madrasas, strengthen alumni networks, and contribute to various madrasa activities (Zhanibek et al., 2022). The use of technology in building relationships with stakeholders not only increases the positive image of the madrasah but also creates a closer sense of togetherness between the madrasah, parents and alumni (Muktamar et al., 2023).

Collaboration with stakeholders through technology is a key aspect in the public relations management strategy at MAN 1 Situbondo which supports improving the institution's image. The Deputy Head of Madrasah for Public Relations (RF) explained that the use of digital platforms has enabled madrasahs to build closer communication with parents and alumni. By utilizing social media, WhatsApp groups, and madrasah websites, schools can inform parents of school activities, important announcements, and educational programs directly and quickly (Kavoura et al., 2024)(M. Munir & Su' there, 2024). This makes it easier for parents to follow their children's progress and be more involved in school activities, such as seminars, training and other events. This collaboration not only increases transparency, but also provides space for parents to provide input and constructive criticism, thereby creating a mutually supportive relationship in efforts to improve the quality of education.

Apart from that, Alumni (RT, MJB, UB, SM, FFF) also felt the benefits of this collaboration, especially in strengthening ties between alumni and madrasas. With the existence of a digital platform, alumni can continue to follow madrasa developments even after graduating and provide contributions in the form of suggestions, support, or even donations for programs implemented by the madrasa (Z. Munir et al., 2024). This creates a stronger network between madrasas, alumni and parents, which in turn helps strengthen the image of madrasas as institutions that not only care about academic education, but also maintain close social relations with the community. Through

technology, madrasas can take advantage of this collaboration to build trust and gain wider support from various related parties (Nisar & Saleem, 2024).

Follow-up Plan

The follow-up plan for this research aims to optimize the implementation of public relations management strategies in improving the image of Islamic educational institutions in the digital era. One of the main steps that needs to be taken is to strengthen the use of digital platforms as communication channels. Madrasas must more regularly update and enrich the content delivered through social media and websites, by displaying relevant information regarding activities, achievements and superior programs. This improvement requires a team that is skilled in managing social media and creating interesting content, as well as ensuring that the information disseminated can be accessed by the wider community.

Furthermore, Islamic educational institutions must be more responsive in dealing with negative issues that may arise, especially on social media. Clear and structured procedures for handling crises need to be strengthened, so that clarification and information provided to the public can be carried out quickly, precisely and transparently. This is important to maintain the image of the institution and prevent misunderstandings that could harm the madrasa's reputation. Apart from that, collaboration with stakeholders, such as parents, alumni and the community, needs to be strengthened through more structured digital channels. Through more intensive and organized communication, madrasas can invite stakeholders to participate in activities and development of madrasa programs.

Finally, regular evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategies implemented is very important to ensure that the approaches used remain relevant to technological developments and societal needs. Based on the evaluation results, institutions can identify areas that need improvement and develop new strategies that are more appropriate to existing dynamics. Thus, through these planned follow-up steps, Islamic educational institutions can improve their image in a sustainable manner and strengthen relationships with stakeholders for the progress of madrasas.

CONCLUSION

The public relations management strategy implemented at MAN 1 Situbondo involves the use of digital technology to strengthen communication with various stakeholders, quick responses to negative issues, and efforts to build close collaboration with parents and alumni. Through social media and websites, madrasas can inform about activities and achievements that build a positive image, while maintaining public trust with transparency and responsiveness to developing issues. Collaboration with stakeholders further strengthens relationships that support a better institutional image in the digital era.

The public relations management strategy implemented by MAN 1 Situbondo in the digital era has proven effective in improving the image of the institution through the use of technology. The use of social media and official websites as the main communication channels allows madrasas to widely disseminate information related to academic activities, student achievements and superior programs. Transparency and quick response to negative issues are also important factors in maintaining a madrasa's reputation, because any problems or controversies can be resolved with timely clarification, maintaining the trust of the community and stakeholders. Collaboration with parents and alumni through digital platforms also strengthens relationships, creating networks that support the growth and development of madrasas.

Overall, the use of digital platforms not only strengthens the positive image of MAN 1 Situbondo as a modern and responsive educational institution, but also creates space for more intense interaction with stakeholders. Through this strategy, madrasas can build closer relationships with parents, alumni and the community, while creating a positive and trustworthy image in the eyes of the public. With a transparent and collaborative approach, MAN 1 Situbondo has succeeded in responding to the challenges

of the times and remaining relevant in the digital era, making it a model for managing public relations in educational institutions.

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