

# Strategic Management of Public Relations Communication in Islamic Educational Institution

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## ABSTRACT

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The decline in student enrollment poses a significant challenge for Islamic educational institutions, including SMP Qur'an As-Salam Bogor, highlighting the need for effective organizational communication management. This study aims to analyze Public Relations (PR) strategies in managing communication and their contribution to strengthening the school's public image. This research employed a qualitative case study approach, with the research subjects consisting of school leaders, teachers, PR officers, and community representatives. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that internal communication management is implemented through coordination meetings, task distribution, and collaboration among school stakeholders, while external communication focuses on activity publications, achievement promotion, and partnerships with the community and external institutions. These strategies contribute to a positive institutional image, increased public trust, and growing community interest in student enrollment. The study concludes that PR functions as a strategic connector between the school and its environment, extending beyond publication activities. It is recommended that Islamic schools optimize PR strategies using systematic and measurable communication approaches to enhance sustainability and competitiveness in the modern era.



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## A. INTRODUCTION

Organizational governance is fundamentally related to management, which encompasses the processes of planning, organising, leading, and controlling organisational resources to achieve predetermined objectives (Yusuf, 2025). Effective management requires good governance to ensure organisational effectiveness and efficiency. Within this framework, communication functions as a vital instrument that connects, coordinates, and regulates organisational activities, both internally and externally (Riinawati, 2025).

Communication is not merely the transmission of information but a process of creating shared meaning that shapes understanding, attitudes, and behaviour (Dwivedi et al., 2021). In organisational contexts, communication becomes a strategic mechanism for managing human relationships, influencing behaviour, and maintaining organisational harmony (Setianti et al., 2024). Consequently, communication management plays a crucial role in ensuring coordination, preventing conflict, and supporting the achievement of organisational goals.

Organisations can be understood both as institutional entities and as dynamic processes of organising work among interdependent members (Riinawati, 2025). In this regard, communication management is an integral component of organisational management, involving structured, integrated, and goal-oriented communication interactions (Wen et al., 2025). Scholars define communication management as the systematic use of communication resources through planning, organising, implementing, and controlling communication processes to achieve organisational objectives (Lisli & Azhar, 2022). Thus, communication management extends beyond message delivery to become a strategic tool for coordination and problem-solving within organisations.

In the context of educational institutions, particularly Islamic boarding schools, globalisation and digital transformation present significant challenges. Islamic schools are increasingly required to compete with public and modern private institutions that offer academic excellence, technological integration, and skill-based programmes (Elyati, 2024). Additionally, issues related to institutional reputation, negative public perceptions, and internal regulations perceived as restrictive have reduced public interest in Islamic boarding schools (Abdurrahman et al., 2025).

This phenomenon is clearly seen in the data on new student enrolment at the Tahfizhul Qur'an As-Salam Islamic boarding school. Based on institutional records, the number of applicants has fluctuated with a downward trend over the past five years.

**Table 1.** Data on the number of students who enrolled at SMPQU As-salaam Karanggan

No	Year	Applicants	Admitted
1	2020	146	131
2	2021	145	125
3	2022	129	108
4	2023	140	118
5	2024	123	109
6	2025	82	75

Based on the data above, it is known that in 2020 there were 146 applicants with 131 accepted, in 2021 there were 145 applicants with 125 accepted, and in 2022 the number decreased to 129 applicants with 108 accepted. Although there was an increase in 2023 with 140 applicants (118 accepted), the number declined again in 2024 to 123 applicants (109 accepted), and in 2025 it dropped dramatically to only 82 applicants with 75 accepted. This trend indicates a shift in public interest in Islamic boarding schools, while also confirming that marketing management is a crucial aspect that must be improved immediately so that Islamic boarding schools remain attractive (Bin Lahuri et al., 2024).

Persisting societal stigma that views Islamic boarding schools as second-tier educational institutions further weakens public trust and interest. Therefore, Islamic educational institutions must focus not only on curriculum development but also on professional, adaptive, and creative communication and public relations management to build a positive institutional image (Setyaningsih et al., 2025). In this context, public relations plays a strategic role in managing internal communication and fostering external relationships with parents, communities, and partner institutions (Norman et al., 2023).

Although previous studies have examined public relations and communication management in educational institutions, most focus on promotional strategies, digital branding, and external communication, particularly in public or general educational settings (Imroni, 2024). Research that specifically explores integrated communication management within Islamic educational institutions while incorporating religious values remains limited (Rahmatullah & Maisyarah, 2025).

Addressing this gap, this study analyses public relations communication management at SMP Qur'an As-Salam Bogor using an integrated input-process-output-outcome (IPOO) framework (Stone, 2019). This research emphasises the synergy between internal organisational communication and external stakeholder engagement, while integrating Islamic values such as deliberation, trustworthiness, and social responsibility as foundational principles of communication management (Wulandari et al., 2024). Accordingly, this study aims to analyse the role of public relations in managing internal and external organisational communication and to examine its contribution to strengthening the institutional image of SMP Qur'an As-Salam Bogor amid increasing educational competition.

## **B. METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to examine public relations communication management at SMP Qur'an As-Salam Bogor. A qualitative design was selected to explore communication practices, perceptions, and interactions within their natural institutional context (Moleong, 2017). The research was conducted at an Islamic junior high school under the As-Salam Islamic Boarding School Foundation in Bogor Regency, West Java.

The participants consisted of four key informants selected through purposive sampling, including institutional personnel responsible for public relations, student affairs, and digital communication. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation to obtain comprehensive and triangulated information related to internal and external communication management (Taherdoost, 2021).

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 2014). This methodological approach enabled an in-depth understanding of how public relations communication management is implemented, its role in strengthening internal and external relationships, and its contribution to building a positive institutional image. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of public relations practices in Islamic educational institutions and to organizational communication studies in the education sector.

## **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. The Role of Public Relations in Organisational Communication Management at SMP Qur'an As-Salam Bogor**

This study positions public relations communication management as the main variable influencing organisational communication and institutional image at SMP Qur'an As-Salam Bogor. Public relations functions as a strategic bridge connecting internal organisational actors school leaders, teachers, staff, and students with external stakeholders, including parents, the surrounding community, and partner institutions. This finding aligns with the view that effective communication management is a fundamental requirement for organisational effectiveness and sustainability (Riinawati, 2025).

In the organisational context, public relations performs multiple strategic roles, including expert advisor, communication facilitator, problem-solving facilitator, and communication technician (Fenetta & Wijaya, 2024). These roles indicate that public relations extends beyond information dissemination to active involvement in decision-making, coordination, and conflict resolution. The interaction of these roles strengthens internal communication, fostering deliberation, cooperation, and shared understanding, while simultaneously reinforcing external communication through relationship-building with the community and institutional partners (Niswaty et al., 2024).

The duties of public relations management represent an operational dimension of the communication management variable. These duties include disseminating official information, assisting leadership in communicating institutional policies, monitoring public

opinion, and developing strategies to gain community support (Niswaty et al., 2024). Through digital publications and direct engagement, public relations mediates feedback between the institution and the public, illustrating the relationship between communication practices and the formation of public perception and trust (Norman et al., 2023).

Communication functions within the institution informative, regulatory, persuasive, and integrative serve as mechanisms through which public relations influences organisational behaviour (Zakiya & Kurniawan, 2024). Informative communication ensures clarity of school programmes, regulatory communication maintains organisational order, persuasive communication encourages voluntary participation, and integrative communication fosters coordination among organisational units. The implementation of these functions through deliberative meetings (*syura*) and digital communication platforms reflects the role of communication management in maintaining organisational harmony (A. Hasanah et al., 2020).

The findings also demonstrate that communication management plays a crucial role in conflict resolution. Open communication forums, regular meetings, and interactive communication with parents help reduce misunderstandings and prevent escalation of conflicts, supporting previous findings on the role of communication in organisational conflict management (A. Hasanah et al., 2020). This relationship indicates that effective communication management contributes directly to a stable and conducive organisational climate.

Public relations programme development reflects a strategic planning variable that strengthens communication management. Programme planning involves understanding community characteristics, identifying communication-related issues, setting institutional goals, selecting appropriate media, and developing relevant programmes that respond to public needs (Abduh, 2022). This strategic alignment enables the institution to synchronise internal objectives with external expectations, reinforcing institutional identity and stakeholder support (Shidiq & Saleha, 2022).

The relationship between the school and its stakeholders emerges as an outcome variable of effective public relations communication management. Continuous interaction with parents, engagement of teachers and students, and collaboration with the community contribute to mutual trust and cooperation (Munthe & Westergård, 2023). These relationships strengthen the institution's positive image and credibility, confirming that public relations serves as a mediator, connector, and image builder within educational institutions (Niswaty et al., 2024).

Overall, the findings reveal an interrelated pattern in which public relations communication management influences organisational communication processes, conflict resolution, programme development, and stakeholder relationships. These interconnected variables collectively contribute to the formation of a positive institutional image and the sustainability of SMP Qur'an As-Salam Bogor, supporting the view that public relations is a strategic component of organisational communication in Islamic educational institutions (Rahmatullah & Maisyarah, 2025).

## **2. Strategies for Building the Image of Educational Institutions**

This study finds that communication management at SMP Qur'an As-Salam Bogor plays a strategic role in strengthening the institutional image of an Islamic boarding school-based educational institution. Public relations functions not merely as an information dissemination unit, but as a managerial mechanism that integrates internal and external communication to build a positive public image (Niswaty et al., 2024).

Communication planning is implemented through branding and publication programmes involving school leaders, teachers, staff, and the foundation. The school positions itself as a Qur'anic educational institution that integrates academic excellence, Islamic character formation, and student leadership development (S. M. Hasanah et al., 2024). Branding efforts are carried out through social media publications, student works, testimonials, and student council involvement in student admission activities. These strategies reflect the application of modern communication management aligned with Islamic values (Rahmatullah & Maisyarah, 2025).

At the organisational stage, communication resources are distributed proportionally. Teachers focus on academic and extracurricular development, students act as activity committees and promotional ambassadors, and parents participate as strategic partners through the Parents' Council. This approach emphasises human resources as core organisational assets, supported by teacher training, student capacity development, and parental engagement (Novianti et al., 2024).

Implementation of communication strategies combines digital and face-to-face approaches. Social media platforms are used to disseminate information on school activities and achievements, while direct promotion is conducted through brochures, parenting seminars, exhibitions, religious gatherings, and school visits. These integrated strategies enable the school to reach diverse community segments effectively (Fraccastoro et al., 2021).

Internally, communication is managed through regular meetings, briefings, consultative forums, and digital platforms such as WhatsApp and email. Institutional values are consistently reinforced, supported by communal activities and employee relations programmes that strengthen organisational cohesion and a sense of belonging (Hartati et al., 2020). Externally, communication is conducted through community and government relations. Community engagement is realised through social and religious programmes, while cooperation with government agencies strengthens institutional legitimacy and administrative coordination (M.Said et al., 2024).

Image-building efforts are reinforced through extracurricular activities, annual exhibitions, alumni networks, digital marketing, and systematic crisis communication. Responsive and transparent handling of negative issues enables the school to maintain a positive image in the digital era (Hadijah, 2025). From the perspective of the educational service marketing mix, the school's communication strategy highlights flagship Qur'anic programmes, qualified human resources, and an integrated curriculum that combines national standards with the Islamic boarding school system, creating a distinctive learning experience (Sahri et al., 2024).

The effectiveness of communication management is supported by disciplined and communicative leadership, systematic management, and transparent financial accountability, which foster public trust. However, challenges remain, including limited public relations expertise, suboptimal digital internal communication, and budget constraints for professional development (Darina et al., 2024).

Using the Input-Process-Output-Outcome (IPOO) framework, communication at SMP Qur'an As-Salam begins with internal and external information needs but faces obstacles such as limited openness and uneven communication flow (Hasan & Apriawan, 2021). The communication process utilises formal and informal channels, with effectiveness largely dependent on the activeness of public relations (Sholihah et al., 2023). Outputs include improved internal coordination and wider dissemination of school information, while outcomes are reflected in stronger organisational harmony, increased professionalism, enhanced public trust, and greater community recognition (Humaidi & Rofiki, 2025).

This study concludes that communication management at SMP Qur'an As-Salam Bogor has been relatively effective in strengthening institutional image. Public relations functions

as a liaison, mediator, and image builder through integrated internal and external communication, positioning the school as a modern, responsive, and socially responsible Islamic educational institution.

### **3. Improving Institutional Image According to the Qur'an**

Improving the image of educational institutions, especially Islamic institutions, has a strong basis in the Qur'an. Image is essentially the public's perception of all the activities of an institution, which can be positive or negative depending on the efforts made to create and maintain it (Ummah et al., 2024). In the context of communication management, institutional image is synonymous with brand image, which is an abstract representation of an organisation's values, reputation, and identity. Although abstract, image can be perceived through the assessment of the wider community, whether in the form of positive appreciation or negative criticism. Therefore, building a positive image means instilling credibility, which consists of expertise in meeting public needs and trustworthiness in consistently maintaining the common interest (Latifah & Razali, 2023).

Positive image, according to the Islamic perspective, is not only interpreted as reputation, but also as trustworthiness. This is in line with the values of the Qur'an, which emphasises the importance of honesty, justice, social responsibility, and service that benefits the community (Wulandari et al., 2024). SMP Qur'an As-Salam Bogor strives to realise this by developing learning programmes based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, while remaining adaptive to national education policies, such as the Merdeka Curriculum. This integration is a form of the school's commitment to providing quality, relevant, and Islamic education services, while meeting public expectations of modern Islamic educational institutions (Sugiannoor et al., 2025).

Apart from the curriculum, the image of Islamic educational institutions is also shaped by other factors, including the quality of graduates, successful management, sound financial conditions, the behaviour of organisation members, and social contributions to the community (Arrohman, 2021). A good image is not only the responsibility of the Public Relations team, but also the result of the collective work of all stakeholder, both internal (principals, teachers, employees, and students) and external (parents, alumni, and the community). At SMP Qur'an As-Salam, the institution's image is reflected in the identity attached to the school's name and reputation, credible leadership, focused management, and a communication style that is in line with the values of the Qur'an (Warta et al., 2024).

Efforts to improve the institution's image are also demonstrated through the school's social responsibility to the surrounding community (Alsaheed, 2022), such as social service activities, donations to orphans, the Friday Blessing programme, and large-scale religious gatherings. The institution's identity, rooted in the Qur'an, is strengthened when it is manifested in concrete actions that directly benefit the public. In the eyes of the community, an institution's reputation is formed from four main aspects: reputation, personality, value, and corporate identity (Kurniawan & Fatgehipon, 2025). Reputation is built on the school's consistency in implementing credible programmes; personality is reflected in the trustworthy and communicative attitude of the management; values stem from a Qur'an-based educational orientation; while institutional identity emerges from the uniqueness of the school's vision, traditions, and governance (Warta et al., 2024).

The results of this study indicate that the Public Relations Department of SMP Qur'an As-Salam has made efforts to improve internal and external communication by evaluating and monitoring existing programmes. Indicators of successful institutional image improvement can be seen from increased community participation in school activities, positive responses to social media content managed by the digital marketing team, and an

increasing number of external parties interested in collaborating with the school . Periodic evaluation of Public Relations activities is also key to ensuring that communication strategies continue to evolve in line with the challenges of the times and public needs (Dedi Candira et al., 2025). Thus, it can be concluded that improving the image of the Qur'an As-Salam Junior High School is not only based on modern communication strategies but also relies on the principles of the Qur'an, which emphasise trust, morals, and social benefits.

#### D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study concludes that Public Relations plays a strategic role in managing organisational communication and strengthening the institutional image of SMP Qur'an As-Salam Bogor. Through systematic internal and external communication management, Public Relations effectively supports the implementation of educational programmes and builds positive relationships with stakeholders. These communication practices contribute to increased public trust and reinforce the school's reputation as a credible Islamic educational institution.

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