



OPTIMIZING THE ROLE OF SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS IN ADDRESSING HATE SPEECH AND BUILDING A POSITIVE IMAGE

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Abstract :

In educational institutions, especially in schools, it is very interesting to observe the effectiveness of school community communication when facing hate speech issues and increasing positive synergy in implementing communication strategies. Nowadays, technology has developed very rapidly, making it very easy for negative and positive narratives to spread widely through communication, especially the use of social media. In this observation, the researcher used a qualitative method with a case study approach, collecting data from all elements within the school environment. In the educational context, it is certainly crucial to understand the patterns, programs, and follow-up in the implementation of communication management, so that the collected data can be analyzed in depth. It can be concluded that in communication relationships, all elements of the school community, especially policymakers, can significantly influence the process of disseminating negative and positive information on a massive and sustainable basis. Therefore, it is important to emphasize when stakeholders organize training activities on social media content and digital literacy, and also not forgetting parents, as part of the school community, because it is proven to increase the effectiveness in preventing negative narratives from circulating very quickly. Ultimately, every school must have a guideline to address the challenges facing the school environment by embracing all aspects, thereby addressing the prevention of hate speech and safeguarding the reputation of an educational institution.

Keywords : *School Public Relations, Hate Speech, Positive Image*

Abstrak :

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dan mengoptimalkan peran humas sekolah dalam mengatasi hate speech serta membangun citra positif di lingkungan pendidikan. Fokus penelitian ini adalah bagaimana strategi komunikasi, media sosial, dan kegiatan internal sekolah dapat dimanfaatkan untuk meredam konten negatif dan memperkuat reputasi sekolah di mata publik. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam dengan pihak humas, guru, siswa, dan orang tua, serta analisis dokumen dan media sosial sekolah. To assess the patterns, strategies and results of public relations interventions in madrasahs, the appropriate approach to use is the analytical descriptive approach. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa humas sekolah yang proaktif dalam menyampaikan informasi, melakukan edukasi digital, dan membangun komunikasi positif dengan seluruh pemangku kepentingan mampu mengurangi Pengaruh hate speech secara nyata Selain itu, kegiatan seperti seminar literasi media, pengelolaan konten positif di media sosial, dan program keterlibatan orang tua terbukti building a positive image of the madrasah. Implikasi penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya penguatan kapasitas humas sekolah sebagai garda terdepan komunikasi,

serta perlunya strategi yang terintegrasi untuk menghadapi tantangan hate speech sekaligus membangun reputasi sekolah yang positif dan berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: *Humas Sekolah, Hate Speech, Citra Positif*

INTRODUCTION

Protecting an educational institution's reputation can be achieved through effective communication among school members, bridging both internal and external relationships (Phipps & Prieto, 2021). However, in cases involving negative content, a gap often emerges between factual information and public perception, particularly when such content carries harmful or misleading implications (Wachs et al., 2022). The delayed response of schools in addressing the widespread dissemination of negative content through social media platforms or WhatsApp groups frequently exacerbates problems among students and the wider school community (Mbada et al., 2023). In many instances, educational institutions fail to respond promptly to harmful information and are slow in managing emerging conflicts, allowing hoaxes and negative content to circulate freely within the school environment (Kumar & Maurya, 2024). These conditions indicate that many educational institutions have not fully adapted to the rapid development of digital technology, limiting their ability to manage the fast flow of information that may threaten institutional reputation. Therefore, this study focuses on examining the role of public relations in educational institutions, particularly in managing negative content and strengthening communication strategies to maintain and enhance the institution's public image.

In the face of rapidly evolving information media, schools sometimes struggle to implement communication strategies that align with established theories. Social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp, widely used by students to exchange information, can accelerate the spread of negative content, including hate speech and hoaxes, making it difficult for schools to manage these issues effectively. Conflicts often arise when students respond emotionally to such content, which can also involve parents and complicate the school's communication with the wider community. Schools that lack adequate facilities to provide accurate information are particularly vulnerable to a negative public image. These challenges highlight the importance of strong synergy between school administrators, teachers, public relations staff, and all stakeholders. Consistent with the findings of this study, effective coordination and proactive management of negative content through public relations practices can help mitigate conflicts and protect the school's institutional image.

Based on previous research, the importance of emphasizing good relations with the community within the madrasah environment in building and creating a positive image of the madrasah is a key pillar in an educational institution. However, in reality, the field still often finds weaknesses in the madrasah public relations team in establishing good relations with the external community in handling negative issues. This finding is summarized in the following points (Tam, Kim, Grunig, Hall, & Swerling, 2022) This study has the perspective that public relations in madrasahs has a very important role in building a positive

image of the institution both through internal and external communication; however, this study has not addressed the issue of digital conflict in madrasas. (Saliu, 2025) in this study examines the role of madrasah public relations in the digital era, which has the perspective that the importance of information management around madrasas in preventing the spread of hoaxes. However, the study has not investigated the problem of overcoming the spread of negative statements that arise from digital interactions in the madrasah environment. (Pollock et al., 2023) This study focuses on exploring the management of the spread of negative statements in madrasas, where the role of public relations has the highest position in dealing with and overcoming these statements, although it does not specifically examine hate speech involving students and parents. From several studies above, most of them focus on building the reputation of madrasas, dealing with hoax news, and minimizing the spread of negative statements in the madrasa context. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge these gaps by investigating how madrasas try to overcome the spread of negative issues, social mediators and build a positive image of madrasas amidst the rampant spread of negative statements in the digital era.

This research also serves as a provision for madrasas to be more effective in addressing harmful content with creative methods using three key principles: structured communication, digital literacy skills, and conflict management. Previous observations have shown that many madrasas still lack understanding and adaptation to current developments, especially in information and communication media. This certainly hinders madrasas from taking action in the face of the massive spread of hate speech. The cause of these problems is often found to be based on the slow response of madrasas in responding to conflicts that occur in social media content within the madrasa environment. The purpose of this research is to provide solutions or perspectives on resolving problems that often arise in the development of technology and information media in madrasas. Ultimately, madrasas can implement developmental models in information media effectively and efficiently in accordance with modernization in information dissemination.

Based on the description above, the researcher has the following objectives: "How to optimize the role of public relations in preventing negative content and improving the good name of the institution?" This objective is taken from the needs of madrasas in facing challenges in the technological era. Madrasas must also have programs that are useful for adaptation in balancing negative content that can damage the positive image that has been built by the madrasa. Therefore, the right synergy can be applied between the school and the public relations team to resolve various problems, and maintain the good name of the madrasa and can respond quickly when experiencing sensitive rumors circulating.

This demonstrates that the proactive and strategic role of public relations is vital in preserving the stability of the school's positive image. Based on these findings, the first argument suggests that public relations that employ two-way communication, manage issues systematically, and enhance the digital literacy of the school community can help reduce hate speech and promote a positive

image. This hypothesis will then be tested empirically to gather more comprehensive evidence.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design conducted at MTs Nurur Rahmah, located in Leces District, Probolinggo Regency, East Java. This approach was chosen to obtain an in-depth understanding of the role of public relations in educational institutions, particularly in managing negative public perceptions and strengthening the institutional image to increase public interest in MTs Nurur Rahmah. The case study design allows researchers to examine institutional phenomena and challenges intensively within their real-life context. MTs Nurur Rahmah was selected as the research site due to its active implementation of public relations management in both internal and external communication activities, its strong interaction with the surrounding community and stakeholders, and its experience in dealing with negative public statements that have affected teachers, students, and administrative staff. The research subjects consisted of the head of the madrasah, public relations staff, teachers, student council administrators, and students who are actively engaged in social media use, representing key stakeholders involved in public relations practices. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure the credibility of the findings, data triangulation was applied by comparing information obtained from multiple data sources and collection methods.

The sources of information for this study consisted of key stakeholders within the madrasah environment, including the head of the madrasah, public relations staff, teachers, student council administrators, and students who are actively engaged in social media, as well as staff involved in external community relations and management personnel from related institutions. Supplementary documents related to community engagement and public relations activities were also used to provide a comprehensive understanding of the madrasah's communication practices. Data were collected through a combination of observations of institutional activities and interactions among students, teachers, and the broader community, in-depth interviews guided by structured questions focusing on experiences in handling negative statements, strategies implemented, and their impact on the madrasah's institutional image, and documentation, including official records and promotional media used for communication with external stakeholders. To ensure the credibility of the findings, triangulation was applied by comparing information across interviews, observations, and documentation, providing a more accurate and reliable representation of public relations practices and community engagement within the madrasah.

Data analysis was performed through a number of stage namely: data reduction involves filtering and focusing on relevant information, data presentation is achieved through form narrative , tables or diagrams for make it easier analysis, and data verification is ensured through triangulation sources,

method, and time. The analysis method used covering analysis content For inspect documents and related texts with Connection madrasa residents; discourse analysis For understand pattern communications and messages used by Public Relations to build image positive; and analysis interpretive For interpreting interview data, observations, and documents For understand perception , strategy, and effectiveness role Madrasah Public Relations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Strengthening Social Media and Internal Communication

A good institution can be seen from how it builds relationships with the surrounding community and uses social media effectively to foster strong communication between the community and the school. There are many ways to maintain a school's reputation, including direct outreach to maintain a positive perception of the school, and indirect ways, such as sharing information through social media to minimize misinformation. To follow up on the madrasah's planned collaboration with internal and external stakeholders, including teachers, students, and guardians, information dissemination, management of the school's official account, publication of a digital bulletin, and regular meetings are all activities aimed at reducing potential hate speech. These activities are key to the public relations function in promotion and prevention.

The principal of the madrasah who was also a resource person said, "To prevent the spread of hoaxes, the school routinely provides detailed and complete publications of school activities." Furthermore, the second resource person, who is a teacher, explained, "Providing quick directions to students and parents by utilizing social media accounts and WhatsApp groups, thereby avoiding negative rumors from circulating." The review conducted by the researcher can be concluded that communication in the school environment is not only about conveying information, but also as a bridge so that facts that occur in the field are conveyed clearly, this is also the task of public relations. By implementing a strategy in an activity, it is very possible that hate speech and disputes will not occur between people.

The public relations team's activities play a significant role in building a positive image for the madrasah, as evidenced by their swift action when disputes or hotly debated issues arise. This is evident in the school's official social media accounts, which have a structured plan, including weekly publications discussing positive activities and documenting each activity at the madrasah.

Public relations has many functions in an organization or institution, namely as a medium in disseminating correct and positive information to minimize the occurrence of bad things such as hate speech. Public relations also has many benefits for an institution because with public relations plans that have been programmed well can be implemented well, proven by public relations using management strategies in an activity, which is always consistent in creating positive content and maintaining the good name and positive image of the madrasah so that the madrasah can face many challenges that exist and will occur in the school environment.

There is a visible picture of collaboration between the consistent

publication of positive content and active and continuous internal communication. This combination creates a preventive and promotive mechanism: the school not only addresses negative issues but also simultaneously strengthens a positive image in the eyes of students, parents, and the community.

To strengthen the findings above, the following presents the results of interviews and observations conducted in the field regarding Strengthening Social Media and Internal Communication, as presented in the table above.

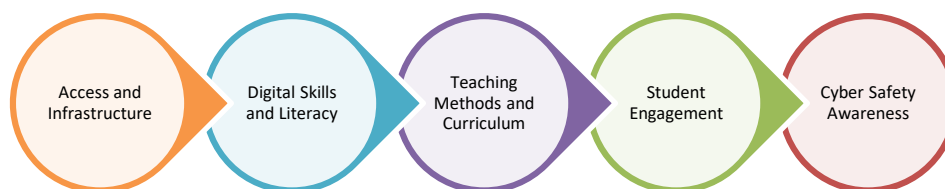
Observed Aspect	Observation Findings	Source/Documentation
Social media posting consistency	Posting frequency is irregular and not aligned with a content calendar	Instagram, Facebook, TikTok feed analysis
Content quality	Content lacks variety; mostly formal information with minimal storytelling	Social media posts from the last 3 months
Audience engagement	Interaction rate is low (likes, comments, shares)	Social media insights (Meta Business Suite, TikTok Analytics)
Visual identity	No standardized templates; visuals appear inconsistent	Uploaded content designs
Response to comments/messages	Replies are slow and no response SOP is in place	Direct messages and comments on platforms
Internal communication channels	Communication is not centralized; spread across multiple informal groups	WhatsApp/Telegram groups, internal emails
Information flow	Information does not reach all staff consistently	Employee interviews, meeting notes
Internal communication media	No structured newsletter or intranet available	Internal documents, daily communication practices
Employee feedback mechanism	Feedback mechanism is not standardized	Internal surveys, discussions with staff
Inter-division coordination	Coordination for content and information is often delayed	Coordination meeting observations, work timelines

Digital Education and Literacy Program for Students

A digital education and literacy program for students in schools consists of a series of activities designed to enhance their understanding of responsible digital media use, identify negative content like hate speech, and develop critical thinking skills when engaging with online information. In practice, this activity includes holding media literacy workshops, providing information on social

media usage guidelines, simulating negative content management, and integrating digital skills training into the curriculum and extracurricular activities.

Picture:
Role Of School Public Relations In Addressing Hate Speech And
Building A Positive Image



Based on the results of interviews with digital literacy teachers at madrasas, they explained that, "We actively hold digital literacy workshops so that students can understand and recognize the spread of hoax news and avoid content that can be provocative." The second informant was a student who said that *"With digital literacy, we are more careful before distributing information, besides that we can also understand the impact of negative comments on social media."* The researchers concluded that this digital literacy program was successful in cultivating critical awareness in students, so that the role of Public Relations in Madrasas not only focuses on controlling the flow of information in madrasas, but can also encourage students to play an active role in overcoming the spread of negative madrasa issues.

The results found in the implementation of digital literacy by schools which are carried out regularly with a focus on publication and information media in training, can increase interactive interactions between students, for example in case studies that have been given by students who are active in using social media, many students are able to adapt by understanding the values contained in positive communication.

The data obtained shows that digital literacy programs in madrasas have been very effective in increasing students' understanding and awareness of the spread of negative issues and content. Then, the positive impact of the program can grow and strengthen their sense of responsibility in maintaining and building a positive image of the institution.

The data also demonstrated a consistent pattern between theoretical learning and interactive practice, where digital literacy not only broadened knowledge but also shaped students' attitudes and behaviors in using social media, thereby simultaneously supporting hate speech prevention and building the institution's good reputation.

Involvement of Teachers, Parents, and Community

The involvement of teachers, parents and madrasa residents is form participation active various stakeholders interest in support the Institution's personal branding in effort purposeful relationship For overcome the existence

of negative statements from society and for build image positive Institutions, involvement This covering coordination between teachers and madrasah staff in weave connection community For give guidance to students , guard regularity communication with parents through online meetings and groups , and collaborate with figure public or organization external For organize educational programs and activities strengthening social reputation of the madrasah.

From the results interview with the teacher obtained information that has intertwined good communication between madrasa residents and the community in the madrasa environment for For ensure that material learning and information delivered to student No cause misunderstanding or negative statements. Meanwhile that's the old man state that through regular communication between madrasah and parents student will more make it easier For give supervision to children to be more wise using social media.from second the statement above researchers interpret involvement This show existence synergy between internal and external parties of the madrasah, as well as show that the role of public relations is not Work Alone but supported by the environment around , so that strengthen effectiveness controlling negative statements from the public and promoting image positive madrasah.

Researchers observe that intertwined communication Good between teachers, parents and the community in the madrasa environment such as existence communication active through WhatsApp group, meeting coordination and activities community others. In addition, madrasa teachers and staff often involved in digital literacy seminars and social activities, as well as activities that highlight madrasah achievements. Researchers believe that matter This show consistent collaborative strategy pattern Where various party Work together create environment positive and safe schools from negative statements from society. In general overall, the data shows that The involvement of teachers, parents and the community is a factor key in support tasks public relations. collaboration This No only facilitate distribution accurate information but also creates a sense of togetherness awareness about importance digital ethics and image positive institutions.

The pattern that emerges from the data is collaboration sustainable between stakeholders internal interests (teachers and students), parents, and stakeholders interest external (society), as well as form mechanism structured support. This is can confirmed that the strategy for prevent negative statements from the public in build image positive Institutions must implemented in a way simultaneously and continuously.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Rapid Response Strategy

Steps that schools can take through monitoring, evaluation, and rapid response can be understood as a series of steps carried out by public relations to monitor potential negative issues or content, assess the extent of their impact, and provide a quick and appropriate response to maintain the school's good name. In practice, these activities include actively monitoring social media, reviewing reports from teachers and students, gathering input from parents, and preparing corrective actions or clarifications that are immediately implemented when an issue arises. It can be concluded that the public relations team can provide

responsive work and is able to maintain good communication so that it can maintain the school's image professionally.

A statement given by a teacher said, "Almost all teachers always react quickly when there are many rumors or negative comments that often circulate." The principal also said that the public relations team always takes quick action when there is content that can cause problems. Therefore, from this, the researcher draws the results of the public relations team working very professionally in maintaining the good name of the school by reducing the potential for negative perceptions circulating with a very quick reaction.

Observations indicate that the public relations team routinely monitors the school's social media accounts and internal communication groups, noting any emerging issues for further analysis. Furthermore, the public relations team is also seen actively preparing clarification materials and educational content in response to specific issues. Researchers concluded that a quick response in decision making can influence the spread of negative content by implementing a structured work program and conducting regular evaluations.

The findings from this research indicate that monitoring, evaluating and responding quickly to the spread of negative issues are key elements in maintaining the reputation of madrasas. This approach allows the spread of negative issues to be handled immediately, thereby maintaining the reputation of the madrasah and managing positive public perceptions effectively.

At the end of this discussion, the researcher shows evaluation data, observation cycles and massive follow-up. This program emphasizes solid interaction from all elements of the school community in the wise use of social media so that the prevention of hate speech can be carried out effectively so as to maintain the good name of educational institutions.

Discussion

Previous studies indicate that the implementation of well-structured and consistent communication programs in both public and private educational institutions plays a crucial role in managing negative content through the involvement of all school elements (Karinshak & Jin, 2023; Ni, Huang, & Shi, 2023). In line with these findings, (Nyagadza & Mazuruse, 2021). emphasize that strong interaction between educational institutions and their surrounding communities can effectively prevent the circulation of negative rumors and help maintain institutional reputation. However, in practice, establishing intensive and coordinated interaction among teachers, parents, and policy stakeholders remains highly challenging, particularly in efforts to prevent the rapid spread of negative rumors (Bilz, Fischer, Kansok-Dusche, Wachs, & Wettstein, 2024). This condition highlights an imbalance between theoretical communication models and their implementation in real educational settings, indicating a lack of synchronization between public relations strategies and on-the-ground realities. As noted by (Tam et al., 2022), such discrepancies necessitate adjustments toward more effective, systematic, and context-sensitive communication structures. The implications of these findings suggest that public relations practices in educational institutions must move beyond normative frameworks and adopt adaptive, collaborative, and responsive communication strategies to effectively

manage negative content and safeguard institutional reputation.

Responses were also found indicating that hate speech plays a crucial role in resolving conflicts by preventing reputational damage within the school environment. This perspective is also in line with (Zhao, He, Zhao, & Lin, 2022), who understand that public opinion can influence and provide critical and timely handling on a massive scale. However, deficiencies in the existing school Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) program in schools are only specifically for handling social media-based crises (Jogezai & Baloch, 2024). Therefore, the theory emphasizes the importance of issue management and existing structures in schools do not fully meet the necessary tools (Akour & Alenezi, 2022; Li, Larimo, & Leonidou, 2023). Consequently, information emergencies become less than optimal in their public relations function (Saif et al., 2021; Zhu, Yan, & Song, 2022).

his study shows that the digital literacy and communication ethics education program implemented by the Public Relations Department is effective in suppressing the spread of hate speech among students. These findings align with the findings (Wachs, Wright, & Gámez-Guadix, 2024) that digital literacy can increase students' awareness of the negative impacts of hate speech and aggressive behavior online (Dunaway & Macharia, 2021; Wachs et al., 2024). The consistency of these findings indicates that the educational approach is not only a complementary approach but also an effective long-term prevention strategy (Burger, Strohmeier, & Kollerová, 2022; Schiff, 2022). Therefore, educational interventions implemented by the Public Relations Department have high functional value in creating a good culture in Madrasas that is healthy and characterized (Lemon & Boman, 2022; Oldham & McLoughlin, 2025).

Based on a causal perspective, the effectiveness of Public Relations in overcoming the spread of negative madrasa issues is influenced by the quality of inclusive relationships between madrasas, students and parents (Marolla-Gajardo & Riquelme Plaza, 2025). When communication is well established and participatory, potential conflicts can be detected and resolved quickly (Conrad et al., 2022). This finding is in line with Grunig & Hunt's symmetrical two-way communication theory which emphasizes good communication as the foundation for creating healthy community relations (Kent & Lane, 2021). On the other hand, madrasahs with minimal and closed communication are more vulnerable to attacks by negative issues, such as slow responses, increased misunderstandings, miscommunication, and the risk of defamation on social media (Dybvik, 2022). This clarifies the correlation between the communication structure and the level of intensity of attacks on negative issues faced by madrasas.

These findings explain that an optimally implemented public relations role can significantly impact a school's ability to handle hate speech issues while simultaneously maintaining and safeguarding the school's good reputation (Ni et al., 2023). By strengthening communication strategies, clarifying crisis SOPs, and consistently implementing literacy programs, the public relations function can run effectively and significantly impact the school's image (Akter & Bhattacharjee, 2025). Conversely, if these are not implemented, the public

relations role will be ineffective or even counterproductive (Waymer & Heath, 2021). Conceptually, this research can broaden insight into educational crisis management in the digital era, while encouraging schools to build adaptive, responsive, and collaborative communication structures through ongoing collaboration.

CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this study is that optimizing the role of public relations in madrasahs has a substantial impact on managing negative statements from the public and strengthening the institutional image. Key aspects identified in this case study include enhancing internal and external communication, responding promptly to digital issues, and educating students about digital literacy. These efforts are not merely technical strategies but form part of the school culture that must be developed and maintained. The study also shows that when public relations effectively carry out mediation, education, and issue management in an integrated manner, the potential escalation of conflicts can be minimized, and the positive image of the madrasah can be maintained sustainably. In terms of scientific contribution, this research enriches the literature on public relations management in educational institutions by expanding the perspective on how public relations functions not only as stakeholder communicators but also as managers of digital conflicts and guardians of a healthy environment to support a positive institutional image. Practically, the findings suggest that educational institutions should establish clear policies and structured protocols for digital communication, actively train staff and students in digital literacy, and strengthen coordination among all stakeholders to protect and enhance the madrasah's reputation.

Furthermore study This strengthen importance approach descriptive qualitative For explore dynamics communication in the environment education in a way more deep , especially in context change behavior communication in the digital age. Although give comprehensive understanding , research This own a number of limitations . Research This only done in several school in context certain , so that findings This No can generalized to all institution education . Differences in type gender , age students , characteristics school and background behind social culture Not yet explored more wide , there is other possible factors influence spread of negative statements. More further research This limited to research qualitative research This No use method survey or approach quantitative that can give description more statistics comprehensive . Considering limitations this , then required study more further accommodating variation type gender , age , and characteristics of the madrasah with use survey or method mixture use For produce base more policies effective and appropriate with need education in the digital era.

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