



## Islamic Education Institutions and Public Trust: A Study of Public Relations in Madrasatul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School Tebuireng Jombang and Roudhotul Mustofa Islamic Boarding School Rejotangan Tulungagung, East Java, Indonesia

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### **Abstract**

This research is motivated by the selection of communication media in public relations which is closely related to the success of information that will be conveyed to the public and able to build public trust. In pesantren institutions, the position of public relations is expected to be able to build trust in the community, especially in facing the challenges of contemporary education. Pondok Pesantren Madrasatul Qur'an (MQ) Tebuireng Jombang and Pondok Pesantren Roudhotul Mustofa Rejotangan Tulungagung East Java are pesantren institutions that apply public relations methods to build trust in the community. The purpose of this study was to determine the implementation of social media, the implementation of human resource competencies, and the implementation of word of mouth in increasing public trust in Madrasatul Qur'an (MQ) Tebuireng Jombang and Roudhotul Mustofa Rejotangan Tulungagung East Java Islamic Boarding Schools. This research approach uses qualitative methods. The data collection techniques are participant observation, in-depth interviews and documentation. Data analysis techniques used are data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This study found that the implementation of social media in increasing trust uses new media and old media. The implementation of human resource competencies in increasing public trust is carried out through organizing training for public relations officers. While the implementation of word of mouth in increasing public trust is done by direct promotion carried out by pesantren stakeholders.

**Keywords:** *Public Relations; Public Trust; Islamic Boarding School; Islamic Education Institution*

### **Introduction**

In the context of educational institutions, public relations management is often assumed to be an activity related to verbal monologue activities only, such as speeches or activities related to correspondence (Mu'min & Diantoro, 2023). Public relations management in today's context should be able to play a broader role, both the role towards the internal public (within the institution) and the role

towards the external public (outside the institution) in socializing the profile, vision and mission, programs, and activities of the institution (Laksono & Sulistyorini, 2021). In general, Islamic educational institutions including pesantren do not see the importance of implementing public relations management. This then does not position public relations as an important instrument in the development of the institution (Arjmand, 2017). Based on this skeptical view, the implications of utilizing adequate public relations communication media and based on Islamic principles in the form of values sourced from the Qur'an and Al Hadith are neglected (Kosim, Muqoddam, Mubarak, 2023).

In practice, the selection of appropriate PR communication media is closely related to the success of information to be conveyed to the public and institutional planning. Diversification of public relations communication media is important to attract public attention and requires the creativity of public relations practitioners as an important part of the pesantren organizational structure in designing activities and documenting them. In this context, Islamic values in pesantren institutions sourced from the Qur'an and Al Hadith, such as *ta'aruf* (getting to know each other), *tarahum* (loving each other), *tafahum* (understanding each other), *tashawur* (mutual consultation), *ta'awun* (mutual cooperation), *takaful* (bearing each other) have received less attention from pesantren in their implementation. This is because it seems like a common thing, so there needs to be integration in the planning of public relations management in pesantren in the continuity of the implementation of public relations to be smooth and orderly and allow for evaluation (Abin & Sujianto, 2022).

In relation to the tasks and activities of public relations, Regulation of the Minister of Communication and Information Technology Number 35 of 2014 concerning the Public Relations Coordinating Board in article 1 paragraph 2 states (Kementerian Hukum & HAM RI, 2014): "Public relations, hereinafter referred to as public relations, is an effort that is deliberately carried out and planned on an ongoing basis in order to create and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between the institution and its public". Through this regulation, public relations activities are activities that have an important point on information management that is packaged by taking into account the development of information and communication technology by utilizing available communication media with planned and continuous activities in realizing goodwill and mutual understanding towards its public.

As a study, Pondok Pesantren Madrasatul Qur'an (MQ) Tebuireng Jombang and Pondok Pesantren Roudhotul Mustofa Rejotangan Tulungagung East Java are two pesantren that are developing and receiving attention from the surrounding community because of the role of pesantren public relations management. Pondok Pesantren Madrasatul Qur'an (MQ) Tebuireng Jombang, annually accepts students with a quota of around 400 for junior high school and MA. By using the PPMQ web social media, the registration service in the near future has fulfilled the quota of new students. In addition, the registration of new students can also be done by registering directly. Through this fact, public interest and public trust are proven by the large number of registrants and the rejection of some registrants. Meanwhile, the Roudhotul Mustofa Rejotangan Tulungagung Islamic Boarding School is raised by KH Junaidi. The Pondok was established in 2010 for several years and already has students from junior high school and MA. A total of 750 consisting of 400 male and 350 female boarding students. This cottage is located in Rejotangan Tulungagung District. Uniquely, he is always the caregiver and founder of the cottage does not inform related to the acceptance of prospective students, simply through the media of his congregation the students have met the quota and during the establishment of the cottage only advertise by installing billboards once until now.

In its concept, intense consolidation and socialization to the internal public about various programs, vision and mission, and pesantren activities resulted in an increase in the solidity of the pesantren in its work, thus increasingly fostering public trust due to the positive image that the pesantren has successfully built (Sujianto & Mutohar, 2023). The pesantren's public relations management plays a role starting from planning, implementation, and evaluation consistently and continuously so as to encourage the acceleration of pesantren development which shows an increasing trend (Batat, 2024).

Social media is used by boarding schools to spread achievements in the academic and religious fields that have become an open secret in the community, so that the image that has been built by the pesantren has a positive impact on the community and many parents of students want their children to enter the boarding school. Pesantren enthusiasts are known to have increased every year, so this can be attributed to the increasing public trust in Pondok Pesantren. With the increase in the number of satriwan-santriwati, this shows that public relations is working hard in building and developing the image of the boarding school, so that it is expected to increase public trust.

Through previous studies, Moore (2005) stated that the communication media used by public relations include publicity, advertising, periodicals, films, special events, and oral communication. Publicity media carried out by public relations in the form of news broadcasts, feature stories, magazine articles, photos, tapes, audio and video, and films. The communication technology has changed the way public relations practitioners communicate with the public. The largest social media at this time are Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram. The rapid development of social media requires human resource competence in increasing public trust carried out by boarding schools by providing good service by holding a training in order to motivate the performance of public relations, which is a provision in carrying out public relations performance. The public relations interaction in carrying out an existing performance is based on motivation and a strong and persistent sense of devotion. In addition, things that can trigger an increase in public relations performance in carrying out tasks are training provision, both in material and practice in the field. As for some of the strategic benefits that can be obtained from training and development include increased public relations satisfaction, higher retention rates, higher turnover (Niati, et al, 2019).

The Word of Mouth Communication (WOM) has been carried out at the boarding school with the help of alumni, guardians of students and teachers. In addition, it is also carried out by providing socialization or participating by Kiai by participating in community activities that can bring the name of the boarding school to be known by the community which aims to increase public trust. As according to Kotler & Keller (2012), WOM or word of mouth communication is a communication process in the form of providing recommendations both individually and in groups for a product or service that aims to provide personal information. Meanwhile, Harris (2013) define WOM as communication between one person and another person about products and services independently (not representing the organization).

By understanding the public relations practices in these two Islamic boarding schools, it is hoped that it can provide a better understanding of how traditional Islamic education institutions interact with the community, as well as how they build and maintain good relationships with various stakeholders. In addition, this study can also provide valuable insights for the development of more effective public relations strategies in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. This study will explore public relations practices in two Islamic boarding schools located in East Java, Indonesia, namely Pondok Pesantren Madrasatul Qur'an Tebuireng Jombang and Pondok Pesantren Roudhotul Mustofa Rejotangan Tulungagung. These two boarding schools were chosen because of their significant role and influence in Islamic education and community life in their respective regions.

## **Methods**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a type of field research through case studies (Kothari, 2004). The selection of locations is done intentionally (purposive) with consideration and reasons for its uniqueness, as well as the suitability of conditions with the research title. The research locations used were Madrasatul Qur'an Tebuireng Jombang Islamic Boarding School and Roudhotul Mustofa Rejotangan Tulungagung Islamic Boarding School, East Java, Indonesia. In this study, the data collected are data related to research questions, namely data related to the implementation of social media, the implementation of HR competencies, and the implementation of word of mouth in increasing

public trust in Madrasatul Qur'an (MQ) Tebuireng Jombang Islamic Boarding School and Roudhotul Mustofa Rejotangan Tulungagung Islamic Boarding School, East Java. In this study, primary data were obtained from participant observation and in-depth interviews with key informants who had been selected through snowball sampling techniques as well as data from documentation at the research location (Kumar, 2000). Meanwhile, the data analysis techniques used are data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Yin, 1994).

### **Literature Review**

Emery (2000) stated that public relations is a planned and organized effort of an institution to create mutually beneficial relationships with various elements of society. In the aspect of public relations media, Moore (2005) explained that the communication media used by public relations organizations include publicity, periodic advertisements, films, special events, and oral communication. In today's context, the most widely used is publicity media in the form of news broadcasts, features, magazine articles, photos, tapes, audio and video, and films. As an effort to respond to the digital era, online news media this data is a major factor in public relations, which is expected to be able to access publicity in the digital space.

In responding to the challenges of the digital era, online news media has become the main foundation of PR strategies (Grunig, 2023). Its presence is not only as a source of information, but also as a means to connect the public with various relevant and actual content. With faster and wider access, online news media allows PR practitioners to reach audiences more effectively in the digital space. Therefore, the ability to manage and utilize data efficiently is key to obtaining the desired publicity in this digital era (Azionya, Oksiutycz, 2019).

The field of public relations is currently one of the fields that must be responsive in dealing with changes in communication technology with the emergence of new media or social media. New communication technology not only changes the way companies and public relations practitioners communicate with the public, but also changes the paradigm of public relations (Putra, 2020). If with old media public relations tries to control the various information spread to the public, then in new media or second generation media, *public relations* will have difficulty controlling the dissemination of information as desired because of the possibility of information produced by public relations being modified by the public to be shared again.

Along with the development of electronic technology, in familiarizing the school with parents, students, the community, and the school can use electronic means, for example by telephone, television, or radio, as well as a means for promoting education. As for the operational techniques of public relations management in more detail that can be implemented in the development of various types of educational institutions including in educational institutions. In DeRoche (2004) view, electronic-based public relations techniques can be carried out through several techniques as follows:

Table: Electronic PR Techniques

No	Activities	Application	Explanation
1	Education weeks	Week of teaching	As a teaching and learning process which is the main activity of the school
2	Recognition days	Test time	For evaluation tools, data analysis and decision-making basis
3	Home visits	Home visit	For consultation in solving students' problems
4	Teacher aids	Teacher's teaching media	Is a tool that makes it easier for teachers to convey subject matter and at the same time makes it easier for students to understand lessons

5	Card	Card	For specific purposes, for example consultation cards, achievement cards or memorization cards for short letters for students
6	Parentteacher conference	Parent-teacher meetings	To establish communication between parents and teachers and increase involvement of parents in school programs.
7	Open house	Visiting each other	Conducting visits between school members at certain times, for example on Eid al-Fitr.
8	Speaker Beareu	Public Relations Section	Special programs related to talks in associations, groups and school organizations
9	Home study	Homework	Homework aims to consolidate the skills that students have acquired in class.
10	School and classroom newsletter	School and class news	A written communication vehicle needed to inform the school of general news.
11	Success card	Award certificate	If there are students or parents who have participated in giving special attention to the school or winners of competitions held by the school, it is very reasonable to be given a certificate of appreciation as proof of what they have done.

Some public relations techniques as described by DeRoche above, researchers elaborated on the implementation of public relations in a private madrasah (Islamic Education Institution/LPI). A number of public relations techniques that can also be applied by LPI include: monthly meetings for the foundation, school board, and school management; public recitation; introduction week or new student orientation period; school activities; distribution of brochures, banners, advertisements in print and online media; student guardian meetings, and several forums organized by the school.

In order to enrich public relations techniques in LPI with various models and types, the concept offered by DeRoche (2004) above can be developed and complement each other with the findings of research conducted by the author in a madrasah. To be more effective and efficient, some of the above public relations activities can be combined in one school activity, for example farewell at the same time combined with carnival, public recitation, performances, distribution of brochures, and *silaturrahim* or other activities that can be integrated. The realm or target of the public relations program for LPI can be divided into two targets: First, the internal segment which includes: students, employees, teachers, principals, and foundation administrators. Second, the external segment which includes parties who have been directly involved such as alumni, user communities, parents/guardians of students, related institutions, and religious and community organizations (Mulyono, 2011).

When it comes to school public relations, the main goal is to build trust in the community. Trust is essential to a commitment or promise, and a commitment can only be realized if it is meaningful. In this context, when one party has *confidence* that the other party involved in the exchange has reliability and integrity, it can be said that there is trust from the community (Darsono & Dharmmesta, 2005). Trust as a person's willingness to depend on the other party involved in the exchange because he has confidence in the other party, trust is a general expectation that individuals have that the words that arise from the other party are reliable. Trust is believing and having confidence in the partner in the relationship.

The definition of trust is a belief that another party's statement can be relied upon to fulfill its obligations (Dwyer, et al, 2000). Distrust can occur in line with the lack of information in performance planning and measurement. A person's trust or distrust that appears in his behavior is determined by factors such as information, influence, and control. Trust will increase if the information received is

considered accurate, relevant, and complete, The level of trust is also influenced by past experience, consistent positive experiences in the past with a party will increase mutual trust so that it will foster hopes for a good relationship in the future, According to Soetomo (2002), there are five actions that show trust: maintaining relationships; accepting influence; being open in communication; reducing surveillance; and patience with understanding. In another context, trust is the desire to achieve goals that last in the long term, so the biggest failure in fostering relationships between sellers and consumers is the lack of trust.

## ***Discussion***

### **Implementation of Social Media in Increasing Public Trust**

The meaning of a communication is in humans not the words (Sari, 2005), so this is in accordance with the dissemination of information through new media used by pesantren public relations (Parker & James, 2023). The source in it is pesantren public relations, the message is information on activities in the pesantren as well as an invitation to study in it which is wrapped in educational, informational and entertainment content, the channel used is social media which is classified as new media (Haryanti & Rusfian, 2023).

The use of several new media commonly known as social media in the process of disseminating information about Pondok Pesantren Madrasatul Qur'an Tebuireng Jombang and Pondok Pesantren Roudhotul Mustofa, including Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and YouTube.

#### **a. TikTok social media**

TikTok is one of the social media used by boarding schools to convey information, messages, or boarding school activities. Almost everyone even among the community knows TikTok as social media today. Some activities that can be used as content on the TikTok social media of Islamic boarding schools include certain agenda activities such as student drama activities, religious lectures, language months, and other pesantren competition activities.

#### **b. WhatsApp**

The use of several new media, commonly known as social media, in the process of disseminating boarding school information, including information disseminated through WhatsApp media is generally more and more specific to the development of students, schedules, development info, exam info and so on. Pondok Pesantren Public Relations collaborates with foster guardians under the instruction of the head of student care to create their own communication channels outside the general group.

#### **c. Instagram**

The pesantren's public relations play an active role in the process of disseminating information on Instagram, this is evidenced by the posting of every activity on the Instagram account which is the official Instagram account of the pesantren. Posts on Instagram are more about content in the form of photos or images and are used as flyers such as greetings for achieving an achievement or achievement, besides that, they also distribute flyers containing the fadhilah of worship. In addition, through the Instagram account, it is also a means for live broadcasting or live streaming on the pesantren's Instagram account.

#### **d. Facebook**

The pesantren's public relations play an active role in the process of disseminating boarding school information on Facebook, this is evidenced by the posting of every activity on the Facebook account which is the official account of the pesantren.

### e. YouTube

YouTube is one of the social media networks that displays long and short videos. Public relations created a YouTube account, the content shared in the YouTube application is routine major activities and santri activities, such as commemoration of Islamic holidays, commemoration of teacher's day, commemoration of santri day, graduation, santri manners in boarding schools and so on. The hope is that parents and the community will participate in listening to santri activities from home.

In addition to using new media, both boarding schools also use old media. Old media has been present long before the existence of new media, the old media era began in the 1950s and began with technological developments marked by the emergence of television and radio (Nugroho, 2020). Apart from TV and radio, old media is also synonymous with newspapers, magazines, and other similar media (Nuswantoro, 2014). Old media has several characteristics, namely centralized from one source to many people, communication that occurs is one-way and there is no reciprocity obtained from the general public. New media is known as an interactive space while old media is more inclined towards broadcasting (Nasrullah, 2016). Old media is categorized as old media, although many old media also have a system like new media with digital viewing using the internet network. In utilizing old media as a medium for disseminating boarding school information, pesantren public relations mostly use the magazine room as a means of promoting pesantren programs.

### **Implementation of HR Competencies in Increasing Public Trust**

The implementation of HR competencies in increasing public trust in Islamic boarding schools is an essential strategic step in building a positive reputation and harmonious relationships with various stakeholders. In this context, efforts to improve human resources in Islamic boarding schools need to pay serious attention to improving the competence of managers, teachers, and administrative staff to be able to provide the best and quality services to students and the community at large. This can be done through continuous training and competency development in accordance with the needs and challenges of the times. In addition, the importance of strengthening and improving the competence of human resources, boarding schools can implement educational programs that are oriented towards the development of skills, academics, leadership, and entrepreneurship. Thus, santri not only become individuals with religious insight, but also have readiness to face various challenges and problems of contemporary society.

Furthermore, in the implementation of HR competencies, transparency and accountability are important keys. The efforts of Islamic boarding schools need to be realized with the performance and achievements of HR openly to the community through various communication media, be it social media, websites, or other publications. Thus, the community can directly see the contribution that has been made by the boarding school in forming qualified individuals who are beneficial to society. In its realization, the implementation of HR competencies is not only about improving individual quality, but also about building trust and a positive image of the boarding school in the eyes of the community. By having competent and qualified human resources, boarding schools can become education and development centers that are respected and trusted by the community, and become constructive partners in building the nation and state.

Furthermore, the implementation of public relations management in developing human resources in Islamic boarding schools is a very important strategic step in strengthening the image and reputation of the institution, as well as improving relationships with various related parties. In this context, public relations has a key role in building effective communication between boarding schools and the wider community, including internal stakeholders and external stakeholders.

Resources that drive and direct the organization, human resources must always be considered, maintained, and developed by the organization. Public relations, otherwise known as public relations, is

providing information directly and persuasively to the public in order to change the actions and attitudes of the public to integrate with the actions and attitudes of the public of an institution (Danadjaja, 2011). The role of a public relation is to provide information to the public. The goal is to invite the public to want to change actions and attitudes in accordance with what a public relation wants. The competence of public relations human resources in increasing public trust is carried out by:

#### a. Journalism Training to Develop Talents and Interests

Increasing the competence of Human Resources (HR) in public relations requires training in supporting the competencies possessed by the public relations department, including journalistic training. Journalism is synonymous with activities related to journalism and newspapers whose activities collect and write newspaper news. In addition, journalistic activities include activities that can produce news starting from preparing, writing, editing, and publishing or disseminating news through social media channels. Human resources in the public relations department of Islamic boarding schools need to be equipped with skills to support public communication, namely text, images, audio, and visual. Making journalistic content in addition to news and photos, of course, videos are currently also needed to fill outdoor media.

#### b. Publication Exhibition of Boarding School Works

The publication of pesantren in the research location is one way to achieve the image of pesantren. The activities and works of students can be displayed in online and offline media. With the work of students, it is hoped that the wider community will be more familiar with the pesantren and provide positive benefits for the pesantren so that it can gain public trust. Exhibiting the work of the boarding school here is one way to achieve the image of the pesantren. The publication of boarding school works is done in various ways. Among them is the self-development of students. This is where students can showcase their work to the community. The results of public trust in the boarding school have an impact on increasing the number of students, the competitiveness of the boarding school, and increasing the effectiveness of public relations strategies.

#### c. Training on Social Media Management as Pesantren Public Relations Media

Pondok Pesantren Madrasatul Qur'an (MQ) Tebuireng Jombang and Pondok Pesantren Roudhotul Mustofa Rejotangan Tulungagung has social media that is active in disseminating information related to pesantren, namely TikTok, YouTube and Instagram. In essence, social media is a two-way communication tool between educational institutions and the community, especially alumni and santri guardians. The communicative social media can support the relationship between pesantren and the community. Communicative social media can be carried out with the support of the competence of the PR media manager. The better the competence of the manager, the better the media that is built, and vice versa.

#### d. Public Speaking Training

Public speaking training is one of the trainings to train and hone the ability to speak and convey information that is done face-to-face through various agendas such as presentations, MCs and leading meetings in various meetings.

The results of this study are supported by Rahman's research that the competence of public relations human resources in increasing public trust is carried out by increasing: Knowledge of communicating face to face (speaking in public), in writing and using communication media; communication skills face to face (speaking in public), in writing and using communication media; adaptability and relationship building (Rahman, 2015).



Furthermore, this research is supported by Ardyaningtyas and Widyanto that the communication skills of public relations managers and the concept of public relations, so that the direction and objectives of communication to be achieved are clear. Relationship can be built if trust can be built (Ardyaningtyas & Widyanto, 2019). To build trust requires the ability to communicate with different individual characters, different communication situations, a publicist knows when to communicate directly, informatively and persuasively.

### **Implementation of Word of Mouth in Increasing Public Trust**

The implementation of word of mouth in increasing public trust is carried out by word of mouth promotion with the help of alumni, guardians of students and teachers. This promotion technique has been able to provide information about the boarding school and then inform all boarding school programs, existing activities and training programs to improve talents and interests. Public relations through word of mouth is carried out by the boarding school by utilizing alumni, because alumni are real living brochures.

According to Kotler & Keller (2012), Word of Mouth (WOM) or word of mouth communication is a communication process in the form of providing recommendations both individually and in groups for a product or service and aims to provide personal information. Harris et al. define WOM communication as informal person-to-person communication between a non-commercial communicator and its recipient based on a brand, product, organization, or service (Harris, et al., 2006).

The efforts to attract the public by holding promotions carried out directly (word of mouth) or indirectly through various media, new students or the public will be interested. This is as according to Ruslan, a public relations has the potential to implement a strategy to attract public attention in various ways in order to strive to achieve company goals and increase sales of both goods and services (Ruslan, 2016). The usual strategies include promotion through mass media and sales through advertising.

The efforts using encouraging or stimulating strategies made by boarding schools in both research locations in increasing the number of students through publications in the mass media. The efforts to influence or create favorable public opinion by conducting socialization activities or participating in community activities that have the potential to support the achievement of public relations goals. Boarding school caregivers influence public opinion by building a positive image of the community and often participating in social activities. As according to Ruslan, influencing people as an effort or creating favorable public opinion by conducting socialization activities or participating in community activities.

### **Conclusion**

Social media in increasing public trust includes the use of several new media commonly known as social media in the process of disseminating information about Islamic boarding schools, through WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and YouTube. Information disseminated through social media is related to routine major activities and santri activities, such as commemoration of Islamic holidays, commemoration of teacher's day, commemoration of santri day, graduation, santri manners in boarding schools and so on. In this case, parents participate in listening to santri activities from home. While old media is categorized as old media, although many old media also have a system like new media with digital viewing using the internet network. In utilizing old media as a medium for disseminating boarding school information, the public relations of the boarding school uses magazines.

HR competence in increasing public trust is carried out with journalism training to develop talents and interests. Exhibitions of pesantren publications from activities and the work of students are displayed in online and online media with the hope that the wider community will get to know the pesantren and provide positive benefits for the pesantren, so that they can gain public trust. In addition, training in social media management as a pesantren public relations media. Public speaking training is also one of the

trainings to train and hone the ability to speak and convey information carried out face-to-face through various agendas such as presentations, MCs and leading meetings in various meetings. While the procurement of cooperation with various professional institutions is also one of the efforts to implement HR in increasing public trust.

Word of mouth in increasing public trust is carried out by word of mouth with the help of alumni, guardians of students and teachers. This promotion technique provides information about the boarding school which then informs all boarding school programs, existing activities and trainings to improve talents and interests. This effort attracts the community by conducting word of mouth promotion with the help of alumni, guardians of students and teachers by conducting socialization activities or participating in community activities, holding programs for pesantren independence, holding a traveling majlis program which is carried out by moving places throughout East Java, so that the name of the boarding school is known by the community whose purpose is to increase public trust.

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