

Effective Public Relations Management in Building a Positive Image: A Case Study of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 3 Cirebon

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study investigates the role of public relations management in building a positive image of educational institutions, focusing on Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 3 Cirebon. It aims to fill gaps in the literature regarding the empirical evidence of effective public relations strategies in madrasahs, providing both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of education.

Design/methods/approach – The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach to deeply understand the public relations strategies at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 3 Cirebon. Nine participants, including the head of the madrasah, public relations staff, teachers, and parents, were purposively selected. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Systematic data analysis involved narrative presentation, data reduction, and conclusion drawing/verification to identify patterns and causal relationships.

Findings – The study found that integrated planning involving all stakeholders, active involvement of public relations staff, and adequate resource allocation were key to building a positive institutional image. Activities such as religious services, social services, and regular community engagement strengthened internal and external relations. Regular evaluations through scheduled meetings and feedback from the community helped identify shortcomings and improve public relations strategies.

Research implications – The findings highlight the importance of collaborative and systematic public relations management in educational institutions. The study suggests that other educational institutions adopt similar approaches to enhance their public image, thereby increasing community trust and support.

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1. Introduction

The image of educational institutions plays a crucial role in attracting the interest of both students and educators (Mulyadi, 2018; Sholikhah, 2021). A positive image influences parents' decisions when choosing schools for their children. Various factors such as academic reputation, physical appearance of the school, cost, personal attention, location, job placement, social activities, and educational programs contribute to the development of this image (Wahyuni, 2018). These elements reflect the characteristics of the organization, including its history, goals, service quality, and social responsibility (Khasanah et al., 2021).

The establishment of superior schools is a complex and challenging process. Positive belief in school branding must be maintained to ensure the school's relevance and identity within society (Jamaluddin, 2020; Utaminingsih, 2020). Branding of madrasahs is crucial for creating a good image among graduates, and school management must ensure the quality of education not only in academic terms (Sholiha, 2018).



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Previous research indicates that the image of educational institutions can be enhanced through effective public relations management. Azlina (2021) and Sandyakala (2020) state that the institution's image is formed through a well-communicated organizational identity, both physically and non-physically. Dwiyama & Nurhasanah (2020) and Alwi & Kitchen (2014) show that brand image is built through the stages of creation, maintenance, and modification of perceptions.

Despite numerous studies on the image of educational institutions, there are still several limitations, including a lack of focus on public relations management aspects at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 3 Cirebon. Previous studies also lacked depth in exploring public relations management strategies in this specific context.

Based on these limitations, this study aims to fill several gaps in the literature, including: (a) Evidence Gap: Lack of empirical evidence on the effectiveness of public relations management in building the image of madrasahs, (b) Methodological Gap: The need for more comprehensive methods to evaluate public relations management, and (c) Population Gap: Lack of research focusing specifically on Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 3 Cirebon.

This research focuses on how public relations management at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 3 Cirebon can build a positive image of the institution in the eyes of the community. The main research question is: How can effective public relations management strategies enhance the image of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 3 Cirebon?

The objectives of this study are to identify the public relations management strategies implemented at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 3 Cirebon. Evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in building a positive institutional image. Provide recommendations to improve public relations management in other educational institutions.

This research is important because it provides both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of public relations management strategies in educational institutions. The results of this study are expected to offer new insights into how effective public relations management can enhance the image of educational institutions and open opportunities for further research on the implementation of public relations management strategies in various educational contexts in Indonesia. This study has limitations in the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 3 Cirebon and the resources available. However, the findings of this research are expected to serve as a foundation for broader and more in-depth future research.

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative design with a descriptive approach. This design was chosen to deeply understand the public relations management strategies implemented at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 3 Cirebon to build a positive image of the educational institution. Qualitative research is deemed appropriate as it can capture phenomena, perceptions, and actions comprehensively within a natural context (Creswell, 2015).

Participants in this study were purposively selected to ensure the relevance and depth of the information obtained. Nine informants were chosen based on their roles in public relations management and their involvement in activities at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 3 Cirebon. The informants include the head of the madrasah, public relations staff, teachers, and parents of students. This selection aims to obtain a comprehensive perspective on the public relations management strategies implemented.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Observations were conducted to directly observe public relations activities at the madrasah, with the researcher participating in the research subjects' environment and systematically recording data in field notes. In-depth interviews were conducted with the nine informants to gather detailed information regarding the strategies and effectiveness of public relations management. Additionally, document

analysis was performed on transcripts, notes, books, newspapers, agendas, and other relevant documentation (Fitri & Haryanti, 2020).

Data analysis was conducted through several stages:

- a. Data Presentation: Data were presented in a narrative form to provide a comprehensive overview of the public relations management strategies at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 3 Cirebon.
- b. Data Reduction: This process involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming raw data from field notes, interviews, and documents.
- c. Conclusion Drawing/Verification: The researcher sought to identify patterns, meanings, causal relationships, and propositions emerging from the analyzed data. Verification was conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings (Sugiyono, 2018).

This research considers ethical aspects by ensuring that all participants provided written consent before participating. The collected information was kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. This study also received approval from relevant parties at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 3 Cirebon to ensure that the research activities did not disrupt the teaching-learning process and other activities at the madrasah. With this approach, the study is expected to identify effective public relations management strategies, evaluate their effectiveness, and provide recommendations to improve public relations management in other educational institutions.

3. Results

3.1. Public Relations Planning

Planning is a rational and systematic process of determining future decisions and actions to achieve goals effectively and efficiently. The success of a madrasah is measured by its ability to develop and gain public trust. For instance, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri (MIN) 3 Cirebon continuously strives to develop its institution in line with contemporary developments through its vision and mission.

To achieve these goals, MIN 3 Cirebon holds annual meetings involving the head of the madrasah, madrasah representatives, the board of teachers, staff, and other relevant parties to collectively formulate programs. This planning is carried out collectively, covering facilities and infrastructure programs, curriculum, student affairs, and public relations. Suherman, the head of public relations at MIN 3 Cirebon, emphasized that planning is conducted through deliberations led by the head of the madrasah and communicated to the madrasah community and the parents of new students.

Key aspects of PR planning at MIN 3 Cirebon include:

- a. Integrated Planning: Annual meetings involving all parties to develop joint programs.
- b. PR Involvement: Active role of PR in planning communication activities that align with the madrasah's vision and mission.
- c. Budgeting: Sufficient financial resource allocation for PR programs.
- d. Organizational Goals: Building a positive image following the madrasah's vision and mission.

3.2. Public Relations Implementation

The implementation of PR programs is a crucial phase that determines the success of the planning. Effective implementation involves the entire madrasah community in social PR activities, as stated by Rosidin, the head of the madrasah. Activities carried out include extracurricular scouting, social service, Friday blessings, major religious gatherings, press conferences, good relationships with parents, and publications of madrasah works.

Table 1. PR Implementation at MIN 3 Cirebon

No	Activity	Description
1	Dhuha Prayer	Routine religious activity reflecting religious values and goodness.
2	Social Services	Social work contributing positively to the community.
3	Halal bi Halal	Strengthening ties among the madrasah community and the surrounding community.
4	Zakat Fitrah	Collection and distribution of zakat fitrah as a form of concern.
5	Madrasah Visits	Introducing the madrasah to the community and other stakeholders.
6	Historical Tours	Enhancing students' understanding of local history and culture.
7	Friday Blessings	Regular activities to strengthen relationships with the community.
8	PTSP Services	Providing efficient and effective services to the community.
9	Press Releases	Disseminating information about the madrasah's activities and achievements.
10	Orphan Assistance	Providing support to orphans and the underprivileged.
11	Inter-Madrasah Competition	Competitions to introduce the madrasah to the broader community.
12	Qurban	Participation in qurban activities.
13	Dharmawanita	Social and charitable activities to strengthen relationships among the madrasah community and the surrounding community.

3.3. Public Relations Management Evaluation

Evaluation is a critical phase to determine the success level of PR program implementation. This evaluation is conducted through scheduled and case-based evaluation meetings, as well as observations of feedback and community satisfaction levels. Suherman emphasized the importance of evaluation to identify program shortcomings, overcome obstacles, and find solutions for successful implementation.

Evaluation involves:

- a. Success Assessment: Assessing how well the activities have been carried out.
- b. Obstacle Identification: Recognizing and addressing encountered challenges.
- c. Community Feedback: Gathering feedback and suggestions from the community.
- d. Evaluation Meetings: Regular meetings to evaluate the effectiveness of PR programs.

Evaluation provides valuable insights for continuous improvement, ensuring that PR efforts align with the organization's goals.

This research reveals that the PR management strategies implemented at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 3 Cirebon have successfully built a positive image of the educational institution. Integrated planning, involving all madrasah components in PR program formulation, plays a key role in this success. Annual meetings involving the head of the madrasah, teacher representatives, staff, and other relevant parties ensure that each step taken is based on collaboration and consensus, making the programs more effective and efficient. The active involvement of PR in each planning and implementation stage, as well as adequate resource allocation, ensures that each designed program runs smoothly and achieves the desired goals. Various activities, such as Dhuha prayers, social services, and other religious activities, not only strengthen internal relations within the madrasah but also enhance positive relationships with the surrounding community.

Furthermore, regular evaluations through scheduled meetings and community feedback help identify shortcomings and seek improvement solutions. This comprehensive evaluation ensures that each PR program not only meets short-term goals but also aligns with the madrasah's long-term vision and mission. With systematic evaluations, MIN 3 Cirebon can continuously improve the quality of its PR programs, adapting to the community's developments and needs. The results of this research provide important recommendations for other educational institutions to adopt a similar approach, emphasizing the importance of collaboration, active involvement, and continuous evaluation in PR management. Proper implementation of these strategies will help other educational institutions build a strong positive image in the eyes of the public, increasing trust and support from various stakeholders.

4. Discussion

This study aims to examine public relations (PR) management strategies in enhancing the image of educational institutions, specifically at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri (MIN) 3 Cirebon. This research is relevant in the educational context because a positive institutional image can attract public interest and increase trust in the institution. Azlina (2021) and Sandyakala (2020) demonstrated that institutional image can be shaped through effective PR management, where the organizational identity is well communicated both physically and non-physically.

This study found that integrated PR planning, involving various related parties, as well as systematic implementation and evaluation, are key to successfully building a positive image of MIN 3 Cirebon. This success was achieved through annual meetings involving the head of the madrasah, teacher representatives, staff, and other relevant parties to jointly formulate programs. The active involvement of the PR team in planning and adequate resource allocation also ensures that each program runs as planned.

These findings align with the research of Dwiyama & Nurhasanah (2020) and Alwi & Kitchen (2014), which show that brand image is built through the creation, maintenance, and modification of perceptions. This also supports Hasanah's (2019) view that both internal and external PR activities contribute to the development of the school's image.

A positive institutional image is built through effective PR management, where well-planned communication and social activities play an important role. Planning that involves all components of the madrasah ensures collaboration and consensus, making the designed programs more effective and efficient. PR activities such as Dhuha prayers, social services, and other religious activities not only strengthen internal relationships but also foster positive relationships with the surrounding community.

While the findings of this study show the success of PR strategies at MIN 3 Cirebon, these results should be interpreted with caution. The complexity of PR management and the variability of social conditions at each educational institution can affect the effectiveness of the strategies implemented. Therefore, these results may not be fully generalizable to all educational institutions.

These findings have important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this research adds to the literature on PR management in the educational context, particularly in building a positive institutional image. Practically, these results provide guidance for other educational institutions in adopting effective PR strategies to enhance their image and gain public trust.

Future research can further explore the factors influencing the effectiveness of PR management in various educational institution contexts. Subsequent studies could also focus on developing more specific indicators to measure the success of PR programs. Additionally, further research could explore the long-term impact of PR activities on the image of educational institutions.

These findings underscore the importance of effective PR management in building a positive image of educational institutions. The results support the theory that good communication and relevant social activities can enhance the institution's image. Moreover, these findings emphasize the importance of the active involvement of all madrasah components in the planning and implementation of PR programs.

This study has several limitations. First, it focuses on a single educational institution, so the results may not be generalizable to all educational contexts. Second, the study uses qualitative methods that may have subjective bias from the researcher. Third, data collection was conducted over a specific period, so dynamic changes in PR management were not fully captured.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that other educational institutions adopt a collaborative and systematic approach to PR management. Additionally, further research is needed to examine the effectiveness of PR strategies in various contexts and to develop more comprehensive

evaluation tools. Implementing these strategies will help educational institutions build a strong positive image, increasing trust and support from various stakeholders..

5. Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of public relations (PR) management strategies in building a positive image for Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 3 Cirebon. The research successfully identified, evaluated, and provided recommendations regarding effective PR strategies within the context of this educational institution. Through integrated planning involving all relevant parties, adequate resource allocation, and regular evaluation, MIN 3 Cirebon has been able to enhance its positive image in the eyes of the community.

The study found that integrated planning and active involvement of all stakeholders in PR management are key to successfully building a positive image for Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 3 Cirebon. Annual meetings involving the head of the madrasah, teacher representatives, staff, and other relevant parties ensure that each implemented program is based on collaboration and consensus, thus making them more effective and efficient. PR activities such as Dhuha prayers, social services, and other religious activities not only strengthen internal relations within the madrasah but also foster positive relationships with the surrounding community. Additionally, regular evaluations conducted through scheduled meetings and feedback from the community help identify shortcomings and seek solutions for continuous improvement, ensuring that each PR program not only meets short-term goals but also aligns with the madrasah's long-term vision and mission.

The study recommends that other educational institutions adopt a collaborative and systematic approach to PR management. The active involvement of all institutional components in the planning and implementation of PR programs is crucial for achieving effective outcomes. Continuous evaluation is also necessary to ensure that the programs remain relevant to the needs and developments of the community.

This study provides a foundation for further research that can explore factors influencing the effectiveness of PR management in various educational institution contexts. Future research could also focus on developing more specific indicators to measure the success of PR programs and their long-term impact on the institution's image.

The study has several limitations, including its focus on a single educational institution, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. The qualitative method used may also contain subjective bias, and the data collected only covers a specific period, so dynamic changes in PR management are not fully captured.

Overall, this study reaffirms the importance of effective PR management in building a positive image of educational institutions. Implementing appropriate strategies will help educational institutions gain trust and support from the community and various stakeholders.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Efrita Norman conceived the presented idea. Sulaiman, Lina Marliani, Dian Widiyantari, Intan Nur Rasini and Maftuhah Dewi developed the theory. All authors discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript.

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Data availability statement

The datasets generated during and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Interest's statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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