

## A Model for Public Relations Management in Islamic Boarding Schools Based on Islamic Values in Addressing Public Stigmatization

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### ABSTRACT

This study addresses the critical reputational challenges faced by Islamic boarding schools in the digital age, where the rapid flow of information amplifies the risk of public stigmatization. Recognizing their dual role as transmitters of religious knowledge and builders of social legitimacy through communication practices rooted in Islamic values, this study develops a precise model of public relations management for pesantren. The model is grounded in the operationalization of core Islamic values amanah, idq, tabl gh, and ikmah and aims to equip Islamic boarding schools with effective strategies to counter negative public perception. Employing a qualitative case study at Pondok Pesantren Kasyifudduja Madura Ra'as, the research demonstrates that integrating religious values with modern public relations practices ensures a more adaptive, ethical, and sustainable institutional reputation. The study's thesis is that only through such integration can Islamic boarding schools effectively address public stigmatization and maintain credibility in contemporary societal contexts.

**Keyword** : Public Relations Management, Islamic Values, Public Stigmatization

### INTRODUCTION

Public relations management is crucial for maintaining and building the reputation of educational institutions, particularly pesantren, which have deep roots in Indonesian society <sup>1</sup>. Pesantren serve both as centers for Islamic knowledge and as social institutions that engage with the public <sup>2</sup>. Thus, public relations is not just an administrative function but a strategic process aligning institutional interests with societal expectations <sup>3</sup>. It aims to build image, manage trust, and foster harmonious stakeholder relationships <sup>4</sup>. In Islamic boarding schools, public relations reflect Islamic values that shape the institution's ethics, orientation, and communication. Therefore, public relations management in these schools must be seen as a religious-value-based practice focused on public good and institutional reputation.

In practice, Islamic boarding schools face reputational challenges from external stigmas and negative perceptions, exacerbated by the rapid dissemination of misinformation through digital information and social media. Unverified information can shape damaging public opinion if not managed strategically. At Kasyifudduja Islamic Boarding School, reputation

<sup>1</sup> Michael L. Kent and Chaoyuan Li, "Toward a Normative Social Media Theory for Public Relations," *Public Relations Review* 46, no. 1 (2020): 101857.

<sup>2</sup> Moh Roqib, "Increasing Social Class through Islamic Boarding Schools in Indonesia," *Journal of Social Studies Education Research* 12, no. 2 (2021): 305–29.

<sup>3</sup> Sophia Charlotte Volk and Ansgar Zerfass, "Alignment: Explicating a Key Concept in Strategic Communication," *Future Directions of Strategic Communication*, 2020, 105–23.

<sup>4</sup> Chiara Valentini, "Trust Research in Public Relations: An Assessment of Its Conceptual, Theoretical and Methodological Foundations," *Corporate Communications: An International Journal* 26, no. 1 (2021): 84–106.

management is a real challenge amid this information flood. Negative perceptions about educational practices and student discipline, such as institutional secrecy or rigid teaching methods, often circulate on social media and shape public opinion inaccurately. This causes confusion among parents, prospective students, and the public, undermining trust in Islamic boarding schools. To address this, boarding schools must establish adaptive, innovative public relations functions that build positive narratives and proactively manage perceptions and reputation crises.

Academic research shows that public relations management in Islamic boarding schools is key to fostering stakeholder relationships.<sup>5</sup> note that effective strategies enhance communication with communities, alumni, and parents through structured internal and external responsibilities.<sup>6</sup> highlight public relations' role in building trust through journalism training, social media management, and promoting student achievements.<sup>7</sup> stress that public relations strategies must evolve with the digital era and use two-way communication to boost reputation. Most studies focus on technical and digital aspects, leaving a gap regarding how Islamic values serve as the operational framework for addressing negative issues and public stigmatization. The novelty of this study is its exploration of Islam's philosophical and moral values as the foundation for public relations.

Although previous research has made significant contributions to understanding public relations practices in Islamic boarding schools, most studies have focused on technical and digital aspects of public relations, such as the use of social media, online publications, and technology-based communication strategies. Such approaches tend to treat Islamic values as a normative backdrop rather than as operational components that can be systematically implemented in public relations management. To date, no research has been found that specifically integrates the values of *amanah*, *idq*, *tabligh*, and *ikmah* as operational variables in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of pesantren public relations activities. Consequently, there remain limitations in explaining how Islamic values can function as strategic mechanisms for addressing negative issues, building public trust, and overcoming stigmatization of Islamic boarding schools. Addressing this gap, this study proposes a new conceptual model that integrates Islamic values with modern public relations theory, thereby producing a framework for pesantren public relations management that is not only communicatively effective but also grounded in Islamic ethical principles.

This study aims to develop a public relations management model for Islamic boarding schools based on Islamic values, particularly in addressing negative issues and public stigmatization. Specifically, this study explores: which Islamic values serve as the foundation for public relations practices in Islamic boarding schools, how these schools leverage community relationships to build a positive image, and how public relations professionals respond to negative issues as an opportunity to strengthen the school's reputation. The urgency of this research is increasingly significant given that Islamic boarding schools in the digital age often face a flood of information that can lead to negative perceptions if not handled strategically. The findings of this study are expected to provide a strong empirical foundation for further research in the field of Islamic educational organization communication, as well as serve as a reference for designing more ethical and sustainable public relations practices.

This study focuses on identifying the Islamic values that shape public relations management in Islamic boarding schools as a normative foundation for public relations practices. In addition, this study analyzes how community relations contribute to reducing public stigmatization and strengthening the positive image of Islamic boarding schools amid the dynamics of public opinion. Furthermore, this study explores how these various findings

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<sup>5</sup> "Implementation of Public Relations in Building the Image of Educational Institutions in Madrasah Aliyah," *Asatiza: Jurnal Pendidikan* 5, no. 3 (2024): 291–306.

<sup>6</sup> "Public Relations Curriculum: A Systematic Examination of Curricular Offerings in Social Media, Digital Media, and Analytics in Accredited Programs," *Public Relations Education* 7, no. 2 (2021): 7.

<sup>7</sup> "Increasing Public Interest through School Image Branding through a Trending Approach," *Educazione: Journal of Education and Learning* 1, no. 1 (2023): 41–53.

can be synthesized into an integrative and practical model of public relations management based on Islamic values within the context of public relations management at Islamic boarding schools.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design<sup>8</sup>. This approach was chosen to understand the public relations management practices of Islamic boarding schools in addressing negative issues and public stigmatization. The research location was selected at the Kasyifudduja Madura Ra'as Islamic Boarding School because it possesses distinctive institutional characteristics, a clear public relations management structure, and a high level of public interaction with parents, alumni, and the surrounding community. These conditions make this boarding school a relevant research context for examining the dynamics of public relations communication and the sustainable shaping of the institution's image.

Based on the results of initial research and observations, it is known that the Kasyifudduja Madura Ra'as Islamic Boarding School has faced shifts in public perception that have led to the emergence of certain stigmas within the community. In some situations, the boarding school has also faced communication issues requiring swift and targeted handling, indicating the potential for a communication crisis that needs to be effectively managed by the public relations team. On the other hand, this boarding school already has a fairly well-structured public relations system, characterized by a division of roles in information management and communication with students' guardians, alumni, and the surrounding community. These conditions indicate that the boarding school's communication landscape is complex enough to warrant a more in-depth study in the context of public relations management and the sustainable development of the institution's image.

**Tabel 1. Research Informants**

No	Informant	Number
1	Pesantren Secretariat Staff	1
2	Pesantren Affairs Bureau Staff	1
3	School Principal	1
4	Pesantren Staff	1
5	Current Student	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>5</b>

There were five informants in this study, consisting of boarding school administrators, officials from the boarding school affairs bureau, staff from the boarding school secretariat, a school principal, and a current student. Informants were selected through purposive sampling because they participated directly in public relations activities and had involvement relevant to the research focus. In-depth interviews were conducted and continued until thematic saturation was reached that is, the point at which no new information or themes could be derived from the data obtained. Thus, this number of informants is considered sufficient to support the depth of the analysis and the validity of the research findings.

The data collection methods used in this study comprised three techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentary analysis. This study also employed content analysis of official documents and public relations archives from the pesantren to examine narratives, strategic messages, and institutional response patterns to negative issues in the public sphere<sup>9</sup>. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each informant for approximately 45–90 minutes and took place during the field data collection period, allowing

<sup>8</sup> Muhaemin Latif and Erwin Hafid, "Multicultural Attitudes in an Islamic Boarding School of South Sulawesi–Indonesia," *Cogent Education* 8, no. 1 (2021): 1968736.

<sup>9</sup> Catherine Blaya, "Cyberhate: A Review and Content Analysis of Intervention Strategies," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 45 (2019): 163–72.

the informants to reflectively share their experiences<sup>10</sup>. Participatory observation was conducted for approximately one month within the Islamic boarding school community to directly observe the patterns of communication and social interaction that took place<sup>11</sup>. Meanwhile, documentation was conducted on approximately 7 official pesantren documents, including public relations archives, meeting minutes, and program reports, which were analyzed throughout the research process to support the validity of the data<sup>12</sup>. Data from interviews, observations, and documentation were then compared to identify consistency and differences in perspective among the informants. Data analysis employed the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, conducted iteratively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions<sup>13</sup>. Data from interviews, observations, and documentation were categorized to identify patterns in public relations practices, community relations, and the pesantren's responses to negative issues. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and techniques to produce a comprehensive and contextual understanding.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Islamic Values as a Guiding Principle for Public Relations

Islamic values serve as the primary foundation for public relations management in Islamic boarding schools, particularly in addressing negative issues and safeguarding the institution's reputation. Based on interviews and observations with Mahbubul Huda, a member of the boarding school administration, he stated that principles such as amanah (trust), idq (honesty), tabligh (conveying information), and ikmah (wisdom) are consistently used as guidelines in designing communication strategies<sup>14</sup>. These values not only serve as ethical guidelines but also shape the direction of communication, determine how messages are conveyed, select media, and formulate the boarding school's official narrative. Based on an interview with Lukma Mahbubi, a member of the secretariat, he also emphasized that communication grounded in Islamic values can enhance credibility, build public trust, and minimize misunderstandings<sup>15</sup>. Thus, Islamic values serve a dual role as both a moral framework and a practical strategy in public relations management, ensuring that every communication action remains aligned with the pesantren's teachings and fosters a sustainable, positive image.

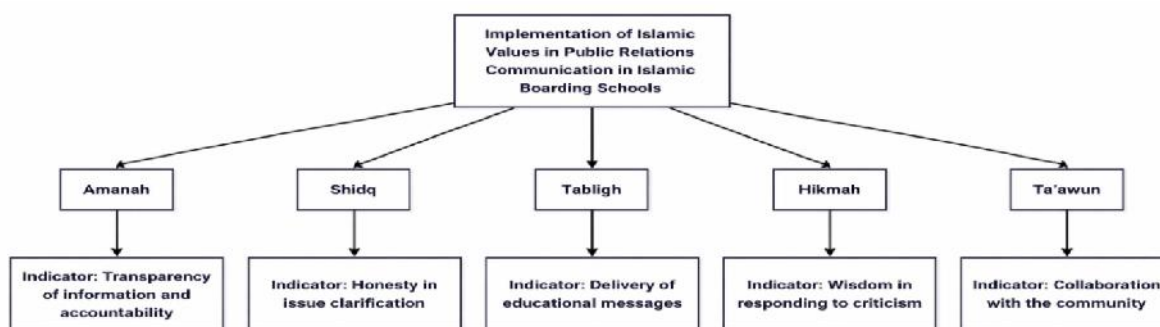


Figure 1. Islamic Values as a Guiding Principle for Public Relations Communication

<sup>10</sup> Tania Buys et al., "A Reflexive Lens on Preparing and Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews with Academic Colleagues," *Qualitative Health Research* 32, no. 13 (2022): 2030–39.

<sup>11</sup> Chatia Hastasari, Benni Setiawan, and Suranto Aw, "Students' Communication Patterns of Islamic Boarding Schools: The Case of Students in Muallimin Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta," *Heliyon* 8, no. 1 (2022).

<sup>12</sup> Linjuan Rita Men, Julie O'Neil, and Michele Ewing, "Examining the Effects of Internal Social Media Usage on Employee Engagement," *Public Relations Review* 46, no. 2 (2020): 101880.

<sup>13</sup> Sue Monaro, Janice Gullick, and Sandra West, "Qualitative Data Analysis for Health Research: A Step-by-Step Example of Phenomenological Interpretation," *Qualitative Report* 27, no. 4 (2022): 1040–57.

<sup>14</sup> Mahbubul Huda, *No Title . Berdasarkan Hasil Wawancara Dan Observasi* (2026).

<sup>15</sup> Lukma Mahbubi, *No Title Berdasarkan Hasil Wawancara Dan Observasi* (2026).

Based on Figure 1, it can be concluded that honesty ( *idq*) and trustworthiness are the most dominant values implemented in public relations communication, followed by *tabl gh*, *ikmah*, and *ta' wun*. Based on the results of interviews and observations with Datu Rusdiyah, a boarding school administrator, she also emphasized that honesty is the primary principle when providing clarifications regarding negative issues, while trustworthiness is manifested in accountability and transparency regarding the boarding school's activities <sup>16</sup>. The value of *tabl gh* is more widely applied through the dissemination of educational information and *da'wah*, while *ikmah* plays a role in resolving conflicts and ensuring communication remains polite. *Ta' wun* emphasizes active collaboration with the community and alumni to support the boarding school's reputation. In other words, the *pesantren*'s public relations practices are not merely formal communication techniques, but are guided by Islamic values that serve as operational guidelines, ensuring that every communication action remains consistent and measured in building public trust.

The analysis of the diagram reveals a hierarchical pattern of Islamic values in *pesantren* public relations practices. The most frequently mentioned values, *idq* and *amanah*, focus on transparency and accountability, indicating that the publication of honest and responsible information is a top priority. The value of *tabl gh* supports active communication with the community, while *ikmah* and *ta' wun* strengthen interpersonal and collaborative communication. Visually, it is evident that the higher the frequency with which a value is mentioned, the more dominant its role in shaping the direction of public relations strategy. This pattern indicates that Islamic boarding schools place greater emphasis on moral values as operational guides, rather than merely media techniques. In other words, public relations in Islamic boarding schools builds reputation through internalized values, not just external campaigns, ensuring that communication is consistent, credible, and long-term oriented. This pattern also confirms that the integration of Islamic values is not a formality but a practical guideline that guides every public relations decision.

The dominance of *idq* and *amanah* stems from the fact that *pesantren* face challenges posed by negative issues and public stigmatization that could potentially damage their reputation. The values of honesty and trust are considered the most effective for managing public perception, building credibility, and minimizing public skepticism. Additionally, *tabl gh*, *ikmah*, and *ta' wun* support a proactive, educational, and collaborative communication pattern, enabling *pesantren* not only to react to issues but also to continuously shape positive narratives. An interpretation of this pattern indicates that Islamic values serve as both an ethical filter and an operational strategy; these values are most frequently prioritized because they have a direct impact on the trust and loyalty of the community served. Thus, *pesantren* public relations practices are not merely information management but value-based reputation management, combining Islamic ethical principles with modern communication strategies to effectively address public challenges.

### **Community Relationships as a Shield Against Stigma**

Community relationships within the *pesantren* play a strategic role in building a positive image and mitigating potential negative stigma that may arise from the outside community. Based on interviews and observations with Lukma Mahbubi, a member of the secretariat, he stated that intensive interaction between the *pesantren* and its alumni, students' families, and local residents serves as the primary foundation for shaping positive perceptions <sup>17</sup>. The community ties formed extend beyond academic activities to include social and *da'wah* initiatives that address the needs of the community. This approach enables the *pesantren* to build a network of trust, strengthen solidarity, and cultivate an image as a transparent institution that is responsive to social issues. Active community involvement also encourages students to understand their social responsibilities, thereby reducing the likelihood of unfounded stigma against the *pesantren*.

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<sup>16</sup> Datu Rusdiyah, *No Title Berdasarkan Hasil Wawancara Dan Observasi* (2026).

<sup>17</sup> Mahbubi, *No Title Berdasarkan Hasil Wawancara Dan Observasi*.

**Tabel 2. Community Relationships as a Shield Against Stigma**

<b>Community Relations</b>	<b>Practice Indicators</b>	<b>Examples of Implementation</b>
Alumni	Alumni involvement in activities	Academic support, financial assistance, mentoring
Students' Families	Regular communication and coordination	Parent meetings, updates on students' progress
Local Residents	Collaboration on social activities	Community service
Students	Internal solidarity and support	Mentoring programs, student leadership activities

The interview data presented in the table shows that the pesantren community is divided into several main segments: alumni, students' families, local residents, and the students themselves. The frequency of mentions indicates that interactions with students and their families are the most dominant; this aligns with what Lukaman Mahbubi, a member of the secretariat, stated: that alumni also play a significant role as study mentors and motivators, while local residents are more frequently mentioned in the context of social activities and educational programs<sup>18</sup>. In other words, the pesantren builds intense and multidimensional relationships with various parties to strengthen its social network. This underscores that stigma against the pesantren does not arise naturally, as the pesantren actively fosters open and collaborative communication with the surrounding community, thereby minimizing negative perceptions that might emerge from external parties.

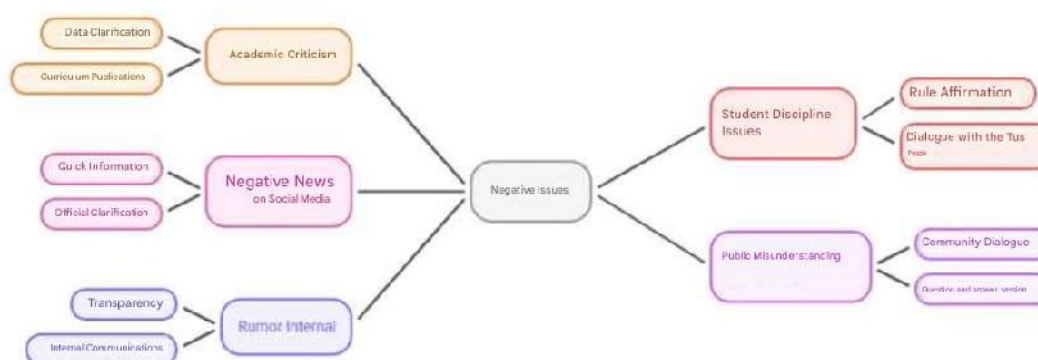
The table reveals a consistent pattern: the more intense the interaction, the higher the frequency with which informants acknowledge the role of the community. Students and their families form the center of these relationships, reflecting the pesantren's internal focus on support and coordination. Alumni serve as liaisons between the pesantren and the outside community, while local residents function as a source of external social reinforcement through collaborative activities. This pattern illustrates a two-way communication model internal to the pesantren, which strengthens solidarity, and external, which builds a positive image. Mentoring and community service activities not only strengthen networks but also provide tangible evidence to the public that the pesantren actively plays a role in human resource development, thereby countering negative stigmas through concrete and consistent actions.

This pattern arises because Islamic boarding schools recognize the importance of building relationships based on trust and social responsibility. The high frequency of interaction with students and their families indicates that robust internal communication serves as the foundation for strengthening the community's moral values and loyalty. The roles of alumni and the surrounding community enhance the boarding school's credibility in the public eye, while also serving as channels for disseminating a positive image. This interpretation of the data suggests that stigma against Islamic boarding schools can be mitigated through participatory and collaborative communication strategies. The pattern that has emerged is not coincidental but the result of a systematic managerial approach: Islamic boarding schools not only emphasize academic activities but also build social networks that foster a sense of ownership, participation, and mutual trust, enabling them to present themselves as inclusive institutions trusted by the broader community.

<sup>18</sup> Mahbubi, *No Title Berdasarkan Hasil Wawancara Dan Observasi*.

## Negative Issues as an Opportunity to Strengthen the Institution's Image

Negative issues that arise in society are often viewed as a threat to the image of Islamic boarding schools; however, research findings indicate that such issues can actually be leveraged as an opportunity to strengthen the institution's image. Based on interviews and observations with Lukman Mahbubi, a member of the secretariat, the pesantren responds to negative issues through a transparent, swift, and educational communication approach. This strategy includes official clarifications through open dialogue, as well as the dissemination of fact-based information via media, including social media and community meetings<sup>19</sup>. This approach not only mitigates negative impacts but also enhances public trust in Islamic boarding schools. By addressing issues professionally, the boarding schools demonstrate a commitment to Islamic values, such as trustworthiness and truthfulness, so that every negative issue has the potential to serve as a means of affirming the boarding schools' integrity, competence, and contributions to education and social activities.



**Figure 2. Momentum for Image Enhancement**

Interview data indicate that each negative issue is addressed with a different communication strategy, depending on the type of issue and its impact on the pesantren. The frequency of mentions suggests that the most frequently cited issues are negative news on social media, followed by issues regarding student discipline and academic criticism. Public misunderstandings and internal rumors, although less frequent, are still addressed through transparency and dialogue. In other words, the pesantren systematically leverages the momentum of every negative issue to reaffirm the institution's values of integrity, transparency, and professionalism. This layered and adaptive response strategy demonstrates that the pesantren does not merely passively confront stigma but actively uses every issue to strengthen its positive image in the eyes of the public and the internal community.

Based on interviews and observations with Mr. Subhan Noor, the principal of MA Kasyifudduja, he stated that issues regarding student discipline and academic criticism require stricter enforcement of rules and transparency in the learning process, while public misunderstandings are addressed through community dialogue<sup>20</sup>. This approach demonstrates a two-way communication strategy, both internal and external, aimed at fostering positive perceptions. Prompt, consistent, and fact-based responses are a hallmark of the pesantren's public relations strategy. Thus, every negative issue is not merely resolved but utilized as an educational tool and tangible evidence of the pesantren's commitment to Islamic values, building public trust, and continuously strengthening the institution's image.

This pattern arises because Islamic boarding schools recognize the importance of professional reputation management. A systematic response grounded in Islamic values, such

<sup>19</sup> Mahbubi, *No Title Berdasarkan Hasil Wawancara Dan Observasi*.

<sup>20</sup> Subhan Noor, *No Title Berdasarkan Hasil Wawancara Dan Observasi* (2026).

as amanah (transparency) and idq (honesty), demonstrates that negative issues can actually serve as strategic tools for strengthening their image. This interpretation of the data indicates that Islamic boarding schools view issues as an opportunity for both internal reflection and external education. By prioritizing swift, clear, and dialogic communication, these institutions are able to counter negative perceptions and transform them into opportunities to enhance public trust. This strategy also demonstrates managerial skills in pesantren-based public relations: every issue is analyzed, communicated, and responded to professionally, so that pesantren not only dispel stigma but also strengthen their legitimacy and reputation as educational institutions that are transparent, adaptive, and of high integrity.

This study aims to understand how Islamic boarding schools leverage community relations and the management of negative issues as strategies for strengthening their institutional image. Conceptually, Islamic boarding schools are not merely educational institutions but also socio-religious entities with extensive networks of relationships involving students, alumni, students' families, and the surrounding community<sup>21</sup>. In this context, institutional image is not solely shaped by academic performance but also by public perceptions of the pesantren's values, integrity, and social contributions<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, pesantren-based public relations strategies cannot be separated from the foundation of Islamic values that form the institutional spirit.

The findings indicate that Islamic boarding schools actively foster internal and external communication grounded in Islamic values, such as amanah (trustworthiness), idq (honesty), tabl gh (transparency in communication), and ikmah (wisdom). These values do not remain merely at the normative level but are operationalized in daily communication practices. For instance, when facing negative issues, boarding school administrators do not merely provide formal clarifications but also prioritize internal deliberation, collective fact-checking, and the dissemination of information that reassures the public without resorting to emotional (reactive) responses. This approach demonstrates that strategic communication in Islamic boarding schools is rooted in religious ethics, which simultaneously distinguishes it from modern corporate public relations models that tend to be image-oriented.

The research question regarding pesantren-based public relations strategies is addressed by identifying communication practices that involve students, alumni, families, and local residents as key stakeholders in building reputation. Students are not merely positioned as learners but also as ambassadors of values who represent the pesantren's image in social and digital spaces. Alumni serve as opinion leaders in the community who can lend legitimacy to the institution when negative issues arise. Meanwhile, students' families serve as emotional liaisons who strengthen public trust in the pesantren education system. This participatory model demonstrates that reputation is built collaboratively, not solely by formal public relations structures.

These findings confirm that image enhancement is not merely a reactive response to criticism but is proactive in nature through community collaboration and information transparency, in line with the principles of ethics-based communication proposed by<sup>23</sup>. From this perspective, organizations grounded in ethical values possess stronger reputational resilience because the public assesses the consistency between messages and actions. The Islamic boarding schools in this study demonstrated this consistency through practices of openness in parent forums, regular publication of activities, and the leadership's readiness to engage in direct dialogue with the community when sensitive issues arise.

Furthermore, the study's findings indicate that negative issues such as academic criticism, disciplinary problems among students, and social media coverage are addressed

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<sup>21</sup> Melanie C. Brooks et al., "Principals as Socio-Religious Curators: Progressive and Conservative Approaches in Islamic Schools," *Journal of Educational Administration* 58, no. 6 (2020): 677–95.

<sup>22</sup> Glory Islamic, M. Ishaq, and Umi Dayati, "Character Education through Philosophical Values in Traditional Islamic Boarding Schools," *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences* 45, no. 1 (2024): 31–42.

<sup>23</sup> "One Community at a Time": Promoting Community Resilience in the Face of Natural Hazards and Public Health Challenges," *BMC Public Health* 23, no. 1 (2023): 2510.

through communication strategies that are prompt, transparent, and educational. Prompt responses are implemented to prevent the spread of unverified rumors<sup>24</sup>. Transparency is achieved through official clarifications and direct meetings with relevant parties<sup>25</sup>. Meanwhile, an educational approach involves explaining the context, procedures, and underlying values of the pesantren's policies<sup>26</sup>. This pattern supports the crisis communication theory proposed by<sup>27</sup> which emphasizes the importance of fact-based responses and organizational values for building credibility. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, facts and values are two inseparable pillars; facts ensure objectivity, while values guarantee moral integrity.

In practice, this strategy demonstrates the integration of crisis management and character development. When a disciplinary violation occurs, for example, the pesantren does not merely impose sanctions but also explains the educational philosophy underlying them. Thus, negative issues are not viewed merely as a threat to reputation but as part of the institutional education and learning process. This approach reveals a reflective dimension in the pesantren's public relations management, where every crisis serves as an opportunity for evaluation and system improvement.

Furthermore, the practice of maintaining close community ties with alumni and students' families aligns with the perspective of social capital theory, as outlined by<sup>28</sup>, in which social networks serve as a source of legitimacy and institutional support. Social capital in the context of Islamic boarding schools is built through emotional closeness, shared values, and collective experiences during the educational period. When negative issues arise, this network functions as a reputational buffer that helps disseminate accurate information and counter unfounded opinions. This demonstrates that the strength of Islamic boarding schools lies in their close social integration.

Significantly, these findings differ from previous research, which has tended to emphasize formal organizational communication or mass media. As noted by<sup>29</sup>, communication by educational institutions often focuses on external publication strategies and branding. However, this study shows that Islamic boarding schools utilize community relations and negative issues as proactive tools, not merely as a reactive measure. This means that communication does not stop at clarification but extends to reinforcing shared values and internal cohesion.

The expansion of organizational communication theory in this study lies in the integration of religious values with the local social context. Conventional crisis communication models tend to focus on organizational reputation and stability. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, this stability is measured not only by public perception but also by alignment with Sharia principles and Islamic ethics<sup>30</sup>. Thus, the success of communication is not only assessed by the resolution of the issue but also by the preservation of trust and barakah as symbolic values held dear by the community.

From a theoretical perspective, this study emphasizes the need to integrate religious values into crisis communication and reputation management models<sup>31</sup>. The values of amanah,

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<sup>24</sup> Xiwei Wang et al., "A Rumor Reversal Model of Online Health Information during the Covid-19 Epidemic," *Information Processing & Management* 58, no. 6 (2021): 102731.

<sup>25</sup> David E. Pozen, "Seeing Transparency More Clearly," *Public Administration Review* 80, no. 2 (2020): 326–31.

<sup>26</sup> As'aril Muhajir, "Inclusion of Pluralism Character Education in the Islamic Modern Boarding Schools during the Pandemic Era," *Journal of Social Studies Education Research* 13, no. 2 (2022): 196–220.

<sup>27</sup> "Conceptualizing and Contextualizing 'Executive Wisdom' as a Framework for Business Leadership: A Grounded Theory Approach," *Business & Society*, 2024, 00076503241255540.

<sup>28</sup> "Increasing Social Class through Islamic Boarding Schools in Indonesia."

<sup>29</sup> "Branding Higher Education: An Exploration of the Role of Internal Branding on Middle Management in a University Rebrand," *Tertiary Education and Management* 26, no. 2 (2020): 131–49.

<sup>30</sup> Islamic, Ishaq, and Dayati, "Character Education through Philosophical Values in Traditional Islamic Boarding Schools."

<sup>31</sup> Tom Christensen and Per Lægheid, "The Coronavirus Crisis—Crisis Communication, Meaning-Making, and Reputation Management," *International Public Management Journal* 23, no. 5 (2020): 713–29.

idq, tabl gh, and ikmah can be positioned as normative variables that moderate the effectiveness of communication strategies. This means that the same strategy can produce different impacts if it is not supported by moral integrity. This contribution opens the door for the development of a more contextual value-based communication model for Islamic educational institutions.

From a methodological perspective, this study also enriches the field of educational public relations through a qualitative approach that emphasizes subjective experiences and contextual practices. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the meanings constructed by pesantren stakeholders in interpreting negative issues. Thus, this study yields not only descriptive but also interpretive findings, explaining how organizational values and culture shape communication responses.

Practically, these findings recommend that Islamic boarding schools strengthen transparency-based documentation and publication systems, expand the involvement of alumni as reputation ambassadors, and develop digital literacy among students so they can respond wisely to issues on social media<sup>32</sup>. These proactive strategies can enhance public trust and minimize the negative stigma often attached to religious-based educational institutions.

Furthermore, this study opens up opportunities for comparative research between pesantren and other educational institutions regarding the management of negative issues and the building of social capital. Such a comparison could reveal differences in communication patterns between religiously-based institutions and secular institutions. Additionally, further research could explore the role of kiai leadership in shaping strategic communication directions, given that the figure of the kiai often serves as the center of moral and symbolic legitimacy within the pesantren structure<sup>33</sup>.

In summary, this study addresses a gap in the literature regarding Islamic-value-based public relations practices in pesantren by integrating crisis communication approaches, community relationship building, and information transparency. Key findings indicate that institutional image enhancement can be achieved through proactive responses to negative issues, community collaboration, and the operational implementation of Islamic values. This contribution expands organizational communication theory by incorporating previously under-explored religious and social contexts, and provides an empirical foundation for the future development of pesantren-based public relations practices.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that public relations management in Islamic boarding schools based on Islamic values plays a significant role in strengthening the institution's image, particularly in addressing negative issues and public stigmatization. The values of amanah, idq, tabl gh, and ikmah serve not only as normative guidelines but are also operationally implemented in internal and external communication strategies. Community relations involving students, alumni, students' families, and the surrounding community have proven to be effective social capital in mitigating stigma and building public trust. Furthermore, negative issues are not viewed merely as threats to reputation but are utilized as opportunities for reflection, clarification, and public education in a transparent and dialogic manner. Thus, the findings of this study suggest that the integration of religious values with modern communication strategies can create an adaptive, ethical, and sustainable public relations model for Islamic boarding schools in maintaining institutional legitimacy in the digital age.

This study has limitations because it focuses on a single case study location; therefore, broad generalizations of the findings should be made with caution. Consequently, further research involving multiple Islamic boarding schools with different characteristics is needed to

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<sup>32</sup> Benyamin Situmorang, "Development of Traditional Management Model of Traditional Islamic Boarding School Education Based on Total Quality Management in Islamic Education (Tqm-Ie) in Aceh Province, Indonesia," *Journal of Positive School Psychology* 6, no. 5 (2022): 7355–77.

<sup>33</sup> Roqib, "Increasing Social Class through Islamic Boarding Schools in Indonesia."

strengthen the validity of the proposed model. Follow-up research could also explore the role of kiai leadership, students' digital literacy, and the effectiveness of social media in value-based communication strategies. Additionally, quantitative analysis of public trust levels and the concrete impact of public relations strategies on improving institutional image could serve as important recommendations to enrich the study of communication in Islamic educational organizations in a more comprehensive and empirical manner.

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