

PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGEMENT IN ENHANCING STUDENT ENROLMENT AT MADRASAH ALIYAH NEGERI LOMBOK BARAT

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse public relations management in increasing student enrolment at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Lombok Barat. The research employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. The research subjects were selected through purposive sampling and included the head of the madrasah, the vice principal for public relations, one student, and one student's parent. Data were collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation studies. The collected data were analysed using an interactive analysis model comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data validity was ensured through technique triangulation. The findings indicate that public relations management at MAN Lombok Barat is implemented systematically through the core management functions of planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation, particularly in the New Student Admission (PPDB) program. The public relations strategies applied include information dissemination through digital and print media, collaboration with internal and external stakeholders, and social activities aimed at strengthening the madrasah's relationship with the community. The increase in student enrolment is influenced by community satisfaction with the quality of educational services, the positive image of the madrasah, and the active participation of the madrasah community and alumni. This study provides both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of Islamic Education Management, particularly in the management of public relations as a strategic approach to enhancing the sustainability of Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: public relations management; student enrolment; madrasah aliyah; Islamic education management.

Introduction

Education is a fundamental and strategic process in the development of human quality, encompassing physical, intellectual, emotional, social, moral,

and spiritual dimensions. Pedagogical activities are essentially directed toward improving the quality of human life from its initial condition to a more meaningful, dignified, and competitive

existence. Therefore, education is not merely oriented toward the transfer of knowledge, but also toward the formation of character, attitudes, and values that support the sustainability of individual and social life (Amos Neolaka & Grace Amialia A. Neolaka, 2017).

Schools, as formal educational institutions, play a strategic role in realizing educational objectives through planned and systematic learning processes. The success of schools in achieving these objectives is largely determined by the quality of their management, particularly in organizing and empowering human resources such as educators, educational staff, students, and other stakeholders. Professional and well-directed institutional management is a fundamental prerequisite to ensure that educational processes operate effectively and efficiently.

Conceptually, management is understood as a process that includes planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling resources to achieve predetermined objectives. Terry defines management as a distinctive process consisting of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling activities through the utilization of human and other resources (Pinarangi, 2017). Similarly, Koontz and O'Donnell view management as the accomplishment of objectives through cooperation and coordination of the activities of others (Suprpto, 2009). These definitions emphasize that

management is a systematic and continuous process that places human resources as the central element in achieving organizational goals.

Within the context of educational institutions, one managerial component that plays a strategic role is public relations. Public relations does not merely function as a complementary unit within the school's organizational structure, but serves as a vital instrument in building institutional image, public trust, and stakeholder support. The success of a school is determined not only by its internal academic quality, but also by its ability to establish harmonious relationships with the community, parents, alumni, and other relevant stakeholders.

According to Onong, public relations is understood as a planned two-way communication process between an organization and its publics aimed at fostering mutual understanding and goodwill (Musarrofah, 2018). In the educational context, public relations activities are directed toward disseminating accurate information, building a positive institutional image, and encouraging community participation in the implementation of education. The role of the community in education is explicitly affirmed in Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, Article 54, which states that the community has a role in the planning,

implementation, supervision, and evaluation of educational services (UU RI, 2003).

Public relations management constitutes a systematic effort that includes planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling communication activities between educational institutions and their publics. Effective public relations management can enhance institutional reputation, strengthen public trust, and directly contribute to increasing student enrolment (Hakim, 2019). Student quantity is a crucial indicator of institutional sustainability and competitiveness, as students are positioned not only as subjects of education but also as academic, social, and institutional assets.

Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) Lombok Barat is one of the Islamic secondary education institutions that has demonstrated a consistent increase in student enrolment from year to year. Based on preliminary observations and initial interviews, this increase is closely related to the active role of the public relations unit in managing communication and information through various media, including social media and local print media such as Lombok Post newspaper. These public relations activities have contributed to shaping a positive image of the madrasah within the community and increasing the interest of prospective students to enrol.

Several previous studies indicate that public relations management has a significant influence on increasing student enrolment. Nafisah (2022) emphasized that systematic planning and implementation of public relations strategies were able to increase student numbers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similar findings were reported by Sasriani (2024), who highlighted the importance of collaboration among all school members in implementing public relations programs. However, most of these studies focus on specific contexts, such as the pandemic period or new student admission strategies, and thus have not sufficiently examined public relations management practices within relatively stable and sustainable educational settings.

Based on the above discussion, this study focuses on the management of public relations at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Lombok Barat in increasing student enrolment for the 2023/2024 academic year. This research aims to analyse the public relations management process, which includes planning, organizing, implementation, and control, as well as to identify supporting factors that contribute to the increase in student numbers. The findings of this study are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of Islamic Education Management and practical implications for the management of public relations in Islamic educational institutions.

Research Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. The qualitative approach was selected because the study seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of public relations management practices in increasing student enrolment at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Lombok Barat. The research was conducted in a natural setting, with the researcher acting as the primary instrument in exploring meanings, processes, and managerial dynamics occurring within the madrasah environment. This qualitative method was used to obtain detailed, in-depth data that reflect the actual meanings embedded in social and organizational practices (Sugiyono, 2019).

The research was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Lombok Barat, which was purposively selected due to the existence of public relations activities that play a role in the process of increasing student enrolment. Research participants were determined using purposive sampling, namely the selection of informants based on specific considerations related to their involvement and knowledge of the research focus (Sugiyono, 2018). The research subjects consisted of the head of the madrasah, the vice head of the madrasah for public relations affairs, one student, and one student's parent, all of whom were considered capable of providing relevant information

regarding public relations management and community responses toward the madrasah.

Data sources refer to the means by which data are obtained, whether through objects, events, or individuals from whom the researcher observes, reads, or asks questions related to the research focus (Moleong, 2017). In this study, data sources comprised primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from informants through in-depth interviews, particularly concerning the planning, implementation, and evaluation of public relations management in increasing student enrolment. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected through documentation studies, including books, journal articles, madrasah archives, public relations activity reports, and other supporting documents relevant to the research.

Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. The observation employed was non-participant observation, in which the researcher was not directly involved in madrasah activities but acted as an independent observer to examine public relations practices and interactions between the madrasah and the community (Masnur Muslich, 2011). Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format with open-ended interview guidelines, allowing informants to convey their perspectives and

experiences in greater depth. Documentation was used to trace historical and administrative data that supported the findings obtained from observations and interviews.

Data analysis was carried out interactively and continuously through three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting, simplifying, and focusing data in accordance with the research objectives. The reduced data were then presented in the form of narrative descriptions to enable systematic understanding of relationships among data. The final stage consisted of drawing conclusions and verification, namely formulating research findings based on patterns and themes emerging from the data and supported by consistent empirical evidence (Sugiyono, 2019).

The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through triangulation, particularly technique triangulation. Triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation derived from the same sources. Through this technique, the resulting data are expected to achieve a high level of credibility and reliability in accordance with qualitative research standards (Sugiyono, 2019).

Result and Discussion

Institutional Profile of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Lombok Barat

Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) Lombok Barat is the only state Islamic senior secondary school in West Lombok Regency. The institution originated from the Bina Citra Insani Foundation and was affiliated with the state system in 2005 as MAN Gerung, a branch of MAN 2 Mataram. It officially obtained state status in 2009 and has been known as MAN Lombok Barat since 2017 (Madrasah Profile, 2024).

Institutionally, MAN Lombok Barat is supported by relatively adequate facilities and infrastructure, qualified teaching staff— all of whom hold undergraduate degrees— and educational personnel who optimally carry out administrative and educational service functions. In the 2023/2024 academic year, the total number of students reached 494, distributed across grades X, XI, and XII.

Implementation of Public Relations Management in Increasing Student Enrolment

The findings indicate that public relations management at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Lombok Barat is implemented systematically and structurally by referring to core management functions, namely planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation. The implementation of public relations management primarily focuses on the New Student Admission program (PPDB) as a strategic instrument to increase student enrolment.

At the planning stage, MAN Lombok Barat carefully designs the PPDB program by establishing clear objectives, including providing broad access to information for the community, optimally recruiting prospective students, and delivering fast and friendly admission services. This planning is realized through the formation of a PPDB committee, the determination of registration schedules, the formulation of selection procedures, and the readiness of madrasah facilities and infrastructure.

The organizing stage is characterized by a clear division of tasks and responsibilities within the PPDB committee structure. Each element—including the head of the madrasah, vice heads, teachers, and educational staff—is assigned specific roles according to their respective competencies. This organizational structure facilitates effective coordination and strengthens teamwork in carrying out public relations functions optimally.

At the implementation stage, public relations strategies are manifested through various forms of publication and socialization, both directly and indirectly. MAN Lombok Barat utilizes print media (brochures, banners, and local newspapers) and digital media (social media platforms and the madrasah website) to reach the wider community. In addition, direct outreach to junior secondary schools (SMP and MTs), as well as the

involvement of alumni and students in promoting the madrasah, constitute important strategies for enhancing institutional attractiveness.

The evaluation stage is conducted through both process evaluation and outcome evaluation of the PPDB program. This evaluation aims to assess the effectiveness of the implemented public relations strategies and to serve as a basis for improving and strengthening strategies in subsequent academic years. The evaluation results indicate that the implementation of PPDB in the 2023/2024 academic year performed better than in previous years, as evidenced by an increase in the number of newly enrolled students.

Data on student enrolment development over the past five years show a significant upward trend, increasing from 114 students in the 2020/2021 academic year to 225 students in the 2024/2025 academic year. These findings suggest that well-planned and well-organized public relations management contributes substantially to the increase in student enrolment.

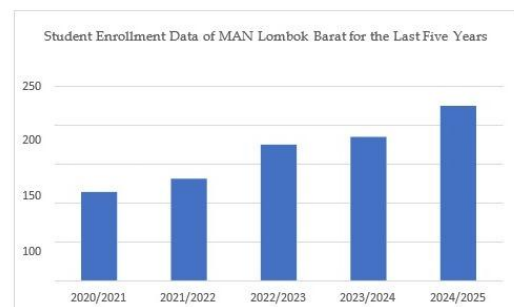


Figure 1. Trend of Student Enrolment Growth at MAN Lombok Barat over the Last Five Years

Discussion

Public Relations Management as a Strategy for Increasing Student Enrolment

The findings of this study confirm that public relations management plays a strategic role in increasing student enrolment at madrasahs. Public relations not only functions to build institutional image, but also serves as a communication bridge between the madrasah and both internal and external publics. This finding aligns with Mulyasa's view that the development of public relations activities aims to enhance public understanding and trust in educational institutions, as well as to encourage community participation in educational development (Haetami, 2023).

Public relations management at MAN Lombok Barat demonstrates an integration of communication strategies, educational services, and institutional image strengthening. The application of management functions in PPDB activities indicates that careful planning, clear division of labor, and continuous evaluation are key factors in successfully increasing student enrolment. This strategy is consistent with Ruslan's concept of public relations strategy, which emphasizes strategy as an integral part of planning

and a fundamental function of management (Kardini et al., 2023).

Factors Contributing to the Increase in Student Enrolment

Based on the research findings, several key factors contribute to the increase in student enrolment at MAN Lombok Barat.

First, community satisfaction with the quality of madrasah educational services. Satisfaction among parents and students is formed through high-quality educational services, a balanced integration of religious and general education, and flagship programs such as tahfiz of the Qur'an. This satisfaction strengthens public trust and encourages positive word-of-mouth recommendations, which directly impact the increase in applicants. This finding is consistent with Nur Sa'idu (2021), who emphasizes that community satisfaction contributes to a positive institutional image and loyalty toward educational institutions.

Second, consistency in maintaining service quality. MAN Lombok Barat continuously strives to maintain service quality in both academic and non-academic aspects. This consistency reinforces public trust and strengthens the madrasah's position amid competition among educational institutions.

Third, active participation of the madrasah community and alumni. The involvement of teachers, students, educational staff, and alumni in

promoting the madrasah expands information outreach and enhances institutional attractiveness. Alumni play a particularly important role as credible promotion agents due to their direct experience with the quality of madrasah education.

Fourth, the provision of diverse and relevant educational programs. Varied extracurricular and co-curricular programs serve as a major attraction for prospective students. These programs not only develop students' talents and interests but also strengthen the madrasah's image as an institution that is adaptive to students' needs.

Fifth, effective information dissemination and promotion. The utilization of print and digital media enables the madrasah to reach the community more widely and efficiently. This strategy aligns with the perspective that public relations must be capable of managing content and communication responsively in accordance with environmental changes (Kardini et al., 2023).

Sixth, social interaction and community service activities. These activities strengthen the emotional relationship between the madrasah and the community and build a positive image of the madrasah as a socially responsible educational institution. This approach aligns with the concept of ingratiation in public relations, which emphasizes building a positive image

through constructive social interaction (Rabbani, 2016).

Theoretically, this study reinforces the concept that public relations management is an integral component of Islamic Education Management and directly contributes to the sustainability of educational institutions. Practically, the findings demonstrate that professional, collaborative, and technologically adaptive public relations management can significantly increase student enrolment.

Conclusion

This study concludes that public relations management plays a strategic role in increasing student enrolment at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Lombok Barat in the 2023/2024 academic year. The increase in the number of students did not occur spontaneously, but rather resulted from the systematic, well-organized, and sustainable implementation of public relations management functions.

The findings indicate that public relations management at MAN Lombok Barat is carried out through the stages of planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation, particularly in the context of the New Student Admission program (Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru / PPDB). Planning is conducted through the formulation of promotion and socialization strategies, organizing is realized through the clear division of

responsibilities within the PPDB committee, implementation is carried out through various forms of publication and direct interaction with the community, and evaluation is undertaken to assess program effectiveness and to serve as a basis for improvement in subsequent periods. The implementation of these management functions demonstrates that public relations serves not merely as a technical promotional unit, but as an integral component of the madrasah's overall management system.

This study also finds that the increase in student enrolment at MAN Lombok Barat is influenced by several supporting factors, including community satisfaction with the quality of madrasah educational services, effective collaboration with internal and external stakeholders, the optimization of information dissemination and promotional activities, as well as social engagement and community outreach programs that strengthen emotional bonds between the madrasah and the community. These factors collectively contribute to building a positive institutional image and enhancing public trust.

Theoretically, the findings of this study affirm that public relations management constitutes a vital instrument within Islamic Education Management, particularly in fostering public trust and ensuring the sustainability of Islamic educational

institutions. Practically, this research provides insight that effective and participatory public relations management can serve as a strategic model for madrasahs in increasing student enrolment while maintaining the quality of educational services.

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