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Public Relations Management in Improving School Quality at Ar-Risalah Islamic Boarding School

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Abstract

This study analyses the role of public relations management in improving school quality at Madrasah Aliyah Ar Risalah Padang. This Islamic educational institution continues to adapt to the development of digital communication in the era of society 5.0. Using a qualitative design with sociological and anthropological approaches, this research applies digital content analysis to the institution's official website and Instagram publications from 2019 to 2024, combined with relevant literature. The theoretical framework integrates three perspectives, namely Digital Public Relations by Kent and Taylor, Total Quality Management, and Image Restoration Theory by Benoit. Through these perspectives, the study explores how public relations contributes to institutional communication, quality assurance, and the strengthening of reputation. The findings show that the public relations division plays a central role in fostering transparent communication, sustaining continuous interaction with stakeholders, enhancing teacher professionalism, and disseminating student achievements that support institutional branding. Public relations practices at Ar Risalah also enhance the institution's ability to respond to issues by fostering openness and implementing corrective measures that maintain public trust. This study concludes that integrated public relations management functions as a strategic instrument for enhancing school quality while positioning Ar Risalah as a competitive model for digitally oriented Islamic education.

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Introduction

Educational institutions in Indonesia—schools, madrasas, and Islamic boarding schools—operate through administrative systems that ensure the quality and effectiveness of institutional management. Although the concept of management originates from the business and economic sectors, its principles apply to educational settings. As noted by Amka, citing Nurhadi (1983), management constitutes a series of coordinated actions undertaken by individuals and groups within an organisation to achieve predetermined objectives efficiently. (Amka, 2021). In the context of Islamic education, digital transformation has revolutionised Public Relations (PR) practices. Studies by Mahmud, Khoir, and Munif demonstrate that PR management in madrasas now incorporates two-way digital communication, social-media-based institutional branding, and the cultivation of a modern Islamic image through online platforms. (Mahmud et al., 2024). Madrasahs and society are two sides of the coin, where the relationship between the two will greatly determine

the quality of educational services that will be implemented by an educational institution (Moneta & Kurniawan, 2022).

Over the past seven years, service management in madrasas has undergone a significant transformation through the integration of digital technologies, applications, and online platforms. Public relations functions have increasingly centred on strengthening school branding across various digital media. Core administrative functions—including planning, human resource management, organisational structuring, coordination, reporting, and budgeting—collectively support the realisation of an efficient, effective, and high-quality educational system. (Hantoro et al., 2021). Empirical evidence suggests that Madrasah Aliyah Ar-Risalah Padang's public relations (PR) performance closely aligns with its strategic initiatives to improve its organisational image and adapt to the characteristics of a moderate Islamic educational institution. At Ar-Risalah Padang, PR performance aligns with moderate Islamic characteristics, integrating education, social communication, and public service via YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. Rooted in Qur'anic values, these efforts enhance transparency, engagement, and reputation, yielding annual increases of 18-22% in out-of-province student enrollment (Hasneli et al., 2021).

Evaluation focuses on the digital dissemination of academic and da'wah activities amid Industry 4.0/Society 5.0 demands, though digital literacy gaps and PR staff capacity challenge it. However, this transformation also reveals key challenges, particularly the unequal levels of digital literacy among education personnel and the insufficient capacity of public relations and data-driven communication staff. (Mahendika, 2020). Rahmadi's perspective noted that the Ar-Risalah Padang madrasah achieved its goals as a model of educational collaboration through strategic communication in West Sumatra Province (Rahmadi, 2024).

According to Subiyakto, POAC (Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling) in PR governance for Sumatran madrasahs, enabling strategic communication, transparency, and digital branding (Subiyakto, 2023). IPR defines effective PR as systematic planning for mutual understanding (Yaqien, 2010). Studies affirm PR strengthens accountability, participation, and reputation in Islamic education (Afandi et al., 2025), advocating "digital PR governance" for ethical, data-driven decisions thus, if the role of public relations supports the improvement of the quality of madrasahs through aspects of strategic communication, transparent public services, and adaptation of digital institutional branding (Diana, E., & Khofifah, K., 2023).

Human resource management must be adaptive in foster a positive image of the school, both within the local community and across the wider community. HRM and branding critically influence enrollment and perceptions of quality. The image and branding of a school or madrasah are very influential in increasing public interest and securing additional resources for quality (Elyus, D. S., & Sholeh, M., 2021). School-based management in developed countries features autonomy and participation. In the Indonesian context, however, such practices are generally limited to private schools or a small number of high-performing public schools (Dakir, 2018).

Recent crises underscore PR's role: 36 misconduct cases (Jan-Sep 2024) across institutions caused 144 child victims (7 deaths), with 30.5% perpetrators as teachers (Viriya Singgih, 2024). A strong digital reputation enhances the speed, transparency, and consistency of organisational communication. Consequently, institutions with well-established digital brand equity are better equipped to mitigate reputational vulnerability when adverse incidents arise, as the public's pre-existing trust provides a stabilising buffer. (Bashir, M., & Aldaihani, A., 2017). The growing prevalence of critical cases within educational institutions has increasingly affected students' learning experiences and institutional effectiveness. PR must employ empathetic, Islamic

communication to transform issues into opportunities for improvement. In dealing with sensitive issues such as harassment or violence, madrasah public relations must employ empathetic and Islamic values-based communication to sustain a positive institutional image. Transparency, coupled with public education, can transform crises into opportunities for moral learning and institutional improvement. (Diana, E., & Khofifah, K., 2023).

Promotional efforts engage diverse audiences, including leaders and da'i, requiring PR-led planning and content creation. These initiatives require careful planning, creative input, and integrated collaboration across all madrasah stakeholders. Within this process, the PR team plays a central role in producing compelling written materials, visual designs, and video content that reflect both the institution's identity and its evolving aspirations. (Djupe, P.A., & Smith, A.E., 2019). Challenges like revisions shape workflows, making reputation a strategic asset, obstacles, and unforeseen issues are normative elements that shape their workflow. Revisions and idea reformulation are often necessary to adapt to changing conditions. Preserving a positive institutional image is crucial, as it reflects a network of beliefs, perceptions, and impressions shaped by specific events and experiences. (Munib, M., & Ajizah, M. A., 2024).

School quality is a term that encompasses many factors indicating how well an educational institution meets the standards of governance transparency, stakeholder participation, humane student services, teacher professional development, and sustainable institutional reputation. Quality is not only measured by academic achievement but also by moral integrity and institutional trustworthiness (Soliha, I. A., Faridi, F., & Tobroni, T., 2024). Transparency and accountability are the basis for public trust in institutions (Sai'in et al., 2024). Meanwhile, the active participation of teachers, students, and the community strengthens the quality culture of madrasahs (Norman et al., 2025). Moreover, responsive student services and teacher competency development programs also influence the community's perception of the school's quality and reputation (Chotimah et al., 2024).

Alumni roles can be actualised in concrete forms, especially in efforts to enhance educational quality and develop productive extracurricular programs. Alums act as catalysts: providing insights. By utilising various communication channels that connect schools and alums, these contributions can meaningfully support the continuous improvement of the educational process. (Filip, A., 2012). Secondly, alumni who excel and possess the necessary abilities can play an important role in shaping public opinion to attract new students and influence enrollment. (Leslie W. Kindred, Don Bagin, Donald R. Gallagher, 1990). Third, as the main result of the education system for which the school is known, alumni are also expected to build networks and shape the institution's image. Building an alum network is a strategic way to open many opportunities and increase the competitiveness of educational institutions, as the benefits will directly impact students and fellow alumni. (Munib, M., & Ajizah, M. A., 2024).

Fourth, within the school, alums in various fields of business, employment, and education can provide students with an overview and inspiration, thereby motivating them to set priorities and goals for the future. Various events such as "Expo Campus". On an annual basis, alumni routinely hold back-to-school activities, including INARAH Back to School and the prestigious Ar-Risalah Open House, as part of a collaboration of enjoyable, festive events. Thus, based on the above background, it can be concluded from the following research questions: 1) What factors support and hinder the effectiveness of PR management in today's digital era? 2) How is the PR management strategy applied in developing the quality of schools at Madrasah Aliyah Ar-Risalah Padang? 3) How does public relations management contribute to the achievement of indicators?

Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a sociological-anthropological approach through digital content analysis on the official website and Instagram of Madrasah Aliyah Ar-Risalah Padang (2019-2024), with primary data in the form of achievement posts, da'wah, academic activities, and clarification of issues, analysed using the Miles-Huberman model (reduction, display, verification) to uncover PR communication patterns that represent the quality of schools through digital footprints.

The author adapted the theoretical argument in this article from Digital Public Relations theory. Kent & Taylor's theoretical framework explains how public relations builds social relationships in public using the principle of the *dialogic loop*: two-way communication, *with the usefulness of information* being informative content rather than the *generation of return visits*, which is the continuity of content. *Conservation of visitors* is the ease of access to information. In the context of research, the object of research can be explored, namely, the performance of Public Relations in publishing activities, achievements, and values of pesantren through social media and websites. These activities increase transparency, trust and public engagement (Kent & Taylor, 2002).

Total Quality Management (TQM) in Islamic education, according to Arcaro and Mulyasa (Mulyasa, 2018). Improving quality through continuous improvement, customer satisfaction, stakeholder engagement, and strong leadership. Public Relations plays a crucial role as a communication bridge, conveying the quality of student services, teacher development, institutional culture, and students' academic and moral achievements. Meanwhile, Image Restoration Theory (Benoit, 2015) provides an analytical framework for maintaining and restoring an institution's reputation in the face of a crisis, with rhetorical strategies such as reducing offensiveness and taking corrective action, as reputation affects public perception and organisational confidence.

In today's digital era, Public Relations performance is shifting to an unconventional digital approach, although the school's branding strategy still requires traditional methods to maintain institutional integrity. The shift towards digital exposure is increasingly dominant, becoming a strategic consideration for PR teams in building an effective image and public relations.

Findings

Background and School Profile of Islamic Boarding School Ar-Risalah

Ar-Risalah Islamic Boarding School was established on June 24, 2003, in Nagari Cupak, Solok Regency, West Sumatra (Notary Helmi Darlis No. 28), inaugurated by Regent Gamawan Fauzi, MM, with initial classes in a 3-story mosque. By 2004/2005, it exceeded expectations with 120 students (two male/two female classes) due to high parental interest. The foundation manages four fields—education (JHS/MA), basic education/development (PAUD/TPA/KG/SD), community service (*zakat/da'wah*), and business (mini-market/coop/water depot)—with evolving structures. Motivated by societal moral decline amid globalisation, quality crisis in West Sumatra's Islamic education, scholar scarcity, gathering dispersed alums from Islamic universities, and reviving Minangkabau's scholarly legacy.

In the context of establishing the Ar-Risalah Waqaf Foundation, several situational factors are motivating. First, the moral decline of the community at large, especially among the younger generation, who are affected by globalisation. Second, there is a crisis of quality Islamic Education Institutions in West Sumatra. At the same time, this region has throughout history been a centre of Islamic learning, a status it held for several decades. Third, the scarcity of role models in society

in this moment is widespread in West Sumatra. Fourth, it aims to gather quality human resources from various alums of Islamic universities at home and abroad who are still scattered in various regions outside West Sumatra.

Public Relations Management: Towards the Improvement of the Quality of Education

Digitalisation has revolutionised public relations (PR) in schools and madrasahs, expanding its role beyond classical management to systematic planning essential for institutional quality. In competitive educational markets, particularly in private madrasahs, PR functions as strategic educational marketing, treating schools as service organisations that must appeal to parents' and students' needs and aspirations (Majhi, P., & Dansana, A., 2021).

Effective programs require structured planning involving the entire school community for holistic quality development. (Dakir, 2018). Jerome S. Arcaro's Total Quality Management (TQM) emphasises continuous improvement through clear principles and steps, where PR enhances stakeholder engagement and distinctive value propositions. This approach addresses digital challenges like IT utilisation and professional development while fostering transparency and competitiveness in Islamic education (Mahmud et al., 2024).

Public Relations Management: Developments and Challenges in the Digital 5.0 Era

In the digital era, Islamic educational institutions face rapid change and growing competition. To stay relevant, madrasahs must excel in religious education while remaining competitive in science and social studies, and integrate strong character education that meets student and parent expectations (Widat, F., & Nisa, K., 2023).

Here is the alignment towards future development achievements in several aspects that need to be considered, including the development of Islamic educational institutions that increasingly adopt technology-based management systems, such as applications for teacher/student data administration, and the simplification of operations while PR disseminates activities digitally via supporting apps. Online learning platforms expand access to remote students—as seen during COVID-19 quarantines with virtual alum programs—enhancing educational reach and flexibility in Islamic contexts. Professional development becomes accessible through online/offline seminars and workshops for teachers/staff, boosting competencies in Islamic education and PR management. Social media and online forums facilitate community interaction among educators, committees, parents, and students, fostering idea exchange and institutional growth (Juhji, B. N., et al, 2020).

In the Society 5.0 era, Islamic educational institutions must enhance resilience through digital transformation and intelligent learning systems, requiring adaptation by teachers, staff, and students. Key challenges include digital competence gaps requiring intensive training, alignment of the curriculum with technology and contemporary needs, ethical integration of Islamic values into modern pedagogy, and data security amid cyber threats (Khoirun Nisa, F. W., 2023). Effective HR management and evolved public relations (PR) are crucial for harmonising innovation with Islamic values. PR must shift from mere marketing to transparent dissemination of institutional programs, achievements, and policies to boost competitiveness, addressing disparities in digital literacy and infrastructure while preserving ethical grounding (Ramadhani, K., 2022).

Findings on Activity Data and Achievements of The Madrasah Program: Public Relations Management

Analysis of findings in improving quality in public relations performance management at Madrasah Aliyah Ar-Risalah (the source of the analysis of Instagram social media followers amounted to 11,000 followers, and posts amounted to 2021, as well as the official website). (admin Humas website, t.t.) The formulation in the table was obtained from the book 'Quality Management in Education' and then quoted in the article titled 'Focus on School: The Future Organisation of Education Service for Students'. There are four main points, as outlined in the table, to obtain management aspects that can improve the quality of education. As follows below:

1. School Organisation

a. Transformational leadership and school goals

Findings show that institution heads are actively building networks, strengthening organisational vision, receiving external support, and demonstrating collaborative leadership through inter-agency visits and educational MoUs.(admin Humas, t.t.-b). This approach reflects the strategic capacity that supports school-based management.

b. School Planning and Policy Formulation

The agreed policy is reflected in international cooperation in the field of education and curriculum, as seen in the momentum of the MoU with Fatoni University, Thailand (Admin Humas, t.t.-a).

c. Managing School Operation

Public Relations displays operational activities and academic collaboration at the international level. This is evidenced by the publication of a meeting with Arabic linguists from Egypt (admin Humas, 2023h).

d. School Community Communication

The tradition of the Ramadan da'wah program and student activities in the community demonstrates two-way communication, as evidenced by the Ramadhan Camp documentation published by Public Relations in residents' homes and mosques. (admin Humas, t.t.-d).

e. Accountability to Community

Ar-Risalah Islamic Boarding School Padang demonstrates strong institutional accountability through long-standing social programs and annual Open Houses, alongside community service activities that bridge academic contributions with societal impact (admin Humas, t.t.-c)

Additionally, the institution's annual tradition includes a student-led KKN (Community Service Program) during Ramadan eve—conducted independently, without ustadz/zah supervision, following prior briefings—which fosters direct student participation in social fields. Complementary initiatives, such as the December 2024 mass circumcision program, supported by Laz Ar-Risalah and Risalah Charity in collaboration with Pratama Risalah Medika clinic, further exemplify community-oriented social benefits (admin Humas, t.t.-e; 2024c).

2. Resources and Administration

a. Identifying and Allocating Resources

Ar-Risalah Education and Public Relations Institution, with the performance of identifying and allocating resources for various useful programs in the community. Ar-Risalah directs

resources for social compensation, digital PPDB (Kurniawan, 2024p) and family education, both among parents and the general public, with a specified capacity. These activities are supported by evidence of the compensation program for 200 orphans and the publication of the PPDB selection (Kurniawan, 2024a).

Family economic resilience activities and seminars carried out by community service, by improving literacy and Islamic financial planning, including in avoiding Riba-based debt, which is a burden. (Kurniawan, 2024m)

b. **Effective and Efficient Management**

Efficiency is reflected in teachers' achievements in the Numeracy Literacy Competition (NLC) and the Great Teacher Olympiad organised by the Indonesian Science Olympiad Centre (POSI) in 2023 (Kurniawan, 2023d). In addition, the improvement and strengthening of productive waqf to financial governance held by the Waqf Ar-Risalah Foundation, as the host in establishing the Productive Waqf Forum (FWP), aims to gather nazir institutions, especially in West Sumatra (Kurniawan, 2024o).

c. **Administrative Support**

Support for strengthening administration through the assistance of waqf institutions by official authorities. This goal is carried out so that the management of waqf at the 'Ar-Risalah Waqf Foundation' can be a peer example for other waqf institutions, as the scale at the national level is around 500 waqf institutions, six of which are accompanied by Ar-Risalah Waqf Foundation (Kurniawan, 2024g).

d. **Facilities and Infrastructure Maintenance**

Various activities that support facilities and learning environments, such as the Student Environment Introduction Period (MPLS), which aims to help students become familiar with the school environment and showcase various facilities (Kurniawan, 2023c).

e. **Community Participation**

Participation in the community is evidenced by schools' increased community interaction through school visits, namely MAN 2 Agam's visit to Ar-Risalah Islamic College in the context of friendship, consultation related to Madrasah Science Competency (KSM) and national examination results, as well as mock studies (admin Humas, 2019e).

In addition to several schools and educational institutions that visited Ar-Risalah, a return visit to strengthen the friendship between educational institutions was also made to SAM Bestari Malaysia, resulting in several collaborations. The visit was attended by a group from YWAR, totalling around 70 people, led by Ustaz H. Arwim Al-Ibrahimi, Lc., M.A., in the context of YWAR's structural staff activities in Malaysia (Kurniawan, 2024e).

3. Human Resources

a. **Empowering staff**

Education staff and teachers are involved in health, education and parenting services. Several activities were held, such as free eye health checks for students. The Padang Health Office attended the activity at the Ar-Risalah Padang Sport Hall. Mr Depitra Wiguna, S.K.M., said that children and adolescents are at risk of experiencing eye disorders, in addition to pressure, teeth and mouth, and weight checks, among others, by the local Public Health Centre. (Kurniawan, 2024c).

b. **Selecting Quality Staff**

Many teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Ar-Risalah have achieved notable success in learning innovation and academic excellence. In 2019, several teachers received recognition through competitions organised by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), including the National Vocational and Madrasah Learning Media Innovation Competition, in which Ust. Harry Eko Jaya Putra, S.Si., M.Pd. won first place and the “favourite” award for his flash-card-based learning media (admin Humas, 2019b).

Further accomplishments are reflected in the success of Physics teacher M. Khairul Jawad, S.Pd., who was selected as a national instructor for science literacy in the 2023 Indonesian Madrasah Competency Assessment (AKMI), joining a cohort of 355 instructors tasked with assisting groups of 20–30 teachers across diverse regions (admin Humas, 2023e).

Additional achievements include the attainment of silver and bronze medals by Ustazah Intan Hanifa Sakinah, Lc. and Ustazah Humairah Bahar, Lc. Respectively, in the 2023 POSI Language Day Arabic studies competition (admin Humas, 2023a). Moreover, Ustazah Widytia Pharamita, S.Pd., M.Pd.E. earned a silver medal in the Integrated Economics category at the 2023 Muharram Science Olympiad, also organised by POSI (admin Humas, 2023f).

Several teachers from Qur'an Ar-Risalah also recorded notable achievements in the 2023 Muharram Science Olympiad (Muslim). Ustaz Muhammad Ilham, S.Si., earned a gold medal in Integrated Science; Ustazah Miming Septia Melinda, S.Pd., received a silver medal in the Indonesian Language category; Ustazah Elfira Fadrin, S.Pd., obtained a silver medal in the Math and Real Science Competition; and Ustazah Fitriah, S.Pd., was awarded a bronze medal in the POSI Islamic Competition for Integrated Mathematics (admin Humas, 2023c).

c. **Professional Development**

The journalistic seminar and workshop involved 12 employees of the Ar-Risalah Foundation, led by the Editor-in-Chief of Posmetro Padang, with an emphasis on the journalistic code of ethics and on preventing potential lawsuits. This activity aims to train journalistic skills for massive and sustainable publication of student activities, while supporting the public relations agenda (admin Humas, 2019a).

In addition, technical guidance parenting for dormitory staff (SMP-MA) accompanied by tausiyah from the foundation management, emphasising parenting standards through fardhiyah da'wah and quality services.(admin Humas, 2020b). Collaboration with the Wikimedia Padang Community to train in writing Minangkabau Wikipedia articles, attended by the Chairman of BEM STEI Ar-Risalah, who hopes for sustainable collaboration (Kurniawan, 2024b).

d. **Staff and Student Welfare**

The agenda for grade IX students of Ar-Risalah Junior High School is significant when participating in career planning training. The principal of Ar-Risalah Junior High School explained that selecting majors in advanced school is the first step in planning a future career (Kurniawan, 2024n). The GNOTA program from YWAR provides scholarships for former MA students and SMP students, aiming to normalise the status of scholarship recipients based on achievements, memorisation of the Qur'an (tahfidz), and economic conditions, to motivate outstanding students (admin Humas, 2022).

Commemorating the 20th anniversary of Ar-Risalah, 7 YWAR employees received free Umrah prizes in appreciation for their best performance, including memorisation of at least five juz of the Qur'an, structural tenure, and achievements in their respective fields from various units such as nurses, junior high schools, MAs, and other employees (Kurniawan, 2024i).

e. Forums for Evaluating Performance

The internationalisation agenda and regular evaluation forums can support improvements in school quality. A total of 111 MA Ar-Risalah students participated in the Internationalisation: Ar-Risalah International Discourse program at the Al-Mizan Shura Council, UiTM campus, Melaka branch. Attended by five lecturers from YWAR led by Ustaz M. Saleh Zulfahmi, it was inaugurated by the Rector of the UiTM Branch, Prof. Datuk Sabariah Mahat. This goal is to participate in sharing ideas and experiences between students and teachers of Madrasah Aliyah YWAR, Ar-Risalah Padang Islamic University, Indonesia, with the Melaka Youth Empowerment Society Association, to produce holistic graduates and academic networks (admin Humas, 2019d).

4. Teaching and Learning Activities

The final point lies in the other important indications of teaching and learning activities in achieving ideal organisational management based on the school-based management theory, including:

a. Improving Learning Quality

Ar-Risalah Islamic Boarding School collaborates with Sheikh Abdallah Abd El-Rahman Beshir, an Arabic linguist from Egypt holding a Master's degree in Arabic Linguistics from Alexandria University (2017), to enhance Arabic competence among teachers and students. His expertise includes teaching non-native speakers (e.g., Malaysians), curriculum development, and teacher training, making him integral to strengthening the institution's Arabic curriculum despite past failures in hiring Middle Eastern instructors due to government licensing restrictions. This partnership addresses critical gaps in instructional quality, enabling native-level Arabic instruction, positioning Ar-Risalah competitively in Islamic education, and effectively navigating regulatory barriers (Kurniawan, 2023a).

b. Curriculum Development

The implementation of the independent curriculum at MAS Ar-Risalah includes practical explorations, such as culinary entrepreneurship, that teach students to select healthy halal-thoyyib food menus, build business spirit, and adopt healthy lifestyles in students (Kurniawan, 2024j). This activity includes hilal observation in Sharia subjects using a quality telescope on the 4th floor of the school building, under the supervision of the supervisor, providing a high-value learning experience (admin Humas, 2023g).

The signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Ar-Risalah Waqf Foundation (YWAR) and Adzkiia Padang University marks a strategic collaboration in implementing the Independent Curriculum within the scope of the Tridharma of higher education. Adzkiia University expressed strong appreciation for this partnership. This collaboration is expected to make a significant contribution to educational advancement. The Vice-Rector II of Adzkiia University, Ustaz Trinda, also expressed his appreciation, hoping that the MoU will serve as a constructive foundation for future joint initiatives (Kurniawan, 2024h).

c. Effective Learning Activities.

The program was initiated by the Alumni Association of MA Ar-Risalah (IKAPIAR) as a tangible contribution to current students. It took the form of a *Student Leadership Academy* designed for members of the Student Executive Board (BES-AR) and the Student Consultative Assembly (MPS). The agenda included leadership-oriented sessions, organisational leadership experience sharing, and structured ice-breaking activities that conveyed essential leadership values (admin Humas, 2020a).

d. Student Development Programs

Ar-Risalah Islamic Boarding School consistently demonstrates student excellence across academic and non-academic domains. The Mukhayyam 'Arabiyy program immerses Grade VII JHS and Grade X MA students in intensive Arabic training facilitated by alumni from prestigious Middle Eastern universities (Medina, Al-Azhar, Qasimia, LIPIA), creating a sustained Arabic-speaking environment in school and dormitories (admin Humas, 2021).

The traditional archery competition, titled the Ground Archery Tournament, is one of a series of academic and non-academic activities at the XXI Ar-Risalah Open House in 2024. (Kurniawan, 2024d). Students also continue to demonstrate notable achievements in both academic and non-academic domains. In the field of sports, their competence is evidenced by their accomplishment in the prestigious *Honda Developmental Basketball League* (DBL) West Sumatra 2019, where they secured the runner-up position after competing against Don Bosco High (Fatih, 2019). National chemistry competition successes at UNP Padang, including third and seventh place in the 29th Chemical Scientific Week competition at Universitas Negeri Padang, achieved success (admin Humas, 2023b).

The annual graduation and *tabfiḥ* completion ceremonies for the 2023/2024 academic year at MAS Ar-Risalah Islamic College were held over two days, accommodating 209 students, with 44 female graduates on day two—including seven full 30-juz hafizah—celebrated by supervisor Depi Dasmal, S.Ag., M.Ag. These achievements reflect comprehensive development in language immersion, sports, STEM competitions, and Qur'anic memorisation, positioning Ar-Risalah as a model of holistic Islamic education. (admin Humas, 2024a).

e. Alumni for School Branding

Ar-Risalah's alums continue to strengthen the institution's reputation through notable academic achievements. In 2023/2024, several graduates were accepted into international universities, including Muhammad Ibrohim (Business Management, Hunan Vocational College of Science and Technology, China), Muhammad Luqmanul Ziyad (International Business, Guangxi Transport Vocational and Technical College, China), and Hamzah Abdurrahim (Medicine, National Research Nuclear University MEPI, Russia). These accomplishments enhance Ar-Risalah's public image and serve as a source of pride for the school community (admin Humas, 2024d). Also, four Al-Azhar University Egypt graduates: Taufiq Ar-Rahman (Aqidah & Philosophy), Muhammad Roza (Sharia Islamiyah), Muhammad Abbas Alharik (Islamic & Arabic Studies), and Ziyad Ayaturrahman (Tafsir & Quranic Sciences). (admin Humas, 2023d).

At the 2024 National MTQ in Kalimantan, alumni Muhammad Wildan Syafawardi secured third place (Hifzil 10 Juz), and Fithri Mardhiyyah won second (Tahfidz 30 Juz & Arabic Tafsir), with Wildan accepted at Moulay Ismail University, Morocco, and Fithri at LIPIA Jakarta (Kurniawan, 2024). The 20th anniversary celebration further amplified alum

branding, with 14 generations sharing online testimonials about transformative learning experiences, future aspirations, and ongoing successes that inspire current students. These narratives—from international study testimonies to anniversary congratulations—reinforce Ar-Risalah's positive image among the Waqf Foundation, fostering community pride and attracting prospective students (admin Humas, 2024b).

f. **Motivating Student**

The Waqf Expo was organised by the Ar-Risalah Waqf Management Agency and featured speech competitions, seminars, nazhir training, product exhibitions, and bazaars at the multipurpose building and hall. Attended by SMP-MA students, it featured the top 3 winners at the Madrasah Aliyah level (male and female categories) and at the junior high level (male/female). The Waqf Implementing Agency Ar-Risalah initiated the series of Waqf Expos. For several days, various activities were held, including Waqf Seminars, Waqf Nazhir Training and Certification, Waqf Product Exhibitions, Bazaars, and other engaging activities. They were also attended by the Indonesian Waqf Agency (BWI), the Regional Committee of Sharia Economics and Finance of West Sumatra, and the Ar-Risalah Waqf Foundation (Kurniawan, 2022).

Madrasah Aliyah Ar-Risalah continues to demonstrate strong academic performance, with graduates accepted into leading national and international universities across Egypt, Jordan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Morocco, Turkey, China, Germany, Canada, and the United States, as well as prominent domestic institutions such as UIN campuses in Sumatra and Java, Andalas University, Brawijaya University, Diponegoro University, and others (Kurniawan, 2023b). Highlights include Abdul Aziz Hidayat, a 2018 alumnus who received a doctoral scholarship at the Taajul Hafizin Qur'an institute in Sudan. Selected as one of Indonesia's top eight hafiz through the Quantum Akhyar Institute under Ustadz Adi Hidayat, Aziz had completed his 30-juz memorisation in class XI. He was active in MHQ competitions (admin Humas, 2019f).

Ar-Risalah students also excelled in the 8th Science Pre-Olympiad (Promise) at SMP Negeri 7 Padang, securing multiple second and third-place awards across science, social studies, and mathematics—mostly by members of the Ar-Rifasa Study Club under the coaching of Ustazah Delsi Fitri Handayani (Kurniawan, 2024k). In 2024, class X student Thayyibal Syafiq was again recognised as an Inspirational Child Figure of West Sumatra for his advocacy on children's rights, continuing earlier recognition in 2023 (Kurniawan, 2024f). Also at VIII National Sports Week (Pospenas), MA Ar-Risalah student Daffa Riza Muliya won a bronze medal in the men's English speech category, contributing to the West Sumatra contingent's achievements and reflecting his continued excellence in English debate (admin Humas, 2019c).

Discussion

Ar-Risalah's implementation of Digital Public Relations Theory showcases a holistic approach to enhancing institutional credibility through dialogic communication, transparency, and stakeholder engagement. This is achieved through initiatives such as Ramadan community programs, social media publications, and da'wah activities that facilitate two-way communication. Transparency is maintained by providing regular updates on institutional visits, signing Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with partners like Fatoni University, organising Open House events, and engaging in media collaborations. Digital branding is strengthened by

showcasing student achievements, faculty awards, and alumni testimonials. At the same time, accessibility is ensured through an active social media presence and a comprehensive website that includes admissions and curriculum information. Public participation is further encouraged through cross-institutional visits, international collaborations, and partnerships with journalism and waqf organisations. These practices collectively reflect Ar-Risalah's unwavering commitment to openness and engagement in the digital age.

From a Total Quality Management (TQM) perspective, Ar-Risalah integrates continuous improvement, stakeholder involvement, service quality, professionalism, and accountability into its communication strategy. Transformational leadership is evident in collaborative initiatives, reciprocal visits, and international partnerships that promote a culture of quality. Stakeholder engagement is reinforced through inter-school visits, Malaysian collaborations, and community programs, while workshops, parenting seminars, and digital training for staff support professional development. Continuous improvement is demonstrated through student achievements, leadership training, and academic seminars. Service quality is enhanced through scholarship programs, career planning, health screenings, and welfare initiatives such as performance-based rewards. Infrastructure management and accountability are upheld through structured programs such as MPLS and transparent reporting at Open House events. These efforts collectively foster a sustainable quality culture.

Finally, Image Restoration Theory provides a framework for safeguarding Ar-Risalah's reputation. The institution employs bolstering strategies by consistently sharing achievements and alums success stories to reinforce its positive image. Transparency is maintained through regular updates on social programs and MoU signings, reducing misunderstandings and building trust. Corrective actions are implemented through community engagement and cross-institutional collaborations, serving as proactive measures to address challenges and maintain credibility. These combined efforts position Ar-Risalah as a resilient and reputable Islamic educational institution capable of navigating crises while sustaining public confidence.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that public relations management at Madrasah Aliyah Ar Risalah Padang plays a strategic role in improving educational quality, strengthening institutional reputation, and expanding public trust. Based on the analysis of the institution's digital footprint, it is evident that public relations functions not merely as an informational conduit but as a managerial instrument that shapes institutional development in the digital era.

First, applying digital public relations principles through two-way communication, transparency in information, and consistent content production has successfully fostered productive engagement between the institution and the wider community. Publications on student achievements, international collaborations, social programs, and institutional activities demonstrate a dialogic communication pattern that reinforces the madrasah's professional image.

Second, from the perspective of Total Quality Management, public relations contributes directly to school quality enhancement by supporting transformational leadership, stakeholder involvement, teacher professionalism, and student-centred services. The integration of these elements fosters a continuous quality culture that strengthens academic and institutional performance.

Third, when examined through the lens of Image Restoration Theory, public relations becomes a central component in maintaining institutional credibility. Openness, consistent reporting, and

the strategic presentation of achievements serve as practical approaches to sustain public trust and reinforce positive perceptions of the institution.

In conclusion, public relations management at Ar Risalah functions as a critical pillar in advancing institutional quality, developing credible educational governance, and enhancing the competitiveness of Islamic education in Indonesia. The integration of digital communication strategies, quality management principles, and reputation-building efforts positions Ar Risalah as a leading model of contemporary Islamic educational institutions within the society 5.0 era.

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