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## STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO BUILD PUBLIC IMAGE AND INCREASE PUBLIC INTEREST

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**Abstract.** *This study aims to reveal the strategic management of public relations to build an image and increase public interest in An-Nur II Islamic Boarding School of Bululawang, Malang, with sub-focus covering: (1) concept of analysis and planning, (2) implementation process, and (3) evaluation process by PR management of An-Nur II Islamic Boarding School Bululawang, Malang. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data collection was done through in-depth interview techniques, participatory observation, and documentation. Data analysis techniques included data reduction, data presentation, and concluding. The validity of the findings carried out by extension of participation, source of triangulation techniques, theories, and methods, and perseverance of the observer. The research informants were boarding school caregivers, the person in charge of public relations, public relations of formal and non-formal educational institutions, work units / executive committee of public relations program, santri (students), parents, surrounding communities, and all relevant stakeholders. The results showed the facts obtained as evidence that An-Nur II Islamic Boarding School Bululawang Malang succeeded in building image and increasing public interest through strategic management of public relations, namely: 1) Award of The Best Islamic Boarding School, 2) Increasing new students interest every year, 3) Social empowerment and improvement of the community economy programs.*

**Keywords.** *Strategic Management; Public Relations; Image Building; Public Interest.*

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**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkapkan manajemen strategis humas dalam upaya membangun citra dan meningkatkan minat masyarakatnya di Pondok Pesantren An-Nur II Bululawang Malang, dengan sub fokus mencakup: (1) konsep perencanaan (2) Proses implementasi (3) Proses evaluasi yang dilakukan manajemen humas Pondok Pesantren An-Nur II Bululawang Malang. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan rancangan studi kasus. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan teknik wawancara, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi. Teknik analisis data meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan, pengecekan keabsahan temuan dilakukan dengan perpanjangan keikutsertaan, teknik triangulasi sumber, teori, dan metode; dan ketekunan pengamatan. Informan penelitian adalah pengasuh pondok, penanggungjawab humas pondok, humas lembaga pendidikan formal dan non formal, unit satuan kerja / panitia pelaksana program humas, santri, wali santri, masyarakat sekitar dan seluruh *stakeholder* terkait. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Ponpes An-Nur II berhasil dalam upaya membangun citra dan meningkatkan minat masyarakatnya melalui manajemen strategis *public relations*, yaitu : 1) Penghargaan Ponpes terbaik, 2) Animo santri meningkat setiap tahun, 3) Program Pemberdayaan sosial dan peningkatan ekonomi masyarakat.

**Kata Kunci.** Manajemen Strategi, Hubungan Masyarakat; Membangun Citra; Kepentingan Masyarakat.

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the keys to developing human resources and improving one's quality. One of the places to get an education is in school. However, the school is only as a means to help continuing education, which basically students have already received from the family. A transfer of education from family to school requires collaboration between parents and schools. So, that's where the relationship between the school and the community depends on one another (Umar, 2016). Therefore, the urgency of an institution requires a division called Public Relations or better known as PR.

The existence of Public Relations in an institution or agency is a bridge (mediation) between the institution and the public (Afkarina, 2018). The purpose of the development of public relations is that every public organization needs to design its relationship with various elements of society in order to achieve a harmonious relationship (Kowalski, 2011). From the above explanation, it can be concluded that the relationship between educational institutions and the community is an effort and process of communication between educational institutions and the community, and encourages interest and cooperation between communities intending to increase the understanding of community members about educational needs.

According to Gorton, the term public relations in educational institutions has three different interpretations; first, the function of public relations is to "sell" educational programs (the strength of educational institutions) to the community to foster pride in educational institutions and gain support. Second, interpreting educational programs (their strengths and weaknesses) to the community so that people understand the efforts made by educational institutions and are willing to provide support. Third, attract public sympathy and encourage community participation for the success of educational programs (Hasan, 2017)

According to Bernay, as quoted by Kowalski in Rizqi, there are three keys in the definition of public relations, namely to inform, to persuade, and to integrate. This means that in public relations, there is information, persuasion, a unification of goals with the public, and integration of the implementation of plans and goals of the institution between the public and organizations (Rizqi, 2016). With another understanding, public relations is in charge of informing everything related to an institution to both internal and external communities. Besides, convincing the public and unifying the will of the public and the institutions or vice versa, is also the duties of public relations. Meanwhile, according to Wilcox, as quoted by Kowalski in Imran, there are six keywords in public relations, namely calm or careful, planning, action or performance, public interest, two-way communication, and management functions (Imran, 2012).

The perspective of the community towards pesantren institutions has changed at this time and is able to become part of the main choice of society in educating their children, this is due to the advantages in the pesantren education system of morals and religious knowledge compared to general education institutions. (Indrioko, 2015) However, this is not sufficient to support the consistency of the pesantren to remain part of the community's main choice if the pesantren does not present attractive innovations

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to attract the appeal of parents and prospective students. This can be proven by the fact that there are still many pesantren educational institutions that are still having difficulty finding new students (Thoha & Jannah, 2019). An indication of the cause of the problem of many Islamic boarding schools that are still having difficulty getting students is the lack of innovation in the management movement, no selling value that is able to attract prospective students and prospective santri parents to choose Islamic boarding schools as a place to seek knowledge (Indrioko, 2015). From that, it is deemed necessary that pesantren can provide measurable breakthroughs that can contribute more so that pesantren remain and are always believed to be the main choice of society in educating their children, one of which is by changing the physical appearance of the cottage to be more comfortable and more characteristic make it a promotional event that will be conveyed to the public.

Furthermore, based on the explanation of the above empirical and theoretical studies, the researcher argues that An-Nur II Islamic Boarding School in Bululawang, Malang, has a positive image and a high level of interest from the community and its stakeholders as evidenced by the data on the boarding school website. It shows that An-Nur II Islamic Boarding School accepts approximately 1,100 students every year.

So, against that background, the researcher decided to conduct further studies and observations regarding strategic steps in PR management of An-Nur II Islamic Boarding School in Bululawang, Malang, in building the image and interest of the community. Moreover, the researcher will also look for the success strategies of PR management of the An-Nur II Islamic Boarding School in Bululawang, Malang, in achieving organizational goals.

Based on the description above, the researcher wants to know how the strategic management of public relations applied by the institution in building an image and increasing public interest in An-Nur II Islamic Boarding School in Bululawang, Malang Regency. Therefore, a study was conducted on "Strategic Management of Public Relations in Efforts to Build Image and Increase Public Interest in Islamic Education Institutions."

## **B. METHODS**

The research approach used in this research was a qualitative approach. The type of research used in this research was descriptive research. Moreover, this study used a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data collection was carried out using interview techniques, participatory observation, and documentation (Nasution, 2018). Data analysis techniques included data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, checking the validity of the findings by extension of participation, triangulation techniques of sources, theories, and methods, and persistence of observation. The research informants were the boarding school caregivers, the person in charge of boarding school public relations, public relations for formal and non-formal education institutions, the work unit / executive committee of public relations program, students, parents, the surrounding community, and all related stakeholders.

This research would use a multi-site study design with qualitative descriptive analysis techniques, namely data analysis that produces detailed descriptions of situations, events, interactions, and informant behavior as primary sources and key informants from the principal, vice-principal of public relations, teachers, and students

in a case study at An-Nur II Islamic Boarding School of Bululawang Malang, then proceed to the analysis of case studies or single cases. This study used a data analysis model adapted from qualitative data analysis by Miles & Huberman as quoted by Sugiyono, following a picture of the flow of the data analysis process (Sugiyono, 2009).

### C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results showed that in an effort to build an image and increase public interest in the institution, PR management at An-Nur II "Al-Murtadlo" Islamic Boarding School of Bululawang Malang used strategic management theory of public relations with the following stages: 1) The concept of strategic planning carried out by public relations of An-Nur II Islamic Boarding School is the process of determining goals, analyzing the internal and external environment, and formulating a strategic plan, 2) The strategy implementation process carried out by the public relations of An-Nur II Islamic Boarding School is the process of determining resources, determining work units, using internal communication systems and external information media, religious approaches, and social community approaches, 3) The process of evaluating strategies carried out by public relations of An -Nur II Islamic Boarding School is the process, preparation, implementation, and evaluation results.

The facts and evidence showing that An-Nur II Islamic Boarding School is successful in building its image and increasing public interest through strategic management of public relations, are: 1) Receiving an award as the best Islamic boarding school, 2) The interest of students increases every year, and 3) Having social empowerment and community economic improvement programs.

#### 1. Environmental Analysis Concept and Strategy Planning of Public Relations

Yosal Iriantara said that an organization's actions and efforts to be able to align with its environment must have strategic management (Iriantara, 2004). Likewise, the public relations dimension and the steps in the strategic management of public relations must also have elements in its process that begin with environmental analysis, planning, implementation, and evaluation. This is in line with what the PR management of An-Nur II Islamic Boarding School has done to build an image and increase public interest in the boarding school with the following initial steps.

*First*, Determining the Vision, Mission, and Goals of the Public Relations Program. In determining the vision, mission and goals of the program, PR of An-Nur II "Al-Murtadlo" Islamic Boarding School carry out the following stages: (1) Written goals, (2) Short, concise and clear goals, (3) Specific goals operationally, (4) Goals have deadlines, (5) Clear main duties and functions, (6) Goals consistent with the vision, mission, and goals of the boarding school, and (7) Flexible goals. In line with the explanation above, Sulistyanyngtyas found facts and findings that the public relations strategy in building superior institutions carries out a planning process that begins by combining the results of environmental analysis with the main goals of the institution (Sulistyanyngtyas, 2013).

*Second*, Internal Analysis. The preparation process of the boarding school public relations to analyze the internal environment is as follows: (1) Pay attention to social events or developments, (2) Collect various kinds of social events or developments to be processed into information, (3) Analyze information to suit the needs of public relations strategic planning, (4) Provide information to every sector of boarding school institutions

(formal and non-formal), and (5) Perfect all kinds of information so that it can be accessed easily by all dimensions of the institution.

*Third, External Analysis.* PR management of An-Nur II Islamic Boarding School in conceptualizing its external analysis performs the following process: (1) SWOT analysis, (2) Building ideas, (3) Adjusting the method (technology) that will be used and in line with the reach of the community or stakeholders, (4) Community social analysis, and (5) Community responses or comments. By using SWOT analysis in analyzing the external environment, public relations will dig up information about the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, and then study it to determine the strategy that should be implemented later. Wheelen and Hunger in Syam said that what is part of the structure of the external environment that needs to be analyzed are the opportunities and threats that will be faced (Syam et al., 2018)

*Fourth, Strategy Plan Formulation of Public Relations.* The steps for PR management at An-Nur II "Al-Murtadlo" Islamic Boarding School on how to formulate a strategy are as follows: (1) Environmental analysis (external and internal), (2) Determining and describing the chosen strategy in deliberation, (3) Determining audiences (recipients of messages or strategies), (4) Choosing the media used, (5) Distribution of main duties and functions to the team based on the technical guidelines distributed, (6) Determining deadlines (program calendar / implementation schedule), and (7) Making activity proposals and accountability reports. Meanwhile, three strategies were chosen are: (1) Socialization, (2) Communication, and (3) Publication. Furthermore, there are two kinds of approaches carried out, namely: Religious Approach and Social Community Approach. This is in line with the exposure of approaches that can be used to link strategy formulation with environmental analysis. According to Hari Lubis, quoted by Prayoga et al. (2020), there are two types of analysis, namely: (1) Critical Question Analysis and (2) SWOT analysis.

## **2. Implementation of Public Relations Management**

*First, Determining Resources.* 1) Human Resources. Determining the need for Human Resources in question is to appoint individuals who are competent in the field of public relations as well as individuals who will continue to improve the quality of their knowledge of the field of promotion to enter the public relations work unit in realizing the program and supporting the achievement of the goals of public relations. Forrest Anderson argues that "the only characteristic that distinguishes high-quality public relations from mediocre public relations lies in the participation of people concerned." This explains that in realizing a quality program or strategy, PR management requires competent people in their respective fields who will support the achievement of the goals of public relations (Dillemath et al., 2009). 2) Resources for Facilities and Infrastructure. The function of determining the resources of the facilities and infrastructure is to support the successful performance of the public relations work unit, include: cameras, PCs (design), billboards, banners, and brochures. 3) Financial Resources. Financial resources in this case are all kinds of PR management needs of boarding school related to the budget that will be utilized in the implementation of the public relations strategy.

*Second, Determine the Required Work Unit.* Determining the work unit in question is the formation of a strong and solid work team that is very important in strategy

implementation. This team will later become the organizing committee for the public relations program that will be run (Laylatul Azizah, 2017).

*Third*, Determining the Appropriate Use of Internal Communication Systems and External Information Media. In using the internal communication system, PR management of An-Nur II "Al-Murtadlo" Islamic Boarding School uses online social media (such as WhatsApp Group, Facebook Group, etc.); while determining the appropriate external information media uses online social media (Website, YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc.), and print media (billboards, banners, brochures, etc.). Delivering information appropriately and clearly to the public, both internal and external, can lead to mutual understanding and goodwill between the public and institutions. W. Emerson Reck in Umam explained that public relations is a continuation of the processes of determining policies, determining services and attitudes that are tailored to the interests of people or groups so that the person or institution can gain their trust and goodwill. Second, implementation, policies, services and attitudes are to ensure the best possible understanding and appreciation (Umam, 2017)

*Fourth*, Collaborative Approach (Religious and Social Society). The Religious approaches taken by the PR management of An-Nur II "Al-Murtadlo" Islamic Boarding School include *Haul* of Boarding School, *Haul* of the Boarding School Founder, *Isra 'Mi'raj* Commemoration, Prophet's Birthday (*Maulud Nabi*) Commemoration, *Halal Bihalal*, *Ahad Legi* Recitation, and Prayer Together (*Istighosah*) of Exam Preparation. Meanwhile, the Community Social Approach taken is Waqf Bank, Waqiah Market (*Pasar Waqi'ah*), and others. This supports the theory presented by Cutlip quoted by Ruliana and Dwiantari, which stated that there are several ways to form a positive image for an organization or institution, including: 1) creating public understanding, 2) creating public confidence, 3) creating public support, and 4) creating a public corporate, namely cooperation between the community and the institution (Ruliana & Dwiantari, 2015).

### 3. Evaluation of Public Relations Management

*First*, Evaluation Preparation. The first stage in implementing the preparation for the evaluation of PR management is making reporting materials and also reviewing the results with the stages of preparing an accountability report (LPJ) file, checklist, and follow-up on the results of activities by seeing the impact of the activities that have taken place.

*Second*, Evaluation Implementation. The implementation of this evaluation includes meetings to discuss the results of activities, presentation of accountability reports for activities, and financial reports compiled in the LPJ; while in reporting, the public relations division uses two techniques, namely oral and written. The oral reporting technique is carried out face-to-face, by telephone, interview, and so on; while written evaluation is by submitting the LPJ to the person in charge of public relations to be reported to the boarding school caregiver.

*Third*, Results of the Public Relations Strategy Evaluation (Impact Evaluation). The evidence obtained in the impact evaluations of An-Nur II "Al-Murtadlo" Islamic Boarding School in building an image and increasing public interest through strategic PR management are three things: (1) The Best Islamic Boarding School in East Java in 2017 with the Brand of "Pesantren Wisata", (2) The interest of the new students increases every

year, and (3) Social empowerment and improvement of the community economy programs.

Meanwhile, the findings of the strategies carried out by the Management of An-Nur II "Al-Murtadlo" Islamic Boarding School in an effort to build an image and increase the interest of the community are: (1) To accommodate alumni ties, (2) Delivery of programs and messages with the use of targeted information and communication media, (3) Religious social approach, (4) Community socio-economic approach, and (5) Building an educational institution environment with the nuances of "Brand" tourism (ZOO, parks & physical buildings with tourist nuances) with the aim of providing a quality of comfort to students in carrying out all school activities and being a selling point that will be offered to prospective parents of students..

Faradillah in Ja'far as-Shodiq explains that there are three strategic indicators in building an image, namely: branding, position, and differentiation. First, brand, which is the most important part of the institution, because the brand will give an image to the institution. Second, position, which is the placement of the institution in the right position at the level desired and needed by the community. Third, differentiation, which is the advantage owned by the institution and not owned by others (Ja'far as-Shodiq, 2020)

In line with the theoretical study of the image above, the PR of An-Nur II "Al-Murtadlo" Islamic Boarding School has succeeded in building a positive image of the community towards An-Nur Islamic Boarding School with facts and evidences from data, documents, and interviews that have been obtained in observation. The first is the An-Nur II "Al-Murtadlo" Islamic Boarding School Brand, which is a brand embodied in its big vision, namely to create a *sholih* and *sholihah* generation. This brand has a perspective on the quality of education carried out in the boarding school. Then the "Pesantren Wisata" brand, which has a perspective on the facilities and infrastructure offered by the An-Nur II Islamic Boarding School "Al-Murtadlo" to provide comfortable, safe, and pleasant facilities in its environment.

The second is position. The concept of each strategic planning that is passed is by analyzing the internal and external environment as evidence of public relations efforts of An-Nur II "Al-Murtadlo" Islamic Boarding School in forming a positive image to the community with the results of the chosen strategy, namely a religious approach strategy and a social community approach strategy. These two approaches are an attempt by the institution to adjust the vision, mission, and goals of the boarding school to suit the wants and needs of the community. The third is differentiation. The most striking evidence is the institution's big brand, namely "Pesantren Wisata", which is a brand that was built by the founder of the boarding school as a character that is rarely owned by other institutions, even, this is the first time in East Java.

#### D. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the findings and research data, the results of the research are presented in the form of a description of the strategic management stages of public relations, namely, environmental analysis, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

First, in the environmental analysis stage, both internal and external, and strategic planning, PR management of the An-Nur II "Al-Murtadlo" Islamic Boarding School performs the following stages: (1) Determine the vision, mission and goals of the public

realations program, (2) Analyze internal strengths and weaknesses, (3) Analyze external strengths and weaknesses, then continued with (4) Formulate a public relations strategy.

*Second*, the implementation stages of PR management of An-Nur II "Al-Murtadlo" Islamic Boarding School are as follows: (1) Determine the resources needed, (2) Use of internal communication systems and appropriate external information media, and (3) Collaborative approach.

*Third*, the evaluation stage of PR management of An-Nur II "Al-Murtadlo" Islamic Boarding School is as follows: (1) Preparation for evaluation, (2) Implementation of evaluation, and (3) Results of the public relations strategy (Impact Evaluation).

Based on the field findings related to the strategic management of PR management of An-Nur II "Al-Murtadlo" Islamic Boarding School of Bululawang, Malang, in increasing efforts to build an image and increase the interest of the community, several suggestions can be provided. First, always make improvements in guarding public relations programs that are oriented towards building an image and increasing public interest. Second, constantly strives to develop the capabilities of the human resources needed in carrying out the public relations program, and able to come up with brilliant ideas and strategies for public relations and also regenerate the structure by involving students who are considered capable of supporting public relations programs.

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