

## Reconstruction of the Concept of Islamic Educational Public Relations in the Qur'an through Ibn 'Araby's Symbolic Metaphors

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the concept of public relations in Islamic education from a Qur'anic perspective by employing Ibn 'Araby's symbolic–metaphorical approach. The research is motivated by the tendency to understand public relations in Islamic educational institutions primarily as a technical–managerial function, which often overlooks its normative, ethical, and spiritual dimensions. This study adopts a qualitative library research method, utilizing primary sources such as the Qur'an, classical and contemporary tafsir works, and Ibn 'Araby's major writings, including *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam* and *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*. Data analysis is conducted through thematic analysis and a hermeneutic–philosophical approach to reconstruct a Qur'an-based model of public relations in Islamic education. The findings indicate that public relations in Islamic education constitutes an integral part of the Islamic value system, functioning to build social, moral, and spiritual relationships between educational institutions and society. Qur'anic communication principles—such as *qaulan sadīdan*, *qaulan balighan*, *qaulan ma'rūfā*, *qaulan karīma*, *qaulan layyīna*, and *qaulan maysūra*—serve as normative foundations for ethical and effective communication. The integration of Ibn 'Araby's symbolic metaphor approach enriches Islamic educational public relations with a transformative dimension, positioning communication as a meaningful, ethical, and spiritually grounded process that fosters public trust and social harmony.

**Keywords:** Islamic Educational Public Relations, Qur'anic Communication, Ibn 'Araby's Symbolic Metaphor.

### INTRODUCTION

Public relations is a strategic element in educational management that functions to build communication, institutional image, and public trust in educational institutions.<sup>1</sup> In the context of Islamic education, public relations is not merely understood as a technical–managerial instrument, but also as a value-based praxis rooted in normative Islamic

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<sup>1</sup> Fadly Mart Gultom, *Kebijakan Pendidikan Keagamaan Islam Di Indonesia* (Deepublish, 2020).

### Article History

Received: 18 March 2026 | Revised: 08 May 2026 | Accepted: 12 May 2026 | Available online: 14 May 2026

### How to Cite this Article

Bulqis, Bulqis, Muhammad Fadhil Hadziq, and Sri Jomila Oktari. "Reconstruction of the Concept of Islamic Educational Public Relations in the Qur'an through Ibn 'Araby's Symbolic Metaphors." *Al-Munawwarah: Journal of Islamic Education* 2, no. 1 (2026): 36–49. <https://doi.org/10.38073/almunawwarah.v2i1.4715>.

teachings.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the concept and practice of public relations in Islamic education should ideally be examined and formulated based on the primary sources of Islamic teachings, namely the Qur'an and Hadith, in order to align with the transcendental and humanistic objectives of Islamic education.<sup>3</sup>

The Qur'an explicitly emphasizes the importance of harmonious social relations as an integral part of religiosity.<sup>4</sup> Qur'an Surah Āl 'Imrān verse 112 affirms that humiliation will befall a community unless they hold firmly to *ḥabl min Allāh and ḥabl min an-nās*.<sup>5</sup> This verse indicates that the social dimension including communication, institutional relations, and public interaction occupies a fundamental position in Islam.<sup>6</sup> From this perspective, public relations can be positioned as a practical manifestation of efforts to maintain and manage *ḥabl min an-nās* institutionally, particularly within the context of Islamic educational institutions.<sup>7</sup>

Operationally, public relations plays a role in establishing reciprocal relationships between educational institutions and society through continuous two-way communication.<sup>8</sup> This role includes strengthening institutional cooperation, aligning shared interests, and building public trust based on the principle of mutual understanding. In Islamic education, public relations communication practices cannot be separated from Qur'anic communication ethics, such as the principles of *qaulan sadīdan* (truthful and honest speech) and *qaulan balīghan* (clear, eloquent, and effective speech). These principles affirm that public relations communication is not merely the transmission of information, but also a means of value education and the formation of social awareness.<sup>9</sup>

Empirical studies on public relations in Islamic education have been conducted by a number of scholars using various approaches. Saifur Rizal (2019), for instance, emphasizes that public relations is an integral part of Islamic educational management and must be implemented based on the values of the Qur'an and Hadith, particularly in terms of honesty, transparency, and effective communication.<sup>10</sup> In line with this, Jaelani (2018), through a thematic study of the Qur'an and Hadith, demonstrates that public relations practices in Islamic education cannot be separated from Islamic communication ethics oriented toward fostering social relationships and building public trust.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Toha Ma'sum, "Eksistensi Manajemen Pemasaran Dalam Membangun Citra Lembaga Pendidikan," *Intelektual: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Studi Keislaman* 10, no. 2 (2020): 133–53.

<sup>3</sup> Anik Niswatul Karimah, "Model Kepemimpinan Pembelajaran Kepala Madrasah Dalam Meningkatkan Kinerja Guru Berbasis Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Studi Multikasus Di MAN Lumajang Dan MAS Ma'arif NU Nurul Islam Bades Pasirian Lumajang" (Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim, 2025).

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Ghouse Muslim and Pathur Rahman, "Membangun Akhlak Yang Indah Pada Era Globalisasi Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an Terhadap Interaksi Agama," *AL-Ikhtiar: Jurnal Studi Islam* 2, no. 3 (2025): 234–42.

<sup>5</sup> Moch Ridho, "Diskursus Disabilitas Dalam Al-Qur'an: Tafsir, Paradigma, Dan Praktik Di Lembaga Pendidikan" (Mata Kata Inspirasi, 2023).

<sup>6</sup> Saifur Rizal, "Humas Dalam Perspektif Manajemen Pendidikan Islam," *IDARAH: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kependidikan* 3, no. 1 (2019): 16–36.

<sup>7</sup> Chusnul Chotimah, "Strategi Komunikasi Lembaga Pendidikan Dengan Masyarakat," *Ebook Lingkar Media Yogyakarta*, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Abdul Rahmat, *Hubungan Sekolah Dan Masyarakat: Mengelola Partisipasi Masyarakat Dalam Peningkatan Mutu Sekolah* (Zahir Publishing, 2021).

<sup>9</sup> Muhammad Basri Wello and Lely Novia, *Developing Interpersonal Skills: Mengembangkan Keterampilan Antar Pribadi* (CV. Beta Aksara, 2021).

<sup>10</sup> Rizal, "Humas Dalam Perspektif Manajemen Pendidikan Islam," 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Asriani Putri, Dewi Haryati, and Syafaatul Habib, "Building A Positive Image Of Islamic Educational Institutions By Understanding The Values Of Public Relations Management Of Islamic Education Based On The Qur'an," *Faiyadhab: Journal of Islamic Education Management* 1, no. 1 (2025): 51.

Meanwhile, research by Rahman and his colleagues on public relations management at the An-Nur II Islamic boarding school highlights the strategic role of public relations in building institutional image and increasing public interest through sustainable two-way communication.<sup>12</sup> Another study conducted by Fauzi et al. on madrasah institutions shows that the success of public relations in Islamic education is strongly influenced by the institution's ability to harmonize Islamic values with the demands of modern public communication.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, most of these studies still focus on normative–managerial and implementative aspects, while the philosophical, symbolic, and hermeneutic dimensions of Qur'anic communication have not been extensively explored.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, the Qur'an employs various forms of symbolic and metaphorical language in conveying its messages. Ibn 'Araby, as a Sufi philosophical figure, offers a rich symbolic–metaphorical approach to understanding the meanings of the Qur'an in a deeper and more contextual manner. In his thought, symbolic metaphors function not only as aesthetic expressions of language but also as communicative instruments capable of bridging transcendental meanings with human understanding. In the context of public relations in Islamic education, this approach holds significant potential to enhance communication effectiveness, deepen the meaning of messages, and increase public acceptance of the values conveyed by Islamic educational institutions.<sup>15</sup>

However, studies that integrate the concept of public relations in Islamic education with Ibn 'Araby's symbolic–metaphorical approach remain very limited. There has been little systematic research analyzing public relations in Islamic education from a Qur'anic perspective using the symbolic–metaphorical framework developed by Ibn 'Araby. This research gap constitutes the primary foundation of the present study.<sup>16</sup>

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to analyze the concept of public relations in Islamic education from a Qur'anic perspective and to explore the role of Ibn 'Araby's symbolic metaphors in constructing public relations communication in Islamic education. This research is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of Qur'an-based studies on public relations in Islamic education, while also offering a new conceptual approach that enriches the communication practices of Islamic educational institutions in an ethical, symbolic, and transformative manner.

## METHOD

The present study employs a qualitative approach in the form of library research. The focus of the research is directed toward a conceptual analysis of Qur'anic verses related to communication, social relations (*ḥabl min an-nās*), and the ethics of message delivery, as well as Ibn 'Araby's thought on symbolic metaphors in understanding Qur'anic messages. Primary data sources include the Qur'an, classical and contemporary tafsir works, and Ibn 'Araby's major writings such as *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* and *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*. Secondary data sources consist of books, scholarly journal articles, and previous studies addressing public relations in Islamic education, Islamic communication ethics, public relations theory, and studies on

<sup>12</sup> Sangga Cumbuan Kejora, "Strategic Management of Public Relations in Islamic Education Institutions to Build Public Image and Increase Public Interest," *J-Mpi* 5, no. 2 (2021): 112–20.

<sup>13</sup> J Sugiarto, "Public Relations Management of the Institution Islamic Education," *JPEM: Journal of Perspectives on ...* 01, no. 01 (2025): 13–18.

<sup>14</sup> Sugiarto.

<sup>15</sup> Muhammad Dedad Bisaraguna Akastangga, "Metafora Metafora Dalam Puisi Kerinduan Ibnu 'Arabi (Kajian Semiotik-Pragmatik)," *Jurnalistrendi: Jurnal Linguistik, Sastra, Dan Pendidikan* 5, no. 1 (2020): 27–46.

<sup>16</sup> Jesinta Moza Mustika, "Hermeneutika Wujud Ibn 'Arabi: Studi Atas Struktur Metafora Dalam Wacana Al-Haqiqah Al-Muhammadiyah" (UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2025).

Ibn 'Araby's thought.<sup>17</sup> Data analysis is conducted through thematic analysis and a hermeneutic–philosophical approach, involving the identification and categorization of relevant Qur'anic verses, interpretation of meanings through a dialogue between normative tafsir and Ibn 'Araby's symbolic–metaphorical perspective, and the conceptual reconstruction of a Qur'an-based model of public relations in Islamic education. Data validity is ensured through source triangulation by comparing various tafsir interpretations and scholarly viewpoints, as well as conceptual validation by relating the findings to established theories of communication and modern public relations. This study is limited to textual and conceptual analysis, and therefore is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of an ethical, symbolic, and transformative framework of public relations in Islamic education.<sup>18</sup>

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Public Relations in Islamic Education: Conceptual and Normative Framework

The results of the conceptual analysis indicate that public relations in Islamic education cannot be understood merely as a technical managerial function tasked with conveying institutional information to the public. Rather, public relations in Islamic education constitutes an integral part of the Islamic value system that functions to build social, moral, and spiritual relationships between educational institutions and society. In this context, public relations serves as a communicative bridge that continuously connects the vision of Islamic education with the social realities of the community.<sup>19</sup>

In modern educational management, public relations is understood as a two-way communication process aimed at creating mutual understanding and trust between organizations and their publics. However, in Islamic education, such communication carries an additional dimension in the form of da'wah and moral character formation. Therefore, public relations in Islamic education is not merely instrumental and pragmatic, but also normative and transcendental. It is not limited to transmitting messages, but also internalizes Islamic values within the social sphere.<sup>20</sup>

Howard Bonham, as cited by Abdul Muis (2022), defines public relations as the art of building public understanding aimed at strengthening public trust in individuals or institutions. This definition suggests that public relations is not merely a technical activity, but an art of communication that requires social and ethical sensitivity. Abdul Muis further concludes that public relations is a communicative activity directed toward fostering harmonious cooperative relationships with both internal and external publics. In Islamic educational institutions, internal publics include teachers, students, and educational staff, while external publics encompass parents, the wider community, and other related institutions.<sup>21</sup>

The findings of this study demonstrate that the function of public relations in Islamic education is strategic in nature, as it is directly related to the institution's social legitimacy.

<sup>17</sup> Milya Sari and Asmendri Asmendri, "Penelitian Kepustakaan (Library Research) Dalam Penelitian Pendidikan IPA," *Natural Science: Jurnal Penelitian Bidang IPA Dan Pendidikan IPA* 6, no. 1 (2020): 41–53, <https://doi.org/10.15548/nsc.v6i1.1555>.

<sup>18</sup> Miza Nina Adlini et al., "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka," *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan* 6, no. 1 (2022): 974–80, <https://doi.org/10.33487/edumaspul.v6i1.3394>.

<sup>19</sup> Murni, "Konsep Manajemen Humas Pada Lembaga Pendidikan Islam," *Jurnal Intelektualita* 5, no. 1 (2017): 26–45, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.22373/ji.v5i1.4352>.

<sup>20</sup> Murni.

<sup>21</sup> Abdul Muis, "Manajemen Hubungan Masyarakat Dalam Melibatkan Partisipasi Masyarakat Di Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan Islam Al-Mursyidiyah Mayang-Jember Tahun 2021/2022" (Pascasarjana Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember, 2022).

The success of Islamic educational institutions is measured not only by academic achievement, but also by the level of public trust and acceptance. Accordingly, public relations in Islamic education serves as a representation of institutional values before the public, as well as a medium for conveying educational and Islamic messages in a persuasive and ethical manner.<sup>22</sup>

### Principles of Public Relations from the Qur'anic Perspective

The analysis of Qur'anic verses reveals that the concept of communication in Islam is grounded in a highly comprehensive value framework. Qur'anic communication principles regulate not only the technical aspects of message delivery, but also emphasize moral, psychological, and spiritual dimensions. In the context of public relations in Islamic education, these principles function as normative foundations that guide communication practices to remain aligned with Islamic teachings.<sup>23</sup>

#### 1. *Qaulan Sadidan*

*Qaulan Sadidan* refers to public relations activities that contain elements of goodness. In this context, communication carried out between Islamic educational institutions and their partners must convey information honestly, accurately, factually, and without manipulation. According to Syaikh Al-Alusi in Murni (2017), *Qaulan Sadidan* means truthful speech delivered with gentleness and proper manners. The basis of this behavior is in the word of Allah SWT in QS. An-Nisa' 4:9:<sup>24</sup>

وَلْيَخْشَ الَّذِينَ لَوْ تَرَكَوْا مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّةً ضِعْفًا خَا فُؤَا عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ فَلْيَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْيَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا

“And let those fear (Allah) who, if they had left behind weak offspring, would have been worried for them. So let them fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice.” (QS. An-Nisa' 4:9)

This verse explains the importance of honesty in management activities within educational institutions. Honesty is a fundamental principle in public relations because maintaining good relationships with society greatly depends on the level of trust obtained. By making honesty the main principle, a conducive environment for educational activities will be created.<sup>25</sup>

#### 2. *Qaulan Baligha*

*Qaulan Baligha* can be interpreted as a form of effective communication.<sup>26</sup> Communication in this context must be on target, with speech style and messages adjusted to the level of understanding of the audience, while using language that is easy for them to understand. This is in accordance with QS. An-Nisa' 4:63, where Allah SWT says:<sup>27</sup>

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَعِظْهُمْ وَقُلْ لَهُمْ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ قَوْلًا بَلِيغًا

<sup>22</sup> Muis.

<sup>23</sup> Abd Hamid Wahid and Istianatul Hasanah, “Reorientasi Humas Dalam Lembaga Pendidikan Islam,” *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 03, no. 02 (2019): 25–36, <https://doi.org/http://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v3i2.670>.

<sup>24</sup> Kemenag Republik Indonesia, “Al-Qur’an Indonesia” (Aplikasi, n.d.).

<sup>25</sup> Wahid and Hasanah, “Reorientasi Humas Dalam Lembaga Pendidikan Islam.”

<sup>26</sup> Sofyan Sauri, “Pendekatan Semantik Frase Qaulan Sadida, Ma’rufa, Baligha, Masyura, Layyina, Dan Karima Untuk Menemukan Konsep Tindak Tutur Qurani,” n.d., [http://file.upi.edu/Direktori/FPBS/JUR.\\_PEND.\\_BAHASA\\_ARAB/195604201983011-SOFYAN\\_SAURI/jurnal2/PENDEKATAN\\_SEMANTIK\\_FRASE\\_QAULAN\\_SADIDA.pdf](http://file.upi.edu/Direktori/FPBS/JUR._PEND._BAHASA_ARAB/195604201983011-SOFYAN_SAURI/jurnal2/PENDEKATAN_SEMANTIK_FRASE_QAULAN_SADIDA.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> Kemenag Republik Indonesia, “Al-Qur’an Indonesia.”

“They are those whose hearts Allah knows well. So turn away from them, admonish them, and speak to them words that reach deeply into their souls.” (QS. An-Nisa’ 4:63)

Al-Maraghi, as cited in Wahid and Hasanah (2019), explains that the term *Qaulan Baligha* is associated with the meaning of *tabligh*, one of the characteristics of Prophet Muhammad SAW, who was entrusted to deliver warnings to his people with words capable of touching their hearts.<sup>28</sup> In this context, public relations practitioners in Islamic educational institutions need to understand the conditions of the surrounding community. If the audience has little understanding of education, then simple and easy-to-understand language should be used. However, if the audience consists of intellectuals, the language used should leave a profound impression in order to build a positive image.<sup>29</sup>

### 3. *Qaulan Ma'rufu*

*Qaulan Ma'rufu* is a public relations principle related to proper communication procedures between institutions and society or partners. In this case, institutions must be careful in communicating and avoid words that may offend others, especially customers or partners, because they play an important role in supporting the sustainability of the institution. The attitude that should be demonstrated in *Qaulan Ma'rufu* is explained in QS. An-Nisa’ 4:5, where Allah SWT says:<sup>30</sup>

وَلَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَاءَ أَمْوَالَكُمُ الَّتِي جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ قِيَامًا وَارْزُقُوهُمْ فِيهَا وَاكْسُوهُمْ وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا  
 “And do not give the weak-minded your property which Allah has made a means of support for you, but provide for them from it and clothe them and speak to them words of appropriate kindness.” (QS. An-Nisa’ 4:5)

Based on this verse, a public relations practitioner must be able to adjust communication to the conditions of the surrounding community and convey messages with polite attitudes and speech.<sup>31</sup> In this regard, Al-Razi explains that *Qaulan Ma'rufu* refers to good and soul-touching words, so that the listener does not feel humiliated, through expressions that are not hurtful and are recognized as good speech.<sup>32</sup>

### 4. *Qaulan Karima*

*Qaulan Karima* refers to activities of building cooperation with partners through communication that honors the listener, accompanied by respect and attention to their suggestions and input. This is in accordance with the word of Allah SWT in QS. Al-Isra’ 17:23:<sup>33</sup>

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِأَلْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۗ إِمَّا يَنْبَغِ لَكَ عِنْدَ الْكَبِيرِ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَيْهِمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا  
 أِفٌّ وَلَا تُنْهَرَهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا

<sup>28</sup> Wahid and Hasanah, “Reorientasi Humas Dalam Lembaga Pendidikan Islam.”

<sup>29</sup> Wahid and Hasanah.

<sup>30</sup> Kemenag Republik Indonesia, “Al-Qur’an Indonesia.”

<sup>31</sup> Saiful Rizal, “Humas Dalam Perspektif Manajemen Pendidikan Islam,” *Idarah (Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kependidikan)* 3, no. 1 (2019): 16–36, <https://doi.org/10.47766/idadrah.v3i1.610>.

<sup>32</sup> Dian Iskandar Jaelani, “Manajemen Public Relations (Humas) Pendidikan Islam: Kajian Tematik Al-Quran Dan Hadits,” *Istawa: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam (IJPI)* 3, no. 2 (2018): 57–96, <https://doi.org/10.24269/ijpi.v3i2.1501>.

<sup>33</sup> Kemenag Republik Indonesia, “Al-Qur’an Indonesia.”

“And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you show kindness to parents. If one or both of them reach old age with you, do not say to them even ‘uff,’ nor scold them, but speak to them noble words.” (QS. Al-Isra’ 17:23)

Based on this verse, in the context of Islamic educational public relations, *Qaulan Karima* refers to the use and choice of polite words, avoiding harsh or vulgar language, and refraining from expressions that may hurt the feelings of the listener. *Qaulan Karima* is good and beautiful speech accompanied by respect in accordance with proper manners and ethics, which must be considered in communication within Islamic educational public relations.<sup>34</sup>

#### 5. *Qaulan Layyina*

*Qaulan Layyina* contains the meaning of advice, invitation, and exemplary conduct, where the speaker seeks to convince others that what is conveyed is true and rational, without belittling the views or opinions of the listener.<sup>35</sup> In this regard, Allah SWT says in QS. Ta-Ha 20:44:<sup>36</sup>

فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى

“So speak to him with gentle words; perhaps he may take heed or fear Allah.” (QS. Ta-Ha 20:44)

This verse emphasizes the importance of ethics and manners in communication and interaction with partners in the field of education. Caution is needed, along with the understanding that communication is not merely about speaking gently, but also ensuring that the conversation is acceptable to the listener and leaves a positive impression. Furthermore, the use of harsh words and loud tones should be avoided in order to create a positive image for the institution.<sup>37</sup>

#### 6. *Qaulan Maysura*

*Qaulan Maysura* means words that are easy to understand, pleasant, gentle, and appropriate.<sup>38</sup> This is in accordance with the word of Allah SWT in QS. Al-Isra’ 17:28:<sup>39</sup>

وَأَمَّا تَعْرِضْنَ عَنْهُمْ أِبْتِغَاءَ رَحْمَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكَ تَرْجُوهَا فَقُلْ لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّيْسُورًا

“And if you turn away from them seeking mercy from your Lord which you expect, then speak to them a gentle word.” (QS. Al-Isra’ 17:28)

Based on this verse, it can be understood that a public relations practitioner needs to use language that is clear, simple, and easy to understand by the listener or reader so that the communication objectives can be achieved successfully.<sup>40</sup> In this context, public relations practitioners in Islamic educational institutions must utilize various channels or media accessible to society, so that the information conveyed can be well received and avoid multiple interpretations.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Wahid and Hasanah, “Reorientasi Humas Dalam Lembaga Pendidikan Islam.”

<sup>35</sup> Jaelani, “Manajemen Public Relations (Humas) Pendidikan Islam: Kajian Tematik Al-Quran Dan Hadits.”

<sup>36</sup> Kemenag Republik Indonesia, “Al-Qur’an Indonesia.”

<sup>37</sup> Wahid and Hasanah, “Reorientasi Humas Dalam Lembaga Pendidikan Islam.”

<sup>38</sup> Sauri, “Pendekatan Semantik Frase Qaulan Sadida, Ma’rufa, Baligha, Masyura, Layyina, Dan Karima Untuk Menemukan Konsep Tindak Tutur Qurani.”

<sup>39</sup> Kemenag Republik Indonesia, “Al-Qur’an Indonesia.”

<sup>40</sup> Rizal, “Humas Dalam Perspektif Manajemen Pendidikan Islam,” 2019.

<sup>41</sup> Wahid and Hasanah, “Reorientasi Humas Dalam Lembaga Pendidikan Islam.”

## Operationalizing Ibn 'Araby's Symbolic Metaphors in Islamic Educational Public Relations

Ibn 'Arabi is widely recognized as one of the most influential thinkers in the Islamic mystical tradition who employed symbolic metaphors to explain spiritual realities, particularly the relationship between human beings, the universe, and God. In his perspective, symbolic language is not merely a literary ornament, but an epistemological medium that connects the outward (*ẓāhir*) and inward (*bāṭin*) dimensions of reality. Through symbols, abstract spiritual meanings can be communicated in ways that are emotionally engaging, intellectually reflective, and spiritually transformative.<sup>42</sup>

This symbolic approach is highly relevant to the practice of Islamic educational public relations (PR), where communication is not limited to the delivery of institutional information, but also functions as a medium for transmitting Islamic values, building trust, and fostering emotional relationships between schools and society, especially parents.<sup>43</sup> In this context, Ibn 'Araby's symbolic metaphors can be operationalized as a communication strategy that enables educational institutions to present their identity and values in persuasive and meaningful ways.

The operationalization of symbolic metaphors in Islamic educational public relations can be understood through three symbolic categories commonly associated with Ibn 'Araby's metaphysical language: Blank Symbol, Natural Symbol, and Private Symbol<sup>44</sup>. Each category offers a practical framework for shaping communication strategies in educational institutions.

### 1. Blank Symbol

A blank symbol refers to a symbol whose meaning is not immediately visible and therefore requires further interpretation from the audience. This type of symbol is open-ended and provides space for readers or listeners to discover the inner meaning behind it<sup>45</sup>. In Ibn 'Arabi's works, such symbols frequently appear in expressions of longing, journeys, light, or gardens, which are not understood literally but rather point to spiritual meanings regarding the closeness between humans and God.<sup>46</sup>

In Islamic educational public relations, blank symbols can be utilized to create communication that touches the emotions and awareness of parents without conveying messages explicitly. For example, an Islamic school may create a slogan in its student admission brochure stating: "Planting light early for a brighter future." The word light here functions as a blank symbol.<sup>47</sup> Literally, light means illumination, but within the context of Islamic educational communication, it may symbolize knowledge, morality,

<sup>42</sup> Muhamad Firdaus, *Tafsir Simbolis Sufi: Antara Ibn 'Arabi Dan Al-Qushayri*, ed. Agus Ali Dzawafi, Edisi 1 (Serang: Penerbit A-Empat Anggota IKAPI, 2021).

<sup>43</sup> Pasha Syahrissa Maulana and Subhan Afifi, "Analisis Peran Dan Fungsi Public Relations Di Lembaga Pendidikan Islam," *Jurnal Mahasiswa Komunikasi Cantrik* 1, no. 2 (2021): 147–62, <https://doi.org/10.20885/cantrik.vol1.iss2.art7>.

<sup>44</sup> Muhammad Dedad Bisaraguna Akastangga, "Metafora Dalam Tarjuman Al-Ashwaq Karya Ibnu 'Arabi (Kajian Semiotik-Pragmatik)," *Jurnalistrendi: Jurnal Linguistik, Sastra, Dan Pendidikan* 5, no. 1 (2020): 27–46, <https://ejournalunwmataram.org/index.php/trendi/article/download/208/157>.

<sup>45</sup> Mazlina Parman and Nurazmallail Marni, "Sufi Symbols In Poems Of Ibn 'Arabi And Hamzah Fansuri," *UMRAN: Journal of Islamic and Civilizational Studies* 02 (2021): 21–38, <https://doi.org/10.11113/umran2021.8n2.498>.

<sup>46</sup> Muhammad Nazar, Mardjoko Iris, and Sindy Febrianisa, "Penggunaan Metafora Dalam Tarjuman Al-Ashwaq Karya Ibnu 'Arabi (Tinjauan Semantik)," *Tafhim Al-'Ilmi: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pemikiran Islam* 15, no. 1 (2023): 113–26, <https://doi.org/10.37459/tafhim.v15i01.6796>.

<sup>47</sup> Lubna Farah, "The Symbolism in Mystical Poetry of Ibn Arabi," *Al-Ehsan* 15, no. 01 (2021): 93–108, <https://alehsan.gcuf.edu.pk/index.php/alehsan/article/view/36>.

guidance, or faith.<sup>48</sup> Such symbolism encourages parents to interpret for themselves that the school does not merely teach academics, but also shapes the Islamic character of children.

Another example is when a school public relations team uploads a short video showing a teacher guiding a young student through the school corridor toward the mosque, accompanied by the narration: “Every small step today is a path toward a future blessed by Allah.” The phrase path toward the future becomes a symbol that is not explained directly, yet it contains the meaning of education as a process of spiritual and moral development. This strategy reflects the concept of *qaulan baligha*, namely communication that leaves a deep impression on the heart and exerts a meaningful influence on the audience.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, public relations do not merely provide information about school facilities, but also construct strong emotional and spiritual impressions for parents.

## 2. Natural Symbol

Natural symbols are symbols that use elements of nature to represent particular meanings.<sup>50</sup> In Ibn ‘Arabi’s Sufi tradition, elements such as the sea, rain, sky, trees, or the sun are often employed to describe divine attributes and the spiritual journey of human beings.<sup>51</sup> Natural symbols are considered easier to understand because they are closely connected to everyday human experiences.<sup>52</sup>

In the communication practices of Islamic educational public relations, natural symbols may be used to illustrate the educational process. For instance, a school may use the phrase: “Education is a garden nourished by faith and knowledge.” The words garden and nourished function as natural symbols that portray the growth of children’s character in a natural and continuous manner.<sup>53</sup> These symbols create the impression that students are not forced to develop, but rather guided with compassion and Islamic values. The use of natural symbols also aligns with the principle of *qaulan mayisura*, namely communication delivered through gentle and easily understood language.<sup>54</sup>

## 3. Private Symbol

Private symbols are symbols whose meanings are highly specific and generally understood only within certain contexts or by particular groups. In Ibn ‘Arabi’s writings, some symbols are personal and mystical in nature, requiring Sufi understanding to interpret them properly. These symbols tend to be exclusive because they are related to particular spiritual experiences.<sup>55</sup>

In Islamic educational public relations, private symbols may appear in the use of unique terms or institutional identities. For example, a school may refer to its students as “The Guardians of Qur’anic Light Generation”. To the general public, this phrase may simply sound poetic, but for members of the school community, it carries a deeper

<sup>48</sup> Cahya Buana, “Nature Symbols and Symbolism in Sufic Poems of Ibn Arabi,” *Karsa: Journal of Social and Islamic Culture* 25, no. 2 (2017): 434–56, <https://doi.org/10.19105/karsa.v25i2.1304>.

<sup>49</sup> Nur Hasaniyah, Faisol, and Murdiono, “Stilistika Al- Qur’an: Memahami Bentuk -Bentuk Komunikasi Metafora Dalam Surat Ali Imran,” *Arabi: Journal of Arabic Studies* 8, no. 2 (2023): 217–29, <https://doi.org/10.24865/ajas.v8i2.509>.

<sup>50</sup> Buana, “Nature Symbols and Symbolism in Sufic Poems of Ibn Arabi.”

<sup>51</sup> Farah, “The Symbolism in Mystical Poetry of Ibn Arabi.”

<sup>52</sup> Buana, “Nature Symbols and Symbolism in Sufic Poems of Ibn Arabi.”

<sup>53</sup> Buana.

<sup>54</sup> Hasaniyah, Faisol, and Murdiono, “Stilistika Al- Qur’an: Memahami Bentuk -Bentuk Komunikasi Metafora Dalam Surat Ali Imran.”

<sup>55</sup> Parman and Marni, “Sufi Symbols In Poems Of Ibn ‘Arabi And Hamzah Fansuri.”

meaning concerning the responsibility to preserve Qur'anic values in everyday life.<sup>56</sup> Such special symbols function to strengthen institutional identity while simultaneously building a sense of belonging among students and parents.

Thus, these three types of symbols demonstrate that communication in Ibn 'Arabi's perspective is not merely a process of direct message delivery, but also a process of constructing meaning through symbols that touch intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions<sup>57</sup>. In the practice of Islamic educational public relations, the use of such symbols can strengthen communication strategies, making them more persuasive, humane, and aligned with Qur'anic values.<sup>58</sup> This approach further illustrates that messages delivered through symbolic language often leave a deeper impression on society than communication that is purely formal and informative.<sup>59</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that public relations in Islamic education cannot be reduced to a purely technical or managerial function, but must be understood as an ethical and value-based communicative praxis grounded in Qur'anic teachings. The findings show that Qur'anic communication principles, such as *qaulan salidan*, *qaulan baligha*, *qaulan ma'rufa*, *qaulan karima*, *qaulan layyina*, and *qaulan maysura*, constitute a comprehensive normative framework that integrates honesty, effectiveness, respect, gentleness, and clarity in institutional communication. These principles position public relations as a medium for fostering mutual understanding, social harmony, and public trust, while simultaneously serving as a channel for moral and spiritual education within Islamic educational institutions.

Furthermore, the integration of Ibn 'Arabi's symbolic–metaphorical approach reveals that public relations communication in Islamic education operates not only at the level of information transmission, but also at the level of meaning construction and consciousness formation. Symbolic metaphors function as communicative bridges that connect transcendental values with human understanding, thereby enhancing message depth, acceptance, and transformative impact.

This study is limited by its conceptual and qualitative nature, which primarily relies on the interpretation of Qur'anic communication principles and Ibn 'Arabi's symbolic metaphorical thought without direct empirical investigation in Islamic educational institutions. As a result, the findings remain theoretical and may not fully capture the practical complexities, cultural variations, and institutional dynamics of public relations practices in diverse educational settings. In addition, the study focuses mainly on normative Islamic perspectives, thereby limiting comparative engagement with contemporary communication theories and empirical psychological approaches. Future research is therefore recommended to conduct empirical studies involving schools, madrasahs, and Islamic universities in order to examine how Qur'anic communication ethics and symbolic metaphors are implemented in real public relations practices.

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<sup>56</sup> Farah, "The Symbolism in Mystical Poetry of Ibn Arabi."

<sup>57</sup> Parman and Marni, "Sufi Symbols In Poems Of Ibn 'Arabi And Hamzah Fansuri."

<sup>58</sup> Hasaniyah, Faisol, and Murdiono, "Stilistika Al- Qur'an: Memahami Bentuk -Bentuk Komunikasi Metafora Dalam Surat Ali Imran."

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