

## Sustaining Islamic School Reputation: The Multidimensional Role of Educational Public Relations

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### ABSTRACT

In the competitive landscape of Islamic education, maintaining a positive reputation is crucial for Islamic schools to attract public trust and ensure sustainability. Effective educational public relations (PR) plays a central role in addressing modern communication challenges while upholding Islamic values. This study focuses on MA Atqia Bondowoso, exploring how a multidimensional PR approach can sustain its reputation amidst the dynamics of the digital era. The research aims to develop a holistic PR framework that integrates branding, image building, reputation maintenance, effective communication, and community engagement. Employing a qualitative case study approach at MA Atqia Bondowoso, the study examines the role of PR in sustaining the school's reputation. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, then analyzed inductively following Miles and Huberman's stages. Data validity was ensured through triangulation and member checking to provide a comprehensive overview of PR strategies in maintaining the school's reputation. The findings reveal that a strategic PR approach, combining digital and traditional communication channels, enhances public trust, strengthens school competitiveness, and ensures long-term sustainability. Key strategies include consistent branding, transparent communication, and active community engagement, aligned with Islamic principles. The study proposes a comprehensive PR model that addresses contemporary communication challenges while preserving Islamic values.

Keywords: Educational Public Relations, Islamic School Reputation, Branding, Communication, Community Engagement.

### ABSTRAK

*Dalam lanskap pendidikan Islam yang kompetitif, menjaga reputasi positif sangat penting bagi sekolah Islam untuk menarik kepercayaan masyarakat dan memastikan keberlanjutan. Humas pendidikan yang efektif berperan sentral dalam menghadapi tantangan komunikasi modern sambil menjunjung nilai-nilai Islam. Penelitian ini berfokus pada Madrasah Aliyah (MA) Atqia Bondowoso, mengeksplorasi bagaimana pendekatan humas multidimensi dapat mempertahankan reputasinya di tengah dinamika era digital. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengembangkan kerangka humas holistik yang mengintegrasikan branding, pembangunan citra, pemeliharaan reputasi, komunikasi efektif, dan keterlibatan masyarakat. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan studi kasus di MA Atqia Bondowoso untuk mengkaji peran humas dalam mempertahankan reputasi sekolah. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis secara induktif mengikuti tahapan Miles dan Huberman. Keabsahan data dijamin melalui triangulasi dan member checking guna memperoleh gambaran komprehensif tentang strategi humas dalam menjaga reputasi sekolah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan humas strategis, yang menggabungkan saluran komunikasi digital dan tradisional, meningkatkan kepercayaan masyarakat, memperkuat daya saing sekolah, dan memastikan keberlanjutan jangka panjang. Strategi utama meliputi branding konsisten, komunikasi transparan, dan keterlibatan aktif masyarakat, selaras dengan*

*prinsip Islam. Penelitian ini mengusulkan model humas komprehensif yang menjawab tantangan komunikasi kontemporer sambil mempertahankan nilai-nilai Islam.*

*Kata Kunci: Humas Pendidikan, Reputasi Sekolah Islam, Branding, Komunikasi, Relasi Masyarakat.*

## INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in shaping the personality of students, not only academically but also in instilling moral values and character. From an early age, schools, along with family and society, serve as the primary spaces for fostering attitudes, behaviors, and perspectives aligned with national norms and culture. Character education emphasizes noble values, particularly honesty, to produce a generation of integrity capable of contributing positively to social life.<sup>1</sup> Indonesia possesses great potential in educational development and must be able to adapt to the challenges of the times. Efforts to realize better education are a collective responsibility, especially in liberating education from old patterns that restrict student creativity. Educational transformation is necessary to provide ample space for students to develop skills according to their talents, so that their growth and development proceed more naturally.<sup>2</sup>

In this context, Islamic Education serves as a means to form the whole person-individuals who are intelligent, faithful, and possess noble character. Islamic Education is based on the Qur'an and As-Sunnah, with the aim of building moral character reflected in daily life. Globalization has had a negative impact on the younger generation, as many have begun to lose moral values such as honesty, politeness, respect, and noble character.<sup>3</sup> This phenomenon is clearly visible in schools, where many students still exhibit behaviors contrary to religious values and ethics, such as a lack of discipline. Therefore, serious efforts are needed to re-instill character values, especially discipline, through character education.

Islamic Education is the primary way to shape student behavior in schools. Islamic Education is based on the Qur'an and As-Sunnah and aims to improve human quality so that individuals possess Islamic character. Its main objective is to form the morals and ethics of students, as reflected in their daily attitudes and outlook on life.<sup>4</sup> The goal of Islamic education is not only to fulfill intellectual needs but also to emphasize character building, moral deepening, and the practice of religious values in daily life. The success of Islamic education is evident when students not only understand religious knowledge but are also able to apply it in their attitudes and behavior.

Islamic schools in Indonesia have a strategic role in producing a generation that is not only academically superior but also possesses noble character based on Islamic values.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jai, Ani Jailani, Chaerul Rochman, and Nina Nurnila. "Peran pendidikan agama Islam dalam membentuk karakter jujur pada siswa." *Al-Tadzkiyyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10.2 (2019): 257-264.

<sup>2</sup> Zahara, P., Putri, A. D., Nurkarimah, F., Wismanto, W., & Fadhlly, M. (2024). Peran pendidikan inklusi dalam perspektif pendidikan Islam. *Concept: Journal of Social Humanities and Education*, 3(2), 01-12.

<sup>3</sup> M. Imamul Muttaqin et al., "Facing The Challenges of Youth Moral Degradation In The Digital Age," *MA'ALIM: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 4, no. 1 (2023): 54–70, <https://doi.org/10.21154/maalim.v4i1.6417>.

<sup>4</sup> Salsabila, Unik Hanifah, et al. "Peran pendidikan islam terhadap pembentukan karakter disiplin peserta didik." *Intelektual: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Studi Keislaman* 10.3 (2020): 329-343.

<sup>5</sup> Anie Rohaeni et al., "Management of Noble Moral Education for Madrasah Aliyah Students at Persatuan Islam Boarding School," *Journal of Industrial Engineering & Management Research* 2, no. 4 (2021): 154–71, <https://doi.org/10.7777/jiemar.v2i4.174>.

In the context of increasingly fierce educational competition, school reputation becomes an important asset to attract public trust. Educational public relations (PR) serves as a communication bridge between the school and the public, both internal and external, to build and maintain a positive image. However, the role of PR is often not utilized optimally to achieve these goals. The main challenges for educational PR include a lack of consistent communication strategies, minimal structured documentation of school activities, and limited resources for effective publication. Many Islamic schools focus only on seasonal promotion, such as during the admission of new students (PPDB), making reputation-building efforts unsustainable. Additionally, in the digital era, PR faces new challenges, such as the spread of negative issues through social media that can damage a school's reputation in a short time if not handled quickly and appropriately.<sup>6</sup>

To overcome these challenges, educational PR needs to adopt a multidimensional approach covering branding, image building, effective communication, reputation maintenance, and strengthening community relations. This strategy involves an optimal combination of digital media (such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp) and traditional approaches (such as brochures and parent-teacher meetings), the formation of a professional PR team, and proactive responses to criticism and crises. With this approach, PR can ensure that the school's reputation remains intact and public trust continues to increase.

Public relations plays a strategic role in building effective communication and a positive image of educational institutions so that they align with community expectations.<sup>7</sup> Research by Rifa'i & Hosen (2023) at MA Miftahul Ulum examined PR strategies in enhancing school reputation. This study indicates that the school's reputation aligns with its vision, supported by the trust and pride of stakeholders, despite dynamics affecting the school's condition.<sup>8</sup> Research by Rosmayani et al. (2023) at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Samarinda examined the strategic role of PR in building a positive image for an Islamic-based school. This study shows that a positive school image is formed through consistent educational services, open communication, active participation in community activities, and the use of digital media, particularly social media, to strengthen public trust.<sup>9</sup> Research by Astuti et al. (2023) at SD Muhammadiyah Pringsewu and SD IT Cahaya Madani Pringsewu examined PR management in building a positive school image. This study shows that both schools succeeded in creating a positive image through structured and collaborative PR activities with internal and external stakeholders, although their respective approaches differed, namely publication and community collaboration versus school promotion and student character development.<sup>10</sup> Research by Hakim & Rozi (2023) at MAN Gondanglegi and MA AN-Nur

<sup>6</sup> Jaffar Abbas et al., "The Role of Social Media in the Advent of COVID-19 Pandemic: Crisis Management, Mental Health Challenges and Implications," *Risk Management and Healthcare Policy* 14 (May 2021): 1917–32, <https://doi.org/10.2147/RMHP.S284313>.

<sup>7</sup> Pramungkas, Patrea Reola. "Peran Humas Pembentuk Opini Publik Dalam Upaya Pencitraan Lembaga Pendidikan." *Kelola: Journal of Islamic Education Management* 5.1 (2020): 1-14.

<sup>8</sup> Rifa, Moh, and Muhammad Hosen. "Strategi Humas dalam Meningkatkan Reputasi Sekolah (Studi Kasus di Ma Miftahul Ulum)." *JIIP-Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan* 6.7 (2023): 5420-5426.

<sup>9</sup> Rosmayani, Meirina, Siti Julaihah, and Ida Suryani Wijaya. "Strategi Humas dalam Membangun Citra, Kepercayaan, dan Reputasi Sekolah Islam: Studi di SD Muhammadiyah 1 Samarinda." *ITQAN: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Kependidikan* 16.1 (2025): 25-36.

<sup>10</sup> Astuti, Yani Tri, et al. "Manajemen humas dalam membangun citra sekolah: Studi multikasus di SD

Bululawang examined PR management strategies in increasing public interest in madrasahs. This study shows that both madrasahs succeeded in attracting public interest and increasing student enrollment through media publications, alumni networks, and community engagement activities.<sup>11</sup> Research by Marauleng et al. (2022) at Mts Al-Hidayah Bakke examined PR strategies in maintaining school reputation. This study shows that madrasah reputation can be maintained through periodic meetings involving teachers, staff, employees, and parents.<sup>12</sup>

Analysis of these studies shows a research gap; most studies tend to emphasize a single dimension of PR, such as promotion, reputation management, or the use of digital media, in isolation, without integrating all aspects holistically. Furthermore, literature combining PR strategies with strong Islamic educational values, particularly in the context of Islamic-based schools, is still limited.

The novelty of this research lies in the development of an educational PR framework that integrates the holistic "Education Whole Being" approach unique to Madrasah Aliyah (MA) Atqia Bondowoso, East Java, Indonesia, with adaptive digital communication strategies in the Industry 4.0 era. Unlike previous research that tends to focus on promotion or crisis management separately, this study proposes a multidimensional PR model that simultaneously manages branding, image, reputation, communication, and public relations within a single integrated framework. This approach also considers the context of Islamic schools with strong Islamic values, which has not been widely explored in educational PR literature. This research is important because it provides practical and contextual guidance for Islamic schools, specifically MA Atqia Bondowoso, in optimizing the role of PR to maintain reputation amidst the dynamics of the digital era. The results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for other Islamic schools to build a positive image, strengthen relationships with the community, and face modern communication challenges. With a strong reputation, Islamic schools can continue to contribute to producing a superior generation that integrates Islamic values, science, and technology, while maintaining competitiveness in the national educational landscape.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study research design, namely field research conducted by directly engaging with the school to obtain accurate and in-depth data. The qualitative approach was selected because it is suitable for describing phenomena as they naturally occur without manipulation, while the case study design enables an in-depth examination of the multidimensional role of educational public relations in maintaining the reputation of MA Atqia Bondowoso.

The data sources in this study consist of two types: primary data and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through direct interviews with the school principal, the public

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Muhammadiyyah Pringsewu dan SD IT Cahaya Madani Pringsewu." *DIMAR: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 6.1 (2024): 12-26.

<sup>11</sup> Hakim, Muhammad Nur, and Fahrur Rozi. "Strategi Manajemen Humas Dalam Meningkatkan Animo Masyarakat Terhadap Pendidikan Madrasah." *Joiem (Journal Of Islamic Education Management)* 5.1 (2024): 28-45.

<sup>12</sup> Nisa, Ukhrotun. "Strategi Humas dalam Upaya Menjaga Reputasi Sekolah di Mts Al-Hidayah Bakke." *Jurnal Mappesona* 4.2 (2021): 101-106.

relations team, teachers, students, parents/guardians, and community representatives who are directly involved in public relations activities. Secondary data were collected from various supporting documents, including school records, activity photographs, publications, archives, as well as relevant writings or reports related to public relations activities at MA Atqia Bondowoso.

Data collection techniques included interviews, observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore information from key informants regarding public relations strategies in maintaining the school's reputation. Observations were conducted by directly examining public relations activities within the school environment, both internal and external, to obtain a concrete understanding of the interactions taking place. Documentation was used to collect written and visual data that supported and reinforced the findings from interviews and observations.

Data analysis in this study was conducted inductively, following the stages proposed by Miles and Huberman, namely data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. All data obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation were examined in depth to identify meanings relevant to the research focus. The collected data were then categorized, compared across sources, and interpreted to reveal patterns, strategies, and dynamics of the public relations role in maintaining the reputation of MA Atqia Bondowoso.

To ensure data credibility, this study employed source and method triangulation, as well as member checking with the informants. These steps were undertaken to ensure that the research findings accurately reflect actual field conditions and possess high validity and reliability. Thus, the results of the analysis are expected to provide a comprehensive portrayal of the role of public relations in maintaining the reputation of MA Atqia Bondowoso.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Branding

In an increasingly competitive educational landscape, school branding has become a vital strategy to differentiate oneself from other institutions. Branding functions not only as a marketing tool but also as an effort to build a positive image, reputation, and a distinct identity in the public eye.<sup>13</sup> This identity reflects the vision, mission, values, and advantages offered by the school, thereby positioning the educational institution correctly in the market while attracting prospective students who align with its educational philosophy.<sup>14</sup>

School branding plays a crucial role in building trust and strengthening reputation. Effective branding makes a school more attractive to families seeking quality education because it can highlight specific strengths, both in academic fields and activities.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, branding directly influences the formation of public perception, which ultimately determines the choices parents and students make regarding a school.<sup>16</sup> More than

<sup>13</sup> Alam, Muhammad Intisar, et al. "Branding initiatives in Higher Educational Institutions: current issues and research agenda." (2019).

<sup>14</sup> Williams Jr, Robert L., and Maktoba Omar. "How branding process activities impact brand equity within Higher Education Institutions." *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education* 24.1 (2014): 1-10.

<sup>15</sup> Ansori, Ansori, et al. "Method of Communications Islamic Educational Institutions in Building Branding Image Symbolic Interaction Studies." *Managere: Indonesian Journal of Educational Management* 5.3 (2023): 280-293.

<sup>16</sup> Hasanah, Istianatul, Hefniy Hefniy, and Abdul Wahid Zaini. "Strengthening brand identity: Embracing local

just attracting new students, a proper branding strategy can broaden community engagement and build support from various parties. This allows schools to have stronger networks and resources to support the sustainability of educational programs. Thus, the effectiveness of school branding impacts not only short-term reputation but also contributes to the long-term sustainability of the institution.<sup>17</sup>

MA Atqia Bondowoso presents itself as an educational institution that offers something different from schools in general. By carrying the concept of Education Whole Being, MA Atqia Bondowoso places students as whole individuals who need to be developed in a balanced manner across spiritual, intellectual, social, and character aspects. This approach aligns with the school's grand vision: Advancing Qur'an, Science, and Technology—promoting the Al-Qur'an, science, and technology as the main foundations of education.

Education oriented toward the "whole being" does not only focus on knowledge or skills but also on self-integration, social relations, life values, and one's existential purpose.<sup>18</sup> With this approach, MA Atqia Bondowoso focuses not only on the transfer of knowledge but also on the formation of a whole human being who possesses a balance between spiritual, intellectual, social, and existential aspects. As part of whole being education, there are four main principles as foundations: (1) humans are viewed as whole persons, not just a collection of separate competencies; (2) education must place individuals in a harmonious relationship with society; (3) educational goals must be able to balance practical aspects with intrinsic meaning; and (4) education needs to provide a comprehensive life direction. Thus, graduates of MA Atqia Bondowoso are expected not only to excel in religious sciences but also to be competent in science and technology, while possessing a strong character.

Public Relations (PR) plays a vital role in building and strengthening the image of MA Atqia Bondowoso in the eyes of the public. Through effective communication, PR conveys that learning at MA Atqia Bondowoso does not only produce academically bright students but also forms a religious and innovative generation capable of competing in the global era. Information regarding the school's strengths is disseminated through various channels, both digital and print, so the community can directly see MA Atqia Bondowoso's commitment to producing graduates of character who master religious knowledge and are skilled in science and technology.

The Vice Principal of Public Relations, Abd. Halik, S.Pd., emphasized that the role of PR is the primary bridge between the school and the community. He explained that the strategy involves three main steps: publishing prominent school activities highlighting student achievements, building a positive impression through excellent service, and utilizing various digital communication media.

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wisdom through character education management." *Indonesian Journal of Education and Social Studies* 2.2 (2023): 83-94.

<sup>17</sup> Rana, Sudhir, et al. "Conceptualizing international positioning strategies for Indian higher education institutions." *Review of International Business and Strategy* 32.4 (2022): 503-519.

<sup>18</sup> Wortham, Stanton, et al. "Educating for comprehensive well-being." *ECNU Review of Education* 3.3 (2020): 406-436.

*"We strive to ensure that every positive activity at school can be published, whether through social media, brochures, or the website. Nowadays, the public searches for a lot of information through the digital world, so we are active on Instagram and Facebook so the school's message can be delivered quickly."*

From the community side, a resident living near the school, Mr. Hasyim, stated that the service at MA Atqia Bondowoso has become better and more open than before. He noted that the school is now quicker to respond to information requests and is more transparent in communication.

*"Now, if there are activities, we are usually given invitations or information through WhatsApp groups. The teachers and staff are also friendly when we visit the school. So, the impression is indeed that this madrasah is growing and becoming more professional."*

Meanwhile, from the students' perspective, a similar impression was shared by Habibullah, an 11th-grade student at MA Atqia Bondowoso, who feels proud of the change in his school's image.

*"Now the school often appears on social media, so my friends outside also know that MA Atqia Bondowoso is active and high-achieving. The teachers are also more open, and we are taught to be polite to guests. I feel more confident being a part of this school."*

Based on the interview results above, it can be understood that with a planned branding strategy, Public Relations ensures that the community does not only know MA Atqia Bondowoso as an educational institution but also as a center for forming a superior generation based on Qur'anic values, critical thinking, and readiness to contribute meaningfully to the nation's progress.

### **Building Image**

In the world of education, a positive image is a crucial factor that determines the sustainability and development of a school. Institutions with a good reputation tend to find it easier to attract the interest of prospective students, obtain parental support, and establish cooperation with various parties.<sup>19</sup> This indicates that building a positive image is not merely an accessory, but a strategic necessity that must be managed in a planned and continuous manner.<sup>20</sup>

A positive image plays a major role in fostering public trust in the quality of the education provided. Parents, for instance, will feel more confident entrusting their children to a school that is not only known for its achievements but is also capable of providing friendly service and a conducive learning environment.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, a good image also makes it easier for the school to obtain support in the form of participation, trust, and collaboration

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<sup>19</sup> Fauzi, Farid, and Dewi Apriliani. "Building A Brand Image Strategy in Integrated Islamic Kindergarten at Central Aceh District." *Al-Fikra: Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman* 22.1 (2023): 104-115.

<sup>20</sup> Kurniawan, Asep, Diah Ayu Nuratillah, and Mumun Munawaroh. "Manajemen Pemasaran Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan Islamic Center Cirebon Dalam Membangun Brand Image Untuk Meningkatkan Minat Calon Peserta Didik." *Holistik: Journal For Islamic Social Sciences* 6.1 (2022): 12-23.

<sup>21</sup> Budiyatmo, Basuki, and Ade Iriani. "Membangun citra sekolah berdasarkan marketing mix untuk meningkatkan jumlah peserta didik." *Kelola: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan* 9.2 (2022): 238-252.

with various parties.<sup>22</sup> Through the publication of activities, student achievements, and the utilization of digital media, schools can demonstrate their commitment to developing student potential, both in terms of academics and character building.<sup>23</sup>

It is within this context that public relations (PR) management serves as a key strategy. The success of a school is not only determined by the quality of the learning process in the classroom but also by the ability to establish communication, collaboration, and good relationships with the external public. Systematically managed PR is capable of creating conditions that support student growth while simultaneously strengthening the trust of parents and the community. Thus, at MA Atqia Bondowoso, the role of public relations is very vital in building the school's positive image. Through consistent and directed publications, PR functions as an information bridge between the school and the internal public—teachers, students, and educational staff—as well as the external public, such as parents, the community, and strategic partners. This role ensures that every activity, achievement, and institutional advantage can be known, understood, and widely appreciated. Consequently, the positive image that is built is not just an outward appearance, but a true reflection of the school's commitment to providing meaningful and quality education.

In an effort to realize a positive institutional image, MA Atqia Bondowoso implements a number of communication strategies systematically designed by the Public Relations department. The Vice Principal of Public Relations, Abd. Halik, S.Pd., explained that the main strategy used includes three important steps.

According to him, the first step is to publish school activities that highlight student achievements, flagship programs, and instructional innovations that are characteristic of MA Atqia Bondowoso. These publications function not only as a form of appreciation for the achievements of students and teachers but also as a means to strengthen the school's identity in the eyes of the public.

*"We strive to ensure that every positive activity at school can be published. For example, academic competitions, social activities, or religious programs. That way, the community knows that MA Atqia Bondowoso is active and high-achieving."*

The Principal of MA Atqia Bondowoso, Agus Riyadi, M.Pd., explained that one of the primary focuses in building a positive institutional image is through friendly, fast, and professional service. He emphasized that good service is not solely the task of PR, but rather the responsibility of all school elements—including teachers, staff, and students—because every interaction that occurs with the community is a direct representation of the school's image.

*"A good image comes not only from what we publish, but also from how we serve. If the community feels comfortable and valued, their impression of the school will automatically be positive."*

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<sup>22</sup> Wu, Zihua. "Understanding teachers' cross-disciplinary collaboration for STEAM education: Building a digital community of practice." *Thinking Skills and Creativity* 46 (2022): 101178.

<sup>23</sup> Ghorbanzadeh, Davood, and Mohsen Sharbatian. "The role of website features in creating value co-creation behaviors and enhancing the brand image and reputation of higher education institutions." *Interactive Technology and smart education* 21.1 (2024): 21-43.

MA Atqia Bondowoso also utilizes various communication channels, including print, electronic, and digital media. MA Atqia Bondowoso actively uses press releases, brochures, the website, and social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook to reach a wider and more effective audience.

*“Nowadays, the public searches for a lot of information through social media. Because of that, we are active on digital platforms so that the school’s message can be delivered faster and more broadly.”<sup>24</sup>*

Based on these interviews, it can be concluded that in the effort to realize this goal, the strategy used covers three main steps. First, conducting publications of school activities that highlight student achievements, flagship programs, and instructional innovations that constitute the identity of MA Atqia Bondowoso. Second, building a good impression through friendly, fast, and professional service, so that every interaction with the school provides a positive experience for the community. Third, utilizing various communication channels, including print, electronic, and digital media—such as press releases, brochures, websites, Instagram, and Facebook—to reach audiences more broadly and effectively.

### **Maintaining Reputation**

School reputation is the public’s perception or evaluation of the quality and credibility of a school, encompassing academics, services, environment, and achievements.<sup>25</sup> This reputation is formed through the real-world experiences of students and parents, the achievements attained, and how the school is managed and communicated to the public.<sup>26</sup>

School reputation is an invaluable social capital. It is formed from the accumulation of real experiences, ranging from the quality of learning and services provided to students and parents, to the school’s contribution to the community.<sup>27</sup> Unlike an image, which can be formed quickly through promotion, reputation is born from consistency and time.<sup>28</sup>

School reputation is vital because it serves as the primary asset in building public trust.<sup>29</sup> A school with a good reputation will find it easier to attract prospective new students, gain parental support, maintain alumni loyalty, and earn the respect of the surrounding environment. Conversely, a poor reputation can erode trust and is difficult to recover. Therefore, maintaining reputation means safeguarding the school’s long-term sustainability, credibility, and honor. Consequently, the role of Public Relations (PR) at MA Atqia Bondowoso does not stop at efforts to build a positive image but also includes the maintenance and reinforcement of the school’s reputation. A well-maintained reputation

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<sup>24</sup> Abd. Halik, S.Pd. Wakil Kepala Madrasah bidang Humas, Hasil Wawancara pada 16 April 2025

<sup>25</sup> Marketing, Integrated. "Perencanaan Promosi SMA Islam Al-Azhar Kelapa Gading untuk Meningkatkan Reputasi Sekolah."

<sup>26</sup> Monica, Metta Virya, Aris Ananta, and Widyatmika Gede Mulawarman. "Optimalisasi Branding dan Rebranding dalam Meningkatkan Reputasi Lembaga Pendidikan." *Pendas Mahakam: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Sekolah Dasar* 9.2 (2024): 185-189.

<sup>27</sup> Rifa, Moh, and Muhammad Hosen. "Strategi Humas dalam Meningkatkan Reputasi Sekolah (Studi Kasus di Ma Miftahul Ulum)." *JIIP-Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan* 6.7 (2023): 5420-5426.

<sup>28</sup> Harditia, Harditia, and Sudadi Sudadi. "Strategi Manajemen Humas dalam Membangun Reputasi Sekolah di Mata Publik." *Al-Marsus: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 3.1 (2025): 28-40.

<sup>29</sup> Nisa, Ukhrotun. "Strategi Humas dalam Upaya Menjaga Reputasi Sekolah di Mts Al-Hidayah Bakke." *Jurnal Mappesona* 4.2 (2021): 101-106.

becomes an essential asset in increasing public trust and ensuring the school's survival amidst competition between educational institutions.

The Head of the Madrasah, Agus Riyadi, M.Pd., explained that school reputation is built not only through publication but also through providing the best service for students and parents, improving the quality of learning, and being open to criticism and suggestions from the community.

*"We always strive to provide the best service, not only for students but also for parents. The school must be open to input, because that is how we can continue to improve ourselves. Reputation cannot be maintained with words alone, but with tangible evidence in the field."*

From the parents' perspective, Mrs. Fatimah stated that the school's openness in accepting criticism and suggestions makes parents feel valued as educational partners. She assessed that two-way communication between the school and parents is a key factor in maintaining public trust.

*"This school is more open now. If there are obstacles, we can convey them directly, and usually, the school responds well. That makes us feel involved, not just as spectators."*

Based on these interview results, it can be concluded that the reputation maintenance strategy is carried out by providing the best service for students and parents, continuously improving the quality of learning and school facilities, and showing openness to input and criticism from guardians and the community. Thus, the school is not only seen as good from the outside but its benefits are felt directly by all related parties. Additionally, PR must also be prepared to face crisis situations. If a problem or negative issue arises, swift steps in the form of clarification and improvement are key to dampening wider negative impacts.

The utilization of social media such as the Website, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook also plays an important role as an effective means of two-way communication, allowing the school to convey information transparently while building closeness with the public. Evidence of social media utilization by MA Atqia Bondowoso can be seen in Figures 1 and 2.

In Figure 1, it can be observed that MA Atqia Bondowoso, which carries the concept of integrated education between the Al-Qur'an and science, utilizes YouTube for PR by showcasing the school's identity, videos of learning activities, *dakwah* (preaching), and student achievements. This helps increase school recognition, build public trust, facilitate communication with stakeholders, boost new student enrollment, store digital archives, and support *dakwah* campaigns, thereby strengthening the image of a modern and high-quality pesantren.

The MA Atqia Bondowoso website is also used to complement YouTube. Through the website, PR conveys the latest news such as student and teacher achievements, as well as inspiring photos, to increase visibility, build trust, promote enrollment, and support digital *dakwah*, thus strengthening the image of a quality modern pesantren. With this strategy, PR acts not only as a guardian of the image but also as a reinforcer of reputation, ensuring the school remains trusted and respected by the community.

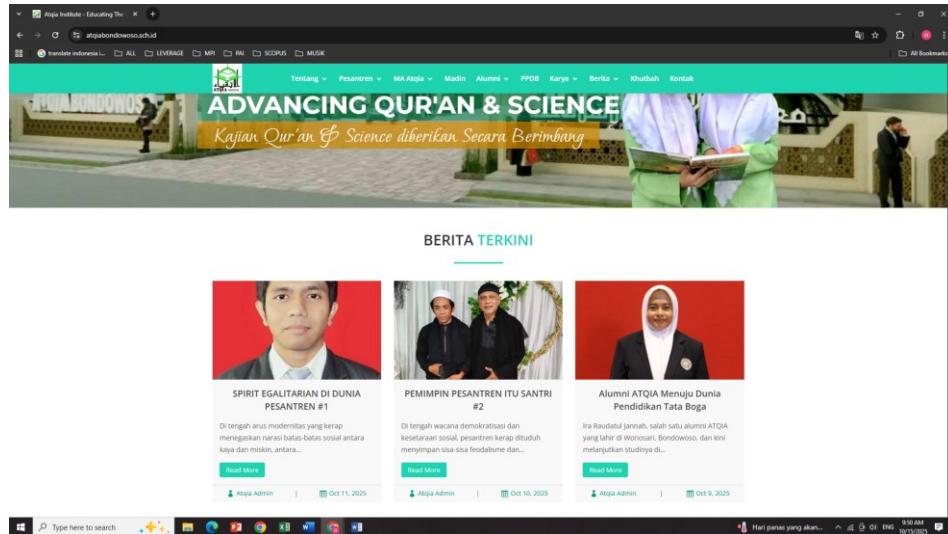


Figure 2. Website Display of MA Atqia Bondowoso.

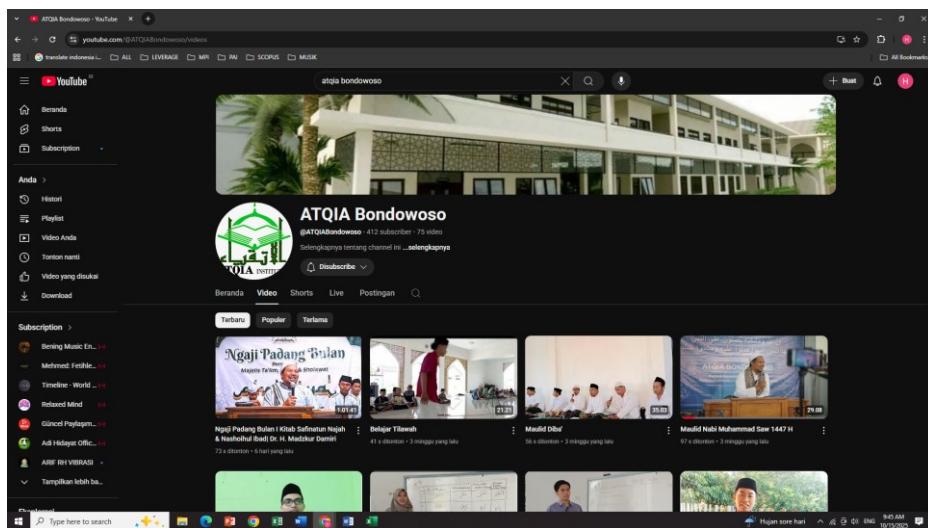


Figure 1. YouTube Display of MA Atqia Bondowoso.

## Effective Communication

Communication is a fundamental foundation in establishing relationships between schools and the community. Without effective communication, various school programs and policies are difficult to understand, accept, and support by the public.<sup>30</sup> Beyond merely conveying messages, effective communication plays a crucial role in maintaining coordination, motivating members, regulating behavior, and serving as a medium for emotional expression within an organization.<sup>31</sup> Clear and open information is essential for individuals and groups to make appropriate decisions and to support the achievement of shared goals.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, effective communication is not always easy to achieve. Various

<sup>30</sup> Safitri, Bela, and Nendi Sahrul Mujahid. "Komunikasi efektif dalam organisasi." *Cendekia Inovatif Dan Berbudaya* 1.3 (2024): 309-316.

<sup>31</sup> Priyowidodo, Gatur. "Komunikasi Organisasi." *Komunikasi Organisasi* (2025).

<sup>32</sup> Febriantin, Fany. "Bagaimana Membangun Sistem Komunikasi Yang Efektif dan Efisien." *Jurnal Pendidikan, Hukum, Komunikasi (J-DIKUMSI)* 1.2 (2025): 63-70.

obstacles often arise, such as unclear messages, lack of transparency, limited effective listening skills, and conflicts of interest.<sup>33</sup> In addition, insufficient constructive feedback and limited communication facilities can further exacerbate these challenges. Such barriers not only disrupt internal coordination but may also undermine public trust in the institution.<sup>34</sup>

In this context, the role of public relations (PR) becomes highly significant. PR is not merely responsible for disseminating information but also for ensuring that messages are delivered clearly, accurately, and appropriately to diverse audiences. Through well-planned communication strategies, PR serves as a connecting bridge between the school and the community, thereby maintaining and strengthening public support, trust, and participation. In practice, the communication activities conducted by the PR unit of MA Atqia Bondowoso are divided into two forms: direct and indirect communication. Direct communication involves face-to-face interactions, such as meetings with parents, coordination with the school committee, and visits to the community. Indirect communication is carried out through digital media, including Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp, as well as printed media such as brochures, pamphlets, and banners.

In line with contemporary developments, the PR unit of MA Atqia Bondowoso has adapted by utilizing digital technology to expand the reach of information dissemination. Social media platforms serve as effective tools for introducing school programs, achievements, and activities to the broader community, particularly younger generations who are highly active in the digital sphere. However, it is important to recognize that not all segments of society are accustomed to using technology. Therefore, traditional approaches such as distributing brochures and installing banners remain relevant as complementary strategies to ensure messages reach a more diverse audience. By integrating direct, digital, and traditional communication methods, the PR unit of MA Atqia Bondowoso has successfully built a strong information bridge between the school and the community, fostering harmonious, participatory, and sustainable relationships.

### **Community Relations**

An increasingly advanced society requires educational institutions to continuously develop and respond effectively to public expectations. In this context, a harmonious relationship between schools and the community is essential, as the success of educational programs cannot be achieved by schools in isolation.<sup>35</sup> Community support and participation not only facilitate the smooth implementation of school activities but also generate direct benefits for the communities being served.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Khofi, Mohammad Bilutfikal. "Collaborative leadership in education: Increasing Teacher participation in decision making." *Journal of Loominguluis ja Innovatsioon* 1.2 (2024): 82-90.

<sup>34</sup> Adnyana, I. Wayan Diana Putra, Ayu Larasti, and Heriyanti Heriyanti. "Strategi dan Hambatan dalam Mewujudkan Komunikasi Organisasi yang Efektif." *Co-Value Jurnal Ekonomi Koperasi dan Kewirausahaan* 15.9 (2025).

<sup>35</sup> Septiani, Iin, Muhammad Rifqi, and Bradley Setiyadi. "Peran Manajemen Hubungan Masyarakat dalam Upaya Meningkatkan Kualitas Mutu Pendidikan di Sekolah." *Jurnal Ilmiah Universitas Batanghari Jambi* 25.1 (2025): 752-757.

<sup>36</sup> Marten, Lerry, Martinah Martinah, and Nesen Nesen. "Partisipasi Masyarakat Dalam Peningkatan Kualitas Pendidikan Di Sekolah Dasar." *Proceeding National Conference of Christian Education and Theology*. Vol. 2. No. 2. 2024.

The role of public relations (PR) is pivotal in establishing and maintaining these relationships. Through well-designed communication and collaboration strategies, PR ensures that the community understands, accepts, and supports school programs and activities. Strong relationships foster trust, enhance cooperation, and provide both material and moral support that contribute to the sustainability of the institution.<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, PR functions as a mediating bridge between schools and the community, creating a mutually beneficial synergy for both parties.<sup>38</sup>

**Table 1. Summary of Research Findings on the Multidimensional Role of Educational Public Relations at MA Atqia Bondowoso**

Aspect	Research Findings	Practical Implications
<b>Branding</b>	MA Atqia Bondowoso adopts the concept of <i>Education Whole Being</i> , integrating Qur'anic values, science, and technology to form a distinctive school identity. PR promotes academic, spiritual, and character excellence through digital and printed media channels.	Enhances public trust, attracts prospective students, and strengthens the school's position in the educational market.
<b>Building Image</b>	A positive image is developed through the publication of achievements, friendly services, and communication via digital media (Instagram, Facebook) and traditional media (brochures).	Strengthens public perception of educational quality and a conducive learning environment.
<b>Maintaining Reputation</b>	Reputation is sustained through excellent services, continuous improvement in teaching quality, openness to criticism, and rapid crisis response via social media.	Ensures institutional sustainability, maintains trust, and increases stakeholder loyalty.
<b>Effective Communication</b>	A combination of direct communication (parent meetings) and indirect communication (social media, brochures) ensures clear message delivery and broad audience reach.	Builds harmonious relationships with the community, enhances transparency, and strengthens public support.
<b>Community Relations</b>	Activities such as Islamic holy day commemorations and community service programs (Qur'an teaching, language instruction) strengthen ties with the community and create positive synergy.	Increases community participation, reinforces moral support, and provides additional resources for the school.

At MA Atqia Bondowoso, the role of PR is particularly strategic in building and strengthening community relations. One of the key initiatives involves engaging the community in religious activities during the celebration of Islamic Holy Days (*Perayaan Hari Besar Islam*), such as the Prophet Muhammad's Birthday (*Maulid Nabi*) and the Isra' Mi'raj commemoration. Community participation in these events encourages positive interaction and fosters a sense of shared ownership of the school.

School-community relationships are further strengthened when the community experiences tangible benefits from school programs. To this end, MA Atqia Bondowoso implements community service activities as a form of concrete contribution. For instance, during the month of Ramadan, students are assigned to local communities to teach Qur'anic

<sup>37</sup> Septiani, Iin, Muhammad Rifqi, and Bradley Setiyadi. "Peran Manajemen Hubungan Masyarakat dalam Upaya Meningkatkan Kualitas Mutu Pendidikan di Sekolah." *Jurnal Ilmiah Universitas Batanghari Jambi* 25.1 (2025): 752-757.

<sup>38</sup> Khofi, Mohammad Bilutfikal, Sucik Indrawati, and Hilmi Shofyan. "Performance Management Strategy in Increasing Competitive Advantage in Islamic Educational Institutions." *Jurnal Inovatif Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 4.2 (2025): 1-13.

reading skills and provide basic instruction in Arabic and English at neighborhood prayer rooms (*mushola*). These activities not only deliver educational benefits to the community but also reinforce social bonds between the school and the surrounding society. Through such meaningful contributions, the relationship between the school and the community becomes more resilient, enabling productive cooperation and collaboration.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, both parties can work synergistically to achieve educational objectives and successfully implement school programs. The PR unit, through effective coordination and execution of these initiatives, ensures harmonious interaction and supports the sustainability of educational quality at MA Atqia Bondowoso.

## CONCLUSION

The multidimensional role of educational public relations is crucial in maintaining the reputation of Islamic schools, particularly at MA Atqia Bondowoso. This study demonstrates that effective public relations strategies encompass branding, image building, reputation management, effective communication, and the strengthening of community relations, all of which are integrated within a holistic framework of *“Education as a Whole Being”* grounded in Qur’anic values, science, and technology. By combining digital and traditional communication channels, the public relations unit at MA Atqia Bondowoso ensures consistent, transparent, and impactful interaction with both internal and external stakeholders.

The findings confirm that a structured public relations approach not only reinforces the school’s positive image but also enhances public trust, institutional competitiveness, and long-term sustainability. This study offers a practical and contextual model for other Islamic schools seeking to optimize the role of public relations in addressing the challenges of modern communication while upholding Islamic values. Through the maintenance of a strong institutional reputation, MA Atqia Bondowoso contributes to the development of academically competent, morally grounded, and socially responsible graduates who are well prepared to meet the demands of the digital era.

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<sup>39</sup> Rina Suryani Oktari et al., “Enhancing Community Resilience towards Disaster: The Contributing Factors of School-Community Collaborative Network in the Tsunami Affected Area in Aceh,” *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, Tsunami Recovery Processes after the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami and the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami: Lessons Learned and Challenges, vol. 29 (August 2018): 3–12, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2017.07.009>.

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