



International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research

ISSN(Online): 3090-2959

Vol 2 no 2 (2026): July 2026

<https://journal.as-salafiyah.id/index.php/ijir/index>

Email: ijireditor7@gmail.com

Public Relations Management In Enhancing The Image Of Madrasahs

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Abstract: This study proposes the Community–Vocational Digitalization Model as a new framework for strengthening institutional image through integrated public relations management. The study employed a qualitative approach with a multisite design conducted at two leading madrasahs, namely MAN Surabaya and MAN 1 Gresik. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, combined with cross-site analysis. The findings indicate that strategic communication serves as the primary foundation for strengthening the madrasah image through digital transparency, publication of achievements, and effective social interaction. Individual relationships are reinforced through alumni networks, stakeholder collaboration, and the utilization of digital media that increases participation and public trust. Managerial support is demonstrated through digital security systems, human resource management, and technological integration based on hybrid storage and multi-layer security systems. Image development is implemented through branding strategies, publication of achievements, public relations activities, and the strengthening of visual identity and service digitalization. This study produces a conceptual framework entitled the Community–Vocational Digitalization Model, which integrates community strength, vocational orientation, and digital transformation within public relations management. The model contributes to strengthening institutional reputation, increasing public trust, and improving the competitiveness of madrasahs in responding to the challenges of modern education.

Keywords: Public Relations Management, Madrasah Image, Strategic Communication, Educational Digitalization, Stakeholders, Branding

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of educational institutions, particularly madrasahs, has become an inevitable necessity amid the dynamics of globalization and increasingly intense competition among educational providers. Madrasahs are no longer positioned solely as institutions oriented toward the transmission of religious values; rather, they have evolved into strategic institutions required to address demands for quality, relevance, and competitiveness. In this context, educational management cannot rely exclusively on academic aspects but must adopt comprehensive managerial strategies, including integrated public relations management. Public relations function as a communication bridge between the madrasah and its stakeholders, both



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internal and external, ensuring that the institution's vision, mission, and programs are well understood and broadly supported by society (Morissan, 2014; Cutlip et al., 2000).

Public relations management plays a crucial role in fostering harmonious and productive working relationships. Effective relationships contribute to a conducive organizational environment, enhance operational efficiency, and encourage the involvement of all institutional components in building a positive image. In practice, public relations extend beyond information dissemination; they are responsible for managing public perception of educational institutions. Therefore, effective communication management, strong relational networks, and appropriate publication strategies become key determinants in improving the reputation of madrasahs and strengthening public trust (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Ruslan, 2016).

Empirical evidence indicates that madrasahs have faced challenges, particularly declining public interest in Islamic educational institutions. This phenomenon is not merely due to weakening religious values but is more closely related to the perception that some madrasahs have not fully addressed the future needs of students. Modern society, characterized by rational decision-making, tends to consider religious values, social status, and future prospects simultaneously when selecting educational institutions. In many cases, social status and career opportunities become dominant considerations. This condition requires madrasahs to innovate and strengthen their management systems to enhance both attractiveness and competitiveness (Mulyasa, 2012; Porter, 2019).

Within this context, some madrasahs have successfully adapted and progressed through innovative managerial strategies, while others have experienced stagnation or even decline. The success of educational institutions in enhancing competitiveness is closely linked to their ability to manage various aspects, including human resources, infrastructure, curriculum, and collaborative networks. One significant contributing factor is public relations management, which enables institutions to establish effective communication, expand partnerships, and strategically promote their strengths (Bryson, 2018; Haryanto & Rozza, 2012).

MAN Surabaya and MAN 1 Gresik represent two examples of madrasahs with high levels of competitiveness. Both institutions demonstrate distinct approaches in managing communication



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and building institutional image. MAN Surabaya emphasizes formal, systematic, and digitally driven communication, highlighting academic achievements and extensive media publications. In contrast, MAN 1 Gresik adopts a more cultural and religious approach, prioritizing personal communication and emphasizing Islamic values and social activities as institutional identity. These differences illustrate that public relations strategies can be adapted to institutional characteristics and socio-cultural contexts (Andriyani, 2020; Chotimah, 2013).

The excellence of these madrasahs is reflected in high public interest and notable achievements. MAN Surabaya has demonstrated success in academic and technological fields, including national and international achievements and a high percentage of graduates admitted to public universities. Meanwhile, MAN 1 Gresik excels in both academic and religious domains, achieving recognition in various competitions and experiencing continuous student enrollment growth. These phenomena indicate that both madrasahs possess the capacity to build a positive image and public trust, largely supported by effective public relations management (Mundiri, 2016; Zainur & Rozaq, 2018).

From a theoretical perspective, the competitiveness of educational institutions can be understood as their ability to attract public interest and maintain trust through the quality of educational services provided. This competitiveness is influenced by factors such as graduate quality, student achievements, parental satisfaction, and institutional adaptability. Public relations serve as a strategic instrument that connects internal institutional achievements with external public perceptions. Consequently, the success of a madrasah is determined not only by its internal quality but also by its ability to effectively communicate that quality to the public (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Keller, 2013).

Despite its importance, studies on madrasah public relations management have not comprehensively explored the strategic constructs underlying institutional success in building image and competitiveness. Existing research highlights factors such as publication, recommendations, alumni quality, and institutional image as determinants of public interest. However, these studies have not fully examined how public relations practices are systematically



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implemented to integrate communication, relationships, managerial support, and image building within a unified framework (Harini, 2014; Nurhasanah, 2014).

Based on this context, this study focuses on public relations management in enhancing the image of madrasahs. The research examines how effective communication is established, how institutional and interpersonal relationships are developed, how managerial support for public relations functions is organized, and how strategies for building a positive image are implemented. These aspects are explored through research questions that investigate communication practices, relationship development, managerial support, and image-building strategies at MAN Surabaya and MAN 1 Gresik as two research sites with distinct characteristics yet similar success in achieving competitiveness.

Aligned with this focus, the objective of this study is to formulate a conceptual proposition of public relations management in improving madrasah image. The study aims to develop theoretical understanding of effective communication in institutional image building, relational patterns that foster trust and public support, managerial support mechanisms that strengthen public relations functions, and image-building strategies that enhance competitiveness. This research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of more systematic, adaptive, and sustainable public relations management in madrasahs.

METHOD

Research Approach and Design

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. The qualitative approach was selected because it aims to achieve an in-depth understanding of social phenomena based on participants' perspectives, particularly concerning the management of industry-based curriculum quality improvement. Qualitative research enables researchers to explore meanings, processes, and dynamics within natural settings without manipulating variables (Creswell, 2013; Moleong, 2005; Sugiyono, 2011).

This study is grounded in an inductive paradigm, where theories are developed based on empirical data obtained from the field. The analytical process was conducted iteratively through



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cycles of data collection, data reduction, interpretation, and verification. Thus, the findings are not only descriptive but also generate deeper conceptual understanding (Bungin, 2012; Miles & Huberman, 2005).

This research is a field study using a multi-site design. It was conducted at two locations: SMKS Magetan 1 YKP and SMKS 1 Pemda (Ma'arif) Ponorogo. The multi-site design allows for comprehensive understanding through in-depth analysis at each site, followed by cross-site analysis to identify patterns, similarities, and differences in the implementation of industry-based curricula (Yin, 1987; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Researcher's Role

In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the primary instrument (human instrument). The researcher is responsible for all stages of the research process, including planning, data collection, analysis, and reporting (Moleong, 2005; Sugiyono, 2007).

The researcher's presence in the field was carried out through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The researcher interacted intensively with informants such as principals, vice principals, vocational teachers, students, and industry partners. This interaction aimed to obtain rich and contextual data (Creswell, 2013).

Throughout the research process, the researcher maintained an objective, open, and ethical stance. Field notes were systematically recorded to ensure data accuracy. The role of the researcher as a participant observer allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study (Patton, 1987).

Research Sites

This study was conducted in two vocational education institutions:

1. **SMKS Magetan 1 YKP**, which excels in the automotive sector through the implementation of teaching factory and collaboration with national industries.
2. **SMKS 1 Pemda (Ma'arif) Ponorogo**, which develops an agribusiness- and livestock-based curriculum using a contextual approach grounded in local potential.



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These sites were selected due to their differing characteristics in implementing industry-based curricula, while both are oriented toward improving students' competencies (Mulyasa, 2012).

Data Sources

The data sources in this study consisted of:

1. **Primary data**, obtained through interviews with principals, teachers, students, and industry partners.
2. **Secondary data**, including curriculum documents, activity reports, industry partnership agreements (MoUs), and learning evaluation documents.

Data sources were classified into three categories:

1. **Person**: research informants
2. **Place**: environmental conditions and learning activities
3. **Paper**: documents and archives

This classification aligns with qualitative research data frameworks (Arikunto, 2010; Sugiyono, 2011).

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection techniques used in this study included:

1. **In-depth interviews**: Conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore information related to policies, implementation, and evaluation of the industry-based curriculum (Creswell, 2013).
2. **Participatory observation**: The researcher directly observed teaching and learning processes, industrial practices, and teaching factory activities (Patton, 1987).
3. **Documentation study**: Data were collected from official documents such as curricula, activity reports, and industry partnership records (Sugiyono, 2011).

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted interactively using the model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes three main stages:

1. Data condensation
2. Data display

3. Conclusion drawing and verification

This model emphasizes continuous interaction between data collection and analysis processes (Miles & Huberman, 2005).

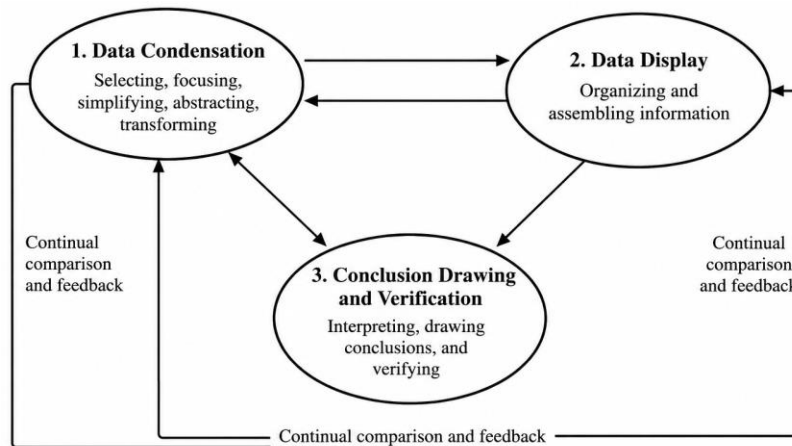


Figure 1. Data analysis Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña

In addition to single-site analysis, this study also employed **cross-site analysis** to compare and integrate findings from both research locations (Yin, 1987).

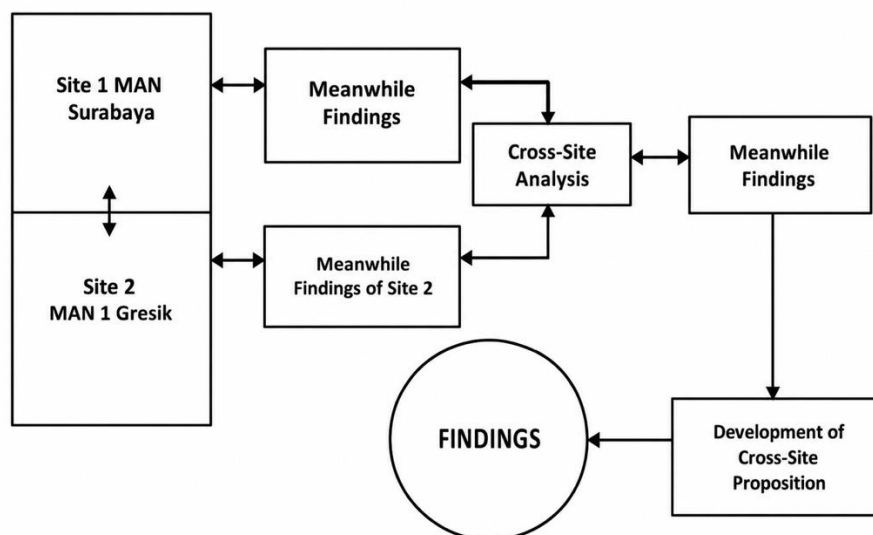


Figure 1. Cross-site analysis

Cross-site analysis was conducted through the following stages:



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1. Within-site analysis
2. Comparison of findings
3. Integration into theoretical conclusions

Trustworthiness of Data

The trustworthiness of the data was ensured using four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba:

1. **Credibility:** achieved through triangulation of sources, techniques, and theories
2. **Transferability:** ensured through detailed descriptions
3. **Dependability:** maintained through research process audits
4. **Confirmability:** established through data confirmation with informants

Triangulation techniques were applied by comparing data from various sources and methods to ensure validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moleong, 2005).

Research Procedures

The research procedures were carried out in three stages:

1. **Pre-field stage:** Including proposal preparation, literature review, and research permits
2. **Field stage:** Including data collection through interviews, observations, and documentation
3. **Post-field stage:** Including data analysis, report writing, and verification of findings (Creswell, 2013; Sugiyono, 2011)

Methodological Assertion

Overall, this research method emphasizes a systematic, contextual, and comparative approach to understanding the management of industry-based curricula. The multi-site design enables the researcher to obtain a more comprehensive understanding, ensuring that the findings are not only descriptive but also contribute theoretically and practically to the development of vocational education (Yin, 1987; Bungin, 2012).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Effective Communication in Enhancing Madrasah Image

The findings indicate that strategic communication plays a crucial role in shaping the image of madrasahs. The principal acts as a strategic communication leader who not only delivers



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information but also formulates communication policies that influence public perception. This role is reflected in the ability to integrate institutional vision, mission, and values into both formal and informal communication channels. Communication functions as a strategic instrument in building institutional reputation rather than merely serving administrative purposes (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Ruslan, 2016).

Strategic communication is implemented through systematic stages, beginning with the identification of key stakeholders such as students, teachers, parents, and the community. Communication strategies are then tailored using informative, persuasive, and participatory approaches. These strategies are applied through program socialization, parent forums, and digital media publications. Communication operates as a mechanism for building trust and public engagement, not limited to message delivery (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000; Kusumastuti, 2002).

The findings reveal an integration between brand icon and brand champion. Brand icon is represented through visual symbols, Islamic identity, and institutional character. Brand champion is embodied by teachers, students, and alumni who actively promote institutional values and achievements. This integration strengthens institutional identity and increases public attractiveness (Wheeler, 2013; Keller, 2013).

Digital transparency emerges as a significant factor in strengthening the madrasah image. Both institutions utilize websites, social media, and digital platforms to deliver information openly and accountably. Public access to institutional information becomes easier, leading to increased trust and legitimacy. Transparency in digital communication supports institutional credibility in contemporary educational environments (Heemsbergen, 2016; Singarimbun, 2023).

Internal aspects also contribute to image development through in-house branding. Strengthening learning quality and publishing academic and non-academic achievements serve as internal strategies. Institutional image is constructed through tangible quality reflected in learning environments, active teaching methods, and adequate infrastructure. Educational quality and institutional performance directly influence public perception (Mulyasa, 2012; Widodo, 2011).

Interpersonal communication, referred to as edu-personal communication, plays an essential role in strengthening institutional image. Teachers establish emotional connections with students



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through direct and digital interactions. These relationships create a harmonious learning environment and enhance student motivation. Peer-social interaction fosters collaboration among students and supports the development of positive social character (Vygotsky, 1978; Johnson & Johnson, 1999).

Additional strategies identified include achievement showcase, creative content, and service excellence. Student achievements are systematically published through digital platforms and institutional activities. These practices reinforce the image of the institution as a high-performing educational environment. Student-generated creative content contributes to institutional identity, while high-quality educational services increase public satisfaction. Institutional image is formed through the integration of actual performance and effective communication strategies (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Parasuraman et al., 1985).

Aspect	MAN Kota Surabaya	MAN 1 Gresik
Main Identity	High-achieving school in academic and non-academic fields	Islamic, intelligent, competitive, environmentally conscious
Branding Strategy	Achievement publication, alumni testimonials, social media	Clear vision-mission, vocational programs, service digitalization
Academic	Olympiads, scientific writing, exam performance	Vocational programs, literacy research, student publications
Non-Academic	Arts, sports, extracurricular activities	Student organizations, environmental programs, arts, sports
Supporting Factors	Internal and external media exposure	Modern facilities, digital system integration

Table 1. Comparison of Branding and Madrasah Image Implementation

Strategic communication is identified as a key factor in shaping the madrasah image. Visionary leadership directs communication practices toward producing positive public perceptions. Organizational communication theory recognizes communication as a tool for building relationships, trust, and institutional legitimacy (Mulyana, 2000; Morissan, 2014).

Differences in communication strategies reflect institutional characteristics. MAN Kota Surabaya emphasizes modern approaches based on academic achievement and technology utilization. MAN 1 Gresik highlights religious values, vocational orientation, and environmental awareness. Both approaches demonstrate effectiveness in constructing a positive institutional image.



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Integration between branding, digital transparency, and service quality indicates that institutional image is built through a comprehensive system. Strong branding is supported by measurable achievements, transparent information, and quality educational services. This integrated approach enhances institutional competitiveness in the education sector (Porter, 1990; Hubeis & Najib, 2014).

Interpersonal communication and student social interaction contribute to internal image development. Harmonious relationships between teachers and students create a conducive learning environment that strengthens institutional reputation. Social interaction supports character development and reinforces collective identity within the institution (Vygotsky, 1978).

The findings confirm that effective communication in madrasahs consists of strategic leadership, digital transparency, internal branding, social interaction, and service quality. The integration of these elements strengthens institutional image and enhances the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions in contemporary contexts.

Individual Relationships in Enhancing the Madrasah Image

The findings demonstrate that individual relationships play a strategic role in shaping and strengthening the image of madrasahs. Relationships are developed not only within internal interactions between teachers and students but also through external connections involving alumni, parents, communities, government institutions, and organizational partners. The quality of these relationships contributes directly to public trust, community participation, and the sustainability of educational programs. Madrasahs that effectively manage relationships tend to develop a stronger image as open, collaborative, and socially responsive educational institutions (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Ruslan, 2020).

The strengthening of alumni networks and empowerment emerges as one of the major findings of this study. Alumni are positioned as strategic partners with tangible contributions to institutional development. Their involvement appears in academic and non-academic activities such as providing learning motivation, sharing experiences related to higher education and professional careers, and participating as speakers in seminars and educational activities. Alumni also contribute to vocational and entrepreneurial programs through skills training and business



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mentoring. These findings indicate that alumni function not merely as symbols of past success but as active forces that reinforce the institutional image of the madrasah. Successful alumni shape positive public opinion and increase institutional attractiveness among prospective students (Mundiri, 2016; Wheeler, 2013).

Broad relationships are reflected in the strengthening of stakeholder networks. Madrasahs establish connections among teachers, students, parents, alumni, government agencies, and surrounding communities. These networks function as communication channels and collaborative platforms that support educational programs. Stakeholder involvement contributes to institutional legitimacy and program effectiveness. Support is expressed not only through material assistance but also through trust, participation, and the reinforcement of social values within the madrasah environment (Bryson, 2018; Nurhasanah, 2014).

Active collaboration is visible through educational, social, religious, and character-development activities. Teachers, students, parents, and community members participate in programs designed to create productive and innovative learning environments. Intensive interaction among these groups develops a conducive educational atmosphere and strengthens collective values. Such conditions contribute to the formation of students who demonstrate cooperation, social responsibility, and environmental awareness (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Lickona, 1995).

Public transparency becomes a significant factor in developing healthy relationships between madrasahs and society. Institutions demonstrate commitment to providing clear, accurate, and accessible information to the public. Information related to activities, achievements, and educational services is disseminated through direct communication and digital media. Technological platforms such as official websites, integrated school information systems, digital one-stop services, and digital libraries enable communities to access information efficiently and transparently. These practices strengthen public trust because madrasahs are perceived as accountable educational institutions (Heemsbergen, 2016; Bovens, 2007).

Technological development has encouraged the integration of social media as a communication and publication tool. Platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, websites, and



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TikTok provide opportunities for madrasahs to reach wider audiences. The published content is informative, creative, and engaging, increasing public participation and interaction. Social media facilitates two-way communication that strengthens relationships between educational institutions and society. Digital interaction creates the perception that madrasahs are adaptive institutions aligned with contemporary developments (Singarimbun, 2023; Sofi & Wulandari, 2024).

Communication transformation is also reflected in the implementation of digital public relations. Madrasahs employ digital technology to disseminate information continuously and systematically. Publications concerning institutional activities, student achievements, and educational services are distributed through multiple digital channels. These strategies increase institutional visibility and reinforce the image of the madrasah as a modern and transparent institution. Digital communication also supports responsive interaction with communities and stakeholders (Ardianto, 2002; Morissan, 2014).

Relationship management is strengthened through the implementation of Customer Relationship Management (CRM). This approach represents not only technological utilization but also a long-term strategy for maintaining relationships with stakeholders. Integrated information systems enable madrasahs to manage data concerning students, parents, and alumni more effectively. This management process contributes to improved educational services and greater community satisfaction. Sustainable relationships foster public loyalty and institutional trust (Payne & Frow, 2005; Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Strategic partnerships form another essential aspect of strengthening individual relationships. Madrasahs establish cooperation with universities, government institutions, communities, and business sectors. These partnerships create opportunities for innovative and relevant educational programs. Exchanges of resources, knowledge, and experiences enrich the quality of educational implementation. Strategic partners strengthen the position of madrasahs as institutions with broad networks and competitive capacity (Kanter, 1994; Dyer, Kale, & Singh, 2022).

Real action and relationship-building programs demonstrate the commitment of madrasahs to sustainable social engagement. Social activities, achievement publications, and collaborations



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with communities provide concrete evidence that madrasahs contribute not only to formal education but also to social development. These visible actions strengthen public trust because communities directly experience the institutional contribution to their environment (Santika, n.d.; Harlyn, 2021).

The evaluation of relationships with communities is conducted through customer surveys. These surveys measure the satisfaction levels of students, parents, and society regarding educational services. The collected data serve as the basis for program improvement and institutional development. Survey results also reflect the level of public trust in the madrasah. The use of surveys as evaluation instruments indicates the institutional commitment to continuous service improvement (Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1985; Subagiyo, n.d.).

Overall, individual relationships within madrasahs are formed through the integration of alumni networks, stakeholder engagement, social collaboration, and digital technology utilization. This integration creates strong, sustainable, and trust-based relationships. Such conditions contribute to the formation of the madrasah image as an excellent, professional, and adaptive Islamic educational institution in contemporary society.

Backup Management in Enhancing the Madrasah Image

The findings indicate that backup management constitutes an essential component in maintaining institutional stability, sustainability, and public trust in madrasahs. This management system includes the strengthening of digital security, human resource management, data storage systems, and organizational readiness in addressing various risks. The availability of reliable supporting systems ensures that educational services continue to operate effectively under different circumstances. Effective backup management also strengthens institutional credibility and reinforces the image of the madrasah as a professional and adaptive educational institution (Bush, 2011; Widodo, 2011).

Digital security emerges as a central aspect of backup management. The protection of data, information, and digital activities has become a fundamental requirement in modern educational governance. This protection includes hardware, software, and network security, together with the development of digital literacy among users. The principles of confidentiality, integrity, and



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availability form the foundation of information security systems. Digital security is associated not only with technological infrastructure but also with the development of a security-aware culture within the madrasah environment (Whitman & Mattord, 2018; Stallings, 2008).

Field findings reveal that digital security management has been implemented concretely in educational practice. The madrasah in Surabaya emphasizes access control reinforcement for websites and social media accounts, the use of strong passwords, and the monitoring of published content to ensure ethical standards and prevent misuse. Digital literacy programs are also provided for teachers and students to increase awareness of cyber threats such as phishing and data theft. This approach reflects the understanding that digital security represents a collective responsibility shared by all members of the madrasah community (Suryadi, 2021; Wahida, 2023).

Security management in Gresik demonstrates a more integrated system through the implementation of a digital madrasah program. Web-based information systems are utilized to manage academic data, administrative services, and online learning activities. These systems are equipped with user authentication mechanisms, activity monitoring, and strict privacy policies. Regular socialization concerning digital security is conducted to strengthen institutional awareness regarding cyber protection. This condition reflects a more structured and integrated digital governance model (Heemsbergen, 2016; Zhang, Cao, & Muccini, 2020).

Human resource management also forms a significant element of backup management. The management of teachers and educational staff is carried out strategically to support institutional vision and mission. Teacher competency development is implemented through training programs, workshops, and collaboration with educational institutions. Performance evaluation based on educational quality indicators is applied to ensure the continuity of service quality. These findings demonstrate that human resource quality functions as a primary factor in maintaining institutional reputation and strengthening public confidence (Dessler, 2020; Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

Human resource management in Gresik is conducted through a more digitalized system. Teacher and staff data are managed through web-based information systems that facilitate performance monitoring, attendance management, and professional development. Collaboration with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, alumni, and community leaders provides additional support



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for improving human resource quality. This practice demonstrates that human resource management extends beyond administrative functions and contributes strategically to institutional competitiveness (Northouse, 2021; Nurhayati, 2022).

Data management through hybrid storage systems becomes an important solution in supporting backup management. The combination of local and cloud-based storage creates a balance between security, flexibility, and efficiency. Important data such as student grades, attendance records, and administrative documents are stored on local servers to maintain confidentiality. Public information and external communication are stored through cloud systems to ensure accessibility. This approach protects institutional data while supporting efficient information access (Minelli, Chambers, & Dhiraj, 2013; Yusof & Chell, 2000).

The implementation of storage systems in Gresik demonstrates stronger integration between digital flexibility and data protection. Academic information systems use cloud services to support flexible access, while sensitive information remains stored on internal servers. This combination provides security assurance and operational efficiency in data management. The utilization of these technologies reflects institutional readiness in responding to digital transformation without neglecting security considerations (Zhang et al., 2020; Whitman & Mattord, 2018).

Manual archives continue to function as an important part of backup management. Physical documents such as report cards, diplomas, and official letters are stored systematically to maintain authenticity and legal validity. Manual recording systems through registration books and institutional records remain in use as authentic evidence. The existence of manual archives provides additional protection in situations where digital systems experience disruption. These practices indicate that traditional systems continue to hold an important role in educational administration (Nawawi, 1996; Suryosubroto, 2004).

Archive management in Gresik also demonstrates a balance between manual and digital systems. Important documents such as official decrees and alumni records are stored physically using clear classification systems. Integration with digital systems facilitates document retrieval and data management. This condition illustrates that the combination of manual and digital



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systems can increase efficiency while preserving document authenticity (Engkoswara & Komariah, 2010; Purwanto, 2017).

The multi-layer security approach becomes an important strategy in strengthening system security. Protection is implemented through multiple layers, including access control, data encryption, firewalls, and user education. Layered systems provide additional safeguards when one security layer encounters disruption. These practices are reflected in the implementation of two-factor authentication, user activity supervision, and internal network protection. Digital literacy education also forms part of the strategy to increase institutional awareness concerning cybersecurity (Al-Otaibi, 2021; Stallings, 2008).

Public response functions as an important indicator in evaluating the effectiveness of backup management. Public trust in the madrasah demonstrates that implemented systems provide security and service certainty. Communities express positive responses toward information transparency and the quality of educational services provided. Support from various stakeholders indicates that madrasahs possess strong legitimacy within the social environment (Bovens, 2007; Ruslan, 2020).

Leadership policy plays a central role in directing the entire backup management system. Madrasah principals establish policies that support digital transformation, partnership strengthening, and a culture of transparency. Visionary leadership integrates technological systems, human resources, and social relationships into a unified institutional framework. These policies provide clear direction for institutional development and sustainability (Fullan, 2014; Hoy & Miskel, 2013).

Leadership practices in both madrasahs demonstrate commitment to building adaptive and sustainable systems. The applied approaches reflect integration between technological innovation and social values. This condition strengthens the identity of the madrasah as a professional, trustworthy, and future-oriented educational institution (Mulyasa, 2009; Bush, 2011).

Overall, backup management in madrasahs is formed through the integration of digital security, human resource management, data storage systems, and leadership policies. This integration creates a system capable of maintaining institutional stability, strengthening public



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trust, and reinforcing the image of the madrasah as an excellent and adaptive Islamic educational institution in the era of digital transformation.

Building a Positive Image in Enhancing the Madrasah Image

The findings demonstrate that the development of a madrasah image represents a strategic process that depends not only on external communication but also on the consistency of concrete actions aligned with institutional vision, values, and educational service quality. Institutional image is formed through public experiences, interactions, and perceptions regarding the performance of the madrasah. This condition confirms that image-building strategies should focus on trust, satisfaction, and sustainable relationships with society (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Ruslan, 2020).

Field practices indicate that image-building strategies are implemented through the integration of public communication and concrete action. The madrasah in Surabaya strengthens its image through the publication of student achievements, service transparency, and active participation in social activities. Information is distributed through official websites and social media platforms, allowing the public to access information easily. The madrasah in Gresik presents an approach emphasizing digital innovation through the digital madrasah program. The use of technology-based information systems creates the impression of an institution that is modern and adaptive to change. These approaches demonstrate that the image of the madrasah is constructed through a combination of values, practices, and consistent communication (Heemsbergen, 2016; Sofi & Wulandari, 2024).

Madrasah branding becomes an important element in image development. Branding is understood as a strategic identity reflecting institutional values, service quality, and organizational culture. This identity is not limited to visual symbols but also includes experiences perceived by the public. Madrasahs build their brands through the publication of academic and non-academic achievements, participation in social activities, and transparent digital communication. These efforts shape public perception that the madrasah is an active, high-achieving, and competitive educational institution (Keller, 2013; Wheeler, 2013).



International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research

ISSN(Online): 3090-2959

Vol 2 no 2 (2026): July 2026

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Brand strengthening is also carried out through the integration of technology into educational services. Digital madrasah programs function as instruments for demonstrating commitment to innovation and modernization. Academic information systems, digital administrative services, and collaboration with various stakeholders strengthen the position of the madrasah within educational competition. This condition illustrates that madrasah branding is constructed through the combination of service quality and adaptability to social and technological developments (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Harlyn, 2021).

The publication of achievements serves as a major strategy in strengthening institutional image. Madrasahs actively display student accomplishments in academic and non-academic fields. Information is disseminated through digital media, public events, and official documentation. This publication functions as concrete evidence of educational quality. Society gains a clear understanding of student competence and teacher professionalism. The greater the visibility of achievements, the stronger the positive perception toward the institution (Marno, 2024; Mundiri, 2016).

Public relations play a highly strategic role in the image-building process. Public relations units function as intermediaries between the madrasah and society while managing both internal and external communication. Their activities include information dissemination, media management, and relationship building with parents, alumni, government institutions, and mass media. Public relations are not merely administrative structures but constitute part of institutional strategy in strengthening public trust (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000; Morissan, 2014).

Public trust in the madrasah is closely associated with the quality of educational services provided. Trust is formed through academic reputation, management integrity, and the relevance of educational programs to social needs. Madrasahs capable of delivering high-quality learning, strong Islamic values, and innovations relevant to contemporary developments tend to gain higher levels of public confidence. This condition indicates that public trust is influenced not only by religious values but also by institutional professionalism and adaptability (Abrori, 2020; Mulyasa, 2012).



International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research

ISSN(Online): 3090-2959

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The relationship between trust and reputation is mutually reinforcing. A strong reputation increases public confidence, while high levels of trust strengthen institutional reputation. Madrasah reputation is developed through accreditation, achievements, teacher quality, transparent management, and adaptability to change. Institutions that consistently maintain service quality achieve stronger positions within society (Chapleo, 2010; Sutojo, 2004).

Community collaboration becomes another important factor in image development. The involvement of teachers, students, parents, alumni, and the wider community creates a participatory educational ecosystem. Programs involving community participation, such as social activities, vocational training, and character-building initiatives based on Islamic values, generate positive effects on public perception. This collaboration strengthens a sense of belonging and reinforces the legitimacy of the madrasah as an integral part of society (Etzioni, 1995; Johnson & Johnson, 1999).

Digitalization functions as a catalyst in improving institutional image and reputation. The implementation of digital systems in learning, administration, and public communication demonstrates professionalism and accountability. Technology facilitates information access, accelerates services, and increases transparency. Madrasahs capable of integrating technology with Islamic values are perceived as institutions that remain relevant to contemporary needs (Suryadi, 2021; Singarimbun, 2023).

The implementation of digitalization in both madrasahs reveals different characteristics. The madrasah in Surabaya emphasizes system transparency and public communication through digital media. The madrasah in Gresik develops digitalization integrated with vocational learning and technology-based educational services. Both approaches strengthen the image of the madrasah as an innovative and adaptive educational institution (Heemsbergen, 2016; Wahida, 2023).

Responsive complaint management constitutes an important component in maintaining public trust. This system allows society to submit complaints or suggestions rapidly and receive appropriate solutions. Quick and transparent responses demonstrate institutional commitment to quality service. The existence of complaint-management systems also indicates that the madrasah practices open and accountable governance (Bovens, 2007; Payne & Frow, 2005).



International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research

ISSN(Online): 3090-2959

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Visual identity becomes an element that symbolically strengthens institutional image. Logos, colors, typography, and communication design reflect the values and character of the madrasah. The use of Islamic symbols combined with modern visual elements demonstrates balance between tradition and innovation. Consistency in visual identity enables society to recognize and trust the institution more easily (Wheeler, 2013; Keller, 2013).

The implementation of visual identity in both madrasahs demonstrates different emphases. The madrasah in Surabaya presents a modern image through consistent digital branding management. The madrasah in Gresik highlights the integration of Islamic values with vocational and local characteristics. These approaches strengthen the position of the madrasah as an educational institution possessing a clear identity and relevance to community needs (Mundiri, 2016; Zainur & Rozaq, 2018).

Overall, the development of the madrasah image is formed through the integration of communication strategies, service quality, community participation, and the utilization of digital technology. This integration generates a strong institutional image, increases public trust, and strengthens the competitiveness of madrasahs in responding to the dynamics of modern education.

Conceptual Model

Based on the findings and discussion of the study, a conceptual construction concerning public relations management in enhancing the image of madrasahs was developed through the *Community–Vocational Digitalization Model*. This model demonstrates that the success of a madrasah's image is not determined solely by communication activities, but by the integration of community strength, vocational reinforcement, and digital transformation managed strategically through madrasah public relations management.

This conceptual model positions public relations management as a system connecting four major pillars: *good communicator*, *good relationship*, *backup management*, and *good image maker*. These four pillars operate simultaneously and reinforce one another in building an excellent madrasah image.

The *good communicator* aspect emphasizes the importance of effective communication in conveying the vision, mission, and programs of the madrasah to all stakeholders. Open and clear



International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research

ISSN(Online): 3090-2959

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communication creates transparency, reduces misunderstanding, and increases public trust. The madrasah principal acts as a strategic communicator who directs institutional policies and messages, while the public relations team manages digital communication through various platforms such as websites, social media, and official publications. Teachers and homeroom teachers also function as direct communicators who build interaction with students and parents.

The *good relationship* aspect illustrates the importance of harmonious relationships between the madrasah and various parties, including parents, communities, government institutions, and partner organizations. Strong relationships increase external support, expand collaborative networks, and foster a sense of belonging toward the madrasah. Public relations officers establish connections with media and stakeholders, the madrasah committee strengthens internal relations with the community, and alumni act as strategic connectors who broaden the madrasah's reputation within wider social environments.

The *backup management* aspect indicates that the madrasah image is also supported by a strong and integrated internal management system. Vice principals in different divisions ensure that all programs operate according to procedures and quality standards. Information technology and digitalization teams support information transparency through technology-based administrative systems and responsive complaint services. Teachers and educational staff implement institutional policies consistently, strengthening public trust in the professionalism of the institution.

The *good image maker* aspect focuses on strategies for building a positive madrasah image through branding and publication. The madrasah principal and the public relations team design structured image-building strategies. Students function as image ambassadors through academic and non-academic achievements, while teachers and alumni strengthen the institutional image through academic, social, and publication contributions. In this context, the madrasah image represents the collective work of the entire madrasah community rather than the sole responsibility of the public relations unit.

These four aspects are integrated within the broader framework of *community–vocational digitalization*, which represents the distinctive characteristic of this research model. The



International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research

ISSN(Online): 3090-2959

Vol 2 no 2 (2026): July 2026

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community approach positions the madrasah as part of society that actively interacts and collaborates in various social and educational programs. The vocational approach strengthens the relevance of the madrasah to workforce demands and practical skills. Digitalization functions as an enabling factor that accelerates communication, improves transparency, and broadens publication outreach.

This model also develops the theory proposed by Morissan concerning the role of public relations in building organizational image. The study not only confirms the four principal components of communication, relationships, management, and image, but also expands them by introducing the dimensions of community–vocational orientation and digitalization as reinforcing factors within the context of modern madrasah education.

The implications of this model indicate that madrasahs capable of integrating effective communication, strong social relationships, solid internal management, and consistent image-building strategies will generate an excellent institutional image. This image is characterized by increased public trust, a strong institutional reputation, and high competitiveness within the dynamics of modern education.

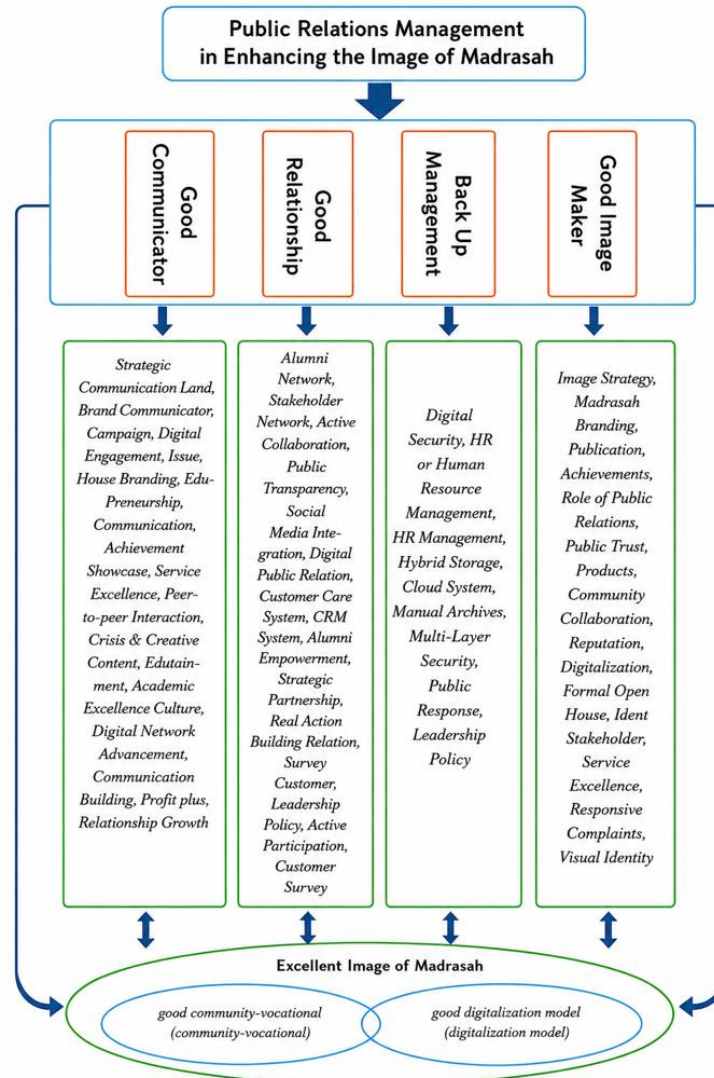


Figure 1. Community–Vocational Digitalization Conceptual Model in Enhancing the Madrasah Image

Figure 1 illustrates that public relations management serves as the central element in enhancing the madrasah image through four major components: *good communicator*, *good relationship*, *backup management*, and *good image maker*. These components are interconnected and form an integrated system.



International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research

ISSN(Online): 3090-2959

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At the center of the model, reinforcement is provided through strategic communication, relationship networks, community and vocational collaboration, and madrasah image and branding strategies. These approaches are supported by the utilization of digital technology, including social media-based communication, madrasah information systems, and service transparency.

The final section of the model presents the outcome in the form of an excellent madrasah image, characterized by increased public trust, stronger institutional reputation, and improved quality of educational services. This excellent image represents the result of integrating community strength, vocational reinforcement, and digital transformation managed systematically through madrasah public relations management.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that public relations management plays a strategic role in enhancing the image of madrasahs through the integration of communication, relationships, managerial support, and planned image-building strategies. Effective communication contributes to the development of transparency and public trust, while strong relationships with alumni, stakeholders, and the wider community expand social support for the madrasah. Systematic managerial support through the strengthening of digital security, human resource management, and technology integration provides stability and sustainability for educational services. The development of the madrasah image is also shown to depend not only on communication activities, but on the consistency between service quality, achievements, and integrated branding strategies.

The findings of this study produced the *Community–Vocational Digitalization Model*, which emphasizes the synergy between community strength, vocational relevance, and digital transformation as the primary foundation for enhancing the madrasah image. This model extends public relations theory by demonstrating that the image of an educational institution is collectively constructed through the involvement of all elements of the madrasah, rather than solely through the public relations function. The implications of this study indicate that madrasahs capable of integrating strategic communication, social collaboration, digital innovation, and service quality



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Vol 2 no 2 (2026): July 2026

<https://journal.as-salafiyah.id/index.php/ijir/index>

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will develop strong reputations, high levels of public trust, and sustainable competitiveness within the context of modern education.

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