



The Role of Public Relations Management in Bullying Prevention

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ABSTRACT

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Bullying remains a persistent issue in school environments, affecting student well-being and institutional credibility. In response to this challenge, public relations (PR) management plays a crucial role in fostering a safe, inclusive, and communicative school climate. This study aims to examine the role of PR management in bullying prevention at SMP PGRI 9 Sidoarjo by applying core management functions, namely planning, organizing, directing, and controlling. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings reveal that PR serves not only as an information disseminator but also as a program strategist and institutional bridge between internal stakeholders and the community. In the planning stage, PR identifies problems and designs bullying prevention initiatives to strengthen the school's public image. In the organizing phase, PR coordinates structured teams such as the Violence Prevention and Handling Team (TPPK). Actuating ensures the implementation of activities, including parental engagement and student outreach. Meanwhile, the controlling phase monitors and evaluates program effectiveness. This study contributes to the discourse on educational communication and safety, emphasizing the strategic significance of professional PR management in shaping a trustworthy and responsive school identity.

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INTRODUCTION

Bullying remains a pressing social problem in the educational landscape, affecting not only the psychological well-being of students but also disrupting the broader objectives of character education and inclusive learning. Various forms of bullying, ranging from verbal insults, physical intimidation to covert exclusion, continue to threaten the safety and comfort of school environments (Gkagkanteros et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2024; Poirier et al., 2022). This phenomenon is not limited to isolated incidents but often reflects deeper issues of communication gaps, lack of preventive structures, and insufficient stakeholder engagement in schools. Studies have shown that prolonged exposure to bullying can lead to anxiety, depression, academic disengagement, and even school dropout (Williams et al., 2022; Kshetri et al., 2023). Therefore, preventive

measures must move beyond reactive discipline and adopt more strategic, systemic approaches. In this context, public relations management plays a potentially transformative role not only in conveying information but also in planning, organizing, and sustaining institutional responses that can foster a safe, respectful, and well-informed school culture.

In response to these issues, effective collaboration between various school stakeholders becomes essential. Besides the principal and teaching staff, guidance and counseling teachers play a crucial role in assisting students with emotional regulation and character development (Hina, 2024; Sain, 2025; Setiawan Putri et al., 2024). However, there is a growing need for a more systemic approach that involves communication beyond the school community, especially with parents and guardians. In this regard, public relations (PR) management emerges as a strategic element that supports school efforts in conveying anti-bullying messages and promoting a positive image of the school to the wider community (Putri, 2024; Umar & Khaer, 2024).

The role of school public relations is to establish strong ties between the school and external stakeholders. Through functions such as communication, coordination, and information dissemination, PR divisions help bridge the gap between the internal school environment and public expectations. By effectively managing public perception and ensuring transparency in school programs, including bullying prevention, PR can foster trust, encourage parental involvement, and enhance the school's reputation. To perform these roles effectively, public relations requires structured management. According to Bamat et al. (2024), management involves four interrelated functions: planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. These components are essential in ensuring that PR efforts are purposeful and impactful.

Despite the growing awareness of bullying in schools, studies focusing on the role of public relations management in preventing bullying remain limited. While much attention has been given to the psychological and pedagogical aspects of bullying, few have examined how structured public communication strategies contribute to prevention and intervention (Abdullah, 2024; Safitri & Zawawi, 2025; Jali, 2025; Heru & Bali, 2024). This study seeks to fill that gap by investigating how public relations management at SMP PGRI 9 Sidoarjo contributes to bullying prevention through effective stakeholder engagement, awareness campaigns, and community involvement.

The novelty of this research lies in its emphasis on PR management as a central actor in promoting school values and safety policies to both internal and external audiences. It highlights how strategic public relations actions, when supported by professional management, can foster a culture of openness, prevent harmful behaviors, and reinforce the school's commitment to student welfare.

Furthermore, this study aims to explore how public relations at SMP PGRI 9 utilizes communication tools and technology to support their anti-bullying agenda, including through social media, newsletters, and collaborative parent programs.

The main problem addressed in this research is how public relations management functions in the prevention of bullying at SMP PGRI 9 Sidoarjo. The objective is to identify the roles, strategies, and impact of PR in disseminating anti-bullying messages and supporting students' social development. This study hypothesizes that effective public relations management, supported by clear planning and active community engagement, plays a vital role in fostering a safe school environment and preventing bullying. This study is expected to provide valuable insights for educational leaders and school administrators in developing comprehensive, community-based approaches to bullying prevention.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted in November and January with the object of research at SMP PGRI 9 Sidoarjo, which is located at Jl.Jati Selatan IV no.16 Sidoarjo District, Sidoarjo Regency, East Java Province. The method used in the research is a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach through observation, interviews, and document collection (Byrne, 2022; Campbell et al., 2021; Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Observations made are direct observations to find out the efforts made by the School in preventing bullying. In addition to observing, researchers also collected sources of information by conducting interviews with informants and collecting several valid documents.

The data analysis technique is by reducing the data in the form of describing and elaborating (Cole, 2024; Scharp, 2021; Tasci et al., 2020). Furthermore, a systematic presentation of data obtained from observation results, interview results, and documentation will be carried out, and then conclusions will be drawn so that it is easily understood by oneself or others. Then, it is developed into inductive qualitative data so that data collected repeatedly using triangulation techniques can be accepted, and then the data will develop into a theory.

This descriptive approach describes the actual situation using this qualitative research method, researchers get a complete understanding and information related to "The Role of Public Relations Management in Bullying Prevention at SMP PGRI 9 Sidoarjo". Research subjects to obtain data were obtained from several informant sources, namely the principal, public relations, and counseling guidance teachers. In addition to obtaining sources of information from informants, researchers also collect data by reviewing archival

documents in the form of photos of guidance and counseling program books, guidance service implementation plans, student statements, call books, guidance and counseling service books, student handling books, and Principal Decrees regarding violence prevention teams at SMP PGRI 9 Sidoarjo.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Strategic Planning of Public Relations as a Preventive Communication Channel

Strategic planning in the context of bullying prevention reflects the ability of public relations (PR) at SMP PGRI 9 Sidoarjo to formulate, structure, and implement communication-based interventions aimed at creating a safe and supportive school environment. This role involves more than just disseminating information; it encompasses identifying school-based issues, designing responsive communication strategies, and utilizing digital platforms to establish consistent and transparent communication with both internal and external stakeholders. Through these efforts, PR functions not only as a messenger but also as a strategic actor in the school's anti-bullying campaign, reinforcing trust between the school and the wider community.

The results of interviews with PR staff and school administrators indicate that the PR division takes a proactive role in planning anti-bullying initiatives. The first step in this strategic planning is problem identification, which PR carries out by collecting feedback and complaints through multiple sources: teacher reports, student inputs, and parent observations. After problem identification, PR sets concrete objectives, such as "ensuring a safe and bully-free environment" and "improving stakeholder trust in school responsiveness." According to one PR staff member, "We first listen to what students feel, what teachers observe, and what parents report. From there, we decide how and when to communicate responses." This planning phase establishes the foundation for PR's next crucial function: communication delivery.

Observational data show that PR utilizes digital media platforms as its main tools of communication. WhatsApp groups, the school website, Facebook, and YouTube serve as accessible, real-time channels for public outreach. These platforms are used not only for announcements but also for sharing stories of successful interventions, educational campaigns, and scheduled activities related to anti-bullying. For instance, one social media post by the school PR detailed the success of a school seminar on bullying prevention attended by both students and parents, which was later uploaded to the school's YouTube channel. This type of visibility and openness, made possible by digital integration, has fostered a positive narrative around the school's commitment to student well-being.

Supporting documents and planning outlines provided by the PR team further demonstrate the systematic nature of their strategic role. Each semester, PR prepares a communication calendar detailing outreach events, targeted socialization activities, and collaboration with external agencies such as the local police or media. Importantly, PR also collaborates with the internal Tim Pencegahan dan Penanganan Kekerasan (TPPK) to align its messaging with broader school-based intervention efforts. In this regard, PR acts as a unifying voice that amplifies the school's values and ensures that the message of anti-bullying becomes part of the school's culture and community perception.

Interpretation of these findings reveals that public relations at SMP PGRI 9 Sidoarjo possesses a strong strategic orientation in planning communication programs for bullying prevention. The PR division does not act in isolation, but builds upon data-driven inputs, stakeholder involvement, and technology utilization. Its proactive planning and communication approach has contributed significantly to shifting public perception from passive awareness to active trust in the school's role as a safe educational institution. This confirms that effective public relations planning, when carried out with purpose and structure, serves as a key pillar in both preventing harmful student behavior and reinforcing institutional credibility.

Collaborative Governance through TPPK: Institutionalizing Bullying Prevention

Collaborative governance in the context of bullying prevention at SMP PGRI 9 Sidoarjo refers to the formation and operation of an integrated institutional mechanism through the Tim Pencegahan dan Penanganan Kekerasan (TPPK). This team consists of the Vice Principal for Student Affairs, guidance and counseling (BK) teachers, and public relations (PR) staff. The TPPK serves as the central hub in implementing preventive, curative, and evaluative strategies for handling bullying cases. Its collaborative structure bridges internal and external communication, policy enforcement, and student emotional support, representing a formalized model of anti-bullying governance within the school ecosystem.

The TPPK team implements multiple layers of intervention. These include classroom counseling schedules, disciplinary point systems, coordination meetings, and parental involvement. For example, when a student is involved in bullying, the BK teacher takes initial action, and if necessary, the PR officer follows up with communication to the student's guardians. Monthly TPPK meetings then assess the overall case status and determine whether additional measures or revisions to the program are needed. This procedural coordination reflects a deliberate and responsive system for bullying management.

Table 1. Evidence of Findings: Collaborative Governance through TPPK

Data Source	Key Quote/Finding	Interpretation
Interview with Counseling Teacher	"We have a class schedule for bullying socialization, and PR takes care of communication with parents."	Role-sharing within TPPK ensures both internal education and external communication are addressed.
Interview with Public Relations Officer	"If there is a case, we always report it in the monthly PKK meeting and look for a solution together."	TPPK meetings function as evaluative mechanisms that guide collective decision-making.
Observation Notes	TPPK was formed by official decree, involving PR, BK teachers, and the student affairs vice principal.	Bullying prevention is institutionalized, not ad hoc, and supported by a formal organizational structure.
School Documentation	Monthly TPPK reports contain follow-ups, action plans, and public communication logs.	There is a transparent monitoring and reporting system that enhances accountability and responsiveness.

From the four data points in Table 1 above, it is evident that bullying prevention at SMP PGRI 9 is not left to individual efforts but instead is embedded in a collaborative institutional mechanism. The TPPK, through clear division of labor and regular evaluative practices, enables a multi-directional response involving students, teachers, parents, and external partners. The presence of PR in this team also ensures that the school's image as a safe and responsible institution is maintained through consistent community engagement and communication transparency.

The effectiveness of collaborative governance in school violence prevention. Rather than relying solely on BK teachers, SMP PGRI 9 uses the TPPK as a systemic intervention that integrates human resources, organizational structure, and strategic communication. The human, in particular, acts not merely as a messenger but as a strategic partner in ensuring that bullying cases are not only handled properly but also used as opportunities to strengthen the school's preventive culture. This institutionalization transforms anti-bullying efforts from being reactive into being a core component of the school's identity and image.

Digital Public Relations and Community Engagement in Strengthening School Image

Digital public relations at SMP PGRI 9 Sidoarjo has evolved into a transformative strategy that extends beyond mere information dissemination. In the context of bullying prevention, public relations (humas) acts not only as a communicator but also as a publicist, narrative builder, and community engager. The school leverages digital platforms such as the official website, YouTube

channel, Facebook page, and WhatsApp group for parents to deliver consistent and transparent communication about school programs, especially anti-bullying initiatives. This shift toward integrated digital engagement has significantly contributed to the formation of a positive, safe, and inclusive school image.

Data gathered from observations, interviews, and document reviews show that public relations at SMP PGRI 9 deliberately designs digital content to highlight positive student activities, school values, and preventive interventions. One PR staff member emphasized, “We upload documentation of bullying prevention activities, cooperation with the police, and seminars on the YouTube channel so that the public can see the school's commitment directly.” This intentional digital storytelling aligns with a broader strategy to build public trust and legitimacy, reinforcing the school's image as proactive and responsive in facing student issues, particularly bullying.

The collaboration with external institutions such as the local police and Radar Jatim (a regional media outlet) adds credibility to the school's efforts. Police involvement in anti-bullying campaigns provides a law-based perspective, while media partnerships help broadcast these efforts to a wider audience. The presence of such stakeholders in digital publications, whether in photo coverage or quoted interviews, amplifies the perceived authority and seriousness of the school's commitment. Meanwhile, internal dissemination through WhatsApp groups ensures that student guardians remain informed and involved, which is vital in creating a shared responsibility for maintaining a safe school climate.

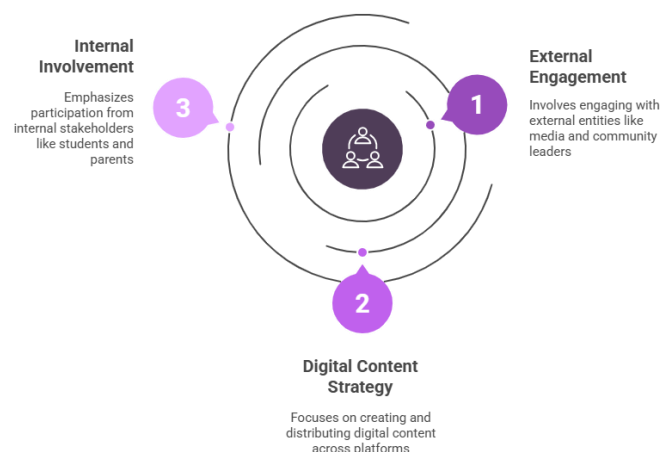


Figure 1. Digital Public Relations and Community Engagement

The data interpretation from the field reveals that SMP PGRI 9's digital PR approach is strategic, inclusive, and dialogical. It moves beyond one-way communication toward a participatory model where stakeholders are invited to witness and co-own the school's vision. The PR officer explained that consistent

updates, whether about seminars, case follow-ups, or student achievements, are crucial in “building public perception that the school is safe and open.”

This practice of using digital platforms for public engagement has two major impacts. First, it legitimizes the school's anti-bullying policy in the eyes of the public through transparent documentation. Second, it cultivates emotional investment from parents and the wider community, making them more likely to support and trust the school's governance. The pattern observed in these findings shows that digital public relations is no longer peripheral but central to educational communication and institutional branding. By leveraging digital tools in a deliberate and ethically managed way, SMP PGRI 9 not only manages crisis communication but also proactively builds a resilient school identity rooted in trust, openness, and collaboration.

Discussion

The discussion of the results of this study compares field findings with existing literature and explains both their theoretical and practical implications. Based on the findings, public relations (PR) at SMP PGRI 9 Sidoarjo has taken a central role in bullying prevention efforts through three main strategies: structured communication planning, collaborative governance through the formation of TPPK, and digital-based community engagement. These roles reflect a shift in the function of school public relations from mere information dissemination toward being a strategic, integrative, and community-focused function. This is consistent with the theoretical framework of strategic school communication as proposed by Nisa' & R (2024) and public relations in education described, which emphasize that effective PR in schools must be participatory, strategic, and aligned with institutional values.

In line with the first finding, strategic planning of public relations as a preventive communication channel shows a proactive role of PR in identifying issues, formulating messages, and utilizing digital platforms to build stakeholder trust. This finding confirms studies by Munawwaroh (2024), which emphasize that effective school communication planning should be data-driven, dialogical, and digitally mediated to build long-term institutional credibility. However, this study contributes new insights by showing how school PR develops an operational calendar, collaborates with internal teams like TPPK, and frames anti-bullying campaigns as an institutional priority, an approach that is rarely detailed in previous school-based PR literature.

The second finding regarding collaborative governance through TPPK reveals that bullying prevention is not a fragmented task but is instead institutionalized through structured teamwork involving the vice principal, BK teachers, and PR staff. This is aligned with the collaborative governance model

as discussed by Forster et al (2022), which argues that sustainable change requires inter-institutional cooperation and formalized structures. Similar practices have been observed in studies by García-Fernández et al. (2023) on school climate improvement, where multi-role teams enhance responsiveness and accountability. The current study provides concrete evidence of how PR serves not only as a communication channel but as an internal partner in student safety governance (Seguí-Grivé et al., 2024). This enriches the literature by offering an Indonesian school-based case of integrated governance for behavioral intervention, something rarely addressed in Southeast Asian contexts.

The third finding highlights the role of digital public relations and community engagement in shaping the public image of the school. The use of social media, YouTube, and WhatsApp for consistent messaging reflects a communicative transformation in the role of PR from unidirectional broadcasting to community building. This aligns with Habermas' theory of communicative action and is echoed in empirical studies by Smith et al. (2023), which show that digital PR strategies enhance transparency and emotional engagement. However, this study adds value by showing how PR leverages collaboration with external stakeholders such as the police and local media to increase the legitimacy of the school's anti-bullying commitment, an aspect that enhances the institutional trust model.

From a theoretical perspective, this research strengthens the paradigm shift from traditional PR roles in education toward strategic, participatory, and digitally-enabled PR practices. It affirms that PR in educational settings must not be separated from core educational missions such as student well-being, policy socialization, and behavioral reform (Ramos-Diaz et al., 2022; Tziner et al., 2023; Fahmi et al., 2024). The integration of PR into governance (TPPK) and digital storytelling efforts reveals that communication functions are most effective when embedded within organizational structures and shared accountability mechanisms. This complements theories of transformative school leadership, which emphasize that leadership must also be communicative and relational (J. H. Kim, 2023; Al Jauhari & Thelma, 2023).

In terms of practical implications, the findings suggest that schools should view PR not just as a promotional tool but as a strategic partner in shaping safe school climates and maintaining public trust. School principals are advised to integrate PR in early-stage planning, involve them in school governance structures like TPPK, and provide adequate resources for digital content creation and stakeholder engagement (Pratiwi et al., 2024; Ramdlani et al., 2024). This will require capacity building in strategic communication for school PR officers, as well as interdepartmental alignment to ensure that school-wide initiatives are communicated coherently and transparently.

The repositioning of school PR from peripheral to strategic can significantly enhance the school's ability to prevent bullying, engage the community, and build a positive institutional image. These findings contribute to expanding the discourse on educational leadership and communication by offering an integrated model in which PR serves a hybrid function: as a communicator, collaborator, and cultural architect.

CONCLUSION

Public relations at SMP PGRI 9 Sidoarjo serves not only as an information channel but also as a strategic actor that actively engages with internal and external stakeholders to foster a safe and inclusive school environment. This study demonstrates that PR effectively applies core management functions, planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling, by coordinating anti-bullying programs, forming institutional teams such as TPPK, and leveraging digital platforms for transparent communication. The wisdom gained from this research lies in recognizing PR as a collaborative agent that bridges school policies with community expectations, thereby enhancing institutional trust and school image. The strength of this paper is its contribution to the study of educational communication and school-based violence prevention. However, a limitation of this study is its single-site focus, which may limit generalizability. Future research should explore PR roles across diverse educational settings to enrich comparative perspectives and uncover broader implementation models.

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