



Strengthening Educational Quality in Islamic Schools: The Strategic Role of Public Relations and Public Services

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to analyze the contribution of public relations management and public services to strengthening the quality of madrasah education. The study was motivated by the growing importance of public relations and service quality in building public trust, community participation, and a positive institutional image within increasingly complex educational demands. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, while data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation. The study was grounded in Grunig and Hunt's Two-Way Symmetrical Theory and Stakeholder Theory. The findings reveal that public relations management and public services functioned in an integrated and participatory manner, despite the absence of a formal public relations structure. Dialogic communication, student-oriented services, collaborative relationships with parents, and well-planned resource management contributed significantly to improving educational quality. The implications of this study emphasize that public relations play a strategic role in strengthening institutional quality, stakeholder satisfaction, and the sustainability of educational programs in madrasah education.

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INTRODUCTION

The quality of education has become a central issue in contemporary society because educational institutions are expected not only to transfer knowledge but also to develop character, social responsibility, and life skills among students. Madrasahs as Islamic educational institutions play a strategic role in shaping moral and intellectual generations capable of responding to social transformation and global competition (Bakar, 2024; Haddade et al. 2024). In recent years, society has increasingly demanded educational institutions that are

transparent, responsive, and capable of providing quality public services to students and parents. This condition has encouraged schools and madrasahs to improve institutional governance through professional management practices, including the strengthening of public relations and educational services. Effective communication between educational institutions and stakeholders contributes significantly to public trust, institutional reputation, and community participation in educational development (Marpaung et al. 2023; Afandi et al., 2025). In addition, positive institutional image influences parents' decisions in selecting schools for their children and supports long-term institutional sustainability (Setyaningsih et al., 2025). Therefore, strengthening public relations management and public services is important because these aspects influence educational quality, stakeholder satisfaction, and institutional competitiveness in modern educational environments.

Despite the growing importance of educational quality, many Islamic educational institutions still face difficulties in managing communication and public services effectively. Several madrasahs experience problems related to limited public trust, weak stakeholder involvement, poor institutional branding, and ineffective communication between schools and parents (Mardhiah and Sardaniati 2025; Rohimah et al., 2025). In many cases, public relations activities remain administrative and ceremonial rather than strategic and participatory. Educational institutions often prioritize academic achievement while neglecting service quality, transparency, and public engagement. As a result, parents may perceive educational services as unresponsive and less professional, which can reduce satisfaction and institutional credibility (Oktasari 2025; Lisnawati 2025). Furthermore, rapid technological development and increasing educational competition require schools to adapt their communication approaches to digital and community-oriented models (Mahmud et al., 2024; Ilyas et al., 2026). Without effective public relations and service strategies, madrasahs may struggle to maintain competitiveness and social legitimacy. These conditions indicate that the management of public relations and public services remains a significant challenge that directly influences the sustainability and quality of Islamic educational institutions.

Field phenomena demonstrate that educational institutions with effective public relations and responsive public services tend to achieve stronger community trust and institutional development. Many successful madrasahs have implemented collaborative communication strategies involving parents, communities, and external institutions to support educational programs and student development (Yasin and Nur 2025; Taufiq and Citraningsih 2026). In practice, educational public relations activities include information dissemination, institutional promotion, stakeholder collaboration, and service

facilitation aimed at improving institutional reputation and educational outcomes. Educational institutions also increasingly integrate public services into school management systems through transparent administration, student-centered services, and community participation programs (Fauzi et al., 2026; Waluyo et al., 2025). The field reality further shows that institutions capable of building participatory relationships with parents and stakeholders generally experience better educational support and stronger institutional image. Conversely, institutions with weak communication systems often encounter misunderstandings, low public participation, and reduced institutional trust. These phenomena confirm that public relations management and public services are not complementary activities but strategic components in strengthening educational quality and institutional sustainability within Islamic educational environments.

Previous studies have extensively discussed the role of public relations management in strengthening educational institutions. Research by Nuzula et al. (2024) and Setiawan (2025) emphasized that public relations contribute significantly to building institutional image and promoting educational innovation in madrasahs. Similarly, Khofi et al. (2026) and Huda (2025) highlighted the multidimensional role of educational public relations in sustaining school reputation and attracting public interest toward Islamic educational institutions. Other studies also found that communication strategies and institutional branding positively influence stakeholder trust and parental satisfaction (Rahmania et al. 2025; Rubai 2025). Furthermore, Agustin et al. (2025) explained that strategic public relations management supports educational objectives by strengthening relationships between schools and communities. Although these studies provide important insights into educational public relations, most of them focus primarily on branding, promotion, or institutional image without comprehensively examining the integration between public relations management, public services, and educational quality improvement. Consequently, the broader contribution of participatory communication and service quality toward sustainable educational development remains insufficiently explored in the context of Islamic primary education.

In addition to public relations studies, previous researchers have also explored educational service quality and institutional management within Islamic schools. Mu'alimin et al. (2026) investigated school quality management perspectives among principals and teachers, while Marpaung et al. (2023) discussed the strategic role of public relations and public services in educational quality enhancement. Other studies examined public participation, stakeholder collaboration, and institutional management reforms as factors influencing educational development (Haddade et al. 2024; Waluyo et al., 2025). However,

earlier studies generally analyzed these variables separately rather than integrating them into a comprehensive framework of educational quality strengthening. In addition, many studies focused on secondary schools or conceptual discussions and provided limited empirical exploration of how communication practices and public services interact within everyday educational management. The existing literature also rarely addresses how participatory public relations practices and responsive services contribute simultaneously to institutional trust, stakeholder satisfaction, and sustainable educational quality. Therefore, there remains a significant research gap regarding the integrated contribution of public relations management and public services in strengthening the quality of Islamic educational institutions.

This study offers a new perspective by positioning public relations management and public services as integrated strategic instruments for strengthening educational quality in madrasah education. Unlike previous studies that examined these aspects separately, this research emphasizes the interconnected relationship between participatory communication, stakeholder engagement, institutional services, and educational quality development. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on dialogic communication practices involving parents, institutional collaboration, student-centered services, and resource management as interconnected dimensions of educational quality strengthening. This study also highlights that educational quality should not only be measured through academic achievement but also through stakeholder satisfaction, institutional trust, positive public image, and the sustainability of educational programs. Furthermore, this research provides a contextual understanding of how Islamic educational institutions can optimize public relations and service management simultaneously within a participatory educational environment. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of practical educational management strategies that are adaptive, collaborative, and sustainable in responding to contemporary educational challenges and increasing public expectations toward educational institutions.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to analyze how public relations management and public services contribute to strengthening the quality of madrasah education. The research focuses on understanding communication practices, stakeholder involvement, institutional services, and management strategies that support educational quality improvement within Islamic educational institutions. This study argues that effective public relations management and responsive public services can create stronger institutional trust, improve stakeholder satisfaction, and support sustainable educational development. Participatory communication between schools and parents is assumed to strengthen collaboration and educational support, while quality

public services are expected to improve institutional professionalism and community confidence. Through this perspective, public relations are viewed not merely as promotional activities but as strategic management functions directly influencing institutional quality and educational sustainability. The study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions by enriching educational management discourse and offering strategic recommendations for educational institutions seeking to strengthen public trust, institutional competitiveness, and educational quality through integrated public relations and public service management approaches.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore comprehensively how public relations management and public service management contribute to strengthening the quality of madrasah education. A qualitative approach was selected because the research focused not only on educational outcomes but also on understanding the processes, communication strategies, interactions, and service practices implemented by the madrasah in building relationships with the community and stakeholders. The study was theoretically grounded in the Two-Way Symmetrical Theory proposed by Grunig and Hunt (1984), which emphasizes mutually beneficial two-way communication between institutions and their publics, as well as Stakeholder Theory, which positions parents and students as strategic actors within the educational system. These theories served as analytical frameworks to examine communication patterns, participation, collaboration, and stakeholder engagement in improving educational quality. The research was conducted in a madrasah setting considered relevant to the study objectives due to its active implementation of public relations programs and public service practices involving parents, students, and the surrounding community.

Data collection techniques consisted of observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to directly examine public relations activities and public service practices within the madrasah, including two-way communication with parents, publication of school activities, community involvement through parent associations, and academic and administrative service procedures. In-depth interviews were carried out with the head of the madrasah, teachers, public relations officers, students, and parents to obtain detailed information regarding their experiences, perceptions, and satisfaction toward the implementation of public relations and public services. From the perspective of the Two-Way Symmetrical Theory, the interviews focused on identifying the extent to which communication practices were dialogic and participatory. Meanwhile, based on Stakeholder Theory, the

interviews explored forms of stakeholder involvement and participation in decision-making processes and educational program development. Documentation was utilized as supporting data, including public relations activity archives, standard operating procedures (SOPs) of public services, photographs, meeting reports, and quality improvement evaluation documents.

The data analysis process followed the interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data condensation was conducted by selecting, simplifying, and categorizing relevant information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Subsequently, the data were systematically displayed in narrative and thematic forms to facilitate interpretation and identification of patterns related to communication practices, stakeholder participation, and service quality improvement. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verifying the findings by continuously comparing the collected data with the theoretical frameworks used in the study. To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation of sources and techniques was applied by comparing information obtained from different participants and data collection methods. Through this analytical process, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how public relations management and responsive public services contribute to improving the quality of madrasah education through participatory communication, institutional collaboration, and stakeholder satisfaction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that the implementation of public relations management and educational cooperation at MI Zainul Anwar has been running functionally and integrated with the madrasah management system. Although there is no formal public relations unit that stands alone, public relations functions have been carried out through the role of the madrasah principal, teachers, the madrasah committee, and the involvement of parents and the surrounding community. This structure reflects a collaborative and participatory management pattern in supporting the improvement of educational quality at the madrasah. MI Zainul Anwar is an educational institution located in Alassumur Kulon Village, Kraksaan District, Probolinggo Regency, with an A accreditation status and an accreditation score of 91 and is under the auspices of the Zainul Anwar Foundation. This madrasah was established in 1964 and has infrastructure such as classrooms, a library, a teacher's room, a madrasah principal's room, and other learning support facilities (Ilyas et al., 2026) .

From the perspective of the Excellence Public Relations theory developed by James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt, organizations with effective public relations practices are those capable of building two-way communication with their publics and involving public relations in the strategic decision-making process. Public relations practices at MI Zainul Anwar show a tendency towards a symmetrical two-way communication model, especially in relations with parents and the surrounding community, who are the main stakeholders of the madrasah.

Communication and Media Section

An analysis of the communication function at MI Zainul Anwar shows that the school prioritizes interpersonal communication and direct communication between the school and parents. Information about the school's programs, learning activities, and student development is typically disseminated through parent-teacher meetings, communication between teachers and parents, and school activities involving the community. This is in line with the characteristics of the school's rural environment, which maintains strong social interaction between the school and the community. The surrounding community's strong concern for the school's activities also contributes to the success of this communication.

According to the public relations theory of Cutlip, Center, and Broom, communication in public relations activities not only functions to convey information, but also to create a relationship of mutual understanding between the organization and its public (Ilyas et al., 2026) . The communication pattern implemented at MI Zainul Anwar shows that parents are not only recipients of information, but are also involved as partners in supporting educational activities. However, from an institutional development perspective, the use of digital media can still be improved to support the dissemination of madrasah information to the wider community so that it can strengthen the image and existence of educational institutions amidst competition between madrasahs.

Public Information and Integrated Services Section

The analysis shows that MI Zainul Anwar has strived to provide educational services oriented to the needs of students and the community. This is evident in the various flagship programs developed by the madrasah as a form of quality educational services. The flagship programs implemented at MI Zainul Anwar include local and global excellence programs. The global excellence program implemented is computer and internet skills, while the local excellence program includes the development of entrepreneurial skills and technological understanding aimed at improving students' life skills (Lisnawati, 2025) .

From the perspective of service-oriented public relations theory, the quality of service provided by an organization is the primary message received by the public. Through these various programs, madrasas strive to provide educational services that are not only oriented towards academic aspects, but also towards developing students' skills and character. Furthermore, the existence of facilities such as libraries managed by automated systems and information technology facilities are also supporting factors in improving the quality of educational services at madrasas. Thus, the service function

Public participation at MI Zainul Anwar is not only administrative, but also plays an important role in building a positive image of the madrasah in the eyes of the community.

Institutional Relations and Partnership Section

An analysis of institutional relationships indicates that MI Zainul Anwar has established various forms of collaboration with both governmental and non-governmental institutions to support educational activities and the development of madrasah programs. These partnerships reflect the madrasah's commitment to strengthening educational quality through collaborative engagement with external stakeholders. Collaboration with government agencies is implemented through several strategic programs, including cooperation with the Kraksaan District Health Center in supporting the School Health Unit (UKS) program, collaboration with the Environmental Service in the implementation of the Adiwiyata environmental education program, and partnership with the Child Protection Agency in developing the Child-Friendly Madrasah program. These institutional relationships demonstrate that external collaboration plays an important role in supporting sustainable educational development and enhancing the quality of services provided by the madrasah.

In addition, the madrasah also collaborates with non-governmental organizations such as the Raudlatut Tholibin Islamic Boarding School as a place for learning outside the classroom and the Raudlatut Tholibin Islamic Boarding School for TPQ learning activities. The madrasah also collaborates with private parties such as batik artisans, regional libraries, and the National Narcotics Agency (BNN) in character education activities and outreach on the dangers of drugs for students. (Mardhiah et al., 2025) .

From a stakeholder theory perspective, the success of an educational organization is greatly influenced by the institution's ability to build relationships with various stakeholders. The partnerships established by MI Zainul Anwar demonstrate that the madrasah strives to expand its collaborative network to support educational activities and improve the quality of services to students (Rohimah et al., 2025) .

General Administration and Resources Section

An analysis of the administrative and resource aspects shows that MI Zainul Anwar has quite good internal potential to support the implementation of educational activities. Based on the internal analysis of the madrasah, some of its strengths include the high work enthusiasm of the teaching staff, the availability of information technology facilities for learning, and a madrasah environment that supports the educational process. However, the madrasah also faces several challenges such as a limited number of teachers according to qualifications, limited funding sources, and several facilities that still need to be improved, such as classrooms and health unit facilities (Mardhiah and Sardaniati 2025) .

From the perspective of educational management theory, effective resource management is a crucial factor in improving the quality of educational institutions. Therefore, madrasahs need to undertake sustainable resource planning and development to overcome the various challenges they face (Rubai 2025) .

Synthesis of Analysis and Theoretical Implications

Overall, the analysis shows that public relations management and educational collaboration at MI Zainul Anwar have been quite effective, although they have not yet been institutionalized within a formal public relations structure. The implementation of communication, public service, institutional relations, and resource management functions have been integrated into the madrasah's management system. These findings indicate that public relations management practices at MI Zainul Anwar serve not only to convey information but also as a strategy for building relationships with the community, parents, and various partner institutions (Sulistyorini, 2024) .

Furthermore, the characteristics of the madrasah's environment, which is located in a rural area with high community support, are important factors in strengthening the relationship between the madrasah and its public. Thus, public relations practices at MI Zainul Anwar can be viewed as a form of public relations management based on the values of togetherness, participation, and cooperation in improving the quality of madrasah education (Rianti et al., 2024) .

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the most important finding lies in the understanding that effective public relations and public service management in madrasah education are not solely dependent on formal organizational structures, but rather on the consistent implementation of participatory communication, responsive educational services, and collaborative stakeholder

involvement. The research highlights that dialogical communication between madrasah and parents, supported by quality educational services and institutional partnerships, contributes significantly to strengthening educational quality and building public trust in Islamic educational institutions. The strength of this study lies in its contribution to the development of educational management and public relations scholarship by integrating the Two-Way Symmetrical Theory of Grunig and Hunt with Stakeholder Theory within the context of madrasah education, thereby providing a broader understanding of how public relations functions strategically in improving educational quality. Nevertheless, this study is limited to a single madrasah context, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other Islamic educational institutions with different organizational cultures and management systems. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve comparative studies across multiple madrasahs or educational institutions, apply mixed-method approaches, and further explore the influence of digital public relations, stakeholder engagement, and service innovation on the sustainability and competitiveness of Islamic education in contemporary society.

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