

## UTILIZATION OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGEMENT

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**Abstract :** *This research focuses on the implementation of communication technology in public relations management at SD Darut Thalabah Wonosari, with the aim to identify the impact of budget constraints and lack of technology skills among staff on the effectiveness of communication technology use and explore strategies to overcome these barriers. The research method used is qualitative with a descriptive approach. Data was collected through observation, interviews, and documentation at SD Darut Thalabah Wonosari, located at Jalan Kebon Agung No. 23, Wonosari, Gunungkidul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta. The results showed that although communication technologies such as instant messaging apps, email, and school web pages have improved communication efficiency, budget constraints and lack of technology skills are still major obstacles. The research also found that regular training and interactive website development can overcome most of these barriers. The implications of the study show the importance of adequate budget allocation and continuous training to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of technology-based public relations management in schools.*

## INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technology has become a crucial element in modern life, affecting various sectors, including education (Maulidia, 2023; Ahmed et al., 2021; Szymkowiak et al., 2021). Schools as formal educational institutions not only function as places of knowledge transfer but also as mediators connecting various related parties, such as teachers, students, parents, and the community (Ngoc Hoi, 2023; Carpenter et al., 2021; Alebizadeh et al., 2021). In this context, communication technology plays an important role in supporting school public relations management (Suh et al., 2021; Li et al., 2021; Verčič, 2021). Advances in information and communication technology force public relations practitioners to use technological devices to distribute information to the public effectively (Liu et al., 2021; Spielman et al., 2021; Permatasari et al., 2021; Zaini, 2023). Effective implementation of communication technology can accelerate information delivery and increase transparency, so that the relationship between schools and communities becomes more harmonious and productive (Rusdi et al., 2022; Imran, 2023; Norman et al., 2024).

The school's relationship with the community aims to increase understanding of educational needs and practices and encourage community participation in advancing schools (Admiraal et al., 2021; Purwanto et al., 2023). In this digital era, this relationship is further facilitated by the existence of sophisticated communication technology (Rahmatullah et al., 2022; Hao et al., 2022; Bailey et al., 2022). Public Relations communication today cannot be separated from the role of digital media (Vogler & Eisenegger, 2021; Fraccastoro et al., 2021). The use of the internet and other information technologies enables effective monitoring, integration of information, and dissemination of digital data, which is very helpful in school public relations management (Ya et al., 2020; Habib et al., 2021; Heidari et al., 2022; Zaini, 2023).

This research was conducted at SD Darut Thalabah Wonosari, where in this research activity it was found that the application of communication technology such as instant messaging applications, email, and school websites has been started to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of communication. This technology is expected to strengthen interactions between schools, parents, and communities, as well as facilitate more transparent and rapid dissemination of information (Sanjani, 2023; Zaini, 2024;). However, the implementation of communication technology in public relations management in this school does not always run smoothly. Various challenges, such as budget constraints and lack of technology skills among staff, are still major obstacles to overcome.

The main problem faced in this study is how budget constraints and lack of technology skills among staff affect the effectiveness of communication technology implementation in public relations management at SD Darut Thalabah Wonosari. In addition, this study aims to explore strategies that can be adopted to overcome these barriers and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of communication between schools and communities.

Previous research has been conducted which was conducted by Safonov et al. (2022) where the results showed that digital technology can accelerate the dissemination of information and increase transparency in school management.

In addition, research conducted by Jacob et al. (2021) in highlighting various challenges faced by schools in implementing ICT, including budget constraints and lack of training for staff. The article also provides recommendations for overcoming these barriers through effective resource management strategies and ongoing training. This is also reinforced from research conducted by Jain et al. (2021) in an article discussing concerns related to data security and privacy in school information systems. The research emphasizes the importance of strict and transparent security policies to protect the personal data of students and staff.

Although previous research has explored the use of communication technology in education, there is still a gap in understanding how budget constraints and lack of technology skills among staff affect the effectiveness of implementing such technology in schools. This study aims to fill the gap by focusing on strategies that can be adopted to overcome these obstacles and improve public relations management at SD Darut Thalabah Wonosari.

This research offers novelty by exploring in depth how budget constraints and lack of technology skills among staff affect the implementation of communication technology in public relations management in primary schools. The focus on primary schools in Indonesia also provides new perspectives that have not been explored much in international literature. This study aims to identify the impact of budget constraints and lack of technology skills among staff on the implementation of communication technology in public relations management at SD Darut Thalabah Wonosari. Another point studied in research is related to strategies that can be adopted to overcome these obstacles.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses qualitative methods with a descriptive approach to understand in depth how budget constraints and lack of technological skills among staff affect the implementation of communication technology in public relations management at SD Darut Thalabah Wonosari. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore in-depth and contextual information about the phenomenon under study (Mulisa, 2022). Data collection techniques used include direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Direct observation was conducted to understand the situation and conditions on the ground, in-depth interviews with principals, teachers, and public relations staff to obtain rich perspectives, and documentation to collect relevant supporting data.

This research was conducted at SD Darut Thalabah Wonosari located on Jalan Kebon Agung No. 23, Wonosari, Gunungkidul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta. This location was chosen because it has an ongoing communication technology implementation program, so it is suitable to be used as a case study in this study. Interviews were conducted with the principal, several teachers, and public relations staff to gain their views on the barriers and benefits of using communication technology in the school (Al - Mamary, 2022).

The data analysis technique used in this study is thematic analysis (Campbell et al., 2021). Data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation were analyzed to identify key themes relevant to the research objectives. Thematic analysis allows researchers to group data based on specific themes and identify patterns that emerge from the data. The categorized data was then further analyzed to understand how budget constraints and lack of technology skills affected the implementation of communication technology in public relations management at SD Darut Thalabah Wonosari. The results of this analysis are expected to provide deep insights and practical recommendations to overcome these obstacles.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The use of communication technology has brought significant changes in various aspects of human life, including in the fields of education, business, and society. In education, communication technologies allow access to a wider range of learning resources and support more interactive and effective learning methods. In the business world, communication technology facilitates faster and more efficient cross-border transactions and communication, thereby increasing productivity and collaboration between companies. Additionally, in a social context, communication technology allows individuals to connect and share information easily through social media platforms, thus strengthening social networks and communities. However, the use of communication technology also poses challenges, such as privacy issues, data security, and the risk of technology dependence.

### **Application of Communication Technology**

The application of communication technology at SD Darut Thalabah began with the use of instant messaging applications. Apps like WhatsApp and Telegram allow for fast and efficient communication between parents and school staff. Parents can easily contact teachers or school administration to get information about school activities or their child's development. School staff can also easily provide relevant information to parents. In interviews with school principals, it was revealed that the use of instant messaging apps has made it easier to coordinate and disseminate important information. The principal explained,

"Before, it took a long time to make an announcement to all parents, but now with just one message, everyone can know." (I-ks,14/5)

The application of communication technology is not just limited to instant messaging applications. Email is also widely used to convey important information to parents, such as meeting schedules and other important announcements. The school's website serves as a hub of information that is constantly updated with a variety of school-related information, such as curriculum, activity schedules, and other important announcements. With the web page, parents can access the information at any time without the need to come to school. One teacher interviewed stated,

"Email really helps us in conveying information en masse. No more sending letters one by one."(I-gr,15/5)

The use of email also helps in creating efficiency and transparency in communication, which is in line with Suwatno's view on the role of digital media in public relations management. The results of the interviews showed that communication technology, especially email, has significantly increased the efficiency of conveying information to parents. Previously, the process of delivering announcements took quite a long time because they had to send letters one by one. However, with email, information can be delivered in bulk with just one message, saving time and effort. This shows that email not only makes communication easier, but also speeds up the process of conveying information, allowing for faster responses and better coordination. This benefit is especially felt in an educational environment, where the speed and accuracy of information are essential to support teaching and learning activities and coordination between schools and parents.

The use of email at SD Darut Thalabah Wonosari has been proven to improve the reliability of communication between the school and parents. Messages can be received instantly and with less risk of loss or delay compared to physical mail. This allows schools to provide important information, such as schedule changes or emergency announcements, more quickly and effectively. In the context of school management, communication technologies such as email also support transparency and openness, as all parties can easily access and keep communication records (Ahmed et al., 2021; Bailey et al., 2022; Sanjani, 2024). Thus, this interview underscores the importance of the adoption of modern communication technology at SD Darut Thalabah Wonosari in improving operational efficiency and the quality of interaction between the school and parents, which ultimately contributes to improving the overall quality of education. The experience at SD Darut Thalabah Wonosari shows that the integration of communication technology not only simplifies the administrative process, but also strengthens the relationship between the school and its community, creating a more responsive and connected learning environment.

### **Inhibiting Factors of Communication Technology Application**

Although communication technology has provided many benefits, there are several inhibiting factors that affect its effectiveness. Limited financial and technological resources are one of the main obstacles. Darut Thalabah Elementary School experienced difficulties in procuring adequate hardware and software as well as in staff training. Lack of understanding and skills of staff in using new technologies also hinders the optimization of the application of communication technology. In addition, concerns related to information security and privacy are a challenge in the implementation of communication technology. Interviews with PR staff revealed that one of the biggest obstacles was budget constraints. A staffer stated,

"We don't always have enough funds to buy new devices or train staff." (I-ks,14/5)

Interviews with public relations staff revealed that budget constraints are a major obstacle in the implementation of communication technology at SD Darut Thalabah. The statement pointed out that schools often find it difficult to provide the necessary hardware and software, as well as adequate training for staff. These financial constraints hinder the optimization of the use of communication technology, because without sufficient financial support, it is difficult for schools to update technology infrastructure and improve staff competencies. This interpretation confirms the importance of adequate budget allocation to support the efficiency and effectiveness of technology-based public relations management in schools. Lack of understanding and skills of staff is also a significant obstacle. Some staff find it difficult to understand and master new technologies quickly. One teacher admitted,

"I'm still learning to use some features in instant messaging and email apps. Sometimes I need help from my children at home." (I-gr,15/5)

An interview with one of the teachers revealed another challenge in the implementation of communication technology, namely the lack of technology skills among staff. The statement pointed out that some staff had difficulty in understanding and using communication technology effectively. This reflects the urgent need for intensive training and mentoring for staff to ensure they are able to make optimal use of technology. This lack of skills can hinder efficient and effective communication between schools and parents, so ongoing training is essential to improve staff competence in the use of technology. Concerns related to information security and privacy are also a challenge. Some parents feel concerned about the security of their personal data and that of their children when using communication technology. The principal stated,

"We always try to ensure that personal data remains secure, but this concern still exists among parents." (I-ks,14/5)

Interviews with school principals show concern for data security in the use of communication technology. The statement indicates that although the school has taken steps to protect personal data, concerns regarding privacy and information security are still felt by parents. This highlights the importance of transparency and effective communication on data security policies to build trust among parents and ensure they feel safe in schools' use of communication technology (Heidari et al., 2022; Bailey et al., 2022; Zuhdi et al., 2024). It is important for schools to adopt strict and transparent information security policies to address these concerns.

## Communication Technology Optimization Efforts

To overcome these obstacles, SD Darut Thalabah can adopt several optimization strategies. Regular training for staff on the use of communication technology can improve their understanding and skills. The development of more interactive and responsive school websites can improve access to information for parents and communities. The use of social media as a communication platform can strengthen interactions between schools and communities. In addition, automated messaging systems can ensure important information can be received quickly and efficiently. Regular training for staff is essential to ensure they can use communication technology well. The principal stated,

"We plan to hold communication technology training every semester so that all staff can keep their skills updated." (I-ks,14/5)

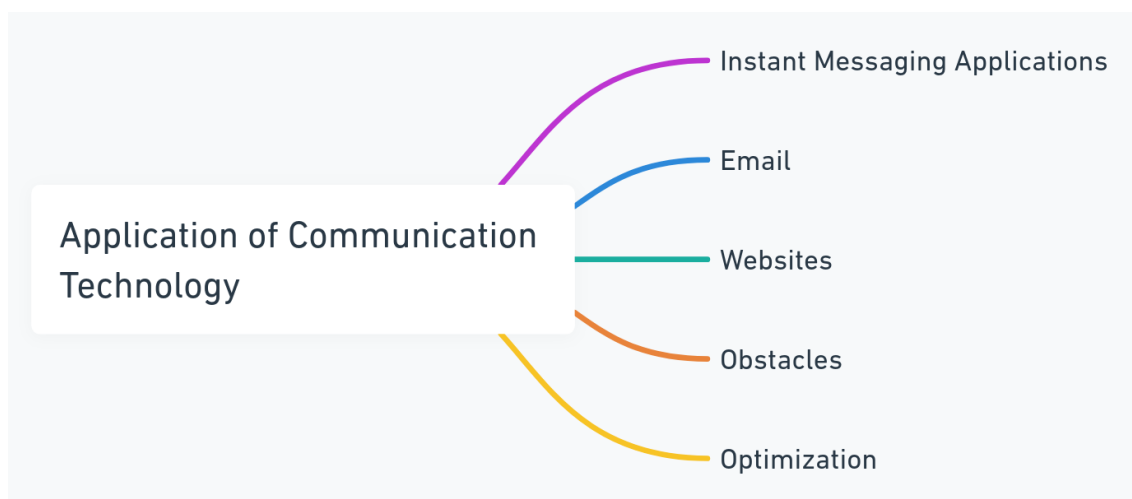
Interviews with principals revealed strategic plans to improve technology skills among staff. The statement demonstrates the school's commitment to providing continuous training. It aims at ensuring that staff always have the latest knowledge and are able to use communication technology effectively. These periodic trainings are expected to address skills gaps and improve efficiency in school public relations management, enabling better communication between schools, parents, and communities. This training will assist staff in understanding and mastering new technologies, as well as increase their confidence in using them. Interactive and responsive website development is also a priority. One teacher stated,

"We wanted to create a more interactive school website, so parents and students could more easily access information and interact with the school." (I-gr,15/5)

An interview with a teacher expressed a desire to increase the interactivity of the school's website. The statement reflects the school's efforts to leverage technology to strengthen communication with the school community. By developing a more interactive website, the school aims to facilitate easy and quick access to information for parents and students, as well as increase their involvement in various school activities and decisions. This shows that schools understand the importance of digital media as a tool to support transparency and active participation from all stakeholders.

A good website can be an efficient information hub and facilitate communication between schools and communities. The use of social media as a communication platform can also strengthen interactions between schools and communities. A PR staffer stated, "Social media allows us to interact with parents and the community directly and responsively." This can increase parental involvement and participation in school activities, as well as build a positive image of the school in the eyes of the community.

To facilitate understanding related to the results of research produced in this study can be adjusted through the chart presented below;



**Figure 1. Implementation of Communication Technology**

The results of this study show that the implementation of communication technology in SD Darut Thalabah, despite having great potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of communication between schools, parents, and communities, faces some significant obstacles. Budget constraints and lack of tech skills among staff are major barriers, as one staffer revealed that the funds available were often not enough to buy new devices or train staff. This is in line with the findings Suh et al. (2021) which highlight similar challenges in ICT implementation in schools, where budget constraints and lack of training are major obstacles.

In addition, concerns related to data security and privacy that are still felt by parents, even though schools have tried to protect personal data, reflect the emphasize the importance of strict and transparent security policies in school information systems (Faiz et al., 2023). On the other hand, the use of instant messaging applications, email, and school websites at SD Darut Thalabah has shown increased efficiency in communication, supporting the view of Carpenter et al. (2021) that digital communication tools can accelerate the dissemination of information and increase transparency. However, the lack of tech skills among staff, as revealed by a teacher still learning to use the new features, confirms the need for ongoing training, in line with recommendations from Johnson and White. Thus, despite the similarities in the barriers faced, the study makes an additional contribution by highlighting the importance of regular training and the development of more interactive websites to overcome existing limitations and improve public relations management in schools.

## CONCLUSION

This study concluded that the Public Relations management strategy implemented by SMP Islam As Salam Bondowoso, which involves the use of various communication techniques such as oral, written, and concrete action communication (Uswa Hasana), is effective in increasing community participation. The use of social media has also been shown to be able to reach a wider audience quickly and efficiently, according to the findings of previous studies. In addition, the role of leadership in coordinating and motivating the PR team is critical in ensuring the success of communication programs. By combining a variety of effective communication and leadership techniques, the school manages to create a harmonious and constructive relationship with the community, which in turn increases support and participation in school activities.

For future research, it is recommended to conduct a more in-depth evaluation of the effectiveness of each communication technique in reaching different segments of society. In addition, research can be expanded by examining how newer and interactive communication technologies can be applied in PR management in educational institutions. Further research also needs to explore the role of leadership in a broader context, including how different leadership styles can influence the success of communication strategies and community participation. Thus, these findings can provide practical and theoretical guidance for the development of more effective communication strategies and PR management in other educational institutions.

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