

The Private College Public Relations Management: A Case Study

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Submitted: 22-05-2021

Revised: 01-03-2022

Accepted: 03-04-2022

ABSTRACT. This article aims to analyze public relations strategies in improving the quality of education, public relations strategies in improving the image of education, and information management carried out by a private university in East Java. A qualitative descriptive approach is carried out with a case study at IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk. Research data was obtained through interviews, observation, and documentation. The results found that public relations at the university did not have a specific organizational structure, but everyone acted as public relations and carried out the function of public relations; the programs those public relations have launched must be implemented to improve the quality of education that refers to the standard process and educational outcomes. The public relations strategy is determined to improve the image through regular program procurement, collaboration with the government, mass media, figures who have mass, other institutions, providing scholarships, and community service. It uses a vertical, horizontal, and diagonal communication system to communicate with the internal public, while the external public uses a two-way communication system.

Keywords: *Public relations, Private college, Quality of education*



<https://dx.doi.org/10.32678/tarbawi.v8i01.5926>

How to Cite

Soim, S., Nik Haryanti, N., & Nurohmah, N. (2022). The Private College Public Relations Management: A Case Study. *Tarbawi: Jurnal Keilmuan Manajemen Pendidikan*, 8(01), 25-36. doi:10.32678/tarbawi.v8i01.5926.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the school and the community depends on each other (Normina, 2017). Likewise, a university has an interdependent relationship with the community, especially a private university that is not favored by the community. Many excellent and tidy private universities tend to be expensive, while cheap private universities tend to be seen as having low quality. Therefore, a university, especially a university with a private status, should establish a harmonious relationship with the community to facilitate the learning process and produce outputs accepted by the community.

The management of school or college relationships with the community is one of the substances of educational management that must be appropriately managed in addition to the curriculum and teaching programs, academic staff, student affairs, finance, educational facilities, and infrastructure, as well as special services for educational institutions (Wiwitan & Yulianita, 2017; Royhatudin et al., 2020; Juhji et al., 2020; Rahmatullah, 2021; Citraningsih et al., 2021; Juhaeni et al., 2021). Schools or colleges are one part of a society, so higher education management must be seen concerning other components in implementing education and linked to all community programs.

The relationship between universities and the community is essentially a tool that plays a significant role in fostering and developing students' personal growth at the university (Rahman,



2019). Higher education as a social system is an integral part of a more extensive social system, namely society. Universities and the community have a close relationship in effectively and efficiently achieving educational goals. However, a university must also support achieving goals or fulfilling community needs, especially educational needs. Departing from the starting point of this thought, it is necessary to regulate the relationship between universities and the community or public relations (Grunig, 2013; Hasan, 2017).

Relations became part of the administration of schools or universities in the early 20th century (Anan, 2016; Henry, 2017; Labaree, 2018). It explains that an administrator must communicate the school's programs, objectives, and other things that the public should know. Unfortunately, many policymakers and education experts did not agree with the existence of public relations in schools at that time. Many also say that public relations are just propaganda, and many also say that public relations are the same as advertising or marketing. For this reason, it is necessary to discuss further public relations and its function in schools or universities.

Public relation is a form of communication that applies to all commercial and non-commercial organizations in the government and private sectors (Purba, 2020; Sugiyanto et al., 2016). This is an overall effort carried out in a planned and continuous manner to create and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its entire audience. Meanwhile, public relations in universities has three different interpretations, namely: (1) the function of public relations is to "sell" educational programs (the advantages possessed by universities) to the community to foster pride in universities and gain support, (2) interpret educational programs (strengths and weaknesses) to the community so that the community understands the efforts made by universities and is willing to provide support, and the third is to attract public sympathy and encourage community participation to make its educational programs successful (Trimanah & Wulandari, 2018).

Public relations are the application of public relations which has the primary mission of providing or distributing services. This includes public and private institutions both at the pre-college and tertiary levels. In other words, public relations in higher education is a social science and leadership process that is a design approach to dealing with society. Here, it can be seen that there is interaction and communication between universities and their ecosystems. There are three keywords in public relations: informing the public, persuading, and integrating (Wilardjo, 2012). Public relations inform, seduce to unite the public, integrate institutions' actions and attitudes with their public, or integrate public actions and attitudes with organizations. Public relations is tasked with informing everything about an institution to the public, both internal and external communities. Seducing or convincing the public and uniting the wishes of the public and institutions or vice versa is also the task of public relations. Meanwhile, according to Wilcox, as quoted by Kowalski, there are six keywords in public relations: calm or caution, planning, action or performance, public interest, two-way communication, and management functions.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the school-community relationship is a communication process between the school and the community and encourages the interest and cooperation of community members to increase the understanding of community members' educational needs; this is done in the context of institutional improvement efforts, likewise with schools or colleges, which lately are not only state-owned ones who are trusted by the community that these universities can show the quality that is equivalent to state schools or universities and can establish communication with the community both internally and externally. The success of this private school or college is due to public relations management which is very helpful in fostering a harmonious relationship between the school and the community so that the community realizes and understands the importance of education.

In the public relations system, there are also several models used by an institution to convey all information to the public. There are times when an institution conveys only good

information, and there are times when it conveys all the facts without covering up the ugliness or shortcomings of the agency. This information delivery model is closely related to the role of public relations in universities (Triyono, 2018).

The role of public relations in universities, namely: (1) improving the quality of education, (2) encouraging open political communication, (3) improving the image of universities or schools and their environment, (4) information management, (5) marketing programs, (6) build motivation to change, (7) provide evaluation data (Ilmiati, 2016). Four dominant factors must be carried out in public relations management: institutional renewal, technology, leadership and communication, and reflective practice. Knowledge and experience in order to be able to express the contents of the message clearly to the public (Pienrasmi, 2015). To realize the success of public relations management, the people who serve in public relations must also know things related to public relations to work optimally. Everyone in the organization or institution must become public relations for the organization or institution. To hold the position of the organization's public relations, people who have the advantages of sensitivity and criticality must be chosen compared to others. The ability to communicate is the key. In a tertiary institution, public relations must be all people involved in the learning process, namely the chairperson, lecturers, students, and all employees in the college.

Public relations is significant and has such a big influence on the continuity of the program of an agency or higher education institution, especially private universities with the usual facilities and relatively low costs. Because an excellent private university is synonymous with the high cost of education, and many more things make a person hesitant to choose a college as a place to study. At first, the lower middle class only believed in schools or universities with state status. However, nowadays, private universities with affordable costs have attracted much attention from the public. This happens because many private universities have established good communication relationships with the broader community, whether it concerns the existence of higher education institutions, the programs they have, or the dissemination of higher education outputs to the public. This happens because the role of public relations can foster good relations with internal and external universities, as happened at IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk, which is currently one of the idol colleges with private status in Nganjuk.

To gain this trust is not easy. Through the management of public relations, IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk strives to improve the quality of education, both quality which refers to the educational process, and quality which refers to educational outcomes. Especially quality which refers to the educational process. With good quality, it will indirectly create a good image in the eyes of the community so that public trust will increase towards IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk. Improving the quality of education and a good image is the main menu in public relations management. The development of science and technology has brought changes in almost all aspects of human life. Various problems can only be solved except with efforts to master improve science and technology. Besides being beneficial for human life, on the one hand, these changes have also brought humans into an era of increasingly fierce global competition. In order to be able to play a role in global competition, as a nation, we need to continue developing and improving the quality of its human resources. Therefore, improving the quality of human resources is a reality that must be carried out in a planned, directed, intensive, effective, and efficient manner in the development process if they do not want this nation to be unable to compete in this globalization era.

Therefore, all public relations activities must be able to produce or at least influence all activities that can contribute to improving educational services. Improving education services is expected to improve the quality of education itself, and the quality or quality of good education will increase public confidence in an educational institution. Gain trust is not an easy matter, especially in an educational institution that is not favored; that is why public relations management is needed in an educational institution in Higher Education.

The current existence of IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk is not like the existence of most private universities, especially those in Nganjuk. IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk has shown that the high school has earned the public's trust, both the wider community and the policy-making community, namely the government. In this case, the private status of IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk has improved in several ways. Since implementing public relations management in the 2014 academic year, the number of students has increased from to year. In addition, the quality of the education process has also experienced many improvements, starting from the quality of teachers, curriculum, infrastructure, and teaching methods. All of this has been strengthened by the acceptance of several IAI alumni, Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk, to become civil servants, work as advocates, and so on in his political career and many more in the private sector. As described above, the success of this public relations management can lead IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk to improve the quality of education to gain public trust. This is related to the system used to implement public relations. Therefore, the author will conduct a study that discusses the success of public relations management at IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk, how the strategies are carried out in improving the quality of education, how the public relations function is carried out to gain public trust, and how communication is carried out with the public so that IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk is not underestimated and has even become a favorite private university in Nganjuk.

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METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is research whose findings are based on qualitative paradigms, strategies, and model implementations (Fitri & Haryanti, 2020). Therefore, this study is trying to know and describe public relations management in universities. This research will produce detailed information that may not be obtained in other types of research.

Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. In in-depth interviews, researchers first prepare who will be interviewed and prepare materials related to public relations. Therefore, before conducting the

interview, the outline of the questions must follow the data collection to whom the interview was conducted—in between the conversations, inserted prompting questions to dig deeper into the things that are needed. The parties to be interviewed include the Chairman of IAI Pangeran Diponegoro, lecturers, students, the surrounding community, and all people involved in public relations management at IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk. Observations are carried out through researchers involving themselves or interacting with activities carried out by research subjects in their environment while also collecting data systematically in field notes. This technique is called the participant observation technique. In this study, researchers will come directly to the research location to see events or observe objects and take documentation from research places or locations related to public relations management at IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk. So, the position of the researcher as an active or passive observer. Documentation is a technique of collecting data from non-human sources. In this study, researchers took data in notes, transcripts, books, and agendas. This is done to convince the object's truth to be studied. Data analysis was carried out by applying the theory from Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2014), recommending using three stages in conducting qualitative research analysis, namely, 1) Data reduction, 2) Data display, 3) Conclusion drawing/verification.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results of this research reveal public relations strategies in improving the quality of education that refer to process and output standards, public relations strategies in improving the image of educational institutions through regular programs, collaboration, scholarships, and community service; and internal and external information management carried out at the IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk college. In detail, these findings are described in the following discussion.

Discussion

Public relations strategy in improving the quality of education

In general, there are two strategies implemented by public relations at the private university IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk in improving the quality of education, namely improving the quality of education internally and externally. All public relations activities must provide support for programs that have been launched to improve the quality of education. In addition, support for the quality of education refers to the process and outcomes of education.

Educational process

The quality of education has continuously improved the students themselves, for example: through special student activities, house-to-house studies, and studies involving other students. To improve the quality of learning, lecturers also survey lecturer performance, which includes teaching methods, scientific insight, and conditioning of the learning atmosphere. In addition, monitoring of lecturers is also carried out by the institution to ensure the continuity of the educational process it carries out. Research carried out by lecturers as an obligation to carry out the tri dharma of higher education is also carried out collaboratively with both the government and the private sector. Personal approaches to lecturers are also carried out using public relations to increase quality at the level of the lecturers themselves and institutions based on the principle of kinship.

IAI Pangeran Diponegoro, one of the private universities in Nganjuk, made various efforts to improve the quality of education. Improving the quality of education is carried out both internally and externally. Internally, efforts to improve quality are carried out by mentoring the fostered mosques, schools, and the surrounding community. This is done as an effort to

stimulate the management of educational institutions. This strengthens Rahman (2019) that public relations management at Islamic educational institutions is a process of managing communication between schools and the community to increase understanding about the process, and educational needs, encourage citizen interest and cooperate to improve quality based on values. Islamic values.

Educational results

Efforts are being made to improve educational outcomes through student conversation programs using active and passive English. By joining the program, students are expected to be able to communicate using English both well and in writing so that it becomes an added value for students when they graduate from the study program at the private university IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk. Alumni have felt the success of improving the quality of education by accepting them as civil servants. Thirty-four alumni were accepted as civil servants from a quota of 60 madrasahs Ibtidaiyah teachers in Nganjuk. This success adds to its satisfaction for alumni as well as for users. Hari Suderajat said that the quality of education with a relative definition has two aspects: measuring graduates' ability according to school goals set in the curriculum and measuring the fulfillment of the needs and demands of customers (parents of students and the community). The observations with one of the alumni, namely Mr. Yasin, explained that he was satisfied with the learning process and the results of education at IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk. His satisfaction led to a recommendation for his brother to study there.

Research by Haryanti, Mutohar, Qomar, and Syafi (2018) reveals that the quality of higher education is a systematic and planned process to form the nation's next generation who is dignified and knowledgeable so that it can make a meaningful contribution to nation-building. Quality is a dynamic idea that can be used as a relative counsel (Sallis, 2006). Quality has two aspects that need to be considered: adapting to specifications and meeting customer needs. In essence, improving the quality of higher education can refer to changes in the quality of lecturers and academic quality (Nightingale, & O'neil, 2012; Parji & Prasetya, 2020). The quality of lecturers has reflected incompetence, mastery of material, methods, self-control, and discipline. Academic quality is reflected in the curriculum and infrastructure that can support learning activities.

Public relations strategy in improving the image

IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk tries to create an image that has a positive value. There are many ways that Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk's IAI improves its image: organizing regular programs, cooperation, scholarship award, and community service.

Organizing regular programs

This regular program was created to attract the public to improve the quality of education at IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk to raise a positive image as one of the private universities in Nganjuk. One of these programs is the intensive English program, one of the students' favorite programs. With this program, students become more confident in communicating in English. This ability is certainly a magnet in attracting public interest so that they want to study there and raise a positive image for the institution. In addition, there is a program not usually given by other universities, namely the study of the yellow book. This program will attract *Salafiyah* people to study at IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk. In addition, he dismissed the notion that universities constantly contradicted the *Salaf* scholars.

Cooperation

Currently, mass media is experiencing a very drastic development trend, mainly social media, which has significant developments. Therefore, IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk, as a private university, did not waste this opportunity by cooperating with radio and newspapers. IAI

Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk sent lecturers to fill radio programs, enrolled students in competitions organized by radio, summoned journalists at events organized by IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk, and filled out the rubric for newspapers. In addition, public relations also utilize social media in building public trust online media. The efforts that have been made have strengthened the opinion of Gusri, Arif, and Dewi (2020) that public relations must adapt by utilizing social media such as Instagram and YouTube as a means to build a positive image and crisis management. In addition, according to Baharun (2019), public relations can accelerate reciprocal communication and information, deliver messages using various techniques and media, attract customers, save operational costs, and increase public participation.

The government is an external public that can affect the existence of an institution, including educational institutions. The form of cooperation is carried out with the provincial government through a research program funded by the provincial government. Two types of partnerships with external publics are linked as a user (as a user) and as a resource (as a source). As a user, by collaborating with local governments, provincial governments, and IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk in the form of research and service, such as the involvement of 30 scholarship program students by the provincial government.

Scholarship award

Scholarships are awarded by one institution, and one person then gets accessible facilities from semester fees. In addition, the provision of scholarships from the foundation in collaboration with the provincial government.

Community service

Community service is one of the three dharmas of higher education. There are various forms of service, such as establishing cooperation in accordance with existing resources in the form of research and service. This collaboration is carried out with the community as users by sending participants in actual work lectures (KKN) or field introduction practices (PPL) to various public and private schools. Students who participate in the program are enthusiastic and carry out various activities related to education, religion, and social life. The results of an interview with one of the principals and a civil servant teacher at MTsN Pulosari Ngunut – one of the KKN/PPL sites – showed that the school is pleased with the KKN/PPL program from IAI student Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk.

Figures who have mass, such as collaborating with Pondok Panggung, Pondok PPHM Ngunut. The figures who have the masses really help IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk as a private university. Through this collaboration, IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk automatically became famous.

Information management

In information management, there are two types of communication: internal and external communication (Effendy, 1993). Likewise, at IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk is described below.

Internal Communication

Internal communication is communication that is within the organization reciprocally. This communication is divided into three: (a) vertical communication, (b) horizontal communication, and diagonal communication.

Vertical communication is the communication from subordinates to leaders in a reciprocal manner. Communication between the chairman and other lecturers and employees is flexible and familial. The chairman of IAI, Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk, is a democratic person and does

not use a complicated bureaucratic system, and he tends to use the family system. However, the principle of formality is still used at a particular time.

Horizontal communication is horizontal communication between employees, lecturers and lecturers, and students and students. The form of communication between lecturers and lecturers is semi-formal or even non-formal, namely the existence of a joint *Istighosah* forum attended by all foundation officials, lecturers, and campus employees. This is done for spiritual strengthening and promotes communication on kinship, togetherness, and mutual harmony; maybe there are mistakes and mistakes in communication. In this forum, all will merge and forgive each other. Between one lecturer and the other also looks compact. When they are resting or waiting for the time to pray, they often joke and discuss various problems. It can be related to specific disciplines or related to students. They are very open, so there is no visible competition. All types of communication at IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk are flexible, uncomplicated, and familial but still use the principle of formality at certain times.

Diagonal communication, namely communication within the organization between people of different positions. Diagonal communication is communication between lecturers and students and between students and employees. The relationship between lecturers and employees on campus also looks good, there is a sense of mutual respect, and there is still a sense of kinship. When lecturers ask for help from employees, lecturers do not seem to regard employees as people who can be told to do whatever they want; lecturers still treat them the same so that employees will help without any burden. Meanwhile, the relationship between lecturers and students cannot be separated from the principle of kinship. The behavior of students and lecturers at IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk is more orderly because, according to the chairman of IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk, this is because there are *Aswaja* courses from that material religious philosophies are being taught which will be implemented in behavior. Managers also tend not to use a complicated bureaucratic system in student service matters. In the communication carried out in parallel communication, the strata do not look much different here. The results of this study are in accordance with Eger, Egerova, and Kryston (2019) that nowadays, universities and faculties need to interact online with their potential applicants, current students, and other stakeholders.

External Communication

IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk cooperates with the available resources here, namely research and service. For example, they were being trusted by the provincial government as the implementer of a scholarship program for 30 students. The relationship between students' parents and the campus is weak because no forum or association explicitly handles them. This is also because there has never been a problem between parents and the institution. However, at certain times, parents, namely the institution, invite parents of students to the activities held when semester I and II students participating in the Intensive English Program will practice in Bali. Semester I and II students who are generally still the responsibility of parents are given permission letters to be signed by parents. This form of communication is expected to be the capital to establishing better communication with parents.

Communication with parents of students is formed when lecturers attend certain events, for example, celebrations of religious holidays and events held by NU, so when lecturers meet with guardians of students who happen to be attending the event, they communicate with parents of students. Furthermore, discuss the study and development of the students themselves. So, the slightest opportunity is used by IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk as a form of public relations management. Meanwhile, communication with alumni is established by inviting alumni to specific events and monitoring, namely checking the existence of student alumni who are already working in outside agencies. This check is carried out by sending a letter in a questionnaire to the institutions where the student alumni are working. Monitoring is done by finding out how the

position of alumni in their work, how the application of disciplines by alumni, and finally, by monitoring it will be known what should be taught to students so that it is instrumental in society.

According to Wiwitan and Yulianita (2017), there are four public relations models for conveying information as a form of communication with the public: 1) One-Way Asymmetrical. This model disseminates information by only doing positive news. 2) One-way Symmetrical. This model conveys information by reporting accurately without eliminating negative information. 3) Two-way Asymmetrical. This model is used to influence the public. This information about the public is used to structure communications to increase the likelihood of influencing public behavior. 4) Two-way Symmetrical. This model is used to construct good understandings and resolve conflicts between organizations and their public. In this case, IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk uses a two-way communication system, both Two-way Asymmetrical, and Two-way Symmetrical. That is to influence the public. This information about the public is used to structure communications to increase the likelihood of influencing public behavior and develop a good understanding and resolve conflicts between the organization and its public.

CONCLUSION

This finding reveals that public relations at IAI Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk does not have a unique organizational structure, but everyone acts as public relations and carries out the function of public relations; public relations programs must be implemented to improve the quality of education that refers to the standard of educational processes and outcomes; public relations strategy is carried out to improve the image through regular program procurement, collaboration with the government, mass media, figures who have mass, other institutions, providing scholarships, and community service; to communicate with the internal public using vertical, horizontal, and diagonal communication systems. Meanwhile, the external public uses a two-way communication system. Public relations management which includes planning, organization, actuating, and controlling, should be carried out systematically. Private universities must improve quality, which refers to the standard of educational processes and outcomes, and harmonize internal and external relations to form a positive image of the community.

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