

# The Public Relations Strategies at Higher Education in Indonesia

Irwan Fathurrochman<sup>1\*</sup>, Kusen<sup>2</sup>, Yuni Rahman<sup>3</sup>, Andi Teja Sukmana<sup>4</sup>, Heri Indarto<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Islamic Education Management, Educational Faculty, IAIN Curup, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Curup, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup> Universitas Muhammadiyah Gorontalo, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup> Sekolah Tinggi Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan (STKIP) Darussalam, Cilacap, Indonesia

<sup>5</sup> Sekolah Dasar Negeri Wanareja 02, Cilacap, Indonesia

<sup>1\*</sup>Email: irwan@iaincurup.ac.id

<sup>2</sup>Email: kusenpasca1969@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup>Email: yunirahman@umgo.ac.id

<sup>4</sup>Email: andy.teja13@gmail.com

<sup>5</sup>Email: heriindarto1975@gmail.com

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## Abstract

This research aims to describe the problem of interested students in the IAIN Curup Islamic Education Management study program. The problems faced in this study are public relations strategies and efforts in increasing the interest of new students, public relations management support in increasing collaboration with stakeholders, views, and interests of the lecture prospective new students. The results showed that the implementation of Public Relations management is very urgent. The results showed that the application of Public Relations management was very urgent to be implemented. The public relations management used in attracting prospective new students is by using the concept of marketing public relations: elements of product marketing, price, and place. In addition to these components, there are also target components for public relations strategies and public relations and facilities. The strategy used in attracting prospective new students is also through internal and external components, namely through electronic media, social media that directly touch millennial generation in providing interesting information, such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, and official websites.

**Keywords:** Strategy, Public Relations Management, College, Study Program.

## 1. Introduction

The strategy of increasing the interest of educational customer services becomes a fascinating study until the current era of the industrial revolution 4.0, where the acceleration of educational institutions becomes increasingly dynamic, Sallis states that the strategy is an approach to achieving the quality of an educational institution (King, 2008). The Public Relations Strategy is closely related to concepts, approaches, and general plans for programs designed to achieve goals. According to Batyko (2012), strategy is the driving force in every business or organization. A strategy is an intellectual force that helps organize, prioritize, and provide energy (Anum & Apriyanto, 2019). Without energy, there will be no direction, and without strategy, there will be no momentum, which certainly will not have an impact on an organization (Alessandri, et al. 2006).

Datuela (2013) argues that Public Relations strategy theory can be implemented using the term 7-Cs PR, which is as follows: (1) Credibility, communication starts from an atmosphere of mutual trust created by the communicator in earnest to serve the public that has confidence and respect. (2) Context (Context). Regarding something related to the environment of social life, the message must be conveyed clearly and participatory attitude. Effective communication is needed to support the social environment through reporting in various mass media. (3) Content, the message contained in this strategy, must concern the interests of many people so that information can be received as something generally useful for the community. (4) Clarity, the message is arranged with words that are clear, easy to understand, and have the same understanding (intent, theme, and purpose) between the communicator and the communicant. (5) Continuity and Consistency, Communication is a process that never ends. Therefore it is done repeatedly with a variety of messages, and the messages must be consistent. In this way, it will be easy to carry out a communication process to persuade the public. (6) Channels (Channels), Using appropriate and trusted media channels and selected by the audience as the target. The use of different media channels will have different effects. In this case, PR must understand the differences and the

process of disseminating information effectively. (7) The capability of the Audience, taking into account the capabilities of the audience. Communication will be effective if it relates to factors such as habits and improvement in the ability to read and develop audience knowledge (Kasiyarno, Santoso, & Apriyanto, 2020; Balmer, 2001).

Public Relations is the art of creating a better public understanding so that it can deepen public trust in an individual or institution (Bastedo, and Bowman, 2010). Public Relations in an educational institution is a series of activities and management related to the relationship of educational institutions with the community intended to support the teaching and learning process in the educational institution concerned to improve the quality of learning. Public Relations in the globally sophisticated era is now becoming an essential part of a company. The role of public relations is needed to support the company's operations, especially since the company has a close relationship with the interests of the wider community. Various information is required to be accessed as quickly as possible by users of information, namely the community. Therefore the communication process of a company's public relations is done to provide several pieces of information and make the public able to receive such news or messages according to their needs. This communication is needed in a company to achieve the objectives of the company it represents. Community participation in education can be realized in various approaches and forms according to the conditions of the culture of the community itself. Based on Government Regulation Number 17 of 2010 Article (1) concerning Management and Implementation of Education, it is stated that community participation in education includes, the involvement of individuals, groups, families, professional organizations, employers, and community organizations in the administration and control of the quality of education services.

Various public relations activities can be realized if well-organized through PR management that is managed professionally and can be accounted for the results or targets. Then there is an exchange of opinions, messages, and precise information and easy to understand by both parties through the channel system, mass media, or other media that can be used as a tool for two-way communication activities.

Public relations activities in educational institutions is not an easy job or just a part-time job. But it must be done professionally and seriously. It relates to the ability of Public Relations staff in technical management and as managerial skills, as well as full concentration on the part of the Public relations practitioner to manage the Public Relations work program to achieve goals or objectives as planned.

The community is the source, implementer, and user of educational outcomes (Barney, 1991). It requires several strategies to increase the role of public relations in improving student interest in Islamic education management study programs by applying the aspects of public relations. This is very important because if the institution and its activities are not grounded in public relations management, activities will not be directed properly (Ahrne, Aspers, & Brunsson, 2015; Aspers, 2011). These aspects include public relations targets, namely internal public and external public. Within the scope of the business world of public companies, the internal public includes shareholders, managers, and employees. In this research, the internal public is the Academic Community consisting of educative staff, namely Lecturers of Islamic Education Management Study Program IAIN Curup, administrative staff, namely educational staff, and students who are directly involved in the service of study programs. b). The external public consists of parties who have the same characteristics of interests. Examples in the world of business and the industrial world are similar communities, investors, the wider community, and government. The external public in this study is those who are involved in the service directly or indirectly, parents of students of Islamic Education Management Study Program Curriculum, high school students who are prospective students.

With the development of education today, competition between universities is very open. The quality of every educational institution is needed to develop everything that has long been a superior educational institution with high-quality values. Educational institutions must be able to read a situation that is real and clear every time and atmosphere. Besides, universities must also be able to give the right image to establish good relations with the community. So that universities are in demand by the community. Almost every beginning of the school year, the world of education is fussed with the classic problem of admission of new students. One of the leading indicators for measuring educational institutions is the number of students received and student achievement. The community's interest influences the number of students enrolling in tertiary education. For this reason, schools need proper public relations management so that the imaging of tertiary institutions, notably the IAIN Islamic Education Management Study Program, is excellent and community participation increases.

Suitable efforts are needed to establish relationships with the community through imaging media. Imaging media is intended to publicize all Study Program programs and activities so that the public becomes aware of

the strengths and efforts of the Study Program to improve the quality of education and the level of knowledge of the community towards participation in educational development.

Community participation in the administration of education, especially tertiary institutions, is indispensable for achieving educational goals. Community participation in the whole process is expected that the community feels ownership and responsibility for the implementation of education delivery. The ability of personnel in implementing public relations strategies IAIN Curup Islamic education management study program is very influential on the strength of the Study Program to attract student interest (Aspers & Darr, 2011; AIE, 2015; Datuela, 2013). A study on the performance of civil servants STAIN Curup stated that the competency of the Study Program Management possessed to increase the quantity and quality of students (Aspers, 2009). Until now, the IAIN Curup Islamic Education Management Study Program is one of the Study Programs that still have a few students. This can be seen from the number of students in each generation, which is no more than 30 people per generation. A good promotion strategy can also have an impact on students' interest in enrolling in school. Especially for new schools; of course, promotional activities are significant to attract prospective new learners.

## **2. Material and Methods**

Public relations was first stated by the president of the United States, namely Thomas Jefferson in 1807. However, what is meant by the term Public Relations at that time was associated with Foreign Relations. Public relations requires the right strategy and needs to be proactive in finding information and bright packaging so that information is valuable in the eyes of the public. The information that is packaged and then delivered to the public at least has news and quality value, for example, related to research or finding innovations (Fathurrochman, Budiman, Alamsyahril, & Kristiawan, 2019; Fathurrochman, 2017; Hanafi, 2015).

Communication in an institution plays a crucial role in achieving the goals of the institution. Submission of information accurately and clearly to the public, both internal public and external public, can lead to mutual understanding and goodwill between the public and institutions. Public relations is a continuation of the process of establishing policies, determining services, and attitudes that are tailored to the interests of people or groups so that people or institutions gain their trust and goodwill (Myers & Lariscy, 2013). Second, the implementation of policies, services, and attitudes is to ensure the best possible understanding and appreciation (Harini, 2014).

Goodwill and cooperation can be realized because there are initiatives carried out by public relations institutions to instill mutual understanding and trust in the public. Then the institution's concrete actions are followed by a commitment to realize public interests (Haryanto, 2012; Sallis, 2002; Sinakou, et al. 2018). Tested Public Relations For School expressed his opinion in detail, that public relations activities in schools are not enough only to inform certain facts of the school, but also (a). Report about the thoughts that develop in society about the problem of education (b). Help the school principal how to get help and cooperation (c). Make a plan for ways to get help (d). Shows the changing state of public opinion (Anggoro, 2005).

Every educational activity requires management, and the management is carried out to achieve the desired goal in educational institutions. According to Arikunto (1998), management is a process of mobilizing others to obtain specific results to achieve predetermined goals.

The process in management is a form of ability or skills to obtain results in the context of achieving goals through organizational activities. Therefore, management includes the concepts of leadership, human relations, decision making, people, facilities, and cooperation. The relationship between the school and the community is a relationship of mutual need. School is a means to foster and develop students' abilities in school. Schools are trusted by the community to educate, train, foster, and develop the abilities of their children in the field of education. Schools and communities play a role in achieving school goals effectively and efficiently.

The community plays a role in the activities and programs at school, while the school knows the needs, hopes, and demands of the community. The relationship between the community and the school must be created harmoniously for the success of school programs. Therefore, community relation is an important thing that must exist in an educational institution. According to Ristianti, et al. (2019), defining community relations is a management function that is unique and supports coaching, maintenance, joint lines between the organization and its public. Its involving communication activities, understanding, acceptance, and cooperation, involving management in dealing with problems or problems, helping management to be able to respond to public opinion, support management in following and utilizing change effectively, acting as an early warning system in anticipating research trends and healthy and ethical communication techniques as the primary means.

Public relations in general, according to Ristianti, et al. (2019), public relations management is a process in handling planning, organizing, communicating, and coordinating thoughtfully and rationally to achieve the shared goals of the organization or institution it represents.

Public relations management is generally defined as a typical management function between an organization and its public (community) or in other words between educational institutions and internal public (teachers, employees, and students) and external public (parents of students, communities, other institutions).

The two-way communication between the organization and the public is reciprocal to support the functions and objectives of management by enhancing cooperation in the fulfillment of shared interests (Stein, & Andreotti, 2016; Tight, 2006; Tomlinson, 2017). Schools and communities need interaction, communicating with each other so that people know about school activities. The school strives for the community to continue to co-operate in school activities. This is done so that the school remains accepted during the community.

This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach (Verger, Lubienski, & Steiner-Khamsi, 2016; Risdianto, Dinissjah, Nirwana, Kristiawan, 2020). The research took place in the IAIN Curup, Department of Islamic Education Management based on Curup Utara District, Rejang Lebong Regency, Bengkulu Province, Indonesia.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

Curup State Islamic Institute is one of the State Islamic Religious Colleges in Bengkulu Province, and the only one is in the city of Curup, Rejang Lebong Regency. After running for almost more or less for 20 years, STAIN Curup is now being tidied up after the issuance of Presidential Regulation Number 24 of 2018 concerning the Change of STAIN Curup into Curup Islamic State Institute (IAIN). With these changes, it is expected as a vehicle to develop educational innovations that encourage the formation of a positive national character and be an inspiration for the global community always to uphold professionalism and dignity. In addition, this campus is expected to produce human resources who have competencies according to their needs, and have a strong, independent, open, superior, and progressive national outlook (Aspers, 2011).

Islamic Education Management Study Program is a new study program at IAIN Curup under the auspices of Tarbiyah. Establishment of Islamic Education Management Study Program based on Decree of the Director-General of Islamic Education Ministry of Religion Number: 827 of 2012 dated July 2, 2012. The Academic degree awarded to graduates of the Islamic Education Management Study Program is the Bachelor of Education. The accreditation from BAN-PT is C. By BAN-PT Decree No. 252/SK/BAN-PT /Ak-XVI/S/XII/2013. We are currently applying for new accreditation from BAN-PT. The Islamic Education Management Study Program is one of the academic education programs that produce Islamic education personnel, as mandated by Government Laws and Regulations that produce education professionals who can compete with the demands and challenges of global life for the advancement of Islamic education.

The Islamic Education Management Study Program is also a professional academic service institution as part of a strategy to meet the needs of human resources who have the knowledge, skills, and managerial professionalism of Indonesian community development as a whole. With an education-oriented striving to reach the needs and demands of the future of people's lives full of dynamics competitive. The Islamic Education Management Study Program lays a strategic foundation concerning the vision, mission, and objectives of the study program. It prepares the students to become Muslim scholars, expert educators, and staff. At the same time, Islamic Education Management along with the theories of developing accountability implementation of the education and teaching process, as well as having the ability to carry out the learning process in social science subject groups, and integrating science and religion, strengthening the ethical, humanitarian and Indonesian dimensions.

Improving the function of public relations, according to Frank Jefkins, there are three functions of public relations, namely: (a). Provide public information (b). Conduct persuasion to change people's attitudes and actions directly (c). Trying to integrate the attitudes and actions of an agency or institution by the attitudes and actions of the community or vice versa.

To achieve a high effect on public relations activities, Frank Jefkins suggested stages of the public relations operational process. These stages are: (a). Fact-Finding, (b). Planning and Programming, (c). Communication, (d). Evaluation.

In its implementation, to obtain maximum results, four specific steps can be adjusted to the needs. These steps are (a). Phase Fact-Finding Namely is collecting data by the reality that exists. In this case, the IAIN Curup Islamic Education Management Study Program public relations should carry out routine activities that are open registration for prospective new students and use existing data as consideration. (b). Planning &

Programming Phase That is the stage of planning and making a program following what is already known in the fact-finding stage. At this stage, the public relations program at IAIN MPI Curup Study plans what needs to be done to achieve the targets they want. (c). Communication Phase Namely, the implementation stage of communication.

In this context, the public relations of the Islamic Education Management Study Program IAIN Curup carried out what was planned earlier by conducting new student admissions activities. The implementation stage of communication here, for example, with the occurrence of communication between the IAIN Curup Islamic Education Management Study Program with the prospective new student persuasively, informative even maybe coercive. This is usually adjusted to what was planned earlier. (d). Evaluation Stage Namely, the stage of evaluating what has been done from the first stage to the next steps.

The public relations strategy is "The optimal alternative chosen to be pursued to achieve the main objectives of public relations within the framework of a public relations plan" (Stein, & de Andreotti, 2016; Tight, 2006).

**Table 1.** Components of Public Relations Strategies in Higher Education

Components :	Formation of a public relations strategy :
Target Component	Units or segments worked on
Facilities Components	Guide to means to work on a goal.

**a) Product**

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation that have been done, it can be concluded that the alumni can compete with alumni of other tertiary institutions so that graduate themselves, such as facilities and facilities, are owned by the IAIN Curup Islamic Education Management Study Program. So, it becomes fatigued, which can function as a means and pre facilities that are sufficient and become one of the attractive factors for prospective new students.

**b) Price**

The price, in this case, is the tuition fees charged to students are very affordable. The cost of tuition fees at the IAIN Curup Islamic Education Management Study Program is quite affordable for the size of public universities. This can be seen from the comparison of tuition fees. It is quite different between IAIN Curup and Bengkulu University, including with other State Islamic Universities such as the State Islamic University of Raden Fatah Palembang, Raden Intan Lampung State Islamic University and Imam Bonjol State Islamic University.

**c) Place**

The place, in this case, is the location of the IAIN Curup Islamic Education Management Study Program. In addition, to affordable costs, a strategic place and also a large area of land, then transportation facilities which are also quite supportive are considered by prospective new students to choose a place of study as a university where they continue their education to a higher level of education as their first choice.

**d) Promotions**

Promotion, in this case, is the way or effort of the IAIN Curup Islamic Education Management Study Program in promoting the excellence of study programs. After describing the elements of product, price, and place, the next element that will be decomposed is the element of promotion conducted by the IAIN Curup Islamic Education Management Study Program in attracting prospective new students.

**3.1 The Strategy Forming goodwill and cooperation**

At this stage, the objectives of the IAIN Curup Islamic Education Management Study Program's public relations program are already in the real action stage (Curtin, 1999; Usman, 2006). This means that cooperation has been established in the form of certain behaviors that support the success of the institution, as evidenced by the results of the MoU that are already very adequate in the effort to attract prospective new students. Goodwill and cooperation can be realized because there are initiatives that are repeatedly carried out by public relations to instill mutual understanding and trust in the public—then followed by the company's concrete actions to commit to realizing the public interest.

The scope of public relations work within an institution is as follows (Tomlinson, 2017), for that Islamic Education Management Study Program's has implemented strategic strategies as defined by Kriyantono above. The following steps have proven to be very useful. In increasing the interest of college prospective new students: (a). Publication and Publicity, namely introducing institutions to the public. For example doing writings that are distributed to the media, newsletters, articles, and press releases. (b) Events, organizing events, or activities to form an image. (c) News, the work of public relations is to produce written products that are

disseminating information to the public, such as press releases, news releases, and news. (d) Community Investment, public relations must create programs aimed at creating the involvement of the surrounding community or community (Tonkiss, 2009; Trigilia, 2002).

### **3.2 The Strategy Through Internal Public Engagement**

Internal public engagement is by conveying the vision, mission, and objectives of IAIN Curup's Islamic Education Management Study Program to the entire academic community, including students, which will be a compelling promotional media in increasing the interest of college new students (Verger, et al. 2016).

### **3.3 The Strategy Through the External Public and Components of Facilities or Media**

The strategy for engaging the external public is to collaborate with the media or the press (White, 2002). This form of collaboration with the media is to provide press releases to journalists relating to achievements, other activities at the IAIN Curup's Islamic Education Management Study Program.

## **4. Conclusion**

The strategies that have been used by the Islamic Education Management Study Program IAIN Curup in attracting prospective new students using the concept of Marketing Public Relations. It has four elements of product marketing, price, place, promotion, and two components of the public relations or public relations strategy (target component and facility components). The strategy used by the IAIN Curup Islamic Education Management Study Program in attracting new students is through internal and external public target components, electronic media, and social media components. It directly touches millennial generation in publishing information to attract prospective new students such as Facebook pages, Whatsapp, Instagram, and the official website.

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