Public Relations to Foster Organization's Values and Identity: The Case of Muhammadiyah

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the strategic role of public relations in religious organizations, focusing on how Muhammadiyah employs communication to foster its organizational values and reinforce its identity. By adopting Pacanowsky's cultural approach to organizational theory, the research delves into how symbols, narratives, and rituals inherent in Muhammadiyah's culture are effectively integrated into its public relations strategy. A qualitative methodology was employed, including in-depth interviews and document analysis, to explore how these cultural elements are embedded in communication practices. The findings reveal that Muhammadiyah carefully aligns its public relations efforts with its organizational culture, enabling an authentic representation of its values to internal and external stakeholders. The study underscores the significance of maintaining consistency between an organization's identity, values, and communication strategies, particularly for religious institutions. It concludes that strategically incorporating cultural elements into communication not only preserves organizational integrity but also enhances the institution's relevance and influence in its broader societal context.

Keywords: Public Relations; Organizational Culture; Muhammadiyah; Religious Institutions; Strategic Communication

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menelaah peran strategis public relations dalam organisasi keagamaan, dengan fokus pada bagaimana Muhammadiyah memanfaatkan komunikasi untuk menumbuhkan nilai-nilai organisasinya dan memperkuat identitasnya. Dengan mengadopsi pendekatan budaya terhadap teori organisasi dari Pacanowsky, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana simbol, narasi, dan ritual yang melekat dalam budaya Muhammadiyah diintegrasikan secara efektif ke dalam strategi PR. Metodologi kualitatif diterapkan, termasuk wawancara mendalam dan analisis dokumen, untuk menelusuri bagaimana elemen-elemen budaya ini tertanam dalam praktik komunikasi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Muhammadiyah secara cermat menyelaraskan upaya PR dengan budaya organisasinya, sehingga dapat merepresentasikan nilai-nilainya secara autentik kepada pemangku kepentingan internal maupun eksternal. Studi ini menekankan pentingnya menjaga konsistensi antara identitas organisasi, nilai-nilai, dan strategi komunikasi, terutama bagi institusi keagamaan. Kesimpulannya, dengan secara strategis menggabungkan elemen-elemen budaya ke dalam komunikasi, tidak hanya menjaga integritas organisasi tetapi juga meningkatkan relevansi dan pengaruh institusi dalam konteks masyarakat yang lebih luas

Kata Kunci: Public Relations; Budaya Organisasi; Muhammadiyah; Lembaga Keagamaan; Komunikasi Strategis

INTRODUCTION

The complicated relationship between religion, society, and communication has been a subject of insightful request for centuries (Andersson, 2024; Ihlen et al., 2019; Smudde, 2021). As the principal educators in numerous societies, religious organizations exert significant influence over their followers' values, beliefs, and behaviors. Developing and spreading core organizational values that support their identity and purpose are central to their mission (Cloutier & Ravasi, 2020; Falcão et al., 2021; Kia et al., 2019). While the role of public relations in shaping organizational image and reputation is well-established, its specific role in fostering the internalization of organizational values within religious settings remains under-explored. This study aims to address the complex elements of public relations that instill organizational values within religious institutions.

Religious organizations are multifaceted entities operating within a dynamic socio-cultural landscape (Bankins & Waterhouse, 2019; Marsen, 2020). They are not only spiritual sanctuaries but also complex social entities with intricate organizational structures (A. D. Brown, 2022; Men et al., 2021). Their ability to preserve significance, attract new members, and retain existing ones depends on their ability to effectively communicate their core values. Traditional methods of value transmission, such as religious education and spiritual guidance, while essential, may not suffice in today's rapidly evolving media environment (Choi & McKeever, 2022; Watkins & Lewis, 2014; Patterson & Agarwal, 2023). Public relations, with its strategic approach to communication, offers a potential avenue for enhancing the impact of value-based messaging (Page & Capizzo, 2024; Pawlewicz & Senetra, 2024).

However, applying public relations principles within religious settings presents unique challenges. Religious values are often deeply rooted in tradition, doctrine, and sacred texts, making them resistant to modern communication strategies. The delicate balance between preserving doctrinal purity and adapting to the demands of contemporary society is an ongoing challenge for religious leaders (Bakir et al., 2019; Fu & Wang, 2024). In addition, the internal structure of religious organizations, characterized by hierarchical authority and a strong emphasis on collective identity, can hinder the adoption of innovative communication approaches (Heath, 2021; Schot et al., 2020). Despite these challenges, there is a growing recognition of the need for religious organizations to utilize modern communication techniques to engage with their constituencies and the broader society (Lee, 2022; Pemer, 2021; Shin, 2023). The rise of social media and digital technologies has transformed the communication landscape, allowing religious organizations to reach wider audiences and engage in more interactive forms of discourse (Oh & Ki, 2024; Pemer, 2021). However, the effectiveness of these platforms in promoting organizational values remains a relatively unexplored domain.

Eventually, this study seeks to illuminate the complex and multifaceted relationship between public relations and religious education. By examining how public relations can be utilized to instill organizational values, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion about the role of religion in modern society (Ma et al., 2023; Zimand-Sheiner & Lahav, 2022). Muhammadiyah, a prominent Islamic organization in Indonesia, serves as a compelling case study for exploring the strategic use of public relations to foster organizational values and strengthen identity (Efendi et al., 2021; Khoiruddin Zuhri et al., 2024; Ma et al., 2023). Founded in 1912 by Ahmad Dahlan, Muhammadiyah has evolved from a small Islamic reformist movement into a multifaceted institution encompassing education, healthcare, social services, and da'wah (Islamic propagation) (G. Brown, 2019; Latief & Nashir, 2020; Permadi et al., 2022). The organization's commitment to progressive Islam, coupled with its extensive network and influence, makes it a significant player in Indonesian society (Kim, 2023; Smollan & Morrison, 2019; Zainuddin et al., 2021).

Central to Muhammadiyah's identity is its adherence to a pure and rational interpretation of Islam (Barton et al., 2021; Luqman, 2023). The organization emphasizes the importance of education, social justice, and community empowerment as integral parts of Islamic teachings (Nashir, 2015; Qodir et al., 2020). These values have shaped Muhammadiyah's trajectory and continue to define its mission and purpose. As Indonesia undergoes rapid social and religious transformations, maintaining a strong and consistent organizational identity becomes increasingly crucial for Muhammadiyah (Akmaliah, 2020; Lock & Jacobs, 2024). Public relations play a pivotal role in communicating these core values to the public, fostering a sense of belonging among members, and navigating the complex challenges of the contemporary world (Wiesenberg, 2020). By effectively communicating Muhammadiyah's commitment to progressive Islam, education, and social justice, public relations can contribute to

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strengthening the organization's identity and ensuring its continued relevance in the Indonesian landscape.

Muhammadiyah's extensive network of schools, hospitals, and other social institutions provides both opportunities and challenges (Jubba et al., 2021). While these institutions serve as platforms for disseminating the organization's values, they also require effective communication strategies to manage their public image and reputation. Building a strong organizational identity across these diverse units is essential for maintaining coherence and unity within the Muhammadiyah movement (Arifianto, 2020).

The novelty of this study is its investigation of how public relations (PR) can strategically promote and strengthen the values and identity of an organization within a religious institution such as Muhammadiyah. As Muhammadiyah navigates the complexities of modern Indonesian society, the issue of identity is crucial because of rapid social and religious changes, which bring both challenges and opportunities. Although previous studies have thoroughly explored the impact of PR on molding the image and reputation of organizations, there is a noticeable lack of understanding regarding how PR can be used not only to mirror but also to actively influence and enhance a common set of values that reinforce the organization's identity. Muhammadiyah, an established Islamic organization dedicated to progressive Islam, believes that it is crucial to maintain a strong and consistent identity to fulfill its mission of advancing social justice, education, and rational interpretation of Islam. Hence, this research is crucial in offering insights into the strategic utilization of PR to ensure that Muhammadiyah's identity stays pertinent and influential in a diverse and changing society.

Past investigations from Eise & Rawat (2023) has revealed emerging patterns among individuals identified as spiritual but not religious in Western societies over the past few decades. Surveys have found that around one in four American adults now fall into this group. However, there remains uncertainty about who these individuals are and how their beliefs and behaviors differ from those who are religiously affiliated. Some communication studies suggest that spiritual but not religious individuals are less committed to community engagement compared to religious individuals. In contrast, sociological research challenges this view, finding that non-religious individuals create a sense of community through sharing personal stories. This study aims to further understand the beliefs and Previous research on Arab public relations has explored various aspects of the practice in the region. Studies have found that while the field has grown significantly in terms of education programs and research output, the practice remains inconsistent across countries (Alkathiri & Alharbi, 2024). Other research has identified an over-reliance on promotional models of practice compared to strategic approaches common in Western contexts. Government and private sector organizations are most frequently studied within Arab public relations scholarship. However, limited research has comprehensively examined trends and patterns across the growing body of literature in this emerging sub-field. This study aims to address this gap by conducting the first scoping review of Arab public relations research to map key aspects of scholarship between 1979 and 2023.

Studies on meditation suggest that mediated communication is increasingly influential in society. The public relations practices of Christian denominations were found to differ from the typical practices in quantitative studies, while qualitative case studies examined how clergy utilize blogs (Wiesenberg, 2020). Further research is necessary to explore how denominations communicate across various levels and to determine whether there is a shift from in-person to mediated communication with members. The objective of this study is to fill these gaps.

The literature review in the article from Morehouse & Lemon (2023) discovered that most crisis communication research emphasizes the reputational, financial, and material harm to corporations, leaving out other types of organizations and specific religious crises. There have been only a few studies on the moral failings of celebrity pastors, but most of them have used secular theories to analyze religious crises without taking into account the religious aspects. The review identified a requirement to investigate two additional types of potential harm: religious harm and emotional harm in the context of crises within religious organizations.

Studies Oh & Ki (2024) also indicated that utilizing a conversational human voice in communications has a positive effect on how the organization is perceived, whereas an organizational tone produces less favorable results. Nevertheless, there has been limited research that has directly contrasted the influence of human and AI agents on cultivating relationships between organizations and their audiences. The objective of this study is to fill this void. Studies in the field of religious public relations have investigated how religious organizations utilize public relations theories and created new frameworks tailored to the religious setting (Morehouse, 2024). Researchers have

proposed ideas such as the devotional-promotional communication model and covenantal relationships, but there is a lack of research, and the concepts have not been fully defined or distinguished. The impact of devotional campaigns on relationships has been examined in studies.

The article by Fortunato (2021) examines how a Jesuit university responded to a 2018 Pennsylvania grand jury report detailing sexual abuse by Catholic priests. The article reviews previous studies on institutional roles, organizational mission, crisis response strategies, and stakeholder relationships in times of crisis. This literature forms the basis for a case study analysis of the university's evaluation of the crisis, prioritization of stakeholders, and implementation of corrective measures for a responsible response. Organizations can be used as a means to promote values, goals, and beliefs to the public. All religious organizations, activist groups, and charitable organizations have this purpose Page & Capizzo (2024). Digital media is not part of church leaders' public communication and therefore has no relevance to the communication practices of church organizational elites (Wiesenberg, 2020). An exaggerated understanding of Islamic activism as something that the advanced spread of Islam is inseparable from the socio-political and multi-religious heritage of the country (Fahm, 2020). According to Pawlewicz & Senetra (2024) strong social ties are encouraged by religious organizations that can improve social relations, reinforce values in social consciousness and thus develop morality.

Involving the public relations function is a must in leading the work because of its natural expertise in communicating with all stakeholders and the wider public (Smudde, 2021). An example from Malang Regency focuses on religious harmony through rituals and promotes religious unity in Indonesia through cultural practices. Several local traditions maintain harmony between religious communities in Malang (Gede Agung et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Abdulabbas Hammoodi & Shuker Al-Hinkawi (2023) found that strategic value impacts urban integration, sustainability, and cultural preservation. The concept of space strategy relates to permeability, accessibility, and urban integration indicators. Public relations functions as a strategic tool for conflict management in dynamic equilibrium, highlighting the ethical challenges faced by PR practitioners in ongoing conflict cycles. It emphasizes negotiation, advocacy, and ethical considerations in public relations (Shin, 2023).

Women in Kuwait use activism for their struggle for rights through public relations strategies. Thus, activism and PR are essential for women's rights in a patriarchal society. The religious composition and pastoral ministry in the Armed Forces are very important, with compulsory military service for Catholics and other religious groups. This reflects the instillation of values in military organizations (Rezmer, 2016).

Although existing literature has explored the role of public relations in religious organizations and the importance of organizational values, there remains a significant gap in understanding how public relations can be used strategically to foster these values. Most research has focused on how public relations reflects or communicates existing values, rather than actively shaping and promoting them to strengthen identity. Moreover, there is little research on the specific tactics and strategies that religious organizations can use to foster a shared value system among members, staff, and the wider community through public relations efforts, especially in Muhammadiyah. This research aims to fill this void by examining how public relations can serve as a catalyst for value formation and reinforcement within religious institutions in building identity. This research explains How can religious institutions strategically utilize public relations to foster and strengthen organizational values in order to strengthen and maintain institutional identity in an increasingly complex and pluralistic society. This research uses Michael Pacanowsky's Cultural Approach to Organizations theory as its theoretical framework.

While existing literature has explored the role of public relations in religious organizations and the significance of organizational values, there remains a considerable gap in understanding how public relations can be strategically utilized not just to reflect but actively foster and strengthen these values, thereby reinforcing organizational identity. Previous studies have primarily focused on the communication of established values rather than the proactive role of public relations in shaping and promoting these values to create a cohesive organizational identity. Moreover, there is limited research on specific tactics and strategies that religious organizations, particularly Muhammadiyah, can employ to cultivate a shared value system among members and the broader community through public relations efforts. This research aims to address this gap by investigating how public relations can serve as a catalyst for value formation and identity reinforcement within religious institutions.

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Michael Pacanowsky's Cultural Approach to Organizations posits that organizations are fundamentally cultures, characterized by shared meanings, symbols, and rituals (M. E. Pacanowsky & Donnell-trujillo, 1982). Rather than viewing organizations as rigid structures with hierarchical systems, this perspective emphasizes the organic and dynamic nature of organizational life, shaped by the collective experiences and interpretations of its members (Criscione-Naylor & Dobrev, 2023). Central to this approach is the idea that culture is created and sustained through communication. Organizational members actively participate in constructing and maintaining the organization's culture through their interactions, stories, and shared experiences (Lam et al., 2021). Culture is not something static or imposed from above but is a living, evolving entity that is constantly negotiated and renegotiated (van Rooij & Fine, 2018).

To understand an organization, it is essential to delve into its cultural patterns. These patterns manifest in various forms, including organizational stories, rituals, and artifacts. Stories, for instance, are narratives that convey organizational values, history, and heroes (Fotaki et al., 2020). They serve as a means of transmitting cultural knowledge and shaping employee identities. Rituals, on the other hand, are repetitive behaviors that reinforce cultural values and create a sense of belonging. They can range from formal ceremonies to informal routines. Artifacts, such as physical objects, symbols, or language, are tangible manifestations of an organization's culture (Baker, 2009).

Pacanowsky's approach highlights the importance of interpretations in organizational research. By immersing themselves in the organizational setting, researchers can observe and interpret cultural patterns firsthand. This allows for a deeper understanding of how communication shapes organizational life and how culture influences individual behavior. A key implication of the cultural approach is that effective organizational leadership involves shaping and managing culture (Jerab & Mabrouk, 2023). Leaders who can articulate and embody the organization's values, create a sense of shared purpose, and facilitate open communication are more likely to foster a positive and productive organizational culture (Kelmendi et al., 2024). Additionally, understanding the cultural dynamics of an organization is crucial for successful change management. By recognizing the existing cultural patterns, organizations can develop strategies to introduce new ideas and practices while minimizing resistance.

In essence, the Cultural Approach to Organizations offers a rich and nuanced perspective on organizational life. By focusing on shared meanings, symbols, and rituals, it provides valuable insights into how communication shapes organizational culture and how culture, in turn, influences individual and collective behavior (Sharma & Aparicio, 2022).

Michael Pacanowsky's Cultural Approach to Organizations provides a robust theoretical framework for examining how public relations can foster organizational values and strengthen identity within religious institutions (M. E. Pacanowsky & Donnell-trujillo, 1982). This perspective views organizations as cultures, characterized by shared meanings, symbols, and rituals. By focusing on the communicative construction of reality, Pacanowsky's theory offers a lens to explore how public relations can shape and reinforce a religious institution's identity (Nordby, 2021). This approach allows for an in-depth analysis of how public relations strategies can contribute to creating a shared value system among members, crafting compelling narratives, and utilizing symbols and rituals to strengthen the organization's connection with its community. Ultimately, by understanding the cultural dynamics of a religious institution, public relations practitioners can develop more effective strategies to foster organizational values and build a strong, enduring identity.

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach to explore the strategic role of public relations in fostering organizational values within religious institutions, focusing on Muhammadiyah as a case study. The qualitative method allows for an in-depth understanding of how cultural elements are embedded within the organization's communication strategies. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and document analysis, providing insights into the cultural practices, symbols, and narratives that shape Muhammadiyah's public relations efforts.

The study is guided by the cultural approach to organizations theory, as proposed by Pacanowsky, which emphasizes the significance of cultural artifacts, rituals, and storytelling in shaping organizational identity and communication. This approach is particularly relevant in understanding how Muhammadiyah's values are embedded in its public relations strategies. By examining how

cultural narratives are crafted and communicated, the research highlights the interplay between culture and communication in religious institutions, offering a nuanced understanding of strategic public relations within this context.

The following is a Table of key informants who provide data on Muhammadiyah's public relations strategy in instilling values and strengthening organizational identity.

Table 1. Key Informants

No	Name	Roles	Description
1.	Abdul Muti	General Secretary	Central Board of Muhammadiyah
2.	Dadang Kahmad	Chief of Muhammadiyah	Central Board of Muhammadiyah
3.	Makroen Sanjaya	Director	Muhammadiyah Television/Tv Mu
4.	Isngadi	Managing Editor	Suara Muhammadiyah Magazine
5.	Arif Nur Kholis	Head of Office	Muhammadiyah Central Board

Source: Data Processed by Researchers, 2024

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The following section presents the results and discussion based on the data collected and analyzed in this study. The findings are organized thematically to address the research objectives and provide a comprehensive understanding of how public relations strategies are employed by Muhammadiyah in fostering organizational values and strengthening its identity as a religious institution. The discussion integrates these findings with relevant theoretical frameworks, highlighting the significance of cultural approach to organizations in achieving effective value dissemination and identity formation. This section also reflects on the broader implications for strategic public relations in religious organizations, contributing to the ongoing discourse on the intersection between communication, values, and institutional identity (García, 2021).

The interview results reveal a structured approach in Muhammadiyah's public relations (PR) management, where PR functions are integrated into the roles of each member of the Central Executive Board (PP) and its affiliated institutions. This integration allows all PP members to have both the opportunity and authority to convey Muhammadiyah's perspectives in public spaces. These perspectives include responses to specific issues and general views unrelated to any immediate context. Although broader external communication responsibilities are primarily assigned to the General Chairman, General Secretary, and key sectoral chairpersons, this delegation is flexible, depending on the situation and the scope of authority, particularly for strategic communication. A key insight into this structure is highlighted in the words of Abdul Mu'ti, General Secretary of Muhammadiyah's Central Board:

> *"Structurally, the function is inherent in the roles, and these roles are embedded within each member of the Central Executive Board (PP) and the institutions under the PP Muhammadiyah. This structure ensures that all PP members have the opportunity and authority to present various Muhammadiyah perspectives in the public sphere, whether in response to specific issues or in conveying general views not necessarily tied to any particular issue. Although there is greater latitude granted for external communication to the General Chairman, General Secretary, and sectoral chairpersons, this delegation is not rigid. It merely provides broader authority to the General Chairman, General Secretary, and relevant chairpersons within their respective domains."* (Abdul Mu'ti, General Secretary of Muhammadiyah Central Board)

Furthermore, Muhammadiyah's public communication is categorized into personal and institutional expressions. Personal expressions can be delivered by individuals as private opinions, provided these views do not contradict the organization's core policies (Wuestenenk et al., 2024). For instance, a sermon on LGBTQ issues may reflect a personal stance that aligns with but does not represent the official position of Muhammadiyah. Official positions are usually articulated through press conferences or written statements on strategic matters, such as decisions related to Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, or significant governmental policies like the Omnibus Law. These formal statements underscore the importance of clear and strategic communication in ensuring the alignment of

Muhammadiyah's public messaging with its organizational values and objectives. Abdul Mu'ti, General Secretary of Muhammadiyah's Central Board, elaborates:

> *"Secondly, public communication can be either personal or institutional. Personal communication is delivered by individuals in their capacity, but these personal views must not contradict the overarching organizational policies or may simply reflect individual opinions that do not represent the organization's stance. For example, a sermon on the topic of LGBTQ issues may not represent the official position of the organization, but the view expressed is still consistent with the organization's stance. Official positions are usually communicated through press conferences or formal written statements on specific issues that are typically of strategic importance. For instance, official statements regarding Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, or Muhammadiyah's response to the Omnibus Law and other strategic government policies are formally issued in writing due to their critical significance."* (Abdul Mu'ti, General Secretary of Muhammadiyah Central Board)

This approach highlights the strategic role of public relations in maintaining consistency across Muhammadiyah's communications, ensuring both clarity and alignment with its objectives. Additionally, Muhammadiyah disseminates the concept of Islam Berkemajuan (Progressive Islam) through various channels, primarily focusing on educational sermons (tabligh) in schools and universities, as well as publications on social media. This outreach employs a communication approach grounded in wisdom (hikmah), positive counsel, persuasion, and dialogue (Beyene et al., 2022). Such strategies reflect Muhammadiyah's commitment to fostering progressive Islamic values through constructive, inclusive, and rational communication. As Dadang Kahmad, Chief of Muhammadiyah's Central Board, explains:

> *"Currently, we are delivering messages of identity such as Islam Berkemajuan through educational sermons in schools and universities, as well as through publications on social media. The standard operational approach is based on wisdom (hikmah), good counsel, persuasion, and dialogue."* (Dadang Kahmad, Chief of Muhammadiyah Central Borad).

This method aligns with Muhammadiyah's overarching objective to promote a balanced, dialogic approach in its outreach and educational activities, effectively conveying its progressive values within a contemporary context.

The role of TVMu, Muhammadiyah's official broadcasting entity, is pivotal in embodying and promoting the organization's progressive identity. As the official broadcaster, TVMu functions both as a participant in Muhammadiyah's mission and as a catalyst for communicating its values. This dual role is reflected in the internal conduct of the broadcasting team and the programs they produce, which align closely with Muhammadiyah's vision for progressiveness (Onose et al., 2023). This alignment underscores TVMu's role as a strategic communication tool, amplifying Muhammadiyah's message to a broader audience.

> *"As the official broadcaster of Muhammadiyah, the institution's official broadcasting entity naturally feels involved and engages itself in Muhammadiyah's identity as a progressive organization, while also serving as a driving force to voice that identity. This is reflected both in the internal behavior of TVMu as an integral part of this mission and in the programs it airs."* (Makroen Sanjaya, Director of Muhammadiyah Television/TVMu)

Additionally, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, the official Public Relations media outlet of the organization, plays a significant role in conveying Muhammadiyah's message and values. *Suara Muhammadiyah* serves as an extension of the organization, dedicated to consistently reflecting Muhammadiyah's identity and values in alignment with its vision and mission (Heckert et al., 2022). In the context of a religious institution like Muhammadiyah, where PR media is key to strengthening and preserving identity, the alignment between the organization and its official media is crucial.

> *"Suara Muhammadiyah as the official Public Relations media of Muhammadiyah, in principle, can be called that. Suara Muhammadiyah and Muhammadiyah should be in harmony"* (Isngadi, Managing Editor of the Magazine Suara Muhammadiyah).

Through strategic Public Relations, Muhammadiyah effectively leverages multiple communication channels to consistently convey its values and messages to the public. This approach is essential in strengthening and preserving Muhammadiyah's organizational identity.

Arif Nur Kholis, Head of Office for the Muhammadiyah Central Board, explains the strategic dissemination of Islam Berkemajuan, a concept central to Muhammadiyah's identity. To reach a wider audience, Muhammadiyah provides key documents in Indonesian, English, and Arabic, making the messages accessible both domestically and internationally. Additionally, Muhammadiyah uses various media platforms—including its website, social media, and YouTube channel—to communicate these values in an engaging, accessible manner (Singh & Singh, 2024)..

"Islam Berkemajuan is a concept that has become Muhammadiyah's identity, and we are committed to spreading this idea through various media platforms. We ensure that important documents related to Islam Berkemajuan are available in Indonesian, English, and Arabic, and package these messages in a form that is easily accessible to the public through Muhammadiyah's website, social media, and YouTube channel. Our ultimate goal is to ensure that these ideas are widely understood, not only as theoretical concepts but as real and relevant practices in everyday life." (Arif Nur Kholis, Head of Office Muhammadiyah Central Board)

This strategic approach underscores Muhammadiyah's commitment to making Islam Berkemajuan widely understood as a practical, relevant concept for daily life, effectively reinforcing Muhammadiyah's core values and identity through diverse communication channels.

Public Relations Strategies to Foster Organizational Values and Strengthen Identity

In this study, in-depth interviews with key stakeholders in Muhammadiyah reveal critical aspects of strategic Public Relations (PR) used to reinforce organizational values and identity within a religious institution. Using Michael Pacanowsky's Cultural Approach to Organizations as the conceptual framework, the study identifies several core themes that illustrate how Muhammadiyah organizes and implements communication to achieve its strategic goals.

Structure and Function of Communication in Muhammadiyah Organization

The findings highlight the significance of the communication structure in Muhammadiyah, particularly in empowering all members, especially those in the Central Executive (PP), with the opportunity and authority to communicate Muhammadiyah's perspectives in public spaces. This communication structure is not merely a technical mechanism; rather, it serves as a critical element in reflecting and reinforcing the organizational culture.

The Cultural Approach to Organizations theory emphasizes that organizational culture is formed and maintained through daily communication practices. Pacanowsky (2016) argues that organizations should be understood as cultural systems rich in symbols that give meaning to the daily lives of their members. In Muhammadiyah, the communication structure that gives authority to the leaders to convey the views of the organization to the public is a symbol that reflects the hierarchy and values upheld by this organization.

The hierarchy in Muhammadiyah not only determines who has the authority to speak on behalf of the organization but also reflects the norms and values that exist in the organization. For example, providing a wider space for public communication to the Chairman, General Secretary, and chairmen in charge shows how power and authority are shared within the organization. This is in accordance with Pacanowsky's and Donnell-Trujillo's (1982) view that an organization is a cultural system built through the practice of daily communication and interaction that reflects the values and norms embraced by its members.

Furthermore, the interviews also revealed that the communication structure in Muhammadiyah is not rigid, but flexible and adjusted to needs. Authority for public communication can be given to specific individuals in certain situations, depending on the context and issues at hand. This flexibility shows the dynamic cultural adaptation in Muhammadiyah, where the organization can adapt its communication strategy to the existing situation while still maintaining the identity and core values of the organization (Andreis & Leopardi, 2021).

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Difference between Personal and Institutional Communication

The interview also highlighted the importance of distinguishing between personal and institutional public communication in Muhammadiyah. In organizational culture theory, the difference between personal and institutional communication can be seen as the difference between the personal narrative and the official narrative of the organization. Pacanowsky emphasized that the formal narrative of an organization is an important part of the organization's culture, as it reflects the views and values embraced by the organization as an entity (Criscione-Naylor & Dobrev, 2023).

In Muhammadiyah, personal public communication can be conveyed by individuals in the organization, but the personal views must be in accordance with the outline of the organization's policy. This shows that there is a cultural awareness in Muhammadiyah that every member has the responsibility to maintain the consistency and integrity of the organization's identity in every public interaction. Personal views expressed in public spaces should not contradict the official views of the organization, even if they do not represent the official position of the organization (Harris, 2023).

or instance, a Muhammadiyah member might address a sensitive issue such as LGBTQ rights in a sermon. Although the viewpoint presented may not be the official position of Muhammadiyah, it is expected to be in alignment with the organization's overarching principles. This approach demonstrates how Muhammadiyah upholds its organizational culture by ensuring all forms of public communication, whether personal or institutional, reflect the organization's core values.

In this context, Pacanowsky's theory helps us understand how Muhammadiyah uses communication as a tool to maintain organizational identity. By differentiating between personal and institutional communication, Muhammadiyah can ensure that the narrative conveyed to the public always reflects the values and principles embraced by the organization, without sacrificing the flexibility of individuals to express their personal views.

Use of Media to Convey Organizational Messages

One of the important findings of this study is how Muhammadiyah uses various media, such as Suara Muhammadiyah, TVMu, and social media, to convey the organization's message and views to the public. The use of this media reflects how Muhammadiyah uses cultural symbols in its communication to strengthen the organization's identity.

Suara Muhammadiyah, as the organization's official PR media, plays an important role in ensuring that the messages conveyed to the public are in line with the organization's values and identity. This is in accordance with the theory of the Cultural Approach to Organizations, where communication media is seen as a cultural artifact that carries and strengthens organizational values (Fotaki et al., 2020; Lam et al., 2021). In this case, Suara Muhammadiyah not only functions as a communication channel, but also as a symbol of Muhammadiyah's commitment to maintain its identity and values.

Similiarly, TVMu, as an official broadcasting institution owned by Muhammadiyah, also has an important role in strengthening the organization's identity. The interview showed that TVMu was not only involved in conveying Muhammadiyah's messages to the public, but also functioned as a locomotive that led efforts to promote Muhammadiyah's identity as an advanced organization. The programs displayed on TVMu reflect the values of Muhammadiyah and serve as a reflection of the organization's identity.

Additionally, Muhammadiyah's engagement with social media illustrates its responsiveness to evolving communication landscapes. Through social media platforms, Muhammadiyah reaches a broader and younger audience, while maintaining message consistency. This adaptive approach demonstrates Muhammadiyah's commitment to not only uphold its identity but also broaden its influence by aligning its communication strategies with technological trends and current communication practices (Ganiem et al., 2024).

Within the framework of organizational culture theory, this media use reflects Muhammadiyah's application of cultural symbols to maintain and strengthen its identity. These platforms serve as conduits for the organization's official narrative, which embodies Muhammadiyah's core values and principles. Consequently, these media channels play a critical role in preserving organizational culture and enhancing Muhammadiyah's public identity.

Alignment between PR Media and Organizational Identity

The interviews indicate a strong expectation within Muhammadiyah that its official PR media, particularly *Suara Muhammadiyah*, align closely with the organization's identity and values. This

alignment ensures that public messaging consistently reflects Muhammadiyah's core principles, reinforcing its organizational identity.

In Pacanowsky's Cultural Approach to Organizations theory, this harmony between PR media and organizational identity represents the alignment between cultural symbols in organizational communication and the organization's foundational values (Giol-Calefariu, 2023). As a cultural symbol of Muhammadiyah, Suara Muhammadiyah embodies the organization's values and is responsible for conveying messages that accurately reflect Muhammadiyah's identity.

Such alignment underscores Muhammadiyah's commitment to maintaining the integrity of its public identity. In a media-driven world, it is crucial for organizations to ensure that public messaging remains consistent with their identity. By ensuring that Suara Muhammadiyah and other PR media adhere to Muhammadiyah's values, the organization strengthens its identity and builds public trust.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research illustrates the significant role of strategic public relations in strengthening organizational values and identity within Muhammadiyah. Using Pacanowsky's cultural approach, the study has shown how Muhammadiyah's public relations strategies are deeply intertwined with its cultural elements—such as communication practices, symbols, and rituals—which are instrumental in consistently conveying its progressive Islamic values, including education, social justice, and rational interpretations of Islam. By embedding public relations functions into key leadership roles, Muhammadiyah achieves a flexible and structured communication approach that reinforces organizational identity and resonates with both internal and external audiences.

The study's findings underscore that alignment between public relations strategies and cultural values is essential for religious organizations like Muhammadiyah, as it fosters coherence between values and public image, thus enhancing the organization's influence and relevance. As the social and religious landscape of Indonesia continues to evolve, strategic communication remains essential for Muhammadiyah to maintain its impact.

This research also suggests that future studies could further examine the intersection of organizational culture and public relations in other religious contexts, as understanding these dynamics may help similar institutions strengthen their identities and public engagement. The study highlights the importance of adopting culturally reflective communication practices and adapting to contemporary platforms like social media to reach a broader, younger audience, ensuring that traditional values remain impactful in the modern world.

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