

Public Relations Strategy in Developing School Image at SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura

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Abstract: This abstract discusses the development of SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura as an educational institution that has demonstrated significant improvement in both academic and non-academic achievements, as well as in student enrollment. The background of this study emphasizes the importance of public relations strategies in building a positive school image amid competition among educational institutions. The purpose of this research is to analyze the implementation of public relations strategies, identify supporting and inhibiting factors, and evaluate their impact on public perception of the school. This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed through data reduction, data display, and verification using triangulation techniques to ensure the validity of the findings. The results show that public relations strategies covering alumni management, human resource development, publications, and event organization are collaboratively designed with the school principal by considering various aspects of school image building. The implementation of these strategies is carried out systematically through promotion in print media, electronic media, and social media, as well as through communication and public outreach. The implications of this study indicate that integrated and consistent public relations strategies can enhance the school's positive image and strengthen public trust, thereby contributing to the competitiveness of educational institutions.

Keywords: Strategy, Public, Relations, Images, Schools.

A. Introduction

The leading of SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura is one public high schools located in Abepura District, Jayapura City, Papua Province, Indonesia. Established in 1965, this school has developed into an educational institution with a good reputation and is popular among the community. The existence of this long-standing school is closely linked to various community responses, both in the form of support and expectations regarding the quality of educational services provided.

In a broader context, schools are an integral part of society and cannot be separated from their social environment. Consequently, schools are expected to be able to adapt and contribute to meeting the needs of the community through various programmes and collaboration with education stakeholders. The strategic role of schools as educational institutions is also closely linked to efforts to achieve national educational objectives (Cruzat et al., 2022).

In line with this, a school's ability to build and maintain positive relationships with the community is a key factor in supporting the success of educational institutions. Good relations

with the community not only enhance the school's reputation but also boost public trust and community participation in supporting the school's programmes. Therefore, a well-planned and sustainable public relations strategy is required to optimise interactions between the school and its surrounding community (Saeful, 2020). According to Herimanto, public relations is a process of interaction aimed at consistently fostering positive public opinion, building trust, and enhancing positive public perception (Elyus & Soleh, 2021).

Referring to several definitions of public relations according to Dinda Septian, it can be concluded that: Public relations is a structured, planned and ongoing activity carried out by individuals who are experts in effective communication management, thereby creating a positive image within the community. Public relations activities in schools do not merely involve relations between the school and pupils' parents, but must also establish communication with the wider community, such as building relationships with the local community and the government, as public relations activities can only function effectively through cooperative communication with all sections of society (Elyus & Soleh, 2021).

This study stems from the importance of the role of public relations in supporting the success of educational institutions, particularly in building a positive image and enhancing public trust. In addition, educators must recognize the importance of building positive relationships with students (Orun, 2024). In this context, the role of public relations at Jayapura State Senior High School No. 1 is strategic as a link between the educational institution and the community.

Theoretically, modern public relations functions not only as a conveyor of information but also as a manager of two-way communication aimed at building a relationship of mutual understanding between an organisation and its public. This is in line with the thinking of Scott M. Cutlip and Allen H. Center, who emphasise the managerial function of public relations in building mutually beneficial relationships, as well as James E. Grunig's two-way symmetrical model, which places dialogic communication at the heart of public relations practice (Luttrell, 2023).

However, there is a research gap in the study of public relations in the education sector, particularly at the secondary school level in rural areas. Most previous studies have focused on higher education institutions or emphasized one-way communication and publications alone, resulting in a lack of in-depth examination of participatory and dialogic public relations strategies within school settings.

Given this gap, this study is important (research urgency) to examine how public relations strategies are applied contextually in secondary school settings, including their supporting and inhibiting factors. Thus, this study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of educational public relations studies, as well as a practical contribution to more effective and adaptive public relations management in educational institutions.

Public Relations Strategy in Developing School Image at Senior High Schools refers to a series of planned, implemented, and evaluated public relations activities conducted by schools to build, maintain, and enhance a positive image among students, parents, communities, government institutions, and other stakeholders. This strategy includes internal and external communication, school activity publications, social media management, partnerships with various organizations, and public information management. The effectiveness of public relations strategies is reflected in increased public trust, enhanced school reputation, greater attractiveness to prospective

students, and positive perceptions of the quality of educational services provided by the school (Nurlina et al., 2022; Rosani et al., 2023).

The researchers concluded that Jayapura 1 Public High School has a strategically designed public relations program aimed at enhancing the school's image within the community. The role of public relations is crucial as it serves as a bridge between the school and the community in effectively conveying information. This role is realized through efforts to introduce the school's flagship programs, promote the institution to the community as users of educational services, and communicate students' achievements and accomplishments to the public, particularly to parents. This is in line with the cognitive development at Jayapura 1 Public High School, where the Public Relations Department has successfully communicated the school's objectives to the general public and achieved success within the National Education System as stipulated in Law No. 20 of 2003, Article 1, Paragraph 1: Education is a conscious and planned effort to support the learning process so that students actively develop their potential to possess religious spirituality, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills necessary for themselves, the community, the nation, and the state (Kesowo, 2003).

In order to enhance the school's reputation in the community, the researchers also highlighted the school's unique characteristics and what makes it appealing, namely the students of Jayapura 1 Public High School who consistently excel in art competitions and exhibitions. However, there are also many people who do not care about the school's reputation. In this sense, the researchers believe that when a problem arises that negatively impacts the school, there will inevitably be uncertainty about what needs to be improved to restore the school's "good impression" or image. To be accountable to stakeholders, the school must continuously improve its quality through creativity and good management.

The current trend is that schools (both public and private) are competing with one another to attract public attention. Therefore, it has become the responsibility of the school's public relations department to build, maintain, and develop a positive image so that a favorable perception of the school can be established. Private schools are very active in promoting their strengths, as they are currently the preferred choice even though the public knows they are expensive. In fact, private schools do not hesitate to provide and equip supporting facilities for teaching and learning activities, various services, and a wide range of extracurricular activities for students so that students can feel comfortable in their studies and excel according to their interests and talents. In addition, through their public relations and management departments, private schools continue to establish cooperative relationships with various media outlets and maintain good relations with the community, delivering what the community expects especially to ensure satisfaction (Arianto et al., 2025).

On the other hand, most public schools believe that the community will continue to choose public schools over private ones, so there is no need for further promotion—as is the case at Jayapura Public High School No. 1. In fact, promotion is actually one of the ways to introduce the school's identity and build its image. This is because school promotions typically include a school profile, which usually covers: the school's identity; an explanation of the school's vision, mission, and objectives; a description of the school's facilities and infrastructure; profiles of educators and support staff; the curriculum; the school's achievements; and various other types of information. (Umiyati, 2021).

Based on the researcher's initial observations, public relations management at Jayapura 1 Public High School has begun to weaken and needs to be further developed. Similarly, educators,

students, and other community members must participate in improving the school's image. Therefore, the researcher is interested in addressing the topic "Public Relations Strategies at Jayapura 1 State High School in Developing the School's Image in the Community." In this context, the researcher aims to understand how the public relations strategy process at Jayapura 1 State High School unfolds, as well as who is involved in developing the school's image.

B. Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive case study design. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of public relations strategies in developing the school's image at Jayapura 1 Public High School. Methodologically, this study draws on the qualitative research framework proposed by John W. Creswell, which emphasizes the in-depth and holistic exploration of phenomena in their natural context (Creswell, 2017).

The study was conducted at Jayapura 1 State High School, located in Abepura District, Jayapura City, Papua Province. The study involved three informants selected through purposive sampling: the school principal, the vice principal for public relations, and a teacher who is also a member of the public relations team. The selection of informants was based on their direct involvement in the planning and implementation of public relations activities at the school (Nia et al., 2025).

Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, non-participatory observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted to gather information regarding the planning, implementation, and evaluation of public relations strategies. Observation was used to directly observe public relations activities and interactions with the public, while document analysis was used to supplement and verify the data obtained from interviews and observation (Sugiyono, 2022).

Data analysis was conducted in several stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In addition, the researcher also applied coding and thematic analysis techniques to identify patterns, categories, and themes emerging from the research data (Nurislaminingsih, 2025).

To ensure the validity of the data, this study employs source triangulation and methodological triangulation, specifically by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation. As a result, the study's findings are expected to possess a high degree of validity and credibility (Nurfajriani et al., 2024).

C. Results and Discussion

Public Relations Strategy in Developing the Image of SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura

The findings indicate that SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura develops its institutional image through several integrated public relations strategies, namely human resources, alumni engagement, publication, and event-based activities. These strategies reflect a structured effort to position the school as a reputable and competitive educational institution. This approach is consistent with the concept of strategic public relations, which emphasizes the importance of integrating communication efforts with organizational goals (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Cornelissen, 2023)

Human resources are identified as the core element in the implementation of public relations strategies. Informants stated that the selection of public relations personnel is based on competence, communication ability, and the capacity to build relationships with influential stakeholders. This indicates that the school does not merely emphasize administrative functions of public relations, but rather places strategic importance on relational competence and social networking. The ability of public relations personnel to engage with key figures such as government officials suggests that institutional image is constructed through legitimacy and recognition from authoritative actors. This finding aligns with stakeholder theory, which highlights the importance of managing relationships with key stakeholders to build organizational reputation (Freeman, 2010).

Furthermore, the cohesiveness and productivity of the public relations team reflect an internal organizational strength that supports consistent communication practices. This condition shows that human resources are not only an operational component but also a strategic driver in shaping institutional image. This finding is in line with the theory proposed by Michael Armstrong, which emphasizes that human resource development is closely related to structured learning processes and organizational effectiveness (Fahrezi et al., 2025). In addition, Harris and DeSimone argue that human resources must be developed systematically to equip individuals with competencies relevant to organizational demands (Umiyati, 2021).

Another significant strategy is the utilization of alumni as part of public relations efforts. Informants stated that many alumni of SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura currently hold strategic positions in government and education sectors, which indirectly contributes to strengthening the school's public image. This finding reflects that alumni function as symbolic assets that represent the success and credibility of the institution. The presence of alumni in influential positions creates a positive associative image, where the success of individuals is linked to the quality of the institution that produced them. This phenomenon is closely related to the concept of brand image, where public perception is shaped by associations attached to an institution (Keller, 2013). This strategy also indicates a long-term orientation in public relations practices, as the institution leverages historical outcomes (graduates) to construct present reputation. Moreover, alumni serve as relational bridges that connect the institution with broader social networks, enabling wider recognition and trust. According to (Effendi, 2021) alumni play a role as connectors between educational institutions and society, contributing to institutional visibility and image formation.

In terms of publication, the findings show that SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura actively disseminates information through both digital and conventional media. Informants stated that the school utilizes social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, official websites, banners, and direct communication during meetings with parents and stakeholders. This indicates that the school applies a multi-channel communication strategy to reach diverse audiences. The use of digital media reflects an adaptive response to contemporary communication trends, allowing the institution to expand its reach and maintain visibility in the public domain. This is supported by the perspective that social media plays a significant role in modern communication strategies by enabling interactive and participatory engagement with audiences (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). At the same time, direct communication strengthens interpersonal relationships and trust, which are essential components in public relations.

However, the reliance on publication also requires careful content management, as information dissemination has the potential to generate different interpretations among audiences. This

finding is consistent with Rosady Ruslan, who states that public relations functions include disseminating organizational activities to both internal and external publics in order to shape positive perceptions (Setiawan et al., 2025). Furthermore, Noor's perspective highlights that communication strategies, including publication, must have distinctive characteristics to attract public attention (Alayubi & Syah, 2025).

Event-based strategy is also identified as an important approach in building the school's image. Informants stated that the school actively participates in and organizes various events, including academic and non-academic competitions, as well as internal and external activities. These events serve as platforms to demonstrate student achievements and institutional excellence. This finding indicates that events function as experiential communication media, where stakeholders can directly observe and experience the quality of the institution. The success of such events contributes to creating positive impressions and strengthening the school's positioning as a high-achieving institution. This is in line with the concept of educational marketing, which emphasizes the importance of showcasing institutional value through direct experience (Kotler & Fox, 1995). In addition, events foster emotional engagement and collective identity among stakeholders, which are essential in sustaining a strong institutional image. This is also supported by Noor's theory, which states that effective events must have unique characteristics to differentiate them from others (Alayubi & Syah, 2025). Moreover, Mair and Foley emphasize that effective event management can enhance participant experiences and create lasting positive memories that support organizational reputation (Alayubi & Syah, 2025).

The findings also reveal that the effectiveness of public relations strategies is influenced by several supporting factors. Informants stated that the involvement of school stakeholders, including principals, teachers, students, alumni, parents, and the surrounding community, plays a crucial role in supporting the implementation of strategies. This reflects a collaborative communication environment where multiple stakeholders contribute to institutional success. Such collaboration aligns with the principles of effective public relations, which emphasize mutual relationships between organizations and their publics (Cutlip, 1962). The availability of competent human resources, adequate facilities, and structured planning further strengthens the implementation of these strategies. In addition, student achievements in both academic and non-academic fields contribute to sustaining the school's image over time (Kinanti & Wijaksono, 2021).

However, several inhibiting factors were also identified. Informants stated that miscommunication often becomes a barrier in implementing public relations strategies. This indicates that differences in perception and interpretation among stakeholders can affect the effectiveness of communication processes. In addition, limitations in funding and the lack of optimal management of digital platforms, such as the school's website, reduce the effectiveness of publication strategies. These constraints highlight the importance of communication clarity, resource management, and professional competence in public relations practices. In line with (Reanita, 2025) communication barriers can arise from motivational, perceptual, and semantic factors, which may hinder message delivery and lead to unintended outcomes.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura implements a comprehensive public relations strategy by integrating human resources, alumni networks, publication, and event management. These strategies are not only operational but also strategic in nature, as they collectively contribute to building a sustainable and positive institutional image. The integration of relational, communicative, and experiential approaches indicates that effective public relations in educational institutions requires a holistic strategy that goes beyond information

dissemination, emphasizing trust-building, stakeholder engagement, and long-term reputation development.

D. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that the public relations strategy implemented by SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura reflects a comprehensive and integrated approach to institutional image development. Rather than relying on a single method, the school strategically combines human resource capacity, alumni engagement, publication practices, and event-based activities to construct and maintain a positive public image. These strategies indicate that school image is not formed solely through communication outputs, but through the synergy of relational, experiential, and symbolic dimensions.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the development of public relations discourse in educational settings by highlighting the importance of integrating internal resources and external networks in image-building processes. The findings reinforce the notion that effective public relations strategies extend beyond information dissemination, emphasizing the role of social capital, stakeholder engagement, and experiential communication in shaping institutional reputation. This also strengthens the relevance of public relations theories within the context of non-corporate organizations, particularly educational institutions.

Practically, the findings imply that schools need to adopt a strategic and holistic approach to public relations management. Strengthening human resource competencies, maintaining active alumni relations, optimizing digital and conventional publication channels, and organizing impactful events are essential steps in building a sustainable institutional image. In addition, effective communication management and stakeholder collaboration are crucial to ensuring the success of these strategies. However, this study also identifies several challenges, particularly related to communication barriers and resource limitations. These findings suggest that schools need to improve internal communication systems, enhance digital platform management, and allocate resources more effectively to support public relations activities.

Based on these findings, this study recommends that educational institutions develop structured public relations programs that emphasize professional competency, digital communication optimization, and stakeholder involvement. Future research is also encouraged to explore public relations strategies in different educational contexts or to examine the impact of digital transformation on institutional image more deeply.

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