



Da'wah and the Improvement of Islamic Higher Education Institution's Image with Communication Strategy of Public Relations

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ABSTRACT

Image is an important component for education institutions to increase public trust. One of the efforts in improving this image is the communication strategy performed by the public relations officers in Higher Education Institutions (HEI). Islamic universities as da'wah organization also is expected to have a good image. This study is to reveal the communication strategies of two Islamic HEI: State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Surakarta, and State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Salatiga, and the improvement of their images by public relations with da'wah. These two Islamic HEI selected as the object of research because they are still in level *institute*, so, they have great opportunities for developing to higher level. The approach used in this research is a qualitative approach with a case study method. The data collection techniques are interviews, observation, and document analysis. The result shows that IAIN Surakarta improves its image by using communication strategies in accreditation of study programs and academic journals, as well as transformation into a university. IAIN Salatiga, meanwhile, improves its image by using strategies of green campus and international journal publication. Therefore, the public relations office considers applying the principle of da'wah to encourage people to empower.

Keywords: communication strategy; public relations; islamic higher education institution

ABSTRAK

Citra merupakan komponen penting bagi perguruan tinggi dalam meningkatkan kepercayaan masyarakat. Upaya peningkatan citra ini dapat dilakukan dengan strategi komunikasi oleh bagian hubungan masyarakat (Humas) di perguruan tinggi. Perguruan tinggi Islam sebagai lembaga dakwah juga dituntut memiliki citra yang baik. Penelitian ini berupaya mengetahui strategi komunikasi dua perguruan tinggi keagamaan Islam, yaitu Institut Agama Islam Negeri Surakarta dan Institut Agama Islam Negeri Salatiga. Kedua perguruan tinggi tersebut dipilih karena masih level institut sehingga memiliki peluang berkembang ke level lebih tinggi. Pendekatan yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Adapun teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan wawancara, pengamatan, dan analisis dokumentasi. Penelitian menemukan bahwa IAIN Surakarta berupaya melakukan strategi komunikasi untuk meningkatkan citra melalui akreditasi program studi, jurnal, dan transformasi menjadi universitas. Sedangkan IAIN Salatiga melakukan strategi komunikasi untuk meningkatkan citra melalui kampus hijau dan publikasi jurnal internasional. Dengan demikian, bagian Humas dianggap menerapkan prinsip dakwah untuk

mengajak masyarakat melakukan pemberdayaan.

Kata kunci : *strategi komunikasi; hubungan masyarakat; perguruan tinggi Islam;*

INTRODUCTION

Education can be implemented both in setting of formal or informal. In a formal setting education has many levels, ranging from early childhood education, elementary school, middle school, to university. Higher education plays a significant role in determining job in the current era of globalization (Yetiska, 2019). Therefore, people study in universities to increase their knowledge and skills capacity. Likewise, universities need efforts to gain public trust.

The number of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in Indonesia is more than 3,000 (ranging from academies, polytechnics, institutes, colleges, and universities).

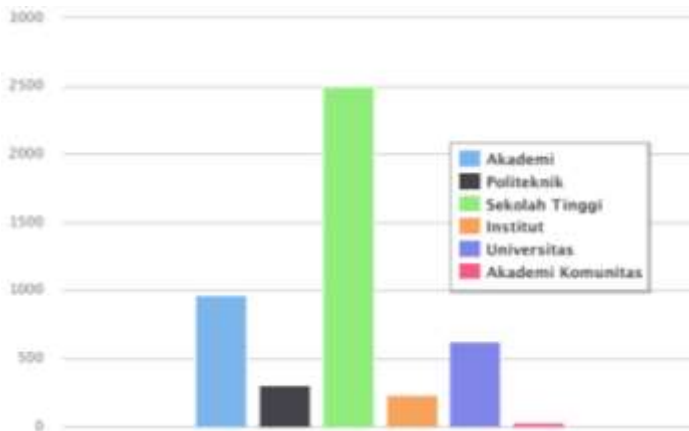


Figure 1. Graph of the Number of Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia
(Source: <https://forlap.ristekdikti.go.id>)

The high number of HEI in Indonesia as shown in Figure 1 creates competition between them (Muhtaram, Sutarsih, & Rosalin, 2012), mostly to gain public trust. In facing this competition, universities try to create a good image for increasing of organization branding.

Image is an essential aspect of HEI to gain public trust. As explained by Ruvendi & Djan (Nalim, 2012) some aspects that will be considerations by people when choosing a university for study are reputation or image of institution, accreditation status, paths or levels of education, academic titles, educational facilities, the quality and quantity of lecturers. The image also can be defined as the overall perception of an object formed by a person through processing information from various sources at any time (Assael, 1992). Besides, the image can be defined as whatever someone thinks about a specific object (Mujahidin, Zuhriah, & Khoirianingrum, 2018). Based on this understanding, the image is

formed by the information.

In the context of higher education, information can be used to create a good image for institution, for example, information on the profile of university, accreditation of program of studies, quality of lecturers, number and types of faculties and study programs, tuition to be paid, facilities of learning, and university activities. Various information is conveyed to the public through multiple media. The media facilities that currently used by universities to describe these information are websites and social media. The parties assigned by the university to operate websites and social media are public relations office. So, the role of the public relations office in HEI is important.

As explained above, image is an essential aspect for HEI to gain public trust, especially for institution that is in developing status. One of the HEI that is still in the process of transformation and has not yet reached the level of university is *institute*. The transformation of HEI from *institute* to university requires several components, they are: the number of students, types of faculties and study programs, the ratio between lecturers and students, and the quality of lecturers. It is vital to gain the number of students by conveying higher education information to improve the image of the university.

Islamic HEI is also a da'wah organization. As Islamic education they have objectives to disseminate Islamic teachings (Mulkhan, 2008). Different from *pesantren* as Islamic informal education institutions, Islamic HEI is formal education institution and need to adapt to the development of situation and society. Some Islamic HEI that are still in the form of *institute* are State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Surakarta and State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Salatiga. Both Islamic HEI are under the supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Republic of Indonesia. Before, some Islamic HEI succeeded in transforming their status from *institute* to university, for example, State Islamic University (UIN) Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, State Islamic University (UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, State Islamic University (UIN) Walisongo Semarang, State Islamic University (UIN) Palembang, and so on. IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga have a relatively similar process of development with above universities. IAIN Surakarta changed to an institute from a academy on January 3, 2011, while IAIN Salatiga changed its status on October 17, 2014. Both institutes have uniqueness. One of their uniqueness is their location close to universities that succeeded in transforming into university. IAIN Surakarta is close by to UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, while IAIN Salatiga is close by to UIN Walisongo Semarang.

Based on these conditions, it is essential to study the public relations (PR) strategy implemented by IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga in enhancing the image of a university during its competition with other universities, especially those that are close to it. The expected benefit from this research is an evaluation of the PR communication strategy of IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga.

There are several previous studies related to the role of public relations in building the image of higher education. Some of the researches are [Sung & Yang's](#) research (2008), [Singh & Pandey's](#) research (2017), [Alhadid's](#) research (2016), [Sulistyaningtyas'](#) research (2007), [Wiwitan & Yulianita's](#) research (2017), research by [Mohammed](#) (2014), research by [Rini, Rusmiwari, & Widodo](#) (2017), research by [Niswaty, Wulandari, Saleh, & S](#) (2019), research by [Luqman](#) (2013), research by [Musyarrofah](#) (2018), research by [Rachmad](#) (2015), research by [Mughtar & Herdiana](#) (2016), and research by [Setyanto, Anggarina, & Valentina](#) (2017).

From these various studies, research that similar to this research is [Mughtar & Herdiana](#) (2016) because it uses Islamic HEI as its object. However, this research has elements of novelty. First, the object of this research study is an Islamic HEI, which is in status of institute. Second, this study intends to compare several Islamic universities. Third, Islamic HEI, which are used as objects in this study, is Islamic universities in the process so that later it will be known about the role of public relations in improving the image of the college. Fourth, the selected Islamic universities have never been the object of research on the theme of public relations.

This study is to find out the communication strategies of two Islamic HEI: State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Surakarta), and State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Salatiga, and the improvement of their images by public relations with da'wah. The study used a qualitative approach and a case study research method. Case study was used when some uniqueness in the phenomenon in investigation. This uniqueness, for example, is that the condition of the university under examination in this study still has opportunities to developing to higher level. Besides, they are also located near larger Islamic universities. IAIN Surakarta is close to the State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga in Yogyakarta and IAIN Salatiga is close to the State Islamic University Walisongo in Semarang. So, these tow Islamic HEI require a significant effort to carry out a communication strategy to improve a better image and increase public trust. The data collection techniques are interviews (including interviews with the vice-chancellor of the public relations unit in the university) and document analysis (academic manuals and studies of college websites and social media). The data validation uses triangulation methods and member checking.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Image Improvement with Public Relations Communication Strategy

There are two aspects that studied in this research. First, the communication strategy of public relations carried out by HEI as an educational institution and second the image of HEI as an educational institution.

Public relations strategy can be interpreted as a public relations practice that is carried out in a planned, structured and continuous manner. Its purpose is to

create and maintain goodwill on the part of the public relations strategy. In addition, the public relations strategy is also a form of mutual understanding between an organization or institution towards the audience (Jefkins, 2009). Mainwhile, the image can be defined as a set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions contained in a person or audience regarding an object (Kotler, 2007).

In the context of IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga as Islamic HEI, there is a public relations mechanism in both institutions. As HEI, they have to get a good image from the community. A good image is the modality for them to attract people to send their children to study in their institutions. This good image can be obtained from the public relations communication strategy. As explained above terms of public relations that the goal of institutions in carrying out a public relations strategy is maintaining good intentions. This good intention plays a role in educating people's lives and implementing the three basic duties (*Tri Dharma*) HEI (education, research, and community service).

If the public relations strategy works well, then a mutually beneficial relationship can occur. IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga won the trust of the community, and the community is assisted in improving the quality of education. Furthermore, as a state Islamic HEI, the community is also expected to be assisted in spreading religious values. As explained by Mundry (2017), HEI must strive to advance and develop by creating a positive image to the public. So, people can make the decision with pleasure to register their children and actively participate in the development process of these educational institutions. So, apart from developing quality, it also requires productive public relations activities based on a clear vision and mission of organization. Muchtar & Herdiana (2016) wrote that public relations activities carried out by Islamic universities were in an effort to improve the image of the institution.

If the public relations performance of IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga in improving the image of higher education is viewed from the 7C principle formulated by Cutlip et al. (2013), the following results were obtained. Firstly, credibility. Every information contained in the website and communication media of IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga comes from trusted and valid sources, so their information can be trusted. In fact, if they publish fake news (hoax), the public relations will make a clarification, for example, a clarification about new logo of IAIN Surakarta. Secondly, context. Every information and news delivered by IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga is in line with the context. It means that the information has links, perspectives, ideas, and understandings carried by each of these universities. Third, content. Every information and news delivered by the public relations unit in IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga is in line with the needs of students and society. However, these needs have not been accommodated in the communication media of IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga. Fourth, clarity. The information and news delivered by the public relations department of IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga have clarity and do not lead to differences in

interpretation. Fifth, continuity and consistency. This principle has not been implemented by the public relations of IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga because the news distribution is still fluctuating every day. Sixth, channel. IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga uses several online media, like website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Seventh, capacity of audience. News and information published by the public relations unit in IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga are adjusted to the capacity of the audience, like using language easily to understand.

The above 7C principles in public relations in order to improve the image of higher education are also in line with Islamic values. For example, the principle of credibility is in accordance with the principles of trustworthiness and honesty, consistency and continuity according to the principle of *istiqamah*. Although the public relations unit in IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga still have to improve the implementation of this principle. The capacity of audience is in accordance with the attitude of the Prophet Muhammad which provides different information or answers because it adapts to the ability of the audience, and the content is in accordance with Islamic principles to meet the needs of society (Mubarok & Marhaeni, 2016; Trimanah & Wulandari, 2018).

In implementing the public relations strategy as an effort to improve the image of the institution, IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga are taking the same effort. First, the public relations strategy is pursued through websites and social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). The use of social media today has become a necessity. This is due to the rapid development of technology as a means of conveying information. These developments led to the transformation of the times to the millennial era. One of the characteristics of the generation living in the millennial era is the time of their birth. According to Howe & Strauss (1992), the millennial generation is a generation born in 1982 to 2000. In addition, according to Martin & Tulgan (2006), millennial generation is a generation that was born and lived between 1978 and 2000. In addition, the characteristics of this millennial generation are following technological developments and being always connected to various applications available on the internet (Zulhazmi & Hastuti, 2018).

The use of social media by IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga creates a positive image and improves two-way communication between institutions and society in accordance with the objectives of public relations (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2013). Another positive image that IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga want to show is that these two HEI are willing to keep up with the times. In addition, the use of social media also illustrates that these two HEI want to provide easy access to information and news needed by society. Moreover, the use of social media by IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga is also to strengthen the image that these institutions are able to provide an example to the public regarding the use of social media for positive things. Zulhazmi & Hastuti (2018) noted that the internet and social media have several positive contributions. In addition,

according to [Pienrasmi \(2015\)](#) social media is a new way to spread information. Social media can convey information more quickly and reach a wider audience at a lower cost. Further, more public responses to information dissemination activities through social media are obtained and more effort can be conducted immediately by universities. Social media provides easy access for universities and the public to communicate directly and in two ways communication.

Social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) and the websites used by IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga have relatively the same conditions. These media are used to publish news and information related to these HEI. Specifically, this information contains the publication of activities (whether carried out by the institution or by students), student information, new student information, profile information (such as faculties and study programs contained in the institute), information on leaders and organizational structures, announcements of activities that will be carried out, and the laws and regulations that underlie the performance of each unit in the institution. The delivery of this information certainly has a target, namely the stakeholders. As written by [Sulistyaningtyas \(2007\)](#) that there are several types of university stakeholders, namely:

First, prospective students. Prospective students become targets to meet the needs of the number of students needed in these HEI. In the context of IAIN Salatiga and IAIN Surakarta, the information needed by prospective students is faculty and study program profiles, profiles of Student Activity Unit, and new student information as shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. The appearance of the IAIN Surakarta website (Source: www.iain-surakarta.ac.id)

Second, students. Students are the target of the public relations strategy because students are part of a university. In addition, whatever students get will be conveyed to a wider audience. In the context of the website and IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga, there is a lot of information for students, for example information on registration, information on activities (both academic and non-

academic, for example seminars, workshops, UKM activities, and so on).

Third, human resources. Human resources are the target of public relations because human resources in internal institutions also need information. Information provided by IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga for human resources is about the laws and regulations that underlie work mechanisms and information about rank and position.

Fourth, alumni. Even though they have graduated from college, alumni still need some information from the college. The information provided by IAIN Surakarta is for example a satisfaction survey, a survey on the satisfaction of lecturers and employees towards the IAIN Surakarta institution, a survey on student satisfaction with the performance of lecturers and student services, a survey on alumni tracking studies. In addition, IAIN Surakarta also provides institute and study program certificate files, so that if there are alumni of IAIN Surakarta who want to continue their study to master degree or apply for jobs and need an accreditation certificate, they can download the certificate file. Meanwhile, IAIN Salatiga provides a tracer study on its website, so that alumni can fill it in for IAIN Salatiga data.



Figure 3. IAIN Salatiga Website Display
(Source: www.iaain-salatiga.ac.id)

Fifth, industry and business. Industry and business are targeted because industry and business will become partners, particularly as job providers for alumni (although alumni are also encouraged to become entrepreneurs to create jobs).

Sixth, parents. In terms of public relations, parents are expected to play a role in supporting the decision makers of prospective students or students. Some of the information presented by IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga, for example faculty profiles and study programs, information on new student examinations, information on registration, registration and registration procedures.

Seventh, the local community. College is located in the middle of society. Therefore, the openness of universities to society is needed. One form of openness is to build communication and public relations. The websites and social media of IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga have provided various information needed by the community, for example information on the types of faculties and study programs, costs required, available facilities, types of scholarships, college addresses, and university activities.

The use of social media and websites was chosen because social media and websites make it easier for the public to access information so that the IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga colleges are closer to the community. In addition, the use of websites and social media as a means of public relations because websites and social media are able to increase the positive image of the higher education institution. As stated by [Alhadid & Qaddomi \(2016\)](#), the use of social media can increase a positive image in institutions.

Although IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga have used social media and websites to convey information in order to improve the image of higher education, there are several things that are need to noted. The note is the consistency and type of news or information on social media and college websites. The news on the IAIN Surakarta website is not consistent. Sometimes webiste contain two to three stories a day, and sometimes there are only two to three stories a week.

The IAIN Surakarta website is linked to other links, for example the website links of the Ministry of Religion, Directorate General of Islamic Education, and Academic Information Systems. In addition, the IAIN Surakarta website is also integrated with social media. The social media is twitter. On Twitter, the communication carried out by PR has a fluctuating intensity. On the one hand, in one day up to two tweets. However, on the other hand, sometimes within a week only two to three tweets. Twitter of IAIN Surakarta has since November 2012 tweets as many as 1,362 tweets (data on July 8, 2019 at 20.23). The ratio is 0.5676. This means that not every day there is information or news uploaded by PRO IAIN Surakarta. In fact, if you look at the number of Twitter followers of IAIN Surakarta, it is quite large, namely 2,955 followers (data up to July 8 2019 at 20.23 WIB). Twitter with a large number of followers can be a public relations modality for IAIN Surakarta to provide as much information as possible about IAIN Surakarta so that the image of the institution increases.

Likewise, what happened in the social media and the IAIN Salatiga website. Regarding the consistency of the presentation of news information on the IAIN Salatiga website and social media, it is still volatile. This means that not every day there are news of activities. Sometimes there is one news every day, but there is also one news with the next activity two weeks apart (for example the news of IAIN Salatiga building a green campus on September 25, 2018 and the news that IAIN Salatiga will soon build a mosque on October 9, 2018). Public Relations of IAIN Salatiga using twitter. Statistics of IAIN Salatiga on twitter are that they

joined in September 2016. As of July 9 2019 at 20:16 WIB, IAIN Salatiga has 465 tweets and 1,292 followers. The ratio is 0.465. This means, not every day there is news or information on Twitter. Considering that IAIN Salatiga has just joined for 2 years and 9 months and already has 1,292 followers, this should be a valuable modality for IAIN Salatiga public relations to convey information.

Regarding the consistent delivery of information and news carried out by public relations, [Cutlip et al.](#) (2013) wrote that one of the functions of public relations or public relations is to create two-way or reciprocal communication and regulate the flow of information, publications and messages from agencies/organizations to the public or vice versa, in order to achieve a positive image for both parties. Talking creates two-way communication, then it also talks about the consistency of communication or the delivery of information as a public relations strategy. The public relations strategy should be implemented consistently. What's more, according to [Melewar, Foroudi, Gupya, Kitchen, & Foroudi](#) (2017); [Rinrattanakorn](#) (1992); [Mohamed & Otieno](#) (2015) states that public relations strategies to improve the image of an institution or institution should be carried out consistently.

Consistency as a measure of the quality of public relations can be understood. This is because the consistency of information delivery by public relations indicates openness on the part of public relations. In addition, this consistency indicates that public relations parties are actually carrying out their role in conveying information to the public. In the context of IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga, the delivery of this information has not achieved this consistency. As has been written, public relations are still fluctuating in publishing information on tertiary institutions. On the one hand, there are two to three stories in a day. On the other hand, other times, there are only two to three stories in one week.

News and information of IAIN Salatiga in external media are also not too much and are less consistent, meaning that there is not every day news and information about IAIN Salatiga. Public Relations of IAIN Salatiga is trying to improve the image of the IAIN Salatiga institution with several news, one of which is that IAIN Salatiga will become an academic tourist destination as well as efforts to improve the status of IAIN Salatiga to become UIN Salatiga. Related to IAIN Surakarta's public relations communication strategy to external media, it has been implemented, but it has not been consistent. For example, to the media Solopos, Republika, Metrotv, Seconds, and the Ministry of Religion.

On the other hand, the tagline Religiosity, Civility, Modernity, Professionalism can be a parameter of the success of the performance of each component in IAIN Surakarta, including the public relations department. The information contained in IAIN Surakarta's communication media cannot be considered to have reached the parameters of Religiosity, Civility, Modernity, Professionalism. Likewise, IAIN Salatiga, news and information uploaded by IAIN Salatiga public relations is deemed to have failed to meet the tagline parameters of

spirituality, intellectuality, professionalism. This is due to the low news or information that contains the elements contained in the tagline. The majority of news and information contained in the websites and social media of IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga are news and information on student activities. Actually, IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga as Islamic colleges have tried to create content that contains elements of religiosity and spirituality in accordance with the tagline. However, the content is not consistent and only at certain times, for example the creation of religious content during the month of Ramadan.

Public Relations officers in IAIN Surakarta imaged their institution with A-accredited of eleven study programs as shown in Figure 4, namely Islamic Banking, Aqidah and Islamic Philosophy, Koran and Tafsir, Islamic Religious Education, English Literature, Arabic Language Education, Sharia Business Management, English Language Education, Sharia Economic Law, Islamic Family Law, and Islamic Early Childhood Education.



Figure 4. Ten Study Programs Accredited A IAIN Surakarta on the Website
(source: www.iain-surakarta.ac.id)

A Good accreditation (accreditation A or excellence score) can create a good image for higher education. This indicates that the university is able to manage the study program well so that the accreditation of the college is superior. In the next stage, when universities have a good image, public trust will be higher (Kamal & Rahmadiane, 2017). This is evident from the trend of increasing the number of students at IAIN Surakarta from year to year. In addition, the image of the IAIN Surakarta higher education institution lies in the Omah Journal. There are 15 journals at IAIN Surakarta (until 2019). These 15 journals are under the Omah Journal of IAIN Surakarta. The Omah Journal of IAIN Surakarta has been around since 2013 and has become a model for managing journals in other universities. This is evidenced by several visits from other university journal managers, for example IAIN Purwokerto and Darussalam Gontor University. There are two journals out of 15 journals that have been accredited by Sinta for

rank 2. Whenever there is a journal that has been successfully accredited, the public relations department will put up a congratulatory banner in front of the gate of IAIN Surakarta as information to the public.

The image of the IAIN Surakarta university that is also being strived for by public relations is the uploading of various types of regulations and announcements related to higher education on the IAIN Surakarta website. The image of IAIN Surakarta is also built by affirming the vision and mission of IAIN Surakarta, that IAIN Surakarta is a university that upholds local wisdom. According to [Kriyantono \(2018\)](#); [Nugraha \(2014\)](#); [Wagiran \(2012\)](#) states that the use of local wisdom values is able to generate a positive image so that it affects the public. Moreover, if viewed from the context of IAIN Surakarta in the Sukoharjo and Surakarta areas where the level of heterogeneity of religious thought is very high, the affirmation of local wisdom is important as a high bargaining value and a positive image to help people solve problems caused by differences in religious paradigms. .

Regarding reporting about the quality of journals as a component to improve the image of higher education, IAIN Salatiga also has quality journals. The journal is Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslims Societies (IJIMS). IJIMS has been indexed by Scopus and is the only journal in Indonesia that has the quality of Best Quartile 1 or Q1 (data until 2019). Another image of the IAIN Salatiga institution is the construction of a new building which becomes campus III on the Salatiga Ring Road. The two new buildings are called the building of KH Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan. The two figures represent the founders of the largest Islamic social organizations in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. In addition, the two figures are considered role models and reflections of moderate Muslims who developed Islam adapted to Indonesian culture. According to [Aini \(2018\)](#); [Arif & Pareno \(2018\)](#); [Nur & Mukhlis \(2015\)](#), emphasizing the value of moderate Muslims can clean the image of Islam from various things that have polluted it lately, for example radicalism and terrorism in Islam. Therefore, upholding the symbol of moderate Muslims (in the context of IAIN Salatiga, using KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan as the names of the building) will be able to improve the image of the university because it is a sign that the university plays a role in spreading moderate Islamic understanding which uphold peace, tolerance and openness to differences.

A good image of IAIN Salatiga is also created from the information component on the website, for example in Figure 5 shows a service satisfaction survey. Every visitor to the IAIN Salatiga website can fill out the survey and then it will be processed automatically so that a service satisfaction index will appear. As described by [Ratnasari \(2016\)](#), the quality of higher education services, student satisfaction, and the image of higher education are related. In addition, there is also a link that will take the access to regulatory documents, one of which is a standard operating procedure (SOP) document. Of course, this SOP is needed by

every party who wants to interact and collaborate as well as do what is needed at IAIN Salatiga. The SOP can be opened and downloaded by any access to the IAIN Salatiga website. Another image highlighted by IAIN Salatiga is that IAIN Salatiga is a green campus, or a campus that prioritizes environmental care and sustainability.



Figure 5. Service Satisfaction Survey on the IAIN Salatiga Website
(source: www.iain-salatiga.ac.id)

The final image raised by the public relations unit in IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga is they will be transformed into the State Islamic University (UIN) in the near future. The university is popular as the highest and most complex form of HEI because it contains various types and domains of study programs and faculties. Thus, the study programs contained in UIN are not only religious programs of study, but also non-religious program of studies. Thus, UIN can attract the interest wider society. As explained by Musyarrofah (2018) that public relations can help universities to develop and increase a positive image with these developments. Aminuddin (2019) also said that changing institutions can be a strategy to create an image that the institution or college is able to face challenges and optimize opportunities in the future.

Da'wah in Image Improvement of IAIN Salatiga and IAIN Surakarta by Public Relations Officers

IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga are two Islamic HEI, so they have two functions, educational institution and da'wah (missionary) institution. Their function as educational institution is implemented by holding a learning and teaching process for students, starting from the undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral levels. The function as a da'wah institution is carried out by publishing various information that provide religious information for the community. One

example of da'wah function is at the time IAIN Surakarta collaborated with one of the mass media to create a Q&A video about religious issues and IAIN Salatiga created a short video lecture which uploaded on the Youtube channel. This effort is a part of strategy to create a good image that play by these two educational institutions in the area of religious da'wah. It is time for each party to use the information media to maximize da'wah opportunities. considering that information media is growing rapidly, from writing, to mass media radio and television, and now turning to social media (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and Instagram).

In addition, the efforts of IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga to optimize social media for preaching and improving the image of the institution also by applying the principles of da'wah formulated by Sayyid Qutub. First, concerning to the condition and situation of *mad'u* or audience of da'wah. Most of the audiences of IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga da'wah movement are students who need to practicality Islamic knowledge, and people who literate to social media. So, IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga use social media as a means of preaching, especially on the Youtube channel. In the context of da'wah, the people need videos and information in short duration that answer their problems and their needs, so Youtube channels are increasingly popular. Second, the materials needed by the community. The da'wa materials uploaded by IAIN Surakarta are about religious and islamic issues, for example the law of smoking with vape when fasting, the law of gargling when fasting, forgiving during Eid, the importance of tarawih prayer and others. The da'wah materials uploaded by IAIN Salatiga are activities in IAIN Salatiga campus and religious lectures as well as ramadan teachings. Therefore, the Public Relations officers in IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga understood the advantages of the internet and social media as a means of improvement the their institution image, especially as a da'wah institution. This is because the internet and social media are not hindered by space and time, making dakwah more varied, the number of internet users increasing, and saving costs and energy.

The 7C principle in public relations to improve the image of Islamic HEI that implemented by IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga is in line with Islamic values. For example, the principle of credibility is in accordance with the principle of *amanah* (trustworthiness) and honesty, consistency and continuity according to the principle of *istiqamah* although the public relations of IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga still have to improve the implementation of this principle, capacity of the audience is in accordance with the attitude of the Prophet Muhammad. which provides different information or answers because it adapts to the ability of the questioner or audience, and the content is in accordance with Islamic principles to meet the needs of society (Mubarak & Marhaeni, 2016; Trimanah & Wulandari, 2018).

The principle of *amanah* is applied by IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga

with information openness. Any information needed by the academic community and society that uploaded on social media and websites. In addition, this trustworthiness principle is also applied by IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga by achieving good quality accreditation, both accreditation of study programs, institutions, and academic journals. IAIN Surakarta has eleven study programs accredited A, while IAIN Salatiga has study programs accredited A and journals that have been accredited internationally (IJIMS journal). This achievement is an indicator for the two tertiary institutions that both universities have a good quality of education so that people can entrust their sons and daughters to receive education at the two universities.

The principle of openness is applied by IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga in the form of creating a scientific journal site without paying (open access journal). This means that everyone can access the journal site and download the journal without having to pay. The site contains various research results, both from local lecturers and from scientists and academics from all over Indonesia and the country. The research is written in the form of journal, so the journal is a media for publication of research results that can be used as a reference for solving community problems. As already understood, research begins with phenomena and problems that occur in society. So, research can also be interpreted as an effort to find solutions to solve these problems. On the other hand, journals as a media for publication of research results also invite all parties to carry out research results to achieve the benefit of the people. The process of inviting this can be interpreted as preaching, as the meaning of preaching is inviting. This means that the process of preaching at IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga is not only religious teachings, but also other research area to take a role in solving problems according to the research results in the journal.

The image of IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga as da'wah institutions is also reflected in their motto. IAIN Surakarta's motto is religiosity, civility, modernity, and professionalism, while IAIN Salatiga promotes spirituality, intellectuality, and professionalism. There is the word religiosity in the slogan of IAIN Surakarta and spirituality in the slogan of IAIN Salatiga, which indicates that the two universities not only carry out an educational function, but also a da'wah function. Both the function of da'wah in general and the function of preaching in particular. The function of da'wah in general is to invite the academic community and society to have good moral, while the function of da'wah in particular is to invite the academic community and society to study religion properly.

In addition, the public relations officers in an institution, is to carrying out duties in accordance with the function of da'wah, also have a role to maintain the reputation of an institution as an institution that carries out the principles of da'wah. As stated by Sari (2017), public relations or public relations plays a role as a communicator, so that it is expected to have an influence on the harmonious relationship between an institution and its public. Being a communicator causes

public relations or public relations to be professional in carrying out their roles. Professionalism is one of the principles of da'wah, that da'wah must be a means of empowering the community. In the context of this research, the public relations office in IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga have been professional in reporting various activities in the two institutions, especially community service activities aimed at empowering the community, both carried out by lecturers and students through the Community Service Program (*Kuliah Kerja Nyata*). In addition, public relations office in both institutions also publish some information or videos containing solutions to religious problems so as to enlighten people's understanding of Islam. Thus, public relations office in both institutions have carried out the principle of da'wah in the form of empowering the community.

The news also enhances the image that IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga have a role not only for lecturers and students, but also for the wider community with various service activities. At this point, the two institutions have played a da'wah role in the form of empowering the community.

Thoah & Jannah (2018) explained that in helping institutions public relations create a religious image. In the context of IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga, public relations officers play a role in maintaining the reputation of the two educational institutions as da'wah institutions under the supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Furthermore, the professional principles that must be carried out by public relations or public relations are in accordance with the principles of da'wah. Public relations create a religious image in the two institutions by tagging religiosity and spirituality, and making videos about religious issues. Thus, the two institutions not only carry out an educational function, but also a da'wah function.

CONCLUSION

IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga as Islamic High Education Institution and da'wah organization have units that concerns to convey and publish information. This unit is the public relations (PR) office under the authority of university. One of the duties of the public relations officers is to improve the positive image of institution. The public relations office of IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga have conveyed the information needed by the public. In addition, image enhancement is also pursued by delivering information related to accreditation of study programs, quality of academic journals, characteristics of higher education which are contained in the vision and mission of institution, as well as the transformation from institute to university. Nevertheless, the implementation of public relations principles related to improving the positive image of higher education still needs improvement, for example related to the consistency and continuity of information and news, a variety of information and news, as well as the suitability of information and news with the tagline carried by IAIN Surakarta and IAIN

Salatiga. As a da'wah institution these two HEI has played functions not only educational function but also da'wah function in empowering society to implement Islamic values.

Based on these conclusions, the suggestions formulated particularly for the public relations office in IAIN Surakarta and IAIN Salatiga as well as generally for public relations office in other HEI that they should publish information and news at least one news a day, because if we observe, there are many activities in campus every day, even in holidays. In addition, the public relations officers should also be able to include the elements that are carried in the college's tagline into any published information and news. Furthermore, public relations officers can improve their professionalism and quality in carrying out their duties. The suggestion I provide also that further researchers should examine the impact of public relations performance in enhancing positive image with other approaches, for example a quantitative approach, so that the magnitude of the impact of public relations performance can be ascertained. Thus, it will be known the amount of effectiveness of public relations performance in improving the positive image of Islamic High Education Institution.

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