

## CONSTRUCTING RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE IN THE DIGITAL ERA: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIES AT IAIN PAREPARE

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**Abstract:** *In the era of information disruption, State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) face challenges in maintaining religious authority in the virtual public sphere. This study aims to analyze the strategy of IAIN Parepare's Public Relations in constructing the discourse of religious moderation through digital media. Using a qualitative method with a Critical Discourse Analysis approach, this study dissects the text dimensions, discourse practice, and social practice of the campus's digital activities. The results show that IAIN Parepare's Public Relations acts not only as an administrative information manager but also as a strategic knowledge producer. The findings reveal: 1) Digital infrastructure (website, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) serves as a power tool to produce authoritative religious narratives; 2) At the textual level, Public Relations applies a strategy of vernacularization of moderation values by integrating Bugis local wisdom terms, such as "Panrita" and "Malebbi," in its digital da'wah programs; 3) At the social practice level, there is a transformation of communication from a one-way corporate pattern to a dialogic-participatory one, implying the strengthening of social legitimacy and the institution's positive image as a center of religious moderation.*

**Keywords:** *Digital Public Relations; Religious Moderation; Critical Discourse Analysis; Social Media; Local Wisdom*

**Abstrak:** Di tengah era disrupsi informasi, Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri (PTKIN) menghadapi tantangan dalam mempertahankan otoritas keagamaan di ruang publik virtual. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi Humas IAIN Parepare dalam mengonstruksi wacana moderasi beragama melalui media digital. Menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan Analisis Wacana Kritis (*Critical Discourse Analysis*), penelitian ini membedah dimensi teks, praktik produksi wacana, dan praktik sosial dari aktivitas digital kampus. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Humas IAIN Parepare tidak hanya berperan sebagai manajer informasi administratif, melainkan sebagai produsen pengetahuan yang strategis. Temuan mengungkapkan: 1) Infrastruktur digital (website, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) difungsikan sebagai alat kekuasaan untuk memproduksi narasi keagamaan yang otoritatif; 2) Pada level teks, Humas menerapkan strategi vernakularisasi nilai moderasi beragama dengan memadukan istilah kearifan lokal Bugis, seperti "Panrita" dan "Malebbi", dalam penamaan program dakwah digitalnya; 3) Pada level praktik sosial, terjadi transformasi komunikasi dari pola korporat satu arah menjadi dialogis-partisipatif, yang berimplikasi pada penguatan legitimasi sosial dan citra positif institusi sebagai pusat moderasi beragama.

**Kata Kunci:** Humas Digital; Moderasi Beragama; Analisis Wacana Kritis; Media Sosial; KearifanLokal

## Introduction

In an era characterized by information disruption, rapid flux is driven by the dynamic movement of data.<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon poses novel challenges for religious authorities and educational institutions, whereby virtually any individual can generate information and act as a reporter by leveraging information technology, bypassing official media channels or institutions. This condition is constructed by the exponential growth of information and communication technology, which ultimately necessitates a shift in how organizations manage information with precision and rectitude.<sup>2</sup>

For State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (*Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri* or PTKIN), this phenomenon is not merely technical, but discursive. Information inaccuracy not only threatens organizational reputation and credibility but also risks distorting public religious understanding.<sup>3</sup> Currently, information is susceptible to alteration and distortion by a public that processes and reproduces news according to subjective views and interests. Consequently, Public Relations (PR)—as the unit tasked with bridging communication with the public—possesses a strategic role that extends beyond mere news dissemination.<sup>4</sup>

PR practitioners must remain industrious and adaptive, ensuring the provision of information regarding every organizational eventuality. The role of PR, often termed the organization's 'mouthpiece', must position information as a vital instrument in forging the nexus between the organization and the public. If information is delivered rapidly, accurately, and positively, it enhances the organization's image; conversely, negative information entails detrimental implications. In the context of PTKIN, this image is intrinsically linked to public trust in the institution as a guardian of religious moderation.

To navigate the contestation of discourse in the public sphere, PR must adopt a competitive and innovative paradigm, leveraging digital media as the locus of information management. The utilization of websites and social media has become the primary preference for business enterprises and non-profit organizations alike.<sup>5</sup> Previous studies, such as those by Wahyuddin and Sugiana, have highlighted the efficacy of digital platforms in disseminating health information during Diphtheria outbreaks, as well as their utility for creative economy actors in promotion and productivity enhancement.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dakir, *Manajemen Humas di Lembaga Pendidikan Era Global*, Yogyakarta: Penerbit K-Media, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Dikhorir Afnan, "Fungsi Humas Desa Sebagai Pengelola Informasi di Era Keterbukaan Informasi Publik," *Jurnal SosHum Insentif*, 2019, 153–63, doi:10.36787/jsi.v2i2.135.

<sup>3</sup> Cindy Muawanah Khoirunnisak, Irzum Fariyah, and Ihya Nur Syamsiani, "Strategi Kehumasan Dalam Membangun Citra IAIN Kudus Sebagai Perguruan Tinggi Islam Terapan Di Era Digital," *Al-Jamahiria: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Dakwah Islam* 2, no. 2 (December 31, 2024): 186–97, doi:10.30983/al-jamahiria.v2i2.8700.

<sup>4</sup> Luthfia Amanda, "Peran Humas Sebagai Fasilitator Publikasi Informasi Dan Dokumentasi Di Perguruan Tinggi," *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan* 13, no. 1 (June 19, 2022): 1–5, doi:10.21009/jmp.v13i1.27048.

<sup>5</sup> Evawani Elysa Lubis, "Peran Humas Dalam Membentuk Citra Pemerintah," *Jurnal Ilmu Administrasi Negara* 12, no. 1 (2012): 51–60.

<sup>6</sup> Dolly Indra Syahputra, Yan Hendra, and Taufik Wal Hidayat, "Peran Humas Dalam Membangun Citra Pemerintahan Sumatera Utara Pada Kantor Biro Humas Gubernur," *Perspektif* 7, no. 1 (2019): 24, doi:10.31289/perspektif.v7i1.2523.

Nevertheless, there is a paucity of critical scrutiny regarding how digital media is utilized by PTKIN to construct socio-religious discourse.<sup>7</sup> While the adoption of websites and social media in higher education is an inevitability—with many Indonesian institutions, including PTKIN, employing them as central information hubs—examining the role of PR in this context remains imperative. It becomes particularly compelling when linked to how institutions curate narratives of religious moderation amidst a disruptive information tide.

*Institut Agama Islam Negeri* (IAIN) Parepare is a prominent PTKIN in South Sulawesi, distinguished by a PR division that is notably active and productive in digital information management.<sup>8</sup> Its contribution to processing information via websites and social media has garnered national acclaim. Specifically, the PR of IAIN Parepare secured the top award within the PTKIN scope for the oversight news category from the Inspectorate General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Kemenag RI*) in 2020, first place in a national short video competition in 2021, and second place in the PTKIN PR Award by *Kemenag RI* in 2022.<sup>9</sup>

This research aims to explore the existence and role of PR at IAIN Parepare through a critical lens. The fundamental enquiry addresses the extent to which digital media usage accelerates the PR role, not merely in promotion, but in forming religious discourse. This is pivotal given the interest of higher education institutions, particularly PTKIN, in building trust, image, and reputation via digital media. Therefore, this study employs a qualitative method<sup>10</sup> with a critical discourse analysis approach to dissect the strategies of IAIN Parepare's PR in constructing the discourse of religious moderation in the digital era.<sup>11</sup>

### Digital Infrastructure as a Means of Discourse Production

From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the public relations (PR) activities of IAIN Parepare must not be construed merely as administrative functions, but rather as strategic discursive practices. These practices aim to shape, direct, and secure religious discourse and institutional image within an increasingly saturated and competitive digital public sphere. PR acts not merely as a conduit for information, but as an actor exercising control over the very means of meaning production.<sup>12</sup>

Mastery over digital infrastructure is an indispensable prerequisite in contemporary discourse contestation. Information management at IAIN Parepare PR is entirely predicated on digital media, supported by the integration of robust applications

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<sup>7</sup> Uud Wahyudin and Dadang Sugiana, "Penggunaan Media Digital Untuk Penanganan Klb Difteri" 2 (2018).

<sup>8</sup> Lina Sinatra Wijaya Yosua Jefri Apriananta, "Penggunaan Website Dan Media Sosial Dalam Membangun Citra Positif Perguruan Tinggi," *Komunikatif, Jurnal Ilmiah Komunikasi* 7, no. 2 (2018), doi:<https://doi.org/10.33508/jk.v7i2.1750>.

<sup>9</sup> Yauma Alyanur, "Peran dan Tugas Dosen pada Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi," *ldikti13.kemdikbud.go.id/*, n.d., <https://ldikti13.kemdikbud.go.id/2024/06/03/peran-dan-tugas-dosen-pada-tri-dharma-perguruan-tinggi/>.

<sup>10</sup> Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Kualitatif R&D*, II, vol. I (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2019).

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Zajda, "Using Critical Discourse Analysis in Values Education". *Discourses of Globalisation, Cultural Diversity and Values Education*. London: Springer, 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Hayana, "Terbaik Kedua, Humas IAIN Parepare Terima Penghargaan Dari Menag RI," *IAIN Parepare.Ac.Id*, January 24, 2023, <https://www.iainpare.ac.id/blog/berita-1/terbaik-kedua-humas-iain-parepare-terima-penghargaan-dari-menag-ri-1041>.

and hardware. Reliance on this infrastructure signifies a paradigm shift from conventional PR to digital PR, which is adaptive to the velocity of information flow.

In the context of discourse production, IAIN Parepare PR has established a comprehensive media ecosystem. They control the instruments of message production through two mutually complementary channels: the institutional website and various social media platforms. The synergy between these channels creates a discursive network, enabling official institutional information to reach various demographic strata of the audience.<sup>13</sup>

The primary foundation of this infrastructure is the website with the official domain [www.iainpare.ac.id](http://www.iainpare.ac.id). This website serves not merely as a digital noticeboard, but as an authoritative institutional archive that has existed since 2010, when the campus still held the status of STAIN. As the oldest managed digital artefact, the website represents the stability and academic legitimacy of IAIN Parepare in the cyber realm.

The function of this website is reinforced by its role as a central data integration hub. It functions as a campus information centre integrated with 20 Management Information System (MIS) applications, including finance and staffing. This indicates that IAIN Parepare positions data sovereignty as the fundamental basis for producing accurate and data-driven discourse.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, the website acts as the nucleus for information decentralization. It serves as the hub for 42 sub-domain websites managed by work units and study programmes under the aegis of IAIN Parepare. This structure allows scientific and religious narratives to be produced not only centrally by the rectorate but also reproduced organically by the smallest units on campus, creating a polyphony of voices that remains within a unified institutional framework.

Meanwhile, to reach a broader, more fluid, and interactive audience, IAIN Parepare PR undertakes discourse expansion into social media. The platforms utilized include Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and TikTok. This multi-platform usage demonstrates a strategy of adaptation to the varied information consumption behaviours of modern society.<sup>15</sup>

I AIN Parepare's Facebook page, for instance, serves as one of the most massive instruments in discourse dissemination. This account boasts a post reach achieving a substantial figure of 143,525. This reach indicates that messages of religious moderation or campus policies produced by PR possess viral potential and significant social impact that transcends the physical boundaries of the campus.

The strength of Facebook lies not only in reach but in public engagement. Recorded post interactions stand at 51,399, with 7,942 followers. This high level of interaction indicates that the discourse projected by IAIN Parepare is not merely passive consumption; rather, it is responded to, discussed, and reinterpreted by the public,

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<sup>13</sup> Syahputra, Hendra, and Hidayat, "Peran Humas Dalam Membangun Citra Pemerintahan Sumatera Utara Pada Kantor Biro Humas Gubernur." *Perspektif*. Vol. 7 (1), 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Heriyanti Heriyanti, Ummanah Ummanah, and Resman Maharul Tambunan, "Peningkatan Kualitas Sumber Daya Manusia Melalui Pelatihan Peranan Humas Bagi Anggota Polresta Tangerang," *Indonesian Journal for Social Responsibility* 3, no. 2 (2020): 75–82, doi:10.36782/ijsr.v3i02.84.

<sup>15</sup> Rosady Ruslan, *Manajemen Public Relations & Media Komunikasi*, Rajawali Pers, 11th ed., vol. 11 (Jakarta: Rajawali Perss, 2018).

thereby creating a vibrant social dialectic.<sup>16</sup>

Conversely, Instagram is utilized to capture a more visual audience, particularly the youth segment. The IAIN Parepare Instagram account, established in 2017, has become the institution's visual showcase. In the period of June–August 2023 alone, there were 9,144 visitors viewing posts, comprising both followers and non-followers. The ability to reach non-followers is crucial in expanding the influence of institutional discourse to new publics.

The YouTube platform is also managed rigorously through the 'IAIN Parepare TV' channel, established on 29 August 2018. This channel functions akin to a campus television station, independently producing audio-visual content. With 3,985 subscribers, the channel has successfully built a loyal community of viewers anticipating educational and religious content from the campus.<sup>17</sup>

Discourse productivity on YouTube is notably high and consistent. IAIN Parepare PR has published 492 videos, viewed 178,200 times, with a total watch time reaching 12,200 hours. This accumulation of watch hours serves as empirical evidence that IAIN Parepare has succeeded in becoming a reference source for information and educational entertainment in the digital domain.

To ensure the produced discourse possesses competitiveness and credibility, the production process is supported by professional technology. The PR team utilizes various popular design and editing applications such as Canva, Adobe Premiere, Filmora, and Photoshop. The use of this creative industry-standard software ensures that message packaging—both visual and video—possesses an aesthetic quality capable of attracting attention amidst the deluge of information.<sup>18</sup>

This infrastructure is further completed by robust hardware support. IAIN Parepare equips its PR team with computers, laptops, cameras, handycams, recording devices, and drones for aerial filming. The presence of sophisticated equipment such as drones demonstrates the institution's commitment to presenting a modern and comprehensive visual perspective.

Collectively, this digital infrastructure confirms that IAIN Parepare PR employs an organized management and planning approach in message production. This infrastructure is not merely an operational tool, but an engine of discourse production that enables IAIN Parepare to control narratives, establish an authoritative image, and effectively disseminate Islamic values to the wider society.<sup>19</sup>

### **Message Textuality: Mainstreaming Religious Moderation as Religious Discourse**

At the level of text analysis, content production by IAIN Parepare PR transcends basic informative functions. IAIN Parepare PR produces content that is not merely technical-administrative but ideological, particularly in campaigning for religious moderation within the higher education environment. This is evident in the

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<sup>16</sup> Andik Prakasa Hadi and Faiz Abdul Rokhman, "Implementasi Website Sebagai Media Informasi Dan Promosi Pada Pondok Pesantren Putra-Putri Addainuriyah 2 Semarang," *Pixel: Jurnal Ilmiah Komputer Grafis* 13, no. 1 (2020): 39–49, doi:10.51903/pixel.v13i1.190.

<sup>17</sup> Anang Sugeng Cahyono, "Pengaruh Media Sosial Terhadap Perubahan Sosial Masyarakat Di Indonesia," *Publiciana* 6, no. 1 (2017): 202–25, doi:10.32923/asy.v5i2.1586.

<sup>18</sup> Fiqfahiya Lita Zanjabila, "Pengelolaan Media Sosial Dan Website Di SMK Negeri 1 Cepu," *Hijri, Jurnal Manajemen Kependidikan Dan Keislaman* 1 (2022): 84–98, doi:10.30821/hijri.v1i1.11805.

<sup>19</sup> Rina Juwita, "Media Sosial Dan Perkembangan Komunikasi Korporat," *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi* 1, no. 20 (2017): 47–60.



image-building programmes designed strategically via digital media. These programmes aim not only to popularize the campus but to implant specific values into the public consciousness.<sup>20</sup>

From a critical discourse perspective, image building is an endeavour in the contestation of meaning. IAIN Parepare PR utilizes digital media as the primary medium for branding. Through this medium, they construct the identity of IAIN Parepare not merely as an educational institution, but as a centre of moderate religious authority. This strategy is executed through the intensification of news publication and information on innovative activities, at both national and international scales.

Furthermore, IAIN Parepare PR creates in-depth broadcast programmes, producing content such as podcasts, live streaming, or video streaming. This choice of format indicates a shift from static text to dynamic text that is more persuasive. These contents are designed to provide profound information as well as scientific and religious enlightenment to the public. The term ‘enlightenment’ here indicates the position of PR as an educator guiding public understanding.<sup>21</sup>

Specifically, the discourse of religious moderation is constructed through the nomenclature of their flagship programmes. One primary programme is the weekly news segment titled ‘*Malebbi’ Kareba IAIN Parepare*’. The use of this phrase in the programme title is a linguistic strategy laden with cultural significance.

Additionally, there is a podcast programme named ‘*Ada-ada Tau Panrita*’. This programme is explicitly positioned as a ‘Podcasting Religious Moderation Funnel’. The label ‘Moderation Funnel’ firmly declares the institution’s ideological alignment with the narrative of moderate Islam (*wasathiyah*), whilst simultaneously countering narratives of extremism prevalent on social media.<sup>22</sup>

The use of local terms such as ‘*Panrita*’ (signifying scholar/cleric in Bugis local wisdom) and ‘*Malebbi*’ (signifying polite/noble) in programme naming demonstrates an astute cultural strategy in communicating religious messages. IAIN Parepare PR performs a vernacularization of global moderation values into a local language familiar to the South Sulawesi audience.

Through the ‘*Ada-ada Tau Panrita*’ programme, PR positions academics and campus religious figures as sources of legitimate authority. The discourse produced in this podcast is not merely casual conversation, but a transmission of religious values. Thus, digital media functions as a new academic pulpit to articulate moderation.<sup>23</sup>

Beyond the local nuance, PR also presents another podcast programme titled ‘*Talking Academics IAIN Parepare*’. This programme utilizes English or global terms to showcase the campus’s side of modernity and intellectuality. This variation in programme naming—between the local and the global—shows PR’s flexibility in concocting texts to be acceptable to various demographic segments.

In the production process, IAIN Parepare PR is involved fully from upstream to downstream. They handle data collection, data processing, and information

<sup>20</sup> Kemendikbud, “Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia Daring,” n.d., [kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id](http://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id).

<sup>21</sup> Suryani Barimbing and Yunisa Octavia, “Peran Hubungan Masyarakat (Humas) Dalam Penyebarluasan Informasi Pembangunan Daerah Di Kabupaten Bengkalis Riau,” *JIPAGS (Journal of Indonesian Public Administration and Governance Studies)* 6, no. 2 (July 30, 2022), doi:10.31506/jipags.v6i2.15997.

<sup>22</sup> Satya Wacana Christian University Indonesia et al., “Penggunaan Website Dan Media Sosial Dalam Membangun Citra Positif Perguruan Tinggi,” *Jurnal Komunikatif* 7, no. 2 (December 2018): 187–209, doi:10.33508/jk.v7i2.1750.

<sup>23</sup> Nurtanio Agus and Rahmania Utari, “Humas Pendidikan (Buku Pegangan Kuliah) Program Studi Manajemen Pendidikan” (Yogyakarta: Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, 2019).

publication. Full control over this information production chain enables PR to select diction and narratives most aligned with the institutional vision before they are released to the public.<sup>24</sup>

The forms of text presented are highly varied. Information content is produced in various formats such as news scripts, infographics, photography, videographics, or live broadcast content. This diversity of text forms enriches the audience's experience in consuming the discourse of religious moderation, allowing weighty messages to be digested more lightly through engaging visualization.

The distribution of these texts is segmented. Information content in the form of long news scripts is published via the website, whereas visual and audio-visual content is disseminated through social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. This segmentation ensures that each platform presents 'text' suited to its user characteristics, yet still carries the same single grand narrative.<sup>25</sup>

Information quality becomes a priority in this discourse production. IAIN Parepare PR recognizes that in the post-truth era, credibility is the primary currency. Therefore, they strive to provide quality information. Indicators of this quality are viewed from the level of accuracy, relevance, truth, credibility, and utility of the information for the public.

This quality information is deemed crucial for building trust. Information is judged by the extent to which it is trustworthy and provides benefits to its users. By presenting valid and accountable religious content, IAIN Parepare is constructing a fortress of discourse to shield the public from hoaxes or misleading religious information.<sup>26</sup>

This effort is reinforced by a programme-based digital information service approach. Programmes such as 'Malebbi' Kareba' and 'Ada-ada Tau Panrita' are executed consistently, not incidentally. Consistency (*istiqamah*) in producing this text is vital for forming the public collective memory regarding the role of IAIN Parepare. Thus, through these programmes, PR does not merely act as a provider of information services. More than that, they act as producers of knowledge redefining the moderate Islamic values distinct to IAIN Parepare. Digital infrastructure and content production capabilities become instruments of power to win the hearts and minds of the public in the cyber realm.<sup>27</sup>

### **Social Practice: Resonance of Campus Religious Authority**

At the level of social practice analysis, the use of digital media by IAIN Parepare PR has fundamentally altered the interaction pattern between campus authority and the public. Digital media is no longer viewed as a unidirectional channel, but as a space for the dynamic negotiation of meaning. This shift is characterized by the capability of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to

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<sup>24</sup> Ali Nurhadi et al., "Bridging the Gap: Improving Lecturer Adherence to the Tri Dharma of Higher Education through Performance Monitoring," *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 4 (December 7, 2024): 1097–1109, doi:10.33650/al-tanzim.v8i4.8568.

<sup>25</sup> Rudy Haryanto and Sylvia Rozza, "Pengembangan Strategi Pemasaran Dan Manajemen Hubungan Masyarakat Dalam Meningkatkan Peminat Layanan Pendidikan," *Ekonomi & Bisnis* 11, no. 1 (March 18, 2013), doi:10.32722/eb.v11i1.99.

<sup>26</sup> Poppi Damayanti, "Pengembangan Humas Efektif Di Perguruan Tinggi," *Journal of Public Policy and Administration Silampari* 3, no. 1 (2021): 6, doi:10.31539/joppas.v3i1.3113.

<sup>27</sup> Citra Anggraini and Yugih Setyanto, "Peranan Public Relations Dalam Mempertahankan Eksistensi Ramayana," *Prologia* 3, no. 2 (December 21, 2019): 408, doi:10.24912/pr.v3i2.6373.

provide communication and interaction features, enabling bidirectional dialogue between the institution and society.<sup>28</sup>

This interactivity deconstructs the academic ivory tower that has historically alienated the campus from society. Through comment features and direct messaging, IAIN Parepare PR actively opens a space for communication and consultation services for the public. These features allow the public to enquire, critique, or merely express appreciation directly to campus administrators without convoluted bureaucracy. This practice signifies a significant paradigm shift in corporate communication. Conventional methods employed in the past tended to be purely output-oriented (focusing on the quantity of news disseminated), whereas current social media usage is more oriented towards the process of dialogue with stakeholders. PR no longer speaks merely *to* the public, but speaks *with* the public.<sup>29</sup>

In the context of consultation services, interactions occurring in the comments sections and private messages on Facebook or Instagram position PR as a solution-oriented consultant. Publics requiring information related to academics or religious issues can be served in real-time. This creates an emotional bond and trust, which constitute vital social capital for IAIN Parepare.

The impact of this social practice is evident from the digital footprint on the Facebook platform. The official IAIN Parepare account recorded a massive post reach, achieving a figure of 143,525. This reach indicates that the narrative constructed by the campus has permeated deep into the public consciousness, transcending the geographical boundaries of Parepare City.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, the intensity of social resonance is measured by the volume of interaction. Recorded post interactions stand at 51,399 on the Facebook platform. This high interaction figure proves that IAIN Parepare's content is capable of soliciting active responses—be it likes, shares, or comments—signifying high public engagement.

Demographic analysis of followers on Facebook also provides interesting insights regarding who responds to campus discourse. Data shows that the audience is dominated by females with a percentage of 59.6%, while males account for 40.4%. This data provides a signal for PR in formulating more inclusive discourse strategies or specifically targeting this segment in future religious moderation campaigns.<sup>31</sup>

Authority resonance is also monitored strongly on the visual platform, Instagram. In the observation period of June–August 2023 alone, there were 9,144 visitors viewing posts. Notably, these visitors originate not only from followers but also non-followers, with a breakdown of 5,612 followers and 3,982 non-followers. This indicates that IAIN Parepare's content possesses viral appeal capable of penetrating algorithms to reach new audiences.

Interactions on Instagram also reflect intimate engagement. Visitor interactions on posts reached 1,516. This figure, albeit smaller than Facebook, signifies the quality

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<sup>28</sup> Mifrohatul Musyarrofah, "Peran Hhumas Dalam Pengembangan Pendidikan Tinggi," *Idaarrah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan* 2, no. 1 (June 2, 2018): 11–23, doi:10.24252/idaarah.v2i1.5122.

<sup>29</sup> Warul Walidin, Saifullah, and Tabrani ZA, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif Dan Grounded Theory*, ed. Masbur, I (Banda Aceh: FTK Ar-Raniry Press, 2015).

<sup>30</sup> urtanio Agus and Rahmania Utari, "Humas Pendidikan (Buku Pegangan Kuliah) Program Studi Manajemen Pendidikan" (Yogyakarta: Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, 2019).

<sup>31</sup> Ali Nurhadi et al., "Bridging the Gap: Improving Lecturer Adherence to the Tri Dharma of Higher Education through Performance Monitoring," *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 4 (December 7, 2024): 1097–1109, doi:10.33650/al-tanzim.v8i4.8568.



of intense visual interaction, where the campus image is consumed and appreciated by the Millennial and Gen-Z generations who dominate this platform.<sup>32</sup>

In the audio-visual realm, YouTube serves as the primary barometer for the depth of IAIN Parepare's influence. The IAIN Parepare TV channel has published 492 videos since 2018. The consistency of high-volume video production demonstrates the commitment of IAIN Parepare to continuously filling the public sphere with academic and religious narratives.

The impact of these hundreds of videos is significant. The total videos have been viewed over 178,200 times with a total watch time reaching 12,200 hours. This substantial watch duration indicates that the public is not merely 'browsing', but genuinely attentive, treating IAIN Parepare's content as a meaningful reference or viewing material.<sup>33</sup>

The high level of public attention across these various platforms demonstrates that the narrative constructed by IAIN Parepare is accepted as a credible reference. The religious and academic authority of the campus is no longer recognized only within classrooms but has been amplified into the digital space. PR has successfully utilized digital media as an effective instrument for socialization and promotion, including recruiting prospective students through the SPAN UM PTKIN and independent admission tracks.

The greatest social implication of this strategy is the strengthening of institutional legitimacy in the eyes of the state and society. The success in managing discourse and digital infrastructure has garnered prestigious external recognition. This is evidenced by the attainment of the first-best award in the oversight news category from the Inspectorate General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Itjen Kemenag RI*) in 2020.<sup>34</sup>

This achievement continued with sustained consistency. In 2021, IAIN Parepare PR won first place in a national short video competition, and in 2022 secured second place among PTKIN in the PR Award by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. These arrays of awards are not mere trophies, but validation that IAIN Parepare's PR practices are on the right and superior track. Overall, these awards and digital statistical data affirm the position of IAIN Parepare. They have succeeded in positioning themselves as an influential institution within the digital landscape of PTKIN, whilst simultaneously strengthening the organization's positive image sustainably. The social practices executed by PR have successfully transformed digital capital into tangible social and religious authority.<sup>35</sup>

### **Reconstructing the Role of Public Relations: From Information Management to Digital Religious Discourse Authority**

Based on the analysis of infrastructure, message textuality, and social practices previously elucidated, this study asserts that the optimization of the PR role at IAIN

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<sup>32</sup> Rudy Haryanto and Sylvia Rozza, "Pengembangan Strategi Pemasaran Dan Manajemen Hubungan Masyarakat Dalam Meningkatkan Peminat Layanan Pendidikan," *Ekonomi & Bisnis* 11, no. 1 (March 18, 2013), doi:10.32722/eb.v11i1.99.

<sup>33</sup> Poppi Damayanti, "Pengembangan Humas Efektif Di Perguruan Tinggi," *Journal of Public Policy and Administration Silampari* 3, no. 1 (2021): 6, doi:10.31539/joppas.v3i1.3113.

<sup>34</sup> Citra Angraini and Yugih Setyanto, "Peranan Public Relations Dalam Mempertahankan Eksistensi Ramayana," *Prologia* 3, no. 2 (December 21, 2019): 408, doi:10.24912/pr.v3i2.6373.

<sup>35</sup> Mifrohatul Musyarrofah, "Peran Hhumas Dalam Pengembangan Pendidikan Tinggi," *Idaarah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan* 2, no. 1 (June 2, 2018): 11–23, doi:10.24252/idaarah.v2i1.5122.

Parepare transcends technical-operational definitions. In a disruptive digital ecosystem, PTKIN PR functions no longer merely as a conveyor of administrative news but has transformed into a strategic actor in the construction of religious discourse authority. This shift serves as a response to the challenges of the information disruption era, where change is rapid and influenced by massive data flow movements.

This role optimization is first evident in the capacity of IAIN Parepare PR to undertake structural adaptation to technology. The disruption phenomenon demands organizations to mobilize and manage information with novel working systems. IAIN Parepare addresses this challenge through a mature planning and management approach. The success in integrating the website with management information systems, alongside structured social media management, proves that technology is viewed not as supplementary, but as a new epistemological basis in the governance of Islamic higher education.

The principal argument emphasized in this section is that the ‘quality information’ prioritized by IAIN Parepare PR is, in essence, a form of the ‘power of knowledge’. Quality indicators emphasized—such as accuracy, truth, and credibility—represent efforts to reclaim public trust amidst rampant information distortion. By presenting valid data, IAIN Parepare PR is upholding the institution’s authority of truth against wild, irresponsible narratives on social media.

Furthermore, the ‘programme-based digital information services’ strategy demonstrates that IAIN Parepare PR has advanced from incidental communication to sustainable ideological communication. Programmes such as *Malebbi’ Kareba* and religious podcasts are not merely entertainment content but a curriculum of religious moderation delivered digitally. Through these programmes, PR executes a public education function equivalent to *da’wah* activities, yet packaged in a manner more populist and acceptable to the digital generation. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, the use of local idioms such as ‘*Malebbi*’ and ‘*Panrita*’ in digital programmes constitutes a cultural strategy to implant legitimacy. PR realizes that to win discourse in South Sulawesi, the narrative of religious moderation must be grounded in local wisdom values. This underscores that IAIN Parepare’s digital media functions as a bridge connecting universal Islamic values, local Bugis values, and modern campus values within a single breath of communication.

The success of this strategy relies heavily on discourse production infrastructure support. The availability of sophisticated digital tools such as drones, cameras, and computer hardware, as well as proficiency in design applications like Photoshop and Adobe Premiere, is not merely a matter of visual aesthetics. In the digital attention economy, visual quality is the gateway to message credibility. IAIN Parepare PR understands that substantial religious messages will lose their allure if not packaged with high creative industry standards.

Beyond production, the distribution aspect via social media has created a new, egalitarian public sphere. Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube of IAIN Parepare are no longer mere noticeboards, but spaces of dialectic. Interaction features on these platforms allow the public to verify, question, and even critique campus policies directly via comments and messages. Transparency mediated by this technology automatically enhances institutional accountability in the eyes of the public.

Statistical data showing thousands of interactions and watch hours on IAIN Parepare’s social media provides empirical evidence that the campus has successfully built a ‘digital community’. This community is formed not by coercion, but by

voluntary interest in the quality content presented. Here lies the success of PR in converting passive audiences into active publics who participate in disseminating the campus's positive image.

Role optimization is also reflected in PR's ability to mitigate reputational risk. In an era where negative information can destroy organizational image instantly, IAIN Parepare PR acts as a reputation gatekeeper. By producing a consistent, heavy flow of positive information—such as student achievements and academic activities—PR creates a digital 'safety belt' shielding institutional dignity from potential attacks of negative issues.

The attainment of various national awards, ranging from short video competitions to the Ministry of Religious Affairs PR Award, serves as external validation of this strategy's effectiveness. These awards affirm that IAIN Parepare has become a trendsetter or benchmark for other PTKIN regarding digital media management. This recognition is vital to consolidate IAIN Parepare's political and academic bargaining position on the national stage.

Sociologically, the role of IAIN Parepare PR contributes to the formation of a smarter 'information society' within the PTKIN environment. By habituating the public to consume official information via digital channels, PR educates society to refer to primary sources and avoid hoaxes. This is a form of the campus's intellectual social responsibility to the wider community.

In the context of promotion, the digital strategy executed has also proven effective in recruiting new student intake. Promotional content on Instagram and YouTube inviting prospective students to register is packaged in youth-oriented language. This indicates that PR is capable of code-switching, from bureaucratic language to Millennial language, without losing the substance of the academic message.

However, this optimization effort is not without challenges. Limitations in human resources (HR) and the need for continuous digital tool upgrades are dynamics that must be faced. This analysis indicates that although the discourse strategy is correct, its sustainability depends heavily on leadership commitment to investment in HR and technology. Digital authority cannot be built with part-time work; it demands full dedication and specific expertise.

It is crucial to note that the role of PR as an 'Information Manager' has now evolved into a 'Knowledge Curator'. PR does not merely manage raw data but selects, frames, and imbues meaning into every campus event before presentation to the public. This curation process is termed a practice of power in determining what is significant and what is insignificant for public knowledge. The synergy between the website as a static database and social media as a dynamic interaction base creates a holistic communication ecosystem. The website functions as an anchor of credibility, while social media functions as a sail catching the winds of trend changes. The balance between these two platforms is the key to discourse stability at IAIN Parepare.

Through the communication management approach pioneered by Grunig, IAIN Parepare has applied two-way symmetrical communication. PR not only speaks but also listens to public aspirations through social media analytical data. This data then becomes evaluation material for leadership to take strategic policies, making PR the vital eyes and ears of the organization.

Ultimately, the optimization of the PR role through digital media at IAIN Parepare is a manifestation of the modernization of Islamic education. The use of

digital technology does not imply secularization, but the instrumentation of Islamic values to remain relevant in the modern age. PR ensures that PTKIN is not technologically illiterate but rather controls technology for the benefit of the *ummah*. In this arena, PR fights to win public perception. This victory of perception is visible in the formation of strong image building. This image is symbolic capital that can be converted into public trust, high interest from new students, and stakeholder support.

To conclude the argument, it can be asserted that IAIN Parepare has successfully transformed the challenge of information disruption into an opportunity for institutional strengthening. Through the Critical Discourse Analysis strategy, it is evident that every uploaded content, every replied comment, and every broadcast video serves as a brick neatly arranged to build a fortress of solid academic and Islamic authority. Thus, the role of IAIN Parepare PR as an information manager through digital media has proven optimal, not only at the technical-administrative level but at the strategic-ideological level. They have successfully established digital media as effective instruments of 'Digital Da'wah' and 'Digital Branding', positioning IAIN Parepare as a lighthouse of religious moderation in the Indonesian digital landscape.

## **Conclusion**

This study concludes that the role of IAIN Parepare PR in the digital ecosystem has evolved from merely an administrative information manager to a strategic producer of religious discourse. The principal findings demonstrate that digital infrastructure, comprising the website and social media (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube), is deliberately employed as an instrument of power to construct the narrative of religious moderation. Through the Critical Discourse Analysis approach, it is evident that IAIN Parepare PR performs a vernacularization of Islamic values through creative programmes grounded in local wisdom, such as '*Malebbi' Kareba*' and the 'Religious Moderation Funnel' podcast. This strategy is underpinned by the mastery of content production technology (design applications and digital equipment), which enables the institution to exercise full control over the quality and trajectory of messages delivered to the public.

The implication of this transformation is a paradigm shift in the engagement between State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) and society, moving from unidirectional (output-oriented) communication to a dialogical and participatory model. Digital media has become a resonant space for campus religious authority, evidenced by high figures of digital interaction and public attention towards IAIN Parepare's academic *da'wah* content. The success of this discourse strategy has direct implications for the strengthening of institutional legitimacy, confirmed through various national recognitions, including the PR Award from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This asserts that the digitalization of PR is not the mere modernization of tools, but a cultural strategy to cultivate a positive image and public trust.

Notwithstanding these achievements, this study identifies fundamental limitations regarding human resources (HR) and technical infrastructure. The limited quantity and qualification of HR possessing specific digital expertise, alongside the necessity for rapid technological hardware updates, constitute impediments to maintaining the consistency of quality discourse production. Therefore, it is recommended that IAIN Parepare prioritize investment in enhancing staff digital competence and upgrading production equipment. For future research, it is suggested that the scope be expanded to include audience reception analysis to examine the

extent to which the discourse of religious moderation produced by PR is genuinely internalized within the religious understanding of the digital society.

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