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Reconstruction of Public Relations Communication in Educational Institutions

A Study at SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Surabaya

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ABSTRACT

Effective public relations (PR) management in educational institutions is essential for aligning school regulations with stakeholder expectations while maintaining a positive institutional image. Drawing on Legitimacy Theory, this study explores the reconstruction of PR communication strategies at SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Surabaya, particularly in reconciling strict disciplinary rules with flexible interaction patterns to secure social legitimacy. A descriptive qualitative approach with a field-study design was employed. Data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews with school management, teachers, school committee representatives, and parents, as well as analysis of school discipline documents for the 2025/2026 academic year. The findings show that internal communication is strengthened through a daily evaluative coordination forum conducted consistently after the morning recitation activity. Teacher-student interactions outside the classroom are also developed in a more fluid, personal, and humane manner. Although the school enforces strict disciplinary rules, including closing the gate at 06:45 and requiring late students to study from home, these measures have not generated substantial parental resistance. This outcome is supported by the PR function, which reframes regulatory firmness through interactive two-way communication, 24-hour personal consultation channels for urgent matters, and optimized home-visit programs. The study demonstrates that adaptive PR communication can reduce tension between institutional discipline and stakeholder expectations while preserving institutional authority and consistent regulatory implementation. It contributes to the formulation of a school-discipline-based PR

communication model for strengthening social legitimacy, sustaining stakeholder trust, and enhancing the competitiveness of educational institutions in an increasingly dynamic and globalized educational environment.

Keywords
Educational Management
Institutional Image
Public Relations
School Rules
Two-Way Communication

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Introduction

Public relations (PR) in the ecosystem of educational institutions is no longer just a complementary function of administration or a one-way information funnel. Grounded in Legitimacy Theory, public relations (PR) serves as a strategic instrument to secure social legitimacy by aligning institutional policies with stakeholder expectations. In the midst of the dynamic changes in the current school governance climate, the effectiveness of public relations communication requires continuous reconstruction in order to be able to move adaptively. Interaction patterns should not be rigid; they must be able to bridge the institution's internal policies without ignoring the human aspect in embracing teachers, students, and parents. Planned public relations management through the preparation of clear work programs has proven essential in building a positive image of the school in the eyes of the public, which in turn has direct implications for increasing the competitiveness of institutions and the quantity of new applicants [1]. The formation of this image requires systematic strategic communication to manage opinions, publications, and education marketing based on quality improvement [2].

In contemporary education management research, the relationship between organizational communication and the performance of school elements has been widely studied. Organizational communication has a positive and significant direct relationship to the commitment and performance of teachers in the school environment [3]. However, in reality, the lack of effective organizational communication implementation, such as the implementation of a one-way authoritative pattern without feedback, often adversely affects the quality of learning and triggers suspicion or misperception of policies issued by leaders. Therefore, schools need to develop healthy and conducive communication through effective techniques that are able to encourage positive interactions in order to achieve maximum educational goals [4]. Ideal organizational communication is generally realized through three main flows, namely downward communication from the principal to motivate teachers, upward communication in the form of submission of suggestions or task reports, as well as

horizontal communication for coordination among fellow educators [5]. Through strengthening competent teaching human resources (HR), the performance of the institution can continue to be maintained and improved. In addition, strengthening external networks, such as optimizing the role of school committees and active involvement of parents in providing input and financial support, have also proven to be crucial in creating a conducive learning environment [6].

Although digitalization through the use of social media and instant messaging groups has been massively adopted to expand the reach of information, a *Knowledge Gap* It is still clearly visible in the field. There has not been much literature that specifically reviews how a private high school based on religious values knits its communication channels to remain responsive for 24 hours in urgent conditions, while at the same time harmonizing the enforcement of rigid discipline with a flexible public relations approach [2]. Previous research has tended to see student discipline enforcement and the strategic function of public relations as two separate variables, rather than as a single interaction system that reinforces each other. For example, organizational communication strategies that combine formal channels (meetings, morning apples) and warm interpersonal approaches, supported by mechanisms of reward and punishment, have proven to be effective in improving discipline, consistency, and active participation of students in school activities [7]. To win the competition between institutions, the fulfillment of public expectations for the integrated education marketing mix, starting from the quality of graduate products, cost transparency, accessibility of places, to the completeness of physical facilities, must be communicated in a complex manner [8].

This article aims to comprehensively examine the reconstruction of the public relations communication strategy at SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Surabaya. Based on observation records, study documents, and initial interview transcripts, this school applies a unique internal communication pattern, namely routine coordination activities and daily evaluations for 30 to 60 minutes every Monday to Thursday morning right after the recitation activity with teachers and staff. The focus of analysis in this study is emphasized on the dynamics of daily internal coordination, the flexibility of interaction patterns between teachers and students outside the classroom that take place fluidly, and the external communication model in socializing school regulations to students' parents. This study also dissects the implementation of the School Discipline Document for the 2025/2026 Academic Year, which regulates school entry hours (the gate closes at 06.45 WIB), the mechanism of learning at home for students who are late for no urgent reason, and the control system of religious attributes through the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Good morning by the picket teacher. Therefore, the primary contribution of this study lies in formulating an "adaptive public relations communication

model based on school discipline" as a novel framework to maintain institutional legitimacy amid rigid policy enforcement.

Literature Review

A. The Core Framework: Legitimacy Theory in Educational Public Relations

Legitimacy theory posits that organizations continuously attempt to ensure that they operate within the bounds and norms of their respective societies. In the context of education management, an institution requires social legitimacy from its primary stakeholders, specifically parents, teachers, and school committees, to successfully enforce institutional policies [1]. Legitimacy is not static; it must be maintained through proactive and adaptive communication practices. When an educational institution introduces rigid and strict operational regulations, it faces the potential risk of a legitimacy gap or stakeholder resistance. Therefore, the strategic function of public relations (PR) shifts from a mere publication tool to a vital mechanism for securing social legitimacy. PR serves as an interactive bridge that translates internal disciplinary firmness into a shared moral agreement, thereby neutralizing potential external backlash [9].

B. Securing Stakeholder Trust through Adaptive Two-Way Communication

To narrow the legitimacy gap arising from strict school regulations, educational organizations must move away from authoritative, one-way communication models and adopt an adaptive two-way symmetrical approach. According to Stakeholder Theory, the sustainability of an institution is highly dependent on how effectively it manages relationships with its surrounding entities. In school governance, internal alignment through multi-directional organizational communication flows, comprising downward instructions, upward feedback, and horizontal coordination, forms the baseline of institutional readiness [10]. Securing external stakeholder legitimacy requires public relations to provide flexible, humane, and responsive communication lifelines. This includes leveraging digital transformation platforms and maintaining personal, high-accessibility channels (such as 24-hour consultation access and structured home visit programs) to synchronize parental interpretive understanding with the school's disciplinary objectives [11].

C. Theoretical Synthesis: The Intersect of School Discipline and PR Lifelines

Previous literature often views the enforcement of student discipline and the strategic function of public relations as two isolated variables. Standard disciplinary practices such as absolute attendance deadlines and strict uniform or worship compliance systems are typically studied under the lens of behavioral control and punishment mechanisms [12]. However, within the framework of legitimacy and stakeholder theories, rigid discipline enforcement can only achieve long-term consistency if it is integrated into a humane communication ecosystem. When strict rule compliance is packaged through professional communication ethics and warm

interpersonal approaches, it ceases to be perceived by parents as a punitive instrument. Instead, it is reconstructed as a collaborative character-building effort, establishing a stable foundation for the school's public image and long-term institutional competitiveness [13].

Material and Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach as its primary methodology to explore and describe the reconstruction of public relations communication in depth and contextually. Within this qualitative framework, an exploratory case study design was adopted to investigate the specific phenomena of public relations communication reconstruction and discipline alignment at SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Surabaya. Furthermore, field research was conducted as the main data collection strategy, enabling the researcher to act as the primary instrument in gathering primary narrative data directly from key informants and institutional documents [14].

Data collection activities are carried out comprehensively through three main complementary techniques, i.e., passive participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. First, direct observation was carried out on Monday, April 6, 2026, at the campus of SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Surabaya. The focus of observation was directed at the dynamics of internal interaction, routine coordination activities in the morning, the flexibility of teacher-student communication outside the classroom, and the atmosphere of discipline enforcement in the school climate [9]. Second, the interview technique was carried out using semi-structured interview guidelines with Mr. Nafi as the representative of the school management, as well as several picket/homeroom teachers, representatives of the school committee, and parents of students. This interview session was recorded and transcribed in full to capture the substance of the institution's public relations strategy as a whole, exploring the alignment of internal implementation, cross-sectoral synergy, and the minimization of parental resistance toward school policies [4].

Third, the documentation study is applied through a critical analysis of the official text "Rules of Conduct of SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Surabaya for the 2025/2026 Academic Year". This document is reviewed to map school regulatory instruments, student delay tolerance limits (06.45–07.00 WIB), mechanisms, Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for morning greetings by picket teachers, the special equipment infaq system, and the formation of a Student Executive Board (BES) in controlling worship activities. The data analysis technique used adopts an interactive model which includes three systematic stages, namely data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion or verification [15].

To ensure the credibility and validity of scientific findings, this study applied observation extension techniques, increased diligence in the field, and triangulated sources and techniques to confirm the alignment between interview transcript data, observation

results, and code document manuscripts [8]. In addition, this study is strengthened by a literature study to 25 journal articles with both national and international reputations that explore public relations management, digital communication transformation (WhatsApp, Instagram, website), public relations communication ethics, and the role of school committees. This literature review serves as a sharp theoretical analysis knife in dissecting the phenomenon of communication reconstruction in schools [16], [17].

The entire series of data collection in research involving human participants has been carried out in strict compliance with the principles of research ethics. *Informed consent* has been obtained explicitly from the authorities of SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Surabaya and Mr. Nafi as the informant before the data recording process began. The researcher guarantees the confidentiality of personal identity and the security of sensitive data to protect the privacy rights of the entire academic community at the institution [18]. The author also knowingly declares that the manuscript of this scientific article is original, has never been published in any media, is not under consideration by other journals when it is submitted, and the entire team of authors has read and approved the final substance of this article.

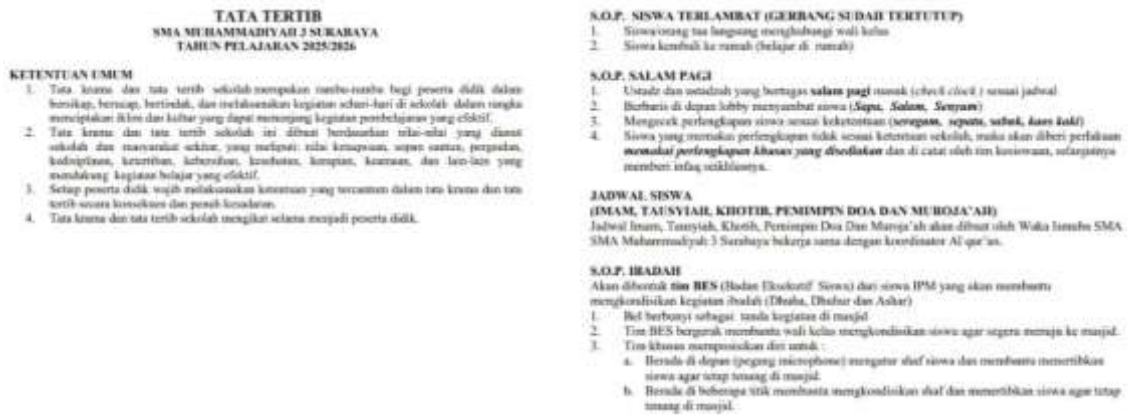
Results

A. Internal Communication Dynamics and Daily Evaluative Coordination Patterns

Based on field data collected through direct observation and transcripts of an in-depth interview with Mr. Nafi on Monday, April 6, 2026, SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Surabaya implements a highly structured but adaptive internal communication system. The delivery of information, policies, and school work programs relies on two main channels, namely the use of digital media in the form of instant message groups specifically for teachers/staff and the implementation of daily face-to-face coordination forums. This forum has its own uniqueness because it is held consistently every Monday to Thursday morning, right after the agenda of reciting with all educators and education staff. This evaluative coordination activity lasts from 30 to 60 minutes. Group interview activities and verification of field data with the school management are authentically documented in Figure 1. The practical implementation of this internal communication mechanism was explicitly highlighted by Mr. Nafi during the in-depth interview, stating:

To convey information regarding school activities, we use two primary channels: first, through internal school communication groups, and second, through daily morning coordination sessions before the learning process begins. Right after the Qur'an recitation session, we allocate approximately thirty minutes to an hour specifically to coordinate,

evaluate, and communicate ongoing as well as upcoming programs. (Personal Communication with Mr. Nafi, April 6, 2026).



TATA TERTIB
SMA MUHAMMADIYAH 3 SURABAYA
TAHUN PELAJARAN 2025/2026

KETENTUAN UMUM
1. Tata krama dan tata tertib sekolah merupakan rambu-rambu bagi peserta didik dalam bersikap, bersiap, bertindak, dan melaksanakan kegiatan sehari-hari di sekolah dalam rangka menciptakan iklim dan kultur yang dapat menunjang kegiatan pembelajaran yang efektif.
2. Tata krama dan tata tertib sekolah ini dibuat berdasarkan nilai-nilai yang dianut sekolah dan masyarakat sekitar, yang meliputi: nilai kesopanan, sopan santun, pergaulan, kedisiplinan, ketertiban, keberadaban, kesehatan, kebersihan, keamanan, dan lain-lain yang mendukung kegiatan belajar yang efektif.
3. Setiap peserta didik wajib melaksanakan ketentuan yang tercantum dalam tata krama dan tata tertib secara konsekuen dan penuh kesadaran.
4. Tata krama dan tata tertib sekolah mengikat selama menjadi peserta didik.

S.O.P. SISWA TERLAMBAT (GERBANG SUDAH TERTUTUP)
1. Siswa/orang tua langsung menghubungi wali kelas
2. Siswa kembali ke rumah (belajar di rumah)

S.O.P. SALAM PAGI
1. Ustadz dan ustadzah yang bertugas **salam pagi** masuk (*check clock*) sesuai jadwal
2. Berbaris di depan lobby menyambut siswa (***Sapa, Salam, Senyum***)
3. Mengecek perlengkapan siswa sesuai ketentuan (**seragam, sepatu, sabuk, kaos kaki**)
4. Siswa yang mematuhi perlengkapan tidak sesuai ketentuan sekolah, maka akan diberi perhatian ***memakai perlengkapan khusus yang disediakan*** dan di catat oleh tim kesiswaan, selanjutnya memberi infaq sekhilasnya.

JADWAL SISWA
(IMAM, TAUSYIAH, KHOTIB, PEMIMPIN DOA DAN MUROJA'AH)
Jadwal Imam, Tausyiah, Khotib, Pemimpin Doa Dan Muroja'ah akan dibuat oleh Waka Ismuba SMA SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Surabaya bekerja sama dengan koordinator Al qur'an.

S.O.P. IBADAH
Akan dibentuk **tim BES** (Badan Eksekutif Siswa) dari siswa IPM yang akan membantu mengkondisikan kegiatan ibadah (Dhuha, Dhuhur dan Ashar)
1. Bel berbunyi sebagai tanda kegiatan di masjid
2. Tim BES bergerak membantu wali kelas mengkondisikan siswa agar segera menuju ke masjid.
3. Tim khusus mempersiapkan diri untuk :
   a. Berada di depan (pegang microphone) mengatur shaf siswa dan membantu memeriksa siswa agar tetap tenang di masjid.
   b. Berada di beberapa titik membantu mengkondisikan shaf dan memeriksa siswa agar tetap tenang di masjid.

Fig. 1. Official School Operational Documentation: Student Code of Conduct and Morning Greeting Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) at SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Surabaya

Through this daily forum, the process of evaluating programs that are being or will be implemented can run quickly. However, time constraints on Friday caused the routine coordination agenda to be canceled. This pattern is that the effectiveness of staff work is driven by a balance between downward work instructions, the delivery of aspirations upwards, and horizontal coordination between teachers. This step to strengthen internal capacity is also a tangible form of human resource development in maintaining the quality of institutional services. Daily face-to-face patterns have proven to be effective in cutting psychological barriers in the form of suspicion or misinterpretation of school principals' policies that are often found in authoritative one-way communication in implementing institutions. With a discussion room that is open every morning, internal synergy is maintained, minimizing the potential for work conflicts from an early age.

B. Teacher-Student Interaction Patterns and Communication Flexibility Outside the Classroom

Empirical findings at the research site show that the communication pattern that is built between teachers and students at SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Surabaya is not just fixated on the transfer of academic materials in the classroom. The interactive relationships created tend to be fluid, inclusive, and humane. Teachers provide ample space for students to have their opinions heard during the learning process. This flexibility of interaction extends beyond class hours, where students can independently and without awkwardness come to the teacher's room or take advantage of break time to discuss their academic needs and personal problems.

This model of a warm and motivational interpersonal approach is essential to form positive behavior and disciplined character in students. The arrangement of a healthy and conducive interaction climate indirectly increases student learning motivation and supports teachers' teaching performance in the classroom. The school successfully positions its role as a safe

learning environment through persuasive communication techniques, so that the hierarchical distance between educators and learners can be bridged wisely without losing respect and manners [19].

C. Reconstruction of Discipline Regulations Through Public Relations Rescue Valves

The construction of discipline enforcement at SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Surabaya is legally regulated through the School Discipline Document for the 2025/2026 Academic Year. This document contains rigid and strict rules in order to build a competitive school culture. One of the main focuses of this regulation is limiting the time of student attendance in the morning. The school gate was closed at 06.45 WIB. For students who attend above 07.00 WIB, the system automatically imposes sanctions in the form of a policy of returning students home to carry out the independent learning process (BDR). This strict rule is excluded only for logical emergency reasons, such as medical illness or technical problems with the vehicle on the road, accompanied by original evidence in the form of photo documentation sent via instant message to the homeroom teacher at that time [20]. The details of the operational system of the discipline regulation are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Operational Matrix of Discipline Regulation for Students

Rules of Discipline	Deadline/Procedure	Sanctions
School Entry Matters	Arrive before 06.45 WIB	The main gate is closed at exactly 06.45 WIB
Extreme Delays	Present after 07.00 WIB	Return home to study independently
Rule Exceptions	Medical illness/ punctured tires on the road	Must send proof of *real photos* via WhatsApp to homeroom teachers
SOP Morning Greetings	Check uniforms, shoes, socks, belts.	Use of school-specific attributes & sincere infaq
SOP for Worship Control	BES Team (Student Executive Board)	Conditioning of mosques for Dhuha, Dhuhur, Asr

Source: Rules of SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Surabaya

In addition to the restrictions on entry hours, the school establishes a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Morning Greetings, which requires the picket teacher team to stand to welcome the students in front of the lobby through the gestures of Greeting, Greeting, and Smile while checking the completeness of uniform physical attributes. If a violation of attributes is found, students are required to wear special equipment provided by the student body, record their names, and be asked to give sincere infaq. The religious aspect is also strictly controlled through the formation of the Student Executive Board (BES) from elements of the Muhammadiyah Student Association (IPM), which coordinates with the homeroom teacher to mobilize students to the mosque when the worship bell (Dhuha, Dhuhur, and Ashar) rings [20].

In theoretical terms, the firmness of the instrument reward and punishment contained in Table 1 is indeed effective in training students' consistency. However, very rigid rules have the potential to generate psychological resistance or strong protests from parents if they are not communicated precisely. This is where the urgency of reconstructing public relations communication carried out by SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Surabaya lies. The public relations department does not position the rule as a rigid punishment instrument. When facing external communication obstacles triggered by the high workload of parents, thus triggering a difference in understanding of the essence of school rules and public relations to build a two-way communication channel that is very interactive and flexible.

The school opens a 24-hour personal confidant room and private consultation with homeroom teachers and Counseling Guidance (BK) teachers to respond to urgent conditions. More than that, the school optimizes the home visit program as a lifeline to unravel the root of student discipline problems in a humanist manner. This proactive, intensive, and ethical public relations step has proven to be able to harmonize the perception of students' guardians, turn resistance into sympathy, and strengthen the social legitimacy of the institution in the eyes of the public [11].

D. External Public Relations Activities and School Publication Media

In the external realm, the public relations management of SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Surabaya consciously integrates the conventional promotional mix with the transformation of digital media to expand the reach of information and build closeness with the community. Publications of student achievements, excellence of local religious content, and school activity agendas are disseminated regularly through social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and the school's official website. This step to digitize public relations is very crucial in the era of globalization in order to strengthen the image of the institution and boost brand awareness in the midst of fierce competition between secondary education institutions [21].

Efforts to build external reputation are strengthened through continuous communication with the foundation and school committees. Relations with the foundation are maintained through gathering activities, forum sharing, and periodic work program reporting. Meanwhile, communication bridges with parents of students are facilitated through official meetings at the beginning of the new school year, report card collection forums, and online coordination groups. This cross-sectoral synergy triggers the active participation of the school committee and parents, both in the form of brainstorming and moral support for the school's designed work program [7]. The packaging of this complex, transparent, and quality-based public relations strategy ultimately succeeded in forming positive public opinion. The image of a healthy school that continues to be maintained by the entire academic community of SMA

Muhammadiyah 3 Surabaya is a strong social capital to increase the competitiveness of the institution in a sustainable manner [22].

Discussion

The daily coordination pattern at SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Surabaya reflects the effectiveness of staff work, which is driven by the balance of organizational communication flows. This dynamic brings together downward work instructions, the delivery of aspirations upward, and horizontal coordination between teachers in a balanced manner. The step to strengthen internal capacity is a tangible form of human resource development in maintaining the quality of institutional services [23]. Through a discussion room that is open every morning, internal synergy can minimize the potential for work conflicts from an early age. This daily face-to-face pattern has proven to be effective in cutting psychological barriers in the form of suspicion that is often found in authoritative communication in institutions [24].

On the other hand, a model of a warm and motivational interpersonal approach between teachers and students is essential to form positive behaviors. Structuring a healthy and fluid interaction climate outside the classroom indirectly increases students' motivation to learn at school. This conducive environmental condition has also been proven to support teachers' teaching performance to the maximum in the classroom. The school has succeeded in positioning its role as a safe learning environment through humanistic persuasive communication techniques. As a result, the hierarchical distance between educators and learners can be bridged wisely without losing respect [19].

Theoretically, the firmness of the instrument of *reward and punishment* in the rules of discipline, it is indeed effective to train the consistency of students. However, very rigid rules have the potential to generate psychological resistance or strong protests from parents if not communicated precisely. This is where the urgency of reconstructing flexible public relations communication lies in bridging communication barriers due to parents' busy work schedules. The public relations department does not position the rule as an instrument of rigid punishment, but rather opens a private consultation room. Proactive steps through the program Home Visit as a lifesaving valve this has been proven to be able to align perceptions and turn resistance into sympathy [21].

In the external realm, the digitization of public relations through social media is crucial to strengthen the image of the institution (Branding image) in the era of globalization. Massive publications serve to boost brand awareness in the midst of fierce competition between educational institutions. Efforts to build external reputations are strengthened through cross-sectoral synergy that triggers active participation from school committees and parents. The packaging of this complex, transparent, and quality-based public relations strategy ultimately

succeeded in forming positive public opinion. The image of a healthy school in a sustainable manner becomes a strong social capital to increase the competitiveness of institutions [22].

Conclusion

This study successfully concluded that SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Surabaya reconstructed public relations communication in an adaptive manner to bridge the knowledge gap related to the enforcement of rigid school discipline. Through the daily evaluative coordination forum after reciting activities and the use of digital media. The unexpected results showed that strict rules such as the home learning policy (BDR) for students who are late and the Morning Greeting SOP did not trigger resistance, but rather strengthened student compliance. This happens because public relations provide a lifeline in the form of a 24-hour responsive personal consultation room and a humane home visit program.

The main contribution of this article lies in the presentation of a two-way communication reconstruction model that balances a rigid regulative approach with a flexible persuasive approach in school management. The primary contribution of this research lies in the formulation of an "adaptive public relations communication model based on school discipline" as a novel framework. This model demonstrates that a rigid regulative approach can successfully coexist with a flexible persuasive approach without causing stakeholder resistance. This study has limitations because it only focuses on the analysis of one religious-based private educational institution in a short observation span. Therefore, further research is suggested to expand the study locus on the comparison of public and private schools by involving the quantitative perspective of the school committee more broadly. Integrated communication synergy based on quality ultimately proves crucial in maintaining social legitimacy and institutional competitiveness in the era of globalization.

Limitations and Suggestions

This research has limitations in the scope of its research, which focuses on the analysis of one religious-based private educational institution, namely SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Surabaya. In addition, the collection of field data that relies on qualitative techniques in a relatively short observation time has the potential to limit the generalization of findings for public relations dynamics in public schools or institutions with different operational scales. The special characteristics of the 2025/2026 disciplinary Document and the role of the internal student team also mean that some tactics for handling miscommunication with parents in this school do not necessarily apply instantly to other educational institutions.

Based on these constraints, future research is suggested to expand the study loci by using a comparative method between religion-based private schools and public schools. The researchers were also encouraged to integrate a quantitative approach to measure the level of

parental satisfaction and the effectiveness of school social media statistically. In addition, the involvement of broader perspectives from school committees and foundations in responding to extreme discipline regulations (such as the BDR rule for late students) will contribute to the enrichment of the literature on education public relations management.

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