



## Public Relations' Role in Promoting Religious Programs at Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque

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**Abstract.** The mosque holds a significant role in Islamic culture, serving not only as a place of worship but also as a center for social, political, and cultural activities. Historically, mosques have functioned as venues for education and strategic planning, as seen during the time of the Prophet Muhammad. The Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque, an icon of Islamic culture in East Kalimantan and the second-largest mosque in Southeast Asia, embodies this multifunctionality. This study aims to explore the role of public relations in publicizing and promoting religious programs at the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque and to identify the media utilized for these efforts. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. A total of 15 informants participated, including 8 public relations staff selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques and 7 congregation members and visitors chosen via accidental sampling. Data analysis involved condensation, presentation, and conclusion, with validation ensured through interview recordings and photographic evidence. Findings indicate that public relations play a vital role in coordinating program publications and promotions. This includes regular meetings, collaboration with various media outlets, and the use of social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and websites. Additionally, electronic media like radio and television, as well as traditional materials like banners and posters, are employed to maximize outreach and engagement.

**Keywords:** Mosque Public Relations; Religious Programs; Publication; Promotion; Media Utilization; Samarinda Islamic Center

### 1. Introduction

People who work in public relations must always be aware of the importance of moral principles in carrying out their role (Agustin et al., 2019; Hafiar et al., 2024; Kaleel & Alomari, 2024). Public relations is also one of the most important components a public organization or institution must have in creating strong relationships with the community and maintaining its reputation because it cannot be separated from its service to the public interest (Andersson, 2024; Gaara et al., 2024; Royandiah et al., 2022; Shaya &

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Ahmad, 2024). Public relations is the core of an institution, agency, or company. Public relations is responsible for disseminating information and promoting a program within an institution. This section makes information more easily accessible to the general public in person, online, or print media. This information is disseminated as a propaganda tactic to persuade the public to support the organization's achievements. Therefore, the role of public relations is very dependent on the media used to convey information effectively (Faturahim et al., 2021; J. et al., 2023; Rosmilasari et al., 2023).

An agency needs the role of public relations because it acts as a liaison between the public and the organization as service users. The role of Public Relations becomes more vital when an agency faces events related to its policies, especially if the policy triggers debate among the public or within the agency itself. In this situation, public relations respond to the activities carried out. Public Relations professionals are also responsible for maintaining harmony in internal functions, providing services to the public, and cultivating positive relationships with print media and the Internet. Unfortunately, there are still some people who continue to believe that PR is less important. According to researchers, the role of Public Relations is often underestimated without considering how crucial its function is for an agency. The growth of the public relations industry is very important for the progress of every organization in the current global era. For messages from public relations to be received effectively, there must be an understanding between both parties. Reciprocity, thoughts, replies, and audience reactions to the function of public relations as a bridge between the institution and the audience will determine whether the understanding is appropriate (Alnaim & Noaime, 2023; Sadi & Álvarez-Nobell, 2024; Sutrisna, 2023).

Various communication tools in the information technology era have enabled individuals to interact with each other and their environment (Archetti, 2022; Arrazy & Turpyn, 2021; Faturahim et al., 2021). Public relations acts as a medium to connect people and build effective communication. Apart from that, Public Relations also functions as a bridge between internal management and stakeholders (Agustin et al., 2019; Kaleel & Alomari, 2024). A PR practitioner must be able to act as a communicator, which is the main part of his duties (Hafiar et al., 2024; Oksuz & Gorpe, 2023; Santa Soriano & Torres Valdés, 2021; Shaya & Ahmad, 2024). Communication is the main key to building an effective work team. Communication is the basis of all public relations activities. The role of public relations in communicating with the public as a whole is to be a communication facilitator, problem solver, communication technician, and expert advisor. Therefore, communication becomes the main tool in carrying out these roles. This is why a publicist needs to be a skilled communicator. Since public relations is closely linked to the larger community, it is very important to adhere to communication norms. Combining the viewpoints of the sender and recipient of the message is the essence of communication. In this case, the institution's public relations representative must be able to explain the organization's goals to the wider public. Considering the important role of public relations in creating social stability, both private and government public relations must be optimized. The social relationships that publicists have are very flexible in their work and allow them to respond quickly to various events to fulfil publication duties.

One of the tasks of the public relations division is to carry out publications. Publication is a public relations effort to convey as much information as possible about leadership actions to the general public. Through publication, it is hoped that a good image will be created and will benefit the institution through the opinion of the public who have received the information conveyed. The media will make the publication



process easier when disseminating information to the wider community. Apart from that, public relations require media support to support publications. Within this framework, there are two types of public relations media: internal media and external media. Internal media such as magazines, tabloids, institutional profiles, and websites are included in the institutional internal media category. Meanwhile, mass media, both print and electronic, are examples of external media created by public relations.

Every institution often uses online and print media to disseminate information and advertise. Creative promotion is very important to attract public interest in the activities that will be held. One example is uploading pamphlets or flyers to institutional social media accounts like Instagram and Facebook. Social media has become a forum for communication that is not limited by time or place, making it easier to publish and promote content. This way, anyone can access every upload at any time. Institutions can also use other media, such as posters and banners, to convey promotions directly to the public. There are two methods for publishing and promoting activities in institutions: 1) through articles that convey information indirectly through intermediary media, such as radio, print media, television, exhibitions, and the internet; 2) through directive distribution of information without the help of intermediary media, such as through face-to-face meetings, meetings and lectures. Each institution must have its own means or media to convey information and promotions (Fauk *et al.*, 2021; Laeheem, 2020; Mukhibat *et al.*, 2024; Syafieh & Anzhaikan, 2023).

When a program has been planned, Public Relations also needs to evaluate the achievement of its results. This task includes various daily activities and activities related to publications and promotions, such as posting flyers to promote events, identifying activity locations, and placing banners as a form of publication in print media. In this case, both in government and private agencies, the role of public relations is needed to help publicize and promote activities to convey information to the public.

Mosques as places for carrying out religious activities require proper management in carrying out their activities (Agung Riyadi *et al.*, 2023; Iskandar *et al.*, 2021; Khojir, 2020; R. Reza *et al.*, 2022). Public relations are an important element in a mosque because the mosque functions not only as a place of worship but also as a place for various social, political, cultural, and other activities (Alnaim & Noaime, 2023; Sofyansyah & Anom, 2023; Sutrisna, 2023). In particular, mosques were used as places for meetings and deliberations, social activities, and da'wah, and even during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, they were used to organize war strategies. Because of its diverse functions, mosques are institutions that have direct contact with society. Public relations can be introduced as a liaison through the delivery of information about religious programs, thereby helping to build a good image of the mosque in the eyes of the public.

One of the places of worship that has developed into a representation of Islam and community pride in the city of Samarinda and the province of East Kalimantan as a whole is the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque (MICS). Public relations are needed at the Islamic Center Mosque because it symbolizes Islamic teachings. The centre of Islamic preaching and worship activities in Samarinda is the mosque located in Teluk Lerong Village. The profile states that an Islamic Center is a location where Islamic civilization is concentrated in a certain area. In addition, various events are often held here, including congregational prayers, regular recitations, Islamic holiday celebrations, and children-focused activities such as TPA and madrasas, Islamic da'wah, *tabligh akbar*, and many more (Hasanah *et al.*, 2022; Rosmilasari *et al.*, 2023; Syaikhu *et al.*, 2021). As an icon of Islamic culture in East Kalimantan, the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque is the second largest mosque in



Southeast Asia after the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta. Unsurprisingly, this mosque is visited by many people, with at least 500 visitors every day, both from inside and outside the province (Munawati & Halimah, 2022; Rosa & Pradini, 2023). Some of the facilities provided for the convenience of visitors include a polyclinic, canteen, dormitory with 50 rooms for out-of-town guests, multi-purpose building, meeting room, escalator for people with disabilities, special clothing for non-Muslim guests, luggage storage, *mukena*, house for the imam and mosque guard, a small museum, as well as a radio. Apart from that, a library inside the mosque stores various religious and secular books.

Public relations are an important aspect in the process of building the image of an institution (brand image), including institutions called mosques. So that mosque management is well managed, the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque has management, one of which is the public relations department. The aim is for the religious programs carried out by the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque to be achieved well. In initial observations with managers, it was discovered that public relations were divided into two fields: Communication, Information, and Community Services (Kominfo), as well as the UPT Radio and Television sector. Religious programs that are published and promoted are prepared by the Department of Worship and Da'wah and carried out by Takmir. Therefore, to understand the role of public relations and the media used at the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque, researchers think that this role will be carried out well and effectively if public relations try to determine the most suitable media for publication and promotion. This way, planning and results will run smoothly without obstacles and reach the community.

By considering this background, researchers are interested in the role of public relations and information publication media titled "The Role of Public Relations in the Publication of Information and Promotion of Religious Programs at the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque". Considering the important role of public relations in the sustainability of an organization and achieving its goals, this research is deemed relevant and necessary.

## 2. Methods

This research uses qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive and explicit understanding of the phenomena experienced by research subjects, including behaviour, perceptions, motivations, and actions. A descriptive approach is applied to analyze the condition of research objects based on reality or observable facts. This research focuses on the role of public relations in publications and information on religious programs at the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque. A written description of the observational results will be provided to explain them. This research is located at the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque, Jl. Slamet Riyadi No. 1, Teluk Lerong Ulu, Kec. Sungai Kunjang, Samarinda City, East Kalimantan. The informant in this research was the Head of General Affairs and Public Relations of the Provincial Islamic Center Management Agency (BPIC) (Agung Riyadi et al., 2023; Iskandar et al., 2021; R. Reza et al., 2022).

East Kalimantan, Head of Communication and Information and Community Services Division of BPIC Prov. East Kalimantan and the BPIC Provincial Radio and Television Technical Implementation Unit head. East Kalimantan. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling method, namely selecting samples that meet certain criteria that are relevant to the research objectives (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). It is hoped that this technique will be able to answer the research problem, where the subjects are selected from several fields of Public Relations by considering the characteristics that are in accordance with the research objectives. Apart from that, the accidental sampling method



is also used, namely a sampling technique based on chance, where anyone who coincidentally meets the researcher can be used as a sample as long as that person is deemed suitable for the data source. The characteristics determined for informants include the fact that the informant comes from the public relations sector of the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque and that the informant is a congregation or visitor to the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque, as seen in Table 1 and Table 2.

**Table 1** Informants from Public Relations Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque

No	Name	Position
1.	H. Ibrahim Syachrial, S. Hut	Head of General Affairs and Public Relations, BPIC, East Kalimantan Province
2.	Drs. H. Ardiansyah, M. M	Head of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Community Services Division, BPIC, East Kalimantan Province
3.	H. Djoko Iriandono, SE, MA	Head of Communication and Information Section, BPIC, East Kalimantan Province
4.	Drs. H. Fahmi Rasyad, M. M	Head of Technical Implementation Unit for Radio and Television, BPIC, East Kalimantan Province
5.	Rusdin	Technical Officer for Radio, BPIC, East Kalimantan Province
6.	Ahmad	Technical Officer for Television, BPIC, East Kalimantan Province
7.	Drs. H. Djamaluddin HD	Head of Takmir Division, BPIC, East Kalimantan Province
8.	Kayubi Sutomo, S. Ag	Head of Worship and Preaching Section, BPIC, East Kalimantan Province

Source: Islamic Center Mosque, 2024

**Table 2** Informants from Congregations and Visitors Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque

No	Name	Job	Age	Status	Hometown
1.	ZA	Teacher	55	Married	Samarinda
2.	A	Housewife	65	Married	Samarinda
3.	EE	Privat labor	49	Married	Samarinda
4.	W	Tenant guard	35	Married	Samarinda
5.	LR	Student	23	Single	Samboja
6.	D	Student	20	Single	Penajam
7.	M	Student	21	Single	Penajam

This research uses two types of data sources: primary and secondary. Primary data is obtained directly from sources through in-depth conversations, interviews, and observations carried out with relevant agencies and through direct observation to collect it. The main sources of these informants were observations and conversations held with



related agencies, including the Head of General Affairs and Public Relations Subdivision, Communication and Information Division, and UPT Radio & Television. Meanwhile, secondary data is information collected by researchers from various accessible sources. This fact is obtained through literature such as books, reports, journals, and websites, as well as additional data which includes a general description of the organization, organizational structure, working hours, and other information related to the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque. This research uses three data collection techniques, namely observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations are carried out by methodically observing the symptoms of the research object in the right location to understand the phenomena that occur. An interview is a data collection process that involves conversations with informants, either in person or by telephone. So that the interview can run smoothly, it is necessary to prepare equipment such as notebooks, tape recorders, and cameras. Documentation techniques are carried out by collecting data from reports, notes, letters, books, or other official documents related to the research subject. Documentation studies include tracing policies, events, history, and developments related to the research subject.

To facilitate understanding and dissemination of conclusions, researchers in this study used the data analysis method proposed by Miles and Huberman. The data analyzed can be field notes, researcher comments, images, photos, documents, reports, biographies, articles, and so on. This method includes the stages of data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. At the data collection stage, researchers obtain information through observation, documentation, and interviews in the field. Then, data condensation is carried out, namely the process of selecting, summarizing, and sorting the data so that it becomes writing that can be analyzed. The recorded interviews from the informants were compiled verbatim. Next is the data presentation stage, where the data compiled in text form is presented with a clear theme flow, enabling understanding of the research context and making it easier to conclude. The final stage is drawing conclusions, where the researcher draws conclusions based on the research objectives.

For the validity of the data, researchers used reference materials as a credibility test. In qualitative research, the validity of the data must be tested thoroughly. This validity depends on the validity, relevance, and correctness of research results and objectivity. Objectivity is very important because the interviewer acts as the main instrument in the research, so there is the potential for subjective bias in concluding the interview results. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability tests are several methods for testing data validity. The credibility test is used to ensure the validity of the data in this research. If there is no difference between the actual situation and what is reported, then the data can be considered reliable. Using reference materials is part of the credibility test analysis carried out by researchers. Reference materials support claims that the information obtained by researchers is reliable. One way is to use interviews as additional evidence. Interview recordings can be used as authentic evidence regarding the truth of the information source. Additional reference materials, such as photographs documenting events and human interactions with activities, are also very important. The research report must include these photos as they are reliable original documents. Additional tools such as cameras, cell phones, and voice recorders are also very useful in supporting the credibility of the data.



### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. *The Role of Public Relations*

The first thing we must understand is the limitations of public relations. Public relations as developing and maintaining good relations with different publics (Dong *et al.*, 2023; Wayan Supada, 2020). The role of public relations in publishing information and promoting religious programs at the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque includes publishing and promoting religious programs in every field of public relations. Public Relations assists and facilitates various areas at the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque, not only in disseminating information about religious programs but also other activities managed by BPIC, including education, health, and other social activities. Apart from that, public relations are responsible for building and maintaining the good reputation of the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque by organizing positive activities that create a good impression for the mosque and the community. Each unit has specific responsibilities for publicizing and promoting its programs, while public relations acts as a coordinator overseeing the process. Public Relations also covers religious activities or programs to increase public awareness, conveys information through various media, and collaborates with media partners such as Tepian TV to expand the reach of publications. In addition, public relations hold regular meetings to discuss the program to be implemented, coordinate related fields, and arrange the distribution of tasks to ensure program implementation runs smoothly.

The media publishing information and promoting religious programs at the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque consists of several types. First, social media such as Facebook, YouTube and websites. Each unit manages its own social media, while the communications and information section only manage the website. Second, other media, such as banners and posters, are placed on notice boards to reach the public directly. Third, electronic media, such as radio and television, are supported by streaming applications and collaboration with partner media to expand the reach of religious program broadcasts. The public's response regarding sources of information on religious programs shows that the media used by public relations in publicizing and promoting religious programs is quite effective in reaching congregations and visitors to the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque. This information is generally obtained through social media such as Facebook, YouTube, and websites managed by public relations. However, some people also learn about religious programs through public relations and social media partners, and some directly because they are used to participating in these activities. What MISC Public Relations does is almost the same as what the Ubudiyah Aulawiyah PTPN II Tanjung Morawa Mosque does in maintaining its current image (M. Reza & Azhar, 2023).

The role of public relations is very important in achieving communication goals between institutions and the public. Public relations are tasked with disseminating information and building, maintaining, and strengthening strong relationships with the outside world to win favourable public opinion. In this context, public relations strategy covers various aspects that provide long-term benefits to the organization. Apart from that, public relations also function as an internal part of the organization and is an element of contemporary management characteristic of current organizational management. The role of public relations is to build and maintain relationships of mutual understanding, mutual trust, and mutual support so that public relations can gain support from the wider community and form a positive image for the organization.



Based on this framework, the researcher adopts the theoretical assumptions of Rosady Ruslan regarding the roles of public relations, which serve as benchmarks in this study. The first role is that of a communicator. In disseminating information about upcoming activities, the public relations team of the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque acts as a communicator. For instance, details about religious programs are consistently shared through various platforms, including social media posts, electronic media, and other communication channels. This ensures that information reaches the public effectively and encourages participation.

The second role is maintaining relationships. Under the coordination of the mosque's public relations, a strong connection is fostered between the mosque and the community. This relationship enables the public to actively engage in the religious activities organized by the mosque. Community participation, in turn, supports the overall mission and programs of the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque, strengthening its role as a center for religious and social activities.

The third role is backing up management. Public relations contribute to the management of religious programs by collaborating with various stakeholders. This includes inviting external event organizers to participate and partnering with social media influencers or platforms to enhance the visibility and reach of the programs. Such collaboration ensures the smooth execution of events and broadens the mosque's audience base.

Finally, the fourth role is that of a good image maker. Public relations efforts are aimed at building and maintaining a positive image of the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque. This involves delivering excellent services, implementing well-planned programs, and adhering to ethical and cultural standards. Through these initiatives, the mosque's public relations team upholds its reputation and reinforces its position as a respected institution in the community.

### 3.2. Public Relations Media

The media used, such as social media and electronic media, have their respective advantages. However, both also have different obstacles and advantages. Social media allows promotion without additional costs and quickly, while electronic media requires licensing costs such as radio (Wiratmo et al., 2017). According to the public relations officer at the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque, using social media is more profitable because past religious programs can still be shared anytime and anywhere. Meanwhile, electronic media is sometimes not timely.

#### 3.2.1. Social Media

Public relations at the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque focus on social media, such as YouTube and other websites, for its religious programs. The mosque's public relations officer made a video as long as the resource person's study, uploaded it on YouTube, and then pasted the video link on the website for wider publication. In addition, religious program flyers are updated regularly every day by public relations on the website ([islamiccenterkaltim.org](http://islamiccenterkaltim.org)).

#### 3.2.2. Electronic Media

Public relations at the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque use two main media outlets, radio and television. For radio, PR currently broadcasts via Facebook, YouTube, and paid applications because live radio broadcasts require complicated licensing. The application





can reach broadcasts more widely, including Saudi Arabians on Umrah or Hajj. Television broadcasts are carried out through Tepian Cable TV, YouTube, and Facebook. This broadcast is carried out regularly with various sources, covering religious programs and health. For example, resource persons from the Muhammadiyah University of East Kalimantan (UMKT) for health programs and the Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris State Islamic University (UINSI) Samarinda regarding religious programs.

### 3.2.3. Additional Media

Other media used by the public relations of the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque consist of banners, banners, and flyers or posters. Strategic placement is necessary to maximize this media publication so the public can see it. In this case, public relations put up banners around the mosque so that they can be seen directly by people passing by. Apart from that, flyers or posters are also placed on information boards (*mading*) which occupy the first and second floors, near escalators and stairs, which are strategic locations because pilgrims often pass them.

Specifically, MISC Public Relations does not yet have a public relations division and a multimedia information systems and production division like those at the Ulil Albab mosque, UII integrated campus to publicize and promote MISC's religious programs. This could mean that the activities are not yet integrative. So, what do congregants and visitors think about religious programs at MISC? From the 7 informants, it was clear that they received various information about MISC's religious programs. Apart from coming from social media partners that MISC Public Relations collaborates with to help publicize activities at MISC for visitors who are still studying, workers get information from their friends as well as informants who work as teachers apart from the media owned by Public Relations. For regular pilgrims, information is obtained from the media used by public relations and the Subuh WhatsApp group. Meanwhile, tenant guards get religious programs from merchant group social media at MISC.

## 4. Conclusions

Public Relations holds a crucial function in promoting and publicizing religious programs, as evidenced by its activities at the Samarinda Islamic Center Mosque (MICS). This role involves providing support and coordination across various mosque departments, sharing updates on religious events, and overseeing initiatives managed by BPIC, such as those related to education, healthcare, and community services. While individual units handle the promotion of their specific programs, Public Relations acts as the primary coordinator to ensure that activities are effectively communicated to the public. This includes covering events, distributing information through media channels, and collaborating with local television networks to broaden the reach of program promotions. Regular meetings are conducted to facilitate coordination, delegate tasks, and streamline the execution of programs.

Public Relations utilizes diverse media platforms to share information and promote MICS programs, including social media, electronic media, and physical information boards for direct communication. To improve its efficiency, MICS Public Relations should adopt a more centralized approach. By consolidating external public management at the Public Relations desk, it would ensure consistent messaging and prevent other units from independently publishing or promoting mosque-related activities. This centralization is vital for preserving and enhancing the mosque's positive public image, aligning with its broader goals and vision.



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