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RECEIVED 24 February 2025

ACCEPTED 24 June 2025

PUBLISHED 04 July 2025

CORRECTED 17 July 2025

CITATION

Sumarlan I, Muktiyo W, Pawito P and
Rahmanto AN (2025) Public relations
strategies in religious organizations: a
qualitative study of Muhammadiyah's
organizational communication.
Front. Commun. 10:1574048.
doi: 10.3389/fcomm.2025.1574048

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Public relations strategies in religious organizations: a qualitative study of Muhammadiyah's organizational communication

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Muhammadiyah, one of Indonesia's most influential Islamic organizations, is crucial in shaping the country's socio-religious landscape through *Islam Berkemajuan* (Progressive Islam). To sustain its identity and legitimacy, Muhammadiyah implements structured public relations (PR) strategies that engage stakeholders and reinforce its ideological position. Beyond promotion, PR in religious organizations is a tool for institutional sustainability, stakeholder relations, and public perception management. This study examines Muhammadiyah's PR strategies using the Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) theory and the Cultural Approach to Organizational Communication. A qualitative approach is employed, integrating semi-structured interviews and document analysis to explore communication's role in shaping organizational identity. McPhee's Four Flows model analyzes membership negotiation, self-structuring, activity coordination, and institutional positioning, while the Cultural Approach explains how Muhammadiyah embeds its values into symbols, narratives, and rituals. Findings indicate that Muhammadiyah reinforces its identity through structured messaging, internal cohesion, and digital adaptation. By balancing religious authenticity with modern communication tools, the organization maintains relevance in a dynamic society. The study expands the application of CCO theory in religious organizations and provides practical insights for faith-based institutions. Future research should examine the impact of digital communication on younger audiences and compare PR strategies across religious organizations.

KEYWORDS

communications, identity, public relations, religious organization, strategies

1 Introduction

Muhammadiyah, one of Indonesia's most influential Islamic organizations, has been crucial in shaping the nation's socio-religious landscape since its establishment in 1912 (Arifin et al., 2022). The organization promotes Islam Berkemajuan (Progressive Islam), an interpretation of Islam that embraces modernization, education, and social welfare while maintaining religious authenticity (Qodir et al., 2020). To achieve its mission, Muhammadiyah employs structured and strategic public relations (PR) efforts that reinforce its identity, engage stakeholders, and adapt to the evolving media landscape (Sumarlan and Ukka, 2024).

Public relations in religious organizations extend beyond traditional promotional activities; they are vital for fostering institutional legitimacy, maintaining organizational

cohesion, and ensuring effective stakeholder engagement (Suh and Kim, 2023; Morehouse and Saffer, 2023). PR strategies are crucial in shaping Muhammadiyah's public perception by communicating its values and mission through various channels, including digital media, print publications, and direct community engagement (Andersson, 2024). As digital communication increasingly influences public discourse, Muhammadiyah must strategically position itself while maintaining alignment with its theological principles and organizational vision.

This study examines the public relations strategies employed by Muhammadiyah to construct and maintain its organizational identity. By integrating the Communication Constitutive of Organizations (CCO) Theory and the Cultural Approach to Organizational Communication, this research investigates how communication flows within Muhammadiyah facilitate identity formation, institutional sustainability, and strategic positioning in Indonesia's socio-religious landscape.

The CCO Theory, notably McPhee's Four Flows Model (McPhee and Zaug, 2008), provides a framework for understanding how communication within Muhammadiyah actively shapes its identity, governance structures, and interactions with the broader public. This theory emphasizes that organizations are constituted through communication, making PR a fundamental aspect of Muhammadiyah's existence.

Meanwhile, the Cultural Approach to Organizational Communication explores how Muhammadiyah embeds its progressive Islamic identity into symbols, narratives, and rituals to maintain internal cohesion and external credibility (Geertz and Pacanowsky, 1998). By examining Muhammadiyah's PR strategies through these theoretical lenses, this study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on organizational communication in religious institutions.

Through a qualitative research approach, this study provides an in-depth analysis of Muhammadiyah's PR strategies, emphasizing their role in sustaining institutional identity, engaging diverse stakeholders, and navigating contemporary challenges. The findings of this study offer valuable insights into how religious organizations strategically manage their communication to remain relevant, credible, and resilient in a rapidly changing societal context.

2 Literature review

Christensen (2023) and Wiesenber (2020) found that Public relations play a crucial role in shaping the identity of religious organizations, including Muhammadiyah, by crafting and communicating messages that reflect their core values and beliefs. In religious institutions, public relations are not merely a tool for publicity but an essential function for building and maintaining trust with internal and external audiences (Al-Kandari et al., 2019; Soni et al., 2023; Wiesenber, 2019; Morehouse, 2024; Sokolovskyi, 2024). Effective public relations help religious organizations establish a positive image, engage with stakeholders, and ensure their message aligns with their organizational identity and mission, particularly in promoting religious values and community service (Tao et al., 2021; Smudde, 2021; Formentin and Spaulding, 2022; Irdiansyah, 2023).

The Communication Constitutive of Organizations (CCO) theory offers a framework for understanding how communication practices are central to organizations' formation and ongoing transformation

(McPhee and Zaug, 2009). According to McPhee and Zaug (2008) model, communication is not just a means of transmitting information but a constitutive force that shapes organizational reality. This theory identifies four communication flows—membership negotiation, self-structuring, activity coordination, and institutional positioning—that are integral to creating and maintaining organizational identity (Vásquez and Schoeneborn, 2018). By focusing on these flows, CCO provides insight into how communication within Muhammadiyah is vital to constructing and evolving its identity as a progressive Islamic organization.

The Cultural Approach to Organizational Communication provides a complementary lens to examine how an organization's culture is communicated and sustained (Pacanowsky and Donnell-Trujillo, 1982). This approach emphasizes that organizations are not only structures or systems but also cultures that are created and reinforced through communication practices (Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo, 2009). In the case of Muhammadiyah, its Islamic and progressive values are deeply embedded in its organizational culture, and communication practices serve as a primary means of transmitting these values to members and the wider community. The Cultural Approach highlights the interplay between communication and cultural norms, illustrating how cultural and religious practices influence organizational identity (Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo, 2009; Pacanowsky, 2016).

Integrating CCO and the Cultural Approach offers a comprehensive framework for understanding Muhammadiyah's public relations strategies. While CCO focuses on the communicative processes that shape the organization's identity and structure, the Cultural Approach explores how these processes are rooted in and reflect Muhammadiyah's cultural and religious values. By combining both theories, this study can provide a deeper understanding of how communication within Muhammadiyah constructs its organizational identity and reinforces its role as a promoter of progressive Islam.

These theories offer valuable insights into the complex relationship between communication and organizational identity in religious settings. By examining Muhammadiyah's public relations practices through the lens of CCO and the Cultural Approach, this study aims to uncover how communication strategies help shape and maintain its religious and cultural identity (Dühring and Zeffass, 2021). Furthermore, this theoretical integration allows for a nuanced exploration of how Muhammadiyah uses public relations to navigate the challenges of promoting its values while engaging with diverse audiences in a dynamic societal context.

3 Research methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach to capture the complex, contextual, and socially constructed nature of communication practices within Muhammadiyah. Rather than merely describing public relations strategies, this research contributes methodologically by demonstrating how qualitative inquiry uncovers the intersection between organizational identity, religious values, and communication structures in religious institutions (Reynolds, 2019; Rocha and Pinheiro, 2021). By employing an interpretive paradigm, this study critically examines how communication is not just a medium for information exchange but a constitutive force shaping institutional identity.

To ensure methodological rigor, this research integrates semi-structured interviews and document analysis (Brorsson, 2022). Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with key informants within Muhammadiyah, including public relations officers, organizational leaders, and members actively involved in communication efforts. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences while accommodating emergent themes that may not have been initially anticipated. This approach aligns with the iterative nature of qualitative inquiry, where data collection and analysis occur concurrently, enabling continuous refinement of emerging insights.

Document analysis will examine key communication materials such as press releases, organizational reports, internal publications, and social media content. This methodological triangulation strengthens the validity of the findings by cross-verifying insights from multiple data sources. The use of document analysis supplements interview data while providing a historical and contextual foundation for understanding Muhammadiyah's evolving communication strategies.

Purposive sampling will guide participant selection, ensuring that those involved have direct knowledge and experience related to Muhammadiyah's public relations practices. This strategy enhances the richness of the data by including perspectives from different hierarchical levels within the organization, capturing both top-down strategic decisions and grassroots communication practices. To address potential biases in participant selection, the research will implement reflexive sampling adjustments based on preliminary

findings, ensuring a more representative and nuanced understanding of organizational communication.

The methodological contribution of this study extends beyond data collection techniques by incorporating thematic analysis as the primary analytical approach. The thematic analysis identifies patterns and recurring themes across interviews and documents, offering a structured yet flexible framework for interpreting qualitative data. This study follows Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework: familiarization with data, initial coding, theme generation, review of themes, definition and naming of themes, and final synthesis. This structured approach ensures that findings are deeply embedded in participants' narratives and organizational contexts while advancing methodological discourse on qualitative inquiry in religious organizations (Table 1).

4 Results

4.1 Muhammadiyah's public relations strategies

Muhammadiyah's public relations (PR) strategies illustrate how communication constitutes and maintains its organizational identity. Using McPhee's Four Flows of Communication within the CCO theory, Muhammadiyah constructs its institutional presence through membership negotiation, self-structuring, activity coordination, and

TABLE 1 Classification of informants.

Informant code	Position/Role	Informant category	Data collection method	Interview focus
INF-001	Muhammadiyah central PR officer	Public relations practitioner	Semi-structured interview	Organizational communication strategies, image management, and the role of PR in Progressive Islam
INF-002	Muhammadiyah branch leader	Organizational leader	Semi-structured interview	Implementation of communication strategies at the branch level, internal coordination, and message adaptation
INF-003	Muhammadiyah digital media strategist	Media and technology expert	In-depth interview	Utilization of digital media, the role of social media in organizational communication
INF-004	Active Muhammadiyah Member	Internal participant	Structured interview	Member experiences in receiving and understanding organizational messages
INF-005	Editor of <i>Suara Muhammadiyah</i>	Journalist and internal media	Semi-structured interview	The role of internal media in disseminating organizational messages
INF-006	Islamic communication academic	Expert and scholar	In-depth interview	Academic analysis of organizational communication based on progressive Islam
INF-007	Islamic and social affairs observer	External stakeholder	Structured interview	Public perception of Muhammadiyah and the effectiveness of PR in building the organization's image

institutional positioning. PR efforts, such as official statements, media engagement, and educational outreach, ensure that Muhammadiyah's identity as a progressive Islamic organization remains consistent. A PR officer explained:

"Every publication and communication strategy are designed to reinforce our commitment to Progressive Islam while addressing contemporary societal issues". (Interview, INF-001, Public Relations Practitioner).

This statement highlights Muhammadiyah's emphasis on aligning communication with its ideological mission. The organization ensures consistency in message delivery across various media platforms through carefully crafted publications (Yusoff et al., 2020). The PR division strategically designs content that disseminates information and reinforces Muhammadiyah's identity as a progressive Islamic organization. This approach helps maintain credibility among stakeholders while addressing contemporary challenges (Pang et al., 2018). The structured communication process ensures that Muhammadiyah remains adaptive to societal needs while staying true to its core principles.

Muhammadiyah's self-structuring communication ensures that its ideological framework is systematically communicated across different branches (Mann, 2015). The organization maintains internal consistency through structured meetings, leadership guidelines, and policy documents. A 2023 Muhammadiyah leadership directive emphasized:

"All regional chapters must align their public messaging with the organization's central values to ensure a unified voice" (Central Board of Muhammadiyah, 2023b).

From the Cultural Approach to Organizational Communication, Muhammadiyah's PR strategies incorporate Islamic values, historical narratives, and cultural symbols to enhance legitimacy and maintain engagement (Carey, 2009; Kent, 2015). Religious discourse is carefully embedded in public messaging (Tao et al., 2021), ensuring that Muhammadiyah is perceived as a religious authority and a modernizing force. A media strategist noted:

"We balance religious authenticity with modern communication methods, ensuring our content resonates with traditional and younger audiences." (Interview, INF-003, Media and Technology Expert).

This demonstrates Muhammadiyah's ability to adapt its communication approach to different audience segments. By integrating religious narratives with digital tools, the organization ensures its messages remain relevant and accessible (Pang et al., 2018). Social media and online platforms allow Muhammadiyah to reach younger generations while maintaining engagement with long-standing members. This strategic adaptation prevents the organization from becoming outdated in an era of rapid digital transformation. Ultimately, modern communication strategies help Muhammadiyah sustain its presence as a leading Islamic organization.

Muhammadiyah's institutional positioning is reinforced through strategic media engagement and public discourse management. By framing social issues within Islamic ethical perspectives,

Muhammadiyah strengthens its credibility and public trust. A 2023 press statement on social justice declared:

"Muhammadiyah stands for an inclusive and just society, advocating policies that align with Islamic ethical values." (Central Board of Muhammadiyah, 2023a).

Muhammadiyah's PR also leverages digital media and social networks to enhance outreach and maintain organizational engagement. The activity coordination flow within CCO highlights how communication facilitates synchronized actions among members. A digital media strategist noted:

"Our online platforms serve not just to inform, but to engage members in collective actions that reflect Muhammadiyah's vision." (Interview, INF-003, Media and Technology Expert).

Digital platforms provide an avenue for active participation rather than passive information consumption (Zhou and Xu, 2021; Zaid et al., 2022). Muhammadiyah's PR team curates interactive content that encourages members to be involved in social and religious initiatives. The organization fosters a sense of community and shared responsibility by leveraging online engagement tools (Davies and Hobbs, 2020). The use of digital media also enables swift communication in response to current events and organizational needs (Mancini, 2020). This ensures that Muhammadiyah's members remain connected and aligned with the organization's mission. A senior Muhammadiyah official stated:

"Our communication strategies are designed not just to inform, but to instill a deep understanding of Progressive Islam among members." (Interview, INF-006, Expert & Scholar).

Focusing on education and ideological reinforcement ensures that Muhammadiyah's values are deeply embedded within its members. The organization utilizes structured communication tools, such as training sessions, publications, and public discourse, to solidify its teachings. This approach not only spreads information but also cultivates critical thinking regarding Islam in a modern context. Muhammadiyah fosters a progressive yet authentic understanding of religious principles through strategic messaging. Combining religious discourse and contemporary engagement helps strengthen the organization's intellectual and spiritual foundation.

The membership negotiation flow within CCO theory explains how Muhammadiyah integrates new members into its organizational culture. The organization employs structured induction programs, educational campaigns, and leadership training to ensure that individuals internalize its values. A Muhammadiyah training module from 2016 emphasizes:

"Every new member must undergo structured orientation to understand our historical legacy, ethical principles, and social commitments" (Muhammadiyah, 2016).

Beyond internal membership, Muhammadiyah's public discourse plays a crucial role in reinforcing its identity (Kim et al., 2023). Through digital platforms, print media, and public lectures,

Muhammadiyah positions itself as a moderate, reformist Islamic organization. A media strategist noted:

“We deliberately frame our messages to emphasize modernization while preserving Islamic authenticity, ensuring that Muhammadiyah remains relevant to contemporary audiences.” (Interview, INF-005, Journalist & Internal Media).

Balancing modernity and tradition are a key aspect of Muhammadiyah's PR strategy. The organization ensures that it embraces modern communication channels and does not compromise its religious integrity (Dahlen, 2019). By carefully curating content reflecting Islamic teachings and contemporary issues, Muhammadiyah remains an authoritative voice in the religious sphere. This approach strengthens the organization's credibility among different demographic groups. Effective messaging that bridges the gap between tradition and modernity ensures continued engagement and influence in society (Mahoney, 2021).

The self-structuring flow in CCO theory explains how Muhammadiyah maintains coherence across its diverse regional branches. The organization issues formal guidelines, leadership directives, and policy statements to ensure uniformity in communication and decision-making. A 2022 Muhammadiyah governance document stated:

“All regional representatives must align their public messaging with the core tenets of Progressive Islam” (Central Board of Muhammadiyah, 2022).

Communication also plays a coordinative function in shaping Muhammadiyah's activities and programs. PR efforts ensure members across different regions work toward common goals while adapting to local contexts. A senior organizer explained:

“Our communication mechanisms ensure that Muhammadiyah's social programs, from education to disaster relief, consistently reflect our values of service and reform.” (Interview, INF-002, Organizational Leader).

This highlights the role of communication in coordinating Muhammadiyah's diverse programs across different regions. Clear and structured messaging ensures that all branches adhere to the same ethical and operational guidelines (Planer, 2023). Using communication tools facilitates the smooth implementation of initiatives that benefit the community. Through PR strategies, Muhammadiyah fosters a spirit of service that aligns with its broader mission. Muhammadiyah maintains trust and engagement among its stakeholders by ensuring that messages consistently reflect organizational values.

4.2 The role of communication in shaping organizational identity and values

Communication plays a central role in shaping Muhammadiyah's organizational identity by reinforcing its commitment to Progressive Islam. The organization ensures that its values are consistently communicated across all levels through structured messaging and

engagement (Kent and Lane, 2021). This alignment helps maintain institutional coherence and strengthens the connection between members and Muhammadiyah's broader mission. A senior Muhammadiyah official stated:

“Our communication strategies are designed not just to inform, but to instill a deep understanding of Progressive Islam among members.” (Interview, INF-006, Expert & Scholar).

Beyond internal messaging, Muhammadiyah also leverages public discourse to establish itself as a reformist Islamic movement. The organization demonstrates its relevance and commitment to religious and social progress by engaging with contemporary societal issues (Olii et al., 2021). A media strategist noted:

“We deliberately frame our messages to emphasize modernization while preserving Islamic authenticity, ensuring that Muhammadiyah remains relevant to contemporary audiences.” (Interview, INF-005, Journalist and Internal Media).

Muhammadiyah's institutional positioning is further reinforced through its engagement with government institutions, media outlets, and civil society organizations (Akingbola et al., 2019). The organization strategically frames its public statements to align with Islamic principles while responding to contemporary societal issues. A 2023 official statement on education policy asserted:

“Muhammadiyah remains committed to advancing education rooted in Islamic ethics while embracing scientific progress” (Ahmad Muttaqin et al., 2020).

4.3 Interaction of cultural and communication flows in organizational practices

Muhammadiyah's communication strategies are deeply intertwined with cultural narratives, ensuring its religious and organizational identity remains intact across generations. The organization integrates symbolic language, historical references, and Islamic teachings into its communication frameworks to maintain cultural continuity (Coman, 2023). This approach reinforces Muhammadiyah's role as both a religious institution and a progressive social movement. A Muhammadiyah leader stated:

“Our organizational culture is not separate from our communication practices—every statement, meeting, and program reflects our values.” (Interview, INF-007, External Stakeholder).

The interaction between cultural values and structured communication processes ensures that Muhammadiyah's messages are informational and deeply resonant with its members (Bashir et al., 2023). This integration allows the organization to maintain legitimacy while adapting to contemporary challenges. A Muhammadiyah social worker explained:

“Our communication strategies ensure that every social program aligns with Muhammadiyah's cultural ethos—service is an

extension of our religious identity” (Interview, INF-002, Organizational Leader).

Integrating digital communication with cultural narratives ensures Muhammadiyah's ongoing relevance in a rapidly evolving media landscape (Wang and Liang, 2024). Through these PR strategies, Muhammadiyah effectively manages its identity, engages stakeholders, and sustains its cultural and religious values. The combination of CCO's constitutive communication approach and the Cultural Approach to Organizational Communication provides a comprehensive understanding of how Muhammadiyah constructs its public image and negotiates its place within Indonesian society.

5 Discussion

Muhammadiyah implements structured organizational communication through membership negotiations, structure formation, activity coordination, and institutional positioning. Every aspect of this communication contributes to the sustainability of the organization's identity in the face of social change. With a targeted communication system, Muhammadiyah ensures that its ideological message remains consistent at various levels of leadership and membership. A systematic communication structure allows adaptation to new challenges without losing the basic principles of the organization (Ciszek, 2015).

Membership negotiations in Muhammadiyah show an approach oriented toward internalizing values. Each individual who joins undergoes a socialization process that ensures an understanding of the organization's vision and mission. This socialization is done through formal education, cadre training, and digital media that strengthen understanding of Progressive Islam. Communication technology accelerates the process of adapting new members to organizational dynamics (Snow et al., 2017). This approach results in strong ideological attachments, preventing understanding fragmentation among members.

The organizational structure of Muhammadiyah shows a communication pattern that ensures the formal sustainability of organizational values. Institutional rules, communication guidelines, and leadership instructions create continuity in the delivery of organizational messages. Every policy issued reflects Muhammadiyah's efforts to integrate modernity with Islamic principles. This consistency in communication structure allows organizations to remain relevant in various social contexts (Kathpalia, 2016). Coordination between the central and regional governments is a key element in maintaining the unity of ideas.

The coordination of activities in Muhammadiyah shows the effectiveness of communication in managing various social and religious programs. Each activity has a communication mechanism that ensures the active involvement of members. Implementing education, health services, and humanitarian assistance shows the alignment of communication strategies in real action. A two-way communication model is implemented to accommodate feedback from various parties (Andreu Perez et al., 2022). With this approach, Muhammadiyah can respond to the community's needs quickly and accurately.

Muhammadiyah's institutional positioning is built through a communication strategy considering social and political dynamics. This organization actively builds its image as a progressive Islamic entity that is adaptive to the times (Mazur-Wierzbicka, 2021). Mass media and digital platforms strengthen Muhammadiyah's representation in public discourse. Through strategic communication, Muhammadiyah ensures that the discourse of Progressive Islam remains part of the main narrative in the public space. This approach shows how communication can be a tool for religious organizations to build legitimacy.

Muhammadiyah optimizes the use of communication technology to expand the reach of the organization's message. Digitization of information allows for a broader and faster distribution of ideas (Kholifatul, 2023). The spread of progressive Islamic values through various communication channels creates a dynamic information ecosystem. Technology-based interaction also creates a more inclusive participation space for members and sympathizers (Meske et al., 2020). Muhammadiyah adapts technology without ignoring the substance of ideological values that are the foundation of the movement.

The language and symbols used in Muhammadiyah's communication reflect the collective identity that continues to be strengthened. The built narrative always refers to the historical and Islamic values that are the basis of the organization's movement (McQuail, 2010). For example, the use of the term Progressive Islam is a characteristic that affirms Muhammadiyah's vision of developing progressive Islamic thought. Phrases such as *Amal Usaha* (Charity) and *Gerakan Tajdid* (reform movement) are often used in official publications, leadership speeches, and internal media to affirm the organization's mission in renewal and community service (Nashir, 2015). This strategy provides a strong bond for members to understand and internalize the organization's mission (Elhady, 2017). Consistency in the use of ideological language strengthens the loyalty and involvement of members in various activities, such as in internal studies that emphasize the terms enlightening, renewal, and modern as the main concepts in the Muhammadiyah da'wah movement. Symbolism-based communication is an important instrument in building internal cohesion, such as the use of the Muhammadiyah logo, which depicts the shining sun as a representation of enlightenment and Islamic da'wah that shines on the lives of the people (Figure 1).

Muhammadiyah's communication model is not only persuasive but also educational. Scientific publications, academic discussions, and religious training are integral to an organization's communication strategy. Muhammadiyah encourages intellectual discourse that allows members to receive information and critically examine it. This scientific tradition shows how communication is used to form a mindset that aligns with Progressive Islam's values. This approach shows that communication in religious organizations functions as information dissemination and a tool for social transformation (Yilmaz, 2023).

Muhammadiyah's communication strategy shows the synergy between organizational structure, technology, and ideological narrative. Every communication element is integrated into the system to support the effectiveness of message delivery. Not only does Muhammadiyah rely on the top-down communication pattern, but it also implements two-way dialog to strengthen member involvement.

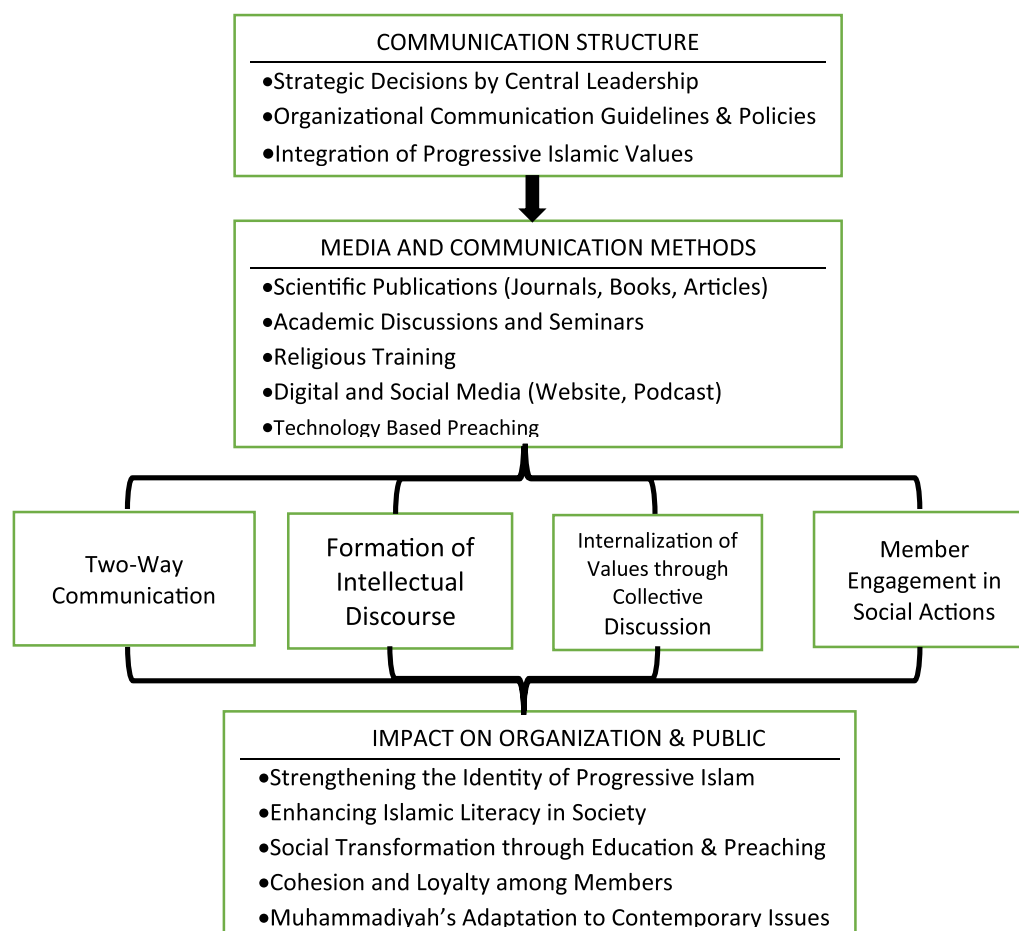


FIGURE 1
Model of public relations religious organization insight from Muhammadiyah.

This model of communication ensures that Progressive Islam is not only a concept of discourse but also represented in social practice. This approach emphasizes that organizational communication is crucial in building the sustainability of religious values in the modern era (Kondrla, 2023).

6 Conclusion

Muhammadiyah's public relations strategy is crucial in building and maintaining the organization's identity as a progressive Islamic movement. By implementing the Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) approach, Muhammadiyah ensures the continuity of Progressive Islamic values through four communication streams: membership negotiations, establishment of organizational structures, coordination of activities, and institutional positioning. The Cultural Approach to Organizational Communication also shows how Muhammadiyah's symbols, rituals, and religious narratives continue to be strengthened in various internal and external communication forms. In addition, the use of digital media has become a strategic element in reaching a wider audience while maintaining religious authority.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the study of communication of religious organizations by integrating the theory of CCO and the Cultural Approach to Organizational Communication to understand how communication shapes and maintains the identity of religious organizations in the modern context. The findings of this study expand the understanding of how religious organizations function not only as values-based institutions but also as dynamic communication entities in adapting to social and technological changes. This research also shows that the structure and culture-based communication model can be applied to other organizations with a strong value system and a vast network.

In practical terms, this study provides insight for religious organizations in designing public relations strategies oriented toward promoting and forming institutional identity and legitimacy. Muhammadiyah shows that structured organizational communication can strengthen member involvement, increase public trust, and maintain organizational relevance in social change. Other religious organizations can leverage this strategic communication approach to build synergies between tradition and modernity, ensuring that core values are maintained across multiple communication channels, including digital media.

For further research, a more in-depth study of the effectiveness of Muhammadiyah digital communication in attracting the participation of the younger generation is an important agenda, especially in the context of organizational regeneration. In addition, comparative studies with other religious organizations can provide broader insights into the dynamics of communication in the spread of religious values in Indonesia. A longitudinal approach is also recommended to explore how Muhammadiyah's communication strategy has evolved in line with social and technological changes and its impact on member engagement and public acceptance of Progressive Islam.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author/s.

Ethics statement

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

IS: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Project administration, Resources, Writing – review & editing. WM: Data curation, Supervision, Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization. PP: Formal analysis, Writing – review & editing, Data curation, Methodology, Supervision, Validation. AR: Validation, Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Methodology, Visualization.

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Funding

The author(s) declare that no financial support was received for the research and/or publication of this article.

Acknowledgments

The authors express their gratitude to Muhammadiyah's organizational representatives, public relations officers, and media strategists who participated in this study.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Generative AI statement

The authors declare that no Gen AI was used in the creation of this manuscript.

Correction note

This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the scientific content of the article.

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