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## ESTABLISHING AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IMAGE IN EAST BEKASI: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS AT KINDERFIELD HIGHFIELD SCHOOL BEKASI

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### ABSTRACT

The importance of education in today's world cannot be overstated, as it plays a crucial role in shaping a high-quality society. This research focuses on exploring the theory of Excellence in Public Relations. It delves into the complex dynamics between organizations and their communities, examining the various communication functions and objectives that underpin these relationships. The study employs a post-positivist paradigm, adopting a qualitative approach and a case study methodology. The author gathers information through observations, interviews, and documentation about the individuals involved. The research was conducted by presenting data and formulating conclusions. The findings indicate that this study applied three specific models—Public Information, Two-Way Symmetric, and Two-Way Asymmetric—out of the four models proposed by the theory. Public

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relations effectively communicated with the community through various activities such as charity events, open house events, and blood donation events. The research concludes that Kinderfield's community relations activities, conducted by its Public Relations department, have resulted in a positive image for Kinderfield. This achievement has established Kinderfield as a trustworthy school in the eyes of the community, making it a preferred choice for parents seeking an educational institution for their children.

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## INTRODUCTION

Establishing a brand image requires organizational relations with the public, and contributions from communities or groups residing in a single geographic area. The author investigates how Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi constructs an educational institution in a location that may be deemed less strategic. The vicinity in which Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi is situated is a residential zone, indicating that the local economy is classified as middle to lower. The author intends to investigate how residents and the community can accept Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi. This institution offers education on international standards as an integral part of the locality. Undoubtedly, the establishment of an international standard school in a region characterized by a middle to lower socioeconomic status will engender a perception of social inequality among the local community or inhabitants.

Community relations are crucial to the community's involvement in activities organized by Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi. Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi has implemented a Charity Programme as part of its community relations efforts, directly engaging the local community. The charity program is a regular agenda, and Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi is organized to provide residents with food and essential items. This philanthropic program serves the dual purpose of enhancing the organization's reputation and cultivating favorable connections between the local community and

Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi.

The local residents reckon the charity program implemented by Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi has instilled a sense of community concern among residents. As a result, a group of individuals who are conscious of this concern has been formed, and it is expected to grow in size over time. The impact on Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi would be significant if it successfully establishes a positive image, as it would lead to increased awareness and recognition among a larger audience. As a result, the charitable program has had positive impacts on the awareness of residents of Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi's existence. Emotional reactions facilitate the establishment of a link between an individual's subjectivity and the societal and institutional environment in which it transpires. Emotional concerns mutually impact one another, contributing to the formation of one another's conceptual and personal perceptions. Social interaction's emotional labor is the fundamental cause of this dynamic, reciprocal relationship between identity and emotions (Yulisinta, Marta, & Panggabean, 2023).

The photographs depict the location of the charity program organized by Kinderfield Highfield Bekasi School. The images highlight the active involvement of students, teachers, and local community members in the program. The author observes that this activity fosters the organization's rapport with its public, also known as community relations.

Community relations and public relations are interrelated concepts in organizational communication. Public relations encompasses various tactics and initiatives to establish and maintain positive connections between organizations and various target audiences. The primary goal of public relations is to shape public perception and opinion of an organization or agency by effectively managing communication and interaction between the organization or agency and its target audience. The activities organized by Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi, which involve the community or society, can shape the public's perception and contribute to the establishment of a positive image for the school.

Additionally, community relations is a component of public relations that centers

explicitly on the interaction between an organization or agency and the local community. In practice, community relations is primarily concerned with fostering positive relationships within a community. Community relations activities encompass a range of initiatives aimed at demonstrating care for the local community. These include offering blood-checking services, donating or sponsoring community projects, engaging in meetings or discussions with residents, and collaborating with other community organizations.

Community and public relations are closely connected as community relations play a vital role in the broader public relations endeavor. By engaging in effective communication and fostering positive relationships with the community, organizations can garner support, cultivate a favorable reputation, and generate a beneficial influence in the surrounding environment. A German-born psychologist named Alexander Thomas investigated a perspective on culture referred to as cultural standards (Panggabean et al., 2014). This research employs the theory of cultural standards as a conceptual framework to enhance comprehension of Indonesian society. The attributes of a society are delineated by cultural standards, which comprise the norms, behaviors, and perceptions regarded as customary and obligatory within the community. One of these is harmony; the Indonesian people have a propensity to establish close relationships with their neighbors and maintain harmony (Sudarji et al., 2022; Yulisinta, Marta, Panggabean, et al., 2023). The implementation of brand awareness strategies by Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi exemplifies this cultural norm.

As stated by Jerold, whom Sumartono cited, community relations is an initiative aimed at enhancing organizations and communities for the benefit of all. Ade Noviani and Sri Wijayanti (2022) state that the community program messages are derived from the community itself. Public relations is crucial for establishing and enhancing the company's reputation among the broader community. Typically, a company establishes a public relations team to cultivate a positive reputation among the broader community through various programs.

Community relations is fundamentally a facet of public relations. Thus, the stages

in the public relations process also impact the stages in community relations. Public relations is crucial in establishing relationships with the broader community and forming a network of individuals who share common goals but are not associated with any specific organization. This network is instrumental in facilitating the dissemination of product knowledge, which in turn enhances the brand image of an agency or institution. By achieving these objectives, public relations can effectively accomplish its intended outcomes (Clara & Marta, 2021; Suharto et al., 2022).

As defined by Mohammad Pambudi in (Rizky Fredy, 2020: 108), brand awareness pertains to the degree to which consumers have retained mental representations of a product that satisfies their requirements. Durianto defines brand awareness as the capacity of existing and potential customers to recognize and retrieve information regarding a specific brand linked to a given category of products. Consumers are more likely to purchase when they possess prior knowledge of a product.

Products or services whose performance they are familiar with through personal experience or knowledge. The correlation between the community's attendance at the charity activity program organized by Kinderfield Highfield Bekasi and the likelihood that more individuals will become aware of the existence of an educational institution of international caliber in the vicinity and develop an interest in the school is as follows: organizing effective community-based activities that take into account convenience, safety, results, and other pertinent considerations. Although parents' reluctance to spend time on unfamiliar products or services is understandable, they manifest some degree of concern by considering the viewpoints of others concerning those facilities or items. This practice is "evaluating the perspectives of others" or "assessing the viewpoints of others."

One crucial aspect that Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi must focus on when implementing a marketing strategy is targeting individuals to enhance brand awareness among parents of potential students regarding the services provided by the school. Participants of the charity program can offer suggestions and input to persuade parents to select Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi as their educational institution. By enhancing a robust brand image within the collective consciousness of the community or local

populace, the brand will attain a more excellent value relative to its competitors and garner increased consumer trust. Brand image substantially impacts impulsive buying behavior, product purchase choices, and brand loyalty. Pricing, service quality, word-of-mouth, and perceived price all influence it. Social enterprises must hire clients with a favorable brand image and service philosophy to positively impact consumer experience and repurchase (Agung et al., 2021; Priyadi et al., 2020).

The level of community engagement with the agency organization directly impacts the visibility and memorability of the Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi brand. Increased frequency and reach of brand-related information and a positive brand image further enhance the brand's reputation. This practice will provide a significant advantage to Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi, enabling it to enhance the promotion of its products and services with greater efficiency and success in the future. Based on the background above, the author intends to write a research paper titled "Establishing an International School Image in East Bekasi: The Role of Community Relations at Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi."

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Excellent Theory**

Kriyantono (2014: 92) argues that Grunig's excellence theory, which sets a high public relations standard, may not apply to companies from different countries. According to Kent and Taylor, local cultural interpretations primarily influence PR practitioners in Bosnia. They also follow the press agency model, personal influence model, public information model, asymmetrical model, and symmetrical model (excellence). It has been discovered that the symmetrical communication model, as described in the excellence theory, is not optimal for public relations (PR) practice in Bosnia. Furthermore, it differs from PR practices in America, Britain, and Canada (Sa'diah, 2018).

According to these experts, the excellence theory assumes that public relations practitioners should engage in symmetrical communication as it is the most effective and ethical approach to carrying out their duties. Sa'diah's excellence theory outlines ten

crucial principles, as stated by Sari (2018: 70).

1. Involvement. Organizations or companies should integrate public relations activities into the strategic management function.
2. Empowerment. Public relations requires unfettered access to established groups and the ability to communicate directly with management.
3. Integration. The organization or company must integrate the public relations department into its structure.
4. Independence. Public relations is a distinct management position that differentiates it from other management roles.
5. Managerial. Public relations managers must possess the attributes of a "communication manager" rather than a "communication technician" as they strategically oversee every public relations program.
6. Symmetrical model. Public relations primarily follows the two-way symmetrical or two-way balanced model as its fundamental approach. However, it can also incorporate elements of the two-way asymmetric model (mixed motives).
7. Symmetrical internal communication. The internal communication system functions symmetrically, employing a decentralized structure that guarantees autonomy among departments, fosters two-way dialogues, and enables the involvement of organizations or company members in the decision-making process.
8. Knowledge. The symmetric model utilizes the public relations function to execute managerial duties, education, and expertise efficiently. This is achieved through an extensive comprehension of the requisite competencies to operate as managers within the symmetrical system.
9. Role diversity. The public relations role encompasses a variety of responsibilities. Public relations excellence facilitates cultural integration and mitigates discrimination based on gender, race, nationality, or historical background.
10. Ethical public relations. Public relations practitioners must prioritize ethical professional behavior while performing their duties.

According to the experts mentioned above, the author recognizes a correlation between the theory of Excellence in public relations and the author's research. The theory posits



that public relations, particularly in the context of community relations, is responsible for disseminating information and educating the broader community about school-related matters. Public relations aims to persuade the community of Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi and establish a perception of it as an internationally oriented institution while fostering an understanding of the concept of international schooling.

### **Community Relations**

Community relations is a significant component of public relations. Community relations is a strategic initiative undertaken by public relations professionals in an organization or business entity to enhance the effectiveness of their communication goals. Yosai, as quoted by Sumartono (2010: 177), states that community relations is essentially a subset of public relations. Therefore, the procedures involved in the public relations process also apply to community relations. In this context, public relations is defined as an organizational activity rather than solely a method of communication between the organization and its public. The variations in the execution of activities in community relations primarily stem from the specialized nature of the tasks involved. Jerold further supports this, as quoted by Yosai, who defines community relations as "community improvement initiatives through various efforts for the collective welfare of the institution and the community" (Sumartono, 2010: 177). DeMartinis (2010: 177) also describes community relations as "a method for engaging with various groups connected to the organization's functions."

Community relations, in the opinion of the expert, is a tool that public relations can employ to enhance the quality of its work in a variety of ways, including enhancing the reputation of an organization or business entity and informing the broader community about it through the formation of a group or community comprised of several interconnected individuals with the same objective.



## **METHODOLOGY**

The author employed the case study methodology in this research (Danar et al., 2020; Marta & Fernando, 2020). During the research process, the author employs a method that involves careful observation and analysis. The author selected the case study method to immerse themselves in the phenomena occurring within the social environment shaped by the customary patterns of the surrounding culture.

The purpose of utilizing case studies in research is to enhance comprehension of the subjects under investigation rather than to make generalizations. A case study is a comprehensive investigation of naturally occurring behavior within a specific social group to gain a deeper understanding and solve problems from a different perspective.

Yin, as cited by Nur'aini (2020:93), identifies the following as the primary characteristics of case studies: (1) concentration on one or more cases within their real-life contexts; (2) elucidation of the causal relationship; (3) formulation of theories during the research design phase; application of generalizable theories; and (4) reliance on diverse sources of evidence.

Due to its properties and characteristics, the author deems it necessary to employ the case study method in this research. By doing so, the author can gain insight into the subject by examining the existing community's social environment and conducting interviews with individuals designated to represent the majority of the existing community.

## **FINDINGS & DISCUSSION**

The activities undertaken by the public relations department of Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi, following the Two-Way Symmetric model, have been executed flawlessly and effectively. This success is attributed to the department's multifaceted approach to disseminating information, which includes neighborhood advertisements and social media accounts, rather than relying solely on unidirectional communication.

The utilization of two-way asymmetric communication by the public relations department during 'Open House' and 'Charity' events exemplifies public relations excellence. This is evident from the two-way communication conducted by the department. Additionally, the

Two-Way Symmetric model is implemented to ensure effective two-way communication between the public relations department and the internal staff of the institution. This is demonstrated through the collaboration of Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi's internal staff regarding the quality of education provided, enabling the public relations department to showcase the institution's value to the broader community effectively.

The two-way communication implemented during 'Open House' and 'Charity' activities exemplifies the use of two-way asymmetry as a model of excellence in public relations. Furthermore, the Two-Way Symmetric model demonstrates that the public relations department effectively facilitates two-way communication with the internal staff. Through collaboration concerning the quality of instruction provided by the institution's staff, the public relations department can effectively demonstrate the institution's worth to the greater community.

The author acknowledges that the research title is associated with the theory of excellence in public relations, which examines how public relations communicates with the general public. Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi effectively engages in communication with its community and the public through the organization of charitable events and open houses. The public perceives Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi as having a well-developed image through the participation of its members in activities or programs that facilitate the exchange of positive information and indirectly promote the institution. As a result, more individuals become aware of Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi and may consider enrolling or registering there. An increasing number of individuals becoming aware of and interested in Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi indicates the success of the institution's public relations initiatives to enhance its brand image in accordance with the three defining characteristics of brand image theory (2024, Mangngi et al.).

## **CONCLUSION**

The author concludes that the role of public relations in an organization or institution encompasses numerous responsibilities, as evidenced by the research conducted in this study. Public relations not only acts as an intermediary, bridging internal parties within

the organization or institution, but also serves as a medium that significantly impacts the institution's or organization's sustainability.

This is exemplified by the responsibilities of the public relations department at Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi, specifically through the efforts of Andri Yosua Kosasi. Beyond establishing a positive image for Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi, Andri Yosua Kosasi is tasked with educating the public about the brand recognition of educational institutions that use the term "international standard school." In his role as the public relations representative, Andri Yosua Kosasi has successfully implemented three models of excellence in public relations: the Public Information model, the Two-Way Asymmetric model, and the Two-Way Symmetric model.

The utilization of these models has enabled effective communication with both the community and internal staff. Through activities such as charity events, open houses, and blood donation drives, the public relations department has fostered a positive image for Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi. This has established the school as a trustworthy institution in the eyes of the community, making it a preferred choice for parents seeking quality education for their children.

Furthermore, Andri Yosua Kosasi's efforts to enhance enrollment have contributed to the institution's sustainability and opened up prospects for expansion, including the establishment of additional facilities and the elevation of the educational tier from Elementary to Senior High School. These efforts not only aim to produce exceptional graduates but also to gain the community's trust, ensuring that the endeavors dedicated to cultivating a positive brand image are fruitful.

The research underscores the importance of responsive public policies, adequate financial support, and active community involvement in the successful implementation of public relations strategies. Additionally, the study highlights the need for robust data security measures to maintain public trust and the continuous integration of new technologies to enhance the effectiveness of public relations efforts.

In conclusion, the synergy between effective public relations practices, supportive policies, financial backing, community engagement, and technological advancements is crucial for the successful transformation and sustainability of educational institutions like

Kinderfield Highfield School Bekasi. By addressing these challenges and leveraging the strengths of the public relations department, the institution can continue to thrive and meet the demands of modern society.

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