



Article

Integrating Religious Values into Public Relations: A Proposed Framework for Malaysia

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Abstract

Public Relations (PR) scholarship emphasizes ethical frameworks such as honesty and fairness. However, few studies systematically align these principles with Islamic teachings. This situation has created a gap in culturally resonant PR models. Therefore, this study addresses the underexplored integration of Islamic values into PR practices by investigating how Islamic values could be integrated into PR practices and proposing a holistic framework in the Malaysian context. The study employed a qualitative approach consisting of document review of the Quran and Hadith and semi-structured interviews with nine experts, including PR professionals, academics, and Sharia scholars. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that Islamic values such as sincerity, kindness, cooperation, speech principles, truthfulness, trustworthiness, righteous conveyance, and wisdom align with ethical PR practices. The proposed framework integrates these values into foundational values, communication principles, and strategic decision-making based on spiritually grounded PR practices. The study's contribution lies in advancing a culturally grounded PR framework that could help enhance ethical decision-making in Muslim-majority settings. The findings also offer actionable insights for practitioners and policymakers by bridging Islamic scholarship and PR theory. The study fills a critical gap in global PR discourse by advocating for context-specific ethical frameworks that balance religious principles with professional standards.

Keywords: Islamic values, communication ethics, cultural principles, Malaysia, PR framework

Suggested citation:

Yusoff, S.Z., Hassan, S.A., and Hassan, I. (2025). Integrating Religious Values into Public Relations: A Proposed Framework for Malaysia. *International Journal on Culture, History, and Religion*, 7(SI2), 880-906. <https://doi.org/10.63931/ijchr.v7iSI2.430>



Introduction

Public Relations (PR) has been adopted in many organizations to persuade and gain mutual understanding through goodwill (Andersson, 2024; Saffer, 2025). As a profession, PR has ethical values that ensure the delivery of quality service to stakeholders. The profession demands the ability to deliver messages, persuade, and influence the public. PR practices develop rapidly all over the globe as organizations build and maintain reputations internally and externally. Stakeholders such as customers, investors, legislators, and employees ensure the organization is always intact in the industry. The perception of these groups significantly impacts organizational image and reputation in the long term. According to Sommerfeldt and Kent (2020), reputation symbolizes the relationship between an organization and its audience. It is because corporate reputation represents a comprehensive positive perception of the organization's public relations. The importance of public relations in an organization cannot be denied when it is consistent with the organization's top management and strategic decision-making.

Moreover, there are differing scholarly arguments regarding PR practices. For instance, Grunig (2013) maintained that PR practices are adopted according to each country's cultural background, guided by strategy, symmetry, and diversity. Nonetheless, Haque and Ahmad (2017) emphasized that PR practices must be based on truth and honesty, and prioritize public interests, freedom, and rights. However, Seitel (2017) enumerated five PR principles: 1) honesty in communication, which leads to credibility, openness, and consistency of belief principles; 2) fairness in actions, which leads to equality; 3) two-way communication on an ongoing basis; 4) research into the environment; 5) assessment for action modifications if necessary.

As a professional task, a PR project may necessitate collaboration with individuals from diverse backgrounds, each with their own customs and beliefs. For PR consultants, it becomes essential to possess both PR skills and cultural knowledge, particularly in cases involving Islam. PR practitioners might work in a Muslim-majority country or alongside Muslim colleagues. Nevertheless, the challenge for Muslim PR practitioners lies in navigating the profession without contradicting their Islamic principles. The global discourse has increasingly expressed concerns about the consistency of PR foundations and Islamic practices.

In the last few years, communication scholars from different regions have studied and compared PR foundations with religions and cultural practices (e.g., Manafe et al., 2025; Rozak, 2025; Smudde, 2021). However, research into integrating Islamic values into PR foundations requires a more systematic investigation. Academic discourse on PR and Islam is relatively new despite the long-standing practical PR

implementation (Ridzuan & Yusoff, 2021). Consequently, there is still a significant gap for further research, particularly in Malaysia. Existing research indicates an overlap in the dimensions of PR practices. Therefore, the current research focuses on generating a comprehensive framework from PR practices from Islamic viewpoints. The current study provides valuable insights that could help enhance organizational performance. The dimensions outlined in this study pertain to relational principles, differing from the conventional ones established by scholars. Specifically, the current study sought to achieve the following objectives.

1. To identify PR foundations and practices that concur with Islamic values evident from the Quran and Sunnah.
2. To propose how Islamic values can be integrated into PR practices in the Malaysian context.

Literature Review

Research focusing on developing PR frameworks reflects various theoretical and practical perspectives. Earlier studies emphasized the strategic role of PR in organizational communication, often focusing on traditional models such as RACE - Research, Action Planning, Communication, and Evaluation (Bowen, 2009). However, recent studies emphasize the importance of societal impact. For instance, Saffer (2025) employed a conceptual analysis to develop a network-based framework. The findings showed that such an approach can enhance PR's role in fostering positive social change. The study highlights the potential for societal influence. Similarly, Eyo (2025) offers a framework to address systemic challenges in Nigerian PR practices. The study used a qualitative method to identify key barriers and propose solutions. The findings revealed that contextualized approaches are essential for effective PR in various settings.

Additionally, Andersson (2024) proposed a theoretical framework for understanding strategic PR practices. The study employed a conceptual analysis based on strategy-as-practice, practice theory, and existentialist notions of human modes of being. The findings highlight the importance of understanding strategy as a deliberate and non-deliberate activity.

From a cultural perspective, Ni (2022) proposed a theoretical framework for intercultural PR through a literature review by synthesizing existing knowledge on cultural factors influencing PR practices. The framework underscores the significance of cultural sensitivity in global PR strategies. Similarly, Anani-Bossman and Mudzanani (2023) employed a mixed-method approach to develop a framework for PR practice in African higher education. The findings highlight the importance of

cultural and regional considerations in PR strategies and emphasize the need for tailored frameworks that reflect local contexts.

Another significant aspect of modern PR frameworks is digital media and content co-creation. In this regard, Nhinda et al. (2023) employed a case study method to propose an integrated content co-creation framework for PR and digital media. The study explored the framework's application at a Namibian commercial organization. The findings demonstrate that collaborative content creation can enhance organizational communication and engagement with diverse stakeholders. In a similar context, Vladimirović (2023) utilized a conceptual analysis to discuss PR theoretical frameworks and instruments to outline key tools and models used in PR practices. The study found that aligning theoretical frameworks with practical instruments can help achieve effective PR outcomes.

In summary, research on PR frameworks reflects various theoretical and practical perspectives, including strategic planning, network analysis, intercultural context, and digital media integration. These frameworks highlight the complexity and adaptability of PR in contemporary contexts. Previous studies have revealed key findings emphasizing the need for contextualized, culturally sensitive, and digitally integrated PR strategies.

Religion and Public Relations

The connection between religion and PR has garnered increasing scholarly attention across the globe. Studies have examined how religion and culture shape PR practices across various traditions and geographical regions (e.g., Al-Kandari et al., 2021; Leong et al., 2024; Manafe et al., 2025; Rozak, 2025; Smudde, 2021; Spaulding, 2021; Sule, 2023). The relationship between religion and PR has deep historical roots. Earlier studies laid the groundwork for understanding how religious organizations utilize PR strategies to communicate their messages effectively. For instance, Brown (2014) argues that religion and PR have had a “nearly mutual embrace” throughout history, with religious institutions adopting PR strategies. Lamme (2014) elaborated on this historical connection by exploring how religious movements adopted PR in American history. This perspective highlights the enduring influence of religion on PR practices.

The integration of religious values into PR practices has led to the development of various theoretical frameworks. For instance, Xifra (2008) introduced the concept of “*devotional-promotional communication*” in the context of soccer clubs. This framework illustrates how PR strategies can employ quasi-religious sentiments to build strong emotional connections with audiences. In the Islamic context, Al-Kandari et al. (2021)

analyze the use of religious content in social media communications by Islamic banks in Kuwait. The study demonstrated how religious principles shape PR strategies in financial institutions. The findings highlight the importance of aligning PR practices with religion and cultural values to engage with target audiences.

Recent literature points to several emerging trends in the connection between religion and PR. For example, Spaulding (2021) highlighted the growing importance of faith in public relations. The study suggested that PR practitioners must increasingly consider religious perspectives in performing their duties. Sule (2023) further reflected this trend by proposing specialized PR practices for faith-based organizations in the Nigerian context. Recently, Leong et al. (2024) provided a case study of Brunei's business system and demonstrated how Islamic principles shape corporate social responsibility (CSR) and PR initiatives. These studies highlight the deep integration of religious values into PR strategies of businesses and organizations in contexts where religion is crucial in societal norms.

Another emerging area is the integration of workplace spirituality and religion into internal PR practices. Smudde (2021) examined how spiritual and religious elements can be integrated into organizational culture and PR. The study highlights the framework's potential benefits for employee engagement and organizational cohesion. This perspective aligns with the idea that effective PR must consider the spiritual dimensions of stakeholders, particularly in diverse cultural contexts. Much of the literature focuses on Islamic and Christian contexts. Limited studies consider PR frameworks rooted in other religious traditions, such as Hinduism or Buddhism. The principles of these religions, such as non-violence, mindfulness, and interconnectedness, can inform unique approaches to PR. Recently, Rozak (2025) emphasized developing PR theories relevant to Indonesian culture, including Islamic, Christian, Hinduist, and Buddhist religious traditions. The study highlights the need for culturally sensitive PR frameworks to accommodate various religious perspectives. Manafe et al. (2025) echoed this call for cultural sensitivity by advocating for a culture-based perspective on PR practices.

Moreover, cross-cultural perspectives have enriched our understanding of how different religious traditions approach PR. For example, Behloul (2011) examined the self-presentation strategies of Bosnian Muslims in Switzerland. The findings revealed how cultural and religious contexts influence PR efforts. The study suggests that integrating Islamic beliefs into PR practices may have unique characteristics. In summary, previous studies revealed how religion and culture can influence PR practices across various contexts, including religious movements and corporate strategies. Religion continues to shape how messages are constructed and

disseminated. Therefore, developing a comprehensive framework that incorporates religious values in PR practices is pertinent.

Integrating Islamic values into PR practices could offer a unique approach beyond conventional models. Grounded in Islamic principles, this approach will emphasize ethical conduct and spiritual accountability. Core Islamic principles, such as *Qaulan Maysura*, could be integrated. This principle emphasizes gentle, kind, and considerate speech (Haque, Shahnewaz, & Siddiquee, 2013) and aligns with the values of high-context communication cultures where indirectness, politeness, and respect are highly valued. In Asian societies, confrontation is often avoided to maintain harmony and save face (Ting-Toomey, 1988). Al-Kandari et al. (2021) touched on this cultural alignment. While universal ethics in PR emphasize honesty, fairness, and transparency (Kirat, 2005), Islamic values add a layer of accountability to divine principles and moral integrity (Haque & Ahmad, 2016; Jabnoun & Khalifa, 2005). This dimension suggests that PR practitioners should adhere to ethical standards and align their actions with religious beliefs to develop a more profound sense of responsibility.

Previous studies have observed that conventional PR models can be enhanced to reflect the unique realities of local cultures (Duffy, 2010; Huang, 2000; Sriramesh et al., 1999; Sriramesh & Enxi, 2004). For instance, the Press Agency Model or Public Information Model, while utilized in countries such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (Abdelhay, 2014), may benefit from adaptations to better align with local ethics and cultural sensitivities. Recent studies have emphasized the need for culturally relevant PR frameworks (Hafiduddin & Rozak, 2025; Noh et al., 2023). Hafiduddin and Rozak (2025) highlighted the importance of transforming Islamic education PR to build organizational identity and foster collaboration with the younger generation. The study emphasizes the need for PR practices rooted in local culture and religious values. A comprehensive approach integrating religious and local values is vital for successful PR outcomes in these regions.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative method comprising interviews and document analysis to collect and analyze data. A qualitative method represents a practical technique for describing people's behavior, attitudes, and practices (Ograjenšek, 2016). Qualitative techniques often rely on textual analysis to explore meaning and thematic inferences. This method represents a systematic way of dealing with the subjective interpretation of textual data through classifying, categorizing, coding, and identifying themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Thus, the current study

utilized a cross-sectional narrative using interviews and document analysis to understand how Islamic values could be integrated into PR practices in the Malaysian context. Triangulating interviews with document analysis will provide a richer understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Robertson & Samy, 2015; Ruslin et al., 2022).

Data Collection

The data for this study were collected in two phases. First, interview data were gathered from nine participants using semi-structured interviews. The sample comprises three PR professionals, two PR academics, and four Sharia experts selected using purposive sampling. The participants were selected based on their expertise, availability, and knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation. While PR professionals offered insights into actual PR practices, academics contributed theoretical perspectives on PR. Additionally, Sharia experts provided insights into Islamic values in Malaysia. Respondents' identities were encrypted for confidentiality. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of interview participants.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Informants

SN	Informants	Gender	Position	Academic Qualifications	Years of Experience
1.	PA01	Male	PR Academic Expert	PhD in Communication	23
2.	PA02	Male	PR Academic Expert	PhD in Public Relations	30
3.	PA03	Male	PR Manager	Master's in communication	20
4.	PA04	Male	PR Manager	Master's in marketing communication	25
5.	PA05	Male	PR Manager	Master's in marketing communication	30
6.	PA06	Male	Sharia Expert	Degree in Shariah	28
7.	PA07	Male	Sharia Expert	Degree in Shariah	25
8.	PA08	Male	Sharia Expert	Degree in Shariah	10
9.	PA09	Male	Sharia Expert	Degree in Shariah	12

Given the exploratory nature of this study, interviews aimed to provide a comprehensive Islamic interpretation of PR practices, focusing on roles and functions. The interview questions were designed to explore how Islamic values can be integrated into conventional PR practices and how a comprehensive framework can be developed. For instance, participants were asked, "What is the evidence of PR in

the Quran and Hadith, particularly concerning *Hablumminallah* (relationship with Allah) and *Hablumminannas* (relationship with people)? This question sought to establish scriptural foundations for ethical communication, such as the Quranic emphasis on “enjoining what is right” (Q3: 104) and the Prophet Muhammad’s model of *Shoora* (consultation), which frame PR as a dual obligation to uphold divine accountability and foster societal trust.

The participants were also asked What are the fundamental principles of PR based on Islamic teachings? This question sought to reveal core tenets such as *Amanah* (trustworthiness), *adl* (justice), and *Maslaha* (public welfare), which prioritize transparency and communal benefit over transactional stakeholder management. Another question was asked. PR practices vary across countries due to religious and cultural factors. How can the fundamental principles of PR be applied in the Malaysian context? This question prompted strategies to harmonize universal Islamic values, such as *Ta’awun* (cooperation) (Q5: 2), with Malaysia’s multicultural norms, advocating for frameworks that align CSR initiatives with *Maqasid al-Sharia* (higher objectives of Islamic law) while preserving societal harmony. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Second, secondary data comprising Quranic verses and Hadith (prophetic traditions) were gathered through document review. According to David and Sutton (2004), secondary data refers to readily available information or concepts relevant to the subject under investigation. Only information related to Islam and PR is gathered from the chosen documents. The document review focuses on searching for arguments to form a basis for the relevance of Islamic values to PR. In addition, the official website of the Mufti of the Federal Territory’s Office was visited. Sources such as books, articles, and seminar papers were also referred to.

Validity and Reliability

Four Sharia experts, including the Mufti (Islamic Jurist) of the Federal Territory, checked the interview data to ensure validity. The validity procedure focused explicitly on the roles and functions of PR practice in Malaysia within Sharia law. All of the experts were given the same set of questions. For reliability, two interview sessions were conducted to determine if consistent data could be gathered. This approach aligns with established reliability assessment techniques that enhance the trustworthiness of findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This procedure is necessary to

ensure that data collection methods are robust and consistent (Knorr and Hissbach, 2014; Patton, 2015).

Coding Procedure and Data Analysis

This study employed thematic analysis to interpret PR through Islamic viewpoints based on interview data collected from PR practitioners in Malaysia. Specifically, the study utilized Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis procedure to analyze the data gathered. The technique involves six key steps: 1) familiarization with the data; 2) generating initial codes; 3) searching for themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) defining and naming themes; and 6 writing up the results. Thematic analysis allows for identifying and interpreting patterns within the data to infer valid insights from verbal, visual, or written data (Bengtsson, 2016). According to Boeije (2022), this approach allows for data segmentation, categorization, summarization, and reconstruction.

Results and Discussion

The current study employed a qualitative approach to explore PR practices through the lens of Islamic values. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis based on two primary objectives: first, to identify Islamic values that align with PR and practices, and second, to propose strategies for integrating these values into PR practices within the Malaysian context. The findings are presented and discussed as follows.

Islamic Values Concurring with PR Foundations and Practices

The first objective of this study was to identify Islamic values that concur with PR practices from the Quran and Sunnah. Five themes emerged from the document review: Ikhlas (sincerity), Ihsan (being kind to others), Ta'awun (cooperation), saying good words, and applying the qualities of Rasulullah (SAW). These Islamic values promote transparency, trust-building, and collaborative efforts, which are crucial for successful PR campaigns (Sule, 2023). Integrating these values into PR practices could help ensure ethical conduct and foster a deeper connection with audiences, particularly in contexts where religious and cultural sensitivities shape public perception and engagement. Table 3 summarizes the findings obtained from the

document review, consisting of themes and exemplary quotes from Quranic verses and Prophetic tradition.

Table 2: Emerging themes from document review

SN	Foundations	Source	Translation/Quotation
1	Ikhlas (Sincerity)	Imam al-Baihaqi in Shu'ab al- Iman, Hadith no. 4929]	"Indeed Allah 'Azza Wa Jal is kind, when one of you does something, he should do it diligently".
2	Ihsan (Being kind to others)	Ali-'Imran (Q3:112)	"They are stricken with humility wherever they may be, except when under a covenant (of protection) from Allah, and a covenant from men; they have drawn on themselves the wrath of Allah, and destitution is put over them. It is because they disbelieved in the Ayat of Allah and killed the Prophets without right. It is because they disobeyed (Allah) and used to transgress (the limits set by Allah)".
		Al-Hujurat (Q49:11)	"O you who believe! Let a group not scoff at another group; it may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor let (some) women scoff at other women; the latter may be better than the former. Nor defame yourselves, nor insult one another by nicknames. Evil is the name of wickedness after faith. Moreover, whosoever does not repent, then such are indeed wrongdoers".
		Al-Hujurat (Q49:13)	"O humankind! We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has At-Taqlawa. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware".
		Al-Baqarat (Q2:83)	"And (remember) when We took a covenant from the Children of Israel, (saying): Worship none but Allah (alone) and be dutiful and good to parents, and to kindred, and to orphans and (the poor), and speak good to people and perform As-Salah and give Zakah. Then you slid back, except a few of you, while you are backsliders".
3	Ta'awun (Cooperation)	Al-Ma'idah (Q5:2)	"O you who believe! Violate not the sanctity of the symbols of Allah, nor of the Sacred Month, nor of the Hady brought for sacrifice, nor the garlands, nor the people coming to the Sacred House (Makkah), seeking the bounty and good pleasure of their Lord. However, when you finish the Ihram, hunt, and do not let the hatred of some people (once stop you from Al-Masjid Al-Haram (at Makkah) lead you to transgression. Help you one another in Al-Birr and At-Taqlawa, but do not help one another in sin and transgression. Moreover, have Taqlawa of Allah. Verily, Allah is severe in punishment".

4	Qualan principles (Saying good words)	Al-Nisa' (Q4: 86)	"When you are greeted with a greeting, greet in return with what is better than it, or (at least) return it equally. Certainly, Allah is Ever a Careful Account Taker of all things".
		Al-Nisa' (Q4: 63)	"They (hypocrites) are those of whom Allah knows what is in their hearts; so, turn aside from them (do not punish them) but admonish them, and speak to them an effective word to reach their inner selves".
		Al-Nisa' (Q4: 5)	"And give not unto the unwise your wealth which Allah has made a means of support for you, but feed and clothe them therewith, and speak to them words of kindness and justice".
		Al-Nisa' (Q4: 9)	"And let those (executors and guardians) have the same fear in their minds as they would have for their own, if they had left weak offspring behind. So, let them have Taqwa of Allah and speak truthfully".
		Al-'Isra' (Q17: 28)	"And if you turn away from them and you are awaiting a mercy from your Lord for which you hope, then, speak unto them a soft, kind word".
		Al-'Isra' (Q17:23)	"And your Lord has decreed [Qada] that you worship none but Him. Moreover, you should be considerate of your parents. If one or both attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor reprimand them, but address them in terms of honor".
		Taha (Q20:44)	"And speak to him mildly, perhaps he may accept admonition or fear (Allah)".
5	Sidq (truthfulness)	Maryam (Q19:50)	Sidq (truthfulness)- "And We gave them of Our mercy, and We granted them Sidqin `Aliyyan on the tongues".

As shown in Table 2, the major themes offer religious legitimacy to behaviors such as diligence, mutual respect, justice in communication, and collaboration for the common good. For example, sincerity emphasizes excellence in one's actions, which aligns with the PR principle of professional integrity and commitment to quality service. Similarly, Quranic verses from Surah Al-Hujurat advocate respectful communication, which is critical in PR for maintaining positive stakeholder relationships and fostering social harmony. Additionally, cooperation aligns with the PR practice of strategic alliances and ethical collaboration (Q5:2), where practitioners are urged to support one another in righteousness and avoid harmful conduct. The recurring theme of using kind, respectful, and truthful words (Q3: 112, Q49: 11, Q49: 13, Q2: 83) aligns with PR's focus on transparency, trust-building, and reputation management.

Sincerity is crucial when integrating Islamic values into PR practices, as practitioners need to be sincere solely for the sake of Allah SWT. This genuine nature is one of the approaches that could reflect PR practice and be emphasized (Ikbal, 2015).

This value is mentioned in the narration of al-Baihaqi in Syu'ab al-Iman (no. 4929), (no. 4930), and (no. 4931): "Indeed Allah 'Azza Wa Jal is kind; when one of you does something, he should do it diligently". A sincere person will do a job with complete diligence, and perseverance makes a person do the job with earnestness and persistence.

Moreover, being kind to others, which signifies the importance of doing good to fellow human beings, is emphasized in Islam. The Prophet SAW was reported to have said: *"Indeed, I was sent to perfect noble morals"* (Al-Bukhari in al-Adab al-Mufrad: no. 273). Therefore, PR practitioners are the mirror of the organization and must carry a positive self-image and be polite when speaking and dealing with others. The basis of doing good to fellow human beings is also mentioned in the narrations of al-Tirmizi (no. 1987 & 1924), al-Bukhari (no. 13), Muslim (no. 45 & 1844), and Abu Daud (no. 4941).

The act of doing good is also comprehensive, doing good to all creatures, regardless of status. As people who are involved in relations with the public and organizations, PR practitioners are advised to give the best service to others as they would like others to serve them. This value is emphasized in the Prophetic tradition as narrated by Muslim (no. 1844): *"Whoever wants to be saved from hell and admitted to heaven, then his death should come on the condition that he believes in Allah and the Last Day. He also treats people as he likes people to treat him."* The hadith explains that loving and cherishing others is essential. Al-Bugha and Mistu (2005) interpreted this hadith as emphasizing the essence of love and perfect faith, adding value for Muslims and encouraging people to unite. This principle is critical where PR practitioners represent organizations aiming to maximize profits. Research indicates that although a two-way symmetrical model emphasizes internal and external communication, it tends to be one-sided (Broom & Sha, 2013). Therefore, the nature of loving the audience should have as much value as his love for the organization.

Furthermore, the basis for cooperation is essential in Islam as mentioned in Surah al-Ma'idat (Q5: 2). According to Ibnu Katsir's (2011) interpretation, Allah SWT commands His faithful servants to always help each other in doing good, which is called al-Birru (virtue), and abandon all forms of evil. Allah SWT also calls for His faithful servants to help others in distress, whether they are doing wrong or being wronged. This value could be reflected in every aspect of PR work. The spirit of cooperation must be instilled (Saad, Cleveland & Ho, 2015). The basis for "cooperation" emphasized by the interview participants aligns with the Shura concept that should be practiced in Islamic-based organizations. This suggests that every matter needs to be agreed upon between management and technical employees to

produce an impact on the target audience. In this regard, Kirat (2016) explained that both parties must work together in all matters, especially involving relationships with the community.

Likewise, Qaulan principles (the act of saying good words) when dealing with the public will reveal good morals and can improve the image of an organization. This value forms a principle of Islamic communication. The interviews and document review revealed six Qaulan principles of ensuring effective communication: Qaulan Sadida (truthful speech), Qaulan Maysurah (easy speech), Qaulan Layyina (gentle speech), Qaulan Karima (noble speech), Qaulan Ma'rufa (kind speech), Qaulan Baliqha (eloquent speech). Together, these principles play a critical role in the PR context. For instance, Qaulan Sadida means words that are true, honest, accurate, and free from deception. The term Sadida is mentioned twice in the Quran: *"And let those (executors and guardians) have the same fear in their minds as they would have for their own, if they had left weak offspring behind. So, let them have Taqwa of Allah and speak truthfully"* (Q4:9) and *"O you who believe! Have Taqwa of Allah and speak (always) the truth (qaulan sadida)."* (Q33:70)

Qaulan Maysura is explicitly mentioned in Surah al-Isra' (Q17:28): *"And if you turn away from them and you are awaiting mercy from your Lord for which you hope, then, speak unto them a soft, kind word"*. In PR, this value could be vital in shaping a positive reputation in the eyes of the audience, especially during times of crisis within an organization. During such periods, panic ensues due to the chaos resulting from the crisis. Therefore, PR professionals are advised to use words that please listeners as a communication intermediary between the organization and the audience.

Additionally, Qaulan Layyina is mentioned in Surah Taha (Q20:44): *"And speak to him (Pharaoh) mildly, perhaps he may accept admonition or fear (Allah)."* Ibn Kathir (2011) interprets this verse as providing an important lesson, as Prophet Moses is instructed to use language and words that are gentle and courteous when addressing Pharaoh, even though he is known for wrongdoing and arrogance. Using soft words, especially towards those disliked, is necessary, and even more so towards those who are liked. Gentle words are essential for a more profound and impactful effect, evoking emotions and bringing positive results (Yusoff & Hassan, 2020). A soft tone facilitates the reception of the message and helps avoid conflict. Also, PA08 adds that when speaking, one should avoid being harsh and refrain from using hurtful words, and in case of disagreements, individuals should sit together, discuss, and find a solution.

Qaulan Karima is also explicitly mentioned in Surah al-Isra' (Q17:23): *"And say to them a noble word (a courteous word)."* According to Ibn Kathir (2011), this verse commands people to speak gently, well, with politeness and accompanied by nobility

and respect. In addition, Qaulan Ma'rufa is mentioned four times in the Quran, including in Surah al-Nisa' (Q4:5): *"And give not unto the unwise your wealth which Allah has made a means of support for you, but feed and clothe them therewith, and speak to them words of kindness and justice."* The repetition of Qaulan Ma'rufa is a crucial indicator of the importance of doing good and expressing kind words. In PR, this principle needs to be applied and practiced by every practitioner, especially when conveying messages to the audience, whether in advertising, promotions, or all communication activities.

Lastly, Qaulan Baligha is mentioned in Surah al-Nisa' (Q4:63): *"They (hypocrites) are those of whom Allah knows what is in their hearts; so turn aside from them (do not punish them) but admonish them and speak to them an effective word to reach their inner selves"*. Qaulan Baligha refers to straightforward, expressive, articulate, clear, and precise words (Zainudin et al., 2017). The information conveyed should carry profound meaning into the recipients' hearts, subsequently triggering awareness. Therefore, to apply this principle, PR practitioners must use methods appropriate to the cognitive level of the information recipients. This emphasis is crucial for achieving understanding and ensuring effective communication.

Incorporating the Qaulan principles into the PR framework represents a valuable contribution to the profession. This approach will supplement the conventional PR framework and align well with Malaysian or Asian cultures. Adapting communication practices to suit Malaysian culture is crucial, considering the high-context nature and emphasis on face-saving, where indirectness and politeness are used to maintain harmony (Ting-Toomey, 1988; Al-Kandari et al., 2021). While universal PR ethics highlight honesty and transparency (Kirat, 2005), Islamic values add a dimension of divine accountability, urging practitioners to adhere to both ethical and religious principles, as articulated in previous studies (e.g., Haque & Ahmad, 2016; Jabnoun & Khalifa, 2005). Therefore, Islamic values such as sincerity, kindness, cooperation, and good words could reinforce PR practices.

In addition to sincerity, kindness, cooperation, and good words, truthfulness is identified as mentioned in Surah Maryam (Q19:50): *"And We gave them of Our mercy, and We granted them Sidqin `Aliyyan on the tongues"*. This theme is equally obtained from the interview findings, suggesting four qualities of Prophet Muhammad SAW that can supplement PR practices: Sidq (truthfulness), Amanah (sincerity), Tabligh (Preaching), and Hikmah (wisdom). Muslims emulate these praiseworthy qualities. The Prophet SAW was a great communicator and the best PR model in conveying Islamic teachings through his daily activities and great personality. One of the participants mentioned that integrating Islamic values into PR concepts becomes crucial to strengthen the profession: *"...So Islamic principles can strengthen PR practices. How do you want to build*

it? Must refer to the Qur'an and hadith" (Excerpts from PA08). Table 3 summarizes the findings obtained from interview participants.

Table 3: Emerging themes from interviews

SN	Subthemes	Exemplary Quotes	Source
1	Sidq (truthfulness) in all interactions	[Sidq] ... "is vital to producing competitive practitioners who strive to add knowledge and skills to improve self-quality from efficiency, professionalism, hard work, and a high work ethic".	PA01
2	Amanah (trustworthiness) in all interactions	"For example, from the point of agreement, conversation, physical appearance, and so on, the way we communicate is an example of how the Prophet Muhammad SAW had an approach in trading. He is trustworthy in business.	PA05
3	Tabligh (righteous conveyance) and clarity	"The task of public relations practitioners as the most potent information conveying agent needs to be utilized in the best possible way to impress the hearts of the listening audience. Some words in the Quran that can be associated with communication are Qira'a (reading), Tabligh (conveying), Qaul (saying), Tawassa (ordering), Su'al (asking), Sama'a (listening), Balagh (proclaiming), Dakwah (calling), Tabshir (preaching), Tazkirah (warning), and Maw'izah (advice).	PA04
4	Hikmah (wisdom) in approach	"The nature of this wisdom can be seen in the story of the first migration of the companions to Abyssinia. It can be seen through the polite and wise communication of the companions when arguing and explaining Islam to King Najasyi".	PA01

As shown in Table 3, emerging themes include Sidq (truthfulness), Amanah (trustworthiness) in all interactions, Tabligh (righteous conveyance) clarity, and Hikmah (wisdom) in approach. These dominant themes reflect ethical communication grounded in Islamic principles. They underscore the significance of trustworthiness, righteous conveyance, wisdom, selflessness, and sacrifice as bases for effective and morally sound PR. This outcome echoes Yusoff and Hassan's (2020) assertion that ethical conduct and social responsibility are paramount in enhancing PR principles. The themes also signify that Islamic PR extends beyond mere technical skills to emphasize the PR practitioner's character and intention. This outcome aligns with Zainudin et al.'s (2017) exploration of Islamic communication theory, which posits that sincerity and ethical intent are paramount.

Truthfulness, trustworthiness, righteous conveyance, and wisdom are not merely aspirational but actionable, demanding that PR practitioners embody integrity, transparency, and a commitment to delivering accurate and beneficial information. For example, Sidq denotes that information must be authentic, genuine, grounded in accurate facts, and not merely crafted for attention-grabbing purposes. As exemplified

by the ethical conduct of the Messenger of Allah, PBUH, the authenticity extends to being faithful in both words and actions. Traditional PR practices are often associated with propaganda, the distortion of narratives, and excessive focus on promotional activities, which might be viewed as incompatible with the sincerity inherent in the Sidq nature. Hence, recommending the adoption of this trait as a PR principle is valid, aiming to uphold the profession's integrity.

The significance of Amanah (trustworthiness) is exemplified by the Prophet SAW, who earned the title al-Amin *"trustworthy"*, due to his unwavering trustworthiness. His trustworthiness was renowned for being reliable and never resorting to falsehood or betraying trust. PA04 underscores the importance of fulfilling promises, drawing parallels to PR scenarios where organizations must honor commitments made in advertising, such as special gifts with certain products or services. PA05 further emphasizes that adopting the exemplary traits of Prophet Muhammad SAW ensures the smooth functioning of internal and external aspects of an organization's public relations.

"For example, from the point of agreement, conversation, physical appearance, and so on, the way we communicate is an example of how the Prophet Muhammad SAW had an approach in business. He is trusted in the business of buying and selling. Conventional does not place Sharia as the basis of public relations". (Excerpts from PA05)

Moreover, Tabligh (preaching) emphasizes clear, truthful, and effective communication that aligns with moral and ethical principles in spreading truth or Islamic teachings. Incorporating this value into PR seeks to build bridges of understanding, urging the audience to demonstrate good deeds. For example, in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, organizations set a positive example by assisting the less fortunate, indirectly providing a good role model for the audience to follow. The role of PR practitioners as robust information conveyors should be maximized to leave a lasting impact on the audience. PA05 suggests applying the Qualan principles in delivering the preaching. Practitioners must recognize the position of the Quran as a guiding principle in life. Allah SWT mentions in Surah al-Isra' (Q17:9): *"Indeed, this Quran guides to that which is most suitable and gives good tidings to the believers who do righteous deeds that they will have a great reward."* Communication activities must be executed effectively to yield positive results (Zainudin et al., 2017).

Hikmah (wisdom) suggests making sound judgments and decisions guided by knowledge, understanding, and moral integrity. The profound influence of Prophet Muhammad SAW is evident in the increasing global recognition and acceptance of Islamic teachings. This remarkable impact has led the West to acknowledge his extraordinary significance, ranking him as the foremost among the hundred most

influential individuals in history (Hart, 1922). In PR, wisdom is crucial in achieving goals.

Integration of Religious Values into PR Practices in the Malaysian Context

The second objective of this study was to propose how Islamic values can be integrated into PR practices in the Malaysian context. Integrating Islamic values into PR is proposed by carefully categorizing and grouping Islamic values obtained from document review and interview responses into a cohesive framework that reflects ethical and spiritual dimensions of PR. The framework integrates three interrelated components: foundational values, communication principles, and a strategic approach from Islamic viewpoints. Figure 1 represents the proposed framework.

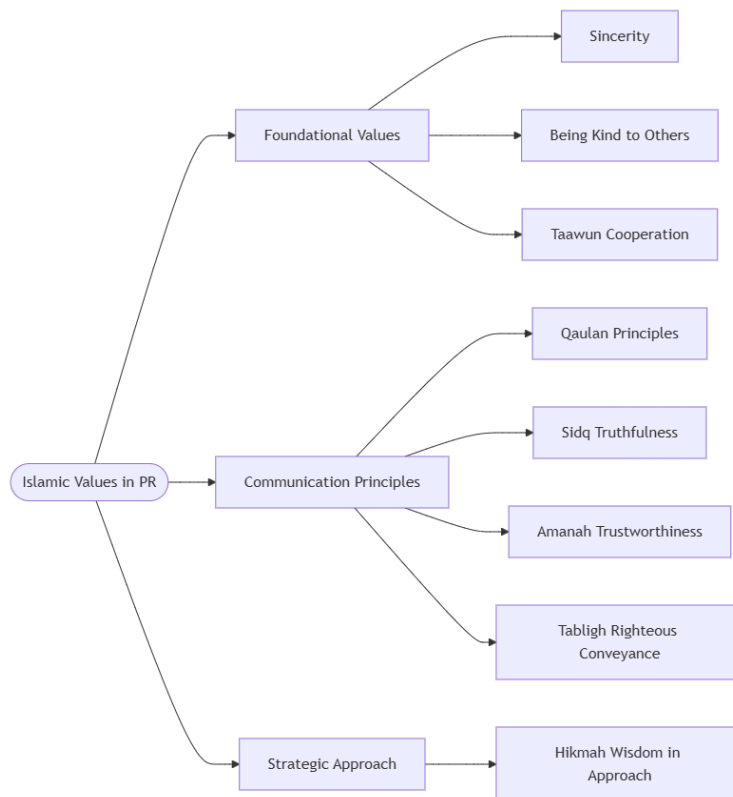


Figure 1: Proposed Framework - Islamic Values in PR

The framework incorporates foundational values such as sincerity, kindness, and cooperation from Islamic viewpoints. These values emphasize ethical conduct and community welfare, as highlighted by studies such as Alserhan (2011) and Hassan et al. (2008), which stress the importance of adhering to Islamic ethics in communication. Sincerity, for instance, reinforces all Islamic deeds and ensures that PR practitioners

act with genuine intent, which could foster trust and credibility. Similarly, kindness and cooperation promote mutual respect and collaboration within PR activities.

Moreover, the proposed framework further integrates communication principles derived from Islamic teachings. These principles guide PR practitioners in delivering ethical and impactful messages. For example, Qaulan Sadida emphasizes truthful speech, and Qaulan Maysurah advocates for gentle and kind communication, both of which are critical for maintaining harmony in high-context communication cultures like those in Malaysia (Ting-Toomey, 1988; Al-Kandari et al., 2021). In addition, Sidq ensures honesty in all interactions, while Amanah reinforces accountability. Tabligh, on the other hand, emphasizes clarity and righteousness in conveying messages. These values could ensure ethical and effective information dissemination (Yusoff & Hassan, 2020).

The strategic approach incorporates the value of Hikmah (wisdom) as a guiding principle for PR practices. This value advocates thoughtful and balanced communication strategies that reflect understanding and sound judgment. Hikmah enables PR professionals to address complex situations with sound judgment and foresight. This approach aligns with PR efforts toward overarching ethical and strategic objectives (Zainudin et al., 2017). The framework encourages culturally sensitive communication strategies by aligning PR practices with Hikmah. The proposed framework provides a holistic model for integrating Islamic values into PR practices based on the ethical guidelines outlined in the Quran and Hadith. This approach could enhance organizational integrity to foster, which is particularly relevant for Malaysian practitioners.

Implementation of the Proposed Framework

Implementing PR functions within the proposed framework requires upholding Islamic values and principles in all stakeholder communication. This implementation involves embedding foundational values, adhering to ethical communication principles, and ensuring strategic decision-making is guided by Islamic teachings. The Quran and Sunnah should be the guiding principles that prevent PR practitioners from going astray by considering Tasawwur (conception) as a framework and Mardatillah (pleasing Allah) as the final goal. This entire process of integrating Islamic values into PR must be governed by Hablun Minallah (relationship with Allah) and Hablun Minannas (relationship with people) (Ikbal, 2015). Hablun Minallah considers Allah's (SWT) appeasement the primary goal, while Hablun

Minannas signifies PR practitioners' interaction with internal and external environments to achieve goals.

Allah SWT is the primary 'stakeholder'

The PR role is classified into managerial and technical levels (Broom & Dozier, 2004). In addition, there are three categories of stakeholders: primary, secondary, and tertiary (Argenti, 2015). These stakeholders fall into internal and external categories (Van Riel & Balmer, 1997; Goodman, 2000; and Cornelissen, 2020). Internal stakeholders are employees and management, while external stakeholders are customers, media, investors, society, suppliers, and government (Argenti, 2015). From the findings of this study, Sharia and academic experts described Allah SWT as the primary "stakeholder" in implementing PR practices based on Islamic teachings. According to PA03, they embrace the concept of trust in the blessings of sustenance from Allah SWT as the stakeholder category in their organization. He recounted his experience working in a conventional organization, where blame was often placed on human resources in situations leading to losses, without turning to Allah SWT as the ultimate planner.

Comprehensive involvement

This implementation strategy emphasizes the active participation of PR practitioners, organizational leaders, employees, and external audiences in upholding Islamic values throughout communication. This aspect ensures that foundational values such as sincerity, kindness, and cooperation are embedded across organizational culture and practices. Employees should be trained to embody these values in their interactions, while external audiences are engaged through transparent and respectful communication that reflects Islamic teachings. All informants mentioned that integrating Islamic values into PR practices requires comprehensive involvement from superiors and subordinates. The management's willingness to implement this strategy is essential and, subsequently, must be supported by subordinates. However, PA06 argued that to ensure the implementation of this strategy, a family atmosphere must be applied based on Taaruf, Tafahum, and Takaful, so that members can learn together to carry out this function. PA01 added that regular training needs to be given to accomplices to help them perform this function

consistently. As emphasized by Salleh (2003). Islam regards human interests and positions them as fundamental development principles.

PR as a management function

As a management function, PR is defined as a systematic process to establish and maintain mutual understanding between organizations and their publics through ethical communication (Harlow, 1976; Grunig & Hunt, 1984). PR as a management function is a critical implementation strategy for the proposed framework by embedding Islamic values into organizational decision-making and stakeholder engagement. By integrating PR into management, organizations can align communication strategies with broader organizational goals to foster stakeholder trust through transparent and culturally sensitive messaging (Cutlip et al., 2000). For instance, PR practitioners must counsel leadership on ethical communication practices rooted in truthful and kind speech and righteous conveyance to ensure that internal and external communications uphold Islamic teachings while addressing organizational objectives (Yusoff & Hassan, 2020). This strategic integration positions PR as a proactive driver of ethical governance and societal harmony, not merely a reactive tool. This aspect implements the framework's vision of PR as a spiritually accountable and socially responsible management discipline.

As a management function, PR could influence the organization's ideology (Broom & Sha, 2013). From an Islamic perspective, considering PR at the management level means implementing Islamic policies more orderly and comprehensively. PA06 emphasizes this idea:

If PR is not at the management level, what will happen? If you are only an executor, you cannot implement it. PR should be involved in top management. When involved in top management, it becomes easy. We, as PR, can give advice. Easy to talk to. How does the leadership see the importance of PR? It will be easy if he considers PR very important because they will support PR activities. It could be impossible if the management thinks this PR is to get publicity. It would help if you were involved from the start. How does management want to empower PR in the organization? (Excerpts from PA06)

The leader of an organization holds considerable influence in implementing Islamic principles to shape the organization's course. Previous research demonstrated that implementing Islamic-based practices in organizations is at a moderate level (Ilhaamie, 2010). Although not exhaustive, the study provides insights into the extent of adherence to Sharia principles in organizational affairs. Conversely, other studies pointed out that implementing Islam-based practices faces numerous challenges,

including acceptance among the organization's top management (Mohiuddin, 2017; Atkins et al., 2017). In this context, a leader's core beliefs significantly impact the establishment of the organizational work culture (Muhammad al-Ghazali, 1997). PA02 emphasizes this idea:

Depending on the top management, see where he is learning. He will take it easy. Follow the standard. Make decisions that are not based on Fiqh. He will say we do it based on the meeting if we discuss it. However, he makes the final decision (Excerpts from PA02).

Conclusions

This study investigated how Islamic values could be integrated into PR practices and proposed a holistic framework in the Malaysian context based on the Quran and Sunnah. The findings revealed that Islamic values such as sincerity, kindness, cooperation, speech principles, truthfulness, trustworthiness, righteous conveyance, and wisdom align with ethical PR practices. The proposed framework integrates these values into foundational values, communication principles, and strategic decision-making based on spiritually grounded PR practices. These values emphasize ethical communication and accountability. Implementing the proposed framework is based on *Hablun Minallah* (relationship with Allah) and *Hablun Minannas* (relationship with people). These strategies require trust in the blessings of sustenance from Allah SWT as the primary stakeholder, comprehensive involvement, and PR as a managerial function based on Islamic teachings. The study also highlights the importance of cultural alignment, particularly in Malaysia's multicultural setting, where indirectness, politeness, and respect for hierarchy are deep-rooted.

This study contributes to existing literature by bridging Islamic teachings with PR theory and addressing a gap in research on faith-based PR frameworks. The study provides actionable insights for practitioners in Malaysia and similar contexts. However, the study's reliance on secondary sources and limited interview data may constrain its generalizability. Future research could explore the empirical validation of the framework through case studies or surveys, particularly in sectors such as Muslim-friendly tourism or Islamic finance. In addition, investigating how Islamic PR frameworks adapt to cross-cultural challenges would further enrich the field.

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