



HMI'S ROLE IN ADVOCACY ON NATIONAL ISSUES: A REVIEW OF ACTIVISM AND PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of the Islamic Students Association (HMI) in advocating for national issues through the perspectives of student activism and public communication. As a student organization with a long history in Indonesia's socio-political movements, HMI plays a strategic role in shaping public opinion and promoting policy change. Using a qualitative approach and case study method, this study examines the dynamics of the HMI movement in responding to national issues such as democracy, social justice, and freedom of expression. Data were obtained through documentation of activities, observation of official social media, and analysis of mass media reporting on HMI actions. The primary focus of the analysis was directed at activism patterns, public communication strategies, and the resulting media narratives. The findings indicate that the success of HMI's advocacy is influenced by its ability to contextually articulate issues, build strategic communication networks with the media, and integrate Islamic values as the moral foundation of the movement. Furthermore, the use of social media is an important instrument in disseminating messages and mobilizing public support. This study strengthens understanding of the relationship between student movements, political communication, and public relations strategies in a democratic space. It also offers practical recommendations for HMI to develop a communication approach that is adaptive to social and technological change. Thus, HMI's role in advocating national issues is understood not only as a response to the political situation, but as an effort to build a structured and sustainable national discourse.

Keywords: Islamic Students Association, student activism, media framing, public relations, National Issues

1. INTRODUCTION

The Islamic Students Association (HMI), founded on February 5, 1947, is one of the oldest and most influential student organizations in Indonesia. Since its inception, HMI has demonstrated a strong commitment to advocating for national

issues, acting as a catalyst for social and political change in the country. This role reflects not only a spirit of nationalism but also the integration of Islamic values into their struggle.

Throughout the history of the Indonesian student movement, HMI has played a significant role in various important moments. During the Old Order era, HMI actively opposed policies deemed unpopular and potentially detrimental to the nation. During the New Order era, HMI participated in the reform movement that led to the fall of the authoritarian regime. HMI's activism was not limited to demonstrations but also involved intellectual discussion and the development of constructive alternative policies. These contributions demonstrate that HMI serves not only as a critic but also as a solution provider for national problems. Research indicates that HMI's involvement in politics has hampered its function as a student organization (Akla et al., 2025).

Journalistic media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion regarding advocacy movements such as those undertaken by the Student Association of Indonesia (HMI). Through reporting, the media can influence public perception of issues raised by student organizations. The media's framing of news can determine whether an advocacy movement is viewed positively or negatively by the public. Research shows that the relationship between an organization and the media, or media relations, significantly influences the quality of news received by the public (Hardia et al., 2025). Therefore, HMI's ability to maintain good relations with the media is a crucial factor in effectively conveying its advocacy messages (Dalimunthe et al., 2025).

In an effort to build its image and influence public perception of the national issues it raises, HMI needs to implement an effective Public Relations (PR) strategy. A good PR strategy focuses not only on conveying information but also on building strong relationships with various stakeholders. This includes a deep understanding of the audience, appropriate use of media, and proactive responses to emerging issues. Research shows that communication strategies in political PR are crucial because they help shape public perception, build reputation, and influence opinion (Musa et al., 2025). Therefore, HMI's implementation of an appropriate PR strategy is crucial (Purba et al., 2025).

A comprehensive understanding of how student activism, media coverage, and communication strategies interact can provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of advocacy conducted by organizations like HMI. Therefore, research examining the synergy between student activism, media coverage, and communication strategies in the context of HMI advocacy is essential to fill this gap and provide practical recommendations for improving advocacy effectiveness (Rahman et al., 2023).

In today's digital era, new challenges and opportunities arise for HMI in carrying out its role. Social media, for example, has become a crucial platform for organizations to disseminate messages and interact with the public. However, the

use of social media also requires an appropriate communication strategy to ensure the message is well-received by the audience. Research shows that social media is currently a focus for practitioners, researchers, and academics specializing in public relations. This is because the emergence of social media, initiated by Web 2.0, has revolutionized the way audiences communicate (Remuta et al., 2028). They freely discuss products, brands, and companies. Therefore, PR is required to be able to engage online audiences to support organizational goals. Through social media engagement, PR can communicate directly with the public, minimizing the threat of crises spreading online.

Collaboration between HMI and journalistic media outlets needs to be strengthened to ensure that advocacy messages are delivered accurately and effectively. A strong relationship between an organization and the media can help shape positive public opinion on the issues raised. Research shows that a mutually beneficial relationship between both parties can increase the effectiveness of communication and information dissemination. Therefore, HMI needs to develop an effective media relations strategy to support its advocacy efforts.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research approach used in this study is qualitative, which aims to understand in-depth the dynamics of advocacy on national issues by the Islamic Students Association (HMI) and how the media frames the movement. A qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on exploring the meaning, interaction patterns, and communication strategies used in HMI advocacy, which cannot be explained solely by numbers or statistics (Creswell, 2018). The method used in this research is a case study, which allows the researcher to conduct an in-depth analysis of HMI's advocacy on various national issues. Case studies are an appropriate method because they allow for a contextual understanding of how this student organization plays a role in championing social and political issues and how they interact with the media and the public (Yin, 2018). This study will examine various advocacy events carried out by HMI, including the strategies implemented, public responses, and their impact on public policy. In addition, this study uses framing analysis to examine how the media frames HMI's advocacy movement. Framing analysis refers to the theory of Robert Entman (1993), which explains that the media not only presents information but also shapes public perception through the way they frame an issue. This research will identify framing elements in media coverage of HMI, including word choice, perspective, and how the media highlights or ignores certain aspects of HMI's advocacy. Using this method, the research can understand how the media contributes to constructing HMI's image in the public sphere.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

HMI's activism includes demonstrations, public discussions, advocacy training, and participation in national forums. This activism aligns with the concept of social mobilization as outlined by Della Porta and Diani. In this context, HMI utilizes both formal and informal advocacy spaces as a form of social and ideological struggle, making the organization a crucial entity in articulating the political interests of urban Islam. In the study "Urban Islamic Activism," this position is reinforced by the narrative that urban Muslims currently experience identity unrest amidst secular modernity and choose movement spaces as a way to maintain the authenticity of that identity.

Activists from the Islamic Students Association (HMI) are holding a press conference at the Bawaslu Media Center as part of their advocacy efforts and participatory oversight of the democratic process in Indonesia. This momentum reflects HMI's role in social mobilization, where the student organization not only mobilizes on the streets but also utilizes formal spaces to voice public interests and promote election transparency. HMI's involvement in this official forum demonstrates a structured advocacy strategy through a dialogical and diplomatic approach to championing national issues.

Charles Tilly, a prominent sociologist, argued that a social movement is an organized collective effort to challenge existing authority, power, or social norms. In the Indonesian context, student movements are often the driving force of social and political change (Rahmi et al., 2020). Research by Pamungkas (2015) shows that student movements in Indonesia, including the HMI, play a significant role in advocating for national issues, such as democratization and social justice. This student activism can be seen as a manifestation of social movements that seek to influence public policy and existing power structures.

Media as an Arena for Identity Contestation

Journalistic media plays a role as both a mediating agent and an arena for contestation. The framing of HMI news coverage in the media demonstrates a duality: on the one hand, it promotes HMI's advocacy as a moral and communal movement, but on the other, it also has the potential to reduce HMI's struggle to a form of politicization or extremism. This is closely related to the dynamics of identity politics, as discussed in the book "Urban Islamic Activism," which explains how social actors are often trapped in symbolic stereotypes due to the dominant narratives of mainstream media. Therefore, HMI's ability to conduct strategic media advocacy is essential for shaping constructive public opinion.

HMI's PR strategy reflects a mature understanding of the importance of two-way communication. In practice, HMI not only conveys messages through mainstream media but also actively manages internal media channels such as digital bulletins, Islamic podcasts, and visual campaigns on social media. In many

cases, HMI's campaign content is segmented, using language and symbols tailored to the characteristics of the target audience, whether students, social activists, or the general public. This aligns with Grunig and Hunt's approach to effective PR and demonstrates HMI's understanding of the relational communication context and its adaptability to the changing digital landscape (Dalimunthe et al., 2025).

Grunig and Hunt identified four Public Relations (PR) models: press agentry/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetric, and two-way symmetric. The two-way symmetric model is considered the ideal approach in which the organization and the public interact reciprocally to achieve mutual understanding. In the context of HMI, an effective PR strategy is necessary to build positive relationships with the public and the media (Rianti et al., 2024). HMI employs various communication strategies, including media relations and public campaigns, to promote national issues and mobilize support. However, the effectiveness of these strategies depends on HMI's ability to adapt its messages and tactics to evolving social and political dynamics.

HMI's adaptive PR strategy involves engaging in relevant discourse, building a positive image through active participation, utilizing media to reach a wider audience, and communicating directly. This demonstrates HMI's adaptability to the context of the issues being discussed. Walter Lippmann, in his work "Public Opinion," emphasized that public opinion is shaped by images in our minds, influenced by the mass media. The media not only presents information but also shapes the reality we perceive. Media coverage of HMI's actions has a significant impact on public opinion of the organization. If the media frames HMI positively, the public is more likely to support their agenda; conversely, negative framing can degrade HMI's image in the eyes of the public.

Islam as a Practical Ideology, Not Just a Symbol

Islamic values in HMI's advocacy are not merely symbolic attributes, but are transformed into a practical ideology that frames all organizational actions. For example, in responding to national issues such as intolerance, corruption, or social inequality, HMI uses a normative Islamic approach as an ethical foundation. In the context of secularism discussed in "Urban Islamic Activism," this reflects the fact that spirituality and piety are not merely private matters but can be actively represented in the public sphere. HMI utilizes public space as a field of struggle that is not only political, but also ideological and theological. These activities indicate Islamic practices that go beyond symbolic rituals, manifesting themselves in discussions and social interactions. The diversity of displays within the group emphasizes the essence of Islamic values (practice) rather than an exclusive focus on symbols. When it comes to social action, this further strengthens Islam as an ideology that is put into practice for the greater good.

Wiktorowicz's theoretical approach to Islamic Activism suggests that HMI's success lies not only in its ability to mobilize resources but also in its effective

framing of issues and active participation in fast-paced and responsive social media channels. HMI, as explained in this theoretical framework, demonstrates its ability to manage a flexible yet ideological organizational structure, making it relevant in the era of digital contestation. HMI cadres take action, demonstrating their ability to mobilize the masses. The banner "Guarding Diversity..." is an attempt to frame a message about unity and diversity. This action has the potential to be documented and disseminated digitally, expanding the message's reach. The organization's symbols reinforce its visual identity during the action and in the digital realm.

Robert Entman introduced Framing Theory, which explains how the mass media frames information and events, thereby influencing public perception and interpretation. Framing involves selecting certain aspects of reality and emphasizing them in a narrative to promote problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and recommendations for action. Krisnanto (2021) analyzed how the media framed student demonstrations related to the ratification of the Omnibus Law. This research demonstrates that media framing can influence public understanding and assessment of student advocacy actions.

HMI can no longer be reduced to a mere intra-campus organization. It has transformed into a cultural-political entity that plays a central role in shaping public opinion among Indonesian Muslims. By integrating mobilization tactics, media strategies, the articulation of ideological values, and the management of a complex Islamic identity, HMI has positioned itself as a strategic actor in the architecture of religious discourse in an era of digital contestation and social disruption (Ritonga et al., 2025).

4. CONCLUSION

This study found that the effectiveness of HMI's advocacy on national issues relies heavily on the synergy between visionary activism, fair media framing, and communicative PR strategies. HMI's activism has proven effective in maintaining the continuity of students' role in the national socio-political struggle, particularly through intellectual discourse and concrete actions based on Islamic values. Media framing is a crucial element that HMI must consider because it has significant potential to influence public perception. In this context, mainstream and alternative media outlets have different approaches to HMI coverage, requiring the organization to establish strategic relationships with both to effectively convey its message. HMI's communication strategy, particularly on social media, is a crucial instrument in building narratives and mobilizing public support. However, this study demonstrates the need to improve professional capacity in digital communication management and strengthen message cohesion across all lines of organizational communication. The Islamic values that underpin HMI's struggle must continue to be internalized in its advocacy strategy to remain relevant and

legitimate amidst dynamic social change. This Islamic spirit is not merely an ideological symbol, but also a source of motivation and moral direction in advocating for social justice. In this way, HMI can strengthen its position as a strategic actor in national advocacy and as a bridge between Islamic values and the ideals of social justice in national and state life.

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