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BAZNAS REPUTATION MANAGEMENT TO RESTORE PUBLIC TRUST
(A Case Study on McDonald's Indonesia's Donation for Palestine)

[1*]Mohamad Arifin Purwakananta, [2]Tria Patrianti, [3]Evi Satispi, [4]Oktaviana Purnamasari
Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta, Indonesia
24110100043@student.umj.ac.id, tria.patrianti@umj.ac.id, evi.satispi@umj.ac.id, oktaviana.purnamasari@umj.ac.id

ABSTRACT
Reputation management is a crucial element in maintaining and restoring public trust in philanthropic organizations. This study aims to analyze the reputation management strategies implemented by the National Amil Zakat Agency (BAZNAS) in responding to controversies surrounding donations by McDonald's Indonesia to Palestine. The research employs a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, document analysis, and participant observation, and analyzed using triangulation to ensure validity. The findings reveal that BAZNAS employed three primary strategies to restore public trust: (1) Transparent Communication, by providing clarifications through mass media and digital platforms to educate the public about the donation fund management mechanisms; (2) Strategic Collaboration, through partnerships with independent parties for audits and evaluations; and (3) Branding Enhancement, through campaigns emphasizing BAZNAS's commitment to humanitarian values and sustainability. These findings indicate that a holistic approach focusing on communication and strengthening institutional values can effectively mitigate negative impacts on an organization's reputation. This study contributes theoretically to the field of reputation management in philanthropic organizations and offers practical implications for similar institutions in addressing trust crises.
Keywords: reputation management, public trust, BAZNAS, donations, organizational crisis

INTRODUCTION

Reputation is one of the most valuable intangible assets for nonprofit organizations, including Islamic philanthropic institutions such as the National Amil Zakat Agency (BAZNAS). In the nonprofit context, reputation serves not only as an indicator of public trust but also as a fundamental prerequisite for organizational legitimacy and operational sustainability (Deephouse & Carter, 2005). Unlike profit-oriented organizations that rely on financial performance, philanthropic institutions depend on the level of public confidence to secure both moral and material support. As a national zakat management body entrusted with public funds, BAZNAS is required to maintain its reputation through transparency, accountability, and effective public

communication. When reputation is compromised, the consequences extend beyond institutional credibility to the potential disruption of ongoing social programs.

The reputation crisis faced by BAZNAS in late 2023 exemplifies the complexity of communication challenges in the digital era. The incident originated from McDonald's Indonesia's donation to support Palestinians, which was channeled through BAZNAS. Although the initiative was humanitarian in nature, it provoked negative reactions among segments of the public. Some perceived the collaboration as politically insensitive, given McDonald's global associations with Israel. The rapid spread of criticism on social media placed BAZNAS in a defensive position. In such circumstances, a nonprofit organization's reputation becomes highly vulnerable to dynamic public opinion, often shaped more by emotional narratives than by factual information (Aula, 2010).

This phenomenon illustrates how nonprofit reputation is increasingly influenced by the digital and social media ecosystem. Walker (2010) emphasizes that in the digital age, organizational reputation is shaped through complex interactions among institutions, media, and the public. Narratives emerging in public discourse are no longer fully controlled by organizations but are participatory and open. In the case of BAZNAS, public reactions to McDonald's donations reveal a trust gap—a perceptual distance between the institution's good intentions and public acceptance. This condition underscores the need for adaptive, empathetic, and timely crisis communication strategies to preserve organizational reputation amidst the rapid circulation of digital information.

The BAZNAS reputation crisis also highlights the importance of a strategic communication approach grounded in ethical and spiritual values. As an official amil zakat institution of the state, BAZNAS carries a moral responsibility to uphold the principles of sharia, transparency, and social justice. Therefore, every public communication decision must take into account the sensitivity of Muslim audiences toward global humanitarian and political issues. Latief (2023) asserts that communication in Islamic philanthropy serves not only to convey messages but also to represent the moral and spiritual identity of the Muslim community. In times of crisis, poorly framed communication can generate mistrust and weaken the institution's social legitimacy, even when the intentions behind it are noble.

From a communication theory perspective, managing a reputation crisis of this nature requires an in-depth understanding of Coombs's (2007) Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), which posits that the effectiveness of crisis communication depends on public perceptions of organizational responsibility for the incident. The greater the perceived responsibility, the higher the public's demand for a swift, empathetic, and transparent response. In the case of BAZNAS, although the organization was not directly involved in the global McDonald's controversy, public perceptions of the legitimacy of the partnership became a decisive factor influencing its reputation. Consequently, responsive communication strategies and public clarification were essential to managing negative perceptions.

Furthermore, Austin and Jin (2010), through their Social-Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) theory, highlight the central role of social media in shaping

public opinion during crises. They argue that the public has transitioned from being mere recipients of information to active producers of narratives that influence organizational reputation. In the case of BAZNAS, the swift and diverse reactions of netizens demonstrated that social media has become the primary arena of reputational perception. The absence of proactive communication can create an information vacuum—a void that is quickly filled by speculation and negative interpretations. This underscores the importance of continuous, real-time digital communication management grounded in transparency and empathy.

The McDonald's donation controversy revealed that speed, accuracy, and social sensitivity are fundamental pillars of nonprofit reputation management. Within Fombrun's (1996) reputation theory framework, reputation is constructed from long-term perceptions of organizational performance, social responsibility, and communication behavior. Hence, reputation management is not merely reactive crisis handling but also a process of building credibility through consistent values and actions. Bourdieu (1986) conceptualizes reputation as a form of social capital—symbolic trust that determines the level of public confidence in an institution. For BAZNAS, public trust constitutes symbolic capital that must be preserved through ethical, inclusive, and transparent communication strategies.

Accordingly, this study is relevant in addressing the need for an effective reputation management model for Islamic philanthropic organizations in the digital age. It aims to analyze the communication strategies implemented by BAZNAS in handling its reputation crisis arising from McDonald's Indonesia's donation for Palestine and to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in restoring public trust. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of crisis communication and reputation management studies in the religious nonprofit sector. Practically, it offers insights for zakat institutions and other philanthropic organizations in designing adaptive, ethical, and responsive public communication strategies suited to the dynamics of the digital era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Business and Organizational Communication

Business communication refers to the process of conveying information, ideas, and values between an organization and its stakeholders, both internal and external. In the context of nonprofit organizations, communication serves to build trust, foster participation, and strengthen institutional reputation in the eyes of the public. Shannon and Weaver (1949), in their Mathematical Theory of Communication, emphasize that effective communication must be two-way, allowing for feedback to ensure that messages are received and understood accurately. This principle is highly relevant to institutions such as BAZNAS, which rely heavily on public perceptions of transparency and integrity in managing zakat funds.

Furthermore, Open Communication Theory underscores the importance of transparency in establishing organizational reputation. Roberts and O'Reilly (1974) argue that open communication fosters an environment of trust by enabling honest and accountable information flows. For Islamic philanthropic institutions, open

communication means providing public access to financial reports, policies, and social activities, thereby minimizing misunderstandings and reducing public suspicion. Transparent and truthful communication thus becomes the foundation of sustainable reputation building.

Reputation Management Theory

Organizational reputation can be defined as the aggregated perception of stakeholders regarding an organization's performance, values, and ethics (Fombrun, 1996). Fombrun and Rindova (2000) argue that reputation is not the result of a single event but an accumulation of images formed through consistent actions and communications over time. In the case of BAZNAS, a positive reputation reflects the institution's commitment to Islamic values, professional management of public funds, and tangible social contributions.

Modern reputation management theory has been expanded by Doorly and Garcia (2012), who view reputation as a strategic asset that must be managed holistically through communication policies, organizational behavior, and public relations. According to Doorly, strong reputation emerges from alignment between what you say and what you do. Discrepancies between the two create reputational dissonance, which erodes credibility. Therefore, reputation must be safeguarded through consistency of values, transparency in actions, and responsiveness during crises.

Additionally, Bourdieu (1986), through his concept of social capital, explains that reputation represents a form of symbolic capital that carries significant social value. This symbolic capital enables organizations to gain public trust, legitimacy, and collective support. Within the BAZNAS context, reputation functions as trust capital—a determinant of public participation in national zakat movements. When crises or ethical issues threaten this reputation, the institution's social capital diminishes, potentially undermining its mission sustainability.

Trust Theory

Trust constitutes a fundamental component in building and maintaining relationships between organizations and their publics. Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) define trust as a willingness to be vulnerable to another party's actions based on the expectation that the other will act beneficially. They identify three key dimensions of trust: ability, benevolence, and integrity. These dimensions are particularly relevant to zakat institutions, where the ability to manage funds, the benevolent intention to support beneficiaries (mustahik), and moral integrity are critical determinants of reputation.

Morgan and Hunt (1994), through the Commitment-Trust Theory, argue that trust and commitment are the cornerstones of long-term organizational relationships with stakeholders. In nonprofit settings, trust is not merely the product of persuasive communication but the result of consistent behavior—keeping promises, upholding ethical values, and demonstrating accountability. For BAZNAS, public trust depends on the institution's capacity to maintain integrity in donation management while distancing itself from controversial political or corporate associations.

Hosmer (1995) emphasizes that trust is a moral construct that reflects public belief in an organization's ethical standards. In Islamic philanthropy, this ethical dimension is both moral and spiritual. Muslim communities' trust in zakat institutions is closely tied to their adherence to sharia principles, social justice, and moral accountability. Thus, trust and reputation are two sides of the same coin—mutually reinforcing factors that shape the legitimacy of philanthropic organizations in the eyes of the public.

Crisis Communication Theory

Crisis communication refers to organizational responses to events that threaten reputation and demand strategic, empathetic, and transparent management. W. Timothy Coombs (2007), through the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), posits that the effectiveness of crisis communication depends on the level of responsibility attributed to the organization by the public. Coombs categorizes crises into three clusters: victim, accidental, and preventable. Each cluster requires distinct communication strategies—defensive, explanatory, or apologetic.

In the case of McDonald's Indonesia's donation, BAZNAS faced an accidental crisis, where the organization did not intentionally cause controversy but suffered reputational repercussions from symbolic associations with an external entity.

Austin and Jin (2010) expand on this through the Social-Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) theory, which highlights social media as the dominant arena of crisis perception. Delayed or inadequate responses can exacerbate crises, as publics tend to fill information voids with speculation. Therefore, social media communication strategies must be real-time, empathetic, and dialogic. BAZNAS, in this context, must engage actively in clarifying issues, addressing public feedback, and providing evidence of its humanitarian commitments to mitigate reputational damage.

Seeger (2014), in his Digital Crisis Communication Theory, emphasizes transparency, interactivity, and social responsibility as key to successful crisis communication in the digital era. He argues that nonprofit organizations should utilize social media not merely as a channel for information dissemination but as a strategic tool for continuous trust-building. Thus, crisis communication is not merely reactive but forms part of a broader reputation management strategy requiring consistency between words and actions.

Ethics and Values in Islamic Philanthropic Communication

Communication in Islamic philanthropic organizations is inseparable from spiritual, moral, and social values. Hilman Latief (2023) stresses that ethical communication in philanthropy must reflect justice, honesty, and moral responsibility toward the *ummah* (Muslim community). In times of reputational crisis, institutions like BAZNAS must demonstrate communication that is not only rational but also compassionate and value-driven.

This aligns with Fauzia's (2024) perspective that crisis communication in philanthropic institutions should be *inclusive, reassuring, and empowering*. An ethics-based

communication approach strengthens social trust and institutional reputation, particularly amid crises that touch upon religious sensitivity.

Consequently, the theoretical framework of this study integrates four key approaches:

1. Organizational communication, emphasizing transparency and openness;
2. Reputation management, emphasizing consistency between values and actions;
3. Trust theory, focusing on integrity and benevolence; and
4. Crisis communication theory, emphasizing empathetic and digitally adaptive responses.

The integration of these approaches provides a robust theoretical foundation for analyzing how BAZNAS managed its reputation crisis arising from McDonald's Indonesia's donation and how its communication strategies contributed to restoring public trust in the digital era.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to analyze the reputation management strategies implemented by the National Amil Zakat Agency (BAZNAS) in addressing its reputational crisis following McDonald's Indonesia's donation for Palestine in 2023. This approach enables an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon within its social, cultural, and communicative context. According to Yin (2014), the case study method is particularly suitable for investigating contemporary and complex events in which the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined.

The qualitative approach allows for interpretive analysis, where meaning is derived from the subjective experiences of actors and the public's perceptions of the organization's communication behavior. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) emphasize that qualitative research focuses on understanding processes and meanings rather than merely producing numerical data. In this regard, the researcher interprets the dynamics of communication between BAZNAS, the media, and the public in the formation and recovery of institutional reputation.

The research adopts a descriptive-analytical design, focusing on mapping and interpreting the crisis communication strategies implemented by BAZNAS. This design facilitates a systematic description of how the institution responded to the reputational crisis, how the public reacted to such responses, and how the interplay between both parties shaped reputational perceptions in the public sphere.

This design follows the framework of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which outlines three stages of qualitative data analysis: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The study treats BAZNAS as a single embedded case, while also considering broader external contexts such as public opinion on social media, online media coverage, and official institutional communications through press releases and digital channels. Thus, the research does not solely focus on internal policies but also includes public interactions as an integral part of reputation formation.

The data used in this research comprise two main categories: primary data and secondary data.

Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with key informants from BAZNAS, including officials in charge of public communication, public relations, and social media management. Additional interviews were conducted with two experts in Islamic philanthropic communication and one digital media analyst to provide triangulated perspectives.

Secondary data consisted of official BAZNAS documents (annual reports, press releases, and performance reports), national online media coverage (e.g., *Detik, Kompas, Republika,* and *JPPN*), social media posts (X/Twitter and Instagram), and public responses gathered from the BAZNAS *Muzakki Service Channel*. Academic literature related to crisis communication theory, reputation management, and Islamic communication ethics was also reviewed to provide theoretical grounding and context for the case analysis.

Data were collected using three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, document analysis, and digital observation (netnography).

1. In-depth interviews were conducted using semi-structured guides, allowing open-ended exploration of informants' experiences and interpretations concerning the crisis communication process.
2. Document analysis examined BAZNAS's official statements, media publications, and digital archives during the crisis period (November 2023–March 2024).
3. Digital observation (netnography) was employed to monitor public conversations on social media—particularly X (Twitter) and Instagram—to capture public sentiment, dominant narratives, and perceptions of both BAZNAS and McDonald's.

Netnography, as introduced by Kozinets (2010), enables researchers to understand how online interactions contribute to the real-time construction of reputation and public opinion. This method is especially useful for analyzing the digital dimension of reputation crises that unfold dynamically within social media ecosystems.

Data analysis followed the thematic analysis framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which involves six sequential stages:

1. Familiarization with the data,
2. Initial coding,
3. Identification of major themes,
4. Reviewing the themes against the data,
5. Defining and naming the themes, and
6. Producing the analytical narrative.

Within this study, the identified themes include:
(a) Public perceptions of BAZNAS's reputation before and after the crisis;
(b) The institution's communication strategies in responding to the McDonald's issue;
(c) The role of social media in shaping public narratives; and
(d) Efforts to restore reputation through empathetic and transparent communication.

To assess the effectiveness of BAZNAS's crisis response, the analysis integrates the frameworks of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) (Coombs, 2007) and Social-Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) (Austin & Jin, 2010). To ensure

trustworthiness, the study applies the four criteria for qualitative research validity established by Lincoln and Guba (1985):

- Credibility — achieved through member checking with informants to verify data interpretations and through triangulation of sources (BAZNAS, media, and public data).
- Transferability — ensured by providing detailed contextual descriptions so that findings can be applied to similar nonprofit institutions.
- Dependability — maintained through an audit trail documenting all stages of data collection and analysis.
- Confirmability — achieved by preserving researcher objectivity and distinguishing analytical interpretation from personal opinion.

Additionally, theoretical triangulation was applied by integrating SCCT, SMCC, and Bourdieu's (1986) *social* capital *theory* to enhance analytical reliability and theoretical robustness. The study was conducted at the Head Office of BAZNAS, Republic of Indonesia, located at Jl. Matraman Raya No. 134, East Jakarta, and through digital observation of BAZNAS's official social media channels. The data collection process took place between December 2023 and April 2024, covering both the crisis and post-crisis periods of BAZNAS's reputational recovery. The selection of location and timeframe was purposive, as this period represented the most intense phase of public communication dynamics between BAZNAS, the media, and the public following McDonald's Indonesia's donation to Palestine.

This study adheres to strict academic ethical standards, including confidentiality of informants, responsible use of data, and objective presentation of findings. All participants provided informed consent before participation, and social media data were analyzed only from publicly accessible content.

The ethical framework of this research also aligns with Islamic communication principles, emphasizing *ṣidq* (truthfulness), *'adl* (justice), and *amānah* (trustworthiness) in information dissemination (Qur'an, Surah Al-Ahzab: 70–71). Thus, the research process upholds not only scientific integrity but also the moral and spiritual values embedded within Islamic philanthropic communication.

RESULT

Dynamics of the Crisis and Public Perception of BAZNAS

The reputational crisis faced by the National Amil Zakat Agency (BAZNAS) originated from its decision to receive a humanitarian donation from PT Rekso Nasional Food, the franchise holder of McDonald's Indonesia, for the people of Palestine in November 2023. Although the donation was intended as a form of humanitarian solidarity, segments of the public viewed the move as controversial due to McDonald's perceived global association with Israel. Within hours, criticism spread rapidly on social media through hashtags such as #BoikotMcD and #Baznas, accompanied by allegations that BAZNAS had failed to demonstrate sufficient sensitivity toward the Palestinian cause.

This incident illustrates how public perceptions in the digital era can shift swiftly, putting significant pressure on the reputation of nonprofit organizations long regarded as credible (Aula, 2010). BAZNAS's standing as a national zakat authority came under scrutiny; some accused the institution of losing moral independence by accepting donations from a multinational corporation perceived as politically problematic. Others, however, viewed the donation positively—as an act of universal solidarity irrespective of the donor's origin.

This polarization highlights the increasingly contested nature of public trust, where organizational reputation becomes a site of negotiation between legacy credibility and emergent digital discourse (Walker, 2010). In this context, reputation is not merely a reflection of facts but rather a social construct shaped by emotional and rapidly evolving narratives.

BAZNAS's Initial Response to the Crisis

In response to the mounting controversy, BAZNAS promptly issued an official clarification through a press conference and its social media channels, asserting that the donation from McDonald's Indonesia was accepted solely for humanitarian purposes and had undergone full sharia compliance review. The statement emphasized that the funds were sourced from an independent local franchise entity, unaffiliated with any international political agenda.

This clarification represented a defensive–protective strategy, consistent with Coombs's (2007) *Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)*, whereby an organization seeks to reduce perceived responsibility by providing factual context. However, while timely, the clarification did not fully restore public trust.

Several observers considered BAZNAS's tone too technocratic and procedural, lacking emotional resonance with Muslim audiences. Fauzia (2024) emphasizes that crisis communication within philanthropic organizations must be both informative and empathetic, demonstrating moral awareness of public sentiment. BAZNAS thus encountered a communication gap between bureaucratic institutional discourse and the emotional expectations of its audience. This case underlines the need for a value-oriented, humanistic crisis communication approach, rather than one limited to technical explanation.

The Role of Social Media in the Escalation of the Crisis

Social media played a decisive role in amplifying and shaping the BAZNAS crisis. Digital observation (netnography) revealed that within the first three days following the announcement, over 15,000 posts using the hashtags #BoikotMcD and #Baznas circulated on X (Twitter). The overwhelming majority carried negative sentiment, focusing on claims that BAZNAS had failed to exercise due diligence in donor selection.

Austin and Jin's (2010) *Social-Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC)* theory explains this phenomenon by framing social media as a multi-voice arena, in which publics act not only as receivers but also as active producers of crisis narratives.

BAZNAS's delayed engagement—its first official response appeared nearly 48 hours after the controversy broke—allowed critics to dominate the online discourse. Coombs (2007) refers to this as an information vacuum, wherein the absence of timely official communication enables speculation to flourish. By the time BAZNAS responded, much of the public had already formed negative perceptions, which proved resistant to correction.

This episode underscores the necessity of real-time digital engagement as a core principle of reputation management for religious nonprofit institutions. In the current digital environment, silence or hesitation can be interpreted as complicity or avoidance, thus eroding organizational trust.

Reputation Recovery Communication Strategies

Once the initial wave of criticism subsided, BAZNAS implemented a more comprehensive reputation recovery strategy. The measures included:

1. Intensifying the publication of humanitarian programs for Palestine;
2. Collaborating with respected Muslim scholars and public figures to reinforce the institution's moral integrity; and
3. Releasing transparent reports on donation allocation through its official website and social media platforms.

This approach aligns with the rebuilding strategy within SCCT, emphasizing corrective action and tangible demonstrations of social responsibility (Coombs, 2007). In terms of message content, BAZNAS began to highlight Islamic universal values such as *'adl* (justice), *rahmah* (compassion), and *insaniyyah* (humanity). This narrative direction reflects Latief's (2023) assertion that communication in Islamic philanthropy should embody moral and spiritual dimensions rather than focus solely on administrative details. The strategy proved moderately effective: digital sentiment analysis during February–March 2024 indicated a 28% increase in neutral-to-positive sentiment, suggesting that public perceptions of BAZNAS became more constructive as transparency and value-based messaging improved.

The Role of Transparency and Accountability in Restoring Trust

A crucial factor in BAZNAS's reputation recovery was its emphasis on transparency and accountability. The public release of financial reports detailing the allocation of Palestinian aid—accompanied by independent audit verification—provided concrete evidence of institutional integrity.

This aligns with Fombrun and Shanley's (1990) argument that positive reputation stems from public perceptions of reliability, responsibility, and behavioral consistency. In this case, data transparency and verifiable proof carried greater persuasive weight than verbal assurances.

From the lens of Bourdieu's (1986) social capital theory, transparency functions as a mechanism for rebuilding the symbolic trust capital disrupted by the crisis. By providing tangible proof of ethical fund management, BAZNAS effectively restored the moral legitimacy underpinning its institutional authority.

This finding underscores that for nonprofit organizations, reputation is not sustained merely through symbolic communication but through consistent ethical governance and demonstrable accountability.

Communication Challenges and Organizational Learning

Despite the success of its recovery measures, the study identified several persistent challenges. First, the delayed initial response indicated inadequate crisis monitoring and digital readiness. Second, fragmentation in internal communication resulted in inconsistent messaging across departments. Third, coordination between the public relations division and the sharia advisory team was not fully integrated, despite the crisis's religious sensitivity.

These findings suggest the need to strengthen strategic communication management capacity within BAZNAS. Doorly (2012) asserts that sustainable reputation depends on alignment between organizational behavior, communication, and internal values. Therefore, BAZNAS should develop an integrated crisis communication system that unites technological tools, governance mechanisms, and Islamic ethical principles.

Theoretical Synthesis: Integrating SCCT, SMCC, and Islamic Philanthropic Ethics

The findings indicate that BAZNAS's partial success in restoring its reputation was achieved through the integration of key principles from SCCT and SMCC, enriched by Islamic ethical communication values. SCCT explains the structural logic of response strategies based on perceived responsibility; SMCC elucidates the role of digital publics in co-constructing reputation; and Islamic philanthropic ethics contribute a moral–spiritual dimension that enhances sincerity and empathy in organizational messaging.

The integration of these frameworks forms a value-based crisis communication model, wherein reputation recovery relies not only on clarification and transparency but also on moral empathy and ethical integrity. This hybrid approach is especially relevant for Islamic philanthropic institutions operating within socio-religious contexts sensitive to global issues and moral legitimacy.

By synthesizing Western communication theories with Islamic ethical perspectives, this study contributes to the development of a contextualized theoretical model for reputation management in faith-based nonprofit organizations in Indonesia and beyond.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that reputation constitutes a symbolic and social form of capital that serves as the principal source of legitimacy for Islamic philanthropic organizations such as the National Amil Zakat Agency (BAZNAS). Reputation represents not merely a reflection of public image but also the accumulated embodiment of values, integrity, and trust established through consistent and transparent communication practices.

The case of McDonald's Indonesia's donation for Palestine revealed that reputation within nonprofit organizations is highly vulnerable to shifts in public

perception, especially in the digital era, where information spreads rapidly and emotional narratives dominate. Although BAZNAS's intention was humanitarian, the organization's reputation became contested due to public sentiment and symbolic associations.

From the perspective of crisis communication theory, the findings reaffirm the relevance of Coombs's (2007) Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) in explaining how public attribution of responsibility shapes organizational responses. Initially, BAZNAS adopted a defensive clarification strategy, but its effectiveness was limited because the response lacked emotional resonance and empathy. Consistent with Austin and Jin's (2010) Social-Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) theory, the institution's delay in engaging social media audiences created an information vacuum, which was quickly filled by negative narratives.

Subsequently, the implementation of rebuilding strategies—including transparent communication, public disclosure of audit reports, and humanitarian value-based campaigns—helped to restore public trust. These measures align with Fombrun's (1996) concept of reputation capital, which asserts that a positive reputation can be recovered through consistent behavior and tangible proof of social responsibility. Sentiment analysis confirmed that public perceptions improved following the institution's enhanced transparency and ethical messaging.

From an Islamic ethical standpoint, BAZNAS's crisis communication reflects the values of ṣidq (truthfulness), amānah (trustworthiness), and 'adl (justice), which serve as moral imperatives in Islamic communication. When these principles are manifested in organizational conduct, communication transcends technical crisis management and becomes a demonstration of moral accountability to the Muslim community. This is consistent with the perspectives of Latief (2023) and Fauzia (2024), who emphasize that Islamic philanthropic communication should be inclusive, reassuring, and empowering.

Theoretically, this study demonstrates the value of integrating SCCT, SMCC, and Islamic philanthropic ethics into a unified value-based crisis communication model. Within this framework, reputation is not merely a managerial asset but a moral trust (amānah) that must be safeguarded through alignment between words, values, and actions. The study contributes to advancing crisis communication literature within the nonprofit sector while introducing an Islamic ethical paradigm as an epistemological foundation for strategic communication in faith-based organizations.

Based on the findings and analysis, several strategic recommendations are proposed for BAZNAS and other Islamic philanthropic institutions, applicable at both the practical and academic levels:

1. Develop a Digital Crisis Monitoring System.

   BAZNAS should establish a *social listening–based* monitoring mechanism to detect emerging public issues early. Such a system would enable real-time engagement and prevent misinformation, in line with the *real-time response principle* of Austin and Jin (2010).
2. Implement Empathetic Communication Protocols Rooted in Islamic Values.

Crisis responses should not only address factual accuracy but also express empathy toward public emotions. Communications infused with *rahmah* (compassion) and *ḥikmah* (wisdom) can calm public tension and strengthen the institution's moral image.

3. Enhance Integration Between Communication and Sharia Teams.

   Crises involving religious sensitivity require coordination among communication, management, and sharia divisions. A multidisciplinary structure ensures that all public statements align with Islamic principles while maintaining strategic coherence.

4. Institutionalize Transparency Through Open Reports and Periodic Audits.

   Transparency is the cornerstone of trust. BAZNAS should regularly publish accessible reports detailing financial performance, donation distribution, and program impact, supported by independent auditing (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990).

5. Develop a Model for Digital Islamic Philanthropic Communication.

   The study recommends the development of a conceptual model titled *Digital Islamic Philanthropy Communication Framework*, integrating modern reputation management strategies with Islamic ethical values. This model may serve as a benchmark for zakat and waqf institutions operating in complex digital ecosystems.

6. Strengthen Communication Human Resources (HR).

   Continuous professional development programs in *digital public relations, media engagement,* and *crisis management based on Islamic ethics* should be conducted for communication staff to enhance institutional preparedness for future crises.

7. Academic Recommendations.

   Future research may expand by conducting comparative studies across different zakat and philanthropic organizations in the Muslim world or by empirically testing the value-based crisis communication model using quantitative or mixed-method approaches. Such studies could bridge Western communication theories with Islamic epistemological perspectives.

This research carries theoretical, practical, and social implications.

1. Theoretically, it extends crisis communication literature by introducing Islamic ethical values as a moral–spiritual dimension in reputation management.
2. Practically, it offers a strategic framework for nonprofit and faith-based organizations to maintain legitimacy and credibility amid digital public scrutiny.
3. Socially, it reaffirms that truthful, transparent, and value-based communication serves as a vital bridge between institutions and society, strengthening communal solidarity and collective trust.

Consequently, BAZNAS emerges not only as a manager of religious charitable funds but also as a moral communication actor, representing the modern face of Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia. The McDonald's donation controversy demonstrates that a philanthropic institution's reputation cannot be preserved solely through administrative procedures but must be built upon integrity, responsiveness, and ethical authenticity.

As Fombrun (1996) aptly stated, "*A strong reputation is the organized expression of honesty – where good intentions are consistently transformed into credible actions.*"

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