A SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIALIZATION STRATEGY FOR NEW STUDENT RECRUITMENT

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ABSTRACT
This study examines the socialization strategy used in new student recruitment at MTs Negeri 1 Palembang and explores how the strategy can be interpreted through a SWOT framework. A qualitative descriptive design was employed to capture how recruitment-related socialization is planned, implemented, and evaluated in the institutional setting. Data were collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation involving the principal, the vice principal for student affairs, the PPDB committee chair, teachers involved in promotion, parents, and prospective students. The data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, while triangulation was used to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings. The results indicate that the madrasah implements socialization through a combination of digital and face-to-face channels, including social media, brochures, school visits, and direct communication with parents and feeder schools. Its key strengths include institutional reputation, qualified human resources, and adequate facilities, whereas its main weaknesses lie in the limited variety of promotional content and the suboptimal use of digital communication. Externally, the institution benefits from growing public interest in Islamic education and wider access to communication technology, but it also faces strong competition from other schools and changing parental expectations. The study concludes that SWOT analysis is useful not only for identifying strategic factors but also for formulating more adaptive, focused, and sustainable socialization strategies for student recruitment.

Keywords: SWOT analysis, Madrasah tsanawiyah, New student recruitment, Socialization strategy

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in improving individual and social quality of life because it enables learners to develop knowledge, skills, values, and adaptive capacities required in a changing world (Sitepu et al., 2023). In this sense, education is not merely a process of knowledge transmission; it is also a structured effort to cultivate character, responsibility, and independent thinking. Indonesian educational policy, as articulated in Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, emphasizes that education must be deliberately designed to create learning conditions that allow students to develop their full potential. This principle implies that educational institutions must manage their services strategically and responsively from the outset, including in the area of student recruitment.

Within educational management, students are a central element because they are both the primary recipients of educational services and an important indicator of institutional quality (Herlambang, 2021). As developing individuals, students require learning environments that support their intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual growth. Consequently, student management should not begin only after admission; it should start with the way institutions introduce themselves, communicate their value, and attract prospective students and parents. Recruitment, therefore, is not a purely administrative activity but a strategic entry point in the broader management of educational services.

The literature on educational management suggests that the effectiveness of student recruitment is shaped by several factors, including the clarity of promotional objectives, the quality of communication with parents and applicants, the involvement of school personnel, and the accessibility of information for the wider community (Noviana, 2024). Recent studies also highlight the increasing importance of websites, social media, and other digital platforms in institutional promotion. Educational institutions that are able to integrate direct communication with digital outreach tend to be better positioned to strengthen visibility and competitiveness. However, many schools and madrasahs still struggle to use these opportunities strategically because of limited resources, weak content planning, or the absence of a clearly structured communication strategy.

SWOT analysis offers a useful analytical lens for examining this issue because it enables institutions to map internal strengths and weaknesses alongside external opportunities and threats (Benzaghta et al., 2021;

Puyt et al., 2023). In educational settings, SWOT has been widely applied to support institutional planning, strategic positioning, and decision-making. Yet in many studies, SWOT remains largely descriptive and is not always extended into a clear strategic synthesis. This creates an opportunity to use the framework more analytically in order to show how socialization strategies can be refined in relation to both institutional capacity and environmental demands.

MTs Negeri 1 Palembang is one of the state madrasahs in South Sumatra that conducts annual new student recruitment. Preliminary observations conducted on October 27, 2025, indicated that the institution has several advantages, including competent teachers, relatively complete facilities, and a positive academic and non-academic reputation. At the same time, the recruitment process still faces practical challenges, such as uneven participation among school personnel, promotional activities that have not been fully optimized, and increasingly intense competition from other schools offering attractive programs. These conditions suggest that institutional quality alone is insufficient; recruitment outcomes also depend on how effectively the institution socializes its identity, strengths, and services to the public.

Against this background, the present study seeks to analyze the socialization strategy used in new student recruitment at MTs Negeri 1 Palembang through a SWOT perspective and to identify the supporting and constraining factors that shape the process. The study's contribution lies in treating socialization not as a peripheral promotional activity but as a strategic component of recruitment management, and in extending the SWOT framework from factor identification to strategic formulation. In doing so, the article aims to enrich discussions on student management in the madrasah context while offering practical guidance for institutions seeking to strengthen their recruitment strategies.Education plays a crucial role in improving individual and social quality of life because it enables learners to develop knowledge, skills, values, and adaptive capacities required in a changing world (Sitepu et al., 2023). In this sense, education is not merely a process of knowledge transmission; it is also a structured effort to cultivate character, responsibility, and independent thinking. Indonesian educational policy, as articulated in Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, emphasizes that education must be deliberately designed to create learning conditions that allow students to develop their full potential. This principle implies that educational institutions must manage their services strategically and responsively from the outset, including in the area of student recruitment.

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METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. The approach was selected because the research sought to obtain an in-depth understanding of how the socialization strategy for new student recruitment was planned, implemented, and interpreted within the institutional context of MTs Negeri 1 Palembang. A descriptive qualitative design was considered appropriate because the study did not aim to test causal relationships; rather, it sought to portray the phenomenon systematically and contextually based on the perspectives of the actors involved.

The analytical focus of the study was the socialization strategy within the broader new student recruitment process. In this article, promotion and selection are treated as closely related dimensions that provide context for understanding how socialization operates in practice. Through this focus, the study examines how the madrasah communicates information, introduces its institutional identity, and positions itself in relation to prospective students and parents. SWOT analysis was then used as an interpretive framework to map internal and external strategic factors and to translate them into actionable directions.

The research participants were selected purposively because they were considered to have direct knowledge of and involvement in the admission process. The informants included the principal, the vice principal for student affairs, the chair of the New Student Admission Committee (PPDB), several teachers involved in promotional activities, parents, and prospective students who had participated in the recruitment process. Their inclusion allowed the researchers to capture multiple perspectives on planning, implementation, and public response to the madrasah's socialization efforts.

Data were collected through three techniques. First, non-participant observation was conducted to examine the forms of promotional activity, the use of communication media, and the institutional setting in which socialization took place. Second, semi-structured interviews were used to explore the experiences, perceptions, and evaluations of the participants regarding recruitment socialization. This interview format provided sufficient guidance while still allowing the researchers to probe emerging issues in depth. Third, documentation was used to collect supporting evidence such as brochures, PPDB archives, committee meeting records, social media posts, and other promotional materials.

To strengthen trustworthiness, the study applied source triangulation and technique triangulation. Information obtained from school leaders, teachers, parents, and prospective students was compared across data sources, while findings from interviews were checked against observation notes and documentary evidence. This procedure helped reduce single-source bias and increased the credibility of the interpretation. In addition, the researchers maintained analytic consistency by organizing field evidence around the study focus and the SWOT dimensions used in the analysis.

Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During the reduction stage, the researchers selected and organized data relevant to the socialization strategy and its supporting and constraining factors. The reduced data were then presented narratively to facilitate pattern recognition and interpretation. Conclusions were drawn iteratively throughout the research process so that the final findings reflected the empirical realities of recruitment socialization at MTs Negeri 1 Palembang as accurately as possible.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Brief Profile of the Research Object

MTs Negeri 1 Palembang is a state Islamic junior secondary school located in Palembang, South Sumatra. The institution is known for combining the national curriculum with religious development and for maintaining a relatively strong public image among madrasah-based educational institutions in the area. Organizationally, the madrasah is led by the principal and supported by vice principals in the areas of curriculum, student affairs, facilities and infrastructure, and public relations, along with teachers and administrative staff who handle academic and student services.

The Socialization Strategy as Part of Recruitment

The findings indicate that, at MTs Negeri 1 Palembang, socialization is embedded within the wider process of new student recruitment rather than functioning as an isolated activity. In practice, the recruitment strategy is organized around three interrelated components: promotion, selection, and socialization. Promotion serves to broaden public reach, selection functions to maintain the quality and credibility of admissions, and socialization becomes the bridge through which information, institutional identity, and the madrasah's advantages are communicated to prospective applicants and their families.

The socialization strategy was implemented through a combination of online and offline channels. Digitally, the madrasah used Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp groups, and the official website to disseminate admission information and institutional messages. Offline, the institution relied on brochures, banners, school visits, and direct communication with parents and feeder schools. Interview data indicate that these channels were intentionally combined to ensure wider access to information while maintaining personal interaction with the community. Observation and documentation further show that the socialization process was conducted in a planned and increasingly intensive manner, especially during the admission period.

The field data also show that the recruitment process was supported by several admission tracks, including achievement, tahfidz, and regular tracks. Although selection is analytically distinct from socialization, in practice it reinforced the credibility of the madrasah's public communication. A transparent and orderly selection system strengthened public trust because it signaled that admission was managed fairly and professionally. In this way, the selection mechanism functioned not only as an academic filter but also as part of the institution's broader image-building process.

Another important finding concerns the role of information clarity. Socialization materials were not limited to announcing registration schedules; they also introduced the madrasah's facilities, academic and religious programs, and service quality. This suggests that socialization in the PPDB context operates as a strategic communication process rather than as a one-way dissemination of technical information. The more clearly the institution communicated its value proposition, the greater its ability to attract prospective students and reduce uncertainty among parents.

Internal Strengths and Weaknesses

The main internal strengths identified in this study include the madrasah's established reputation, the quality of its teachers and staff, adequate facilities, and a relatively orderly administrative service system. These factors contributed positively to public trust and strengthened the institution's attractiveness during the admission process. Interview and observational data suggest that the socialization strategy benefited from the fact that the madrasah already possessed a credible institutional image that could be communicated to the community as a recruitment asset. At the same time, the study also identified several internal weaknesses. The variety of promotional content remains limited, digital communication has not yet been optimized strategically, and some socialization efforts still depend heavily on face-to-face interaction. These weaknesses do not negate the institution's strengths, but they do indicate that the madrasah has not fully maximized its communication potential. In particular, the absence of more varied and persuasive digital content may reduce the institution's ability to compete in an increasingly media-driven recruitment environment.

External Opportunities and Threats

From an external perspective, the madrasah benefits from several important opportunities. Public interest in Islamic-based education continues to grow, communication technologies make information dissemination easier and broader, and policy support for the development of madrasahs creates a favorable environment for institutional strengthening. These conditions provide strategic space for MTs Negeri 1 Palembang to expand its reach, sharpen its branding, and build more sustainable communication with prospective students and parents.

However, the institution also faces significant external threats. Competition among schools and madrasahs has become more intense, especially as many institutions now promote distinctive flagship programs. In addition, parental expectations are changing; they increasingly demand faster, clearer, and more responsive information services. If these shifts are not anticipated, institutions that rely on routine promotional practices may gradually lose their competitive position in the recruitment process.

Strategic Synthesis Based on the SWOT Matrix

Compared with a number of earlier studies, the findings of this research suggest that SWOT analysis becomes more meaningful when it moves beyond simple factor listing and is used to formulate strategic priorities. In this study, the SWOT matrix indicates that the madrasah should capitalize on its institutional reputation, staff quality, and facilities to strengthen digital branding and expand cooperation with feeder schools. At the same time, its internal limitations in media diversification and digital optimization point to the need for more systematic content development, stronger communication planning, and periodic evaluation of outreach effectiveness.

Table 1. Strategic Synthesis Based on the SWOT Matrix

Strategy Type	Strategic Priority Actions
SO Strategy (Strengths-Opportunities)	Leverage the madrasah's reputation, staff quality, and facilities to strengthen digital branding, expand collaboration with feeder elementary schools and madrasahs, and foreground academic excellence alongside religious development in socialization materials.
WO Strategy (Weaknesses-Opportunities)	Strengthen the capacity of the public relations and PPDB teams in digital content production, develop a regular posting calendar, diversify promotional formats such as short videos, testimonials, and infographics, and use communication technology to reach prospective applicants more widely.
ST Strategy (Strengths-Threats)	Emphasize institutional differentiation through responsive services, transparent selection, and a consistent narrative of excellence, while maintaining high-quality administrative support in order to preserve public trust amid increasing competition.
WT Strategy (Weaknesses-Threats)	Reduce reliance on face-to-face outreach by building permanent information channels, standardize core promotional messages, evaluate media effectiveness regularly, and improve responsiveness to shifts in parental preferences and information needs.

The matrix therefore demonstrates that SWOT is not only a mapping device but also a practical decision-making tool. Through the matrix, the madrasah can translate broad strategic factors into more operational steps, such as standardizing key messages, diversifying media formats, improving digital responsiveness, and preserving administrative transparency. This strategic synthesis makes the socialization strategy more focused, adaptive, and sustainable in the face of institutional competition and changing public expectations.

The findings confirm that the socialization strategy for new student recruitment at MTs Negeri 1 Palembang operates through the integration of institutional branding, information services, and admissions management. Socialization, in this context, should not be reduced to a technical announcement function; rather, it acts as a strategic mechanism through which the institution introduces its identity, builds trust, and shapes public perceptions. This interpretation is consistent with the view that recruitment is an important

part of educational management because it influences both institutional image and the quality of student intake.

The use of social media and other online channels in this study also supports the argument that educational promotion is increasingly shaped by digital communication patterns. Nevertheless, the findings show that simply having access to digital media is not enough. What matters is how consistently and strategically these channels are managed, including message design, content variation, posting regularity, and responsiveness to public inquiries. In this regard, the madrasah's main challenge is not the absence of digital platforms, but the need to optimize them more professionally and persuasively.

Another notable finding is the mutually reinforcing relationship between socialization and selection. A well-organized and transparent admission process strengthens the credibility of the messages delivered during socialization because it demonstrates that the institution's claims are supported by sound administrative practice. This suggests that recruitment communication is more effective when it is aligned with internal service quality. In other words, public trust is built not only through promotional messages but also through the quality of the procedures that prospective students and parents actually experience.

From a strategic perspective, this study reinforces the usefulness of SWOT analysis for educational institutions when it is used both diagnostically and prescriptively. The framework helps identify where the institution stands, but its greater value lies in guiding how available strengths can be matched with emerging opportunities while minimizing weaknesses and anticipating threats. This is particularly relevant in competitive educational environments where recruitment success depends not only on institutional quality but also on communication agility and strategic responsiveness.

Conceptually, this study contributes to the literature by clarifying that socialization in the context of new student recruitment at a madrasah should be understood as a structured strategic communication process. It also demonstrates that a qualitative SWOT-based analysis can generate actionable recommendations when empirical findings are translated into a strategic matrix rather than presented merely as descriptive categories. Practically, the study offers guidance for school and madrasah leaders seeking to improve recruitment performance through more integrated and adaptive communication strategies.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the socialization strategy for new student recruitment at MTs Negeri 1 Palembang has been implemented through a combination of digital and face-to-face communication channels integrated within the broader admissions process. The strategy is supported by several internal strengths, particularly institutional reputation, qualified human resources, adequate facilities, and orderly administrative services. At the same time, it remains constrained by limited variation in promotional content, an underdeveloped digital communication strategy, and continued dependence on direct outreach in several activities.

SWOT analysis shows that the madrasah has considerable opportunities to strengthen its recruitment performance through growing public interest in Islamic education, expanding communication technologies, and supportive policy conditions. However, these opportunities are accompanied by external pressures, including stronger inter-school competition and changing parental expectations regarding information quality and service responsiveness. Accordingly, the institution needs to move toward a more focused and sustainable communication strategy that combines strong institutional messaging with more professional digital engagement.

This study is limited to a single-site qualitative case and therefore does not aim at statistical generalization. Even so, it provides a contextually grounded account of how SWOT analysis can be used to refine recruitment socialization in a madrasah setting. Future studies may broaden the scope by comparing multiple schools or by examining how socialization strategies influence enrollment outcomes over time.

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