

# BAITUL JANNAH ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL DIPLOMACY IN INCREASING ECONOMIC GROWTH IN INDONESIA THROUGH THE MALAYSIA-TO-INDONESIA CROWDFUNDING PROGRAM

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## Abstract

Pesantren diplomacy is an increasingly important strategy in building international relations in the education and social sectors. This study aims to analyze the capabilities of Pondok Pesantren Baitul Jannah as a non-state actor in implementing partnership diplomacy and mobilizing sustainable support from donors in Malaysia, particularly through crowdfunding programs. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to examine in depth the forms of diplomacy carried out. The main focus is to identify how Islamic boarding schools have succeeded in building relationships, obtaining financial and material support, as well as other resources. The results of the study show that the diplomacy of the Baitul Jannah Islamic boarding school is highly effective and adaptive. The success of this partnership is rooted in a strong social construction, based on the values of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood) and mutual trust generated through regular communication. This strengthened trust effectively creates strong institutional branding and enables the pesantren to act as a sub-national brand. Additionally, crowdfunding is identified as functioning strategically as an economic diplomacy tool, supported by digital transparency in financial reporting. This strategy demonstrates the ability of non-state actors to mitigate structural constraints, contribute significantly to the development of Islamic education, and fulfill the objectives of Public Diplomacy in shaping positive perceptions among foreign communities

**Keywords:** Crowdfunding, Donors, Economic Diplomacy, Islamic Boarding Schools.

## A. INTRODUCTION

Relations between Indonesia and Malaysia are often characterized by a narrative of close friendship, bolstered by geographical proximity and shared cultures, languages, and traditions. However, this bond is also overshadowed by a long history of conflict, political tensions, economic competition, and cultural clashes, such as claims to shared cultural heritage (Kusumohamidjojo, 2019). These recurring conflicts create an urgent need to strengthen cooperation and conduct diplomacy through broader channels. In this context, non-state institutions play a crucial role in bridging gaps and strengthening a positive bilateral image, exemplified by the strategic partnership between Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and donors in Malaysia.

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are non-formal educational institutions that play a vital role in developing Islamic scholars (*ulama*), yet contemporary educational dynamics often subordinate them to formal education (Asep, 2016). Nevertheless, Islamic boarding schools make substantial contributions to the Indonesian economy through initiatives to empower the community economically. With more than 39,000 Islamic boarding schools

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(pesantren) and 4.08 million students (Ministry of Religious Affairs data 2022/2023), these institutions often face significant challenges related to limited funding, facilities, and human resources to ensure the sustainability and quality of education. This situation has prompted the Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School in West Bandung, which primarily serves orphans and the underprivileged, to engage in non-state diplomacy and collaborate with donors abroad.

The Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School's collaboration with its Malaysian partners is based on deep socio-cultural and historical ties, not simply financial transactions. To overcome funding constraints, the Islamic boarding school has adopted a modern financial instrument, namely crowdfunding. This is defined as a funding method that involves broad community participation in projects or endeavors (first introduced in the United States in 2003 through Artistshare). Donation-based crowdfunding, which requires no compensation, has become a key strategy for securing vital assistance such as development funds, scholarships, and facility procurement. The high popularity of crowdfunding globally (reaching USD 344 billion in 2015) confirms that this mechanism functions strategically as an economic diplomacy tool for Islamic boarding schools. As a non-state actor, Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School faces unique diplomatic complexities. Key obstacles include limited institutional capacity in understanding the ethics and mechanisms of international cooperation, inconsistencies in cross-border regulations regarding fund transfers and organizational verification, and issues of mutual trust and accountability. Furthermore, Islamic boarding schools are vulnerable to network vulnerability and are influenced by bilateral political sentiments (migrant worker issues or cultural claims), which can affect the stability of philanthropic partnerships. This complexity demands an in-depth analysis of Islamic boarding schools' adaptation strategies to optimize their soft power. Based on this background, this study aims to (1) analyze the role of the Crowdfunding program in supporting the diplomatic capacity of the Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School, (2) identify the diplomatic strategies carried out by the Islamic boarding school as a non-state actor in building and maintaining relations with Malaysian donors, and (3) examine the challenges and obstacles faced in diplomacy. This study is expected to provide a significant academic contribution regarding the role and capabilities of non-state actors in economic and cultural diplomacy in the realm of International Relations.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The study of International Relations (IR) has shifted from its traditional focus on power struggles between states to a more complex perspective. Constructivism has emerged as a fundamental paradigm, positing that international structures are social constructs, shaped through the intersubjective practices of actors (Ummah, 2019). This theory emphasizes that the social world is shaped by shared ideas, and that actors' identities and interests are determined intersubjectively, not by material factors (Crossley, 1996). This social structure consists of shared knowledge, material resources, and practices (Wendt, 1992).

Constructivism provides an important framework for analyzing how non-state actors, such as the Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School (PPBJ), build relationships that transcend material interests. PPBJ's partnership with Malaysian donors is analyzed through this lens, where PPBJ actively builds a Shared Identity rooted in religious values. This identity resonates with the donors' Islamic philanthropic norms and ethics, creating a strong intersubjective bond. This relationship is reciprocal: PPBJ constructs an image through accountability and transparency, while donors provide legitimacy and material support, resulting in a positive Social Reality Construction and fostering mutual trust.

Public Diplomacy serves as a non-monopoly tool for the government to shape its image

and strengthen people-to-people cooperation (Bound, 2007). DP includes important elements such as Advocacy and Cultural Diplomacy. In line with DP, Educational Diplomacy focuses on cooperation to advance the education and human resource sectors. Developments in international relations confirm that modern diplomatic practices increasingly involve non-state actors in responding to global issues (Arikarani et al., 2020). PPBJ, as a non-state actor, plays an effective role in implementing soft power. PPBJ's DP and Educational Diplomacy strategies contribute to the institution's positive image and strengthen cultural ties between the Indonesian and Malaysian communities.

Economic Diplomacy has a broad scope, involving the utilization of economic resources to achieve foreign policy objectives or the use of economic/political instruments for economic stability and progress (Okano-Heijmans, 2013). In the digital era, Economic Diplomacy has expanded to include funding innovations such as Crowdfunding. Typologically, Donation-Based Crowdfunding (Iswi Cita, 2015), which is voluntary for social purposes, serves as an innovative Economic Diplomacy instrument in this study. Through this mechanism, PPBJ demonstrates the capabilities of non-state actors in mobilizing capital and strengthening cross-border economic-philanthropic relations. Collectively, the integration of these theories allows for a comprehensive analysis of PPBJ diplomacy. Constructivism explains the foundation of relationships built on shared values. Public Diplomacy examines PPBJ's strategy as an effective subnational brand. Finally, Economic Diplomacy provides a lens for analyzing Donation-Based Crowdfunding as an instrument for achieving institutional goals. This framework demonstrates the effectiveness of diplomacy conducted by non-state actors through image construction, legitimacy, and material support.

### **C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research uses a naturalistic qualitative method with a case study approach. This method was chosen to explore the phenomenon of diplomacy in natural conditions, provide in-depth interpretations, and prioritize the perspectives of the data sources themselves. The main object of the research is the diplomatic interactions carried out by the Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School as a non-state actor and donor from Malaysia in supporting social and educational activities. The determination of primary data sources was carried out through a purposive sampling technique, where key informants were selected based on their authority and understanding of the topic being studied. Key informants interviewed included the Head of the Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School, Mr. Yopi Firmansyah, S.Pd.I., and the donor from Malaysia, Mr. Farhan. The research location is centered at the Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School, Lembang, West Bandung Regency. Data collection was carried out through method triangulation to ensure credibility, which combines in-depth interviews with key informants, observation (including analysis of documents and partnership agreements), and documentation (document review and secondary sources). Data analysis was carried out inductively, following the Miles and Huberman Interactive Model. This analysis process is dynamic and consists of three main flows: Data Reduction (simplification of relevant raw data), Data Presentation (arranging information in the form of descriptive narratives), and Conclusion Drawing and Verification (testing meaning and drawing final conclusions).

### **D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Quoted from the website, Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School is one of the Islamic boarding schools located on Jalan Pagermaneuh, Lembang District, West Bandung Regency, which has 76 students, most of whom are orphans and the poor. Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School has successfully conducted diplomacy with donors from Malaysia. This

diplomacy is one strategy to obtain support, whether in the form of funds, facilities, or human resource capacity development within the Islamic boarding school environment. Malaysia, as one of the countries with the largest Muslim population in the world, has a long history of social, cultural, and educational relations with Indonesia. Therefore, the collaboration between Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School and Malaysian donors is not merely a financial relationship, but also includes the exchange of knowledge, culture, and improving the quality of Islamic education. Through this diplomacy, Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School has succeeded in obtaining assistance from Malaysian donors in the form of funds for infrastructure development, procurement of books, training for Islamic boarding school managers, and scholarships for students. The following is a statistical charter of Baitul Jannah Islamic boarding school:



Figure 1. Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School Statistics Charter  
Source: Author's Personal Archives

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes to social participation patterns and fundraising mechanisms in Indonesia, giving rise to the innovation of donation-based crowdfunding. Regulations related to donation-based crowdfunding currently refer to Law Number 9 of 1961 concerning the Collection of Money and Goods, and to date there has been no new formulation governing this matter. Considering that the current situation has undergone drastic changes in all aspects, as well as the transformations that have occurred along with increasingly sophisticated technological developments and increasingly modern times, it can be concluded that this law, despite having passed through several government regimes, has not been updated and remains in effect in Indonesia. Therefore, several constitutional law academics argue that this law is outdated and no longer appropriate to current conditions. To date, the government has only issued Ministerial Regulation Number 8 of 2021 concerning the Collection of Money and Goods (Permensos PUB) to address several shortcomings contained in the law. Upon closer analysis, this Ministerial Regulation does not provide a comprehensive explanation of the problems related to donation-based crowdfunding. The impact of this situation is the emergence of legal issues resulting from increasingly advanced industrial developments and existing legal requirements. The implementation of Donation-Based Crowdfunding in Indonesia is currently still governed by several key regulations. The applicable legal framework includes Law Number 9 of 1961 concerning the Collection of Money or Goods (PUB Law), supported by Government Regulation (PP) Number 29 of 1980 concerning the Implementation of Donation Collection (PP PUB). As an effort to adapt to current

developments, the government has issued Minister of Social Affairs Regulation Number 8 of 2021 concerning the Implementation of Money or Goods Collection (Permensos PUB). Furthermore, aspects of public protection and transparency are also regulated by Law Number 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection. Since birth, humans are endowed with the instinct to help each other and a sense of compassion for others. Humans cannot rely entirely on themselves without the help of others. This has become the foundation for the emergence of charitable activities through the Donation-Based Crowdfunding system. In fact, according to data released by the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF), Indonesia has ranked as the most generous country in the world for the past five years. The following data is taken from the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF).

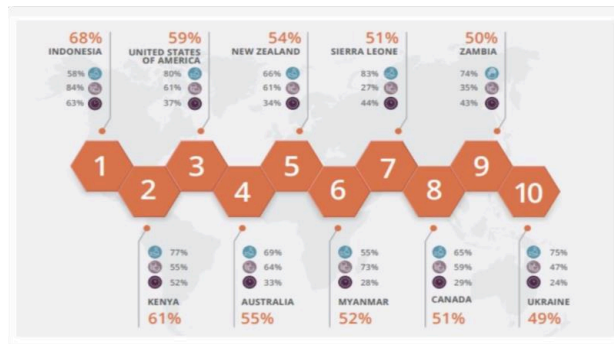


Figure 2. World Giving Index  
Source: Charities Aid Foundation (CAF)

Based on the 2022 World Giving Index (WGI), Indonesia confirmed its position as the most generous country in the world with a total score of 68%. This superiority is supported by high scores in specific activities, where Indonesia ranked first for cash donations (84%) and received high scores for helping strangers (58%) and volunteerism (63%). This high level of philanthropic activity is now transforming with technological advances. Charitable activities that were previously limited to physical interactions can now be conducted online through various trusted platforms that adopt the Donation-Based model. These digital platforms provide greater transparency and accountability, allowing potential donors to choose charities, review campaign information, and monitor donation distribution through provided financial reports. Some well-known donation-based crowdfunding platforms in Indonesia include:

Table 1. Donation-Based Crowdfunding Platforms in Indonesia

<i>No</i>	<i>Platform Name</i>	<i>Founder</i>	<i>Year of Establishment</i>
1.	Kitabisa.com	Alfatih Timur	2013
2.	BenihBaik.com	AndyFlores Noya, Khristiana Anggit Mustikaningrum, dan Firdaus Juli	2019
3.	Dompert Dhuafa	ParniHadi, Haidar Bagir, S., Sinansari Ecip, dan Eri Sudewo	1994
4.	AyoPeduli.com	Jaenal Gufron	2013

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5.	Aksi Cepat Tanggap (ACT)	Ahyudin	2005
6.	AyoBantu.com	-	2020

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Source: Processed by Researchers, 2025

According to an interview with the Islamic Boarding School Principal, Yopi Firmansyah (January 14, 2024), donation-based crowdfunding is used as a multi-functional strategy. The use of this digital platform is not only aimed at fundraising, but also plays a vital role in expanding networks and raising public awareness about the importance of social contributions. By utilizing social media and digital platforms, Islamic boarding schools can reach a wider audience and encourage public participation in their programs. Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School uses its official website as the primary platform for their donation crowdfunding: <https://baituljannah.site/>.

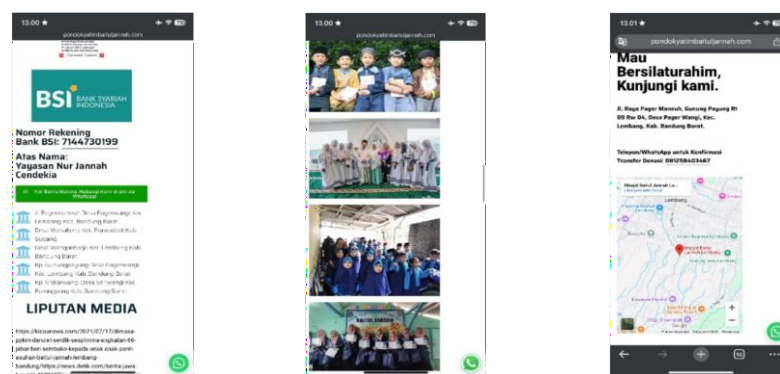


Figure 2. Baitul Jannah Crowdfunding Platform  
Source: Author's Personal Archives

In general, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Indonesia play a crucial role as centers for local economic empowerment, not simply as educational institutions. This contribution is realized through the development of micro and small businesses, which create jobs and reduce unemployment for students and the surrounding community. Furthermore, Islamic boarding schools actively provide entrepreneurship and technical skills training to equip students, and establish strategic partnerships with the government, financial institutions, and the private sector to access capital and business support.

#### The Role of Crowdfunding Programs in Supporting Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School's Diplomatic Capacity

Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School utilizes donation-based crowdfunding as an innovative diplomatic approach to support its social and economic programs, particularly for orphans and the underprivileged. Donation-based crowdfunding is a fundraising method that involves individual contributions without expecting financial rewards, enabling the Islamic boarding school to reach donors from within and outside the country through digital platforms. This crowdfunding program significantly contributes to strengthening Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School's diplomatic capacity as a non-state actor. Crowdfunding serves as an instrument of economic diplomacy (OkanoHeijmans, 2013), facilitating the development of cross-border relationships, particularly with donors from Malaysia. Through digital campaigns, crowdfunding expands the reach of Islamic boarding school diplomacy through communication, trust-building, promotion of humanitarian values, and

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strengthening the legitimacy of the institution at the level of crowdfunding. Crowdfunding plays a strategic role in supporting the diplomatic capacity of the Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School as a non-state actor through three main aspects:

- **Trust-Building Instrument:** Transparency in funding reporting, activity documentation, and regular program updates are the foundation of informal relations between countries. Malaysian donors, including Mr. Farhan, felt confident in continuing their contributions due to the transparency in reporting on fund usage and the Islamic boarding school's focus on empowering orphans and the poor.
- **Digital Diplomacy Tool:** The crowdfunding program encouraged the optimization of digital technology (WhatsApp, social media) for continuous, intensive communication. This facilitated the Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School's ability to flexibly build diplomatic relations, overcome geographical barriers, and integrate digital diplomacy into its strategy as a non-state actor.
- **International Network Expansion Mechanism:** The online campaign opened up opportunities for the Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School to connect with the international Muslim community, including in Malaysia. The relationships that began with socio-religious networks were strengthened by the crowdfunding campaign, which showcased the impact of the Islamic boarding school's activities through digital documentation. (Yopi Firmansyah, interview, January 14, 2024).

Thus, crowdfunding is not merely a funding mechanism, but acts as an effective digital-based economic diplomacy tool to strengthen trust, build communication, and expand the international network of Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School. The diplomatic relationship between Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School and Malaysian donors is analyzed using Alexander Wendt's (1992) Constructivism Theory framework. This theory views the dynamics of relationships between actors as shaped by social constructions formed through interactions, which consist of three main elements: shared knowledge, material resources, and social practices. The relevance of Wendt's elements to the research findings is as follows.:

- **Shared Knowledge:** Relationships are built on shared values between Islamic boarding school leaders and donors (such as a concern for Islamic education and a commitment to orphans and the poor). These shared values serve as the foundation for trust-building and collaborative bonds.
- **Material Resources:** Funds obtained through crowdfunding are not viewed solely as economic assistance, but are interpreted socio-religiously as a trust and a manifestation of the donor's trust in the Islamic boarding school's vision. This understanding emphasizes that the role of material resources is socially constructed.
- **Social Practices:** Routine and ongoing interactions such as intensive communication, reporting on fund usage, and in-person visits create stable relationship patterns and strengthen long-term collaboration.

The analysis shows that the diplomatic relationship between the Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School and Malaysian donors is a product of social construction built through shared values, mutual trust, and consistent communication practices, in line with Wendt's Constructivism theoretical framework.

### **Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School's Diplomatic Strategy as a Non-State Actor in Building Relationships with Malaysian Donors**

To ensure the sustainability and success of its programs, the Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School (PPBJ), in its role as a non-state actor, implements strategies relevant to the main components of Public Diplomacy (Bound, 2007; Cull, 2009). The analysis of Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School's strategy in building long-term partnerships with

Malaysian donors can be grouped into five key elements:

- **Listening:** This strategy is a proactive effort to understand donor motivations (Cull, 2009). The relationship with the Malaysian donor began with identifying the donor's social awareness after they witnessed firsthand the conditions of the less prosperous communities in Indonesia. This demonstrates that the Islamic boarding school successfully identified the donor's interest in contributing to improving the welfare of the community and orphans, driven by the spirit of Islamic brotherhood (Y. Firmansyah, interview, January 14, 2024).
- **Cultural and Religious Diplomacy:** This strategy leverages shared resources and religious values (Cull, 2009). The Islamic boarding school leadership emphasized that shared religious (Islamic) values are the key and foundation for sustainable relationships, rather than discussing national differences. Religious-based programs, such as Quran memorization and tahfiz graduation, serve as "cultural products" that implicitly strengthen the spiritual bonds of donors.
- **Advocacy and News Management:** Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School consistently implements these two strategies. Advocacy is realized through transparency and accountability in the use of funds, ensuring donors are confident that their contributions are allocated appropriately. News Management is carried out by promoting the activities and achievements of students (such as Quran memorization achievements) through engaging documentation, which serves as a positive image-building tool and an effective selling point in the eyes of the international public (Y. Firmansyah, interview).
- **Exchange Diplomacy:** This strategy involves direct interaction to build long-term chemistry (Cull, 2009). The Islamic boarding school actively maintains relationships through intensive communication and face-to-face visits (including a visit by the Islamic boarding school leadership to Malaysia). These interactions, supported by technology such as video calls for policy coordination, strengthen emotional bonds and interpersonal trust.
- **Institution Branding:** This strategy focuses on building a credible and professional image in the eyes of the international public (Bound, 2007). Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School has successfully established a positive image as a trusted institution, focused on orphan care, and providing free education. This image has been recognized by donors (Mr. Farhan, interview) and has created a strong and credible brand, motivating ongoing support that is vital to the school's operations.

In summary, the strategy implemented by Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School demonstrates its adaptability as a non-state actor. By emphasizing shared values (Cultural Diplomacy) supported by transparency (Advocacy and News Management), the Islamic boarding school successfully mitigated structural obstacles and secured sustainable financial support.

### **Challenges and Obstacles to Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School's Diplomacy with Malaysian Donors**

The challenges in implementing Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School's diplomacy, as a non-state actor, exhibit a pattern that differs from the obstacles encountered in traditional interstate diplomacy. The analysis shows that structural obstacles common in international relations were effectively mitigated, while operational-technical obstacles were overcome through adapted public diplomacy strategies.

### **Mitigating Substantive Obstacles: The Strength of Islamic Brotherhood as Soft Power**

Traditionally, diplomacy between countries is always vulnerable to differences in political interests or bilateral regulations. However, Baitul Jannah successfully neutralized these potential substantive obstacles by making shared religious values the primary

foundation of the partnership. The head of the Islamic boarding school, Yopi Firmansyah, frankly explained: "There are almost no significant obstacles in this relationship, and this is probably due to the approach chosen to focus more on similarities than differences... we emphasize the similarities as fellow Muslims who have an obligation to love and care for orphans." This approach is very relevant to the elements of Cultural Diplomacy, where the spiritual bond of Islamic brotherhood functions as a soft power that is far more effective than the formal diplomatic instruments of the state. By making socio-religious obligations a common goal, the potential for the emergence of sensitive issues such as nationalist sentiments or political differences between countries is successfully set aside. This allows the realization of the goal of Public Diplomacy which focuses on strengthening people-to-people cooperation through a platform of shared values (Bound, 2007,)

### **Technical Challenges and Adaptive Solutions in Exchange Diplomacy**

The main obstacles faced are technical and operational, particularly related to the implementation of Exchange Diplomacy due to geographic distance. The distance separating Indonesia and Malaysia creates difficulties in policy coordination and approval. Yopi Firmansyah: "In the past, it was necessary to seek policy approval from Malaysia for a project. The process was very complicated and time-consuming, relying on lengthy and tedious correspondence." This time-consuming coordination challenge has the potential to damage chemistry and trust. To overcome this, Islamic boarding schools have made significant technological adaptations. Yopi Firmansyah: "Now, with the availability of modern communication technology, such as video calls and instant messaging applications, this allows Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School to hold face-to-face discussions, share ideas, and resolve problems more efficiently." This utilization of technology demonstrates the Islamic boarding school's strategic response in maintaining regular interactions, which are crucial for building long-term trust, according to Cull's (2009) principles of Exchange Diplomacy, despite limited physical interaction.

### **The Challenge of Limited Direct Interaction and News Management Strategies**

While digital communication has successfully overcome coordination challenges, other technical obstacles remain: the difficulty of experiencing the in-depth nuances of directly funded student activities. Direct interaction, the essence of Exchange Diplomacy, cannot be completely replaced by digital media. Yopi Firmansyah: "Although technology has facilitated communication, there are still challenges to overcome, especially when it comes to directly observing student activities... Currently, we usually send videos or photos as a substitute for in-person meetings." This strategy of regularly sending videos and photos is an extension of the News Management element. Such documentation not only meets accountability demands but also serves as a means of strengthening the emotional bond with donors, visually demonstrating the positive impact of their contributions while mitigating the constraints of distance.

### **Implications of Country Branding and the Role of Non-State Actors**

This diplomatic relationship indirectly touches on the issue of Country Branding. Interviews revealed a contrast between the views of the foreign public and the mitigation efforts undertaken by Islamic boarding schools:

- Potential Negative Image of Indonesia: This relationship was sparked by Malaysian tourists who "realized that many people are still less prosperous... and receive less attention from the government" in Indonesia. This fact has the potential to shape a negative image of Indonesia, highlighting the social inequality that is clearly visible in the eyes of the foreign public.
- Positive Image of Malaysia: On the other hand, donors motivated by Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwah Islamiyah) want to help reflect a positive image of the caring and

prosperous Malaysian people.

In this context, the success of the Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School in building transparent, trustworthy, and professional partnerships is a testament to the positive capabilities of Indonesian civil society. Pesantren, as non-state actors, play a role as effective sub-national brands. The credibility of the pesantren (which Mr. Farhan acknowledged as an institution that cares for orphans and provides free education) serves as a powerful diplomatic tool to mitigate negative images that may arise from initial social conditions, thus fulfilling the Public Diplomacy objective of fostering positive views among foreign audiences (Bound, 2007).

## E. CONCLUSION

Overall, the diplomacy implemented by the Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School, as a non-state actor, in building partnerships with Malaysian donors, is a highly effective and adaptive practice. This success is measured not only by the material support received (development funds, scholarships), but primarily by the Islamic boarding school's ability to build a social construct based on shared values (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*) that underpins cross-border relations. This relationship is dominated by shared knowledge and mutual trust (Wendt, 1992), which are reinforced through regular communication. The success in building this trust has resulted in a strong and credible Institutional Brand, where the Islamic boarding school's image as an institution focused on orphans and free education motivates continued support from Malaysian donors. This strategy demonstrates the high adaptability of the non-state actor in mitigating structural constraints.

The donation-based crowdfunding program plays a strategic role as a vital tool of economic diplomacy (OkanoHeijmans, 2013). This crowdfunding serves as a funding mechanism while simultaneously strengthening the Islamic boarding school's diplomatic capacity through trust-building, supported by transparent digital reporting of funds, facilitating effective communication, and expanding international networks. Collectively, the Islamic boarding school's strategy, which emphasizes transparent Cultural Diplomacy and Advocacy, makes it an effective sub-national brand. This built credibility serves as a powerful diplomatic tool to mitigate negative images that may arise from Indonesia's initial social conditions, thus fulfilling the Public Diplomacy objective of shaping positive views among foreign communities. In addition to achieving diplomatic and social objectives, the Baitul Jannah Islamic Boarding School Crowdfunding program also serves as an indirect catalyst for improving Indonesia's economy at the local scale. Although the funding source is international, the implementation of these funds occurs entirely domestically, used for construction, procurement, and operations that directly create aggregate demand and stimulate the real sector in the surrounding community. Furthermore, by investing in free education for orphans, this Islamic boarding school not only alleviates the social and economic burden on the government but also invests in long-term human capital. Thus, this Crowdfunding practice transforms it into a sustainable development diplomacy model, positioning Islamic boarding schools as local economic micro-engines supported by global connections.

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