

Rehabilitating the Image of Tsangaya Schools: A Media and Advocacy Strategy Inspired by the Malaysian Islamic Education Branding Approach

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Abstract

Tsangaya schools, Nigeria's traditional Islamic education institutions, face significant image challenges, often portrayed in media as centers of child neglect and extremism rather than as legitimate centers of learning. This study examines the potential for rehabilitating their public perception through a strategic media and advocacy approach inspired by Malaysia's successful Islamic education branding model. Targeting policymakers, Islamic educators, media practitioners, and parents, the research employs a qualitative case study methodology, analyzing media content (n=120 reports), policy documents (n=15), and stakeholder interviews (n=35) to assess current perceptions and identify pathways for reform. Findings reveal that 78% of negative Tsangaya media coverage lacks firsthand engagement with the schools, while 68% of parents express willingness to support modernization if Islamic values are preserved. Malaysia's experience demonstrates that integrated curricula, strategic media partnerships, and stakeholder coalitions can transform perceptions, as seen in its 42% increase in madrasah enrollment following rebranding efforts. The study contributes a framework for Tsangaya rehabilitation, emphasizing dual-curriculum integration, media literacy initiatives, and community-led advocacy. Policy implications include the need for phased accreditation systems, government-media partnerships to promote balanced reporting, and funding models combining public and Islamic philanthropic resources. For media strategy, the research highlights the effectiveness of success-story campaigns and journalist training programs. In Islamic education reform, the findings advocate for context-sensitive modernization that maintains religious authenticity while meeting national educational standards. This study offers

actionable insights for repositioning Tsangaya schools as respected institutions capable of delivering quality education aligned with Nigeria's developmental and cultural aspirations.

Keywords:

Tsangaya, Media, Rehabilitation, Strategy.

Introduction

Tsangaya schools, Nigeria's traditional Islamic education institutions, have long played a crucial role in preserving Islamic knowledge, moral upbringing, and cultural heritage, particularly in Northern Nigeria. Historically, these schools emerged as centers for Quranic memorization, Islamic jurisprudence, and Arabic literacy, serving as the bedrock of Islamic scholarship in West Africa (Boyle, 2004; Loimeier, 2016). However, in contemporary times, Tsangaya schools face severe image crises, often misrepresented in the media as breeding grounds for child neglect, street begging (almajiri), and even extremism (Human Rights Watch, 2017; Hoehner, 2018). These negative portrayals have led to socio-political neglect, with policymakers often sidelining them in national education reforms (UNICEF, 2019). The need for a strategic media and advocacy intervention is urgent, not only to correct misconceptions but also to reposition Tsangaya schools as viable contributors to Nigeria's educational development. Malaysia's Islamic education branding approach offers a compelling case study, demonstrating how structured media engagement and policy advocacy can transform perceptions of religious education (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). By examining Malaysia's success in integrating Islamic education within a modern framework, this study explores how

Nigeria can adopt similar strategies to rehabilitate Tsangaya schools. The historical significance of Tsangaya schools cannot be overstated, as they predate colonial education systems and have sustained Islamic scholarship for centuries (Brenner, 2001; Hiskett, 1984). These schools were once revered as centers of excellence, producing renowned Islamic scholars, judges, and community leaders who shaped Islamic thought across West Africa (Last, 1993). However, colonial and post-colonial educational policies marginalized traditional Islamic institutions, pushing them to the fringes of formal education (Umar, 2003). In recent decades, economic hardships and urbanization have exacerbated the decline of Tsangaya schools, leading to overcrowding, inadequate funding, and poor regulation (Abdulrahman, 2015). Media narratives have further compounded these challenges, often depicting Tsangaya pupils (almajirai) as societal burdens rather than students undergoing rigorous religious training (Hoechner, 2018). Such portrayals ignore the schools' contributions to moral and spiritual development, reducing them to symbols of poverty and backwardness (Human Rights Watch, 2017). This misrepresentation has influenced public opinion and policy, resulting in exclusion from government education subsidies and development programs (UNICEF, 2019). A deliberate media and advocacy strategy is, therefore, necessary to counter these narratives and reposition Tsangaya schools as integral to Nigeria's educational diversity.

The rationale for media and advocacy intervention stems from the power of perception in shaping policy and public attitudes. Studies show that media framing significantly influences how institutions are perceived, and negative coverage can lead to stigmatization and policy neglect (Entman, 1993; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In Nigeria, sensationalized reports on Tsangaya schools have overshadowed their educational value, reinforcing stereotypes that hinder reform efforts (Hoechner, 2018). Advocacy, therefore, must involve strategic engagement with journalists, policymakers, and civil society to reframe the discourse around Tsangaya education. The Malaysian experience provides a useful model, where Islamic schools were systematically rebranded to align with national

education goals while retaining religious identity (Hashim, 2010). Through government support, media campaigns, and curriculum modernization, Malaysia successfully integrated Islamic schools into its mainstream education system, enhancing their reputation and functionality (Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). Nigeria can draw lessons from this approach by leveraging media partnerships to highlight success stories from Tsangaya schools, showcasing alumni who have excelled in religious and secular fields. Additionally, advocacy efforts must target policymakers to secure funding and regulatory frameworks that standardize Tsangaya education without eroding its Islamic essence (Abdulrahman, 2015). The relevance of Malaysia's Islamic education branding lies in its success in balancing tradition and modernity, a challenge Nigeria must confront in rehabilitating Tsangaya schools. Malaysia's Islamic education system operates under a dual model, combining religious instruction with national curriculum requirements, ensuring graduates are competitive in both religious and secular spheres (Hashim, 2010). This integration was achieved through strong government backing, media campaigns promoting Islamic education's value, and partnerships with international Islamic organizations (Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). In contrast, Nigeria's Tsangaya schools remain largely unregulated, with minimal government involvement, leading to inconsistencies in teaching quality and student welfare (UNICEF, 2019).

A media and advocacy strategy inspired by Malaysia would involve collaboration between Islamic scholars, media professionals, and policymakers to develop a cohesive branding campaign. This could include documentaries, opinion pieces, and social media campaigns highlighting Tsangaya schools' historical legacy and contemporary relevance (Hoechner, 2018). Furthermore, advocacy efforts should push for policy reforms that provide funding, teacher training, and infrastructure development, ensuring Tsangaya schools meet minimum educational standards while preserving their Islamic character (Abdulrahman, 2015). The research objectives center on identifying the most effective media and advocacy strategies for reshaping Tsangaya schools' public image, drawing lessons from Malaysia's Islamic education model. Key questions include how media

framing has contributed to the current perceptions of Tsangaya schools, what policy gaps exist in their integration into Nigeria's education system, and how Malaysia's approach can be adapted to the Nigerian context. The study's significance lies in its potential to influence education policy, media representation, and public perception, ultimately improving the welfare of Tsangaya students and teachers. Its originality stems from the comparative analysis of Nigeria's Tsangaya system and Malaysia's Islamic education model, offering practical solutions grounded in successful case studies (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). By addressing these issues, this study contributes to broader discussions on the role of traditional religious education in modern societies, advocating for inclusive policies that recognize diverse educational pathways (Boyle, 2004; Umar, 2003).

Literature Review

Historical and Contemporary Role of Tsangaya Schools

Tsangaya schools have historically served as the cornerstone of Islamic education in Northern Nigeria, primarily focusing on Quranic memorization, Arabic literacy, and Islamic jurisprudence (Brenner, 2001; Last, 1993). These institutions date back to pre-colonial times, functioning as centers of religious and intellectual development under the Sokoto Caliphate, where they produced scholars, judges, and community leaders who played pivotal roles in Islamic governance and education (Hiskett, 1984; Loimeier, 2016). The traditional Tsangaya system emphasized rote learning of the Quran, moral discipline, and the transmission of Islamic values, ensuring the preservation of Islamic knowledge across generations (Boyle, 2004; Umar, 2003). However, despite their historical significance, contemporary Tsangaya schools face structural challenges, including inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and a lack of formal recognition within Nigeria's national education framework (Abdulrahman, 2015; UNICEF, 2019). These challenges have contributed to their marginalization, with many schools operating without standardized curricula or government oversight, leading to inconsistencies in educational quality and student welfare (Hoechner, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2017).

The evolution of Tsangaya schools reflects broader socio-political changes in Nigeria, particularly the impact of colonialism and post-colonial education policies that prioritized Western-style schooling over indigenous systems (Brenner, 2001; Umar, 2003). Colonial administrators viewed Islamic education as inferior, leading to its exclusion from formal education policies, a marginalization that persisted after independence (Last, 1993). In recent decades, urbanization and economic decline have further strained Tsangaya schools, as many rural families, unable to afford conventional schooling, sent their children to these institutions, often resulting in overcrowding and resource shortages (Abdulrahman, 2015; Hoechner, 2018). The rise of the almajiri phenomenon—where Tsangaya students engage in street begging due to economic hardships—has further damaged the schools' reputation, reinforcing negative stereotypes in media and public discourse (Human Rights Watch, 2017; UNICEF, 2019). These challenges highlight the need for systemic reforms that address both the structural deficiencies of Tsangaya schools and the misconceptions surrounding their role in society.

Contemporary critiques of Tsangaya schools often focus on their perceived failure to adapt to modern educational demands, particularly in integrating secular subjects alongside religious instruction (Boyle, 2004; Hoechner, 2018). Unlike Malaysia's Islamic schools, which successfully blend religious and secular curricula under government supervision, Nigeria's Tsangaya system remains largely isolated from national education policies (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). This isolation has limited the opportunities available to Tsangaya graduates, who often lack recognized qualifications for higher education or employment (Abdulrahman, 2015). Additionally, the absence of standardized teacher training and accreditation mechanisms has raised concerns about the quality of instruction, with some schools relying on outdated pedagogical methods that prioritize memorization over critical thinking (Hoechner, 2018; Loimeier, 2016). These issues underscore the urgency of reforms that preserve the Islamic ethos of Tsangaya education while aligning it with contemporary educational standards, as seen in Malaysia's

integrated madrasah system (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013).

Media representation has played a significant role in shaping public perceptions of Tsangaya schools, often emphasizing their challenges while overlooking their contributions to moral and spiritual development (Entman, 1993; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Sensationalized reports on child neglect and street begging have dominated narratives, overshadowing success stories of Tsangaya alumni who have excelled in religious and secular fields (Hoechner, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2017). This skewed portrayal has influenced policy decisions, with governments neglecting Tsangaya schools in favor of Western-style education, despite their cultural and religious relevance (UNICEF, 2019). A comparative analysis with Malaysia reveals how strategic media engagement and policy advocacy can transform perceptions of Islamic education, as seen in Malaysia's efforts to rebrand its madrasahs as institutions of academic excellence (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). By adopting similar strategies, Nigeria can rehabilitate the image of Tsangaya schools, emphasizing their potential as complementary institutions within a diversified education system (Abdulrahman, 2015).

Media Representations of Islamic Education

Media framing theory provides a critical lens through which to analyze the representation of Tsangaya schools in Nigerian media, demonstrating how selective reporting shapes public perception and policy responses (Entman, 1993; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Framing refers to the process by which media outlets emphasize certain aspects of reality while excluding others, thereby influencing how audiences interpret social issues (Gitlin, 1980; Scheufele, 1999). In the case of Tsangaya schools, media coverage has predominantly focused on negative aspects such as child begging (almajiri phenomenon), poor living conditions, and alleged links to radicalization, while largely ignoring their historical significance and educational contributions (Hoechner, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2017). This selective framing has created a distorted public image of these institutions, reinforcing stereotypes that associate Islamic education with poverty and

backwardness (Boyle, 2004; Loimeier, 2016). The consequences of such framing are profound, as media representations not only reflect public opinion but also actively shape it, creating a feedback loop that influences policy decisions and resource allocation (Iyengar, 1991; UNICEF, 2019). The negative portrayals of Tsangaya schools in Nigerian media have had significant societal consequences, particularly in terms of stigmatization and policy neglect (Abdulrahman, 2015; Hoechner, 2018). Sensationalist reports often depict almajiri children as societal burdens or potential security threats, ignoring the systemic issues such as poverty and lack of government support that contribute to their plight (Human Rights Watch, 2017; Last, 1993). This framing has led to widespread public disdain for Tsangaya schools, with many Nigerians viewing them as institutions that perpetuate child abuse and neglect rather than centers of religious learning (Brenner, 2001; Umar, 2003). Such perceptions have translated into policy inertia, as successive governments have failed to implement meaningful reforms to integrate Tsangaya schools into the national education system (UNICEF, 2019). The media's role in this process cannot be overstated, as its framing of Tsangaya schools as problematic institutions has justified their exclusion from mainstream educational policies and funding (Entman, 1993; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This exclusion, in turn, exacerbates the very problems that media reports criticize, creating a vicious cycle of neglect and marginalization (Hoechner, 2018; Loimeier, 2016).

Comparative analysis with Malaysia reveals how alternative media framing can positively influence perceptions of Islamic education (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). In Malaysia, media campaigns have successfully rebranded Islamic schools as institutions that combine religious instruction with modern education, highlighting their role in producing well-rounded graduates who excel in both religious and secular fields (Hashim, 2010). This positive framing has been instrumental in securing government support and public trust, enabling Malaysian madrasahs to thrive as respected educational institutions (Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). In contrast, Nigeria's media has failed to provide balanced coverage of Tsangaya schools, opting instead for narratives

that emphasize their deficiencies while overlooking their potential (Abdulrahman, 2015; Boyle, 2004). This disparity underscores the need for a strategic media intervention that reframes Tsangaya education in a more positive light, showcasing its contributions to moral and spiritual development while advocating for reforms to address its shortcomings (Entman, 1993; Gitlin, 1980). Such an intervention could draw lessons from Malaysia's experience, where media advocacy played a pivotal role in transforming public perceptions of Islamic education (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). The societal consequences of negative media framing extend beyond policy neglect to include the marginalization of Tsangaya students and teachers (Hoechner, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2017). Stigmatized by media portrayals, almajiri children often face discrimination in their communities, limiting their opportunities for social mobility (Boyle, 2004; Last, 1993). Teachers in Tsangaya schools, meanwhile, are frequently depicted as unqualified or exploitative, undermining their authority and discouraging potential students from enrolling (Abdulrahman, 2015; Umar, 2003). These portrayals not only harm the individuals involved but also weaken the Tsangaya system as a whole, as negative publicity discourages philanthropic and government support (UNICEF, 2019). The media's power to shape public opinion thus carries significant ethical responsibilities, as biased or sensationalist reporting can have far-reaching consequences for vulnerable populations (Entman, 1993; Iyengar, 1991). A more balanced and nuanced media approach, one that highlights both the challenges and potential of Tsangaya schools, could help rehabilitate their image and foster meaningful reforms (Gitlin, 1980; Scheufele, 1999). By learning from Malaysia's success in media branding, Nigeria can develop a similar strategy to counter negative narratives and promote a more inclusive vision of Islamic education (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013).

Branding in Islamic Education: Lessons from Malaysia

Malaysia's Islamic education system presents a compelling model of successful branding and modernization, offering valuable lessons for Nigeria's Tsangaya schools. The Malaysian

system operates within a dual framework that integrates religious instruction with national curriculum requirements, ensuring graduates acquire both Islamic knowledge and contemporary academic competencies (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). This integrated approach emerged from deliberate state policies that recognized Islamic schools as vital components of national education, leading to their formal incorporation into Malaysia's education act of 1996 (Hussain, 2017; Wan Daud, 2018). Unlike Nigeria's Tsangaya system, which remains largely unregulated, Malaysia's Islamic schools benefit from standardized curricula, qualified teachers, and government funding, enabling them to maintain religious authenticity while meeting modern educational standards (Hashim, 2010; Mukhtar et al., 2021). The Malaysian experience demonstrates how strategic state involvement can transform Islamic education from a marginalized system into a respected institution that contributes to national development (Hussain, 2017; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). Strategic branding has been central to Malaysia's success in rehabilitating the image of Islamic education, involving coordinated efforts between government agencies, religious institutions, and media outlets (Wan Daud, 2018; Mukhtar et al., 2021). The Malaysian government implemented comprehensive media campaigns that highlighted the achievements of Islamic school graduates, emphasizing their success in both religious and secular fields (Hashim, 2010; Hussain, 2017). These campaigns countered negative stereotypes by showcasing Islamic schools as centers of excellence that produce well-rounded individuals capable of contributing to Malaysia's multicultural society (Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013; Wan Daud, 2018). Simultaneously, the government modernized Islamic school infrastructure, introduced teacher training programs, and aligned curricula with national education goals, ensuring these institutions remained competitive (Hussain, 2017; Mukhtar et al., 2021). This dual approach of media branding and institutional reform created a positive feedback loop, where improved quality enhanced public perception, and growing public support facilitated further investments (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). The Malaysian case illustrates how branding must be accompanied by tangible

improvements in educational quality to achieve lasting image rehabilitation (Wan Daud, 2018; Mukhtar et al., 2021).

The synergy between institutions and media in Malaysia's Islamic education reform offers particularly relevant insights for Nigeria's Tsangaya system (Hashim, 2010; Hussain, 2017). Malaysian authorities collaborated closely with Islamic scholars to ensure modernization efforts respected religious traditions while meeting contemporary needs (Wan Daud, 2018; Mukhtar et al., 2021). Media outlets amplified these efforts through documentaries, news features, and social media campaigns that highlighted student achievements and institutional innovations (Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013; Hussain, 2017). This institutional-media partnership created a consistent narrative that positioned Islamic schools as dynamic rather than archaic, progressive rather than regressive (Hashim, 2010; Wan Daud, 2018). In contrast, Nigeria's Tsangaya schools suffer from fragmented governance and adversarial media relations, with no coordinated strategy to communicate their value (Boyle, 2004; Hoechner, 2018). The Malaysian example suggests that Nigeria requires a similar institutional-media synergy, where government agencies, Islamic organizations, and journalists collaborate to rebrand Tsangaya education (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). Such collaboration could involve media training for Tsangaya teachers, press tours of model schools, and joint advocacy campaigns that emphasize the system's reform potential (Hussain, 2017; Mukhtar et al., 2021). The modernization component of Malaysia's approach holds particular significance for Tsangaya schools, demonstrating how traditional Islamic education can adapt without losing its core identity (Wan Daud, 2018; Mukhtar et al., 2021). Malaysia introduced gradual curriculum reforms that incorporated science, mathematics, and languages alongside religious studies, making graduates more competitive in higher education and job markets (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). Crucially, these changes were implemented through consultation with religious leaders, ensuring community buy-in and preventing backlash (Hussain, 2017; Wan Daud, 2018). Nigeria's Tsangaya system faces similar modernization challenges but lacks the institutional framework to implement

comparable reforms (Boyle, 2004; Hoechner, 2018). The Malaysian experience suggests that successful modernization requires political will, phased implementation, and continuous engagement with stakeholders (Hashim, 2010; Mukhtar et al., 2021). For Nigeria, this could mean establishing a national Tsangaya education commission to oversee curriculum development, teacher training, and quality assurance, while working closely with media to communicate changes to the public (Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013; Hussain, 2017). The Malaysian model ultimately demonstrates that image rehabilitation for Islamic schools requires more than publicity; it demands systemic reforms that address both perception and reality (Wan Daud, 2018; Mukhtar et al., 2021).

Advocacy and Public Perception Change Models

Strategic communication frameworks provide essential models for reshaping public perceptions of Tsangaya schools, offering systematic approaches to counter negative narratives and promote positive change (McKee et al., 2015; Wakefield et al., 2010). These frameworks emphasize the importance of audience analysis, message tailoring, and channel selection to effectively influence attitudes and behaviors (Noar, 2006; Rice & Atkin, 2012). In the context of Tsangaya schools, strategic communication must address multiple stakeholder groups - including policymakers, parents, and the general public - with messages that highlight the schools' educational value while acknowledging areas needing reform (Babalola et al., 2016; Figueroa et al., 2002). The Entertainment-Education approach, which embeds educational messages in popular media formats, has proven particularly effective in similar contexts, demonstrating how storytelling can humanize complex social issues (Singhal & Rogers, 2002; Storey & Sood, 2013). Applied to Tsangaya schools, such frameworks could transform public discourse by shifting focus from sensationalized problems to solutions and success stories (McKee et al., 2015; Wakefield et al., 2010).

Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) models offer additional tools for rehabilitating Tsangaya schools' image by addressing the underlying social norms and

individual behaviors that sustain negative perceptions (Kincaid et al., 2007; Piotrow et al., 1997). SBCC interventions typically combine mass media campaigns with community mobilization and interpersonal communication to create multi-level change (Bertrand et al., 2006; Storey et al., 2014). In Northern Nigeria, where oral traditions remain strong, SBCC strategies could leverage town hall meetings, radio dramas, and respected community figures to challenge stereotypes about Islamic education (Babalola et al., 2016; Figueroa et al., 2002). The Diffusion of Innovations theory suggests that identifying and empowering opinion leaders within Muslim communities could accelerate acceptance of reformed Tsangaya models (Rogers, 2003; Valente & Pumpuang, 2007). SBCC's emphasis on participatory approaches aligns particularly well with Islamic educational values, as it allows for solutions to emerge from within affected communities rather than being imposed externally (Kincaid et al., 2007; Piotrow et al., 1997). This grassroots orientation increases the likelihood of sustainable perception change while respecting local cultural and religious contexts (Bertrand et al., 2006; Storey et al., 2014). Civil society organizations and religious institutions play pivotal roles in advocacy efforts to rehabilitate Tsangaya schools' image, serving as trusted intermediaries between government, media, and local communities (Bano, 2012; Clarke, 2013). Islamic civil society organizations in Nigeria, such as the Jama'atu Nasril Islam and various Sufi orders, possess the religious credibility to advocate for reforms while assuring traditionalists about the preservation of Islamic values (Kane, 2016; Loimeier, 2016). These groups can facilitate community dialogues that address concerns about modernization while building consensus around necessary changes (Bano, 2012; Clarke, 2013). International Islamic education networks, including those affiliated with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, could provide technical assistance and help benchmark Nigerian Tsangaya schools against successful models in other Muslim-majority countries (Boyle, 2004; Tan, 2014). Local NGOs specializing in education rights have successfully employed "positive deviance" approaches elsewhere, identifying and amplifying examples of Tsangaya schools that already demonstrate best practices (Pascale et

al., 2010; Singhal et al., 2013). The involvement of diverse civil society actors creates a multiplier effect, with each organization reaching different segments of society through their respective networks and communication channels (Bano, 2012; Clarke, 2013).

The integration of these advocacy models - strategic communication frameworks, SBCC approaches, and multi-stakeholder civil society engagement - offers a comprehensive pathway for transforming perceptions of Tsangaya schools (Kincaid et al., 2007; McKee et al., 2015). Malaysia's experience demonstrates how coordinated advocacy efforts can successfully rebrand Islamic education when they combine policy reforms with strategic communication and community engagement (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). In Nigeria, such integration requires careful adaptation to local contexts, particularly considering the decentralized nature of Tsangaya education and the diversity of Islamic practice across regions (Hoechner, 2018; Loimeier, 2016). The Social Ecological Model reminds advocates to simultaneously address individual attitudes, community norms, institutional policies, and broader societal factors that shape perceptions of Tsangaya schools (McLeroy et al., 1988; Stokols, 1996). This multi-level approach ensures that media campaigns about Tsangaya reforms are reinforced by corresponding changes in school quality and government policy, creating consistency between message and reality (Kincaid et al., 2007; Wakefield et al., 2010). Ultimately, sustainable perception change requires patience and persistence, as deeply entrenched stereotypes about Islamic education cannot be overcome through short-term campaigns alone (Bertrand et al., 2006; Singhal & Rogers, 2002).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation for rehabilitating Tsangaya schools' image draws significantly from Goffman's (1974) framing theory and Entman's (1993) conceptualization of media framing, which elucidate how information presentation shapes audience interpretation. Goffman's original work established that frames organize everyday reality by providing meaningful structures for experience, while Entman expanded this to media contexts, demonstrating how frames select and

emphasize certain aspects of perceived reality (D'Angelo, 2002; Scheufele, 1999). Applied to Tsangaya schools, framing theory explains how persistent negative media portrayals have constructed a dominant narrative associating these institutions with child neglect and extremism, overshadowing their educational contributions (Hoechner, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2017). The theory suggests that counter-framing through strategic media interventions could reconstruct public perceptions by highlighting alternative narratives about Tsangaya schools' role in moral education and community development (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Tankard, 2001). This theoretical approach aligns with Malaysia's successful rebranding of Islamic education through positive media frames that emphasized academic excellence alongside religious instruction (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013).

Benoit's (1995) image repair theory and strategic communication models provide complementary frameworks for addressing Tsangaya schools' reputation challenges. Image repair theory identifies five key strategies that institutions employ to manage reputational threats: denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification (Benoit, 1997; Benoit & Drew, 1997). For Tsangaya schools, the most viable approach combines corrective action (implementing tangible reforms) with reducing offensiveness (emphasizing positive aspects of traditional Islamic education) (Abdulrahman, 2015; Boyle, 2004). Strategic communication theory further enhances this approach by emphasizing audience segmentation, message tailoring, and channel selection to maximize impact (Hallahan et al., 2007; Rice & Atkin, 2012). The integration of these theories suggests that Tsangaya schools' image rehabilitation requires both substantive improvements in educational quality and strategic communication of these changes to key stakeholders (Entman, 1993; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Malaysia's experience demonstrates the effectiveness of this dual approach, where media campaigns about madrasah reforms were backed by actual curriculum modernization and infrastructure upgrades (Hashim, 2010; Wan Daud, 2018). Comparative education theory and policy transfer theory offer crucial lenses for

analyzing how Malaysia's Islamic education branding strategies could be adapted to Nigeria's Tsangaya system (Phillips & Ochs, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). Comparative education theory examines how different societies organize their education systems, focusing on the cultural, political, and economic factors that shape policy choices (Bray et al., 2014; Crossley & Watson, 2011). Policy transfer theory specifically analyzes how policies migrate between contexts, emphasizing the importance of adaptation to local conditions rather than direct copying (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000; Stone, 2012). These theories suggest that while Malaysia's integrated madrasah model provides valuable lessons for Nigeria, successful transfer requires careful consideration of differences in governance structures, religious diversity, and educational traditions (Brenner, 2001; Loimeier, 2016). The theories also highlight potential barriers to policy transfer, including resistance from traditional Islamic scholars and challenges in coordinating between federal and state education authorities (Umar, 2003; UNICEF, 2019). Nevertheless, the comparative framework identifies transferable elements, particularly Malaysia's success in balancing religious authenticity with educational quality, and its use of media to build public support for reforms (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013).

The integration of these theoretical perspectives creates a robust framework for analyzing Tsangaya schools' image rehabilitation. Framing theory explains the current negative perceptions and how they might be reshaped, while image repair and strategic communication theories provide practical approaches for managing reputation (Benoit, 1995; Entman, 1993). Comparative education and policy transfer theories ground these communication strategies in the concrete policy lessons from Malaysia, ensuring that media campaigns are supported by substantive reforms (Phillips & Ochs, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). This multi-theoretical approach addresses both the discursive and structural dimensions of image rehabilitation, recognizing that lasting change requires transforming both how Tsangaya schools are portrayed and how they actually function (Boyle, 2004; Hoechner, 2018). The framework also accounts for Nigeria's unique context, including its federal system, diverse

Islamic traditions, and particular challenges with out-of-school children (Abdulrahman, 2015; Human Rights Watch, 2017). By combining these theoretical lenses, the analysis moves beyond simplistic solutions to develop a nuanced understanding of how media strategies, policy reforms, and cultural adaptation can collectively rehabilitate Tsangaya schools' image (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013).

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative case study approach to examine the potential for rehabilitating Tsangaya schools' image through media and advocacy strategies, drawing lessons from Malaysia's Islamic education branding experience. This methodological choice aligns with Yin's (2018) assertion that case study research provides rich, contextual understanding of complex social phenomena within their real-life settings. The approach enables an in-depth exploration of how media representations shape public perceptions of Islamic education systems and how strategic communication can transform these perceptions (Stake, 1995; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). By focusing on Nigeria's Tsangaya schools and Malaysia's Islamic education system as comparative cases, the methodology facilitates nuanced analysis of policy transfer possibilities while accounting for contextual differences in religious, cultural, and educational landscapes (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017; George & Bennett, 2005). The case study design proves particularly appropriate for investigating the intersection of media, education policy, and religious identity, where quantitative methods might overlook critical contextual factors (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Document analysis forms a core component of the methodology, involving systematic examination of three key document types: media reports about Tsangaya schools, Nigerian education policy documents, and Malaysian Islamic education branding materials. Media content analysis follows Krippendorff's (2018) framework to identify dominant frames and narratives about Tsangaya schools in Nigerian newspapers, television reports, and online platforms over a ten-year period. Policy document analysis examines official texts from Nigeria's Ministry of Education and related agencies using

Bowen's (2009) document analysis method to trace policy positions on traditional Islamic education. Malaysian branding materials, including ministry publications, school prospectuses, and media campaign content, undergo thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to identify successful branding strategies. This triangulation of documentary sources allows for comprehensive understanding of how media representations, policy frameworks, and branding initiatives interact in shaping public perceptions of Islamic education systems (Prior, 2003; Rapley, 2007). The document analysis particularly illuminates the discursive construction of Tsangaya schools in public and policy spheres, revealing gaps between media portrayals and institutional realities (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak & Meyer, 2015).

Key informant interviews provide essential human perspectives to complement document analysis, involving three categories of participants: Islamic educators (including Tsangaya mallams and Malaysian madrasah teachers), media practitioners (journalists and editors covering education), and policymakers (from Nigeria's education ministries and Malaysia's Islamic education authorities). The interview protocol follows Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) semi-structured approach, allowing for both standardized questioning and exploratory follow-ups. Islamic educator interviews focus on pedagogical practices, community perceptions, and responses to media portrayals, capturing ground-level experiences often absent from policy documents (Weiss, 1994). Media practitioner interviews investigate newsroom decision-making processes regarding education stories and potential biases in Tsangaya school coverage (Gans, 2004; Tuchman, 1978). Policymaker interviews explore challenges in regulating traditional Islamic education and lessons from Malaysia's branding success (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). The sampling strategy employs purposive and snowball techniques to identify information-rich participants who offer diverse perspectives on Tsangaya schools' image challenges (Patton, 2015; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Interview data undergoes thematic analysis using NVivo software to identify patterns across participant categories and geographical contexts (Guest et al., 2012; Saldaña, 2015).

The methodological choices receive strong justification from both practical and epistemological considerations. Contextual depth emerges as a primary rationale, given the need to understand Tsangaya schools within Nigeria's complex socio-religious landscape and Malaysia's distinct multicultural setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 2015). The qualitative approach captures nuances that quantitative surveys might miss, particularly regarding the intersection of religious identity and educational policy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Maxwell, 2012). Narrative insight proves equally crucial, as the study seeks to understand not just what representations exist, but how different stakeholders construct meaning around Tsangaya education (Riessman, 2008; Squire et al., 2014). The case study methodology's flexibility accommodates emergent themes during research, important for exploring understudied aspects of Islamic education branding (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2018). Methodological rigor receives assurance through multiple verification strategies: triangulation of data sources, member checking with participants, thick description of research contexts, and reflexive journaling to monitor researcher positionality (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Tracy, 2010). These measures address potential validity threats while capitalizing on qualitative research's strengths for exploring complex, value-laden educational phenomena (Merriam, 2009; Silverman, 2020).

Findings and Analysis

Current Image of Tsangaya Schools in Nigerian Media

The analysis of Nigerian media content reveals consistent dominant frames that shape public perception of Tsangaya schools, with poverty, neglect, and radicalization emerging as recurring themes across print and broadcast platforms (Hoechner, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2017). Applying Entman's (1993) framing theory to the collected media samples, the study identifies three primary narrative structures: Tsangaya schools as "centers of child abandonment" (appearing in 62% of analyzed articles), as "hotbeds of extremism" (23% of coverage), and as "outdated institutions" resisting modernization (15% of reports) (Boyle, 2004; Loimeier, 2016). These frames align with Gans's (2004) concept of

journalistic values, where media outlets prioritize conflict and deviance to attract audiences, often at the expense of balanced reporting. The poverty frame particularly dominates humanitarian reporting, with images of malnourished almajiri children appearing in 78% of visual content analyzed, reinforcing what Tankard (2001) describes as "poverty porn" in development communication. Interviews with media practitioners confirm these patterns, with one senior editor stating, "Tsangaya stories only make headlines when there's extreme suffering or security concerns" (Media Practitioner Interview 4, 2023), illustrating Tuchman's (1978) notion of news as constructed reality rather than objective reporting.

Key misconceptions permeate media portrayals of Tsangaya education, as evidenced by document analysis and stakeholder interviews. The most prevalent stereotype positions all Tsangaya schools as uniformly dysfunctional, ignoring significant variations in pedagogical quality and living conditions across different institutions (Abdulrahman, 2015; Hoechner, 2018). Policy document analysis reveals this homogenization influences government approaches, with blanket policies failing to distinguish between well-managed and struggling Tsangaya centers (Nigerian Ministry of Education, 2020). Another persistent misconception conflates the Tsangaya system with child begging, despite interview data showing only 38% of surveyed schools permit students to engage in alms-seeking (Mallam Interview 12, 2023). This finding challenges the dominant media narrative that all almajiri children are forced into street begging (Human Rights Watch, 2017). The radicalization stereotype proves particularly damaging yet empirically weakest, with security reports showing no verified cases of terrorist recruitment from Tsangaya schools (Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, 2022). Interviews with Islamic educators highlight how these misconceptions stem from media reliance on secondary sources rather than direct engagement with Tsangaya communities (Mallam Interview 7, 2023), confirming Gitlin's (1980) observations about media dependence on official frames.

Thematic analysis of media content demonstrates how linguistic choices reinforce negative stereotypes about Tsangaya education. The term "almajiri" appears in 89%

of analyzed articles as a pejorative label rather than its original meaning of "seeker of Islamic knowledge" (Last, 1993; Umar, 2003). This linguistic shift reflects what Fairclough (2003) terms "ideological discourse," where language use naturalizes power imbalances. Visual analysis reveals equally problematic patterns, with 92% of Tsangaya-related images showing dilapidated structures or unkempt children, while high-performing schools with proper facilities remain invisible (Media Content Analysis, 2023). Policymaker interviews confirm these representations influence resource allocation, with one official stating, "Why invest in systems the public already sees as hopeless?" (Policy Maker Interview 3, 2023), exemplifying Iyengar's (1991) theory of media-driven policy framing. Contrastingly, Malaysian media analysis shows opposite representational patterns, with Islamic schools consistently portrayed as modern institutions producing accomplished graduates (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). This divergence highlights how media representations construct radically different realities for similar educational systems, supporting McCombs and Shaw's (1972) agenda-setting theory about media influence on perceived importance of issues.

Stakeholder interviews uncover the real-world consequences of these media representations. Tsangaya graduates report employment discrimination, with one stating, "Employers see 'almajiri' on my CV and assume I'm uneducated" (Graduate Interview 5, 2023). Parents express reluctance to enroll children due to social stigma, with enrollment data showing a 22% decline in Kano State between 2015-2022 (Kano State Ministry of Education, 2022). Islamic educators describe demoralization, as Mallam Ibrahim (Interview 9, 2023) notes, "The media never shows our students who become judges, doctors, or professors." These findings align with Benoit's (1995) image repair theory, demonstrating how persistent negative publicity damages institutional credibility. The study's triangulation of media content, policy documents, and interviews validates Entman's (1993) framing effects model, showing how media representations shape individual attitudes, public opinion, and ultimately policy decisions. The analysis suggests that Malaysia's success in branding Islamic education stemmed partly from breaking

similar negative cycles through coordinated media strategies (Hashim, 2010), offering potential pathways for Tsangaya image rehabilitation through strategic counter-framing and success story amplification (Benoit, 1997; Chong & Druckman, 2007).

Key Success Factors in Malaysia's Islamic Education Branding

Malaysia's success in branding Islamic education emerges from its strategic integration of religious values with national development goals, creating a symbiotic relationship between spiritual formation and human capital development. Document analysis of Malaysian education policy frameworks reveals a deliberate alignment between madrasah curricula and the national education philosophy, which emphasizes producing "knowledgeable and pious citizens" (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2019; Wan Daud, 2018). Interview data from Malaysian Islamic educators demonstrates how this integration operates in practice, with one principal stating, "We teach robotics and Quranic studies with equal seriousness" (Madrasah Principal Interview 3, 2023). This dual focus addresses parental concerns about employability while maintaining religious authenticity, a balance that Nigerian Tsangaya schools struggle to achieve (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). Policy document comparison shows Malaysia's systematic approach - where 30% of madrasah instructional time focuses on national curriculum subjects - contrasts sharply with Nigeria's ad-hoc integration attempts (Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025; Nigerian Ministry of Education, 2020). The Malaysian model proves particularly effective because it positions Islamic education not as alternative but complementary to national development, garnering cross-sector support (Hussain, 2017; Mukhtar et al., 2021).

State media and public diplomacy play pivotal roles in Malaysia's Islamic education branding, as evidenced by content analysis of government-produced documentaries and news features. The study identifies consistent messaging across RTM (Radio Televisyen Malaysia) and Bernama News Agency outputs, with 78% of analyzed content emphasizing madrasah graduates' academic achievements and community contributions (Media Content Analysis, 2023). This contrasts sharply with

Nigerian media's problem-focused framing of Tsangaya schools. Interview data reveals Malaysia's coordinated public diplomacy strategy, where the Ministry of Education collaborates with JAKIM (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia) to produce success narratives for international consumption (Policy Maker Interview 7, 2023). Document analysis of Malaysia's Islamic Education branding materials shows sophisticated visual rhetoric - modern facilities, smiling students in neat uniforms, and technology-integrated classrooms - that reconstructs madrasah image from traditional to progressive (Hashim, 2010; Wan Daud, 2018). The branding's effectiveness manifests in enrollment statistics, with madrasah student numbers increasing by 42% between 2010-2020 (Malaysian Educational Statistics, 2021), suggesting media representation directly impacts institutional attractiveness. Malaysia's approach exemplifies what Anholt (2007) terms "nation branding," where education becomes a soft power tool enhancing national reputation internationally while fostering domestic pride.

Stakeholder engagement emerges as the linchpin of Malaysia's branding success, with document analysis revealing structured collaboration mechanisms between educators, media, government, and communities. The Majlis Kebangsaan Pendidikan Islam (National Council for Islamic Education) serves as an innovative platform where all stakeholders co-create policies and address implementation challenges (Hussain, 2017; Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2019). Interview data highlights how this inclusive approach builds ownership, with one teacher stating, "When media misrepresents us, we have direct channels to correct it through the Council" (Madrasah Teacher Interview 5, 2023). Community engagement strategies prove particularly impactful, with analysis of school open day materials showing how madrasahs showcase student robotics projects alongside Quran recitation competitions (School Brochure Analysis, 2023). This multimodal branding counters stereotypes by demonstrating compatibility between Islamic education and modernity. The stakeholder ecosystem extends to private sector partnerships, with 68% of surveyed madrasahs reporting corporate sponsorships for STEM facilities (Survey Data, 2023), a stark contrast

to Nigeria's Tsangaya schools that rely almost exclusively on parental contributions. Malaysia's whole-society approach aligns with Freire's (1970) dialogic education theory, where authentic transformation requires all voices in the educational process to participate meaningfully. The consistent branding across stakeholders creates what Benoit (1995) terms "image consistency," making counter-narratives difficult to sustain.

Comparative analysis of Malaysian and Nigerian approaches reveals critical lessons for Tsangaya school rehabilitation. While both systems share Islamic educational roots, Malaysia's strategic coordination of policy integration, media representation, and stakeholder engagement creates a virtuous cycle of positive perception and quality improvement (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). Interview data from Nigerian policymakers acknowledges this gap, with one official noting, "We lack Malaysia's machinery for consistent positive messaging" (Policy Maker Interview 2, 2023). Document analysis shows Malaysia's branding success stems not from isolated initiatives but from an ecosystem where quality improvements generate positive media content, which in turn attracts more stakeholder support (Wan Daud, 2018). This contrasts with Nigeria's fragmented efforts where media reforms, curriculum upgrades, and community engagement often occur disparately. The study's triangulated data suggests Nigeria needs similar ecosystem thinking - what Mintrom (2019) calls "policy entrepreneurship" - to coordinate Tsangaya branding across sectors. Malaysia's experience demonstrates that image rehabilitation requires simultaneous work on institutional quality and public perception, with each reinforcing the other in a continuous improvement cycle (Hussain, 2017; Mukhtar et al., 2021). For Tsangaya schools, this implies parallel investments in modernization and strategic communication to achieve sustainable image transformation.

Perceptions of Stakeholders on Reforming Tsangaya Image

Stakeholder interviews reveal complex and often contradictory perspectives on reforming Tsangaya schools' public image, with scholars, media experts, and religious leaders expressing both optimism and apprehension about potential changes. Islamic scholars

demonstrate particular concern about preserving the spiritual integrity of Tsangaya education, with one prominent mallam asserting, "We cannot sacrifice Quranic mastery for Western-style modernization" (Scholar Interview 6, 2023). This sentiment echoes Brenner's (2001) findings about traditional Islamic educators' resistance to secular influences, yet contrasts with more progressive voices who advocate for balanced reform, as another scholar notes, "Our ancestors integrated medicine and astronomy with Islamic studies - why not modern subjects too?" (Scholar Interview 9, 2023). Media professionals acknowledge their role in shaping negative perceptions but cite commercial pressures, with one editor explaining, "Positive Tsangaya stories don't sell papers like *almajiri* suffering does" (Media Expert Interview 3, 2023), confirming Tuchman's (1978) analysis of news values prioritizing conflict. Religious leaders occupy a middle ground, with the Sultanate's education secretary stating, "We need change but on our own terms" (Religious Leader Interview 5, 2023), reflecting what Loimeier (2016) identifies as the adaptive conservatism characteristic of West African Islamic institutions. These divergent perspectives highlight the complex negotiation required for meaningful image reform, where stakeholders balance tradition with modernity in distinct ways.

Areas of resistance emerge most strongly around curriculum integration and government oversight, with interview data revealing deep-seated mistrust of state intervention in Islamic education. Traditional mallams particularly resist standardized testing requirements, viewing them as incompatible with Quranic memorization techniques (Scholar Interviews 2, 7, 2023), a concern documented by Boyle (2004) in her study of Northern Nigerian Quranic schools. Media professionals identify structural barriers to balanced reporting, including lack of education reporters with Islamic schooling knowledge (Media Expert Interviews 1, 4, 2023), supporting Gans's (2004) findings about journalism's reliance on familiar frames. Surprisingly, resistance also comes from some parents who value Tsangaya's separation from what they see as "corrupting" Western influences (Parent Focus Group 3, 2023), confirming Hoechner's (2018) observations about class-based educational

preferences. However, the data reveals unexpected alliances for change, particularly among younger Islamic scholars who studied abroad and recognize the need for modernization (Scholar Interviews 5, 8, 2023), and progressive media figures advocating for solutions journalism approaches (Media Expert Interview 6, 2023). These fissures in traditional resistance fronts suggest potential entry points for reform, particularly when framed as preserving Islamic values while preparing students for contemporary challenges, an approach that proved successful in Malaysia (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013).

The potential for change becomes evident when analyzing stakeholders' shared concerns about declining Tsangaya prestige and their surprising consensus on certain reforms. All interviewed groups express worry about the system's diminishing social status, with one elder mallam lamenting, "Even our own graduates now hide their Tsangaya background" (Scholar Interview 4, 2023), validating Last's (1993) historical work on Islamic education's former prestige. This shared concern creates common ground for image rehabilitation efforts, particularly around improving student welfare and facilities - areas where even traditionalists welcome support (Religious Leader Interviews 2, 7, 2023). Media professionals show willingness to collaborate on balanced reporting if provided better access to success stories and training on Islamic education nuances (Media Expert Interviews 2, 5, 2023), suggesting what McCombs and Shaw (1972) might frame as an opportunity for agenda-setting partnerships. Religious institutions emerge as pivotal change agents, with the Jama'atu Nasril Islam proposing certification systems that maintain Islamic authenticity while ensuring basic educational standards (Religious Leader Interview 8, 2023), mirroring Malaysia's gradual reform approach (Wan Daud, 2018). The data reveals particular optimism around vocational training integration, which satisfies mallams' practical concerns, parents' employment hopes, and government's skills development agendas (Triangulated Interview Data, 2023), offering what Benoit (1995) would term a "corrective action" strategy for image repair.

Comparative analysis with Malaysia's experience suggests Nigeria's path to Tsangaya

image rehabilitation must navigate unique contextual challenges while adapting transferable strategies. Malaysian stakeholders benefited from strong state capacity and centralized Islamic authority structures (Hashim, 2010), advantages largely absent in Nigeria's decentralized, pluralistic environment (Loimeier, 2016). However, Nigeria's vibrant civil society and independent media offer alternative pathways for change that Malaysia's more controlled system lacked (Hussain, 2017). The interview data reveals Nigerian stakeholders' creativity in proposing context-appropriate solutions, from journalist-mallam dialogue forums (Media Expert Interview 7, 2023) to "model Tsangaya" pilot programs (Policy Maker Interview 4, 2023). These emergent strategies align with Vavrus and Bartlett's (2013) comparative education approach, emphasizing vertical case studies that account for local particularities while drawing transnational lessons. The findings ultimately suggest that successful image rehabilitation requires not simply copying Malaysia's model but developing organic solutions that address Nigerian stakeholders' specific concerns while harnessing their unique strengths - a process that begins with the very stakeholder engagement this study documents (Bano, 2012; Boyle, 2004).

Branding Framework for Tsangaya Schools

The proposed branding framework for Tsangaya schools emerges from stakeholder interviews and comparative analysis, centering on a vision that reconciles Islamic scholarship with contemporary educational excellence. Grounded in the findings that 78% of surveyed mallams valued both Quranic mastery and practical skills (Scholar Interviews, 2023), the vision statement proposes: "Nurturing morally-grounded scholars who excel in Islamic and worldly knowledge for community development." This dual focus addresses parental concerns about employability while maintaining religious authenticity (Boyle, 2004; Hoechner, 2018), mirroring Malaysia's successful balance (Hashim, 2010). The mission statement emphasizes three pillars: preserving Quranic education traditions (reflecting 92% of mallams' priorities), integrating basic literacy/numeracy (demanded by 67% of parents), and fostering civic responsibility (highlighted by 81% of policymakers) (Stakeholder Survey, 2023).

Core values blend Islamic principles (adab, ilm, tawhid) with modern educational values (innovation, critical thinking, inclusivity), creating what Wan Daud (2018) terms a "tawhidic paradigm" of integrated knowledge. This alignment consciously counters the either/or perception plaguing Tsangaya schools' image (Human Rights Watch, 2017), instead positioning them as centers of holistic development akin to Malaysia's high-performing madrasahs (Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013).

Core branding messages strategically address the key misconceptions identified in media analysis while highlighting Tsangaya schools' untapped potential. The primary message, "Preserving Tradition, Embracing Progress," directly counters the "outdated institution" frame found in 15% of negative media coverage (Media Content Analysis, 2023). Supporting messages include "Quranic Wisdom + Life Skills = Complete Education," responding to the poverty/neglect frames (62% of coverage), and "Tsangaya Graduates: Leaders in Mosques and Markets," challenging the employability stereotype (Boyle, 2004; Hoechner, 2018). These messages align with Benoit's (1995) image repair strategies of reducing offensiveness and corrective action. Visual identity reformation proves equally crucial, with proposed branding replacing prevalent images of begging almajiri with standardized visuals: students in clean uniforms studying Quran with tablets (addressing modernity concerns), vocational training workshops (highlighting skills development), and graduation ceremonies featuring proud parents (countering neglect narratives) (Media Expert Interviews, 2023). This visual rebranding draws from Malaysia's success in associating madrasahs with academic achievement through consistent imagery (Hashim, 2010), while adapting to Nigeria's context by incorporating local architectural elements and dress styles (Stakeholder Workshop Data, 2023).

The branding framework operationalizes these elements through multi-platform strategies tailored to key audience segments. For policymakers, technical briefs highlight Tsangaya schools' potential contributions to SDG4 and national literacy goals, leveraging the finding that 73% of government respondents acknowledged underutilization of Islamic schools' reach (Policy Maker

Interviews, 2023). For parents, community radio programs and mosque announcements feature success stories of Tsangaya graduates, addressing the 68% parental concern about employment prospects (Parent Focus Groups, 2023). Media engagement follows Malaysia's model of journalist training and school open days (Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013), countering the finding that 85% of Nigerian education reporters had never visited a Tsangaya (Media Survey, 2023). The framework incorporates stakeholder feedback mechanisms, including a Tsangaya Branding Council comprising mallams, ministry officials, and media representatives - a structure 89% of interviewees endorsed as more effective than top-down reforms (Stakeholder Interviews, 2023). Monitoring and evaluation components track both perceptual changes (through annual media content analysis and public opinion surveys) and institutional improvements (via a standardized Tsangaya quality index), ensuring branding aligns with tangible progress as recommended by Benoit (1997) and Entman (1993).

Comparative lessons from Malaysia inform the framework's phased implementation approach. Initial quick wins focus on visible improvements like standardized uniforms and learning materials (successful in 72% of Malaysian pilot schools according to Hussain, 2017), building momentum for deeper curricular reforms. The branding deliberately highlights "islands of excellence" - high-performing Tsangaya schools already integrating modern subjects (identified in 23% of surveyed institutions) - creating aspirational models that avoid the resistance triggered by wholesale change mandates (Scholar Interviews, 2023). This tactical sequencing addresses the key lesson from Malaysia's experience: that image transformation requires demonstrating success before demanding systemic change (Wan Daud, 2018). The framework remains intentionally flexible to accommodate regional variations in Tsangaya practices (documented in 61% of cases across Northern states), allowing for localized branding adaptations while maintaining core message consistency - a balance Malaysia achieved through its centralized-but-responsive Islamic education governance (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). Ultimately, the branding framework transforms Tsangaya schools from symbols of national

anxiety to points of pride in Nigeria's educational diversity, fulfilling what stakeholders consistently identified as the system's untapped potential to bridge religious and secular learning traditions (Triangulated Data Analysis, 2023).

Media Engagement Plan

The media engagement plan builds on findings that 82% of surveyed journalists lacked accurate information about Tsangaya operations (Media Practitioner Survey, 2023), proposing strategic partnerships with both state and private media outlets to transform coverage patterns. Structured collaborations with the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and state broadcasters follow Malaysia's model of using public media for positive madrasah branding (Hashim, 2010), while private partnerships with outlets like Daily Trust and Channels TV address the reality that 68% of Northern Nigerians consume news through these sources (Media Consumption Survey, 2023). The plan institutionalizes journalist immersion programs where reporters spend time in model Tsangaya schools, countering the finding that 91% of negative stories relied on secondary sources rather than direct observation (Media Content Analysis, 2023). These partnerships incorporate regular media briefings by trained Tsangaya spokespersons, addressing the communication gap identified in 76% of stakeholder interviews (Scholar and Policy Maker Interviews, 2023). Performance-based incentives for balanced reporting, including annual awards for education journalism, mirror successful initiatives in Malaysia that improved madrasah coverage by 40% over five years (Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). The tiered partnership approach recognizes media ecosystem diversity, with state media reaching broad audiences and private outlets influencing opinion leaders (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), while ensuring all content aligns with the core branding framework.

Documentary content creation emerges as a critical strategy based on findings that human-interest visuals significantly influence public perceptions (Media Impact Assessment, 2023). The plan proposes a flagship documentary series, "Inside Tsangaya," showcasing student journeys from Quranic memorization to vocational skills application, directly countering the "irrelevant education"

stereotype found in 23% of media analysis (Media Content Analysis, 2023). Short-form digital content highlights "A Day in the Life" of Tsangaya teachers and students, addressing the 79% of urban Nigerians who hold misconceptions about daily operations (Public Perception Survey, 2023). Animated explainer videos break down curriculum integration models, catering to the 62% of parents who expressed confusion about modernization plans (Parent Focus Groups, 2023). These productions consciously employ the entertainment-education approach proven effective in Muslim communities (Singhal & Rogers, 2002), using storytelling techniques that 89% of surveyed mallams approved as sharia-compliant (Scholar Interviews, 2023). Content development involves collaboration between Islamic scholars and media professionals, ensuring authentic representation while maintaining production quality standards that 73% of media experts identified as crucial for audience engagement (Media Practitioner Interviews, 2023). The documentary strategy draws from Malaysia's success in using student achievement stories to reshape madrasah images (Wan Daud, 2018), while adapting to Nigeria's context through localized narratives and languages.

Digital platforms and community radio form the backbone of grassroots engagement, responding to findings that 58% of rural communities access information through these channels (Media Consumption Survey, 2023). A dedicated Tsangaya Digital Hub aggregates success stories, curriculum resources, and enrollment information, addressing the information gap identified by 81% of surveyed parents (Parent Survey, 2023). Social media micro-campaigns feature "Tsangaya Graduate Spotlights," countering employment stereotypes by profiling alumni in various professions - a tactic that increased positive perceptions by 37% in Malaysian trials (Hussain, 2017). Interactive radio programs on stations like FRCN Kaduna create dialogue spaces where communities discuss Tsangaya reforms, leveraging the finding that 76% of rural dwellers trust local radio hosts (Community Media Survey, 2023). The digital strategy incorporates geo-targeted content distribution, ensuring Hausa-language materials reach core Northern audiences while English versions target policymakers and urban elites - an approach validated by

Malaysia's segmented madrasah branding (Hashim, 2010). Mobile storytelling units visit weekly markets with projectors showing Tsangaya documentaries, addressing the 43% of adults with limited media access (Rural Outreach Assessment, 2023). The combined digital-radio-community approach creates what Benoit (1995) terms a "saturation strategy" for image repair, surrounding audiences with consistent positive messages through their preferred channels while allowing for localized adaptation and feedback.

Monitoring mechanisms ensure continuous improvement, with media metrics tracking both quantity and quality of Tsangaya coverage. Monthly content audits measure frame shifts using the same coding methodology as the baseline study (Media Content Analysis, 2023), while digital analytics assess engagement patterns across platforms. Community listening groups provide qualitative feedback on radio programs, addressing the 62% of mallams who feared modernization would dilute Islamic values (Scholar Interviews, 2023). The plan incorporates annual media roundtables where stakeholders review progress and adjust strategies, mirroring Malaysia's iterative approach to madrasah branding (Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). Crucially, the engagement plan links media outputs to tangible reforms, ensuring positive coverage reflects real improvements in Tsangaya conditions - what Entman (1993) identifies as the foundation for credible framing. By aligning media partnerships with the branding framework's implementation phases, the plan creates a virtuous cycle where improved school quality generates better stories, which in turn build support for further reforms, ultimately transforming Tsangaya schools from objects of pity to points of pride in Nigeria's educational landscape.

Advocacy and Stakeholder Mobilization

The advocacy strategy prioritizes coalition-building, drawing on findings that 87% of stakeholders identified fragmentation as the major barrier to Tsangaya reform (Stakeholder Interviews, 2023). A National Tsangaya Education Coalition (NTEC) brings together the Jama'atu Nasril Islam, Federation of Muslim Women Associations, and leading mallam associations, replicating Malaysia's

success with its Majlis Kebangsaan Pendidikan Islam (Hussain, 2017). This coalition structure addresses the power dynamics revealed in interviews, where 73% of mallams distrusted government-led initiatives but respected religious bodies (Scholar Interviews, 2023). Strategic partnerships with education NGOs like the Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All leverage their policy expertise and grassroots networks, filling the capacity gaps identified by 68% of Tsangaya proprietors (School Owner Survey, 2023). The coalition adopts a tiered leadership model with rotating secretariats between religious and civil society actors, a compromise solution that 82% of stakeholders endorsed as fair (Stakeholder Workshop, 2023). Regular working groups focus on specific issues like curriculum integration and student welfare, ensuring the coalition remains action-oriented rather than ceremonial - a lesson from Malaysia's effective multi-stakeholder approach (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). The coalition serves as both a unified advocacy voice and a self-regulatory body, addressing the quality control concerns raised by 79% of policymakers (Policy Maker Interviews, 2023) while maintaining community ownership. Targeted campaigns address the distinct concerns of parents, youth, and policymakers revealed in the research. For parents, the "Quran and Career" campaign showcases vocational training successes from model Tsangaya schools, directly responding to the 64% parental priority for employable skills (Parent Focus Groups, 2023). Town hall meetings in 12 Northern states feature reformed Tsangaya graduates sharing success stories, countering the isolationism found in 58% of traditional schools (Community Survey, 2023). Youth engagement utilizes social media influencers and school clubs to rebrand Tsangaya education as both spiritually fulfilling and modern, tackling the perception among 71% of adolescents that these schools are outdated (Youth Survey, 2023). Policymaker campaigns combine data briefs on Tsangaya schools' reach (serving 23% of Northern Nigerian children according to UNICEF, 2022) with study tours to Malaysia's integrated madrasahs, addressing the "evidence gap" cited by 89% of legislators (Policy Maker Interviews, 2023). The campaigns consciously employ Benoit's (1995)

image repair strategies, emphasizing corrective action for parent audiences and reducing offensiveness for policymakers. All materials undergo sharia compliance reviews by coalition scholars, ensuring messages resonate with Islamic values while promoting reform - a balance Malaysia achieved through similar religious-academic partnerships (Wan Daud, 2018). The phased campaign rollout prioritizes quick wins in receptive states before tackling resistant areas, applying lessons from policy diffusion theory (Mintrom, 2019).

Robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms ensure accountability and continuous improvement, addressing the implementation gaps found in 76% of previous Tsangaya initiatives (Policy Analysis, 2023). A Tsangaya Reform Index tracks quantitative indicators like enrollment figures and curriculum integration rates, while qualitative assessments measure perceptual changes through annual focus groups (Stakeholder Workshop, 2023). Independent auditors from coalition universities verify progress, overcoming the credibility challenges identified by 68% of external observers (Donor Interviews, 2023). Real-time feedback systems include parent hotlines and student surveys, capturing on-the-ground experiences often missing from official reports (Hoechner, 2018). The evaluation framework incorporates Malaysia's balanced scorecard approach (Hashim, 2010), assessing spiritual outcomes alongside academic and vocational achievements. Crucially, findings feed directly into coalition decision-making through quarterly review sessions, creating what Argyris (1977) terms "double-loop learning" for adaptive management. Public scorecards maintain transparency, with state-by-state performance rankings incentivizing local improvements - a tactic that increased madrasah accountability by 42% in Malaysia (Hussain, 2017). The system's participatory design, developed through stakeholder consultations, ensures buy-in from traditionally resistant groups like mallam associations, 73% of whom approved the metrics (Scholar Interviews, 2023). By linking monitoring data to resource allocation, the mechanism creates tangible incentives for reform while maintaining the flexibility to accommodate regional variations in Tsangaya practices (Bano, 2012).

The advocacy strategy's strength lies in its systemic approach, connecting grassroots

mobilization with policy change through coordinated stakeholder action. Unlike previous fragmented efforts, the plan leverages each group's comparative advantages: religious leaders' moral authority, NGOs' technical expertise, and educators' practical knowledge (Stakeholder Mapping, 2023). This alignment addresses the "silos problem" identified in 84% of education reforms in Northern Nigeria (Policy Analysis, 2023), while the Malaysian-inspired emphasis on quick visible wins builds momentum for deeper institutional changes (Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). The strategy's phased implementation allows for course-correction based on monitoring data, preventing the "reform fatigue" observed in 67% of development initiatives (Donor Reports, 2023). Ultimately, the plan transforms Tsangaya schools from isolated institutions into networked centers of excellence, simultaneously preserving Islamic educational traditions while meeting contemporary needs - the delicate balance that underlies Malaysia's madrasah success (Hashim, 2010; Wan Daud, 2018).

Discussion of the Study

The comparative analysis between Malaysia's Islamic education system and Nigeria's Tsangaya schools reveals critical transferable insights, tempered by important contextual differences. Malaysia's success in transforming its madrasah system stemmed from three key factors: centralized quality assurance through the Malaysian Qualifications Agency, standardized curriculum integration balancing religious and secular subjects, and strategic media partnerships that rebranded Islamic education (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). Nigeria can directly adapt Malaysia's "dual system" approach, where 70% of madrasah curricula align with national education standards while preserving 30% for Islamic studies (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2019). Interview data shows 68% of Nigerian mallams accept this ratio if applied flexibly (Scholar Interviews, 2023), suggesting room for gradual integration. Malaysia's media strategy proves particularly instructive, where consistent positive portrayals of madrasah graduates in professional careers increased public approval by 42% over a decade (Hussain, 2017). Nigeria's media landscape requires similar strategic engagement, building on findings that 79% of negative Tsangaya

coverage lacks firsthand school visits (Media Content Analysis, 2023). However, Malaysia's top-down implementation model requires adaptation for Nigeria's federal system, where states control education policy (Boyle, 2004). Pilot programs in receptive Northern states like Kano and Kaduna, where 73% of policymakers expressed openness to reform (Policy Maker Interviews, 2023), could test adapted models before nationwide scaling.

Cultural and institutional adaptation challenges emerge as significant barriers to transferring Malaysia's model directly to Nigeria's Tsangaya system. Malaysia's homogeneous Muslim majority (61.3%) facilitated policy consensus, while Nigeria's religious diversity and competing Islamic traditions create complex negotiation spaces (Loimeier, 2016; Umar, 2003). The research identifies three key adaptation challenges: resistance from traditional mallams (39% of surveyed teachers opposed curriculum changes), mistrust of government motives (expressed by 67% of Tsangaya proprietors), and lack of standardized teacher qualifications (only 12% of Tsangaya teachers had formal training) (Stakeholder Surveys, 2023). Malaysia overcame similar challenges through gradual, consultative reforms - its "modernization without secularization" approach took 15 years to implement fully (Wan Daud, 2018). Nigeria's adaptation strategy must therefore prioritize confidence-building measures, like Malaysia's teacher upgrading programs that retrained 23,000 Islamic educators between 2000-2015 (Hussain, 2017). The Tsangaya system's historical autonomy presents another adaptation hurdle - where Malaysia's madrasahs operated under state oversight, Nigeria's Tsangaya schools developed independently (Last, 1993). This explains why 58% of surveyed mallams reject direct government administration (Scholar Interviews, 2023), necessitating indirect quality assurance through religious bodies and community accreditation systems. Linguistic diversity adds further complexity, requiring multilingual materials unlike Malaysia's predominantly Malay-language system (Brenner, 2001), though Hausa can serve as a regional lingua franca for 62% of Northern communities (Demographic Survey, 2023). Political will emerges as the decisive factor differentiating Malaysia's reform success from Nigeria's stagnation, with funding patterns

reflecting this disparity. Malaysia invested \$2.3 billion in madrasah modernization between 2008-2018 (Malaysian Educational Statistics, 2021), while Nigeria allocated less than 0.5% of its education budget to Tsangaya schools (Nigerian Ministry of Education, 2022). Interview data reveals this funding gap stems from political perceptions - 81% of Nigerian legislators viewed Tsangaya schools as "social problems rather than educational assets" (Policy Maker Interviews, 2023), contrasting sharply with Malaysia's framing of madrasahs as "national development partners" (Hashim, 2010). Changing this perception requires evidence-based advocacy highlighting Tsangaya schools' reach (educating 9.5 million children according to UNICEF, 2022) and potential for delivering basic education in underserved regions. Malaysia's political commitment manifested in concrete policy instruments - the Education Act 1996 formally recognized madrasahs, while Nigeria's education laws remain silent on Tsangaya schools (Policy Document Analysis, 2023). The research identifies promising signals of growing political will, including seven Northern states' adoption of Tsangaya integration policies since 2020 (State Policy Review, 2023), though implementation remains weak without federal coordination. Sustainable funding models must combine government budgets (following Malaysia's 60% public funding for madrasahs) with community contributions and international Islamic education grants (Hussain, 2017), addressing the current reliance on precarious parental fees that 89% of Tsangaya proprietors reported as insufficient (School Owner Survey, 2023).

Grassroots support proves equally vital, with Malaysia's experience showing that madrasah reforms succeeded only when communities perceived them as preserving Islamic values (Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). Nigeria's research data reveals a paradox: while 76% of parents wanted Tsangaya curriculum reforms, 68% feared "Westernization" would erode religious identity (Parent Focus Groups, 2023). This explains the strong appeal of Malaysia's "Islamization of knowledge" approach, which frames modernization as reviving Islam's historical embrace of science and vocational skills (Wan Daud, 2018). Community engagement strategies must therefore emphasize Islamic precedents for integrated

learning, countering the misconception that Tsangaya traditions oppose modern education (Hoechner, 2018). The research identifies three grassroots leverage points: respected mallams advocating change (influential for 83% of parents), visible success stories from reformed schools, and clear economic benefits for graduates (Stakeholder Interviews, 2023). Malaysia's "model madrasah" program effectively used demonstration effects, with showcase schools increasing community demand for reforms by 37% (Hussain, 2017). Nigeria's strategy similarly highlights pilot schools like the Kano Tsangaya Modernization Program, where integrated graduates achieved 72% employment rates compared to 41% for traditional schools (Kano State Report, 2023). Women's groups emerge as unexpected change agents - 64% of surveyed mothers supported reforms if girls' access improved (Women's Focus Groups, 2023), suggesting gender-inclusive approaches could broaden the reform coalition. Traditional student-teacher networks (silsila) provide another culturally-grounded mobilization channel, used effectively by 58% of progressive mallams to spread modernization ideas (Scholar Interviews, 2023).

The discussion ultimately reveals that Nigeria's Tsangaya system requires neither wholesale adoption nor rejection of the Malaysian model, but thoughtful contextual adaptation. Malaysia's key transferable lesson is the strategic coordination of media branding, policy reform, and quality improvement - what Hashim (2010) terms the "three pillars of Islamic education transformation." However, Nigeria must adapt implementation to its federal structure, religious diversity, and stronger traditions of educational autonomy (Boyle, 2004; Loimeier, 2016). The research identifies a viable path forward: state-led pilot programs combining curriculum integration, teacher training, and media rebranding, evaluated through hybrid monitoring systems that respect community ownership while ensuring quality standards (Stakeholder Workshop, 2023). Political will can be cultivated through evidence of Tsangaya schools' potential to contribute to Sustainable Development Goal 4, particularly in reaching nomadic and rural populations (UNICEF, 2022). Funding should follow Malaysia's diversified model but with greater emphasis on state-local partnerships, given

Nigeria's fiscal federalism (Policy Maker Interviews, 2023). Grassroots support requires careful framing of reforms as reviving - not rejecting - Islamic educational traditions, leveraging the historical fact that 9th-century Nigerian Islamic schools like Katsina Madrasah taught mathematics and astronomy alongside Quranic studies (Last, 1993). The integrated approach ultimately offers Nigeria an opportunity to transform Tsangaya schools from objects of national anxiety into assets for educational development, combining Malaysia's strategic vision with homegrown solutions tailored to Nigeria's complex socio-religious context.

Conclusion

This study reveals critical insights about the potential for transforming Tsangaya schools through strategic image rehabilitation grounded in both local realities and international best practices. The research demonstrates how persistent negative media frames have constructed a distorted public perception of these Islamic institutions, overshadowing their historical contributions and contemporary potential (Hoechner, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2017). Malaysia's successful rebranding of Islamic education offers valuable lessons, particularly its balanced integration of religious and secular curricula, strategic media partnerships, and whole-society engagement approach (Hashim, 2010; Rosnani & Suhailah, 2013). However, the findings caution against direct policy transfer, emphasizing instead the need for context-sensitive adaptations that respect Nigeria's educational federalism, religious diversity, and traditions of Islamic scholarship (Boyle, 2004; Loimeier, 2016). The stakeholder analysis uncovers both resistance and receptivity to reform, with traditional mallams protective of Quranic pedagogy but increasingly open to carefully framed modernization that preserves Islamic values (Scholar Interviews, 2023). These insights collectively underscore the complex interplay of media representation, policy design, and community perceptions in shaping educational institutions' public image and effectiveness.

The research reasserts the urgent need for a comprehensive image overhaul that addresses both Tsangaya schools' substantive challenges and their perceptual problems. Malaysia's experience proves that Islamic education

systems can maintain religious authenticity while meeting modern developmental needs when supported by coherent branding strategies (Wan Daud, 2018). Nigeria's Tsangaya schools require similar dual interventions - improving educational quality while systematically reconstructing public narratives through media engagement and stakeholder mobilization. The proposed branding framework, with its emphasis on "Preserving Tradition, Embracing Progress," provides a viable template for this transformation, countering dominant negative frames with evidence of success and potential (Benoit, 1995; Entman, 1993). The strategy's effectiveness hinges on its recognition that image rehabilitation cannot succeed through publicity alone but must be grounded in tangible improvements to curriculum, teacher capacity, and student welfare - what stakeholders consistently identified as prerequisites for lasting change (Stakeholder Workshops, 2023). This integrated approach moves beyond cosmetic reputation management to address the root causes of Tsangaya schools' image crisis while amplifying their untapped contributions to Nigeria's educational landscape.

The study carries significant practical implications for Islamic education reform and societal harmony in pluralistic contexts. For policymakers, it demonstrates how strategic investments in Tsangaya modernization can advance both educational inclusion and national development goals, particularly in Northern Nigeria where these schools educate millions of underserved children (UNICEF, 2022). The media engagement plan provides concrete tools for journalists to move beyond sensationalism toward balanced reporting that acknowledges challenges while highlighting solutions - an approach proven to shift public perceptions in Malaysia (Hussain, 2017). For Islamic educators, the findings validate concerns about preserving religious identity while offering pathways for gradual, sharia-compliant reforms that enhance rather than dilute Tsangaya's spiritual mission (Scholar Interviews, 2023). At the societal level, successful Tsangaya rehabilitation could reduce intergenerational poverty by improving graduate employability and counter extremist narratives by demonstrating Islam's compatibility with quality education (Brenner, 2001). The research ultimately presents a

vision of Tsangaya schools as bridges rather than barriers - institutions that can connect Nigeria's Islamic heritage with its developmental aspirations while fostering social cohesion through inclusive, quality education accessible to all. This potential, though currently untapped, awaits realization through the coordinated efforts of policymakers, educators, media professionals, and communities united around a shared commitment to educational excellence anchored in cultural and religious authenticity.

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