

Navigating Ethical Dilemmas: A Comprehensive Review of Communication Ethics on Social Media

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Abstract

This comprehensive literature review examines the ethical dilemmas associated with communication on social media platforms, specifically hoaxes, cyberbullying, and discriminatory behavior. In the current 5.0 era, where technology infiltrates all aspects of life, social media has become an essential medium for human interaction, particularly among the youth. However, despite Indonesia's extensive social media use, the country ranks low in digital civility in Southeast Asia, highlighting critical ethical issues. This review highlights how unethical communication practices on social media negatively impact mental health and digital civility. Key findings from the literature indicate that spreading misinformation and harmful online behaviors create a toxic environment, significantly affecting young users. The study uncovers the intricate relationship between communication ethics and the prevalence of hoaxes and cyberbullying, emphasizing the need for a deeper understanding of these ethical challenges in Indonesia. The review proposes specific policy recommendations to promote ethical communication on social media to combat these issues. It also advocates for targeted educational initiatives to increase awareness and adherence to communication ethics among the younger generation. By fostering an environment of ethical online behavior, these measures can help mitigate the negative impacts of social media on mental health and societal well-being.

Keywords

Communication ethics; social media; online civility; mental health; ethical challenges

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1. INTRODUCTION

The 5.0 era has been dominated by technology, with media and communication technology driving human activity (Calp & Bütüner, 2022; Maddikunta et al., 2022). Social media platforms like TikTok, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter enable free and easy interaction, especially among the youth (Leng et al., 2022). However, this widespread usage raises significant concerns about



communication ethics, particularly in Indonesia, which ranks low in digital civility in Southeast Asia (ElFar et al., 2021; Mourtzis et al., 2022).

The use of social media is a widespread phenomenon that affects various levels of society, which has raised concerns about communication ethics (Barrett-Maitland & Lynch, 2020). It is worth noting that the younger generation actively uses social media for civic activities (Hong & Kim, 2021; Kenna & Hensley, 2019). Although social media provides convenience in exchanging information and communicating, its impact on communication ethics is a serious concern that requires careful consideration (Mahmudah & Madja, 2021). For example, the rise of hoaxes, cyberbullying, and discriminatory behavior highlights the ethical challenges faced by social media users.

According to the 'Digital Civility Index (DCI)' report (Microsoft, 2020), Indonesia has the lowest online civility score in Southeast Asia, despite being actively engaged in social media use (Molaei, 2014; Sirry et al., 2022). Addressing these issues and working towards a more civil online environment is crucial. However, it is important to note that there has been a significant improvement in Indonesia's online civility score. Significant improvements have been made in Indonesia's online civility score, yet challenges remain due to the prevalence of hoaxes, cyberbullying, and discriminatory behavior (Mas'ood et al., 2017).

The rise in internet usage throughout Indonesian society, including in rural areas, highlights the significance of social media as a primary information source (Sanny et al., 2020). Indonesians' heavy reliance on social media, averaging 3.3 hours per day, plays a crucial role in shaping their communication patterns and social learning (Poan et al., 2022). When communicating about youth mental health through social media, it is crucial to consider ethics. The relationship between communication ethics and youth mental health is particularly important, as unethical behavior can significantly impact mental well-being. By acknowledging multiple perspectives and showing respect for differing opinions, we can foster a cooperative atmosphere that prioritizes the well-being of young people. Indonesia, one of the most populous countries in the world, is experiencing significant growth in internet usage (Arifandi & Simamora, 2023). It is important to recognize that unethical use of social media, such as spreading hoaxes and negative content, can hurt people's social and political lives (Musthofa & Prihananto, 2023). Therefore, it is crucial to promote responsible use of social media to ensure a healthy online environment for all users.

Social media is a powerful communication tool that has revolutionized how people interact, discuss current issues, and express their views (Sloan & Quan-Haase, 2016). By utilizing social media, individuals and organizations can enhance communication strategies and achieve their goals confidently and diplomatically (Mcgrath, 2012). Its impact on the dynamics of human communication has been significant and cannot be ignored. As Donatus et al. (2018) argue, effective communication requires not only the delivery of messages but also a constructive realm of rationality (Donatus et al., 2018). Communication dynamics differ in social media compared to direct or verbal interaction (Astajaya, 2020). This raises doubts about the validity of emotional attitudes and feelings that are difficult to test (Mutiarani et al., 2024). However, it is important to acknowledge the complexity of this issue and consider multiple perspectives.

Communication etiquette is crucial for establishing positive and respectful individual relationships (Kirinic & Bakic-Tomic, 2020). It entails honesty, privacy respect, and empathetic behaviour in every interaction. Neglecting etiquette can result in conflict, tension, and even a decline in mental health (Cleary et al., 2012). As a group undergoing significant life transitions, young people require particular attention regarding the impact of communication ethics on their mental well-being. Research has

unequivocally demonstrated that implementing moral interactions can significantly decrease distress levels and enhance the quality of interpersonal relationships.

In the context of Indonesia's diverse society, particularly where the majority of people are Muslim, the use of social media raises ethical questions that require careful consideration. Communication ethics in the Islamic context must align with Sharia principles, emphasize Islamic elements, and use language that reflects Islam. It is important to acknowledge this topic's sensitivity and approach it diplomatically while also showcasing expertise and confidence in the subject matter. Communication that adheres to the principles of Islamic teachings, including faith, shar'i rules, and human character, is expected to maintain good manners of interaction, prevent disputes, and strengthen human bonds. In this context, this article will conduct a comprehensive literature review on communication ethics in social media. The focus involves the impact of social media use on online civility, youth mental health, and challenges related to ethical aspects of online communication in Indonesia. This study highlights the urgent need for policies promoting ethical communication and educational initiatives to foster awareness among the younger generation. With a better understanding of these dynamics, it is possible to navigate the challenges of this era with confidence and diplomacy.

2. METHODS

The research method for this comprehensive review of communication ethics on social media involved a qualitative approach, focusing on a systematic literature review to gather and analyze data from various academic sources. The study aimed to identify and explore the ethical dilemmas in social media communication by examining peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and credible online resources published between 2010 and 2023.

Data collection involved extensive database searches using refined keywords such as "communication ethics," "social media," "online civility," "mental health," and "ethical challenges." Key databases included Google Scholar, JSTOR, PubMed, and ProQuest. Clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to enhance specificity and relevance, focusing on studies that specifically addressed ethical issues in social media communication, its impact on mental health, and strategies for promoting ethical behavior online (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Flick, 2018).

Despite the thoroughness of the systematic literature review, it inherently limits the study to existing published works, potentially excluding emerging trends or unpublished data. Additionally, the broad range of keywords and databases used for data collection could result in overwhelming data, challenging the maintenance of a focused and coherent analysis. To address these concerns, the study complemented the literature review with primary data collection methods, including interviews and surveys with social media users and experts, to provide firsthand insights and validate the findings from the literature review.

The data were systematically analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes, patterns, and significant findings relevant to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process involved coding the collected literature to identify key themes related to ethical dilemmas in social media communication, such as the spread of misinformation, cyberbullying, and the impact on mental health. While thematic analysis facilitated categorizing these themes into broader categories, care was taken to avoid oversimplifying complex ethical issues by recognizing nuanced differences (Herring, 2004). The study also employed comparative analysis to examine differences and similarities in findings across various geographical contexts, particularly focusing on Indonesia. This approach provided insights into the unique ethical issues social media users face in different regions. However,

the focus on Indonesia was supported by sufficient region-specific studies to ensure depth in the analysis.

Furthermore, potential biases in the selected literature and the subjective nature of thematic analysis were acknowledged. A more focused selection of keywords and a clear delineation of inclusion and exclusion criteria were employed to mitigate these biases. Additionally, incorporating primary data collection methods helped balance the reliance on secondary data, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings. The research findings were synthesized to propose recommendations for policy development and educational initiatives to promote ethical communication on social media platforms. This method ensured a rigorous and in-depth exploration of the ethical dilemmas in social media communication, contributing valuable insights to the academic discourse on this subject (Silverman, 2020).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

When analyzing the literature on communication ethics in social media use, it is clear that ethical guidelines are crucial in guiding communication interactions. Paying close attention to the audience, avoiding causing offense, and being mindful of both verbal and nonverbal communication are important. Acknowledging multiple perspectives and respecting differing opinions is essential to foster a cooperative atmosphere. Interaction etiquette is crucial in daily life, as it involves providing factual and instructive information in communities and building conversations with relevant ideas. As a professional, it is important to acknowledge this issue and address it with a diplomatic approach while also being confident in promoting ethical behavior and setting an example for others to follow. Ethical communication is essential in social media, and people are expected to exhibit ethical behavior towards their interlocutors. However, it is unfortunate that unethical behavior still exists on social media.

Table 1. Literature review data analysis matrix.

Author, Journal	Method	Research Results
Astajaya, I.K. (2020). <i>Etika Komunikasi di Media Sosial</i> (Astajaya, 2020).	In this study, the authors used descriptive qualitative research methods.	The discussion highlighted the criticality of implementing policies promoting ethical social media communication. Individuals must exercise caution when receiving information to mitigate the risks associated with technological advancements. Institutions must prioritize the continued education of communication ethics, particularly among younger generations. Incorporating knowledge and education on communication ethics in social media is crucial in maintaining the quality of information and preventing its negative impact on society. It is important to filter information, comprehend content, and cross-check to ensure accuracy and reliability. By doing so, we can

Author, Journal	Method	Research Results
Afriani, F., & Azmi, A. (2020). Penerapan Etika Komunikasi di Media Sosial (Afriani & Azmi, 2020).	The research aims and objectives determine the use of the content analysis method.	<p>promote responsible communication and uphold ethical standards.</p> <p>The study found that students of PPKN 2016 have effectively applied polite communication ethics in WhatsApp groups. This is evident from their use of initial greetings, expressions of gratitude, and positive responses. The students also demonstrated ethical behavior by sourcing information from reliable sources, avoiding negative content, and refraining from sharing information that could lead to conflict or contain elements of SARA or plagiarism. The implementation of privacy ethics is commendable, as evidenced by the absence of personal accusations, dissemination of private information, and bullying within the group.</p>
Meidiaputri, R. D., & Mukhlis, I. (2023). Etika Komunikasi dalam Menggunakan Media Sosial (Suatu Kajian Literatur) (Meidiaputri & Mukhlis, 2023).	This research explores communication ethics in social media using literature and desk research. The literature was carefully searched and analyzed, focusing on the Islamic perspective.	<p>A review of ten journals demonstrates the significance of communication ethics in social media. Due to the openness of digital media, users are often negligent. To avoid negative content, students need to increase their awareness and understanding. Communication ethics should be integrated into daily life and can be influenced by Islamic principles. Netizens should respond wisely to information, read critically, and avoid making comments without rational consideration. Communication ethics remain relevant in the digital media era due to moral responsibility. Students need to learn how to use the internet wisely. Netizens' communication ethics when receiving news and information involve understanding the different types of netizens.</p>
Najib, A. A., & Avivah, S. (2023). Etika Komunikasi Media Sosial dalam Perspektif Islam (Najib et al., 2023).	The research is classified as desk research, which involves gathering information directly from various literature sources.	The investigation concludes that applying ethical principles inherited from Islamic teachings is necessary when interacting on social media platforms. This helps to avoid negative consequences and serves as an indirect

Author, Journal	Method	Research Results
		means of spreading ethical teachings through da'wah.
Yumar, E., Yuliarta, R. L., Deo, H. Y., & Linderi, C. (2023). <i>Etika dalam Berkomunikasi dan Kesehatan Mental Pemuda</i> (Yumar et al., 2023).	This study employed a qualitative methodology to investigate the correlation between communication ethics and young people's mental health.	The study found that young people aware of and practicing ethical communication tend to have better mental health. Communication that promotes honesty, mutual respect, and empathy can lead to positive interpersonal relationships and support mental well-being. The study also identified internal and external factors that influence young people's ethical communication practices, including values received from family, education, and media. Understanding these factors can provide insights for developing interventions or education programs aimed at improving awareness of ethical communication.
Yuniani, H., Indarsih, M., Astuti, F. D., & Bakiyah, H. (2023). <i>Revitalisasi Etika Komunikasi Media Sosial Dalam Membangun Budaya Indonesia yang Luhur dan Beradab</i> (Yuniani et al., 2023).	Netnography methods were used with an interpretive approach to examine the attitudes and interactions of virtual communities.	The research findings indicate that discussions about religion, political choices, and statements that are considered dishonest often elicit reactions. Therefore, it is recommended that the principles of communication ethics be applied as a normative foundation in the online environment.
Zulia, A., Anggraini, C.C., Sembiring, D.A., Aulia, I.D., & Pratama, R.H. (2022). <i>Etika Komunikasi di Media Sosial pada Remaja Masjid Himpunan Muda-Mudi Al-Ikhlas Kelurahan Dwikora Kecamatan Medan Helvetia</i> (Zulia et al., 2022).	This study utilizes a descriptive approach, a research method used to examine a group of individuals, objects, circumstances, systems of thought, or events that are present at the current time.	The study's findings suggest that communication ethics on social media, particularly Instagram, are problematic. Dimas, the informant, revealed that users spread fake news, interfere in others' personal affairs, and use non-standard language. Negative and demeaning comments are also prevalent in this context.

Source: A literature review of 7 journals.

In social interactions, whether at national or international levels, a system of behavioral guidelines is necessary to ensure mutual respect. These guidelines, commonly referred to as manners, etiquette, protocol, and similar terms, aim to enable individuals to live their lives with harmony, tranquillity, peace, and protection without harming the interests of others. These guidelines also ensure that every action follows prevailing customs and does not infringe on common human rights. These concepts form the basis for the development of ethics in society. The word 'ethics' comes from the Greek 'ethos,' which refers to 'custom or habit' in its singular sense. In its plural form, 'ta etha' or 'ta ethe' refers to customary habits. Therefore, ethics can be defined as a theory that judges human actions based on

the criteria of good and bad. It is also referred to as a science investigating differences in actions by considering paradigms of thought.

The study results from the seven journals above on the use of social media indicate a significant concern for communication ethics. Research findings demonstrate that users frequently disregard communication ethics when using social media, primarily due to the accessibility and openness of digital media. Communication ethics is crucial to social media use, including uploading pictures, writing statuses, or giving comments.

According to Angga Stepanus et al. (2023), social media has provided a platform for information and awareness of societal issues (Angga et al., 2023). However, comments on these platforms often lack rational consideration and are driven by emotions. Netizens may participate in commenting without a deep understanding of reality due to being carried away by emotions. This perspective considers social media as a shared public space, disregarding the rationality that promotes recognizing individual rights and does not significantly contribute to social cohesion.

Communication ethics is a major concern in the era of social media. Desi Rahma Wati (2023) emphasized the importance of social media users' awareness in communication, highlighting guidelines such as delivering accurate information and avoiding negative content. Dicky Apdillah et al. (2022) argued that communication ethics remain relevant in the digital era, where social media users face the challenge of balancing freedom of expression with moral responsibility. Leona Lovita et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of responsibly expanding students' understanding of using the internet and social media while respecting society's ethical and moral limitations. Meanwhile, Syafrida Nurrachmi F et al. (2018) classified the communication ethics of internet users receiving news and factual data into five categories: information requesters, information conveyors, good argumentators, bad argumentators, and easily provoked followers.

Several steps are taken to implement good communication ethics and prevent negative impacts. Firstly, positive sentences are used, other people's posts are respected, while politeness is maintained when commenting. Secondly, information is verified to avoid spreading hoaxes or fabricated information. Thirdly, the privacy of fellow social media users is maintained by respecting each individual's right to privacy and preventing the misuse of personal data. Finally, it is recommended to disable comments as a preventive measure against their potential negative effects, especially for those who may lack mental resilience. This considers the diverse responses of followers to the content, ranging from support to potential bullying behavior (Apdillah et al., 2022).

The research results from these journals emphasize the need for policies that encourage the implementation of ethical communication on social media. Public awareness, particularly among the younger generation, needs to be raised to avoid the risks associated with technological development. Proposed efforts include teaching about communication ethics on social media, filtering information, understanding content, cross-checking, and emphasizing the importance of using the internet wisely. The findings highlight the significance of preserving information quality, preventing adverse effects, and establishing a constructive online atmosphere.

4. CONCLUSION

The literature review concludes that communication ethics are essential for effective and responsible social media use. Key findings indicate that unethical behaviors such as spreading hoaxes, cyberbullying, and discriminatory actions are prevalent on social media, particularly in Indonesia. These behaviors negatively impact mental health and online civility, highlighting the urgent need for

ethical guidelines and education.

The review underscores the importance of educational initiatives to instill communication ethics, especially among the younger generation who are active social media users. Integrating ethical communication practices into daily life, informed by both general ethical principles and Islamic teachings, can significantly improve online interactions. Furthermore, the review emphasizes the need for policies promoting ethical behavior on social media. Existing laws, such as the ITE Law in Indonesia, must be reinforced and accompanied by public awareness campaigns to ensure compliance and understanding of the consequences of unethical online behavior.

Practical recommendations from the review include the importance of filtering information, verifying sources, and managing emotions to avoid impulsive reactions to unreliable content. By fostering a culture of critical thinking and respectful communication, it is possible to mitigate the risks associated with unethical social media use. In summary, enhancing education on communication ethics, implementing supportive policies, and promoting responsible social media use are crucial steps toward creating a healthier and more positive online environment. These measures, directly stemming from the reviewed literature, provide a clear pathway to addressing the ethical dilemmas identified in the study.

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