

## **Building Polite Communication as a Form of Ethical Truthfulness in Media Information**

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### **Abstract**

The advancement of information and communication technology has generated significant changes, including shifts in communication patterns and lifestyles compared to previous eras. Contemporary human communication is shaped by informational needs and the availability of communication media. Communication scholars acknowledge the existence of four major communication eras, as identified by Bungin (2011): (1) the writing era, (2) the print media era, (3) the electronic media era, and (4) the computer media era. This study aims to examine and analyze the role of polite communication as an ethical foundation for ensuring the accuracy and integrity of information disseminated through communication media. The research employs a qualitative approach using a literature review method to explore how polite communication can be cultivated as a form of ethical adherence to truthfulness in media practices. Data were collected through library research, during which the researcher reviewed, read, and documented various cases of ethical violations concerning information accuracy in the media. The collected data were subsequently processed objectively, systematically, and analytically. The findings indicate that cultivating polite communication, as articulated in Lakoff's Politeness Theory, requires communicators to refrain from imposing their will, to grant freedom to interlocutors, and to maintain a courteous disposition. At the level of media ethics, users are expected to be selective, knowledgeable, vigilant, respectful, and capable of fostering a civilized social order. Forms of ethical violations include the use of impolite or inappropriate language, the dissemination of hoaxes, and acts of defamation.

**Keywords:** Polite Communication, Ethics, Media

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information technology today has transformed the ways in which users communicate. These changes manifest in behavioral patterns, forms of interaction, and modes of communication. Misuse of media by users has turned digital platforms into spaces for expressing all forms of emotion, ranging from identity disclosure and the release of anger and frustration to establishing connections. Consequently, the expressions conveyed through media often neglect ethical values (Putra, A. E., Doho, Y. D. B., Savitri, G. A., & Fianto, L., 2023).

In the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, the term communication derives from the verb communicate, which is defined as an effort to construct an opinion, express feelings, and convey information to be known and understood by others. Meanwhile, communication is described as “the act or process of communicating.” Based on these definitions, the communication process that occurs between a communicator and a communicant can be understood as a deliberate act intended to create mutual understanding and appreciation between individuals in the exchange of information, enabling both parties to comprehend one another (Kadri, 2022). Communication ethics is an essential aspect of communicative activity, characterized by attitudes of respect and appreciation for differences. Discussing communication ethics is not merely about examining speaking styles; rather, both the communicator and the communicant must understand the ethical standards that should be upheld throughout the communication process.

Communication ethics therefore functions as a guideline for delivering and receiving information: 1) Communicators and communicants are expected not to convey information of a private nature that exceeds reasonable boundaries. 2) Messages should be delivered using polite language that reflects mutual respect and appreciation. 3) When presenting arguments or expressing opinions, messages must be formulated based on factual realities. In accordance with the ethical principles of truth in communication, the following standards should be observed: 1) Respect and uphold the privacy of the interlocutor. 2) Do not interrupt or cut off the interlocutor before they have finished speaking. 3) Speak to others without conveying a sense of superiority or judgment. 4) Communicate effectively using simple and easily understood language. 5) Respect the communication process and build mutually beneficial interaction. 6) Adhere to media communication standards by avoiding actions that may harm oneself or others, acknowledging that media serves as a convenient tool for communication. According to data from the APJII Internet Survey, Indonesia’s internet penetration rate in 2025 reached 80.6%, an increase of 1.16% compared to 2024.

Picture 1  
APJII 2025 Internet data penetration  
**Tingkat Penetrasi Internet  
di Indonesia Tahun 2025**



Based on the figures above, the population of internet users has increased not only because of the rapid growth of internet technology penetration, but also due to behavioral shifts in society, in which people increasingly depend on the internet for a wide range of everyday interactions from communication needs to various other activities. The widespread use of communication media in social interaction creates a significant potential for ethical violations, as the vast accessibility of the internet, the high demand for information, and the ease with which individuals can express themselves in the digital sphere all contribute to such risks. According to findings from social media observers, various forms of user interaction in digital platforms reflect patterns of interaction that occur in the real world. The tendency of media users to disregard ethical principles of truthfulness in online interactions mirrors similar behaviors in offline contexts. Within mediated communication, whether acknowledged or not, communication ethics provides a set of standards that serve as foundational values for users. Communication ethics aims to cultivate principles that guide attitudes and behaviors in communicative practices. Ethical communication constitutes a form of interaction that fosters positive, harmonious, and friendly relationships among individuals. Therefore, maintaining ethical standards in mediated communication is essential for safeguarding the rights and responsibilities of users (Ginting, R., Yulistiyono, A., Rauf, A., Manullang, S. O., Siahaan, A. L. S., Kussanti, D. P., & Effendy, F., 2021).

Based on the research findings regarding the lack of digital ethics in Indonesia, ethical principles in media communication should be upheld by both parties involved in an interaction, emphasizing the use of appropriate and honest language to avoid harming the interlocutor. The selection of proper wording aims to minimize the risk of misinterpreting information. In digital

media, individuals employ different forms of language according to their level of understanding; however, they must still use language that is effective, clear, and free from ambiguity. Pre-observation data gathered by the author in the field indicate that public awareness of ethical conduct in digital media remains low, making it difficult to verify the accuracy of information disseminated online. According to statutory regulations No. 19 of 2026, electronic interaction involves collections of electronic data including text, images, audio, maps, designs, photographs, and electronic data interchange which must carry meaning and be comprehensible to users capable of interpreting such information. Meanwhile, electronic transactions refer to legal actions carried out by the government through relevant institutions to enhance public awareness in the responsible use of social media. The regulation also stipulates strict sanctions for violations committed in media use (Pusung, G. S., & Bintang, M., 2023). Politeness in communication is a fundamental element for the sustainability of future relationships, as the purpose of communication is not merely to initiate and terminate interaction, but to begin and build long-term relationships that support meaningful social interaction.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a qualitative approach using a literature review technique to analyze how polite communication can be developed as an ethical foundation for truthfulness in digital media practices. The data collection technique used is library research, in which the author gathers data by examining, reading, and analyzing books, journals, and previous research articles related to the object of study. The author also collects other relevant data concerning the research problem such as photographs, images, and graphs to support the research data requirements. According to Sugiyono, library research is closely related to theoretical studies and other references concerning values, culture, and norms that develop within particular social contexts encountered by society. This method is highly relevant, considering that the present study is centered on an academic and scientific review of literature (Nana, K. R., Mas'ud, F., Gemian, S. B., Sanung, F., Keba, A. D., & Jelita, M. T., 2025).

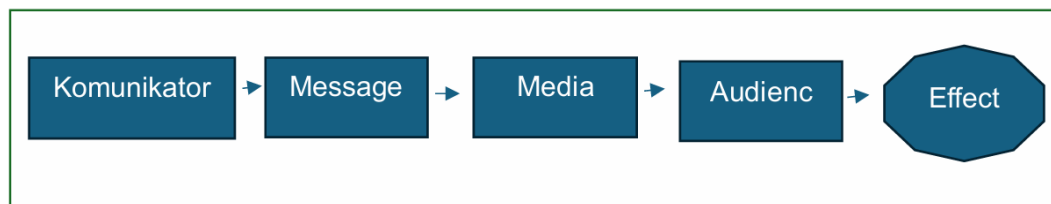
Library research focuses on identifying sources by examining materials obtained from books, journals, and scientific articles, as well as photographs and images. The data collected provide an overview that helps answer the research problems. The data are then organized and classified before being analyzed and interpreted. Data analysis is conducted by describing the available information and facts, followed by further analytical processes. This analysis does not merely present explanations but also seeks to provide a clear understanding of the findings obtained (Ansori, Y. Z., Budiman, I. A., & Nahdi, D. S., 2019).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Developing Polite Communication

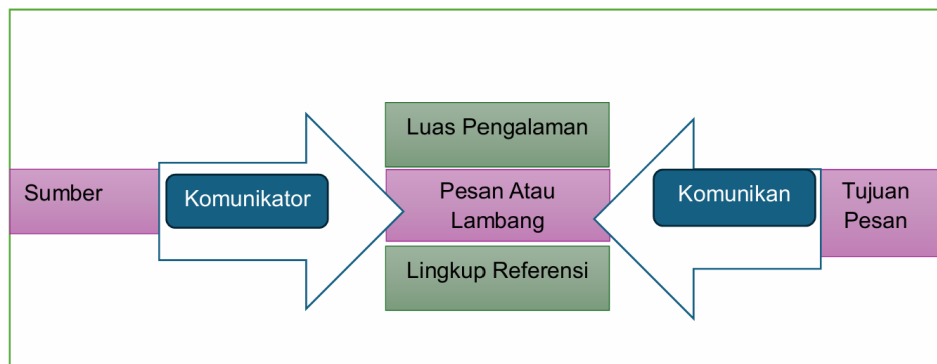
In the essence of human interaction, every individual possesses full rights and obligations to express ideas, thoughts, feelings, knowledge, and understanding as a form of self-expression directed toward anyone they choose. The communication process that occurs is centered on behavioral patterns between the communicator and the communicant, producing knowledge as part of a mutual influence between the parties involved. Given the essential role of communication in human life, polite, proper, and accurate communication is crucial for ensuring smooth interaction between communicators and communicants. The fundamental principles of proper and polite communication lead to behaviors that establish a two-way relationship among those engaged in the process. This can be illustrated in the following model:

Picture 2  
Lasswell's Communication Process Model



From the figure above, the communication process can be understood simply as an interaction between the communicator and the communicant that produces feedback. The primary function of communication is to serve as a tool or medium for conveying ideas and thoughts among individuals involved in the process. The communicator is the main source who brings information or messages in the form of ideas to be delivered. Effective and proper communication depends heavily on the communicator's ability to choose the right words when conveying their ideas. The message is the product of ideas conveyed to the interlocutor. In polite communication, the message is a product that has been filtered by the communicator so that it becomes appropriate to present to the communicant. Media refers to the channel used to deliver the message. Audience refers to the target recipients of the message, whether an individual or a group. Effect is the impact or change that occurs in a person or group after receiving the message, which may manifest as a change in behavior or attitude (Hermawan, D., & Barlian, U. C., 2004). To build polite and effective communication, individuals involved must pay close attention to the outcomes of the communication process as it unfolds. Essentially, communication among humans is the expression of ideas throughout the course of their interactions in life; therefore, communication has become a crucial aspect of human history. Communication is considered effective and

polite when the receiver is able to understand the message according to the sender's intended meaning. In practice, misunderstandings often occur when the receiver misinterprets the message. This typically happens because the sender is not careful enough in delivering their intended meaning. The following describes situations that commonly occur in social interactions during communication:



The figure above illustrates a process of mutual information exchange and mutual interpretation of meaning among individuals involved in communication. To ensure that communication functions effectively and politely, feedback from the interlocutor is essential, supported by attentive listening and a clear understanding of the topic being discussed. In this regard, both the communicator and the communicant must understand the rules governing effective and polite communication (Guntoro, G., 2020). According to experts from the American Management Association, several factors must be considered in the communication process:

- 1) Before communicating, think carefully about the concept or idea you intend to convey.
- 2) Plan your communication objectives.
- 3) Consider the situation and timing.
- 4) Pay close attention to the content of the information.
- 5) Determine why this information is important for the receiver.
- 6) Consider the type of feedback you expect.
- 7) Be consistent with what you have stated.
- 8) Be prepared to be a good listener

The current situation shows that many individuals still engage in communication while assuming that they are always in the right. They tend to hold firmly to egoistic principles, allow their emotions to escalate, and fail to consider the perspective of their interlocutor. Such attitudes deprive the other party of the opportunity to express their intentions or provide the expected feedback. As a result, the communication process often fails due to the absence of mutual respect. It is important to emphasize that communication is not merely the transmission of symbols, words, or sentences. More than that,

communication is a reflection of one's behavior and an embodiment of courteous speech acts. Without awareness of ethics and respect for others, effective communication cannot be achieved.

In the politeness theory proposed by Brown and Gilman, it is explained that polite and courteous speech acts are strongly influenced by the behavioral characteristics of the participants in a conversation. These participants may differ significantly in their social status: a speaker may hold a higher position than the hearer, they may share equal status, or the hearer may even occupy a higher position. Such variations shape the forms of interaction that occur, as both the speaker and the hearer express their respective degrees of familiarity. This dynamic continues as long as mutual respect is maintained throughout the communicative process.

In Lakoff's theory, it is explained that there are several conditions that must be fulfilled by both the speaker and the hearer during interaction. 1) Don't impose: The first principle requires that the speaker must not pressure or hurt the hearer's feelings in a way that forces them to comply with the speaker's wishes. 2) Give options: In this activity, the speaker should provide the hearer with the freedom and opportunity to express themselves without restriction. 3) Make the hearer feel good / be friendly, This condition constitutes the core of polite interaction, in which both the speaker and the hearer are expected to create a sense of safety, comfort, and friendliness. Through gentle, respectful, and courteous speech, both parties can establish a calm atmosphere characterized by mutual respect and appreciation (Sumarna, F. X., 2015). Given the significance of maintaining courteous communication during interaction, Lakoff's theory becomes one of the approaches capable of shaping a more polite and refined communicative style.

The role of communication in building polite, respectful, and considerate relationships lies in understanding the key principles required to maintain good and long-term interpersonal connections:

Picture 4  
Symbol of Sustainable Communication Relationships



Most people assume that communication relationships are temporary, only occurring when someone is in need. However, communication is actually a continuous process. When a person initiates communication properly, they are, in effect, establishing a communicative relationship for the present and the future. Politeness in language is reflected through verbal signals, words and sentences, that ultimately manifest in behavior. This process requires mutual respect between individuals. Communication is not merely the exchange of ideas and thoughts; it also requires careful selection of language, expression, and delivery that aligns with the cultural background of the interlocutor. For communication to run effectively, every individual must understand the proper linguistic conventions: what should be conveyed, when it is appropriate to convey it, why it needs to be communicated, and how it should be delivered.

### **Media Ethics**

Ethics are patterns that enable the regulation of human attitudes and behaviors in carrying out an action. Generally, when a person is able to behave properly, it indicates that they have successfully exercised self-control and indirectly taught those around them to act appropriately as well. Communication ethics refer to the behaviors that occur within the process of communicative interaction. The importance of communication ethics lies in its purpose to maintain the continuity of communication by fostering calmness, comfort, mutual respect, and appreciation throughout the process (Hamama, S., 2024).

formed behavioral patterns. Cyberspace provides users with extensive opportunities to express themselves. Previously, people relied on conventional media often referred to as one to-many audiences where one source communicated to many receivers, such as through books, radio, and television. This later shifted to one-to-one media, such as telephones and letters, and has ultimately transitioned into the digital media landscape experienced today. In current reality, digital media serve not only as a means of social interaction but also as a fundamental necessity in human life. This is why today's media have become essential in fulfilling human communication needs, functioning as tools for information and education, business, marketing, buying and selling, demonstrations, propaganda, image-building, self-expression, and more. Because of the close relationship between users and digital media, it is not impossible for individuals to engage in unethical behavior while using these platforms. Easy internet access and the availability of various platforms make it effortless for users to post irresponsible content. The rapid spread of information regardless of its accuracy combined with low digital literacy and poor emotional regulation, especially among those who excessively interact with digital media, often leads to psychological instability caused by constant exposure to online content. Ideally, users should carefully evaluate incoming information, verify the credibility of its sources, and avoid hastily disseminating it to others before confirming its authenticity (Mustika,

R., 2018). The decline in online etiquette among media users is reflected in statistical data showing that ethical violations have reached approximately 40%. These data indicate that communication-ethics violations increase each year. Furthermore, reports submitted to the Press Council regarding breaches of communication ethics had already reached 625 cases by mid-2025, involving various issues such as hoaxes, hate speech, platform privacy violations, legal disputes, and others.

Violations of communication ethics among media users are frequently reflected in behaviors such as constantly comparing their lives with others. This behavior is commonly referred to as FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), a sense of worry or anxiety about not keeping up with the trends or lifestyles of others. When individuals observe significant or appealing aspects of someone else's life on social media, they may fear being left behind. At a glance, this behavior may seem normal; however, if continuously indulged, it can become harmful. Feelings of jealousy toward others' lives may drive individuals to showcase an exaggerated version of their own lives, ultimately resulting in personal detriment. Another ethical violation involves dishonesty, specifically the use of false identities to attract attention or form romantic connections, commonly known as catfishing. This behavior clearly violates the ethical principle of honesty expected from media users, as it involves withholding the truth and deceiving others, leading to harm for both the perpetrator and the victim. Ethical violations also include forms of cyberbullying, which extend beyond harsh comments on social media. They may include slander, threats, or the dissemination of photos without prior consent. The public's limited understanding of proper media use today makes it difficult to deny that such cases of media-related violations represent serious ethical breaches that must be collectively addressed (Putra, A. E., Doho, Y. D. B., Savitri, G. A., & Fianto, L., 2023).

The government has undertaken specific measures to address violations, as stipulated in Law No. 19 of 2016, which amends Law No. 11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions (the ITE Law). Article 27 regulates matters related to decency, defamation, and the violation of one's reputation, while Article 28 addresses the dissemination of hoaxes and hate speech related to ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group relations (SARA).

Several media communication ethics that users must adhere to Safuan, M., & Aufa, KR (2022):

- 1) Choosing good and correct words, speaking politely, reflects that the sender of the message is not merely sharing ordinary information, but is attempting to provide understanding and instill values and ethical honesty toward the interlocutor. As emphasized by Imam Al-Ghazali in *Ihya Ulumuddin*, every utterance carries the potential for harm, while remaining silent avoids such harm. In this regard, it is advised that when

one's words are not good or not based on facts, one should choose to remain silent.

- 2) Share useful information. Beneficial information will bring advantages both to oneself and to others; therefore, it is an essential part of communication ethics. This includes the choice of words and the use of language that focuses on values contributing to the reader's knowledge. Useful information can unite those in conflict, bring comfort to those who are grieving, and calm hearts that are restless. Choosing meaningful and beneficial words can serve as a remedy that reconciles people who are at odds.
- 3) Avoid lying and slander. Dishonesty is a violation of ethical principles as well as moral and religious norms, and it is considered a major sin. Lying not only disgraces the one who commits it but also drags the victim into the flow of widespread deception. Such behavior can lead to broken and damaged friendships, social conflict, spiritual and emotional distress, and even exclusion from society.

Forms of Ethical Violations in Digital Media:

1. Instagram Violations of Language Ethics in Advertising on Instagram

Picture 5  
Forms of Ethical Violations in Digital Media Communication



The image above illustrates violations of language ethics in social-media advertising. Today, consumer demand for products is heavily influenced by advertising, which means that media users are continuously exposed to advertisements. Each of us has the potential to become an advertiser; however, a common mistake found in practice is the excessive use of language that does not correspond to the actual product. This constitutes an ethical violation in the form of dishonesty, leading consumers to make

misguided choices, experience disappointment, and feel deceived. In more serious cases, such behavior can ultimately erode public trust in the advertiser.

## 2. Hoax News

Picture 6  
Hoax News in the Media



Hoax violations occur on platforms like Facebook in the form of chain messages, such as warnings about account blocking and instructions on how to avoid it. These messages claim that the recipient's account will be immediately blocked and instruct users to follow a link to enter their email and Facebook account password to prevent the block. Upon investigation, it was found that these chain messages about account blocking are false and constitute hoax information; the messages do not come from any official Facebook source. Such hoax chain messages can lead to user data breaches, which may result in serious consequences and harm the parties involved.

## DISCUSSION

In line with Lakoff's politeness theory, the conditions that must be observed by participants in communicating information through media include avoiding any form of coercion. Messages should be conveyed with sincerity, at an appropriate time, and with consideration of whether the recipient is ready to receive and respond. The sender should provide the recipient with full freedom to choose whether to respond, based on careful

reasoning, without forcing or threatening them with hurtful words. By fostering a comfortable, safe, friendly, and amicable environment, this approach to communication is more conducive to establishing sustainable relationships. In media ethics, users are expected to be wiser and more responsible when uploading content, ensuring it is high-quality, truthful, and promotes stability. They should strive to choose words that are beneficial and educational for other users. Selecting accurate and responsible language encourages politeness and mutual respect, while sharing valuable information can help resolve conflicts, alleviate sadness, and ease anxiety. In this way, a person can serve as a source of comfort for others. Disseminating truthful information that aligns with facts represents a noble ethical value. It not only upholds the principle of courtesy but also shapes responsible media behavior. Al-Mujadalah Bil-Ihsan exemplifies a distinctive rhetorical approach in ethical media practice.

## CONCLUSION

Ethics are patterns that enable the regulation of human attitudes and behaviors in carrying out actions. When a person is able to act appropriately, it indicates self-control and the ability to guide those around them toward proper behavior. In polite and respectful media communication, Lakoff's theory provides clear guidance: one should not impose their will when communicating, but rather allow the recipient full freedom to respond to the message and express their opinions. By fostering openness, participants can build harmonious and constructive communication relationships.

Media ethics require users to be selective in utilizing media as a means of self expression. While creativity and interaction are encouraged, they must remain within the ethical boundaries established by the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (ITE Law), which governs dishonesty, defamation, and the proper management of information. Adhering to these principles fosters awareness and helps create an orderly, harmonious, wise, and civilized society.

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