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KAJIAN ETIKA TEKNOLOGI INFORMASI DALAM KOMUNIKASI DIGITAL DI ERA SIBER

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ABSTRACT

The rapid development of digital communication has significantly changed the landscape of human interaction. While offering convenience and global connectivity, it also raises critical ethical challenges such as data privacy violations, misinformation, cyberbullying, and digital manipulation. This article explores the importance of applying Information Technology (IT) ethics in digital communication to ensure responsible and respectful online behavior. Through a literature review approach, the study examines existing ethical codes, current issues in digital interaction, and the limitations of regulatory enforcement. The findings suggest that low digital literacy, lack of ethical awareness, and outdated legal frameworks contribute to the rise of unethical practices in digital spaces. To address these issues, this study highlights the need for strengthening digital ethics education, developing adaptive and enforceable regulations, and promoting personal accountability among users. Building an ethical digital communication ecosystem requires the collaboration of government, academic institutions, and digital service providers.

Keywords: *Digital Communication, It Ethics, Privacy, Cyberethics, Digital Literacy, Online Behavior.*

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) has profoundly reshaped the landscape of human interaction. Traditional communication methods—such as face-to-face conversations, postal letters, and landline calls—have been largely replaced or supplemented by digital communication tools. Platforms such as social media, emails, instant messaging apps, and video conferencing now enable people to exchange information quickly, efficiently, and across vast geographical distances. These innovations have opened up new possibilities in education, business, governance, and personal relationships, transforming communication into a digital-first experience.

While the benefits of digital communication are evident, this technological shift also presents unprecedented ethical challenges. The internet allows for anonymity, virality, and decentralization, which, although empowering, can also lead to misuse. The rise in incidents involving cyberbullying, data breaches, hate speech, online fraud, and the spread of misinformation reflects a growing disconnect between digital capabilities and users' ethical understanding. As society becomes increasingly reliant on digital tools, it becomes essential to ask: how should we behave in the digital space? What moral boundaries govern our online interactions?

Information Technology (IT) ethics is a field of study and practice that addresses such concerns. It provides a framework for responsible behavior in the use of technology, covering areas like data privacy, intellectual property, transparency, accountability, and

respect for others. In the context of digital communication, IT ethics becomes particularly relevant as it guides how individuals and organizations use communication technologies in ways that uphold societal values and minimize harm.

One of the critical problems identified in digital communication today is the low level of ethical literacy among users. Many people, especially younger or new users, are unaware of the consequences of sharing unverified content, exposing sensitive information, or engaging in offensive online discourse. The immediacy and informality of digital platforms often blur the lines between private and public communication, leading to unintended ethical violations. Unlike traditional settings where etiquette is more established, the norms of digital communication are still evolving—and often ignored.

In Indonesia, for instance, internet penetration has rapidly increased over the past decade, but digital literacy has not kept pace. This gap has contributed to the widespread circulation of hoaxes, privacy breaches, and even cases of online radicalization. Many users do not fully understand the implications of agreeing to terms and conditions, the importance of digital consent, or the risks of oversharing. This underscores the urgent need for structured education on digital ethics, starting from schools and extending to community outreach programs and workplace training.

Furthermore, regulatory frameworks in many countries—including Indonesia—are often reactive rather than proactive. Legal instruments struggle to keep up with the fast-paced evolution of digital technologies. Existing laws may not cover nuanced digital crimes or may lack enforcement mechanisms capable of dealing with the sheer volume of violations occurring in cyberspace. Meanwhile, platform providers frequently prioritize profit and engagement metrics over user safety and ethical considerations, creating environments where unethical behavior can flourish.

Despite efforts by global organizations like the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) to establish professional codes of ethics for IT practitioners, these guidelines are seldom translated into policies that apply to the general public. Moreover, most users are unaware of these ethical standards, and there is little enforcement or incentive to follow them. This disconnect between ethical theory and user behavior illustrates the need for more accessible, relatable, and actionable ethical guidelines for everyday digital communication.

Based on these concerns, this paper seeks to explore the ethical dimensions of digital communication by reviewing relevant literature, examining existing ethical codes and real-world issues, and proposing strategies for ethical governance in digital interaction. The goal is to highlight the critical role of digital ethics education, the need for updated and adaptive regulations, and the importance of fostering a culture of responsibility in online behavior. A sustainable, inclusive, and ethical digital communication environment requires the collaboration of governments, academia, tech companies, and individual users alike.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Definition and Scope of IT Ethics

Information Technology (IT) ethics refers to the set of moral principles that govern the behavior and decision-making processes in the use of information systems and technology. According to the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), IT ethics involve responsibilities such as contributing to society and human well-being, avoiding harm, being honest and trustworthy, and respecting privacy and confidentiality. In the context of digital communication, IT ethics guide how individuals use digital platforms responsibly, including what information is shared, how it is shared, and the consequences of that information for others.

The scope of IT ethics covers a wide range of issues: data privacy, digital security,

intellectual property rights, online behavior, transparency, accountability, and algorithmic fairness. With the rise of digital communication, these issues have become increasingly important in daily life, especially as the boundary between public and private communication becomes increasingly blurred in social media and messaging platforms.

2. Digital Communication and Ethical Challenges

Digital communication, although beneficial, has brought new ethical dilemmas. The speed at which information travels makes it easy for misinformation or harmful content to spread rapidly. The anonymity provided by online platforms can reduce accountability, encouraging behaviors such as cyberbullying, trolling, and hate speech. Ethical concerns also arise regarding consent in data collection, digital surveillance, and the psychological manipulation of users through targeted content and algorithms.

Scholars like Luciano Floridi (2013) have emphasized the concept of infosphere—the digital environment in which all data-driven activities occur—and argued that moral obligations now extend beyond offline interactions. Ethical behavior in the infosphere involves recognizing the impact of our actions on both individuals and the digital ecosystem as a whole.

3. Professional Ethical Standards and Codes

Various international organizations have established ethical standards to address the growing ethical concerns in IT. The ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct and the IEEE Code of Ethics provide detailed guidance for practitioners, focusing on trustworthiness, integrity, and responsibility. These codes are intended primarily for professionals working in the design and implementation of information systems, but they also serve as valuable references for users in broader digital contexts.

Despite their thoroughness, these ethical codes often fail to reach general users. There is a significant gap between the ethical standards established by professionals and the practical understanding of ethics by everyday users of technology. This suggests a need for ethical guidelines to be simplified, contextualized, and made accessible to non-experts, especially in regions with limited digital education.

4. Digital Ethics in Indonesia

In the Indonesian context, studies have revealed that ethical awareness in digital communication remains relatively low. According to Kominfo (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology), digital literacy campaigns have been initiated in response to the increasing number of online defamation cases, fake news distribution, and online fraud. However, these efforts often focus on general literacy and cybersecurity, without explicitly addressing the ethical dimensions of digital communication.

A study by Dewantoro (2024) on professional ethics in government information systems highlights the need for ethical integration in both system design and usage. The absence of ethics as a formal component in education and workplace training contributes to inconsistent online behavior. Moreover, the legal system in Indonesia is often reactive rather than preventive, making it difficult to curb unethical digital practices before they escalate.

5. Summary of Literature Insights

The literature reveals that although IT ethics is a well-established academic and professional field, its implementation in everyday digital communication is still lacking. Existing frameworks and codes are helpful but need to be translated into culturally relevant and user-friendly practices. In particular, developing nations face the dual challenge of technological adaptation and ethical education. The insights from current literature emphasize the urgent need for ethical digital communication strategies that are proactive, inclusive, and context-sensitive.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The digitalization of communication, while offering substantial benefits in terms of speed, reach, and convenience, has simultaneously generated complex ethical challenges that remain inadequately addressed. The growing reliance on digital platforms for everyday interactions—from socializing and education to commerce and governance—has exposed users to new forms of risk, particularly in the areas of privacy, data protection, misinformation, and psychological harm.

One of the most pressing issues is the lack of digital ethics awareness among general users. While the technical infrastructure of digital communication continues to evolve, user behavior has not kept pace in terms of ethical maturity. Many individuals are unaware that their actions online—such as sharing unverified information, misusing someone's digital identity, or leaving offensive comments—can have real and lasting consequences. Ethical breaches often occur not from malicious intent, but from ignorance or underestimation of digital impacts.

Another key concern is the ineffectiveness of current legal and regulatory frameworks. Existing laws tend to focus more on cybersecurity and data protection, with less emphasis on normative behavior in digital communication. Moreover, enforcement is often reactive and selective, with many violations going unpunished due to jurisdictional ambiguity, technical limitations, or lack of institutional capacity. This creates an environment where unethical behavior can thrive with minimal deterrence.

A third major problem is the gap between professional ethical codes and public practice. Although international organizations like ACM and IEEE have produced comprehensive ethical guidelines, these documents are largely targeted at IT professionals. Everyday users—who make up the vast majority of digital communicators—are rarely exposed to these standards, nor are they trained to apply ethical thinking in online scenarios. This disconnect leaves a vacuum where harmful behaviors are normalized or ignored.

Additionally, there is inadequate integration of digital ethics into formal education and public discourse. Digital literacy campaigns in Indonesia and similar countries often prioritize technical skills (such as how to use applications or protect passwords) rather than values-based competencies like respect, responsibility, and empathy in online communication. Without ethical foundations, digital literacy becomes incomplete.

From these challenges, the research identifies the following core problems:

1. How can digital communication be governed ethically in the absence of universal ethical understanding among users?
2. What are the main barriers to implementing ethical standards in everyday digital interactions?
3. How can ethical principles be made accessible and applicable to the general public, especially in developing digital societies like Indonesia?
4. What roles should stakeholders—governments, educators, tech companies—play in ensuring ethical digital communication?

These questions frame the basis for the subsequent analysis and guide the development of recommendations for creating a more ethically responsible digital communication environment.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design with a focus on narrative literature review. The purpose of this method is to explore and synthesize existing scholarly discussions, professional codes, and empirical findings related to the application of ethics in digital communication. This approach allows for a broad and in-depth understanding of ethical challenges from multiple perspectives—technical, social, and regulatory.

The sources analyzed in this study include peer-reviewed journals, professional organization guidelines (such as those from ACM and IEEE), policy documents, case studies, and reports from governmental and non-governmental organizations, particularly those related to digital communication practices and cyber ethics in Indonesia and globally.

To ensure the relevance and credibility of the findings, the selection criteria for literature were as follows:

- Publications from the last 10 years (2014–2024), with some foundational theories included regardless of date
- Sources that directly discuss IT ethics, digital communication, cyber behavior, digital literacy, and information governance
- Preference for literature from recognized academic databases such as IEEE Xplore, ScienceDirect, Springer, and Google Scholar
- Inclusion of national data and government reports for context-specific insight, especially in the Indonesian digital landscape

The analysis process was conducted in three stages:

1. Data Collection: Identification and collection of literature and reference materials related to digital ethics and communication behavior.
2. Data Classification: Organizing data based on key themes such as ethical frameworks, common violations, user behavior, regulatory responses, and educational initiatives.
3. Interpretative Analysis: Synthesizing and interpreting the findings to identify patterns, highlight gaps in current practices, and derive implications for future ethical frameworks.

This methodological approach does not involve field experiments or surveys, but instead relies on secondary data analysis, allowing the study to draw broad generalizations and critical reflections from already established knowledge. It also enables the construction of a conceptual model to guide ethical communication in the digital era.

By using a literature-based method, this research aligns with academic traditions in ethical theory development, and supports a reflective, value-oriented discussion. The qualitative design further ensures that the analysis remains flexible and contextual, especially important in a field where cultural, technological, and legal variations influence ethical interpretations and implementations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Common Ethical Issues in Digital Communication

The literature reveals several recurring ethical issues in digital communication. Among the most prominent are privacy violations, misinformation, cyberbullying, intellectual property theft, and manipulative content driven by algorithms. These problems arise due to a combination of user ignorance, platform design, and a lack of enforceable ethical standards. In Indonesia, for example, Kominfo has reported a steady increase in online defamation and data misuse cases, often involving content shared without consent or verification.

Privacy concerns are especially critical, as users often overshare personal information or consent to unclear data policies. Meanwhile, hate speech and online harassment have become normalized in some digital spaces, particularly in unmoderated forums or anonymous platforms. These behaviors are further amplified by echo chambers and algorithmic biases, which reward engagement over accuracy or respect.

2. Ethical Awareness and Digital Literacy Gaps

A significant factor contributing to unethical digital behavior is the lack of ethical literacy. While many users understand basic digital functions, they lack the critical thinking

skills needed to assess the consequences of their actions online. For instance, forwarding a sensational news article without fact-checking may seem harmless, but can perpetuate panic, hate, or fraud.

In Indonesia, digital literacy initiatives have focused primarily on technical aspects such as cybersecurity and the safe use of apps, with minimal emphasis on ethical reasoning, digital empathy, or respectful online dialogue. This narrow approach results in users who are digitally competent but ethically unprepared. Schools and universities often do not include digital ethics as part of their curricula, further widening the gap between digital usage and digital responsibility.

3. Regulatory Limitations and Platform Accountability

Legal and regulatory frameworks are often inadequate to deal with the dynamic nature of digital communication. Many countries, including Indonesia, rely on outdated laws that do not fully cover new forms of digital misconduct. While some legislation like the Information and Electronic Transactions Law (UU ITE) exists, its implementation is inconsistent and sometimes controversial due to vague definitions and selective enforcement.

Additionally, technology platforms themselves are not always held accountable for unethical content circulating on their services. Although many platforms provide terms of service and content moderation policies, these are often difficult to enforce effectively at scale. Self-regulation by tech companies has proven insufficient, particularly when business interests conflict with ethical responsibilities. This lack of structural enforcement leads to an environment where ethical violations go unchecked.

4. The Role of Professional Ethics and Governance Models

Professional codes of ethics from bodies such as ACM and IEEE offer detailed guidance for ethical conduct, especially for developers and system designers. However, these frameworks rarely reach everyday users. There is a need for an inclusive model of ethical governance that adapts these professional values into more accessible guidelines, educational content, and community standards applicable to general users.

Some countries have experimented with digital citizenship programs and digital ethics campaigns, showing promising results in increasing awareness and improving online behavior. Such initiatives should be localized and integrated with formal education systems to reach a broader audience. In Indonesia, collaboration between government, educators, and private tech companies could form the foundation for an ethics-focused digital policy framework.

5. Toward an Ethical Digital Ecosystem

Building an ethical digital communication environment requires a multi-stakeholder approach. The government must develop adaptive, enforceable regulations that clearly define digital ethics violations and their consequences. Educational institutions should incorporate digital ethics into curricula, equipping students not only with digital skills but also with moral judgment.

Technology platforms must take greater responsibility in promoting ethical interactions by designing interfaces that discourage harmful behavior and reward positive engagement. Finally, users themselves must cultivate a sense of digital empathy, accountability, and critical thinking. Ethics should be seen not as a restriction, but as a compass that enables a healthier and more sustainable digital society.

CONCLUSION

The rapid growth of digital communication has undeniably transformed the way people interact, learn, and conduct daily activities. However, this transformation has also

brought significant ethical challenges that demand urgent attention. Issues such as privacy violations, misinformation, cyberbullying, and the unethical use of personal data have become increasingly common, revealing the lack of ethical awareness and regulation in the digital space.

This study has highlighted that although professional organizations such as ACM and IEEE have long established ethical codes for IT practitioners, these frameworks have not been effectively implemented among general users. The absence of accessible ethical education, coupled with weak regulation and limited accountability, has contributed to a digital environment where harmful behaviors are easily overlooked or tolerated.

To create a more ethical digital communication ecosystem, a multidimensional and collaborative approach is necessary. Governments must establish adaptive and enforceable digital ethics regulations. Educational institutions should integrate digital ethics into curricula at all levels, focusing on values such as empathy, responsibility, and critical evaluation. Technology platforms should adopt ethical design principles and increase transparency and accountability in their moderation systems.

Most importantly, individual users must embrace a mindset of digital responsibility, recognizing that every online action can have real-world consequences. Ethical behavior in digital communication should not be seen as optional or idealistic but as an essential component of participation in the digital society.

By embedding ethics at every level—personal, institutional, and systemic—we can move toward a safer, more respectful, and inclusive digital environment that upholds the integrity of human communication in the information age.

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