


# Ethnics in Expressing Opinions on Social Media: The Role of Regulation, Influence of Public Opinio, Legal Awareness, Online Security, and Social Responsibility Convolutional Neural Network Method

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<b>Keywords:</b> Communication ethics, social media, public opinion, digital literacy, phenomenology.	Social media has become a major platform for public opinion. However, this freedom is often not accompanied by adequate ethical responsibility. This study highlights the case of "Poltekbang and the funding crisis" as a real example of how violations of communication ethics on social media can have a negative impact on the reputation of individuals and institutions. Using a phenomenological approach, this study explores various comments and narratives that develop on social media, accompanied by references from academic journals, including those indexed by Scopus. The results of the analysis show that the spread of information without a verification process, the emergence of hate speech, and the tendency to overgeneralize are the main patterns of ethical violations on social media. Based on these findings, this study recommends increasing digital literacy and implementing empathy-based communication guidelines. These steps are expected to encourage the creation of a healthier, more constructive, and more responsible discussion culture in the digital space.
This is an open access article under the <a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/">CC BY-NC</a> license 	<b>Corresponding Author:</b> Muhammad Caesar Akbar Polytechnic Aviation Medan, North Sumatera, Indonesia <a href="mailto:mhdcaesar@poltekbangmedan.ac.id">mhdcaesar@poltekbangmedan.ac.id</a>

## INTRODUCTION

Social media has become the main platform for individuals to express their opinions freely and openly. Its rapid development has transformed social media into a new public space for discussion and information exchange (Guntara & Herry, 2023). However, this freedom is often misused to spread unverified information, build negative narratives, and even commit defamation. This misuse poses a major challenge in maintaining communication ethics in the digital era (Jayananda et al., 2021). Freedom of speech is indeed recognized as a fundamental human right, as stated in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, this freedom is not absolute. In practice, the use of social media often ignores ethical norms and principles, which then triggers social conflicts and violations of the law (Mantiri & Reskin, 2023).

An example of this dynamic is seen in the case of "Poltekbang and the funding crisis," where social media mentioned financial problems and alleged delays in employee salaries,

which damaged the institution's reputation and created negative public opinion (Riswandie & Maharani, 2023). Regulation, legal awareness, and digital literacy are needed to prevent misuse of social media that can exacerbate conflict. Values such as honesty, empathy, and responsibility are also important for maintaining online safety (Jayananda et al., 2021; Sikumbang et al., 2024). This study aims to analyze the importance of ethics in expressing opinions on social media, especially related to public institutions such as the Medan Aviation Polytechnic, by integrating regulations, public opinion dynamics, and social responsibility to reduce the negative impacts of digital media misuse.

## Literature review

### Communication Ethics

Habermas (1984) asserts that ideal communication is a dialogical process aimed at achieving shared understanding. In the context of social media, communication ethics involve the principles of honesty, openness, and respect for others. Communication ethics are increasingly important in the digital era, where social media changes the way people interact. However, freedom of speech on social media is often not balanced with an understanding of social norms (Guntara & Herry, 2023).

As a major platform for online interaction, social media provides freedom of speech, but is often misused to spread unverified information or insulting comments, which damage reputation. Defamation on social media shows the negative impact of freedom of speech without awareness of social and legal consequences (Jayananda et al., 2021; Sikumbang et al., 2024). Mantiri and Reskin (2023) emphasized the importance of regulations to regulate freedom of speech on social media. They reminded that misuse of social media, such as the spread of hoaxes, hate speech, or slander, can damage social harmony. Legal awareness is needed to encourage responsible use of social media.

Riswandie and Maharani (2023) added that freedom of speech must still respect the rights of others, such as the right to be free from slander or defamation. The increasing number of defamation cases due to the misuse of social media shows the importance of strict regulations. In this perspective, communication ethics involves not only freedom of speech, but also the responsibility to ensure that every statement is delivered with full consideration and respect for others.

Communication ethics on social media include social responsibility and understanding legal regulations to prevent negative impacts (Jayananda et al., 2021). Digital literacy and legal awareness are important for an ethical and responsible communication culture (Sikumbang et al., 2024).

### Digital Literacy

Livingstone and Helsper (2007) define digital literacy as the ability to use, understand, and evaluate information critically. Lack of digital literacy is often at the root of various ethical violations that occur on social media. In this context, digital literacy includes the ability to access, analyze, and use information ethically and responsibly, especially on social media (Sikumbang et al., 2024). These skills also include awareness of risks and responsibilities in the use of digital media. Guntara and Herry (2023) emphasize that digital

literacy is important to distinguish healthy communication from harmful communication on social media. Understanding information verification and wise use of social media can prevent the spread of hoaxes and unethical behavior, such as slander or defamation.

In addition, digital literacy includes legal awareness in social media. Sikumbang et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of understanding the legal impact in order to be responsible. Without understanding rights and regulations, social media can cause legal problems. Digital ethics and regulations must be part of digital literacy. Riswandie and Maharani (2023) argue that digital literacy includes technical skills, critical thinking, and social and legal responsibility. This literacy supports ethical use of social media, avoids defamation, and contributes to a healthier and more inclusive society.

### **Virality and Its Impact**

Virality on social media is the rapid spread of interesting or controversial content. While it can raise social awareness, virality also carries the risk of harm, especially in terms of ethics and defamation. According to Guntara and Herry (2023), virality often spreads unverified information, which can be detrimental, such as in the case of "Poltekbang and the funding crisis." Without clear evidence, viral information can cause moral, material, and social losses. Virality can shape public opinion quickly, often without clear facts. Riswandie and Maharani (2023) stated that this opinion is often influenced by emotions, not reflecting reality. Social media becomes a place to spread hoaxes, and even though they are wrong, the viral impact still damages reputation. However, social media virality can raise awareness about important issues, such as human rights and health. However, if not managed wisely, it can have negative impacts. Sikumbang et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of verifying information and ethics in using social media. Digital literacy and responsible education are essential to creating a safe and productive digital space.

### **Previous Case Studies**

Previous research shows that viral cases often exacerbate institutional problems because negative narratives spread faster than official clarifications (Sunstein, 2018). In recent years, cases of defamation and abuse of freedom of expression on social media have increasingly highlighted its vulnerability as a platform for the spread of unverified information, which is detrimental to individuals and organizations. The Poltekbang Medan case shows the negative impact of spreading unverified information, where the baseless narrative states that the institution is in financial crisis and unable to pay staff salaries.

Accusations that spread quickly on social media caused unrest and damaged Poltekbang's reputation, even without valid evidence. The virality of this inaccurate information raised doubts about the stability and credibility of the institution. This case shows how the abuse of freedom of speech on social media can damage the reputation of institutions and create distrust in society. In addition, this phenomenon also underlines the importance of the role of legal regulations in controlling the spread of unverified information and the abuse of freedom of speech (Jayananda et al., 2021).

Another relevant case study is the defamation on social media that befell Indonesian celebrities. They were humiliated through Instagram posts that spread false information,

damaging their reputations and careers. The spread of these unverified opinions triggered lawsuits, demonstrating the negative impact of social media in defamation. Riswandie and Maharani (2023) highlighted that the abuse of freedom of expression on social media often triggers violations of the law, such as defamation, insults, or slander, which not only harms the victim but also triggers polarization and reduces public trust. These cases highlight the importance of strict regulation and legal awareness in social media. Without supervision, social media can harm many parties. The public needs to understand the limits of freedom of speech and disseminate information with ethics and social responsibility (Sikumbang et al., 2024).do with high ethics and social responsibility (Sikumbang et al., 2024).

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a phenomenological approach to understand the public response to the issue of "Poltekbang and the funding crisis" on social media. The focus is to analyze the formation of public opinion, the influence of social norms, communication ethics, and legal regulations. This study also emphasizes the importance of digital literacy and legal awareness in social media interactions, with the aim of providing recommendations for public policies that support healthy and responsible discussions.

### Data source for this method

#### a. Primary

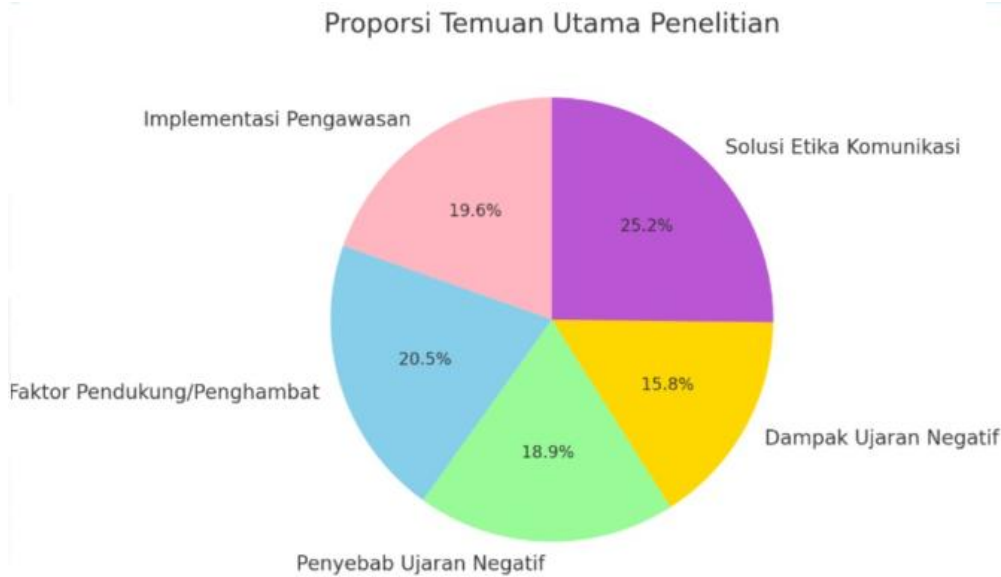
The primary data source in this study was obtained through screenshots of public comments on social media related to the issue of "Poltekbang and the funding crisis." This data refers to the interactions and responses of the public involved in online conversations about the topic. The comments collected reflect a variety of views, from those supporting to those blaming, and provide an overview of how the public interprets and responds to information related to the viral issue. These screenshots are considered important because they reflect the dynamics of public communication in the digital space, which is the main place to spread information, opinions, and speculation.

#### b. Secondary

Secondary data sources include news articles, official reports, and academic journals relevant to the issue being studied. News articles provide up-to-date information on the development of the "Poltekbang and the funding crisis" case, which may include clarifications or statements from related parties, such as Poltekbang management or educational authorities. Official reports are used to provide concrete evidence and facts that can support an understanding of the case, including official statements regarding the institution's financial condition and the policies implemented. Academic journals, on the other hand, serve to explore theories related to communication ethics, freedom of speech, and digital literacy.

The content analysis method was used to identify key themes in public comments and narratives on social media regarding the issue of "Poltekbang and the funding crisis." This approach analyzes digital content, such as comments and discussions, to find patterns that

shape public perceptions of Poltekbang and trust in the institution, as well as exploring reactions related to morality and justice that reflect the social values of the community.



**Figure 1.** A pie chart that illustrates the proportion of key findings from a study.

This chart presents data in percentage form to provide a visual representation of the distribution of various findings based on key categories. Here is a complete explanation of each section:

1. Implementation of Supervision(19.6%)  
 This section shows that 19.6% of the total research findings focus on the implementation aspect of supervision, which is likely related to how supervision of negative speech is carried out, including the mechanisms, policies, or strategies implemented.
2. Supporting/Inhibiting Factors(20.5%)  
 This section illustrates that 20.5% of the findings relate to factors that support or hinder the process of monitoring or managing negative speech. These factors can include technical, policy, or social aspects.
3. Causes of Negative Speech(18.9%)  
 As much as 18.9% of the findings focused on the causes of negative speech, which could include psychological, social, cultural, or technological aspects that trigger the speech.
4. The Impact of Negative Speech(15.8%)  
 This finding covers 15.8% of the total proportion and describes the consequences or impacts caused by negative speech, whether on individuals, communities, or the social environment in general.
5. Communication Ethics Solutions(25.2%)

The largest category, at 25.2%, indicates a research focus on solutions based on communication ethics. This could include suggestions for ways, guidelines, or policies to prevent or manage negative speech ethically.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Case Analysis of "Poltekbang and the Funding Crisis"

The case began with a social media post claiming that Poltekbang was having difficulty paying staff salaries. The post sparked speculative reactions and unsubstantiated accusations that damaged Poltekbang's reputation. The issue spread on social media, worsening negative perceptions and defaming the institution, even though the accusations have not been proven. This phenomenon shows the negative impact of unverified information in damaging the reputation of an institution, especially on social media.

The pattern of ethical violations in this case can be seen through several aspects: the spread of unverified information on social media, hate speech against the Poltekbang leadership, and excessive generalization that considers individual mistakes as institutional failures. These patterns show the major negative impacts of social media abuse, which can damage the reputation of individuals or institutions.

The impact of the ethical violations in this case affected both individuals and institutions. Poltekbang employees suffered reputational damage and stress due to inaccurate accusations, while the institution lost public trust. The spread of unverified information damaged Poltekbang's credibility, influenced the perception of prospective students and the community, and hampered new student registration and external collaboration.

### Ethical Guidelines Recommendations

In an effort to prevent ethical violations on social media, there are several basic principles that need to be followed. First, make sure the information disseminated is based on verified facts to avoid the spread of hoaxes or detrimental information. Second, it is important to prioritize empathy in communication, so that discussions remain constructive and do not fall into hate speech or personal attacks. Everyone deserves to be respected, both those directly involved and the audience. Finally, digital responsibility must be prioritized, because every opinion or comment can have a wide impact, both on individuals and institutions. And recommendation are:

a. Digital Literacy Education.

Governments and educational institutions must strengthen digital literacy programs, particularly for younger generations, to help them use social media more wisely. These programs should include components such as information verification and raising awareness about the impact of spreading online content.

b. Ethical Awareness Campaigns.

In addition to digital literacy education, raising public awareness about ethical communication on social media is crucial. People must be taught to communicate with empathy, avoid hate speech, and respect differing opinions. These campaigns can be

conducted through various channels, including social media itself, to educate the public on the importance of positive online behaviour and the negative consequences of unethical actions on individuals and institutions.

c. Regulation Enforcement.

Strict enforcement of regulations against the spread of hoaxes and hate speech on social media is also essential. Governments and relevant authorities must ensure that existing laws are effectively applied to combat harmful content such as slander, misinformation, and personal attacks. Firm legal actions can serve as a deterrent and prevent further violations of ethical communication standards in the digital space.

## CONCLUSION

The "Poltekbang" case emphasizes the importance of communication ethics on social media, because violations can harm individuals and institutions. The widespread dissemination of unverified information and personal attacks tarnish the image of Poltekbang and have a negative impact on the mental state of the parties involved. This study highlights the complex ethical challenges associated with expressing opinions on social media, particularly in the context of digital communication's growing influence on public discourse. Through the integration of Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) methods, this research demonstrates how advanced computational models can be employed to detect unethical content patterns and classify violations of communication norms. Key findings indicate that regulation enforcement, public opinion, legal awareness, cybersecurity measures, and social responsibility all play vital roles in shaping user behavior in digital spaces. The effectiveness of ethical expression on social platforms is closely linked to a balanced framework between individual freedom of speech and collective responsibility. CNN-based analysis reveals that patterns of hate speech, misinformation, and personal attacks often correlate with low levels of legal literacy and ethical awareness. Moreover, the research confirms that technological intervention alone is insufficient without the support of regulatory frameworks and education initiatives. Ethical behavior must be reinforced by an informed public, responsible content creation, and transparent platform governance. When combined, AI-powered content monitoring and community-driven ethics education can create a safer and more respectful digital environment. In conclusion, advancing ethical communication on social media requires a multi-dimensional approach, where machine learning techniques such as CNN are utilized alongside regulatory policies, legal education, and collective social responsibility to ensure that freedom of expression is exercised within ethically appropriate boundaries. This phenomenon occurs due to low digital literacy, where many social media users do not understand the importance of verifying information and the impact of their posts. Lack of understanding of communication ethics and digital responsibility encourages the spread of misinformation, hate speech, and attacks on individuals and institutions, exacerbating public distrust. Indifference to ethics in cyberspace damages reputations and disrupts social harmony, weakening trust in information and institutions.

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