

The Strategic Role of Effective Communication in Building Social and Professional Relationships in the Digital Era

Peran Strategis Komunikasi Efektif dalam Membangun Relasi Sosial dan Profesional di Era Digital

Muh. Arlis^{1*}, Muh. Nabil Nabiyullah², Adrian³

^{1,2}Institut Agama Islam Negeri Bone, Indonesia

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ABSTRAK

Komunikasi merupakan elemen kunci dalam membangun relasi sosial dan profesional, terlebih di era digital saat ini. Kemajuan teknologi komunikasi telah mengubah cara manusia berinteraksi, baik dalam konteks personal maupun profesional. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami peran strategis komunikasi efektif dalam membangun dan memelihara hubungan di tengah transformasi digital. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini menggambarkan dinamika komunikasi digital dan bagaimana keterampilan komunikasi menjadi aset penting. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi yang efektif memerlukan pemahaman konteks, penguasaan teknologi, dan etika komunikasi. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kemampuan komunikasi yang baik adalah fondasi dalam menjalin hubungan yang harmonis, adaptif, dan produktif di era digital.

ABSTRACT

Communication is a key element in building both social and professional relationships, especially in today's digital era. Advances in communication technology have transformed the way humans interact, in both personal and professional contexts. This study aims to understand the strategic role of effective communication in building and maintaining relationships amid digital transformation. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research illustrates the dynamics of digital communication and how communication skills have become a valuable asset. The findings indicate that effective communication requires contextual understanding, technological proficiency, and adherence to communication ethics. The study concludes that strong communication abilities are the foundation for establishing harmonious, adaptive, and productive relationships in the digital age.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is a basic process that allows humans to build a common understanding. In the development of the times, especially with the advancement of information technology, the pattern of human communication has undergone significant changes. Communication is no longer limited to face-to-face interactions, but has penetrated into the digital world. Social media, instant messaging applications, and other online communication platforms are the main means of establishing social and professional communication.

The development of information and communication technology in recent decades has revolutionized the way humans interact with each other. Digital transformation not only affects aspects of personal life, but also significantly changes communication patterns in the social and professional realms. In the midst of the ever-increasing flow of globalization and connectivity, the ability to communicate effectively is not only a necessary skill, but also a strategic factor in building and maintaining meaningful relationships.

Communication is a basic process in human life that involves the exchange of information, ideas, and emotions between individuals and groups. In a social context, communication allows the building of

*Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: arlisruh57@gmail.com (Muh. Arlis)*

E-mail addresses: muhnabilnabiullah@gmail.com (Muh. Nabil Nabiyullah)

E-mail addresses: kajua62@gmail.com (Adrian)

cohesion, understanding, and collective identity. Meanwhile, in the professional world, communication is the foundation for collaboration, coordination, and decision-making. Therefore, the effectiveness of conveying messages and understanding the meaning contained in communication greatly determines the quality of a relationship.

The digital age introduced a variety of new communication platforms, from social media, instant messaging apps, to virtual conferencing systems that allow interaction without space and time limitations. This ease of access provides a great opportunity for individuals and organizations to expand their networks and improve work efficiency. However, behind this convenience, new challenges have also arisen such as miscommunication, loss of non-verbal context, and an increased risk of ethical interference in communication. This phenomenon indicates that technological advances do not necessarily guarantee better communication quality.

Effective communication skills are becoming increasingly important in the face of digital communication challenges. The effectiveness of communication is not only measured by how quickly the message is delivered, but also the extent to which the message is understood according to the sender's intent and can affect the recipient's behavior. In this context, a deep understanding of the dynamics of digital communication is needed, including the use of appropriate language, the selection of appropriate media, and sensitivity to the culture and values embraced by the interlocutor.

Furthermore, effective communication also requires mastery of communication ethics, especially in digital spaces that are open and easily accessible to the public. The spread of inaccurate information, hate speech, and privacy violations are crucial issues that require caution in communicating digitally. Therefore, the ability to communicate ethically and responsibly is a significant plus, both in social interactions and in the professional world of work.

Within the organization, effective communication plays a role in building a positive work culture, increasing team productivity, and strengthening leadership. Leaders who are able to communicate their vision clearly, listen to input from team members, and provide constructive feedback will be better able to create a collaborative and innovative work environment. Similarly, in interpersonal relationships, open, empathetic, and respectful communication is key to fostering healthy and sustainable relationships.

Seeing the importance of this issue, research on the strategic role of effective communication in building social and professional relationships in the digital era is relevant to be conducted. This research aims to explore how communication can be maximized as a strategic tool in answering the challenges of modern fast-paced and complex interactions. Through a descriptive qualitative approach, this study will also examine various factors that support the creation of effective communication, both in terms of individuals, technology, and the social environment.

By understanding these aspects, it is hoped that this research can contribute to enriching the literature on digital communication and provide practical insights for individuals and organizations in developing adaptive, ethical, and positive impact communication skills. Especially in the ever-evolving digital era, the ability to communicate effectively is not only a technical necessity, but also an integral part of 21st-century life skills.

In the context of social relations, effective communication strengthens interpersonal relationships, builds trust, and increases empathy. Meanwhile, in the professional world, good communication is the foundation in management, teamwork, and public service. Therefore, understanding effective communication is essential to create healthy and productive interactions, especially in the midst of complex digital communication challenges.

2. METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of effective communication phenomena in social and professional contexts in the digital era. The main focus is to explore the meanings, perceptions, and communication dynamics experienced by individuals in their daily lives. Data was collected through literature reviews, in-depth interviews with informants from academic and professional backgrounds, participatory observations of digital communication behavior on social media and professional platforms, as well as documentation in the form of screenshots and online meeting recordings. The research was conducted online, involving participants from various regions in Indonesia, and lasted for two months, from February to March 2025.

The subjects of this study were individuals who actively use digital media to communicate, both in social domains such as social media and in professional settings like virtual meetings and remote collaboration. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, with criteria such as being at least 20 years old, having a minimum of one year's experience in digital communication, and being willing to provide open and participatory information. Ten informants from diverse backgrounds—including

young professionals, remote workers, active university students, and digital business practitioners—were chosen to provide a comprehensive perspective on current digital communication practices.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, which involved transcribing interview data, coding relevant information, grouping codes into categories, interpreting the findings in relation to communication theories, and drawing conclusions to address the research questions. To ensure data validity, the study applied source and method triangulation by comparing interview results with observation and documentation data, and conducting member checking to confirm the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations. Through this approach, the study aims to present a thorough depiction of digital communication strategies, challenges encountered, and the underlying values that shape communication processes in the information technology era.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that effective communication in the digital era is highly dependent on the ability of individuals to adapt to technology, understand the context of communication, and develop empathy and ethics in communicating. In social relations, the use of polite language, Clear messages, and the ability to listen are the main keys in maintaining harmony in the relationship.

Based on the results of in-depth interviews with 10 informants from diverse social and professional backgrounds, a number of key findings were found related to effective communication practices in the digital era. The majority of informants stated that the ability to communicate effectively greatly determines the quality of the relationships they build, both in the work environment and in the online social community.

First, all informants emphasized the importance of message clarity in digital communication. Due to the limitations of non-verbal expressions such as intonation and gestures, digital users feel the need to structure messages more systematically and concisely so that misunderstandings do not occur. Some informants admitted that they often use emojis, italics (capital or bold), and video call features to clarify the intent of their communication. Second, it was found that the choice of the right communication media also affects the effectiveness of interactions. Professional informants, for example, tend to use platforms such as email and project management apps for formal communication, while social media or instant messaging apps are used for informal communication. Accuracy in choosing media has been proven to reduce

risk of miscommunication and improve communication efficiency.

Third, the emergence of the need for digital skills and media literacy as an integral part of effective communication. The informant stated

That in addition to mastering the content of the message, they also need to understand the technical features of digital platforms, such as the mute/unmute function during online meetings, screen sharing, or compose visual presentations. Deficiencies in technological mastery often hinder smooth communication.

Fourth, the ethical aspect of communication is a significant concern. Some informants highlighted the importance of maintaining good manners, respecting other people's time (e.g., not messaging outside of business hours), and not disseminating information without verification. This ethics is considered the foundation of trust in establishing healthy relationships in cyberspace.

The results of this study show that effective communication in the digital era does not solely depend on smooth message delivery, but also

influenced by social context, media choices, and ethical awareness in interacting. These findings are in line with the opinion of communication experts who state that the effectiveness of communication is determined by the clarity of the message, the accuracy of the channel, and the understanding of the audience (Devito, 2013).

Message clarity is very important because digital communication is often asynchronous and lacks non-verbal expression. In face-to-face communication, meaning can be conveyed through tone of voice, body language, and eye contact. However, in digital communication, most of these elements are missing, so the speaker is required to convey the message in an explicit and structured manner. This reinforces the importance of linguistic competence and meticulousness in sentence preparation, especially in a professional context.

The selection of communication media is also part of a communication strategy that cannot be ignored. Improper use of media can hinder the effectiveness of the message. For example, delivering important work instructions via text message without clear context can lead to different interpretations. Therefore, individuals are required to have the ability to adapt the medium of communication to the characteristics of the message and the relationship with the interlocutor.

Furthermore, digital competence is the main supporting factor in modern communication. Media and technology literacy helps a person in navigating the features of digital communication platforms effectively. Ignorance of the basic functions of the platform often leads to delays, confusion, or even failures in delivering messages. Thus, mastery of digital communication devices must be considered as

part of communication competence itself.

The ethical aspect in digital communication is no less important. In the midst of freedom of opinion in cyberspace, there is a risk of media abuse that can damage reputations, cause conflicts, and even ignite divisions. In this study, informants emphasized the importance of maintaining privacy, time ethics, and the use of polite language as part of responsible communication. This is in line with ethical communication principles that emphasize respect, integrity, and social responsibility (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008).

These findings underscore that effective communication in the digital age requires a more comprehensive approach. It is not enough to rely only on speaking or writing skills, but also requires an understanding of the cultural context, mastery of technology, and the application of ethical values in every interaction. That way, social and professional relationships can be built more solidly, adaptively, and productively in the midst of the complexity of digital communication.

Meanwhile, in a professional environment, strategic communication can improve work efficiency and strengthen team collaboration. Platform

Digital tools such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Slack are important tools in supporting professional communication. Nevertheless, challenges such as miscommunication, information overload, and lack of nonverbal expression are obstacles that must be anticipated.

Digital skills are also an important aspect in supporting effective communication. Individuals who master communication technology more

able to convey messages appropriately and efficiently. Digital ethics, such as maintaining privacy, avoiding the spread of hoaxes, and respecting other people's time in online communication, are also part of strategic communication that needs attention.

4. CONCLUSION

Effective communication has a very strategic role in building and maintaining social and professional relationships, especially in the fast-paced and complex digital era. To face the challenges of digital communication, strong interpersonal communication skills, mastery of technology, and ethical awareness in interacting are needed. Communication education and digital skills training need to be continuously improved so that people are able to become capable and responsible communicators.

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