Transforming Digital Communication Ethics: An Innovative Strategy to Build a Respectful Virtual Space in Medan Aviation Polytechnic

Muhammad Caesar Akbar[1], Shafira Ayu Az-zahra[2]

Email: mhdcaesar@poltekbangmedan.ac.id
Polytechnic Aviation Medan

ABSTRACT

The transformation of digital communication has changed the way individuals interact in virtual spaces, including in the world of education. Medan Aviation Polytechnic, as a technology-based educational institution, faces the challenge of maintaining polite communication ethics in the digital space. This research aims to examine how elements such as digital safety, media effectiveness, communication norms, digital empathy, and emotional control shape digital communication ethics in the campus environment. Using a mixed-method approach, data was collected through quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and document analysis. The main findings show that digital safety and media effectiveness have a significant impact on the creation of polite communication, while digital empathy and emotional control are key factors in maintaining positive interactions. This article provides recommendations to improve ethical awareness and empathy skills in digital communication at Medan Aviation Polytechnic.

Keywords: Communication Ethics, Virtual Space, Digital Empathy, Emotion Control, Digital Safety

INTRODUCTION

The development of information technology affects almost all aspects of life, including in the field of education. Digital communication is the main tool in the teaching and learning process, especially in a pandemic situation and in the era of Society 5.0. However, the ease of communicating digitally brings challenges in terms of communication ethics. This is important because the virtual space that is formed often involves interactions without physical presence which reduces contextual and emotional understanding between individuals.

Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986) explains that the effectiveness of communication depends on the media's ability to transmit information clearly and accurately. On the other hand, Emotional Intelligence theory (Goleman, 1995) underlines the importance of the ability to manage emotions in social interactions, which is relevant in building digital empathy and emotional control in cyberspace. The purpose of this study is to examine how five dimensions of digital security—media effectiveness, communication norms, digital empathy, and emotional control—influence the formation of digital communication ethics at Medan Aviation Polytechnic.

METHODS
Security in Digital Communication
Findings Data:
1. Digital Security Survey (n=150 students):
    o 65%Students use simple passwords such as their date of birth.

- o 48% Students are not aware of the dangers of clicking on suspicious links.
- o 32% students have never enabled two-factor authentication.
2. Lecturer Interviews (n=10):
    - o 80% Lecturers complained about the lack of institutional guidance on digital security.
    - o Several lecturers noted incidents of students becoming victims of phishing due to a lack of digital literacy.

Effectiveness of Digital Communication Media
Findings Data:
1. Use of Digital Platforms (n=100 students and 10 lecturers):
    - o 85% Lecturers only use Google Classroom to upload materials without interactive features.
    - o 70% Students felt that using features such as online quizzes and discussions increased their engagement.
2. Observation Results:
    - o Most students find platforms like Zoom or Microsoft Teams more effective for group discussions than plain text platforms.

Compliance with Digital Communication Norms
Findings Data:
1. Student Interviews (n=50):
    - o 40% The student admitted to using offensive language in an online forum.
    - o 60% Students are not aware of any institutional rules regarding digital communication.
2. Online Discussion Forum Observation:
    - o Of the 10 discussion forums observed, 3 of them showed conflict due to the use of inappropriate language.

Digital Empathy
Findings Data:
1. Digital Empathy Survey (n=120 students):
    - o 55% Students admitted to having difficulty understanding the emotional context of text messages.
    - o 65% Students feel that using emojis or videos can help express emotions better.
2. Student Interview:
    - o Most respondents stated that digital empathy can help resolve conflicts in group discussions.

Emotional Control
Findings Data:
1. Emotional Control Survey Results (n=80 students):
    - o 40% Students find it easy to get emotional when receiving criticism in online forums.
    - o 50% Students feel they do not have effective strategies to control their emotions.
2. Lecturer Interview:

o Lecturers noted that students who had good emotional control tended to be more active in discussions and received input positively.

Table 1. Lecturer Security

Category	Key Findings	Recommendation
Digital Security	65% of students use simple passwords; no institutional digital security policy.	Cybersecurity training and implementation of two-factor authentication.
Media Effectiveness	Digital platforms are underutilized.	Training in the use of interactive features on digital platforms.
Communication Norms	There is no hard and fast rule; 40% of students have used inappropriate language.	Preparation of a digital communication code of ethics.
Digital Empathy	55% of students have difficulty understanding emotions through text.	Promotion of digital empathy through training and use of visual media such as video.
Emotional Control	50% of students find it difficult to control their emotions in conflict.	Stress management training and online discussion simulations.
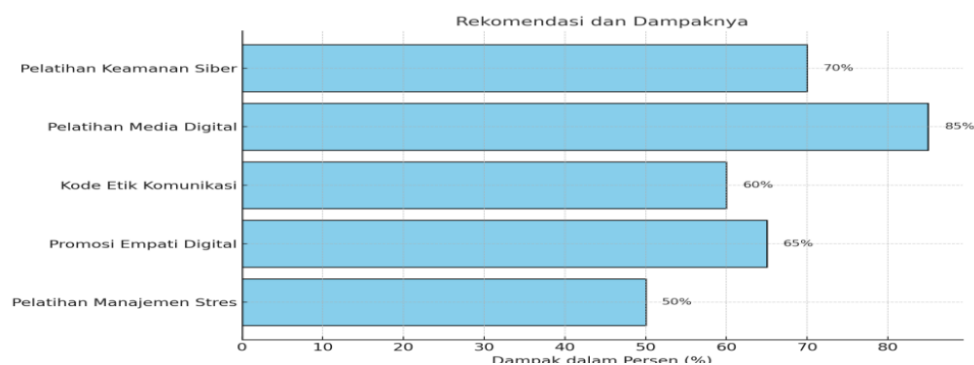
Figure 1. Recomendation Code
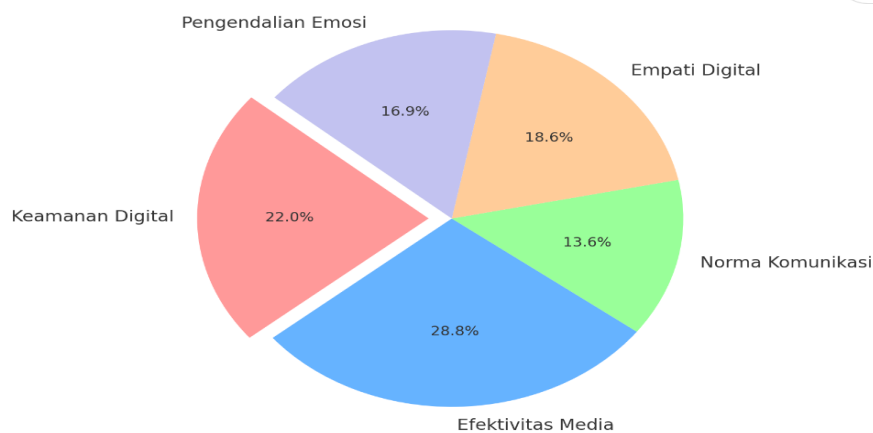
Figure 2. Chart of system

Pie Chart: Proportion of Key Research Findings
This diagram shows the proportion of key findings across five research categories (Digital Safety, Media Effectiveness, Communication Norms, Digital Empathy, and Emotional Control).

Bar Chart: Recommendations and Impact
This horizontal bar chart illustrates the key recommendations for each category and their potential impact on improving conditions at Medan Aviation Polytechnic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Digital Security.

From interviews and observations, it was found that students' awareness of the importance of digital security is still low. Many students do not understand the importance of secure password management or the potential risks of clicking on malicious links. In addition, Medan Aviation Polytechnic does not yet have a comprehensive policy regarding data security on digital platforms. Security in digital communication is essential to protect personal and institutional information from cyber threats. According to Stallings (2017) in his book Cryptography and Network Security, security measures such as data encryption, digital identity management, and regular software updates can reduce the risk of information leakage. Educational institutions need to adopt a similar approach by involving students and staff in cybersecurity literacy training.

Most respondents (65%) considered it important to have cybersecurity training for all members of the academic community. The use of encryption software, as well as the protection of personal data, are key factors in creating a safe communication space. This is in line with the Media Richness theory which states that communication must be equipped with safe and reliable media to maintain the credibility of the message (Daft & Lengel, 1986).

Media Effectiveness.

The effectiveness of digital media is not only determined by technology, but also the ability of its users. Daft and Lengel (1986) in the Media Richness Theory explain that media that is rich in features, such as video conferencing or document collaboration, is more effective for complex communication. Medan Aviation Polytechnic needs to provide special training for lecturers and students to improve their skills in using digital communication media optimally.

Communication Norms:

The lack of strict rules about digital communication norms leads to unethical behavior, such as the use of foul language or disregard for academic hierarchy. Some students also demonstrate noncompliance by frequently ignoring reasonable response times in online discussions. Only 40% of respondents stated that they understand the importance of using polite and professional language in digital communication. This lack of understanding of digital etiquette needs to be addressed through ongoing education and training. Compliance with digital communication norms is essential to maintain harmony in virtual interactions. Suler (2004) in the Online Disinhibition Effect shows that anonymity in cyberspace often leads to unethical behavior. Therefore, educational institutions such as the Medan Aviation Polytechnic must establish strict policies regarding communication norms, such as a digital communication code of ethics that includes consequences for violations.

Most students reported that they had difficulty understanding emotion or intent in text messages. This lack of digital empathy often leads to misunderstandings in group discussions. Digital empathy is the ability to understand and respond to emotions in virtual communication. Goleman (1995) in Emotional Intelligence emphasizes the importance of empathy in building healthy interpersonal relationships. In a digital context, empathy can be enhanced by promoting the use of clear language, emoticons, or video for more personal communication. Digital empathy training programs can be designed to help students develop these skills. Emotional control is a major challenge in communication on social media platforms, especially in WhatsApp groups which are often the place where conflicts between individuals arise. 50% of respondents reported experiencing tension or misunderstandings due to poor emotional control.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that the transformation of digital communication ethics in the Medan Aviation Polytechnic environment requires a holistic approach that covers various aspects to create a polite, safe, and effective virtual space. In the dimension of digital security, awareness of the importance of data protection and privacy needs to be increased through special training designed for the entire academic community. Encryption technology and strict cybersecurity policies can ensure protection against digital threats, while creating a sense of trust in virtual interactions.

In terms of media effectiveness, choosing the right communication platform such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, which support live visual and audio collaboration, has been shown to improve the quality of interactions compared to text-based communication methods such as email. Context-rich media allows for clearer message delivery, minimizes the risk of misunderstanding, and encourages more productive discussions. However, the effectiveness of communication cannot be separated from the understanding of communication norms, where the use of polite and professional language is often ignored in digital interactions. This study emphasizes the need to strengthen the culture of digital literacy to increase awareness of communication norms, which include word choice, use of good grammar, and understanding of the cultural context in academic environments.

Furthermore, digital empathy is an important element in building emotional closeness even without physical presence. Deep understanding of the emotions and perspectives of others, even if limited to text- or video-based communication, can help create an inclusive and supportive atmosphere. This can be achieved through training programs that emphasize emotional intelligence, such as attentive listening and constructive responding. Finally, the aspect of emotional control is a challenge in itself in the virtual space. The digital environment often facilitates impulsive responses that can lead to conflict. Self-control and the ability to manage emotions in stressful situations are key skills that must be developed. This is in line with the theory of emotional intelligence which emphasizes the importance of emotional regulation to create healthy and harmonious relationships.

Overall, the results of this study provide insight that the development of effective digital communication ethics requires synergy between technological approaches, education, and interpersonal skills development. Medan Aviation Polytechnic can be a pioneer in implementing these best practices through policies that support ethical learning, appropriate media use, and intensive training on empathy and emotional control. With these strategic steps, a polite, safe,

and inclusive virtual space can be realized, providing great benefits not only for the institution, but also for society at large.

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