

## COMMUNICATING WITH EMPATHY: ETHICAL PRACTICES IN SOCIAL MEDIA

**Bernadus Wibowo Suliantoro**

Fakultas Bisnis dan Ekonomika universitas atma jaya yogyakarta

[wibowo.suliantoro@uajy.ac.id](mailto:wibowo.suliantoro@uajy.ac.id)

**Abdul Wahab Syakhrani**

STAI Rasyidiyah Khalidiyah Amuntai, Kal-Sel, Indonesia

[aws.kandangan@gmail.com](mailto:aws.kandangan@gmail.com)

### Abstract

This research explores the importance of communicating with empathy as an ethical practice on social media. In an increasingly globalised digital era, interactions on social media are often marked by conflict, misunderstanding and unethical behaviour. Through an empathic approach, users can better understand and appreciate others' perspectives and feelings, which in turn reduces potential tensions and enriches the quality of interactions. Empathic communication supports honesty, transparency and inclusiveness, and promotes a more welcoming and safe digital environment. This research shows that empathy not only improves interpersonal relationships but also contributes to the formation of a more solid and harmonious online community. Thus, implementing empathic communication on social media is a key step in achieving better digital ethics and creating more humanised and meaningful interactions.

**Keywords:** Communicating, Empathy, Ethical Practices, Social Media.

### Introduction

Since the last few decades, information and communication technology has experienced rapid development, especially with the presence of social media. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and various other platforms, have changed the way humans interact and communicate with each other (Toma & Hancock, 2012). Social media is an online platform that allows users to create, share, and exchange information, ideas, and content in the form of text, images, video, and audio with a virtual community or network of other users. Social media also serves as a tool that enhances interpersonal communication, marketing, and information dissemination, while providing a space for public discussion and the development of communities based on common interests. Social media is not only a communication tool, but also a place where identity, emotions, and social engagement are expressed and shaped (Nathanson, 2003).

However, along with the increasing use of social media come challenges and issues related to communication ethics. Communication ethics is a set of principles and norms that guide how individuals exchange information in a way that is correct, respectful and responsible in various communication contexts. It includes consideration

of honesty, clarity, and empathy in communication, as well as respect for the human rights and privacy of others (Smith, 2019) . Communication ethics emphasises the importance of conveying messages without causing misinterpretation, prejudice or unnecessary conflict, and encourages the use of constructive and polite language. In the digital age, communication ethics also means acting with integrity and responsibility in the use of technology and communication platforms, ensuring that the messages conveyed are in accordance with the moral and ethical values of society (Derks et al., 2008) .

One of the main issues that often arises is the lack of empathy in social media interactions. Many social media users are often unaware of the impact of their words or actions on others who may have different backgrounds, cultures or worldviews. The anonymity and physical separateness of these platforms often allow individuals to feel free to behave unethically or even engage in verbal abuse (Wang & Tchernev ., 2012)

Empathy, the ability to understand and feel what others are feeling, is a key component of healthy and constructive communication. Communicating with empathy can support the creation of a social media environment that is more positive, inclusive and supports healthy relationships between users. When empathy becomes an integral part of communication, it can encourage ethical behaviour and reduce negative events such as misinformation, hate, and inappropriate behaviour (Shensa et al., 2018) .

Despite its importance, empathic communication practices on social media are still not fully understood and are often overlooked. Social media users and managers still face challenges in applying and promoting empathy in daily interactions. Therefore, in-depth research is needed to understand how empathy can be integrated in social media communication, the obstacles faced, and the impact of empathic communication on communication ethics.

## **Research Methods**

The study in this research uses the literature method. The literature research method is an approach used to collect and evaluate information from relevant and existing written sources to support hypotheses or answer research questions. This process involves the identification, selection, and critical analysis of available books, journals, articles, and digital sources to gain a comprehensive understanding of a particular topic (Rofiah & Bungin ;, 2021) (Madekhan, 2019) . Researchers utilise this method to synthesise existing findings, identify gaps in current knowledge, and establish a strong theoretical context for further research. Thus, literature research not only aims to find out what has been previously studied, but also to build an informative and purposeful framework to develop new research (Syawie ., 2005)

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Empathic Communication Practices on Social Media**

In the growing digital age, social media has become the primary means for individuals to communicate and share information. However, interactions on social media are often accompanied by a lack of clarity and lack of emotion, which can lead to misunderstandings and conflict. To mitigate this, it is important that we practice empathic communication. Empathic communication is the ability to understand and experience others from their perspective, and to express genuine concern and understanding (Goleman, 2006).

One way to practice empathetic communication on social media is by active listening. This means paying close attention to what others are saying before responding. In the context of social media, this can be applied by thoroughly reading a comment or post before responding. By understanding the context and emotions behind the message, we can avoid impulsive responses that may feel hurtful or uncaring (Manago et al., 2008).

In addition, using polite and respectful language is a key element in empathetic communication. We should always consider the other person's feelings in the way we convey our messages. Using kind words, avoiding insults, and showing respect in every interaction can make the other person feel valued and understood. An emphasis on using emoticons or emojis can also help add emotional nuances that may be lost in written communication, making our intentions and feelings clear (Turkle, 2015).

Showing empathy can also be done by providing emotional support. On social media, we are often exposed to moving personal stories or expressions of disappointment and sadness. Responding with words of support, encouragement, or simply saying "I understand how you feel" can go a long way in creating a climate of positive and understanding communication. Small actions like these can make a big difference in strengthening social relationships on digital platforms (Pratt et al., 2015).

Finally, it is important to admit mistakes and apologise if we have unintentionally hurt someone else's feelings on social media. A sincere admission and apology is a form of empathy that shows we value the feelings of others and are willing to take responsibility for our actions. It also helps create a more inclusive and understanding communication culture (Johnson, 2022). By practising empathetic communication on social media, we can build a more supportive and harmonious community, and reduce the potential for conflict and misunderstanding in our digital interactions.

### **Challenges in Empathic Communication on Social Media**

Empathic communication on social media, while very important, is not without its challenges. One of the main obstacles is the limitation in conveying and capturing emotions through writing. When we speak face-to-face, body language, intonation, and facial expressions play an important role in conveying empathy. However, on social

media, we only have text which is often insufficient to convey emotional nuances. This can make messages look cold or insincere, even when our true intention is to show empathy (Neubaum & Krämer, 2014) .

In addition, the speed and immediacy of interactions on social media can be challenging. These platforms often demand quick responses, which can encourage us to give knee-jerk reactions without considering the other person's feelings deeply. As a result, we may not give the most empathetic response or may even offend the other person. Therefore, it is important to take time to understand the context before we respond, even though the pressure to respond quickly can be very high in fast-paced digital environments (Morreale et al., 2006) .

The anonymity offered by social media can also hinder empathic communication. Without face-to-face interaction, users often feel freer to express themselves without considering the impact on others. This anonymity can facilitate negative behaviours such as trolling or bullying that damage relationships and hinder empathy. In fact, this lack of identity can make some people more likely to ignore social norms that are usually maintained in face-to-face communication (Zhang, 2019) .

Another challenge arises from the diversity of audiences on social media. These platforms do not limit who can read or respond to our posts, which means that a single message can be interpreted in different ways by different audiences. Different cultures, backgrounds and life experiences can cause people to understand and respond to empathy in different ways. Managing effective and empathetic communication in this multicultural context requires extra attention and sensitivity to such differences (Gupta, 2018) .

The ever-present digital distractions on social media can also be a hindrance. Platform algorithms that often push sensational and controversial content to get more engagement can lead to more negative and conflicted communication. In this polarised atmosphere, showing empathy and understanding others' points of view becomes increasingly difficult. As users, we need to actively filter content and focus on building constructive and mutually beneficial dialogues (Martinez, 2020) .

Finally, the emergence of fake news and misinformation on social media can obscure the truth and make empathetic communication difficult. When people are exposed to inaccurate or biased information, they may develop incorrect views about certain situations or individuals. This can undermine efforts to build empathy as our responses may be based on misinformation. Therefore, it is important that we always verify information before responding as well as encourage a culture of media literacy among users to create a more honest and supportive environment (Brown, 2020) .

### **Impact of Empathic Communication on Communication Ethics**

Empathic communication has a significant impact on communication etiquette, as empathy emphasises the importance of recognising and understanding the feelings

and perspectives of others. By empathising, individuals tend to be more guarded in their speech and actions, out of respect for the other person. This further reinforces the importance of respectful and appreciative communication, making it the foundation for healthy and ethical interpersonal relationships (Anderson, 2021).

Empathy also plays a role in minimising conflict and promoting constructive problem resolution. In the context of ethical communication, empathetic listening can prevent misunderstandings that often lead to conflict. By understanding the feelings and motivations of others, we are better able to find solutions that are adequate and fair to all parties involved. This practice supports conflict resolution that not only resolves problems, but also strengthens relationships between individuals (Nguyen, 2021).

In addition, empathic communication promotes transparency and honesty. When one feels empathy from the other person, they are more likely to be open and honest. This creates a communication environment where all parties feel safe to express themselves without fear of judgement or misunderstanding. This openness and honesty are key principles in ethical communication, as they build trust and mutual understanding (Sheldon, 2016).

Empathic communication also contributes to inclusiveness and fairness. By acknowledging and understanding multiple perspectives, empathetic communication ensures that the voices of different groups, especially marginalised groups, are heard and respected. It encourages communication practices that honour diversity and strive to be more inclusive. The result is a more fair and equal approach to communication, where every individual is treated with equal dignity (Greitemeyer & Mügge., 2014)

Finally, the impact of empathic communication on ethics in communication strengthens the emotional capacity of individuals to engage in deeper and more meaningful interactions. Through empathic communication, people not only learn to better appreciate the feelings of others, but also become more aware of the ethical responsibilities they have in social interactions. This not only improves the quality of personal and professional relationships but also strengthens the social fabric where interactions are based on mutual understanding and respect, making them more harmonious and civilised (Chen, 2013).

Thus, the impact of empathic communication on ethical communication encompasses many important aspects that make social interactions more harmonious and meaningful. By emphasising respect for other people's feelings and perspectives, empathy reinforces the principles of ethical communication, such as mutual respect and mindful speaking. In addition, empathy assists in conflict resolution and reinforces honesty and transparency, all of which build trust among communication actors. Empathic communication also promotes inclusiveness and fairness, ensuring that a variety of voices and perspectives are heard and valued. As such, empathic communication not only improves interpersonal interactions but also contributes to a

more just and harmonious social order. Overall, empathy is an essential element of ethical communication, capable of creating deeper and more meaningful relationships in all aspects of life.

## Conclusion

Communicating with empathy on social media is a very important ethical practice in maintaining the quality of online interactions. Through empathy, social media users can better understand and appreciate the feelings and perspectives of others, thereby reducing the potential for conflict and misunderstanding. With this approach, communication on social media becomes more humanised, respectful and inclusive of different views.

In addition, empathy in social media communication improves the quality of discussions and strengthens the social fabric online. It also encourages honesty and integrity in sharing information and promotes healthy digital ethics. By communicating empathetically, we not only improve personal relationships but also contribute to a more welcoming, safe digital atmosphere that supports positive community growth.

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