



Navigating ethical challenges in Indonesian digital public relations practices

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Received May, 27 2024/Accepted September, 21 2024

Abstract

The emergence of Digital Public Relations (PR) management has revolutionized the way in which corporations communicate with their public, utilizing digital platforms to provide more dynamic and interactive communication. Nevertheless, this digital revolution has also resulted in a multitude of ethical dilemmas and challenges. This study aims to analyze the ethical dimensions of Digital Public Relations management in Indonesia, with a particular focus on the challenges encountered and the approaches employed for navigating them. This qualitative study employs in-depth interview as data collection method with two experienced Indonesian PR practitioners to gain comprehensive and detailed observations. The findings highlight various notable challenges in digital PR management, encompassing the need to uphold transparency in communications and guarantee social responsibility in every PR strategy. This study suggests an Ethical Digital Public Relations model that includes three fundamental ethical values: transparency, privacy management, and social responsibility, based on the aforementioned findings. Ultimately, the study recommends PR practitioners to adhere to these three values in order to successfully address ethical dilemmas and strengthen the credibility as well as reliability of their digital PR management. By upholding these values, PR practitioners can effectively handle ethical challenges and make a beneficial impact on the growing field of digital public relations.

Keywords: Campaign Management; Digital Public Relations; Ethics; Privacy Protection

Introduction

The development of digital communication technology has entirely altered the strategies of digital public relations, allowing for more dynamic, quick, and interactive interaction with public. Technologies such as social media analytics, content management systems, and customer relationship management (CRM) platforms, which are powered by big data and artificial intelligence (AI) are proven to improve the customization of messages and the ability to respond in real-time to public sentiment (Castro & New, 2016; Mendhe et al., 2020; Rane, 2023). These technologies have broadened the scope of public relations practices, offering a worldwide platform for spreading information and cultivating brand loyalty (Macnamara, 2016; Wright & Hinson, 2015). Additionally, social media enables reciprocal communication, enhancing transparency and accountability (Mayes, 2021). The ongoing evolution of digital PR is driven by the pivotal role of digital communication technologies, which in turn lead to innovations and establish new benchmarks for communication that is both effective and ethical (C. M. Kim, 2020).

The emergence of digital public relations (PR) has given rise to numerous ethical concerns, since the rapid dissemination of information via digital platforms frequently distort the boundaries of ethical communication. A major obstacle is the dilemma of transparency, in which organizations must strike a balance between advertising their organization and offering truthful, unambiguous information to the public. The occurrence of "astroturfing," which refers to the creation of false grassroots efforts, has generated concern regarding the genuineness of digital communications (Douda, 2023).

In addition, the utilization of big data and artificial intelligence (AI) for the goal of targeted messaging has generated concerns over privacy and consent. This is caused by these technologies which frequently collect and analyze personal data without obtaining specific consent from the user (Manheim & Kaplan, 2019; Wachter & Mittelstadt, 2019). An illustrative example that emphasizes these moral challenges is the Cambridge Analytica scandal, in which misuse of Facebook data for political campaigns revealed significant violations of privacy and trust, thereby emphasizing the

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necessity for rigorous ethical guidelines in digital public relations operations (Hinds et al., 2020). These examples demonstrate the crucial significance of including ethical values into digital PR campaigns in order to maintain public trust and uphold the integrity of the profession.

Indonesia's digital public relations practices are intricately interconnected with its developing digital landscape. According to DataReportal (2021), the number of internet users in the country has exceeded 175 million, with a remarkable 160 millions of them actively using social media. As a result, it ranks among the most expansive and rapidly developing digital markets in Southeast Asia. In a study conducted by Wachid (2023), it is highlighted that digital public relations practices, such as social media engagement, content marketing, and the integration of big data and artificial intelligence (AI), are becoming increasingly important in enhancing brand visibility and managing corporate reputation. Furthermore, the use of digital communication channels has driven Indonesian PR professionals to employ a diverse array of digital communication platforms, such as widely-used social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, as well as customized websites tailored for certain local demographics.

Nevertheless, the rapid adoption of digital PR strategies in Indonesia has also resulted in notable ethical challenges. The ethical challenges in Indonesian digital PR practices are further complicated by the absence of comprehensive regulations and a standardized code of ethics. Although the Indonesian government has taken steps to implement restrictions such as the Electronic Information and Transactions Law, these policies frequently fail to adequately address the intricacies of digital public relations practices (Wijaya, 2022). Due to the lack of a comprehensive code of ethics specifically tailored to digital PR, professionals in this field are forced to tackle these difficulties without explicit rules, resulting in inconsistent approaches throughout the organization. This lack of regulation not only weakens the moral principles of the profession but also diminishes public trust in digital communications landscape.

This study seeks to investigate the impact of digital public relations on ethical dimension, specifically in the field of public relations in Indonesia. The study also aims to reveal insights into the ethical challenges, possibilities, and adaptations that Indonesian public relations practitioners experience in response to the digital PR revolution using qualitative research methodologies. The ultimate objective is to enhance our understanding of the complex connection between digitization and the ethical dimension in the public relations industry in Indonesia.

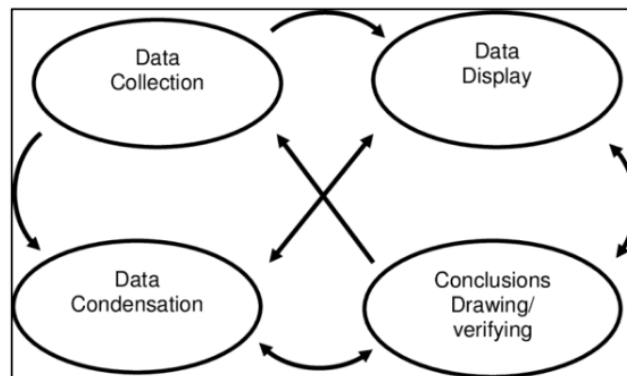
Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method to examine and analyze the present ethical challenges and coping mechanisms of Indonesian public relations practitioners in conducting their digital public relations strategies. Qualitative research is a method that involves placing the observer within a particular context in the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2023). By employing a qualitative research methodology, the researcher can thoroughly examine the interpersonal dynamics inside the realm of digital public relations. The objective was to present an impartial portrayal of the circumstances pertaining to the ethical challenges and coping mechanisms in Indonesian digital public relations practices.

This study utilizes in-depth interview for data collection method. The in-depth interview method is widely regarded for its robust ability to comprehensively investigate research issues. It facilitates in-depth examinations that uncover nuanced and precise observations that may not be readily visible through less individualized or conventional methods of gathering data (Turner III & Hagstrom-Schmidt, 2022). Two experienced Indonesian public relations practitioners were selected as key informants due to their substantial expertise and participation in the industry. The individuals identified as key informants in this study are as follows:

1. Chief Operating Officer (CEO) of Carabicara Network, Karolus Dinar Kurniawan (KI1)
2. Chairman of Indonesia's Advertising Supervisory Agency (Badan Pengawas Periklanan, Susilo Dwihatmanto (KI2)

Figure 1: Data Analysis: Interactive Mode



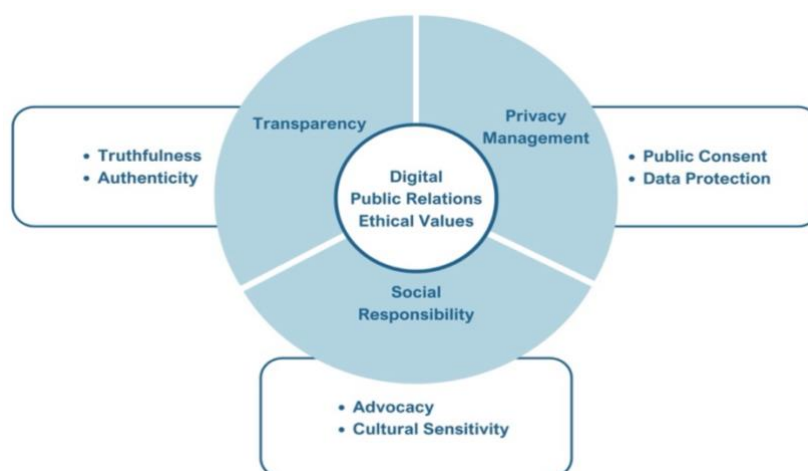
Source: Miles et al. (2019)

This study employed a descriptive qualitative analytic technique following the collection of data and transcription of interviews. The validity and reliability of the collected data were assessed by various tests, including credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity) tests (Sugiyono, 2013). The data was subsequently analyzed using the Interactive Model approach, as outlined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2019). Figure 1 illustrates the various components of the data analysis process, including data collection, data condensation, data visualization, and drawing conclusions.

Results and Discussion

The results of the in-depth interview provide an extensive understanding of the ethical aspects that are essential for digital public relations practices in Indonesia. This study proposes a model that emphasizes the significance of ethical values in multiple dimensions. The proposed values are fundamental to PR practices that are both effective and responsible, such as transparency, privacy management, and social responsibility. The proposed model is illustrated in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Proposed Model of Digital Public Relations Ethical Values



Source: Data Analysis Result of The Study

The proposed model above seeks to offer a systematic framework for the public relations practitioners to navigate the complexity of digital environment through incorporating these ethical values. This model not only aim to address the ethical challenges that have been highlighted, but also encourages the adoption of best practices. As a result, ethical digital public relations practices can improve trust and credibility in the rapidly evolving digital public relations landscape, particularly in Indonesia.

Transparency Value in Digital Public Relations Practices

Transparency is a crucial ethical value in the field of digital public relations, playing a vital role in establishing trust and credibility with stakeholders. O'Neill, (2020) emphasizes that in the era of digitalization, where information disseminates quickly, upholding transparency requires open, honest communication and accountability. This value encompasses not only the disclosure of accurate information but also the responsive and attentive handling of public inquiries (Lee et al., 2021). Transparency is crucial in Indonesian digital public relations practices, given its broad and swiftly growing digital audience. The following section provides research results on how KI1, and KI2 perceive and uphold transparency value in their digital public relations practices. As stated by KI1:

“In my opinion, transparency in digital public relations means being open and honest with stakeholders, which naturally incorporates the idea of truthfulness. Maintaining truthfulness can be challenging due to the need to represent the organization in the best possible way and the rapid spread of misinformation online. To solve these problems, public relations practitioners should set and uphold clear ethical norms, participate in ongoing monitoring and fact-checking, and prioritize open communication channels for immediately addressing and correcting any disinformation.”

According to the research results above, transparency in digital public relations is strongly linked to truthfulness, underlining the significance of being open and honest with stakeholders. The issue of maintaining truthfulness in an environment of a need to positively represent the organization and the rapid spread of misinformation online is apparent. Strengthening this study, public relations practitioners must set and adhere to defined ethical standards, regularly monitor and fact-check material, and maintain open communication channels in order to confront and correct disinformation. These acts not only adhere to ethical standards, but also improve the organization's credibility and trustworthiness.

On the other hand, KI2 shared an unique viewpoint regarding the value of truthfulness in digital public relations practices, particularly from the advertising activities, as stated below :

“Transparency in digital PR practices, particularly in advertising, is crucial for ensuring that information is fact-based and data-driven. It is important to only provide accurate and verifiable information in advertisements because this is one of the ways to protect the public from disinformation.”

The research findings from KI2 highlight the importance of truthfulness in digital public relations, particularly in advertising, to guarantee that communication flow is fact-based and data-driven. This perspective emphasizes the significance of delivering accurate and verifiable information to safeguard the public from misinformation. Furthermore, it is evident that ensuring factual accuracy in advertising not only enhances public trust but also maintains ethical norms in digital landscape.

Moreover, according to the comprehensive interview findings, this study uncovered that the ethical value of transparency in digital public relations practices involves more than just truthfulness. While maintaining truthfulness is crucial for assuring the accuracy and reliability of all communication strategy, the research results also emphasized the significance of authenticity. Authenticity involves demonstrating authentic and sincere behavior in all interactions, ensuring that the organization's messages accurately represent its true values and purposes. The focus on both truthfulness and authenticity is essential in the context of Indonesian digital public relations practices, as emphasized by KI1 below:

“As we all know, there is nothing new under the sun. However, I believe the value of authenticity must be strongly incorporated in the digital PR strategies. In this context, authenticity means being genuine and honest in all communication strategies, and also connecting with the organization's core values. Upholding authenticity is difficult because

of the need to adapt to market trends and offer an idealized image, which can lead to deceptive messaging. Following the principle that "there is nothing new under the sun," public relations practitioners can deal with these problems by focusing on timeless ethical norms, keeping consistent brand messaging, and interacting meaningfully with their audience."

The findings from KI1 emphasize the essential significance of authenticity in Indonesian digital public relations strategies, beyond fundamental truthfulness to guarantee that messages are closely harmonized with the organization's core values. The focus on authenticity is vital in the digital environment, where the urge to conform to market trends and present an ideal image can result in misleading communication strategies. Public relations practitioners can effectively address these challenges by persistently adhering to longstanding ethical standards. This entails continually strengthening organizational messaging and cultivating authentic interaction with the public. This study recommends that those approaches do not only minimize the possibility of false information spreading but also enhances the general reputation and long-term trustworthiness of the company, hence establishing a better benchmark for ethical digital public relations practices in Indonesia.

Based on the extensive analysis of the research results, truthfulness value is essential in digital public relations practices to develop and retain trust with stakeholders. In the fast-paced digital environment, maintaining truthfulness is crucial to ensure that all communications are precise, trustworthy, and capable of being confirmed. Ensuring transparency is also crucial in the field of advertising, as a need to portray a perfect image can sometimes result in deceptive or overstated assertions. According to KI2, it is crucial to include factual and data-driven information in advertisements. It must be conducted to safeguard the audience against deception and maintain ethical standards (Saltman, 2022). Furthermore, adhering to truthfulness not only increases public trust, but also strengthens the credibility and ethical reputation of the firm in a highly competitive digital landscape (de Chenecey, 2018).

Moreover, this study reveals that authenticity complements truthfulness by guaranteeing that communications are not just precise but also genuine. Authenticity in digital public relations practices entails effectively communicating messages that are consistent with the organization's fundamental principles and genuine objectives as a crucial factor in establishing a solid and trustworthy organizational image. The findings from KI1 highlight the significance of authenticity in Indonesian digital public relations public relations practices, where the necessity to conform to market trends can result in misleading communication. Maintaining authenticity necessitates a resolute dedication to coherent organizational communication, ethical standards, and meaningful interaction with the public (Golpayegani & Mahmood, 2019; Hagelstein et al., 2021). The combination of prioritizing truthfulness and authenticity can help public relations practitioners in effectively managing the complexities of the digital landscape, resulting in stronger relationships with stakeholders and an improved overall organizational reputation.

Lastly, this study argues that the connection between truthfulness and authenticity is vital in the practices of digital public relations, particularly in Indonesia. An effective strategy for ethical communication is required due to the fast-growing and varied digital audience in Indonesia. By integrating truthfulness and authenticity, public relations practitioners can adeptly navigate the challenges presented by disinformation and the demand to adhere to market trends. Hence, it is crucial for digital public relations practitioners to provide utmost importance to both truthfulness and authenticity under the general transparency ethical values thus establishing a more elevated standard for ethical digital public relations practices.

Privacy Management Value in Digital Public Relations Practices

Privacy management is the second value within the proposed model in this study which serves as essential ethical principle in the field of digital public relations (PR). It involves the proper handling and safeguarding of personal data to uphold public trust and adhere to laws and regulations (Solove, 2022). In the age of digital technology, where immense amounts of personal data are gathered and used, companies need to establish thorough security measures to safeguard against illegal access and misuse of this information (Wang et al., 2019). By giving priority to privacy

management, not only are risks reduced, but trust is also built and the organization's reputation and long-term success are improved. The following section provides research results on how KI1, and KI2 perceive and uphold privacy management value in their digital public relations practices. As stated by KI1:

“When it comes to public relations or communication strategies in general, we cannot take the research step for granted. And in this case, research requires several data from the public. In my perspective, public consent is critical in the research phase because it ensures that users are completely informed of and agree to how their data will be used, especially in surveys. The challenges of maintaining public consent include establishing transparency in data collecting procedures and effectively expressing the goal of data usage. To solve such challenges, we must establish explicit consent procedures, maintain open communication, and educate the public on the importance of consent in data usage.”

The findings from KI1 above highlight the importance of obtaining public consent all over the research phase of communication strategies, ensuring that the publics are fully informed and agree to how their data will be used. This viewpoint emphasizes that obtaining explicit agreement not only protects privacy, but also promotes transparency and trust. It is obvious that effective consent procedures, clear disclosure about data use, and public education on the importance of consent are critical measures for addressing the issues of sustaining public consent. These procedures not only maintain ethical standards, but they also improve the credibility and trustworthiness of digital public relations research.

Additionally, KI2 provides a supplementary viewpoints regarding public consent for their data usage. KI2 emphasizes the role of public survey organization that provides general data to be used by other companies' research activities as below:

“One thing that we should know is data trading is actually not a taboo thing in public relations activities. Public survey organizations play an important role in assisting other companies' research initiatives by providing detailed and accurate data about a certain public. These organizations are very helpful because they guarantee the data acquired is consented and legal to use. This allows other organizations to build their communication strategies based upon reliable and ethically sourced data.”

The findings from KI2 above emphasize the critical role that public survey organizations play in ensuring ethical data use in public relations activities. These organizations not only provide extensive and precise data, but they also ensure that all information is consented to and acquired legally. This approach is critical because it enables organizations to create communication strategies based on accurate and ethically generated information. Critically, while data trade is common, these organizations' emphasis on consent and legality contributes to public trust and supports industry ethics.

According to the findings of the in-depth interviews, this study demonstrates that the ethical value of Privacy Management in digital public relations practices in Indonesia goes beyond mere public consent in data mining. Additionally, it includes the crucial element of data protection. Public consent guarantees that individuals are thoroughly informed about and provide their agreement to the utilization of their data, while data protection prevents this information against unlawful access and exploitation, as stated by KI2 below:

“Data protection is crucial for managing privacy, as it guarantees the secure handling and protection of individuals' personal information, preventing unauthorized access or breaches. Organizations can maintain the ethical value of data protection by implementing strong security measures and consistently monitoring data for any unwanted breaches.”

The findings from KI2 highlight the crucial significance of data protection in privacy management ethical value, emphasizing its role in preventing unwanted access and breaches. This

study argues that although it is crucial to build solid safety precautions and maintain consistent monitoring, relying just on these processes may not be adequate. Organizations must also acknowledge and deal with the evolving characteristics of cyber threats, and allocate resources towards ongoing staff training and the adoption of updated technologies in order to proactively mitigate possible risks. Moreover, it is essential to establish a culture of responsibility and openness within the organization to guarantee that data protection is not only a matter of following procedures, but a fundamental ethical responsibility.

The risk posed by cyber threats in digital public relations practitioners is very significant, as these threats have the potential to result in substantial data breaches, destruction of reputation, and financial losses. An notable case is the 2020 Twitter breach, wherein attackers successfully infiltrated prominent accounts, such as those belonging to Barack Obama, Elon Musk, and big business entities, with the intention of promoting a Bitcoin fraud scheme (BBC News, 2020). This incident exemplifies the vulnerability of digital platforms to breaches and emphasizes the essential requirement for strong cybersecurity safeguards in public relations activities.

Moreover, this study contends that establishing an organizational culture that values public data protection is essential for upholding trust and credibility. Organizations can enhance their ability to protect sensitive information and avoid breaches by making data protection a fundamental ethical principle, as stated by KII below:

“In my perspective, public relations must mediate the needs of both the organization and the public, with a focus on ethical norms such as data protection. For example, our client once asked for a raw data set about the public for a campaign, we denied and instead offered processed data that suited their requirements while protecting individuals' privacy. This approach represents our organizational culture, which values data protection, guaranteeing that we maintain the public's trust and privacy rights while fulfilling the needs of our clients.”

The findings from KII emphasize the crucial need of prioritizing data protection within the organizational culture, demonstrating a worthy practice of balancing client demands while protecting public privacy. However, it raises concerns about potential gaps in industry standards and the uniformity of such processes across organisations. While KII's approach is remarkable it is crucial to evaluate whether similar ethical standards are used consistently across the sector or if they are exceptions rather than the norm. Building on these findings, it is critical for the public relations sector to create and implement standardized ethical principles that require stringent data protection procedures, ensuring that public confidence and privacy are consistently maintained across all operations.

The significance of public consent ethical value in the wider context of privacy management ethical value in digital public relations practices is crucial. Public consent guarantees that individuals possess comprehensive knowledge regarding the utilization of their data and have openly granted permission for its usage. Nevertheless, the research findings indicate a possible excessive focus on procedural consent without sufficiently addressing the underlying problem of actual understanding. Consent forms and notifications are frequently intricate and loaded with legal terminology, which may not be understandable to all users, hence raising doubts about the authenticity of the received consent (Martin et al., 2017). Hence, this study recommends that organizations should make efforts to streamline these procedures and guarantee that permission is genuinely informed, rather than just a superficial checkbox activity, in order to promote authentic openness and confidence.

Furthermore, this study reveals that data protection ethical value is a crucial component of privacy management ethical value that is necessary for protecting personal information from unwanted access and breaches. The focus of the findings on strong security measures and ongoing monitoring is crucial, yet, it exposes a potential deficiency in the proactive management of cyber risks. Although it is important to apply these safeguards, the fast-changing nature of cyber threats necessitates a flexible and proactive approach that surpasses traditional protocols (Moyo, 2022). This study contends that in order to proactively address possible risks, organizations should allocate

resources towards implementing cutting-edge cybersecurity solutions and providing ongoing training for their workforce. Moreover, it is essential to conduct regular audits and make improvements to security processes in order to adjust to emerging vulnerabilities and evolving threat landscapes.

Hence, adhering to public consent and data protection ethical values in the broader ethical value of privacy management is essential for maintaining trust as well as credibility in digital public relations practitioners. Nevertheless, the research results indicate that the current procedures throughout the public relations sector may not be consistently rigorous in all areas. The lack of consistency in the application of these ethical principles is a substantial threat to public trust. Implementing universally accepted ethical principles that require rigorous privacy management protocols is crucial, but it is not enough by itself. This study emphasizes that organizations should foster a culture that fully embraces these values, guaranteeing that ethical standards are deeply rooted in their operations and not just seen as procedural obligations.

Social Responsibility Value in Digital Public Relations Practices

The last ethical value within the proposed model of Digital Public Relations Ethical Values in this study is social responsibility value. This study argues that the importance of social responsibility ethical value in digital public relations practices cannot be understated, as it plays a vital role in promoting ethical communication and demonstrating an organization's dedication to the development of society. In the era of digital technology, social responsibility in public relations practices entails utilizing digital platforms to actively participate in initiatives that contribute to the improvement of society. This includes activities like advocacy for social justice, promoting social causes, and supporting community initiatives (Dudgeon, 2022). Although numerous organizations claim their commitment to social responsibility, there frequently exists a discrepancy between their claimed goals and their actual implementation, resulting in distrust among stakeholders (Lu et al., 2021). Therefore, strategic advocacy plays a crucial role in upholding this value, as it enables organizations to actively promote and support causes that are in line with their principles and resonate with their target audience, as pointed out by KI1 below:

“In my perspective, strategic advocacy in digital PR is important since it entails balancing the needs of the company or client with those of the public. Public relations professionals frequently confront the difficulty of aligning their organizational core values and needs while also actively supporting important causes in society.”

The findings from KI1 emphasize the vital role of strategic advocacy in digital public relations practices, emphasizing the intricate equilibrium that public relations practitioners must uphold between organizational objectives and public concerns. Although linking firm principles with societal concerns might improve credibility, the difficulty arises in ensuring that these efforts are not seen to be superficial or opportunistic. Hence, this study argues that public relations practitioners must possess a profound comprehension and genuine involvement with the causes they support, guaranteeing that their advocacy initiatives are both genuine and effective. Furthermore, It is crucial for organizations to refrain from superficial gestures and instead dedicate themselves to long-term, impactful lobbying that genuinely aligns with their principles and the demands of the public digitally.

Moreover, the increasing examination by socially aware publics implies that any apparent lack of sincerity in advocacy initiatives might rapidly have negative consequences, harming both reputation and public trust (Huttunen, 2024; Park, 2022). In order to address these problems, public relations practitioners must utilize transparent communication tactics, actively engage with public concerns, and exhibit an unwavering commitment to the causes they support (Kim & Ferguson, 2018). This strategic strategy not only fosters trust but also establishes the organization as an authentic leader in social responsibility.

As previously stated, strategic advocacy in the practices of digital public relations requires transparent communication tactics. This study contends that transparent communication tactics

involves strategic dissemination of fact-based information through digital public relations practices for social well-being, as stated by KI2 below:

“Fact-based public relations strategies are essential, particularly in advertising activities to uphold our credibility and integrity. This is our part of our responsibility to advocate towards the needs of public regarding transparent communication.”

The findings from KI2 above highlight the significance of fact-based public relations strategies in upholding credibility and integrity, especially in the advertising activities. However, simply expressing the importance of communication based on factual information is inadequate without being supported by constant implementation. Several organizations fail to maintain consistent transparency, leading to significant loss of public trust (Farwell et al., 2019). Hence, this study recommends that organizations must prioritize the implementation of strong checks and balances to guarantee that every advertising content undergoes careful examination to ensure accuracy. This not only strengthens their dedication to strategic advocacy but also maintains their moral obligation to offer clear and honest information to the public.

Nevertheless, the challenge in distributing information in digital public relations lies in managing the competing demands of public transparency and safeguarding the organization's interests. The general public demands on obtaining complete and accurate information, desiring to be informed about every aspect, while public relations practitioners must carefully manage these demands without jeopardizing confidential data. To retain the organization's integrity and build trust and transparency with the audience, it is necessary to employ strategic communication methods. According to the statement provided by KI1 below:

“Striking the right balance between meeting public demand for transparency and safeguarding organizational interests is a complex and challenging task in the realm of digital public relations. As someone experienced in public relations, I have frequently encountered the challenge of balancing transparency with the need to protect confidential data for the sake of the organization. Striking a delicate balance is crucial when it comes to successful strategic advocacy. The aim is to promote the organization's values and causes while safeguarding its strategic interests.”

The research results from KI1 above highlight the complex task of upholding a balance between openness and safeguarding the interests of an organization in the realm of digital public relations. While it is crucial to fulfill the public's need for transparency, public relations practitioners must also guarantee the confidentiality of sensitive data to safeguard the organization's strategic objectives. Effectively managing this delicate balance is crucial for successful strategic advocacy, as ignoring it can result in either loss of trust among the public or undermining of organizational objectives. Hence, in order to achieve sustainable success, organizations must create effective communication strategies that effectively and openly address public concerns without revealing shortcomings and therefore preserving their credibility and attaining their long-term strategic advocacy objectives.

Additionally, this study highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity value as an essential element of the social responsibility ethical value in digital public relations, alongside the strategic advocacy value. Cultural sensitivity involves understanding and valuing a wide range of cultural viewpoints, which is crucial for establishing genuine relationships with the public. According to the statement provided by KI1 below:

“In general public relations practices, especially in the digital one where information can spread more easily, failing to consider cultural sensitivity can result in substantial miscommunication and reputational damage. In my experience, understanding and appreciating the varied cultural backgrounds of our public is critical for developing personalized and well-targeted public relations tactics. By embracing cultural sensitivity,

organizations can develop deeper connections while avoiding mistakes that could alienate or insult their publics.”

The findings from K11 above emphasize the crucial importance of cultural sensitivity in the practices of digital public relations, highlighting the significant consequences of disregarding this principle, such as misunderstandings and damage to the organization's reputation. Although it is important to comprehend various cultural viewpoints, numerous organizations fail to devote sufficient resources to this aspect, resulting in generic and poor public relations strategies (Bada et al., 2019). Hence, this study contends that organizations must prioritize cultural sensitivity as a competitive advantage in order to establish genuinely specific and resonant communication strategies, rather than just as a compliance requirement.

To maintain cultural sensitivity, it is necessary to have a thorough awareness of the target audience, as previously said. In the context of Indonesia, this challenge is intensified by Indonesia's vast cultural diversity and intricate social dynamics. This study reveals the challenges that the public relations practitioners encounter in attempting to effectively incorporate a diverse cultural perspectives into their digital public relations tactics, as stated by K1 below:

“Balancing the demands of global clients while respecting Indonesia's extensive cultural diversity and intricate social dynamics presents a significant obstacle in the realm of digital public relations. In my experience, numerous global business firms fail to consider the specific details of local cultures, resulting in ineffective or potentially damaging PR strategies that are insensitive to the cultural context and provoke public outrage on social media platforms.”

The findings from K11 reveal a notable absence in the way numerous multinational companies manage digital public relations practices in Indonesia. The failure to consider local cultural nuances frequently leads to efforts that are not only ineffective but also culturally inappropriate, provoking public outrage on social media. This demonstrates a shallow comprehension and execution of cultural sensitivity, where the focus is on international narratives rather than local relevance. In order to genuinely emphasize cultural sensitivity, organizations must develop cultural competence in their employees. This entails ensuring that their public relations strategies are not just globally consistent but also locally considerate and impactful.

This study emphasizes that importance of strategic advocacy value in digital public relations cannot be neglected. Although it is desirable for strategic advocacy to harmonize an organization's ideals with social issues, the truth is that several PR campaigns often appear dishonest or opportunistic (Dilenschneider, 2022). The disparity between claimed intentions and real actions highlights a shallow approach to advocacy, where the major emphasis is on immediate benefits rather than sustained, significant involvement. This study recommends that In order for strategic advocacy to have a meaningful impact, it is essential for PR practitioners to have a sincere dedication to the issues they are supporting. This goes beyond using persuasive language and requires them to actively and consistently engage in their strategic advocacy initiatives within the digital public relations practices.

Similarly, the proper consideration of cultural sensitivity is an essential element of social responsibility ethical value in the field of digital public relations. The comprehensive research results reveal a widespread deficiency in comprehending and valuing local cultural contexts, especially in diverse areas such as Indonesia. This lack of attention not only results in unsuccessful public relations efforts but also exposes the organization to the possibility of significant negative reactions and harm to its reputation. The lack of cultural sensitivity in the PR initiatives of numerous multinational firms indicates a superficial dedication to social responsibility, where global narratives take precedence over local relevance (Fei, 2024; Willeam, 2021). Hence, in order to fully uphold the cultural sensitivity value, organizations should allocate resources towards cultural competence training and formulate public relations strategies that are globally coherent and locally meaningful.

Therefore, this study proposes that including strategic advocacy and cultural sensitivity ethical value into digital public relations initiatives is crucial for establishing genuine connections with varied audiences and upholding trust. Nevertheless, the research results and discussions indicate that numerous companies view these values as mere tasks to be completed rather than fundamental elements of their ethical framework. This shallow approach not only diminishes the efficacy of PR initiatives but also erodes the trust of the public. In order for organizations to genuinely follow these ideals, they must embrace a comprehensive approach that places true participation, cultural diversity, and long-term advocacy activities as top priorities. This requires ongoing acquisition of knowledge, open and honest exchange of information, and a determined dedication to ensuring that the actions of the organization are in accordance with both international norms and local.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes the crucial significance of incorporating ethical values proposed in the model, such as transparency, privacy management, social responsibility, strategic advocacy, and cultural sensitivity, into digital public relations practices. In order to strengthen credibility and establish trust, public relations practitioners must promote genuine communication and continually respect these principles. Practical suggestions for PR professionals including developing thorough privacy safeguards, embracing honest communication tactics, and investing in cultural competence training. Additionally, It is crucial for scholars to do further research on the influence of these ethical norms on digital PR results and provide theoretical frameworks that assist practitioners in efficiently balancing global standards with local significance. By adopting these ethical values, both professionals and academics can make a substantial contribution to a more ethical and efficient digital public relations landscape.

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Versi Online: <http://journal.ubm.ac.id/>
Hasil Penelitian

Bricolage ; Jurnal Magister Ilmu Komunikasi
Vol.10 (No. 2) : 267 - 282. Th. 2024
p-ISSN: 2502-0935
e-ISSN: 2615-6425
