Popularity Abracadabra and Communication Ethics on Social Media (A Study of Rhetoric on the Content of YouTube Account @Kaesang)

Andika Hendra Mustaqim

English Department, Faculty of Communication and Language, Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika

*Corresponding Author
Email: andika.ahq@bsi.ac.id

Abstract

Communication ethics is an important factor for a politician in conveying content on social media. Ethics is also a guide in gaining popularity, especially for politicians who want to fight for power. This study aims to examine the ethics of communication on Kaesang Pangarep’s YouTube account. Using Habermas's (1984) communication ethics approach, this study examines the various approaches to popularity-based communication ethics by Kaesang. By using a qualitative approach, content analysis is a research method that is applied with an emphasis on descriptive. This research finds many novelties in the study of communication ethics. Kaesang adheres to communication ethics such as communicative action and dramaturgical approach. Kaesang also displays honesty by showing originality as an effort to construct legitimacy. Then, the research states that there is no violation of the validity of the truth, determination and honesty that Kaesang. To apply communication ethics, this study reveals the popularity of abracadabra by Kaesang, namely using caution in rhetoric and polite language style.

Keywords: Communication Ethics, Kaesang Pangarep, Social Media

INTRODUCTION

Kaesang Pangarep, later called Kaesang, is the youngest son of the President of the Republic of Indonesia Joko Widodo (Jokowi). Initially, the public knew him as the president's son who did not like politics because of the business activities he had been involved in. However, since May 2023, Kaesang's name has been mentioned as a strong candidate for mayor of Depok, a satellite city of Jakarta.

As a young millennial, Kaesang made a lot of moves by showing his intention to run for the Depok mayoral election. He approached young people through content displayed on the YouTube account, namely @Kaesang. He broke old models and styles of politicians by presenting something new. However, the question that arises is what about ethics with the millennial political style that is promoted by Kaesang through content on his YouTube.

In fact, it is impossible for humans to live without ethics. Ethics is very necessary for humans, without ethical principles, it is impossible for humans to live in harmony, without fear, despair, without hope, fear, and uncertainty (Merril & Odell, 1983). According to Johannesen (1990), ethics pays attention to human communication because it looks at judgments about what is right or wrong, and the potential impact on attitudes and styles that are carried out consciously.

Ethics is a very significant foundation in communication. That is because ethics is not related to purely philosophical matters, but also concerns matters relating to values and norms that bind a person in social life.

Indonesia's leading communication ethics expert, Haryatmoko (2011) views ethics as a philosophical reflection on morals. So, ethics is more of a normative discourse (it doesn't always have to be in the form of an obligatory order, because it is possible to act) that discusses good/evil. Ethics is seen more as an art of life that leads to happiness and wisdom (Haryatmoko, 2011).
In a book entitled *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, Habermas (1979) explains that ethics was originally known in bourgeois society which had views of legality, morality, and sovereignty and they expressed modern natural-law constructions in the form of formal ethics. In a different book entitled Theory and Practice, Habermas (1973) reveals that ethics is often associated with politics and ethics itself cannot be separated from custom and law.

Against the background of these problems, this study aims to examine rhetoric from the perspective of communication ethics. Ethics is a significant thing because it relates to the socialization and existence of a person on social media. This is very important because this study provides benefits and guidance on the ethics of communication in social media, especially for politicians.

Ethics is not the business of scientists and officials. Ethics is also the main concern of the millennial generation which is often underestimated about ethics, especially communication ethics. The millennial generation is indeed very close to social media where ethics has an important role.

Communication ethics has the goal of guaranteeing the right to communicate in public spaces and the right to correct information (Haryatmoko, 2007). Haryatmoko (2007) added, communication ethics also cares about the issue of justice, where the understanding of justice is sensitive to the needs of the community, and its uniqueness so that universality does not crush different voices that do not have to be uniform.

Why does communication need ethics? Johannesen (1996) revealed that communication requires a process of selecting symbols and creation because scientists argue that all communication transactions see the level of trust that is influenced to guarantee communication without a time limit. Seventh, it avoids unethical communication. Eighth, communication ethics is always listening with empathy.

Many researchers who study Internet ethics argue that many users do not read the terms of service (Fuchs, 2017). In touch with internet research, Fuchs (2017) suggests that qualitative analysis of social media data is linked to internet ethics by building a realistic and constructive dialogue.

Selnow (2000) explained that internet sites do not have editors, censors or truth arbiters. Thus, the message conveyed is free from obligations of accuracy and honesty. This includes social media, so moral principles are still needed. Selnow (2000) proposes ethical values such as truth, justice, honesty, and freedom.

Warnell (2015) warns that the number of millennials in 2050 will represent 75% of the share of the global job market so they must learn ethics as a preparation as a group that is always productive and positive. Asharaf (2015) explains that the millennial generation is always attached to social media and they also participate in digital interactions with various information and create news and inspire many ideas.

Habermas (1984) revealed four concepts of communicative action, namely the teleological action model, normatively regulated action, dramaturgical action, and communicative action. These four actions represent how the ideal act of communication in society, including in the realm of social media.

First, teleological action. According to Habermas (1984), teleological action considers the relationship between actors and the world that exists in a state of affairs (a certain situation or combination of circumstances). At the semantic level, according to Habermas (1984), these certain conditions are representations of the proportional content of sentences that express beliefs or intentions.

Second, normative regulated actions. The concept of normatively governed action presupposes the relationship between actors and worlds (Habermas, 1984). He gives examples of its application in sentences. “That is the case where q is ruled” which has a different meaning.
from the sentence “That is ruled by q.” The second sentence expresses a specific format or command when the form matches the normative truth claim, it is claimed validity for the intended circle.

Third, dramaturgical action. This concept was introduced by Goffman (1959) in his book entitled "the presentation of self in every day life". According to Habermas (1984), from the perspective of dramaturgical action, we can understand social action as bringing together participants forming public appearances with each other or performing for each other.

Communicative action. This concept plays with additional presuppositions, namely the linguistic medium that reflects actor-world relations (Habermas, 1984). To understand language, the mechanism of action coordination is introduced. Habermas (1984) describes three language concepts in communicative action. First, indirect communication where people only have realizations about their views. Second, consensual action in which people actualize existing normative agreements. The third self-presentation is related to the audience.

Then, Habermas (1984) explains the concept of communicative action assuming the perspectives of the speaker and listener. It is an actor who seeks consensus and measures it with truth, rightness and sincerity.

Habermas (1984) revealed a model of action related to participants interacting by mobilizing the potential of rationality to achieve the goal of understanding in communication. He made three valid claims about a person's statement. First, the statement is said to be true in the content of the proposition which states facts that are satisfactory and true. Second, a speech act is considered correct if it is by the prevailing normative context or the normative context that must be answered is recognized as having legitimacy or being valid. Third, the desire or intention expressed by the speaker has been expressed and is the content of what he is thinking.

Habermas also describes three worlds in which actors take relations with their statements (Habermas, 1984). First, the objective world as the totality of all entities concerning true statements is possible. Second, the social world is the totality of all legitimacy regulated in interpersonal relations. Third, the subjective world, namely the totality of the speaker's experiences to which he has special access.

This scheme, in the view of Haryatmoko (2007), is rather abstract and ideal but provides clear criteria, which can be drawn from Habermas's theory of communicational action. Its ethical framework lies mainly in the demands related to language.

According to Haryatmoko (2007), Habermas's idea presupposes that the type of communication that is built is a medium of mutual understanding without manipulation, conditioning, and deception. The ideal situation is in contrast to the real situation of an information organization system. The latter emphasizes egocentric calculations of utility and is coordinated by the constellation of interests. Even though it is too ideal, according to Haryatmoko (2007), Habermas' idea contributes to the development of communicative ethics by providing a normative framework that shows that it is still possible to produce correct information.

Research on communication ethics on social media is an interesting study because it goes along with the use of these communication platforms on social media. Ethics is important because it concerns the public interest in the use of social media communications (Gori et al., 2023). Moreover, ethics in social media also poses a threat because it is related to violence, pornography and hate speech, so it requires proper guidance (Germandi et al, 2023). Equally important, communication ethics is important because it relates to engagement with followers on social media where self-display efforts are important (Toffoletti et al., 2023).

The ethics of communication on social media is manifested in the form of rhetoric shown in words and actions. Rhetoric in social media is associated with ethics because it involves personal branding (Lair et al, 2005). This is because the rhetoric in social media is related to
mobilization and efforts to approach the public so that it is bound by ethics (Bradshaw). Ethics in rhetoric is something that is needed in the midst of the technological dissolution (Colton, 2016).

Based on the explanation of this background and frame of mind, this study aims to explore the ethics of communication and its relation to the popularity of the rhetoric delivered by Kaesang on his YouTube account. Later, that goal will be a guide to research to find novelty.

**RESEARCH METHODS**

The studies conducted in this research used a qualitative approach with content analysis methods. Hall and Grogan (2018) explain that social media research can use qualitative with an emphasis on descriptive content. With a descriptive approach to content, this study also bases the results on strong conceptual analysis.

The content analysis focuses more on testing each content as a unit (Neuendorf, 2017). This unit makes the analysis more robust and solid to produce significant research findings.

The sample used with the sample method aims to specialize in the analysis of videos displayed on Kaesang's Youtube account, namely @Kaesang for a duration of 1 July 2023 to 31 July 2023. The videos that are analyzed focus more on political issues in the podcast. The number of videos studied was four videos.

The reason for only four videos being analyzed is because this research uses a thematic approach in which the chosen theme is related to the politics promoted by Kaesang. In addition, the video duration which reaches more than 30 minutes makes the rhetorical analysis solid and comprehensive.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This discussion and discussion analyzes the content of Kaesang with the perspective of communication actions and claims of the validity of Jurgen Habermas's (1984) version of the statement. Thus, a critical view will emerge in the analysis of communication ethics towards YouTube content uploaded by Kaesang.

**The Four Communicative Actions**

Habermas' version of the theory of communicative action (1984) describes four concepts of communicative action consisting of teleological action models, normatively regulated actions, dramaturgical actions, and communicative actions. In short, the teleological model of action is an extension of the strategy model that can include the calculation of the agent's anticipated decision success as part of the additional goals set by the actor.

The concept of normative regulated action, does not refer to basic actors and other actors in the environment, but members of social groups who are action-oriented based on common values. Dramaturgy refers to participation in interacting with the public where the actor is raised with a certain image, his self-impression. The concept of communicative action proposes interaction between two subjects who can speak and act to build interpersonal communication.
1. Teleological Action

The various statements that Kaesang conveys on the podcast on his YouTube account show his efforts to build trust and sincere intentions. It was shown that what he was doing was an effort and a step to construct a purpose and objective that had already been planned.

Basically, according to Habermas (1984), certain conditions (states of affairs) are proportional content representations of sentences that express beliefs or intentions. Does the actor succeed in bringing his beliefs and perceptions into agreement with what is in the world or does he succeed in bringing what is the problem in the world into agreement with what he wants and believes (Habermas, 1984)?

What about the Kaesang content? Kaesang wanted to express his intention to show himself in Indonesian politics. The situation that occurs is that politics in Indonesia is heating up and the fighting parties will use any means to gain sympathy.

The Kaesang content was successful in being able to convey trust and perception to build follower consensus. This is shown by the content which is popular and liked by the people of Kaesong and is able to instil their opinions and views in their followers.

2. Actions Regulated Normatively

Habermas (1984) classifies normatively regulated action as a normative confirmative action concept assuming that agents can distinguish factors from normative elements of action situations in which conditions form values. The starting point for the normative model is that participatory actions can simultaneously adopt an objective value of something or not a case and non-confirmation actions that are ordered (Habermas, 1984).

From the content on his YouTube account, Kaesang uses YouTube as a medium to convey his arguments regarding the prestige of Jokowi's big name normatively. Jokowi is a president like the core of the discourse that Kaesang wants to present. It is also very normative for Kaesang to say rhetoric about his father.

However, this normative action also tries to break through by paying attention to the ethics and values that form the basis of Kaesang's life. He still has certain boundaries that are not violated because they are not only related to breaking the law but the ethics that bind him. This shows how Kaesang also tries to make himself a polite person, although he still presents himself as a young man trying to break into Indonesian politics.
3. Dramaturgical Action

Figure 2. Screenshot of @Kaesang on July 21, 2023.
Source: YouTube account of @Kaesang

All statements or actions on social media cannot be separated from dramaturgy. It was also attached to Kaesang. Moreover, actions and statements in front of the camera also contain scenarios, although sometimes they also pay attention to the aspect of spontaneity. The dramaturgy that Kaesang performs is still based on communication ethics because he is bound as a public figure who has targets and goals for what he says and does.

Dramaturgical action is considered inseparable from communication, especially political communication. However, this is not the case with the millennial generation, which tends to be more expressive and shows a model of communication like itself. Millennials generally don't see communication as part of the drama in life. They think that communication is a form of self-identity about who they are. That's what Kaesang pointed out in his content.

The content conveyed by Kaesang shows that he does not use a dramaturgical approach because it is spontaneous and shows expression as a form of disappointment. The content is a form of Kaesang's political expression. With regards to communicative actions, Kaesang wants to associate himself with his followers that he is a young politician.

This content also shows the intention that Kaesang is a biological child, and not as an acknowledgment. Kaesang also wants to emphasize that Jokowi's character is not necessarily the same as himself. He does not want to equate himself with Jokowi.

This shows that there is a dramaturgical aspect according to Habermas (1984), dramaturgical action is carried out by the principle of dramaturgical performance according to the project to make someone's impression. That's because Kaesong has political interests.

4. Communicative Action

Discourse on YouTube content is a communicative act that Kaesang wants to convey. The impression that was shown was that Sandi was not a smart politician. Kaesang's statement model represents three language concepts in communicative action as expressed by Habermas (1984). First, Kaesang's statement shows indirect communication where people only have realizations about their views. Second, Kaesang also tries to build consensus regarding his opinion on political attitudes by actualizing existing normative agreements. Third, Kaesang makes a self-presentation related to the audience with whom he is.

The main and first thing in the communicative act constructed by Kaesang is that he has an understanding that people who see his video already have a realization about him. This is important because the fact that Kaesang the son of the President of the Republic of Indonesia became an important figure is something that sticks with the public. Apart from that, the public also has the realization that Kaesang is a child of an official who is different from the others, because of his independence and work ethic which has been shown in various businesses and endeavours.
The realization of the public and the audience makes a reference to Kaesang speaking and acting on social media. It becomes a hint that sticks to Kaesang's mind so it has an impact on caution. Although, he tried not to be awkward about it.

Furthermore, Kaesang also built a consensus about the political stance he took. This is shown in various videos on YouTube. He presented himself that he was a candidate for mayor of Depok. The consensus was built with something normative to build its popularity.

Finally, from public perception to the consensus that Kaesang compiled, he represented it in the video so that it was watched by many people. That self-presentation shapes what, who, and how Kaesang is. It was constructed based on communication ethics so that it displays Kaesang who is a hopeful figure.

Claim Validity

To analyze ethics in the context of communication, the validity claims expressed by Habermas (1984) consisting of truth, rightness and sincerity are very fundamental. The three validity claims can lead to knowing whether someone’s statement reflects the right ethics in communicating, especially on social media, such as YouTube.

1. Truth

Truth is a very expensive thing in the world of politics. However, the truth depends on the perspective and point of view of the person giving the assessment. In addition, the truth is also bound by the context and history that surrounds it.

Habermas (1984) emphasizes interaction to convey the truth by conveying facts, normative context, and clear intentions. From the content of @Kaesang, it seems that he has tried to convey the truth about what he said.

![Figure 3 screenshot of @Kaesang on July 14, 2023.](Source: YouTube account of @Kaesang)

The truth of the statements and actions expressed by Kaesang refers to not being separated from the facts. It showed that what Kaesang revealed was indeed something that happened. Meanwhile, the normative context of Kaesang’s statement on his YouTube account shows that he cannot escape from his background as the son of a president who will always be the centre of attention. In addition, the context of politics in Indonesia is also an aspect that is very attached to him.

The purpose of more towards the goal to be achieved by Kaesang is popularity. He wants to show that he has real and clear ambitions to achieve, namely to become the mayor of Depok. So, it’s become the abracadabra of popularity that Kaesang applied.

In this way, the content of Kaesong does indeed show the truth as revealed by Habermas (1984), that a person's utterances focus on truth and facts. Truth is indeed a very expensive thing on YouTube because the flow of information is very flooded.
2. Rightness

Kaesong is a representative of the millennial generation who is expressive and speaks as it is in terms of language. Not only language, but Kaesang also pays attention to the element of accuracy in his statement on YouTube.

Kaesang's various statements show a satisfying proposition of accuracy from the point of view of the millennial generation. That is a satisfying fact for millennials like Kaesang. The accuracy of Kaesang's statement can also be proven by the current context where many millennials have positive views about politics in Indonesia.

However, if the content is read by the Baby Boomers generation, of course, it is very disrespectful and ignores ethics. However, Habermas' version of ethics focuses on precision. The language spoken by Kaesang is indeed an identical style spoken by the millennial generation.

This is due to other factors that form the foundation in terms of the accuracy of the audience that is the target of the video. He is targeting young people, namely the millennial generation and Generation Z, so he uses a style of language and rhetoric that is more appropriate for the younger generation. So, it’s become the abracadabra of popularity that Kaesang applied.

What's interesting about Kaesang in his various contents is how he presents accuracy by trying to confirm the information or statements he conveys to the partners he speaks to or the sources presented on his podcast. It was intended that he would not make a mistake in speaking and position himself as a politician who wants to build an image that he is not a leader who sounds random.

3. Sincerity

Presenting honesty is a rare thing in today's post-truth world. For this reason, Kaesang tries to be present as a young politician who prioritizes honesty. At a minimum, it is displayed through various statements and actions on social media.

On social media, honesty is not only shown through mere statements and actions. But, it is corroborated by a valid and solid expression. The expressions shown by Kaesang in his various contents are by using body language, such as smiles, and laughter, to the gestures he plays. It was as a form of emphasis on honesty that he wanted to mean.

Honesty on YouTube is also played with the right rhetoric. It is strengthened by choosing the right words and arranging sentences to avoid bias and misinformation that lead to dangerous misperceptions. This shows that what Kaesong is showing is an attempt to show himself as an honest young man. So, it’s become the abracadabra of popularity that Kaesang applied.

However, by claiming the validity of Habermas's version of honesty, it can be a solution to revive the importance of honesty or originality. However, honesty is very essential in communication ethics. What Kaesang disclosed is also by valid claims of honesty or originality and has a legitimacy estimate.

The honest claim presented by Kaesang shows his efforts to build himself as a young politician who has credibility. Although it will be tested later when he is elected in the Depok
mayoral election. However, this claim is an attempt to show oneself as a politician who is different from other politicians.

CONCLUSION

Kaesang is not an ordinary YouTube content creator. He is a character because he was born into an educated family. What is written and expressed is not just because he is carried away by feelings as he claims. But what he said showed his thoughts on the political concept within himself. Seen from the perspective of communication ethics, Habermas (1984) shows that what Kaesang expressed contains truth and facts.

Of the four communicative actions of Habermas's (1984) version, Kaesang's statement shows a teleological action in which he was successful in being able to convey trust and perception to build consensus among his followers. Kaesang also denotes normatively regulated actions where there are conditions. It turns out that Kaesang's statement on YouTube does not use a dramaturgical action approach, but what he conveys is spontaneous and expressive scenarios. Then, the discourse on the content is a communicative action that Kaesang wants to convey.

To analyze ethics in the context of communication, the validity claims expressed by Habermas (1984) consist of truth, accuracy, and honesty which are very fundamental. Kaesong is a representative of the millennial generation who is expressive and pays attention to the element of accuracy in his statements on YouTube. For honesty, what Kaesang disclosed also complies with prevailing claims of honesty or originality and has legitimacy. Thus, there is no violation of the validity of the truth, determination and honesty that Kaesang has made through his various statements on YouTube.

This research has limitations because it only examines Kaesang, and does not compare it with politicians or other content creators. This research also only uses a qualitative approach so it does not pay attention to public voice. In the future, researcher suggest that studies on communication ethics on social media can examine audience perceptions.

This research has a real contribution to YouTube content creators in paying attention to communication ethics. That way, they will understand and adhere to the most ideal communication ethics in presenting themselves on videos on their account. This research is also useful for politicians to convey ideas and war of ideas on social media.

REFERENCES


