

## Actualizing Malay communication ethics in social media: Study of the *Kitab Kumpulan Ringkas Berbetulan Lekas*

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### Abstract

This research stems from the rampant negative impact of social media as a medium of communication in the cyber era, such as crime, cyber violence, sexual harassment, pornographic content, gossip infotainment, and so on. This study uses the content analysis method that is extracted from the parts of values of communication ethics in *Kitab Kumpulan Ringkas Berbetulan Lekas* (KRBL) written by Raja Ali Kelana. The urgency of this research is part of the effort to answer the needs of today based on past experiences and as part of maintaining the value of wisdom that lives in the treasury of knowledge in Malay. The results of the study of the content of communication ethics in KRBL show that the principles of communication ethics contained therein are speaking the truth, being knowledgeable, not indulging in disgrace, speaking softly, not arguing, and maintaining confidentiality. These values seem to be very normative and in line with the values in Islamic teachings and universal values in communication. The content of communication ethics values in KRBL is also still quite relevant to be actualized in social media. From this study, it is also revealed that the intellectual legacy of Nusantara figures enriches the study of Islamic communication, necessitating further research on different figures, approaches, and subjects.

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### Keywords:

communication ethics; social media; Malay literature; Raja Ali Kelana.

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh maraknya dampak negatif media sosial sebagai media komunikasi di era siber, seperti kriminalitas, kekerasan siber, pelecehan seksual, konten pornografi, infotainment yang bersifat gosip dan lain sebagainya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode analisis isi yang digali dari nilai-nilai etika komunikasi dalam Kitab Kumpulan Ringkas Berbetulan Lekas (*KRBL*) yang ditulis oleh Raja Ali Kelana. Urgensi penelitian ini adalah sebagai bagian dari upaya menjawab kebutuhan masa kini berdasarkan pengalaman masa lalu dan sebagai bagian dari mempertahankan nilai kearifan yang hidup dalam khazanah ilmu pengetahuan dalam bahasa Melayu. Hasil kajian terhadap muatan etika komunikasi dalam *KRBL* menunjukkan bahwa prinsip-prinsip etika komunikasi yang terkandung di dalamnya adalah seperti berkata benar, berilmu, tidak mengumbar aib, bertutur kata lemah lembut, tidak berbantah-bantahan, dan menjaga kerahasiaan. Nilai-nilai tersebut terlihat sangat normatif dan sejalan dengan nilai-nilai dalam ajaran Islam dan nilai-nilai universal dalam berkomunikasi. Muatan nilai-nilai etika komunikasi dalam *KRBL* juga masih cukup relevan untuk diaktualisasikan dalam media sosial. Dari penelitian ini, diketahui juga bahwa khazanah pemikiran tokoh Nusantara memperkaya kajian komunikasi Islam sehingga perlu diteliti lebih lanjutan, baik terhadap tokoh, pendekatan, maupun obyek yang berbeda.

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## INTRODUCTION

With the advent of technology, human communication has become increasingly diverse. Interpersonal communication is no longer solely reliant on verbal exchanges but is enriched by a myriad of digital platforms, ranging from open to closed networks. The characteristics of digital communication are text and symbols, a combination of text and images, which can also be visual, and sometimes a combination of them. The presence of this communication platform facilitates the communication of modern humans even though they are separated by thousands of kilometers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012). It is not surprising that this new communication, especially through social media, has significantly changed the world (Miller et al., 2016).

Conversely, the rapid proliferation of technology has also given rise to new challenges, including the widespread dissemination of fake news, hate speech, hoaxes, and fraudulent activities. A study conducted by Populix revealed that nearly 80% of respondents have encountered negative experiences while using social media platforms. Among the negative experiences encountered, spam messages (52%), fraud (31%), maintenance errors (30%), hacking (26%), stalking (21%), and cyberbullying (16%) are some of the most common negative experiences (CNBC, 2022). The data shows that cyberspace and digital communication are not a vacuum. Even communication that is expected to be faster and better creates new problems. In a sense, digital communication, which is expected to make it easier to get messages from communicants, is actually uprooted due to the influx of information, news, and messages containing negative material (Fuchs, 2022b). The convenience of communication is disrupted. In fact, communication in chat groups, it creates new uproar, which causes members to become more distant and leave the group (Saputra, 2020).

Adverse impacts such as these phenomena arise because digital communication ethics have not become a habit for every user. Unfortunately, many online users mistakenly believe that digital communication is less authentic than face-to-face interaction, leading to the proliferation of hoaxes and hate speech. To foster a respectful and understanding online community, it is crucial to recognize and practice good communication ethics (Fuchs, 2022b; Mutiah et al., 2019; Rusmina, 2018). The significance of ethics in the communication process aims to make communication effective and establish a harmonious relationship between the communicator and the communicant. The relationship will be harmonious if the communicator and communicant foster mutual pleasure. A sense of mutual respect and pleasure can arise when individuals understand and appreciate each other's unique characteristics and values (Nurrachmi & Puspita, 2018).

Johannesen states that ethical communication is not only a series of careful and reflective decisions and communicating in a responsible and ethical manner, but the conscientious observance of ethical principles (Johannesen et al., 2008). In communication, it is necessary to consider the rules of propriety so that the communication process runs smoothly and harmoniously. That is, in everyone, there

is a conscious and unconscious potential in their behavior. If you are accustomed to doing ethical actions in accordance with the rules, it will be built in yourself to comply with the applicable norms. For example, in critical conditions, decisions regarding ethical communication arise not from deep consideration but rather from the character that is formed within ourselves.

According to Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), as cited by Tjahjadi, humans possess an innate capacity to discern good actions (Tjahjadi, 1991). He strongly emphasized purity of motivation as the main characteristic of moral action, and it inherents sense of morality that manifests in our inclination to adhere to ethical guidelines out of respect for societal norms. He believed that the implementation of moral obligations is for the sake of duty itself and not for the sake of other goals (Sudarminta, 2013). Humans possess an intrinsic sense of morality that compels them to act in accordance with their duties and obligations. This inherent moral compass guides our actions, transcending personal desires or inclinations. Kant referred to this unwavering commitment to duty as the “command.”

From the above description, it is known that communication ethics itself has been a long-standing study among philosophers and scholars (Arnett et al., 2009; Karolak, 2015). In the Western and Islamic world, the discussion of communication ethics is also inseparable from the philosophy of ethics in general (Mukherjee, 2016; Yusoff, 2016). But what is no less important is the communication ethics of local cultural values that grow in an area. In this case, Malay scholarship also has many guidelines and guidelines that become ethical standards for Malay people, both written and unwritten (Tjahjadi, 1991). Numerous Malay scholars, especially during the Riau Lingga Kingdom era, produced works and ideas on communication, such as Raja Ali Haji with *Gurindam Dua Belas*, Abu Muhammad Adnan with his *Kutipan Mutiara*, Raja Khalid Hitam with his *Syair Perjaianan Sultan Mahmud Riau Lingga*, and including Raja Ali Kelana in his *Kumpulan Ringkas Berbetulan Lekas (KRBL)* (1910). The last book has emphasized the significance of ethics and manners in communication. This influential text delves into three primary themes: state administration and government politics, general communication, and manners.

The urgency of studying *KRBL* is because the values contained in the civilization of society are living values that become wisdom (Al Muhdhar et al., 2019;

Ningrum & Sungkawa, 2018). Thus, the communication ethics in *KRBL* is fundamental to learn because: firstly, the manuscript is part of the heritage of Malay civilization. As it is known that Malay civilization was once an important part of civilization in the world so that it has many legacies to be inherited by the next generation; secondly, research on the Malay treasures of the past needs to be re-actualized so that it remains alive and is well applied in today's life; and lastly, the phenomenon of the digital era which has not yet received answers to its problems, needs to find solutions from the past with the aim of presenting its antithesis. Based on the above description, this article focuses on the values of communication ethics contained in the *KRBL* manuscript and looks at its relevance for today. Examining the relevance of the values contained in *KRBL* is part of the effort to revive the values that once grew in the Malay civilization.

## **METHODS**

This study examines communication ethics using a qualitative research approach, specifically a library research method. The primary data source is the *Kitab Kumpulan Ringkas Berbetulan Lekas (KRBL)*. The thought processes within *KRBL* are analyzed through content analysis, a method that aims to reveal the intellectual substance of a figure by dividing and categorizing textual discussions to uncover underlying concepts (Ratna, 2010; Schreier, 2012). According to Kimberly A Neuendorf, "content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use." (Neuendorf, 2017) So, sections of the text focusing on communication ethics are critically examined to explore Raja Ali Kelana's philosophical foundation regarding norms and values in communication ethics.

The methodological steps include first describing the author and the work—Raja Ali Kelana and *KRBL*—then identifying specific parts relevant to the research objectives, and finally analyzing these sections. This analysis uses a descriptive-analytic approach, which unpacks the themes within *KRBL* while integrating interpretive analysis to reach a comprehensive understanding (Ratna, 2010). Each of Raja Ali Kelana's ethical thoughts is outlined descriptively, with integrated analysis enhancing the coherence of understanding. Upon uncovering the central tenets of Raja

Ali Kelana's views on communication ethics, the study then assesses their relevance in today's context to draw a comprehensive conclusion regarding the intellectual archaeology of his thought.

This study uses a conceptual framework on communication and new media as a basic foundation while also reinforcing the concept. The theoretical framework is based on Islamic and Western communication ethics theories. This theoretical framework will serve as an analytical tool in dissecting Raja Ali Kelana's thoughts on communication ethics. Both of these will be explained as follows.

#### *Communication on social media*

In today's modern world, it is virtually impossible to avoid exposure to media. We realize it or not, the media, with all its content, has become a part of human life. Along with the times, the presence of media is increasingly diverse and growing. Initially, communication in the media was only unidirectional, meaning that media audiences could only enjoy the content presented by media sources (Miller et al., 2016). But along with the times, ordinary people as media viewers are no longer only able to enjoy the content of the media exposed to them, but can already participate in filling the content in the media. This is a form of digital communication or cyber communication through various devices called new media (Aichner et al., 2021).

The term "new media" is considered by the users to represent the term new world that represents human activities in real life. However, the meaning of new media itself is also not the same. Each expert has their own definition of new media, depending on their approach. For example, according to Kaplan and Haenlein, social media is a group of internet-based applications built on the ideological foundations of Web 2.0, which is a platform for the evolution of social media that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012). Taprial and Kanwar define social media as media that a person uses to be social, or get social online by sharing content, news, photos, and others with others (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012). Social media is the process of interaction between individuals by creating, sharing, exchanging, and modifying ideas or ideas in the form of virtual or network communication. Experts agree that the term new media is not a term to replace old media, but rather a term to describe emerging characteristics only.



Digital communication is a communication process dominated by written communication, ranging from SMS, email, WhatsApp, Facebook, and other web-based applications. Later, with the rapid development of technology, voice messages and video calls have been able to bridge the gap between communicators and communicants so that both are like in a direct meeting. Various topics of conversation appear on social media platforms: politics, health, social, economic, cultural, religious, and so on. For example, in politics, certain topics are deliberately created to influence others in making choices, which then end up between likes and dislikes (Syahputra et al., 2024; Ubaid & Subandi, 2017). Likewise, on the topic of religion, likes and dislikes towards religious issues also often become long conversations on social media, especially when it comes to religion and politics (Arjon, 2018; Hayat & Nurhakki, 2022). Interestingly, social media is also used for promotion, branding, and building public opinion. Social media is no longer individual media, but has also become the official account of companies, institutions, organizations, and even anonymous accounts. People who build an image or build public opinion are called buzzers or influencers.

However, this new media is also considered as a source of new social problems such as crime, violence, sexual harassment, pornographic content, gossip, infotainment, divorce, infidelity, wrong imitation effects, pseudo-relationships, shifting morality, forgery, plagiarism, game addiction, laziness, and even macro negative effects to the stage of hegemony tendencies, disruption, interstate conflict due to wiretapping and the state's failure to anticipate media convergence (Redi, 2015). This means that the new media that appears on the internet world is not just a device. Rather, it is also able to influence its users. Therefore, McLuhan said, 'the medium is the message'. The media used to convey messages, according to McLuhan, is not just a tool, but has a certain role. Society is not only influenced by the 'content' but also by the 'media' used (McLuhan, 2008). This condition requires ethical standards in the use of social media (Fuchs, 2022b; Mutiah et al., 2019; Rusmina, 2018).

#### *Communication ethics: Western and Islamic perspectives*

Social media has become a public sphere that is inevitably ethical. As Jurgen Habermas suggests, social media has become a public sphere involving ethical

considerations. The public sphere requires mutual understanding, equality, and rational argumentation to reach a shared consensus (Habermas, 2004). For this reason, ethics remains a crucial benchmark for determining the good or bad, right or wrong, of any social media communication (Karolak, 2015). Ethical values have long been debated among philosophers and religious scholars, serving as foundational standards for truth doctrines. This section explores the characteristics and points of intersection between these perspectives as a framework for examining the ethical communication principles embodied in *KRBL*.

Three primary schools of ethical thought have emerged: deontology, teleology, and virtue ethics. First, deontological ethics emphasizes universal moral obligations and principles, regardless of the outcomes of an action. Immanuel Kant (1875) championed this approach, asserting that a morally right action aligns with absolute moral duty, irrespective of its consequences. In digital communication, deontological ethics promotes respectful and value-driven communication, honoring each individual as an end in themselves. Second, teleological ethics, or consequentialism, assesses the morality of an action based on its outcomes. This approach judges the rightness or wrongness of an act by its consequences. A prominent proponent, John Stuart Mill, argued that a morally right action generates the greatest happiness for most people. In digital communication, teleological ethics prioritizes actions that provide broad social benefit. Third, virtue ethics emphasizes the role of individual character and virtues as the core of moral behavior (Annas, 2007). Aristotle, a major proponent of virtue ethics, stresses the importance of cultivating a good moral character. In the digital realm, virtue ethics encourages communicators to act with integrity, honesty, and wisdom—not solely for specific goals but as a reflection of good moral character.

These ethical frameworks each offer distinct guiding values. In communication ethics, scholars have extensively explored universal values that provide a standard for assessing the morality of actions. Here, Western philosophy and Islam present distinct yet similarly purposed value principles in communication. The following summarizes key communication ethics principles from various thinkers and Islamic perspectives.

1. **Honesty:** This principle emphasizes speaking and acting honestly, never deceiving or withholding vital information. Honesty in communication



builds trust among the parties involved. The Qur'an in Surah Al-Ahzab (33:70) states, *"O you who believe, fear Allah and say what is right."*

2. **Openness:** Communication should be open to all information, opinions, or ideas from others. Openness fosters constructive and non-critical dialogue. Islam also prioritizes this principle of freedom and transparency according to the concept of *hurriyah* (Yusoff, 2016).
3. **Responsibility:** Individuals should be accountable for their words and actions in communication. This also involves awareness of the message's impact and a readiness to accept the consequences of the communication. This is also similar to Quranic content in Surah Al-Ahzab (33:70) as mentioned above.
4. **Fairness:** This principle promotes equity in communication, ensuring that no discrimination or injustice occurs. Equal opportunities should be provided for everyone to share their views. The Quranic Surah An-Nisa (4:135) stresses the importance of fairness in every situation, including communication.
5. **Respect:** Respect is fundamental to ethical communication. Communicators should honor differences in opinions, backgrounds, or values among individuals. In the Surah Al-Hujurat (49:12), Allah warns us of the dangers of prejudice, *"O you who believe, avoid much suspicion, for some suspicions are sin. Do not spy on one another, nor backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would surely abhor it. So, fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is Accepting of Repentance, Most Merciful."*
6. **Caring:** Ethical communication should also show care for others, considering how a message might impact the feelings or welfare of the recipient. In Islam, this has also been explained in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:12), where Allah forbids gossip and compares it to 'eating the flesh of one's dead brother.'
7. **Confidentiality:** In certain contexts, confidentiality is essential for safeguarding individual privacy or sensitive information. This principle emphasizes the importance of not disclosing information shared in

confidence. As it relates to honesty and trustworthiness, Islam stresses the importance of this.

In Islam, communication ethics are categorized into two main areas: the message's content and the delivery manner. Content guidelines include teachings such as honesty and truthfulness, fairness and impartiality, politeness, refraining from negative assumptions, promoting goodness, and using respectful language—all of which align with universal communication principles (Sadig, 2017).

Regarding the manner of delivery, key Islamic principles include *qaulan sadidan*, *qaulan ma'rufan*, *qaulan balighan*, *qaulan layyinan*, and *qaulan kariman*. *Qaulan sadidan* emphasizes truthfulness, urging communicators to avoid sharing unverified information, while *qaulan ma'rufan* encourages positive engagement, even during disagreements, ensuring messages cause no harm. *Qaulan balighan* stresses clarity and conciseness, recommending straightforward and relevant communication to the audience's needs. *Qaulan layyinan* promotes gentleness and responsiveness, especially in online interactions involving differing views or critiques, advocating for respectful, non-harmful words. Finally, *qaulan kariman*, or "respectful words," encourages honoring the recipient, avoiding offensive language, and fostering dignity in electronic communication by maintaining courteous and respectful message delivery.

The overview of communication ethics concepts in Western and Islamic traditions indicates that each considers ethics the standard for evaluating good and bad actions. However, Islam provides more detailed principles in communication practices, encompassing the three ethical schools of thought within its framework. Furthermore, Islam emphasizes communication etiquette, prioritizing decorum in interactions. This understanding will serve as a reference for evaluating Raja Ali Kelana's ideas in *KRBL*, thereby revealing the distinctive characteristics of his philosophical thinking.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **Raja Ali Kelana and the *Kitab Kumpulan Ringkas Berbetulan Lekas (KRBL)***

One of the most notable and influential scholars in the Riau Lingga Kingdom was Raja Ali Kelana. He was a "Kelana," which is known as a principal position in the

structure of the Riau-Lingga Kingdom. Besides, he was also a potential successor to “*Yang Dipertuan Muda*” in the royal structure. “*Yang Dipertuan Muda*” is also known as the Prime Minister in the modern era. He was the successor to his father, “*Yang Dipertuan Muda Muhammad Yusuf Al-Ahmadi*,” who was the half-brother of Sultan Abdurrahman Muazzam Syah II, the last sultan of the Riau-Lingga kingdom. His family background as part of the royal family gave him many opportunities to learn from teachers who were brought to Penyengat. Raja Ali Kelana also joined the Rusydiah Klub, an organization of scholars at the time, whose members included Tahir Jalaluddin, Syed Ali, Tengku Khalid Hitam, and others. Together with the Rusdiyah Club, Raja Ali Kelana was part of the publishing and printing of magazines and books in Penyengat and Singapore (Rahman, 2020; Syahri, 2007).

The political situation in the Riau Lingga Kingdom in that era was strongly influenced by the political policies of the Dutch East Indies government. The Dutch government always tried to pressure the Sultan and the policymakers to always obey their will. However, within the kingdom, there were also two factions: those who agreed to follow their policies and those who refused. In such conditions, Raja Ali Kelana had an important role in providing advice to the Sultan. The politics between the brothers culminated in the determination of the position of *Yang Dipertuan Muda* after the death of his parents, King Muhammad Yusuf Al-Ahmadi. As a result of the controversy, Raja Ali Kelana finally resigned from the position of Kelana (Syahri, 2007).

After stepping down from Kelana, Raja Ali Kelana was more active in activities with the Rusydiah Klub. The group was suspected of being an association that was not willing to submit to the Dutch and continued to provide intellectual resistance through criticism and input to the sultan. The climax was when the Dutch ultimatum to the sultan declared the dissolution of the Riau Lingga Kingdom. As a result, the sultan and several royal officials, including Raja Ali Kelana, chose to move to Singapore before the Dutch read out the impeachment letter. After some time in Singapore, Raja Ali Kelana moved to Johor and became mufti for the rest of his life.

His experience in the world of practical government politics and his struggles in the intellectual world also provide experience in writing his thoughts. Throughout his life, he is said to have written six books, and one of them is *Kitab Kumpulan Ringkas*

*Berbetulan Lekas (KRBL)*. *KRBL* is one of Raja Ali Kelana's essays printed by Al-Imam publisher in Singapore (Kelana, 1910). *KRBL* has been published several times in transliteration by publishers in Indonesia (Yunus, 2001) and Malaysia (Kelana, 1999). From what the author traces, the translation published in Indonesia is incomplete, namely, only the initial part that reviews the science and ethics of government politics. While the section on manners is not included (Yunus, 2001). Meanwhile, the Malaysian publication contains the complete title as stated in the manuscript (Kelana, 1999).

The book is broadly divided into three main sections: government politics, communication ethics, and general ethical principles. Similar to many Middle Eastern literary works, Malay manuscripts from the Riau Islands often exhibit influences and borrowings. This is a common observation among scholars studying the works of Raja Ali Haji (Idris, 2015). Some studies conducted on *KRBL* are more focused on the study of its political field (Harun, 2001; Rahman, 2020, 2022). Other parts of *KRBL* have never received the attention of scholars. While in it, there are discussions about communication ethics, daily ethics, and also other ethics. Therefore, this paper will only focus on one section, "*Adab Perangai Berkata-kata*," which contains 14 chapters. Raja Ali Kelana's thoughts on communication ethics contained in this part of the *KRBL* are thoughts that deserve mutual attention because they are the embodiment of values that once lived in this Malay realm. Therefore, the urgency of this study is the need for its reconstruction and actualization in the face of communication in today's digital era.

### **The value of communication ethics in *KRBL***

Literally, the *KRBL* text encompasses a strong emphasis on ethical content. It has been recognized by the author, Raja Ali Kelana, who aims to serve as a guide for his readers concisely, aligning with the literary style used in it (Harun, 2001). In the scientific paradigm, ethics involves the careful consideration of right and wrong in all human actions, both individual and collective. Meanwhile, communication is closely related to social interaction through communication. In this case, Raja Ali Kelana has contained some of the main principles in communication ethics as reviewed in *KRBL*, which is contained in the chapter "*Adab Perangai Berkata-kata*."

From the author's search, there are at least six important terms that become values in communication ethics contained in *KRBL*, namely telling the truth, being knowledgeable, not spreading disgrace, speaking softly, not arguing, and keeping secrets. The following is a description of these communication ethics values and a content analysis of them.

#### *Speak the truth*

At the beginning of the chapter on communication etiquette in *KRBL*, one of the first principles of communication etiquette is to speak the truth. As written below:

*"When he speaks, let him speak the truth, so that he will not prevail, which will strengthen him from falling into error" (Kelana, 1910).*

Truthfulness is a fundamental principle of effective communication. Lies can undermine the communication process and erode trust in personal and social relationships. As emphasized in the *KRBL*, accurate and precise language is essential to prevent misunderstandings and misinformation.

On the other hand, telling a lie is the next discussion. In everyday terms, it is often said, "If you lie once, there will be another lie." One lie will lead to another. This happens because it tries to cover up the first lie. And so on. The warning in this *KRBL* about lying is as follows:

*"So verily, lying is a reprehensible trait that degrades its companions. To begin with, lying is like swearing and speaking slanderously, and this is half of the character of a person who lacks intelligence, which will return later to the beginning.... of puberty and immorality" (Kelana, 1910).*

The quote above emphasizes that telling lies is the same as insulting the other person. Telling lies is the same as slander. While slander is the ugliest of lies. Therefore, it is very important in every communication to convey the right message, a message that is in accordance with the facts, a valid message. In this *KRBL*, it is

indicated that people who lie in speaking are among the characteristics of reasonable people.

When examined further, the principle of telling the truth in *KRBL* is also a universal value in communication. This is also the main teaching in Islam. Islam teaches its followers to always speak the truth. Honesty is an important principle that emphasizes a person's character.

### *Knowledgeable*

In the 14th Article, the need for knowledge in communicating with others is mentioned. Here is an excerpt from *KRBL*:

*"When speaking, let it be with knowledge. And if you keep silent, keep silent with hilmu (compassion)" (Kelana, 1910).*

Knowledgeable in the context of the principle of communication ethics in *KRBL* is knowing that a word is based on theoretically proven knowledge, and also knowing well about the theme of the conversation. If you do not know it, it is recommended that you keep quiet or just listen well. This is in accordance with the fact that if you do not know the theme of the conversation, then the direction of the conversation will tend to go off topic. As a result, the conversation becomes unfocused and wanders here and there.

In fact, even when silent, Raja Ali Kelana suggests that silence still shows affection or is equivalent to listening carefully. Similarly, if one is left out of the discussion in a discussion forum, one should be silent and listen first in order to know the topic of discussion well. This is as described in the following excerpt:

*"When a man begins to speak to us, do not turn away from him until the word is complete, as it is not obligatory to listen to knowledge when you have missed the word, but to wait for the word, because you cannot avoid knowing the will of the thing beforehand, and you can return to him the use and guidance that....//50//"* (Kelana, 1910).



This knowledgeable speech is also important for knowing the other person. When talking to parents, teachers, and rulers, the role of knowledge is very important. Likewise, if the interlocutor is suspected of being wrong in conveying information and opinions, then KRBL suggests that he should not immediately reprimand in a subtle way. This is because the harsh reprimand will actually make the communication pattern not good. Conversely, if you know that the material presented is wrong, then you must admit the mistake. Not by justifying it with false arguments.

*"So indeed, reconciliation is best fought if it is hard on the breath and perpetuates the fault, which is the greatest and most evil of behaviors, and sometimes leads to decay and distress" (Kelana, 1910).*

It is very clear from the above quote that not admitting mistakes is a bad deed and will have a negative impact on communication and social relationships.

#### *Don't expose someone's disgrace*

A person's disgrace or disability is not something worth talking about, especially not in an open forum. This is as stated in the following article 116 of the KRBL:

*"When speaking, do not mention any of the disgraces that are attributed to the body, for perhaps someone in the assembly has such a disgrace. So (ra'-sin-nun) ia and so it is the cause of corrupting his heart and keeping him away from us" (Kelana, 1910). As for "ra-sin-nun) ia," it is not clearly readable in the original manuscript.*

In the quote above, one of the disgraces that should not be mentioned is a person's physical disability. Physical disabilities should not be discussed, especially in a social forum, for fear that there are members in the forum who experience the disabilities being discussed. In fact, mentioning disgrace with sarcasm is also not allowed because it has an impact on the disharmony of the conversation.

Raja Ali Kelana through KRBL impliedly mentioned that all forms of disgrace should not be discussed vulgarly, because in fact everyone has their own disgrace. His

message is also in line with Islamic teachings which prohibit a person from indulging in the disgrace of others. In fact, in a hadith it is mentioned that those who hide the disgrace of others will actually be rewarded by covering their own disgrace. Therefore, talking about disgrace or spreading someone's ugliness on social media is also not allowed.

#### *Gentle speech*

Manners in conversation are very important. For example, when talking to an older person, there are manners. Talking to people of higher rank, there are also manners. Likewise, speaking with younger people, it is also necessary to maintain manners. This is as mentioned in the following quote:

*"Half of the perfection of the one who says, when the one who is addressed is a person who is honored or has a rank that by saying with "you", "I" umpanya, but say for him with the advantages and glory that is on approximately decent and maqom such as "kebawah dauli", "dauli tengku", "kebawah kuasa", "kuasa tengku", "hamba engku", "hamba tengku", "hamba habib", "hamba wan", and others. Or "patik", "yang", "tok abah", "anak", "abang", "adik", "uwak kami", "sahaya", and others where appropriate" (Kelana, 1910).*

This means that manners in speaking also need to be shown and maintained properly. The example written in the quote above is the condition of the Riau-Lingga kingdom era, which still uses the old Malay language. When actualized with today's conditions, the choice of vocabulary only needs adjustment but does not reduce the true meaning of the text. For example, we used to call "Bapak or Sir" for those who are older or have a higher rank. Calling "adik" or "adinda" to the younger ones.

Therefore, gentle speech is an important part of the communication process. It relies heavily on the choice of vocabulary as well as expression when delivering it. In KRBL, it is also mentioned as follows:

#### Article (122)

*When someone asks you a question, you should answer him with a gentle and kind answer, for this extinguishes the flame of distress. And dulls the sharpness of the tongue and pleases the troubled heart. On the contrary, a harsh and harsh*

*answer, in fact, muddies the law of the nafs and ignites the flame of anger."*

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Article (123)

*Know, O beloved, that the softness of the tongue and the delicacy of speech are insufficient both for the attainment of any purpose if they are not accompanied by a feeling of peaceful knowledge and a gentle disposition (Kelana, 1910).*

Gentle words or polite speech will make people happy and comfortable to communicate with. The importance of gentle speech is not just the choice of good and polite vocabulary, but it must also be accompanied by gentle attitudes and behavior. The purpose of gentle speech is to make communication less awkward, to make communication smoother, and to make communication more modest. In Islamic terminology, these gentle words fall into the category of qawlan layyinah (Parhan et al., 2021).

*Don't argue*

In a forum, expressing opinions for discussion sometimes results in long discussions that lead to debates. Debate must be avoided so as not to cause new problems. In KRBL, it is mentioned as follows:

*"Know, O beloved, that multiplying in opposition and arguing leads in general to anger and hatred, and perhaps many valid sentences damage our noble friends. So, if you really want to fight, then keep in mind that the opposition should be gentle and each of them should be short and clear" (Kelana, 1910).*

What is meant by "turning to opposition and rebuttal" is debate. Raja Ali Kelana explains that debate tends to lead to bringing hatred and anger, and so there is strife and enmity between them. What is conveyed in this KRBL is the worst impact of unhealthy debates, such as tangential debates, debates that are not on topic, and debates that have no meaning between the debaters, thus destroying the relationships that have been established. Debates that only rely on wanting to win, wanting to look smart, wanting to show their dominance and hegemony, and others are unhealthy

forms of debate and will only lead to disputes. It's important to keep your emotions in check so that you don't get provoked into anger.

However, he admits that debate cannot be avoided entirely because it brings benefits, such as scientific debates that are useful for sharpening critical thinking, increasing understanding, and training sensitivity to other people's thoughts. However, it must be done wisely. Raja Ali Kelana gave a warning on two conditions, namely that it be delivered with gentleness, brevity, and clarity. The first one is very clear, as it is also mentioned in the Qur'an Surah An-Nahl verse 125 that we should argue in a good way. The second is to be brief in arguing so as not to cause a longer debate. In debates, good arguments must be presented in a systematic and structured manner. And the last is clear, which is in the form of clarity of argumentation and does not get out of the context being debated.

#### *Keeping secrets*

Secrets are very important. Whoever knows about a secret that has been leaked, then it is no longer a secret. Therefore, keeping secrets is also one of the norms and values to be maintained in every communication. Raja Ali Kelana in *KRBL* mentions this in the following quote:

*"When a man has been entrusted with a secret, be on guard against revealing it, for the concealment of secrets is half as great as that which distinguishes men from him" (Kelana, 1910).*

Confidential information should not be revealed to others. If the confidentiality is only known to three people, then no fourth, fifth, sixth, and so on should be allowed to know. Some things can be conveyed to the public, and there are also things that do not need to be, such as secrets. It may be that this confidentiality is of a nature that also brings shame to others, including those who have the effect of ostracizing them.

Keeping secrets is not just about keeping information hidden, but also about respecting the dignity, privacy, and trust of individuals. In a society characterized by the rapid and widespread exchange of information, it is important to return to the basic values of honor and respect. Through the understanding and practice of confidentiality, we can build strong relationships, foster trust, and create an

environment where every individual feels valued and protected. Raja Ali Kelana emphatically stated that keeping secrets is half the trust people place in him.

Understanding confidential boundaries is an important part of communication ethics. This includes respecting the trust of others, weighing the impact of sharing information, and ensuring that individual privacy needs are respected.

From the description above, it can be seen that the communication pattern that is the principle in communication is direct communication and indirect communication. Direct communication is communication that is directly delivered by the communicator to the communicant. Indirect communication is communication that is done through words, symbols, and gestures. When viewed from all the information contained in this *KRBL*, the communication pattern described is a direct communication pattern. Ethical values are also in line with universal values in communication. In fact, the advice about communication manners is also in line with Islamic teachings.

### **Relevance to social media communication**

Social media platforms facilitate the rapid dissemination of information on a vast scale. Once content is shared on these networks, the original poster cannot retract or delete it from the recipients. This widespread accessibility has led to the emergence of novel forms of social organization and interaction rooted in electronic information networks (Aichner et al., 2021). Although information technology does not directly cause social change, it is an integral part of many movements in social change (Miller et al., 2016), such as new forms of production and management, the existence of new communication media, or popularly referred to as economic and cultural globalization.

New media has become an indirect means of communication that many users are interested in, with a variety of topics, ranging from politics to marketing, and even knowledge sharing. For example, in politics, social media plays an important role in influencing voters because social media has become a public space in democracy (Fuchs, 2022a). Not a few politicians utilize social media as a means of campaigning and conveying their political stance. In Indonesia and Malaysia, social media has enlivened political contestation and government policies. The public easily provides

an assessment of government policies that are considered unpopular, so that they become a topic of discussion in cyberspace. In Indonesia, during the last three general elections, 2014, 2019, and 2024, social media has played an important role in the war of influence, especially during the presidential and vice-presidential elections. The two contestants of choice in 2014 and 2019 have created political and religious polarization, and in fact, it is still being felt in 2024. This is also the case in Malaysia with cyber *laskar* influencing voters in elections and government policies (Iwan & Hed, 2023).

Communication media is considered a source of new social problems, especially social issues that arise due to the development of information and communication technology. The problems of communication media give birth to many social problems, such as crime, violence, sexual harassment, pornographic content, gossipy infotainment, divorce, infidelity, wrong imitation effects, pseudo-relationships, shifting morality, forgery, plagiarism, game addiction, and laziness. Even on a macro level, the negative effects reach the stage of hegemony tendencies, disruption, conflict between countries due to wiretapping, and the state's failure to anticipate media convergence.

This means that, in addition to the positive side, there is also a negative side to the existence of this communication technology. This is the impact of the technological determination of social media. On social media, people can post something that is considered indecent, say harsh words, ostracize people, and so on. The cause is the lack of ethics of its users (Nurrachmi & Puspita, 2018). The discretion of social media users in communication causes new problems in life. In fact, problems in cyberspace or the digital world can be carried over to the real world. This is in line with

Therefore, it is important for the values of communication ethics as stated in *KRBL* to be used as guidelines in digital communication. Ethical values about the need to convey the truth are still very relevant in the context of social media communication. Many hoaxes or fake news created by these creators have reduced the knowledge of many people. Unfortunately, sometimes the hoax news is actually considered true news. Hoaxes become more prevalent when they are related to politics and religion (Utami, 2018; Wahida & Syahputra, 2020). Likewise, hate speech is quite massive on social media (Syahputra, 2019). So, it is better if social media users



also need to check and recheck or filter before filtering information that will be disseminated, so that misinformation and especially disinformation do not occur.

As we all know, many fake accounts do not represent the real person. Behind their anonymity, they feel free to make posts and sometimes even commit actions that harm others, such as fraud, data theft, and so on. This is where the need for law enforcement in the use of social media has been discussed by many researchers (Stewart, 2022). Unfortunately, many people now spread other people's photos and videos just for fun, ostracize, and discredit other people, so that other people feel harmed, even though it is part of one's privacy. In this case, the value of not indulging in disgrace in the ethical principles, as in *KRBL*, is also still very relevant. Also included in this category is the need to keep private matters confidential.

On social media, users can comment on the likes and dislikes of their network friends' posts. On social media, there are also sometimes debates that are exchanged in the comments section. All of this, while done in a progressive, productive manner, will have a good impact on social life; when done counterproductively, such as related to supporting and opposing in the presidential election by discrediting each other's candidates (Syahputra et al., 2024), then it actually makes communication bad. Therefore, policies are needed for all social media users in communicating. In the context of Raja Ali Kelana's discussion in *KRBL*, every social media user must know how to comment. If you don't know, it's best to keep quiet so as not to create uproar and chaos that causes a healthy understanding.

In general, the values of communication ethics contained in *KRBL* are still very relevant. However, it is necessary to reactualize the content of these values because digital communication patterns are slightly different from direct personal communication, while the presence of *KRBL* is in the context of direct personal communication. Digital communication, especially in social media, uses more text and symbols, so it needs a good understanding to get a good message. Even the way or intonation of reading a text message has a huge influence on the reception of the message in the text. For example, the greeting "hi" is written in the media. So, if it is read in a high tone, the meaning will be different from the low tone.

There are several actualizations of communication ethics values in *KRBL* in the context of digital communication. The first is the digital platform policy. Developers

need to create features or algorithms that integrate automatic fact-checking systems that encourage users to verify the accuracy of information before sharing it. Developers can also embed algorithms that can detect content containing dubious information, abuse, privacy exploitation, and others. This is in line with the principles of “speaking the truth” and “don’t expose someone’s disgrace” in *KRBL*. Developers can also create a “pause and reflect” feature, where users are given a timeout before posting or commenting with harsh or provocative words, as a form of actualization of the principles of “gentle speech” and “don’t argue,” as often happens when discussing political and religious issues on social media.

Second, adaptive policies. Regulatory-wise, there are already laws and regulations governing cyber activities, such as the Electronic Information and Transaction (ITE) Law, public information, and data protection. These regulations relate to developers and users. However, what needs to be emphasized in the actualization of communication ethics values is the emphasis on developers. This is because if developers are not strictly regulated, there will be loopholes in communication ethics. In addition, it is necessary for the government, through educational institutions, to include the values of communication ethics in the *KRBL* in the curriculum, from school to university level. Thus, the younger generation will not only be technically proficient in using digital technology but will also have a strong ethical foundation rooted in local wisdom and the cultural values of their own nation.

Third, digital literacy. Whether they realize it or not, many users feel that they can hide from their activities on social media because they do not meet their interlocutors face to face, so they often post things that are too personal, exploitative, contain false information, and so on. Therefore, massive digital literacy is needed, both through workshops and the dissemination of educational content. Digital literacy needs to teach “communication skills” or “knowledgeable” so that the digital space is not filled with negative things. This does depend heavily on the awareness of each social media user themselves, how they use social media or digital communication.

## CONCLUSION

The proliferation of the internet, computers, and cell phones has significantly amplified the role of communication technology devices in contemporary human life.

However, the impact is that there is a pattern in communication which sometimes has a positive and/or a negative impact. To counteract the negative impact, an ethic is needed to measure good or bad. In this case, the source of ethical values is philosophy and religious norms, as well as the experiences of a society. In this context, the advice on communication ethics contained in *KRBL* is a source of ethical values. As reviewed in the previous section, there are several sources of values in communication in *KRBL*, such as speaking the truth, being knowledgeable, not indulging in disgrace, speaking softly, not arguing, and maintaining confidentiality. These values are still very normative and historical, with the values in religious teachings and universal values in communication. The content of communication ethics values in *KRBL* is also still quite relevant to be actualized in social media in the midst of various digital communication patterns. In fact, its actualization can be applied to digital platform developers and government policies. However, it is also important to always promote these values through digital literacy. Nevertheless, there is still ample opportunity for researchers to view Raja Ali Kelana's thoughts in the *KRBL* from different perspectives, such as hermeneutics, comparative studies, and empirical studies, thereby enriching the body of research in communication science or Islamic communication science.

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