

The Influence of Right Speech (Samma Vaca) on the Communication Ethics of Buddhist Students on Social Media

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the influence of correct speech (Sammā Vācā) a key principle in Buddhist ethics on the communication behavior of Buddhist students in Lampung. Using a quantitative approach with a survey method, data were collected from 98 Buddhist students who actively use social media. A structured questionnaire based on a Likert scale was used and analyzed through relevant statistical tests, including validity, reliability, and simple linear regression. The findings show that correct speech significantly influences communication ethics, with a determination coefficient of 0.532, indicating that 53.2% of students' communication ethics are affected by their understanding of Sammā Vācā. These results highlight the importance of integrating Buddhist moral teachings into digital literacy education to foster respectful and ethical online communication aligned with Dhamma values.

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Introduction

The development of information technology, especially social media, has provided a new space in the practice of communication between individuals, including among students. Social media is not only a means to make friends, but also an arena for self-expression, public discussion, and even ideological debate. In the midst of increasingly open freedom of speech, communication ethics are crucial to maintaining, especially for Buddhist students who should make moral teachings the basis for interacting digitally.

The Buddha's teachings in the Mahācattārisaka Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya 117, one of the elements of the Hasta Ariya Marga or the Noble Eightfold Path is Samma Vaca or Right Speech. Right Speech includes not telling lies, not slandering, not speaking harshly, and not speaking in vain (Bodhi, 2017). The practice of Samma Vaca not only applies to direct (face-

to-face) communication, but should also be a guide in media-based communication, including social media. (McPherson, 2005; Suyatno, 2023).

The relevance of Sammā Vācā becomes increasingly critical in digital communication spaces, where ethical values are often challenged by the rapid and unfiltered nature of online interactions. In this context, the consistency between one's understanding of Buddhist communication ethics and their actual online behavior becomes a key indicator of the internalization of doctrinal values. The capacity to uphold truthfulness, respect, and restraint in online discourse reflects the depth of moral application among Buddhist practitioners, particularly among university students who are active users of digital platforms (Srivastava & Saxena, 2024).

However, in reality, there are still many Buddhist students who are involved in hate speech, spreading hoaxes, or offensive communication on social media (Pravichai & Ariyabuddhiphongs, 2018). This phenomenon shows the potential gap between the understanding of the Samma Vaca teachings and the actual practice of communication ethics. This study tries to explore the extent of Buddhist students' understanding in Lampung of Samma Vaca and how it affects their communication ethics on social media.

Communication ethics are moral principles that regulate communication behavior, both verbally and nonverbally, offline and online (Gani, 2022; Mutiah et al., 2019). In the context of social media, communication ethics becomes increasingly important because communication is done openly, instantly, and has a wide impact (Ihsani & Febriyanti, 2021; Sari, 2020; Surbakti et al., 2021). Therefore, a strong understanding of the principles of ethical communication, including from the perspective of religious teachings, is essential for building a healthy digital society (Afriani & Azmi, 2020; Purwatiningsih et al., 2020).

Lampung as a multicultural province with religious and cultural diversity is a challenging and strategic space to see how religious values are applied in student communication practices (Widiyanto & Julianti, 2024). Buddhist students as part of the young generation who are active on social media are required to be able to maintain correct, harmonious communication and reflect Buddhist values in the digital public space.

Therefore, this study is important to be conducted to find out how much Buddhist students understand the concept of Samma Vaca and how it affects their communication behavior on social media. This study is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions in strengthening communication ethics education based on religious values, especially Buddhism.

Theoretical Basis

True Speech (Samma Vaca)

Samma Vaca is one of the eight noble paths (Ariya Atthangika Magga) in Buddhism which literally means "right speech". Right speech is part of the moral discipline (sila) which aims to form ethical behavior in communication (McPherson, 2005).

According to (Suyatno, 2023), Samma Vaca consists of four important aspects, namely:

1. Don't tell lies
2. Don't say anything that is divisive
3. Don't say bad words
4. Do not say anything in vain (nonsense)

No Lies (Musavada)

Lying means conveying information that is not in accordance with reality, with the intention to deceive or mislead. In the context of digital communication, forms of lying include spreading hoaxes or false information (Derrett, 2006).

Do not slander or pit yourself against each other (Pisunavaca)

Speech that divides or incites one party against another is called pisunavaca. In social media, this can be seen from comments or posts that provoke conflict between users (Lisniasari & Ismoyo, 2020). Such speech not only disrupts interpersonal harmony but also contributes to the formation of echo chambers and polarization within online communities. When left unchecked, divisive communication can escalate into hate speech and cyberbullying, undermining social cohesion and mutual respect in digital spaces.

No Swearing (Pharusavaca)

Abusive language includes insults, taunts, or offensive words. Using rude language on social media is a violation of this principle (Harahap et al., 2023).

No Useless Talk (Sampappalapa)

Vain speech is useless or excessive talk that does not bring any benefit. On social media, this is seen in posts that spread gossip or issues without any constructive meaning (Lisniasari & Ismoyo, 2020). Although it may appear harmless, vain speech contributes to the erosion of focus and the spread of misinformation, especially when shared repeatedly without verification. In digital communication, such content can distract from meaningful discourse and create an environment saturated with noise rather than knowledge.

Communication Ethics

Communication ethics refers to the moral principles that govern how a person communicates responsibly, fairly, and respects the rights of others (Purwatiningsih et al., 2020; Surbakti et al., 2021). Ethics become important in the context of digital communications because of the speed and breadth of information dissemination (Widi et al., 2023).

Social Media as a Means of Communication

Social media is a digital platform that allows users to share information, build social networks, and interact online (Kustiawan et al., 2022; Sarkawi, 2021). Social media creates a new communication space that is open, instant, and permanent in digital archives (Cahyono, 2016).

Communication Ethics on Social Media

Truth of Information

Ethical communication requires conveying truthful and accurate information. Spreading fake news or unverified information is a violation of this principle (Purwatiningsih et al., 2020; Surbakti et al., 2021). In the digital era, where information circulates rapidly and widely, the responsibility to ensure accuracy becomes increasingly critical. Misinformation not only distorts public perception but can also lead to serious consequences, such as panic, distrust, or social division. Upholding truthfulness in communication fosters credibility, builds public trust, and promotes a more informed and responsible online environment. Therefore, individuals especially students and digital natives must develop critical thinking

and verification habits before sharing content.

Politeness in Language

Ethical communication must pay attention to politeness, avoid hate speech, and maintain politeness in language (Agustina et al., 2020; Cahyani, 2023). On social media, this is reflected in a style of language that does not hurt other parties. Polite language not only preserves interpersonal respect but also minimizes the potential for misinterpretation and conflict escalation in online settings. In diverse societies, where users may come from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, politeness serves as a universal code of mutual consideration.

Communication Responsibility

Ethics also require social media users to be responsible for what they say or share, including its impact on other individuals and the wider community (Cahyono, 2016; Kustiawan et al., 2022). This responsibility extends beyond the intention behind a message to include its potential consequences such as emotional harm, misinformation, or escalation of conflict. In an era where content can go viral instantly, users must be aware that every post, comment, or shared link carries ethical weight.

Avoiding SARA and Provocation

Ethical communication on social media must be free from SARA (Ethnicity, Religion, Race and Inter-group) elements that divide and provocative speech that can cause social conflict (Afriani & Azmi, 2020; Purwatiningsih et al., 2020).

Method

Object, Subject, Place, and Time of Research

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method. The research population is Buddhist students at several universities in Lampung, with a total of 98 people and using population research.

Research design

Research design is the overall planning to answer research questions and measure the difficulties that arise during the research process, and this is important because research design is a strategy to obtain the data needed to test hypotheses or to answer research questions and as a tool to control the variables that are affected (Darmawan, 2014; Fadli, 2021).

Data collection technique

Data collection is very important in research because the main purpose of this research is to obtain data (Ardiansyah et al., 2023; Sugiyono, 2007). With the data collected, it can be continued to the data measurement stage. The data collection technique used by researchers in the study is a questionnaire. A questionnaire is a data collection technique that provides respondents with a series of written questions or statements to answer (Sugiyono, 2010). The tool used to collect data is a questionnaire. This instrument was chosen because it can efficiently and consistently collect responses from many participants. This questionnaire is designed to measure students' understanding of Sammā Vācā and communication ethics on social media, based on relevant theoretical constructs.

Findings

Instrument testing

Instrument validity test

The instrument test was conducted on December 9, 2024 in Lampung with 98 student respondents. By implementing the Instrument Test, information was obtained that out of 60 statement items, there were five invalid statements. Invalid items were found in variable X, namely statement items number 1, 7, 28, and 37, while in variable Y, namely statement item number 41. Each item was assessed based on the corrected item-total correlation value, and those with $r\text{-count} \leq r\text{-table}$ were considered invalid. The researcher deleted the Invalid statement items so that out of 60 items, there were still 55 statement items. This can be seen through data processing using SPSS 22.0. Invalid items can be seen from, if the count $\leq r_{\text{tabel}}$, then the item is declared invalid.

The reliability test of correct speech and communication ethics based on the results of the research reliability test, it was obtained that the Reliability Analysis Scale (Alpha) using SPSS 22.0 produced an alpha of 0.892 because the significance value ≥ 0.05 means that the measuring instrument is declared reliable. This level of reliability suggests that the instrument consistently measures the constructs across different respondents, strengthening the internal consistency of the data. It can be concluded that the research instrument used in this study has met the requirements of good validity and reliability.

Table 1. Instrument Reliability Test

<i>Reliability Statistics</i>	
<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	N of Items
.892	55

Source: SPSS 22.0 data processing results

Normality test

Normality test is to see whether the distribution of residual value data is normal or not. The normality test is carried out using the One Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov test. The requirement for sample data comes from a normally distributed population with a significance level of 0.05 or 5%. Based on the results of the normality test obtained from 98 respondents, the significant value (2-tailed) is 0.09, which means $0.09 > 0.05$, so it can be concluded that the data is normally distributed. The results of the normality calculation using the One Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov test are presented in the following table.

Table 2. Instrument Reliability Test

<i>One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test</i>		
		<i>Unstandardized Residual</i>
N		98
Normal	<i>Mean</i>	.0000000
Parameters ^{a,b}	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	10.22115961
<i>Most Extreme</i>	<i>Absolute</i>	.100
<i>Differences</i>	<i>Positive</i>	.044
	<i>Negative</i>	-.100
<i>Test Statistic</i>		.100
<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</i>		.090 ^c

Source: SPSS 22.0 data processing results

Homogeneity test

Homogeneity test is a way to find out whether several population variants are the same or not. Homogeneity test is carried out as a requirement in independent sample test analysis by Compare Means One Way Anova. The underlying assumption in the analysis (anova) of the variance of the population is the same. The test criteria if more than 0.05 or 5%, then it can be said that the variance of the two data groups is the same. The results of the homogeneity test are seen from the output of the test of homogeneity variance, the significance value of the scientific approach and high-level thinking skills is 0.726, which means $0.726 > 0.05$, then it can be said that the two data are homogeneous. For more details, see the following table of test of homogeneity of variances.

Table 3. Homogeneity Test

<i>Test of Homogeneity of Variances</i>			
Pengaruh X Terhadap Y			
<i>Levene Statistic</i>	df1	df2	Sig.
.239	1	96	.726

Source: SPSS 22.0 data processing results

Simple linear regression analysis

Data analysis techniques are used to answer research problems formulated through hypotheses. Testing the hypothesis as a temporary answer to the problem "Is there an influence of correct speech on student communication ethics on social media?" Hypothesis testing in this study uses a simple regression formula, and data is obtained through SPSS 22.0. Testing using simple linear regression obtains the following results:

Table 4. Regression Equation Output

<i>Coefficients^a</i>					
Model		<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	46.116	10.402		.000
	Etika Komunikasi	.475	.090	.557	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Ucapan benar

Source: SPSS 22.0 data processing results

Based on the output results by reading the coefficients, a constant value of 46.116 is obtained, meaning that if the scientific approach has a value of 0, then the consistent value of the high-level thinking ability variable is 46.116. The regression coefficient on the correct speech variable (X) is 0.475, meaning that if correct speech increases or develops, the communication ethics variable (Y) will increase by 0.475 as follows.

$$Y = 46,116 + 0,5475X$$

The statistical hypothesis in this study is.

Ha: There is a positive and significant influence of correct speech on students' communication ethics on social media.

H0: There is no positive and significant influence of correct speech on students' communication ethics on social media.

The hypothesis testing criteria are to reject H_0 if $t_{count} > \text{significance} < 0.05$ or 5%. Based on the data analysis, the t_{count} value is 6.189, and the t_{table} value with $df = n-2$ is $df = 96$ of 1.661 with a significance value of 0.000 because the absolute value of t_{count} is $7.189 > 1.661$ and the significance is $0.000 < 0.05$, then H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. It can be concluded that there is an influence of correct speech on student communication ethics on social media. The hypothesis testing criteria use alpha 5% (0.05), namely H_0 is rejected if ≤ 0.05 by reading the following anova table.

Table 5. Output analysis Anova

ANOVA ^b						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5478.225	1	5478.225	41.677	.000 ^b
	Residual	7208.575	68	106.008		
	Total	12686.800	69			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Ucap Benar

b. Dependent Variable, Etika Komunikasi

Source: SPSS 22.0 data processing results

Based on the ANOVA output in Table 5, the F-count value is 41.677 with a significance level of 0.000, which is far below the threshold of 0.05. This indicates that the regression model is statistically significant, and thus, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected while the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. These results confirm that correct speech (Sammā Vācā) has a significant effect on students' communication ethics on social media. The high F-value also suggests that the model has a strong explanatory power in explaining variations in communication behavior, supporting the idea that ethical speech principles play an important role in shaping digital communication ethics among Buddhist students.

Table 6. Output Nilai Koefisien Determinasi R Square

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.657 ^a	.532	.523	9.296

a. Predictors: (Constant), Ucap Benar

Source: SPSS 22.0 data processing results

Based on the results presented in Table 6, the coefficient of determination (R Square) is 0.532. This indicates that 53.2% of the variance in students' communication ethics can be explained by the variable Sammā Vācā (Right Speech), while the remaining 46.8% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. The value of $R = 0.657$ also reflects a moderately strong positive correlation between understanding of Right Speech and ethical communication behavior among students. These findings suggest that internalizing the principle of Sammā Vācā plays a significant role in shaping communication ethics, particularly in digital and social media contexts.

This result highlights the importance of religious moral teachings specifically Buddhist communication ethics as a foundation for guiding students' behavior in modern communication settings. However, the presence of nearly half the variance being influenced by other variables also implies that ethical communication is multifaceted and potentially shaped by additional elements such as digital literacy, peer influence, institutional culture, and exposure to media content. Further research is recommended to explore these contributing factors in greater depth, which could enrich the understanding of how communication ethics are developed and sustained in diverse sociocultural environments.

Discussion

The results of the study show a strong influence of Samma Vaca on communication ethics. This is in line with the principles of Buddhist communication which emphasize good intentions, honesty, and mindfulness (sati). This correlation reflects the transformative potential of doctrinal values when internalized beyond ritual or theoretical understanding. In the case of Buddhist students, the integration of Sammā Vācā into daily interactions especially online suggests that moral teachings remain relevant and actionable in contemporary communication settings. Such internalization often results from consistent religious engagement, personal reflection, and institutional support within educational or religious communities. This finding strengthens the argument that the formation of Buddhist students' communication behavior does not only depend on formal education, but also on the internalization of spiritual values in everyday life.

Based on the results of the simple regression analysis that has been carried out in the previous chapter, it is known that Right Speech (Samma Vaca) has a positive and significant influence on the Communication Ethics of Buddhist Students on Social Media. This is indicated by the positive regression coefficient value and the significance value (p-value) which is less than 0.05, so that H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. Statistically, this confirms that the stronger a student's commitment to practicing Sammā Vācā, the more ethically sound their communication behavior becomes in digital contexts. This positive linear relationship underscores the applicability of ancient moral principles in regulating modern behavioral patterns, including in environments that are often unmoderated and susceptible to impulsive expression such as social media. This means that the higher the application of the samma vaca principle, the better the communication ethics shown by students in using social media.

This finding strengthens the understanding that correct speech, namely speech that does not contain lies, slander, harsh words, and nonsense, can be a guideline for communicating ethically, including in the digital space. Moreover, this reinforces the broader ethical function of religious teachings as not merely doctrinal imperatives, but as behavioral frameworks that promote social harmony. The alignment between doctrinal prescriptions and measurable communication behavior demonstrates the potential for religion-based ethics to contribute to civic values, digital citizenship, and online accountability. The principle of samma vaca, which is part of the Noble Eightfold Path (Atthangika Magga) in Buddhist teachings, morally directs individuals to avoid types of speech that are detrimental to themselves and others.

In this study, the correct speech variable was studied through four main indicators, namely:

1. Do not lie (musavada)
Respondents tend to have an attitude of avoiding lies in online conversations. This is reflected in high scores on statement items such as "I do not spread false information on social media." Buddhist students understand that conveying false information is a form of violation of communication ethics.
2. Do not slander (pisunavaca)
This value also scored high. Students showed awareness of not sharing content that could divide or cause conflict between users. This reflects the appreciation of the Buddha's teachings on the importance of unifying and compassionate speech.
3. Don't say bad words (pharusavaca)
Respondents stated that they avoid using harsh and offensive language. They understand that although social media provides freedom of expression, it does not mean

that it is free from ethical responsibilities.

4. Don't talk in vain (samphappalapa)

Students also show awareness not to post things that are not useful. Irrelevant, provocative, or attention-seeking remarks are considered a form of samma vaca violation.

Communication ethics in this study are analyzed through several dimensions:

1. Honesty

Students who implement samma vaca tend to be more honest in conveying information, opinions, or comments on social media. This strengthens the finding that honesty is a basic principle of ethical communication.

2. Attitude of mutual respect

True speech encourages awareness to respect differences of opinion and belief, especially in the highly pluralistic digital public space.

3. Communication responsibility

Buddhist students who understand the principles of right communication show a cautious attitude in making posts, comments, and sharing information. They tend to think twice before posting something.

4. Avoid hate speech

The implementation of samma vaca correlates with minimal actions such as hate speech, trolling, or provocative comments. This is important in encouraging a healthy and inclusive digital climate.

This finding is in line with the theory of communication ethics put forward by [Nainggolan, 2021](#)), which states that ethical communication must pay attention to honesty, responsibility, and respect for others. In the Buddhist context, the principle of samma vaca functions as a spiritual and social guide in communicating. This alignment shows that the ethical values emphasized in secular communication theories such as integrity and accountability resonate strongly with religious moral teachings. Both frameworks emphasize relational ethics, where the well-being of the communication partner is central. This convergence opens the possibility for integrated ethical models that combine religious wisdom with contemporary communication norms, particularly in educational settings.

This study also strengthens the results of previous studies by [\(Ali et al., 2018\)](#), which states that moral training through the practice of the Noble Path can have a positive impact on the communication behavior of Buddhists, including in modern contexts such as social media. The reinforcement of earlier findings provides empirical consistency and supports the external validity of the current study's conclusions. It also confirms that the Noble Eightfold Path, while ancient in origin, has a lasting relevance that transcends traditional environments and adapts well to the complexities of digital life. In particular, practices such as sammā vācā offer practical guidelines for navigating digital communication with mindfulness and compassion.

This research provides an important contribution in building awareness of the need for a religious and moral approach in shaping digital ethics. In the context of Buddhist students, religious education is not only a cognitive doctrine but must be a value that is realized in everyday practice, including in interacting in cyberspace. This implies a pedagogical shift in religious instruction, where the focus moves from knowledge transmission to ethical embodiment. Educational institutions, especially those with religious foundations, must consider integrating practical digital ethics training rooted in doctrinal values to ensure the relevance and transformative power of spiritual teachings. When spiritual principles are

internalized and applied in real-life settings, including online platforms, they can significantly enhance the moral landscape of digital communication.

Conclusion

Right Speech (Samma Vaca) has a significant influence on the Communication Ethics of Buddhist Students on Social Media. The results of the regression test show that the higher the application of the principles of correct speech, such as not lying, not slandering, not being rude, and not talking in vain, the higher the level of students' communication ethics in using social media. This indicates that Buddhist values have an important role in shaping responsible and ethical communication behavior in the digital space.

Buddhist students demonstrate good understanding of the principle of right speech as a guideline for digital ethics. In practice, Buddhist students tend to avoid spreading false information, hate speech, and provocative comments, and try to use social media wisely and usefully. This attitude shows the internalization of religious values in everyday life, including in social media activities.

The application of religious values provides a positive contribution to the formation of digital communication ethics. The principle of samma vaca is not only normative, but can also be operationalized into concrete behavioral indicators that are relevant to the context of the times, especially in facing the challenges of modern communication on social media.

Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be proposed. First, Buddhist students are encouraged to consistently internalize the values of Dhamma, particularly samma vaca (right speech), in all their communication activities on social media. It is essential to recognize social media as a public space that demands moral responsibility rather than a platform for unrestricted expression.

Second, Buddhist educational institutions should consider integrating digital literacy education grounded in Buddhist ethical principles into their curricula. Teaching digital ethics in direct relation to the Noble Eightfold Path can foster the development of communicative characters that are both wise and compassionate.

Third, future research is encouraged to adopt broader methodological approaches, such as qualitative or mixed-method designs, to deepen the understanding of the complexities surrounding Buddhist communication on social media. Expanding the respondent pool beyond students to include a wider community will also enrich the scope and applicability of the findings.

Finally, Buddhist communities and religious organizations are urged to initiate and promote educational campaigns that advocate for ethical and peaceful communication practices in digital environments. Such efforts align closely with Buddhism's overarching mission to disseminate virtue and alleviate suffering through the practice of right speech and right action.

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