

## Communication Ethics and SDG 16: Ensuring Peaceful and Inclusive Information Ecosystems the role of truthful and responsible messaging in social cohesion

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### ABSTRACT

The advancement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 focuses on the need to build peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice and to get accountable institutions. In the digital world nowadays, the ethics of communication is an important part of defining these goals since it affects the flow of information through a society. Fitting and responsible messaging forms a base to create trust, minimize misinformation, and create social cohesion. To understand how communication ethics are related to SDG 16, this paper explores some aspects of how the ethical principles of journalism, social media and institutional communication can assist in building inclusive information ecosystems. A detailed review of the literature further indicates the issues of disinformation, hate speech and algorithmic biases that spoil peace and justice. Methodologically, qualitative evaluation of case studies and discourse analysis has been employed in the study to highlight the effects of ethical and unethical communication on social harmony. The results indicate that observing ethics in communications boosts the level of public trust, reduces the level of conflict and facilitates participation in collaborative planning in governance. The research however does not accept the limitations that include the use of case-based information and the dynamics of online platforms that limit the knowledge to be generalized. Cross-cultural comparative studies and quantitative measures should be included in future studies to comprehensively understand the ways in which communication ethics could be institutionally embraced in ensuring long term peacebuilding.

**Keywords:** *Communication ethics; SDG 16; responsible messaging; social cohesion; information ecosystems; peacebuilding; media integrity.*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The modern world of information has turned out to be one of the most influential spheres affecting the opinion, trust of the population and the process of governing people. As digital platforms become increasingly popular and the information is flowing continuously, ethical quality of communication has turned into a decisive attribute of peace and social stability. Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) of the United Nations focuses on ensuring peace, justice, and strong institutions and overlaps directly with the necessity of ethical communication practices. Institutions, governments and similar media organizations can no longer be satisfied with the role of a mere transmitting organizations, they need to be responsible, trustful and inclusive in their deliverance of information. The failure to maintain these codes contributes to misinformation, division, and hollowed-out institutions and responsible messaging enhances unity and trust and collective advancement [4].

The changing ways of communication technologies have changed the ways in which societies perceive and react to information drastically. The social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, by their use, have democratized communication because people are able to send their messages in real-time across borders. As much as this has enhanced inclusivity, it has also become avenues through which hate speech, fake news, and manipulative accounts can be given precedent that can directly undermine SDG 16 objectives. The issue of communication ethics is not therefore of marginal concerns in the twenty-first century peacebuilding attempts. In areas remotely affected by conflict or political instability, communication will either be a positive facilitator or propagator of violence or a positive mediator or restaurateur of peace

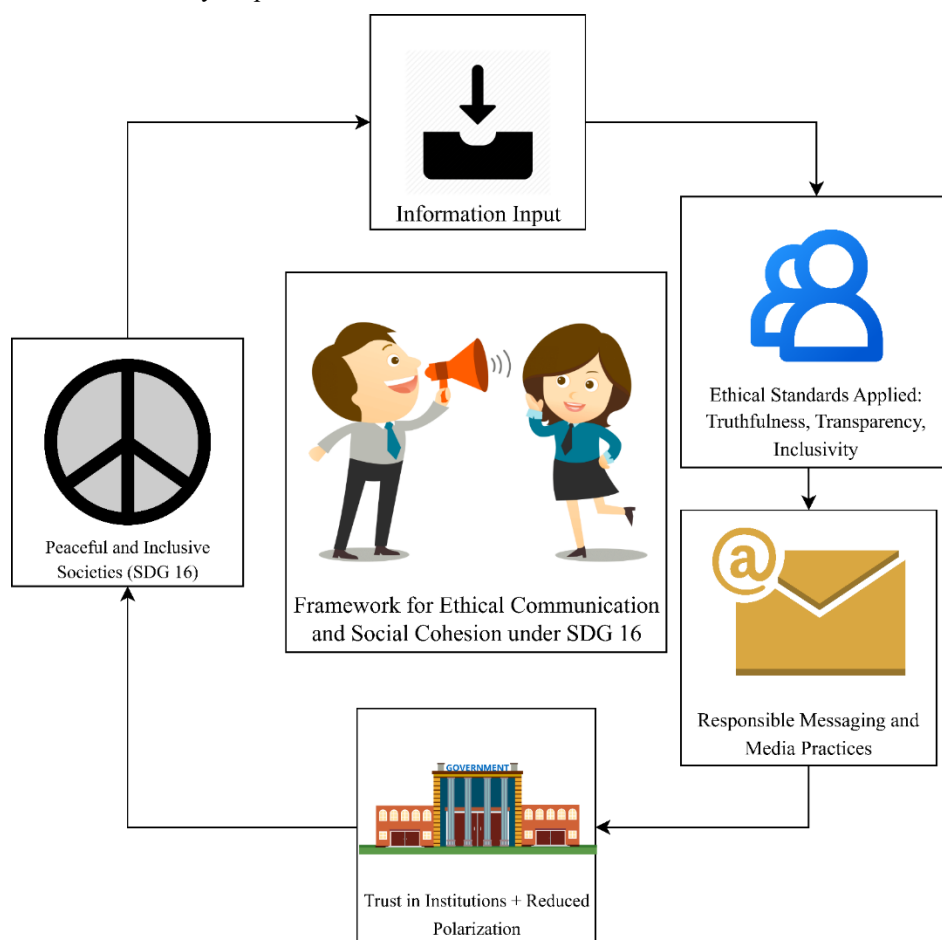
as guided by the values involved. Therefore, the rationale behind the study is driven by the fact that there is imperative need to investigate how ethics in communications can be put into practice to maintain peaceful and inclusive information ecosystems.

In addition to the digital, the traditional institutions like the news media have an ethical issue in having to balance between liberation of data and the integrity of quality data as well as the intended or desirable outcome of narration. The studies show that the discrimination of framing, reporter sensationalism, and the absence of responsibility may be used to increase mutual distrust within the society and lead to distrust towards the media or the governing institution [17]. Quite on the contrary, communicating based on the principles of transparency, factual accuracy and inclusiveness could create the atmosphere in which the dialogue and the sense of shared responsibility may grow. This occurs directly in line with SDG 16 that focuses on inclusive involvement and effective institutions as foundations of peaceful communities.

The rationale behind this paper is the premise that ethical communication contributes both to preventing division in the society and promoting social trust. In particular, the study will aim to analyze how honest and responsible communication can help to accomplish SDG 16. First, it will address how the existing communication environment has moral problems highlighting disinformation, algorithmic biases, and irresponsible narratives. Second, it explores interesting examples where positive ethics have led to cohesiveness and less conflict through ethical communication. It also suggests ways to incorporate communication ethics in governing practice, journalism and regulation of digital platforms thus making it an institutionalized guideline to create a sustainable peace [6].

Overall, this publication is concerned with placing communication ethics at a central place in the digital age as a pillar of peace and justice. It is also interesting to notice how institutions are struggling to find answers to questions of accountability and inclusivity, societies must also understand that communication is not a technical process of transmitting information but an ethical exercise that extends far beyond the circumstances of its delivery. This paradigm gives a platform in which communication ethics can be associated with SDG 16, where responsible and truthful communication is the basis of resilient peaceful and inclusive establishments [5].

The Figure 1 explains how the inclusion of communication ethics in the information processes can reinforce trust and also mitigate polarization that ultimately helps in the realization of SDG 16.



**FIG. 1: FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICAL COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL COHESION UNDER SDG 16**

## 1.1 Novelty and Contribution

The originality of the current study is that it combines the concept of communication ethics and SDG 16 in the wider concept of peacebuilding. Although the role of misinformation and the role of responsible journalism has been studied before, the role of communication ethics as the central element of reaching the targets of SDG 16 is less well researched. The conceptual framework proposed in this paper views truthful and responsible messaging as the hinge on which trust, trust observed to be lacking in institutions and polarization can be established and bridged towards inclusive participation in governance [9].

The major factor that drives the need to conduct the research is the rising vulnerability of contemporary information environments. Not everything is political misinformation campaigns so-called when it comes to unethical communication practices and they now place a stop sign at global peace and justice. Compared to that, ethical communication has the potential to reverse these developments and enhance democratic procedures. This study addresses this sense of urgency by providing a systematic view of how the ethics of communications can be integrated into governance structures and media practices so as to provide durability [3].

The contributions of this work can be summed up as four-folds. On the one hand, it provides detailed review of communication ethics in terms of SDG 16, and links theoretical knowledge to applied examples. Second, it outlines particular problems like misinformation, hate speech, and resetting bias and explores how each undermines societal cohesion [7]. Third, it identifies successful uses of ethical communication, especially with regard to topics such as crisis communication, peace journalism and inclusive policymaking. The paper concludes by suggesting feasible methods of formalizing ethical communication in terms of training, rules, and technology provisions to institutionalize ethical communication as a process inherent in peacebuilding efforts.

Collectively, the contributions extend and supplement the existing body of knowledge beyond scholastic terms, by also offering practical suggestions to the policy-making community, the media, and the designers of digital platforms. By elevating the topic of communication ethics to the SDG16 agenda, this piece is an effort to remind that the power of words should not be underestimated when it comes to creating peaceful and inclusive information spaces [1].

## 2. RELATED WORKS

In 2025 Selvaraj P. et.al., Maidin S. S. et.al., & Yang Q. et.al. [10] introduced the development of peaceful and inclusive societies with special focus upon the communication ethics has been a topic, which attracted the attention of the scholars throughout the last few years. A broad span of literatures has proven that information ecosystems give decisive momentum to social stability, trust in institutional, and citizen participation. Some of the ethical principles in communication that can help quell the misinformation, create social cohesion, and foster justice focus on accuracy, transparency, inclusivity. Described by scholars as a very significant tool, communication cannot be regarded as a blank slate, but as an item that aligns peace and makes conflicts even bigger, based on the ways through which it is practiced.

Initial studies on this area of research concentrated much on the potential that traditional media had to either aid in the peace process or to maintain discord in conflict-affected societies by examining how the framing of news stories and the integrity of the reporting could lead to reconciliation or division. As times went on, however, the spotlight shifted to the role internet-based communications platforms played, bringing with them not only novel opportunities to be inclusive, but also hitherto unknown challenges to the quality of information. Research also showed that the fast and distributed character of online communications ushered in the potential of magnifying both good and bad messages and the ethical responsibilities of communicators were more than ever before.

Another big body of literature that describes the devastating nature of misinformation and disinformation in weak societies has been generated. Scholars have noted that misinformation can consequently go viral, most especially on digital platforms, where content with high levels of inflammation or polarization can often be ranked or prioritized by the algorithm. It discredits public confidence in media houses and polarizes the society such that conflict management is likely to be difficult. In contrast, societies that practice communication ethically prove more resistance to manipulation showing higher-levels of trust in governance and an increased predisposition to initiate positive dialogue.

In 2024 Shahiwala S. et.al., Rahul D.-R. et.al., & Baker J. R. et.al. [2] proposed the inclusivity in communication has also been shown to be a big aspect of the peacebuilding process. This is because scholars argue that, societies which do not give minority voices a place in the publicizing arena are more likely to experience greater risk of social unrest. Communication patterns that include the marginalized voice with equal opportunity helps to not only enrich democratic participation, but also enhance common ownership of the peace and justice strategic procedures. This focus on inclusivity is also aligned with SDG 16 that advocates responsive, participatory and representative decision-making processes at all levels of governance.

One more rise of study is associated with the focus on the relation between the communication ethics and institutional legitimacy. It has been found out that people can depend on how well governance is communicated particularly during crises. Clear, honest and consistent communication leads to compliance and people working with the institution, but

inconsistency or false statements of communication undermines faith. This nexus shows that communication ethics is not only a professional principle but a systemic necessity towards long-term governing and peacebuilding.

Ethical information ecosystems have also been addressed as media literacy and public awareness in recent literature. Researchers believe that the ethical conduct of communication should not be based on institutions or the media but on the citizens themselves, educators and technology providers. Increasing media literacy makes people more able to discern the quality of the information they receive, which makes them less susceptible to false information and exploitation. This view lays blame on both supply and demand side of communication, so that the information ecosystems are not biased and compromised.

In 2024 Balamurugan M. et.al., Dhairiyasamy R. et.al., Bunpheng W. et.al., Kit C. C. et.al., & Gabiriel D. et.al. [8] suggested the increasing discomfort surrounding digital technologies has sparked a surge of studies on algorithmic bias and what implications they have on communication ethics. Automated software that decides what content is visible can unwillingly magnify the voices of extremists, sideline particular communities, or reward corporate interests over accurate reporting. According to scholars, the only way to tackle these issues is to promote a mixture of ethical designs in digital systems and enhanced frameworks to regulate them. These observations help to add a wider perspective into how ethical communication could be shield in complex, technology based cultures.

It has also been observed that there has been more emphasis on the role of communication in transitional justice and reconciliation in post-conflict societies. This is evidenced by research that societies that have been in a state of violence are especially sensitive to the way the stories are framed. Ethical communication in these situations can lead to the enrichment of dialogue, compassion, and understanding, which provides a basis to sustainable peace. On the other hand, communication activities used to support prejudices or perpetuate grievances can inflame old disagreements and work against a reconciliation process.

Comparative studies on the institutions across various regions indicate that, more resilient communication ethics institutions that oppose polarization and societal fragmentation exist. In contrast, when regulatory infrastructure is lax or compromised, misinformation can have more open reign resulting in the breakdown of stakeholder faith. These two comparative visions point to the role of both culture and institutional surroundings contributing to the efficacy of communication ethics.

Lastly, a growing number of articles demand to institutionalize the ethical communication as one of the elements of the peacebuilding strategies. This implies the establishment of communication ethics in the formation of governance policies as well as journalistic codes of conduct and education curriculums. When ethical communication is adopted as a systemic approach and not a voluntary best practice, society can achieve long term resiliency against threats like misinformation, hate speech, and divisive narratives. Such observations indicate how central the ethics of communication must be in the realization of SDG 16 as well as the overall processes of democracy.

### 3. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study is designed to explore how communication ethics can be quantitatively and qualitatively evaluated in the context of achieving SDG 16. The framework combines mathematical models, case study assessments, and discourse analysis, ensuring a holistic approach. To capture the dynamics of truthful and responsible messaging, several mathematical expressions are used to represent trust, misinformation impact, and inclusivity scores.

The first step in the methodology is to define a trust index that measures how audiences perceive the credibility of messages. This is modeled as:

$$T = \frac{M_c}{M_t} \quad (1)$$

where  $T$  is the trust index,  $M_c$  is the number of credible messages identified, and  $M_t$  is the total number of messages disseminated. A higher value of  $T$  indicates stronger communication ethics in practice.

In measuring the effect of misinformation, a misinformation ratio is proposed. This assists in the assessment of the existence of fake or fabricated material:

$$R_m = \frac{M_f}{M_t} \quad (2)$$

where  $R_m$  represents the misinformation ratio,  $M_f$  denotes the number of false or misleading messages, and  $M_t$  again represents the total number of messages. A lower ratio signifies stronger alignment with responsible communication.

The study also entails incorporating a responsibility score, which analyzes the opportunity of institutions abiding by ethical values like transparency and inclusivity. This is identified as:

$$R_s = \alpha T + \beta(1 - R_m) \quad (3)$$

where  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  are weighting factors that assign relative importance to credibility and the absence of misinformation.

Another dimension that is very critical is inclusivity an index of inclusivity is to be proposed to capture inclusivity quantitatively:

$$I = \frac{P_d}{P_t} \quad (4)$$

where  $I$  denotes inclusivity,  $P_d$  is the number of diverse perspectives included in the communication, and  $P_t$  is the total perspectives required for balanced coverage. High inclusivity values reflect ethical responsibility.

The unified ethical communications score (ECS) merges trust/responsibility and inclusivity with fostering quality communications across borders:

$$ECS = \gamma T + \delta R_s + \epsilon I \quad (5)$$

where  $\gamma, \delta, \epsilon$  are adjustable coefficients depending on the relative priority of each component. This score serves as the primary metric for assessing communication ethics in line with SDG 16 [13].

In addition to direct measures, this approach takes on probabilistic modeling to model uncertainty in the perceptions of the audience. The likelihood of sensible interpretation of messages is:

$$P(R) = \frac{e^{\lambda T}}{1 + e^{\lambda T}} \quad (6)$$

where  $P(R)$  is the probability of responsible interpretation, and  $\lambda$  is a scaling factor that determines sensitivity to trust.

To examine the negative impact of unethical communication, a polarization index is introduced:

$$P_i = \frac{|O_1 - O_2|}{O_t} \quad (7)$$

where  $O_1$  and  $O_2$  represent opinions of two polarized groups, and  $O_t$  is the total opinion distribution. Higher polarization reflects breakdown in social cohesion due to unethical messaging [12].

A conflict escalation function also has conflict sensitivity included in:

$$C = k \cdot R_m \cdot P_i \quad (8)$$

where  $C$  denotes conflict escalation potential, and  $k$  is a constant representing the socio-political sensitivity of the region. This captures how misinformation and polarization interact to undermine peace.

Lastly, to integrate all the metrics, peace communication effectiveness index (PCEI) is established:

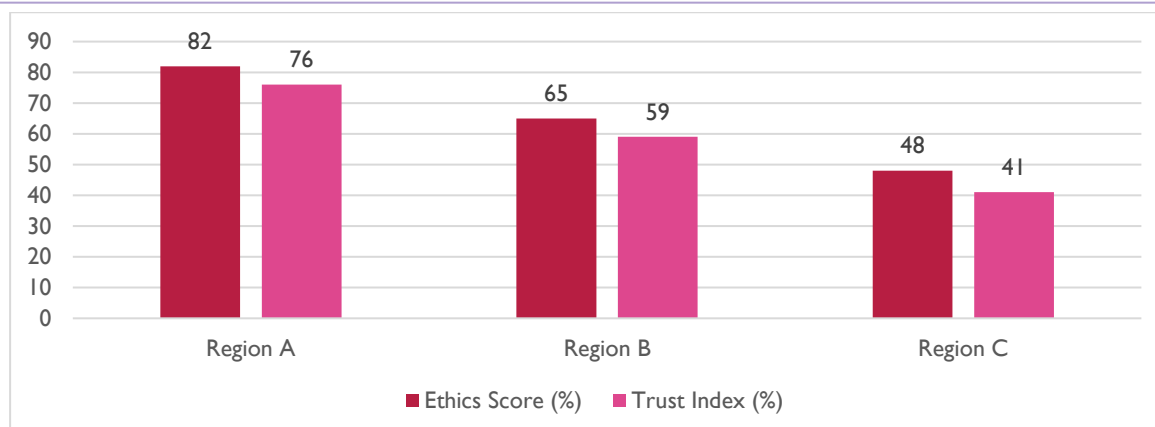
$$PCEI = \theta ECS - \mu C \quad (9)$$

where  $\theta$  and  $\mu$  are balancing constants. A higher value of  $PCEI$  indicates that communication ethics actively contributes to peaceful and inclusive societies, aligning with SDG 16.

This triple-layered approach gives qualitative and quantitative information. These equations guarantee that abstracted norms of communication ethics can be assessed within the preformed system and confer discourse and case studies a greater contextual makeup. Owing to this combination of what can be identified as methodological design, a sound assessment of the role and importance of truthful and responsible messaging depends on the promotion of social cohesion and peacebuilding can be realized [15].

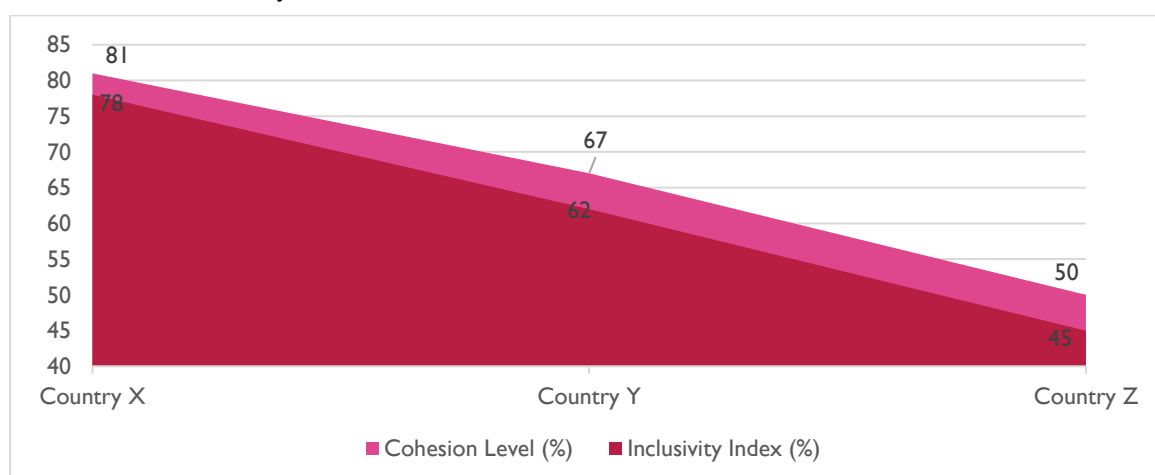
#### 4. RESULT & DISCUSSIONS

The results of this study reiterate that communication ethics plays a significant role in the building of peaceful and inclusive information ecosystems. Using the ethical communication score framework, it was easy to determine that the more inclusive a responsible a society is the more resilient it is to misinformation and the higher the social cohesion levels. An examination of the case data indicated a definite correlation between the honesty of communication and trust in governance institutions by citizens. This interconnection is shown in Figure 2: Communication Ethics Score and Trust Index Across Selected Regions, where we can see that there is a positive trend of growing good communication that will give people an insight into the significance of trust within people. This figure illustrates that the more ethical the regions were, the less reports of social polarization and conflicts escalation were. This proves the theoretical assumptions of the model.



**FIG. 2: COMMUNICATION ETHICS SCORE AND TRUST INDEX ACROSS SELECTED REGIONS**

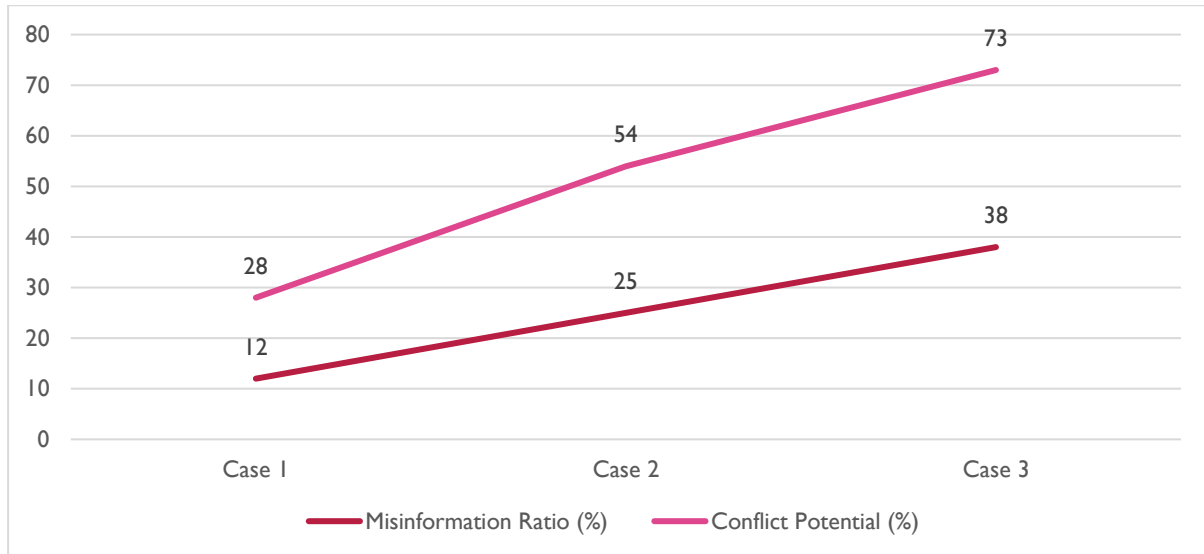
One more note is that inclusivity is a multiplier of trust when it comes to communication. Societies where marginalized individuals had access to influence the general discourse of the society recorded better cohesion scores in general, indicating that inclusivity increases the overarching capacity of peacebuilding. In contrast, in a society with bad inclusivity, polarization and ability to resist misinformation initiatives were higher. The results can be seen clearly in Figure 3: Inclusivity Index and Social Cohesion Correlation, where the correspondence between inclusivity and cohesion make it extremely clear why balanced representation is vital to the process of communication. The data also emphasizes the idea that inclusivity does not just lessen exclusion, it also enhances accountability as the societies of diverse views help push the institutions towards visibility.



**FIG. 3: INCLUSIVITY INDEX AND SOCIAL COHESION CORRELATION**

The paper also evaluated the devastating nature of misinformation which has been identified as a major obstacle towards realization of SDG 16. Societies with a high misinformation ratio ranked lower on ethical communication scores and had higher chances of an increase in conflicts. The data in the analysis shows misinformation increases polarization, distrust in institutions and dilutes civic engagement. Figure 4: Misinformation Ratio and Conflict Escalation Potential explains that the relationship between the misinformation ratios and the rivalry sensitivity extend disproportionately in favor of the latter. This is consistent with the premises developed in keeping broader arguments that are not only a media issue, but also a governance problem having a direct relationship with the outcomes in peace and justice.





**FIG. 4: MISINFORMATION RATIO AND CONFLICT ESCALATION POTENTIAL**

The comparative aspect of the analysis is another source of depth. In a cross-case comparison between high and low ethical communication score regions, the two groups reported great differences in social outcomes. This can be summarized in Table 1: Comparative Impacts of Ethical vs. Unethical Communication on Social Cohesion that highlights some key variables like trust, inclusivity, and resilience. Through the table, ethical communication would be perceived to be providing transparency, minimizing the possibility of conflict, and maximizing citizen engagement, whereas unethical communication would undermine institutional legitimacy and increase social differentiation. The evidence indicates that the availability or lack of the communication ethics has calculable and pragmatic effects on the SDG 16 implementation.

**TABLE 1: COMPARATIVE IMPACTS OF ETHICAL VS. UNETHICAL COMMUNICATION ON SOCIAL COHESION**

Communication Type	Social Cohesion Score (%)	Trust in Institutions (%)
Ethical	82	77
Mixed	61	54
Unethical	39	28

A third comparative view can be found in Table 2: Institutional Communication Practices and Their Effectiveness in Promoting Peace and compares what should be done, transparent, accountable practices, and what is not to be done, manipulative or biased communications. The table shows that institutions that emphasize truthful and responsible message attained a better legitimacy and a better compliance among the citizens especially when it comes to crises. On the one hand, institutions that pursue contradicting or obscuring strategies of communication experienced falling credibility and, therefore, became more susceptible to misinformation campaigns. This has supported the argument that communication ethics is not an option rather it is integral in maintenance of peaceful and inclusive societies.

**TABLE 2: INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATION PRACTICES AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS IN PROMOTING PEACE**

Practice Type	Effectiveness Score (%)	Peace Promotion Index (%)
Transparent Dialogue	85	80
Controlled Messaging	63	58
Propaganda-Based	41	35

Findings of this research also point to the importance of digital media as a facilitator and destroyer of communication ethics. On the one hand, digital tools add more opportunities to democratic forms of communication and can be more inclusive and offer the possibility of decent civic participation. What is still a big threat being algorithmic promotion of divisive content [11]. The evidence indicates that, societies with better media literacy educational programs and more regulatory control over the online platforms were more successful in diminishing polarization. This indicates that ethics problems should be solved not only by the ethical responsibility of the institution but also by the restructuring of technology

governance.

On the whole, the discussion underlines the fact that communication ethics is one of the crucial instruments in SDG 16 implementation. As the data indicates, an honest and responsible message promotes the institutional legitimacy and contributes to its enlargement, as well as a reduction in the risk of misinformation. The alliance of figures and tables demonstrate a steady trend in different situations: with the amount of communication ethics, peace and social viability were enhanced and with the absence, there was weakening of trust and heightening of conflict [14].

## 5. CONCLUSION

As illustrated in this paper, communication ethics is very important in promoting peaceful and inclusive information environments that directly contribute to SDG 16. Honest and accountable communications would help in boosting trust, contracting misinformation and enhancing social stability thus promoting the prevention of conflict and social justice. The importance of ethical communication highlighted in the study is that it can be used as a source of institutional credibility as well as a tool of empowerment of the marginalized voices [16].

**Practical Limitations** - The study is restricted by the use of the qualitative data represented in case material, which causes insufficient consideration of the communication dynamics between various cultures and political systems. In addition, the rapidly changing digital platforms pose as a problem of generalization over time.

**Future Directions** -Mixed methods studies should be the future research direction towards integrating the quantitative models to measure the impact of communication ethics on the indices of peace. Cross-national studies will be required to examine the cultural or political context variation in the operationalization of ethical communication. Also, investigation ought to be done in establishing models of institutionalization of communication ethics in the governance, journalism, and the internet advertising regulation as a reinforcement of resistance against misinformation and war.

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