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Communicate Ethically about NSO Ethics

Bukhari Fauzul Rahman (1,3), Maulana Faris (1,2), Ilmiawan Auwalin (2)

(*[1]Statistics Indonesia; [2]Airlangga University, [3]Monash University*)

maulana.faris@bps.go.id; bukhari.fauzul@bps.go.id; auwalin@feb.unair.ac.id

Abstract

In an era of rapidly evolving information, ethical and effective communication by national statistical organizations has never been more important. This research aims to explore how national statistical organizations can communicate ethically and effectively about data ethics, with a focus on transparency, accountability and public trust. Through a qualitative approach combining case studies and in-depth interviews with statistical experts from Statistics Indonesia, this research assesses current practices and challenges faced in communicating ethical issues. The results of this research indicate that effective communication about ethics requires the incorporation of clear ethical principles in all layers of operations, ongoing education about the importance of data ethics to stakeholders, and the implementation of policies that support transparency and responsibility. It is hoped that the recommendations from this research will increase public trust and ensure the integrity of data produced by national statistical organizations.

Keywords: communication, ethics, NSO

I.   Introduction

Communication Ethics is crucial for organizations including the Statistics Office, and in particular for BPS-Statistics Indonesia. It is a crucial aspect in maintaining public trust and data integrity. As an institution responsible for the collection, analysis, and publication of national statistical data, BPS has a crucial role in providing accurate and reliable information for policymakers, researchers, and the general public. Therefore, communications conducted by BPS must adhere to strict ethical standards to ensure that the data submitted is not only technically correct, but also presented in a manner that is not misleading or detrimental to various parties.

This paper aims to explore ethical communication guidelines at mainstream organizations and the Statistics Office including BPS, with a particular focus on how to convey ethics both to internal and the public. In a world that is increasingly dependent on data for decision-making, it is important to understand how the Statistics Office maintains transparency and accountability in conveying statistical data. In addition, this paper will also discuss the extent to which organizations including the Statistics Office should communicate ethics to its internal and the public as well leverage theoreticals communication frameworks. This paper will provide in-depth insights into the internal and external dynamics that influence ethical communication in BPS Indonesia. By analyzing BPS's communication practices, this study is expected to provide useful recommendations for improving communication ethics in other national statistical institutions.

II. Ethics Guidelines for NSO

Ethics is often associated with the concept of morality in a part of philosophy study, and it is related to which extent fundamental issues of practical decision making regarding any human concern include the value humans rely on, as well as an standard or indicator by which human behavior can be judged (Singer, 2024). In 1649 Descartes had discussed ethics-but not explicitly embedded in his manuscripts, however he argued that human beings need to achieve an ethical life for the better life among human beings. To achieve an ethical life, Descartes wrote in his "Passions of soul" which discussed the necessity to maintain the passion or emotion is a key to obtaining a good life and being morally responsible. The passion consists of six base human traits including miracle, love, hate, desire, happiness, and sadness. Thus, in the context of how we live ethically as an individual or being within an organization, it involves the ability to understand, control, and direct the passions of someone else. Through these abilities, an individual could make a good contribution into the harmony, cooperation and decision making within the society (Descartes, 2024). Hence, as a part of the community, a person should manage their manner regarding the self value of morals and convey the ethics arrangement which emerges in the society as a good guideline of human interaction or standard to achieve a personal good life and good decision making.

In the context of organization, what is specific regarding ethics to organization is that someone's relation is put within a formally structured hierarchical system in an organization, but this ethic should be more practical in organization and organized to allow it to be applied to all (Rhodes, 2023). Furthermore, Svensson and Wood (2011) argued that *"both internal and external areas of ethical concerns across organizations consist of three main principles including ethical structures, ethical processes and ethical performances. These three principles also require ongoing monitoring of the business practice to determine whether the business management of an organization is ethical or unethical. Moreover, the ethical structures support and maintain the ethical business practice in and between organizations, whilst ethical processes that require organization to perform sound current and future ethical business practice. Additionally, performance ethics provide the objective of evaluation and maintenance of ethical business practice and decide whether they are ethical or not"*.

There is a standard for ethical code which has the role of ethical culture in most notable organizations. The standard include some key aspects as follows : *there should be a written standards for ethical conduct and then train the standard within all internal parties of the organization; there is a system for seeking ethics-related*

advice or information; there is an anonymous system for reporting ethics fraud; enforce the ethics standard and disciplining of employees who break the standard; and conduct employee performance evaluations (ERC, 2007)

National Statistical Offices (NSOs) are generally guided by a specific set of internationally recognized ethical values to ensure the integrity, transparency, and reliability of the data they produce and publish. Some of the key ethical values that NSOs often adhere to include:

1. **Professional Independence**: NSOs must work independently of political influence or other external pressures to ensure that the data they produce is objective and free from bias. This allows NSOs to provide accurate and unbiased information to the public and policymakers.

2. **Transparency**: Transparency in the process of data collection, analysis, and dissemination is a key principle. NSOs must clearly communicate the methodology, definitions, and assumptions used in the production of statistics so that data users can understand the context and limitations of the information presented.

3. **Confidentiality**: NSOs must maintain the confidentiality of the data collected by individuals and entities. Information collected for statistical purposes must not be used for non-statistical purposes, and must be protected from unauthorized disclosure.

4. **Accuracy**: Data produced by NSOs must be accurate, relevant, and presented in a timely manner. They must continually evaluate and improve their methods to ensure high data quality.

5. **Fairness and Equity**: NSOs must ensure that their data fairly reflects the entire population, without bias or discrimination. This includes ensuring that all groups in society are properly represented in the statistical data produced.

These ethical guidelines are often outlined in international documents, such as the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics adopted by the UN, or the European Statistical Code of Practice in the European Union. NSOs, including BPS in Indonesia, usually refer to these principles as a basis for carrying out their duties.

The European Statistics Code of Practice (2017) is the cornerstone of the common quality framework of the European Statistical System. It is a self-regulatory instrument and is based on 16 Principles covering the institutional environment, statistical processes and statistical outputs. The 16 principles include:

1. **Professional Independence**: Professional independence of statistical authorities from other policy, regulatory or administrative departments and bodies, as well as from private sector operators, ensures the credibility of European Statistics.

2. **Coordination and Cooperation**: National Statistical Institutes and Eurostat ensure the coordination of all activities for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics at the level of the national statistical system and the European Statistical System, respectively. Statistical authorities actively cooperate within the partnership of the European Statistical System, so as to ensure the development, production and dissemination of European statistics.

3. **Mandate for Data Collection and Access to Data:** Statistical authorities have a clear legal mandate to collect and access information from multiple data sources for European statistical purposes. Administrations, enterprises and households, and the public at large may be compelled by law to allow access to or deliver data for European statistical purposes at the request of statistical authorities.

4. **Adequacy of Resources:** The resources available to statistical authorities are sufficient to meet European Statistics requirements.

5. **Commitment to Quality**: Statistical authorities are committed to quality. They systematically and regularly identify strengths and weaknesses to continuously improve process and output quality.

6. **Statistical Confidentiality and Data Protection**: The privacy of data providers, the confidentiality of the information they provide, its use only for statistical purposes and the security of the data are absolutely guaranteed.

7. **Impartiality and Objectivity**: Statistical authorities develop, produce and disseminate European Statistics respecting scientific independence and in an objective, professional and transparent manner in which all users are treated equitably

8. **Sound Methodology**: Sound methodology underpins quality statistics. This requires adequate tools, procedures and expertise.

9. **Appropriate Statistical Procedures**: Appropriate statistical procedures, implemented throughout the statistical processes, underpin quality statistics.

10. **Non-Excessive Burden Respondents**: The response burden is proportionate to the needs of the users and is not excessive for respondents. The statistical authorities monitor the response burden and set targets for its reduction over time.

11. **Cost Effectiveness**: Resources are used effectively.

12. **Relevance**: European Statistics meet the needs of users.

13. **Accuracy and Reliability**: European Statistics accurately and reliably portray reality.

14. **Timeliness and Punctuality**: European Statistics are released in a timely and punctual manner.

15. **Coherence and Comparability**: European Statistics are consistent internally, over time and comparable between regions and countries. It is possible to combine and make joint use of related data from different data sources.

16. **Accessibility and Clarity**: European Statistics are represented in a clear and understandable form, released in a suitable and convenient manner, available and accessible on an impartial basis with supporting metadata and guidance.

Statistical Code of Practice and Statistical Ethics are related but not the same. The Code of Practice focuses more on operational procedures and quality standards in statistical production, while Ethics in Statistics focuses more on the moral behavior and responsibilities of researchers. The Code of Practice is often more specific and detailed, while Statistical Ethics is more philosophical in addressing ethical dilemmas that may be encountered in statistical work. The Code of Practice aims to maintain the quality and consistency of statistics, while Ethics in Statistics aims to ensure that statistics are used in a fair and responsible manner. Both are important in ensuring that the statistics produced and used are accurate, transparent, and ethical. The Statistical Code of Practice and Statistical Ethics are closely related and complementary in the context of statistical practice

There is no explicit code about ethics in the BPS-Statistics Indonesia's legal product, however the BPS defines its core value as stated in the Chief of BPS regulation no. 36 of 2020 regarding Strategic Planning of BPS year 2020-2024, that is, the core values are the values which are upheld by every employee and has the role as a guideline in making a policy in achieving and realizing the BPS's vision. The core values of the BPS consist of professionalism, Integrity, and trust. Professionalism means that every employee must work professionally aligned with their own role, position and tasks. Professionalism comprises five elements including competent, effective, efficient, innovative, and systemic. Furthermore, the integrity core value is a form of employee's devotion to organization and comprises six elements, including dedication, discipline, consistency, openness, and accountability. Ultimately, the last core value is trust which shows how an employee's work is a manifestation of the form of their work responsible to God. Trust value comprises four elements including trustworthy, honest, sincere, and equitable.

III. Ethics Communication

Communication is the human act of sending (verbal or non verbal, online or offline) and receiving messages in which interpretations are made during the process. Ethical Communication is communicating clearly, concisely, truthfully, and responsibly. Because communication is a universal human activity, ethical communication can take a universal approach. Everyone expects to be treated with dignity, fairness, and respect in communicating with others.

According to Lipari (2017) Communication ethics concerns the creation and evaluation of goodness in all aspects and manifestations of communicative interaction. Because both communication and ethics are tacitly or explicitly inherent in all human interactions, everyday life is fraught with intentional and unintentional ethical questions. Thus ethical questions infuse all areas of the discipline, including rhetoric, media studies, intercultural/international communication, relational and organizational communication, as well as other iterations of the field. The questions of what makes a law or action just or unjust, who gets to deliberate, and how we decide are some of the central questions of communication ethics.

In the second period of the 20s century, communication ethics scholars faced the authority or power and truth issues to raise ethical questions about the relationship between social perspective and social justice. Communication ethics is often characterized by the debate between the truth question which is objective and absolute and the truth conception which tends to be more subjective and relativistic. Furthermore, over the last 100 years, communication ethics has engaged questions about how to create ethical worlds with our communication processes, be they individual, face-to-face, mediated, or institutional. In short, communication ethics concerns the discernment of the good, seeking to balance the competing values, needs, and wants of multiple constituencies inhabiting pluralistic democracies.

According to Lipari (2017) Communication ethics can be described by three central characteristics: **heterogeneity, interconnectivity**, and **historicity**. These three characteristics assist in how we understand ethical communication can be implemented in various ranges of social context.

Heterogeneity reflects on the diversity among individuals or groups who communicate. Since every human being has diverse backgrounds, values, experiences, and point of views, it means that ethical communication must stand to appreciate, understand and embrace that diversity. The ignorance of diversity will not allow the equity in the communication process to happen. Heterogeneity also arises through the sheer number of values that may come into conflict in any given situation. In the case of hate speech, for example, the values of free speech bump up against the values of freedom from intimidation, harassment, and violation. The communication ethicist must face this nearly endlessly multiplicitous-diversity in her inquiry into questions of the good.

Interconnectivity emphasizes every individual and the message which they communicate to are interconnected. In communication there should not be someone experiencing isolation. What we deliver and communicate has an impact on anyone else, and it is influenced by the social and cultural context within our society or environment. Ethical communication involves a consciousness about how our voice and act could influence the interpersonal relationship, as well as social connection in a broad context.

Historicity emphasizes communication that always occurs in certain historical contexts. It means that the way we communicate is influenced by certain things including the past experiences, cultural norms, and social conditions as well as the political situation. To ensure we can communicate ethically, we have to consider certain historical contexts which may cover our communication. This way will hinder the people who communicate from insensitivity towards the diversity of experiences and backgrounds. Furthermore, we can leverage these three characteristics to practice a more ethical communication, which we embrace the diversity and understand the interconnectivity within us, as well as foster a consciousness about the history that made our interaction.

Additionally, Lipari (2017) also discussed three central themes in ethics communication, including **relation, power**, and **integrity**. Relation is how we connect to others in the communication context, highlighting the importance of recognition of differences (alterity) and cares (compassion). This theme explains that in every interaction, we should treat others with respect and care, recognize the diversity and encourage openness and inclusion. Moreover, the power theme focuses on how power or authority affect communication. Moreover, it has the sub-theme including justice, normativity, and force, and it shows that in communication, power is frequently utilized to defend or even to challenge social norms. For instance, those who are in the center of the power tend to have dominant authority to speak or to be heard, and that power will affect communication's justice and freedom.

Whilst, integrity covers honesty, truth, and trust in communication. Moreover, truth, trust, authenticity, and transparency emphasizes on how important it is to keep integrity in any form of communication, in order to hinder the people who communicate from misleading communication, and even could break the trust. Hence, communication ethics is an effort to balance the competing values among the pluralistic society with the purpose to develop a good and fair communication interaction.

The way how to express ethics in a communication could leverage two rules suggested by Bennet (1980), including adhering to the Golden Rule or Platinum Rule. The golden emphasizes on "always treat each other in the same way you want to be treated", so that golden rule is to focus more on the self. Whilst, the Platinum Rule emphasizes on "treat others the way they wish to be treated". Platinum rule focuses more on other people's preferences because we have different points of view.

Gelman (2018) argued that there is a strong relationship between ethics and statistics, in which the ethics practice is not only about honesty and integrity, but it involves navigation on complex interaction within data analysis, uncertainty, and communication. Furthermore, it should transform into a real transparency and includes self critique in the practice of statistics, in which the statistics should be leveraged in understanding the uncertainties, and variations, it is not to exaggerate the statistical significance of a finding. German said that its final objective is to foster science communities to be more ethical and reliable.

IV. Internal Ethics Communication

The conceptual framework of organization's corporate and business ethics which consists of three main principles developed by Svensson and Wood (2011) has been leveraged in this paper. We use the framework to communicate and/or disseminate the ethic both to the internal and external of the organization, and it is a part of the ethical processes. This part of the framework suggests that the code of ethics of an organization has to be

communicated or delivered to the employee effectively and embed certain relevant examples. A supportive leadership should be embedded to any leader who wants to ensure their organization's code of ethics is successfully communicated to the employee, so that the leaders have to fully support and enforce the organization's value and ethics regardless of the challenge that might be faced (Thomas *et al*, 2004).

The context ethics and unethical culture are not a binary things that has only two options, it should be encouraged within organization and all the members of the organization must agree to reach the consensus about what is ethic code applies in the organization and to develop assessable ways of activity towards such ideals (Tilley *et al*, 2012). Furthermore, the organization must communicate the ethic effectively to its internal in a way that the communication has to stabilize towards a control and standardization with flexibility and acknowledgement of complexity (Christensen et al, 2008). It is common that an organization has its own code of conduct, but there is no clarity on who has to ensure the ethic has already been spoken and implemented within the internal (Tilley, 2009).

Communicating ethics internally should consider the cultural diversity among the members of the organization. The leader or the communicator who admitted to do this job have to put the collaborative and inclusive approach to embrace this diversity. It necessitates inclusive leadership-leadership that prioritizes respectful treatment, fairness, value, a sense of belonging, and inspiration for all team members (Bourke and Titus, 2023). It is crucial to put collaboration and inclusivity when determining an ethical standard as it leads the result to be more effective rather than just overlay an existing culture or refer certain staff to develop an ethics standard (Tilley et al, 2012). Additionally, a leader should campaign their organization values and ethics to all employees and has to give their leadership commitment that is a commitment to transform as a role model who implement the value as an example, as well as ensure every employees in organization has the opportunity to be informed about positive ethics values and practice (Thomas et al, 2004). Gomez-Alatorre et al (2020) using a cluster randomized control trial experiment do assess the effectiveness of communicating the code of ethics in a business through one way direction without involving the employees in making the ethics found that it was statistically ineffective.

Martinez et al (2021) proposed a mechanism to introduce ethics into organization members or employees through three patterns of opportunities approach, including turning points, decision-making, and transmission of culture. Turning point opportunity allows the condition of "sense of responsibility to society" that could be leveraged by the organization to conduct ethics or change the existing ethics to meet sociological and cultural diversity as well as inclusion. Furthermore, it will drive decision-making opportunities which allows ethical deliberation conditions. In this part, the ethics could be generated through a participation channel who involves organization members, as well as conduct a development of ethical motivation and competence using human resource training and develop reward systems. The last is how the organization transmits the culture and ethics through mission and values statement, innovative internal communication, and assess the consistency of the implementation.

V. External Ethics Communication

Following the necessity to communicate the ethics to the internal of the organization, the external should be communicated as well. It means that the organization should inform their organization's value and ethic to the external. The public, in particular the parties who have direct connection to the organization, rely on the sustainability goodwill of the organization, and they should be seen as mutually inclusive to allow value to exist for everyone (Svensson and Wood, 2011). External parties or the public are crucial to the organization to develop and maintain the relationship regarding issues they manage; external parties can be considered as strategic constituents (Seitel, 2011). Moreover, the public is important to reach out by organization as they have different perspectives of the importance scale regarding the issue, and they have their own priority values and ethic to make a judgment (Heath and Palenchar (2009). Thus, when communicating the organization ethics to the external parties, the organization has to narrow its target public.

Kim and Ni (2010) as cited in Mahoney (2023) argued that the target *public is crucial in determining and defining who they are and how they behave.* Hence, Mahoney (2023) itself discussed that the target publics in the context of external parties are *those who are important to organization and with whom it needs to create a good connection in building the awareness, acceptance and promote action.* Furthermore there are two ways in categorizing target publics proposed by communication strategist, including primary target publics which are those who directly affected by situation or issues regarding ethics the organization try to communicate and tertiary or intervening target publics which are those who are not affected, however they might have resource to influence. Moreover, after defining the target public, the following action is to uncover the target publics' knowledge about the organization, in particular about their opinion about the organization, whether they have good opinion or bad opinion about the organization.

To ensure the organization's success in communicating its ethic to the public, we leverage Mahoney's framework on strategic communication plans which has adjusted the classic version. The plan includes elements of setting the goals, setting the objectives and messages, target publics, pathways and tools (Mahoney, 2023). Setting goals recognizes the situation that organizations are dealing with regarding, in particular in which extent the organization's ethics is emerged and conducted to achieve organization's vision and it has to be related to the public condition or issues. For instance, BPS's core values of professional, integrity, and trust are conducted in realizing BPS's vision of the provider of qualified statistical data for advanced Indonesia. The vision is aligned with the national development theme of "advanced Indonesia" and it is important to be informed to the public. Furthermore, setting the objectives and messages emphasizes how the organization tells the public about what they are going to do to achieve their goals and how the messages are conducted and delivered to the public about the organizations' goals. At the BPS, the objectives and messages are clear and well conducted as a part of law product, that is "Chief of BPS-Statistics Indonesia regulation Number 36 of 2020 Regarding Strategic Planning of BPS year 2020-2024" and it is accessible to the public. Additionally, BPS also showcases the messages through a Public Service Declaration which everyone can see when they visit 526 BPS offices spanning across Indonesia.

Furthermore, organizations should define their target public which is categorized into primary target public and tertiary target public as it will assist the organizations to effectively deliver their message to the public. It is crucial to understand the specific target public as the public is very diverse. The organizations have to foster ethics communication when they are going to communicate their ethics and values to the public, that is so they have to embrace the public diversity and treat the public based on the public categories to hinder the unethical communication that might be judged by the public itself. Then, plan the pathways as well as the tools to communicate the ethics. Pathways can be the indicator to assess the organizations reach its target public, whilst tools used as the outputs of the communication. As we mentioned prior, the examples of the outputs to deliver the messages of BPS's ethics or value are through the regulation and provide public service declaration. However, we can leverage a range of communication tools to deliver the ethics to the public, such as websites, social media, and so on.

VI. Conclusion

Organizations comprises diverse employees which have their own perspective about values and personal ethics. However, every employee is seeking for a better life as their core goals and their personal ethics emphasize the same goals which encourage their goals to be achieved. In conducting the organization's ethics, the leaders have to create an inclusive environment within organizations to embrace the diversity among the employees, such as cultural, demographic and biological diversity. Furthermore, the organizations' ethics should follow the standard including the ethics should be written, train the ethics to all employees, as well as monitor and evaluate the implementation of the ethics.

In terms of the Statistics Office, there are some major values that can be considered as ethics or norms. The values include professional, accuracy, effectiveness, efficiency, consistency, and transparency or accountability. These values emerge as guidelines to provide qualified statistical data which portray the socio-economic conditions and issues in the society. Thus, the Statistics Office needs to communicate its value as the organization's core ethic to their internal and external parties.

Communicate ethics is important to both sides of communicating to internal and communicating to external. Communicating ethics internally is significant to all together manage the organization to achieve or realize the organization's goals. Allowing the employees to understand and implement the ethics is useful to obtain a good working environment and foster productivity among employees. Whilst, communicating an organization's ethics externally is crucial as the external is the representative of the public interest that has to be informed about an organization's ethics or even issues. Engaging the public to get to know about an organization's ethics allows good public relations that can be leveraged by the organization to achieve their goals.

Communicating ethics internally can be commenced by identifying the organization's turning point which allows the sense of responsibility to culture and it is a good moment to conduct the organization's ethic (or making an adjustment). Furthermore, organizations should allow ethical deliberation conditions through creating a certain participation channel or creating a reward system. Lastly, communicating ethics internally proceeds into the transmission of culture approach in which the organization transmits the ethics to all employees through mission and value statement.

Ultimately, in communicating ethics externally, the organizations have to consider the external are those who might have or not have influence in the public. Thus, to conduct good communication, an organization has to create its strategic communication plan. The strategic communication plan should consist of the elements of setting goals, setting objectives and messages, defining the target public, choosing the pathways, and using a range of innovative tools. Ultimately, organizations including BPS or other Statistical Office need to ensure the ethics is well conducted by involving the employees and then communicate it both internally and externally to the public.

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