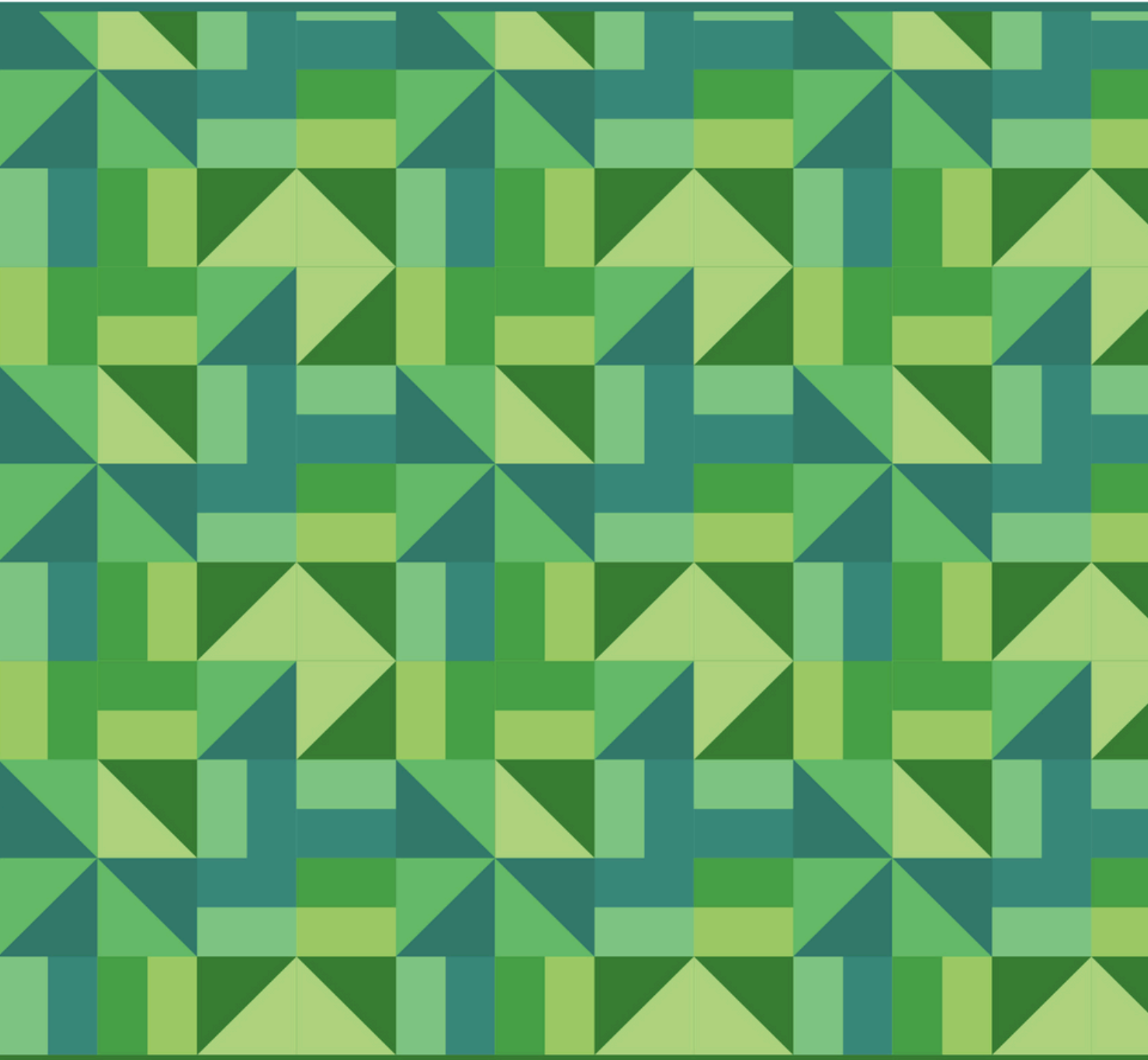


# JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION & PUBLIC RELATIONS



***VOL. 3 NO.1, 2024***

ISSN : 2809-6940 | E-ISSN : 2809-9087



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## Foreword from Editor in Chief of JCPR

# Strategic Communication in Banking Services: Navigating Public Diplomacy and Employee Well-being in Digital Era

The dynamics of corporate competition and global community groups require the right communication and diplomacy strategy. Effective communication is a very crucial thing for various types of people. The communication carried out must be able to build trust and make the audience feel part of the communicator. All communication activities must be part of the process of managing reputation, both internal and external; both national and international.

Likewise in the management of social crises or the management of stress in employees. Diplomacy and interpersonal communication can be a supporter of the success of community groups or organizations.

Volume 3 no 1 explores the Bank Service Marketing Communication Strategy, reveals Public Diplomacy in the Rohingya Crisis, interpersonal communication in a company, employee stress management through the use of sophisticated tools such as physical activity control hours and the level of stress applied by the company to support employee welfare.



Articles that discuss banking communication are faced with the challenge of not only providing financial services but also communicating bank values effectively to customers and prospective customers. The preparation of an interesting narrative that is in line with the needs of customers will be the bank's difference from its competitors. The banks studied use multi-channel communication strategies, utilizing traditional media such as print and television media, as well as digital platforms such as social media, and mobile applications. By delivering a consistent message across multiple channels, banks increase their brand visibility and credibility. The researched bank successfully shares its values with customers and enhances its reputation as a socially responsible entity.

Meanwhile, public relations discourse within the company can serve as a tool to create a positive work environment. Regular communication from leaders who demonstrate a commitment to employee well-being, recognition of achievement, and open channels for feedback contribute to a supportive work culture.

Employees are the backbone of any organization, and their well-being has a direct impact on the quality of service provided. Work stress management programs are very important to be implemented to ensure employee satisfaction and ultimately be able to provide superior customer service.

Innovative approaches to employee welfare include the use of personal sports devices. Companies that encourage the use of fitness equipment such as smartwatches to monitor a healthy lifestyle among employees. This device not only tracks physical activity but also provides insight into sleep patterns and information about stress levels.

Meanwhile, interpersonal communication plays an important role in managing work stress among employees. Providing training in effective communication, conflict resolution, and stress management equips employees with the skills needed to face challenges in the workplace. In addition, encouraging open dialogue and creating a forum for employees to share their concerns fosters a sense of togetherness and brotherhood. Integrating these personal exercise devices into workplace health programs encourages a holistic approach to employee well-being. Every company can organize fitness challenges, offer incentives to achieve health goals, and create a positive work environment.

On the other hand, the Indonesian government as a large organization needs to conduct public diplomacy to form perceptions, especially when dealing with sensitive issues such as humanitarian crises such as the Rohingya refugee case.

Jakarta, January 2024  
Editor in Chief of JCPR

Assoc. Professor Dr. Ulani Yunus, MM

*“Public relations discourse within the organization can serve as a tool for fostering a positive work environment”*

**Journal of Communication and Public Relations (JCPR) | Volume 3 No.1, January 2024** is published by LSPR Institute of Communication & Business. We welcome all of experts, practitioners, and academicians who are interested in public relation and communication studies to submit their articles. Articles in this journal discuss various current issues of communication and public relations. Since 2024, the publication is issued twice a year (January and July).

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## Interpersonal Communication using Personal Sport Device in Forming Community

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### ABSTRACT

Technologies matched the effectiveness of various health activity strategies, such as exercise monitoring, information, and social support. The purpose is to find out that technology has become part of delivering sports information that is used by the applications and devices, creating communication between individuals and devices they used to plan and record sports and exercise routines, physical performance, and record all the activity. Effective communication can occur if the sender and the recipient have good skills in exchanging messages. This study may provide an overview of verbal and nonverbal that may occur during communication in sports activities. This manuscript analyze whether technology enhances or hinders Interpersonal Communication using George Herbert Mead's Symbolic Interaction Theory. It uses a technique that includes a literature review and interviews with certain users of personal sports equipment to examine three fundamental concepts: mind, self, and society. According to the study, a person's capacity to interpret symbols is what makes up their mind. Therefore, everyone must interact to develop their mind and get that meaning. Then, the self is the ability to accept and adapt based on the judgment of another person's point of view. Moreover, an individual in the surrounding environment will deliver people in the process of taking tasks in society; they even can form a community as the same user of personal sports devices. Using Symbolic Interaction Theory, humans will perform an action based on the meanings attached to the action. Nevertheless, humans can obtain their purpose from social interaction with others.

**Keywords:** *Sport Device, Interpersonal Communication, Community Development, Symbolic Interaction*



## INTRODUCTION

The development of digital innovations and technology has brought new experiences to everyday human life, extending beyond mobility to the evolution of individual cultural habits (Srisathan & Naruetharadhol, 2022). The internet has fundamentally changed how people organize and connect with those around them. These advancements continue to shape our understanding of how emerging technologies, including the internet, which has birthed digital media, are considered to be the killer of traditional media due to its significant and comprehensive development in human life (Praditha & Widodo, 2022). The advent of the internet has transformed nearly every aspect of life, including business, social interactions, shopping, and leisure activities, all profoundly influenced by digitalization. This same transformative process has also fundamentally altered how people follow and engage in sports.

Further, Internet of Things (IoT) and human-computer interface (HCI) as part of advanced digitalization have permitted the successful completion of an array of tasks efficiently and timely. Many intelligent and highly engaging platforms for students' PE-based education can use IoT and HCI. The proposed study examined different methods for recognizing athletes in images and videos captured during practice. Wearable and portable devices can develop to monitor a player's health during physical activity.

Sports have become an integral part of everyday life on an international scale, forming connections at nearly all levels, including diplomatic, cultural, economic, organizational, community, and interpersonal (L'Etang, 2006). This integration is paralleled by the advancement of digital and technological innovations. Modern culture has embraced sports as a way of life, and technology has made it more accessible for people to use sports equipment. One prominent feature of modern urban lifestyles is the emphasis on sports and fitness. As a result, urbanites have access to various amenities that facilitate exercise, leading many investors to view the establishment of fitness centers as a viable business opportunity.

The interplay between sports and lifestyle is evident, with urban environments offering numerous facilities to support physical activity. In Indonesia, the awareness of healthy lifestyles is growing, yet only 1% of the population is a member of a fitness center. This presents a significant opportunity for fitness centers targeting the B-C market segment. According to MarketResearch.com, the Asia Pacific fitness and health center market was valued at \$21.27 billion in 2018. Irawan Amanko, Chief Executive Officer of ReFIT Indonesia, highlighted in an article that the market value of the fitness business in Indonesia is estimated to be around Rp. 2-3 trillion per year (Suhartadi, 2017).

The development of digital innovations and technology has also brought new experiences to everyday life, extending beyond mobility to the evolution of individual cultural habits. The internet has fundamentally changed how people organize and connect with those around them, impacting our understanding of how emerging technologies can enhance social involvement. The transformative influence of the internet is seen in various aspects of life, including business, social interactions, shopping, and leisure activities, all profoundly shaped by digitalization. This same process has fundamentally altered how



people follow and engage in sports, making technology an essential component of modern sports culture.

The rapid development of the fitness center industry is also supported by technological advancements. For instance, a fitness center in Jakarta introduced a bracelet used as a locker lock. Customers attach this bracelet, named the RFID Wristband, to their hand to place and open the locker during visits and exercise sessions. The RFID Wristband connects to scanners placed at each studio door in the fitness center; the machine records the presence of members and connects directly to a mobile application. With the application on their cellphones, fitness center members can access various information, class programs, and personal activity records.

However, since covid 19 hit the world, people have started to do physical restrictions when leaving the house. So that many activities, especially sports, are carried out at home. Social restrictions, do more activities at home, maintain social distance, and avoid crowds are effective ways to reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19 outside the home. The problem is, self-isolation activities at home tend to have a negative effect on a person's mental health. Self-isolation activities accompanied by fear of contracting COVID-19 and excessive exposure to hoax information can have the effect of anxiety and depression. To reduce the boredom and anxiety caused by self-isolation, many people have started trying to establish a pleasant daily routine. One of them, they start sports activities as part of a healthy lifestyle to boost the body's immune system to be immune from virus attacks.

An online survey conducted by Sitohang, M. Y, 2021 said that in early December 2020 with 321 respondents showed that 1 in 5 people who had not previously exercised started exercising during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, almost half of the respondents who had been exercising since before the pandemic changed their sports activities for the better. They increase the duration of exercise and increase the type of exercise performed. Sports activities are indeed proven to reduce the effects of stress to maintain immune function because physical activity can reduce the effects of anxiety which in fact continue to haunt us while staying at home. Long before the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, many people had lived a sedentary lifestyle or lacked physical activity which could have a negative impact on health. During the COVID-19 pandemic, running and exercising at home (home workout) were the most popular types of exercise by respondents (79%).

Exercising at home, such as home workouts, can be a safe, easy, and inexpensive exercise choice for those avoiding social interaction to prevent COVID-19. This program includes aerobics (e.g., walking around the house or neighborhood), strength training, stretching exercises, and a combination of strengthening and stretching muscles. The increasing demand for technology products in sports and health is evident at the industry level, with innovations in sports equipment at fitness centers, sports competitions, health therapy in hospitals and clinics, and individual technologies. One of the most popular individual technologies is smartwatches, which connect to mobile health applications. According to the online magazine menshealth.com, the five best smartwatches of 2019

were the Apple Watch, Fitbit Versa, Samsung Galaxy Watch, Garmin Vivo Active 3, and Matrix Power Watch X (Lane, 2019).

Research in the United States shows that using sports applications on smartphones can provide a "challenging" effect for users. The track record of physical activity in the application features motivates users to increase their physical activity. For example, if the app notes that the user walked 2,000 steps today, the next day, users will challenge themselves to walk further or at least match the previous day's steps (Sitohang, M. Y., 2021).

The habitual practice of independent exercise alongside the use of smartwatches and mobile apps persisted throughout the entirety of the Covid-19 pandemic. This study delves into the satisfaction levels among individuals regarding the utilization of new sports technology to organize their physical activities. Specifically, the study focuses on how technological innovations in sports communication, such as integrating watches with mobile health apps, have impacted user experiences. The research aims to explore various aspects, including how individuals communicate their sports participation through these technologies and how such interactions foster community-building among users.

One of the primary questions this study seeks to answer is: How do advancements in sports technology, particularly in the realm of wearable devices and mobile applications, influence interpersonal communication and community formation among users? This inquiry is crucial as it examines the evolving dynamics of how people engage with sports and fitness activities in a digitally interconnected world.

Technological innovations have not only facilitated personal fitness tracking but have also transformed how individuals interact and share their sporting experiences. By analyzing these dynamics, this study aims to uncover insights into the changing landscape of interpersonal communication within sports communities. It explores whether traditional face-to-face interactions are being supplanted by digital platforms, and how these technologies contribute to the formation of cohesive social groups centered around shared athletic interests.

Moreover, the integration of sport watches and smartphones has intensified digital interactions within internet platforms, fostering new modes of engagement and community-building. By understanding how these technologies shape social behaviors and interactions, researchers can provide valuable insights into optimizing future developments in sports technology and enhancing user experiences.

## LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

### *Interpersonal Communication*

Insancamila, Rizqi, and Norhabiba (2022) said that, when there is direct or face-to-face communication between people, it is called interpersonal communication. Message processing can also be referred to as message recipients, in this process what happens is the interpretation of other people's communicative behavior so that the meaning of their behavior can be understood. Next is interaction coordination, which is the process of aligning message production and message processing to produce a smooth exchange. The

process of interpersonal communication is followed by social perception, namely capturing events or activities of ourselves, other people, social relations, and social institutions.

Gamble and Gamble said communication may come in two ways: interpersonal or intrapersonal. Interpersonal communication happens where there are at least two persons communicating, exchanging and learning information that helps sustain relationships. Intrapersonal communication is communication within the self. It happens if someone thoughts of evaluating within himself; intrapersonal communication does not involve anyone else (Gamble & Gamble, 2022).

The Shannon-Weaver communication model, as seen below, has six elements to transmit how a message is sent and received. There are a source, message, channel, noise, receiver, and feedback (Fulginiti & Bagin, 2017)

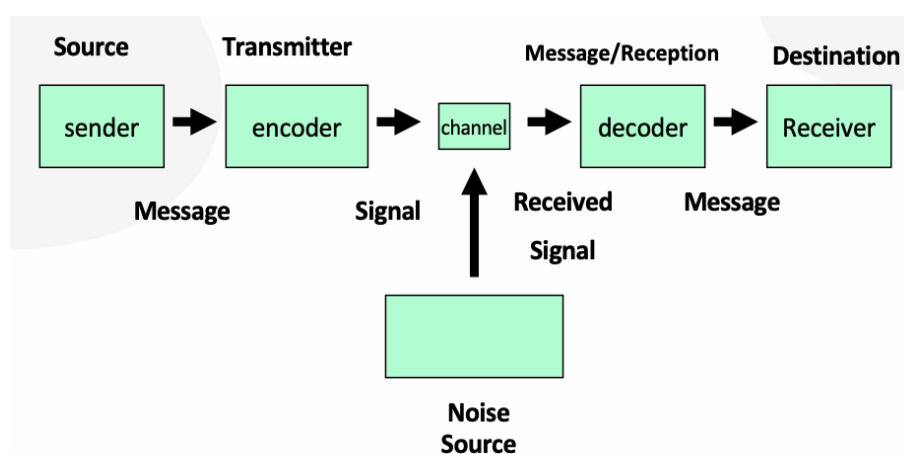


Figure 1 Shannon/Weaver Model (Fulginiti & Bagin, 2017)

The source sends the message; the encoder specifies how to send the message. Then the message will choose the channel. The channel is medium. For example, a tweet would be sent via Twitter to the audience using a computer or a smartphone. The computer or phone is the channel. The next element in the Shannon-Weaver Communication Model is the decoder. It takes the message and arranges it in a proper format. In the example using Twitter, Twitter would be both the encoder and decoder. (Fulginiti & Bagin, 2017). If the communication were one-way, it would stop here. If the communication is two-way, it would have one additional element, feedback. "Feedback is powerful too. Feedback tells the communicator how this message is being received (Broom, 2009, p. 272 in Nelson (2012)).

I.A Richards described that the visual aspect has significant meaning in communication to be able to change one's way of thinking. For example, a person's moment is depicted in a photographic figure, visuals can embody one's interpersonal messages and are reflected in one's cognition. In this view, interpersonal communication is defined as the process of creating something unique, has meaning, and has an impact on the mind of someone who receives the message (Nurdin, 2020).

As interpersonal communication is the basic thing that humans need because humans are social creatures. Humans need other people to exchange thoughts, information, opinions, and feelings. One notable example of successful interpersonal communication with global impact is the work of Nelson Mandela during South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy. Mandela's ability to communicate effectively across diverse groups and ideologies was pivotal in uniting a fractured nation and garnering international support for the anti-apartheid movement. His speeches and negotiations exemplified empathy, inclusivity, and strategic diplomacy, which were instrumental in bridging racial divides and fostering reconciliation.

One key lesson learned from Mandela's approach to interpersonal communication is the power of empathy and active listening. He demonstrated a deep understanding of the grievances and aspirations of various communities within South Africa, which allowed him to articulate a vision that resonated across racial and cultural lines. Mandela's ability to acknowledge and address historical injustices while advocating for a future built on equality and justice serves as a testament to the transformative potential of empathetic communication in complex socio-political contexts.

Another lesson from Mandela's leadership is the importance of integrity and consistency in communication. Throughout his life, Mandela remained steadfast in his commitment to non-violence and reconciliation, even during times of adversity and political pressure. His unwavering moral compass and consistent messaging earned him credibility both domestically and internationally, facilitating constructive dialogue and cooperation among disparate parties.

Furthermore, Mandela's approach underscores the significance of patience and perseverance in achieving long-term goals through interpersonal communication. He navigated decades of imprisonment, political negotiations, and societal transformation with resilience and determination, emphasizing dialogue over conflict and collaboration over division. His ability to maintain communication channels open and engage in constructive dialogue, even with former adversaries, laid the foundation for a peaceful transition and a more inclusive South Africa.

In essence, Mandela's success in interpersonal communication offers valuable insights into fostering global impact through empathy, integrity, and perseverance. By prioritizing understanding, consistency, and dialogue, individuals and leaders can navigate complex challenges, bridge divides, and cultivate meaningful change on a global scale.

### *Understanding Symbolic Interaction Theory in Social Sciences*

Symbolic interaction theory stands as a cornerstone in the realm of social sciences, focusing on how symbols shape and direct human behavior and social interactions. At its core, this theory emphasizes the significance of meaning-making through symbols within social contexts, highlighting the dynamic nature of human interaction.

Developed primarily by George Herbert Mead during the 1920s and 1930s, symbolic interaction theory delves into how individuals and groups communicate and derive meaning through symbols such as words, signs, and gestures (Rohim, 2016). According to

Rohim (2016), social structures influence behavior, shaping the symbolic interactions that define social life.

Symbolic interaction theory revolves around several foundational concepts articulated by George Herbert Mead, namely Mind, Self, and Society (Siregar, 2016):

- a. **Mind:** this concept refers to an individual's ability to create and utilize symbols to derive meaning from their experiences. It underscores the essential role of interaction in the development and acquisition of symbolic meanings.
- b. **Self:** the notion of self in symbolic interaction theory pertains to how individuals perceive themselves based on the feedback and perspectives of others. It explores how the self is constructed through social interactions and perceptions.
- c. **Society:** symbolic interaction theory posits that society emerges from the ongoing interactions between individuals and their social environments. These interactions contribute to the formation of shared meanings and norms within communities.

In broader terms, Sobur (2016) outlines three fundamental principles of symbolic interaction theory:

- a. **Meaning:** human actions are fundamentally driven by the meanings attributed to those actions, which are derived from social interactions.
- b. **Interaction:** meaning-making is a dynamic process that evolves through interactions with others, where symbols play a pivotal role in communication and understanding.
- c. **Perfection:** the meanings individuals attribute to actions are refined and perfected over time through continued social interactions.

The theory's relevance extends into contemporary contexts, including the integration of personal digital devices like smartwatches and mobile applications. These technologies facilitate new forms of symbolic interaction, where users communicate, share meanings, and engage in virtual communities based on shared interests (Siregar, 2016).

For example, the use of fitness-tracking apps allows individuals to monitor their physical activities and health metrics, engaging in self-reflection and goal-setting based on data provided by these digital tools. This application of symbolic interaction theory demonstrates how technology enhances interpersonal communication and meaning-making in modern society.

Symbolic interaction theory remains a vital framework for understanding how symbols and interactions shape human behavior and social dynamics. From its inception by Mead to its contemporary applications in digital technologies, this theory continues to illuminate the intricate ways in which individuals create, interpret, and share meanings within social contexts. As technology evolves, so too does the application and relevance of symbolic interaction theory in understanding the complexities of human interaction in a digital age.

#### *Sport Technology 4.0*

Understanding the relationship between lifestyle and health has led to significant advancements in Sport and Exercise Medicine (SEM), which encompasses a holistic

approach to health through prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation (Jadon et al., 2024). SEM goes beyond mere physical movement; it integrates sport and exercise into daily routines as both preventive measures against diseases and effective methods of rehabilitation.

Recent developments in wireless technologies have revolutionized the collection of biomechanical, physiological, and performance data in sports. The advent of "big data" analytics has fostered the belief that gathering extensive and precise data can enhance athletes' health and optimize sports performance. Technologies for monitoring athletes have proliferated rapidly, offering new avenues for understanding and improving athletic performance. However, the challenge lies in effectively managing and interpreting the vast amounts of data generated, distinguishing between valuable insights and irrelevant noise.

Sports scientists are increasingly utilizing a variety of commercially available assessment tools to gather comprehensive data. Professional sports organizations invest significant resources—time, finances, and skilled human capital—in adopting these new technologies. Commercial interests also drive the development and promotion of new technologies, enticing practitioners with promises of enhanced performance and injury prevention.

According to Sitohang (2021), most individuals engage in moderate to vigorous exercise sessions lasting 30-60 minutes, one to two times per week. This exercise frequency and intensity align with the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommendations, which advocate for regular physical activity to maintain overall health. Moderate-intensity exercise, in particular, has been shown to stimulate the circulation of various immune cell subtypes between the bloodstream and tissues, thereby bolstering immune function.

The habit of engaging in regular physical activity not only supports physical fitness but also contributes to mental well-being. Amidst technological advancements in sports science and SEM, promoting healthy lifestyles through exercise remains a cornerstone of preventive healthcare strategies. Encouraging individuals to adopt sustainable exercise habits benefits both individual health and public health outcomes.

SEM continues to evolve as a multidisciplinary field integrating cutting-edge technologies and data-driven approaches to enhance athletic performance and promote overall health. By leveraging advancements in data collection and analysis, alongside promoting regular exercise as a lifestyle choice, SEM plays a crucial role in preventive healthcare and rehabilitation strategies globally.

One successful case of sports technology implementation can be seen in the Nike+ Running app. Introduced in 2006, this app revolutionized the running experience by combining GPS tracking with social features and personalized coaching. Users could track their runs, set goals, receive real-time feedback, and share their achievements with friends and online communities. Nike leveraged this technology to build a global community of runners, enhancing user engagement through challenges, leaderboards, and social integration. The app's success lay in its ability to integrate advanced technology seamlessly into everyday fitness routines, fostering motivation and camaraderie among runners worldwide.



Conversely, a notable example of sports technology that faced challenges and struggled to meet expectations is Google Glass in sports applications. Introduced with great fanfare in 2013, Google Glass promised to revolutionize sports training and performance analysis by providing athletes with real-time data and video feedback. However, the device encountered several obstacles, including privacy concerns, usability issues, and resistance from sports organizations. Athletes found the technology distracting during training, and coaches were uncertain about its practical applications in improving performance. Ultimately, Google Glass failed to gain widespread adoption in the sports community due to these challenges.

From these cases, several lessons can be learned. Firstly, successful sports technology implementations prioritize user experience and integration into existing routines. Nike+ Running succeeded by enhancing the running experience with features that appealed to both casual and serious runners, leveraging social dynamics to boost engagement. Secondly, effective sports technology requires thorough testing and consideration of user feedback. Google Glass's failure highlighted the importance of addressing usability concerns and ensuring practical applications in real-world sporting environments before widespread adoption. Lastly, building a community around sports technology can enhance its value proposition. Nike+ Running's community-building features demonstrated how fostering social interaction and friendly competition can motivate users and sustain long-term engagement with the technology. These lessons underscore the importance of user-centric design, practicality, and community building in the successful deployment of sports technology innovations.

### *Forming Community*

Forming communities is a nuanced process that involves establishing connections, shared identities, and sustained engagement among individuals with common interests or goals. Successful community formation often hinges on understanding member needs, fostering meaningful interactions, and leveraging appropriate platforms or mediums. Conversely, unsuccessful attempts may stem from overlooking cultural nuances, inadequate facilitation of engagement, or misalignment with participant expectations.

A notable successful case study in community formation is Reddit, a social media platform known for its diverse range of communities or "subreddits." Reddit's success lies in its ability to empower users to create and moderate communities around specific interests, from niche hobbies to professional networking. Each subreddit fosters a sense of belonging and shared identity among its members through active participation, discussions, and community-driven content curation. The platform's decentralized moderation approach allows communities to self-regulate, ensuring relevance and authenticity.

In contrast, Google+ serves as a cautionary tale of failed community formation. Launched with high expectations to rival Facebook, Google+ struggled to gain traction and eventually shut down in 2019. Despite Google's vast resources and integration attempts across its ecosystem, Google+ failed to differentiate itself sufficiently from established



platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Moreover, its complex interface and initial focus on circles and privacy settings alienated users seeking simpler, more intuitive social networking experiences. The demise of Google+ underscores the importance of user-centric design, clear value propositions, and effective community management in platform adoption and sustainability.

From these case studies, several lessons emerge. Firstly, successful community formation requires aligning platform features with user needs and preferences, ensuring ease of use and relevance. Secondly, empowering community members through moderation tools and participatory governance fosters a sense of ownership and commitment. Thirdly, continuous engagement and adaptation to evolving user expectations are crucial for sustaining community vitality. Lastly, failed attempts highlight the pitfalls of neglecting user experience, overcomplicating interface design, and underestimating established competitors' market dominance.

#### METHODOLOGY

This research utilized a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate the role of personal sports devices in forming communities through interpersonal communication. The study also employed the case study method, a form of qualitative research aimed at uncovering the meanings and processes behind specific activities (Emzir, 2016). By focusing on case studies, the research seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of the impact of human-computer interaction on innovation within personal sports devices.

Primary data analysis was conducted, with human-computer interaction serving as the independent variable and personal sports devices as the dependent variable. Data collection techniques included interviews, documentation studies, literature reviews, and online data searches. In-depth interviews were conducted to gather direct information, allowing for face-to-face interactions with participants either with or without structured interview guidelines. This approach facilitated a deeper exploration of individual experiences and perspectives.

Documentation studies were another key method used, involving the analysis of documents created by the research subjects or others related to the subjects (Herdiansyah, 2014). This method provided additional context and background information, enriching the primary data collected through interviews. Researchers also engaged in library research, examining books and literary works relevant to the research problems. This process helped uncover theoretical frameworks, research methods, and techniques that supported the study's objectives (Sugiyono, 2014). The integration of online data retrieval methods allowed researchers to efficiently gather theoretical information from online media sources, enhancing the academic rigor of the study (Bungin, 2017).

Data was categorized into three main themes: Mind, Self, and Society. The "Mind" category focused on how users recognize and understand symbols within sport applications. Questions in this category explored the users' cognitive processes in interpreting these symbols. The "Self" category investigated how users employ symbols in their interactions and how these symbols aid in self-expression. This category aimed to

understand the personal significance and utility of these symbols in everyday interactions. Lastly, the "Society" category examined how users communicate their conditions, interests, and achievements using the sport application. This section provided insights into how the application facilitates community participation and interpersonal communication.

The questions within these categories were open-ended, allowing researchers to capture a broad range of responses and gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of sport applications in building interpersonal communication and fostering community involvement. Non-categorized answers were set aside, ensuring that the analysis remained focused on the core themes of the study.

By utilizing a combination of qualitative methods, this research provides a nuanced understanding of how personal sports devices and their associated applications influence interpersonal communication and community formation. The in-depth analysis of human-computer interaction within these devices offers valuable insights into the ways technology shapes social dynamics in modern sports culture.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Symbolic Interaction*

Symbolic interaction is a foundational concept in sociology that explores how symbols shape human interactions and social relationships. As individuals acquire symbols, they gain the ability to communicate complex meanings and messages within their social contexts. This process is particularly evident in the realm of digital sports devices, where users engage with symbols as a fundamental mode of communication.

When a user interacts with a sport device, each feature and function introduces new symbols into their cognitive framework. These symbols, ranging from icons representing different activities to notifications and progress indicators, become integral to how users interpret and respond to information provided by the device. Over time, these symbols accumulate in the user's mind, forming a repository of meanings that facilitate interactions both within the device's interface and in broader social settings.

Historically, sports were viewed as primarily individual pursuits aimed at personal health and fitness goals, rather than communal activities. Athletes typically gained public recognition only when representing larger entities such as organizations or countries. However, contemporary trends have reshaped this narrative, integrating sports more deeply into everyday lifestyles. Today, engaging in sports is not just about personal fitness but also serves as a means of social integration and community membership. Digital platforms play a pivotal role in this evolution by connecting individuals with shared sporting interests across various mediums, thereby fostering enhanced interpersonal communication skills and confidence among participants.

In the realm of human communication, symbols are critical tools for conveying meaning and understanding. In the digital age, symbols extend beyond traditional forms like facial expressions or verbal cues to include graphical icons and interactive elements within applications. Application designers leverage these symbols to create intuitive interfaces that resonate with users' habits and preferences, facilitating seamless

interaction and mutual understanding. Users adeptly navigate these symbolic landscapes, swiftly interpreting and employing symbols to express their thoughts, emotions, and achievements in diverse social contexts.

Symbolic interaction within digital sports devices underscores the transformative power of technology in shaping modern interpersonal relationships. By exploring how symbols mediate communication and social dynamics, this study illuminates the profound impact of digitalization on sports culture, where symbols serve as bridges connecting individuals through shared interests and activities.

### *Mind*

In understanding the dynamics of user interaction with sports devices, it's crucial to delve into the concept of the mind, which operates at the intersection of society, symbols, and self-awareness. This triangular relationship, as illustrated in various sociological frameworks, highlights how individuals perceive and utilize symbols within their social contexts.

Within the realm of sports devices, the mind phase involves users filtering symbols based on their comfort and familiarity with communication styles. Symbols here encompass a wide array—from simple icons denoting exercise activities to more complex indicators like progress metrics and achievement badges. These symbols serve as alternative means of interaction for users, enabling them to articulate their fitness goals, track their performance, and engage with others within digital communities.

Users accumulate a diverse array of symbols in their mental repertoire, categorized based on their personal experiences and interactions with the sports application. These symbols form a unique vocabulary that facilitates communication and self-expression through the device. Application designs are increasingly tailored to human emotions and needs, ensuring that symbols resonate intuitively with users' preferences and cultural backgrounds.

The user-friendly design of modern sports devices plays a pivotal role in shaping how symbols are perceived and utilized. Through intuitive interfaces and clear graphical representations, users can quickly grasp the meaning behind each symbol, enhancing their interaction efficiency. Ease of use emerges as a significant factor influencing user engagement, as highlighted in interviews where participants cited simplicity as a key reason for adopting sports devices. These symbols persist in users' minds, evolving and adapting as new symbols are introduced through updates and user feedback.

In the digital era, symbols transcend traditional forms of communication, becoming integral to how individuals express emotions, achievements, and aspirations within virtual communities. Social media platforms, predating sports applications, have pioneered the use of symbols such as likes, thumbs-up, and chat boxes to facilitate interpersonal communication and community engagement. Users adeptly navigate these symbolic landscapes, utilizing icons to convey nuanced messages and connect with peers sharing similar interests.

Data analysis underscores the symbiotic relationship between sports applications and user engagement, where symbols serve as conduits for meaningful interaction and information exchange. Athletes, for instance, leverage these symbols to communicate achievements, share insights, and build fan bases, thereby amplifying their visibility and influence within the sports community. This interconnectedness highlights how symbols not only convey information but also foster camaraderie and collaboration among users, contributing to the vibrant digital sports ecosystem.

In conclusion, the study of symbols within sports devices illuminates their transformative role in modern communication and community-building. By understanding how symbols shape user experiences and interactions, researchers can better optimize application designs and enhance user engagement in digital sports environments.

### *Self (Symbolic Self, Social Self, and the "I" and "Me")*

Symbolic interactionism revolutionized our understanding of the self, challenging previous notions that the self was an autonomous entity defined solely by innate characteristics. Before the advent of this sociological theory, prevailing beliefs held that individuals possessed an intrinsic selfhood independent of social influences. However, theorists like George Herbert Mead argued that the self is intricately linked to social relationships and emerges through interactions with others. In this view, symbols play a pivotal role as they mediate these interactions, shaping how individuals perceive themselves and their place in society.

Symbols, in the context of sports applications, serve as potent tools for self-expression and social connection. Users engage with these symbols not merely as functional indicators but as representations of personal identity and social belonging. For instance, a user may adopt specific symbols within a fitness tracking app to signal their commitment to health or athletic achievement. These symbols become a language through which users communicate their values, goals, and aspirations to their community.

In interviews, participants highlighted their motivation for using sports applications as seeking acknowledgment and validation within their social circles. The symbols they select reflect their desired message and serve as cues for others who share similar interests or goals. This process of symbolic interaction facilitates communication and fosters a sense of community among users, where shared symbols signify shared meanings and mutual understanding.

The concept of the self undergoes dynamic construction during interactions with sports applications. Users navigate through phases of self-expression and social identification as they deliberate over which symbols to adopt and how to interpret them. At the 'I' phase, individuals assert their unique identities by choosing symbols that resonate personally, reflecting their individual circumstances and preferences. Conversely, the 'Me' phase involves conforming to social norms and expectations, where users align their symbol use with community standards to facilitate effective communication and social integration.

The design features of sports applications play a crucial role in facilitating symbolic interaction among users. Intuitive interfaces and customizable symbol sets empower individuals to express themselves authentically and engage meaningfully with their peers. Users leverage these features to interpret and respond to symbols used by others, fostering reciprocity and strengthening social bonds within digital sports communities.

As symbolic interactionism continues to shape our understanding of human behavior in digital environments, the study of symbols in sports applications underscores their role in constructing social selves and facilitating interpersonal communication. By examining how symbols mediate interactions and influence user perceptions, researchers can inform the design of future technologies to enhance user experience and community engagement in digital sports ecosystems.

### *Society*

From a symbolic interaction perspective, society's essence resides in how individuals interact and communicate using symbols. In the realm of sports applications, this concept manifests profoundly as users engage with symbolic representations to express identity, goals, and achievements within digital communities. These applications serve not only as tools for personal fitness tracking but also as platforms for social interaction and community formation.

Users who feel comfortable with specific sports applications often gravitate towards forming communities centered on shared symbolic interactions. For example, within a running app, users may join groups based on mutual fitness goals or interests in specific challenges. These virtual communities transcend geographical boundaries, bringing together individuals who share common objectives and values through symbolic representations like achievement badges, leaderboard standings, and shared workout routines.

Interviews with users highlight how symbolic interaction fosters community dynamics in digital spaces. By interpreting the symbols used by others, such as progress updates or congratulatory messages, users establish meaningful connections and engage in interpersonal communication. These interactions not only validate individual achievements but also cultivate a sense of belonging and support within the community.

In these digital communities, symbols play a crucial role in facilitating communication and collaboration. Users celebrate milestones collectively, set group targets, and track progress together, reinforcing social bonds and motivating each other towards shared fitness objectives. For instance, a group within a cycling app might collectively aim to cover a certain distance or achieve specific fitness metrics, using symbols and metrics as benchmarks of their collective success and camaraderie.

The formation of digital communities around personal sport devices illustrates the transformative power of symbolic interaction in modern society. Beyond mere functionality, these applications enable users to construct and share meaningful narratives about their health journeys, fostering a supportive environment where individuals can thrive and grow together. As technology continues to evolve, understanding the role of

symbols in digital communication becomes increasingly critical in designing inclusive and engaging platforms that promote community well-being and interaction..

### CONCLUSION

Users are well-acquainted with the features of smartwatches and applications, enabling them to efficiently utilize sports functionalities without consulting the manual. However, they primarily engage with features that meet their usual needs. They typically use applications that align with their exercise routines and interests, despite the plethora of available features. Key reasons for their usage include recording activities, synchronization with smartwatches, tracking distance, pace, and time, monitoring exercise progress and achievements (such as heart rate, calories burned), and ease of use and understanding of provided features.

Users also interact with each other, often as members of communities formed around similar applications. While they do not use the application directly for communication, they meet during sports activities and exchange valuable information and knowledge. Social media serves as a broader platform for interaction, facilitating connections beyond the user base of similar applications. The skill in using these applications enhances their activities.

Interpersonal communication within the sports community is evolving due to these applications. The symbols provided by the applications make it easier for users to communicate, shifting interpersonal communication from face-to-face interactions to digital platforms. This study shows that symbols in a digital platform create a comfortable and satisfying interaction, altering traditional communication dynamics. Delayed responses are not an issue, as users focus on how to communicate effectively. The use of symbols fosters a comfortable environment where immediate reactions are unnecessary. Interpersonal communication through digital platforms using symbols can shape unique communities with specific interaction styles, moving beyond physical groups to those formed around specific applications.

### BIODATA

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## Public Relations Discourse on X (Twitter) and Analysis of Public Relations

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### ABSTRACT

In the twenty-first century, public relations gained a new form along with digital media, as well as having a wider area of dialogue. Especially social media offers new opportunities for the development of public relations strategies that focus on building and developing relationships with sharers. While creating dialogical, interactive and relationship development-oriented strategies with social media as a part of public relations, it is also thought to contribute to the development of theory and practice. As previous studies have focused on how web-based communication is used for public relations purposes, this study aims to reveal what is published about public relations on X (Twitter) and how the features of the platform can contribute to public relations practices. In order to examine how public relations discourse is represented on social media, the contents obtained by using the hashtags #halklailiskiler and #publicrelations on X (Twitter) were analyzed. Using content analysis, an exploratory research focused on the type of messages shared and the themes that emerged about public relations were evaluated qualitatively. As a result of the research, the possibilities of acquiring, developing and distributing information in the field of public relations and the ability to strengthen the public relations strategy of social media are emphasized. Since the study covers a two-month period and is researched through a single medium, it has been interpreted with limited data.

**Keywords:** *Public Relations, social media, X (Twitter), representation.*

### INTRODUCTION

The approach that public relations has had since the time when it was professionally mentioned is to regulate the relations of an institution by establishing strategic communication with its target audiences. Public relations, which is an integral part of a successful institution, is used to strengthen the image, create new target audiences, and draw attention to a subject. Press releases are only one part of corporate mission and vision setting, image creation and public relations strategies. However, public relations, which is defined as a set of activities aimed at ensuring an integration between the institution and its environment, is tried to be understood with a two-pronged approach. The first of these involves the public relations or relations of an institution, while the other covers the branch of science used to describe a practice or technique (Göksel, 1994: 5). Today, public relations theory and practice are largely based on management perspectives and a multifaceted understanding that prioritizes a strategic focus on the

field. Public relations now proceeds with information focusing on multifaceted interdisciplinary inquiries (Valentini & Edwards, 2019). With this feature, an important aspect of public relations is to form ideas. This understanding has not only changed the way of communicating with digital networks and even the way of doing business, but has also dominated an area of managerial and organizational information where analyzes of (Dietrich, 2016: 17) public relations theory and practice can be made and monitored. In this regard, public relations has a changing and dynamic structure that progresses with the development of communication technologies. Generally, the internet can turn into a tool that provides solutions to modern public relations, providing feedback, crisis management, information production, and communication difficulties in a special context.

This study, which examines the issues discussed by public relations on social media, accesses public relations information and investigates its potential benefits, discovers the purpose for which right relations information is shared. In this context, it discusses how much social media includes public relations theory and practice through public relations discourse. Twitter, which creates new opportunities in public relations studies, examines how public relations discourse is represented by revealing the contributions of content that strengthens public relations theory and practice.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media serves as a vital tool for public relations practitioners, offering insights into effective communication strategies and optimal ways to engage their target audience. Beyond its role as an effective marketing medium, well-managed digital content on social media platforms has the potential to influence behavior (Sutjadi & Prasetya, 2021; Putri & Oktaviani, 2022; Tyas & Hutagaol, 2021). This transformative potential is evident in content tailored to the unique features of each social media tool. While many platforms share similar structures, each possesses distinct characteristics and user demographics, necessitating tailored PR approaches that align with platform dynamics and audience preferences.

Public relations focuses on establishing and developing relationships with social media and target audiences. And as for its base, it is based on dialogue. It is aimed to maintain the mutual relationship with the dialogue and to ensure participation. Therefore, digital communication platforms have an important place in public relations studies in terms of creating an interactive, continuous and meaningful communication/relationship strategy. An important element that emphasizes public relations messages on social media is Hashtags. Hashtags are one of the ways to initiate dialogue and draw boundaries to determine the categories of messages and shape the interaction process. It also facilitates the finding of relevant content and provides information exchange. Hashtags, which are an important tool for public relations in order to create a power that mobilizes the masses and to generate a community within the framework of a specific subject, can increase the value of shared content and thus play an important role in reflecting attitudes. Social media is used to present important

corporate values such as corporate news, product promotion, and event notification to the public, especially during periods of personal or corporate crisis. With social media, both institutions, corporate stakeholders and the public in general can request information, offer suggestions, help or request; in short, social media can be used as a method or technique of communication.

It is now one of the commonly accepted opinions that social media opens up new opportunities for the creation of innovative public relations strategies that focus on building and developing relationships with stakeholders on the basis of creating meaningful dialogue (Paliwoda-Matiolanska, vd., 2020). The reasons for the adoption and adaptation of this expanding sphere of influence of public relations in a short time are the formation of a competitive environment and easy and fast access to target audiences. So that a public relations process that cannot be active online and cannot communicate effectively will neither create the desired image nor maintain its existence (Petrovici, 2014: 80).

Social networks help target specific audiences in terms of public relations. X (Twitter) is used as an effective tool for this targeting. Despite Twitter being not the single and privileged platform, its short, instant and useful structure and real-time communication make this effect easier. X (Twitter), which is referred to as the biggest relational and communicative phenomenon on the internet aimed at sharing information and establishing connections with other users, offers much of this opportunity to communicate on social media (Xifra & Grau, 2010: 171) today, and since the basis of public relations is communication, it becomes an important tool that undertakes this function.

In their research with (2011) public relations practitioners, Evans et al. emphasize the importance of X (Twitter) as a tool that directly connects with the media and will not go out of style, but will always be at the forefront in creating an integrated campaign and communicating with the target audience. Xifra and Grau emphasize that as a result of (2010) the fact that this important tool also indirectly supports the development of public relations theory and practice, as well as being a tool of professional use, the contribution of shared professional experiences to the development of public relations knowledge and structure is clear. Saffer et al. made an approach about the description and perceptions of the profession in their research in which they showed that (2013) public relations is perceived as higher quality than a corporate account with high interaction. Accordingly, the level of X (Twitter) interaction affects the quality of the relationship.

The researches mostly provide recommendations by revealing opinions on how X (Twitter) is used and how it works successfully for public relations purposes (Evans vd., 2011) for (Su vd., 2017) (LaMarre vd., 2013) (Frame & Bratche, 2015) (Tarhan vd., 2022) (Yıldırım, 2014) (Algül & Daniş, 2020) (Çalışkan & Baytimur, 2018) (Dursun & Taşdemir 2021) (Arslan, 2017) (Tanyıldızı & Demirkıran, 2018). While these studies contribute to public relations practices, it can be assumed that they also improve public relations theory and practice since they reveal the use of X (Twitter) accounts according to the

interaction needs of followers. Furthermore communication has moved beyond one-way messaging, it has become digital and has become a goal as well as a tool for announcing campaigns. This purpose is experienced with social media, which carries the transparent cover of public relations. In this respect, social media has also revealed three communicative functions: information, participation and community (Su vd., 2017). For this reason, tweets have continued to increase their effectiveness by encouraging participation with informative content and community-building practices using hashtags. Therefore, it is no longer possible to keep public relations away or separate from these channels.

### METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to focus on two main issues. The first is to consider the current state of Xifra and Grau's (2010) exploratory work. Hereunder, it is to determine what sharers post when they talk about public relations on X (Twitter) and how it contributes to and can be found in the theoretical and practical development of public relations. The second is; based on the (Taeyeon & Phua, 2020) views that hashtags are seen as a power to mobilize target audiences (Zahra, 2020), are used as community-building practices (Su vd., 2017) and reflect attitudes by increasing the perceived value of information, it is to evaluate that public relations discourse is used as an expression that shapes the content and draws attention to the content. From this point of view, the second purpose of the study is to determine whether the sharings made are used for public relations professions and practices or to draw attention to other issues.

Based on the aims of the study, analysing public relations discourse on X (Twitter) helps to understand how science and industry studies are constructed. In order to analyse how public relations discourse is used on X (Twitter) through the hashtags #halklailişkiler and #publicrelations, the research questions of the study were formed as follows on the basis of the question "What do X (Twitter) users say using the discourse of 'public relations' ?":

- a. What is the theoretical knowledge density of the posts made with the hashtag #halklailişkiler?
- b. What is the professional/practical knowledge density of the posts made with the hashtag #halklailişkiler?
- c. Has the hashtag #halklailişkiler been used in posts other than public relations profession and practices?
- d. What is the theoretical knowledge density of the posts made with the #publicrelations hashtag?
- e. What is the professional/practical knowledge density of the posts made with the hashtag #publicrelations?
- f. Has the hashtag #publicrelations been used in posts other than public relations profession and practices?

With this study, which adopts a qualitative approach to public relations discourse, the content published on X (Twitter) used to interact and disseminate



information, as well as the role it plays in following the general public and up-to-date topics are observed.

The data collected in the study were analyzed by content analysis. The data collected by content analysis are first conceptualized, then organized according to the concepts revealed and the themes explaining the data are determined. The aim here is gathering similar data within the framework of certain concepts and themes and to interpret them by organizing them in a way that the reader can understand (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006: 227). Accordingly, categorical analysis was used in the research. According to this analysis, messages are grouped into categories according to certain criteria and then coded and based on the relevant dimensions of the research. After the categories are created, the collected data are placed in the categories and their frequencies are determined (Bilgin., 2014: 19). Qualitative and quantitative data are interpreted together, as the quantitative data obtained with this measurable analysis makes it possible to present a qualitative judgment (Koçak & Arun, 2013: 24).

Tweets, which are tweeted repeatedly and tweeted in response to a tweet were not included in the data collection process. The person or institutions sharing are not specified. The data were made under the same categories in both Turkish and English. The research covers two months between January and February 2023 with retrospective screening. The data obtained using the hashtags #halklailişkiler and #publicrelations were manually coded. A total of 366 tweets (#halklailişkiler=85; #publicrelations=281) were obtained and categorized to analyze the content after they were defined. In addition to the categories previously developed by Xifra and Grau in the categorization, new categories have been added:

- a. Job position: includes information about the announcements of job applicants and job seekers in the field of public relations for certain positions in public relations.
- b. Academic information-article: This category includes articles, comments and questions from people in the field.
- c. Application: It includes information sent by public relations executives as representatives of institutions.
- d. Press release: Contains links to press releases to be announced and read.
- e. General information about the public relations sector: It includes sharings about the communication strategies of the public relations sector or organizations.
- f. Research and surveys: It includes questionnaires and invitations that readers are asked to answer in order to find out their opinions.
- g. Announcements: The institution's tweets about the organization of events, announcements and seminars are included.
- h. Practice: It includes the posts about the practices made/to be made about public relations.
- i. Reward: Includes sharings about corporate or individual rewards received.
- j. Special day: It includes the sharings made about special days and meetings.
- k. Social responsibility: Sharings about social responsibility activities are included.



1. Visits: It includes sharings about corporate or individual visits.

The 12 categories created were grouped under three main headings as "public relations practices, theory development and information" and the fourth category was evaluated as others which are outside these three categories;

- a. Under the category of public relations practices, there are social responsibility studies, campaign and advertising, press release, research surveys, announcements of events.
- b. Under the category of theory development in public relations, there are academic studies and articles, theoretical information that can be useful in the sector, and educational programs where theoretical information is shared.
- c. The information category includes job application announcements, special day celebrations/commemorations and visits.
- d. In addition to these categories, the content is not related to public relations theory and profession, but only includes studies using hashtags.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this part of the research, the data collected are analyzed and explanations are made to answer the research questions. The data in Table 1 shows the distribution of tweets containing the hashtag #halklailişkiler by categories. The data in Table 1 were obtained using Turkish characters and tweets in Turkish language were evaluated.

Table 1: Distribution of data collected with the hashtag #halklailişkiler

|   |   |        |        |                              |
|---|---|--------|--------|------------------------------|
| Theory development  | Academic knowledge - Article  | N = 11 | 28.95% | $\Sigma$<br>N = 38<br>44.71% |
|   | Sectoral publications   | N = 19 | 50.0%  |                              |
|   | Education   | N = 8  | 21.05% |                              |
| Public relations practices  | Social responsibility   | N = 1  | 4.55%  | N = 22<br>25.88%             |
|   | Campaign-advertising  | N = 5  | 22.72% |                              |
|   | Press release   | N = 3  | 13.63% |                              |
|   | Research-survey   | N = 1  | 4.55%  |                              |
|   | Announcement  | N = 12 | 54.55% |                              |
| Informing-News  | Job Position  | N = 3  | 25.0%  | N = 12<br>14.12%             |
|   | Reward  | N = 1  | 8.34%  |                              |
|   | Special day/celebration/commemoration   | N = 4  | 33.33% |                              |
|   | Visiting  | N = 4  | 33.33% |                              |
| Tweets using the hashtag #halklailişkiler, which relates to topics outside the theory and practical public relations and informing - news category. | The posts in this category were made for the purpose of complaint and criticism and the lack of public relations was mentioned. |        |        | N = 13<br>15.29%             |

$$\Sigma = N=85 = 100\%$$

According to Table 1, the theory development category includes 44.71% (N=38) of the analyzed tweets. The highest sharing rate in the distribution of theoretical knowledge is seen in sectoral publications (50.0%; N=19). The ratio of academic information and articles is 28.95% (N=11), and the sharings rate of education is 21.05% (N=8). The theory development category has the highest rate among other categories and has the most content sharing.

The public relations practices category contains 25.88% (N=22) of the tweets analyzed. Announcements constitute the majority of the posts in this category (54.55%; N=12). Consequently, campaign-advertising sharings are listed as 22.72% (N=5), press release as 13.63% (N=3), social responsibility as 4.55% (N=1) and research-survey as 4.55% (N=1).

The informing and news category includes 14.12% (N=12) of the analyzed tweets. Although the sharings in this category have the lowest rate among other categories, the distribution does not differ much in the categories within itself. Accordingly, in the informing and news category, special day/celebration/commemoration 33.33% (N=4) and visiting 33.33% (N=4) is rates are equal, while job position has a rate of 25.0% (N=3) and reward sharing has a rate of 8.34% (N=1).

Only #halklailişkiler tweets on topics other than theory and practical public relations studies were found to be 15.29% (N=13). The content of the posts in this category was constituted by complaints and criticism and the lack of public relations behavior in situations where X (Twitter) users expressed their dissatisfaction was mentioned.

Based on the data in Table 1, the answers to the research questions created within the framework of the subject specified on the basis of the research can be given as follows:

- a. The vast majority of the posts of those who post about public relations on X (Twitter) are the sharings about the theory of public relations and its practices. Academic articles, institutional publications and trainings can show that theoretical knowledge can be produced which can contribute to the practical aspect of public relations.
- b. Following theoretical information sharing, the most shared content consists of professional/practical information. These are the contents that directs communication, develops mutual relationships and aims for continuity of communication with followers.
- c. In addition to sharings of theoretical and practical public relations, it is also seen that the concept of public relations is used as a way that people use to draw attention to their problems. Considering that this ratio is higher than the informing-news category, it can be said that hashtags on social media offer an exit door to mobilize the relevant party, especially on controversial issues.

In Table 2, the data shows the distribution of tweets containing the #publicrelations tag by categories. The data in Table 2 were obtained using English characters and tweets in the same language were evaluated.

**Table 2:** Distribution of data collected with the hashtag #publicrelations

|   |   |         |        |                               |
|---|---|---------|--------|-------------------------------|
| Theory development  | Academic knowledge - Article  | N = 34  | 20.86% | $\Sigma$<br>N = 163<br>58.00% |
|   | Sectoral publications   | N = 115 | 70.55% |                               |
|   | Education   | N = 14  | 8.59%  |                               |
| Public relations practices  | Social responsibility   | N = 9   | 30.0%  | N = 30<br>10.68%              |
|   | Campaign-advertising  | N = 13  | 43.34% |                               |
|   | Press release   | N = 6   | 20.0%  |                               |
|   | Research-survey   | N = 1   | 3.33%  |                               |
|   | Announcement  | N = 1   | 3.33%  |                               |
| Informing-News  | Job Position  | N = 11  | 30.55% | N = 36<br>12.81%              |
|   | Reward  | N = 6   | 16.67% |                               |
|   | Special day/celebration/commemoration   | N = 18  | 50.0%  |                               |
|   | Visiting  | N = 1   | 2.78%  |                               |
| Tweets using the hashtag #publicrelations, which relates to topics outside the theory and practical public relations and informing - news category. | Sharings in this category include posts related to public relations from corporate or individual accounts and posts that are not related to public relations. |         |        | N = 52<br>18.51%              |

$$\Sigma = N=281 = 100\%$$

According to Table 2, the theory development category includes 58.00% (N=163) of the analyzed tweets. The highest sharing rate in the distribution of theoretical knowledge is seen in sectoral publications (70.55%; N=115). The rate of academic knowledge and articles is 20.86% (N=34), and the rate of education-related posts is 8.59% (N=14). The theory development category has the highest rate among other categories and has the most content sharing.

The category of public relations practices includes 10.68% (N=30) of the tweets analyzed. Campaigns and advertisements constitute the majority of the posts in this category (43.34%; N=13). Following this, social responsibility sharings are listed as 30.00% (N=9), press release as 20.00% (N=6), research-survey as 3.33% (N=1) and announcement as 3.33% (N=1). Sharings in this category have the lowest rate among other categories.

It includes 12.81% (N=36) of the tweets analyzed in the information and news category. The sharings in this category are at least less than theory development among other categories, and a little more than public relations practice sharings. Accordingly, in the informing and news category, special day/celebration/commemoration has a rate of 50.00% (N=18), job position has a rate of 30.55% (N=11), reward sharing has a rate of 16.67% (N=6) and visiting has a rate of 2.78% (N=1).

The proportion of tweets using only the # publicrelations tag for topics other than theory and practical public relations and informing-news categories is 18.51%

(N=52). Sharings in this category include posts related to public relations from corporate or individual accounts and posts that are not related to public relations.

Based on the data in Table 2, the answers to the research questions created within the framework of the subject specified on the basis of the research can be given as follows:

- a. The vast majority of the sharings of those who post about public relations on X (Twitter) are the sharings of academic, sectoral and educational in the category of theory development. It can show that these posts develop theoretical knowledge that can contribute to the practical aspect of public relations.
- b. Following the theoretical information sharing, the most shared content consists of other posts that are not related to the posts where only the public relations tag is used and professional expressions/aphorisms related to public relations are included.
- c. Information in the informing and news category is the content that directs communication, develops mutual relationships and aims to maintain communication with followers, where a situation or subject is conveyed as news.
- d. Sharings containing public relations practices constitute the part with the lowest rate in the category.
- e. It is seen that more sharings were made with the #publicrelations tag in the English language during the data collection process, and all of the sharings were from the public relations theory and practical field. In addition, the hashtag was not used as a complaint tool in the data obtained in this language.

## CONCLUSION

It is possible to realize that public relations discourse on X (Twitter) contributes to the development of theoretical and practical knowledge indirectly, if not directly, both through the content developed and as a result of the opportunities provided by the structure of the digital platform. Shaping the content of public relations discourse with information can contribute to the development of its theoretical structure and its use in a field that draws attention to the content can enable X (Twitter) to contribute to public relations as an important tool.

This study is one of the studies that examines how public relations discourse can contribute to the field on X (Twitter) by using public relations discourse and how public relations discourse is represented. The results of this study discuss the data on how public relations are and can be used in social media. While the studies on the subject address the use of social media in the conduct of public relations campaigns, the current study is examined in terms of its contribution to the theory and practical development. The common conclusion of all of them is that everyone is now aware of the integration of X (Twitter) into public relations communication strategies.

The use of public relations discourse on X (Twitter) of the data obtained as a result of the research is as follows:

- a. The posts made under the public relations hashtag show that theoretical and practical information is shared more intensively in both languages. The aim is to inform the public about public relations theory and the practices carried out.
- b. Within the scope of the study, it is seen that people look for help with the public relations hashtag at the point of solving their problems on X (Twitter). The fact that public relations is placed on the basis of a complaint can be argued that the concept and its applications are not fully understood or public relations is seen as the first stage of the solution process.
- c. It is seen that the research data is used beyond one-way messaging. Accordingly, it can be said that the sharings were made for the purpose of an announcement and informing the public. Feedback was expected only in research surveys.
- d. In the scans made in foreign language, it was determined that more sharings were made in the data collection range compared to the scans made in the mother tongue. The fact that these sharings are mostly in the category of theory development highlights the contents of the scientific contributions of public relations.
- e. Public relations discourse is practiced not only by professionals but also by people who are interested in public relations.

In particular, the opportunities offered by X (Twitter) to individual or corporate public relations in many subjects such as public relations discourse, crisis communication management, solution seeking, campaign communication, marketing, informing/news sharing on social media are developing day by day. All content contributes to the theoretical and practical aspects of public relations for practitioners and theorists, as well as providing a resource area for the exploration and development of new topics. X (Twitter) is an earned media for public relations and one of the easy ways to understand and monitor the development of the industry. It is an important tool in creating a successful public relations strategy and ensuring that stories are heard. X (Twitter), where all kinds of content can be published, allows other people to speak about their posts. In X (Twitter), some content promotes products or links are placed in press releases. Since public relations practitioners need to follow the media, it is essential that they also master this tool. Keeping the audience up-to-date, watching what stakeholders share, increasing the number of followers is important in terms of sharing public relations on X (Twitter) and learning about public relations.

Public relations' presence on X (Twitter) is not only about crisis management but also about building and maintaining relationships with target audiences. With this approach, announcing sectoral and scientific developments in the field and sharing new topics for public relations practitioners, educators, students and anyone interested in the field will both indirectly lead to the development of public relations in terms of content and facilitate stakeholders to master the theory and practice of public relations.

X (Twitter) has created a more transparent world. It can be said that it can inform public relations theory by helping everyone in the field of public relations to gain insights about public opinion and to analyze these insights in order to make improvements. It

can lead to the development of knowledge as much as it allows the spread of knowledge. In this respect, X (Twitter) can be defined as an integrative tool that can be used to add value to public relations theory and practice. It seems inevitable that different social media tools will help gain interest and knowledge in the field of public relations in the context of their features.

Social media is now used by everyone for different purposes and in different ways. It constitutes an effective way of word of mouth communication process. Since both public relations and social media are used to build and maintain trust in institutions and their messages, it has become usual for them to be integrated. Each social media platform can be used in its own unique way to help public relations, and each offers possibilities for how it can be used to add value to public relations theory and practice. Information that will help public relations activities can be produced from the platform features. It can ensure the development of up-to-date information. It can provide information by using various and unique ways of conducting research. Opportunities are offered to obtain, develop and distribute information about the sector. It also has the ability to strengthen its public relations strategy.

The sharing of public relations theory and practice may indirectly contribute to the development of the field by increasing the value of information perceived by the target audience, leading to the production and research of new information, or expanding the areas where the shared information is used. The accumulative nature underlying science leads social media, which is one of the important tools of public relations practices, to shape the form and content of professions and practices.

As a result, since the study covers a period of two months and was researched through a single medium, it was interpreted with limited data. In this respect, since the study covers a limited period of time, in terms of time interval, it can be expanded by using different public relations-based hashtags and different social media platforms.

#### BIODATA

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## Implementation of Bank as a Service Marketing Communication Strategy in Increasing the number of customers on blu by BCA Digital

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### ABSTRACT

Marketing communication activities through strategies to develop market penetration and brand positioning strategies are very significant efforts for blu by BCA Digital. blu is an all-in-one banking product that is a solution to answer the financial and non-financial needs of digital savvy through an interconnected digital ecosystem, as well as spreading brand awareness for the BCA Digital platform. This study aims to identify blu's marketing communication strategy with the implementation of public relations, marketing mix, efforts and challenges in their promotional activities. This research also seeks to find the most dominant form of blu's promotional efforts. Descriptive qualitative method is used in this study. The data collection was carried out through non-participant observation, in-depth interviews, literature review and archiving. Key informants were obtained through purposive sampling technique. Data analysis was carried out by means of data reduction, data presentation and verification. shows that blu is very dominant and active in carrying out digital promotional mixes through mobile application platforms, social media and establishing collaborative partnerships with various communities to build ecosystems. In addition, blu also has the goal of educating its multi-segment target audience to make blu's digital banking relevant to everyday life. blu launched a mobile banking application which as of December 2022, the users achieve more than 1.1 million people. This achievement could not have been separated from good collaboration and integration with fintech partners, cooperation with companies and various universities with bank as a service or blu access is installed in the partner's applications.

**Keywords:** *blu by BCA Digital, Marketing Communication, Digital Bank, Bank as a service, BaaS.*

### INTRODUCTION

July is the month of celebration for blu by BCA Digital, which will proudly enter its second year in 2023. Despite being a relatively young entity, blu by BCA Digital has continually strived to create financial solutions that are relevant, integrated, simple, and straightforward to meet its clients' diverse financial needs. In its ongoing commitment

to support all financial requirements and to always be #SiapJadiPegangan – a heartfelt greeting to its loyal customers – blu proudly embraces the spirit of collaboration with its campaign titled #Better2Gether. This initiative aims to express gratitude to blu's customers and partners who have faithfully supported blu by BCA Digital over the past two years.

"We are constantly trying to encourage Blu customers to be more active in using Blu's various features and products for their financial needs, both daily and long term," said Lanny Budiati, President Director of BCA Digital. "This collaborative spirit of #Better2Gether is also one of our efforts to become a leading digital bank and a dependable one-stop-solution application."

blu's ambition to become the premier digital bank and the customer's first choice is more than just a slogan. blu by BCA Digital is partnering with numerous organizations to achieve its goals, ensuring that it can provide a comprehensive range of services. This broad network of partnerships guarantees that blu is present wherever its customers are active, be it offline or online. By touching all digital touchpoints, blu ensures that all its customers have both visibility and ease of access.

The dynamic communication and marketing strategies of PT Bank Digital BCA, or blu by BCA Digital, may be attributed to the legacy of its parent company, PT Bank Central Asia Tbk. blu by BCA Digital, originally known as Bank Royal, has been operating since 2020, following its acquisition by PT Bank Central Asia Tbk. Since then, it has grown and evolved, embodying a modern approach to banking that prioritizes customer convenience and satisfaction.

As blu by BCA Digital continues to innovate and expand, it remains steadfast in its mission to simplify and enhance the financial lives of its customers. The #Better2Gether campaign is a testament to blu's dedication to fostering strong relationships with its users and partners, ensuring that everyone involved can grow and succeed together. With this collaborative spirit, blu by BCA Digital is well on its way to becoming the go-to digital bank for all financial needs.

BCA Digital represents the bank of the future, focusing on serving the digitally aware population through the blu digital banking smartphone application. blu by BCA Digital empowers clients to conduct both financial and non-financial transactions via their cell phones, making banking more accessible and convenient than ever before. Some of its standout features include:

- a. bluSaving: A flexible saving account that allows users to manage and grow their savings effortlessly.
- b. bluDeposit: A feature that provides attractive deposit options with competitive interest rates, helping users to secure their financial future.

- c. bluGether: A collaborative saving tool that lets multiple users save towards a common goal, making it easier for friends, families, or groups to achieve their financial targets together.

The blu app is readily available on both the Google Play Store and the Apple App Store, ensuring that users can access its features on a variety of devices. Not just limited to direct digital banking, blu by BCA Digital also operates as a bank-as-a-service (BaaS). This allows clients to undertake a wide range of financial transactions, such as creating accounts, transferring funds, and topping up e-money through partner platforms, all without needing to switch applications.

blu has established partnerships across a variety of industries, including notable names like Blibli, Telkomsel, Redi, CGV, MRT Jakarta, FUNDtastic, Moduit, EmaskITA, and educational institutions like Binus University and ITHB Bandung. This extensive network of collaborations ensures that blu is integrated into the daily lives of its users, providing seamless financial services wherever they are.

A remarkable accomplishment for a digital bank, blu by BCA Digital demonstrates a keen understanding of the importance of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). This strategy is essential for creating an environment where consumers remain loyal to their products and services, resisting the temptation to switch to other brands.

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) involves coordinated marketing activities that maximize sales by presenting a unified message to consumers. This approach ensures that the benefits and even the potential drawbacks of products are communicated clearly, helping to build trust and loyalty among customers. By employing IMC, blu by BCA Digital effectively reinforces its brand presence and ensures that its messaging resonates with its audience.

As blu by BCA Digital continues to grow, it remains dedicated to its mission of providing innovative, user-friendly financial solutions. The #Better2Gether campaign and its array of features exemplify blu's commitment to making banking simpler, more collaborative, and deeply integrated into the digital lives of its customers. With this forward-thinking approach, blu by BCA Digital is set to redefine the landscape of digital banking, offering a comprehensive, reliable, and user-centric service that meets the evolving needs of its clientele.

Based on the above description, the researcher is interested in conducting a more in-depth study with the title "Implementation of Bank as a Service Marketing Communication Strategy in Increasing the Number of Customers on blu by BCA Digital." blu by BCA Digital has a significant opportunity to capture the digital bank market share through various product marketing strategies that utilize seven key stages of a marketing communication strategy. These stages include goal setting, targeting,

message content creation, media selection, promotion mix development, budgeting, and evaluation. By effectively implementing these tactics, blu can enhance its product promotion efforts and attract a larger customer base.

## LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

### *DigitalBank*

Digital bank services are electronic services that optimize client data, allowing consumers to conduct their activities safely and securely in a fully electronic environment (Financial Services Authority, 2020). In some countries, these digital banks are known as Neo banks. Thanks to their innovative business model, which provides end-to-end digital solutions and services that leverage advanced technological capabilities, digital banks hold a significant advantage over traditional banks (Windasari et al., 2022). Furthermore, certain digital banks are supported by established organizations with substantial business experience and robust ecosystems. This backing results in advantages such as high brand awareness and a wealth of data to enhance customer insights and acquisition (Fu & Mishra, 2022).

The rapid growth and evolution of digital banks have revolutionized the banking industry by providing seamless and efficient financial services. Digital banks are designed to meet the demands of tech-savvy consumers who prioritize convenience, speed, and accessibility. By eliminating the need for physical branches, digital banks can offer services at lower costs, pass on the savings to customers, and provide a more flexible and user-centric experience.

One of the key benefits of digital banks is their ability to provide personalized financial services. By leveraging big data and artificial intelligence, digital banks can analyze customer behavior, preferences, and financial habits to offer tailored recommendations and products. This level of personalization not only enhances customer satisfaction but also fosters greater engagement and loyalty.

Moreover, digital banks are at the forefront of financial innovation, introducing new products and services that cater to the evolving needs of consumers. From instant loan approvals and real-time payments to advanced budgeting tools and investment platforms, digital banks are continually expanding their offerings to provide a comprehensive suite of financial solutions. This continuous innovation ensures that customers have access to the latest financial technologies and services, making digital banks an attractive option for modern consumers.

Security is a paramount concern for digital banks, and they invest heavily in state-of-the-art security measures to protect customer data and transactions. Utilizing technologies such as encryption, biometric authentication, and multi-factor

authentication, digital banks ensure that their platforms are secure and that customers can conduct their banking activities with confidence.

The success of digital banks also hinges on their ability to foster strong customer relationships. By providing excellent customer service through various digital channels, including chatbots, mobile apps, and social media, digital banks ensure that customers receive timely and effective support. This commitment to customer service helps build trust and loyalty, further solidifying the position of digital banks in the financial industry. In addition to their technological prowess, digital banks benefit from the strategic support of their parent organizations. These established entities provide digital banks with a solid foundation, including access to extensive customer bases, rich data resources, and well-developed brand identities. This support enables digital banks to scale rapidly and effectively compete with traditional banks.

The rise of digital banks represents a significant shift in the financial landscape, offering consumers a more convenient, personalized, and secure banking experience. As digital banks continue to innovate and expand their services, they are poised to become a dominant force in the banking industry, redefining the way consumers interact with financial institutions.

The future of banking is undeniably digital, and the success of digital banks is a testament to the growing demand for technology-driven financial solutions. As more consumers embrace digital banking, traditional banks will need to adapt and evolve to stay competitive. The continued growth and success of digital banks will likely drive further innovation in the financial sector, ultimately benefiting consumers by providing more options, better services, and enhanced financial experiences.

The study of digital banks reveals both success stories and failures, each providing valuable insights into the dynamics of the financial technology industry. One notable success story is that of Nubank, a Brazilian digital bank. Nubank's success can be attributed to several key factors. Firstly, it identified a clear market need: Brazil's traditional banking sector was characterized by high fees and poor customer service. Nubank capitalized on this by offering a user-friendly, fee-free banking experience. The use of technology to streamline operations and reduce costs allowed Nubank to offer competitive services while maintaining profitability. Furthermore, Nubank's focus on customer experience, utilizing a mobile-first approach, resonated well with tech-savvy consumers. Its robust customer service and transparency fostered trust and loyalty. Nubank also leveraged data analytics to offer personalized services, which enhanced user satisfaction and engagement.

In contrast, the downfall of Xinja, an Australian digital bank, illustrates several pitfalls to avoid. Xinja initially showed promise by securing a banking license and

attracting significant investor funding. However, its rapid expansion and ambitious product launches outpaced its operational capacity and market demand. Xinja struggled with inadequate risk management and compliance issues, which eroded consumer trust. Additionally, its aggressive interest rate offers on savings accounts were unsustainable in the long run, leading to financial instability. The inability to achieve profitability quickly enough caused investor confidence to wane, resulting in funding challenges. Xinja's failure to secure a sustainable business model and its misalignment with market needs were critical factors in its collapse.

From these cases, several lessons can be learned. The success of digital banks like Nubank underscores the importance of identifying and addressing clear market needs, maintaining a strong focus on customer experience, and leveraging technology to enhance service delivery and operational efficiency. Building trust through transparency and excellent customer service is crucial. Digital banks must also manage growth carefully, ensuring that expansion is supported by robust risk management and compliance frameworks.

On the other hand, the failure of Xinja highlights the dangers of overexpansion without solid foundational support. It demonstrates the need for a sustainable business model and the importance of aligning product offerings with market demand. Effective risk management and compliance are essential to maintaining consumer trust and regulatory approval. Additionally, digital banks should avoid overpromising on returns that cannot be sustained, as this can lead to financial instability and loss of investor confidence.

In summary, the contrasting outcomes of Nubank and Xinja provide a comprehensive view of the factors that contribute to the success and failure of digital banks. They emphasize the necessity of a customer-centric approach, technological innovation, prudent risk management, and sustainable growth strategies. These lessons are invaluable for new entrants in the digital banking space, guiding them towards sustainable and successful operations.

### *Digital Savvy*

In essence, being digitally savvy, or tech-savvy, refers to the proficiency in using technology to accomplish various goals. This concept, often equated with technological literacy, encompasses a wide range of purposes and activities. For instance, individuals who are tech-savvy utilize technology to seek information on the internet, learn new skills, and discover novel items. They also leverage technology for networking, expanding their social circles by connecting with others online, and for efficiently completing assignments or professional tasks. This audience, characterized by their



adeptness with digital tools and platforms, forms the core user base for blu by BCA Digital.

These tech-savvy individuals are distinguished by their comfort and familiarity with the digital world. They seamlessly navigate various online environments, from social media and e-learning platforms to professional networks and digital marketplaces. Their ability to efficiently find and use digital resources not only enhances their productivity but also enriches their personal and professional lives. For blu by BCA Digital, understanding and catering to this demographic is crucial. These users expect seamless, intuitive, and innovative digital banking services that align with their tech-savvy lifestyles.

Moreover, the tech-savvy audience is typically early adopters of new technologies and digital trends. They are quick to embrace advancements that promise to improve their efficiency, convenience, and connectivity. This makes them an ideal target for blu by BCA Digital, which prides itself on offering cutting-edge digital banking solutions. By focusing on the needs and preferences of this audience, blu can ensure its offerings remain relevant, engaging, and valuable.

The study of digital savvy individuals as a target market reveals both success stories and failures, each providing valuable insights into the dynamics of the financial technology industry. One notable success story is that of Nubank, a Brazilian digital bank. Nubank identified a clear market need: Brazil's traditional banking sector was characterized by high fees and poor customer service. By offering a user-friendly, fee-free banking experience, Nubank capitalized on this need. The use of technology to streamline operations and reduce costs allowed Nubank to offer competitive services while maintaining profitability. Furthermore, Nubank's focus on customer experience, utilizing a mobile-first approach, resonated well with tech-savvy consumers. Its robust customer service and transparency fostered trust and loyalty. Nubank also leveraged data analytics to offer personalized services, which enhanced user satisfaction and engagement.

In contrast, the downfall of Xinja, an Australian digital bank, illustrates several pitfalls to avoid. Xinja initially showed promise by securing a banking license and attracting significant investor funding. However, its rapid expansion and ambitious product launches outpaced its operational capacity and market demand. Xinja struggled with inadequate risk management and compliance issues, which eroded consumer trust.

Additionally, its aggressive interest rate offers on savings accounts were unsustainable in the long run, leading to financial instability. The inability to achieve profitability quickly enough caused investor confidence to wane, resulting in funding

challenges. Xinja's failure to secure a sustainable business model and its misalignment with market needs were critical factors in its collapse.

From these cases, several lessons can be learned about targeting the digital savvy market. The success of digital banks like Nubank underscores the importance of identifying and addressing clear market needs, maintaining a strong focus on customer experience, and leveraging technology to enhance service delivery and operational efficiency. Building trust through transparency and excellent customer service is crucial. Digital banks must also manage growth carefully, ensuring that expansion is supported by robust risk management and compliance frameworks.

On the other hand, the failure of Xinja highlights the dangers of overexpansion without solid foundational support. It demonstrates the need for a sustainable business model and the importance of aligning product offerings with market demand. Effective risk management and compliance are essential to maintaining consumer trust and regulatory approval. Additionally, digital banks should avoid overpromising on returns that cannot be sustained, as this can lead to financial instability and loss of investor confidence.

In conclusion, the contrasting experiences of Nubank and Xinja provide valuable insights into the dynamics of targeting the digital savvy market. Success lies in understanding and meeting the specific needs and preferences of this demographic while avoiding pitfalls associated with impracticality, high costs, and privacy concerns. By learning from these examples, businesses like blu by BCA Digital can better position themselves to capture the attention and loyalty of the digital savvy audience.

### *Integrated Marketing Communications*

The notion of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is acknowledged to be highly diversified. According to an Affiliate Advertising Agency in America, Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is a concept that can maximize communication as a whole by merging the duties of a clear and coordinated communication plan (Shakeel & UlRehman & M.Syed Ibrahim)

Experts Smith, P.R., and Ze Zook also claimed that Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is a type of integrated marketing communication for a corporation, both for-profit and non-profit. Marketing communications are employed in promotions to acquire both financial and non-financial benefits. They define marketing communication as advertising, sponsorship, packaging, social media and web sites, sales promotion, selling & sales management, direct marketing, merchandising, exhibitions, and public relations (Smith & Zook, 2011).

Tjipto, an expert, claims that Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is an extension of the phrase advertising (promotion). The distinction between advertising and IMC is that advertising is primarily focused on one-way communication, whereas IMC stresses two-way communication. Advertising, in his opinion, is a form of mass communication, whereas IMC is more personal. Tjipto (2008).

Meanwhile, according to Kotler and Armstrong (2001), Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is an organizational concept that involves integrating and aligning communication channels in order to deliver messages in a straightforward, coherent manner and to give consumers confidence in the products offered/marketed.

IMC strategy is inextricably linked realm of marketing. Sales promotion, publicity, advertising (advertising) are the four basic methods of IMC. Kotler (1996):243. The creation of communication instruments such as sales promotion, sponsorship, personal selling, advertising, word-of-mouth, public relations, packaging, corporate identity and the internet in the marketing communications mix (IMC) for their products. (Prisgunanto, 2006).

The goal of implementing Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) or integrated marketing communications is to be able to provide/distribute a product's message to consumers/society with clear and consistent messaging. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), on the other hand, is useful for building brand awareness of a brand, which will sustain consumer loyalty to the product/brand.

The marketing system paradigm has moved from a traditional system to online marketing by reducing physical marketing constraints such as time, nation, and the need to meet suppliers and customers. Marketing communication tactics, according to Mahmud Machfoedz's book *Modern Marketing Communications*, are: "Determination of a marketing promotion objective and marketing promotion objective by a company through the creation of a marketing message plan and marketing materials through marketing development using the promotion mix method and the provision of a marketing budget to achieve an evaluation and control of an appropriate and useful marketing plan." Here is the description:

- a. **Setting Promotion Objectives.** Businesses employ sales or marketing campaigns with diverse objectives aimed at achieving specific goals. These campaigns are pivotal in attracting new consumers through targeted strategies that introduce products to broader audiences using compelling messages and attractive offers across various marketing channels. Effective communication of product information plays a crucial role by providing detailed descriptions, highlighting unique features, and building consumer trust. Furthermore, campaigns focus on increasing consumer numbers for established products by reigniting interest and

encouraging repeat purchases through discounts, special offers, and loyalty programs. Informing consumers about product enhancements is also vital to keep them informed and engaged, ensuring products remain competitive. Sales promotions additionally motivate consumer visits to physical or online stores through urgency tactics like limited-time offers and special events, thereby driving purchases. Ultimately, these efforts aim to create a compelling buying environment that boosts sales, strengthens market presence, fosters customer relationships, and supports sustained business growth.

- b. **Determination Promotion Target.** In marketing communication, targeting specific consumer segments is crucial for maximizing effectiveness and relevance. Chris Fill, referenced by Mahmud Machfoedz in "Modern Marketing Communication," emphasizes segmentation as a method to divide the mass market into identifiable units. This approach enables marketers to understand and cater to the unique needs, preferences, and behaviors of individual consumers by categorizing them based on demographics, psychographics, geography, and behavioral patterns. Segmentation allows marketers to create tailored promotional strategies that resonate deeply with each segment, enhancing precision and effectiveness. This personalized approach not only captures consumer attention and fosters engagement but also optimizes resource allocation and budgeting within marketing campaigns. Moreover, segmentation provides valuable insights into consumer behavior and market trends, enabling marketers to anticipate shifts in preferences and adapt strategies to maintain competitiveness. Embracing segmentation empowers marketers to navigate the complexities of the consumer landscape adeptly, driving sustainable business growth and success in today's competitive marketplace.
- c. **Marketing Message Design.** In marketing communication, crafting an effective message is essential after setting promotional goals and objectives. Message development aims to create ideals that resonate with the target audience, driving desired actions by capturing attention, arousing interest, stimulating desire, and motivating action effectively. Key to effective messaging are three critical elements: message content, structure, and format. Message content must be compelling, relevant, and aligned with audience needs, addressing benefits and differentiating from competitors. Structure organizes content logically, starting with a captivating hook, providing details, and concluding with a strong call to action. Format includes visual elements like fonts, colors, and imagery, enhancing appeal and suitability across digital, print, and other

- platforms. Effective marketers optimize messages through testing and analytics, refining strategies based on performance data to maximize impact, engagement, and achievement of promotional goals. Crafting messages with thoughtful content, structure, and format not only drives action and enhances conversion rates but also strengthens brand loyalty and perception among consumers.
- d. Marketing Media Channels. In marketing communication strategies, the selection of media channels is crucial as they serve as conduits for delivering commercial messages to target audiences effectively. Traditional channels like newspapers and magazines offer tangible formats that provide credibility and lasting impact, reaching broad masses through printed publications. Television and radio utilize audio-visual storytelling to create dynamic brand experiences, engaging mass audiences with memorable content. Outdoor media, such as billboards and transit advertising, capitalize on high-traffic locations to enhance brand visibility and awareness in public spaces. In the digital age, digital media channels like social media, websites, email, and mobile apps have transformed marketing by offering extensive reach, precise targeting, and interactive features. Social media platforms enable direct consumer engagement through personalized content and community-building, fostering brand loyalty and influencing consumer behavior. Websites and mobile apps serve as digital storefronts for 24/7 consumer access, offering convenience and accessibility for information and purchases. Email marketing and direct mail deliver personalized messages tailored to consumer preferences, enhancing campaign effectiveness. Integrated marketing communication strategies often blend multiple channels to create cohesive brand experiences across touchpoints, maximizing reach, engagement, and return on investment (ROI). Strategic media channel selection aligns with campaign objectives, target audience characteristics, and budget considerations, ensuring messages resonate effectively in today's interconnected marketplace (Sutjiadi & Prasetya, 2021; Putri & Oktaviani, 2022; Tyas & Hutagaol, 2021). A bank in Kuwait fully utilizes Instagram as its public relations media to build brand image, foster community closeness, and engage interactively (Al-Kandari et al., 2019).
- e. Development of Marketing. Development of marketing as on the promotion mix, encompassing all communication efforts of a company, integrates various promotional elements to effectively engage target audiences. Advertising plays a pivotal role by using paid media channels like TV, print, radio, and digital platforms such as social media and internet ads to disseminate brand messages widely. Personal selling involves direct interaction between sales representatives

and customers, allowing for tailored presentations and relationship-building to enhance sales. Sales promotion tactics, including discounts, coupons, and limited-time offers, aim to prompt immediate consumer responses and foster loyalty. Public Relations (PR) manages public perception through media relations, press releases, events, and crisis management, bolstering brand credibility and reputation. The synergy of these elements in the promotion mix creates a cohesive marketing strategy that adapts to technological advancements, shifts in consumer behavior, and competitive landscapes. Modern marketing strategies leverage analytics for real-time campaign adjustments, ensuring relevance and responsiveness in dynamic markets, thereby optimizing overall effectiveness and achieving sustained growth.

- f. **Marketing Budget Provision.** Businesses face a challenging decision in determining their advertising expenditures, a critical aspect of their budgeting process. Establishing a method to calculate the advertising budget involves creating a systematically organized plan that encompasses all business activities in monetary terms over a specific period. According to Munandar, a budget is a comprehensive plan that outlines future activities and expenditures, expressed in monetary units such as the Indonesian rupiah. It includes estimates and projections for forthcoming business operations and expenses. This budgeting process allows companies to allocate resources effectively, ensuring they have sufficient funds to support their advertising efforts and achieve their marketing objectives in the future.
- g. **Evaluation and Control of the Marketing Plan.** Marketing strategies must remain flexible and responsive to changing environments and market conditions. Continuous evaluation and monitoring are crucial to ensure that strategies stay on course and to identify when adjustments are necessary. Arikunto defines evaluation as the process of gathering information about the functioning of something, which informs decision-making by providing valuable insights into performance. Evaluating marketing actions and outcomes is essential for companies to assess their progress towards achieving objectives and to refine their strategies accordingly. This ongoing evaluation process allows businesses to adapt to evolving consumer preferences, competitive landscapes, and technological advancements. It requires dedication and resources from marketers, as evaluating marketing strategies involves thorough analysis and sometimes additional research to gather relevant data. Regular evaluation ensures that businesses can make informed decisions and optimize their marketing efforts effectively over time.

IMC is particularly relevant in the banking sector, where trust and reliability are paramount. A successful case study in IMC is that of the "Bank of America." Bank of America executed a well-coordinated IMC campaign that utilized various channels such as television, digital media, and direct mail to promote its "Better Money Habits" financial literacy initiative. This campaign was successful due to its cohesive messaging across all platforms, which consistently emphasized the bank's commitment to helping customers manage their finances better. The campaign integrated educational content with traditional advertising, creating a holistic approach that built trust and positioned the bank as a knowledgeable and supportive financial partner. By aligning its marketing efforts with customer needs and interests, Bank of America enhanced its brand image and customer loyalty.

On the other hand, the failure of Wells Fargo's IMC campaign following its account fraud scandal serves as a stark contrast. In an attempt to rebuild its reputation, Wells Fargo launched an IMC campaign emphasizing a renewed commitment to customer service and trustworthiness. However, this campaign failed to resonate with customers because it did not effectively address the underlying issues that had eroded trust in the first place. The messaging came across as insincere and disconnected from the bank's actual practices, leading to further skepticism and backlash. Additionally, the lack of coordination between the bank's communication channels resulted in inconsistent messages, further diminishing the campaign's credibility. The failure to integrate genuine reforms with its marketing communications highlighted a disconnect between the bank's actions and its promotional efforts, ultimately undermining the campaign's effectiveness.

The success of Bank of America's campaign illustrates several key principles of effective IMC. Consistency in messaging across all channels is crucial to building a strong and cohesive brand image. By integrating educational content that aligns with customer needs, the campaign not only promoted the bank's services but also provided value to customers, thereby enhancing trust and engagement. The alignment of marketing efforts with broader business goals and customer interests ensured that the campaign was relevant and impactful.

In contrast, Wells Fargo's failed campaign highlights the importance of authenticity and alignment between communication and actual business practices. A successful IMC campaign must be backed by genuine organizational changes and improvements. Simply promoting a message of trust and reliability is insufficient if the underlying issues that led to distrust are not addressed. Furthermore, coordination between different communication channels is essential to avoid mixed messages and



confusion among customers. The lack of genuine reform and the inconsistency in messaging were critical factors in the campaign's failure.

The contrasting outcomes of Bank of America and Wells Fargo's IMC campaigns provide valuable lessons for the banking industry. Effective IMC requires a consistent and cohesive message that aligns with customer needs and business practices. Authenticity and genuine organizational commitment to the values promoted in marketing communications are crucial for building and maintaining trust. By integrating these principles, banks can leverage IMC to enhance their brand image, foster customer loyalty, and achieve their marketing objectives.

## METHODOLOGY

The research process employs qualitative research methods presented descriptively to analyze the increase in the customer base through the implementation of an integrated marketing communications (IMC) strategy. The descriptive method was chosen because the research deals with current events and relates to present circumstances. The descriptive method is a technique for investigating the state of a human group, a subject, an environmental condition, a system of thought, or even a class of events in the present (Fitri et al., 2022).

The purpose of this descriptive research is to create systematic descriptions, illustrations, and relationships between the phenomena under investigation. This method was chosen because this research seeks to find a detailed portrayal of a group of people to achieve the group's goals, enabling a clear and accurate revelation of the group phenomenon.

In this study, the researcher acts as an observer. Data are collected from transcripts of observations and interviews, both electronic and manual, with personal visits to blu's office. Additionally, data triangulation is performed based on activities or events such as the visit to the center for blu's 2nd-anniversary celebration titled "bluday Celebration," reports on the event's implementation, as well as documentation and sources on the Internet. Bibliographic studies are also used to strengthen the quality of data, information, and the various issues related to this research. Theoretical references from multiple sources provide the basis and the main framework for this research.

The study aims to use a qualitative technique to examine the marketing communication strategy at blu by BCA Digital. Data will be gathered from informants representing the marketing team, clients, and prospective consumers through interviews, observation, literature research, and internet searches. This comprehensive approach aims to provide a thorough understanding of how blu by BCA Digital employs

the seven stages of a marketing communication strategy to promote its services and increase its customer base.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this comprehensive discussion, researchers meticulously categorize and delineate key concepts and themes to provide a clear and accessible analysis. The goal is to ensure that the findings are easily comprehensible and effectively communicated. Categorization in this context pertains to systematically organizing the stages and components of marketing communication strategies, aiming to highlight their strategic importance and operational nuances. By structuring the discussion around these categories, the study not only elucidates the underlying principles but also provides a framework for evaluating and understanding the complexities involved in implementing effective marketing communication strategies.

### *Setting Promotional Goals*

At blu by BCA Digital, a proactive approach is taken to continuously engage in diverse promotional activities across various channels—above the line, below the line, and digitally. These efforts are strategically aimed at bolstering brand awareness and enhancing visibility among both existing and potential customers. By maintaining a robust presence through these promotional endeavors, blu not only seeks to attract new customers but also aims to foster loyalty and retention among its current user base. Tailoring promotional programs and introducing new service features are pivotal strategies employed to cater specifically to the needs and preferences of its digitally savvy target market. Furthermore, blu places a strong emphasis on optimizing existing products, ensuring they are user-friendly and effectively meet evolving customer expectations. This proactive approach not only strengthens blu's market position but also underscores its commitment to providing innovative solutions in the digital banking sector.

### *Determine Promotional Target*

At blu by BCA Digital, the target audience comprises forward-thinking prospects and customers who demonstrate a strong affinity for and proficiency with internet technology. These individuals are characterized by their readiness to embrace technological advancements and their proactive engagement with digital platforms. Essentially, blu's promotional efforts are strategically geared towards tech-savvy customers who not only possess smartphones but also actively utilize them for various online activities. This target demographic is inclined towards maximizing their digital

experiences, making them ideal candidates for blu's innovative digital banking solutions. By focusing on this digitally fluent audience, blu aims to effectively resonate with their preferences and needs, thereby enhancing engagement and fostering lasting relationships within the competitive digital banking landscape.

#### *Marketing Message Design*

blu by BCA Digital employs a strategic approach in crafting its marketing messages, exemplified by slogans like #SiapJadiPegangan and #Better2Gether. These slogans encapsulate blu's commitment to being a reliable partner and fostering collaboration within its customer base. The messaging strategy is characterized by its use of clear, straightforward language that resonates effortlessly with the target audience. This approach ensures that blu's digital banking services are easily understood and accessible to all, emphasizing simplicity and clarity in communication. By adopting a friendly and engaging tone, blu effectively conveys its brand values and service offerings, making it easier for customers to connect with and trust the brand. This deliberate messaging strategy plays a crucial role in enhancing brand recognition and reinforcing blu's position as a customer-centric digital banking solution provider in the competitive marketplace.

#### *Marketing Media Channels*

blu by BCA Digital employs a diverse array of marketing channels to engage with and reach its customers effectively across various touchpoints:

- a. **Banner Ads:** These are strategically placed images or text displayed on websites, typically at the top, side, or bottom of web pages, aimed at capturing immediate attention.
- b. **Video Ads:** Short videos that are showcased before, during, or after viewing online video content, designed to convey messages visually and dynamically.
- c. **YouTube Series - THE UWISE BROTHERS:** blu's creation of THE UWISE BROTHERS video series on YouTube garnered substantial engagement, with 15,671,493 viewers over a span of 9 months. This initiative highlights blu's commitment to using video content to connect with a broad audience.
- d. **Pop-up Ads:** These ads appear in separate windows atop the webpage being viewed, ensuring visibility and direct interaction with users.
- e. **Social Media Ads:** Advertisements displayed across popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, leveraging these channels' extensive user bases for targeted outreach.

- f. Pay Per Click (PPC): blu utilizes PPC ads where advertisers pay only when users click on their ads, optimizing cost-efficiency in digital advertising campaigns. Google AdWords serves as a prime example of this advertising model.
- g. Display Ads: These are graphical or multimedia advertisements that appear on diverse websites and advertising networks, enhancing brand visibility across the digital landscape.
- h. Sponsored Content Ads: Ads presented as editorial content or sponsored posts, seamlessly integrating promotional messages into relevant content.
- i. Ad Retargeting: Targeted ads directed at users who have previously visited blu's website or engaged with its digital content, reinforcing brand recall and encouraging return visits.
- j. Mobile Ads: Advertisements tailored specifically for mobile devices like smartphones and tablets, leveraging the pervasive nature of mobile technology to reach users on-the-go.
- k. Email Announcements: Periodic announcements and newsletters sent via email to blu's subscriber base, providing direct updates and promotions to engaged customers.

blu's strategic utilization of these diverse marketing channels underscores its commitment to reaching and engaging with customers through multiple platforms, enhancing brand visibility, and fostering meaningful interactions in today's competitive digital landscape.

#### *Development of the Promotional Marketing Mix*

blu by BCA Digital strategically optimizes its marketing activities across various dimensions to effectively engage with its target audience:

- a. Sales Promotion: blu implements a wide range of enticing promotions to cater to digitally savvy consumers' financial and lifestyle needs. Examples include offering MRT tickets for IDR 2, refunds of IDR 22,000 for BPJS transactions via the Blu application, and discounts on virtual card transactions with partners like Astro, SayurBox, and Grab. Additionally, QRIS transactions at various outlets such as CGV, Chatime, and Cinepolis offer 100% cashback (up to IDR 22,000), further enhancing customer engagement.
- b. Social Media Ads (Broader Reach): blu leverages multiple social media platforms including YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter to amplify its brand presence and engage with a broader audience. These platforms serve as pivotal channels for targeted advertising campaigns and community engagement initiatives.

- c. Advertising: In addition to digital channels, blu employs Out-of-Home (OOH) advertising and TV commercials to reinforce its brand messaging and increase visibility across different demographics and geographic areas.
- d. Special Events: blu organizes various special events such as press conferences and community meetings to deepen its relationships with stakeholders and enhance brand credibility. These events not only promote brand awareness but also foster community involvement and support.
- e. Sustainability Initiatives: Through initiatives like #bluBuatBaik, blu demonstrates its commitment to environmental sustainability. Collaborating with Rekosistem for waste management, blu initiated the Blu Virtual Run in October 2022, engaging 2,625 participants across 214 Indonesian cities who collectively covered 174,525 km. The proceeds from this initiative will fund the establishment of 7 blu x Rekosistem waste stations in strategic locations.
- f. Innovative Features: In 2022, blu introduced 15 new features including the bluVirtual Card, Lucky Draw promotions, and enhanced account management tools like bluGether and account opening without notifications. These innovations aim to improve user experience, streamline transactions, and offer convenient financial solutions within blu's digital ecosystem.
- g. Expansion and Collaboration: As a Bank as a Service (BaaS) provider, blu collaborates with diverse partners including e-commerce platforms like Blibli, telecom providers like Telkomsel Redi, and cultural institutions like CGV and MRT Jakarta. These collaborations enhance accessibility to financial services and pave the way for future expansions into the investment and payment sectors.
- h. Customer Transactions: In 2022, blu witnessed significant transaction volumes in transfers, cardless cash deposits, e-money top-ups, cardless cash withdrawals, and QRIS payments. Despite not offering credit services yet, blu disbursed over IDR 3.2 trillion in credits through cooperative segment financings, underscoring its pivotal role in Indonesia's digital banking landscape.

Through these comprehensive marketing strategies and initiatives, blu by BCA Digital not only strengthens its market position but also enhances customer satisfaction, fosters sustainable practices, and drives innovation in financial services.

#### *Provision of Marketing Budget*

BCA Digital's blu, a prominent player in Indonesia's digital banking sector under PT. Bank Central Asia, strategically allocates a substantial budget to maximize the impact of its promotional initiatives. This budgetary allocation is meticulously planned and adjusted to ensure optimal utilization across various marketing channels, including digital, traditional media, and direct engagement activities. By investing in targeted advertising campaigns, innovative promotional strategies, and comprehensive customer engagement programs, blu aims to strengthen brand visibility, attract new customers, and retain existing ones in the competitive financial services landscape. This strategic approach not only supports blu's growth objectives but also underscores its

commitment to delivering exceptional value and convenience to its diverse customer base.

*Evaluation and Control of Marketing Plans*

In addition to optimizing its touchpoint network, BCA Digital's blu has implemented several strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing product retention and customer satisfaction. These initiatives underscore blu's commitment to building lasting relationships and expanding its service offerings:

- a. **Development of Loyalty Programs:** blu has rolled out innovative loyalty programs designed to foster customer retention across various banking transactions, including ATM/debit card usage, mobile banking, and internet transactions. These programs are tailored to reward customer loyalty and encourage continued engagement with blu's services.
- b. **Commitment to Customer Satisfaction:** Since its inception, blu has prioritized being a dependable and beneficial partner for all banking needs. This customer-centric approach is reflected in its continuous efforts to improve service quality and responsiveness to customer feedback.
- c. **Increase in Third Party Funds (DPK):** blu has witnessed a significant rise in Third Party Funds (DPK), reaching IDR 6.85 trillion by December 2020. This growth indicates growing customer confidence and trust in blu's financial products and services.
- d. **Enhanced Customer Engagement:** blu is actively engaging its customer base, ensuring regular interactions and personalized service offerings. This proactive approach helps in understanding customer preferences and adapting services to meet evolving needs effectively.
- e. **Monitoring and Adaptation:** Regular monitoring and evaluation of marketing strategies allow blu to adjust its approach based on performance metrics and customer feedback. This adaptive strategy ensures that blu remains responsive to market dynamics and customer expectations.
- f. **Future Outlook:** Looking ahead, blu aims to further strengthen its market position by continuing to innovate in customer service, expanding its digital capabilities, and fostering deeper customer relationships through targeted marketing initiatives.

Table 1: Comparison of Assets, Total Third Party Funds (TPF) and loans provided based on the 2022 financial report (in million rupiah)

| <b>Bank Name</b>   | <b>Total Aset</b> | <b>Total TPF</b> | <b>Loans Provided</b> |
|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Sea Bank           | 28.270.000        | 21.580.000       | 15.890.000            |
| Bank Jago          | 16.965.295        | 8.274.385        | 9.157.817             |
| Blu by BCA Digital | 11.054.851        | 6.854.604        | 3.239.169             |

Let's take a look at the table above. The three digital banks were born in Indonesia almost simultaneously or are around 2 years old. The Bank Jago application,

which was chosen as the most popular application, was launched in April 2021 and then the Jago Syariah application was launched in February 2022. In June 2022, users of the two applications had reached 3 million. What makes Bank Jago so popular?

If you save at Bank Jago digital you will be freed from monthly admin fees, free inter-bank transfer fees, can withdraw money at other bank ATMs without being charged a fee, can make foreign transactions and verify paypal accounts, and offers various promos such as sharing referral codes.

In addition to the advantages offered, Bank Jago also has a number of disadvantages, such as the lack of ATM machines, the lengthy registration verification process, and the unavailability of credit card features.

Officially changed its name to PT. Bank SeaBank Indonesia (SeaBank) based on the Decree of the Deputy Commissioner for Banking Supervision of the Financial Services Authority Number KEP-12/PB.1/2021 dated 10 February 2021.

Compared to Bank Jago and blu by BCA Digital, SeaBank is a digital bank that is relatively quiet from marketing activities or frenetic events. But unexpectedly, judging from the financial parameters can be thumbs up. SeaBank's total assets reached IDR 28.7 trillion, Bank Jago IDR 16.9 trillion while Blu IDR 11 trillion. Likewise for Total Third Party Funds: Seabank IDR 21.58 trillion, Bank Jago IDR 8.3 trillion and Blu IDR 6.8 trillion.

Not to mention the total loans disbursed which are very decisive in maintaining the bank's financial liquidity, SeaBank ranks first with IDR 15.89 trillion, Bank Jago IDR 9.1 trillion and Blu is again in third place with IDR 3.2 trillion.

Is there something wrong with this performance record? Are blu's intensive and even promotion efforts not enough to attract and attract customers, both depositors and creditors? This is what we need to criticize. Even though since its inception on the blu by BCA Digital market, it has been clear that it is a subsidiary of Bank BCA, which is one of the largest private banks in Indonesia. Both the technological, financial and brand infrastructure are of course very strong. Even on the logo, blu never releases the inscription BCA, of course to provide guarantees as well as customer confidence that blu owned by Bank BCA will be safer.

The use of digital banking services continues to grow in Indonesia. So, what are the reasons people use digital banks? According to the Populix survey results, quoted from katadata.id, as many as 75% of respondents rated digital bank services as practical and 74% considered their services easy to use.

Furthermore, 67% of respondents use digital bank services because they save time, 65% because of the many features, and 62% think digital banks make it easier for customers to track expenses. There are also 61% who use digital banks because they are integrated with e-wallets, and 56% because they are integrated with e-commerce. The Populix survey involved 1,000 respondents spread across major cities in Indonesia. The survey was conducted on 20-25 May 2022.



| No | Nama                      | Nilai / Persen Responden |
|----|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1  | Praktis                   | 75                       |
| 2  | Mudah digunakan           | 74                       |
| 3  | Hemat waktu               | 67                       |
| 4  | Banyak fitur              | 65                       |
| 5  | Mudah melacak pengeluaran | 62                       |
| 6  | Integrasi e-wallet        | 61                       |
| 7  | Integrasi e-commerce      | 56                       |
| 8  | Lebih aman                | 43                       |
| 9  | Direkomendasikan          | 29                       |

Figure 1: Customer reasons for choosing a digital bank (databoks.katadata.id)

The table shows that the brand factor and the security of transactions are not the main motivations of digital banking users.

### CONCLUSION

This study underscores blu by BCA Digital's proactive approach in leveraging digital promotion through mobile app platforms, social media, and strategic partnerships to cultivate robust ecosystems. The launch of its mobile banking application, which boasts over 1.1 million users as of December 2022, highlights blu's effective integration with fintech partners and collaborations with various entities, including universities and businesses adopting Bank as a Service models. blu demonstrates aggressiveness in its marketing endeavors, yet opportunities remain for enhancing its market acquisition and performance relative to digital banking competitors. Moving forward, aligning marketing strategies with industry benchmarks and competitive analyses will be crucial for blu to consolidate its position and potentially lead in its market segment.

The study also identifies several critical stages in blu's marketing communication strategy. Firstly, goal setting involves defining clear objectives such as increasing brand awareness and fostering user engagement, essential for focusing efforts and measuring campaign success. Secondly, targeting involves meticulous segmentation to pinpoint audience segments that align with blu's digital banking offerings. Crafting compelling messages that resonate with these segments forms the third stage, ensuring relevance and engagement. Media selection, the fourth stage, entails choosing optimal channels like social media, digital advertising, and influencer partnerships to effectively convey these messages.

Moreover, developing a cohesive promotional mix, integrating advertising, public relations, sales promotions, and direct marketing, strengthens blu's market presence across diverse touchpoints. Effective budget allocation is pivotal in executing

these strategies while maximizing ROI, highlighting the need for meticulous planning and financial oversight. Lastly, continuous evaluation through KPIs such as customer acquisition rates and engagement metrics allows blu to refine and optimize future campaigns, ensuring sustained growth and competitive edge in the dynamic digital banking landscape.

By employing these comprehensive stages of the marketing communication strategy, blu by BCA Digital not only enhances its visibility and customer engagement but also positions itself strategically for continued growth and leadership in the digital banking sector. Insights gathered from stakeholders including marketing teams, clients, and prospective consumers provide valuable feedback for refining strategies and driving ongoing success. Through a blend of qualitative and quantitative research methods, this study aims to deepen understanding of how blu by BCA Digital effectively implements these strategies to achieve its business objectives and ensure sustained relevance in the market.

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## Lark: As a Medium of Interpersonal Communication for TNS Employees to Manage Work Stress Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic

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### ABSTRACT

Working from home (WFH) during the community activity restrictions period (PPKM), such as those imposed by Indonesia's government, leaves employees with little choice in dealing with work stress. Lark is a collaborative working media tool, during work from home all communication in TNS department took place in Lark. This study's importance is to see how Lark basically a formal working media tool can form an interpersonal communication between woman employees that help them to manage work stress during WFH and PPKM period. Since the trend of working from home is likely to continue even after pandemic, this research provides contribution and information related to communication tools and work from home consequences. The theory for this research is Computer-mediated Communication and Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT). This research method employs a qualitative approach through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and library study. This study finds that implementing WFH during the Covid-19 period resulted in heightened work stress among female employees in TNS Department. It was observed that sharing work-related burdens with coworkers proved to be effective in reducing work stress. Interestingly, sharing with a coworker was considered more beneficial than sharing with a spouse or family. Lark application which serves as a working media tool turns out can facilitate interpersonal communication among female employees. The application's instant messenger, phone call, and expressive emoji make it convenient for employees to share their concerns and stress, as compared to using video conferences.

**Keywords:** *Lark, Computer-Mediated Communication, Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT), Work from home, Covid-19 Pandemic*

### INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Covid-19, a highly contagious disease that was rapidly spreading across the globe, had altered business, people, and life in general. As of April 2022, there are over 400 million confirmed cases and over 6 million deaths from this disease (World Health Organization, 2022). To combat the spread of this virus, many countries are implementing WHO-recommended health protocols, as well as imposing total lockdowns (Satgas Covid-19, 2022). To combat the spread of this virus, many countries

are implementing WHO-recommended health protocols, as well as imposing total lockdowns (Bastoni et al., 2021). Indonesia was one of the countries that imposed PSBB, or Large-Scale Social Restrictions, which were later replaced by PPKM, or Implementation of Restrictions on Community Activities (Muhyiddin & Nugroho, 2021). Government restrictions on the movement of community activities (PPKM) of course have an impact on economic activities and businesspeople. This then normalizes WFH activities, which companies must implement to maintain business continuity (Mungkasa, 2020).

The phrases "work from home" or "remote working" have existed for many years, accompanied by extensive studies and research into these concepts. However, it is during the Covid-19 pandemic that these terms became widely known and used (Klopotek, 2017). Remote work, commonly known as WFH (Working from Home), is recognized as having both advantages and disadvantages in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. On the one hand, WFH offers increased flexibility in managing work-related tasks (Buffer & Angellist, 2020; Ipsen et al., 2021). However, it is also associated with certain perceived drawbacks such as decreased work motivation, additional expenses for utilities and home internet, and challenges in establishing clear boundaries between personal and professional life (Asbari et al., 2020; Febrianty et al., 2021; Galanti et al., 2021; Sahni, 2020).

The interplay between WFH, work-life balance, and job stress has a substantial impact on job satisfaction, both directly and indirectly. Notably, the study reveals that adopting WFH as a novel approach can effectively maintain job satisfaction among Indonesian workers amidst the Covid-19 pandemic (Shabuur & Mangundjaya, 2021). Consequently, WFH is perceived as having positive implications that organizations should consider attentively in the future. On the other hand, studies also found that WFH during Covid-19 and restricted periods raised work stress, loneliness, and sleep deprivation (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2021). Especially woman, according to a United Nations assessment based on research undertaken by UN Women in collaboration with UNICEF, WFP, and UNDP, COVID-19 has a disproportionate impact on women's mental and emotional health, with 57% of women suffering greater stress and anxiety compared to 48% of males. Increased demands of care and household work, concern over job and income loss, and the consequences of movement limitations on gender-based violence may all be contributory causes (UN Women, 2020).

TNS department is one of the departments that has implemented a full-time WFH work system for employees during Covid-19 pandemic and PPKM period. During this day, all communication and information related to work took place in a company application called Lark. As the department in charge of platform security, there is a chance that TNS team will be exposed to or asked to review potentially harmful content (Bailliencourt, 2023). Given this, the company understands the importance of putting employees' mental health and stress levels first, for example, provides team-building sessions and gives employees the freedom to choose the date and location of the event, which usually occurs outside of the workplace. Unfortunately, when forced to work from

home (WFH) and face restrictions on outdoor activities, employees are left with few options for dealing with work-related stress.

Every human interaction involves communication. Even when words are not exchanged with another person, the nature of our shared lifeworld inherently assumes a communicative context in every encounter. To be human is to be with other humans (Petricini, 2022). Humans are social beings according to Aristotle, the need to have interpersonal relationships and socializing are regarded to be one of the most fundamental aspects of life (Fudian & Oktavianti, 2021). Study shows that when people spend their time alone is less pleasurable than spending time with others and given the restriction period imposed by the government (PPKM) during Covid-19 pose a challenge to fulfilling the innate need for social relationships.

Given the pandemic situation, face-to-face communication and physical contact are no longer prioritized, and alternative forms of communication are emphasized to ensure safety. Poor communication characterized by intensity, lack of clarity, and complexity can give rise to misunderstandings, ultimately leading to decreased motivation and diminished psychological well-being (Yuliana & Rahadi, 2021). To alleviate stress during the Covid-19 period, several measures can be taken, including engaging in family communication, maintaining effective workplace communication, adhering to schedules, prioritizing health and safety, following government regulations, and minimizing exposure to Covid-19 news (Wolor et al., 2020).

The study found that communication plays a crucial role in supporting the mental and psychological well-being of students who are separated from their families due to migration during the pandemic. In this context, open and empathetic communication, along with a family's willingness to listen to the concerns of migrating students, becomes essential (Wowor & Putri, 2021). An additional study suggests that implementing successful approaches to interpersonal communication, whether in personal or professional settings, can alleviate stress, promote well-being, and enhance overall quality of life (Vertino, 2014). Moreover, virtual interpersonal communication is acknowledged as having a positive influence on increasing teacher motivation to engage in teaching activities (Das & Banerjee, 2021).

Information and communication technology in the form of computer-mediated communication (CMC) played a critical role in adopting WFH during a pandemic (Meier et al., 2021; Putri & Irwansyah, 2020). The advance of technology provides media to keep communicating, maintaining social connections, and fulfilling the need to interact during Covid-19 with one another. WFH offered a variety of media during the Covid 19 epidemic, ranging from lean to rich. The capacity of various technologies and mediums to duplicate messages varies. As a result, the communication parties can select the most appropriate technology and media to convey desired messages or to carry out communication. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) allows us to communicate, and share stories and information virtually without must be in the same room, even location. Indeed, CMC was found to have a good and positive impact on people's well-being amid the restriction period (Liu et al., 2019).

Therefore, based on this background, this study aims to investigate how the Lark application, a tool for workplace communication, facilitates interpersonal communication among female employees at TNS to manage work stress during the WFH and PPKM periods amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically focusing on female employees within select departments of TNS Indonesia, the research spans from 2021 to 2022, coinciding with the full implementation of WFH. This study innovatively explores the sources of stress for TNS employees during the pandemic, contrasting with previous studies that predominantly examine interpersonal communication's impact on teacher and employee motivation, often using platforms such as Zoom, WhatsApp, or Twitter.

In conclusion, as organizations like TNS adapt to the challenges posed by Covid-19 and the widespread adoption of remote work, understanding how communication tools like Lark contribute to stress management becomes crucial. This research endeavors to uncover how Lark functions as a medium for interpersonal communication among TNS employees, influencing both their day-to-day work dynamics and the academic discourse surrounding remote work in crisis scenarios. By scrutinizing its implications for stress management and employee well-being, this study aims to offer valuable insights that can shape future organizational strategies and enrich discussions on effective remote work practices during global health crises.

## LITERATURE REVIEW & RESEARCH BACKGROUND

### *Computer-Mediated Communication*

In 1991, Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) was a relatively new and unexplored field in academic disciplines, and its credibility was not widely accepted. During that time, CMC mainly consisted of email and asynchronous discussion groups, such as newsgroups, listservs, and privately hosted BBS (Kelsey & Amant, 2010). Walther (1992) defined synchronous or asynchronous electronic mail and computer conferencing as processes in which senders encrypt text messages sent from their computers to receiver computers (Walther, 1992). According to Goldman (1999), CMC was broadly defined as text, audio, and video exchanges occurring between two or more individuals using computer software and interfaces, including private email exchanges, private chat rooms, newsgroups, and the World Wide Web (Dehkordi et al., 2012). The information shared through CMC could be directed toward oneself, others, or even an imaginary audience.

As time passed, the term "computer" in CMC evolved to consider the context of digital technology beyond just desktop computers. Today, people can access the internet through various devices like smartphones, laptops, tablets, etc. Therefore, CMC can be defined as the transfer of meaning between two or more humans using digital technology, focusing on how mediation affects communication processes via specific technology practices (Carr, 2021; Yao & Ling, 2020). CMC interactions can take various forms, including one-to-many or one-to-one transactions, synchronous or asynchronous



processes, and diverse modes of interaction like typed text, spoken discussions, or visual/video messages (Holmes, 2005; Kelsey & Amant, 2010).

During the pandemic, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) played a crucial role in various aspects of life (Király et al., 2020; Y. C. Lee et al., 2021). The patterns of CMC significantly impacted the psychological, social, and economic aspects of communities (Arnus, 2015). Social media, being an internet-based platform that emphasizes human connections, played a vital role during this period, enabling people to connect, exchange knowledge, and create online network communities without face-to-face interactions. The introduction of new media tools has transformed how we establish and maintain relationships with others, whether they are friends, family, coworkers, or acquaintances (Carr, 2021; Luo & Walden, 2019; Treem et al., 2020).

CMC has accelerated the transmission and receipt of messages, and while it still takes time for senders to compose and receivers to respond to messages, the actual time to send and receive messages globally is now nearly instantaneous due to computer networks. This type of interaction is known as Interpersonal CMC. Interpersonal CMC includes dyadic interaction, where CMC tools facilitate direct one-to-one communication with a relational partner. It also involves lightweight interaction, referring to simple and quick messages that do not require significant time or effort to transmit, often seen on social network sites like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. Additionally, phatic interaction, which involves messages to establish mood, acknowledge, or demonstrate sociability, has adapted and evolved online despite the absence of many socioemotional cues (Carr, 2021).

#### *Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT)*

Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT) explores how interpersonal communication dynamics manifest across different settings, whether professional or personal, emphasizing the crucial role of communication in building and sustaining relationships (Knapp & Daly, 2011). These interactions occur within various relational contexts, from familial bonds between parents and children to professional engagements among coworkers and employers, and educational connections between teachers and students. The theory acknowledges that interpersonal communication can take place in dyadic forms involving two individuals or extend to smaller groups like families (Berger & Roloff, 2019; DeVito, 2016).

In the realm of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), which includes digital platforms and online environments, theories suggest that the absence of nonverbal cues might hinder the development of interpersonal relationships (DeVito, 2016). This limitation poses challenges in conveying one's personality traits, emotions, and sentiments effectively through online interactions. Despite these challenges, Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT), pioneered by Walther (1992), posits that relationships can still form and develop through CMC, albeit at a slower pace compared to face-to-face interactions (Carr, 2021; Olaniran et al., 2011; Walther, 1992).

Walther's SIPT underscores the adaptive nature of communication styles in online environments, where users adjust their verbal interactions over time to compensate for the lack of nonverbal cues, thereby fostering a sense of electronic propinquity (Carr, 2021). This temporal aspect in SIPT is not merely chronological but rather signifies the sequential exchange of interactive messages, shaping the development of virtual relationships (Carr, 2021).

Interpersonal relationships formed through communication, whether face-to-face or mediated by technology, play a vital role in our lives by providing support, understanding, and a sense of belonging (Valo & Mikkola, 2019). These relationships enhance our social networks and contribute to personal well-being by fulfilling emotional needs and fostering mutual understanding (DeVito, 2016). Moreover, interpersonal communication serves multiple functions such as learning, relating, influencing, playing, and helping, illustrating its diverse roles in human interactions (DeVito, 2016).

This study delves into the nuanced realm of interpersonal communication through Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) among female employees within a specific department, aiming to uncover the intricate ways in which digital platforms shape relationship dynamics in professional environments. By focusing on CMC, which encompasses various digital tools and platforms, the research seeks to understand how these technologies facilitate or hinder interpersonal interactions among women in the workplace. This investigation is particularly relevant as it addresses contemporary challenges and opportunities posed by digital communication tools that have power to change the behaviour (Putri & Oktaviani, 2022), offering insights into how virtual interactions impact teamwork, collaboration, and social dynamics within organizational contexts. By examining these dynamics within a single department, the study aims to provide a detailed exploration of how gender influences communication practices and relationship-building strategies in the digital age. This approach not only contributes to the literature on interpersonal communication and technology but also offers practical implications for enhancing workplace communication strategies and fostering inclusive and supportive work environments for female employees.

## METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted using qualitative methods with interpretive paradigm, qualitative research can help to understand the viewpoints and experiences of participants or research subjects, which can provide useful insights into the phenomena or event subject of study (Creswell, 2013; Smith et al., 2009). McQueen (2002) stated that the interpretive perspective sees the world through "a set of individual eyes" and selects people who "have their own interpretation of reality" to "embrace the world view." The interpretive paradigm emphasizes the importance of the researcher obtaining 'insightful' and 'depth' information. (Thanh & Thanh, 2015).

Participant observation, interviews, and analysis of documents or literature are the data-gathering methods employed in this study, which are expected to be valuable and support the validity of this research (Flick, 2014; Hadi et al., 2021). As explained by

Neuman, some factors to consider when picking informants include familiarity with the culture and involvement in, witnessing, and directly experiencing the phenomena presented in the research. Furthermore, they get involved in the field or research environment to ensure they can later provide answers and insights into the topic being studied (Neuman, 2007).

Therefore, for this study, researchers deliberately chose to recruit female participants exclusively, comprising a diverse group of individuals: three married and two single. This decision was grounded in the recognition that women have been disproportionately affected by higher stress levels during the Covid-19 pandemic. Research by UN Women has underscored this disparity, revealing that 57% of Indonesian women reported experiencing heightened stress during this period, compared to 48% of men. By focusing on female informants, this study aimed to explore how gender influences the experience and perception of stress amidst the pandemic's challenges. This approach not only seeks to shed light on the unique pressures faced by women but also to contribute to a deeper understanding of gender-specific responses to crises, thereby enriching the broader discourse on mental health and gender dynamics in times of adversity.

Table 1: Informants Information (Processed by Author, 2023)

| <b>Code Name and Age<br/>(Anonymous)</b> | <b>Marital Status in 2021-2022</b> | <b>Position in TNS at 2022-2022</b> |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| KR/27                                    | Single-Married                     | Quality Analyst                     |
| NS/32                                    | Married                            | Content Analyst- Quality Analyst    |
| MD/30                                    | Single                             | Quality Analyst- Team Leader        |
| MS/27                                    | Single- Married                    | Quality Analyst - Team Leader       |
| HR/29                                    | Single                             | Content Analyst- Quality Analyst    |

This study utilized a rigorous semi-structured interview approach, designed to capture rich and detailed insights from participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with open-ended questions, allowing for flexibility in responses while maintaining focus on predefined themes and conversation trajectories set by the researcher. This methodological choice aimed to ensure a comprehensive exploration of participants' perspectives on the dynamics of interpersonal communication through Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) within the workplace.

To analyze the gathered data, this study employed the well-established Miles and Huberman model, as outlined in Sugiyono's methodology framework (Sugiyono, 2013). This model involves three iterative stages: data reduction, where raw data is systematically condensed into manageable units; data display, where patterns and relationships within the data are visually represented to facilitate interpretation; and data verification, where the accuracy and reliability of findings are rigorously scrutinized. By adhering to this structured analytical process, the study aimed to uncover nuanced insights into how digital platforms influence communication dynamics among female employees, offering a robust foundation for understanding the complexities of CMC in professional settings.

Moreover, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for a deep exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and strategies in utilizing digital communication tools. By combining methodological rigor with participant-centered inquiry, the study sought to provide a holistic understanding of the interpersonal challenges and opportunities presented by CMC, thereby contributing valuable insights to both academic literature and practical workplace communication strategies.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *WFH and TNS Employees Work Stress During PPKM Amidst Covid-19 Pandemic*

The Covid-19 pandemic has precipitated sweeping changes across various facets of daily life, profoundly altering social interactions and communication norms on both personal and professional fronts. Previously commonplace activities like handshakes as a customary greeting, in-person business meetings, classroom teaching, casual meet-ups at cafes, mall outings, and outdoor explorations have either dwindled to a rarity or been strongly discouraged during these unprecedented times. One of the most notable shifts has been the widespread transition from traditional office settings to remote work environments, commonly known as Working From Home (WFH), which has reshaped the dynamics of the workplace.

Within the context of this study, the TNS department mandated full-time WFH arrangements for its employees, reflecting a broader trend towards remote work adoption across industries. While remote work offers certain conveniences, such as flexibility and reduced commute times, it has also been associated with heightened levels of work-related stress. Informants within the study, such as KR27, underscored these challenges, highlighting concerns over blurred boundaries between work and personal life, increased isolation, and the pressure to maintain productivity amidst global uncertainties.

The shift to remote work has not only altered the physical workspace but has also reshaped interpersonal communication dynamics within professional settings. Digital communication tools and platforms have become essential lifelines for maintaining connectivity and collaboration among colleagues. However, the reliance on these virtual channels has introduced new challenges, including difficulties in conveying nonverbal cues, fostering team cohesion, and navigating complex social interactions without face-to-face contact.

As organizations and individuals adapt to these changes, understanding the nuanced impacts of remote work on communication practices and employee well-being becomes increasingly crucial. This study aims to explore how female employees within the TNS department navigate these challenges, offering insights into the evolving nature of interpersonal communication in the digital age and its implications for workplace dynamics and organizational culture. By examining these dynamics amidst the backdrop of the pandemic, the research aims to contribute valuable perspectives to ongoing discussions on remote work, stress management, and effective communication strategies in contemporary workplaces.

.....TNS served as my initial employer in Indonesia, the first place I work in Indonesia, I pursued a college education abroad and resumed my employment there. Upon returning to Indonesia, I faced the challenge start work during the pandemic and PPKM. I have to adapt swiftly under these circumstances, and it surely added stress to the situation. Not only did I have to adjust to my work responsibilities and a new environment, but I also had to contend with the constraints of PPKM, which limited my freedom of movement (Informant KR27).

The study by Buffer & Angellist claimed that employees at WFH during the Covid-19 period struggled to communicate with coworkers (Buffer & Angellist, 2020). According to Beehr and Newman, job stress is a condition that arises from individuals' interactions with their work and involves making adjustments that deviate from their usual roles (T. K. Lee et al., 2022). Luthans (2008) defines stress as the way individuals respond to overwhelming physical and psychological demands brought about by specific circumstances. This adaptive response is influenced by individual differences and psychological processes related to adjustment.

In an organizational context, stress is commonly defined as an individual's adaptive response to environmental pressures that disrupt their physical, psychological, or behavioral well-being (Ivancevich & Matteson, as cited in Luthans, 2011). It reflects the dynamic interaction between individuals and their work environment, where external factors such as workload, organizational culture, and interpersonal dynamics play significant roles in shaping employees' experiences.

For instance, starting a new job during the pandemic introduces unique challenges for individuals adapting to unfamiliar organizational cultures, visions, and missions. The stress experienced by new employees can be viewed as a natural response to navigating these new environments amidst global uncertainties. As they strive to integrate into their roles and establish professional identities within the organization, they may encounter heightened pressures to perform, build relationships remotely, and align with organizational expectations under unprecedented circumstances.

Understanding these stressors is crucial for organizations seeking to support their employees effectively, particularly during periods of rapid change and uncertainty. By acknowledging the multifaceted nature of stress in organizational settings, from individual adaptation to broader systemic challenges, organizations can implement targeted interventions and supportive measures to foster resilience, enhance well-being, and promote sustainable performance among their workforce. This holistic approach not only benefits individual employees but also contributes to a healthier organizational culture and improved overall productivity in dynamic and evolving work environments. According to the findings of the interviews, the informants claimed that WFH, particularly during the implementation of PPKM, influenced their working style and level of work stress. Informant NS32, added that:

.....when WFH, my father was ill, it diverted my attention from my work because, aside from work, of course, I also had to take care of him, not to mention take care of my husband, and household chores. In addition, I was the first and only person working on my project for Indonesia when I initially started at TNS, thus I had complete responsibility in all the decision, without coworker to talk from the same country, my stress at the time was increased by feeling alone and the lack of friends with whom to chat (Informant NS32).

In the statement of the informant above, we can see that stress during WFH occurs due to the division of focus between homework and office work. When working in an office, the focus of employees is just getting the job done, but at home, external conditions such as the problems above are hard to avoid. This finding similar with UN analysis based on data from UN Women, UNICEF, WFP, and UNDP claims that COVID-19 has a disproportionately negative impact on women's mental and emotional health, with 57% of women experiencing higher levels of stress. Increased home and caregiver responsibilities, fear of losing one's job and money, and the effect of movement restrictions on gender-based violence may all be contributory factors (UN Women, 2020). The informants experienced the same event.

Data reveals a substantial impact of remote work on sleep patterns, with a notable 67% of individuals reporting sleep deprivation, particularly during periods of lockdown. This phenomenon is largely attributed to the absence of household assistance, compelling individuals to juggle domestic responsibilities alongside their professional duties (Joy, 2020). For married workers, managing these dual roles becomes even more demanding as they navigate the complexities of setting clear boundaries between family obligations, such as childcare and household management, and their work responsibilities. This challenge is exacerbated by the prolonged uncertainty and confinement imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic (Bahney, 2020).

The transition to remote work has blurred traditional lines between professional and personal life, creating a need for individuals to adapt quickly to new routines and coping strategies. Many find themselves grappling with increased stress levels stemming from the pressures of maintaining productivity in home environments that were not initially designed for continuous work. As individuals strive to balance competing demands, such as attending virtual meetings while attending to household chores or childcare, they often experience heightened mental and emotional strain.

Moreover, the absence of physical separation between workspace and living space can lead to difficulties in disengaging from work, contributing to prolonged work hours and disrupted sleep patterns. This phenomenon underscores the importance of implementing effective strategies to support remote workers' well-being, including promoting work-life balance, encouraging regular breaks, and providing resources for managing stress and sleep hygiene. By addressing these challenges proactively, organizations can mitigate the adverse effects of remote work on sleep quality and



overall employee health, fostering a more sustainable and supportive work environment amidst ongoing global uncertainties.

One of the study's findings indicates that during the Covid-19 time, it became stressful for employees for them to work on sensitive subject during WFH. The possibility exists that TNS team could be exposed to or requested to examine potentially hazardous information as the division responsible for platform security. This was not a problem for workers prior to Covid-19 because TNS personnel had access to welfare services, including training, research-based resources, and professional counseling (Bailliencourt, 2023).

.....TNS is the department that ensures the security of the platform and content shared, there were times when I worked on a lot of sensitive content, especially during the Covid period, and this really affected my mood and gave me stress. Especially because there are restrictions on movement by the government (Informant MD30).

Basically, both working from home and working centrally from the office, employees must still work according to the company's competency standards. This means that employees will still experience demands and feel the same work pressure as when working in an office (Asbari et al., 2020). Working from home does not mean reducing work tasks and employee responsibilities to the company, employees must still be able to complete work targets in a timely manner, achieve KPIs set by the company, and still be exposed to sensitive content. Employees who are unable to achieve work targets can experience stress. When restrictions on community activities are imposed by the government and employees must work from home, the employee's options for reducing work stress are limited.

Furthermore, an unstable internet connection also contributed to the stress of TNS employees at this time. According to a survey published by Ookla in the Speedtest Global Index for February 2023, Indonesia has slower internet speeds than other Southeast Asian nations. At 20.17 Mbps, Indonesia presently ranks 103rd out of 137 nations in the world for average mobile internet speed (Humas UM Sumbar, 2023).

.....living in a relatively remote area of Indonesia with an often-poor internet connection and regular power outages are two things that can make WFH more stressed. Not to mention the unfriendly condition of the house. Naturally, if we work in an office, this issue won't be a concern, but when we work from home, things are different (Informant MS27).

During the research, it became evident that the unreliable internet connectivity significantly exacerbated work-related stress among TNS personnel during the extended period of Working From Home (WFH), especially for those residing in rural districts of



Indonesia. This connectivity issue posed a persistent challenge, impacting the ability of employees to maintain consistent communication, attend virtual meetings, and meet deadlines effectively. Furthermore, the frequent occurrence of power outages further compounded these challenges, particularly for employees reliant on home Wi-Fi setups. Power failures not only disrupted their work tasks but also led to temporary loss of internet access, exacerbating feelings of frustration and hindering productivity.

For employees navigating these technological challenges, the WFH experience often involved navigating a precarious balance between professional responsibilities and the unpredictable realities of their home environments. The need to adapt to these conditions highlighted the resilience and resourcefulness of individuals in managing diverse and sometimes adverse working conditions. Moreover, these challenges underscored the importance of organizational support in terms of providing robust IT infrastructure, offering flexible work arrangements, and implementing contingency plans to mitigate the impact of technical disruptions on employee performance and well-being.

Addressing these connectivity and power-related issues is essential not only for improving individual work experiences but also for optimizing organizational efficiency in remote work setups. By investing in reliable technology solutions, providing training on remote work best practices, and fostering a supportive work culture that prioritizes employee well-being, organizations can enhance resilience and productivity in the face of unforeseen challenges, ensuring sustainable success in remote work environments.

#### *The Role of Interpersonal Communication in Managing TNS Employee Work-Stress*

In an early exploration of interpersonal communication by Giffin and Patton (1971), communication was defined as "a process involving the sending and receiving of messages." During this period, group communication typically referred to interactions among more than two individuals, while interpersonal communication was often narrowly construed as dialogue between two people. However, as Carr (2021) notes, defining interpersonal communication solely based on numerical criteria overlooks the nuanced dynamics that can occur within familial, friendship, and professional contexts, where interactions often transcend simple dyadic exchanges.

Amidst the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Indonesian government implemented the Community Activity Restrictions Enforcement (PPKM) as a measure to curb the virus's spread. These restrictions significantly limited individuals' avenues for stress management, exacerbating both the stress stemming from the pandemic itself and work-related stress experienced by TNS employees. The PPKM measures constrained social interactions, restricted mobility, and reshaped daily routines, thereby impacting the ways in which individuals cope with and adapt to stressors in their personal and professional lives.

Human interaction with others is a necessary part of life. Since human connection plays such a crucial part in their life, humans rely on interpersonal interaction to satisfy both their material and spiritual needs (DeVito, 2016; Yunus, 2023). According to Kathleen A. Vertino's research in "*Effective Interpersonal Communication:*

*A Practical Guide to Improving Your Life,"* nurses have the opportunity to employ effective interpersonal communication strategies in various contexts, including personal and professional settings. By doing so, they can effectively mitigate stress, enhance health, and elevate their overall quality of life (Vertino, 2014). Face-to-face or online intrapersonal communication serves numerous goals. The five objectives are: to learn, to relate, to influence, to play, and to help (DeVito, 2016). From the interview, this objective is aligned with the experience of informants:

.....in spite of the strain that comes with (WFH), I think that talking to coworkers about personal struggles and experiences—whether they are work-related or from personal life—can help lighten the load we are carrying throughout the pandemic. By communicating what we have gone through, we can collectively ease our burdens and find support in one another (Informant MD30).

.....I've already mentioned that when I first started at this company, I was the only one in charge of projects for Indonesia. After two months of work, two additional team members were added to this project. At the time, I was relieved because I finally had companions with whom I could discuss work, and I no longer felt alone and lonely (Informant NS32).

The informants stated that their goal of conducting interpersonal communication with co-workers had various reasons. However, basically emphasizes the purpose of connecting, playing, and helping. Interpersonal Communication helps us in relating. This relationship will help relieve loneliness and depression, allow us to share and increase happiness and make us a more positive person. This informant's statement is in line with previous research which stated that communication has an important role in supporting mental and psychological health during a pandemic (King et al., 2023; Reddy & Gupta, 2020). Communication with others not only affects the sense of identity but also directly influences physical and emotional well-being. Consistently, research shows that communicating with others promotes health, whereas social isolation is linked to stress, disease, and early death (Wood, 2008).

Based on insights gleaned from interviews, participants emphasized the importance of engaging in informal conversations with coworkers as a means of coping with challenges. These interactions often involved sharing anecdotes about enjoyable experiences, discussing weekend activities, exchanging humorous memes, or simply confiding in one another as friends or colleagues. Such casual exchanges were described as essential not only for fostering camaraderie and team spirit but also for providing much-needed mental breaks amidst the pressures of work and the broader uncertainties brought about by the ongoing pandemic.

The act of discussing lighter topics and sharing personal anecdotes was perceived as a vital strategy for maintaining balance and emotional well-being in the face of pervasive stressors. These informal interactions not only helped alleviate tension but also contributed to a sense of connectedness and solidarity within the workplace community. By creating opportunities for informal bonding, individuals were able to navigate the challenges of remote work and social distancing more effectively, reinforcing the importance of social support networks in sustaining morale and resilience during turbulent times.

Furthermore, the informal nature of these interactions allowed participants to unwind and recharge, enhancing their overall ability to cope with the demands of their professional roles amidst unprecedented disruptions. This aspect underscores the role of interpersonal communication not only in facilitating task-oriented collaboration but also in fostering a supportive organizational culture that prioritizes holistic well-being and mutual support among colleagues.

.....for me, sharing stories and venting with coworkers helps me feel rejuvenated during WFH. Even while they can't offer solutions to the issues I'm experiencing, at least they will listen and provide entertainment. Chatting with pals was quite useful at the time because we couldn't go out, right, no hangout, no cinema, so we just chatted and shared stories (Informant KR27).

The informants also mentioned that communicating with coworkers about work stress during WFH was better than talking about it with their husband or family, the reason because they sense a deeper understanding. According to NS32 and MS27 while their spouses or family members may offer support when they share about their work stress, the understanding of the specific obstacles the informants face may be restricted due to their lack of involvement in the same work context. Contrarily, chatting and discussing with coworkers, who are working on the same project and encountering similar difficulties, leads to a deeper understanding. As a result, there are times when they don't need to elaborate on a problem because without any explanation of the issue, coworker quickly understands the situation. Through interpersonal communication people become aware of each other, build connections to other people, construct and maintain relations with them, and develop a sense of belonging to the same social system (Carr, 2021).

#### *The Role of Lark as a Medium of Interpersonal Communication and Implementation of Computer-Mediated Communication*

Previous research on Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) has highlighted significant challenges stemming from the absence of nonverbal cues, which traditionally play a crucial role in interpersonal communication dynamics. The limitations of CMC, such as the inability to convey tone, bodily movements, gestures, and facial expressions, have been cited as factors that restrict the richness and depth of message delivery (Jones

& Pitt, 2019; Kock, 2005). These deficiencies initially posed barriers to effective communication and relationship building in virtual environments.

However, studies also indicate that over time, advancements in technology and adaptation strategies have facilitated the establishment of meaningful interpersonal communication through CMC channels (Luo & Walden, 2020). For instance, research by Zhenyang Luo and Justin Walden explores how technological advancements have introduced new methods for conveying contextual cues and fostering a sense of closeness in virtual interactions (Luo & Walden, 2020). These developments have reshaped communication dynamics, enabling individuals to adapt their communication styles and utilize digital tools more effectively to build and sustain relationships over extended periods.

The evolving landscape of CMC has not only expanded the possibilities for virtual interaction but has also influenced the nature of interpersonal relationships in contemporary society. As individuals increasingly rely on digital platforms for communication, understanding these technological shifts becomes crucial for navigating the complexities of modern interpersonal dynamics. By examining the intersection of technology and communication, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how digital tools shape interpersonal interactions and influence social behaviors in today's interconnected world.

During the pandemic, numerous changes occurred, and one notable shift was the increased reliance on performing tasks "online." Work, education, and caregiving responsibilities all underwent a transformation, transitioning to a new connected way of functioning. The primary response to continue working from home and maintaining social connections was the widespread adoption of digital communication tools. However, the extent to which communication technologies played a protective role is still a matter of debate. While some previous research suggests that technology could help alleviate feelings of loneliness, particularly during lockdowns (Shah et al., 2020), there is also a considerable body of literature pointing to the potentially destructive effects of technology-mediated communication on interpersonal relationships during COVID-19 (Choi & Choung, 2021).

Lark stands out as a robust and versatile toolkit tailored to meet the diverse communication and collaboration needs of modern teams. It integrates an extensive array of features aimed at enhancing productivity and fostering seamless interaction among team members. Key functionalities include high-quality audio and video conferencing capabilities, facilitating virtual meetings and discussions with clarity and efficiency. The platform also supports real-time live chat, enabling instant communication and quick exchanges of ideas or updates.

In addition to facilitating direct communication, Lark offers advanced project management tools such as approval flows and workflow automation, streamlining task delegation and project tracking processes. These features empower teams to coordinate tasks effectively and maintain project momentum even in distributed work environments. Instant messaging functionality further enhances collaboration by

providing a platform for casual conversations, brainstorming sessions, and quick consultations, promoting agile decision-making and responsiveness.

Moreover, Lark distinguishes itself with innovative features like wiki page creation and screen recording capabilities. Wiki pages serve as centralized repositories for information, allowing teams to document processes, share knowledge, and maintain organizational insights effortlessly. Meanwhile, screen recording functionality enables users to capture and share tutorials, presentations, or demonstrations seamlessly, enhancing clarity and facilitating effective remote training or knowledge sharing.

By combining these diverse functionalities within a user-friendly interface, Lark not only supports day-to-day communication but also empowers teams to innovate, collaborate efficiently, and adapt to evolving work dynamics. As organizations increasingly embrace remote and hybrid work models, platforms like Lark play a pivotal role in enabling seamless communication, enhancing productivity, and fostering a cohesive team environment regardless of physical location.

During the outbreak of Covid-19 and the transition to remote work (WFH), the TNS department relied heavily on Lark for all communication and work-related activities. From on-boarding training to project collaboration and day-to-day tasks, the department utilized Lark's messenger, document sharing, meeting capabilities, minutes recording, chat rooms, calendar, and email services to effectively manage their work processes. The TNS department belongs to a tech start-up company, where the reliance on technology for communication tools is inevitable. The majority of TNS employees consists of Millennials or Gen-Z individuals who are well-versed with familiar knowledge in using technology.

As stated above, research mentioned how CMC can form communication especially during lockdown periods. All the Informants of this research stated that CMC in the form of Lark give them the ability to feel connection with people. Informants stated that:

.....when WFH, I confided in or shared my problem to team mate on Lark application. Since all work communication is on Lark, talks or chats on Lark are like killing two birds with one stone, you can work and talk with friend at the same time (Informant NS32).

.....if I felt overwhelmed, stressed at work, or had problems at home during WFH, I would have a chat with one of my friends on Lark, if they are not busy we usually do phone call, but if we're busy we will just chat, chatting on Lark is fun because of the emojis it's very expressive, so even if it's just chatting we can use emojis or stickers to show more emotion (Informant KR27).

.....when I started to feel lonely or bored because of WFH, me and my teammate who are also my best friends, will share and talk either by chats or voice call on Lark, so it won't be too lonely, this is






convenient because we can still do all the work at the same time (Informant HR29).

In online communication, when individuals share personal information or emotions with their conversation partner, the partner tends to perceive the discloser as more likable and intimate than in face-to-face (FtF) interactions (Pang et al., 2018). People learn from others' self-disclosures, discovering commonalities and developing stronger affection. Cues in Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT) can be adapted through languages and emoticons. Other studies emphasize that in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), social norms of politeness must be explicitly expressed through linguistic means, conveying as much or even more affection than non-verbal vocal and physical cues in parallel face-to-face interactions (Carr, 2021). This includes using explicit statements of positive affection, offering encouragement, and praising the conversation partner's abilities or qualities (Pang et al., 2018; Walther et al., 2005)

According to informants (KR27 and MD30) when narrating their difficulties or offering support to friends experiencing stress and fatigue, they frequently express affection and encouragement through words, whether during text chats or voice calls. For instance, phrases like “pretty girl can do it”, or “don't worry, everything will be fine, stay strong mom “, and “patient beb, sis, this shall pass” are commonly used. Adding expressions of affection to their conversations fosters a sense of closeness, uplifts each other, and helps alleviate the stress they feel.

According to informants’ statement various and expressive emoji in Lark give joy and fun in conversation, the emojis can show the feeling and creating meaning. Informants will choose specific emoji to show their exact feeling while on chat. When they feel overwhelmed or exhausted by work and house chorus, they will show their feeling by specific emoji. According to informants there are some emojis they usually use to express their feelings.

Table 2: Emoticons Table (Processed by Author, 2023)

| Informant Feeling              | Chosen Lark Emoji  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Exhausted, Tired, Overwhelmed. |  |
| Support, Thankful, Entertain.  |  |
| Happy, Shy, Admire.            |  |
| Encourage.                     |   |
| Celebrate.                     |   |



Emoticons have unquestionably gained widespread popularity among individuals who grew up in the digital age, and their frequent usage is a means of adapting to communication platforms with limited nonverbal cues (Candrasari, 2020). The incorporation of emoticons and emojis as substitutes for conventional non-verbal communication has brought about positive changes in digital interactions (Gesselman et al., 2019). Emojis have emerged as a significant element of social behavior in today's digital realm and can be strategically employed as affective signals, especially in the context of human courtship (Venter, 2019).

Lark has the feature of instant messenger, phone or voice calls and video conferencing or video calls. Previous studies have discovered that video conferencing or video calls were adopted as an alternative to face-to-face interactions during the Covid-19 pandemic, addressing the limitations posed by the situation (Fudian & Oktavianti, 2021). To fulfill the need for interaction with peers during this time, video calls became one of the most preferred communication formats, with approximately 70% of participants using them more frequently during lockdown than before (Meier et al., 2021). However, this current study conducted within the TNS department found that informants were more at ease and engaged in communication with coworkers through Lark's instant messenger and phone calls, rather than relying on video conferencing or video calls. This observation aligns with other research results, indicating that individuals adapted to the restrictions and diversified their communication methods, with a notable preference for instant messengers and video calls.

Based on the informants' perspectives, communication through Lark's instant messengers or phone calls is considered easier and more efficient, akin to sharing stories while working with coworkers to alleviate feelings of loneliness. The use of video calls was not deemed essential because the main priority during that time was work, and the informants did not place significant emphasis on gestures or facial expressions while sharing stories. Additionally, one informant mentioned that the unstable internet connection posed a challenge, making video calls disruptive to work productivity, especially since their work heavily relied on stable internet connections.

Supporting this finding, unstable internet connection has been a challenge for effective CMC. In some regions, video conferencing may not be a feasible choice due to limited access to reliable internet and high bandwidth connections. Despite being considered a solution, internet access on affordable mobile devices is still in its early stages of development. Consequently, the absence of accessible internet, sufficient bandwidth, and up-to-date technology significantly hinders the successful adoption and implementation of online media (Kelsey & Amant, 2010).

According to the informants' statements, interpersonal communication is possible in Lark, and from their statement, it's all because of the tools and features that are provided in the application. Lark has many features that can be used to communicate, from instant messaging to phone calls, and video conferencing. According to a previous study, video conferencing enables parties to see each other's faces through communication devices and establish a social presence, which is like to meeting in



person directly, and helps them to pick up on non-verbal cues, sensory cues, and socio-emotional indicators. The finding also shows that Lark an application basically a formal working tool can establish interpersonal communication between coworkers.

Limitation, the study's focus on TNS employees during the Covid-19 pandemic may limit the generalizability of findings to other industries or non-pandemic scenarios. The Covid-19 pandemic and the associated WFH period may represent a unique and exceptional context. Consequently, the findings might not be applicable in non-pandemic or post-pandemic situations. Important to note that most employees in TNS consist of Millennials or Gen-Z individuals who possess a high level of familiarity and proficiency with technology, they are equally proficient in using the Lark application and similar technologies, neglecting potential differences in technology competency that might influence their stress management. Based on this limitation, the researcher proposes that upcoming studies should center on examining how baby boomer generation employees perceive the adoption of communication technologies like Lark. This research can delve into their attitudes and experiences, while also identifying potential factors that may hinder or facilitate their use of the platform. Future research can also perform comparative research involving multiple organizations to assess the effectiveness of Lark and other communication platforms in building interpersonal communication to manage work stress during different circumstances, such as normal working conditions, crises, or remote work situations while also considering employee demographics such as age, job role, and technological proficiency.

## CONCLUSION

Working from home (WFH) during the community activity restrictions period (PPKM), such as those imposed by Indonesia's government, leaves employees with little choice in dealing with work stress. Lark is a collaborative tool, where chat, email, video conferencing, calendar, and documents can all be found in one spot. During work from home in the covid-19 pandemic all communication in TNS took place in Lark. This study's importance is to see how Lark, that basically a formal working media tool can form an interpersonal communication between woman employees that help them to manage work stress during WFH and PPKM period amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to the findings of this study, implementing WFH during the Covid-19 period resulted in heightened work stress among female employees in TNS Department. The stress was attributed to factors such as exposure to sensitive content, challenges in setting boundaries between household chores and office work, unreliable internet connection, feelings of isolation, and a lack of communication and interaction. However, it was observed that sharing work-related burdens with coworkers proved to be effective in reducing work stress. Interestingly, confiding in a coworker was considered more beneficial than sharing with a spouse or family, likely due to the shared understanding of similar challenges and issues in the work environment.

This study also discovered that Computer-mediated-communication plays a crucial role in fostering interpersonal communication and helps employees maintain a

sense of connection, even while working from home. Particularly, the Lark application, which serves as a working media tool, facilitates interpersonal communication among female employees, aiding them in managing work stress during the WFH and PPKM period amid the Covid-19 pandemic. The application's instant messenger, phone call features, and expressive emoji make it convenient for employees to share their concerns and stress related to WFH and the pandemic, as compared to using video conferences or video calls. Lark allows employees to interact and communicate with colleagues efficiently while remaining focused on their tasks, considering its primary function as a professional working media tool.

#### BIODATA

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## Indonesia's Roles in Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis: Through the Lens of Public Diplomacy

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### ABSTRACT

Myanmar's Rohingya crisis remains unresolved, with the Rohingya minority suffering human rights violations from the majority Buddhist Rakhine population, supported by the central government. As a result, many Rohingya have fled to neighboring countries like Thailand, India, Indonesia, Nepal, and others in the region (UN Refugees, 2022). Indonesia, a founding ASEAN member, believes ASEAN should address the Rohingya crisis, but ASEAN faces obstacles due to the non-intervention principle and differing ideologies and interests among member states. Concerned with the crisis since its emergence in 1948, Indonesia has intensified its peace-brokering efforts as the current ASEAN host, utilizing shuttle diplomacy and engaging key players in Myanmar. Resolving the conflict is significant for Indonesia, as it seeks to enhance its regional reputation and revive its influential role from the Soeharto era. Public diplomacy will be used in this paper by seeing the efforts of the Indonesian government, especially during President Jokowi's second term. As Joseph S. Nye said "*soft power is the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment,*" we can see the Indonesia effort through shuttle diplomacy, implementation of the Five-Point Consensus on Myanmar, and humanitarian aid to solve this conflict.

**Keywords:** *Public Diplomacy, ASEAN, Indonesia, Rohingya's Crisis, Shuttle Diplomacy*

### INTRODUCTION

As of January 1, 2023, Indonesia has assumed the significant role of ASEAN's chairman, a position it will hold until December 31, 2023. This leadership comes at a time when the region is grappling with numerous challenges, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The economic landscape of ASEAN member

countries has been severely affected, with several nations facing recessionary pressures. Beyond economic difficulties, the geopolitical context within the region remains fraught with unresolved conflicts. Among the most pressing issues are the territorial disputes in the South China Sea involving China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Brunei Darussalam, as well as the ongoing humanitarian crisis facing the Rohingya in Myanmar.

Indonesia's chairmanship of ASEAN in 2023 is both an opportunity and a significant responsibility. Strengthening ASEAN's institutional capacity and enhancing its effectiveness are paramount priorities that Indonesia must address to foster regional stability and cooperation. The country's approach to these challenges will be crucial in shaping the future trajectory of ASEAN. In this context, Indonesia's role in addressing the Rohingya crisis through the lens of public diplomacy becomes particularly significant. Public diplomacy, with its emphasis on dialogue, cultural exchange, and building mutual understanding, offers a strategic avenue for Indonesia to influence and engage both domestic and international audiences on the plight of the Rohingya.

As Indonesia embarks on its chairmanship, it is imperative to examine how it can leverage public diplomacy to not only address the immediate humanitarian needs of the Rohingya but also to promote long-term solutions that ensure peace and stability in the region. Indonesia's engagement with the Rohingya crisis necessitates a multifaceted approach, encompassing diplomatic efforts, humanitarian assistance, and collaboration with international organizations. By fostering a narrative of compassion, solidarity, and proactive leadership, Indonesia can position itself as a key player in resolving one of Southeast Asia's most enduring and complex humanitarian crises. Through effective public diplomacy, Indonesia has the potential to mobilize support, shape international perceptions, and ultimately contribute to a more peaceful and stable regional order.

Strengthening ASEAN's institutional capacity and effectiveness is a crucial priority for Indonesia during its chairmanship. As stated by Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Teuku Faizasyah:

"Some of the issues that will be discussed at the 42nd ASEAN Summit revolve around the themes of strengthening ASEAN institutions, drafting the ASEAN Post 2025 Vision, post-pandemic economic recovery, strengthening health architecture in the region, as well as other important issues in the region, such as the progress of 5PC implementation in Myanmar and other developments outside the region."(kemenparekraf.go.id)

Indonesia's efforts to resolve the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar are crucial to study, as they highlight Indonesia's longstanding role in addressing regional conflicts

within ASEAN. As a founding member of ASEAN, Indonesia feels a profound responsibility to uphold peace and security in the region. This commitment is deeply rooted in its “free and active” foreign policy principle, which underscores Indonesia's dedication to maintaining world peace and order through impartiality and active engagement.

Indonesia's involvement in regional conflict resolution is not unprecedented. Historically, Indonesia has played a significant role as a peace broker in various regional disputes. For instance, it was instrumental in mediating the Cambodian armed conflict and ending Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia. Indonesia also facilitated peace negotiations between the Philippines and the separatist group Moro National Liberation Front and mediated the territorial dispute between Cambodia and Thailand over the area around the Temple of Preah Vihear. Beyond the region, Indonesia's diplomatic efforts extend to the global stage. Recently, Indonesia sought to facilitate dialogue between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during the G20 summit, demonstrating its proactive stance in promoting international peace and stability.

Indonesia's active involvement in these diverse conflicts showcases its diplomatic agility and commitment to peace. The country's efforts in addressing the Rohingya crisis are a continuation of this legacy. By employing a multifaceted approach that includes diplomatic negotiations, humanitarian assistance, and collaboration with international organizations, Indonesia aims to foster a narrative of compassion, solidarity, and proactive leadership. Through effective public diplomacy, Indonesia has the potential to mobilize international support, shape global perceptions, and contribute to a more peaceful and stable regional order. This role not only aligns with Indonesia's historical responsibilities but also underscores its ongoing commitment to ASEAN's institutional strength and effectiveness.

This proactive approach by Indonesia reflects its understanding of the broader implications of conflicts and its willingness to address them, even in forums where they may not seem immediately relevant. Such initiatives highlight Indonesia's dedication to playing a constructive role on the global stage, showcasing its ability to navigate complex international issues and its commitment to fostering peace and stability.

In this context, Indonesia's role in addressing the Rohingya crisis through public diplomacy is particularly significant. Public diplomacy, with its focus on dialogue, cultural exchange, and building mutual understanding, provides Indonesia with a strategic avenue to influence both domestic and international audiences regarding the plight of the Rohingya. As ASEAN's chair, Indonesia has the unique opportunity to leverage its leadership position to promote collaborative efforts and mobilize regional and international support for the Rohingya.

Indonesia's engagement in the Rohingya crisis will require a multifaceted approach, encompassing diplomatic negotiations, humanitarian assistance, and

collaboration with international organizations. By fostering a narrative of compassion, solidarity, and proactive leadership, Indonesia can position itself as a key player in resolving one of Southeast Asia's most enduring and complex humanitarian crises. Through effective public diplomacy, Indonesia has the potential to mobilize support, shape international perceptions, and ultimately contribute to a more peaceful and stable regional order.

This article will explore Indonesia's roles in Myanmar's Rohingya crisis through public diplomacy, divided into four comprehensive sections. The first section, "The Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar: The Origin and Significance," will delve into the historical roots of the conflict, assessing how changes in Myanmar's political landscape have affected the Rohingya and the broader implications of this enduring humanitarian issue. The second section, "Indonesia's Resources as a Mediator in Regional Conflicts," will examine Indonesia's established track record as a peace broker. Indonesia's previous successes in mediating regional conflicts, such as in Cambodia, the Philippines, and Thailand, will be discussed to highlight the country's capacity and credibility in conflict resolution. This section will also explore how these experiences position Indonesia to play a constructive role in the Rohingya crisis.

The third section, "Conceptual Framework and Research Method: Public Diplomacy," will provide a theoretical foundation for understanding public diplomacy's role in conflict resolution. Public diplomacy involves dialogue, cultural exchange, and advocacy to influence public opinion and international perceptions. This section will link the success of public diplomacy efforts to Indonesia's international image and its potential impact on resolving the Rohingya crisis. The fourth and final section, "Indonesia's Methods in Addressing the Rohingya Crisis: Shuttle Diplomacy and the Implementation of the Five-Point Consensus on Myanmar," will detail specific strategies employed by Indonesia. This includes the shuttle diplomacy efforts of Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi and Indonesia's active involvement in the ASEAN Five-Point Consensus on Myanmar. By examining these methods, this section will provide a detailed analysis of how Indonesia navigates the complex diplomatic landscape to foster peace and stability.

Through these sections, this article aims to provide a detailed, comprehensive, and coherent examination of Indonesia's roles in the Rohingya crisis, emphasizing the importance of public diplomacy. By fostering a narrative of compassion, solidarity, and proactive leadership, Indonesia can not only address the immediate humanitarian needs of the Rohingya but also contribute to a more peaceful and stable regional order. This role aligns with Indonesia's historical responsibilities and underscores its ongoing commitment to strengthening ASEAN's institutional capacity and effectiveness.

#### *Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar: The Origin and Significance*

Myanmar, often known as Burma, is situated in the western part of mainland Southeast Asia and is home to a diverse population of approximately 56.424 million

people as of 2023. The country is a mosaic of various ethnicities, including the majority taingyintha, or “sons of the soil,” as well as significant communities of Chinese and South Asians (Alam, J., 2019). Despite this rich ethnic diversity, the Rohingya population has faced systemic discrimination and exclusion.

Historically, the Rohingya have lived in the Rakhine State of Myanmar, historically known as Arakan, for generations. Despite their long-standing presence, they have been subjected to systematic disenfranchisement and human rights abuses, including restrictions on movement, access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, all contributing to their severe socio-economic deprivation. Arakan, located in western Myanmar and geographically isolated from the rest of the country by a range of mountains, has always maintained a distinct political identity. In the 13th century, Arakan had its own prosperous kingdom with the capital at Mrauk U, enjoying robust economic and trade relations with the Bengal Sultanate. However, this prosperity was disrupted when Meng Khari (also known as Ali Khan) annexed parts of Bengal, including areas like Ramu in present-day Cox's Bazar (Alam, J., 2019). These historical dynamics, combined with their identification as Muslims in contemporary discussions, underscore the complex and enduring nature of the Rohingya's marginalization and exclusion.

The Rohingya, a predominantly Muslim ethnic minority, are not recognized as an official ethnic group by the predominantly Buddhist Myanmar government. This lack of recognition has profound implications for their legal and social status. Since the enactment of the 1982 Citizenship Law, the Rohingya have been denied citizenship, rendering them stateless and severely limiting their rights and freedoms (unrefugees.org). This legal exclusion is the foundation of their marginalization and has facilitated widespread discrimination and violence against them.

The situation escalated dramatically in 2017 when a brutal crackdown by the Myanmar military led to a mass exodus of Rohingya refugees. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), this was the largest and most rapid exodus of Rohingya from Myanmar, with hundreds of thousands fleeing to neighboring Bangladesh and other countries to escape violence and persecution. The international community was shocked by the severity of the humanitarian crisis, which involved widespread reports of atrocities, including extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, and the burning of villages.

These historical dynamics have contributed to the unique identity and socio-political landscape of the Rohingya. The ancient connections between Arakan and neighboring regions underscore the historical depth of the Rohingya's presence in Myanmar, contradicting narratives that seek to portray them as recent immigrants. The rich, albeit turbulent, history of Arakan illustrates the longstanding cultural and economic interactions that have shaped the region, further complicating the modern narrative of exclusion and persecution faced by the Rohingya.

The British colonial period significantly altered the demographic and political landscape of Myanmar, further entrenching divisions. Post-independence, the



Myanmar government has perpetuated and intensified these divisions, systematically disenfranchising the Rohingya. The lack of citizenship and legal recognition has led to severe restrictions on their rights and freedoms, exacerbating their vulnerability.

Understanding the historical and political context of the Rohingya crisis is essential to grasp its full significance. It is a conflict deeply rooted in historical injustices and political manipulation, reflecting broader issues of ethnic identity and statehood. The Rohingya crisis is not only a humanitarian disaster but also a challenge to regional stability and international human rights norms.

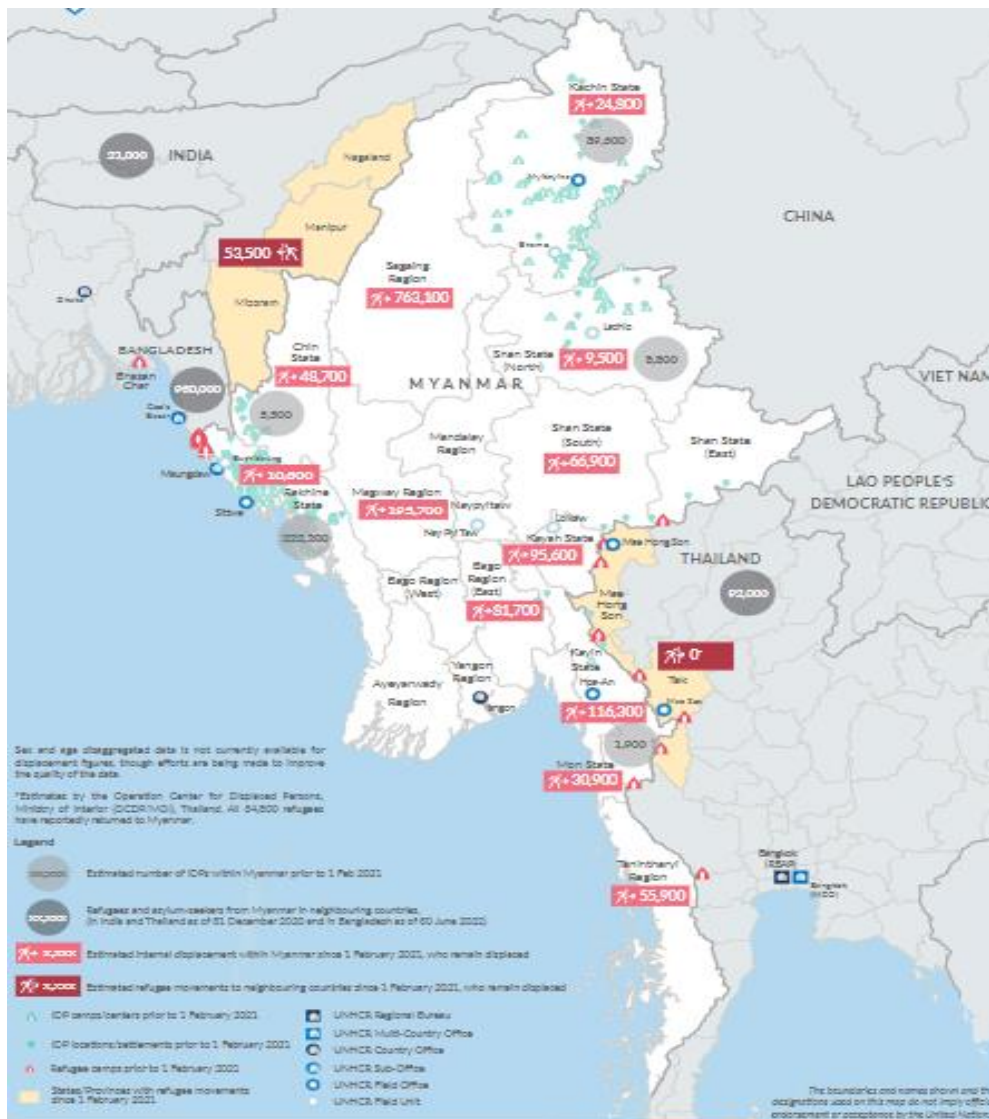


Figure 1: Myanmar Emergency - Regional Overview Map (as of 1 May 2023)



Despite Indonesia not being the top destination of the Rohingya population, but Foreign Minister of Indonesia, H.E Retno Marsudi thinks that Indonesia must take action to solve this conflict. The absence of ASEAN in solving this conflict due to its principle of non-intervention, made Indonesia separate itself to solve this conflict. In the next section, the discussion of Indonesia's resources as a mediator in regional conflict will be presented, and what kind of effort that Indonesia could give to solve this conflict.

#### *Indonesia's Resources as Mediator in Regional Conflict*

Every country in this world has resources to advance its foreign policy either by its hard power or soft power. When talking about hard power, many argue that military and economic capacity are the instruments to influence the behavior or interests of other political bodies. Whereas, when we talk about soft power, Nye stated it relies on:

"Its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when others see them as legitimate and having moral authority)" (Nye, Joseph S., 2011).

Indonesia as one of the largest democratic and Muslim countries in the world presented to the world that it is possible when democracy, Islam, and modernity go hand in hand (Sukma, R., 2011). Moreover, as Foreign Minister Hasan Wirajuda stated that:

"Indonesia today stands proud as the third largest democracy in the world. As a nation with an overwhelmingly Muslim population, Indonesia is a living refutation of the erroneous notion that Islam and democracy are incompatible" (Sukma, R, 2011).

From that statement above, Indonesia would like to project to the world that democracy and moderate Islam are the soft power instruments of Indonesia. Managing a multicultural and multi-religious country is not an easy task. Indonesia indeed experienced intra-state conflict because of ethnicity and religious reasons, but those things were resolved properly by the Indonesian government and it shows the capacity of the government to tackle the conflict within itself.

Sukma said that several reasons have contributed to the increased use of soft power elements as foreign policy assets. There are Sukma, R. (2011) :

- a. The 2004 elections. The 2004 general election was an experiment of Indonesia's new democracy. It was the second election following President

Suharto's resignation. However, this second election was substantially different from the previous one in many ways. This was because the 2004 election was the first held following the adoption of the fourth amendment to the 1945 Constitution. The amendment altered Indonesia's political system in a way that influenced the recruitment of the political elite.

- b. The confidence in crafting democracy and Islam as foreign policy assets. This stemmed from the relative success in moderating Muslim constituent reactions to US reprisal in Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq. Despite sporadic violent street demonstrations by extreme organizations, public protests against the United States were mostly calm. The Indonesian administration was able to gather backing from major Muslim organizations to warn the public that protests against the US should not be violent and that Indonesians should prioritize national interests over outsiders. Leaders of both Muhammadiyah and NU urged Indonesian Muslims to focus more on Indonesia's domestic issues and less on Afghanistan.
- c. The ability to resolve protracted secessionist conflict in the province of Aceh through peaceful. Gerakan Aceh Merdeka or The Free Aceh Movement was a separatist group seeking independence for the Aceh region of Sumatra, Indonesia. This group is undoubtedly challenging for the Indonesian government because many analysts worried about Indonesia's disintegration, or "Balkanization." However, it turned out the democratization process was encouraged to solve this conflict by peaceful means, with the output of the Aceh Peace Accords. This case always became a reference of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's that dialogue is the most important tool in soft power to end intra-state conflict.
- d. Reluctant participant in the war on terror. The combining of moderate Islam and democracy has finally succeeded in its efforts to prevent and combat the growing domestic menace of terrorism. Moreover, Vice President of Indonesia, Jusuf Kalla, said that there is a collaboration between police and ulamas, in which, on the physical front, the police fight the terrorists, while the ulamas [Muslim religious leaders] fight the ideological battle.

From the explanation above, many see that Indonesia is a newly democratic country that began its journey in 2004. However, the success of Indonesia in resolving conflicts both domestically and internationally proves that it possesses the resources and capability to be a mediator in regional conflicts. The principle of "free and active" is often misinterpreted as Indonesia not wanting to be involved in creating a secure and peaceful world to live in. On the contrary, "free" means that Indonesia will not take sides with any party in a conflict, while "active" signifies that Indonesia will contribute to creating a secure and peaceful world through its involvement in various regional or international organizations, and by being a mediator between conflicting parties.

Indonesia's success in resolving conflicts can be attributed to several key factors. Firstly, the 2004 general election marked a significant milestone in Indonesia's democratic journey, as it was the first election held after substantial amendments to the 1945 Constitution. These amendments transformed the political system and influenced the recruitment of political elites, fostering a more democratic and stable governance structure. This political maturity laid the foundation for Indonesia's ability to handle conflicts effectively.

Secondly, Indonesia's confidence in using democracy and moderate Islam as foreign policy assets played a crucial role. The government's ability to moderate Muslim constituents' reactions to international events, such as the US actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, demonstrated a mature and pragmatic approach to balancing domestic and foreign policy concerns. By securing support from major Muslim organizations, the administration ensured that public protests remained largely peaceful and focused on national interests.

Additionally, Indonesia's peaceful resolution of the protracted secessionist conflict in Aceh through the Aceh Peace Accords highlighted the effectiveness of dialogue and democratization in addressing internal strife. This approach served as a testament to the power of soft diplomacy and set a precedent for resolving similar conflicts. The success in Aceh showed that democratization could be a tool for peace, countering fears of disintegration and proving that peaceful negotiations could yield sustainable solutions.

Indonesia's stance as a reluctant participant in the war on terror further showcased a strategic blend of moderate Islam and democratic principles to combat terrorism. The collaboration between police forces and religious leaders to address both the physical and ideological aspects of terrorism underscored a comprehensive and culturally sensitive approach to security. This dual approach helped mitigate the threat of terrorism while maintaining social harmony.

These elements collectively demonstrate Indonesia's capability to mediate regional conflicts and contribute to global peace and stability. The principle of "free and active" foreign policy, often misunderstood, signifies Indonesia's commitment to non-alignment and proactive engagement in creating a secure and peaceful world. This commitment is evident through its involvement in regional and international organizations and its role as a mediator in conflicts. Indonesia's experience and strategies in conflict resolution position it as a valuable player in international diplomacy, capable of bridging divides and fostering dialogue among conflicting parties.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Nation Crisis; Migration and Refugees*

The phenomena of nation crises, migration, and refugees are deeply interlinked and have profound implications for global politics, economics, and social structures. This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current academic

discourse on these topics, highlighting key theories, empirical findings, and ongoing debates.

Nation crises are often characterized by political instability, economic turmoil, social unrest, and sometimes armed conflict. According to Vahabi (2009), nation crises can emerge from a variety of sources including ethnic tensions, economic disparities, and failures in governance. Political scientists such as Collier and Kim (2024) have emphasized the role of economic factors in precipitating civil wars and state failure. They argue that low-income countries with high levels of inequality are particularly prone to violent conflicts.

In recent years, scholars have also examined the impact of global factors on nation crises. Hes (2021) discusses how globalization and technological changes can exacerbate existing tensions within nations, leading to crises. The literature suggests that understanding nation crises requires a multi-faceted approach that considers both internal and external influences.

Migration is a complex phenomenon driven by a combination of push and pull factors. Kuhnt (2009) posits that migration decisions are influenced by factors at both the origin and destination, including economic opportunities, political stability, and social networks. The migration literature distinguishes between voluntary and forced migration, with the latter often resulting from nation crises.

Joshua et al. (2023) highlight the importance of social networks in facilitating migration. They argue that once migration flows begin, they tend to become self-sustaining due to the establishment of migrant networks. These networks lower the costs and risks associated with migration, making it easier for others to follow.

Recent research has also focused on the impact of migration on both sending and receiving countries. OECD (2022) show the economic contributions of migrants to receiving countries, as well as the social and cultural challenges they may face. They also explore how migration can affect development in sending countries, both positively through remittances and negatively through brain drain.

Refugees represent a subset of migrants who flee their home countries due to persecution, conflict, or violence. The legal definition of a refugee is codified in the 1951 Refugee Convention, which outlines the rights of refugees and the obligations of states to protect them. According to UNHCR (2020), the number of refugees has been increasing, reaching over 26 million worldwide.

Scholars such as Vakhoneva, et. Al, (2023) have examined the international refugee regime, focusing on the role of international organizations and states in providing protection and assistance. The literature highlights the challenges in ensuring effective protection for refugees, including issues of burden-sharing and the politicization of asylum policies.

Research has also explored the socio-economic integration of refugees in host countries. Serra and Revez (2023) discussed for understanding refugee integration, which includes factors such as employment, housing, education, and social connections. The literature suggests that successful integration requires a

holistic approach that addresses both the immediate needs of refugees and the long-term goal of social inclusion.

The interplay between nation crises, migration, and refugees is a critical area of study. Tirtosudarmo (2008) argue that nation crises often lead to large-scale displacement and refugee flows. The relationship is reciprocal, as large movements of people can also contribute to nation crises in both sending and receiving countries.

Recent studies have focused on the impact of climate change on migration and national crises. IOM UN Migration (2024) posits that environmental degradation and climate change can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, leading to increased migration and potential conflicts. This perspective emphasizes the need for integrated policies that address the root causes of displacement, ensuring that nations are better prepared to handle the socio-economic pressures that arise from large-scale migrations.

One of the most significant examples of climate-induced migration and its successful management is the Syrian refugee crisis in Germany. The Syrian civil war, which began in 2011, led to one of the largest refugee crises of the 21st century. Millions of Syrians fled their country to escape the violence, seeking refuge in neighboring countries and beyond. Germany emerged as a prominent destination for many Syrian refugees, particularly during the peak of the crisis in 2015.

Several factors contributed to the successful management of the Syrian refugee crisis in Germany. One of the most notable was Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision to implement an open-door policy in 2015. This policy was a significant humanitarian commitment, as Germany accepted over a million refugees, showcasing a strong stance on human rights and international solidarity (Oltermann, 2020).

In addition to the open-door policy, the German government invested heavily in integration programs, which included language courses, job training, and education. These initiatives were crucial in helping refugees adapt to their new environment and become self-sufficient. By equipping refugees with the necessary skills and knowledge, Germany ensured that they could contribute to the economy and society, rather than remain marginalized.

Public support and the involvement of civil society were also critical to the success of Germany's approach. German civil society, including NGOs, volunteer groups, and ordinary citizens, played a crucial role in welcoming and supporting refugees. This broad-based support helped mitigate some of the social tensions that can arise with large-scale migration and fostered a sense of community and solidarity.

Furthermore, Germany's strong economy provided the resources needed to support refugees. The country's economic strength allowed it to invest in the necessary infrastructure and programs to facilitate integration. Many businesses

also viewed the influx of refugees as an opportunity to address labor shortages, integrating refugees into the workforce and benefiting the economy.

The Syrian refugee crisis in Germany offers several important lessons. Firstly, the importance of integration cannot be overstated. Successful integration of refugees requires comprehensive and well-funded programs, particularly in areas such as language acquisition and job training, which are essential for enabling refugees to contribute to their new communities. Secondly, the role of civil society is pivotal. The involvement of civil society can greatly enhance government efforts and provide additional support for refugees. Finally, economic considerations play a significant role. A strong economy can absorb and benefit from an influx of refugees, turning a potential crisis into an opportunity for growth and diversity.

### *Public Diplomacy*

Public diplomacy has emerged as a crucial component of international relations, focusing on how governments and non-state actors engage with foreign publics to achieve diplomatic goals. Unlike traditional diplomacy, which often takes place behind closed doors, public diplomacy is conducted openly and involves cultural exchange, international broadcasting, and social media outreach. This literature review explores the concept of public diplomacy, its evolution, key strategies, and examples of successful public diplomacy efforts that have resolved conflicts or crises.

The term "public diplomacy" was first coined by Edmund Gullion in the mid-1960s, but the practice itself dates back much further. Historically, public diplomacy has been employed as a tool for influencing public opinion and garnering support for national policies abroad. Nye (2019) highlights the importance of soft power in public diplomacy, which involves attracting and co-opting rather than coercing. Soft power relies on the appeal of a country's culture, political values, and foreign policies.

The evolution of communication technologies has significantly impacted public diplomacy. The rise of the internet and social media has democratized information dissemination, allowing states to reach global audiences more directly and interactively. Bradoel & Lowe (2007) describes this shift as the transition from "broadcasting" to "narrowcasting," where tailored messages are delivered to specific audiences. As noted in the research by Vardya & Nurhajati (2022), mass media in the digital era, facilitated by the internet, has become a social site where people gather to share information.

Public diplomacy employs a variety of strategies to engage foreign publics. According to The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences (2008) these strategies can be broadly categorized into:

- a. Listening, is the foundational strategy in public diplomacy, focusing on understanding the perceptions, concerns, and attitudes of foreign publics. It involves collecting and analyzing feedback from international audiences

through surveys, focus groups, and social media monitoring. For instance, the United States Information Agency (USIA) conducted public opinion surveys during the Cold War to gauge the sentiments of Eastern European countries towards American policies and values. By understanding these perspectives, policymakers can tailor their messages and actions to address specific concerns and build trust.

- b. **Advocacy**, on the other hand, is about actively promoting specific policies or viewpoints to foreign audiences. This strategy aims to influence public opinion and garner support for a country's positions on various issues. For example, during the Iraq War, the U.S. government launched a public diplomacy campaign to justify its actions and gather international support. This included speeches by government officials, opinion pieces in international media, and targeted social media campaigns to convey the U.S. perspective on the necessity of military intervention.
- c. **Cultural Diplomacy**, leverages a nation's cultural assets to build mutual understanding and trust between countries. It involves sharing a country's cultural heritage, arts, and traditions with foreign publics to foster goodwill and enhance soft power. A notable example is the British Council's global initiatives, such as the "Shakespeare Lives" program, which celebrated the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death by organizing performances, film screenings, and educational activities worldwide. This not only highlighted the UK's rich cultural heritage but also strengthened cultural ties with other nations.
- d. **Exchange Diplomacy**, focuses on facilitating academic, professional, and cultural exchanges between countries. These exchanges aim to create lasting personal and institutional relationships that can enhance mutual understanding and cooperation. The Fulbright Program is a prime example, offering scholarships for students, scholars, and professionals to study, teach, or conduct research abroad. Participants of the Fulbright Program often return with a deeper appreciation of the host country's culture and values, which can lead to more positive bilateral relations.
- e. **International Broadcasting**, uses media outlets to communicate directly with foreign publics. This strategy involves the dissemination of news, information, and cultural content through television, radio, and online platforms to reach global audiences. Voice of America (VOA) is a prominent example, broadcasting in multiple languages to provide news and information about the United States and its policies. VOA's programming aims to present a balanced view of America, countering misinformation and fostering a better understanding of U.S. culture and values.

Each of those strategies plays a crucial role in public diplomacy, enabling countries to engage with foreign publics in meaningful and effective ways. By listening to, advocating for, sharing cultural values with, exchanging knowledge



with, and broadcasting to international audiences, nations can build stronger, more cooperative international relationships. Public diplomacy has been instrumental in resolving several international conflicts and crises, as explained cases below.

The Northern Ireland conflict, also known as "The Troubles," was a prolonged and violent conflict between unionists, who were mostly Protestant and wanted Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom, and nationalists, who were mostly Catholic and wanted Northern Ireland to join the Republic of Ireland. Public diplomacy played a crucial role in the peace process that led to the Good Friday Agreement.

The British and Irish governments, along with local political leaders, engaged in extensive public diplomacy efforts to garner support for the peace process. This included public outreach, media campaigns, and inclusive dialogues that involved not only political leaders but also community groups and the general public. The use of public diplomacy helped to build a consensus and create a favorable environment for the peace negotiations, ultimately leading to the successful signing of the Good Friday Agreement.

During the Cold War, the United States engaged in extensive public diplomacy efforts to counter Soviet influence and promote American values. One of the most successful initiatives was the Voice of America (VOA) broadcasts, which provided news, music, and cultural programs to audiences behind the Iron Curtain. These broadcasts helped to foster a positive image of the United States and provided an alternative source of information to Soviet propaganda.

Another successful initiative was the Fulbright Program, which facilitated educational exchanges between the United States and other countries. This program helped to build mutual understanding and create networks of influence that supported American foreign policy goals. The combination of broadcasting and exchange diplomacy was effective in promoting American values and countering Soviet influence during the Cold War.

Public diplomacy is a dynamic and multifaceted tool that plays a crucial role in contemporary international relations. By engaging directly with foreign publics, countries can build mutual understanding, promote their values, and influence global opinion. The cases of the Good Friday Agreement and U.S. public diplomacy during the Cold War illustrate the potential of public diplomacy to resolve conflicts and crises. As global communication continues to evolve, public diplomacy will remain an essential component of international strategy, requiring ongoing innovation and adaptation to new challenges and opportunities.

Not all public diplomacy efforts succeed, and understanding the reasons behind these failures is crucial for refining strategies and improving future outcomes. This literature review examines notable cases where public diplomacy efforts did not achieve their intended goals, analyzing the reasons for these failures and the lessons that can be drawn from them.

In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, the United States launched extensive public diplomacy campaigns aimed at improving its image in the Middle East. These efforts included the creation of the Arabic-language satellite TV station Al-Hurra, the Arabic-language radio station Radio Sawa, and various cultural exchange programs. Despite these efforts, U.S. public diplomacy in the region faced significant challenges and ultimately did not succeed as intended.

One major issue was a lack of credibility. According to Lynch (2006), many in the Middle East viewed U.S. public diplomacy efforts with suspicion, considering them as propaganda. Al-Hurra, for example, struggled to attract viewers compared to established local media outlets like Al Jazeera, which were seen as more credible. This lack of trust significantly hampered the effectiveness of U.S. messaging.

Another critical factor was cultural insensitivity. The U.S. campaigns often failed to resonate with local audiences due to a lack of cultural understanding. Kraidy (2005) argues that messages tailored to American sensibilities did not effectively address the concerns and values of Middle Eastern audiences. This disconnect made it difficult for U.S. initiatives to gain traction or influence public opinion positively.

Additionally, U.S. public diplomacy efforts were undermined by contradictory foreign policies. Public diplomacy initiatives were often at odds with U.S. actions in the region, such as the Iraq War and strong support for Israel, which were widely perceived as hostile. Nye (2008) suggests that soft power efforts are less effective when they contradict hard power actions, and this inconsistency diminished the potential impact of U.S. public diplomacy.

From these failures, several lessons can be learned. First, credibility is key. For public diplomacy to be effective, the messenger must be trusted. Partnerships with local media and influencers who already have credibility can enhance the effectiveness of public diplomacy efforts. Second, cultural sensitivity is crucial. Understanding and respecting the target audience's culture and values are essential. Tailoring messages to resonate with local sensibilities can significantly improve engagement and impact. Finally, policy alignment is necessary. Public diplomacy efforts should be consistent with a country's overall foreign policy. Contradictory actions can negate the positive effects of public diplomacy.

A second case study focuses on Russia's public diplomacy in Ukraine. Prior to and during the early stages of the Ukraine conflict, Russia engaged in extensive public diplomacy efforts to promote its interests and narrative. This included the use of Russian-language media outlets such as RT and Sputnik, and various cultural and historical ties to emphasize a shared heritage. Despite these efforts, Russia's public diplomacy in Ukraine encountered significant obstacles.

One primary reason for failure was the perception of propaganda. Russia's public diplomacy efforts were widely seen as blatant propaganda, particularly in Ukraine and the West. According to (Roozenbeek, 2020) the overt nature of these

efforts led to skepticism and resistance among target audiences. This perception of bias and manipulation undermined the credibility of Russian messages.

Moreover, Russian public diplomacy often exacerbated conflicts rather than fostering understanding. The emphasis on polarizing narratives deepened the sense of "us versus them," which fueled the conflict rather than mitigating it. As noted by Kleinfeld (2023), this approach intensified divisions and hindered efforts to promote peace and stability.

Another issue was the lack of genuine engagement. Russia's efforts focused more on broadcasting its perspective rather than engaging in meaningful dialogue. This one-way communication failed to build mutual understanding or address the concerns of the Ukrainian public. Effective public diplomacy requires listening and responding to the target audience's needs and perspectives, which was lacking in Russia's approach.

Lessons from Russia's failures include the importance of avoiding perceptions of propaganda. Public diplomacy must be perceived as genuine and unbiased. Engaging in transparent and honest communication builds trust and credibility. Additionally, promoting unity rather than division is crucial. Effective public diplomacy should aim to bridge divides and promote understanding rather than exacerbate tensions. Emphasizing common ground and shared interests can help mitigate conflicts. Finally, genuine engagement is essential. Public diplomacy should be a two-way street. Engaging in dialogue and listening to the target audience's concerns fosters mutual understanding and more effective communication.

Understanding these case studies and the reasons behind their failures provides valuable insights into improving future public diplomacy efforts. By prioritizing credibility, cultural sensitivity, policy alignment, transparency, unity, and genuine engagement, public diplomacy initiatives can be more effective in achieving their intended goals and fostering positive international relations.

## METHODOLOGY

This study is a descriptive qualitative research analyzing the public diplomacy conducted by the Indonesian government. Using content analysis methods from reliable sources such as news reports and previous research, the author aims to understand the historical context, strategies, and tactics employed by the Indonesian government in addressing Indonesia's position on the Myanmar-Rohingya crisis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The tool of public diplomacy is separated into five components: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, international broadcasting, and exchange diplomacy, which is widely utilized by states. Exchange diplomacy is used to regulate the international environment by sending individuals overseas and allowing citizens from other

nations to study and acculturate for some time (Cull, N. J. (2008). As a result, public diplomacy refers to an intentional communication strategy that associates promotion within a country with its international public.

When it comes to the main functions of diplomacy, there are at least three important forms of diplomacy: economic diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, and public diplomacy. Public diplomacy, often known as people's diplomacy, is one of the several government operations aimed at directly communicating with various foreign publics. Public diplomacy also encompasses all official efforts to persuade the target segments of opinion to accept or tolerate the government's policy objectives.

In the case of the Rohingya's Myanmar conflict, Indonesia uses track one diplomacy or official diplomacy. De Magalhaes describes Official Diplomacy as (Magalhaes, C. J. 1988):

“[a]n instrument of foreign policy for the establishment and development of contacts between the governments of different states through the use of intermediaries mutually recognized by the respective parties”.

Track One diplomacy is distinguished from all other forms of diplomacy by its formal application at the state-to-state level. Track One Diplomacy is commonly regarded as a state's principal peacemaking tool in foreign affairs. It is carried out by diplomats, high-ranking government officials, and heads of state to influence political power structures.

The effort of Foreign Minister of Indonesia, H.E Retno Marsudi in September 2017, used shuttle diplomacy to try to resolve the Rohingya humanitarian issue in Rakhine State. She took a flight from Jakarta to Singapore, then to Myanmar, Thailand, and Bangladesh before returning to Jakarta. She argued that the safety of The Rohingya population is the utmost priority, and she also asked Junta Militer to refrain from using violence towards The Rohingyas.

At the UNGA High-Level Side Event on “Rohingya Crisis” in New York, 22 September 2022, FM Retno Marsudi appealed to the countries to resolve The Rohingya's conflict. There are three points that she addressed (kemlu.go.id). First, their (The Rohingya) voluntary return requires security assurances and hope for livelihoods, second, the need to protect The Rohingya refugee's safety and security in Cox's Bazaar, and third, the urge for peace and national reconciliation.

In the third point, FM Retno Marsudi has been doing shuttle diplomacy to urge international communities to be involved in the realization of peace and national reconciliation. Following the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the term "shuttle diplomacy" was used to describe Henry Kissinger's efforts to mediate peace in the Middle East by "shuttling" back and forth between countries and leaders to establish cease-fires and peace deals (Hoffman, D. A., 2011). The model of shuttle diplomacy

is not suitable for every conflict, whereas when it is difficult for conflicting parties to meet directly or meet at one table, shuttle diplomacy at least can be an alternative, to find a solution. Here, the mediator will “shuttling” back and forth between countries and leaders to bring a caucus or a room to reflect what kind of proposition each party is willing to offer.

In the case of the Rohingya conflict in Myanmar, the negotiation dynamics are notably complex. The discussions are not between the Myanmar Government and the Rohingya representatives but rather between the Myanmar Government and the international community. This situation arises because the Myanmar Government, currently ruled by the Junta Militer, does not recognize the Rohingya as its citizens. Consequently, the Junta Militer does not see the Rohingya as legitimate negotiating partners, leaving no room for direct negotiations between the two parties.

The only viable path to resolving the conflict lies in the concerted efforts of the international community to pressure the Junta Militer to cease the persecution of the Rohingya. This international effort is framed within the concept of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) under international law. R2P is a global commitment endorsed by all member states of the United Nations to prevent mass atrocity crimes such as genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.

A significant diplomatic breakthrough in addressing the Rohingya crisis came from Indonesia's Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, who successfully spearheaded the drafting of a five-point consensus on Myanmar, endorsed by ASEAN countries. This consensus outlines a roadmap for mitigating the violence and fostering dialogue in Myanmar. The five-point consensus includes the following key elements:

- a. Firstly, there shall be an immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar, with all parties exercising utmost restraint to prevent further bloodshed and instability. This point emphasizes the urgent need to halt the ongoing violence to create a conducive environment for dialogue.
- b. Secondly, constructive dialogue among all parties concerned shall commence to seek a peaceful solution in the interests of the people. This dialogue aims to bring together various stakeholders to negotiate a peaceful resolution that benefits all citizens of Myanmar, including the Rohingya.
- c. Thirdly, a special envoy of the ASEAN Chair shall facilitate the mediation of the dialogue process, with the assistance of the Secretary General of ASEAN. This envoy is tasked with ensuring that the dialogue is productive and that all voices are heard, providing a neutral and supportive framework for negotiations.
- d. Fourthly, ASEAN shall provide humanitarian assistance through the AHA Centre, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management. This assistance is crucial for addressing the immediate needs of those affected by the conflict, ensuring that humanitarian aid reaches those in dire need.

- e. Lastly, the special envoy and delegation shall visit Myanmar to meet with all parties concerned. This visit aims to engage directly with the stakeholders, gather firsthand insights, and build the trust necessary for successful mediation.

Despite the clear framework provided by this consensus, the Junta Militer has so far shown little willingness to implement these measures. However, with Indonesia's chairmanship of ASEAN still ongoing, there remains a window of opportunity to exert diplomatic pressure on the Junta Militer. Continued efforts by Indonesia and its ASEAN partners, alongside the broader international community, are crucial in pushing the Junta Militer to adhere to the consensus and end the persecution of the Rohingya.

In summary, the resolution of the Rohingya conflict hinges on the international community's ability to enforce the principles of R2P and leverage diplomatic tools such as the ASEAN five-point consensus. While the Junta Militer's response has been lukewarm, sustained international pressure and regional leadership are key to achieving a peaceful and just resolution for the Rohingya people.

#### CONCLUSION

The tenure of Indonesia as the chairman of ASEAN in 2023 has been marked by significant challenges and opportunities. The economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic and persistent geopolitical tensions, such as the South China Sea disputes and the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, underscore the complexity of Indonesia's leadership role. Strengthening ASEAN's institutional capacity and effectiveness remains a paramount task, reflecting Indonesia's broader commitment to regional stability and development.

Indonesia's efforts to address the Rohingya crisis, rooted in its historical role as a peace broker, highlight its dedication to upholding peace and security in the region. The legacy of Indonesia's "free and active" foreign policy is evident in its proactive approach to resolving conflicts, both within ASEAN and beyond. Past successes, such as mediating in the Cambodian conflict and facilitating dialogue between Russia and Ukraine, demonstrate Indonesia's capability and commitment to peacebuilding.

The Rohingya crisis has drawn international attention due to the severe persecution faced by the Rohingya population in Myanmar. Indonesia's involvement, led by Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, reflects a deep-seated responsibility to address humanitarian issues within the region. Despite ASEAN's principle of non-intervention, Indonesia has taken bold steps to mediate and seek solutions, emphasizing the need for security assurances, refugee protection, and national reconciliation.

Indonesia's soft power, derived from its democratic values and moderate Islamic principles, enhances its credibility as a mediator. The successful resolution

of internal conflicts, such as the Aceh Peace Accords, further strengthens Indonesia's position as a capable and reliable peace broker. The country's commitment to dialogue, cultural diplomacy, and the promotion of democracy and human rights forms the backbone of its public diplomacy efforts.

The implementation of shuttle diplomacy by Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi and the drafting of the Five-Point Consensus on Myanmar exemplify Indonesia's strategic approach to conflict resolution. While the response from Myanmar's Junta Militer has been limited, Indonesia's leadership in ASEAN provides a continued opportunity to advocate for the implementation of these measures.

In conclusion, Indonesia's chairmanship of ASEAN in 2023 underscores its pivotal role in addressing regional conflicts and promoting stability. The lessons learned from past diplomatic efforts, both successful and challenging, offer valuable insights for future initiatives. By leveraging its soft power and maintaining a steadfast commitment to peace and dialogue, Indonesia can continue to make meaningful contributions to regional and global security.

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