The Corruption of Personal Branding Communication in Education and Its Implications for Sustainable Development Goals

Bambang Sukma Wijaya[1], Nanang Wijaya Kusuma[2], Ersal Bioldy[3]

Abstract

Quality education is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In supporting this goal, academic personal branding becomes an effort that promotes good values and competitive advantages of educational people, especially concerning their scientific identities and professions. However, in practice, communication corruption sometimes occurs. This article assesses the communication corruption potentials of academics in personal branding efforts and discusses their relationships with SDGs literacy. Using a descriptive quantitative approach by surveying 150 academics with personal branding experience, the findings show a high potential for corrupt communication. Research signals the importance of integrity and self-control in personal branding, so academics do not arbitrarily use power and opportunities to engineer communication. It impacts goals 3, 4, 8, and 16 SDGs. Integrity and self-control in communication keep educational people on the right track and have good mental health. Thus, the performance and productivity of education increase, and well-being is maintained, strengthening the institution.

Keywords: *academic branding, corrupt communication, educational people, personal brand, SDGs literacy.*

1. Introduction

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a global call to end poverty, protect the earth, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity (UN, n.d.). As a global goal, the SDGs focus on 17 crucial community and environmental development issues. Each issue is interrelated in a global partnership and shared commitment to the prosperity and peace of people and the earth (UN, n.d.). The point is, like the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals), to improve the sustainability of a better quality of life (Porio, 2014).

It is essential to literate SDGs in many ways. In line with the SDGs, personal branding is an individual's strategic effort to improve the quality of life. It has the potential to create prosperity and peace in a constructive, responsible, and sustainable manner. Many personal brandings carry social responsibility themes, such as Indonesian racer Rifat Sungkar (Hendarsih, 2023). At the same time, individual and institutional branding strategies can align with the SDGs as a strategic effort to support sustainable consumption (Mainwaring, 2016). Not surprisingly, branding strategies that support the SDGs have

---

[1] Graduate School of Communication, Universitas Bakrie, Jakarta, Indonesia, e-mail: bswijaya98@yahoo.com. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7969-636X
[2] Department of Information Systems, Universitas Bakrie, Jakarta, Indonesia, e-mail: nanang.w.kusuma@gmail.com. https://orcid.org/0009-0004-3921-1224
[3] Department of Communication Science, Universitas Bakrie, Jakarta, Indonesia, e-mail: ersalbioldy@gmail.com. https://orcid.org/0009-0004-5281-7431

emerged, such as sustainable branding (Lein, 2018), green branding (Danciu, 2015), green brand communication (Wijaya et al., 2022a), and responsible branding (Manos, 2020). Green and sustainable issues can be unique values of personal branding (Liamzon, 2022), including academics.

Academics and education professionals need personal branding to polish their careers (Gorbatov et al., 2019), sharpen their distinctive expertise, and promote their scientific works (Amir & Wijaya, 2022). In this context, academic personal branding combines two approaches: academic branding and personal branding. Academic branding focuses on academic and scientific work and progress (Wijaya, 2016), while personal branding focuses on academic or educational professional careers (Hinson, 2022). Unfortunately, not a few academics are trapped in communication corruption in personal branding (Wijaya, et al., 2021a; 2021b; Wijaya et al., 2022b).

Communication corruption is events and actions that reduce the right of the communicant or audience to receive messages completely and correctly according to normative (objective) and contemplative (subjective) facts (2013; 2022a). Apart from education and academia, this concept and term has been used widely in various contexts, such as Christianity communication (Jones, 2013), presidential communication (Clemons, 2010), political branding (Wijaya & Faisal, 2016), influencer marketing (Putri, 2021), and even personal communication digitally via e-mail (Schleifer, 2009).

We can detect communication corruption in the message, media, context, and behavioral dimensions (Wijaya, 2013). We can also measure the extent to which communication corruption occurs in the events and behavior of individuals, communities, and institutions at various levels and communication circles through the Communication Corruptivity Formula or RKK (Rumus Koruptivitas Komunikasi) (Wijaya, 2013), including in academic personal branding concerning SDGs.

Therefore, this research focuses on examining the corruption of academic personal branding communication in education and how it relates to SDGs literacy.

2. Materials and method

Thirty-one constructs are used as parameters for the level of communication corruption. Adopting the Wijaya's formula (2013; 2022a), this study measures the level of communication's corruptibility and assesses the potential for communication corruption in personal branding efforts. Wijaya's Communication Corruptivity Formula (RKK) measures six elements with 31 constructs on a 1-5 Likert scale (from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). The RKK formula is as follows:

$$C = \frac{N + P^O - Cs(Ar + R)}{100}$$

Where:

C = Corruptivity of communication

N = Communication Needs (physical, identity, social, instrumental/practical goals)

P = Power (the communicator's power and authority to arrange, regulate and control the meaning of a message)

O = Opportunity (opportunity to commit communication corruption)

Cs = Conscience (communicator conscience)

Ar = Audience Rights (communicator awareness of the rights of the communicant/audience/public as the recipient of the message)

R = Moral Responsibility (communicator's moral responsibility)

According to Wijaya (2022), the higher the need for communication (N), opportunities (O), and power and authority to regulate communication (P), the higher the potential for communication corruption of individuals or institutions as communicators. The level of communication corruption assessment is based on the Communication Corruptivity Index (CCI), with a 1-5 score. Score 1 indicates the potential for communication corruption is very low, score 2 is low, score 3 is moderate, score 4 is high, and score 5 is very high.

One hundred and fifty academic respondents with personal branding experience responded to online and offline questionnaires by first answering screening questions according to the research objectives. Respondent data showed that most were women (51,3%), with the highest number of master's degree graduates (67,3%). Most academic positions are senior lecturer (44%), followed by assistant professor (29,4%), associate professor (25,3%), and professor (1,3%). The most domiciles are Jabodetabek –Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi (65,3%), Java outside Jabodetabek (21,4%), and the rest outside Java.

3. Results

The level and potential for communication corruption of academics in personal branding are represented from the responses of 150 respondents collected from online and offline distributions. This data provides insights from each dimension item surveyed so that the level of communication corruption can be predicted based on academics' activities and personal branding experiences. The results are listed in table 1.

Table 1 Respondents' responses

No	Constructs	Score[a]		Total (n)	Mean
		Min	Max		
1	Communication Needs Dimension (KK-1, KK-2, KK-3, KK-4, KK-5, KK-6, KK-7, KK-8[b])				4.399
	Physical needs	2.25	5	150	4.174
	Identity needs	1.5	5	150	4.316
	Social needs	2	5	150	4.559
	Instrumental goals	3	5	150	4.546
2	Power Dimension (KK-9, KK-10, KK-11, KK-12, KK-13, KK-14, KK-15, KK-16[b])				4.164
	Control	1.75	5	150	4.023
	Authority	2.5	5	150	4.305
3	Opportunity Dimension (KK-17, KK-18, KK-19, KK-20[b])	1.5	5	150	4.100
4	Conscience Dimension (KK-21, KK-22, KK-23, KK-24, KK-25[b])	2.4	5	150	4.391
5	Audience Rights Dimension (KK-26, KK-27, KK-28[b])	3	5	150	4.459
6	Moral Responsibility Dimension (KK-	2	5	150	4.473

29, KK-30, KK-31[b])

[a] 1-5 Likert scale

[b] item codes on questionnaire

The lowest response mean is on the Opportunity Dimension (4.100), indicating that academics have little communicative activity to be corrupted. Landhuis (2016) states that scholarly and scientific communication is mainly in the form of scientific publications, or, to borrow Illingworth & Allen's term, 'inward-facing,' (Illingworth et al., 2020) which requires communicating with academics and other scientists through peer-reviewed publications, grant proposals, conference presentations, books, and more. It impacts career progression and the accumulation of accolades (Illingworth et al., 2020). For lecturers in Indonesia, scientific publications are a 'luxury' performance because apart from having the highest performance points/scores in academic positions (Kemenristekdikti, 2019), it is also a process that is not easy and fast (Harras & Wahyudi, 2020). Not surprisingly, the small opportunity for corruption in scholarly communication does not mean it does not exist. Corruption in scholarly communications usually involves plagiarism, slanderous citations, and the sale of authorship (Wijaya et al., 2021b).

On the other hand, the highest score on the Moral Responsibility Dimension (4.473) tells us how the respondents are aware of morality. Morality and responsibility are crucial in academic and educational life, especially in higher education (Cahn, 1990). Moreover, academics face some complex issues regarding truth-telling in their work and professional life (Eisenberg, 1990). Not surprisingly, the issue of communication corruption has become essential for academics because it is related to truth-telling, morality, and responsibility. From the total mean of each dimension, the scores were then assessed using the RKK formula to determine the level of communication corruption. The result is as follows.

$$C = \frac{4.399 + 4.164^{4.1} - 4.459(4.391 + 4.473)}{100} = \mathbf{3.116}$$

From the range of values 1-5, the score of 3.116 is moderate but leads to high. This hint signals that, although neither low nor high, the level and potential for corruption of academic communication in personal branding tends to be high. According to Wijaya (2022), the higher the need for communication (physical, identity, social, and instrumental/practical), power, and opportunity, the higher the potential for communication to corrupt. Therefore, academics need to be vigilant by increasing their integrity in controlling their communication needs, managing the meaning of messages and impressions, and not taking advantage of opportunities to corrupt because integrity affects academics' personal branding and long-term career development (Dieckmann, 2022).

SDGs literacy is needed to improve education quality, including preventing and minimizing corruption in personal branding communications for academics through research and other scholarly works (TWAS, 2016). Also, in creating a decent work environment, SDGs literacy significantly reduces corrupt practices, including scholarly communication.

4. Discussion

SDGs literacy is a term that refers to the knowledge and skills related to the Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs (TWAS, 2016). The SDGs are a set of 17 global goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015 to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure peace

and prosperity for all by 2030 (UNDESA, 2015). SDGs literacy includes understanding the interconnections among the goals, the challenges and opportunities for achieving them, and the actions individuals and communities can take to contribute to them. SDGs literacy also involves developing critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication competencies that are essential for sustainable development (UNDESA, 2022; UNICEF, 2020; Boeren, 2019).

Efforts to promote SDGs literacy include educational programs and games, awareness campaigns, and initiatives to increase understanding and engagement with the goals (Borbaš, 2023). These initiatives can be implemented at various levels, from schools and universities to community organizations and workplaces, to enhance people's knowledge and commitment to the SDGs (UNSD, 2016; TWAS, 2016; Boeren, 2019). Some benefits of SDGs literacy are:

- It can help scientists and researchers to connect their work to global challenges and opportunities and to adopt a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to sustainable development (TWAS, 2016).

- It can enhance students' formation and education at all levels by fostering competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication essential for sustainable development (TWAS, 2016).

- It can increase public awareness and engagement on the SDGs and their targets and inspire individuals and communities to take action to contribute to them (Boeren, 2019).

- It can support literacy and numeracy skills among youth and adults, especially among marginalized groups, by using collections and materials that are relevant and accessible (Montoya, 2018).

- It can promote global citizenship education and social inclusion by exposing learners to diverse perspectives and cultures and by encouraging respect for human rights and the environment (Boeren, 2019; Montoya, 2018).

From the 17 SDGs, we found four goals are relevant to the communication corruption and academic personal branding (Figure 1). The first is quality education, and the second is good health and well-being. Decent work and economic growth are the next relevant goals—lastly, the SDGs are related to peace, justice, and strong institutions.

Figure 1. Four goals of the SDGs related to communication corruption of the academic personal branding (Source: UNDESA, 2015)

Quality Education (Goal 4 of the SDGs). Academic communication corruption has implications for the quality of education because it occurs in the educational environment, especially in the context of personal branding that focuses on developing a good and positive culture and values of an individual (Amir & Wijaya, 2022). Communication corruption concerns integrity and moral responsibility, both in the message, media,

context, and behavioral dimensions (Wijaya, 2013). Moreover, integrity in academic personal branding is crucial (Dieckmann, 2022) because educators, students, and scholars are change agents in society and development.

Good Health and Well-being (Goal 3 of the SDGs). Communication is closely related to health and well-being as a physical need (Adler & Proctor, 2017). Healthy, honest, authentic, and appropriate communication has an impact not only on physical health but especially on mental health. Getting caught up in communication corruption is like planting the seeds of guilt. Corrupt communication, according to Reinner (2022), is no different from hiding the smell of rotten fruit, which then gushes out through words and damages the health of the environment, both the community and the natural environment. "Everything about corrupt communication has a putrefying effect on others" (Renner, 2020). Therefore, reducing the level of communication corruption is one of the fundamental efforts to maintain health and prevent physical, mental, social, and cultural diseases in line with the SDGs' mission to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (UN, n.d.).

Decent Work and Economic Growth (Goal 8 of the SDGs). Personal branding is a strategic communication that promotes good values and distinctiveness (Amir & Wijaya, 2022). In addition to focused popularity, the effects of personal branding are being hired by dream employers, invited by prospective clients, productive collaboration opportunities, new business development through personal brand diversification with solid social encryption, and, of course, a sparkling career (Gorbatov et al., 2019; Amir & Wijaya, 2022). Likewise, with academic personal branding. In addition to professional reasons, academic personal branding is also a capital to gain prosperity and economic growth (Wijaya et al., 2021a) through worthy works and extensive networks. The eighth goal of the SDGs is to promote sustainable, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (UN, n.d.). It links remarkably with recent research emphasizing the importance of proper personal branding, free from communication corruption, for decent work and economic growth.

Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (Goal 16 of the SDGs). Academic branding has two mutually supportive perspectives: individual and institutional (Wijaya, 2016). Individual academic branding is related to personal branding, while institutional academic branding is related to corporate branding. In Indonesia, the performance of lecturers (as the individual academic brand) contributes positively to the performance of higher education institutions (as institutional/corporate brands) (Rahardja et al., 2020). Thus, the good and bad of lecturers (and students and other academic people connected to the institution, including scholars) are the good and bad of the institution. It contributes to the weaknesses and strengths of the institution. A positive and productive academic personal branding, with integrity and competence, positively impacts the reputation of universities, contributing to a high-performance index (Harras & Wahyudi, 2020). The emergence of distinctive and competitive personalities and charms enables healthy competition and collaboration and reduces destructive conflicts, thus leading to peace. This argument is consistent with Garg et al.'s (2022) study on inter-group economic competition in Indonesia, which found no evidence that competition increases inter-group violence. In feasible academic personal branding, justice resistance is avoided because all have equal opportunities, work, and excel without communication corruption, contributing positively to strengthening the image and performance of the institution. The sixteenth SDGs is strongly connected to this issue.

5. Conclusion

Academic communication has the potential to be corrupt in personal branding because the level of communication corruptibility (3.116) is above the moderate value (on a scale of 1-5). Caution should be exercised by reducing abuse of authority and opportunity and

limiting the need for instrumental communications. Meanwhile, communication corruption practices in academic personal branding have implications for the quality of life according to the third, fourth, eighth, and sixteenth SDGs: good health and well-being, quality education, decent work and economic growth, peace, justice, and strong institutions. This study only focuses on academic personal branding communication with the four SDGs. Communication corruption can occur in almost all circles, levels, and communication contexts and is also related to other SDGs. Further studies can explore issues this research has not touched on, making a richer contribution to the SDGs.

Acknowledgement

References

Adler, R., & Proctor, R. F. (2017). Looking out, looking in (15th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Amir, M. T., & Wijaya, B. S. (2022). Making personal branding work better: The role of positive communication in organization. In J. A. Wahab, H. Mustafa, & N. Ismail (Eds.), Rethinking Communication and Media Studies in the Disruptive Era, vol 123. European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences (pp. 317–330). European Publisher.

Boeren, E. (2019). Understanding Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on "quality education" from micro, meso and macro perspectives. International Review of Education, 65(2), 277–294. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-019-09772-7

Borbaš, B. (2023, March 24). 10 ready-to-use lesson plans on the sustainable development goals. BookWidgets. https://www.bookwidgets.com/blog/2019/12/10-ready-to-use-lesson-plans-on-the-sustainable-development-goals

Cahn, S. M. (Ed.). (1990). Morality, responsibility, and the university: Studies in academic ethics. Temple University Press.

Clemons, S. (2010, June 2). Communications corruption at White House. Huffington Post. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/communications-corruption_b_523164

Danciu, V. (2015). Successful green branding, a new shift in brand strategy: Why and how it works. Romanian Economic Journal, 18(56), 47–64.

Dieckmann, H. (2022, February 28). How academic integrity affects personal brand and long-term career aspirations. McGraw Hill. https://www.mheducation.ca/blog/how-academic-integrity-affects-personal-brand-and-long-term-career-aspirations

Eisenberg, P. D. (1990). The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. In S. M. Cahn (Ed.), Morality, responsibility, and the university: Studies in academic ethics (pp. 119–133). Temple University Press.

Garg, T., Gennaioli, C., Lovo, S., & Singer, G. (2022). Can competition reduce conflict? UC Berkeley: CEGA Working Paper Series No. WPS-197. https://doi.org/10.5072/FK2RJ4JP76

Gorbatov, S., Khapova, S. N., & Lysova, E. I. (2019). Get noticed to get ahead: The impact of personal branding on career success. Frontiers in Psychology, 10, 2662. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02662

Harras, H., & Wahyudi, W. (2020). Kontribusi kinerja dosen bagi akreditasi perguruan tinggi. Prosiding SENANTIAS, 1(1), 1473–1480.

Hendarsih, I. D. P. (2023). Personal branding management of Rifat Sungkar through brand social responsibility strategy on social media. Jobmark: Journal of Branding and Marketing Communication, 4(2), 135–149.

Hinson, R. E. (2022, January 15). Have a clear plan for professional success as an academic. University World News: Africa Edition. https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20211220062618710

Jones, J. G. (2013, August). No corrupt communication. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2013/08/no-corrupt-communication

Kementerian Riset, Teknologi dan Pendidikan Tinggi. (2019). Pedoman operasional penilaian angka kredit kenaikan jabatan akademik/pangkat dosen. Direktorat Jenderal Sumber Daya Iptek dan Dikti Kemenristekdikti.

Landhuis, E. (2016). Scientific literature: Information overload. Nature, 535(7612), 457–458. https://doi.org/10.1038/nj7612-457a

Lein, S. (2018, August 20). Why sustainable branding matters. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/theyec/2018/08/20/why-sustainable-branding-matters

Liamzon, E. (2022, January 28). Making your personal brand green. ArabianBusiness. https://www.arabianbusiness.com/opinion/making-your-personal-brand-green

Mainwaring, S. (2016, July 22). How the Sustainable Development Goals accelerate your brand relevance, growth and impact. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/simonmainwaring/2016/07/22/how-the-sustainable-development-goals-accelerate-your-brand-relevance-growth-and-impact

Manos, M. (2020, October 1). The year of the responsible brand. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/theyec/2020/10/01/the-year-of-the-responsible-brand

Montoya, S. (2018, August 29). Meet the SDG 4 data: Measuring youth and adult literacy and numeracy. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). http://uis.unesco.org/en/blog/meet-sdg-4-data-measuring-youth-and-adult-literacy-and-numeracy

Porio, E. (2014). Sustainable development goals and quality of life targets: Insights from Metro Manila. Current Sociology. La Sociologie Contemporaine, 63(2), 244–260. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392114556586

Putri, S. N. (2021). Dark side of the moon: The corruption of communication in influencer marketing. Jobmark: Journal of Branding and Marketing Communication, 3(1), 1–11.

Rahardja, U., Lutfiani, N., Setiani Rafika, A., & Purnama Harahap, E. (2020). Determinants of lecturer performance to enhance accreditation in higher education. 2020 8th International Conference on Cyber and IT Service Management (CITSM), 1–7.

Renner, R. (2020, February 23). Corrupt communication. Renner Ministries. https://renner.org/article/corrupt-communication

Schleifer, B. G. (2009, September 29). Corruption of Communication. The Real Truth. https://rcg.org/realtruth/articles/090929-005-society.html

The World Academy of Sciences. (2016). SDG literacy and relating your research to the global challenges. UNDESA Sustainable Development. https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/sdg-literacy-and-relating-your-research-global-challenges

United Nations Children's Fund. (2020, December 8). SDG goal 4: Quality education (Child-related SDG indicators). UNICEF Data. https://data.unicef.org/sdgs/goal-4-quality-education

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2015). The 17 goals. UNDESA Sustainable Development. https://sdgs.un.org/goals

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2022). Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. UNDESA Sustainable Development. https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4

United Nations Statistics Division. (2019). Goal 4 | Quality Education: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. In The Sustainable Development Goals report 2019 (pp. 7, 30–31). UNDESA. https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019

Wijaya, B. S. (2013). Korupsi komunikasi dalam dimensi pesan, media, konteks dan perilaku: Sebuah proposisi teoretis untuk riset [Communication corruption in the message, media, context, and behavioral dimensions: A theoretical proposition for future research]. Journal Communication Spectrum, 3(1), 1–13.

Wijaya, B. S. (2016). Academic branding: Individual and institutional perspectives. Journal Communication Spectrum, 6(1), 44–59.

Wijaya, B. S. (2022). On the corruption of communication: A theory of deception. Studies in Media and Communication, 10(2), 129–144. https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v10i2.5500

Wijaya, B. S., Amir, M. T., & Lucyanda, J. (2021). Why do educational people commit corruption in communicating their personal brands? Proceedings of the International Conference on Educational Sciences and Teacher Profession (ICETeP 2020), 85–90.

Wijaya, B. S., & Faisal, A. (2016). Political branding, public sphere/space, and the corruption of communications. Proceedings of the International Conference on Ethics in Governance (ICONEG 2016), 280–284.

Wijaya, B. S., Lucyanda, J., & Amir, M. T. (2021). Covid-19 pandemic, personal branding, and the corruption of communication. Proceedings of the 3rd Jogjakarta Communication Conference (JCC 2021), 169–174.

Wijaya, B. S., & Nasution, A. A. (2022). Social media, personal branding, and the hypoesthesia of communication corruption. Cogent Arts & Humanities, 9(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2022.2095095

Wijaya, B. S., Wibowo, T. O., Kania, D., Dedees, A. R., & Vida, H. D. (2022). The politics of representation in green brand communication: a social semiotics approach. International Journal of Social Sustainability in Economic, Social & Cultural Context, 18(2), 31–45. https://doi.org/10.18848/2325-1115/CGP/v18i02/31-45