

Original Research Article

Ethical Issues in Government Communication in Rivers State: A Relationship Model among Netizens

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Abstract: This study examined the ethical challenges surrounding government communication with netizens, aiming to create a model for building relationships among adults in Rivers State, Nigeria. With the rise of social media, government institutions have shifted from merely broadcasting messages to engaging in a two-way conversation where citizens actively assess what the government communicates. However, this shift brings along issues like transparency, accountability, misinformation, responsiveness, and ethical standards, all of which can undermine public trust and the relationship between the government and its citizens. The research utilised a qualitative approach, gathering data through semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with a carefully chosen group of adult social media users, media professionals, academics, civil society members, and community leaders in Rivers State. The analysis was conducted using thematic methods. The results highlighted that ethical communication from the government plays a crucial role in fostering public trust, credibility, citizen engagement, and the overall quality of relationships. Participants pointed out that key ethical principles such as honesty, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and fairness are vital for effective government communication. On the flip side, practices like selective information sharing, political propaganda, slow responses to citizen inquiries, and poor engagement on social media were seen as detrimental to government-citizen relationships and public confidence. The study also found that social media has become a crucial space for democratic dialogue, urging governments to embrace ethical, participatory, and citizen-focused communication strategies. Based on these insights, the study suggests a relationship-building model grounded in ethical communication, dialogue, transparency, responsiveness, and mutual trust. It concludes that sticking to ethical communication principles is key to nurturing sustainable relationships between the government and its citizens.

Keywords: Government Communication, Netizens, Relationship Building, Social Media, Rivers State

Introduction

Government communication is essential for a thriving democracy, as it fosters transparency, accountability, public engagement, and trust between citizens and public institutions. With the rapid growth of digital communication technologies, governments are turning to social media platforms like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube to share information and connect directly with the public. This shift has changed the old-school, one-way flow of official information into a more dynamic communication landscape where netizens can actively comment, critique, share, and assess government actions (Kent & Taylor, 2016; Mergel, 2013).

As a result, ethical considerations have taken center stage in government communication in this digital era. Ethical government communication hinges on honesty, accuracy, transparency, fairness, respect for citizens' rights, and responsible management of public information (Bowen, 2013). However, issues like misinformation, selective disclosure, political propaganda, manipulation of public opinion, suppression of dissenting voices, and the misuse of official communication channels have raised red flags. Such practices can erode citizens' trust in government institutions and weaken the fabric of democracy (Habermas, 1989; Hood, 2010).

Netizens are a powerful stakeholder group whose online interactions play a crucial role in shaping public discourse and government legitimacy. Through comments, reposts, hashtags, and online campaigns, citizens are increasingly engaging in policy discussions and holding public officials accountable. Their responses reflect how they perceive government credibility, ethical behavior, and responsiveness, making social media a vital space for building relationships between governments and the governed (Grunig & Huang, 2000; Macnamara, 2016). In Rivers State, government communication has become more prominent on digital platforms, especially during policy announcements and infrastructure.

Statement of the Problem

The rise of social media usage by government bodies has opened up new avenues for direct interaction with citizens, but it has also heightened concerns about the ethical standards governing official communication. Problems such as misinformation, selective disclosure, political bias, lack of transparency, and insufficient responsiveness have cast doubt on the credibility of government messages and their impact on public trust (Bowen, 2013; Mergel, 2013). When citizens perceive government communication as unethical, they are more inclined to exhibit distrust, scepticism, and negative attitudes on digital platforms, which can ultimately erode the relationship between the government and its citizens (Grunig & Huang, 2000). In Rivers State, the prominence of government communication on social media has surged, with adults actively assessing and reacting to official messages. However, despite the significant role of netizens in shaping public opinion, there remains a

lack of empirical research on the ethical challenges faced in this context. In the realm of government communication, the way we interact can significantly shape the relationships between government institutions and adult citizens, especially in our increasingly digital world. While many studies have delved into political communication, social media interactions, and public relations, there's been a noticeable lack of focus on ethical communication and how it impacts the quality of these relationships. This oversight highlights the need to explore the ethical challenges that arise in government communication with netizens and how these issues can affect the development of a sustainable model for government-citizen relationships among adults in Rivers State.

Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the ethical challenges in government communication with netizens and to create a model for building relationships among adults in Rivers State. The specific objectives include:

1. Analyzing the ethical issues linked to government communication on social media as viewed by adults in Rivers State.
2. Assessing how ethical government communication impacts netizens' trust and their relationship with the government among adults in Rivers State.
3. Crafting a relationship-building model that encourages ethical government communication and enhances engagement between the government and citizens in Rivers State.

Research Questions

This study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What ethical challenges are associated with government communication on social media as perceived by adults in Rivers State?
2. In what ways does ethical government communication affect netizens' trust and their relationship with the government among adults in Rivers State?
3. What kind of relationship-building model can improve ethical government communication and strengthen the engagement between the government and citizens among adults in Rivers State?

Theoretical Framework

Relationship Management Theory: Developed by James E. Grunig and Linda Childers Hon, and later expanded by John A. Ledingham and Stephen D. Bruning, this theory posits that the core goal of public relations is to establish and nurture relationships. The theory suggests that effective communication thrives on fostering dialogue, transparency, and reciprocity, which in turn builds trust between organisations and their stakeholders.

In the realm of government communication, Relationship Management Theory highlights that ethical practices like honesty, accountability, responsiveness, and transparency play a crucial role in boosting public trust and nurturing positive interactions

between governments and citizens. On the flip side, unethical communication can erode the quality of these relationships, leading to distrust and negative feelings among the public. Given that social media allows for ongoing interaction between governments and citizens, the nature of these exchanges is key to maintaining strong government-citizen relationships.

Relationship Management Theory is particularly relevant here, as this study aims to explore how ethical issues in government communication impact the relationship between government institutions and adult netizens in Rivers State. The theory offers a solid framework for evaluating whether ethical communication practices can cultivate trust, satisfaction, commitment, and mutual understanding among citizens. It also aligns with the study's goal of creating a relationship-building model that enhances ethical government communication and strengthens engagement between governments and citizens in the digital age.

Dialogic Communication Theory, introduced by Michael L. Kent and Maureen Taylor in 1998, sheds light on how organisations can forge lasting relationships with their audiences through authentic dialogue. This theory emphasises that communication should evolve from merely sharing information to engaging in two-way, interactive, and participatory exchanges. Kent and Taylor identified five key dialogic principles that aid in relationship building: mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk, and commitment. These principles encourage organizations to actively listen, respond quickly, respect diverse viewpoints, and create.

The rise of social media has really highlighted the importance of Dialogic Communication Theory. These digital platforms enable governments to connect with citizens in real time, making communication more dynamic. For a dialogue to be ethical, it needs to be open, honest, responsive, and respectful of different opinions. When governments overlook public concerns, twist information, or stifle online criticism, it harms the dialogic relationship, leading to a decline in citizens' trust and their willingness to engage.

Dialogic Communication Theory serves as a solid framework for understanding how ethical government communication shapes interactions between the government and netizens in Rivers State. This study looks into how citizens perceive ethical communication and its impact on fostering positive online engagement. The theory also supports a proposed model for building relationships, emphasising the importance of transparency, responsiveness, mutual respect, and ongoing dialogue as key elements of effective government communication. Ultimately, it provides a valuable perspective on how ethical communication practices can enhance public trust, boost civic participation, and strengthen long-term relationships between the government and citizens in our digital age.

Review of Related Literature

Government Communication

Government communication is all about the strategic sharing and exchange of information between government bodies and citizens. Its goal is to inform, educate,

persuade, and encourage public involvement in governance. When done effectively, government communication fosters transparency, accountability, and democratic governance by ensuring that timely and accurate information is shared. In the past, government communication relied heavily on traditional media, but the advent of digital technologies has turned it into a more interactive process that actively invites citizen engagement (Mergel, 2013; Macnamara, 2016). Nowadays, governments are leveraging social media to communicate. Policies, emergency information, and development programs are all part of the conversation, especially when governments actively seek feedback from their citizens.

Ethical Government Communication

When we talk about ethics in government communication, we're diving into the moral principles that guide how officials interact with the public, think about honesty, fairness, transparency, accountability, and responsibility. Bowen (2013) points out that when governments communicate ethically, it boosts their legitimacy and builds public trust. On the flip side, unethical practices like spreading misinformation, using propaganda, selectively sharing information, and manipulating facts can really damage that trust and hinder democratic participation. Ethical communication means that governments should be truthful, respect the rights of citizens, and foster inclusive dialogue.

Netizens and Digital Civic Engagement

Netizens are those active internet users who dive into online discussions, create content, and engage in public debates across digital platforms. They play a significant role in shaping public opinion through comments, reposts, hashtags, and digital campaigns. Guo, Zhang, and Wu (2018) argue that when citizens engage with government social media, it enhances democratic governance by promoting accountability and responsiveness. However, this online engagement also opens the door for criticism and ethical scrutiny, making the quality of communication even more crucial.

Government Citizen Relationship

The government-citizen relationship is all about the ongoing interaction between public institutions and the communities they serve. Grunig and Huang (2000) suggest that successful relationships are built on trust, commitment, satisfaction, and mutual control. Governments that communicate openly and address citizens' concerns promptly are more likely to foster lasting relationships compared to those that stick to one-way communication. As a result, relationship management has become a key focus in modern public administration.

Social Media as a Government Communication Platform

Social media has completely transformed how the public sector communicates, allowing for direct interaction between governments and the public. Platforms like Facebook, X, and Instagram offer a fantastic way to quickly share official information and get instant feedback from the public. Mergel (2013) points out that while social media boosts accessibility, participation, and transparency, it also brings along ethical dilemmas

such as misinformation, fake news, and political polarisation. To truly harness the power of social media, it's crucial to engage in ongoing conversations instead of just broadcasting messages.

Transparency and Public Trust

Transparency means giving citizens timely, accurate, and complete information about what the government is up to. Hood (2010) argues that transparency is key to enhancing accountability and building institutional credibility. When citizens see government communication as honest, consistent, and responsive, it fosters public trust. On the flip side, a lack of transparency can lead to skepticism, lower civic participation, and a decline in confidence in government institutions.

Relationship Building in Public Relations

Building relationships is at the heart of modern public relations. Ledingham (2003) emphasizes that effective organisational communication relies on nurturing mutually beneficial relationships rather than just passing along information. Strategies for cultivating these relationships include being open, networking, providing access, being responsive, and offering assurances. Ethical communication plays a vital role in strengthening these strategies, leading to greater stakeholder commitment, satisfaction, and trust.

Adults' Perception of Ethical Government Communication

Adults make up one of the largest groups engaging in digital political discussions. Their views on government communication have a significant impact on political participation, trust, and civic engagement. When communication is ethical, it encourages citizens to support government initiatives; however, unethical communication can lead to criticism, resistance, and negative discussions online. Therefore, understanding how adults perceive government communication is crucial for crafting effective strategies.

Empirical Review

Cheng and Lee (2025) explored the dynamics of government communication ethics on social media and its impact on building relationships with young adults in Taiwan. By employing structural equation modeling, they discovered that when government communication is perceived as ethical, it significantly boosts trust, enhances the quality of relationships, and increases citizens' willingness to engage with the government online. The study highlighted ethics as a crucial mediating factor in the realm of digital government communication.

Dong and Morehouse (2022) took a different approach with their work, "Toward a Caring Government: Advancing Ethical Government Public Relations with a Care-Based Relationship Cultivation Model." Through qualitative interviews with 32 public relations practitioners in the U.S., they delved into how care ethics can fortify government-public relationships. Their research led to the development of a Care-Based Relationship Cultivation Model, revealing that elements like empathy, responsiveness, transparency, and

human-centered communication play vital roles in fostering trust and nurturing long-term relationships between the government and citizens.

Guo, Zhang, and Wu (2018) focused on the factors that drive netizens' participation on government social media profiles during crises in China. Their survey-based study found that aspects such as information quality, government responsiveness, and perceived social support significantly boosted citizens' online engagement, trust, and positive perceptions of government social media platforms.

Cheng, Wang, and Sun (2023) explored the impact of dialogic communication strategies on the relationships between organisations and the public on social media in their study titled "Timeliness, Responsiveness and the Human Voice: The Effects of Dialogic Strategies and the Mediating Role of Perceived Communication Ethicality on Social Media Relationship Building." Their research revealed that timely responses, a conversational tone, and overall responsiveness greatly improved perceptions of communication ethics. This, in turn, fostered greater trust, satisfaction, and commitment among online stakeholders.

Eller (2016) discussed the need to broaden public sector communications, particularly in the realm of government social media, emphasizing dialogic communication and the cultivation of relationships.

Despite this, there's a noticeable lack of empirical evidence addressing ethical issues in government communication among internet users in Rivers State, Nigeria, especially among adults. Moreover, no existing study has crafted a relationship-building model based on the ethical perceptions of adult netizens in this specific context. This research aims to bridge that gap by investigating how ethical government communication affects government-citizen relationships and proposing a framework to enhance collaborative public relations. The study reviewed current public sector communication practices and called for a transition from one-way information sharing to more collaborative public relations. The findings indicated that two-way symmetrical communication boosts citizen engagement, fosters mutual understanding, and builds trust between governments and the public. Ultimately, the study concluded that ethical and participatory communication should be at the heart of modern government communication strategies.

The literature reviewed highlights that ethical communication, transparency, and dialogue play crucial roles in strengthening government-citizen relationships. However, existing empirical studies have mainly focused on countries such as Taiwan, China and the United States, with emphasis on government social media, dialogic communication and relationship cultivation.

This research was carried out in places like Taiwan and China, focusing on a relationship-building model that's specifically designed for the digital communication landscape in Rivers State.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative research approach to examine the ethical issues surrounding government communication and how these issues affect relationship building among adults in Rivers State.

The research took place in Rivers State, Nigeria, targeting adults aged 18 and older who live there and actively use social media platforms like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok to access or engage with government-related information.

To select participants, we used a topical case purposive sampling technique, focusing on those who had a solid understanding and experience with government communication on social media. We ended up with twenty-four (24) participants, including active social media users, civil society members, media professionals, academics, and community leaders. The final sample size was determined by data saturation.

We gathered primary data through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). We held four focus group sessions, each with six participants, along with ten key informant interviews featuring communication experts, journalists, and public affairs practitioners. An interview guide with open-ended questions helped steer our discussions on ethical government communication, transparency, accountability, trust, and online citizen engagement.

With the participants' consent, we audio-recorded the interviews and focus group discussions, transcribed them word-for-word, and analyzed the data using thematic analysis as outlined by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006). The data were coded into themes that highlight ethical communication practices, the perceived credibility of government, the trust citizens' place in their leaders, and strategies for building strong relationships.

To ensure the findings were trustworthy, the research incorporated several credibility measures: member checking for accuracy, thorough documentation of research procedures for dependability, audit trails and reflexive journaling for confirmability, and rich descriptions of the research context for transferability (Yvonna S. Lincoln & Egon G. Guba, 1985). Ethical approval was secured from the appropriate institutional authority, and throughout the research process, informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality were rigorously upheld.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Interviews and Focus Group Discussions.

Participant Code	Category	Data Source	Emergent Theme	Illustrative Response (Summary)
KII1	Media Practitioner	Interview	Transparency	Government information should be timely and open.
KII2	Academic	Interview	Trust	Ethical communication builds public confidence.
FGD1-P1	Adult Netizen	FGD	Responsiveness	Officials rarely respond to online concerns.

FGD2-P3	Civil Society	FGD	Accountability	Citizens expect factual communication.
FGD4-P5	Community Leader	FGD	Relationship Building	Dialogue improves government-citizen relations.

Table 2: Themes

Theme	Frequency of Mentions	Interpretation
Transparency	18	Most participants viewed transparency as essential.
Responsiveness	16	Prompt responses encourage engagement.
Trust	20	Ethics strongly influences trust.
Accountability	15	Honest communication enhances credibility.
Relationship Building	19	Dialogue strengthens relationships.

Analysis of Findings

The qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were analysed through thematic analysis. From the participants' responses, five key themes emerged: ethical issues in government communication, transparency and accountability, government responsiveness, public trust and credibility, and the relationship between government and citizens. Below, these themes are explored in relation to the study's objectives and the underlying theories.

Theme One: Ethical Issues in Government Communication

Participants generally recognised that social media has improved access to government information in Rivers State. However, they raised concerns about various ethical shortcomings in official communication. The most commonly cited issues included selective information sharing, political propaganda, and delays in clarifying public controversies, insufficient fact disclosure, and limited opportunities for public dialogue.

Many participants noted that government communication tends to highlight successes while shying away from controversial topics or policy failures.

One interviewee put it this way: *"Government pages mostly celebrate projects but rarely provide explanations when controversies arise. Citizens want balanced information, not only positive news."*

In a similar vein, participants in the focus group discussion pointed out that when there's a gap between what officials say and what people actually see, it tends to breed skepticism among netizens. This highlights that ethical communication goes beyond just sharing information; it also involves being honest, thorough, and fair. This aligns with Bowen's (2013) perspective that ethical communication fosters organisational legitimacy through sharing truthful and transparent information.

Theme Two: Transparency and Accountability

Transparency stood out as a key factor in fostering positive government communication. Participants consistently emphasised that being open about government policies, spending, and decision-making processes boosts citizens' trust in public institutions.

Many respondents felt that governments should be upfront about both their successes and their challenges. They argued that keeping important information under wraps only fuels rumors, misinformation, and speculation on social media.

One participant shared: *"When the government explains why certain policies are tough or delayed, people tend to be more understanding than if they just stay quiet."*

Participants also noted that transparency promotes accountability, as it helps citizens become better informed and allows them to assess government performance more objectively. This finding echoes Hood's (2010) argument that transparent governance enhances democratic accountability and strengthens institutional credibility.

Theme Three: Government Responsiveness to Netizens

Another prominent theme was government responsiveness. Participants felt that simply posting information on social media isn't enough; there needs to be active engagement with citizens' questions and concerns.

Most respondents mentioned that government social media accounts seldom reply to public comments, except during election campaigns or crises. As a result, many citizens view government communication as a one-way street rather than a two-way conversation.

One participant in the focus group shared their thoughts: *"People genuinely ask questions online, but often they get no reply. Over time, this makes them lose faith in the government's willingness to listen."*

The participants emphasised that if the government could respond promptly to inquiries, correct misinformation, and acknowledge public concerns, it would greatly enhance the online relationship between government institutions and citizens. These insights align with Kent and Taylor's (1998) Dialogic Communication Theory, which highlights the importance of mutual dialogue and responsiveness in building effective relationships.

Theme Four: Public Trust and Government Credibility

Trust was identified as the key outcome of ethical communication from the government. Participants largely agreed that honesty, consistency, and factual communication boost confidence in government institutions.

They pointed out that when official information is seen as politically driven or misleading, citizens become hesitant to trust future government messages, no matter how accurate they may be. This leads to a greater reliance on unofficial sources of information, which can further propagate misinformation.

One key participant remarked: *"Once credibility is lost, even truthful government information becomes hard for citizens to accept."*

As a result, participants recognised that ethical communication is crucial for rebuilding public trust and enhancing democratic governance.

This finding supports Relationship Management Theory, which identifies trust as a key indicator of successful relationships between organisations and the public (Grunig & Huang, 2000).

Theme Five: Building Government Citizen Relationships

Participants were in complete agreement that ethical communication plays a vital role in fostering relationships between the government and citizens. They argued that for relationships to be sustainable, there needs to be openness, respect, dialogue, empathy, and ongoing engagement, rather than just sporadic information sharing.

Several respondents proposed practical measures, including regular online town hall meetings, prompt responses to public complaints, publication of verified information and consistent engagement with citizens across social media platforms.

One participant captured this viewpoint perfectly by saying, *"The government should see citizens as partners rather than just informing them after decisions have been made."*

The findings indicate that building strong relationships is enhanced when government communication embodies ethical values and shows genuine respect for citizens' viewpoints.

Overall Interpretation of the Findings reveals that ethical communication is key to fostering effective relationships between the government and citizens in Rivers State. Participants consistently linked ethical government communication with qualities like transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and credibility. On the flip side, practices like selective disclosure, slow responses, and politically biased messaging were seen as significant barriers to trust and meaningful online engagement.

Moreover, the findings show that netizens have shifted their expectations; they no longer want governments to simply share information. Instead, they seek ongoing dialogue, openness, and active involvement in governance. Social media has thus changed the game, turning government communication from a one-way street into a two-way relationship-building avenue.

These insights support the principles of Relationship Management Theory, which highlights trust, commitment, and mutual understanding, as well as Dialogic Communication Theory, which promotes two-way communication, responsiveness, and public engagement. Altogether, the findings suggest that ethical government communication lays the groundwork for a sustainable model of government-citizen relationships among adults in Rivers State.

Discussion

The results of this study underscore that ethical government communication is a vital factor in building effective relationships between government institutions and adult netizens in Rivers State. The research showed that adults view ethical communication as being marked by honesty, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and fairness. There's a growing dissatisfaction with practices like selective information sharing, political propaganda, slow responses to public concerns, and a lack of genuine engagement with citizens on social media. These issues are seen as harmful to public trust and democratic participation.

The findings back up Bowen's (2013) argument that ethical communication boosts an organization's legitimacy and public confidence by ensuring that information is shared truthfully and responsibly. Participants consistently pointed out that when governments communicate ethically, it fosters trust in official information and encourages citizens to get more involved in governance. On the flip side, unethical communication breeds suspicion, misinformation, and negative views among online users.

The study also highlighted that transparency plays a crucial role in how citizens perceive government credibility. Participants expressed that governments should be open about their successes and challenges, rather than just showcasing the positives. This aligns with Hood's (2010) assertion that transparency enhances accountability and public trust in democratic governance.

Another key takeaway is that responsiveness is still a significant hurdle in government communication. Even though government agencies are increasingly using social media, participants noted that interactions often feel one-sided, with little regard for citizens' comments, complaints, or questions. This observation supports Kent and Taylor's (1998) Dialogic Communication Theory, which stresses the importance of dialogue, mutuality, and responsiveness in effective public communication.

Additionally, the study found that trust is the cornerstone of a sustainable government-citizen relationship. Participants emphasized that consistency, factual communication, and respect for citizens' opinions are vital for building confidence in government institutions. This finding aligns with Relationship Management Theory, which highlights the importance of trust; commitment, satisfaction, and mutual control are key dimensions that define successful relationships between organizations and the public, as highlighted by Grunig & Huang (2000).

The findings suggest that ethical government communication goes beyond just sharing official information. It involves ongoing dialogue, transparency, accountability, and genuine engagement with citizens. These qualities lay the groundwork for a relationship-building model that can enhance interactions between the government and citizens in Rivers State.

Conclusion

This study delved into the ethical challenges in government communication aimed at netizens, with the goal of creating a relationship-building model for adults in Rivers State. The results show that ethical communication is crucial for building trust, credibility, and lasting relationships between government bodies and citizens in today's digital landscape.

In conclusion, the research identifies transparency, accountability, honesty, responsiveness, and fairness as the fundamental ethical principles shaping adults' views on government communication. When these principles are consistently upheld, citizens are more inclined to trust government information, engage in civic discussions, and foster positive relationships with public institutions. On the flip side, unethical communication practices such as spreading misinformation, selective disclosure, political bias, and poor engagement can erode public trust and damage democratic relationships.

Moreover, the study finds that social media has significantly changed the landscape of government communication, shifting it from a one-way flow of information to a more interactive communication system that demands ongoing dialogue with citizens. As a result, governments need to embrace ethical, citizen-focused communication strategies that can enhance mutual understanding and build public trust.

Ultimately, this study adds to the field of communication by suggesting that ethical communication should serve as a foundational element in fostering effective government-citizen relationships, as well as in other democratic environments.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government institutions in Rivers State should implement thorough ethical communication policies that prioritise honesty, transparency, accountability, and fairness in all official communications.
2. Public information officers ought to undergo regular professional training focused on digital ethics, social media engagement, and strategic public communication to enhance ethical standards and responsiveness. As well government social media platforms should foster two-way communication by promptly addressing citizens' inquiries, complaints, and suggestions, which will help build dialogue and mutual understanding.
3. Government agencies need to set up fact-checking and verification systems to reduce misinformation, ensure the accuracy of official information, and boost institutional credibility. Again, regular digital town hall meetings, online consultations, and interactive public engagement programs should be organised to promote citizen participation in governance and policy discussions.
4. Independent monitoring and evaluation frameworks should be established to assess adherence to ethical standards in government communication and pinpoint areas

that need improvement. Also, government communication strategies should be crafted around relationship management principles that emphasise trust, openness, responsiveness, commitment, and ongoing engagement with citizens.

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