

Reinforcing Public Compliance Through Strategic Communication: Implementation of the Electronic Traffic Law Enforcement (ETLE) Program in Parepare City

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Abstract

This study analyzes the strategic communication approach in the implementation of the Electronic Traffic Law Enforcement (ETLE) program in Parepare City. ETLE was introduced as a digital-based traffic law enforcement system to increase transparency, efficiency, and community discipline through automated surveillance and ticketing. The effectiveness of ETLE, however, is highly influenced by how the program is communicated to the public. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were obtained through interviews with traffic officers and community members, non-participant observation, and documentation analysis. The findings reveal that the Parepare Traffic Police employ a multi-channel communication model that integrates interpersonal communication, digital media campaigns, and stakeholder-based socialization. This strategy positively affects public understanding and compliance, although several challenges persist, including misconceptions about ETLE, limited digital literacy among certain age groups, and inconsistent dissemination of information. The study concludes that ETLE success requires not only technological readiness but also a strategic, targeted, and participatory communication approach. Strengthening collaboration between law enforcement institutions, local government, media, and community leaders is recommended to optimize law compliance and improve acceptance of digital policing.

Keywords: *Electronic Traffic Law Enforcement (ETLE); Communication strategy; Traffic management; Digital policing; Public awareness; Parepare City.*

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the Electronic Traffic Law Enforcement (ETLE) policy in Parepare City, South Sulawesi, presents a distinctive social dynamic compared to other regions. Data from the Parepare Traffic Police for January–October 2025 recorded 2,384 electronic traffic tickets issued, yet only 13 violators, or 0.55%, paid their fines on time, while 99.45% either paid late or had not paid at all (Humas Polres Parepare, 2025). This very low compliance rate does not merely reflect administrative shortcomings; rather, it indicates a deeper pattern of social resistance toward technology-based public policy.

Nationally, ETLE has been introduced gradually since 2017–2019 across major cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, and Makassar, demonstrating a relatively high level of public acceptance (Azura & Farida, 2024). According to Media Indonesia (2024), cities implementing ETLE and ETLE Handheld systems have experienced significant increases in traffic compliance. The Head of Indonesian Traffic Police Corps, Inspector General Agus Suryo Nugroho, also emphasized a notable rise in driver discipline following the implementation of ETLE (*Korlantas E-TLE Bentuk Transformasi Penegakan Hukum Transparan Berkeadilan*, n.d.). This contrast with Parepare underscores possible local socio-cultural influences shaping the acceptance of digital law enforcement.

ETLE is essentially part of a public safety communication strategy aimed at fostering traffic discipline through electronic surveillance without face-to-face interaction between police and motorists (Shandhini, 2022). However, the socialization of ETLE in Parepare has not been fully optimized. The low compliance rate cannot be explained solely through legal awareness; instead, it must be viewed through the socio-cultural characteristics of the Bugis–Makassar community (Farid, 1999). Residents of Parepare uphold the value of *siri* (dignity and honor), which makes them highly sensitive to forms of law enforcement perceived as disrespectful or degrading (Mattulada, 1995). Because ETLE operates impersonally, detecting violations through cameras without direct communication with officers, it is often perceived as surveillance that does not respect the dignity of citizens.

In contrast, the manual ticketing system allows room for interaction and explanation between drivers and officers. This aligns with the cultural principles of *sipakatau* (humanizing others) and *sipakainge* (mutually reminding), which emphasize personal and respectful communication when delivering warnings or sanctions. The rejection of ETLE in Parepare therefore manifests not in open protest but in a form of silent resistance, continuing to violate traffic rules or disregarding fine payments without verbal confrontation. This subtle form of resistance is more difficult to diagnose and address because it is not expressed through explicit conflict (Wekke, 2018).

Within the broader context of Indonesia's digital transformation, the adoption of public service technology demands not only adequate digital infrastructure but also communication strategies capable of building trust and acceptance (Nasution, 2024). Previous studies on ETLE have mostly focused on legal, technical, and enforcement dimensions, overlooking the role of cultural factors in shaping public attitudes (Prasetyo & Wibowo, 2023). Research in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Bandar Lampung provides an important empirical basis for understanding ETLE implementation across Indonesia; however, these studies did not examine how cultural values

might contribute to differences in compliance across regions. The study in Jakarta conducted by Pratama (2023) focused primarily on technological readiness and legal awareness as predictors of compliance, concluding that ETLE success was driven by infrastructure reliability and strong enforcement mechanisms (Pratama, 2023). Although the research acknowledged variations in compliance between districts, it did not explore the possibility that cultural identity and communication norms shaped citizens' willingness to accept ETLE.

Similarly, the evaluation of ETLE in Yogyakarta by Venardi and Pambudi (2024) emphasized legal certainty, driver discipline, and behavioral change as outcomes of digital law enforcement (Venardi & Pambudi, 2024). Even though Yogyakarta is well known for its deeply rooted Javanese cultural values, such as *tepa slira* and *hamemayu hayuning bawana*, the study did not link cultural philosophy to differences in public responsiveness. Compliance was treated as a legal reaction rather than a socio-cultural one, leaving a theoretical gap regarding why enforcement is more effective in some areas than others.

The same pattern appears in the study of Bandar Lampung by Azura and Farida (2024). While the research successfully mapped variations in ETLE readiness and compliance across multiple regions, the analysis focused on governance, infrastructure, and policy implementation without considering the cultural frameworks that shape public interpretation of authority. Consequently, the study identified behavioral differences but did not interpret *why* those differences exist beyond administrative explanations (Azura & Farida, 2024).

Taken together, these three major regional studies illustrate that national scholarship on ETLE has been dominated by technological, regulatory, and behavioral frameworks, whereas cultural frameworks remain unexplored. None of the studies has examined whether local cultural values, such as Bugis–Makassar norms of *siri'*, *sipakatau*, and indirect communication, may function either as amplifiers or barriers to policy acceptance. The absence of cultural analysis in previous research reinforces the novelty of the present study, which identifies that compliance levels are not uniform across Indonesia not because infrastructure differs, but because the cultural logic of obedience, dignity, and persuasion differs across communities.

The empirical finding from Parepare, 0.55% on-time payment, far below Jakarta's 45–50% or Surabaya's 38%, signals the presence of unique local factors that influence public response. In the Bugis–Makassar cultural context, values such as *siri'* and *sipakatau* likely shape how citizens perceive ETLE as an impersonal surveillance system that diminishes a sense of honor. Based on this gap in the literature, the present research seeks to explore how local cultural values influence public acceptance of ETLE. The novelty of this study lies in integrating Bugis–Makassar socio-cultural values into the analysis of ETLE's communication strategy, particularly by identifying silent resistance as a systemic response to impersonal law enforcement that is seen

as undermining dignity. Using the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), this research examines public persuasion processes to explain why ETLE communication in Parepare fails to foster compliance, because it overlooks cultural preferences for direct interpersonal dialogue, prompting citizens to respond through peripheral rather than central routes of persuasion. This theoretical integration offers a new contribution to understanding the varied acceptance of technological public policy within Indonesia's multicultural society.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research method to obtain an in-depth understanding of the communication strategy used to implement the Electronic Traffic Law Enforcement (ETLE) program in Parepare City, including socio-cultural factors that influence public acceptance and compliance with the policy. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the research problem is closely related to communication processes, perceptions, attitudes, and cultural meanings that cannot be adequately explained through quantitative measurement. The research was conducted at the Traffic Unit of the Parepare Police Department (Satlantas Polres Parepare) in 2025 as the institution responsible for executing the ETLE program. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, targeting individuals who possess relevant knowledge and direct experience with the implementation of ETLE. They included traffic police officers involved in socialization activities and community members who had received ETLE tickets, as well as local figures familiar with Bugis–Makassar cultural values. Data collection relied primarily on in-depth interviews to explore personal experiences and perceptions regarding ETLE, supported by document analysis, including electronic ticket issuance records, internal police reports, public information materials, and media coverage. The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing based on emerging themes and empirical patterns. To ensure the credibility of the findings, data validation techniques such as source triangulation and member checking were implemented, allowing informants to review and confirm the interpretation of their statements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implications of ETLE Communication Strategy for Public Awareness and Compliance

Findings indicate that the communication strategy used by the Parepare Traffic Police relies mainly on informational dissemination rather than cultural persuasion. Although social media posts, banners, and limited community meetings were conducted, messages primarily emphasized technical procedures: how violations are recorded, how fines must be paid, and sanctions for noncompliance. For many residents, this style of messaging was interpreted not as an invitation

to cooperate but as a warning or threat. This response reflects what Rahayu, Idris, and Usman (2018) noted about Bugis–Makassar communication norms: persuasive messages are accepted when they reflect *sipakatau* (treating others as human) and *siri'* (protection of honor), rather than unilateral assertion of authority.

Several participants stated that ETLE was perceived as a tool to catch people rather than a system to protect people. The difference in language highlights the degree to which message framing influences interpretation and behavioral intention. From a communication psychology perspective, message framing is a crucial determinant of persuasion because individuals react not only to message content but also to the emotional meaning embedded within it. Pratama demonstrates that ETLE acceptance increases when system communication emphasizes shared safety values, not punishment. When communication is perceived as punitive rather than protective, defensive reactions are more likely to emerge, leading individuals to psychologically distance themselves from the message (Pratama, 2023).

This is consistent with assumptions of the Elaboration Likelihood Model proposed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986). When audiences do not feel personally valued or emotionally connected to a message, they avoid cognitive elaboration through the central route and instead evaluate the policy based on peripheral cues, such as whether the communicator feels respectful, trustworthy, or intimidating (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). In the Parepare context, messages centering on sanctions rather than collaboration caused ETLE to be processed through peripheral route evaluation, producing feelings of skepticism and cultural discomfort rather than rational safety-oriented reflection. As a consequence, the intention of ETLE as a security mechanism becomes overshadowed by a communication approach that creates cognitive distance and emotional disengagement, resulting in weak internalization and low compliance.

Evidence from national reporting further supports this interpretation. According to Media Indonesia (2025), cities where ETLE was framed as a transparent system that protects the public fairly experienced substantial increases in compliance (*Korlantas E-TLE Bentuk Transformasi Penegakan Hukum Transparan Berkeadilan*, n.d.). The Head of the Indonesian Traffic Police Corps, Inspector General Agus Suryonugroho, stressed that driver discipline increases when the system is communicated as fair and respectful rather than intimidating. When this comparative insight is applied to the Parepare case, it becomes clear that the obstacle is not a rejection of technology, but a failure of communication to achieve cultural legitimacy.

Silent Resistance and Cultural Meaning-Making in Digital Policing

One of the strongest themes emerging from interviews is the phenomenon of *silent resistance*. Instead of expressing disagreement publicly, the majority of traffic violators simply ignore their fine obligations. This non-confrontational resistance is not an expression of apathy or ignorance

but a culturally informed strategy. For the Bugis–Makassar community, individuals protect their honor (*siri*) not by openly challenging authorities, which risks social escalation and possible shame, but by withholding cooperation. This pattern reflects what Rahayu, Idris, and Usman (2018) describe as a culturally embedded conflict-avoidance strategy in which dignity is defended through indirect rather than direct confrontation.

In Bugis–Makassar communication practice, direct verbal confrontation is not always the preferred method of expressing disapproval. When social tension arises, withdrawal from interaction can function as a symbolic negotiation to maintain self-respect and avoid unnecessary humiliation. Refusing to pay ETLE fines therefore becomes a communicative action rather than a purely administrative refusal, an implicit form of disagreement that preserves public politeness. The evidence supports the idea that compliance among the Bugis–Makassar community is not only a legal matter but a symbolic one: people comply when they feel respected as social beings. This echoes the view of Pratama (2023), who asserts that cooperation with digital law enforcement increases when citizens perceive the legal system as acknowledging their personhood rather than merely asserting power (Pratama, 2023).

Moreover, ETLE abolishes the interpersonal negotiation processes that have historically existed between officers and drivers in face-to-face traffic stops. Under the traditional setting, drivers could explain emergencies, contextual misunderstandings, or unexpected situations. This interaction, even if corrective, still preserved *sipakatau*, the recognition of the other as a dignified human being. The ETLE mechanism, however, removes this dialogic opportunity. Respondents repeatedly described receiving ETLE fines as being accused without a chance to defend oneself, which reinforces a feeling of humiliation rather than guidance. This absence of interaction contradicts both *sipakatau* (mutual humanization) and *sipakainge* (reminding one another respectfully), key elements of Bugis–Makassar moral communication. This aligns with the general argument of Dwivedi et al. (2017) that technological enforcement systems risk rejection when they eliminate cultural scripts of reciprocity and dialogue (Dwivedi et al., 2017).

National discourse reinforces this interpretation. According to Media Indonesia (2025), ETLE compliance increases in metropolitan areas partly because the system is framed as transparent and equitable, rather than purely punitive (Korlantas *E-TLE Bentuk Transformasi Penegakan Hukum Transparan Berkeadilan*, n.d.). Similarly, the Head of the Indonesian Traffic Police Corps, Inspector General Agus Suryonugroho, emphasized that citizens comply when they trust that enforcement preserves fairness and dignity. The contrasting case of Parepare demonstrates that low compliance is not a technological gap but a cultural signalling problem: the community interprets the absence of dialogic space as symbolic disrespect, and silent resistance

functions as a culturally acceptable mechanism for reclaiming dignity without triggering overt conflict.

Cultural Misalignment and the Absence of Symbolic Legitimacy

Digital policing assumes that surveillance itself motivates compliance. However, in a community where social recognition and dignity are fundamental, enforcement that lacks personal acknowledgment reduces symbolic legitimacy. In Parepare, ETLE is technologically legitimate but socially illegitimate because it fails to satisfy cultural expectations for reciprocal communication between authorities and citizens.

The technological system also disrupts a cultural moral economy in which sanctions are contextualized and can be socially negotiated based on relational norms. While this may appear inefficient from a policy standpoint, culturally, negotiation ensures that the moral logic of justice aligns with community norms. ETLE's one truth logic (camera evidence) conflicts with the Bugis–Makassar ideal that truth should emerge from interpersonal clarification.

This tension creates two opposing moral frameworks.

table 1
Moral Frameworks

No.	ETLE System Logic	<i>Bugis–Makassar Cultural Logic</i>
1.	Fairness = uniform application of rules	Fairness = context-sensitive interaction
2.	Evidence = camera detection	Evidence = dialogic explanation
3.	Law = written rule	Law = moral respect + responsibility
4.	Compliance through fear of sanction	Compliance through restored dignity

ETLE as a Challenge to Identity, Not to Technology

Contrary to common assumptions, this research finds that the community does not reject ETLE due to unfamiliarity with digital systems. Most respondents understand how CCTV works and are aware that many modern cities use digital surveillance for traffic enforcement. The resistance therefore cannot be attributed to technological incompetence or lack of digital literacy. Instead, resistance arises from a deeper socio-psychological reaction, ETLE is perceived as a mechanism that threatens identity, dignity, and cultural self-worth. In other words, resistance targets what the system symbolizes, not how the system operates.

In the cultural worldview of the Bugis–Makassar community, the act of acknowledging an individual as a person, someone who can speak, explain, clarify, and defend their actions, is a direct reflection of *siri'* (honor)(Riyadi, n.d.). When the ETLE system imposes sanctions without

interpersonal dialogue, individuals feel deprived of the opportunity to communicate their situational context. What is lost is not the chance to avoid sanctions, but the chance to assert dignity. Several participants described the experience of receiving an ETLE fine as being judged silently, or punished without being spoken to, which reveals that the experience is not merely legal, but symbolic.

The absence of interpersonal negotiation removes the cultural process of restoring social balance. In traditional interactions, when a violation or conflict occurs, dignity can be repaired through respectful communication, by listening, explaining, and acknowledging the humanity of both sides. ETLE bypasses this mechanism entirely. The system sees, records, and penalizes, but never recognizes, and this absence of recognition results in a perceived erosion of identity. Therefore, compliance failure is not rooted in technological distrust, but in the belief that the system does not treat citizens as honorable subjects of law.

This reinterpretation repositions the policy challenge: the difficulty of ETLE implementation in Parepare is not about teaching people how to use technology, but about designing communication that protects cultural identity while enforcing legal discipline. From this perspective, the key weakness is not technical readiness, but cultural literacy on the part of law-enforcement communication. Digital modernization must coexist with cultural affirmation, because in a value-based society such as that of the Bugis–Makassar, people are more willing to obey rules enforced by systems that respect dignity than by systems that merely punish deviation.

Reflection Under the Elaboration Likelihood Model

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) provides a persuasive framework that helps explain why ETLE communication in Parepare has not succeeded in shaping public compliance. According to Petty and Cacioppo (1986), persuasion occurs through two cognitive pathways: the *central route*, in which individuals evaluate arguments based on rational elaboration, and the *peripheral route*, in which individuals process persuasive messages using surface-level cues such as emotional impressions or social meaning. Applying this framework, the findings of the present study indicate that ETLE communication in Parepare does not activate the central route because the policy messages fail to engage with the community's cultural values related to dignity, honor, and interpersonal recognition.

Instead, the public primarily processes ETLE through the peripheral route. Participants evaluate the system not based on safety arguments or the logic of rule enforcement, but based on how the system makes them feel socially and culturally. This corresponds to Rahayu, Idris, and Usman (2018) who explain that Bugis, Makassar communication patterns prioritize mutual respect, interpersonal acknowledgment, and honor preservation (*siri* and *sipakatau*). When law

enforcement does not align with these symbolic values, the message triggers emotional and cultural defensiveness rather than rational evaluation.

This also supports the broader argument from Dwivedi et al. (2017) that public resistance to e-government services in developing societies is often linked to cultural misalignment rather than technological constraints. In Parepare, citizens understand how ETLE works technically, but the communication strategy does not affirm their cultural identity as respected, relational social beings. As a result, people resist the *way the policy is communicated*, not the policy's digital nature. Furthermore, Pratama (2023) reported that the success of ETLE in Jakarta depended not only on system sophistication but also on the perceived legitimacy of communication from law enforcement. The Jakarta case illustrates how residents are more compliant when institutions show transparency and personal acknowledgment. In contrast, Venardi and Pambudi (2024) observed that when legal communication is solely regulatory, compliance becomes unstable and short-lived even in regions with high digital infrastructure readiness.

Bringing these perspectives together, it becomes clear that public resistance to ETLE in Parepare is not irrational, it is culturally rational. Community members behave in accordance with their cultural framework of respect and identity protection, which influences how they accept or reject rules. The failure of the central route and dominance of the peripheral route in processing ETLE messages demonstrate that persuasion must resonate with cultural expectations to be effective. Until ETLE is interpreted as a system that protects honor rather than undermines it, attempts to foster compliance will continue to encounter silent resistance.

The Necessity of Culturally Responsive Digital Policing

The findings of this study indicate that digital law enforcement cannot rely solely on infrastructural modernization; it must also integrate cultural adaptation into its communication strategy. Digital policing becomes persuasive not when citizens fear authority, but when they feel respected by it. This aligns with the view of Widayanti, Sudirman, and Dewangga (2025) who emphasize that the legitimacy of digital policing depends not only on technological reliability but also on the perceived fairness and ethical sensitivity of enforcement actors.

In the context of Parepare, the challenge lies not in making citizens understand ETLE, but in ensuring that the system communicates authority without compromising cultural values of dignity and relational respect. The Bugis–Makassar worldview, as explained by Rahayu, Idris, and Usman (2018), ties obedience to norms with recognition of personal honor (*siri*) and interpersonal humanity (*sipakatau*). Enforcement that fails to respect these symbolic values is interpreted not as a call to safety, but as a threat to identity.

This also reflects the findings of Dwivedi et al. (2017), who assert that digital policies fail when they overlook citizens' socio-cultural expectations, even in technologically capable regions. Therefore, the success of ETLE in Parepare is not determined by digital infrastructure alone but by its ability to communicate in ways that align with cultural logic (Dwivedi et al., 2017).

Based on the collected data, three key communication strategies are required to restore cultural legitimacy in ETLE implementation:

1. Culturally Sensitive Messaging

Messages should emphasize shared responsibility and mutual respect rather than surveillance and punishment. Pratama (2023) highlights that communication rooted in shared values increases perceived legitimacy of digital enforcement.

2. Involvement of trusted community intermediaries, elders, religious leaders, and informal authorities.

Compliance in Bugis–Makassar society is historically mediated through figures of social respect rather than anonymous institutional commands. Venardi and Pambudi (2024) show that policy implementation becomes more effective when delivered through culturally rooted social brokers.

3. Communication that restores honor instead of triggering humiliation.

The act of sanction should be framed as protection of communal safety and pride, not permanent labeling or public shaming. According to Mohar Syarif (2025), acknowledgment and recognition from authorities are essential elements of public acceptance in digital law enforcement (Mohar Syarif, 2025).

When these three elements are activated, ETLE is not interpreted as surveillance that threatens dignity but as a collaborative system that empowers citizens to protect community safety and shared honor. Only in that mode can compliance become sustainable and voluntary rather than forced or strategically avoided. Therefore, the pathway forward for ETLE is not merely technological improvement, but culturally responsive digital policing that honors identity while promoting law-abiding behavior.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The implementation of Electronic Traffic Law Enforcement (ETLE) in Parepare demonstrates that technology–driven public policy cannot be separated from the cultural context in which it operates. While ETLE successfully enhances traffic compliance in many Indonesian metropolitan areas, its reception in Parepare reveals a different pattern shaped by the Bugis–Makassar cultural

logic of honor (*siri'*) and relational humanity (*sipakatau*). Public resistance toward ETLE does not arise from a lack of technological understanding but from the perception that the system diminishes dignity by enforcing punishment through impersonal digital surveillance. The Elaboration Likelihood Model further illustrates that persuasion through the central route fails when messages do not align with cultural identity, causing citizens to rely on the peripheral route, driven by emotional and symbolic interpretations of honor and respect. Therefore, ETLE communication in Parepare is ineffective not because the community rejects technology, but because the system has not secured cultural legitimacy. Sustainable compliance can only be achieved when digital policing is perceived as a mechanism that protects personal and collective honor rather than undermines it.

Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions can be offered to strengthen the implementation of ETLE in Parepare. The adoption of digital policing must be accompanied by culturally sensitive communication strategies that align with the values of *siri'* (honor) and *sipakatau* (mutual respect). Therefore, ETLE socialization should not rely solely on deterrent narratives or punitive messaging but must frame traffic compliance as a collective responsibility that protects the dignity and safety of families and the wider community. In addition, involving respected intermediaries, such as community elders, religious leaders, and other figures of informal authority, can help reinforce the legitimacy of the policy, as messages delivered by culturally trusted voices are more likely to be accepted. It is also necessary for law enforcement to engage in dialogic communication rather than unilateral announcements by creating open spaces for discussion and public feedback so that the community feels heard rather than judged. To support this approach, officers and ETLE implementers need cultural literacy training to ensure that law enforcement does not unintentionally convey messages that are perceived as humiliating or dishonoring. By reframing ETLE as a tool for protecting collective honor rather than merely punishing violations, compliance has the potential to become voluntary and sustainable. The cultural strategy developed in Parepare may also serve as a model for other Indonesian regions with strong socio-cultural identities, providing a pathway toward more harmonious and community-centered digital governance.

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