

## EXPLORING DIGITAL AND PHYSICAL COMMUNICATION AS A MEDIUM FOR SOCIAL CONNECTION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Janella C. Devisfruto

Senior High School Student, Polytechnic College of Botolan

Joemark D. Ablian

Institute of Education, Polytechnic College of Botolan

joemark.ablian@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

Digital communication has become an integral part of our lives and is gradually replacing far more traditional forms of communication, including speaking, writing, and physical gestures. In this paper, the researcher sought to examine the benefits and drawbacks of digital and physical communication and to evaluate how these two forms of communication are interacting. The researcher used a total of 10 papers to acquire information from existing literature studies. Thus, the findings revealed that physical communication is frequently more effective than digital communication because it can accommodate a higher level of complexity than digital communication does. On the other hand, since there is no requirement for a face-to-face meeting, digital communication can also offer greater convenience. However, unlike physical communication, it cannot provide a connection for interpersonal relationships. Therefore, future research should focus on how communication in various age groups is impacted by technology as well as how it affects social interactions, such as the expression of emotions and the development of relationships. Additionally, future studies could also look at how language has changed as a result of digital technology, including how new slang has emerged and how grammar has evolved. This might make it easier for each individual to comprehend on the switch from verbal to digital communication has affected the way they communicate. It's also crucial to consider how these communication methods could be used to improve quality of life.

**Keywords:** digital communication, physical communication, social connection, literature review

### INTRODUCTION

People of this generation can now use several information and communication tools to stay in touch with others when opportunities for face-to-face encounters are not available or are limited. Therefore, digital communication has been observed to become the focal point for social connection, particularly when face-to-face engagement is restricted. For this reason, the utilization of a technological method is becoming regarded as a more vital communication approach rather than a physical one (Hargittai, Fuchs, Hunsaker, Marler, Gruber, & Nguyen, 2021). The increased use of media and digital technology has changed how individuals shape and think about their physical activities (Araujo, Knijnik, & Ovens, 2020). This means that the adoption of a digital strategy improves how people understand, think about, and believe what they see online. Because of this, it also affects how they perceive things based on the level of their digital usage. Meanwhile, a study by Febrianti and Auwal (2021), examines the widespread use of endearments in casual chats and other forms of digital communication. This

study revealed the degree of closeness implied by addressing someone with endearing phrases. This demonstrates how people interact digitally and how they develop intimate relationships with one another, especially when they use endearments to express their affection toward each other. On the other hand, Liu, Baumeister, Yang, and Hu (2019), emphasize how digital communication media affect psychological well-being. Hence, it is hypothesized that making phone calls and sending texts enhances well-being, whereas instant chatting and online games may do the contrary. The digital method has been proven to be an effective tool for shaping and integrating corporate promotional strategies that can benefit both people and communities for the greater good. Studies have shown that this can be a highly efficient way of persuading and changing people's behavior durably and conveniently (Mehmet, Roberts & Nayeem, 2020). Digital promotion strategies can be utilized to target specific demographic groups and create awareness of a particular brand or product. By using personalized messages and tailored content, companies can effectively engage with their target audience and create positive long-term relationships. Additionally, digital methods can open up the potential for interactive experiences that can further add to the engagement of potential customers. This indicates that it also has benefits, notably in terms of a more accessible and viable manner among individuals, making it more favorable for all users. However, there are also some drawbacks and digital inequalities that result from the technological approach, which has played a significant role in digital communication. This subsequently develops into a catastrophe and exposes people susceptible to digital exclusion (Marer, Hargittai, & Nguyen, 2021). Given this, research by Kluck, Stoyaniva, and Kramer (2021); and Phil, Tomova, and Blakemore (2020), has shown the value of frequent social interactions, which should never be deprived or neglected in any way. While, research done by Moran and Gutman (2020), focused on strengthening physical communication as a form necessary for maintaining mental well-being. This supports the requirement for ongoing physical interaction and is a crucial development stage for the stability of one's physical and mental health. In addition, a study by Rajaobelina, Brun, Kilani, and Ricard (2021), explores how the use of live chat services affects peoples' emotions. This evaluates how well live chat services function and how the previous human-to-human interaction varies from that technologically advanced method. This research places a strong emphasis on the changes that have occurred in the modern world and how those changes may have affected the lives of numerous people through this various social approach.

On the other hand, some of the research gaps involve the relationship between the use of both physical and digital approach as a form of medium for social connection, as prior studies limit their insights on how the use of both approaches influence each other as well as how may it affect one's physical and emotional wellbeing while using the combined strategy. Further to that, some gaps also involve the disadvantages and barriers that must be addressed regarding the communication initiative that will be handled.

The general purpose of this study is to explore the use of both digital and physical communication to better comprehend how these aids each individual in overcoming social barriers, particularly when a pandemic arises that ultimately causes a massive change in society. And attempt to draw attention to some detrimental effects related to the employed strategy. Thus, provide suggestions for how to manage and overcome such instances.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The goal of this study is to (1) determine the objective of other studies, (2) identify the findings of existing studies, and (3) highlight recommendations needed in the context of the previews and presented literature review. This is to assess the impact and value of the communication approach to determine the most suitable way for particular groups or individuals to interact and communicate.

## METHODS

A literature review is a comprehensive survey of academic materials concerning a particular subject, as outlined by McCombes (2019). It provides a summary of existing knowledge, allowing researchers to identify relevant theories, approaches, and gaps in the existing body of knowledge that can be applied to a research paper, thesis, or dissertation. Thus, to use one's understanding of scholarly debate around the topic at hand, the researcher decided to conduct this research paper using a literature review. This approach to the research study aids in assessing sources, finding gaps, and elaborating context to establish and produce a paper's necessary verified literature review.

This research paper also features studies covering the year 2014 to 2021. After the initial research conducted by other researchers, the present researchers deemed it necessary to analyze the given research topic within a specified period, to assess the accuracy and validity of their results. Due to the significant and timely research inquiry, the latest years of coverage are considered necessary for the confirmation of the paper. Which would then line up with the accuracy and reliability of the research study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section of the study focuses on the conclusions drawn from the outcomes of the prior body of research. As well as a summary of the findings and the result's overview of the discussion has been interpreted for future recommendations.

### 1. Main Aim of the Studies

Table 1. Main Aim of the Studies

Authors and Years	Objectives
Argyle, 2017	Explores behavior including bodily movements, facial expressions, gestures, eye movement, proximity, and orientation.
Jack and Schyns, 2015	Examines facial expressions in communication and how a face can impede interpersonal connection, providing insight into educational, work, and healthcare settings.
Kick, Sawyer, and Thomas, 2015	Investigates how Gen Z's use of social media and digital communication affects their interpersonal communication skills in the workplace.
Lu, Kim, Dou, Kumar, 2014	Effective strategies for promoting physical activity via media richness, and interactivity among college students.
Lunenborg, 2010	Barriers to physical communication, and ways to improve effectiveness.
Marion and Samuel, 2017	Investigate how digital communication affects adolescents' relationships and well-being.



Nguyen, Gruber, Fuchs, Marler, Hunsaker, Hargittai, 2020	Analyze how COVID-19 has altered digital communication usage and the potential inequalities that arise.
Stone and Wang, 2018	Determine how social media use affects memory, depending on what type of information is presented.
Taylor and Gibson, 2016	Evaluate how digital technologies and social media can promote the democratization of heritage and analyze their impacts on public values.
Yau and Reich, 2017	Explores how friendships change in the digital age and find qualities of face-to-face friendships in the presence of digital spaces.

Physical and digital communication have become increasingly intertwined due to the rise of technology and its pervasive impact on everyday life. Physical and digital communication must coexist for these to be productive as physical communication moves more and more toward the digital realm. Additionally, the two methods of communication have been blending and entangling throughout recent years. Consequently, people commonly combine physical and digital communication, depending on the context presented. Therefore, Table 1 presents how physical and digital forms of communication become increasingly intertwined (Nguyen, Gruber, Fuchs, Marler, Hunsaker, Hargittai, 2020). Therefore, studies have been conducted to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of both forms of communication and how they affect social interactions (Lunenborg, 2010; Lu, Kim, Dou, Kumar, 2014; Taylor and Gibson, 2016; Stone and Wang, 2018). Additionally, studies conducted by Argyle, 2017; and Jack and Schyns, 2015, explore how nonverbal behavior becomes a vital part of understanding how people interact. This study looked at the impact of nonverbal indicators in everyday encounters, including body language, facial expressions, gestures, eye movement, proximity, orientation, and more. On the contrary, numerous research has highlighted the importance of social media in allowing adolescents to establish and maintain relationships with others (Yau and Reich, 2017) and how digital communication can have a profound impact on relationships and mental well-being in young people (Marion and Samuel, 2017). Social media can be an integral part of a teenager's life and can serve a positive function in their development. Meanwhile, a study conducted by Kick, Sawyer, and Thomas, in 2015 emphasizes how Generation Z or 20<sup>th</sup>-century youths' use of digital and social media communication affects their interpersonal skills in the workplace. To conclude, these studies examine the advantages and disadvantages of digital and physical communication, the impact of social media on interpersonal communication, and insights into physical interaction. Furthermore, these studies examined how physical and digital communication methods were relevant to one another and sought to discover how both approaches provided a more practical means of social connection. Not only that, but these studies also look into how social evolution has affected these approaches and how they have influenced the way we communicate and behave.

## 2. Main Outcome of the Studies

Social media's widespread use has fundamentally changed how people interact, communicate, and express themselves. This is particularly true for young people who have grown up in an increasingly digital society. Despite the many benefits of social media, such as convenience, further study is needed to understand its impact on interpersonal development and physical

communication and to develop effective interventions that ensure people benefit from it. Hence, table 2 shows the findings and results of existing literature and studies. Thus, numerous studies demonstrate that preparation, active listening, and awareness are essential to effective communication and can lower the likelihood of message misunderstanding or misinterpretation (Lunenburg, 2010). This includes the benefits of nonverbal communication for establishing connections and expressing identity and social status through physical contact and social engagement (Argyle, 2017; & Jack et al., 2015).

**Table 2. Main Outcomes of Research**

<b>Authors and Year</b>	<b>Findings and Results</b>
Argyle, 2017	Nonverbal communication uses body movements, facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, and posture to convey feelings and meanings.
Jack and Schyns, 2015	Face conveys social status, emotion, personality, and other facial expressions.
Kick, Sawyer, and Thomas, 2015	Gen Z's reliance on digital communication leads to issues such as lack of participation, knowledge transfer difficulties, miscommunication, and conflicts.
Lu, Kim, Dou, Kumar, 2014	Web design interactivity and richness boost motivation for physical activity, leading to improved psychological outcomes.
Lunenburg, 2010	Barriers to effective communication can be overcome through awareness, planning, and active listening.
Marion and Samuel, 2017	Social media use by adolescents has positive and negative impacts on relationships and emotional well-being.
Nguyen, Gruber, Fuchs, Marler, Hunsaker, Hargittai, 2020	The COVID-19 pandemic increased digital inequalities, leading to social, economic, and educational disparities.
Stone and Wang, 2018	Social media use can lead to reduced memory recall and false memories and can impact the truthfulness of public information.
Taylor and Gibson, 2016	Digitization and social media do not guarantee democracy.
Yau and Reich, 2017	Online friendships have the same core characteristics as offline, including self-disclosure, validation, companionship, support, conflict & resolution.

On the other hand, studies conducted by Lu, et al., 2014, assert that richness and engagement in web design can aid users in maintaining motivation for exercise and improving psychological effects. The use of digital technology as a vehicle for social contact has, however, also given rise to negative problems and disputes (Kick, et al., 2015; Stone et al., 2018; & Taylor et al., 2016). The exponential growth in the use of technology in communication is negatively impacting our capacity to effectively interpret nonverbal clues and engage in meaningful discussions. Additionally, studies by Nguyen, et al., 2020 noted that the pandemic was to blame for global digital inequities as well as for the economic and educational systems' despondency. However, other research has shown that online and offline friendships share the same fundamental traits, which is beneficial for teenagers because it enables them to contact their friends more frequently and in a wider range of contexts (Yau et al., 2017). Marion et al., 2017 also believe

that social media use can affect mental health and interpersonal connections in both positive and negative ways. Since it may either expose people to peer pressure, cyberbullying, and heightened mental health risks, or it can help people build relationships, entertain them, and teach them social skills. Therefore, these findings show that social media has the potential to be highly advantageous, as it allows users to keep in touch with family and friends regardless of distance. Additionally, it is an excellent tool for self-expression and exploration, enabling individuals to connect with others through shared interests, acquire concepts, and form bonds with like-minded individuals. The social media can, however, also have detrimental effects on interpersonal skills development and verbal and nonverbal communication. The fact that individuals may feel cut off from having in-person interactions with the people they are connected to online, as this presented study has demonstrated that might result in social isolation. This can lead to a decreased time spent engaging in social interactions and physical communication, which limits people the chance to develop and use their interpersonal skills. To conclude, it is essential to understand how social media and physical communication affect people to adopt the proper interventions needed for social connection.

### 3. Recommendation of the Studies

Table 3 presents the gaps and limitations of existing studies, which can be used to guide future research or for future purposes. This includes examining potential consequences that could result from physical and digital communication, as well as how to deal with and overcome them.

**Table 3. Recommendation of the Studies**

Authors and Years	Recommendations
Argyle, 2017	Explore the biological and cultural aspects of social interaction and analyze their implications for current social psychology theories.
Jack and Schyns, 2015	Identify which contextual factors influence social categorization.
Kick, Sawyer, and Thomas, 2015	Examine the bridge communication gap between generations at work and promote interpersonal skills.
Lu, Kim, Dou, Kumar, 2014	Identify elements of website design that can enhance health campaigns.
Lunenburg, 2010	Examine specific barriers to communication and ways to overcome them.
Marion and Samuel, 2017	Investigate adolescents' digital communication about online experiences.
Nguyen, Gruber, Fuchs, Marler, Hunsaker, Hargittai, 2020	Look into ways to bridge the digital divide and provide access to digital services for those with limited access.
Stone and Wang, 2018	Impacts of social media on individuals and society, with potential implications.
Taylor and Gibson, 2016	Digitization and social media's impact on cultural heritage need further research to ensure democratic access and creativity.
Yau and Reich, 2017	Explore how online communication affects friendship development and conflict resolution.



To address these implications, researchers may look at improving rules, methods, and practices to make sure that digital communication is safe, competent, and equitable to use. Moreover, must offer thorough information on the exploration of social media's evolution to ensure democratic access, innovation, and personal development. This would also involve looking at how the impacts of physical and digital connections transform society by influencing people's perceptions and behaviors. As this can lead to improved empathy and understanding of others, as well as greater acceptance of diversity.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, it is believed that both physical and digital approaches have advantages and disadvantages that must be understood and comprehended accurately to improve the skills and abilities for better communication. It is evident from presented studies conducted by existing researchers that digital technology has had a significant impact on communication. The development of the internet and social media has made it possible for us to contact people anywhere in the world. This has given us a wide range of knowledge and resources as well as the ability to work together, keep in touch with friends and family, and collaborate. Digital technology can, however, be a two-sided blade because it can also result in confusion, cyberbullying, and other adverse effects. Although, physical communication is still the most essential way for connecting with people on a personal level. Face-to-face contacts enable us to establish relationships and trust as well as more meaningfully communicate our thoughts and feelings. Finding a balance between digital and physical communication that works for us is crucial for effective communication. By being aware of the advantages and disadvantages of both styles of approach and knowing when to use each one, we may improve our communication skills and forge deep bonds with the people in our lives

Nevertheless, there are a few areas that might be further studied in future research on the effects of digital technology and physical connection on communication. Such as how different age groups view and use digital technology regarding communication, as well as how this differs from physical engagement. In addition, the impact of digital technology on social interactions, such as how it affects the expression of emotions and the formation of relationships, could also be the subject of future research. Another area of research could focus on the effects of digital technology on language, including the emergence of new slang and the development of grammar. This may assist us to comprehend how the transition from physical to digital communication has altered how we communicate.

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