



CHANGING PATTERNS OF HUMAN RELATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY URBAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

This study examines the decline of face-to-face interaction within urban societies through a qualitative literature review. The analysis reveals that this degradation is a complex process involving the adoption of digital communication technologies, transformation of urban spatial structures, shifts in social values, and changes in family life patterns. Key manifestations include reduced frequency of physical meetings, diminished conversational depth, weakened social cohesion, and erosion of interpersonal communication skills. Consequences encompass increased loneliness, reduced empathic capacity, weakened conflict resolution abilities, and depletion of social capital that underpins communal life. Resistance to this decline exists in various forms but lacks systematic organization. Restoration of face-to-face interaction quality requires multidimensional approaches at individual, family, educational, workplace, urban design, and policy levels. The involvement of younger generations is critical as they possess deep understanding of digital communication dynamics while experiencing the negative impacts of superficial interaction patterns. This study contributes to understanding the transformation of social interaction in digital era and provides foundations for developing interventions to restore balance between digital and physical interaction.

Keywords: face-to-face interaction, urban society, social communication, relational quality, social degradation.

Introduction

The development of digital communication technology has fundamentally transformed the landscape of social interaction over the last two decades. The presence of smart devices connected to the internet allows individuals to communicate without the constraints of space and time. This ease of access brings consequences for the patterns of human relationships that were previously built through physical encounters. Urban societies with high mobility and time constraints have become the groups that most rapidly adopt various digital communication platforms. The shift from face-to-face interaction to mediated interaction occurred massively without a lengthy adaptation process (Hampton, 2016). This aligns with the reality that the way we chat and gather in virtual communities has indeed changed significantly compared to the past (Darmawan, 2021). This phenomenon does not only occur among the younger generation who grew up with technology but also extends across various age groups. Public spaces that once served as meeting points for city residents are now beginning to lose their social function. Cafes, city parks, or shopping centers that were once bustling with direct conversation are now filled with individuals absorbed in their respective gadgets. This change in behavior marks a major transformation in how humans build and maintain social relationships. The quality of interaction, shifting from depth toward efficiency, has become a hallmark of the digital era.

The intensity of physical encounters in the daily lives of urban communities shows a consistent downward trend from year to year. Work busy-ness that demands long hours at the office leaves little room for direct socialization. When free time is available, the tendency to fill that time with individual activities at home through digital devices is strengthening. Intensive patterns of technology use often correlate with time displacement from traditional social interaction toward digital media consumption (Oksa et al., 2021). Yet, maintaining a balance between work affairs, social life, and the surrounding environment is very important so that our lives remain stable (Mardikaningsih & Hariani, 2021). Flexible work patterns and the increasingly prevalent phenomenon of freelancers actually reinforce social isolation because interactions with colleagues that once occurred naturally have now drastically decreased. Private transportation, which is becoming easier to access, reduces the interactions that occur in public spaces such as

public transport. Vertical housing, a characteristic of urban areas, also limits opportunities to meet neighbors who were once an important source of social interaction. Schools, which were once places for parents to meet and interact, now rely on digital communication for various purposes. This condition is certainly a challenge for parents in instilling good life values in children at home (Safira et al., 2022). Community organizations such as social gatherings, religious study groups, or sports clubs are slowly being abandoned because they are considered time-consuming. The accumulation of these various factors creates a condition where individuals are increasingly rarely involved in meaningful face-to-face interactions.

The depth of social relations built through face-to-face interaction is undergoing a significant shift in quality (Drucker & Gumpert, 2012). Direct conversation allows individuals to capture nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, voice intonation, and body language that enrich the meaning of communication. These elements provide a more complete understanding of the feelings and intentions of the interlocutor. In mediated communication, many of these important nuances are lost or reduced to mere text or limited emojis. Relationships built through digital interaction tend to be superficial due to the lack of emotional depth that arises from physical togetherness. Friends known only through social media often do not have strong enough bonds to support each other in difficult situations. Deep conversations involving self-reflection and emotional openness are increasingly rare as they are replaced by brief, informational conversations. On the other hand, these rapid social changes need to be addressed with appropriate policies so that society continues to feel fair and valued (Halizah & Mardikaningsih, 2022). The sense of togetherness that arises from sharing space and time is difficult to replicate through digital connections. The skills to read and respond to social cues, which have been honed through direct interaction, are beginning to erode in a generation that interacts more digitally. As a result, the quality of human relationships, which serves as the foundation of social cohesion, is experiencing a worrying decline.

Urban society faces a dilemma between the convenience offered by digital communication and the fundamental human need for authentic relationships (Drucker & Gumpert, 2012). Technology promises limitless connections with anyone anywhere, yet ironically often results in deeper feelings of loneliness (Primack et al., 2017). Studies show that increased

social media use correlates with rising feelings of social isolation. Individuals spend hours observing others' lives through digital posts without ever engaging in real interaction. These changing social conditions also affect how people move and participate in collective activities within their environment (Rojak et al., 2021). Life displayed selectively on digital platforms creates an illusion of happiness and success that actually triggers unhealthy social comparisons. The need for validation through the number of likes and comments becomes a substitute for the need for recognition from a real social environment. When digital interaction fails to meet deep emotional needs, individuals feel increasingly alienated despite being technically connected to many people. The contradiction between the quantity of digital connections and the quality of social relationships becomes a confusing characteristic for many. They feel busy with digital communication yet still feel that no one truly knows them in their entirety. Ultimately, we all need to realize that technology is merely a tool, while the warmth of human relationships remains paramount (Darmawan, 2021; Rojak et al., 2021). The inability of technology to fulfill basic human needs for authentic connectedness becomes a source of a hidden social crisis.

Generations growing up with digital technology from an early age show communication characteristics that are very different from previous generations (Venter, 2019). The ability to perform synchronous communication through various platforms is developing rapidly, yet the skill to engage in quality face-to-face conversation is actually experiencing a decline. Children and adolescents today are more comfortable expressing themselves through text compared to speaking directly. They experience anxiety when having to make phone calls or meet new people physically. The ability to read social cues, which should develop through direct interaction, becomes less honed due to limited exposure. Often, the way we interact in our surroundings indeed carries certain influences, including how society provides views or labels regarding a person's mental health condition (Aisyah & Issalillah, 2022). The long-term consequences of these changes are still difficult to predict, but they are beginning to manifest in various aspects of life. Difficulties in building deep interpersonal relationships potentially affect marital stability, the quality of parenting, and the effectiveness of teamwork. The capacity for empathy that develops through direct interaction also faces challenges as individuals are less

exposed to the experience of feeling others' emotions firsthand. Schools, as institutions that should be places for developing social skills, now face new challenges. Teachers report that students find it increasingly difficult to work together in groups and resolve conflicts constructively. The communication patterns formed from an early age will carry long-term implications for the social structure of society as a whole.

The primary issue arising from the degradation of face-to-face interaction is the loss of space and time intentionally provided to build meaningful social relationships. Urban communities live in environments that, structurally, no longer support the spontaneous interactions that serve as the foundation of social cohesion. Urban designs that separate residential, commercial, and office areas reduce opportunities to meet people from diverse backgrounds. These changes in the urban environment sometimes make residents less able to maintain old habits because they must adapt to modern life (Amri & Khayru, 2022). Activities that were once moments of gathering, such as family dinners, neighborhood social gatherings, or religious activities, are gradually being abandoned. Development problems in large cities often make small communities feel marginalized from their own places of residence (Fauzi, 2022; Gani, 2022). The increasingly complex busyness of individuals makes synchronizing time to meet a challenge in itself. When time together is finally scheduled, the presence of digital devices often disrupts the quality of that togetherness (Misra et al., 2016). Constant notifications pull an individual's attention away from the ongoing interaction. Physical presence no longer guarantees the presence of attention because an individual's mind can be elsewhere through connected devices. The absence of space and time fully dedicated to face-to-face interaction causes social relationships to lose depth and meaning. Without deliberate intervention, this condition will continue and further erode the social capital that acts as the glue of community life.

Another issue relates to the inability of individuals and society to critically realize the long-term impacts of the shifting communication patterns taking place. The adoption of digital communication technology is happening so rapidly that there is no room for reflection on the potential consequences. Convenience and efficiency offered by technology become the sole measures of progress, while other values such as the depth of relationships and the quality of togetherness are ignored. In uncertain

situations like the present, organizations or groups must indeed be smarter in adapting to survive (Arifin & Darmawan, 2022). Individuals are trapped in a cycle of digital device use without realizing that the time spent on digital interaction reduces the time available for real interaction (Finnerty, 2014). Awareness of the importance of face-to-face interaction often only emerges when individuals have already felt negative impacts such as loneliness or emotional exhaustion. However, without an adequate understanding of the root of the problem, the solutions found are often superficial, such as reducing social media use without replacing it with high-quality real interaction. We also need to pay attention to issues of health and environmental justice so that communities in peripheral areas do not bear too heavy a burden (Issalillah & Mardikaningsih, 2022). Society also lacks a framework to evaluate whether the technology being adopted truly improves the quality of life or actually undermines fundamental aspects of social life (Kolanović, 2019). New social norms regulating when and how technology should be used have not yet been adequately formed. Consequently, individuals and families make decisions about technology use independently without clear guidance. The lack of collective awareness regarding the urgency of maintaining the quality of face-to-face interaction remains a major obstacle in overcoming the degradation that is occurring.

This study aims to comprehensively understand the phenomenon of the degradation of face-to-face interaction occurring in urban society. The changes in communication patterns over the last two decades have broad implications for the quality of social life, mental health, and community cohesion. Without an adequate understanding of the mechanisms and consequences of this shift, efforts to address it will be reactive and directionless. This research is important for identifying the factors contributing to the decline in the intensity and depth of face-to-face interaction. An understanding of how individuals and society experience and interpret these changes is also necessary to formulate appropriate approaches. Essentially, we must continue learning to understand social conditions to find the right solutions for everyone (Fauzi, 2022; Issalillah & Mardikaningsih, 2022). Contributions to the development of social and communication sciences are a consideration, given that this phenomenon is still relatively new and has not been extensively studied comprehensively (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2013). The research results are expected to serve

as a basis for the formulation of public policies and intervention programs aimed at restoring the quality of social interaction in urban communities. This research is also expected to increase public awareness about the importance of maintaining a balance between digital communication and face-to-face interaction in daily life.

This research aims to systematically outline the process of degradation of face-to-face interaction in urban society and analyze its implications for the quality of social communication and inter-individual relations. This study will explore the factors contributing to the shift in interaction patterns, the forms of changes occurring, and the short-term and long-term consequences of the phenomenon. Theoretically, this research enriches the study of communication and urban sociology by providing an analytical framework regarding the transformation of social interaction in the digital era. Its practical contribution consists of recommendations for policymakers, educators, and the public in responding to the challenges arising from the degradation of face-to-face interaction.

Method

This research utilizes a qualitative approach with a literature study design aimed at synthesizing knowledge regarding the degradation of face-to-face interaction in urban society. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of various theoretical perspectives and existing empirical findings. As explained by Gorard and Taylor (2004), the combination of methods in social research enables researchers to understand complex phenomena from various complementary viewpoints. The procedures applied in this study refer to the principles of qualitative research put forward by Henn et al. (2005), which emphasize the importance of interpretive analysis of written sources to produce a rich understanding of social phenomena. The literature search was conducted by identifying scientific publications relevant to the topics of face-to-face interaction, digital communication, urban sociology, and social change. The sources reviewed include books, journal articles, and research reports published within the last two decades to capture the dynamics of change occurring alongside technological developments. The source selection process was carried out by considering topic relevance, author credibility, and the quality of the research methodology used. Analysis was performed

using a thematic approach to identify the primary patterns in the literature concerning the degradation of face-to-face interaction. This approach allows for the identification of consensus and debate within the literature as well as uncovering areas that still require further development. The synthesis of findings from various sources was conducted to build a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of face-to-face interaction degradation in urban society.

Result and Discussion

The degradation of face-to-face interaction in urban society does not occur as a single event but rather as a gradual process that takes place alongside the penetration of digital technology into various aspects of life. This indicates that the way we live and relate to one another is indeed undergoing a major transformation due to the influence of modern technology (Wahyudi, Kabalmay, & Amri, 2021). This process began with the adoption of personal communication devices that allowed individuals to remain connected without having to meet physically. In the early stages, technology was seen as a supplement that enriched communication possibilities, not yet as a replacement for direct interaction. However, over time, the convenience and efficiency offered began to shift individual preferences from physical meetings to mediated communication. This shift is reinforced by various structural factors in urban life, such as time constraints, long commuting distances, and increasing productivity demands. Mobility and distance issues in large cities often make people feel it is more practical to communicate via gadgets rather than meeting in person (Wisnujati & Mardikaningsih, 2021). Individuals began choosing to send messages instead of meeting, making video calls instead of visiting, or interacting through online groups instead of gathering in person. These individual decisions, which appear rational in the short term, collectively change the social interaction ecosystem fundamentally. Public spaces that once served as meeting points for city residents are slowly losing their social functions. Busy cafes filled with conversation are turning into quiet co-working spaces with individuals focused on their respective screens. This degradation process occurs subtly yet continuously until it reaches a point where face-to-face interaction becomes the exception rather than the habit (Hampton, 2016).

The intensity of face-to-face interaction in urban society shows a consistent pattern of decline across various age groups and social backgrounds. This decline is visible not only in the frequency of meetings but also in the duration of togetherness when meetings do occur. Gatherings that once could last for hours are now often cut short due to the pressure to quickly return to other activities. The presence of digital devices during meetings also diminishes the quality of the togetherness that should be established. Individuals who are physically present are often mentally elsewhere because they constantly check notifications or reply to messages. The phenomenon of phubbing, or ignoring an interlocutor in favor of a digital device, has become a common sight in various social gatherings (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). The accumulation of these various factors causes the time spent on high-quality face-to-face interaction to decrease drastically. Even for vulnerable groups on the streets, the breakdown of interaction patterns and social protection can make their conditions increasingly difficult. Data from various sources indicate that the average urban individual spends more time on digital interactions than face-to-face interactions outside the scope of work and the nuclear family. This trend is strengthening among the younger generation, who spend most of their social time through digital platforms. The consequences of this decline in the intensity of face-to-face interaction will only be seen in the long term when the social bonds that should be built through togetherness are not strongly formed.

The depth of social relations built through face-to-face interaction has characteristics that are difficult to replicate through mediated communication. Essentially, nothing can replace the warmth of speaking directly and looking at each other in person. In direct meetings, individuals can capture various nonverbal cues that enrich their understanding of the interlocutor. Micro-expressions that appear in a matter of seconds can reveal emotions that are not conveyed verbally. Changes in vocal intonation provide clues about a person's level of confidence or doubt regarding what they are saying. Open or closed body language indicates the level of comfort and openness in the interaction. All these elements provide layers of meaning that make communication rich and multidimensional. In mediated communication, especially text-based ones, most of these nuances are lost (Misra et al., 2016). Emojis and punctuation are only able to replace a small

fraction of the richness of nonverbal cues available in direct interaction. Video calls, although providing visuals and audio, still cannot capture the entirety of the experience of being present together in the same space. Physical touch, which possesses extraordinary communicative power, cannot be present in long-distance communication. Consequently, relationships built through mediated communication tend to have shallower depth compared to relationships nurtured through intensive face-to-face interaction. This shallowness is reflected in lower levels of emotional openness, a lack of mutual understanding, and the weakness of the bonds formed.

The change in the quality of social interaction brings implications for the structure of social cohesion in urban society. Social cohesion, which has long been built through strong networks of relationships between residents, is experiencing erosion as the frequency and quality of interaction decline. The bonds formed through intensive face-to-face interaction create mutual trust and reciprocal obligations that serve as the foundation of mutual cooperation. Therefore, it is crucial for us to revive the spirit of togetherness and concern within our living environments (Zulkarnain et al., 2021). When interactions shift to the digital realm, the bonds formed tend to be looser and transactional in nature (Velicu & Marinescu, 2019). Individuals may have many connections within their digital networks, yet few are willing to provide tangible support when needed. Social capital, which has been an important asset in urban life, is experiencing a decline in both quality and quantity. Consequently, society's ability to address collective problems, such as neighborhood security or assistance for residents in distress, is diminished. Shared education and awareness within the community are keys to building a better and more inclusive future (Warin, 2022). Dependence on formal institutions increases as a replacement for weakening informal networks. Individualistic lifestyles, which have long been a critique of urban life, are strengthening due to the reduction of bonds connecting one individual to another. In the long run, this erosion of social cohesion can threaten the stability and resilience of urban society in facing various collective challenges.

Generations growing up with digital technology from an early age face unique challenges in developing the social skills necessary for high-quality face-to-face interaction. This is a significant concern because the way humans think and behave is now heavily influenced by the digital age

(Darmawan et al., 2021). Intensive exposure to mediated communication during critical developmental periods forms communication patterns different from previous generations. The ability to express oneself through text is developing rapidly, yet the skill to read social cues in direct interaction is becoming less refined. Children and adolescents today are more comfortable conveying emotions through emojis than through facial expressions or voice intonations. They experience difficulty in initiating and maintaining face-to-face conversations that lack the clear structure found in digital chats. Social anxiety arising when having to interact directly is increasingly common among the younger generation. Research shows that increased use of social media correlates with rising levels of social anxiety among adolescents (Twenge et al., 2018). Schools, as institutions that should serve as venues for developing social skills, face new challenges in facilitating interaction among students. Teachers report that students find it increasingly difficult to work in groups, resolve conflicts constructively, or build deep friendships. The long-term implications of this developmental pattern are still difficult to predict, but they are beginning to manifest in various aspects of life, such as difficulties in building stable romantic relationships or low collaboration skills in the workplace.

Urban public spaces designed without considering their social functions contribute to the ongoing degradation of face-to-face interaction. Increasingly crowded and unequal urban conditions often make residents feel separated from one another in their daily lives (Fauzi, 2021). Modern city design that separates residential, commercial, and office zones reduces opportunities for citizens to meet spontaneously. Narrow and uncomfortable sidewalks encourage people to use private vehicles rather than walking, which would allow for interaction with the surrounding environment. City parks not equipped with facilities that support collective activities become merely green open spaces that are rarely visited. Shopping centers designed as spaces for individual consumption do not provide areas that support sustainable social interaction. Existing public spaces are often not inclusive of various age groups, thereby hindering cross-generational interactions that enrich social life. As a result, urban residents lose places to meet, converse, and build relationships outside the spheres of work and family. The absence of public spaces supporting social interaction reinforces the tendency for individuals to spend time at home connected to the digital

world (Badel & Baeza, 2021). This cycle continues: the fewer public spaces that support interaction, the less frequently people meet, and the less demand there is for high-quality public space. City design that ignores the social dimension of urban life becomes a structural factor that is difficult for individuals to overcome on their own.

Contemporary work culture that demands high productivity and time flexibility also contributes to the degradation of face-to-face interaction. The balance between work and personal life has now become very difficult to achieve due to endless office demands (Eddine & Darmawan, 2022). Long working hours leave little time for socializing outside the sphere of work. An overtime culture that has taken root in many industries reduces opportunities to spend time with family and friends. Flexible work models that allow working from home, while providing freedom, actually reduce interactions with colleagues that previously occurred naturally. Meetings that were once held in person are now replaced by video conferences which are more efficient but lose the nuance of togetherness (Golden, 2007). Office spaces designed as individual workspaces with few communal areas hinder the occurrence of informal interactions that build relationships between colleagues. The pressure to always be productive makes individuals feel guilty when spending time socializing, which is perceived as not producing measurable output. Consequently, relationships formed in the work environment become more transactional and lose important personal dimensions. A work culture that does not provide space for meaningful social interaction contributes to increased stress and emotional exhaustion among workers. In the long run, the loss of the social dimension in work life can reduce job satisfaction and increase turnover rates that are detrimental to organizations.

The transformation of family life is also an important factor in the degradation of face-to-face interaction in urban society. The busyness of both working parents causes the time spent together as a family to become increasingly limited. Family dinners, which were once an important family ritual, are now rarely held due to difficulties in synchronizing schedules. When family members do gather, the presence of digital devices often distracts from the ongoing interaction. Parents preoccupied with their phones set a poor example for children regarding the importance of full attention in interaction. Children growing up with their own digital devices

learn that mediated interaction is normal and natural. Yet, the attention and affection of parents in communicating directly are the most fundamental things for the future of our children (Fajar, Darmawan, & El-Yunusi, 2021). Living rooms that were once the center of interaction have now transformed into spaces where each family member is busy with their respective devices. The quality of communication within the family declines because deep conversations are replaced by shallow information exchanges through text messages (Mullan & Chatzitheochari, 2019). As a result, the emotional bonds between family members, which should be the foundation of an individual's mental health, become weaker. The decline in the quality of family interaction has long-term implications for a child's ability to build healthy relationships in the future.

Shifts in communication patterns bring consequences to the development of empathy in individuals (Uzefovsky & Knafo-Noam, 2016). Empathy, which is the ability to feel and understand the feelings of others, develops through repeated exposure to the emotional experiences of others in direct interaction. We need to realize that character building and this feeling of caring are actually heavily influenced by the quality of education and the environment where we learn (Rojak & Khayru, 2022). When someone sees a sad facial expression or hears a conversational partner's trembling voice, the brain responds with a mechanism that creates emotional resonance. These repeated experiences form neural pathways that strengthen empathy over time. In mediated communication, especially text-based ones, the emotional stimuli received are much more limited. Emojis and punctuation marks are unable to evoke the same emotional resonance as seeing tears or hearing a cry. Consequently, exposure to the emotional experiences of others becomes rarer and shallower. Generations growing up with intensive mediated communication are at risk of having less developed empathy compared to previous generations. This decline in empathy is reflected in the increase of aggressive behavior in online communication, which often disregards the feelings of other parties. Furthermore, this sense of empathy is also vital in maintaining the living environment so that we remain concerned about the preservation of nature around us (Nuraini et al., 2021). In the long run, a society with low empathy will struggle to build solidarity and social concern, which are the foundations of a harmonious life together.

Loneliness has become one of the most tangible consequences of the degradation of face-to-face interaction that many individuals do not realize. Ironically, individuals who are most active in digital communication often report higher levels of loneliness (Campbell & Ross, 2022). They have many friends in digital networks but feel they lack someone who truly understands them deeply. In fact, humans fundamentally always seek groups or communities with similar interests so as not to feel alone (Rejeki, 2021). Shallow and transactional connections are unable to fulfill the human need for authentic relationships and mutual understanding. This feeling of loneliness is further exacerbated by portrayals of other people's lives that appear perfect on social media. Individuals feel that others have better social lives while they themselves are isolated. The stigma attached to loneliness makes individuals reluctant to acknowledge their feelings and seek help (Barreto et al., 2022). They continue to increase digital activity in hopes of overcoming loneliness, even though such activity actually deepens isolation. This vicious cycle is difficult to break without deliberate intervention. Therefore, every policy taken by the government should truly pay attention to social welfare so that society feels happier (Rizky & Udjari, 2021). Research shows that chronic loneliness has health impacts equivalent to smoking or obesity. The increasing prevalence of loneliness in urban society serves as an alarm regarding the need for serious attention to the quality of social interaction. Without effective intervention, generations growing up with digital communication patterns are at risk of facing an unprecedented epidemic of loneliness.

Conflict resolution skills that have long been honed through face-to-face interaction are declining along with the reduced frequency of direct interaction. In this regard, we can learn much from the values of local wisdom that teach how to solve problems in a wise manner (Nurmalasari & Nuraini, 2021). Conflicts that arise in interpersonal relationships actually serve an important function in strengthening bonds if managed well. The process of face-to-face conflict resolution allows individuals to express emotions, listen to the conversational partner's perspective, and seek collective solutions through intensive dialogue (Drolet & Morris, 2000). In mediated communication, the tendency to avoid conflict or resolve it in less constructive ways is strengthening. Ambiguous text messages can trigger conflicts that should not have happened due to the absence of nonverbal

cues that aid interpretation. When conflict occurs, individuals are more likely to choose to cut off communication rather than face the conflict directly. The phenomenon of ghosting, or unilaterally cutting off contact without explanation, has become commonplace in relationships built through digital platforms. The ability to engage in dialogue during tense situations, which is a vital skill in personal and professional life, is becoming less refined. Consequently, relationships faced with conflict are more easily destroyed because there are no adequate skills to manage them.

Education that does not intentionally develop face-to-face communication skills also contributes to the ongoing degradation (Rhoads, 2010). Schools, which should be places for developing social skills, often focus more on academic achievement and digital skills. Therefore, parenting patterns and education starting from the family sphere are very important to shape a child's character from an early age (Safira et al., 2022). Crowded curricula leave little room for activities that deliberately train direct communication skills. Learning methods that rely heavily on individual assignments and digital interaction reduce students' opportunities to learn how to work together in groups. Teachers burdened with various administrative demands have little time to facilitate the development of students' social skills. Assessments that only measure cognitive abilities ignore the importance of social competence as part of educational outcomes. As a result, students graduate from school with adequate academic abilities but underdeveloped social skills. They enter the workforce with difficulties in building relationships with colleagues, resolving conflicts, or collaborating effectively. In fact, certain views or stereotypes in society often make the competition for finding work increasingly challenging for those who are less skilled at socializing (Sajjapong et al., 2022). Social skills are a determining factor for success in professional and personal life. Education that neglects the development of face-to-face communication skills misses an important responsibility in preparing the younger generation for communal life. Educational reform that places social skill development as a priority is an urgent need that is often overlooked.

Mass media and digital platforms themselves play a role in shaping perceptions of social interaction, which in turn influences societal behavior (Darmawan & de Jesus Isaac, 2022). The representation of social interaction in films, television series, and digital content often fails to reflect complex

realities. Sometimes, what we see in the media can be very different from the actual reality of the lives we lead every day. Dramatic and meaningful encounter scenes create unrealistic expectations about social interaction. Social media content that displays seemingly perfect togetherness makes individuals feel that their own social lives are inadequate. Algorithms that govern what users see create echo chambers that reinforce certain views on social interaction. This is also related to how public policy should be formulated to ensure that the social welfare of all layers of society remains protected (Fajar et al., 2021). Advertisements promoting digital devices as connectors that enrich social life obscure the potential negative impacts. The public does not receive balanced information regarding the benefits and risks of the shifting communication patterns taking place. The absence of a critical narrative regarding communication technology allows digital adoption to proceed without adequate reflection. Media, which should serve as a space for public discussion on important issues, instead contributes to reinforcing the hegemony of technology as a solution to various problems. The role of media in shaping awareness about the importance of balance between digital communication and face-to-face interaction is still very limited (Nguyen et al., 2022). Without changes in the way media represents social interaction, the ongoing degradation will continue unnoticed by the broader community.

The transformation of social values underlying communal life also influences the degradation of face-to-face interaction (Lee et al., 2011). The value of efficiency, which has become the primary measure of progress in modern society, causes time-consuming face-to-face interaction to be considered unproductive. Time spent conversing without a clear agenda is viewed as wasted time. This tendency to pursue efficiency often makes us forget the importance of healthily dividing time between work and personal affairs (Eddine & Darmawan, 2022). The depth of interaction, which requires time and patience, falls victim to a culture that glorifies speed. Individuals prefer brief, efficient communication over long conversations that enrich relationships. Strengthening values of individualism cause the responsibility toward others to diminish. The affairs of others are considered not a personal responsibility, thus interactions that do not provide direct benefits are avoided. Moreover, in large cities, differences in social and economic distance sometimes make people feel increasingly alienated from

one another (Fauzi, 2021). The value of togetherness, which serves as the foundation of *gotong royong*, is slowly eroded by an orientation toward personal achievement. This value transformation occurs gradually without being realized by the society experiencing it. Consequently, face-to-face interaction, which has long been a vehicle for the transmission of collective values, is increasingly abandoned. The younger generation is growing up with value orientations that are very different from previous generations. This fundamental shift in values will be difficult to reverse, even as awareness of the importance of face-to-face interaction begins to emerge.

Resistance to the degradation of face-to-face interaction appears in various forms within urban society, yet it has not been systematically organized (Calhoun, 1998; Sharmeen et al., 2014). Communities that consciously limit the use of technology in their interactions are beginning to emerge. Movements to revive traditions such as dining together social gatherings, or other community activities are gaining attention from certain groups. In facing all these changes, honesty and integrity in conduct remain the primary guidelines so that justice can still be felt by everyone (Saktiawan et al., 2021). Schools that realize the importance of social skills are beginning to integrate activities that train direct interaction into the curriculum. Companies that see the negative impact of digital communication on team collaboration are starting to design activities that require routine face-to-face interaction. Public spaces designed with consideration for their social functions are beginning to be developed in several cities. However, these efforts are still sporadic and have not yet formed a coordinated movement. The emerging resistance has not yet been able to offset the increasing speed of technology adoption. Individuals who wish to maintain the quality of face-to-face interaction often face pressure to conform to new norms dominated by digital communication. Without structural support from public policy and changes in urban design, individual resistance will be difficult to sustain in the long run.

The long-term implications of the degradation of face-to-face interaction will affect various aspects of urban life that are not yet fully understood today. The decline in the quality of interpersonal relationships will impact the stability of social institutions such as marriage and the family (Lewis, 1998). This poses a severe challenge, especially for working women who must balance responsibilities at the office and at home within a

constantly changing social situation (Khairi, 2021). Children growing up with shallow communication patterns will face difficulties in building healthy relationships in adulthood. The community's capacity to face collective crises will diminish due to weakening social capital. We are often caught between the desire for personal freedom and the obligation to remain concerned about collective interests (Saputra & Darmawan, 2021). Innovation born from intensive collaboration between individuals will become increasingly scarce due to the lack of interactions that bring together different perspectives. The quality of urban life, which has long been measured by the ease of access to various facilities, may also need to consider the quality of its citizens' social interactions. The mental health of the community will continue to deteriorate if the need for authentic relationships cannot be met by existing interaction patterns. The social costs of the degradation of face-to-face interaction will become increasingly visible in the form of rising rates of depression, loneliness, and various other social problems. Future generations may judge the current generation in the same way the current generation judges previous ones who were unaware of the impact of their choices. An understanding of these long-term implications should serve as a driver to take action before the degradation reaches an irreversible point.

The restoration of the quality of face-to-face interaction requires a multidimensional approach involving various stakeholders. The government has a very large role in regulating and leading this change so that services to the community become better and more equitable (Rojak, 2021). Individuals need to realize the importance of face-to-face interaction and deliberately allocate time for it in their daily routines. Families can restore rituals of togetherness, such as dining together without the distraction of digital devices. Schools need to reform the curriculum to include the development of face-to-face communication skills as part of educational goals. Furthermore, ensuring every child has equal access to education and health is a fundamental step toward building a strong society (Suwito et al., 2021). City governments need to design public spaces that support social interaction and reduce structural barriers that hinder physical encounters. Workplaces can create a culture that values direct interaction as part of a productive work process. Communities can organize activities that bring residents together regularly to rebuild social networks that have

eroded. Digital platforms themselves can be designed to encourage the transition from online interaction to offline interaction, rather than merely keeping users within the digital ecosystem (Hein et al., 2020). Mass media needs to play a role in increasing public awareness about the importance of maintaining a balance between digital communication and face-to-face interaction. Restoring the quality of face-to-face interaction does not mean rejecting technology, but using technology wisely without sacrificing the fundamental aspects of social life.

The involvement of the younger generation in efforts to restore face-to-face interaction is key to long-term success. It is very important for us to continue maintaining harmony between generations even though times are changing very rapidly (Sulistyo, 2022). Generations growing up with digital technology have a deep understanding of the capabilities and limitations of mediated communication (Lievrouw, 2009). They are also the ones who most feel the negative impacts of shallow interaction patterns on their well-being. Programs involving the younger generation in designing solutions to improve the quality of social interaction will be more relevant to their needs. Moreover, amidst rapid urban growth, we must ensure that no group feels marginalized so that the unity of citizens remains preserved (Mardikaningsih, 2021). Schools can facilitate projects that explore the relationship between technology use and the quality of social relationships. Communities can involve the younger generation in activities that bring them together with different age groups. Digital platforms can be used to organize physical meetings, not just for online interaction. The younger generation can also become agents of change who raise awareness among family and peers about the importance of face-to-face interaction (Spears et al., 2015). Their experience in navigating both the digital and physical worlds can be a valuable source of knowledge for restoration efforts. The involvement of the younger generation ensures that the solutions developed are not merely nostalgia for the past, but adaptations suited to the realities of contemporary life. Ultimately, our hard work today in improving communication will determine how happy and harmonious our lives will be in the future.

Conclusion

The degradation of face-to-face interaction in urban society is a complex process involving the interplay between digital technology adoption, changes in urban structures, the transformation of social values, and shifts in family life patterns. This process is characterized by a decrease in the intensity of physical encounters, reduced depth of conversation, weakening social cohesion, and the erosion of interpersonal communication skills. The consequences of this degradation include increasing loneliness, declining empathy, weakened conflict resolution, and the erosion of social capital that serves as the foundation of community life. Resistance to this degradation appears in various forms but has not yet been systematically organized. Restoring the quality of face-to-face interaction requires a multidimensional approach involving changes at the individual, family, educational institution, workplace, urban design, and public policy levels. The involvement of the younger generation is key to long-term success because they possess a deep understanding of digital communication dynamics while simultaneously feeling the negative impacts of shallow interaction patterns.

The implications of this study indicate that the degradation of face-to-face interaction is not merely a personal issue but a structural problem that requires collective attention. Suggestions that can be provided include the need to increase public awareness regarding the importance of maintaining a balance between digital communication and face-to-face interaction through campaigns and education. Educational institutions need to reform the curriculum to include the development of interpersonal communication skills as a goal equal to academic achievement. City governments need to design policies that support the provision of quality public spaces that encourage social interaction. Workplaces need to develop a culture that values direct interaction as part of a productive work process. Communities need to organize activities that bring residents together regularly to rebuild social networks that have eroded. Further research is needed to understand the dynamics of face-to-face interaction degradation in different socio-cultural contexts as well as the effectiveness of various possible interventions.

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