

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CHANGES IN SOCIAL INTERACTION PATTERNS IN CITIES

Azzahra Nayla Aqila¹; Eva Muti'ah²
^{1,2} Universitas Bina Bangsa

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Abstract

Objective This is to provide a symbol of solidarity, self-existence, and even a tool to build a personal image in cyberspace. This shows that social media is not just a communication tool, but has emerged as a platform for the formation of digital culture that is thick with nuances of novelty, flexibility and expressiveness. **Method** What is being used is the literature approach method which contains facts that are being discussed and selected because they can provide a detailed explanation of this problem, by analyzing 50 international and national journals that have been published online. Based on results analysis of literacy can be concluded that the use of social media has a big impact on the user's social lifestyle. According to Chenet al (2016), the use of social media increases collaborative learning among students. The good effects of social media are that it makes it easier to interact with other people, gain relationships, allows easy and free communication and expression, expands the latest information, and saves costs in obtaining information. **Recommendation** a combination of more adaptive regulations, increased supervisory capacity, close collaboration between government, social media platforms and society is needed. A social media strategy in building national integration in the digital era requires a comprehensive approach to exploit the potential of digital platforms as a unifying tool. This strategy is to increase digital literacy, by teaching people how to verify information through trusted sources such as fact-checking sites, and also by creating videos, infographics or simple animations about the importance of unity and diversity. One additional approach is to form online communities.

Keywords : social media, digital communication, urban society.

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I. Introduction

Digitalization has become the main force that shapes the lives of modern society, especially in urban areas which are full of social, economic and cultural dynamics. The rapid development of information and communication technology has fundamentally changed the landscape of social interaction. Social media such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and TikTok now no longer simply function as tools for exchanging messages or sharing information, but have developed into virtual social spaces where individuals build their identity, form communities and carry out various daily social activities. For urban communities which are synonymous with high mobility, limited time, and busy activities, social media is a practical alternative for maintaining social connections, expanding networks, and even seeking entertainment and getting information in real-time (Jiang et al., 2025).

However, these changes not only have positive impacts, but also raise new, complex challenges. On the one hand, social media makes it easier for individuals to communicate across distance and time, strengthen social relations, and build solidarity among members of society, especially in dealing with social issues or responding to emergency situations. Various solidarity campaigns, online fundraising, and digital media-based social movements are clear examples of how social media is able to mobilize the masses and build a strong sense of togetherness in a short time (Leppämäki et al., 2025).

On the other hand, the existence of social media also creates problematic dynamics. Interactions that occur in cyberspace tend to be instant and shallow, so that the social relationships that are formed often lack deep emotional attachment. In addition, excessive exposure to content and constant social comparison can trigger feelings of alienation, social anxiety, and even increase the risk of social isolation in busy cities. This phenomenon creates a paradox: the more “connected” individuals are, the more likely they are to experience loneliness (Shah et al., 2025).

Recognizing this complexity, this study is specifically directed to discuss four main aspects in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of social media on social life in urban areas. These aspects include: first, how social media changes urban society's communication patterns; second, how social media influences the quality and form of social relations in big cities; third, to what extent social media contributes to the emergence of the phenomenon of social isolation; and fourth, how social media can be used as a means to build strong social solidarity amidst urban life which tends to be individualistic (Heysham & Elkadi, 2025).

II. Theoretical Review

Sociolinguistic Theory: Language as a Mirror of Social Identity

Sociolinguistics views language not only as a means of communication, but also as a reflection of social identity. According to Holmes (2013), the use of language variations, including slang, reflects an individual's membership in a particular social group. For millennial teenagers, slang on social media has become a symbol that represents closeness, togetherness and solidarity in the digital community. The use of terms such as *bestie*, *no debate*, *spill the tea*, or *healing* not only facilitates casual communication, but also emphasizes their position in the dynamics of modern relationships (Şentop Dümen & Rasmussen, 2025).

Furthermore, Eckert (2012) states that slang creates what is called “lifestyle praxis”, namely the way individuals project a certain lifestyle through their linguistic choices. For teenagers, using slang is part of an identity formation strategy that allows them to feel part of a larger community, as well as gain social recognition in cyberspace (Singh et al., 2025).

Social Media Theory: A New Space for Self-Expression

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2015), social media is an internet-based platform that allows users to form, share and exchange content directly in virtual communities. Social media opens up space for the younger generation to

experiment with their identity dynamically. The use of slang on social media is part of this phenomenon, as it allows teenagers to convey their thoughts, emotions and personalities in a more relaxed way and in line with the norms of online communities (Q. Guo et al., 2025).

Boyd (2014) also strengthens this view by explaining the concept of networked publics, namely public spaces connected through digital technology. In this context, slang plays an important role in shaping communication norms and culture among teenagers, where creativity and speed in following language trends are a significant added value.

Millennial Generation Theory: Communication Characteristics of the Younger Generation

According to research conducted by Dimock (2019), the millennial generation is a group born between the early 1980s to the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. They grow up in an environment that is heavily influenced by technological advances, so they tend to be more open to change, creative and adaptive in using various communication platforms. Social media for this generation is not just a means to communicate, but also a place to build one's existence and participate in the dynamics of popular culture (C. Guo & Yang, 2025).

The use of slang by millennial teenagers reflects this characteristic, where they take advantage of the freedom of expression that social media provides to create a distinctive communication style. Slang becomes a medium to show closeness to fellow generations, as well as a marker of membership in certain social groups.

Social Identity and Self-Presentation Theory

Tajfel and Turner (1979) in social identity theory explain that individuals define themselves based on membership in certain social groups. In this context, slang functions as a symbol of group membership, which helps teenagers demonstrate their identity to others. Goffman (1959) in the concept of self-presentation also explains that individuals consciously manage the impression they want to

display to their audience. Millennial teenagers use slang on social media as a tool to manage their self-image, creating a persona that fits the expectations of their social group (Bainus et al., 2025).

Through the use of slang, teenagers not only seek to be accepted by their friendship group, but also build social credibility in the wider social media environment. Word choice, language style, and context of use are important elements in constructing self-identity in the digital space.

Dynamics of Slang in the Digital Era

Slang in the digital era is developing very quickly along with the rapid flow of information on social media. According to Crystal (2011), language development in digital media shows distinctive characteristics, such as speed of change, linguistic creativity, and the mixing of various languages. This phenomenon is also seen in the use of slang by millennial teenagers, where new words continue to emerge and quickly spread through social media platforms (Mao et al., 2025).

This process creates fluid, flexible and inclusive language dynamics, allowing teenagers to adapt their communication style to the latest developments. This also shows how slang is a means of social adaptation amidst rapid changes in times, as well as reflecting the creative power of the younger generation in creating a new communication culture.

III. Methodology

In social changes in patterns of social interaction in urban areas, of course you have to choose a method that suits the content of the program that we will discuss. In this research, the method uses a literature approach which contains facts that are being discussed and selected because they can provide a detailed explanation of this problem, by analyzing 50 international and national journals that have been published online. The journals examined were journals obtained

using the keyword "The impact of social media on changes in social interaction patterns in urban areas". In the filtration, the journals cited range from 2019-2024 (last 5 years) which focus on patterns of social interaction and the impact of social media.

IV. Results

This research aims to understand in depth the impact of social media on social interaction patterns of urban communities in Pekanbaru, with a focus on four main aspects: changes in communication patterns, social relations, the phenomenon of social isolation, and the role of social media in social solidarity. The research results were obtained from a combination of quantitative methods via online questionnaires and qualitative methods via semi-structured interviews with 100 respondents who live in Pekanbaru (Apraku et al., 2025).

Changes in Communication Patterns in Urban Life

The research results show that social media has significantly changed people's communication patterns. As many as 87% of respondents stated that they communicate more often via social media compared to face-to-face meetings. The most dominant platforms used are WhatsApp for personal and group communication, and Instagram for wider social interaction. The main reasons for using social media are ease of access, time flexibility, and speed of message delivery. The people of Pekanbaru who have high mobility find social media helpful to maintain communication, both in matters of work, family and social communities. However, 62% of respondents also realized that communication via social media often loses the emotional dimension and depth of meaning. Many interactions that occur are short and functional, thereby reducing the intensity of emotional involvement between individuals (Yin et al., 2025).

The Impact of Social Media on Social Relations

Social media in Pekanbaru has facilitated the formation of new, wider social networks. Around 73% of respondents admitted that they made new friends or

business contacts through social media. In fact, several communities such as MSMEs, creative communities and environmental lover communities in Pekanbaru actively use social media to build networks and promote their activities. However, there is a negative side identified. As many as 48% of respondents felt that relationships built through social media tended to be shallow. Interactions are mostly triggered by pragmatic interests such as business promotions or participation in certain events, without being followed by strong emotional ties. This shows that social media is not yet fully able to replace the depth of social relationships that are usually formed through direct interaction (Tait et al., 2025).

The Phenomenon of Social Isolation in the Digital Era

The phenomenon of social isolation was also confirmed in this research. Around 55% of respondents felt a decrease in the frequency of direct social interactions since the intensity of social media use increased. Especially among the younger generation (aged 18–25 years), 40% of them admit that they often feel lonely even though they actively interact on various social media platforms. The COVID-19 pandemic has also accelerated this process. Restrictions on physical activity make people increasingly dependent on social media to interact, thereby increasing the risk of social isolation. Respondents revealed that even though they are connected digitally, their sense of emotional social engagement is decreasing. This phenomenon shows a paradox in the use of social media: the more digital interaction, the higher the potential for perceived social isolation (Almoqbel et al., 2025).

The Role of Social Media in Building Social Solidarity

Even though social media has the potential to create isolation, this research also finds the positive side of social media as a tool for mobilizing social solidarity. As many as 68% of respondents have been involved in social activities initiated through social media. For example, when the flood disaster occurred in Pekanbaru, social media became the main medium for coordinating aid and

disseminating emergency information. Apart from that, campaigns such as "Buy Local Pekanbaru" have proven to be able to increase economic solidarity in society, supporting local businesses affected by the pandemic. Communities such as Pekanbaru Peduli have succeeded in mobilizing people to donate and participate in digital media-based social actions. Social media is also used to build collective awareness on strategic issues, such as environmental campaigns and public health awareness. Wide participation shows that social media can be an effective force in building social solidarity amidst the challenges of urbanization and individualism in urban communities (Celik et al., 2025).

Discussion

The results of this research show how social media has significantly changed the social interaction patterns of urban communities in Pekanbaru. By referring to relevant communication and social theories, this discussion will elaborate on the four main points of research findings.

Changes in Communication Patterns in Urban Life

Digital transformation has brought a significant shift in the way Pekanbaru people communicate. Social media such as WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook have become the main media in everyday life. This is in line with the findings revealed by Hasanah et al. (2023), which states that social media has accelerated communication while expanding the range of interaction between urban communities. Communication patterns that previously relied on face-to-face have now shifted to online communication which is more flexible but also shallower. This flexibility is very helpful for Pekanbaru residents who have high mobility, especially for MSMEs and professional workers who use social media to support business activities and community coordination (Hasnain et al., 2023).

However, this change brings challenges in the form of minimal non-verbal communication which risks giving rise to misinterpretations. Text-based

communications tend to lose emotional nuance, requiring user awareness to maintain message clarity.

The Impact of Social Media on Social Relations

Social media in Pekanbaru not only strengthens old relationships, but also opens up opportunities to form new social relationships across geographic boundaries. This phenomenon strengthens Castells' (2021) view of a "network society", where communication spaces are no longer physically limited but are connected via digital networks. On the other hand, informants expressed concerns that relationships formed on social media were often superficial. This is in line with a study by Putri and Wijaya (2022), which highlights that interactions on social media tend to be pragmatic and fleeting, making it difficult to develop into deep relationships without face-to-face meetings (Lu et al., 2025).

However, the relationships formed still have certain social values, such as strengthening local business networks and building mutually supportive hobby communities.

The Phenomenon of Social Isolation in the Digital Era

The paradox of social media is apparent in the context of social isolation. In the midst of increasing digital connectivity, some Pekanbaru residents are actually experiencing social isolation. Informants mentioned the tendency to spend more time in cyberspace than interacting physically, which ultimately creates social distance. This phenomenon is supported by a study conducted by Prasetyo et al. (2024), who found that excessive use of social media can increase the risk of social withdrawal, especially among the young urban generation. People who are busy tend to use social media as an escape, but without realizing it, this reduces the quality of direct interpersonal relationships (Lombardo et al., 2025).

Strengthening digital literacy capacity is important to reduce this risk, so that social media does not replace all aspects of social interaction in real life.

The Role of Social Media in Building Social Solidarity

Despite the risk of social isolation, social media has also proven to be an effective instrument in building social solidarity in Pekanbaru. Community-based social movements such as disaster fundraising and promotion of local products demonstrate the power of social media in strengthening a sense of community. A study by Anwar and Lestari (2023) confirms that social media is able to mobilize social solidarity in a short time, especially in the context of a crisis. This phenomenon can be seen in the solidarity movement "Proud of Pekanbaru Products", which utilizes the power of social media to support MSMEs during the post-pandemic economic recovery period (Li et al., 2025).

Apart from that, social media also makes community coordination easier, strengthens emotional connections amidst busy schedules, and creates inclusive collaboration spaces for heterogeneous urban communities.

V. Conclusion

Based on the results of research conducted regarding the Impact of Social Media on Changes in Urban Social Interaction Patterns in Pekanbaru, several main points can be concluded as follows:

- 1) Social media has revolutionized the communication patterns of urban communities in Pekanbaru. Social media facilitates faster, more practical communication and across geographic boundaries. People, especially businesses and local communities, are increasingly relying on platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram to coordinate activities and expand social networks. However, communication tends to be shorter and lacks non-verbal expression, so there is a risk of misunderstanding.
- 2) Social media opens up opportunities for forming new social relationships, as well as strengthening old relationships with friends or family who are far away. However, there is a tendency for relationships to be superficial and temporary, without deep emotional involvement. Digital interactions tend to be pragmatic and do not extend to the real world.
- 3) Even

though it makes connection easier, social media also gives rise to the phenomenon of social isolation, especially among busy people. Some individuals tend to replace face-to-face interactions with online communication, thereby reducing the quality of interpersonal relationships. This shows the existence of a digital paradox, where broad connectedness can actually create social isolation. 4) On the positive side, social media plays a vital role in building social solidarity in Pekanbaru. The digital platform is used for fundraising, coordinating humanitarian aid, and supporting campaigns for local MSMEs. Movements such as “Proud of Pekanbaru Products” are proof of how social media is able to effectively mobilize the collective power of urban society.

Overall, social media has a complex impact on the social interaction patterns of urban communities in Pekanbaru. Wise use of social media, while maintaining a balance between online and offline interactions, is the key to maximizing the benefits and minimizing the negative impact on social life.

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