

DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AND MISCOMMUNICATION IN MODERN RELATIONSHIP

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Abstract

Digital communication has become an important part of everyday life and has changed the way people interact in modern relationships. The widespread use of social media and messaging applications allows individuals to communicate quickly and easily without being limited by distance or time. However, despite these advantages, digital communication may also create misunderstandings because online messages often lack non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice. This study aims to analyze the influence of digital communication on modern relationships, identify the factors that cause miscommunication, and explain how effective communication can reduce misunderstandings. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. The data were collected through observation and simple interviews with university students regarding their experiences in using digital communication. The collected data were analyzed descriptively to identify common communication problems in daily interactions. The findings indicate that digital communication provides convenience and flexibility in maintaining interpersonal relationships. Nevertheless, delayed responses, unclear messages, and different interpretations of online communication frequently lead to miscommunication, which may reduce trust and create conflict. The study concludes that effective interpersonal communication, supported by honesty, openness, empathy, and mutual respect, is essential for maintaining healthy relationships in the digital era. Therefore, individuals should develop good communication skills to minimize misunderstandings and strengthen interpersonal relationships.

Keywords: Digital Communication, Miscommunication, Interpersonal Communication, Modern Relationships, Social Media.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Communication is an essential part of human life because it allows people to exchange information, ideas, emotions, and experiences. The rapid development of digital technology has significantly changed the way people communicate. Today, communication is no longer limited by distance or time because people can interact instantly through digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Telegram, and other social networking applications. This transformation has made communication faster, easier, and more accessible (DeVito, 2019).

Digital communication has become an important aspect of modern relationships, including friendships, family relationships, and romantic relationships. Although digital media provides convenience, communication through online platforms often lacks non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, and tone of voice. These missing elements may cause people to interpret messages differently from the sender's original intention, resulting in miscommunication (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011).

Miscommunication in digital communication has become a common issue among teenagers and university students who rely heavily on online interaction. Delayed responses, unclear messages, short text replies, and misunderstanding of emotions frequently create conflict, reduce trust, and affect interpersonal relationships. Therefore, understanding how digital

communication influences modern relationships is important to improve communication quality and minimize misunderstandings.

Based on these conditions, this study focuses on analyzing the relationship between digital communication and miscommunication in modern relationships. The findings are expected to provide a better understanding of effective communication practices that support healthy interpersonal relationships in the digital era.

1.2 Problem Identification

Based on the background above, the problems identified in this study are as follows:

1. The increasing use of digital communication in everyday interpersonal relationships.
2. The absence of non-verbal communication cues in digital media that often causes message misinterpretation.
3. Miscommunication that may reduce trust and create conflict in modern relationships.
4. The need for effective communication strategies to minimize misunderstandings in digital communication.

1.3 Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How does digital communication influence modern relationships?
2. What factors cause miscommunication in digital communication?
3. How can effective communication reduce miscommunication in modern relationships?

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze the influence of digital communication on modern relationships.
2. To identify the factors that cause miscommunication in digital communication.
3. To explain how effective communication can reduce misunderstandings and improve interpersonal relationships.

1.5 Significance of the Study

a. Theoretical Significance

This study is expected to contribute to the development of communication studies, particularly in the field of digital communication and interpersonal communication. The findings may also serve as additional references for future research related to communication in the digital era.

b. Practical Significance

This study is expected to provide useful information for students and the general public about the importance of communicating clearly, honestly, and respectfully through digital media. The

findings may help individuals improve communication skills and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships while reducing the possibility of miscommunication.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Communication Theory Applied

Communication theory is a collection of concepts that explains how people exchange information, ideas, emotions, and meanings with one another. Communication theories help researchers understand the communication process, identify communication problems, and find appropriate solutions in different situations. In the digital era, communication theories are increasingly important because many interactions occur through online platforms rather than face-to-face conversations (*Littlejohn & Foss, 2011*).

This study applies the Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) Theory as the primary theoretical foundation. Computer-Mediated Communication refers to communication that takes place through digital technologies, such as smartphones, computers, social media, and messaging applications. According to *Walther (1996)*, CMC allows individuals to communicate effectively without being physically present. However, because communication is conducted through digital media, important non-verbal elements such as facial expressions, eye contact, body language, and tone of voice are often absent. As a result, messages may be interpreted differently by the receiver, increasing the possibility of misunderstanding.

The CMC Theory is relevant to this research because it explains how communication through digital media influences interpersonal relationships. Applications such as WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and Telegram make communication easier and faster. Nevertheless, the limited availability of non-verbal cues often causes confusion regarding the meaning of messages. Short replies, delayed responses, or unclear expressions can lead to different interpretations and eventually create miscommunication between individuals (*Walther, 1996*).

Besides CMC Theory, this research also applies Interpersonal Communication Theory. According to *DeVito (2019)*, interpersonal communication is the process through which two or more individuals exchange messages to build understanding, trust, and relationships. Effective interpersonal communication depends not only on spoken or written messages but also on openness, empathy, honesty, active listening, and mutual respect. These communication skills help individuals reduce conflict and maintain healthy relationships.

In modern relationships, interpersonal communication remains essential even though many interactions occur through digital media. Digital technology provides convenience in communication, but it cannot completely replace direct interaction. Therefore, individuals need to communicate clearly, respectfully, and honestly when using digital platforms. By applying the principles of Computer-Mediated Communication Theory and Interpersonal Communication Theory, this study aims to explain how digital communication contributes to miscommunication and how effective communication strategies can improve interpersonal relationships in modern society.

2.2 Key Concept

Digital communication is the process of exchanging information through digital technologies such as smartphones, computers, social media, and messaging applications. The development of digital technology has changed the way people interact because communication is no longer limited by distance and time. People can communicate instantly using applications such as WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Telegram, and other online platforms. According to *Kaplan and Haenlein (2010)*, social media enables users to create, share, and exchange information in virtual communities, making communication faster and more interactive.

One important concept in this study is miscommunication. Miscommunication occurs when the receiver understands a message differently from what the sender intends. In digital communication, misunderstandings often happen because text messages do not include facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, or tone of voice. As explained by *DeVito (2019)*, non-verbal communication plays an important role in helping people understand the meaning of messages. Without these non-verbal cues, digital messages may easily be interpreted incorrectly, leading to confusion or conflict.

Another important concept is interpersonal communication. Interpersonal communication refers to the communication process between two or more people to build understanding, trust, and emotional relationships. According to *DeVito (2019)*, effective interpersonal communication is characterized by openness, empathy, supportiveness, positive attitudes, and equality. These elements help individuals maintain healthy relationships and solve communication problems effectively.

The concept of modern relationships is also closely related to this study. Modern relationships describe interpersonal relationships that are influenced by technological development and digital communication. Today, many friendships, family relationships, and romantic relationships depend on online communication. Although digital media provides convenience and flexibility, excessive dependence on digital communication may reduce face-to-face interaction and increase the possibility of misunderstanding. Therefore, communication quality remains an important factor in maintaining healthy relationships (*Littlejohn & Foss, 2011*).

Overall, these key concepts explain that digital communication provides many benefits for modern society. However, communication through digital media also creates challenges because the absence of non-verbal communication may increase the risk of miscommunication. Therefore, effective interpersonal communication skills are needed to maintain positive and healthy relationships.

2.3 Previous Studies

Several previous studies have discussed digital communication and its influence on interpersonal relationships. These studies provide useful references for understanding how communication through digital media affects human interaction.

A study conducted by *Walther (1996)* introduced the Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) Theory. The study explains that digital communication allows people to interact effectively even without physical meetings. However, the absence of non-verbal communication often

causes different interpretations of messages. This theory becomes one of the main references in understanding miscommunication in online communication.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) examined the development of social media as a communication platform. Their study concluded that social media has changed the communication process by making information sharing easier, faster, and more interactive. At the same time, the study also pointed out that digital communication requires responsible and effective communication to prevent misunderstanding among users.

DeVito (2019) emphasized that interpersonal communication depends on openness, empathy, trust, honesty, and mutual understanding. According to this study, communication quality has a direct influence on relationship satisfaction. Although digital communication supports daily interaction, face-to-face communication remains important because non-verbal communication strengthens message interpretation.

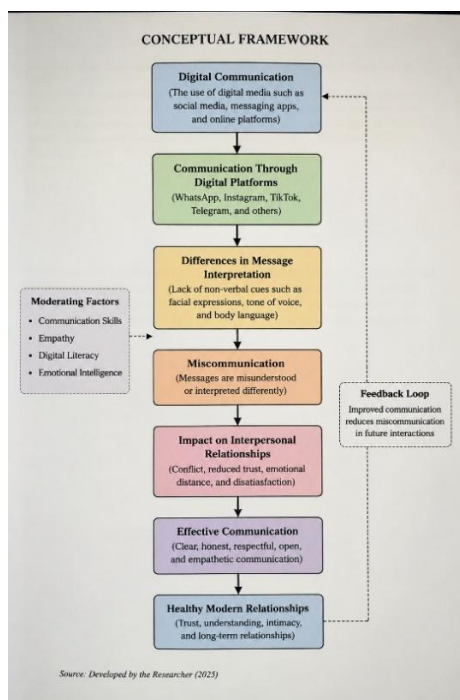
Based on these previous studies, it can be concluded that digital communication has both positive and negative impacts. It improves communication efficiency and accessibility but also increases the possibility of miscommunication due to the absence of non-verbal communication. Therefore, this research focuses on understanding how effective communication can reduce misunderstandings in modern relationships.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

This research is based on the assumption that digital communication influences interpersonal relationships. The increasing use of social media and messaging applications changes the way people communicate. Although communication becomes faster and easier, differences in message interpretation frequently occur because digital communication lacks facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice.

These differences in interpretation may lead to miscommunication, which can reduce trust, create conflict, and weaken interpersonal relationships. However, effective communication characterized by honesty, openness, empathy, and respect can minimize misunderstanding and improve communication quality.

The conceptual framework of this research can be illustrated as follows:



The framework shows that effective communication acts as an important solution to reduce the negative effects of miscommunication in digital communication. Therefore, improving communication skills is necessary to maintain healthy interpersonal relationships in the digital era.

3. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Data Description

Based on interviews conducted with two students, namely *Hayqal* and *Aras*, it was found that digital communication has become an essential part of their daily lives. Both participants agreed that digital communication helps them stay connected with family, friends, and classmates more easily despite distance and time limitations.

The first participant, *Aras*, stated that WhatsApp is the digital communication platform he uses most frequently because it makes communication easier with family members, friends, and classmates.

The first participant, *Aras*, stated that WhatsApp is the digital communication platform he uses most frequently because it makes communication easier with family members, friends, and classmates.

As stated during the interview:

"I use WhatsApp most often because it makes it easier for me to communicate with my family, friends, and classmates." (*Aras*, 2026)

Meanwhile, the second participant, *Hayqal*, explained that unclear messages, delayed responses, and the absence of facial expressions and tone of voice are the main causes of miscommunication in digital communication.

He stated:

"In my opinion, the main causes are unclear messages, delayed responses, and the absence of facial expressions and tone of voice." (*Hayqal*, 2026)

Overall, the interview results indicate that digital communication provides significant benefits in maintaining interpersonal relationships because it enables faster and easier communication. However, both participants agreed that digital communication may also lead to miscommunication due to the lack of non-verbal communication cues. Therefore, clear communication and message clarification are considered important strategies for reducing misunderstandings in modern relationships.

3.2 Data Analysis

The interview findings show that digital communication has become an important part of participants' daily lives. Both participants agreed that digital communication, especially through WhatsApp, helps them communicate more easily with family, friends, and classmates. This finding indicates that digital communication has a positive influence on modern relationships because it enables people to stay connected regardless of distance and time.

However, the data also reveal that digital communication can lead to miscommunication. One participant experienced misunderstanding because a message was too short, making it difficult to understand the sender's intention and emotion. Another participant explained that unclear messages, delayed responses, and the absence of facial expressions and tone of voice are the main factors that cause miscommunication. These conditions may create misunderstandings, conflicts, and reduce trust in interpersonal relationships.

The participants also described several ways to reduce miscommunication, such as writing clear messages, asking for clarification when something is unclear, and choosing phone calls or face-to-face communication when discussing important matters. These findings indicate that although digital communication offers convenience and efficiency, effective communication skills remain essential for maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships and minimizing misunderstandings in the digital era.

3.3 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study indicate that digital communication has a positive influence on modern relationships by making communication faster, easier, and more accessible. Both participants stated that WhatsApp is the platform they use most frequently because it helps them stay connected with family, friends, and classmates. These findings support the idea that digital communication has become an essential part of everyday interpersonal communication in the digital era.

The interviews also reveal that miscommunication remains one of the main challenges in digital communication. The participants explained that unclear messages, delayed responses, and the absence of non-verbal communication cues, such as facial expressions and tone of voice, often lead to misunderstandings. As a result, miscommunication may create conflicts and reduce trust in interpersonal relationships if it is not resolved properly.

Overall, the findings show that effective communication is essential for minimizing miscommunication in modern relationships. The participants suggested several strategies, including writing clear messages, asking for clarification, and choosing phone calls or face-to-face communication when discussing important matters. Therefore, although digital communication provides many benefits, users should apply effective communication skills to maintain healthy interpersonal relationships and reduce misunderstandings.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study regarding digital communication and miscommunication in modern relationships, several conclusions can be drawn. First, digital communication has become an essential part of everyday life. The interview results show that WhatsApp is the platform most frequently used by the participants because it helps them communicate quickly and easily with family, friends, and classmates. This indicates that digital communication plays an important role in maintaining interpersonal relationships despite distance and time limitations.

Second, the study found that miscommunication is one of the main challenges in digital communication. The participants explained that unclear messages, delayed responses, and the absence of non-verbal communication cues, such as facial expressions and tone of voice, often lead to misunderstandings. These misunderstandings may create conflicts and reduce trust in interpersonal relationships if they are not handled properly.

Finally, the findings suggest that effective communication is the key to reducing miscommunication in modern relationships. Writing clear messages, asking for clarification, and choosing phone calls or face-to-face communication when discussing important matters are considered effective strategies for preventing misunderstandings. Therefore, digital communication provides many benefits, but users must also communicate carefully and effectively to maintain healthy interpersonal relationships.

4.2 Implications

This study has both theoretical and practical implications regarding digital communication in modern interpersonal relationships.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings contribute to the development of communication studies, particularly in the fields of digital communication and interpersonal communication. The study shows that digital communication has become an important medium for maintaining relationships, while also highlighting the challenges of miscommunication caused by the absence of non-verbal communication cues. Therefore, the findings support the importance of effective communication in the digital era.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that users should communicate more clearly and carefully when using digital media. Writing complete messages, asking for clarification, and using phone calls or face-to-face communication for important conversations can help reduce misunderstandings. In addition, the study encourages students and the general public to improve their digital communication skills in order to build healthier interpersonal relationships and minimize conflicts caused by miscommunication.

4.3 Research Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the research involved only two participants, so the findings cannot fully represent the experiences and perspectives of all digital communication users. The results are limited to the participants' personal experiences and may differ from those of other individuals.

Second, this study focused only on digital communication through daily messaging applications, particularly WhatsApp. Therefore, the findings do not fully explain miscommunication that may occur on other digital communication platforms, such as social media, video conferencing applications, or online communities.

Despite these limitations, the interview data were sufficient to answer the research questions and provide an understanding of how digital communication influences modern relationships and how miscommunication can be reduced through effective communication strategies.

4.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, future researchers are encouraged to involve a larger number of participants from different age groups, educational backgrounds, or occupations. A broader range of participants would provide more comprehensive insights into how digital communication influences modern relationships in different social contexts.

Future studies are also recommended to examine other digital communication platforms, such as Instagram, Telegram, TikTok, or video conferencing applications, to compare how different platforms contribute to miscommunication. In addition, researchers may investigate other factors, such as digital literacy, emotional intelligence, communication styles, and cultural differences, that may influence the occurrence of miscommunication.

Finally, future research is encouraged to use different research methods, such as quantitative or mixed-methods approaches, to complement qualitative findings. These methods could provide more comprehensive and generalizable results regarding the relationship between digital communication, miscommunication, and interpersonal relationships in the digital era.

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