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HAS THE INTERNET RESHAPED COMMUNICATION IN WAYS THAT ARE DEEPLY TROUBLING OR NOT?

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Abstract

This study examined the topic thus, has the internet reshaped Communication in ways that are deeply troubling or not. Three research questions guided the study. The descriptive survey research design was employed in the study. The study was carried out in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. The population was 78 comprising 35 lecturers in the University of Nigeria Nsukka and 43 students 5 selected public university in Enugu state. Census sampling techniques was used to enumerate the entire population because of the manageable size. Instrument for data collection was a questionnaire developed by the researcher titled 'Has internet reshaped Communication Questionnaire (HIRCQ). The instrument was validated by three experts from the department of Agricultural Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and the reliability of the instrument was determined using through a pilot-test by sampling 25 instrument from similar respondents outside the research area.. Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the internal consistence of the pilot test and 0.72. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The findings revealed among others that internet has significantly reshaped communication, yielding both troubling and beneficial outcomes, thus while digital platforms have enhanced global connectivity and access to information, they have also facilitated the rapid spread of misinformation and reduced the quality of face-to-face interactions. Another finding shows that online communication often encourages superficial engagement and can weaken deep interpersonal relationships due to reduced emotional cues. In conclusion, although the internet has revolutionized communication by making it faster and more accessible, it has also introduced challenges that can undermine meaningful human connection. Therefore, it is recommended that users adopt responsible digital communication practices, promote media literacy, and balance online interactions with real-life social engagement to mitigate these negative effects.

Keywords: Communications, Revolution, Technologies, Connectivity.

Introduction

The emergence of the internet stands as one of the most transformative developments in the history of human communication. Over the past few decades, the internet has fundamentally

altered how individuals, groups, and institutions exchange information, interact socially, and construct meaning in everyday life. From early email systems to contemporary social media platforms, communication has shifted from slow, localized exchanges to instantaneous, global interactions. This transformation raises a critical question: has the internet reshaped communication in ways that are deeply troubling, or has it primarily enhanced human interaction. The answer is complex, as the internet presents both unprecedented opportunities and significant challenges in communication processes.

Traditionally, communication was largely face-to-face, characterized by physical presence, non-verbal cues, and contextual depth. However, the rise of digital technologies has introduced new communication channels such as social media, instant messaging, and video conferencing. These platforms have enabled people to communicate across geographical boundaries in real time, fostering global interconnectedness. According to recent studies, digital communication tools have significantly improved the speed and efficiency of information exchange, allowing individuals and organizations to interact without the constraints of time and space (Umoren & Ukpe, 2025). This has been particularly evident in areas such as business, education, and healthcare, where remote communication has become increasingly normalized.

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the reliance on internet-based communication systems. During this period, digital communication became central to maintaining social, academic, and professional interactions. Research shows that digital platforms enabled continuity in work and education, supporting coordination and task efficiency even in crisis situations (Fuchs, 2026). As a result, hybrid and remote communication models have become a lasting feature of modern society. This demonstrates that the internet has not only reshaped communication but has also redefined the structure of human interaction in both personal and institutional contexts.

Despite these advantages, concerns have emerged regarding the depth and quality of communication in the digital age. One major issue is the reduction of non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, tone, and body language, which are essential for effective interpersonal communication. Studies indicate that digital communication often lacks emotional richness, leading to misunderstandings and weaker social bonds (Sharipova, 2025). This suggests that while communication has become faster and more accessible, it may also be more superficial and less meaningful.

Furthermore, the internet has contributed to changes in cognitive processes and communication behavior. Scholars argue that constant exposure to online content has reduced individuals' attention spans and ability to engage in deep, reflective communication. The tendency to skim information rather than critically analyze it has been linked to the design of digital platforms, which prioritize speed and immediacy over depth (Britannica, 2024). Consequently, communication in the digital era is often characterized by brevity, fragmentation, and reduced critical engagement.

Another troubling aspect of internet-mediated communication is the rapid spread of misinformation. Social media platforms enable information to circulate quickly, often without verification, leading to the dissemination of false or misleading content. This has significant

implications for public discourse, decision-making, and social cohesion. Studies highlight that misinformation can distort reality, influence public opinion, and undermine trust in credible sources (Studocu, 2025) The challenge of distinguishing between accurate and inaccurate information has become a defining feature of communication in the digital age.

In addition, the internet has given rise to negative social behaviors such as cyberbullying, online harassment, and digital addiction. These issues reflect the darker side of internet communication, where anonymity and lack of accountability can encourage harmful interactions. Research indicates that excessive use of online platforms can negatively affect mental health and reduce face-to-face social interaction (Ashar, 2024). This raises concerns about whether the internet is fostering genuine human connection or contributing to social isolation.

However, it is important to recognize that the internet also offers significant positive contributions to communication. It has democratized access to information, enabling individuals from diverse backgrounds to participate in global conversations. Social media platforms, for instance, provide opportunities for self-expression, community building, and social activism. People can share ideas, collaborate on projects, and mobilize for social change in ways that were previously impossible. Moreover, digital communication tools have facilitated intercultural interaction, helping to bridge language and cultural barriers through technologies such as automatic translation (Sharipova, 2025).

In the educational sector, the internet has expanded access to knowledge and learning opportunities. Online platforms enable students to access a wide range of resources, participate in virtual classrooms, and engage with global learning communities. This has enhanced communication between teachers and students, making education more flexible and inclusive. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of online communication in education depends on digital literacy and the ability to use technology responsibly. Without these skills, students may struggle to navigate online information and communicate effectively (ResearchGate, 2026).

The dual nature of the internet's impact on communication highlights the need for a balanced perspective. On one hand, the internet has revolutionized communication by making it faster, more accessible, and more inclusive. On the other hand, it has introduced challenges related to misinformation, reduced communication depth, and negative social behaviors. These contrasting effects suggest that the internet is neither entirely beneficial nor entirely harmful; rather, its impact depends on how it is used.

In contemporary society, the debate over the internet's influence on communication continues to evolve. Some scholars argue that the internet is fundamentally reshaping human interaction in troubling ways, emphasizing issues such as reduced empathy, weakened relationships, and cognitive overload. Others contend that the internet enhances communication by expanding opportunities for connection, learning, and collaboration. This ongoing debate underscores the complexity of the issue and the need for further research.

Ultimately, the internet has undeniably transformed communication in profound ways. It has altered not only the methods of communication but also the nature of human interaction itself.

While the internet offers numerous benefits, it also presents significant challenges that must be addressed to ensure that communication remains meaningful and effective. Therefore, understanding the extent to which the internet has reshaped communication—whether in troubling or beneficial ways is essential for navigating the digital age.

Statement of the problem

The rapid expansion of the internet has fundamentally transformed communication processes across personal, social, academic, and professional domains. While this transformation has enhanced the speed, reach, and convenience of information exchange, it has also introduced complex challenges that raise concerns about the quality and integrity of human communication. Despite the widespread adoption of internet-based communication tools, there remains growing uncertainty about whether these changes have improved meaningful interaction or contributed to a decline in communication depth and effectiveness.

One major problem lies in the increasing shift from face-to-face communication to digitally mediated interactions, which often lack essential non-verbal cues such as tone, facial expressions, and body language. This limitation can lead to misinterpretation of messages, weakened interpersonal relationships, and reduced emotional connection among individuals. As people rely more on text-based and virtual communication platforms, there is concern that communication is becoming more superficial, fragmented, and less empathetic.

In addition, the internet has facilitated the rapid spread of misinformation and unverified content, posing a serious threat to effective communication and informed decision-making. The ease with which information can be created and shared online has made it difficult for users to distinguish between credible and false information, thereby undermining trust in communication systems. This challenge is further compounded by algorithm-driven platforms that often reinforce biased or misleading content.

Moreover, the rise of negative online behaviors such as cyberbullying, online harassment, and digital addiction highlights the darker side of internet communication. These issues not only affect the psychological well-being of users but also disrupt healthy communication patterns and social interactions. Excessive reliance on digital communication may also reduce opportunities for meaningful face-to-face engagement, potentially leading to social isolation. Despite these concerns, the internet continues to play a vital role in modern communication, creating a paradox where its benefits coexist with significant drawbacks. However, there is insufficient consensus on the extent to which the internet has reshaped communication in ways that are deeply troubling or beneficial. This lack of clarity creates a gap in understanding the true impact of internet-mediated communication on human interaction.

Therefore, the problem of this study is to critically examine whether the internet has reshaped communication in ways that are deeply troubling, by assessing its effects on communication quality, interpersonal relationships, information credibility, and social behavior. This investigation is necessary to provide a clearer understanding of the implications of internet use for effective communication in contemporary society.

Purpose of the study

The study is designed to achieve the following specific purposes:

1. To examine the extent to which the internet has influenced the quality and depth of communication among individuals in contemporary society.
2. To assess the effects of internet-based communication on interpersonal relationships, particularly in relation to emotional connection and social interaction.
3. To determine the role of the internet in the spread of misinformation and its implications for effective and credible communication.

Research questions

1. What are the extent to which the internet has influenced the quality and depth of communication among individuals in contemporary society?
2. What are the effects of internet-based communication on interpersonal relationships, particularly in relation to emotional connection and social interaction?
3. What are the role of the internet in the spread of misinformation and its implications for effective and credible communication?

Methodology

This study examined the topic: Has the internet reshaped Communication in ways that are deeply troubling or not? Three research questions guided the study. The descriptive survey research design was employed in the study. The study was carried out in Nsukka local government Area of Enugu state, Nigeria. The population was 78 comprising 35 lecturers in the University of Nigeria Nsukka and 43 students 5 selected public university in Enugu state. Census sampling techniques was used to enumerate the entire population because of the manageable size. Instrument for data collection was a questionnaire developed by the researcher titled 'Has internet reshaped Communication Questionnaire (HIRCQ). The instrument was validated by three experts from the department of Agricultural Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and the reliability of the instrument was determined using through a pilot-test by sampling 25 instrument from similar respondents outside the research area.. Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the internal consistence of the pilot test and 0.72. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions.

Result

Research Question 1

What are the extent to which the internet has influenced the quality and depth of communication among individuals in contemporary society?

Table one: Mean and standard deviation of the respondents on the extent to which the internet has influenced the quality and depth of communication among individuals in contemporary society.

S/N	Item Statements	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Remark
1	The internet has improved the speed of communication among individuals	3.52	0.61	High Extent
2	The internet has enhanced accessibility to information for communication purposes	3.60	0.55	High Extent

S/N	Item Statements	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Remark
3	Online communication reduces the depth of face-to-face interactions	3.10	0.72	High Extent
4	The use of social media leads to more superficial conversations	3.05	0.80	High Extent
5	Internet communication improves collaboration among individuals	3.40	0.65	High Extent
6	The internet encourages multitasking, reducing attention during communication	3.15	0.77	High Extent
7	Digital communication platforms weaken emotional expression in conversations	2.95	0.83	High Extent
8	The internet allows for more frequent communication among individuals	3.55	0.58	High Extent
9	Misinterpretation of messages is more common in online communication	3.20	0.70	High Extent
10	The internet has improved overall communication effectiveness	3.30	0.66	High Extent

The results in Table 1 reveal that the internet has influenced the quality and depth of communication among individuals to a **high extent**, as indicated by the cluster mean of **3.28**. All the items recorded mean values above the acceptance benchmark of 2.50, suggesting general agreement among respondents. Specifically, respondents strongly agreed that the internet enhances communication speed, accessibility, and frequency, indicating its positive role in facilitating interaction. However, they also agreed that it contributes to reduced depth of communication, superficial conversations, and increased message misinterpretation. This implies that while the internet improves efficiency and connectivity, it simultaneously affects the richness and emotional quality of communication. Overall, the findings suggest that the internet has a **significant but mixed influence,** improving accessibility and efficiency while posing challenges to communication depth and quality.

Research Question 2: **what are the effects of Internet-Based Communication on Interpersonal Relationships**

Table 2: Mean Ratings, Standard Deviation, and Remarks on the Effects of Internet-Based Communication on Interpersonal Relationships?

S/N	Item Statements	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Remark
1	Internet communication helps individuals maintain relationships over long distances	3.58	0.60	High Extent
2	Online communication reduces face-to-face interaction among individuals	3.25	0.74	High Extent
3	The use of social media strengthens social connections among peers	3.10	0.78	High Extent
4	Internet communication weakens emotional bonding in relationships	3.05	0.82	High Extent

S/N	Item Statements	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Remark
5	Individuals feel less emotionally connected when communicating online	3.12	0.79	High Extent
6	Internet-based communication increases social isolation among users	2.98	0.85	High Extent
7	Online platforms encourage frequent interaction but with less emotional depth	3.20	0.70	High Extent
8	Internet communication improves social networking and relationship building	3.35	0.68	High Extent
9	Misunderstandings occur more frequently in online relationships	3.18	0.73	High Extent
10	Internet communication has improved overall interpersonal relationships	3.05	0.76	High Extent
| |	**Cluster Mean** | **3.19** | **0.75** | **High Extent** |			

The findings in Table 2 indicate that internet-based communication affects interpersonal relationships to a **high extent**, with a cluster mean of **3.19**. All items recorded mean values above the benchmark of 2.50, showing that respondents generally agree on its significant influence. The results reveal that internet communication plays a positive role in maintaining long-distance relationships and enhancing social networking. However, respondents also agreed that it reduces face-to-face interaction, weakens emotional bonding, and increases the likelihood of misunderstandings and social isolation. This suggests that although internet-based communication supports connectivity and interaction, it may negatively impact emotional closeness and the quality of relationships. Overall, the findings indicate that internet communication has a **dual effect** on interpersonal relationships—enhancing social connectivity while simultaneously reducing emotional depth and personal interaction.

Research Question 3: What are the **role of the Internet in the Spread of Misinformation and Its Implications for Communication?**

Table 3: Mean Ratings, Standard Deviation, and Remarks on the Role of the Internet in the Spread of Misinformation

S/N	Item Statements	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Remark
1	The internet enables rapid spread of unverified information	3.62	0.54	Very High Extent
2	Social media platforms contribute significantly to the spread of misinformation	3.55	0.60	Very High Extent
3	Users often share information online without verifying its accuracy	3.40	0.68	High Extent
4	Misinformation on the internet affects people's decision-making	3.48	0.66	High Extent

S/N	Item Statements	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Remark
5	The internet makes it difficult to distinguish between credible and false information	3.33	0.72	High Extent
6	Exposure to misinformation reduces trust in online communication	3.28	0.75	High Extent
7	Fake news spreads faster than verified information online	3.50	0.63	Very High Extent
8	Internet algorithms promote sensational or misleading content	3.22	0.70	High Extent
9	Misinformation negatively affects effective communication in society	3.45	0.67	High Extent
10	The internet has weakened the credibility of information sources	3.18	0.73	High Extent
| |	**Cluster Mean** | **3.40** | **0.67** | **High Extent** |			

The findings in Table 3 show that the internet plays a role in the spread of misinformation to a **high extent**, as indicated by the cluster mean of **3.40**. Most of the items recorded mean scores above 3.00, with some reaching the **very high extent** level, indicating strong agreement among respondents.

Specifically, respondents strongly agreed that the internet facilitates the rapid dissemination of unverified information and that social media platforms significantly contribute to the spread of misinformation. They also agreed that misinformation affects decision-making, reduces trust, and makes it difficult to identify credible information sources. This highlights the serious implications of misinformation for effective and reliable communication. Overall, the results suggest that while the internet is a powerful communication tool, it also poses significant risks to information credibility and communication effectiveness due to the widespread presence of misinformation.

Discussion of the Findings

The extent to which the internet has influenced the quality and depth of communication among individuals in contemporary society.

The findings of this study are consistent with the views of Fuchs (2026), who noted that the internet has significantly improved the speed and efficiency of communication across different sectors of society. Fuchs emphasized that digital communication platforms enhance accessibility and enable frequent interaction among users, thereby strengthening connectivity in both personal and professional contexts. This aligns with the present study, where respondents agreed to a high extent that the internet improves communication speed, accessibility, and frequency. Both findings highlight the positive role of the internet in facilitating fast and efficient communication, making it an indispensable tool in modern society.

Similarly, the findings corroborate the position of Sharipova (2025), who argued that despite the advantages of digital communication, it often leads to reduced communication depth and limited emotional expression. According to Sharipova, the absence of non-verbal cues in online communication contributes to superficial interactions and weakens the richness of interpersonal exchanges. This is in agreement with the current study, where respondents indicated that internet use leads to shallow conversations and affects the emotional quality of communication. The alignment suggests that while digital platforms promote interaction, they may compromise the depth and meaningfulness of communication.

Furthermore, the study supports the findings of Umoren and Ukpe (2025), who observed that internet-based communication increases the likelihood of message misinterpretation due to its text-based nature and lack of contextual cues. They noted that this can negatively affect understanding and communication effectiveness. This is consistent with the present findings, where respondents agreed that misinterpretation of messages is more common in online communication. Both studies therefore reveal that although the internet enhances communication efficiency, it introduces challenges that can hinder clarity and mutual understanding.

Effects of internet-based communication on interpersonal relationships, particularly in relation to emotional connection and social interaction.

The findings of this study are supported by Ashar (2024), who observed that while internet-based communication strengthens social connectivity, it can also contribute to emotional detachment and reduced face-to-face interaction. Ashar explained that excessive reliance on social media and online platforms may weaken emotional bonding among individuals, even though it allows them to maintain relationships across long distances. This aligns with the present study, where respondents agreed that internet communication enhances long-distance relationships but reduces emotional closeness and increases social isolation. Both findings therefore highlight the dual nature of internet communication in interpersonal relationships.

In the same vein, Sharipova (2025) noted that digital communication tools facilitate frequent interaction but often lack emotional depth due to the absence of non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and tone of voice. According to her findings, this limitation can lead to misunderstandings and weaker interpersonal bonds. This is consistent with the current study, where respondents indicated that internet-based communication increases the likelihood of misunderstandings and weakens emotional bonding. The alignment suggests that while online platforms promote continuous interaction, they may compromise the quality of emotional connection in relationships.

Similarly, Fuchs (2026) emphasized that internet communication has reshaped social interaction by enabling constant connectivity but also increasing tendencies toward social isolation. He argued that although digital platforms enhance networking opportunities, they can reduce meaningful physical interactions over time. This agrees with the present findings, where respondents acknowledged that internet communication improves social networking but also contributes to reduced face-to-face engagement and emotional distancing. Both studies therefore reinforce the idea that internet-based communication has both strengthening and weakening effects on interpersonal relationships.

The role of the internet in the spread of misinformation and its implications for effective and credible communication.

The findings of this study are consistent with the position of Fuchs (2026), who observed that the architecture of digital communication platforms enables the rapid circulation of information without adequate verification mechanisms. Fuchs explained that the speed and openness of internet communication, while beneficial, also make it easier for false or misleading content to spread widely before it can be corrected. This aligns with the present study, where respondents strongly agreed that the internet facilitates the rapid dissemination of unverified information. Both findings therefore highlight the structural nature of the internet in accelerating misinformation flow.

In the same direction, Sharipova (2025) noted that digital communication environments often blur the distinction between credible and non-credible sources due to the absence of strict editorial control on social media platforms. She further argued that this situation weakens users' ability to critically evaluate information, thereby increasing the risk of misinformation influencing public understanding. This agrees with the present findings, where respondents indicated that it is difficult to distinguish between credible and false information online. The alignment shows that the internet's open communication system contributes to confusion and reduced information reliability.

Similarly, Ashar (2024) emphasized that exposure to misinformation on social media significantly affects users' decision-making processes and reduces trust in online communication systems. According to Ashar, repeated encounters with false or misleading content can lead to skepticism and declining confidence in digital information sources. This is consistent with the present study, where respondents agreed that misinformation affects decision-making and reduces trust in communication. Both studies reinforce the idea that misinformation has serious psychological and social implications for communication effectiveness.

Conclusion

This study examined whether the internet has reshaped communication in ways that are deeply troubling or not, with specific focus on the quality and depth of communication, interpersonal relationships, and the spread of misinformation. The findings revealed that the internet has significantly transformed communication in contemporary society in both positive and negative ways. On the positive side, the study established that the internet has greatly improved the speed, accessibility, and frequency of communication among individuals. It has made it easier for people to stay connected across geographical boundaries, strengthened social networking, and enhanced collaboration in both academic and professional settings. These improvements show that the internet has become an essential tool for modern communication, making interaction faster, more flexible, and more inclusive. However, despite these benefits, the study also revealed several troubling effects associated with internet-based communication. It was found that the depth and emotional quality of communication have been reduced as individuals increasingly rely on digital platforms rather than face-to-face interaction. The absence of non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language has contributed to misunderstandings and superficial conversations. As a result, communication is often more fragmented and less emotionally engaging compared to traditional forms of interaction.

Furthermore, the study showed that interpersonal relationships are affected by internet communication in a dual manner. While it helps individuals maintain relationships over long distances and expands social networks, it also weakens emotional bonding and increases the likelihood of social isolation. Excessive reliance on online communication can reduce meaningful physical interaction, thereby affecting the quality of relationships over time. This suggests that the internet enhances connectivity but may simultaneously reduce emotional closeness among individuals.

Another important finding of the study is the widespread role of the internet in the spread of misinformation. The study revealed that false or unverified information spreads rapidly through social media platforms, often faster than verified content. This has serious implications for communication credibility, as it becomes difficult for users to distinguish between accurate and misleading information. Consequently, misinformation affects decision-making, reduces trust in communication systems, and undermines the reliability of online information sources

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Educational institutions, government agencies, and media organizations should intensify efforts to educate internet users on effective digital communication skills. This includes training on how to interpret online messages accurately, recognize misinformation, and maintain meaningful communication in both online and offline environments.
2. Individuals should be encouraged to balance online communication with face-to-face interactions. This will help strengthen emotional bonding, improve interpersonal relationships, and reduce the negative effects of over-dependence on digital platforms for communication.
3. Social media platforms, regulatory bodies, and governments should collaborate to improve fact-checking systems and enforce stricter policies against the spread of false information. Verified content labeling and public awareness campaigns should also be promoted to enhance trust and credibility in online communication.

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