

# ALTERATIONS IN SOCIAL INTERACTION PATTERNS AND IDENTITY IN THE ERA OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL CULTURE

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***Abstract-**This literature study examines how social media and digital culture reshape everyday social interaction, identity formation, and the circulation of disinformation. Interaction increasingly takes place through brief digital signals such as messages, likes, and comments, which become reference points for closeness, recognition, and exclusion. Identity emerges as a continuously negotiated presentation of self, influenced by imagined audiences, platform design, and statistical indicators of engagement. Digital spaces open opportunities to explore alternative identities and to join new communities, yet they also generate tensions between online personas and offline expectations in family, education, and work settings. The study further shows that disinformation is tightly interwoven with patterns of online interaction. Trust networks, rapid communication habits, visual culture, and group-based identification provide fertile ground for misleading narratives that travel through private chats, public timelines, and influencer communities. Algorithmic curation amplifies emotionally charged content, allowing false claims to gain high visibility and persistence. By synthesizing theoretical and empirical works from various disciplines, this article offers an integrated conceptual map that links interactional dynamics, identity work, and disinformation, and thus supports the design of educational, communicative, and regulatory initiatives oriented toward more responsible digital communication.*

*Keywords:* social media; digital culture; social interaction; identity; disinformation; trust networks; online communication.

## INTRODUCTION

Technological changes in communication over the past two decades have shifted the way humans understand themselves, others, and the social world around them. The space for interaction, which used to rely on face-to-face meetings, is now layered with digital spaces that are accessed through personal devices almost all day long. In this new space, people share experiences, display snippets of their lives, negotiate closeness, and at the same time create distance with various parties. Text, image, and video-based platforms present a very dense stream of messages, which quickly form new habits in responding to, interpreting, and remembering events. The rhythm of social life is guided by notifications, recommendation algorithms, and a culture of continuous online presence (Gottschalk, 2021). This shift does not merely provide additional means of communication, but changes the way individuals respond to the gaze of others, manage embarrassment, build familiarity, and prepare themselves to be seen at any moment.

In such an atmosphere, social media functions as a stage where individuals consciously curate their appearance. Photos, short videos, and statuses become a means of piecing together a story about who they are, what they are feeling, and what values they consider important. This process is not one-way, as each post immediately receives responses in the form of likes, comments, and private messages that return the social environment's assessment to the account owner. The identity that is formed as a result is fluid, always open to readjustment following patterns of appreciation or criticism that arise. Users learn to read the symbolic cues from the amount of interaction, compare themselves with others who appear more often, and rearrange the way they speak to match the expectations of their imagined audience. In the long term, the experience of being a subject that is constantly evaluated in the digital space gives new colour to the way people understand dignity, self-esteem, and social recognition (Werani, 2019). This process involves constant negotiation between deliberate self-representation and perceptions and feedback from the online social environment, which together shape an individual's identity in the digital world (Costa et al., 2022).

Amidst this flow of online experiences, the structure of social relations has undergone a subtle but significant shift. Friendships are no longer limited to geographical proximity or regular encounters, but are formed through frequent exchanges of messages, sharing of content, and shared presence in various digital conversations. Family ties, friendships, work relationships, and community membership are supported by conversation groups scattered across various applications. In these groups, jokes, reprimands, advice, and arguments arise in layers and often occur simultaneously. A person's presence is measured by their message trail and engagement in conversations, while silence can be interpreted as withdrawal or indifference. Social networks have become both broader and more fragile, as relationships that appear close in the flow of messages can quickly become strained when the rhythm of communication changes or when information is exchanged that disturbs collective feelings (Liua, 2022).

These changes become even more complex when digital culture presents a flood of information that is difficult to classify spontaneously. On homepages and timelines, official news mixes with personal stories, advertisements sit alongside hate speech, and snippets of fact interact with seemingly convincing speculation. Users move between links, video clips, and images that trigger strong emotions, often without checking the source or mechanism of dissemination. In such circumstances, the boundary between direct experience and experiences mediated by other people's narratives becomes blurred. People feel close to events happening on the other side of the world, as if they are witnessing them first-hand, even though the information they receive has gone through various processes of selection, editing, and interpretation (Shevchenko & Shtofer, 2022). The way we feel threat, sympathy, and solidarity has also shifted, because emotions are activated through screens, not through face-to-face encounters bound by physical proximity. This complex dynamic is an integral part of the broader transformation of cultural values and social practices in the digital age, as analysed by Al Hakim et al. (2021). The process of change they studied, from how we communicate and build relationships to how we interpret reality, reflects how the emergence of digital culture has not only changed tools but also altered the structure of experience, emotional patterns, and the boundaries of communities themselves, as illustrated in detail in the paragraph above.

Another dimension that has emerged in digital culture is the emergence of disinformation that seeps into the most intimate spaces of interaction (Çöteli, 2019). Messages containing certain claims about health, politics, religion, and daily life circulate rapidly among family, friends, and colleagues. Trust that was previously built through shared experiences is now also based on texts, images, and videos shared by people close to us. When the habit of checking sources has not yet been formed, news that seems convincing is immediately responded to with emotional attachment. In many online conversations, it is not the truth of the message that is tested, but rather loyalty to the relationship with the sender. As a result, the space for social interaction in digital media has become an arena for a mixture of efforts to build familiarity, seek identity recognition, and spread information that may not necessarily be accurate. This is where topics such as changes in interaction patterns, identity formation, and disinformation find their relevance for more regular examination.

Behind the abundance of digital communication tools, there is uncertainty about how individuals actually experience the presence of others on social media (Gasparyan, 2023). Relationships that appear intimate on screen can leave a feeling of loneliness when returning to everyday life, which is not always as beautiful as posts. Many users feel compelled to present the best version of themselves, while at the same time feeling anxious when the expected response does not appear. In group conversations, reprimands, jokes, or differences of opinion can cause wounds that are difficult to express openly, because everything is presented in the form of shallow text and symbols. Old relationships can become strained due to infrequent interaction in the digital space, while new relationships appear warm even though the people involved have never met. The question that arises is how these patterns of interaction change the way people perceive closeness, trust, and conflict, and to what extent these changes shift the foundations of community building that have been established through shared experiences in physical spaces.

At the same time, the flow of information through social media has serious consequences for the way society forms its views on public reality. Messages designed to influence emotions often infiltrate family conversations, religious communities, and professional networks, blurring the lines between valid information, personal opinion, and fake news. Disinformation does not only circulate in major issues such as politics or security, but also in the realms of health, education, and inter-group relations. When information is spread by people who are considered close, recipients tend to suspend their critical thinking. In this kind of atmosphere, patterns of interaction on social media have the potential to cause sharp divisions, because differences of opinion are easily interpreted as attacks on group identity. The problem that arises is not merely the inaccuracy of information, but the tension within social networks that makes it difficult for conversations to return to an atmosphere of mutual listening.

These complex socio-digital challenges come on top of other fundamental challenges, namely the gap in digital access and skills. The challenge of achieving inclusivity in technology-based services, particularly in relation to access and skills, has been the subject of separate studies, as discussed by Ramle and Mardikaningsih (2022). As examined by Arifin and Darmawan (2021), efforts to bridge the gaps in technology access and digital skills are an important prerequisite for equality in education and employment in the technological era. However, increasing access and skills alone is not enough if the digital space is filled with disinformation and polarisation that undermine social cohesion. The dual impact of the digital divide and misinformation on community life, particularly in undermining social participation and trust, has been analysed in depth by Issalillah and Hardyansah (2022). This means that the digital literacy needed in this era must be twofold, encompassing not only the technical ability to access and use technology, but also the critical ability to navigate, assess, and interact healthily within a complex and often divisive digital information ecosystem.

Changes in social interaction patterns in the era of social media necessitate a systematic examination of how individuals read, feel, and interpret the presence of others through screens. In various environments, generational tensions arise when parents, educators, and young people have different ways of assessing online familiarity and the boundaries between private and public spaces. One crucial manifestation of this tension is the challenge of parenting, as examined by Safira et al. (2021) in the context of parenting management in the digital age, which is filled with complex choices, influences, and social impacts. Meanwhile, the world of work demands the presence of professionals on various platforms, so that personal identity, career identity, and community identity are mixed in a single stream of posts. Without

a structured understanding, this shift is easily read in a simplistic manner, for example by blaming a particular generation or equating all social media as a threat. A literature review that organises various findings on identity formation, interaction patterns, and self-representation practices can help formulate a more balanced picture of what is actually happening in everyday digital spaces.

The study of the relationship between digital culture and disinformation also requires serious attention, as the circulation of false news is directly related to the integrity of social networks, the health of democracy, and citizens' sense of security. When hoaxes and hate speech infiltrate family and religious community conversations, it is not only factual understanding that is shaken, but also mutual trust. Without a solid theoretical foundation, public responses tend to oscillate between moral panic and indifference, without offering a path for collective learning. By examining various works that review the mechanisms of production, circulation, and reception of disinformation, this literature study attempts to present a conceptual map that helps readers see the connection between interaction patterns, the need for identity recognition, and vulnerability to fake news. From this, various parties can develop more targeted steps in fostering a healthy digital communication ecosystem.

This research aims to systematically describe how social media and digital culture are changing daily interaction patterns, the formation of personal and communal identities, and the structure of social relations in various spheres of life. This study organises the findings of the literature to form a more structured theoretical understanding of how digital platforms mediate experiences of self, closeness, and social distance. In practical terms, the research is expected to provide a conceptual foundation for educators, policymakers, and online community managers to design educational interventions that are sensitive to the dynamics of new interactions, while fostering more ethical, reflective, and responsible communication practices. This study also aims to map the patterns of emergence and circulation of disinformation in digital friendship networks, thereby creating a framework that helps readers develop critical awareness without falling prey to moral panic about the generation that has grown up with social media. Thus, this research contributes to enriching academic discussions on human-technology relations, offering a structured conceptual map and opening up space for interdisciplinary dialogue on more humane digital space governance for stakeholders.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study utilises a qualitative literature review design oriented towards exploring meanings and patterns of interpretation in various publications on social media, digital culture, identity, social interaction, and disinformation. The research was conducted in several interrelated stages. First, sources were searched in reputable international and national journal databases, as well as academic books related to symbolic interaction theory, identity construction, and digital communication studies. The search strategy combined keywords arranged in various combinations, such as "social media", "digital culture", "social interaction", "identity construction", "misinformation", and "disinformation". Second, an initial selection was made by reading the titles and abstracts to ensure their relevance to the focus of the study, particularly works that reviewed user experiences, online relationship patterns, and the practices of information production and circulation on digital platforms. This approach is in line with the idea of systematic literature studies that emphasise explicit planning of procedures so that the synthesis results can be accounted for (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006).

The next stage was the application of inclusion and exclusion criteria developed to maintain the relevance and quality of the sources. The works included were mainly journal articles and academic books that contained a clear theoretical basis, openly explained the research procedures, and provided a rich description of interaction patterns on social media and experiences in digital culture. Sources that are only descriptive in nature, journalistic reports, or opinion pieces without a research basis were excluded from the study. After that, the selected articles were read in full and recorded using a summary sheet containing the research objectives, subject background, main concepts, and key findings. This procedure follows Creswell's (2013) recommendation regarding the importance of systematically organising qualitative data so that the interpretation process can proceed in a focused manner. At this stage, the researcher strives to maintain consistency between the topic boundaries set at the outset and the breadth of insights that emerge from various disciplines, such as sociology, social psychology, communication science, and cultural studies.

The analysis process was carried out through thematic synthesis inspired by the thematic coding steps formulated by Braun and Clarke (2006). Initially, the researcher conducted repeated readings of the summaries and key sections in each source to identify recurring patterns related to identity formation, interaction patterns, and forms of disinformation in the digital space. Next, units of meaning were given open codes and then grouped into broader categories. These categories were then developed into thematic themes such as "self-presentation and social surveillance", "shifts in closeness and distance", and "networks of trust and information vulnerability". The entire process was iterative, with repeated reflection on the researcher's position so that conclusions were not trapped in initial assumptions, in line with the recommendation of reflexivity in qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). To ensure quality, the interpretation of themes was periodically compared with the source text to ensure that the resulting abstractions remained rooted in the empirical expositions of the original authors. The final result is a series of themes arranged logically in the

results and discussion sections, providing readers with a structured overview of changes in social interaction patterns and the dynamics of disinformation in the digital culture era.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Changes in Interaction Patterns and Identity Formation in the Digital Space

The shift of interactions to the digital space means that the presence of others is felt through very concise signs: short texts, emoticons, likes, and various other forms of reaction that can be given in a matter of seconds (Shevchenko & Shtofer, 2022). In such circumstances, the experience of connecting with others tends to focus on the speed and frequency of responses. Conversations that once required lengthy meetings are now broken down into a series of short replies scattered throughout the day. Many users feel that closeness can be measured by how quickly messages are replied to or how often their names appear in comments. This mechanism is slowly shifting the benchmark of relationships, from relatively stable physical togetherness to the fluctuating rhythm of digital interactions. People learn to read attention from small traces on the screen, while facing anxiety when messages are ignored or posts receive no response. In situations like this, feelings of acceptance and exclusion often arise not because of major events, but through patterns of repeated presence in online spaces.

In text-based conversations, the nuances of meaning that can be conveyed in face-to-face conversations through tone of voice, facial expressions, and gestures are now replaced by word choice, punctuation, and standard visual symbols (Elizabeth, 2022). As a result, users must develop a new sensitivity to interpret whether a comment is friendly, critical, or sarcastic. Misunderstandings often occur when a phrase is read without considering the history of previous interactions. To reduce emotional distance, people add emoticons, stickers, or images that are considered capable of expressing moods. However, the choice of symbols itself is not always understood uniformly by all parties. Some people interpret an image as a light joke, while others associate it with insults. Social interaction in the digital space thus requires the ability to read new codes that arise from the habits of certain groups, so that relationships between parties depend on their ability to adapt to an ever-changing symbolic language.

One of the prominent features of interaction on social media is the presence of a broad and layered audience. When someone uploads a photo, opinion, or personal story, they are essentially speaking to many parties at once: family, close friends, colleagues, and even strangers they have never met in person. Each group has its own expectations and norms regarding what is appropriate to discuss. In this situation, users often compose messages with various potential readers in mind, even if they are not directly visible. The process of guessing who will see the message and how they will judge it encourages people to construct a certain image of themselves that they feel is safe and advantageous. Some people choose to present a very neat and controlled version of themselves, while others deliberately emphasise their uniqueness, courage, or vulnerability in order to gain emotional support. This pattern of composing messages that are always audience-oriented shapes a habit of interaction that is full of symbolic calculations (Policarpo, 2018). The strategic logic behind the formation of this self-image is not much different from the principles applied in a professional context to maintain reputation. As discussed by Darmawan et al. (2022) regarding corporate reputation management in the digital age, the main challenge is to maintain a positive image in front of a diverse audience that is always watching on social media. Both individuals and corporations engage in planned "impression management", weighing the risks and benefits of each post and striving to build a consistent and favourable narrative in the eyes of their online audience.

In this flow, self-identity increasingly appears as a series of presentation choices tailored to the logic of the platform. Profile features, upload history, short stories, and content archives become spaces where individuals visually and narratively curate their short biographies. Users choose profile photos that they deem appropriate to represent a certain impression, compose short descriptions of their interests, jobs, or values that they consider important, and delete old posts that they feel no longer align with the image they want to maintain. This process is ongoing as experience grows, new friendships are formed, and social roles change. Identity in the digital space is thus not a complementary layer to offline identity, but rather a bargaining arena that influences how a person subsequently appears in face-to-face encounters. Many people adjust their clothing style, choice of activities, and even the way they speak to align with the persona they have established on their accounts (Alaimo & Kallinikos, 2019).

Social life in digital media has also created new ways of measuring success and recognition. The number of followers, likes, video views, and various other forms of statistics have become easily observable indicators that are often used for comparison. In everyday conversation, it is not uncommon for people to refer to these achievements as markers of self-worth, either jokingly or seriously. This mechanism encourages behaviour driven by the desire to gain massive attention, such as searching for trending topics, following certain challenges, or constructing dramatic narratives to elicit sympathy. On a psychological level, the emergence of numerical indicators makes the experience of identity closely related to the achievement of these numbers. When responses decline, some users feel anxious and question their attractiveness. Conversely, a surge in public attention sometimes brings new pressure to maintain an image that is considered successful, so that interactions become calculated (Szulc, 2019).

However, not all forms of presence on social media take the form of explicit self-promotion. Many users engage in the habit of observing without contributing much to the conversation (Zhao, 2015). They more often read other people's posts, pay attention to their friends' lives, and follow public debates, while rarely commenting. In this position, identity is often formed through the activity of identifying oneself with figures, communities, or discourses that are observed regularly. People feel close to certain figures, as if they know them well, even though the relationship that is built is very one-sided. This observation process also influences how users see themselves, as social comparisons take place silently. Individuals construct measures of success, happiness, and life fulfilment from the fragments of images they consume every day. Thus, seemingly passive interaction patterns remain an important part of identity formation, as they become a vehicle for shaping tastes, aspirations, and feelings of inadequacy.

Digital spaces provide opportunities to explore alternative identities that may be difficult to pursue in offline environments (Rani, 2022). Features such as partial anonymity, the use of pseudonyms, and the freedom to build new networks allow individuals to express interests, orientations, or views that were previously suppressed by family or local community norms. Many people find communities based on hobbies, life experiences, or certain beliefs that provide a sense of emotional acceptance. In such groups, the language, humour, and storytelling styles often differ sharply from those used in formal settings. This experience can bring relief from finally finding a place to speak without fear of judgement, but it also has the potential to cause tension when the identity lived in the digital space intersects with the demands of roles in the workplace, school, or family. The struggle to bridge these two spaces is part of the dynamics of modern identity.

Interactions on social media cannot be separated from the influence of algorithms that regulate the flow of content for each user (Rosana & Fauzi, 2024). Although not visible to the naked eye, the recommendation system that selects which posts will appear on the homepage, which groups are frequently seen, and which topics are continuously suggested, influences the patterns of interaction that are formed. Users tend to interact more frequently with those whose content is repeatedly reposted by the system. In other words, social closeness in digital spaces is often mediated by technical settings that prioritise high engagement. People who frequently react and comment will appear more often, while those who are rarely active will slowly disappear from daily attention. As a result, the social network perceived on the screen does not necessarily reflect a person's entire network of relationships, but only the part that the platform considers interesting. This creates a bias in how individuals assess who is important and how wide their social circle is.

Amidst all these technical arrangements, people still strive to develop a sense of agency in their interactions. Users choose who to follow, who to mute, and when to restrict access to certain posts (Shah, 2023). This strategy is a way to protect oneself from information fatigue, prolonged conflict, or excessive surveillance from certain environments. For example, a worker may separate accounts for professional circles and personal friendship circles, or utilise privacy settings to control who can see their activities. These small decisions contribute to the construction of layered identities, where individuals appear differently to different groups. The patterns of interaction that are built up in this way are not merely the result of platform design, but also a reflection of daily negotiations between the desire to be known, the need for protection, and the demands of social roles.

Digital spaces have also become places where conflicts and differences of opinion are managed in ways that sometimes contrast with offline interactions. In many cases, conflicts of values, political preferences, or lifestyle choices first erupt through sharp exchanges of comments in the open. The public nature of the conversation makes every word spoken seem to linger longer, as it can be reread and disseminated to various parties. This affects the way people weigh the risks when expressing their positions. Some choose to avoid sensitive topics in order to maintain relationships, while others take advantage of this space to show clear allegiances, even if it means sacrificing some of their network of friends. Forms of conflict management such as digital unfriending, account blocking, or withdrawing from conversation groups are part of a pattern of interaction in digital culture that has a real impact on offline relationships (Schwarz & Shani, 2016). This pattern of decision-making and conflict mitigation can be understood as a form of social risk management in the digital environment. Analogously, a systematic approach to risk management, such as that applied to ensure the success of information technology projects in dynamic business environments (Silva et al., 2022), provides a useful lens. Individuals, informally, identify risks (e.g., loss of relationships), assess them, and then choose a response strategy (avoidance, acceptance, or mitigation through blocking).

At the collective level, communities formed through digital spaces present a new form of togetherness, with internal rhythms and values that evolve over time (Marra e Rosa et al., 2016). Groups around specific interests, social issues, or shared life experiences can develop jargon, codes of conduct, and strong emotional support mechanisms. Member presence is measured by participation in discussions, willingness to share experiences, and concern when one member experiences difficulties. In certain situations, the bonds born from digital encounters can rival, even surpass, the attachment that comes from neighbourly or family relationships. However, the nature of membership, which is highly dependent on online activity, makes the sustainability of the community vulnerable to boredom, platform changes, or intensifying internal conflicts. The collective identity built in a warm atmosphere can crack when the flow of messages changes, so members need to continually renegotiate what it means to be part of the group. The challenge of maintaining these digital communities highlights the importance of strategy and innovation for sustainability in a dynamic environment. Although the context is different, the principles of developing strategies to ensure sustainability, as discussed in the context of product development for the global

market by Mardikaningsih and Hariani (2023), can be analogised. Digital communities, like a "social product," also require "technology strategies" and adaptability to maintain relevance, manage conflicts, and prevent stagnation in order to continue developing sustainably in a competitive digital space.

Changing patterns of interaction in the digital space have influenced how individuals perceive time and presence. The ability to stay connected via mobile devices has created an expectation that people will be responsive at all times. In many families and work environments, tensions arise when members are slow to respond to messages, as this is interpreted as a form of neglect. People have developed the habit of checking their devices repeatedly to ensure they don't miss any important messages. However, this habit reduces opportunities to experience silence and face-to-face conversation. When attending one meeting, people's minds are often distracted by notifications from other meetings taking place on their screens. Ultimately, presence becomes divided between multiple layers of interaction. This affects the quality of relationships, as people rarely give their full attention to a single situation, even when they are physically present.

Social media and digital culture have shifted patterns of social interaction as well as the way identities are constructed, negotiated, and experienced, both individually and collectively. Human relationships are increasingly regulated through symbolic representations, audience calculations, and technical dynamics that users are not always aware of. Identity appears as a constantly moving process, pieced together from content traces, engagement statistics, and networks that appear and disappear from daily homepages. At the same time, individuals and communities continue to develop strategies to maintain a sense of autonomy, set boundaries, and nurture relationships that are considered important. This picture forms the basis for the next stage of discussion on how patterns of interaction and identity formation in the digital space relate to the emergence, circulation, and acceptance of disinformation in online social networks.

### **The Relationship Between Online Interaction and the Dynamics of Disinformation**

Disinformation in the digital space is closely intertwined with patterns of interaction that have developed on social media (Kirillina, 2023). In online social networks, information moves along paths of familiarity, so messages sent by family members, old friends, or admired figures are often accepted with spontaneous belief. Users tend to interpret messages from people close to them as a form of concern, such as warnings about health, safety, or moral issues. This pattern causes many people to suspend verification, because what is reinforced first is trust in the sender, not the reliability of the source. When emotional relationships are prioritised, the need to maintain harmony in conversation encourages people to forward messages whose factual basis is unclear. At this point, the architecture of digital friendships meets the human tendency to maintain harmonious relationships, making networks of trust a highly effective channel for the circulation of misinformation.

The fast pace of communication on social media also contributes to the spread of disinformation. A barrage of notifications creates the impression that something important is happening and requires an immediate response. Many users read messages while doing other activities, so there is very limited time to examine the content, check the source, or weigh its consistency with prior knowledge. The decision to disseminate information is often made in a matter of seconds, driven by a fear of missing out on news or being too late to help people who are considered vulnerable. In this flow, accuracy becomes a secondary concern, while the first priority is speed of response. Disinformation exploits this habit by combining eye-catching headlines, narratives that trigger strong emotions, and calls for the message to be shared immediately. Interaction patterns that prioritise speed and spontaneous engagement make anxiety and emotional concern the main entry points for the spread of fake news (Palshikar, 2021).

The visual culture on social media also contributes significantly to the spread of disinformation (Bourbon & Murimi, 2022). Images and short videos are often perceived as more convincing than long texts because they appear to present direct evidence of an event. However, visual clips can easily be separated from their origin, cut, or combined with new misleading narratives. In everyday practice, many users do not have the tools to verify the authenticity of images, so they tend to believe what they see on the screen. When a video depicting riots, disasters, or acts of violence is accompanied by captions targeting certain groups, recipients of the message may be moved by anger or fear before they have a chance to question whether the scene actually originated from the time and place mentioned. This is where interaction patterns that rely heavily on emotional responses to visual content meet information manipulation techniques, resulting in a vicious cycle that is difficult to stop.

Interactions in closed chat groups present their own dynamics. In many families, communities of friends, and religious groups, online groups are the main space for sharing news, joking around, and circulating various chain messages (Nobre et al., 2022). In spaces like this, there is an unwritten norm that members should maintain harmony and avoid prolonged debates. When a dubious message circulates, those who are sceptical are often reluctant to raise objections for fear of being seen as disrupting the atmosphere or opposing respected figures. As a result, messages that should be questioned are simply ignored, or even welcomed with support through emoticons and short replies. The silence of some members can be interpreted as a form of agreement, encouraging the sender to spread similar messages to other networks. This pattern makes closed groups a fertile environment for disinformation that aligns with the dominant beliefs of the group.

Disinformation often exploits patterns of group identification formed on social media (Glenski et al., 2020). Users who feel they belong to a particular community, for example based on religion, ethnicity, political choice, or special

interests, tend to prioritise sources of information that affirm the views of that group. When a news story portrays one's own group as threatened or treated unfairly, the emotional reaction can be very strong. Information that reinforces the image of one's own group as victims or heroes is accepted almost unconditionally, while news that criticises the group is easily suspected of being an attack. Amidst this atmosphere, disinformation designed to stir up fear, resentment, or group pride finds fertile ground. Patterns of interaction filled with expressions of solidarity are actually intended to strengthen bonds, but at the same time open the way for blurring the line between defending one's identity and accepting false news.

The algorithms that govern home page displays and content recommendations also influence the reach of disinformation. Technical systems that prioritise high engagement tend to bring up content that provokes strong emotional reactions, as such content is more likely to be commented on, shared, or debated. In practice, sensational fake news has a high chance of gaining prominence in many users' timelines. When a post causes a stir, the algorithm reads this as a sign that the content is interesting and then expands its reach. Users who are repeatedly exposed to certain narratives may begin to consider them a normal part of public discourse, even if they have never been thoroughly checked. Interactions that appear organic, such as replying to comments and reposting, are in fact facilitated by technical settings that prioritise engagement intensity over information accuracy (Efstratiou & De Cristofaro, 2022).

The direct relationship between interaction patterns and disinformation is also evident in the way people manage conflict in digital spaces. When there are differences of opinion regarding certain news, conversations quickly shift to battles of identity or group loyalty. Instead of examining the content of the message, some users focus their attention on who disseminated it, linking it to political, religious, or other labels. News carriers who are considered to be from the opposing camp are immediately viewed with suspicion, while sources from one's own circle are considered more trustworthy. The power of argument weakens, replaced by a war of signs and categories. In such situations, attempts at clarification are often responded to as attacks, while calls to check the facts are understood as a form of defence against an imaginary enemy. This pattern of interaction allows disinformation to persist much longer, as its existence is tied to the structure of social conflict that transcends the issue of data accuracy.

On a personal level, repeated exposure to disinformation can change the way individuals perceive social security and order. Messages that depict constant threats to certain groups (Balcioglu & Dogan, 2023), such as criminal threats, riots, or hidden conspiracies, create an atmosphere of suspicion. People begin to view their surroundings with anxiety, even though their direct experience in their neighbourhood is relatively peaceful. Daily interactions with neighbours or colleagues can be affected by prejudices formed from exposure to fake news on screen. Meanwhile, when someone tries to correct inaccurate information, they may face strong resistance from relatives who feel their beliefs are being challenged. These conflicts sometimes spill over into family relationships, making conversations about public issues a minefield that people avoid in order to maintain harmony. In other words, disinformation does not stop at the level of opinion, but penetrates the realm of interpersonal trust. This profound personal impact shows how the evolution of digital media, which allows disinformation to spread rapidly, directly shapes opinions and damages the social dynamics of a cause-and-effect relationship, which is the focus of studies in the literature on digital media and public opinion, as analysed by Zulkarnain and Al Hakim (2023).

Information consumption patterns on social media also contribute to the formation of echo chambers, where users interact more frequently with sources that align with their views (Dasic et al., 2022). By choosing to follow certain accounts and ignoring others, individuals build an information environment that feels comfortable, as it rarely challenges their established beliefs. In such an environment, news that confirms one's beliefs is easily believed, while conflicting information is considered irrelevant or part of an attempt to deceive the public. Daily interactions with uniform sources reinforce one's sense of righteousness, so that when disinformation enters in a similar format, critical defences become weak. Discussions that should be a space for exchanging ideas turn into arenas for mutual reinforcement among group members, with little room for correction. This condition makes it difficult to correct false news, because those who bring clarification are considered to be from outside the circle of trust.

In some cases, disinformation takes advantage of the informal authority structures that are formed in online social networks (Dzamukashvili, 2023). Figures who have many followers, often speak loudly, or are considered to have certain knowledge, gain a position that is almost like a main reference for their followers. When such figures share false news, followers tend to accept it with little doubt. Attempts to correct the information become complicated, as criticism of the message's content is easily perceived as an attack on a respected figure. The interactions built around the figure blur the line between personal loyalty and rational judgement. In this atmosphere, disinformation serves to strengthen the bond between opinion leaders and their followers, as sharing news makes the group feel they have special knowledge. This structure results in a circulation of information that is difficult to penetrate from the outside, so that corrective approaches require sensitivity to the dynamics of trust that have been built up. When the disinformation spread by these informal authorities violates the law and causes harm, law enforcement mechanisms become relevant. A restorative approach, which focuses on restoring relationships and the responsibility of perpetrators outside of prison punishment mechanisms, can be a more appropriate alternative for handling cases involving complex community dynamics and social bonds, as described in the mechanism of disinformation dissemination through informal authorities (Riyanto et al., 2023). In addition to a responsive legal approach, more fundamental structural prevention is also needed. This relates to

responsibility in designing the digital ecosystem itself. As emphasised by Radjawane and Mardikaningsih (2022), building ethical and fair technology through a responsible development and implementation approach is a must. The application of ethical principles in algorithm design, platform policies, and user literacy can create a digital environment that is more resilient to the exploitation of social mechanisms such as informal authorities to spread disinformation.

The relationship between online interaction patterns and disinformation is also evident in the use of humour and satire (Mican et al., 2022). Many messages containing false information are spread in the form of jokes, memes, or parodies that elicit laughter. Users who forward this content often claim they are just joking, without realising that the images and text can linger as suggestions in the minds of the recipients. In casual conversations, the line between seriousness and jest is easily blurred. When a meme is repeated many times in various digital spaces, the ideas it contains slowly appear to be commonly accepted truths, even though they have never been rationally examined. Disinformation that spreads through humour is difficult to counter, because criticism can easily be dismissed with the response that the other person is too rigid or lacks a sense of humour. This pattern of interaction dominated by jokes opens the door for the spread of deviant narratives without explicit resistance.

This series of discussions shows that disinformation in the digital culture era cannot be separated from patterns of interaction formed through technical features, networks of trust, group dynamics, and users' emotional habits. False news gains traction not solely because of its content, but because it relies on the structure of relationships that bind individuals to one another in the digital space. Close relationships, group identification, informal authority, and the demand to maintain harmony in conversation often create complex obstacles to clarification efforts. At the same time, algorithms reinforce content that triggers emotional responses, giving attractively packaged disinformation a wide stage. Understanding the close link between online interaction and the dynamics of disinformation is an important starting point for formulating education, literacy, and communication management strategies that are more sensitive to how people construct shared meaning in the digital space.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that social media and digital culture have shifted social interaction patterns from face-to-face encounters to layered communication networks that take place through screens. Closeness, trust, and recognition are now largely measured through digital traces such as messages, comments, and engagement rates, which reshape the way individuals perceive themselves and others. Identity develops as a series of constantly updated self-presentations, influenced by audience expectations, platform logic, and calculations of the risks and benefits of openness. Digital spaces allow for the exploration of alternative identities and the expansion of networks, but at the same time create tension between online personas and the demands of offline roles. At the same time, the structure of interaction on social media is closely related to the emergence and persistence of disinformation. Networks of trust, the fast pace of communication, visual culture, and group reinforcement allow misinformation to become part of everyday conversation. Thus, changes in interaction patterns and identity formation in the era of digital culture cannot be separated from the dynamics of disinformation circulation that touches on the personal, family, community, and public spheres.

The findings of this study have several important implications for the development of social sciences, education, and communication policy. First, studies on interaction and identity need to include digital space not merely as a supplement, but as an area that contributes to shaping fundamental social experiences. Concepts of closeness, authority, and trust demand a new interpretation that recognises the role of algorithms, platform features, and engagement statistics in regulating human relations. Second, media literacy programmes need to move beyond an emphasis on the technical verification of information towards an understanding of how emotions, group solidarity, and the need for recognition shape vulnerability to disinformation. A learning approach that is sensitive to these dynamics gives citizens the opportunity to re-examine their habits of sharing news, without causing them to feel attacked or belittled. Third, policy makers and platform managers need to open up dialogue with researchers and user communities in order to formulate governance that takes into account the long-term impact of content flow regulation on the quality of social relations and community cohesion.

Based on the theoretical mapping obtained, several suggestions can be made for research and practice. Further research could examine the experiences of specific user groups in more detail, such as students, creative workers, religious communities, or residents in areas with limited access, to see how online interaction patterns influence how they negotiate identity and respond to disinformation. In the field of education, schools and universities can design learning modules that encourage students to reflect on their own digital footprints, discuss real examples of conversations on social media, and practise the courage to express objections to dubious news without severing relationships. Civil society organisations and local communities can develop intergenerational discussion spaces on social media experiences, so that concerns, expectations, and self-protection strategies can be formulated together. At the policy level, it is important to encourage the development of regulations that protect citizens from manipulative practices without neglecting the right to freedom of expression, by involving broad public participation.

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