

The Digital Dilution: Technology's Impact on Youth Interpersonal Communication Skills

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Abstract

Recent findings from the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) revealing heightened social isolation and communication anxiety among youths aged 21-34 serve as a critical indicator of a broader societal shift. This abstract argues that this phenomenon is driven by technological determinism, where digital communication tools are fundamentally reshaping human behaviour. The proliferation of social media and generative AI platforms like ChatGPT fosters interaction devoid of non-verbal cues, leading to attenuated affective empathy (Konrath et al., 2011) and reduced proficiency in navigating complex, face-to-face communication. Furthermore, algorithmically driven environments create insulated echo chambers, diminishing motivation for offline social engagement and complicating conflict resolution by removing essential emotional feedback (Garrett & Danziger, 2008). The result is a trend towards emotionally "flatter" interactions that threaten the depth of human bonds. Consequently, we propose a move away from passive technological consumption towards a proactive hybrid model. This necessitates educational and social ecosystems that champion digital literacy alongside the intentional preservation of purpose-driven, in-person communication skills to counteract rising loneliness and safeguard the future of human connection.

