

DIGITAL LANGUAGE A COMMUNICATION TOOL FOR BOTH CHARMS AND HARMS ON MENTAL WELLBEING

IKELE, ALOCHUKWU L.M (Ph.D)* & ALIYU, ADAORA E.A (Ph.D)**

Abstracts

Digital interaction has become a central communicative tool influencing mental well-being in modern society. Through social media platforms, instant messaging and online communities, digital interaction offers significant benefits including emotional support, social connection and increase access to mental health resources. These charms can reduce feelings of isolation foster belonging and enable self-expression across divers populations. However, digital interaction also presents notable harms to mental well-being. Excessive screen time, social comparison, cyber bullying and exposure to negative or misleading content can contribute to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and emotional distress. This constant connectivity and performance-driven nature of online spaces may further intensity psychological pressure and disrupt health boundaries. This paper examines the dual role of digital interaction as both a protective and risk factor for mental well-being emphasizing the need for balanced, mindful and ethical digital communication practices.

Keywords: Digital, language, charms, harms, mental well-being

Introduction

Digital Language according Mathos (2012) refers to forms of mass communication that reach across the world. This includes You Tube, Twitter or X, Facebook, blogs, WhatsApp. Digital language can also be defined as the production, distribution, and consumption of media products on a global scale, facilitating the exchange and diffusion of ideas across culturally (Ejulia 2016). Digital language plays a key role in enhancing globalization, facilitating cultural exchange and multiple flows of information and image between countries through new technologies. This quick and instant exchange of information and knowledge is enabled by the emergence of information and communication technologies of the 21st century called social media. The importance of digital language via communication in any country whether developed or developing cannot be over emphasized. Infact it has both positive and negative impact on mental well-being of the citizens. In Nigeria for instance, the digital media is felt in virtually all aspects of the country. In spite of the usefulness of the digital language there are abuses being perpetrated in the communication channel which directly or indirectly affects the mental well-being of individuals. However, the Federal Government in their wisdom has introduced a number of measures to check these excess still to no avail.

Brief History of Digital Language

According to Matos (2012) the digital expansion of global communications of the 21st century can be traced back to the mechanical advancement of technologies during the course of the 18th and 19th centuries, which started mainly with invention of the telegraph in 1837 and included the growth in postal service, cross -border telephone and radio communications and the creation of a modern mass circulation press in Europe.

It was however the evolution of technologies capable of transmitting messages via electromagnetic waves that marked a turning point in advancing the globalization of communications. The emergence of the international news agencies in the later century, such as Reuters, paved the way for the beginning of a global system of codification. Nevertheless, it was not until the 1960's with the launch of the first glo - stationary communication satellites, that communication by electromagnetic transmission became fully global, thus making the globalization of communication a distinctive phenomenon of the 20th century (Thompson 1995, 159)

Concept of Digital Language and Mental well-being

According to the Oxford dictionary, Digital language is defined as a form of mass communication using digital technologies like the internet. Typically, when we mention social media this includes social networking sites, website advertisement, blogs and podcast. Digital interaction involves internet - based platforms (apps/website) where users create and share content (text, photos, videos and other content). According to Longman dictionary of contemporary English 3rd edition, well-being means feeling of being comfortable healthy and happy both physical, social economical, mentally. A feeling of being satisfied with your life .

Mental well-being is the feeling of being comfortable healthy and happy affecting the mind or happening in the mind. In other words mental well-being means feeling good, functioning well, and having the capacity to handle life's stress, realize your potential, and contribute to your community, encompassing emotional, physiological and social aspects, not just the absence of mental illness, but a positive state of thriving. It involves resilience, positive relationship, self -acceptance and the ability to enjoy life and make productive contributions.

Key components of mental well-being

- Emotional balance -managing feelings, handling stress and recovering from misfortune
- Physiological functioning having a sense of purpose, personal growth, autonomy and competence
- Social connection forming healthy relationship and contributing to your community
- Resilience: Bouncing back from adversity and challenges.
- Productivity: Working effectively and learning well

The “Charms” a Digital Language on Mental well-being

Digital language positively impacts mental well-being by fostering connection and community, offering vital support networks (especially for marginalized groups, providing platforms for self expression, increasing access to mental health resources and education, and promoting resilience through shared positive stories and advocacy, helping to combat loneliness and Isolation when used mindfully and more

Building Connections and Community

- Reduces Isolation: Connects people across distances, helping maintain relationship with family and friends, and forming new bonds with diverse groups.
- Sense of belonging: Creates supportive online communities based on shared interests, identities, or experiences, reducing stigma and increasing belonging.

Support Resources

- Peer support: Offers spaces to share feelings and fears, providing emotional support and coping strategies, especially for those without strong offline networks.
- Marginalized groups: Crucial for youth and minorities to find peer connection, identify development and social support, buffering stress.
- Mental health education: Provides access to educational content, self - help tips and resources from mental health professionals and organisations.

Self - Expression and Empowerment

- Creative outlet: Allows for self -expression, sharing stories and exploring identify
- Advocacy - Amplifies voices for causes, fostering a sense of purpose and making users feel heard

Fostering positivity

- Inspiration & Resilience: Shares motivational content, personal growth stories, and positive messages, building resilience
- Mindful Engagement: Sharing gratitude and uplifting content can improve mood and strengthen well-being

The “Harms” of Digital Language on Mental Well-being

Digital language negatively impacts mental health by increasing anxiety, depression and loneliness, body image issues from social comparison fueling low self-esteem through social comparison and cyber bullying fostering fear of missing out (Fomo) disrupting sleep, decreased productivity, spread of misinformation, privacy risks reduce real life interaction and creating addictive dopamine loops that encourage compulsive use. Excessive use, especially over 3 hours daily for teens links to higher risks of negative mental health outcomes, including self harm ideation, poor body image and worsened depressive symptoms, creating a cycle of stress and dissatisfaction.

Key negative effects

- Anxiety and depression: Exposure to idealized lives creates feelings of inadequacy while the pressure to keep up can fuel anxiety and depressive symptoms.
- Sleep disruption: Blue light from screen suppresses melatonin, and endless scrolling keeps users awake, leading to poor sleep a major contributor to mental health issues
- Social comparison and low self-esteem: Curated profiles present unrealistic lifestyles, leading to constant comparison, dissatisfaction and reduced confidence.
- Fomo (fear of missing out): Seeing other activities creates pressures to constantly check feeds, generating anxiety and a feeling of being left out.
- Cyber bully and harassment: Anonymity can foster online abuse, causing significant emotional distress and lasting harm
- Addiction: Likes and notifications trigger dopamine, creating addictive feedback loops that reduce concentration and interfere with daily life.
- Isolation and loneliness: While connecting online, heavy users often experience less face-to-face interaction paradoxically increasing feeling of isolate
- Body image issues: Filters and edited images especially among young women promote unattainable beauty standards, harming body perception.
- Dopamine reward system: Likes, comments and shares provide quick hits of dopamine reinforcing usage and potentially leading to addiction.
- Filtered reality: The curated, perfect presentation of life online contrasts with real life fostering unrealistic expectations and unhappiness.

Responsible and Safe Digital Language Use for Protecting Mental Well-Being

- Reducing screen time: cutting digital media use to 30 minutes a day resulted in young adults experiencing significantly reduced levels of anxiety, depression, loneliness, sleep problems and fomo, according to a 2018 study by the University of Pennsylvania
- Building connections offline: Set aside time to connect directly with family and friends volunteer for a good cause or join a group of like-minded individuals that meet up on a regular basis.
- Control apps can help restrict a child's phone use and safeguard their privacy. Parents can also establish digital media breaks designed to help kids both disconnect and develop healthy technology habits.
- Remembering that social is not real life. It's helpful to recognize (and to remind younger digital media users) that people can easily manipulate, enhance and curate the posts and information they are sharing.
- Understanding the relationship between digital media and sleep. Parents of young digital media users should consider instituting a no-technology hour before bedtime to support healthy sleep habits. Adults should consider leaving their devices in another room to charge overnight.

Conclusion

Digital language integrates into daily life affecting identity, relationships, politics and commerce, serving as a powerful tool for both positive connection and potential negative issues like misinformation which has the bottom line of affecting the mental well-being of an individual knowingly and unknowingly

***IKELE, ALOCHUKWU L.M (Ph.D)**

SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES

FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (TECHNICAL) UMUNZE

****ALIYU, ADAORA E.A (Ph.D)**

SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF IGBO

FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (TECHNICAL) UMUNZE

References

Thompson, John (1995). The media and modernity: a social theory of the media, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Mathos, Carolina (2012). Globalization and the Mass Media in Willey Blackwell's Encyclopedia of Globalization.

Simplican (2025). <https://www/Smplican.com> impact of social media/advantages and disadvantages Nov. 11

Research Gate (2019). <https://www.rsearchgate.net/Social media/Nov. 2019>

National Institutes of Health (2024) <https://p,c.nch.nlm.nih.gov/concept of mental health and mental wellbeing 2025>.