International Journal Of
Digital Society
And
Social Transformation
VOL 01 | No. 1 | 2026
P-ISSN: XXXX_XXXX | E-ISSN: XXXX_XXXX

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND ITS ROLE IN CHANGING CULTURAL NORMS AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Amna Abdul Sattar
BS Department of English, The Cosmic Degree College (For Women), University of Okara

ABSTRACT

Digital transformation has become a major force in reshaping cultural norms, social values, communication practices, and relationships within communities. The widespread adoption of digital technologies, including social media platforms, smartphones, artificial intelligence, online communication systems, digital education, and electronic public services, has changed how individuals interact, share knowledge, maintain traditions, and participate in collective activities. Digital transformation creates new opportunities for cultural exchange, community participation, social inclusion, and the preservation of cultural heritage. People can now communicate across geographical boundaries, share traditional practices with wider audiences, organize community activities online, and access information about different cultural identities and lifestyles. However, these developments also create challenges, including the weakening of face-to-face communication, the spread of misinformation, cultural homogenization, generational disagreements, privacy concerns, and unequal access to digital resources. The effects of digital transformation differ according to age, education, socioeconomic status, geographical location, cultural background, and levels of digital literacy. This study examines the role of digital transformation in changing cultural norms and community relationships through a qualitative review of recent literature published in 2025 and 2026. It explores the relationship between digital communication, cultural identity, social interaction, traditional values, community participation, and digital inequality. The study uses thematic analysis to identify major patterns in existing research and considers both the opportunities and challenges associated with technology-driven social change. The study argues that digital transformation should not be understood as a purely technological process; rather, it is a social and cultural process influenced by human behavior, community values, institutional practices, and access to technology. It concludes that inclusive digital policies, cultural awareness, responsible technology use, and community-based digital literacy initiatives are essential for ensuring that technological development strengthens social relationships while respecting cultural diversity.

KEYWORDS: *Digital Transformation, Cultural Norms, Community Relationships, Digital Communication, Social Change, Cultural Identity, Traditional Values, Digital Communities, Social Interaction, Community Participation, Digital Inclusion, Cultural Heritage, Social Media, Digital Literacy, Technological Development, Intergenerational Relationships, Globalization, Social Cohesion, Cultural Diversity, Online Communities, Digital Inequality, Community Engagement, Social Networks, Digital Culture, and Sustainable Development.*

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has emerged as one of the most influential developments shaping contemporary societies. The rapid expansion of internet connectivity, smartphones, social networking platforms, cloud-based services, artificial intelligence, digital payment systems, and online communication technologies has significantly changed how people live, work, learn, communicate, and participate in community life. In earlier periods, cultural values and community relationships were primarily transmitted through families, educational institutions, religious organizations, local gatherings, traditional media, and direct interpersonal interactions. Bulat, B. (2026). found thatAlthough these institutions continue to play important roles, digital technologies have introduced additional channels through which people learn cultural expectations, exchange ideas, develop social identities, and establish relationships with individuals beyond their immediate geographical environments. As a result, culture is increasingly influenced by both local traditions and global digital communication. Individuals can participate in online communities, access information about

International Journal Of
Digital Society
And
Social Transformation
VOL 01 | No. 1 | 2026
P-ISSN: XXXX_XXXX | E-ISSN: XXXX_XXXX

different societies, follow international cultural trends, and communicate with relatives and friends who live far away. These changes have created new opportunities for social interaction and cultural learning while also raising important questions about the continuity of traditional practices, the strength of community relationships, and the preservation of local identities.One of the most significant effects of digital transformation is its influence on cultural norms. Cultural norms refer to the shared expectations, beliefs, values, customs, and behavioral standards that guide individuals within a particular society or community. These norms influence family relationships, communication styles, gender expectations, educational practices, religious participation, celebrations, professional behavior, and attitudes toward social responsibility. Ergün, N., Yıldırımçakar, Z., & Filiz, M. Ş. (2026). Explained thatDigital platforms expose individuals to diverse cultural perspectives and alternative ways of living, which may encourage greater openness, tolerance, creativity, and social awareness. For example, young people can explore different languages, artistic traditions, social movements, and lifestyles through online content. Communities can use digital archives, websites, and social media to document historical events, preserve local languages, and share traditional knowledge with younger generations. At the same time, continuous exposure to international trends and commercially promoted lifestyles may influence clothing preferences, family expectations, consumption habits, and attitudes toward established traditions.

Community relationships have also undergone considerable change because of digital communication. In traditional community settings, relationships were often maintained through neighborhood visits, local meetings, family gatherings, community celebrations, and direct conversations. Digital technologies now allow people to maintain relationships through messaging applications, video calls, social networking sites, online groups, and virtual meetings. Another important aspect of digital transformation is the changing relationship between generations. Older community members may place particular importance on established customs, face-to-face interaction, family authority, and traditional methods of sharing knowledge. Younger generations may be more comfortable using online platforms, digital entertainment, and technology-based forms of self-expression. These differences can create disagreements about privacy, appropriate behavior, cultural identity, relationships, and the role of technology in everyday life. However, digital platforms can also create opportunities for intergenerational learning. Older adults can share historical memories, traditional skills, family histories, and local cultural practices through recorded interviews and online archives, while younger individuals can help relatives develop digital skills and access online services. Such exchanges demonstrate that technology can either increase generational distance or support mutual understanding, depending on the willingness of individuals and institutions to adapt.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To examine how digital transformation influences cultural norms and community relationships, particularly through changes in communication practices, cultural identity, traditional values, social participation, and intergenerational interaction.

International Journal Of
Digital Society
And
Social Transformation
VOL 01 | No. 1 | 2026
P-ISSN: XXXX_XXXX | E-ISSN: XXXX_XXXX

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. How does digital transformation influence cultural norms and community relationships, and what factors determine whether these changes strengthen or weaken cultural identity and social cohesion?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital transformation involves more than the introduction of digital devices or the conversion of traditional services into online formats. It includes changes in communication, institutional practices, cultural production, social expectations, and the ways people organize their everyday lives. Digital platforms have become environments in which individuals negotiate cultural meanings, exchange knowledge, and participate in social activities. Through online communication, people can access perspectives that differ from those traditionally available within their families or local communities. Farivar, F., Campos, L., Chong, A., & Thompson, N. (2026). Explains that These experiences may encourage the reconsideration of established assumptions and create new expectations regarding education, employment, gender roles, personal freedom, public participation, and social responsibility.Yao's (2025) research on digital media and cross-cultural communication examines how technological features, symbolic representation, and social engagement contribute to cultural identity construction. The study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining survey evidence with interviews, and emphasizes that digital media influence identity through the ways people communicate and interpret cultural symbols. This perspective is important because it suggests that technology does not automatically produce cultural change. Rather, cultural change develops through the meanings people attach to digital content and the interactions that occur around it.

Digital transformation can also produce hybrid cultural practices in which established traditions coexist with newer digital behaviors. For example, families may preserve customary celebrations while using online platforms to share photographs, organize events, and communicate with relatives living abroad. Community members may continue to value traditional forms of respect while adopting digital communication to coordinate family decisions. Such examples indicate that cultural continuity and innovation are not necessarily opposing processes. Digital tools may change the way a tradition is expressed without eliminating the underlying cultural meaning.However, the rapid circulation of digital content can create pressure to adopt practices associated with influential global cultures. Advertising, entertainment, influencers, and algorithmically recommended content may encourage particular styles of consumption, communication, and self-presentation. When these practices become widely visible, individuals may begin to regard them as expected or desirable, even when they differ from local traditions. The extent of this influence depends on media literacy, family discussion, community expectations, and the ability of individuals to critically evaluate the content they encounter. Kianpour, M., Triandafyllidou, A., Allen, T., Mazrouei, S., & Shams, M. (2026 revealed thatCultural identity refers to the sense of belonging that individuals develop through shared languages, histories, traditions, values, symbols, and social experiences. Digital transformation has expanded the spaces in which cultural identity can be maintained, expressed, and negotiated. People can participate in online groups based on their language, geographical origin, ethnicity, religion, artistic interests, or historical

International Journal Of
Digital Society
And
Social Transformation
VOL 01 | No. 1 | 2026
P-ISSN: XXXX_XXXX | E-ISSN: XXXX_XXXX

experiences. These groups can provide opportunities to exchange knowledge, discuss cultural concerns, and maintain relationships with communities that are geographically distant.

Research by Ergün, Yıldırımçakar, and Filiz (2026) investigates language-based identity expansion through digital media within the Kurdish community in Türkiye. Their findings indicate that using one's mother tongue in digital environments is associated with stronger language-based identity expansion and group identification. This study demonstrates that digital participation may support cultural continuity, particularly for communities whose languages or traditions have historically received limited recognition in mainstream institutions.Digital platforms can also help members of diasporic communities maintain connections with their places of origin. Luo, X., & Shi, W. (2026). Elaborated onOnline communication allows migrants and their descendants to follow cultural events, exchange family histories, learn traditional practices, and participate in celebrations from a distance. Kianpour and colleagues' (2026) critical synthesis of research on social media narratives, diasporic identity, and collective memory considers how online narratives shape the ways communities remember and communicate their shared past. These developments indicate that geographical distance does not necessarily mean cultural separation.At the same time, digital identity can involve selective representation. Users may share certain aspects of their cultural background while avoiding others, particularly when they anticipate criticism or negative reactions from online audiences. Cultural practices may also be simplified or presented primarily for entertainment, commercial promotion, or public recognition.

In some cases, communities gain visibility through digital representation but face pressure to present their traditions in forms that appeal to external audiences.Digital cultural identity should therefore be understood as an ongoing process rather than a fixed outcome. Individuals draw upon family traditions, community experiences, online information, and personal preferences when deciding how to express their identity. Digital transformation expands the resources available for this process, but the results depend on the social conditions under which individuals participate.Social norms are shared expectations about acceptable behavior within a community. They influence how people communicate, dress, form relationships, participate in public life, respect elders, share responsibilities, and respond to social differences. Digital transformation exposes individuals to a broader range of behavioral models and cultural viewpoints, which can influence the development and interpretation of these expectations.One important change concerns the relationship between individual expression and collective expectations. Digital platforms allow users to express opinions, publish creative work, discuss social issues, and participate in conversations that might not be available within their immediate surroundings. These opportunities may support personal autonomy and encourage discussion of previously overlooked social concerns. They may also enable marginalized individuals to find support from people who share their experiences.However, greater exposure to alternative viewpoints can create disagreements between generations and between individuals who hold different cultural values. For example, younger community members may support more flexible approaches to personal expression, career choices, or online friendships, while older relatives may prioritize privacy, family reputation, and established behavioral expectations.

Digital platforms also influence how social approval is communicated. Likes, shares,comments, views, and online reactions can become indicators of popularity or acceptance. Individuals may modify their behavior to receive approval or avoid criticism.

International Journal Of
Digital Society
And
Social Transformation
VOL 01 | No. 1 | 2026
P-ISSN: XXXX_XXXX | E-ISSN: XXXX_XXXX

These mechanisms can reinforce existing norms when popular content reflects familiar expectations, but they can also challenge established norms when alternative viewpoints receive visibility. Consequently, the relationship between digital technology and cultural values is reciprocal: platforms influence behavior, while users, community expectations, and cultural practices influence how platforms are used.

Family relationships are central to cultural transmission because families often introduce children to language, traditions, moral expectations, religious practices, and community responsibilities. Digital communication has changed the ways family members maintain contact and participate in each other's lives. Messaging applications, video calls, shared photographs, and online family groups make it possible to communicate regularly despite geographical distance.These tools can strengthen relationships among migrant families, relatives living in different cities, and family members whose employment or educational responsibilities limit face-to-face visits. Digital communication can help relatives share news, coordinate practical responsibilities, provide emotional support, and remain involved in important family events. Older family members can also use digital platforms to share historical photographs, family stories, recipes, and cultural knowledge with younger generations.Nevertheless, access to communication does not guarantee meaningful interaction. Family members may be physically present but psychologically disengaged when their attention is continuously directed toward personal devices. Digital misunderstandings can also arise when tone, context, or intention is difficult to interpret. In addition, online communication may expose family members to conflicting expectations about privacy, acceptable public behavior, and the appropriate boundaries between family life and digital self-expression.Intergenerational differences are particularly important. Younger people may regard digital communication as a normal extension of everyday relationships, while older adults may be less familiar with platform conventions or concerned about online risks. These differences can create tension when family members disagree about screen time, online friendships, photographs, or the sharing of personal information.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, literature-based methodology to examine the relationship between digital transformation, cultural norms, and community relationships. A secondary research approach is appropriate because the topic spans several disciplines, including sociology, communication studies, cultural studies, digital media research, and community development. The study draws on recent academic literature published in 2025 and 2026, including empirical studies, qualitative investigations, mixed-methods research, and relevant literature reviews.The literature search uses combinations of terms such as digital transformation, digital communication, cultural norms, cultural identity, community relationships, social cohesion, digital inclusion, cultural heritage, and online communities. Relevant publications are identified through academic search platforms, scholarly journal websites, and research databases. Priority is given to studies that directly examine the relationship between digital technologies and cultural or community-level outcomes.The selected literature is evaluated according to its relevance to the research question, clarity of methodology, transparency of findings, and contribution to understanding social and cultural change. Publications are organized into thematic categories covering cultural identity, traditional values, family relationships, online communities, social trust, cultural heritage, digital inequality, and digital literacy. The analysis compares the findings and interpretations

International Journal Of
Digital Society
And
Social Transformation
VOL 01 | No. 1 | 2026
P-ISSN: XXXX_XXXX | E-ISSN: XXXX_XXXX

of these studies to identify shared patterns, contrasting results, and areas requiring further investigation.Because the study relies on secondary sources, it does not involve recruiting human participants, administering questionnaires, or conducting original interviews. It also does not generate new statistical findings. The conclusions are based on the interpretation and synthesis of published research. The review aims to represent the literature fairly while recognizing that the strength of the evidence varies across topics and that findings from particular populations may not apply universally.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is a structured qualitative literature review using thematic synthesis. This design supports a systematic examination of how digital technologies affect cultural practices and community relationships without claiming to produce original empirical data.The research proceeds through five stages. First, the scope of the study is established by defining digital transformation, cultural norms, and community relationships as the principal concepts. Second, relevant publications from 2025 and 2026 are identified through targeted searches of academic and scholarly sources. Third, the publications are screened for relevance to the research question, methodological transparency, and direct discussion of cultural or community outcomes. Fourth, the selected literature is organized into themes and examined for recurring explanations, contrasting perspectives, and contextual differences. Fifth, the results are integrated into a conceptual interpretation that connects technological adoption with cultural adaptation, social interaction, community participation, and digital inclusion.The design recognizes that digital transformation is multidimensional. Therefore, the review does not focus exclusively on social media or internet access; it also considers digital communication services, online cultural resources, digital community platforms, and technology-enabled participation. The design further recognizes the importance of context, including differences between rural and urban environments, between generations, and between communities with varying levels of digital access.The principal limitation of this design is that the findings depend on the quality, availability, and scope of existing research. A qualitative literature review cannot establish causal relationships where the underlying studies provide only associations, nor can it claim that all communities experience digital transformation in the same way. These limitations are addressed by comparing studies critically and avoiding conclusions that extend beyond the available evidence.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis uses thematic analysis to interpret the findings of the selected literature. The purpose is to identify recurring patterns in how digital transformation influences cultural norms, social relationships, and community participation. Since the study is based on secondary sources, the analysis is interpretive rather than statistical. No new survey responses, interviews, or numerical datasets are analyzed.The analysis follows four main steps. First, relevant findings from the literature are organized according to their relationship with the research question. Second, similar findings are grouped into themes, including cultural identity, changing traditional values, family communication, online community participation, social trust, cultural preservation, digital inequality, and digital literacy. Third, the themes are compared across studies to identify common patterns and differences. Finally, the themes are integrated to develop an overall explanation of the relationship between digital transformation and social change.The thematic comparison indicates that digital

International Journal Of
Digital Society
And
Social Transformation
VOL 01 | No. 1 | 2026
P-ISSN: XXXX_XXXX | E-ISSN: XXXX_XXXX

transformation does not produce a single, universal outcome. For instance, online communication may strengthen family relationships when it allows distant relatives to remain involved in everyday life. In another situation, the same technology may contribute to conflict if family members disagree about privacy or appropriate online behavior. Similarly, online cultural content may support heritage preservation when communities document their traditions, but it may weaken cultural representation when content is simplified or presented without adequate context.The analysis also highlights the importance of digital inclusion. Communities with appropriate infrastructure, relevant language resources, and strong digital skills are better positioned to participate in online cultural activities. In contrast, communities with limited access may remain underrepresented in digital discussions. The findings therefore suggest that technology, cultural context, and social conditions must be considered together.

FINDINGS

Digital transformation expands access to information and exposes individuals to diverse cultural practices and social expectations. These experiences can encourage changes in communication styles, personal expression, consumption habits, and attitudes toward traditional customs. However, cultural change does not necessarily mean that established values disappear. Communities frequently combine traditional practices with new technological behaviors.Online communities provide opportunities to share languages, cultural memories, traditions, and historical knowledge. Research on language-based identity expansion indicates that participation in digital media using a mother tongue can be associated with stronger collective identification. This suggests that digital technology can be an important resource for communities seeking to preserve or strengthen their cultural identities.Messaging applications, online groups, and video calls make it easier to maintain relationships across geographical distances. They also support the coordination of community events, volunteer activities, and information-sharing initiatives. Nevertheless, the strength of these relationships depends on trust, meaningful participation, and the quality of communication rather than on connectivity alone.Exposure to international cultures can encourage intercultural understanding and broaden social perspectives. At the same time, commercially dominant content and popular online trends can place pressure on individuals to adopt particular lifestyles or forms of self-presentation. Communities may respond through cultural adaptation, selective adoption, or efforts to preserve local traditions.Digital transformation can create disagreements between generations over privacy, communication, and acceptable behavior. However, it can also support mutual learning when younger people help older relatives use digital technologies and older generations share cultural knowledge and historical experiences. The findings suggest that intergenerational dialogue is important for managing technological change constructively.Unequal access to internet services, devices, accessible content, and digital education affects the ability of individuals to participate in digital communities. Language barriers can further restrict cultural visibility. Inclusive digital development therefore requires affordable connectivity, culturally relevant resources, and training for people with different levels of technological experience.

CONCLUSION

Digital transformation has become an important influence on cultural norms and community relationships. Digital communication platforms, online communities, social networking

services, and digital cultural resources have changed how people maintain relationships, share knowledge, express identities, and participate in collective life. These technologies provide opportunities for stronger communication across geographical distances, increased cultural exchange, improved access to information, and the preservation of languages and traditions. They can also support community development by helping residents coordinate activities, share resources, and participate in discussions about common concerns.However, digital transformation also creates challenges. Continuous exposure to global content may influence established cultural expectations, while misinformation, online hostility, and unequal participation can weaken community trust. Differences in digital skills, language resources, and internet access may prevent some individuals and communities from receiving the same benefits as others. Generational differences can also produce tension when digital behaviors conflict with established expectations about family relationships, privacy, and social responsibility.The study concludes that digital transformation does not automatically strengthen or weaken culture. Its outcomes depend on how technologies are used, the quality of digital interactions, the cultural context in which they operate, and the availability of inclusive support systems. Traditional values and digital practices can coexist when communities have opportunities to adapt technologies to their own needs and priorities.To encourage positive outcomes, governments and educational institutions should invest in digital literacy, affordable internet access, multilingual content, and accessible online services. Community organizations should encourage responsible participation, protect cultural heritage, and provide opportunities for different generations to share knowledge. Technology providers should promote transparent platform governance, privacy protection, and inclusive communication environments.

REFERENCES

Bulat, B. (2026). Governance dynamics in online communities: Autonomy, control, and sense of virtual community. New Media & Society, 28(8), 3561-3586.

Ergün, N., Yıldırımçakar, Z., & Filiz, M. Ş. (2026). From silenced to connected: measuring language-based identity expansion through digital media. BMC psychology..

Farivar, F., Campos, L., Chong, A., & Thompson, N. (2026). Reconceptualizing digital culture as a higher-order capability for digital transformation: insights from innovation ecosystem actors. Industrial Management & Data Systems, 1-22.

Kianpour, M., Triandafyllidou, A., Allen, T., Mazrouei, S., & Shams, M. (2026). Social media narratives, diasporic identity and collective memory: A critical synthesis of the literature. Ethnicities, 26(1), 36-62.

Luo, X., & Shi, W. (2026). Catalysts for Connection: How Cultural Distance and Social Motivations Shape Media Use and Identity for Chinese International Students. Journal of Intercultural Communication Research, 1-21.