

Effect of Digital Communication on Intrapersonal Relationship among Undergraduate Students: A Study at Faculty of Education, Language and Communication, University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS)

Vimala Govindaraju., Neesha Ugan

University Malaysia Sarawak

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.1013COM0022>

Received: 04 May 2026; Accepted: 09 May 2026; Published: 03 June 2026

ABSTRACT

The usage of social media and messaging apps has made digital communication an essential element of university students' everyday lives. Prior research has mostly looked at how digital communication affects interpersonal relationships, frequently ignoring how it affects intrapersonal connections. This study aims to investigate how digital communication affects intrapersonal relationships among University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) undergraduates at the Faculty of Education, Language, and Communication (FELC), with a particular focus on emotional awareness, emotional regulation, and self-awareness. Using a qualitative research approach, ten FELC undergraduates chosen by purposive sampling participated in semi-structured interviews to gather data. The main themes and patterns that emerged from the participants' experiences were identified using thematic analysis. The results show that students' emotional sensitivity, triggers, and ways of expression are all greatly impacted by digital communication. Furthermore, it has been shown that excessive use of social media influences students' self-awareness through identity development, social comparison, and self-evaluation. Depending on usage patterns, this can have both beneficial and negative effects. Based on Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, the study explores the effects of self-regulation, feedback, and observation in digital environments on students' personal growth. This study provides recommendations for encouraging healthy digital activities among college students and improves understanding of the psychological effects of digital communication.

Keyword: Digital communication; Intrapersonal relationships; Emotional regulation; Self-awareness; Social media addiction; Undergraduate students

INTRODUCTION

The introduction lays the groundwork for the reader to comprehend the problem the study is trying to solve and why it is pertinent in the present. It also describes what the study aims to investigate and explains its primary goals. Nowadays, digital communication has become an essential part of daily life, especially among university students. The rapid advancements in communication technology have introduced various digital platforms such as social media, messaging apps, and online forums. These digital platforms have become the primary means for students to communicate socially and academically. According to [1], the use of social media has become a primary source for students to obtain information easily and quickly.

Communication among students is also increasingly centred around social media, as these platforms are more efficient and user-friendly. In this context, previous studies have primarily focused on how digital communication impacts interpersonal relationships between individuals, such as social connections. However, there is a lack of research on the effects of digital communication on intrapersonal relationships, which refers to how individuals relate to themselves, including self-awareness, emotional regulation, and self-esteem formation.

Digital communication is now a necessary part of everyday life, especially for university students. Because communication technology is changing so quickly, there are now many digital platforms, like social media, messaging apps, and online forums. Students now mostly use these digital platforms to talk to each other about school and other things. [2] say that students now use social media as their main way to get information quickly and easily. Students are also using social media more and more to talk to each other because these sites are easier to use and work better. In this case, most of the research that has come before this one has looked at how digital communication affects relationships between people, like social connections. There is much less research on how digital communication affects intrapersonal relationships, which are the ways people relate to themselves, like how they become aware of themselves, control their emotions, and build their self-esteem.

This study focuses on undergraduate students at the Faculty of Education, Language, and Communication (FELC) at University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). The study's goal is to find out how these digital interactions affect students' personal growth, especially when it comes to self-awareness, self-esteem, emotional control, and mental health. This focus is important because university students are going through a lot of personal growth, and digital communication can have a big impact on how they see themselves.

Problem Statement

People have changed how they talk to each other and how they see themselves because they use digital communication tools more often. Most of the research has been on how digital communication affects relationships between people, but not so much on how it affects relationships with oneself. This can be seen in how students' self-awareness, emotional control, and self-esteem are affected by using digital platforms, which hasn't been fully looked into yet. [3] say that intrapersonal communication has a big effect on personal growth. However, there is not much research on the role and importance of intrapersonal communication, especially when it comes to helping students become more self-aware. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how digital communication practices influence the intrapersonal relationships of undergraduate students at UNIMAS, particularly among students at the Faculty of Education, Language, and Communication (FELC).

Research Questions

This study consists of two research questions that align with its main objectives. Firstly, it aims to understand how digital communication influences students' ability to identify and regulate their emotions, as emotional awareness and control are essential components of intrapersonal development. Secondly, the study explores the relationship between social media addiction and students' level of self-awareness, focusing on whether frequent use of social platforms enhances or undermines their understanding of themselves. These research questions are intended to examine the psychological effects of digital communication in greater depth, particularly in terms of emotional and self-reflective aspects among FELC students.

Research Objectives

This study has two main objectives that focus on the impact of digital communication on students' intrapersonal relationships. Firstly, it aims to examine how digital communication influences students' ability to recognise and manage their own emotions, considering how constant online interactions may shape emotional awareness and regulation. Secondly, the study seeks to explore the relationship between social media addiction and students' self-awareness, identifying whether excessive use contributes to the enhancement or deterioration of their understanding of self. Through these objectives, the study intends to provide a deeper insight into how digital platforms affect students internally, beyond their social interactions.

Significant of the Study

This study is important in providing new understanding of a less-explored aspect, which is how digital communication influences intrapersonal relationships among FELC students. This study highlights how students' ability to control their emotions, degree of self-awareness, and self-perception can be impacted by their ongoing use of digital platforms, whereas the majority of previous research focuses on interpersonal aspects. This study is important because it could help FELC students become more conscious of their digital habits and how they

affect their mental health. In order to encourage students' healthy emotional development, lecturers and university counsellors may be able to create more strategic and successful support programmes as well as digital literacy initiatives thanks to this research. In addition, this study can serve as a reference for future researchers interested in exploring intrapersonal relationships among youth, particularly in the context of higher education.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

Students from University Malaysia Sarawak's (UNIMAS) Faculty of Education, Language and Communication (FELC) are the subject of this study. In particular, it looks at how digital communication affects intrapersonal relationships, especially with regard to self-perception, self-awareness, and emotional control. To gather detailed information from students, this study will use qualitative techniques like open-ended questionnaires and interviews. To bolster the conclusions, information will also be collected from academic sources and earlier research. This study does, however, have a number of shortcomings. Firstly, because the study only included students from one faculty, the Faculty of Education, Language, and Communication (FELC), the results cannot be applied to all university students. Second, the data collected is highly dependent on the students' honesty and openness in sharing their experiences, and the qualitative approach restricts the number of respondents. Last but not least, the study ignores outside variables that could also have an impact on the students' intrapersonal development, such as socioeconomic background or cultural influences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to comprehend how digital communication affects intrapersonal relationships among students at the Faculty of Education, Language and Communication (FELC), UNIMAS, this section examines pertinent literature. The use of digital platforms like social media and messaging apps has grown in popularity in today's quickly evolving technological age, and it has both beneficial and detrimental effects on people. This article will go over important research that is pertinent to the investigation of how digital communication affects intrapersonal relationships among university students, especially when it comes to self-awareness and emotional control. Prior research has mostly concentrated on interpersonal relationships via social media, with less attention paid to intrapersonal relationships. Therefore, this article will organise and analyse findings from various past studies that are closely related to the two main objectives: to examine the extent to which digital communication affects students' ability to recognise and manage their own emotions and to explore the relationship between social media addiction and the enhancement or deterioration of students' self-awareness.

Social media, messaging apps, online forums, and other virtual communication platforms are examples of digital technologies that facilitate interaction. According to [4], Students are given the opportunity to interact with one another through the internet, and this is supported by the contemporary educational paradigm. Digital communication is widely used by students, particularly for educational purposes. The term "intrapersonal relationships" also refers to a person's relationship with themselves, which includes their awareness of their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours as well as their capacity to control their emotions in a healthy manner. Students' use of digital communication is greatly influenced by their level of self-awareness, which affects their capacity for effective self-expression and online social interaction. In the end, cultivating a solid intrapersonal relationship can improve both personal connections and academic collaboration in the digital sphere. Emotional control and self-awareness are the two main intrapersonal relationship components that are the subject of this study. These are essential components in fostering mental health, self-assurance, and students' capacity to handle everyday difficulties. Therefore, evaluating the long-term effects of digital media usage on students' psychological development and identity formation requires an understanding of how they manage themselves in the digital context.

Relationship of Topic and the Research Problem

Though the majority of prior research has concentrated on interpersonal relationships, including peer networks, online social interactions, and group communication, digital communication is frequently a topic of interest in the fields of psychology and education. Research on intrapersonal relationships has gotten comparatively less attention, especially when it comes to self-awareness and emotional control. University students are heavily exposed to social media use in today's quickly changing digital age, which may have an effect on their

psychological and mental health. According to [5], social media can have positive effects if used appropriately; however, it can also negatively impact an individual's mental health and lead to issues such as depression, loss of self-control, social anxiety, stress, sleep disturbances, and self-harm. Furthermore, there are rising worries that an addiction to social media could result in emotional instability, low self-esteem, and disturbances in self-reflection. Therefore, by examining the impact of digital communication on students' relationships with themselves, this study seeks to close this research gap and provide fresh insights into the topic of intrapersonal relationships between young people and university students.

Aspect	Past Studies (Interpersonal)	Current Study (Intrapersonal)
Research Focus	Effects of social media on social relationships	Effects of digital communication on one's relationship with themselves
Subject of Study	Relationships between individuals (e.g., students and peers/family)	Student's relationship with self (emotions, self-reflection)
Type of Relationship	Interpersonal (between people)	Intrapersonal (within oneself)
General Approach	Quantitative/qualitative (more social interaction-based)	Qualitative (interviews, personal experiences)
Key Issues Explored	Addiction, social communication, peer pressure	Emotional regulation, self-awareness, mental well-being
Relevance to Current Study	Lacks focus on students' inner psychological processes	Highly relevant to student emotional health and personal development

Table 1. Comparison between Past Studies (Interpersonal) and Current Study (Intrapersonal)

As shown in Table 1, most past studies have emphasised interpersonal outcomes, while the current research focuses on internal psychological processes such as emotion regulation and self-awareness. This distinction clearly highlights the novelty and relevance of the present study.

The Extent to Which Digital Communication Affects Students' Ability to Recognize and Manage their Own Emotion

Numerous studies have highlighted how the use of digital communication, particularly social media, can influence students' emotional regulation. For instance, [6] found that students with lower self-monitoring skills were more likely to develop social media addiction, leading to difficulties in managing emotions. Similarly, [7] showed that students with higher levels of social media addiction often rely on maladaptive coping mechanisms such as self-blame and negative rumination. [8] emphasized that excessive digital use often stems from emotional avoidance, which undermines emotional balance. On the other hand, [9] demonstrated that digital mindfulness practices can improve students' ability to manage emotional distress caused by digital overuse. [10] also supported this view by linking psychological distress to excessive smartphone usage and weakened emotional regulation. These findings collectively demonstrate that digital communication significantly influences students' capacity to recognize and control their emotions.

The Relationship Between Social Media Addiction and the Enhancement or Deterioration of Students' Self-awareness

While emotional control is essential, self-awareness is equally vital in understanding intrapersonal development. [11] found that students with insecure attachment styles are more prone to social media addiction, which correlates with poor self-direction and self-awareness. [12] further showed that low self-esteem and emotional instability resulting from social media overuse can affect students' perception of themselves. [13] found that individuals with ambivalent-closed attachment styles often experience identity confusion and self-image issues

due to excessive media use. [14] linked social media addiction with psychological problems such as loneliness and emotional stress, which weaken one's internal reflection. Lastly, [15] showed that students with high social media dependency often display low grit and self-direction, indicating a deterioration in self-awareness and personal discipline. These studies confirm that social media addiction can significantly impair students' awareness of their thoughts, behaviors, and identity.

Theoretical Framework: Social Cognitive Theory by Albert Bandura

According to Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory, human behaviour is impacted by the mutual interaction of individual elements like emotions, behaviour, and surroundings. When it comes to digital communication, students not only use digital platforms frequently, but they also frequently copy the actions of people they see on social media. This mimicry can take many forms, including emulating the language, fashions, and even attitudes of peers on the internet. As a result, social media has an effect on students' behaviour that goes beyond simple consumption; it shapes their interactions and how they see themselves online. This may have an impact on their self-perception and assessment, especially with regard to self-worth and emotional control. Overexposure to social media content, for instance, can erode confidence and promote social comparison. Positive social media feedback, on the other hand, can boost self-esteem and motivation. Thus, this theory is used to comprehend how university students' intrapersonal development is influenced by their experiences with digital communication.

Conceptual Framework

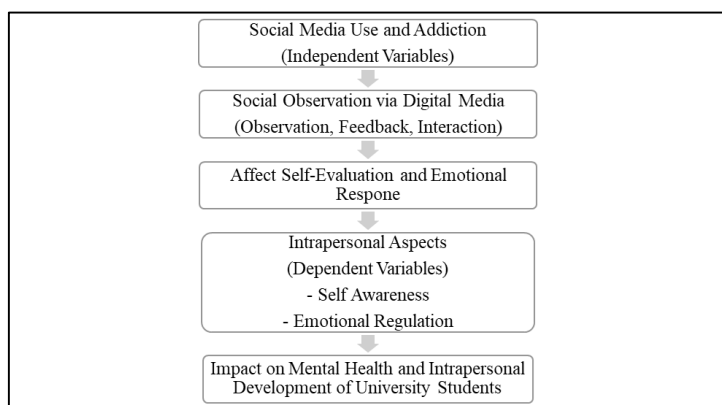


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Digital Communication and Intrapersonal Development among University Students

This study's conceptual framework was created to investigate the connection between university students' intrapersonal characteristics and digital communication. Social media use and addiction are independent variables in this framework, whereas self-awareness and emotional control are dependent variables. According to social cognitive theory, students' self-evaluation and emotional regulation are impacted by social observation via digital media. According to this interaction, students' emotional reactions and self-perception can be greatly impacted by the type and frequency of their social media use. Thus, knowing these dynamics can help develop better digital habits and enhance students' emotional health. Digital content observation, online interactions, and feedback are important factors in forming emotional intelligence, self-reflection, and self-esteem. This framework enables the study to identify how students' daily digital experiences influence their intrapersonal development.

METHODOLOGY

This article will describe the proposed research methodology for exploring the effects of digital communication on intrapersonal relationships among undergraduate students at the Faculty of Education, Language and Communication (FELC), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). The discussion in this article includes the research design, the location and subject of the study, the participant selection method, and the data collection procedures that will be employed in the next phase of the research.

Research Design

This study proposes the use of a qualitative method, as it is suitable for understanding students' personal experiences, inner thoughts, and perspectives regarding digital communication and its effects on themselves. This research design will allow the researcher to obtain in-depth data through semi-structured interviews, which will be analysed thematically.

The Research as an Instrument

In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the main instrument in the process of data collection and analysis. Therefore, the researcher plays a key role in conducting interviews, recording participants' responses, and interpreting the data based on their experiences. Throughout the research process, the researcher will make sure that confidentiality and ethical considerations are upheld.

Experience of the Research

The researcher, a communication student at UNIMAS's Faculty of Education, Language and Communication (FELC), is particularly interested in how digital communication affects students' intrapersonal relationships, which can have an effect on their mental health.

Location and Subject of the Study

The Faculty of Education, Language and Communication (FELC), UNIMAS, will be the site of this investigation. Undergraduate students who actively use digital communication platforms, like social media and messaging apps, for social or academic reasons make up the study's subjects.

Selection of the Respondents

Participants will be chosen through the use of purposeful sampling. FELC students who actively use digital communication and are open to sharing their thoughts and experiences will be the respondents in this study. This approach guarantees that the information gathered is pertinent and offers solid support for carrying out the research.

Criteria of Respondents

Undergraduate students presently enrolled in courses at FELC, UNIMAS, meet the selection criteria for responders. Additionally, respondents must be frequent users of digital communication apps like TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, and others. They ought to be open to participating in interviews and freely expressing their opinions. Respondents must also be FELC students who can speak English or Malay.

Population and Sampling Procedures

The population of this study consists of all students from the Faculty of Education, Language and Communication, UNIMAS. A total of 10 students are proposed to be interviewed, with 2 students from each programme. This sample size is appropriate for qualitative research, which emphasises depth of information. Data collection will be carried out until the targeted data is achieved.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This article presents the findings and discussion of the study based on qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews with undergraduates from the Faculty of Education, Language and Communication (FELC), University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). The study findings are discussed according to the research objectives, which are; - a) To recognise and manage their own emotions, considering how constant online interactions may shape emotional awareness and regulation. b) To explore the relationship between social media addiction and students' self-awareness, identifying whether excessive use contributes to the enhancement or deterioration of their understanding of self.

The results from this research are linked to the objectives, which aim to explore the use of digital communications and the way it affects intrapersonal relationships between undergraduate students in the Faculty of Education, Language, and Communication (FELC), UNIMAS, in terms of emotion management and developing self-awareness.

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

There were ten undergraduates from FELC, UNIMAS in this research. The respondents in the study were selected via purposive sampling and came from four programmes, namely the programmes for Strategic Communication, English for Global Communication, Linguistics, and Islamic Education. All the respondents in the study are active users of digital platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok.

In ensuring confidentiality, names were not used in the study. The respondents for this study comprised ten undergraduates from different courses in the Faculty of Education, Language, and Communication at UNIMAS. The respondents consisted of nine females and one male. They were from different ethnic groups too. There were five Malays, two Iban, and three others from Melanau, Kadazan, and Indian. The biographical information is in Table 4.1.

However, it is conclusive that students frequently utilise digital forms of communication for academic and social interactions, entertainment activities, and personal expressions. It is the varied experiences that enabled a rich understanding to be gained from this research regarding digital communication and students' emotional regulation and self-awareness.

No.	Name	Programme	Race	Gender
1	Qal	English for Global Communication	Malay	Male
2	Divya	English for Global Communication	Indian	Female
3	Siti	English for Global Communication	Malay	Female
4	Lia	Linguistic	Malay	Female
5	Nia	Linguistic	Kadazan	Female
6	Dee	Strategic Communication	Malay	Female
7	Nur	Strategic Communication	Melanau	Female
8	Tata	Strategic Communication	Iban	Female
9	Ayla	Strategic Communication	Iban	Female
10	Ain	Islamic Education	Malay	Female

Table 2. Profile of the respondents

Finding of the Study

This section presents the findings of the study based on the established research objectives. The discussion of the findings is organised according to the research objectives to facilitate understanding and to demonstrate a clear relationship between the interview findings and the objectives of the study.

The Influence of Digital Communication on Students' Emotional Awareness and Emotional Regulation

Based on the interview findings, digital communication has a significant impact on students' ability to recognise and regulate their emotions. Thematic analysis indicates that continuous exposure to digital content directly influences students' emotional states. Respondents identify emotional sensitivity as the significant form of exposure to digital content in this study. This is considered as one's capacity to recognise, understand, and feel emotions. According [16], highly sensitive individuals are supposed to exhibit high emotional reactivity, which may affect their overall well-being. Many respondents indicated that online news and posts that are emotional in nature have impacted their emotions. This response suggests that these students may be emotionally sensitive due to their continuous exposure to digital information.

"I personally become more intense when it comes to media social because somehow all the news or any gossiping that I watched tremendously play with my emotion everyday" (Qal)

"Digital communication affects my emotion because the content I see can change my mood quite easily. Sometimes it helps me express myself better, but sometimes it also triggers stress or frustration" (Ayla)

"Digital communication affects our emotions through the video content uploaded, such as videos about death, people expressing their feelings, and so on" (Nia)

In addition, digital content also acts as an emotional trigger. Several respondents argued that digital communication has impacted their emotions, especially when they are faced with or view content which triggers those emotions. According to [17], digital emotional contagion is the result of a number of situations and is responsible for influencing users' emotions as well as behaviours in different fields. This shows that digital content posts are able to induce those emotions in students.

"I watched a sad TikTok video that made me imagine being in that person's shoes. I felt so sad that I cried because it felt real to me" (Siti)

"I often come across negative or rude statements posted on WhatsApp statuses, and this puts pressure on me and affects my emotions" (Nur)

"When I read negative news about family neglect or abuse toward someone, which made me feel angry. However, when I see pictures of animals doing cute actions, my emotions become stable again" (Dee)

Furthermore, the findings also reveal that digital communication is used as a medium for emotional expression. [18] assert that the internet functions not only as a medium for information dissemination but also as a venue for individuals to articulate their emotions and emotional states. Siti stated that WhatsApp is a digital platform where posts are automatically deleted after 24 hours, making it a suitable space for expressing disappointment toward others through status updates. When the status disappears, she feels that the emotions she expressed have also faded. Based on these findings, digital platforms function as channels for expressing and temporarily releasing emotions.

However, digital communication also plays a role in both emotional regulation and stress triggers. According to [19], individuals should be able to reappraise and practices various emotional regulation strategies, such as altering the way they think about an event or their behavioural responses to it. One respondent, Divya, stated that social media can make her feel better and calmer, but excessive use causes her to feel more stressed. Consequently, these findings indicate that the influence of digital communication on emotional regulation is contingent upon the extent and nature of its utilisation. Based on the first objective of this study, the findings indicate that digital communication has varied effects on students' emotional sensitivity, emotional triggers, and emotional regulation. Table 4.2 presents the main themes identified in the interview analysis for this first objective, along with explanations for each theme.

Theme	Description
-------	-------------

Emotional Awareness	Ability to identify, understand, and feel emotions
Emotional Triggers	Digital content that triggers specific emotions
Emotional Expression	Use of digital platforms to express or release emotions
Emotional Regulation and Stress Triggers	Effect of digital communication on stress or mood management

Table 3. Key Themes of Digital Communication on Students' Emotional Awareness and Emotional Regulation

The Relationship between Social Media Addiction and Students' Self-Awareness

The second objective of this study aims to examine the relationship between social media addiction and students' self-awareness. Based on the interview findings related to this objective, excessive use of social media was found to influence how students evaluate themselves, shape their identities, and regulate their behaviours. Social comparison emerged as a key theme from the interview findings. According to [20], social comparison can be divided into three categories: upward, downward, and lateral. However, social comparison on social media tends to be upward-oriented, where individuals present idealised versions of themselves and their lives. This upward social comparison is associated with negative psychological effects, including the development of low self-esteem and feelings of depression among viewers. Several respondents admitted that they tend to compare themselves with others on social media, which negatively affects their self-confidence. These interview findings indicate that excessive exposure to idealised life portrayals on digital platforms can weaken students' self-awareness.

"Seeing classmates post about their achievements makes me feel like I'm not doing enough, even if I know it's not fair" (Tata)

"Social media definitely influences how I see myself. Sometimes I feel less confident when I see others looking more successful or beautiful" (Lia)

"I feel very inferior because I feel far behind compared to them, and I feel that I am not as beautiful as they are" (Nur)

However, not all respondents experienced negative effects. Some respondents reported that social media helped them engage in self-reflection and enhance their self-confidence. According to [21], individuals may experience an increase in self-esteem when they perceive superior comparison targets as sharing similar attributes. In this context, respondents who maintain a positive outlook on such posts perceive them as motivational sources, thereby bolstering their self-confidence. This suggests that the mindful use of social media can contribute to the development of more positive self-awareness.

"I can explore more about my skills, how should I groom it and become more confident through social media or digital communication" (Qal)

"I compare myself because I know there are many things I still need to learn. Comparing is not wrong as long as it does not involve envy. It should align with religious principles, meaning we should remain grateful. Comparing ourselves can be a way to improve. Feeling insecure is normal as long as it stays within limits. For example, seeing others score many A's motivates us to work harder" (Ain)

Furthermore, the findings also reveal that students are aware of their excessive use of social media. Lia said that she often spends too much time on social media, which makes her put off finishing her schoolwork. She did, however, try to cut down on her social media use, and she said she felt calmer and more focused, even though she was bored and didn't know what to do with her time at first. Awareness of excessive social media use can help prevent its negative effects, as social media may become a fully virtual life for addicted users, differing from their real personalities as a means of escaping reality [22]. Based on the interview findings for the second objective, excessive use of social media influences how students evaluate themselves, shape their identities, and

regulate their behaviours. Several themes were identified that illustrate the effects of social media on self-awareness, social comparison, and self-confidence. These themes are summarised in Table 4.3.

Theme	Description
Upward Social Comparison	Comparing oneself to others who are perceived as better in appearance, achievements, or status on social media, which may negatively affect self-esteem
Negative Impact on Self Confidence	Excessive exposure to idealized content reduces confidence and leads to feelings of inferiority
Positive Self-Reflection	Social media can be used constructively to reflect on personal skills, growth, and self-improvement
Motivated Comparison	Comparing oneself in a healthy, non-jealous way can inspire self-improvement and increased confidence
Awareness of Excessive Social Media Use	Students recognise when their usage is excessive and how it can negatively affect focus and real-life responsibilities

Table 4. Key Themes of Social Media Addiction and Students' Self Awareness

DISCUSSION

This article has outlined the findings and discourse derived from qualitative interview data obtained from undergraduates at the Faculty of Education, Language and Communication, UNIMAS. The study's findings demonstrate that digital communication substantially influences students' intrapersonal relationships, especially regarding emotional regulation and self-awareness. [3] assert that self-awareness empowers students to identify their strengths and weaknesses, regulate stress, and engage effectively with their surroundings.

The authors also stress that improving self-awareness in students is important in higher education because it encompasses understanding one's own values, beliefs, feelings, and motivations that represent a basic foundation to achieve educational success. The authors state that the development of self-awareness in students is important in higher education. This is because it helps them understand their values, beliefs, feelings, and motivations, which are all important for doing well in school and being fulfilled in life.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This article provides a comprehensive summary of the study, emphasising the principal conclusions derived from the research findings, as well as their theoretical, methodological, and practical implications. This article also provides suggestions for future research on how digital communication affects undergraduates' intrapersonal relationships. The discussion in this article is based on the interview results from Article 4 and is in line with the research goals that have already been set.

Summary of the Study

This research employed a qualitative method with the objective of exploring the impact of digital communication on intrapersonal relationships among undergraduate students at the Faculty of Education, Language, and Communication (FELC), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). The main objective is to explore how digital communication influences students' capacity to identify and control their emotions and to explore social media addiction and its relationship with students' self-awareness.

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from ten undergraduate students from FELC (UNIMAS), representing four academic programs within the faculty. According to [23], qualitative methods provide researchers with multiple approaches to study and understand emotional phenomena. The interview data was

analysed using thematic analysis to establish themes related to students' experience with digital communication. The study supports the themes and findings by using quotes to authenticate the participants' voices.

The study's findings indicate that digital communication plays a significant role in undergraduates' lives, particularly in shaping their emotional experiences and self-awareness. The study also shows that digital communication not only has positive impacts but can also produce negative implications for students' intrapersonal relationships, depending on the frequency and manner of use. According to [24], widespread positive portrayals on social media encourage adolescents to compare themselves with the achievements of others, which can inspire positive feelings, while on the negative side, social media users sometimes fail to regulate their use, leading to conflicts with other responsibilities and goals.

Conclusion

Prior to conducting this study, the researcher observed how undergraduates at FELC, UNIMAS interact with digital communication in their daily lives. It was found that students generally use digital media for communication but are less aware of how these digital interactions affect their intrapersonal relationships. Digital communication is closely linked to emotional regulation and self-awareness because it can influence students' behaviours and personal experiences. The researcher also sought to understand students' experiences in-depth when interacting with digital content to illustrate the effects of digital communication on their intrapersonal relationships.

Based on the first research objective, the findings indicate that digital communication significantly affects students' ability to recognise and regulate their emotions. According to [25], emotion regulation theory emphasises the dynamic nature of the process and asserts that regulating emotions in response to the environment is not a static or singular act but rather a series of adaptive and continuous behaviours, cognitions, and physiological responses. Continuous exposure to digital content such as news, emotional videos, and social media posts can heighten students' emotional sensitivity and act as emotional triggers. Moreover, digital platforms facilitate the expression of emotions and provide transient relief, particularly through ephemeral WhatsApp status updates. The effect of digital communication on students' emotional regulation is thus dual both beneficial and detrimental contingent upon individual usage behaviours.

Results for the second objective show that there is a significance between social media addiction and levels of self-awareness among students. Overuse of social media leads to increased levels of social comparison, which may affect self-confidence and self-esteem. But findings also show that there is a positive effect of social media on self-reflection and motivation if used moderately. According to [26], self-motivation is defined as an internal engine that pushes one to complete his/her personal goals and follow personal rules without being attracted by outer rewards. Moreover, awareness of overuse of social media among students will help them control their activities and create a balance between online and offline life.

Theoretical Implication

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to a more profound understanding of the impact of digital communication on undergraduate students' intrapersonal relationships. The findings validate the idea that continuous interactions with the digital environment shape individuals' emotional experiences and self-awareness. This study strengthens the role of digital communication as a factor influencing emotional development, self-reflection, and behaviour in higher education. Furthermore, this research expands the application of communication and social psychology theories in understanding digital communication phenomena among young people, particularly in the context of intrapersonal relationships.

The results indicate that ongoing engagement with digital platforms affects students' self-awareness and emotional regulation, corroborating the principles outlined in Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. According to [27], the main mechanism of the Social Cognitive Theory is that individuals learn cognitive and affective behaviours through observation of others' actions and the social consequences of those actions. The acquisition of skills or achievements also depends on students' belief in their abilities, referred to as self-efficacy, and complex behaviours rely on the development of students' self-regulatory systems. In the context of digital

communication, observing social media content, online interactions, and peer feedback allows students to imitate, evaluate, and adapt their behaviours, influencing how they recognise emotions, manage emotional reactions, and shape self-perception. Therefore, digital communication serves not only as a medium for social learning but also as a platform for dynamic intrapersonal development through observation, imitation, and self-adjustment. Figure 5.1 illustrates an infographic explaining Albert Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory, including key components such as the Reciprocal Triad, Observational Learning, Self-Efficacy, and Self-Regulation, and their effects on individual self-awareness and emotional regulation.

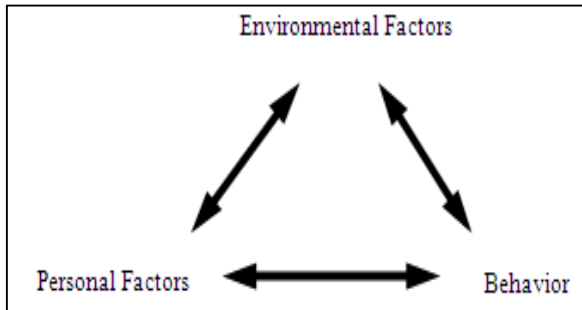


Figure 2. Social Cognitive Theory by Albert Bandura (1986).

Figure 2 presents a conceptual framework based on Social Cognitive Theory. It demonstrates how the use of digital communication and social media (independent variables) affects students’ intrapersonal development through mediating processes such as observational learning, feedback and interactions, self-efficacy, and self-regulation, which subsequently influence dependent variables, including emotional awareness, emotional regulation, self-awareness, and self-reflection.

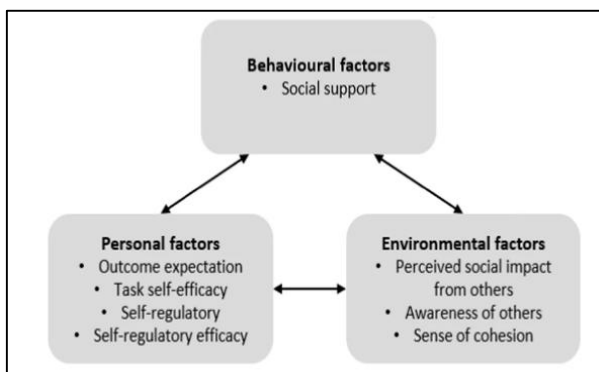


Figure 3. Conceptual Framework based on Social Cognitive Theory (1986).

Methodological Implications

From a methodological perspective, this study indicates that a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews is suitable for exploring students’ subjective experiences with digital communication. Researchers can obtain detailed and in-depth data on students’ emotions, thoughts, and behaviours through this approach, which quantitative methods cannot fully capture.

The use of thematic analysis in this study also helped the researcher systematically identify key themes based on respondents’ real experiences. According to [28], descriptive approaches such as descriptive phenomenology, content analysis, and thematic analysis are appropriate for researchers wishing to use a relatively low level of interpretation, unlike grounded theory, which requires a higher level of interpretive complexity. Therefore, the methodological approach used in this study can serve as a reference for future research exploring intrapersonal relationships and digital communication.

Practical Implications

From a practical standpoint, the findings have important implications for students, the education industry, and stakeholders in higher education. Students need to increase awareness of their patterns of digital communication to better manage their emotions and develop healthier self-awareness. Using digital communication judiciously can help students manage stress, enhance self-reflection, and maintain emotional well-being, consistent with studies showing that digital literacy and self-regulation assist students in managing academic stress and improving emotional well-being [29].

Additionally, educational institutions are encouraged to conduct digital awareness programmes, emotional management workshops, and social media literacy training to help students understand the effects of digital communication on themselves, as social media literacy has been identified as a key competency in higher education [30]. University lecturers and counsellors should also play a vital role in helping students use digital communication in a balanced and responsible manner.

Future Research Recommendations

Based on the limitations of this study, several recommendations are proposed for future research. Future studies could involve larger sample sizes and include students from different faculties and universities to enhance the generalisability of the findings. Additionally, future research could adopt a mixed-method approach to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of digital communication effects, as methodological studies emphasise that combining quantitative and qualitative techniques can broaden the scope and strengthen the analytical rigour of social research [31]. Future studies are also recommended to investigate the role of other factors, such as gender, cultural background, and social support levels, in influencing the relationship between digital communication and intrapersonal relationships. More in-depth research in this area can help develop more effective strategies for managing digital communication among undergraduates.

REFERENCES

1. Handayani, F., Jalwis, N., & Prahatmaja, N. (2024). The role of social media as a source of academic information for students. *Record and Library Journal*, 10(1), 103–111. <https://doi.org/10.20473/rlj.v10-i1.2024.103-111>
2. J, I. M., & Soubramanian, P. (2024). From self-awareness to social savvy: how intrapersonal skills shape interpersonal competence in university students. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1469746>
3. Simbolon, A. R., Hasan, K., Ananda, R., S, A. R., Amelia, D., & Mahira, U. (2024). Analysis of Intrapersonal Communication in Enhancing Self-Wareness of College Students. *Proceedings of International Conference on Social Science Political Science and Humanities (ICoSPOLHUM)*, 4, 00008. <https://doi.org/10.29103/icospolhum.v4i.379>
4. Tang, Y., & Hew, K. F. (2020). Does mobile instant messaging facilitate social presence in online communication? A two-stage study of higher education students. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 17(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-020-00188-0>
5. Sallehuddin, H., Sawai, R. P., Aziz, A. R. A., & Kasmani, M. F. (2021). Association between social media use and depression among university students. <https://doi.org/10.33102/abqari.vol24no2.311>
6. Sahranç, Ü., & Urhun, E. D. (2021). A Study on the Relationship between Social Media Addiction and Self-Regulation Processes among University Students. *International Journal of Psychology and Educational Studies*, 8(4), 96–109. <https://doi.org/10.52380/ijpes.2021.8.4.546>
7. Ozer, N., Tanriverdi, D., Safiye Ozguc, & The author(s). (2024). The relationship between social media addiction and emotion regulation skills and sleep quality of university students. *Annals of Medical Research*, 540–545. <https://doi.org/10.5455/annalsmedres.2024.05.099>
8. Shiraly, R., Roshanfekar, A., Asadollahi, A., & Griffiths, M. D. (2024). Psychological distress, social media use, and academic performance of medical students: the mediating role of coping style. *BMC Medical Education*, 24(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-024-05988-w>
9. Sun, L. (2023). Social media usage and students' social anxiety, loneliness and well-being: does digital mindfulness-based intervention effectively work? *BMC Psychology*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-023-01398-7>

10. Chen, H., Ma, J., Guan, J., Yin, L., Shi, Z., & Zhang, Y. (2022). The impact of psychological distress on problematic smartphone use among college students: The mediating role of metacognitions about smartphone use. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.932838>
11. Shafiee, M., Ashouri, A., & Dehghani, M. (2020). The Relationship Between Attachment Style and Social Network Addiction with the Mediating Role of Personality Traits. *International Journal High Risk Behaviors & Addiction*, 9(4). <https://doi.org/10.5812/ijhrba.101501>
12. Landa-Blanco, M., García, Y. R., Landa-Blanco, A. L., Cortés-Ramos, A., & Paz-Maldonado, E. (2024). Social media addiction relationship with academic engagement in university students: The mediator role of self-esteem, depression, and anxiety. *Heliyon*, 10(2), e24384. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e24384>
13. Eichenberg, C., Schneider, R., & Rimpl, H. (2024). Social media addiction: associations with attachment style, mental distress, and personality. *BMC Psychiatry*, 24(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-024-05709-z>
14. Akhlaq, B., Iqbal, A., & Ikram, A. (2022). Assessment Of Psychosocial Issues Due To Social Media Addiction Among University Students And Their Relationship With Academic Grades. *Pakistan Journal of Social Research*, 04(03), 1020–1031. <https://doi.org/10.52567/pjsr.v4i03.1283>
15. Ch'ng, L. T. X., & Hoo, P. Y. S. (2022). Relationship between Social Media Addiction Levels and Academic Procrastination among Undergraduate Students in Malaysia: Grit as the Mediator. *Advanced Journal of Social Science*, 11(1), 13–27. <https://doi.org/10.21467/ajss.11.1.13-27>
16. Lionetti, F., & Pluess, M. (2024). The role of environmental sensitivity in the experience and processing of emotions: implications for well-being. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B Biological Sciences*, 379(1908), 20230244. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2023.0244>
17. Goldenberg, A., & Gross, J. J. (2020). Digital emotion contagion. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 24(4), 316–328. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2020.01.009>
18. Prikhodko, O. V., Cherdymova, E. I., Lopanova, E. V., Galchenko, N. A., Ikonnikov, A. I., Mechkovskaya, O. A., & Karamova, O. V. (2020). Ways of expressing emotions in social networks: essential features, problems and features of manifestation in internet communication. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.29333/ojcm/7931>
19. Beattie, M. (2021). Social media awareness: The impact of social media on mental health. RED: A Repository of Digital Collections. <https://red.mnstate.edu/thesis/503/>
20. Samra, A., Warburton, W. A., & Collins, A. M. (2022). Social comparisons: A potential mechanism linking problematic social media use with depression. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 11(2), 607–614. <https://doi.org/10.1556/2006.2022.00023>
21. Rüter, L., Jahn, J., & Marksteiner, T. (2023). #influenced! The impact of social media influencing on self-esteem and the role of social comparison and resilience. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1216195. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1216195>
22. Sedek, S. (2021). Innovative Solutions for awareness campaign of social media addiction and its consequences. 11(2), 131–156. <https://doi.org/10.21608/idj.2021.152344>
23. Eatough, V. & Tomkins, L. (2022). 8 Qualitative methods. In G. Schiewer, J. Altarriba & B. Ng (Ed.), Volume 1 (pp. 163-182). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110347524-008>
24. Rosič, J., Janicke-Bowles, S. H., Carbone, L., Lobe, B., & Vandenbosch, L. (2022). Positive digital communication among youth: The development and validation of the digital flourishing scale for adolescents. *Frontiers in Digital Health*, 4, 975557. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fdgth.2022.975557>
25. Bettis, A. H., Burke, T. A., Nesi, J., & Liu, R. T. (2021b). Digital Technologies for Emotion-Regulation Assessment and Intervention: A Conceptual Review. *Clinical Psychological Science*, 10(1), 3–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21677026211011982>
26. Al Mandalawi, A. A. K. H. (2025) Self-Motivation Theoretical Models and Applied Experiments. Al-Iraqa Foundation for Culture and Development website (scientific website) Issue10. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Alaa-Hussein-45/publication/395473218_Self-Motivation-Theoretical-Models-and-Applied-Experiments/links/68c733c9508ac7086f59e872/Self-Motivation-Theoretical-Models-and-Applied-Experiments.pdf

27. Mujahidah, N. & Yusdiana. (2023). Application of Albert Bandura's Social-Cognitive Theories in Teaching and learning. In *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* (Vol. 12, Issue 02, pp. 2131–2133) <https://jurnal.staialhidayahbogor.ac.id/index.php/ei/article/view/4585/1776>
28. Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., & Bondas, T. (2013). Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. *Nursing and Health Sciences*, 15(3), 398–405. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nhs.12048>
29. Ibrahim, R. K., Sabbah, S. A., Al-Jarrah, M., Senior, J., Almomani, J. A., Darwish, A., Albannay, F., & Naimat, A. A. (2024). The mediating effect of digital literacy and self-regulation on the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic stress among university students: a cross-sectional study. *BMC Medical Education*, 24(1), 1309. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-024-06279-0>
30. A'zdom, M. K., & Asilah, A. S. (2025). The role of social media literacy in supporting digital transformation of university learning Systems. <https://jostem.professorline.com/index.php/journal/article/view/27>
31. Sandelowski M. (2000). Combining qualitative and quantitative sampling, data collection, and analysis techniques in mixed-method studies. *Research in nursing & health*, 23(3), 246–255. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-240x\(200006\)23:3<246::aid-nur9>3.0.co;2-h](https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-240x(200006)23:3<246::aid-nur9>3.0.co;2-h)