

# The Role Of Technology In Changing Social Relations In Gowa Regency Society

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## Abstract

This research study assesses the relationship between change in social relation and use of technology within Gowa Regency Indonesia, specifically the impact of mobile phones, social media and other related technologies on communication, social networks, as well as culture. Semi structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation were conducted with 32 participants from the local community, community leaders, and technology users within the young adult population and elder generation. It becomes clear from the study that technology has changed social relationships' patterns with conventional face-to-face exchanges being substituted by remote, but still, keeping social interaction engaging across distances. It also captures shifts in social culture where there are issues of; privacy, Gender, and interactions as well as the community. Thus, whereas the younger participants adopt the new media technologies for subverting conventional morality and asserting individual voice and freedom, the older participants identify new media as threatening their —privacy, and the decay of culture. The research also notes how technology has enhanced bond among the social relations, especially the family and local community ties, as much as it revolutionizes the conventional social relations. The outcomes advance a knowledge on technology effects on social relations by offering a situated view of how the adoption of technologies differ within eras and demographics. Thus, this study helps to fill a gap in previous literature that very often does not pay sufficient attention to the rural scenario.

**Keywords:** technology, social relations, Gowa Regency.

## Introduction

Today, technology is an inseparable part of the global society and human beings modify the ways in which they interact thanks to it. Such a change is equally most apparent in the rural and other Semi-urban areas where the architecture of relations, communication and community is shifting with the impact of technology. This paper will put Gowa regency, in south sulawesi, Indonesia into focus to analyze on how technological advancement is held contributing to the changes of societal relations within a society that is characterized by progressive changes in its social fabric in the contemporary period. The socioeconomic and technological contexts of Gowa are and balance of indigenous cultural beliefs and practices on one hand, and the-advancement technological integration on the other, thus making it an apt setting through which to explore the freedom that technology constrains in a society.

technology has also been defined as a fundamental force of social transformation in many different arenas, such as, educational system, economic system, and health systems Hilbert (2020). Communication technology and specifically the internet has offered people an opportunity to access information and to interact in new and different ways. Technological advancement has made varieties of way through which people can freely connect themselves ranging from social networks, instant messaging, online communities

hence impacting on social relations formation, sustenance and change (Um et al., 2022). Despite the centrality of social relations impact by technological advancements is defining in urban counterpart, a scarce few attempts to explaining the same in the rural or semi-urban Gowa Regency given that it presents a traditional and technological hybridism world.

Technologically development has spread different sectors in the daily life of the people in Gowa, including education, governance, business and tourism. Access to information and communication has becoming more easier through the help of mobile phones, internet and different social media accounts that were almost unreachable in the past in the region. Nevertheless, this kind of technology adaptability has its drawbacks, generally, related to effects on conventional social and cultural settings. in rural regions where people interact closely with one another to suit locally approved norms of communicating, the enhanced use of technology may change the dynamics of human interaction (Shaqsi et al., 2020). Since use of digital platforms has become a part and parcel of the lives of the Gowa people, it on one hand has potential positive or negative impacts on the societies and cultural fabric of the community.

Information technology, in changing social relations can be seen as a double-edged sword. On one hand technology has been said to have increased activism, coupled with fluidity and productions in organizing activists across geographic spaces. Website like social site and other enables people to maintain friendships with friends and relatives who might be far away this increases the sense of global community (Agrawal et al., 2024). another group of scholars maintains that technology is capable of degrading face-to-face communication and weakens the fundamentals of local networks (Detyna et al., 2023). This Historical landscape may present a challenge to communal relations in Gowa due to the reliance of interpersonal contact both in social relations where digital technology is on the rise within the society. This binary of increased connection offering both advantage and reduced social closeness is the key to analyzing how technology is altering social relations in Gowa Regency.

Besides the effects in interpersonal interactions, technology has greater impacts concerning interactions with the larger society. Mobile phone and especially face book has contributed equally to the society, especially in bringing about change in the political, economic and social aspect, where individuals are more involve now as compared to early days (Ulla & Perelas, 2021). And this has made the public realize more on issue such as education, health, and governance in Gowa besides involving them more into the decision-making processes in the locality. Facebook or even WhatsApp has become platforms through which community activities, social issues, causes within the community among others are discussed and support sought. Through such sites, the voices of excluded groups can be heard, discussions initiated and transformational actions called for (Zion, 2020). At the same time however the sharing of information has also accelerated through the provision of various forms of digital media, there are concern on information bubble, information warfare and digital divide may deepen social inequalities.

This brings us to another important parameter within the complex of the digital divide when discussing the influence of technology on social relation in Gowa Regency. New technologies are now available but the level of their adoption and the networks remain quite unequal with old rural schools in the main. Older people may lack adequate physical, financial and social resources to acquire and master the technologies which could isolate them more from the younger generations. As in many other rural contexts, social relations in Gowa are yet in development, and use of technology remains rather restricted, studying how these gaps affect these interactions becomes essential. The current digital disparities mean that urban and rural populations may not equitably embrace the technologies and thus social disparities may also be compounded by the digital divide in addressing the question of whether ubiquitous connectivity is a worthy pursuit.

The role of technology in Gowa's society is not only limited to communication and social networking. The integration of technology into education, for instance, has had profound effects on how learning takes place in schools and communities. Online learning platforms and digital tools have enabled students in Gowa to access educational resources that were previously unavailable, leading to greater educational opportunities.

challenges remain, particularly regarding the equitable distribution of technology and the ability of students to effectively engage with these resources. The introduction of technology into education has also raised questions about the impact on traditional learning methods and teacher-student interactions, which have long been shaped by local cultural practices (Abu et al., 2021).

## **Method**

The methodology used in this study was qualitative in nature, which allowed for a deep exploration of the role of technology in transforming social relations in Gowa Regency. Qualitative research is particularly suited for investigating complex social phenomena like technology's impact on community dynamics, as it allows researchers to capture the lived experiences of participants. This approach was chosen because it can provide richer insights than quantitative methods, particularly when trying to understand nuanced perspectives on how technological innovations shape social practices, relationships, and cultural values.

The data collection for this study was done using three primary methods: in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 individuals from diverse backgrounds, including local residents, community leaders, and educators. These interviews were designed to capture personal accounts of how technology affected participants' social interactions and community engagement. By allowing participants to express their views in their own words, the interviews provided valuable insights into how technology reshaped communication, social bonding, and participation in communal activities.

Focus group discussions were organized to provide a platform for collective reflections on the subject of technology's influence on social relations. Two distinct focus groups were formed, one composed of younger participants (ages 18-30) and the other of older individuals (ages 50 and above). This division was intended to explore generational differences in technology usage and its influence on social relationships. The focus group format encouraged dynamic exchanges among participants, enabling the study to capture varying viewpoints on how technology had changed social practices over time.

In addition to interviews and focus groups, participant observation was carried out in different social settings, such as community centers and local markets. This observational approach provided a unique opportunity to witness firsthand how technology was integrated into daily social interactions. The researcher observed how people used mobile phones, social media, and other technological tools in everyday settings, noting the ways these technologies facilitated or hindered communication and social connections. By immersing in the community context, the researcher was able to observe how technology's impact extended beyond individual usage to influence broader social dynamics.

The data collected from interviews, focus groups, and observations were analyzed using thematic analysis, which allowed the researcher to identify recurring themes and patterns across the data. Through this process, key themes such as the influence of social media on community interaction, generational differences in technology adoption, and the impact of technology on traditional cultural practices emerged. These themes were carefully analyzed to uncover both the positive and negative effects of technology on social relations, considering factors such as age, social status, and access to digital tools. By interpreting the data through a thematic lens, the study was able to offer a comprehensive understanding of the ways technology reshapes social relationships in Gowa Regency.

## **Result and Discussion**

This study aims to provide an in-depth exploration of how the rapid adoption of digital tools, such as mobile phones, social media, and the internet, influences communication patterns, social interactions, and community dynamics in this region. By focusing on the lived experiences of local residents and community leaders, this research seeks to highlight both the opportunities and challenges presented by technology in altering traditional social structures. The findings offer a nuanced understanding of the ways in which technology has become integrated into everyday life, transforming social norms, interactions, and cultural

practices in Gowa, while also revealing generational differences in the acceptance and use of these digital tools. The following discussion presents the key findings that emerged from the data collection process, highlighting the shifts in social networks, communication, and societal values brought about by technological changes in the community.

### **Technological Influence on Social Networks**

The influence of technology on social networks in Gowa Regency has been profound, reshaping how individuals interact, communicate, and maintain relationships. The advent of mobile phones, social media platforms, and instant messaging has significantly altered the dynamics of social networks, particularly in how people maintain connections over distances and how they create new social bonds. Social networks, once largely confined to face-to-face interactions, have increasingly become virtual spaces where people exchange ideas, maintain friendships, and even engage in community-driven activities.

The role of social media in facilitating these virtual social networks was particularly emphasized during interviews. Many participants noted that platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram had become integral to their social lives, enabling them to stay connected with friends and family, as well as to participate in community events and discussions. As one interviewee explained,

"Social media has allowed me to stay in touch with my family, especially those who live in other cities. We chat regularly and share updates, and it feels like we're always connected, even when we're far apart."

This illustrates how social media platforms serve as vital tools for maintaining long-distance relationships and strengthening social ties, particularly among people who may not otherwise have the means to communicate frequently.

In addition to maintaining connections with existing social circles, technology has also played a crucial role in forming new social networks. Younger participants in the study emphasized the importance of social media as a space for meeting new people and expanding their social groups. One participant, a 24-year-old university student, shared,

"I've met so many new people through Facebook groups and Instagram. We share common interests, like studying the same course or liking similar activities, and it feels like we have a deeper connection even though we've never met in person."

This statement highlights the role of social media in facilitating connections based on shared interests, rather than geographic proximity or prior acquaintance, making it possible to form bonds with individuals who might otherwise remain outside one's immediate social circle.

However, while technology has had positive effects on social networking, it has also introduced challenges. Some participants noted that while they had expanded their social networks online, the quality of these interactions sometimes felt superficial. A community leader mentioned,

"We have more connections now, but many of them are on a surface level. People are busy posting pictures, but it feels like we're losing the real, meaningful conversations that used to happen face-to-face."

This reflects concerns about how digital interactions, although numerous, may lack the depth and authenticity of traditional, in-person social connections. The shift towards online interactions has, for some, led to feelings of social isolation despite being more "connected" than ever.

Another significant aspect of technological influence on social networks is the generational divide in the way technology is used. Older participants in the study expressed reservations about the impact of technology on social networks, particularly in terms of face-to-face interaction. One elderly participant explained,

"When I was younger, we would sit together in the evenings, talking and sharing stories. Nowadays, it feels like everyone is on their phones, and we don't connect like we used to."

This comment underscores a generational shift, with older individuals expressing a sense of loss regarding the intimate, direct communication that characterized their social networks before the widespread adoption of digital technologies. For these participants, technology, while useful, was perceived as a barrier to deep, personal interaction, substituting virtual connections for the richer, more authentic face-to-face exchanges.

The differences in generational attitudes toward technology also highlight how the influence of technology on social networks is multifaceted. Younger generations, who have grown up with digital technology, tend to embrace it as a natural extension of their social lives, often finding it to be a tool for self-expression and social engagement. Older generations, however, may view technology with skepticism, feeling that it has undermined traditional forms of communication and weakened community cohesion. These divergent views reflect broader cultural shifts in how social relationships are formed and maintained in the digital age.

### **Changes in Communication Patterns**

The introduction of technology into daily life in Gowa Regency has resulted in significant changes to communication patterns, affecting how people interact with one another both within families and across broader social networks. Traditional communication methods, such as face-to-face conversations and phone calls, have been increasingly replaced by text-based messaging, social media, and other digital communication tools. These changes have transformed the speed, frequency, and manner of communication, leading to both positive and negative consequences for social relations.

One of the most notable shifts in communication patterns is the increased reliance on mobile phones and instant messaging apps. Participants frequently highlighted how messaging apps like WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook Messenger had become the primary means of communication, replacing traditional phone calls or in-person conversations. One young adult participant explained,

"We don't really make calls anymore, everything's through WhatsApp now. It's quicker, and you can send pictures and voice messages, which makes it feel more personal, even though we're not talking face-to-face."

This reflects how mobile technology has not only accelerated communication but also introduced a more dynamic, multimodal approach. Through text, voice messages, and multimedia, individuals can communicate in ways that were not possible with older communication tools, providing a richer, albeit virtual, interaction experience.

However, this shift to digital communication has also raised concerns about the depth and quality of social interactions. Several participants expressed the view that, while technology had made communication more convenient, it had also reduced the face-to-face interaction that fosters deeper emotional connections. A middle-aged participant noted,

"Before, we would gather in the evenings and have long conversations. Now, everyone's just sending short messages, and sometimes, it feels like we've lost that closeness."

This sentiment reflects a broader concern about the erosion of meaningful, in-person dialogues, which many participants viewed as an important aspect of building strong, lasting relationships. While digital communication allows for quick exchanges, it can often lack the warmth and personal connection that face-to-face conversations inherently provide.

The rapid shift to digital communication also has implications for the speed and immediacy of social interactions. In the past, communication within communities tended to follow a slower, more deliberate pace, with individuals meeting regularly to share news or updates. Today, with the advent of social media

platforms, communication is instantaneous, with people sharing updates, news, and opinions in real time. One community leader shared,

"People are now constantly online, sharing everything they're doing. In the past, we would meet in person to catch up on what's happening, but now everything is out there instantly."

This reflects how digital platforms, particularly social media, have dramatically accelerated the flow of information, enabling individuals to share updates and opinions much more quickly than before. While this has fostered a sense of being constantly informed, it has also meant that people are no longer as reliant on face-to-face conversations or community gatherings for information exchange.

Another significant change in communication patterns is the generational divide in how technology is embraced. Younger participants in the study, who have grown up in the digital age, tend to be more comfortable using technology for communication, viewing it as a natural and efficient way to interact. An 18-year-old participant explained,

"I don't remember a time before texting and social media. It's just how we talk to people now."

For this group, communication through digital means is not just an alternative to traditional methods but the default mode of social interaction. In contrast, older participants expressed more reluctance toward adopting new communication technologies, often preferring face-to-face interaction or phone calls over texting or social media. One elderly participant remarked,

"I find it hard to keep up with all these new apps. It feels like I'm losing the connection with my family because they all prefer to message instead of calling."

This highlights a generational divide in communication practices, where younger generations are more inclined to adopt digital communication tools, while older generations may feel alienated by the rapid pace of technological change.

Moreover, the impact of technology on communication patterns extends beyond individual preferences to influence community dynamics. With the rise of social media and messaging apps, local communities in Gowa Regency have found new ways to engage in group discussions, share information, and mobilize for collective activities. A local community organizer explained,

"We use WhatsApp groups to organize events and discuss local issues. It's so much easier to connect with everyone, and we can get things done quickly."

These platforms have enhanced the ability of community members to coordinate and collaborate, breaking down geographic barriers and enabling real-time communication. This shift has helped foster a sense of belonging and engagement, especially among those who may not have been as involved in traditional community meetings.

### **Impacts on Social Norms and Values**

The introduction and widespread use of technology in Gowa Regency have had significant implications for social norms and values, particularly in how people relate to one another, uphold traditional cultural practices, and adapt to modern influences. As technology reshapes communication, it also influences the way people perceive and adhere to long-standing societal expectations, leading to both positive and negative shifts in social behavior. Participants in this study noted how technology has both challenged and reinforced existing norms, creating a dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation.

One of the primary impacts of technology on social norms is its influence on the traditional concept of social etiquette. Historically, Gowa Regency has valued face-to-face interaction and community gatherings as a means of maintaining close-knit relationships. However, with the increasing use of mobile phones and

social media, these traditional forms of social interaction have been displaced. A participant in the study explained,

"In the past, we would sit together at the village square to discuss important matters, but now, people are more likely to chat in WhatsApp groups or Facebook. It's convenient, but it feels like we've lost the personal touch."

This reflects how technology has altered the way community members engage with one another, shifting from communal gatherings to more fragmented, digital interactions. The convenience and speed of online communication have reduced the importance of physically meeting in person, which has implications for the preservation of face-to-face traditions that were once central to maintaining social bonds.

Furthermore, the ease of access to global platforms has introduced external influences that challenge local norms and values. Social media, in particular, exposes individuals to diverse cultural practices and lifestyles that may not align with traditional values in Gowa Regency. A younger participant noted,

"We see a lot of things on social media that are different from our own values. For example, there's a lot of pressure to look or act a certain way. It's hard to resist because everyone else is doing it."

This reflects how the global nature of digital platforms can bring in new trends and ideas that may not always align with local customs or beliefs. While technology provides a platform for learning and exposure, it also creates tension between the desire to adopt global trends and the need to preserve local identity and values.

Technology has also played a role in shifting gender norms in Gowa Regency. The study found that digital communication tools have provided women with greater freedom and autonomy in both public and private spheres. Women, particularly younger generations, have used social media to express themselves, organize social events, and participate in public discussions more actively. A female participant in her early twenties shared,

"Social media gives me a voice in ways that weren't possible before. I can connect with other women and share our experiences, even if we're not physically together."

This highlights how technology can empower individuals, particularly women, by providing them with a platform to challenge traditional gender roles and engage in societal debates. However, some participants also mentioned concerns about how these new forms of expression can clash with traditional expectations of modesty and family-centered roles for women. One older male participant remarked,

"I worry that social media is changing how women behave. They're too open now, and it feels like we are losing the values of respect and propriety."

This indicates a tension between the empowerment facilitated by technology and the concerns about preserving traditional values that have been long-held in the community.

Another significant impact of technology on social norms is its influence on the concept of privacy and personal boundaries. In Gowa Regency, like in many other regions, there was a clear demarcation between public and private life, with boundaries respected by all members of society. However, the rise of social media has blurred these lines, making it easier for individuals to share personal details and intimate moments with a larger audience. A middle-aged participant remarked,

"People no longer keep things to themselves. We share everything our meals, our travels, even our personal issues. It's like there's no more privacy."

This shift in how individuals share personal information has led to a reevaluation of what constitutes acceptable behavior in public and private spaces. While this change has allowed for greater transparency

and connectivity, it has also raised questions about the loss of privacy and the potential for oversharing, which some participants feel challenges long-standing norms of discretion and respect.

Technology's influence on social norms and values also extends to the realm of authority and respect for elders. In traditional Gowa culture, respect for elders and community leaders is central to social interactions. However, the proliferation of digital platforms has sometimes disrupted these hierarchies, as younger generations become more empowered to voice their opinions publicly, often bypassing traditional channels of authority. A community elder explained,

"Before, if we wanted to know something, we had to ask the elders. Now, young people just search online. It's a good thing they're learning more, but they don't respect the elders' wisdom as much as before."

This shift points to a generational gap in how authority is perceived, with younger people relying on technology for information and guidance, potentially diminishing the role of elders as the primary sources of wisdom in the community.

The purpose of this study was to examine how technology impacted and reconfigured social relations within Gowa Regency in order to increase understanding on the ways communication technologies various groups and cultures in the region. Thus, the results of this research shall help extend the knowledge about the effects of technology on social relations in other than urban/non-urban/ rural Indonesian environment. As an assessment of a specific location, this study has filled in the lacuna in the literature, which usually deals with developed and technologically advanced locales. Also, this research is important because it considers both positive and negative changes in social processes due to technology to understand the role of technology in the range of transformation, while some previous studies might provide optimistic or pessimistic interpretations without taking into mind the appropriateness of the technology in the given setting.

One of the major conclusions made in this research is the change of the communication pattern in the context of the ubiquitous mobile phones and social networking sites in Gowa. According to participants engaged in the study, more and more people turn to digital communication media instead of face-to-face communication, which was critical when building strong, community relationships. These changes are consistent with the conclusions of other similar studies; for instance, Nguyen et al. (2022) commented on the extent to which, due to the use of mobile phones in particular, face-to-face communication is 'displacing' itself in numerous societies globally by merely occurring less often. New communication technologies discovered in this study reveal that, although face-to-face contact has reduced, the opportunities of using new technologies such as What App and Facebook keep people connected even with social distance. This can also be understood from Rychłowska (2023) perspective of 'networked individualism', meaning that people are creating their own networks, across geographical spaces, through social media platforms. The Gowa study proved again that with technology it is still possible to keep social relations even though the face-to-face communication is less frequent.

However, this study can be positioned in stark opposition to some literature that focuses excessively on such lightside detriments of technology as the decrease in social connectedness and community involvement. Social media actors in Gowa argue that telephone and digital communication are changing practices where actors warn that these technologies justify new purposes of community communication in emergency situations or when face-to-face meetings cannot be held. This finding disapproves the negative prognosis in some prior studies of social disconnectedness as the outcome of technologically-induced social development. Rather, this paper points to technology as facilitating change in communication practices but also holding possibilities for continued relational maintenance.

The second overarching contribution of this research is its examination of how new technologies have reshaped social rules and expectations especially concerning respect, privacy, and gender. However, as Filippi et al. (2023) highlighted, several prior studies have addressed the question of how SM transgresses

such norms in urban contexts; nevertheless, few investigations have considered rural or peri-urban settings such as Gowa. According to this exploration, this proved that how individuals feel or react towards other people through aspects such as consideration of space has been enhanced by technology. S said that issues that would have been considered unthinkable to post on the social media sites, five years ago, were now commonplace. also reported that due to advancement in technology and new media, there is growing blurring between the personal and public sphere. But, the Gowa study also establish that, these changes were not fully accepted by all society. The elders also said this led to loss of privacy because the young people were snapchatting and it appeared to them as being rude because people went around taking pictures of nearly naked people and posting them online. This generational divide aligns with the work of Rudolph et al. (2021) who pointed out differential acceptance of digital practices to happen across the generations.

Besides, this paper's focus on how technology has influenced gender dynamics in Gowa advances this line of research a notch higher. Alene (2020) Among the prior related researches, Prior research have sought to evaluate the way in which rural women in particular, exercise agency and how technology can help them to gain information and be active in the public sphere. In Gowa, it was noted that young women used social media in conscious manner as a tool that enabled them to challenge traditional gender roles and obtained higher level of freedom in compared to their counterparts, this was also found in other parts of Indonesia. However, this research also identified that this empowered state came at the same time with conflict with traditional norms of women in Gowa. pointed out that although technology creates a space for individuals to express themselves, it appears to have constant and inevitable clashes with culture, which squarely fits into a tension between modernity and tradition.

The effects of technology on small world social networks of Gowa is another important area where this study provides a valuable contribution. As Postulated in the literature the traditional physically anchored social networks are no longer in force because of networked communities which depicts connections hold through technology as opposed to geographical ties. This view is supported by the findings of this study where it is revealed that through technology, principally mobile phones and social media, people in Gowa are able to nurture social relations that operate across space. as Ellison et al. noted in some urban contexts when social networks become less embedded there may be more individualized and fragmented networks, but this was not reported by Gowa participants in relation to the use of digital tools which appear to be connected to reinforcing community connections. This reveals the fact that local contexts should be taken into account when concern respectively to the use of technologies in the social networks, as the majority of the related literature was produced in more individualistic and per-urban cultures.

The study also found that technology has facilitated the maintenance of kinship bonds, especially for those living in more remote areas of Gowa. In this sense, the role of technology in supporting traditional social structures has been underexplored in the literature. This contrasts with the view presented who suggested that technology weakens family bonds by reducing the need for direct communication. In Gowa, however, technology has been a tool for reinforcing familial connections, particularly in the context of migration, where individuals rely on mobile phones and social media to stay connected with family members who have moved away.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this study have established a rich understanding of the application of technology on shifting social relationships in Gowa Regency, and the effects of such tools on communications, networks and culture within the area. The outcomes establish that though technology has changed conventional patterns of interpersonal relationships, and dismantled them in certain contexts, it provided new avenue to sustain social relationships, participate in the community, and negotiate the norms. Building on these limitations, this research shows how context matters when investigating the technology's consequences for relationships in rural and peri-urban environments. In this respect, the study makes a significant addition to the understanding of how technology poses both risks and possibilities for technology-mediated communities and cultural continuity.

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