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**DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AMONG GENERATION Z STUDENTS:
AN INTEGRATED PERSPECTIVE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW**

Digital communication has become an integral component of Generation Z's everyday life, influencing interpersonal interaction, learning, relationship maintenance, and identity expression. Previous research has explored different aspects of Generation Z's digital communication.

The aim of this study is to examine Generation Z students' digital communication from an integrated perspective encompassing three interconnected dimensions: communication intensity, communication practices, and communication culture. The research employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey based on an anonymous online questionnaire completed by 133 students enrolled at the University of Warsaw. The questionnaire included closed-ended items addressing the frequency of social media and messaging application use, preferred platforms and communication formats, attitudes toward video calls, voice messages, and delayed responses, as well as perceptions of online friendships, public self-expression, and the importance of personal identity in digital environments.

The results confirm the central role of digital communication in students' everyday lives. Social media and messaging applications were identified as the principal channels of interaction, while respondents demonstrated flexibility in selecting platforms and communication forms according to situational needs. The findings further revealed broad acceptance of delayed responses, selective use of voice messages, and generally positive attitudes toward video-mediated communication. Most participants regarded online friendships as meaningful relationships while continuing to value face-to-face interaction. Although personal identity was considered important by the majority of respondents, relatively few expressed their personal views publicly online, reflecting a selective and context-dependent approach to digital participation. The study provides an integrated perspective on Generation Z's digital communication and contributes to a better understanding of communication behaviour in contemporary digital environments.

Keywords: Generation Z, digital communication, communication intensity, communication practices, communication culture, social media, messaging applications, online friendships, digital identity.

Statement of the Problem. Digital communication has become an integral component of everyday life among members of Generation Z, influencing interpersonal interaction, learning, information exchange, and relationship maintenance. For university students, social media and messaging applications constitute not only communication channels but also environments for academic collaboration, identity expression, and participation in digital communities. As these online environments continue to evolve, understanding the intensity, practices, and culture of digitally mediated interaction has become an important issue for communication and media research.

Analysis of Recent Research. Studies on Generation Z increasingly explore the ways in which digital technologies shape media use, online interaction, and identity construction. Existing evidence indicates that social media and messaging applications constitute the dominant forms of everyday communication, while digital platforms play an increasingly important role in learning, collaboration, information exchange, and interpersonal relationships [3; 7]. Other studies have focused on messaging applications and digital platforms in higher education, showing that mobile instant messaging facilitates communication, collaboration, and academic engagement among university students [8; 9;

19]. More recently, research has expanded to the social and cultural aspects of online interaction, including self-disclosure, digitally mediated relationships, friendship maintenance, and identity construction [1; 6; 10; 11; 17].

Despite these advances, previous studies have largely investigated individual aspects of Generation Z's online interaction in isolation. However, comparatively little attention has been devoted to integrating communication intensity, communication practices, and communication culture within a single analytical framework, particularly in studies involving university students. To address this gap, the present study adopts an integrated perspective on these interconnected components among students at the University of Warsaw.

Formulating the Aim of the Article. The aim of this study is to examine Generation Z students' digital communication by adopting an integrated analytical framework encompassing three interconnected dimensions: communication intensity, communication practices, and communication culture. Particular attention is paid to social media and messaging use, communication platforms and formats, online friendships, public self-expression, and the perceived importance of personal identity in digital environments.

Materials and Methods. The study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to investigate three interrelated dimensions of Generation Z students' digital communication: digital communication intensity, digital communication practices, and digital communication culture. Data were collected between April and May 2026 through an anonymous online questionnaire comprising three corresponding sections. The instrument included items assessing the frequency of social media and messaging application use, preferred communication platforms and formats, attitudes toward selected forms of digital communication, perceptions of online friendships, public self-expression, and the perceived importance of personal identity in digital environments. Most questions employed closed-ended response categories, enabling descriptive statistical analysis.

The survey was conducted among 133 students (N = 133) enrolled at the University of Warsaw, who voluntarily participated in the anonymous online questionnaire. Participants were recruited using a convenience sampling approach based on voluntary participation. Most respondents were born between 2001 and 2007 and were therefore classified as members of Generation Z according to the generational framework adopted in this study. The sample included both Polish and international students representing Austria, Belarus, China, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, Taiwan, and Ukraine. Although participants represented diverse national backgrounds, they shared the same educational environment at the University of Warsaw.

The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics. All results are presented as percentages calculated from the total sample (100 % = 133 respondents). The analysis examined patterns across the three dimensions investigated in this study.

Because the survey employed a voluntary convenience sample from a single university, the findings should not be generalized to the broader population of Generation Z students. Instead, they should be interpreted as reflecting communication patterns among students at the University of Warsaw and as indicating tendencies that warrant verification in broader comparative studies. In addition, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be influenced by respondents' subjective perceptions and evaluations of their own interaction practices.

Results and Discussion. The results are organized according to the integrated analytical framework adopted in this study, encompassing communication intensity, communication practices, and communication culture. The following sections present the empirical findings and discuss them in the context of recent research.

1. Digital Communication Intensity

This section examines the intensity of digital communication among Generation Z students by analysing the frequency of social media and messaging application use.

Social Media Use

Social media constitute one of the primary components of everyday digital life among students at the University of Warsaw. Half of the respondents (50.0 %) reported using social

media several times a day, while 46.9 % accessed them daily. Only 3.1 % reported using social media several times a week, whereas none selected the options "rarely" or "never."

Overall, 96.9 % of respondents used social media at least once a day, indicating that these platforms have become firmly embedded in students' everyday routines rather than representing an occasional form of online activity. Beyond interpersonal interaction, social media provide access to information, educational resources, entertainment, professional networking, and online communities, making them multifunctional digital environments.

The observed pattern aligns with previous research describing Generation Z as a highly digitally engaged cohort. P. Chen and L. Ha characterized Generation Z as digital natives who have used global social media platforms for communication from an early age. The platforms provide extensive access to diverse information and have become an integral part of young people's everyday lives [3, pp. 301–302]. The absence of respondents reporting rare or no social media use in the present study is consistent with these observations.

The results confirm that social media represent an integral component of students' everyday digital interaction, highlighting their importance for both academic and social life.

Messaging Application Use

Messaging applications represent another essential element of students' everyday interaction. Most respondents (71.4 %) reported using messengers continuously throughout the day, while 19.0 % used them daily. Only 4.8 % accessed messaging applications several times a day and another 4.8% several times a week, whereas none reported using them rarely.

In total, 90.4 % of respondents used messaging applications either continuously or at least once a day, demonstrating that instant messaging has become embedded in everyday communication rather than being limited to specific situations or times of day. Contemporary messaging services support not only text-based interaction but also voice messages, multimedia exchange, file sharing, video calls, and collaborative work, enabling students to integrate academic, professional, and personal communication within a single digital environment.

These findings are consistent with previous research demonstrating that messaging applications have become important communication tools in higher education. WhatsApp and Telegram support communication, information exchange, collaborative learning, and knowledge sharing among university students [9, 16, p. 10]. C. Lee et al. reported that WhatsApp supports class-related communication, resource sharing, assignment submission, and collaborative learning [9, pp. 1–4]. Similar conclusions were reported by S. Saikia et al., who found that WhatsApp and Telegram support academic communication by facilitating knowledge sharing, student collaboration, and access to learning materials [16, pp. 1–11, 18].

The absence of respondents reporting rare messenger use in the present study is therefore consistent with the widespread integration of messaging applications into students' everyday academic communication.

2. Digital Communication Practices

The following findings examine students' communication practices, including preferred digital platforms, communication formats, and selected communication norms.

Content Consumption Platforms

Students at the University of Warsaw reported using a diverse range of digital platforms to consume online content, although clear differences in platform preferences were observed. Instagram was the most frequently selected platform (81.2 %), followed by Telegram (53.1 %), indicating that these services constitute the principal environments through which students access digital content.

A second group of platforms included Facebook (28.1 %), WhatsApp (21.9 %), and Discord (21.9 %). Other services were reported less frequently, including TikTok (15.6 %), Snapchat (12.5 %), X (6.2 %), streaming services and podcasts (6.2 %), and Xiaohongshu (3.1 %), suggesting that they fulfil more specialized or complementary functions.

This distribution indicates that students concentrate their online activity on a limited number of dominant platforms while simultaneously engaging with several complementary services, reflecting diversified patterns of digital media consumption.

Similar patterns have been reported in previous empirical studies. Q. Hu et al. demonstrated that Generation Z's social media use varies according to users' online motivations and communication purposes [7, pp. 2–3]. Likewise, X. Shen et al. showed that users compare competing social networking platforms and make platform choices based on their relative evaluations of available alternatives. The present findings likewise suggest that students combine dominant platforms such as Instagram and Telegram with additional services that fulfil more specific informational and social functions [18, pp. 1–2].

These platform preferences provide an important context for understanding the communication practices examined in the following sections.

Digital Communication Formats

Students at the University of Warsaw reported using several forms of digital interaction, although their frequency differed considerably across communication modes. Text messaging was by far the dominant format, with 96.9 % of respondents reporting frequent use, whereas only 3.1 % used it occasionally. No participants selected the options "rarely" or "never."

Voice messages represented the second most frequently used format: 39.1 % of respondents used them often, 40.6 % sometimes, 15.6 % rarely, and 4.7 % never. Telephone calls were less common, with only 17.2 % reporting frequent use, while video calls were used somewhat more often (29.7 % frequently).

The observed distribution indicates a clear preference for text-based messaging and, to a lesser extent, voice messages. These communication formats enable flexible, quasi-synchronous interaction, allowing users to participate in conversations without requiring the simultaneous availability of all participants. Y. Tang and K. Hew describe mobile instant messaging as a quasi-synchronous communication mode that enables users to communicate at their convenience while supporting resource sharing and collaborative learning activities [19, pp. 2–3]. Furthermore, they reported that mobile instant messaging promotes interaction, collaboration, and student engagement by facilitating rapid communication and strengthening social presence [19, pp. 5–6]. Similarly, le Roux and D. Parry identify instant messaging applications as important communication and collaboration tools in higher education, supporting knowledge sharing, group coordination, and academic interaction [8, pp. 1056–1059]. C. Lee et al. likewise identify WhatsApp as an effective environment for collaborative learning and everyday communication among university students [9, pp. 1–3]. The predominance of messaging-based communication observed in the present study is therefore consistent with previous research highlighting the central role of instant messaging in students' academic and interpersonal interaction.

Collectively, these findings indicate that flexibility, immediacy, and user control continue to shape Generation Z's preferred communication formats.

Video-Mediated Communication

Students at the University of Warsaw generally reported feeling comfortable communicating through video calls. Equal proportions of respondents (37.5 %) indicated that they felt very comfortable and rather comfortable, meaning that 75.0 % expressed a positive attitude toward video-mediated communication. In contrast, 21.9 % reported feeling rather uncomfortable, whereas only 3.1 % felt very uncomfortable.

Overall, three-quarters of respondents were comfortable using video calls, suggesting that this format has become a familiar part of students' everyday digital interaction. Nevertheless, approximately one-quarter experienced some degree of discomfort, indicating that acceptance of video-mediated communication is not universal.

These results are consistent with previous research. R. Riedl described Zoom fatigue as a consequence of intensive videoconferencing associated with increased cognitive effort and psychological strain [14, pp. 154–155, 164]. Likewise, G. Fauville et al. found that more frequent and longer video meetings are linked to higher levels of videoconferencing fatigue and more negative attitudes toward online meetings [4, pp. 1, 7]. Y. Wu et al. further

demonstrated that students' comfort with video-mediated communication positively influences engagement and satisfaction in online learning [20, pp. 1, 4–5]. The present findings similarly indicate that, despite the widespread acceptance of video calls, individual differences in perceived comfort remain important.

Taken together, the results suggest that video calls are a well-established component of students' communication practices, although their acceptance varies according to individual preferences and communication contexts.

Use of Voice Messages

Voice messages have become a common component of students' everyday digital interaction, although they are not equally preferred by all users. More than half of the respondents (51.5 %) reported using voice messages sometimes, while 33.3 % indicated that they used them often. A further 12.1 % stated that they did not particularly like this format but nevertheless used it, whereas only 3.0 % reported actively avoiding voice messages.

A total of 84.8 % of respondents used voice messages either often or sometimes, indicating that they have become an established element of students' everyday interaction. At the same time, their selective rather than universal use suggests considerable variation in individual communication preferences.

These results are consistent with previous empirical research showing that messaging applications provide multiple communication formats (e.g., text, voice messages, voice calls, video calls, and multimedia sharing), enabling users to select communication modes appropriate for different communication tasks and contexts (9, pp. 1–3; 21, pp. 2–4). Similarly, le Roux and D. Parry demonstrated that university students routinely use different types of instant messaging groups for both academic collaboration and everyday social interaction rather than relying on a single communication channel [8, pp. 1055–1059]. The present findings likewise suggest that voice messages primarily serve as a complementary communication option, enabling students to adapt their interactions to specific situations and personal preferences.

Taken together, the results indicate that voice messages represent an established, yet complementary, component of Generation Z's communication practices, extending rather than replacing text-based messaging.

Attitudes Toward Delayed Responses

Most students at the University of Warsaw reported feeling comfortable with delayed responses to messages or calls. More than half of the respondents (54.5 %) stated that they were comfortable when messages or calls were not answered immediately, while 33.3 % indicated that their level of comfort depended on the situation. Only 12.1 % reported feeling uncomfortable with delayed responses.

Overall, 87.8 % of respondents expressed either complete or situational acceptance of delayed responses, indicating that immediate availability is not perceived as a universal expectation. This distribution reflects the growing acceptance of asynchronous interaction as a routine element of everyday digital communication and points to evolving digital communication norms among Generation Z.

The observed pattern suggests considerable flexibility regarding response time. Rather than expecting continuous availability, most participants accepted that digital communication does not necessarily require an immediate reply. Nevertheless, the proportion of students reporting discomfort indicates that expectations of prompt responsiveness remain relevant in certain interpersonal contexts.

These results are consistent with previous empirical research on digital communication norms and mobile instant messaging. A. Halfmann and D. Rieger showed that expectations regarding response latency are strongly influenced by the social norm of constant availability, which encourages users to respond to messages promptly [5, pp. 73–76]. Y. Tang and K. Hew likewise describe mobile instant messaging as a quasi-synchronous mode of communication that allows users to regulate the timing of their responses while maintaining effective interaction [19, pp. 2–3]. Complementing these findings, A. Camerini et al. [2, pp. 1, 8–10] demonstrated that delayed responses during instant

messaging increase users' physiological arousal without significantly affecting their subjective evaluation of the communication experience [2, pp. 1, 8–10]. The present findings similarly suggest that, although prompt responses remain common, moderate response delays are perceived as a normal feature of everyday digital communication.

Taken together, the findings indicate that delayed responses have become a socially accepted component of Generation Z's communication practices. Rather than equating digital connectivity with permanent availability, most respondents recognized flexibility in response timing as a legitimate digital communication norm shaped by evolving social expectations concerning availability, personal autonomy, and interpersonal interaction.

Beyond communication intensity and practices, digital interaction also reflects broader social relationships, values, and identity-related behaviours, which are examined in the following section.

3. Digital Communication Culture

The final section examines the cultural dimension of digital communication by exploring students' perceptions of online relationships, public self-expression, and personal identity in digital environments.

Perceived Value of Online Friendships

Students at the University of Warsaw expressed diverse opinions regarding the proposition that online friendships can be as valuable as those developed offline. A total of 18.2 % of respondents strongly agreed with this statement and 42.4 % rather agreed, whereas 36.4 % rather disagreed and 3.0 % disagreed.

Overall, 60.6 % of participants evaluated online friendships positively, while 39.4 % expressed reservations. These responses suggest that digitally mediated relationships are widely recognized as meaningful interpersonal connections, although offline friendships continue to occupy an important place in students' perceptions of social relationships.

This pattern indicates that online and offline friendships are perceived as complementary rather than competing forms of interpersonal connection. Digital environments expand opportunities to establish and maintain relationships across geographical and social boundaries without replacing face-to-face interaction.

These results are consistent with previous research on digitally mediated relationships. R. Scott et al. found that online communication plays an important role in maintaining close friendships, particularly when geographical distance limits face-to-face interaction, although offline communication continues to be perceived as deeper, more intimate, and more meaningful [17, pp. 5–10]. Likewise, N. Pennington demonstrated that social media facilitate the maintenance of dormant friendships by preserving social connections and enabling reconnection over time [12, pp. 245–247]. J. Hall et al. further showed that digitally mediated communication can contribute to satisfying the need for social connection, although its effectiveness depends on the communication modality, relational context, and users' existing level of social belonging [6, pp. 1–3, 8–9]. The present findings similarly indicate that students value online friendships while continuing to attach considerable importance to offline relationships.

Taken together, the results suggest that online friendships have become an important component of Generation Z's communication culture, complementing rather than replacing face-to-face relationships.

Expression of Personal Views

Students at the University of Warsaw demonstrated a relatively restrained approach to expressing personal views in digital environments. A total of 33.3 % of respondents reported that they never expressed their opinions online, while 30.3 % did so only rarely. By comparison, 24.2 % shared their views occasionally, whereas only 12.1 % did so frequently.

Overall, 63.6 % of participants rarely or never expressed their opinions online, suggesting that, despite intensive engagement with digital media, most students prefer limited participation in public online discussions.

The responses indicate that frequent use of digital platforms does not necessarily correspond to active public self-expression. Instead, many participants appear to distinguish

between using digital technologies for interpersonal communication and using them for publicly expressing personal opinions, reflecting a selective approach to online participation.

This interpretation is supported by recent empirical research on online self-disclosure. P. Masur et al. demonstrated that users' willingness to disclose information on social media is strongly influenced by perceived social norms and the disclosure behaviour of other users [10, pp. 1–3]. Similarly, W. Pu et al. showed that self-disclosure depends not only on privacy-related factors but also on users' perceived control over personal information and characteristics of the communication environment [13, pp. 1–4]. Evidence from Generation Z further indicates that willingness to disclose personal information online is shaped by privacy concerns together with social influences, particularly reference-group influence and interpersonal relationships [15, pp. 2, 8, 21–22]. These findings support previous observations by demonstrating that frequent use of digital communication tools does not necessarily translate into a willingness to express personal views publicly.

Taken together, the results indicate that selective self-expression represents an important characteristic of Generation Z's communication culture, with students distinguishing between private interaction and public opinion sharing.

Importance of Personal Identity Expression

Students at the University of Warsaw generally attached considerable importance to expressing their personal identity. A total of 33.3 % of respondents regarded self-expression as very important and 42.4 % as rather important, whereas 24.2 % considered it rather unimportant. No respondents indicated that the expression of personal identity was "not important at all".

Overall, 75.7 % of participants considered the expression of personal identity important, suggesting that individuality and the communication of personal values represent significant priorities for most respondents. At the same time, the presence of a substantial minority assigning lower importance to identity expression reflects the diversity of value orientations within the surveyed group.

These results complement the previous section on public self-expression. Although most participants regarded personal identity as important, comparatively few reported expressing their opinions frequently online. This comparison suggests that valuing personal identity does not necessarily translate into frequent public self-expression but instead reflects a more selective and context-dependent approach to online self-presentation. P. Masur et al. demonstrated that perceived social norms influence self-disclosure on social media by shaping users' disclosure behaviour [10, pp. 1–3]. Likewise, Y. Öksüz and F. Çetin [11, pp. 5–9] described digital environments as important spaces for identity construction and self-presentation among Generation Z [11, pp. 5–9]. N. Babu and N. Ghafar further showed that social media contribute to identity development by influencing self-perception and social comparison in everyday digital interaction [1, pp. 2-4, 12–14]. The present findings similarly indicate that students attach considerable importance to personal identity while expressing it selectively in public online environments.

Taken together, the results suggest that personal identity occupies an important place in Generation Z's communication culture. However, its public expression appears to be increasingly selective and dependent on communication context rather than uniformly visible across digital environments.

Conclusions of the Study and Directions for Future Research. The present study examined Generation Z students' digital communication through an integrated analytical framework encompassing **communication intensity, communication practices, and communication culture**. The results demonstrate that digital communication has become an integral part of students' everyday lives, supporting interpersonal interaction, academic collaboration, relationship maintenance, and identity expression.

The findings reveal a high intensity of digital communication, with social media and messaging applications serving as the primary channels of everyday communication. Students demonstrated considerable flexibility in selecting communication platforms and formats according to situational needs and personal preferences. The widespread acceptance of flexible, quasi-synchronous messaging practices, together with the selective

use of voice messages and varying levels of comfort with video calls, indicates that communication practices are shaped by both technological affordances and evolving social norms.

The cultural dimension of the study showed that students generally perceive online friendships as meaningful while continuing to value face-to-face relationships. Although most participants considered personal identity important, they remained relatively reserved in publicly expressing their views online, suggesting a selective and context-dependent approach to digital participation.

Future research should extend the present framework by examining the relationships between **digital communication, digital competence, and technology adoption**. Such an approach could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing Generation Z's communication behaviour in rapidly evolving digital environments.

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ЦИФРОВА КОМУНІКАЦІЯ СТУДЕНТІВ ПОКОЛІННЯ Z: ІНТЕГРОВАННИЙ ПІДХІД (НА ПРИКЛАДІ ВАРШАВСЬКОГО УНІВЕРСИТЕТУ)

У статті досліджено особливості цифрової комунікації студентів покоління Z на прикладі Варшавського університету. Запропоновано інтегрований підхід до її аналізу, що охоплює три взаємопов'язані виміри: інтенсивність, комунікаційні практики та культуру цифрової комунікації. На основі результатів анкетного опитування визначено рівень використання соціальних мереж і месенджерів, особливості вибору комунікаційних платформ і форм спілкування, ставлення до відеозв'язку, голосових повідомлень і відкладених відповідей. Встановлено особливості сприйняття онлайн-дружби, публічного самовираження та значущості особистісної ідентичності в цифровому середовищі. Показано, що інтегрований аналіз забезпечує цілісне розуміння цифрової взаємодії представників покоління Z.

Ключові слова: покоління Z, цифрова комунікація, соціальні мережі, месенджери, комунікаційні практики, культура цифрової комунікації, онлайн-дружба, цифрова ідентичність, самовираження.

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