

Social Interaction in the Modern World

In today's ever-evolving world of digital technology, social interaction in the modern world is going through a huge transformation. More and more people worldwide are connected by chat apps, social media, emails, and video conferencing. Subsequently, people anywhere can join these platforms to communicate with friends, family, and strangers. This digital advancement has brought great opportunities for global interconnectivity. However, this has presented us with various challenges that come with having an interconnected life. In this blog post, therefore, we explore the ways in which we socially interact in the modern world.

Jennifer's story*

Everywhere Jennifer walked, people stared down at their phones. All genders, all races, all ages had their eyeballs glued to their screens as they went about their daily business. Nervously, she thrust her hand into her bag and stroked her phone. Normally, she would be one of these people chained to her mobile. Today, she was trying something different.

A message alert bleeped on her phone. Unlocking the screen, she swiped downwards to see her notifications. It was an Instagram alert. She had another new follower. Resisting the urge to flick open the app, she hit the screen lock button instead.

Her phone rang, and she answered it. Another spam call. Jennifer switched off her phone, stashing it in her bag.

To be continued...

**Jennifer's story is a work of fiction, including characters, circumstances, and location.*



Modern Social Interactions through Digital Media.

Source: [Healthscope](#).

Isolation refers to the lack of social interaction and contact with others. Therefore, it often results from physical distance or a decrease in social activities. While [social isolation](#) can have negative effects on well-being, it can also offer vast opportunities for:

- [personal growth](#),
- [reflection](#), and
- [enhanced self-care](#).

Consequently, this can lead to a better [sense of well-being](#). However, isolation also comes in negative forms, as a lack of social interaction in the modern world can leave people feeling lonely. In many ways, this type of isolation has formed one of the major issues brought on by the pandemic, as many people were shut off from their friends and family.

What is social interaction in the modern

world?

Social interaction or connection is the process where two or more people interact with each other in a social setting. People interact so that they can [exchange](#) ideas, share moments and assist with challenges experienced in life. In the traditional setting, social interaction connections usually take place face-to-face. Physical [face-to-face interactions](#) involve participation in [informal and formal](#) social activities. For example, these may include:

- Family gatherings,
- hiking with neighbours,
- a night out with friends,
- team-building events,
- as well as conferences, and
- exhibitions or expos.

In the modern setting, social interaction is driven by the improvements and developments in technology. Technology acts as a mediator to connect two or more people with one another. Consequently, social interactions in the modern world involve connecting, engaging, and communicating with individuals, groups, and communities. For instance, connections through various instant online or virtual chatting and video calling platforms. These are:

Social Media and Online Platforms

In today's world, people from all walks of life use various online platforms to connect with each other socially. These platforms are:

- **Social Media Platforms:** Involves the use of Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn to exchange informal ideas and thoughts. Conversely, people can react to local or global news and share professional and business-related knowledge and information.
- **Video Conferencing Platforms:** These involve Zoom, Webby, and Microsoft Teams. People use them to facilitate virtual face-to-face interactions for many purposes. For instance, you can use Zoom to attend online training, participate in discussions, or conduct live-stream

webinars through YouTube.

- **Instant Messaging Apps:** WhatsApp, iMessage and Messenger are examples of instant messaging apps that are used to conduct daily business operations, calls, and chats. These virtual social are conducted to connect with:

1. our families,
2. our friends, and
3. small socially focused groups.

Types of Social Interactions in The Modern World

There are common forms of social interaction that take place in societies around the world:

Accommodation – Accommodation is a type of social interaction where people alter their behaviour to accommodate a certain situation or person. Accommodation usually [balances conflict and cooperation](#).

Competition – Competition is an interaction where one or more people with opposing ideas compete to achieve a common goal. Therefore, usually, one or two people benefit from the goal.

Conflict – Conflict is where there is a clash of ideas between two people or with a group. For example, social interaction on topics such as religion, politics, war, and disputes usually causes conflict among individuals or groups.

Cooperation – Cooperation is a social interaction where people work together to [reach a shared common](#) goal. For instance, grouping together individuals from different backgrounds to work on a project where the outcome is similar.

Exchange – Exchange is a social interaction where people engage with each other to receive something in return. For example, working hard for your employer to get a [promotion](#).

[Accommodation, cooperation, and exchange](#) stabilise the social structure. [Social](#)

[structure](#) is the social patterns that exist between people over time. [Competition and conflict](#) tend to encourage [social change](#).

Benefits of Digital Social Interaction In The Modern World

One of the benefits of online social interaction is that people can interact with anyone globally without any hassle. Families or friends separated by distance can now interact without having to wait many months or years to see them. Fortunately, these connections have eliminated the physical barriers keeping people apart. For example, individuals, families, and groups can connect, interact, and engage with one another seamlessly. Today, your messages can be received instantly, if you have a good internet connection. No need to wait to receive a message via a letter sent through the post office or a pager.

Challenges of Digital Social Interaction

Although social interaction in the modern world has great benefits, it comes with a fair share of [challenges](#). Modern social interactions have left some individuals feeling lonely and isolated. Here are some of the negative impacts that come as a result of modern virtual social interactions.

- **Reduced Face-to-Face Human Contact:** In many ways, people can be so immersed in these virtual platforms to the point that they no longer experience much human contact. This is something that is necessary for any person's emotional and mental well-being. Moreover, people spend more time on their phones, rather than with people around us and our environment. For example, nowadays, exercises happen indoors by watching some virtual video explaining how to do step-by-step workouts. Consequently, people now have limited access to sunlight, [outdoor activities](#), and [nature](#).
- **Cyberbullying and Privacy Violations:** Involves the sharing of current location and personal information on specific platforms. This usually can lead to personal information misuse and violation of [privacy](#). Digital social interaction has created a source of entitlement to one's life. For example, people can [harass](#), [body shame](#), and [post information](#) that might:

1. pose a threat,
2. compromise [one's security](#) or life, and
3. even damage one's character [and online reputation](#).

- **A Rise in Online Fake Platforms:** Socialising in the digital world has shown a rise in online fake platforms. Catfishers and scammers can use online platforms to steal money, as well as other [people's information to conduct fraudulent activities](#).

moving forward

Technology has transformed the way we connect with each other, despite our geographical area and background. Social interactions are no longer confined to a particular neighbourhood, community, city, or country. People can expand their connectivity across various cross-borders around the world.

Moving forward, it is important to maintain a balance between social isolation and social interaction to ensure optimal well-being. How does social inclusion foster interpersonal relationships? Do social norms force us to create social inclusion and well-being policies based on age?

Jennifer's story

...continued.

Jennifer sat down. Everybody around her had their phones out, interacting with them. She retrieved her phone.

"Hey," a kind voice said. "Whachu doin' there, gal?"

Jennifer glanced up and met the eyes of an elderly lady staring intently at her. The lady did not have a phone.

"Um, I was switching on my phone."

"Why would ya do dat?"

Jennifer shrugged. "Because, everyone else has their phone on and I guess I'm feeling left out."

The elderly lady shared a toothless grin. "Nah, gal. You not left out of all dat. You are left in. Don't you ever miss talking face-to-face with someone?"

"I guess I do." Jennifer returned her phone to its resting place. Returning the smile, Jennifer offered her hand. "Hi, I'm Jennifer. How are you?"

Why must we focus on social interaction in the modern world?

Whether social interactions take place offline or online. It's important for nations to make social interaction the focal point of society. Since, social interactions promote cultural engagement, diverse social connections, and a sense of belonging. All these engagements improve people's mental health and wellbeing, and eliminate social isolation or loneliness. Moreover, social interaction is also important for individuals to build and maintain [micro-to-macro-level](#) relationships and interactions with others. This is needed for countries to build sustainable thrivable communities and societies all over the world.

achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and how they link to social interaction in the modern world

[Carmona-Mederiro et al., 2021](#) defined social interaction as a process where individuals can learn, act, and connect with the environment. Consequently, we should view social interaction as a component that can move forward or advance sustainability. Therefore, modern social interaction is linked to the achievement of several United Nations (UN) sustainable development goals (SDGs). Social interaction can promote:-

SDG 4 & SDG 10: Access to Quality Education & Reduced Inequality

Modern social interaction, through social media, provides people, businesses, and communities with knowledge about many topics of interest. For instance, people get to know about current affairs, environmental affairs, politics, entertainment, religion, health and fitness, etc. Consequently, this has allowed everyone including individuals from rural to disadvantaged communities and backgrounds access to quality education. Higher education institutions now offer distance learning programs to reach even more students, from different parts of the world. impact. Students can now access higher-quality education via distance learning and participate in discussion forums and social media group chats.

Consequently, access to good [quality education](#) for all would assist in achieving SDG 10, reducing inequality.

SDG 5: Gender Equality

The current social interaction landscape promotes gender equality, since all genders can participate socially in any topic. However, [women and men](#) engage and communicate differently during [social networks](#), due to [gender cultures](#). Gender culture means a set of certain behavioural practices associated with being a man or a woman.

The current social setting has seen more women being vocal and out there than men. In the traditional social setting, women are required to stay at home, and not socialise that much. Men tend to engage and exchange with friends or others [socially](#) watching sports or via dating, gaming, and podcasting platforms. Women still prefer in-person face-to-face social interactions to show their emotions and be vulnerable. Technology has made, modern social connections equal, limiting gender categorisation and breaking cultural norms.

SDG 8: Inclusive Sustainable Economic Growth

Online social interaction came with a great opportunity to [boost economic growth](#) in the long run. For instance, new digital jobs, such as digital marketing and virtual, have been created. Businesses, freelancers, and bloggers have to continuously use social media to [socially connect](#) and engage existing and

potentially attract new customers with their posts. As a result, social media is now seen as a great tool to promote [economic](#) growth.

SDG 11 & SDG 3: Sustainable Cities & Communities for Good Health & Well-Being

[Zare, 2015](#) stated that urban residential areas play a role in creating an individual's social interaction. The development of cities has an impact on the social activities of individual communities living in that city. Therefore, social interaction impacts human relations and activities in the cities and [sustainable communities](#). [Socially sustainable cities and communities](#) promote [smart cities](#), [health](#), and well-being, by having a socially inclusive [sustainable living](#) environment.

A Thrivable Framework

The [THRIVE Framework](#) is a holistic regenerative approach that allows [different sustainable](#) approaches including people's social interactions to intersect. The main focus of the THRIVE Framework is to assess sustainability through the integration of the 12 Foundational Focus Factors (FFF). As a result, modern social interactions are linked to some of the [THRIVE Project](#)'s FFF.

Social Interaction Associated with the FFF:

Firstly, modern social interactions may be seen as a wicked problem. Because today's social interconnectivity is intertwined with several challenging global complex [wicked problems](#). Examples of these are inequality, climate change, social injustice, political instability, etc. These issues on climate change and politics require social interactions of different people with conflicting values and interests. So, it's difficult to come up with a solution that will make everyone happy.

Therefore, anything that is social (e.g. social interaction) and cultural in nature is a wicked problem. Because it's difficult and impossible to solve. Wicked problems are complex, because if you solve one issue, the solution may cause other issues in another problem. modern social interaction is a complex issue to solve. Modern connectivity has made it difficult to look at [problems in isolation](#).

Secondly, modern social interactions are part of systems thinking. Because social interaction considers connections holistically. For instance, social interaction does not only have to do with communicating with others. However, involves being mindful of one's actions, [self-awareness](#), [emotional intelligence](#), cultural practices, and the environment. Modern social interaction is also part of [integral thinking](#), because, it focuses on how the social, economic, and environmental impacts of any group, product, and service are interconnected.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the way people socialise has an impact on the sustainability of the economy, environment, health, politics, and even poverty levels, whatever wicked problem you can think of.

To learn more about how [The THRIVE Project](#) researches, educates, and advocates for a future beyond sustainability, visit our [website](#). You can follow our informative [blog](#) and [podcast](#) series, and learn about our regular live [webinars](#) featuring expert guests in the field. [Sign up for our newsletter](#) for regular updates.