



Mediated interaction in digital posthuman age: Rethinking intergenerational communication in urban Ghana

Ramatu Mustapha Dadzie ¹ 

¹ Institute of Film and Television, University of Media, Arts and Communication, Accra, Ghana.

ABSTRACT

Digitalization is a significant technological shift generating a profound socio-cultural reordering with implications for human-technology relations. Although there is a growing body of scholarship interpreting digital transformations using posthumanist perspectives, studies largely focus on Western contexts. Yet, despite the widespread use of digital technologies, little is known about how posthuman theory explains the nature of human-technology relationships and communication practices in the Ghanaian context, limiting information on how digital transformation is reshaping social interactions and subjectivities. To provide a context-specific study that applies posthuman perspectives to Ghanaian digital experiences, the study explores intergenerational communicative practices of two generational cohorts and how digitally mediated communication reshapes intergenerational interaction in urban Ghana. A population of 24 participants between the ages of 18 and 30 and 55 and 75 years were sampled from Accra in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Through focus-group discussions and interviews, data were collected and analysed using posthuman communication theory as the central analytical framework. Findings reveal that young people integrate digital platforms into multiple aspects of their lives, with digital technologies functioning as extensions of identity and personal agency. Older respondents perceive digital communication as a source of cultural disruption that challenges established norms of interaction and social order. The existence of long-standing communicative expectations, grounded in respect, hierarchy and discretion, generates tensions between the two generations during digitally mediated communication. The study contributes to the field of African digital studies by offering a theoretically informed account of digital transformation in urban Ghana.

Keywords: Intergenerational Interactions, Digital Humanities, Mediated Communication, Posthumanism, Digitalization.

INTRODUCTION

Digital technologies pervade all aspects of the social fabric of contemporary societies. In scholarly enquiries of the concept of digitalization of society, focus is placed on how digitalization functions as a transformative social force that reshapes institutions, cultural practices, human relationships, and value

CORRESPONDENCE – Ramatu Mustapha Dadzie Email: ramatudadzie@yahoo.com

PUBLICATION HISTORY - Received : 31st January, 2026 | Accepted: 27th June, 2026 | Published: 10th August, 2026.

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE – Dadzie, Ramatu Mustapha. "Mediated interaction in digital posthuman age: Rethinking intergenerational communication in urban Ghana." *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 7, no.7 (2026): 1820 – 1833. <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2026776>

COPYRIGHT AND LICENSING - © 2026 The Author(s). Published and Maintained by Noyam Journals.

This is an open access article under the CCBY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

systems.¹ Consequently, digitalization is recognized as not only a technological shift but also a profound socio-cultural reordering. Seen as a force for social transformation, Ayhan frames digitalization as a phenomenon that reconstructs social structures and institutions through the processing of knowledge, mediated interactions, and the erosion of temporal and spatial boundaries, which includes the alteration of how knowledge is produced and transmitted, how humans relate to each other, how cultural meanings are constructed and how authority and power are negotiated.² In this view, digitalization is conceptualized not as a technical upgrade but a ‘digimodern’ process, a reconfiguration of modernity in which technology becomes inseparable from social life.

A growing number of scholarships for example Prem, associate the digitalization revolution with posthumanism.³ The academic concept of posthumanism highlights how digitalization produces new cultural norms while destabilizing older ones and reconfigures traditional value systems. Riding on post human tenets, changes in technology often conflict with religious, moral, or communal norms, compelling society to renegotiate the meaning of authority, authenticity, and morality.⁴ In so doing, there is the rise of hybrid digital cultures in which the digital blends with textual, audiovisual and interactive content, leading to multi-literacies and new cultural competencies. As such, Ayhan defines digital literacy as a new mode of learning, meaning-making, and social participation.⁵ In this convergent definition of digital literacy, there is the value transformation of culture from actual to virtual cultural practices of social rituals, identity performances and community belonging. These transformations evolve into digital places such as virtual mosques, churches and community engagement centres that necessitate and compel online participation.

Despite the growing global scholarship on posthumanism and its implications for human-technology relations, there remains a notable absence of research situating posthuman theory within Ghanaian intergenerational contexts. Existing studies on digital culture in Ghana predominantly frame intergenerational communication through sociological or anthropological lenses, focusing on technology adoption, cultural change, social media use, and the negotiation of tradition and modernity. Although these approaches offer valuable insights, they rarely engage with the deeper ontological, epistemological, and ethical questions raised by posthuman theory, questions concerning the reconfiguration of the human, the merging of biological and technological capacities, and the distributed nature of cognition and agency in digitally mediated environments. Furthermore, scholarship examines intergenerational communication specific to Ghana typically emphasizes generational gaps in digital literacy,⁶ shifts in communicative norms, and tensions surrounding respect, authority, and cultural continuity.⁷

However, these analyses often remain anchored within a humanist framework that conceptualizes communication as an exchange between autonomous individuals situated within fixed social categories. They do not consider how technologies themselves participate as active agents in shaping communicative practices, nor do they interrogate how digital mediation produces hybrid forms of relationality which increasingly blur the boundaries between human and non-human actors. The theoretical insights of posthuman thinkers such as Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway, and Katherine Hayles, who explore embodied hybridity, techno-cultural becoming, and distributed subjectivity, have not been systematically applied to the Ghanaian context. Ghana experiences widespread use of digital technologies, yet the transformative effects of digital technologies on generational relationships in Ghana are understudied, resulting in limited information on how digital transformation is changing

¹ Volker Lang, “Digitalization and Digital Transformation,” in *Digital Fluency: Understanding the Basics of Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain Technology, Quantum Computing, and Their Applications for Digital Transformation* (Springer, 2021), 1–50.

² Bünyamin Ayhan, *Digitalization and Society (Edition 1)* (Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2017).

³ Erich Prem, “Principles of Digital Humanism: A Critical Post-Humanist View,” *Journal of Responsible Technology* 17 (2024): 100075.

⁴ Ayhan, *Digitalization and Society (Edition 1)*.

⁵ Ayhan, *Digitalization and Society (Edition 1)*.

⁶ Delali Adjoa Dovie et al., “Generational Perspective of DiGital Literacy amonG Ghanaians in the 21st Century: Wither NoW?,” *Media Studies* 10, no. 20 (2019): 127–52.

⁷ Jonathan Odame, “Enhancing Technology Professional Development for Older Adults in Ghana to Bridge the Digital Divide: A Systematic Review,” *International Journal of Smart Technology and Learning* 4, no. 2 (2024): 151–67.

intergenerational communication practices and subjectivities in Ghana from a posthuman theoretical framework. Hence, to provide a context-specific study on intergenerational communication practices that utilizes posthuman perspectives to urban Ghanaian digital experiences, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do different generations negotiate digital communication in their everyday interactions?
2. How is digitally mediated communication reshaping intergenerational interaction in urban Ghana?

Ghana's rapid digital transformation has produced communicative environments where human interactions are increasingly entangled with technological infrastructures. Younger generations engage with digital tools as extensions of identity and cognition, while older generations navigate these systems as emergent, often foreign communicative terrains. Without a posthuman theoretical lens, these dynamics risk being interpreted solely as generational conflict or cultural divergence, rather than as manifestations of broader shifts toward technologically hybrid modes of being. Significantly, there is a critical need for research that bridges posthuman theory with Ghanaian intergenerational communication, not merely to document digital change, but to theorize how technology fundamentally reconfigures the meaning of human connection, relational authority, and intergenerational co-existence within contemporary Ghanaian society.

The paper is structured in four sections. The first section introduces the study by situating digitalization as a transformative socio-cultural force and identifying gaps in existing scholarship on intergenerational communication in Ghana. The second section presents the theoretical framework that draws on posthuman communication theory to conceptualize mediated interaction. This is coupled with a review of literature that situates the study within broader scholarly debates, followed by the methodology employed. The findings of the study are presented and discussed in the third segment, with analysis framed through posthuman theory. The fourth and final section is the recommendations for policy and stakeholders and the conclusion that synthesizes key findings that highlight the contribution of a posthumanist perspective to understanding intergenerational communication in Ghana's digital age.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intergenerational communication has attracted sustained scholarly attention due to global demographic changes and the continuous evolution of communicative practices. As populations age and younger generations adopt increasingly digitised modes of interaction, researchers have sought to understand the dynamics, challenges, and relational outcomes of communication between younger and older cohorts. Early work in this field, grounded predominantly in Western contexts, relied extensively on Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), which examines how individuals adjust their communicative behaviours to negotiate social distance and relational goals.⁸ Although early research projected a generally problematic view of intergenerational communication, more recent scholarship highlights important cultural variations. In some Asian contexts, intergenerational relations are portrayed as more harmonious due to strong traditions of filial piety.⁹ However, this narrative is contested by studies suggesting that rapid socio-economic changes have weakened traditional respect hierarchies and altered perceptions of ageing.¹⁰ Within African contexts, research remains limited but revealing. Giles, Makoni and Dailey's comparative study of Ghana and South Africa demonstrates that communication behaviours such as respect and avoidance significantly shape young people's

⁸ Howard Giles and Jessica Gasiorek, "Intergenerational Communication Practices," in *Handbook of the Psychology of Aging* (Elsevier, 2011), 233–47.

⁹ Hiroshi Ota, Howard Giles, and Lilnabeth P Somera, "Beliefs about Intra-and Intergenerational Communication in Japan, the Philippines, and the United States: Implication for Older Adults' Subjective Well-Being," *Communication Studies* 58, no. 2 (2007): 173–88.

¹⁰ Ikels, Charlotte, Jennie Keith, Jeanette Dickerson-Putman, Patricia Draper, Christine Fry, Anthony Glascock, and Henry Harpending. "Perceptions of the Adult Life Course: A Cross-Cultural Analysis." *Ageing & Society* 12, no. 1 (1992): 49–84; Koyano, Wataru. "Japanese attitudes toward the elderly: A review of research findings." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 4, no. 4 (1989): 335–345.

conversational enjoyment.¹¹ Their findings suggest that in Ghana, respect enhances intergenerational engagement, whereas avoidance diminishes it, presenting a more favourable communicative climate than some Western-based studies. Anthropological perspectives deepen this understanding by examining cultural norms and social expectations surrounding elders. In Ghanaian societies, particularly among the Akan, elders are traditionally regarded as custodians of knowledge, moral exemplars, and bearers of historical memory.¹² Their authority comes from not only age but also from accumulated experience, ritual participation, and socio-economic achievements. Although these descriptions may idealize the elder's role, they highlight the embeddedness of respect and deference in Ghanaian intergenerational relations.

Nonetheless, social change and the shift in youth identities complicate these norms. The rise of digital technologies has profoundly influenced youth culture and communication patterns. The dominance of mediated interaction is argued to reconfigure not only the speed and format of communication but also to define the rules of engagement in interpersonal exchange, emotional expression, and social expectations. In mediated communication, technology is not a passive conduit.¹³ It actively structures what can be said, how it is perceived, and how relationships unfold. As a result, mediated interaction produces new communicative literacies and challenges long-standing social conventions, particularly around respect, proximity, and the performance of social roles. These dynamics become especially significant in intergenerational contexts where cultural values and levels of technological fluency differ. The ubiquitous presence of digital technologies in the day-to-day affairs of human beings is viewed by posthuman scholars as a hybrid configuration of human/technology.¹⁴ In this view, technology becomes embedded in the very processes through which individuals perceive, communicate, and act in the world.

Braidotti's idea that the posthuman condition expresses the convergence of the human and the technological other speaks to the hybrid human as not merely a technologically enhanced body but a relational entity co-produced with digital systems.¹⁵ In contemporary societies, hybridity manifests through dependence on digital platforms for social recognition, identity formation, emotional expression, and knowledge acquisition.¹⁶ These hybrid relations reshape autonomy, agency, and subjectivity, producing a distributed form of selfhood operating across both physical and virtual environments.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Posthumanism is an intellectual framework that challenges the traditional humanist assumption that the human being is the central, superior, and autonomous agent in the world. Emerging partly from critiques of Enlightenment rationality and Western anthropocentrism, posthumanism argues that human existence is fundamentally entangled with technology, nature, and non-human entities. For example, Braidotti argues that technological mediation is not external to human identity.¹⁷ It is constitutive of who we are as digital systems, algorithms, and machinic processes continually co-shape subjectivity. In this sense, posthumanism does not simply describe technological enhancement; it reconfigures the boundaries of the human by questioning who or what participates in meaning-making, agency, and social life. Posthumanism also challenges hierarchies between humans and non-humans by foregrounding

¹¹ Howard Giles, Sinfree Makoni, and René M Dailey, "Intergenerational Communication Beliefs across the Lifespan: Comparative Data from Ghana and South Africa," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 20, no. 3 (2005): 191–211.

¹² Sjaak. Van der Geest, "Yebisa Wo Fie: Growing Old and Building a House in the Akan Culture of Ghana," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 13, no. 4 (1998): 333–359.; Joseph K. Adjaye and Osei-Mensah Aborampah., "Intergenerational Cultural Transmission among the Akan of Ghana," *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships* 2, no. 3–4 (2004): 23–38.

¹³ Turkle, Sherry. 2015. *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*. New York: Penguin Press.

¹⁴ Mohammad Hossein Jarrahi and Sarah Beth Nelson, "Agency, Sociomateriality, and Configuration Work," *The Information Society* 34, no. 4 (August 8, 2018): 244–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2018.1463335>.

¹⁵ Rosi Braidotti, "Posthuman Humanities," *European Educational Research Journal* 12, no. 1 (2013): 1–19.

¹⁶ Alan P. Rudy and Damian White., "'Hybridity.'" In *Critical Environmental Politics*, Pp. 121–132. Routledge, 2013. Thompson, John B. 'Mediated Interaction in the Digital Age.' *Theory, Culture & Society* , *Theory, Culture & Society* 37, no. 1 (2020): 3–28.

¹⁷ Braidotti, "Posthuman Humanities."

relationality, interdependence, and multiplicity. Rather than perceiving technology as an external tool, posthumanist thought views technology as part of the constitution of the human subject.

This framework becomes crucial in analysing societies undergoing rapid digital transformation, where technological systems increasingly shape identity, communication, and social organisation. Taken together, posthumanism, mediated interaction, and human/technology hybridity form a theoretical constellation that explains the profound shifts in communication and social life in the digital age. Posthumanism provides the philosophical foundation for understanding why human identity can no longer be conceived as isolated from technological systems. Mediated interaction illustrates how communication technologies restructure relational practices and social norms. Human and technology hybridity explains the material and cognitive fusion between humans and digital infrastructures that underpin contemporary communicative experiences. This triumvirate is therefore central to analysing digital culture, intergenerational communication, African futurist narratives, and the broader reconfiguration of the human in technologically saturated environments.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore how digitally mediated communication reshapes intergenerational relationships in Ghana within a posthuman communication framework. Through a purposive sampling strategy, 24 participants who engage in intergenerational communication mediated by digital technologies were selected following a call for participation. To ensure a clear generational contrast, the sample was divided into two distinct cohorts: twelve young people aged between 18 and 30 years, representing digitally immersed users and twelve older adults, with an average age of approximately 75 years, representing a generation whose socialisation predates digital communication technologies. This sampling structure allowed for a comparative exploration of generational perspectives and communicative practices.

Data were collected through focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth individual interviews. Separate focus group discussions were conducted for each generational cohort to encourage open conversation within shared generational contexts and minimise power imbalances that might inhibit expression. Interviews were concluded when data saturation was achieved. All interviews were transcribed verbatim, and notes were taken on recurring ideas, emotions, contradictions and patterns. The data were analysed using a theoretically informed thematic analysis. Analysis proceeded through six stages: familiarisation with data, initial coding, category development, theme generation, theme review and interpretation. Initial codes were generated inductively from participants' narratives concerning their experiences with digital communication. These codes were subsequently grouped into broader categories and themes. The thematic structure was further interpreted through key concepts from posthuman communication theory, including human-technology hybridity, mediated interaction, distributed agency, and the reconfiguration of communicative norms. This combination of inductive and deductive coding allowed the study to remain grounded in participants' lived experiences while situating the findings within broader posthuman debates on digital culture and human-technology relations.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study adopted strategies consistent with qualitative research standards of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through methodological triangulation by combining focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, allowing the researcher to compare and corroborate participants' accounts across different data collection methods. The elicitation technique, which encouraged participants to reflect on actual social media interactions and digital experiences, further strengthened the authenticity of the data by grounding responses in concrete experiences rather than abstract recollections. Furthermore, theoretical trustworthiness was enhanced by systematically linking emergent themes to key posthuman concepts such as human-technology hybridity, mediated interaction, distributed agency, and the reconfiguration of communicative norms, ensuring coherence between the empirical findings and the theoretical framework of the study. Transferability was addressed through the provision of rich, thick descriptions of the research context, participant characteristics, and the socio-cultural environment in which intergenerational digital communication occurs in Ghana. Dependability was ensured by maintaining a clear audit trail throughout the research process. Detailed records were kept on participant recruitment,

data collection procedures, coding decisions, theme development, and analytical interpretations. The systematic application of thematic analysis provided consistency in the interpretation of the data. Confirmability was strengthened through reflexive engagement with the data and the use of verbatim quotations to support thematic interpretations. Throughout the analysis, care was taken to ensure that findings emerged from participants' narratives rather than the researcher's personal assumptions or biases. Theoretical interpretations were continuously checked against the empirical data to maintain fidelity to participants' experiences while situating the findings within posthuman communication theory.

PRESENTATIONS OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Generational Experiences: Negotiating the Shift Towards Digital Communication

When examining the generational experiences of digital intercommunication, this study finds that young people experience digital communication as an integral and normalised aspect of their social, emotional, and economic lives. Unlike the older adults, whose entry into social media is often cautious or externally motivated, young persons adopt digital communication as a primary mode of interaction, identity formation, and social participation. Their experiences reflect a deep immersion in the communicative cultures of digital platforms, where speed, informality, multimodality, and expressive freedom are the dominant norms. For most of the young participants in the study, social media functions not merely as a tool but as a companion and emotional resource. As one young respondent explains,

“Social media offers solace, entertainment, and stress relief. A world without social media is like a world without electricity, and it provides a sense that there is somebody out there for you if you are stressed-up or depressed” (Personal communication 2025).¹⁸

This emotional centrality contrasts sharply with older adults' utilitarian or restrained use of the medium as expressed by one of the elderly respondents that:

“I am very discreet with the information I put across on social media; my information on WhatsApp is virtually useless. You won't get anything about me from my Facebook page. Even on my WhatsApp I don't have a profile picture”. (Personal Communication 2025).

However, for most of the young respondents, social media is a space for visibility and self-expression. Valuing the ability to reach broad audiences and articulate their opinions publicly, one youthful respondent discloses that, “the capacity to be heard across the whole world is an empowering dimension of digital engagement” (Personal communication 2025). Young adults also negotiate digital communication as a productive and economic resource by integrating social media into their professional lives, promoting events, advertising products, while enhancing their entrepreneurial opportunities, as emphasised by a 25-year-old Multimedia Assistant that, “social media is indispensable for promoting programs, planning events and finding clients” (Personal communication 2025). Using social media as an economic utility further deepens their attachment to digital platforms. However, while the youth embrace digital media enthusiastically among their peers, communicating with older adults presents challenges due to conflicting communicative norms. Youth-centred digital literacies, such as abbreviations, emojis, speed-oriented language, and highly informal tone, often clash with elders' expectations for formal, clear, and culturally respectful communication. Younger respondents acknowledge these tensions. For example, one respondent notes that her mother reprimands her for using abbreviations like “kk,” insisting on “official” language or Twi. (Personal communication 2025). Such mismatches require the youth to modulate their communicative styles according to the generational context. Negotiation also occurs in relation to privacy and cultural expectations. Young people operate under tacit peer rules regarding appropriate use of platforms. For example, avoid video calls in public spaces or maintain shorthand conversational patterns. One young respondent describes feeling

¹⁸ All ‘Personal Communication’ indicate the interview the author held with the respondents during the data collection phase of the research.

compelled to accept her mother's Imo video call, not because it aligned with youth norms, but to avoid appearing disrespectful.

"The last time when my mum called me on Imo, all my friends were like, 'Your mum is calling you on imo!!!? I picked the call so as not to act disrespectful. My friends were surprised not because my mum video-called me but using Imo which is normally used for international calls'" (Personal communication 2025)

This reveals an ambivalent negotiation. While digital spaces give young people autonomy and expressive freedom, family hierarchies still shape communicative choices. Furthermore, the youth typically apply cultural deference to elders only under specific conditions. Respectful address, such as using honorifics, is more likely when communicating with a known elder or when a face-to-face encounter is anticipated. Otherwise, the youth default to the egalitarian tone characteristic of social media. As one young respondent explains, there is the possibility of avoiding direct forms of respect online unless the elder is someone he knows personally or expects to meet physically, showing that deference is applied strategically rather than as a normative value. The young respondents recognise that their world of digital communication differs fundamentally from that of older adults. Their linguistic practices, expressive norms, and platform-specific cultures create a generationally distinctive communicative environment, one in which traditional markers of authority or hierarchy are less influential. As one young woman notes, greeting an elder with "what's up?" is acceptable online in ways it would not be in physical interactions.

"I think social media has made morals also drop a bit, because you can say "what's up?" to your peers and it's not considered as rude. But when you text 'what's up' to an elderly person, I think it is a problem because you won't just meet an elderly person and say "what's up?". You would say 'good morning, Ma' or 'good morning Da'. Now you just text hi and it's ok" (Personal communication 2025)

This flexibility reflects the broader cultural hybridity of urban Ghanaian youth, who see themselves as global digital citizens negotiating between local expectations and globalised communicative styles. Overall, the young respondents in the study experience digital communication as a central domain of sociality, identity, and opportunity. Their negotiation of digital communication within family and community settings involves balancing the expressive freedoms and informal norms of youth digital culture with the culturally grounded expectations of respect, propriety, and formality upheld by older generations. This negotiation is dynamic, strategic, and mediated by the shifting power relations inherent in intergenerational digital encounters. On the other hand, older adults encounter the transition to digital communication as a complex process shaped by enthusiasm, caution, cultural expectations, and negotiated agency. Their experiences demonstrate both an openness to new communicative possibilities and a persistent struggle to reconcile digital practices with longstanding social norms governing intergenerational interaction. For most of the older adult respondents, entry into digital communication, particularly through platforms such as Facebook and TikTok, occurs gradually and is often externally motivated. Some join because family and peers are already active online, creating a sense of social pressure to participate. As one elderly respondent noted, participation was "kind of slow. I was forced into it because friends wanted to reach me and it was like peer pressure" (Personal communication 2025). Despite this hesitant entry, older adults generally express enthusiasm for the opportunity to stay informed and maintain contact with relatives abroad, as one elderly respondent enthusiastically assert;

"Ohh! I use social media quite a lot! I communicate with my mates, my friends and the children. We talk about politics, religion, social issues and current affairs and what knots". (Personal communication 2025).

Their initial expectations of social media tend to align with functional or socially constructive purposes such as learning, activism, and interpersonal connection, rather than broad social display or entertainment. Others, for instance, a 65-year-old social worker emphasises social media as "a campaign platform" and a tool for sharing serious messages, while acknowledging its usefulness for connecting

with friends. However, once online, older adults confront communicative practices that diverge from culturally familiar norms of privacy, tact, and respect. Many express discomfort when younger people make private or sensitive matters public, interpreting such practices as disrespectful or inappropriate. One elderly respondent recounts her shock at discovering a youth's "derogatory comments" about a private disagreement posted publicly on Facebook, a violation severe enough to prompt her withdrawal from the platform altogether. This sense of violated privacy is widely echoed among older participants, who interpret the public visibility of social media as a form of vulnerability. One older adult, for example, describes social media as opening users to unwanted scrutiny:

"Once you are there anybody can find you. That is vulnerability" (Personal communication 2025).

To navigate these risks, older adults develop strategies for boundary setting and selective participation. These include explicitly instructing relatives not to post their photos without consent, avoiding public discussions, and limiting overall online visibility. One elderly respondent asserts the prerogative to control how his image is circulated, warning relatives and friends that,

"You can't just take an old picture of mine and post it. That is my prerogative" (Personal communication 2025).

Such practices reflect a desire to preserve personal dignity and autonomy in a communicative space perceived as inherently exposed. Another challenge lies in the perceived erosion of traditional communicative norms. Older adult respondents observe that digital spaces operate according to their own value system, shaped largely by younger users whose practices reflect speed, informality, and egalitarianism. As one elderly respondent explains, engaging in social media requires conformity to these new norms where "you become it, rather it becoming you". This perceived cultural inversion positions older adults as outsiders within a youth-dominated communicative environment, producing feelings of alienation and reluctance to engage fully.

Cultural Tensions: Reshaping Intergenerational Interaction in Urban Ghana.

The coexistence of traditional Ghanaian communication norms and the fast-evolving digital cultures embraced by younger generations generates significant cultural tensions in intergenerational communication. These tensions manifest not only in communication styles but also in expectations, values, and interpretations of appropriate behaviour between the two generations. One of the key sources of tension emerges from divergent communicative norms and expectations. As traditional Ghanaian communication systems place a premium on respect, formality, and hierarchical order, intergenerational communication is guided by deference, careful choice of language, and adherence to relational protocols. Elderly respondents in the study expect communication to reflect social hierarchy, moral maturity, and communal responsibility. As indicated by Esteron, digital communication is defined by speed, informality, abbreviated language, and an emphasis on immediacy and emotional expressiveness.¹⁹ However, while young people prefer highly abbreviated, shorthand messages which facilitate rapid interactions, as used by one young respondent in a text communication; "sup bae", "what r u up 2?" "waguan ? and "LOL", it conflicts sharply with elderly respondents' communicative norms, producing friction in communication. Elderly persons interpret such digital informality as disrespect or careless behaviour as expressed by one elderly respondent that,

"When I chat with my daughters on social media, I tell them not to use the shorthand. I see it as inappropriate. If you send me "kk" I will ask you where is the "o"? Because "ok" and "kk" aren't they the same two letters? I don't accept that"

Young respondents, on the other hand view elders' insistence on formality as outdated and incompatible with platform norms.

¹⁹ Maria Angela S Esteron, "Different Language Usage on Social Media," *International Journal of Advanced Engineering, Management and Science* 7, no. 3 (2021): 93–104.

“On social media, you can say what’s up and hi, and it’s not rude. It’s ok. Whoever can just respond back.”

As noted, addressing an elder with “what’s up” online is not considered rude, although it would be inappropriate offline. This conditional respect reflects a generational shift in the boundaries of politeness and authority. To elders, however, the youth’s selective observance of traditional norms signals cultural drift and a weakening of communal discipline. Young people adopt a hybrid communicative identity. They maintain cultural deference face-to-face but relax it online.

Another source of tension is the conflicting notions of privacy and publicness. Traditional communication contexts in Ghana are relational and often private, especially when it comes to conflict, family matters, or sensitive issues. Elders expect discretion and controlled dissemination of personal information. Digital platforms, however, normalize public sharing. The youth think of social media spaces as extensions of everyday life where posting, tagging, and reposting is routine. For example, one young respondent affirms that,

“I can go to the extent of posting my nudity and stuff, and you know people would lambast nudity while other people too will appreciate it. So, I can get a lot of audience, and trust me those are the things that are even viewed the most”

The disparate appreciation of privacy and discretionary use of social media between the two generational cohorts creates tension when private matters become inadvertently public. For example, an older adult’s disappointment at a young man’s choice to broadcast their disagreement on Facebook illustrates this breach of traditional expectations of discretion and reverence. Elders perceive such public exposure as disrespectful and culturally inappropriate.

The different perceptions of social media as a distinct ‘culture’ by the two generations is also a source of tension. Many elders view social media not merely as a tool but as an independent cultural system that carries its own norms, values, and behaviours. As one elderly respondent explains,

“Entering social media requires conforming to the rules and regulations that govern it. You become it, rather it becoming you”.

This perceived cultural autonomy of social media clashes with expectations that communication should reflect Ghanaian cultural values. While some young respondents agree to the notion that social media is a culture of its own by stating that’,

Older generation and new generation sharing platforms should not be a problem. It is just a matter of conforming to what the platform has to offer and move on”
(Personal communication 2005),

Some younger people, in contrast, perceive digital platforms as flexible spaces enabling autonomy, creativity, and global belonging. Young respondents’ affinity to globalised digital identities sits uneasily with elders’ expectations rooted in local culture. Inductively, these diverse expectations of communication norms may contribute to the changing roles of elders in cultural transmission. The elderly’s authority in communication is tied to lived experience and communal memory.²⁰ Digital communication, however, disrupts this role as social media creates a world different from what the elderly are familiar with. Reduced communication cues, distance, and abbreviated interactions diminish opportunities for cultural mentoring, creating further tension. Furthermore, the anonymity and egalitarian affordances of digital communication systems erode the sense of hierarchy. This can be deduced from the following expressed views from one of the young respondents,

“There are people that I can’t even look into their eyes and say certain things but I can say it freely on social media because I am hiding behind a machine, and it happens all the time on social media”

²⁰ Elaine A Ayensu, “Communication and Culture in Ghana: Technology’s Influence and Progress in a New Digital Age” (Georgetown University, 2003).

and another view from the elderly respondents.

“Because of our cultural upbringing, the need to properly address an elderly person is a way of showing respect. But with social media everybody can say anything. To think a young person can address you in any manner”.

Traditional expression of respect in Ghanaian society is generally indexed through forms of address, tone, posture, and the avoidance of directness.²¹ However, social media flattens this hierarchy. Anonymity and virtual distance reduce inhibitions, allowing for the free expression. The selective or strategic deference as indicated in the statement of the young respondent reflects a loosening of traditional hierarchies, which many elderly respondents interpret as cultural erosion.

Rethinking Intergenerational Mediated Communication through a Posthumanist Lens

The dynamics of intergenerational mediated communication in Ghana, as evidenced in the study findings, provide a fertile ground for posthumanist interpretation. Posthumanism, as it is widely known, destabilises the idea of a stable, autonomous, biologically bounded human subject and instead foregrounds hybrid relationality, human-technology entanglements, and the decentring of traditional hierarchies. When applied to the context of urban Ghana, the interactions between elders, youth, and social media technologies reveal a shift from human-centred communication norms toward technologically mediated forms of relationality that challenge long-standing socio-cultural expectations.

Posthumanism, particularly in the work of Haraway and Braidotti, emphasises the human as already technologically co-constituted. The findings demonstrate that both elders and youth become hybrid communicators whose communicative capacities are extended and sometimes constrained by digital platforms. While the youth embrace hybridity, seamlessly integrating social media into emotional regulation, identity formation, entrepreneurship, and social presence, elders, however, experience hybridity as disorienting, perceiving social media as a cultural system with its own rules, one that demands conformity and erodes their traditional authority. Therefore, for the youth, social media becomes “a companion,” a technological co-presence that provides affective support and shapes their everyday life. But for the elderly, the idea of “You become it, rather it becoming you,” signals the sense that social media reconfigures the human user rather than merely serving them. This human-technology fusion also destabilises traditional generational roles in Ghanaian society, where elders historically serve as knowledge custodians and moral authorities. In the posthuman condition, technological platforms, not elders, become primary sources of information, socialisation, and communicative norms for young people and, in the process, reconfigure generational roles, leading to the erosion of hierarchical communicative norms. Akan and broader Ghanaian communicative norms emphasise hierarchy, deference, and age-based relational order. Posthuman mediation, however, flattens these hierarchies by equalising communicative positions through affordances such as anonymity, textual minimalism, and the collapse of spatial distance.

Furthermore, Posthuman mediation produces a dis-embedding of communication from cultural scripts, enabling youth to embody new identities unconstrained by generational hierarchies. This resonates with Haraway’s idea of the cyborg as a figure that breaks down boundaries. Here, the boundary between “elder” and “youth” as fixed communicative identities is weakened. Closely linked to these weakened communicative identities is a disrupted cultural transmission. Posthumanism questions linear cultural inheritance and the privileging of elders as origin points of knowledge. The study reveals a similar dynamic where elders’ ability to transmit cultural norms is undermined by the youth’s immersion in digital cultures that offer alternative norms, values, and forms of expression. The youth adopt abbreviated, fast-paced digital linguistics, which elders struggle to interpret and reject as illegitimate communication. Elders define social media as exposing them to “vulnerability,” “being opened-up,” or being “naked,” expressing discomfort with the platform’s erosion of boundaries that traditionally regulate communication. From a posthumanist perspective, this reflects a shift in the source of cultural authority: young people increasingly orient themselves toward globalised digital cultures

²¹ Ayensu, “Communication and Culture in Ghana: Technology’s Influence and Progress in a New Digital Age.”

rather than localised customs. The “posthuman youth” become aligned with algorithmic logics, platform conventions, and networked visibility. The study’s observation that the youth have created “a world different from what the elderly are familiar with” shows that social media is not merely a tool; it is a posthuman cultural ecology. For elders, this digital world appears alienating and self-organising, mirroring posthumanism’s notion of distributed agency. The older generation perceives social media as possessing its own “rules and regulations,” suggesting a quasi-autonomous system not governed by human cultural norms where participation requires adaptation to platform logics. This suggests that agency resides not solely in humans but in human-technology assemblages. Thus, intergenerational communication becomes a negotiation between two ontological orders: a humanist, elder-centred Ghanaian communicative tradition and a posthuman, youth-led digital communication culture.

Posthumanism highlights frictions produced when older anthropocentric systems meet technologically mediated modes of being. The study demonstrates that these frictions manifest in differing conceptions of privacy. The older generation expects boundaries while the youth normalise publicness. There are also conflicting ethical orientations. While the elders prioritise communal responsibility, the youth prioritise self-expression and visibility. Another friction is the divergent communicative embodiments. While the youth perform digitised selves, elders ground identity in lived experience. These tensions illustrate the clash between humanist relationality²² rooted in respect, hierarchy, and embodied presence and posthuman relationality²³ based on speed, anonymity, visibility, and affective immediacy. When framed through posthumanism, the intergenerational use of social media in urban Ghana reflects a deep ontological shift. Youth and elders interact not simply across age differences but across different modes of being, shaped by human-technology hybridity, algorithmic cultures, and non-hierarchical digital networks. The study reveals that social media reconfigures generational roles, loosens hierarchical norms, challenges cultural continuity, and produces new communicative identities. Thus, intergenerational social media use in urban Ghana is best understood as a posthuman encounter, where traditional human-centered communicative structures increasingly coexist, often tensely, with technologically mediated forms of relationality that redefine what it means to communicate, belong, and be human in contemporary Ghana.

RECOMMENDATION

From the findings of the study, the recommendations provide practical interventions for policymakers, educators, families, community leaders, technology companies, and civil society organisations. For government agencies, educational institutions, community centres, and NGOs, intergenerational digital literacy programmes should be developed to bring younger and older adults together. Such programmes should not only teach technical skills but also facilitate a mutual understanding of generational communication styles, expectations, and online behaviours. These initiatives would help reduce misunderstandings arising from digital language and platform norms, increase older adults' confidence in digital participation and encourage younger users to appreciate cultural expectations of respect and discretion. The study also recommends that digital etiquette and cultural values should be integrated into education, where educational institutions incorporate digital citizenship and digital etiquette into school and university curricula. These programmes should emphasise respectful online communication, responsible self-expression, privacy awareness, cultural sensitivity in digital spaces and ethical social media engagement. This approach would help preserve important cultural values while equipping young people for participation in global digital cultures. The study further recommends supporting public awareness campaigns on digital privacy and online safety through national awareness campaigns to educate citizens on digital privacy management, safe information sharing, protection against misinformation and scams and responsible online visibility. Such campaigns should target both younger and older populations using accessible and culturally appropriate communication channels. A further recommendation is encouraging policymakers to recognise cultural dimensions of digital

²² Maureen O’Hara, “Relational Humanism: A Psychology for a Pluralistic World,” *The Humanistic Psychologist* 20, no. 2–3 (1992): 439–46.

²³ Simon Ceder, *Towards a Posthuman Theory of Educational Relationality* (Routledge, 2018).

transformation. As the study demonstrates that digitalisation is not merely a technological process but a socio-cultural transformation affecting authority, identity, and human relationships, policymakers should include cultural considerations in national digital transformation strategies, support programmes that preserve cultural values in digital environments, encourage research on the social consequences of technological change and promote inclusive digital policies that address generational differences.

Finally, the study recommends strengthening research on digital culture and posthuman communication in Africa. With the identification of a significant gap in African scholarship in relation to posthuman perspectives on digital communication, universities and other research institutions should support interdisciplinary research on human-technology relationships, examine digital communication across diverse Ghanaian communities, investigate rural-urban differences in digital culture and explore the role of algorithms, artificial intelligence, and platform governance in shaping social relationships. Such research would deepen understanding of how digital technologies are transforming African societies. Rather than attempting to resist digital transformation or abandoning traditional cultural values, stakeholders should pursue a balanced approach that combines the cultural wisdom of Ghanaian communicative traditions with the opportunities offered by digital technologies. The goal should be to cultivate digitally competent, culturally grounded, and socially connected citizens capable of navigating both human and technological dimensions of contemporary life.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine how digitally mediated interaction is reshaping intergenerational communication in Ghana through the analytical lens of posthuman communication theory. The study does so by examining how two different generations negotiate digital communication in their everyday interactions and how digitally mediated communication reshapes intergenerational interaction in urban Ghana. The study finds that in their everyday digital experiences, older adults negotiate digital communication through a dual strategy: cautious adoption informed by their social commitments, and selective withdrawal in response to perceived breaches of cultural or interpersonal expectations. While digital media create new opportunities for connection, older adults remain attentive to the risks posed by public exposure, anonymity, and the weakening of respect-based intergenerational norms. Their negotiation of digital communication thus reflects an ongoing effort to preserve cultural values, safeguard personal boundaries, and maintain meaningful relational ties in an increasingly digitised socio-communicative landscape. In how digitally mediated communication reshapes intergenerational interaction in urban Ghana, the study reveals that the cultural tensions emerging from the coexistence of traditional communication systems and digital cultures in Ghana are profound. They arise from competing notions of respect, privacy, identity, language, hierarchy, and publicness. These tensions reflect a broader negotiation between cultural continuity and technological modernity, with digital platforms accelerating generational divergence in communicative values. As the study shows, social media simultaneously connects generations and widens the cultural gap between them, challenging long-standing norms while generating new forms of intergenerational communication.

The study contributes to scholarship by extending posthuman communication theory to the Ghanaian context and demonstrates how digital technologies actively participate in the reconfiguration of intergenerational communication, cultural authority, and social relationships. By revealing the tensions between traditional communicative norms and emerging digital cultures, the study provides a culturally grounded African perspective on human-technology hybridity and mediated interaction. It further advances intergenerational communication research by conceptualising digital communication as a posthuman encounter in which identities, relationships, and communicative practices are co-produced by both human and technological actors. This contribution broadens existing debates on digital transformation, posthumanism, and African media cultures.

Implications of the study suggest that digital transformation in Ghana is not simply changing how people communicate but is fundamentally reconfiguring cultural authority, generational identities, and social relationships. As communication becomes increasingly mediated by technological systems, sustaining meaningful intergenerational relations will require new frameworks that balance cultural continuity with technological innovation. The study therefore calls for theoretical, educational, and

policy responses that recognise digital communication as a hybrid human-technology process shaping the future of Ghanaian social life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adjaye, Joseph K., and Osei-Mensah Aborampah. "Intergenerational Cultural Transmission among the Akan of Ghana." *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships* 2, no. 3–4 (2004): 23–38.
- Ayensu, Elaine A. "Communication and Culture in Ghana: Technology's Influence and Progress in a New Digital Age." Georgetown University, 2003.
- Ayhan, Bünyamin. *Digitalization and Society (Edition 1)*. Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2017.
- Braidotti, Rosi. "Posthuman Humanities." *European Educational Research Journal* 12, no. 1 (2013): 1–19.
- Ceder, Simon. *Towards a Posthuman Theory of Educational Relationality*. Routledge, 2018.
- Dovie, Delali Adjoa, Dan-Bright S Dzorgbo, Charles C Mate-Kole, Helen Nana Mensah, Albert Foli Agbe, Alexander Attiogbe, and Gloria Dzokoto. "Generational Perspective of Digital Literacy among Ghanaians in the 21st Century: Wither NoW?" *Media Studies* 10, no. 20 (2019): 127–52.
- Esteron, Maria Angela S. "Different Language Usage on Social Media." *International Journal of Advanced Engineering, Management and Science* 7, no. 3 (2021): 93–104.
- Geest, Sjaak. Van der. "Yebisa Wo Fie: Growing Old and Building a House in the Akan Culture of Ghana." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 13, no. 4 (1998): 333–359.
- Giles, Howard, and Jessica Gasiolek. "Intergenerational Communication Practices." In *Handbook of the Psychology of Aging*, 233–47. Elsevier, 2011.
- Giles, Howard, Sinfree Makoni, and René M Dailey. "Intergenerational Communication Beliefs across the Lifespan: Comparative Data from Ghana and South Africa." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 20, no. 3 (2005): 191–211.
- Ikels, Charlotte, Jennie Keith, Jeanette Dickerson-Putman, Patricia Draper, Christine Fry, Anthony Glascock, and Henry Harpending. "Perceptions of the Adult Life Course: A Cross-Cultural Analysis." *Ageing & Society* 12, no. 1 (1992): 49–84.
- Jarrahi, Mohammad Hossein, and Sarah Beth Nelson. "Agency, Sociomateriality, and Configuration Work." *The Information Society* 34, no. 4 (August 8, 2018): 244–60.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2018.1463335>.
- Koyano, Wataru. "Japanese attitudes toward the elderly: A review of research findings." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 4, no. 4 (1989): 335–345.
- Lang, Volker. "Digitalization and Digital Transformation." In *Digital Fluency: Understanding the Basics of Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain Technology, Quantum Computing, and Their Applications for Digital Transformation*, 1–50. Springer, 2021.
- O'Hara, Maureen. "Relational Humanism: A Psychology for a Pluralistic World." *The Humanistic Psychologist* 20, no. 2–3 (1992): 439–46.
- Odame, Jonathan. "Enhancing Technology Professional Development for Older Adults in Ghana to Bridge the Digital Divide: A Systematic Review." *International Journal of Smart Technology and Learning* 4, no. 2 (2024): 151–67.
- Ota, Hiroshi, Howard Giles, and Lilnabeth P Somera. "Beliefs about Intra-and Intergenerational Communication in Japan, the Philippines, and the United States: Implication for Older Adults' Subjective Well-Being." *Communication Studies* 58, no. 2 (2007): 173–88.
- Prem, Erich. "Principles of Digital Humanism: A Critical Post-Humanist View." *Journal of Responsible Technology* 17 (2024): 100075.
- Rudy, Alan P., and Damian White. 'Hybridity.' In *Critical Environmental Politics*, Pp. 121–132. Routledge, 2013.
- Thompson, John B. 'Mediated Interaction in the Digital Age.' *Theory, Culture & Society. Theory, Culture & Society* 37, no. 1 (2020): 3–28.

Turkle, Sherry. 2015. *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*. New York: Penguin Press.

ABOUT AUTHOR(S)

Ramatu Mustapha Dadzie (PhD) is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Film Artistic at the Institute of Film and Television, University of Media Arts and Communication, Accra, Ghana. She lectures in screen studies and mediated cultures. She holds a PhD in Sociology (Media) from the University of Ghana, Legon, Accra. She undertakes research in Ghanaian cinema cultures, representation and identity in African cinema, mediated cultures and communication. Her articles have appeared in *Modern Africa: Politics, History and Society Journal*, *Journal of Communication*, *Media and Society*, *Journal of African Media Studies* and *Animation Practice, Processes and Production Journal*, among others.