

# THE TRANSFORMATION OF TRUST IN THE SCREEN SOCIETY: SOCIAL ISOLATION UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF AUTOMATION

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*This study complies with research and publication ethics.*

## Abstract

In today's digital age, the increasing integration of automation is reshaping human interactions and becoming a transformative force in the structure of modern society. While this shift enhances efficiency, it also introduces significant social and psychological consequences at both individual and societal levels, requiring critical examination. This study explores how digitalization and automation affect social dynamics, focusing on the transformation of interpersonal relationships. As automated systems become more embedded in everyday life, individuals may experience a declining sense of control, resulting in social isolation, erosion of trust, and weakening of communication and social skills. The research emphasizes the evolving relationship between humans and technology, drawing attention to potential risks such as the loss of autonomy, reduced critical thinking, and increased vulnerability to manipulation. Additionally, the study addresses the growing dependence on digital media and automation, examining their connection to surveillance capitalism and its broader social implications. Conceptually, it investigates how technological systems influence trust, decision-making, and social engagement, while highlighting the diminishing role of human agency in the face of machine precision and authority. The ease of access to automated technologies and the resulting dependency are also identified as factors that contribute to the weakening of social bonds. Employing a qualitative approach through literature review and case analysis, the study concludes that the combined effects of technology, media, and globalization lead to the homogenization of experiences, the erosion of individuality, and the external shaping of identity and personal decision-making processes.

**Keywords:** digitalisation, automation, trust, processing, automation bias.

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# OTOMASYONUN OTORİTESİNDE SOSYAL İZOLASYON OLARAK EKRAN TOPLUMUNUN GÜVEN DÖNÜŞÜMÜ

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*Bu çalışma araştırma ve yayın etiğine uygun olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir.*

## Öz

Günümüzde dijitalleşme ile birlikte otomasyonun kullanımının artması, insan-insan etkileşimlerinin şeklini değiştirerek toplumsal yapını da dönüştüren faktörlerden biri haline gelmiştir. Bu dönüşüm, verimliliği artırmakla beraber bireyden topluma toplumdaki etkilerini ve bu süreçlerin bireyler arasındaki sosyal ilişkileri nasıl dönüştürdüğünü incelemektir. Özellikle, otomasyon sistemlerinin artan entegrasyonu ile insanların bu sistemler üzerindeki kontrol hissinin azalması ve bunun sonucunda sosyal izolasyon, güven kaybı ve bireylerin sosyal becerilerinin zayıflaması gibi sorunların ortaya çıkması vurgulanmaktadır. Bu çalışma, hızlı teknolojik gelişmelerin modern toplum üzerindeki etkisini otomasyon üzerinden ele almıştır. Otonom sistemlerin artan entegrasyonuna ve insanlar ile teknoloji arasındaki gelişen ilişkiye dikkat çekmektedir. Otomasyona ve teknolojiye güvenin teslim edilmesiyle kontrol, özerklik ve eleştirel düşünme becerilerinin kaybının yanı sıra manipülasyon potansiyeli de dahil olmak üzere potansiyel risk ve sonuçlarına dikkat çekmek amaçlanmaktadır. Makale, tüketicilerin dijital medya ve otomasyona olan bağımlılığını ve gözetim kapitalizminin toplum üzerindeki etkisini vurgulamaktadır. Araştırmanın amacı, dijitalleşmenin ve otomatizasyonun, bireylerin sosyal yaşamlarındaki etkilerini ve bu teknolojik sistemlerin bireyler arasındaki güven, seçim ve iletişim süreçlerini nasıl etkilediğini, makine hassasiyeti ve gücü karşısında insanın azalan rolünü kavramsal olarak ele almaktadır. Otomasyona erişimin kolaylığını ve bunun sonucunda ortaya çıkan bağımlılığı vurgular. Otomatizasyonun günümüzde nasıl bir otorite haline geldiği ve bireyler arasındaki sosyal bağları nasıl zayıflattığı incelenir. Araştırma, nitel bir yaklaşıma dayanmaktadır. Literatür taraması ve olgu inceleme yöntemleri kullanılarak, teknoloji, otomatizasyon ve sosyal ilişkiler üzerine yapılan önceki çalışmalar incelenmiş, bu kavramlar teorik çerçevede ele alınmıştır. Çalışma, teknoloji, medya ve küreselleşmenin etkisinin deneyimlerin homojenleşmesine ve bireyselliğin kaybolmasına yol açtığı ve bireylerin öz kimliklerinin ve karar alma süreçlerinin bu faktörler tarafından şekillendirildiği sonucuna varmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** dijitalleşme, otomatizasyon, güven, işleme, otomasyon yanlılığı.

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## Introduction

Digitalisation and automation systems are transforming individuals' social interactions, leading to emerging phenomena such as screen addiction. As the attachment to the digital world increases, face-to-face communication diminishes, and individuals spend more time engaging in online interactions.

This study aims to examine the effects of digitalisation and automation on social bonds among individuals within a conceptual framework. By evaluating the impacts of digital interactions on autonomy, trust, and social relationships, the study explores how technological systems have become a form of authority in individuals' lives. Specifically, it addresses the effects of trust in automation and social media usage on individuals' social relationships. The primary objective is to comparatively analyse the influence of automation systems and social media platforms on loneliness, trust, and decision-making processes. The study focuses on how automation may isolate individuals from social bonds, while social media platforms may contribute to feelings of loneliness. In this context, the research aims to provide a new perspective to deeply understand the positive and negative impacts of technology on individuals' daily lives.

Automation has the potential to reduce the cognitive load on individuals in decision-making processes. However, trust in automation may lead to excessive reliance on these systems, thus weakening critical thinking skills. This phenomenon, referred to as 'automation bias', reflects individuals' tendency to trust the information and recommendations provided by automated systems without critical evaluation. For instance, excessive trust in automation systems used in critical domains such as healthcare, transportation, and finance poses significant risk factors, potentially leading to errors and adverse outcomes (Lee & See, 2004). Such reliance weakens individuals' capacity for independent decision-making and alters the nature of their social interactions.

Numerous articles investigate and guide the impact of systems on individuals, offering critical contributions to the literature by framing these discussions through research. This study references significant works that address automation systems and individual behaviour: Shoshana Zuboff's *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (2019) argues that the system Zuboff terms 'surveillance capitalism' centres on monitoring, predicting, and manipulating human behaviour through digital technologies. Zuboff discusses how surveillance capitalism transforms social relationships, cultural norms, and individual freedoms, highlighting the risks this emerging economic model poses to humanity. Lee and See's *Trust in Automation: Designing for Appropriate Reliance* (2004) is a key article in the field, addressing trust in the context of automation and providing practical design recommendations. Hoff and Bashir (2015) aim to synthesise existing knowledge by examining factors affecting trust in automation, proposing a three-layer trust model. Jose van Dijck's *Datafication, Dataism, and*

*Dataveillance: Big Data between Scientific Paradigm and Ideology* (2014) is 'a pivotal study' that explores the social, scientific, and ideological dimensions of Big Data. Dijck discusses the process of 'datafication', which facilitates the continuous measurement and analysis of individuals' behaviours, interactions, and expressions, rendering everyday life increasingly trackable, predictable, and manipulable.

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, utilising literature review and conceptual analysis methods. Drawing from concepts and theories in disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and media studies, it examines the effects of digitalisation on social and cognitive structures from a theoretical perspective.

The findings of this study reveal that digitalisation weakens human-to-human interactions and social bonds, contributing to a sense of loneliness among individuals. The authority of automation undermines trust in oneself and others, increasing dependency on digital systems and weakening social skills.

This study is significant for understanding the authority of technological systems and their impact on social isolation in the digitalisation process. By addressing how the digital world shapes interactions among individuals and its adverse effects on individual freedoms, it contributes to the literature. The findings underscore the need for individuals to recognise the risks of digital addiction and social isolation, emphasising the importance of strengthening social bonds. Developing awareness about preserving social skills amidst digitalisation is identified as a critical step forward.

## Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach. At its core lies a comprehensive literature review conducted to examine the impact of digitalisation and automation on social relations in the context of trust and social isolation. The review focused on academic publications published between 2000 and 2024, addressing issues such as automation, trust, screen society, and the social consequences of digitalisation. Sources were drawn from diverse disciplines, including sociology, psychology, communication, and media studies, thereby allowing the subject to be explored from a multidimensional perspective.

The selection of sources was determined by their direct relevance to the study's focus, their theoretical contribution, and their scholarly significance within the international literature. In this regard, this study employs concepts such as Foucault's notion of the disciplinary society, Zuboff's surveillance capitalism, Bauman's concept of liquid modernity, and Giddens' theory of reflexive modernity to capture contemporary social transformations. Concepts such as automation bias, data-driven domination, and algorithmic governance were also analysed in light of findings from various studies and compared at the

conceptual level.

The analytical process relied on the thematic categorisation of existing research and its comparative discussion at the conceptual level. Within this scope, the study examined how the notion of trust has shifted from interpersonal relations to automation-based systems, how social bonds have been transformed through processes of digitalisation, and to what extent the screen society contributes to the isolation of individuals. These assessments were carried out through conceptual analysis. This study employs a conceptual analysis technique, organising the existing body of literature through thematic classification and examining the concepts comparatively within these categories. The method is not limited to compiling existing findings but also entails discussing the variations in the content, context, and meaning of the concepts. Accordingly, studies focusing on trust, social bonds, and the screen society were first identified; subsequently, the shift of trust from interpersonal relations to automation-based systems, the transformations of social bonds within the process of digitalisation, and the dynamics of isolation produced by the screen society were examined. In this process, the selected studies were compared in terms of their theoretical contributions, methodological orientations, and empirical observations, with similarities and differences analysed within an integrated analytical framework. Rather than focusing on static definitions of concepts, this approach seeks to demonstrate how they are reconfigured and transformed across social, technological, and cultural contexts. Thus, the study not only describes the diversity presented in the literature but also transforms this diversity into a critical and holistic evaluation.

The methodological orientation of the study ultimately aims to highlight the theoretical richness and interdisciplinary diversity of the existing body of work. Although no quantitative data or fieldwork-based findings are presented, the systematic analysis of the literature provides a comprehensive understanding of the subject at a conceptual level.

### **The Transformation of Digitalisation, and Authority**

The concept of authority has been examined by almost all major sociologists, political scientists, and media researchers. Modern information technology has altered the social conditions that previously underpinned the creation of political or religious authority. The purpose of this section is not to present the concept comprehensively. Instead, it seeks to demonstrate its sociological implications in the process of digitalisation. The Internet and accompanying automation technologies have created new positions of power, flattened hierarchical structures, and transformed our perspective on authority.

Max Weber, one of the most frequently cited sociologists, conceptualised the phenomenon of governance in the first volume of his work *Economy and Society*, where he defined three types of authority: charismatic, bureaucratic,

and traditional. According to Weber, power is based on obedience, and obedience can stem from various causes, ranging from old habits to entirely rational considerations. In every power relationship, there exists a certain minimum willingness or interest (whether external or internal) to comply with authority (Weber, 1989, p. 220). Communication network researchers suggest that the types of authority defined by Max Weber at the beginning of the 20th century represent a theoretical framework offered by the developed West that has become increasingly contested in the 21st century (Hoover, 2016, p. 11).

In the contemporary network society, the concept of power can only be understood through the structure and operational principles of the network. Castells, considering the social and technological conditions of networks, defines four forms of power: global network power, which regulates the operation of the network (network power); the power among network nodes (networked power); and the power to create and activate networks (network-making power). Global network power refers to the influence exerted on groups outside the network; network power facilitates the regulation of social interactions. Networked power emphasises the impact of actors within the network on others, while network-making power involves establishing and linking networks toward strategic goals (Castells, 2011, p. 773). To contextualise Castells' definition of power in contemporary systems, it is necessary to examine the concept of datafication. Datafication is defined as the transformation of expressions, locations, and social interactions into real-time, measurable online data. It is used not only to explain social behaviours but also to predict them. This process provides new access to and understanding of human behaviour, enabling not only monitoring but also planning based on behaviours (Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier, 2013; van Dijck, 2014; van Dijck & Poell, 2015; van Dijck et al., 2018). The ownership and utilisation (e.g., sale, manipulation) of data related to users' media and digital device usage have become one of the most decisive elements of power in the 21st century. While this power may not directly correspond to one of Castells' four forms of power, it can be argued that all forms benefit from datafication (Andok, 2024, p. 6). According to Castells, power can only be interpreted through the logic of the network.

Roger Silverstone, in his theory of mediatisation, emphasises the importance of individual experiences. In his book *Media and Morality: On the Rise of the Mediapolis*, he states (Silverstone, 2013, p. 125):

It is no longer possible to understand everyday life without acknowledging the increasingly central role of electronic media in defining the ways of seeing, being, and moving in everyday life. However, neither media nor everyday life is singular in structure, and the relationship between them is not always the same.

Autonomous systems analyse users' behaviours and customise media content, determining what users are exposed to by promoting or suppressing certain content. Thus, they further enhance the dynamic influence of media

on daily life, making individuals' interactions with media increasingly personalised, private, and continuously evolving.

Castells' theory of the network society and Silverstone's theory of media-tisation demonstrate that datafication creates an authority mechanism based on the data individuals leave on digital platforms, offering personalised experiences through this data. This process enables authority to transform into an invisible mechanism of control.

Zygmunt Bauman, in his work *Liquid Modernity* (2000), emphasises that with the transformation of modern societies, significant changes have occurred in the structure and perception of authority. In traditional 'solid' modernity, authority was characterised by a fixed and centralised structure, whereas in 'liquid' modernity, this structure has become more flexible and decentralised. This transformation has influenced individuals' perspectives on authority and their relationships with it, leading individuals to take greater responsibility in their own lives. This new form of authority has reshaped individuals' senses of identity, security, and belonging. According to Bauman, increasing feelings of insecurity and uncertainty in modern societies drive individuals toward a search for security. This situation increases dependence on surveillance mechanisms, making individuals more inclined to be monitored. Surveillance, which was enforced through coercion in totalitarian regimes, has gradually shifted to methods of persuasion and has become a desired state in contemporary society.

The theories of Castells and Bauman emphasise that digitalisation has rendered the structure of authority decentralised and flexible. Castells examines the distribution of power through network structures. At the same time, Bauman explains that authority in liquid modernity has become more adaptable, and individuals are compelled to take on their own responsibilities. Silverstone and Bauman illustrate how digitalisation has transformed the functions of surveillance and control over individuals. While Silverstone highlights how media and autonomous systems impact individuals, Bauman argues that individuals voluntarily subject themselves to surveillance with the advent of digitalisation.

According to Anthony Giddens' concept of 'reflexive modernity' (1996), modernity contrasts with tradition and represents a structure that moves away from fixed and immutable norms. Knowledge changes rapidly, and social norms, values, and rules are continuously questioned. The adoption of knowledge does not occur homogeneously, as different levels of power exist within society. There is no rational foundation for values. Reflexive modernity is a risk society. With technology, science, and globalisation, societies face new types of risks. Individuals become increasingly dependent on the information and technology provided by expert systems. However, the complexity of these systems reduces individuals' sense of control and leads to insecurity (Giddens, 1996, pp. 36-45).

In conclusion, Giddens, and Bauman highlight that the rapid change of knowledge in modern societies, coupled with individuals' dependence on it, increases insecurity. Castells and Bauman argue that digitalisation has decentralised and made authority more flexible. At the same time, Silverstone and Giddens assert that digitalisation reduces individuals' sense of control and increases dependence on security and surveillance mechanisms. These theories reveal how digitalisation permeates individuals' daily lives and redefines the concept of authority.

### **The Authority of Automation**

When addressing the concept of authority, it is necessary to mention Foucault, who considers surveillance as a form of authority. In Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1995), the concept of disciplinary surveillance focuses on the processes of monitoring and controlling individuals. Foucault defines disciplinary surveillance as a power mechanism in which individuals are continuously observed, and these observations are utilised to shape their behaviour. This process enables the continuous recording of individuals' behaviours, allowing for interventions in cases of conformity to or deviation from norms.

For Foucault, surveillance emerges as a fundamental characteristic of modern societies, with the Panopticon design by Bentham providing a concrete example. The Panopticon is a circular prison design featuring a central watchtower, which allows prisoners in surrounding cells to be constantly monitored. This design operates as an invisible mechanism of power, as the awareness of being watched ensures that prisoners self-regulate their behaviour. In this process, disciplinary surveillance becomes a tool for power to dominate individuals without the use of physical force. At its core, this disciplinary mechanism functions through norms and rules that maintain social order and encourage individuals to conform to a particular social and economic system. This process essentially determines how much individual freedom is subjected to disciplinary surveillance.

Through digital networks and autonomous systems, individuals' movements, preferences, and habits are continuously monitored via mechanisms of data collection, analysis, and guidance. The data collection and analysis capabilities introduced by automation extend Foucault's concept of disciplinary surveillance, rendering power decentralised and pervasive. While traditional surveillance mechanisms, as observed by Foucault, were largely confined to physical spaces, automation enables surveillance to occur in virtual environments as well. Through digital devices, the Internet of Things (IoT), and algorithms, individuals' daily lives can now be observed and controlled at all times. In this context, automation not only monitors individuals' behaviours but also predicts and shapes their actions based on collected data.



Gilles Deleuze, in his essay *Postscript on the Societies of Control* (1992), builds on Michel Foucault's analysis of disciplinary societies to introduce the concept of the society of control, exploring how mechanisms of control shape modern societies. In this society, individuals are guided by constantly changing 'codes', and control mechanisms become independent of spatial and temporal boundaries, becoming more fluid. Individuals are now continuously subjected to surveillance and control through digital tools and technologies. Uber's 'ghost car' tactic serves as an example. Technological opacity can be observed in platforms like Uber, where the user interface is designed to create the illusion that the system is more efficient, active, and responsive than it actually is. For instance, 'ghost cars' are sometimes displayed on maps-vehicles that do not actually exist and are shown as circulating potential drivers. Moreover, user journeys are tracked without their knowledge, and such systems provide a 'god-view' perspective used to secretly monitor high-profile customers (Bridle, 2022, p. 126).

This process intersects with the use of technology not merely as a functional tool but also as an instrument for constructing cultures, civilisations, and modern societal structures. While technology accelerates and simplifies certain processes, the standardisation and independence from human intervention introduced by automation constrain the creation of social and cultural structures that were previously achieved through human creativity and cultural development. Thus, automation technology, as a modern reflection of Foucault's concept of disciplinary surveillance, enhances the ability to shape and control individuals' daily lives while simultaneously influencing the evolution of social and cultural structures.

According to sociologist and scholar David Lyon (2019), recognised as one of the founding figures of the 'surveillance studies' field for his contributions to surveillance research, data obtained through surveillance operates within the logic of contemporary internet, and digital media. Lyon emphasises that surveillance is not merely a technological issue but also an ethical, political, and social matter. Digital media provides opportunities that have been linked to numerous scandals involving data security and breaches of user privacy. These opportunities create a foundation for activities that remain largely unknown, posing a potential threat. The *Cambridge Analytica* scandal is a notable example of data manipulation on digital platforms. According to a report published by *Wired* (2018), *Cambridge Analytica* strategically analysed user data collected without permission through *Facebook* in 2014, particularly for targeted advertisements during the 2016 U.S. presidential election. This incident revealed significant security vulnerabilities in *Facebook's* handling of user data and highlighted deficiencies in the company's data privacy policies. The scandal had widespread repercussions globally, eroding public trust in *Facebook* and prompting scrutiny of social media giants' data privacy and user protection policies (Wired, 2018).

The increasing precision and power of machines have enabled the expansion of capitalism, reshaping the dialectical relationship between humans and technology around the value of efficiency. At the core of what is now referred to as 'network determinism' lies our vulnerability in the face of autonomous network systems that operate with their own internal logic and remain beyond human control. This phenomenon, as a manifestation of postmodern technological determinism, creates the illusion that we exercise free will within our networked lives, when in reality this perception is sustained by the hidden power of automation. The convenience afforded by technology has become so accessible that our dependence on automation often goes unnoticed, leading to the mistaken belief that we shape networks according to our own needs and desires. In this process, users may feel as though they are free from external pressures, even though the complexity of the situation necessitates a rethinking of the very concept of determinism (Hassan & Sutherland, 2024, p. 166).

This theoretical framework illustrates that automation not only transforms perceptions of freedom but also generates direct, practical effects on everyday life and institutional processes. For instance, in the United States, Robotic Process Automation (RPA) has been widely adopted in healthcare to reduce errors and enhance efficiency in high-volume, time-sensitive tasks such as patient registration, insurance claims processing, and supply chain management. Research indicates that such systems have accelerated processes by more than 30%, improved data accuracy by 40%, and reduced operating costs by approximately 25%. These findings demonstrate that digitalisation provides significant gains in terms of reliability (Einpresswire, 2023).

The effortless accessibility provided by autonomous network systems pushes us to forget our dependency on technology; meanwhile, automation, described by Arnold Gehlen (1980) as possessing a magical charm, stimulates the desire to expand human capacities. According to Gehlen, the admiration for automated systems carries a magical quality and represents an irrational impulse that goes beyond practical applicability. In this context, the inclination toward automation reflects a fundamental human tendency—a desire to simplify life, enhance human capacity through technology, and relieve individuals from intensive physical and cognitive efforts. Automation can also be interpreted as an effort to establish a degree of dominance over nature. Gehlen suggests that this process should be seen as a full expression of human power, arguing that machines reinforce humanity's superior position over nature.

However, an important aspect that is often overlooked in the trust we place in ourselves and technology is that, as processes become increasingly automated, we gradually exclude ourselves from the act of engagement. Automation holds the potential to sever humanity's ties to both technology and nature at a more fundamental level. In this regard, the statement from science fiction writer and futurist Arthur C. Clarke (1973), known as one of 'Clarke's

Three Laws' -'Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic'- highlights the complex and enchanting power of technology, which has become so advanced and incomprehensible that it creates an almost magical effect. This allure not only increases trust in technology but also fosters dependency on it.

In the postmodern world, where individuals are more easily guided in every aspect of their lives, this new condition -defined as network determinism- becomes a cumulative reflection of our postmodern vulnerabilities. While living within the network, the objectification and commodification of our labour, sociality, and political practices push us outside the increasingly automated circle of action. Isolated within ubiquitous automation systems, we are transformed into subjects and targets that are easily directed. The issue is not merely being automated according to computer codes and protocols, but also being forced to follow the path dictated by those codes and protocols. This process, unimaginable a decade ago, now guides billions of people within the commodified structures of network capitalism's virtual domains (Hassan & Sutherland, 2024, p. 172). Automation systems within the network turn individuals into commodified and isolated subjects. In this digital environment, individuals' behaviours are not only monitored but, as Zuboff explains, are shaped to generate economic value. Thus, individuals are reduced to passive consumers by network capitalism, while simultaneously becoming the data required to sustain these capitalist structures. For individuals who digitise their experiences and lack the right to decide how their data is used (Zuboff, 2019), the data-surveillance system -resulting in the loss of privacy- provides a foundation for predicting and classifying societal behaviours. This condition highlights and exacerbates one of the most significant issues in social classification (Bauman & Lyon, 2016).

Surveillance capitalism, which transforms human experiences into raw material and converts them into behavioural data, aims to extract behavioural surplus value while also seeking to know, shape, and automate individuals' behaviours (Zuboff, 2019). In 2018, it was revealed that *Google* continued to track users' location data even when location tracking was turned off. According to *The Guardian*, "Since 2014, *Google* has allowed advertisers to track the effectiveness of online ads in driving foot traffic. *Google* states that this feature relies on users' location histories" (The Guardian, 2018). *Google's* practice of recording users' location data even when tracking is disabled demonstrates how individuals are unknowingly and without consent turned into objects of data mining.

The automation, which Gehlen described as magical, ultimately captivates individuals and, as in Bauman's concept of liquid modernity, makes them more dependent on surveillance capitalism. Zuboff's surveillance capitalism is supported by Bauman's concept of the 'individual who desires to be watched'. In this context, the theories of Gehlen, Bauman, and Zuboff illustrate how digi-

talisation, rather than liberating individuals, renders them more controllable and easier to direct.

### **Trust in Processing and Automation Bias**

The phenomenon known as ‘automation bias’ demonstrates that individuals tend to prefer recommendations from automated decision-making systems, even when conflicting information without automation is equally correct. This situation leads to excessive reliance on automated systems, weakening individuals’ critical thinking and decision-making skills.

Automation bias first gained attention in the late 1990s, as automation technologies were increasingly employed in critical roles, such as pilots and nuclear power plant operators, to reduce human error. Interestingly, while these applications reduced the number of mistakes, they simultaneously increased error rates in human decision-making processes. This phenomenon began to be referred to in the literature as “automation bias” (Deloitte, 2023).

When examining the societal and individual effects of trust in processing and data-driven information production, it is essential to focus on the human transition from being a central subject in knowledge production to a more peripheral role. Humans are no longer the central subjects or primary agents of knowledge production. Instead, knowledge is produced through machines and advanced via data-driven processes without human agency or consciousness. Massive data sets displace humans from the centre of the knowledge production process, rendering humans calculable and manageable as data themselves. In this process, the knowledge generated through big data surpasses human comprehension. Human capacity for knowledge development is limited; thus, processors, devoid of understanding, operate much faster than humans by relying solely on computation (Chul Han, 2022, p. 93).

This transformation enables data to evolve into increasingly diverse forms. In this era, where knowledge is being redefined through big data analytics, everything is transforming into a value creation process centred on data (Cukier & Mayer-Schöenberger, 2013, p. 35). In this context, the development of abstract systems necessitates a reevaluation of trust and stability, which are fundamental elements of social existence. These abstract systems compel individuals to place trust in complex structures and impersonal principles that are not directly observable or tangible. This situation renders trust an even more decisive element in social relationships. At this juncture, ‘trust’ plays a critical role in individuals’ ability to adapt to cognitive complexity (Lee & See, 2004, p. 52), highlighting the role of trust in modern society.

Whether at the individual or societal level, processing systems provide a cognitive escape route by delegating both the responsibility for decision-making and the consequences of those decisions to machines. As the pace of life accelerates, machines are increasingly performing cognitive tasks, there-

by reinforcing the authority of these systems regardless of their outcomes. People are constantly striving to align their understanding of the world with the cognitive shortcuts provided by automation systems. At this point, conscious thought is being replaced by processing; humans begin to think like machines-or often cease to think at all.

Horowitz, and Kahn (2023), in their article titled *Bending The Automation Bias Curve: A Study of Human and AI-Based Decision Making in National Security Contexts*, examine how the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in international security contexts will progress and explore the relationship between trust in AI and automation bias. Their study tested how knowledge about AI, trust in AI, and other factors influence automation bias through an experiment involving 9,000 adults from nine countries. The research indicates that automation bias toward AI can lead to excessive trust in humans. Conversely, algorithm aversion decreases trust in algorithms as the stakes of decisions increase. The study theorises a version of the Dunning-Kruger effect (where individuals with low knowledge or skill levels tend to overestimate their competence): algorithm aversion is highest among individuals with the lowest levels of expertise, automation bias emerges at moderate knowledge levels, and it balances out at higher knowledge levels.

A phenomenon known as 'hallucination' provides a contemporary example that highlights the importance of recognising and correcting automation bias (Metz, 2023). For instance, a large language model might cite a reference to an article that does not exist and attribute the citation to a legitimate author or journal, or both. The failure of humans to verify such information has led to errors; for example, *StackOverflow*, a platform for programming assistance, banned responses generated by *ChatGPT* due to subtle errors and factual inaccuracies in its outputs (Vincent, 2022).

"Trust in automation drives confidence when the complexity of automation makes complete understanding impractical, and when the situation requires adaptive behaviour that cannot be directed by procedures" (Lee & See, 2004, p. 52). This trust appears to push individuals away from having a clear understanding of processing procedures, leading them toward an adaptation directed by technology. For instance, social media users constantly rely on platform algorithms for their content interactions. Automation bias is a significant cognitive distortion that demonstrates how technology does not need to malfunction to pose a vital threat. This phenomenon manifests in many tragic incidents in daily life. For example, a group of Japanese tourists attempting to reach an island in Australia drove their car directly into the sea, assuming their satellite navigation system indicated a road along the shore. A similar incident occurred in Washington, where a group of people following their navigation system drove their car off the main road and onto a boat ramp, directly into a lake. When rescue teams arrived, they could only see the roof of the car floating on the water. Park rangers in Death Valley National Park, where such

incidents frequently occur, have coined the term 'GPS Deaths' to describe this phenomenon. In these incidents, there were no errors or deviations in the GPS signals; the computer provided the answer it believed to be correct to the question asked. However, users' unquestioning trust in these answers led to tragic consequences (Bridle, 2022, pp. 51-52).

The roots of automation bias should not be sought solely in technology but also in the deep cognitive biases embedded in our brains. When faced with complex problems, particularly under time pressure -a condition almost universal in modern life- people tend to adopt strategies that are easy to implement and justify, focusing on tasks that require the least cognitive effort. In this process, individuals are inclined to relinquish decision-making responsibilities. When presented with options, the brain often defaults to the shortest path requiring minimal cognitive effort, which usually involves unquestioningly accepting solutions provided by automation systems.

Neuroscientist and science writer Simon Spichak, in his article addressing 'automation bias', references a study published in the journal *Radiology*. This study examined the cancer diagnosis processes traditionally conducted by two radiologists, replacing one of them with an AI tool. The AI assistant performed a BI-RADS (Breast Imaging Reporting and Data System) assessment for each scan. To test the system, researchers intentionally programmed the AI to provide incorrect results for a subset of scans that were known to be cancerous. The results revealed that when the AI provided incorrect results, the cancer detection accuracy of inexperienced and moderately experienced radiologists dropped from approximately 80% to 22%. In comparison, that of highly skilled radiologists fell from 80% to 45% (Moscovitch, 2024).

However, in specific sectors, automation has been observed to reduce human error and enhance reliability. In aviation, for instance, autopilot systems, AI-assisted air traffic control, and maintenance protocols increase operational reliability and minimise human error. Next-generation automation applications, particularly in safety-critical contexts, enable more consistent and faster decision-making processes, thereby contributing to overall flight safety (Boston Brand Media, 2023; Appzlogic, 2024).

Automation, therefore, can be regarded as a technology that, depending on the context, simultaneously constitutes a potential security vulnerability and a mechanism that reduces error rates while enhancing reliability. This dual nature reflects Michel Foucault's analysis of the surveillance society, where-in technology functions both as a disciplinary and error-prone apparatus of authority and as an instrument of order and security. Similarly, Byung-Chul Han's (2023) notion of the 'palliative society' highlights the ambivalent role of digitalisation, which fosters dependency and passivity on one hand, while providing comfort and security on the other.

As products become increasingly complex from a technical perspective,

individuals rapidly lose the practical knowledge required to engage with these products independently (Rosa, 2022, p. 86). While the new opportunities offered by technology simplify individuals' daily lives, this process also leads to a decline in personal knowledge and skills and an increase in dependency on technological devices. Consequently, there is a reduction in practical knowledge regarding the repair and maintenance of technological products, accompanied by a loss of users' sense of control over these devices.

In developing practical expertise systems, individuals utilise media products to devise strategies for navigating various aspects of life. This process encompasses individuals' abilities to adopt media products, manage social support systems, handle personal relationships, or adapt to serious illnesses and injuries, involving the selection of options and the balancing of professional opinions. Media products serve as a resource in creating these systems. In this context, the development of media constitutes an essential part of the broader dynamics of modern societies. As the social environment becomes increasingly complex, individuals construct practical expertise systems to cope with complexity and adapt to the demands of the contemporary world. These systems enhance individuals' capacities to overcome challenges and generate solutions that meet the expectations of modern life (Thompson, 2019, p. 267). When faced with complex situations, individuals frequently turn to these systems in search of solutions. However, systems initially used to simplify life are gradually evolving into dependencies.

Processing and its outputs have enveloped all areas of our lives. Processing, which increasingly seizes the power and capacity to construct truth, tends to take over an ever-growing portion of cognitive tasks. In this process, reality itself becomes a computer, and our modes of thought adapt to this new structure.

The transformation of processing systems into tools that shape not only technical functions but also our perception of reality alleviates individuals' cognitive load while simultaneously redefining truth and thought. Processing has become an integral part of daily life, not only because of its effects and outcomes but, more importantly, due to the modes of thinking it imposes. Computational thinking has become so deeply embedded in modern life that opposing it appears as impossible as opposing the air we breathe (Bridle, 2022, pp. 53-54).

Trust in processing systems, particularly given software's capacity to shape perceptions of reality, overshadows individuals' conscious evaluations. This conditioning stems from two primary reasons: First, the complexity of processing makes it incomprehensible, rendering the process opaque. Second, the acceptance of processing systems as politically and emotionally neutral enhances trust in data-driven processes and reinforces this conditioning. In reality, however, contrary to popular belief, processing systems lack transparency; operations are often concealed behind screens, remote servers, or



inaccessible data centres. Trust in machines has become obligatory for users, strengthening cognitive biases that perceive automated processes as more reliable than manual ones (Bridle, 2022, p. 49). While individuals trust platforms to make data-driven decisions, these platforms simultaneously manipulate data, undermining user trust. Advertising strategies hidden behind technical details and complexities often operate without users' knowledge (Ball, 2021, p. 159).

At this juncture, we are transitioning into an era where meaning is being transformed into data. The constant self-production of data and its subsequent reprocessing eliminate opportunities for individuals to understand or learn in a meaningful way. This rapid cycle of data production and processing prioritises the technical handling of data over its interpretation, leading to the neglect of subjective and profound meanings associated with information. Van Dijck (2014) describes this phenomenon as 'life mining', explaining the data collection processes employed by global surveillance corporations (Saran, 2023, p. 295). The quantification of social interactions has enabled access to this data by other users, companies, government institutions, or various platforms. The digital transformation of social structures has paved the way for the emergence of an industry based on the value of data and metadata. This industry utilises automated records of individuals' interactions, locations, and durations of communication. Metadata, once seen as trivial byproducts of platform-mediated services, have evolved into valuable resources that can be extracted, enriched, and converted into profitable products (Dijck, 2014, p. 199).

The transparency principle of Dataism<sup>1</sup> centres on bringing everything into the realm of data, prioritising visibility and the necessity of production. This approach advocates not for individual freedom but for the freedom of data and information, combining total communication and surveillance to establish a form of data-based domination. Big Data generates a knowledge of domination that extends to the human spirit, enabling its management and control. This domination, under the guise of unrestricted data circulation and transparency, constitutes a mechanism of power that intensifies control over individuals (Chul Han, 2022, p. 93).

In this context, the distrust arising from the complexity of abstract systems fosters scepticism toward the system's claims of expertise, resulting in a situation that limits individuals' access to information (Giddens, 2021, p. 100). Simultaneously, online platforms hinder access to information through complex and technical details, manipulatively directing users. This process creates

<sup>1</sup> Dataism is a term used to describe the mindset or philosophy generated by the emerging importance of Big Data. It was first introduced in 2013 by David Brooks in *The New York Times*.<sup>[1]</sup> More recently, the term has been expanded to describe what social scientist Yuval Noah Harari refers to as an emerging ideology or even a new form of religion, where the "supreme value" is the "flow of information".



a world where daily life is guided by algorithms, rendering individuals passive in the face of technology. The restriction of pro-Palestinian posts by algorithms on social media serves as an example of this phenomenon.

*Al Jazeera's* (2023) article titled "Are social media giants censoring pro-Palestine voices amid Israel's war?" focuses on debates regarding the censorship of pro-Palestinian content by social media giants. The article notes that social media users claim that pro-Palestinian content is being restricted on platforms through methods such as reducing visibility or 'shadowbanning'.<sup>2</sup> This situation creates the perception that social media giants are deliberately pursuing a censorship policy by making access to users' content more difficult or obstructed. In this context, the shaping of user experience by social media platforms through algorithmic interventions renders individuals passive, leaving the power to control which content is highlighted in the digital environment to technology giants.

### **The Homogenization of Individuals, and Surrender of Choices Under the Influence of Digital Authority**

The term 'liquid modernity', developed by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, is used to describe the uncertain, rapid, and constant changes experienced by individuals in modern society. Liquid modernity refers to a period in which stable and permanent structures are replaced by rapidly changing conditions, requiring individuals to adapt to survive in this world continually. While this period offers individuals more options and opportunities, it simultaneously increases feelings of uncertainty and insecurity. Technological advancements, changes in the business world, and cultural transformations exacerbate instability and insecurity by complicating individuals' ability to predict the future, thereby creating an environment of uncertainty that negatively impacts decision-making processes. At the same time, advancements in communication and transportation technologies provide individuals with access to a wide range of options, such as diverse lifestyles and career paths. However, this abundance of choices leads to psychological challenges, including indecisiveness, the paradox of choice, and dissatisfaction, causing individuals to experience frustration in their pursuit of the best possible choice. The intense flow of symbolic content provided by the media has the potential to overwhelm individuals. To cope with this, individuals selectively act in their assimilation processes and rely on expert systems, such as critics' opinions, to guide their media consumption (Thompson, 2019, p. 265).

<sup>2</sup> 'Shadowban', or "gölge yasaklama" in Turkish, refers to the restriction of a user on online platforms without their knowledge. In this scenario, the user continues to share content and engage in interactions; however, their posts are not visible to other users or do not appear in search results. Since the user is unaware that their account has been restricted, they continue their normal activities, though their interactions and visibility are significantly reduced.

In such situations, individuals require certain methods to expedite their decision-making processes. Observing and imitating the behaviours of others is defined as learning through modelling. People tend to imitate the behaviours of others, particularly when they observe that these behaviours lead to positive outcomes. Learning through imitation occurs much more rapidly compared to learning through trial and error. The fundamental principle of this type of learning is the individual's identification with an attractive and compelling model. Modelling-based learning is a method widely used in marketing strategies and significantly influences consumers' decision-making processes (Odabaşı & Barış, 2020, p. 91).

Recommendations from popular singers, football players, and social media influencers serve as critical guides in this context. As populism increases at the societal level, individuals' decision-making abilities weaken, and personal will gradually diminishes. Individuals tend to adopt the preferences of social media influencers, thereby transferring the responsibility of decision-making to others. This situation demonstrates that individuals shape their daily life decisions under the guidance of others, in parallel with the trust they place in processing systems. Consequently, while individuals' independent decision-making processes weaken, dependence on external sources increases, exerting a significant influence on personal willpower.

Research on the impact of social media on mental health indicates that these platforms have significant effects, particularly on young people and children.

Studies show that influencers, with their personal sharing and approachable behaviour, are perceived by users as friends or family members, which increases users' trust in them.

A study conducted by Klicksafe in 2020 revealed that one-third of participants aged 13-20 stated that social media influenced their thoughts, highlighting the substantial role influencers play in shaping opinions. These findings demonstrate that children and young people can shape certain aspects of their lives based on recommendations from influencers.

However, excessive use of social media can exacerbate mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. For this reason, it is crucial for parents to closely monitor their children's social media usage. (Aksakallı, 2023)

The concept of the 'Communication Leviathan' refers to the adverse effects of the overwhelming density of media and promotional messages on individuals' decision-making processes. Excessive information flow leads to information pollution, confusion, and mental fatigue among consumers, weakening their decision-making abilities. Internet platforms such as *Facebook* and *Google* operate with a shared techno-human objective: to encourage users to share more content while understanding user intent. These platforms focus on gathering various cues and data related to users, such as their locations,

needs, interests, relationships, and past experiences, to personalise their services, content, and advertisements. They are engaged in a competition to develop new methods that enable users to generate signals about their preferences and activities. Through this process, platforms gain the capability to offer personalised recommendations, such as suggesting restaurants that align with users' locations and preferences. However, this process raises concerns among some privacy advocates, as data collection and analysis activities aimed at understanding user intent can be interpreted as surveillance or thought-reading. This situation accentuates the delicate balance between user privacy and data analysis in the digital environment. (Jarvis, 2021, p. 35)

Modernity presents a reflexive process that requires individuals to construct their identities as a personal project. In this process, individuals must navigate strategies and options provided by abstract systems to define their own direction. The identity construction process of modern humans is shaped not only by personal choices but also by decisions made within the alternatives offered by societal systems and global structures. This dynamic renders the search for identity more flexible while simultaneously transforming it into a journey fraught with uncertainties. (Giddens, 2021, p. 123)

The use of media products governed by algorithms and automation systems enriches and accelerates individuals' self-construction processes while simultaneously making them dependent on systems where control is limited. This phenomenon can be described as the dual nature of mediation dependency. As media provide symbolic forms that serve as tools for identity and self-expression, individuals' dependence on media systems increases. (Thompson, 2019, pp. 263-264)

With the increasing use of social media, individuals are gradually relinquishing control over their self-construction processes to media systems. According to the 'Cultivation Theory' also referred to as the 'Diffusion of Innovations Theory', social media is a powerful tool that reshapes and redefines individuals' perceptions of the external world, influencing their thought processes and playing a significant role in the transformation of socio-cultural values.

An article published by *BBC Future* titled "Could a law make social media less addictive?" examines the addictive designs of social media platforms and the potential impact of legal regulations in this context. The article highlights that social media companies have developed features such as 'infinite scrolling', and 'auto-play' to increase user engagement. These features extend the amount of time users spend on platforms, thereby increasing the risk of addiction.

The article titled "Can a Law Make Social Media Less Addictive?" published by *BBC Future* examines the features designed by social media platforms to create user dependency. It explores potential legal measures to address this issue. The article emphasises that techniques such as 'infinite scrolling', and

'autoplay' significantly increase the time users spend on platforms, thereby heightening the risk of addiction. In this context, the legislation adopted by the European Parliament to combat social media addiction proposes banning these addictive techniques and introducing the concept of a digital 'right to disconnect.' The article highlights that such legal regulations could play a crucial role in protecting users' mental health by encouraging the adoption of ethical principles in the design of social media platforms. (BBC, 2024)

One aspect of the automation process in social media is its ability to constantly remind individuals of activities through untimely notifications and impose an increased flow of information. This has the potential to profoundly distort our perception of reality. From the perspective of memory processes, each time a memory is recalled, the neural network that constitutes the memory is activated, and this activation has the potential to alter or erase the details of the memory. For instance, imagine recalling a past vacation while scrolling through social media. A photograph of the vacation might trigger this recollection. However, while the photograph serves as a reminder of the event, unrelated details from the same day may be forgotten or even likely to be overlooked. Social media provides reminders tailored to one's online persona, and these reminders represent a distorted version of one's life tailored to fit the platform's context. This phenomenon can be described as a double distortion: the memories in one's brain are reshaped through content that was already distorted to fit one's online identity.

In this regard, social media's selection of what experiences are deemed most meaningful can result in specific memories being considered less shareable and thus disregarded. Consequently, it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between recalling lived reality and a reality that has been reshaped online. Social media may infiltrate memory processes in an unprecedented and exaggerated manner. (Shaw, 2017, p. 252). The digital world is progressively erasing individuals' knowledge and memories of the past, leading to the loss of personal memories that define humanity. Shared memories prioritise the collective over the personal in individuals' recollections, distancing them from their own uniqueness and initiating a transformation towards homogenisation.

This phenomenon leads to the replacement of unique experiences with memories shared in the social and digital realms-experiences that everyone uniformly remembers. Ultimately, as the digital world reshapes individuals' pasts, it causes the gradual erosion of individuality and drives people towards uniformity.

The reduction of cultural diversity and the widespread adoption of a homogenised consumer culture today demonstrate that the roots of standardisation can be traced back to Fordism. Emerging as a production-consumption model in the 1930s, Fordism necessitated mass production and standardised consumption patterns. This system, reliant on the steady demand of a large

consumer base for sustainability, promoted limited consumer choices and standardised production. Henry Ford's famous statement, "Our customers can have any colour they want, as long as it's black," succinctly encapsulates the essence of Fordism. This statement also underscores the mutual dependency between mass production and mass consumption. (Odabaşı, 1999, p. 11).

Marcuse's concept of the 'one-dimensional man' (1996) refers to masses shaped under the influence of capitalism's consumer ideology, characterised by individuals consuming the same products and sharing the same thought structures. According to Marcuse, consumerism is not merely an economic activity but also an ideology. (Çoban, 2021, p. 208). The process that began with the Industrial Revolution -marked by mass production- has evolved into a norm of modern life, shaped by the proliferation of automation systems and algorithmic calculations that determine the range of choices presented to individuals.

Today, the world has become increasingly homogenised as individuals adopt similar lifestyles across various regions. People prefer the same types of food, wear identical clothing styles, utilise the same technological tools, and follow the same media figures. In summary, by consuming similar products and engaging in shared practices, they lead increasingly similar lives. This phenomenon, driven by the forces of globalisation, has led to the homogenisation of individual lifestyles. Instead of cultural diversity, the proliferation of standardised consumption patterns has established a global reality in which similar lives are lived worldwide. This process contributes to the universal standardisation of consumer culture and the convergence of individuals' lifestyles.

This homogenising trend results in the production of goods and services that cater to the preferences of the majority, thereby creating pressure on those whose choices deviate from the majority's preferences, ultimately restricting their originality and autonomy. As Baudrillard noted, 'customised product design' often amounts to nothing more than trivial variations, such as differences in detergents. Global corporations, driven by profit-oriented approaches, categorise and homogenise consumers, objectifying them while leveraging their increasing surveillance capacities to exert greater influence over vast populations. Consequently, individuals become objects within marketing strategies, classified and homogenised into specific groups or categories. (Sönmez, 2016, p. 278).

As a result, digital systems have begun to play an authoritative role not only in the social but also in the cognitive and emotional realms of individuals.

In contemporary society, individuals simultaneously feel more isolated and introspective than ever before, while also living in a reality where every aspect of their lives, including their private lives, is observed, recorded, and archived. Information collected about preferences, needs, habits, and desires

accumulates into a vast data repository that monitors their lives. This phenomenon strengthens the perception that everything is regulated, tracked, and controlled, creating a profound sense of pressure and domination over individuals. Consumers have started perceiving themselves as passive entities under the dominance of the marketing world. In this context, individuals who adopt a fatalistic perspective and increasingly believe they are becoming more dependent on globalisation and marketing communication tools are deepening their reliance on the global consumer culture. This dependence further intensifies the dominance of marketing and communication tools over individuals. (Odabaşı, 2019, p. 66). Under the growing influence of communication tools and automation, individuals' critical judgment abilities are weakened, and collective social consciousness is shaped.

The indirect experience of events through digitalisation and media profoundly influences individuals' decision-making processes and identity constructions. This process diminishes individuals' unique experiences and thoughts, leading to homogenisation and standardisation. While the media enriches individuals' sense of self through an intense flow of symbolic content, it simultaneously renders them dependent on systems where control is limited. This situation weakens individuals' ability to make authentic decisions and increases their dependence on external sources. Consequently, individuals' reliance on media systems grows, exerting a definitive influence over their autonomy.

### **The Transformation of Trust and the Isolation of Relationships in the Screen Society**

Giddens (1996) emphasises that the historical evolution of friendship and kinship ties plays a critical role in understanding the operation of trust in social relationships. He asserts that in pre-modern societies, friendships were deeply integrated with local communities and kinship systems, where trust served as a foundational element. However, with the advent of the modern era, the foundations upon which trust is built have undergone significant transformations. Giddens argues that in a contemporary context, trust must be associated not only with the lack of information but also with contingency. The dynamics of trust vary according to the structural transformations of society and the social environments in which individuals operate.

It is highlighted that pre-modern friendships were assessed within the framework of communal and kinship ties, where trust held a central role. Giddens further notes that trust is linked to its existence within time and space, suggesting that in conditions of complete transparency or absolute knowledge, trust would no longer be necessary. Trust is shaped by incomplete information and uncertainty, but it also involves individuals' capacity to take risks and entrust their fate to others. Trust is portrayed as a phenomenon stemming from belief in the reliability of a person or system, encompassing even a

blind reliance on that trust relationship.

Social relationships are also profoundly influenced by the concept of 'liquid modernity', as developed by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman. Rapidly changing life conditions and the constant mobility demanded of individuals can lead to the transient nature of social relationships. While social bonds in traditional societies were more stable and enduring, they have become more fragile in the context of liquid modernity. Individuals who constantly need to meet new people and adapt to new environments may develop more superficial connections rather than deep social bonds.

While Giddens asserts that trust is built on contingency and arises from a lack of complete information, Bauman highlights that under the conditions of modernity's perpetual change and mobility, social relationships become increasingly temporary and superficial. The intersection of these perspectives illustrates how trust is reshaped in modern societies and how individuals must develop diverse trust strategies within constantly evolving social networks. This helps to illuminate the evolution of trust-building processes in contemporary contexts.

In addition to Giddens' definition of trust, numerous other conceptualisations exist. Lee and See's (2004) seminal work, *Trust in Automation: Designing for Appropriate Reliance* has been widely cited as a significant study that explores the meaning of trust in interpersonal relationships and its redefinition within the context of automation. This study analyses different definitions of trust to explain its relationships with attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours. Trust is defined as an attitude based on positive expectations between individuals (Rotter, 1967; Barber, 1983) and as an expectation or intention regarding the occurrence of future events or actions (Rempel et al., 1985; Mayer et al., 1995).

Trust has been defined as the expectation of reliability regarding the words, promises, or actions of individuals (Rotter, 1967). In a social context, trust relies on elements such as loyalty and moral responsibility in reciprocal relationships (Barber, 1983). In a technical context, it is more closely associated with performance and predictability (Rempel et al., 1985). Some researchers have characterised trust not merely as an attitude but as a behavioural outcome reflecting a willingness to enter a vulnerable state (Mayer et al., 1995). This behavioural dimension also encompasses an individual's capacity to accept risks under specific circumstances.

According to the theoretical framework developed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), trust evolves from beliefs into attitudes, intentions, and behaviours. Beliefs and perceptions shape an individual's knowledge base and experiences, which in turn determine the attitudes forming the foundation of trust. Attitudes subsequently translate into intentions that guide specific behaviours. In this context, trust is conceptualised not as a belief or intention but as an attitude. This framework offers a crucial conceptual distinction for understand-

ing how trust influences reliance on individuals or systems.

In the modern screen society, there has been a significant transformation in interpersonal trust and trust in automation. While the digitalised world isolates individuals from social bonds, relationships with automation systems have deepened. Trust in technological systems has become not only an attitude but also a dynamic that increases individuals' dependence on automation in their social and professional environments. For instance, the perceived ability of a trusted system to help users achieve their goals is evaluated in terms of performance, leading to a profound shift in individuals' perceptions.

Another critical dimension of trust lies in its relationship with risk and vulnerability. In situations involving uncertainty and risk, people act with the belief that the trusted party will behave in a specific manner (Mayer et al., 1995). This trust increases individuals' dependency on automation systems and screen-based relationships. However, this phenomenon can lead to the isolation of individuals from social connections, replacing human-human interactions with human-automation relationships.

One fundamental challenge in generalising trust in automation to interpersonal trust is the lack of intentionality in automation. While trust is often grounded in goal-oriented factors such as loyalty and value alignment, these elements are absent in automation. Nevertheless, designers' intentions are embedded in automation systems, and users -particularly as systems become more complex- tend to attribute intentionality to these systems (Barley, 1988; Nass & Lee, 2001; Nass & Moon, 2000).

Interactions in virtual environments may weaken empathy and emotional bonds between individuals. In the real world, numerous factors, including facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language, are crucial for building and maintaining trust among individuals. However, the absence of these elements in digital networks can prevent the full establishment of trust, thereby diminishing the significance of the human need for trust in one another. Thus, maintaining physical interaction and empathy is crucial for preserving and sustaining the meaning of trust.

With digitalisation, individuals' need for communication with others has gradually declined, leading each person to assume a 'godlike' role within their digital environment. This process has also led to a fundamental shift in the methods of acquiring knowledge. Information derived from ancestral sources has been replaced by information obtained through mobile devices. Consequently, individuals experience alienation from their own values, eventually normalising this estrangement. The impact of digitalisation has led individuals to distance themselves from cultural roots and traditional sources of knowledge, adopting new sources of information. This transformation displaces societal values.

Today, we live in a world where the connection between the capacity for



experience and the act of encounter has been severed. The fragmentation of experiences within the spatiotemporal realms of daily life advances alongside an increase in mediated experiences, intersecting with the routine blending of encounters rarely faced in person. The primary issue faced today is the problem of symbolic displacement. The disconnection between the capacity for experience and the act of encounter leads individuals to question how to relate mediated experiences to the contexts of everyday practical life (Thompson, 2019, p. 257).

In the process of adapting to digitalisation, it is essential to recognise the changes in social norms and the emergence of new social dynamics. Social validation signifies an individual's ability to perceive the world as others see it and serves as an indicator of belonging to a like-minded group. This connection is a profoundly reassuring factor for individuals. Discovering that one is similar to others reinforces the sense of belonging. However, individuals deprived of social bonds experience a severe form of social pain, sometimes referred to as 'social death' (Alter, 2018, p. 203). Social validation necessitates the continuous renewal of an individual's self-perception and their understanding of their environment. As communication decreases in social life, individuals turn to digital platforms and are exposed to content presented by automation systems and algorithms. Individuals adapt to content tailored to their interests and preferences. This creates a continuous quest for approval on digital platforms.

Sherry Turkle, in her book *Alone Together*, notes that due to insecurities in relationships and concerns about privacy, we turn to technology to engage in and shield ourselves from relationships simultaneously. Drawing on Turkle's observation, it can be concluded that "Today, we expect more from technology and less from each other" (Bauman & Lyon, 2013, p. 49).

It is argued that what we gain in contemporary societies is not a community but a network. While a community imposes more constraints and obligations on individuals, it is safer and more reliable compared to a network. Communities closely monitor individuals, leaving them little room for manoeuvre. In contrast, networks do not concern themselves with whether individuals adhere to norms; they provide more freedom and impose no penalties when one decides to leave. While communities act as genuine companions supporting individuals in difficult times, networks primarily serve the purpose of leisure and gathering around shared interests. These dynamics highlight the choice between security and freedom, underscoring the impossibility of having both simultaneously and necessitating the sacrifice of one. As Manuel Castells noted, in a globalised world, people have disengaged from communities and increasingly interact with networks. However, a significant distinction exists between online interactions and those formed in the physical world. Between the online and offline manifestations of proximity, a stark difference is evident, marked by depth versus superficiality, authenticity versus artificiality,

and warmth versus coldness (Bauman & Lyon, 2013, pp. 52-53).

The Pew Research Center's report, *Code Dependency: The Pros and Cons of the Algorithm Age*, comprehensively examines the effects of algorithms on modern society. While these technologies have the potential to simplify life and organise chaos, experts express concerns about the adverse consequences of algorithms. These include excessive control by corporations and governments, the reinforcement of biases, the creation of filter bubbles, the restriction of choices and creativity, and increased unemployment rates.

It is noted that algorithms direct the flow of information by offering personalised content based on users' preferences, which may result in the formation of information bubbles and echo chambers. Overreliance on data risks overshadowing human judgment and values. While algorithms are designed to optimise efficiency and profitability, their societal impacts are insufficiently considered (Pew Research, 2017).

According to a press release published by the European Parliament in December 2023, the development of new EU regulations to combat digital addiction is emphasised. The report highlights the negative physical and mental health effects of excessive digital device use, particularly among young people, and recommends limiting design strategies that manipulate user behaviour on digital platforms. The European Parliament has called for the introduction of a 'digital right to disconnect', and expressed concerns about social media addiction, especially among children and adolescents. Additionally, the Parliament advocates for increased responsibility on the part of platforms to create safer and healthier digital environments. It has also called for strengthening digital literacy programs and developing support mechanisms to help users build more informed relationships with digital tools (European Parliament, 2023).

The article *Social Media Use and Loneliness: Do Motivations for Social Media Use Matter?* examines the relationship between motivations for social media use and loneliness among participants from diverse countries. The findings suggest that individuals who use social media to maintain relationships with others feel lonelier than those who spend the same amount of time on social media but for other reasons (Bonsaksen et al., 2023).

In recent years, the number of high-quality studies examining the mental health effects of social media has increased. These studies demonstrate that social media has particularly adverse effects on young adults. Using the unique opportunity presented by *Facebook's* gradual introduction at U.S. universities between 2004 and 2006, Makarin and his team compared the mental health of students at colleges where *Facebook* was newly introduced to that of students at colleges that had not yet adopted the platform. Data on mental health were collected from over 350,000 students. The results revealed a significant increase in mental health issues among students following *Facebook's*

introduction to campus, with approximately 2% of college students across the population developing clinical depression. This finding suggests that *Facebook* contributed to depression in over 300,000 young adults (Bryant, 2021).

In addition to its adverse effects, social media has also demonstrated the capacity to strengthen social connections among individuals under specific circumstances. During the COVID-19 pandemic, physical distancing and isolation policies limited opportunities for face-to-face interaction. During this period, online communication tools played a crucial role in helping individuals maintain their social connections and mitigate the psychological effects of isolation.

International news sources provide supporting evidence for this process. A report published in *TIME* magazine discussed the effects of online communication on happiness and psychological well-being during the pandemic, emphasising that maintaining social connections reduced feelings of loneliness and anxiety (Time, 2022). Similarly, an article in *WIRED* highlighted how digital platforms offered supportive relationships that replaced face-to-face interactions, particularly for high-risk individuals, thereby mitigating the negative effects of isolation (Wired, 2021).

## Conclusion and Discussion

The authority of automation, driven by computational thinking, is increasingly influencing individuals and societies in today's world, evolving into a structure that precludes alternative ways of thinking. This phenomenon leaves profound traces not only in the practical lives of individuals but also in social interactions. A world shaped by computational thinking limits diverse perspectives and critical thinking, leading to the dominance of a one-dimensional understanding of reality. Therefore, it is imperative to develop comprehensive system literacy on both societal and individual levels. Such literacy entails not only understanding the functioning of systems but also critically evaluating their societal context and long-term consequences. Along with understanding their functionality, this literacy involves examining how systems are utilised, whether they are subject to misuse, and identifying their potential limitations. Critical literacy deepens the capacity for critical analysis and alternative approaches, enabling individuals and societies to think beyond computational reasoning. (Bridle, 2022, p. 12). Critical and systemic literacy can pave the way for a transformative process that allows individuals to reassess not only their relationship with technology but also their engagement with the symbolic content offered by these technologies. (Thompson, 2019, p. 37).

Human control over advanced systems is increasingly being questioned. Automation is reshaping the relationship between humans and technology. The effects of automation and digitalisation on social relationships have become increasingly pronounced within the dynamics of today's screen society. This study aims to investigate how trust in automation influences individuals'

social relationships, highlighting the gradual replacement of human-to-human interactions with digital interactions. As discussed in this research, technological authorities play a significant role in individuals' decision-making processes, leading to a diminishing significance of concepts such as trust and loyalty in human relationships. Alongside digitalisation, individuals tend toward social isolation while surrendering their identities to digital environments. This tendency reduces individuals' capacities to make authentic choices and inclines them toward conformity with the majority. Consequently, it is argued that the growing authority of automation weakens individuals' social skills, fosters isolation, and diminishes emotional connections. This study conceptually examines the long-term effects of digitalisation and automation on social relationships, aiming to reveal their implications for individual awareness. The research highlights the importance of increasing awareness about the long-term effects of automation systems on social life.

Technological advancements and digitalisation have a profound impact on the nature of individual and social relationships. Communication conducted via screens diminishes the intimacy and depth of human interactions, thereby weakening social bonds. This phenomenon suggests that digital platforms, which can replace face-to-face interactions, may pose a threat to both individual and societal isolation. In the digital age, the increasing risks of personal and societal isolation underscore the need to reconstruct emotional values, such as face-to-face peer communication. Peer relationships, rooted in intimacy, trust, and closeness, play a crucial role in strengthening social bonds. While the advantages offered by the digital world should not be overlooked, these platforms should serve as tools to support face-to-face interactions rather than replace human connections. Genuine and deep relationships must be nurtured and sustained through face-to-face interactions. The superficiality and isolation brought about by digitalisation must be balanced with real social bonds, reminding society of the importance of meaningful human interactions.

Digitalisation leads individuals to prefer rapid and superficial connections over deep and meaningful social relationships. The construction of modern identity is shaped not only by personal preferences but also by the options provided by societal systems. While this flexibility aids in identity formation, it also introduces uncertainties. Trust is inherently related to a lack of information; individuals tend to trust unfamiliar people and abstract systems more readily. In contemporary settings, information is generated through machines, diminishing the role of human involvement in this process. Digitalisation alters the forms of social interaction, increasing screen-based communication and posing the risk of superficial human relationships. In this era, where digital processes and automation dominate individuals' lives, people grow distant from human connections, feeling the absence of interpersonal relationships more keenly as technological options take their place. For psychological well-being, humans must remain engaged in communication. When individuals lack "warm

communication” with peers, they turn to the “cold communication” offered by technology. Screen addiction weakens emotional bonds and leads to a loss of empathy. Moving away from traditional sources of knowledge disrupts societal values, and digital communication proves inadequate in establishing deep and meaningful relationships. In this context, developing critical awareness and system literacy becomes crucial.

This study emphasises the importance of thoroughly assessing the potential risks and consequences associated with automation and technological systems. The findings underscore the need for a more nuanced understanding of the effects of technology, media, and globalisation on individuals’ lives. Practical recommendations of this study include raising awareness about the potential negative impacts of technology, media, and consumerism on individuals’ autonomy and identity, promoting awareness about the influence of media and digitalisation on individuals and society, encouraging individuals to think critically about the media they consume and the digital world they inhabit, and fostering empathy and emotional intelligence in the digital era.

Future research could involve empirical studies that support the claims presented in the text and explore ways to mitigate the adverse effects of digitalisation, media, and globalisation on individuals, relationships, and society. Special attention should be given to fostering critical thinking and system literacy among children and young people. Further research on the behavioural and societal impacts of automation, as well as strategies to mitigate its adverse effects, is also necessary.

Various strategies can be developed to reduce digital dependency and strengthen social interactions as methods for raising awareness. Behavioural addictions often stem from a need to replenish dopamine deficits and represent recurring forms of dependency. Recognising the spiritual needs that vary among individuals is essential. To make individuals’ interactions with digital media more conscious, increasing media literacy education is recommended. These programs can help individuals critically evaluate digital content and mitigate the risks of addiction. Organising events that encourage face-to-face interactions is crucial for strengthening social bonds within communities. Such activities enable individuals to enhance their social skills and reduce feelings of loneliness. Establishing support groups for individuals experiencing digital addiction is also important. These groups allow individuals to share their experiences and form social connections. Public awareness campaigns about the effects of digital addiction are vital. These campaigns inform individuals about the negative impacts of technology use. Encouraging the development of alternative digital platforms that facilitate healthier social interactions is necessary. These platforms should enable users to form more meaningful and profound connections. This initiative should be carried out within the framework of civil society organisations, communities, and networks and supported by governmental initiatives. Interdisciplinary interactions and collaborations

should be established within universities to advance academic research, promote scientific progress, and lead societal efforts.

Furthermore, organisations, firms, and media outlets across various sectors must take active roles in social responsibility and social entrepreneurship projects that counteract digital isolation while promoting social interaction.

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