Online Media & Society
Vol.6, No.2 (June, 2025), Pp.72-88
ISSN(online): 2790-1882, ISSN(print):2790-1874
DOI: https://doi.org/10.71016/oms/4c10tc47

Original Article **https://hnpublisher.com**

Emojis as Emotional Expression in Online Communication: Replacing the Words in Digital Era

Adina Zaheer[1], Ghulam Safdar[2]

[1]MPhil Scholar, Department of Media and Communication Studies, Rawalpindi Women University, Pakistan.
[2]Assistant Professor, Department of Media and Communication Studies, Rawalpindi Women University, Pakistan.
Correspondence: safdarsting@gmail.com[2]

ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: Emojis in now a day a common way to emphasize feelings without using words in today's digital communication. The study analyzed how relationships between online users are influenced by emojis and how emojis are used instead of commonly used words. The research aimed to explore whether emoji usage is connected to better emotional self-expression, and how users use emojis to covey and share their emotions in digital talks.

Methodology: A quantitative methodology was selected for the research. Participants aged 16- 35 and above from Rawalpindi and Islamabad. An online structured questionnaire built on a Likert scale was distributed among 326 participants. The statistical methods including linear regression, one-way ANOVA, chi-square tests, and one-sample t-tests were performed using SPSS.

Finding: The results revealed that using emojis strongly helped users communicate their emotions. Emoji combination, mood regulation, and emotional satisfaction were strongly influenced by emoji use. Age and gender had some association with emojis dependency and emotional patterns. The findings confirmed that people use emojis not only for artistic purposes but to fulfill emotional needs.

Conclusion: Emojis can express emotions well and sometimes work as alternatives to simple text in online messages. It fulfills needs of users, validating the ongoing relevance of Uses and Gratification theory in the modern media environment.

Keywords: Emoji, Emotional Expression, Digital Communication, Mood Regulation, Emoji Combination, Online Expression, Emoji Dependency.

Article History

Received:
April 05, 2025

Revised:
June 12, 2025

Accepted:
June 17, 2025

Online:
June 25, 2025

1. INTRODUCTION

In the end of 1990s, digital communication practiced an important revolution with the introduction of emojis-pictorial signs expressing emotions, objects, and thoughts. Emojis were invented in Japan and now advanced into a universal language, excelling cultural and language barriers to convey emotional tones in text-based communication. This development has redefined how peoples express their emotions digitally and often complementing or even replacing outdated words. The initial emojis involved representation of

weather, emotions, and daily activities. The term "emoji" is derived from the Japanese words "e" meaning "picture" and "moji" meaning "character" (Bai et al., 2019).

The fame of emojis led to their acceptance by other mobile carriers, and this absence of standardization originally caused irregularities in how emojis were presented across different social media platforms. Identifying the need for consistency, the Unicode Consortium, in charge for standardizing characters across digital platforms, integrated emojis into Unicode Standard in 2010. This move confirmed that emojis would seem constantly across numerous devices and operating systems, smoothing their global propagation (Bai et al., 2019). With the arrival of smartphone and the growth of social media platforms, emojis became essential to digital communication. There visual flora allows user to carry emotions and reactions rapidly, adding a coating of emotional fruitfulness to text that might if not be confusing. Researchers have proven that 92% of the online population incorporated emojis in their messages, emphasizing their extensive recognition (Guibon et al., 2016).

Figure 1: *Emojis can represent many things… (Guibon et al., 2016)*

In the professional setting, use of emojis has also seen as a prominent escalation. A survey proved that 77% of people used emojis at work in the last three months of 2020, proposed a shift to more informal and expressive communication styles in the offices (Pumble, 2023). Emojis now a day assist as a paralinguistic device, giving non-verbal indications that increase the clarity and emotional tendency of digital messages. Researcher claims that emojis function correspondingly to gestures and facial expressions in face-to-face communication, proposing background and emotional tones that words in their own may not completely express (Evans, 2017; Shabir et al., 2014; Shabir et al., 2014a).

Study supports the role of emojis in stirring communication. A systematic review emphasized that emojis transfer emotional and linguistic features that can affect the understanding of messages, creating them essential in carrying emotions and resolved in digital communications (Bai et al., 2019). The worldwide acceptance of emojis has controlled the cultural differences in their practice and understanding. A research examined social media data to originate modifications in emoji usage patterns between Eastern and Western countries inclined to use emojis associated to emotions and facial expressions more repeatedly, however users in Eastern countries used a wider range of emojis also containing those which signify objects and activities. (Chen et al., 2017).

Generational gaps also play an important role in emoji usage. Earlier users often assign new meanings to present emojis or favor certain symbols over others which lead to possible misunderstandings among different age groups. For instance, the "thumbs up" emoji (□) is observed by some younger operators as inactive-destructive, although older users get it as a simple assertion. The competence and soulfulness of emoji's have directed to their usage as substitutes for words or even whole expressions. This change is mainly obvious in unintentional digital communication, where a single emoji can carry multifaceted emotions or responses. The "Face with Tears of Joy" emoji (□) demonstrates this trend, having been nominated as the Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year in 2015 due to its extensive use and capability to convey subtle emotional perspective (Bai et al., 2019).

Figure 2: *Emoji Differences on major platforms (Bai et al., 2019)*

Source https://emojipedia.org/.

This expansion of emojis rises a query about the future of language and writing. Few linguists, like Marcel Danesi, proposed that emojis signify a reverse to a more pictorial form of communication, significant of early hieroglyphics (Danesi, 2016). Whereas emojis are unlikely to substitute traditional language completely, their addition indicates an adaptive extension of human communication means. The usage of emojis has psychosocial inferences, manipulating how individuals observe and relate to each other in digital interactions. Study revealed that peoples who regularly use emojis, have a tendency of higher emotional intelligence, as they are more skillful at expressing and understanding emotions in digital communication (New York Post, 2024). This expertise can lead to further expressive and assumed contacts online, responding the objective nature often connected with digital communication.

Yet, the clarification of emojis can vary built on cultural and person's differences, primarily to potential miscommunications. A researcher inspected that emoji usage thru different cultures, originate that emojis assist as a universal tool for expression, their meanings can change dependent on cultural background, demanding a nuanced understanding of their use (Chen et al., 2019). Even with its benefits, emojis are not deprived of challenges. For example, the similar emoji can seem differently on several devices, producing inconsistencies in how messages are apparent (Miller el al., 2016). Moreover, certain emojis have changed their meanings over time, with some symbols obtaining connotations that disagree from their original intent, further confusing their use (Bai et al., 2019).

Table 1: *Pragmatic Functions of Emojis in Online Writing (Alsulaiman & Alhojailan, 2024)*

Pragmatic Functions	Description	Frequency (N)
Emoji Express Emotions	Emojis are used to carry emotions, containing joy, love, sadness, and frustration.	103
Emojis Decorate Text	Emojis are used to exaggerate text appealingly.	55
Emojis Substitute Nonverbal Cues	Emojis substitute facial expressions, gestures, and prosodic features in text.	27
Emojis Make Meaning	Emojis Highlight or alter the sense of the message, including irony.	25
Emojis Mirror Personal Values	Emojis imitate personal values and opinions, often in hashtags.	13
Emojis Signal (Un) Familiarity	Diverse emojis are used based on relationships (e.g., white heart or close friends, red for formal relations).	Not coded in tweets
Emojis Express Special Meanings	Specific emojis have unique, widely understood meanings (e.g., □ for mockery, □ for laughter).	27% (□) & 20% (□) of participants

Note: Table offered the practical functions of emojis recognized in the study. The table characterized the several ways Saudi female EFL students use emojis in online writing, emphasizing both content-related and form-related functions. The frequency signifies the number of tweets in which each function. Particularly, conveying emotions arose as the most leading function, while functions such as signaling familiarity could not be coded due to background restrictions.

1.1 Emojis Enhance Emotional Satisfaction

Emojis boost emotional satisfaction by letting users to express their feelings more intensely. According to researcher emojis can assist as emotional loudspeakers, attracting the feeling of being understood in digital conservations (Derks et al, 2008). Emotional completion is often related to the capability to precisely convey one's mood, and study indicated that individuals who use emojis regularly rate higher levels of satisfaction in their digital communication (lo, 2008). The existence of emojis can also rise the supposed warmth and friendliness of messages, making conversations more pleasant (Walther & D'Addario, 2001).

1.2 Effects of Emoji Combinations

The combination of several emojis can significantly influence how emotions are transferred in digital communication. Study recommended that using various emojis collectively can strengthen emotional expressions or create subtle emotional significances that a single emoji might not entirely capture (Riordan, 2017). For instance, uniting a laughing emoji with a crying emoji (e.g., □□) can varied emotions, such as laughing with sadness. Researches specifies that users deliberately combine emojis to simplify the tendency of the message, creating communication more real and effective in text-based connections (Gawne & McCulloch, 2019).

1.3 Trust on Emojis for Emotional Expression

Most of the users develop a dependency on emojis as their prime resource to convey emotions and sometimes at the expenditure of textual clarity. Researchers proposed that heavy emoji users may struggle to express their emotions efficiently when emojis are inaccessible, which may lead to probable misinterpretations (Kelly & Watts, 2015). Dependency on emojis is predominantly obvious in digital-native peer group, where reliance on visual symbols often substitutes outdated linguistic terminologies (Danesi, 2016). This spectacles raises questions about the developing nature of digital linguistic and emotional interactions.

1.4 Patterns of Emoji Usage

The rate with which users depend on emojis for emotional satisfaction differs centered on factors such as age, gender, and cultural background. Studies revealed that younger users tend to use emojis more regularly in personal chats, while professional setting often see a controlled use of emojis to maintain formality. Everyday emojis usage has also been related to higher level of social engagement and expressiveness in online communications. As it helps compensate for the absence of nonverbal signs in text based interactions (Tossell et al., 2012).

1.5 Predicting Emotions with Emojis

Emojis not only direct emotions but also help receivers anticipate the emotional quality of a message before completely processing the text. Researches revealed that certain emojis, such as smileys and heart symbols can create an instant positive expectations in the reader, manipulating their perception of the message (Skovholt, et al., 2014). Equally, negative emojis like angry faces or sad faces can led user to imagine negative content, determining emotional replies even before message comprehension (Prada et al., 2018). This preventive effect improves the effectiveness of online communication by setting the emotional background upfront.

1.6 Emojis in Mood Regulation

Emojis plays a vital role in mood regulation which allowed users to strengthen or change their emotional conditions. Researchers originate that using positive emojis can enhance mood by activating emotional contamination, where users feel elevated just by engaging with positive pictorial motivations (Rodrigues et al., 2018). Instead, users may also select emojis to authenticate or express negative emotions such as

sadness or frustration, as a form of emotional purification (Gesselman et al., 2019). This aptitude to control emotions through emojis which highlights their mental impact on digital conversations.

1.7 Problem Statement

The speedy increase in the usage of emojis in digital communication had reformed how emotions were conveyed in online connections. Although emojis were primarily considered additional essentials, they slowly became a primary tool for transmitting emotional expressions. Even with their rising role in communication, there remained incomplete understanding of how specific features of emoji use combinations, frequency, dependency, and mood regulation that impacted emotional expression. Earlier studies intensified more on overall usage patterns without dividing the influence of these sub-variables in a measureable method. Therefore, it was important to examine the connection between emoji usage and emotional expression through quantifiable means.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This Research held substantial worth in contributing to the growing field of digital communication. By investigating how users emotionally involved through emojis and the level to which emoji usage influenced emotional satisfaction, regulation, and expectation, the study provided empirical evidence on a broadly observed yet underexplored phenomenon. The study aimed to suggest insights for social media analysts, digital communication designers, educators and other researchers in understanding the digital emotional landscape. Additionally, this study also assisted to improve theoretical frameworks on nonverbal digital cues and their influence in online communications.

1.9 Research Gap

Most of the previous researches on emoji usage and emotional expression had been directed using qualitative methodologies, such as content analysis and interviews. While these researches provided insightful observations and thematic identifications, there had been a lack of quantitative research that methodically measured the impact of specific emoji-related concepts on emotional expression. This study intended to fill this gap by applying a quantitative research method to estimate the influence of emoji on emotional expression. By doing so, it aimed to prolong the academic discourse with quantifiable and statistically supported results.

1.10 Research Objectives

1) To explore the influence of emojis on emotional expressions and in what way these are replacing the words in today's digital age.
2) To analyze how combination of diverse emojis alter the emotional communication.
3) To measure the level to which social media users depend on emojis for emotional expression.
4) To examine whether emojis subsidize to mood regulation in digital communication.
5) To determine how emojis satisfy individuals as an alternative to verbal emotional expression.

1.11 Research Questions

Q1: How do emojis influence emotional expression and replace words in the digital era communication?

Q2: How different emojis combination influence the emotional expression?

Q3: Up to what extent do entities rely on emojis for their emotional expression?

Q4: Do emojis contribute to mood regulation of users in digital communication?

Q5: Do emojis offer a satisfying alternate to verbal emotional expression?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Telaumbanua et al. (2024) conducted a research "The Use of Emojis in Language Communication on Social Media Platforms". The study aimed to discover how university students of English language Education Study Program at Universitas Nias use and understand emojis in digital communication. The main emphasis was on understanding how emojis influence the clarity and emotional expression of messages, and how cultural and background factors affect their interpretation. The research implemented qualitative approach, concentrating on the lived experiences of participants. Data was gathered through digital analysis and in-depth interviews, where participants provided insight into their use of emojis on social media. The research found that emojis played an important role in enhancing emotional expression and message clarity, respondents agreed that emojis add emotional depth to their messages. The research concluded that while emojis are valuable tool for enhancing digital communication, helps to deliver emotion and clarity, but misunderstanding can arise if used inappropriately.

Bashir et al. (2022) performed a research "An Analysis of the role of Emojis and digitally created discourse in the Construction of a Digital Global Communicative Society". The main objective of the study was to evaluate how digital discourse, mostly through social media, donates to the growth of a multicultural global society by letting people to express themselves using a collective semiotic language, such as emojis. The research used Speech Act Theory to examine the role of emojis in digital communication. Data was gathered from frequently used emojis across social media platforms. Finding revealed that emojis are progressively used by all age group, youngsters are consuming them more than words to express their emotions. The research summarized that emojis are a substantial tool in contemporary communication, aiding as an effective and proficient language supplement.

Ravi & Karmakar (2023) carried out a research on "The Problem of Gendered Emojis in Online Communication Platforms: A Study to Understand Digital Dependence on Using Emotions during Pandemic". The research intended to explore the sexual meanings of non-facial emojis (e.g., eggplant, peach) in virtual communication and examine how they are supposed in closed group communications. Researcher used quantitative approach, collecting data from (n=64) participants aged 20-28 through online survey. Finding indicates that 60.9% respondents were familiar with the sexual meaning of the emojis and 72. 7% participants were comfortable chatting these meanings. The research determined that non-facial emojis frequently carry sexual meanings that are context-dependent.

Verheijen & Mauro (2024) executed a study on "Emoji use by children and adults: An exploratory corpus study". The study designed to scrutinize emoji use in written communication among children and adults, by concentrating on matching the numbers, types, position, function, and sentiment of emojis. The study includes examining a corpus of messages from children and adults, T- tests were used to compare the number of emojis. Chi-square test and Fisher's exact test was practice to observe the relationship between age, gender and other dynamics. The researcher found no major difference between children and adults in using emojis. But, gender, age, and social media use influenced emoji function and position, with older children, girls, showing more stylish emoji use. The study summarized that children's emoji use was formed by gender, age, and technology, such as owning smartphone and using social media.

Tang & Hew (2019) directed a research about "Emoticon, Emoji, and Sticker Use in Computer-Mediated Communication: A Review of Theories and Research Findings". The research aimed to conduct a methodical review of theories and experimental research outcomes on the use of emoticons, emojis, and stickers in computer-mediated communication (CMC). The research followed a content analysis method, gathering articles from 11 databases in the middle of 1996 and 2017, and the final sample involved 51articles. Finding revealed that people use emojis, emoticons, and stickers to express their emotions and to improve their social connections, are used by females more than males. The research summarized the key findings on the use of emojis, emoticons, stickers, and explained their definition by classifying applicable theories.

Dalle-Nogare et al. (2023) conducted a study on "Emojis Are Comprehended Better than Facial Expressions, by Male Participants". The objective of the research was to relate how well human facial expressions and emojis express emotions, with an emphasis on gender differences in recognition. The researcher offered 112 visuals (56 facial expressions and 56 emojis) to (n=96) university students which included 48 male and 48 female. Contestants were tasked to recognize the emotions conveyed in the stimuli. Finding indicates that emojis were more easily renowned than facial expression, males were well at identifying emojis and female were better at recognizing facial expressions. The study concluded that emojis demonstrated to be clearer and easily understood than facial expressions, predominantly in digital communication.

Erle et al. (2022) carried out a research on "Emojis as Social Information in Digital Communication". The research meant to investigate the efficiency of emojis in digital communication, testing their capability to carry emotions and effect social-emotional replies, consistent with the Emotion as Social Information Model (EASI). The researcher directed 11 experiments, relating messages with or without emojis. Respondents were requested to estimate message, concentrating on intensity, valence, and empathy. Results revealed that emojis amplified emotional intensity and made messages appear more thrilling, emojis work in the same way as facial expressions, arousing empathy and contagion but some nonconformity happened due to the difference between face-to-face and digital communication. The research concise that emojis function as an effective emotional signs in digital communication same as facial expressions in face-to-face interactions.

Liu (2023) directed a study on "Are you really smiling? Display rules for emojis and the relationship between emotion management and psychological well-being". The study intended to understand in what way people use emoji to express their emotions in different social circumstances and how this disturb their mental health. The researcher used survey and statistical analysis to look at exactly how people use emojis in private and public surroundings, with different emotional expressions and targets. Research indicate that people regulate their emoji use centered on person and context, with further emojis in positive private settings, and smiling emojis frequently used to soften emotions, connecting emotional expressions with happiness but not expressively disturbing depression. The study found that emojis aid to express emotions and is linked to happiness, but handling emotions with emojis didn't significantly distress mental health.

Jain (2024) led a research on "The Changing Face of Everyday Communication: Emojis as Catalysts". The researcher aimed to explore the growing role of emojis in communication, containing their historical, linguistic, technological, and sociocultural effects. The research employed qualitative approach to review the already existing literature on emoji usage, cultural implication, and impact on communication. Findings proved that emojis have changed communication by crossing culture and language hurdles, improving emotional attitude, and persuading social activities and marketing, by imitating societal values and developing gender identities. Study determined that emojis have transformed modern communication but may overgeneralize complex emotions through emojis may lead to a loss of distinction.

Suzuki et al. (2024) conducted a study on "The Effects of Adding Emojis to Text Messages on Emotional Impressions and Recollection of Textual Content". The research aimed to examine how emojis affect emotional impressions and memory of the text messages. Respondents were requested to read 24 messages (positive/negative) with and without emojis and evaluated their emotional valence and stimulation, they also finished a recognition task to remember the messages. Finding exposed that emojis prejudiced the emotional impression of messages, shifting them toward the emojis valence. Researcher also found that emojis also amplified emotional arousal, with negative emojis cultivating recognition for positive messages. Research summarized that emojis affect both the emotional dealing out and memory of text messages, particularly when the text and emoji valence misalliance.

Neel et al. (2023) conducted a research about "Emoji Alter the Perception of Emotion in Affectively Neutral Text messages". The main objective of the research was to explore the effects of diverse kinds of

emoji on emotional valence of efficiently neutral English language text messages, although considering possible changes across American, British and Danish contestants. The researcher used four different kinds of emojis (no emoji, negative, neutral, and positive) and three nationalities (American, British, and Danish) varied factorial design. Total (n=217) respondents graded 20 text message interchange with/without emoji, consuming a 10 point scale to measure the emotional valence of each reply. The finding exposed that message with negative emoji were ranked more negative, and with positive emoji were rated more positive, neutral and no emoji circumstances were supposed parallel. Research concluded that emoji meaningfully influenced the emotional quality of messages, with no alterations perceived across nationality groups, representing worldwide effects on text opinions.

Maiberger et al. (2024) carried out a study about "Let's face it: When and how facial emojis increase the persuasiveness of electronic word of mouth". The researcher meant to investigate the convincing effects of facial emojis in online brand communications, mainly in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and digital advertising. Researcher scrutinized 2,137 tweets from 10 brands ended six month, they were characterized by whether emojis replaced or recapped vocal expressions. The research found that repeating facial emojis positively influenced the number of likes and retweets, making eWOM more persuasive and changing facial emojis didn't have impact on engagement. The researcher summarized that consuming reiterating emojis in online communication escalates persuasiveness, especially on Twitter and in online advertising.

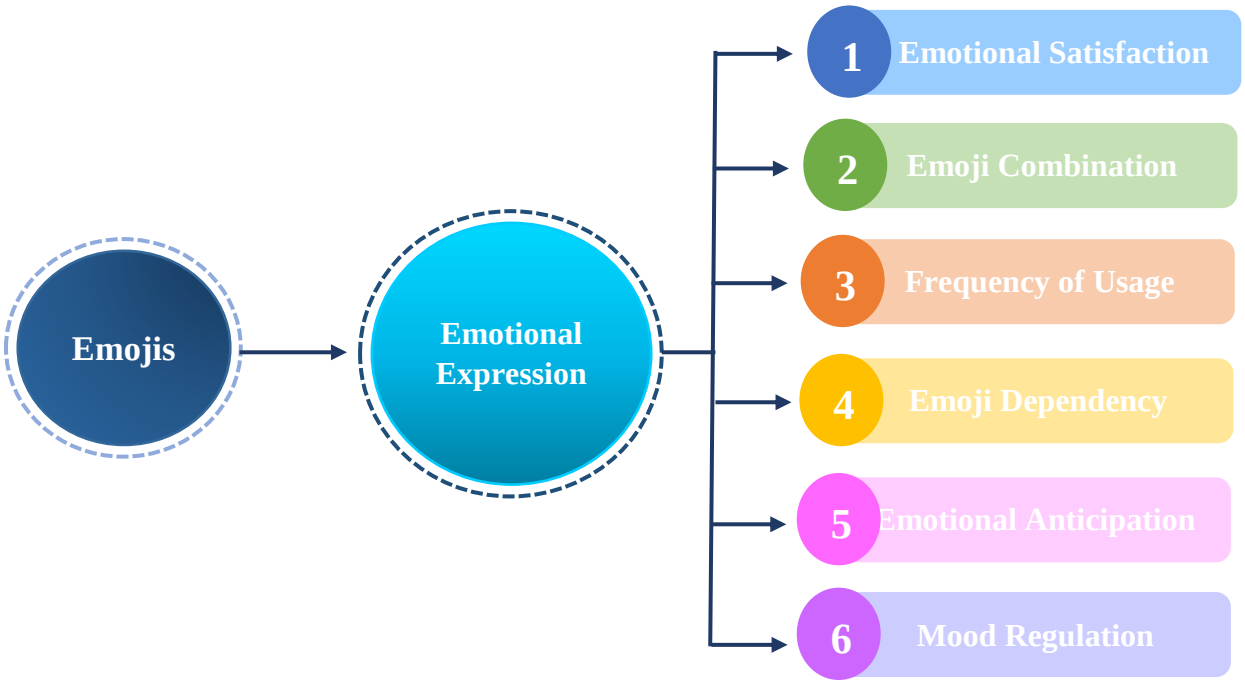
Caspi & Raz (2024) accompanied a research on "Using Emojis That Alter the Meaning of Written Messages to Communicate Interpersonal Relations". The research meant to study how contrasting emojis affect message clarity, emotional understanding, and supposed relationship intimacy. The researcher tasked (n=296) psychology students to interpret 16 WhatsApp messages in different conditions (positive/negative, close/unfriendly relationships, congruent/incongruent emojis). Findings revealed that incongruent emojis made message less clear and removed emotional tone toward the emoji and were connected with closer relationships, even in negative messages. Researcher summarized that incongruent emojis aid to transfer emotion and uphold closeness in relationships even when the message is negative.

Konrad et al. (2020) designed a study about "Sticker and Emoji Use in Facebook Messenger: Implications for Graphicon Change". The study expected scrutinize the use of emoji and stickers in Facebook messenger and their development in communication. The researcher employed a mixed method approach by utilizing semi-structured interviews and surveys to examine how emojis and stickers were used in different context. Research indicated that stickers were employed for emotional intensity and self-expression and were more common in close relationships, on the other hand emojis were used to modify the messages. The research determined that stickers and emojis are growing correspondingly, with cultural transformations manipulating their usage.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This research was based on the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT), which provided a foundational lens to investigate how individuals actively use emojis to satisfy emotional and communicational needs in digital landscapes. The Uses and Gratification Theory was initially proposed by Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler. And Michael Gurevitch in 1973. They defined the theory as a way to explain how individuals actively look for media to satisfy particular needs and desires, rather than being inactive consumers. "The audience is considered as active, and goal-oriented in its media use; media selections lies with the audience" (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). In this research the theory was tested to evaluate whether it remained valid and relevant in the contemporary digital communication landscape. The theory was tested in setting of emoji usage in digital platforms to determine whether users are still actively seeking gratification such as emotional completion and expressive suitability through this growing form of visual language.

Research Model



3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Research design offers an organized plan for the study. There are three core types of research methods: Qualitative, Quantitative, and mixed method research (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Tumer, 2007). This research employs a quantitative research plan, which is defined as a systematic investigation including numerical data to classify patterns and relationships (Apuke, 2017). This research method enables the researcher to gather data from a large sample population, confirming statistical consistency and generalizability.

3.2 Population

The population contains all the individuals who meet the study standards. According to researchers, "A population refers to the whole group of individuals who possess the characteristics being studied" (Banerjee & Chaudhury, 2010). The population of this research is general public of twin cities of Pakistan, Rawalpindi and Islamabad, whom are active social media users aged 16-35 and above who regularly use emojis in digital communication.

3.3 Sample Frame

A sample frame is a list or record holding elements from which a sample is strained. "A well-defined sample frame certifies representativeness and underestimates selection bias" (Etikan & Bala, 2017). This research's sample frame consists of social media users from Rawalpindi and Islamabad who dynamically involved in emoji-based digital interactions.

3.4 Sample Size and Technique

A total of 326 participants were selected, uniformly divided between Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Determining a suitable sample size is critical for numerical power and research validity, According to research, a well-calculated sample size ensures significant statistical readings and decreases errors

(Memon et al, 2020). This research employed probability sampling technique, precisely cluster sampling because it improves efficiency and cost-effectiveness in geographically various populations (Alvi, 2016). This technique was used to divide the population into clusters and randomly selecting whole groups.

3.5 Data Collection Tool

This research utilized a structured questionnaire for data collection process. Questionnaires are broadly used in survey researches due to their consistency and ability to regulate responses. Structured questionnaire enable systematic data collection and allows statistical investigation with high precision (Bird, 2009). The questionnaire for this research involved close-ended questions using Likert scale (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always).

3.6 Data Analysis Technique

Data was examined using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), extensively used software for statistical analysis. SPSS is known for its unconventional data management abilities and statistical testing options. According to researches SPSS delivers extensive tool for data visualization, hypothesis testing, and regression analysis (Landau & Everitt, 2004). This study applied descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, and inferential tests (One-Way ANOVA, Linear Regression, One-Sample t-Test, Chi-Square, and Correlations) to analyze the relationship between emoji usage and emotional expression.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

This study followed to strict ethical guidelines, certifying informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, and their responses were retained anonymous. This research adhered to firm ethical standards throughout.

4. RESULTS

Table 2: *Respondents Demographics*

Sr. No	Statement	Options	F	%
1.	What is city of residence?	Rawalpindi	163	50.0
		Islamabad	163	50.0
		Total	**326**	**100.0**
2.	What is your gender?	Male	163	50.0
		Female	163	50.0
		Total	**326**	**100.0**
3.	What is your age?	10-20	46	14.1
		21-25	107	32.8
		26-30	102	31.3
		31-35	63	19.3
		Above 35	8	2.5
		Total	**326**	**100.0**
4.	What is your educational background?	Matric or below	29	8.9
		Intermediate	41	12.6
		Graduate	145	44.5
		Masters	92	28.2
		Above Masters	19	5.8
		Total	**326**	**100.0**
5.	How frequently do you communicate through digital platforms?	1-2 Hours	68	20.9
		3-4 Hours	144	44.2
		More than 4 hours	114	35.0
		Total	**326**	**100.0**
6.	On which Platform did you mostly use emojis?	WhatsApp	163	50.0

	Instagram	109	33.4
	Facebook	41	12.6
	Other	13	4.0
	Total	**326**	**100.0**

Note: The statistics summarized demographics and behavioral characteristics of the sample (N=326). The participants were evenly divided between Rawalpindi and Islamabad, and equally represented males and females (50% each). Most of the respondents were aged between 21 and 30 years (64.1%), representing a sample that could be referred to as predominantly young adults. The majority of the participants held at least a graduate degree (77.5%), intimating at a sensibly well-educated population. When it came to digital communication, 79.2% indicated they spent over 3 hours using digital platforms daily. The most common platform for emoji use was WhatsApp (50%), followed by Instagram (33.4%) and Facebook (12.6%), reflecting the current escapist social media trends.

Table 3: *Pearson Correlation among Respondents Demographics, Emoji Usage, and Emotional Expression.*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
City of residence?	1	-.387**	.270**	.052	.428**	.534**
Gender?		1	-.114*	.238**	-.382**	-.427**
Age?			1	.595**	.215**	.256**
Educational background?				1	.019	.061
Emojis (IV)					1	.811**
Emotional Expression (DV)						1

**. 0.01 level (2-tailed), *. 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Note: The correlation matrix examined the relationships among six variables: city of residence, gender, age, educational background, use of Emojis (IV), and the Emotional Expression variable (DV). A positive correlation was found between city of residence and Emojis ($r = .428$, $p < .01$) and Emotional Expression ($r = .534$, $p < .01$), which means that people from both cities tend to have higher emoji use and higher scores on the Emotional Expression. On the other hand, gender was significantly negatively correlated with the Emojis ($r = -0.382$, $p < 0.01$) and with Emotional Expression ($r = -0.427$, $p < 0.01$), meaning there were differences based on gender in usage and outcomes. Age correlated positively with education ($r = .595$, $p < .01$), Emojis($r = .215$, $p < .01$), and Emotional Expression ($r = .256$, $p < .01$), suggesting that older participants have higher educational level and greater emoji usage and scores on the emotional expression. Importantly, Emojis had a strong correlation Emotional Expression ($r = .811$, $p < .01$), indicating the fact that there is a strong association between emoji use and the peoples emotional expression.

Table 4: *Linear Regression Analysis of how Emojis influence Emotional expression and how replace words in the digital age communication*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	**(Constant)**	1.660	4.727		.351	.726
	IV_Emjies	2.858	.115	.811	24.909	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Main_DV

Note: The linear regression analysis found that emoji use and showing emotions are linked in a positive way and are both important factors in texts. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 2.858$, $p < .001$) means that for every increase of one emoji, how much someone expressed their feelings went up by 2.86 points. The standardized beta value ($\beta = .811$) means that the variable has a strong effect in predicting the results. The model's constant ($B = 1.660$) didn't matter much for the results because it wasn't statistically

significant (p = .726). This means people talk the same number of words whether or not they're using emoji.

Table 5: *Linear Regression Analysis between Emoji Combination and Emotional Expression*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.479	.415		1.153	.250
	Main_DV	.165	.003	.936	47.865	.000

a. Dependent Variable: DVa_Emo_Comb

Note: The statistical analysis proved there is a strong and significant link between using emojis and conveying emotions. A one-unit rise in emotional expression resulted in a 0.165 unit uptick in the combination of emojis, according to the unstandardized coefficient. The beta value (β = .936) demonstrates that the variable is highly reliably predicted by the other variables. Since the constant (B = 0.479) was not significant (p = .250), it shows that there was little impact on the model without any emotional expression.

Table 6: *One-Way ANOVA results for up to what extent Gender rely on Emojis*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3030.785	1	3030.785	55.209	.000
Within Groups	17786.479	324	54.897		
Total	20817.264	325			

Note: Based on the results from the one-way ANOVA, there is a significant difference in emotional expression depending on the emojis used, F(1, 324) = 55.209, and p < .001. The value of 3030.785 for between-groups sum of squares suggests that emoji use played a significant role in the differences in emotional expression by participants in the sample.

Table 7: *Chi-Square Analysis for association between Age Groups and Emoji reliance for Emotional Expression*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	746.961[a]	244	.000
Likelihood Ratio	563.633	244	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	21.266	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	326		

a. 306 cells (98.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05.

Note: The Chi-square test found that age was related to emotional expression in a statistically significant way, χ^2 (244) = 746.961, p < .001. According to the results, the Pearson Chi-Square and Likelihood Ratio indicated that there's a strong connection between the variables. Nonetheless, most of the cells were found to have less than 5 cells, potentially affecting the quality of the test.

Table 8: *Linear Regression Analysis to examine the contribution of Emojis to Mood Regulation*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-2.019	1.197		-1.686	.093
	IV_Emjies	.523	.029	.707	17.999	.000

a. Dependent Variable: DVf_mood_regulation

Note: The linear regression analysis showed that using emojis is connected with people doing a better job of regulating their mood. The unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.523, p < .001) means that for each new unit of emoji use, there is a 0.523-unit increase in how well someone feels they can manage their mood. The standardized beta (β = .707) shows that this variable (house size) explains a good amount of the variation in home sales prices. The constant (-2.019) was not statistically significant (p value = .093), which means that the way the brand was started didn't really make a difference, regardless of using emojis.

Table 9: *One-Sample T-Test to determine if Emojis offer a Satisfying alternate to verbal Emotional Expressions*

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
IV_Emjies	91.181	325	.000	40.41718	39.5452	41.2892
DVb_Emo_Satis	77.439	325	.000	19.94172	19.4351	20.4483

Note: Based on the results of the one-sample t-test, emoji use and emotional satisfaction were found to be significantly more than zero. The results show that t (325) is 91.181, p < .001, and the mean difference is 40.42 for emoji use. T (325) is 77.439, and p < .001, meaning the mean difference for satisfaction is 19.94. Both of the variables are seen to be strongly present in the data and are statistically important.

5. DISCUSSION

In the modern digital environment, when it's hard to express certain emotions with verbal connectivity, emojis emerged as a significant tool to express specific emotions without words. Emojis are widely used to represent emotions that text alone cannot express. Through emojis, peoples can better communicate their emotions, especially when they talk casually or online. The findings have revealed that emojis are most significant to express feelings. The study found that emojis were widely used to express emotions, demonstrating that emojis can play the role of visual stand-ins for feelings. It has also been observed that combining several emojis in a message can heighten the emotions involved in the conversation.

Besides helping the audience to say what they want, emojis were connected with the feelings and moods. Audience not only rely on emojis to express their feelings but also to control and manage their internal emotional states. Using emojis brings pleasant emotions such as feeling connected and emotionally satisfied, it also help to stabilize, uplift and mirror a person's mood than highlighted a psychological factor of emoji usage. Moreover, the results presented that many users experienced a sense of emotional fulfillment through emoji-based communications, imitating the gratification users originate from visual emotional exchange in digital space.

Emojis played an important role in enhancing emotional expression and message clarity, respondents agreed that emojis add emotional depth to their messages (Telaumbanua et al., 2024). Emojis are progressively used by all age group, youngsters are consuming them more than words to express their emotions (Bashir et al., 2022). People use emojis, emoticons, and stickers to express their emotions and to improve their social connections, are used by females more than males (Tang & Hew, 2019). Emojis were more easily renowned than facial expression, males were well at identifying emojis and female were better at recognizing facial expressions (Dalle Nogare et al., 2023). Emojis amplified emotional intensity and made messages appear more thrilling, emojis work in the same way as facial expressions, arousing empathy and contagion but some nonconformity happened due to the difference between face-to-face and digital communication (Erle et al., 2022). Repeating facial emojis positively influenced the number of likes and retweets, making eWOM more persuasive and changing facial emojis didn't have impact on engagement (Maiberger et al., 2024). Incongruent emojis made message less clear and removed emotional tone toward the emoji and were connected with closer relationships, even in negative messages (Caspi &

Raz, 2024). Stickers were employed for emotional intensity and self-expression and were more common in close relationships, on the other hand emojis were used to modify the messages (Konrad et al., 2020).

Similar to the other studies, this research also proves that people use emoji intentionally for digital communication. This study confirmed the broader view held by some other scholars that emojis impact the emotions and their management in the online world. The study also raise a question that in our current age of digital communication, emojis now function as key tool for expressing feelings, either taking the place of words or making them stronger.

5.1 Theoretical Implication

This research was grounded in "*Uses and Gratification Theory*", which was proposed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch in 1973. The concept suggest that viewers, listeners and readers use media to get what they are missing in their lives. The study findings are in line with the theory, analysis proved that users used emojis on purpose to express feelings in their conversations. Being strongly satisfied, handling changes in mood, and using emojis a lot shows that individuals used emojis to help with emotional expression. It is proved that people use emoji to fulfil their emotional needs. Therefore, these findings confirmed that Uses and Gratification Theory is still valid to how people interact using emojis. Emojis allow people to express their emotions online, which confirms that the theory about communicating emotions with symbols is still applicable today.

6. CONCLUSION

The research was designed to understand how emojis affect emotion and to find out how they work as a form of communication in modern times. The study concluded that emojis greatly improve the expression of emotions. The high regression numbers between emojis and emotional expression, managing emotions, and emotional satisfaction show that emoji greatly enhance how we feel and react in digital communication. Combining more than one emoji allowed for a better emotional connection than using just one icon. According to demographic analysis people use emojis in varied ways, and the chi-square test proved that people's age may be directly related to how people use emoji for emotional reasons. This research contributed to the existing knowledge on visual digital communication and proves emojis as emotional expressive tool especially among many younger and online users. It also strengthens the importance of uses and gratification theory in understanding new forms of media behavior.

Acknowledgements

None.

Conflict of Interest

Authors declared NO conflict of interest.

Funding Source

The authors received NO funding to conduct this study.

ORCID iDs

Adina Zaheer [1] https://orcid.org/0009-0001-0982-2743
Ghulam Safdar [2] https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5152-0052

REFERENCES

Alvi, M. H. (2016). A manual for selecting sampling techniques in research. *Munich Personal RePEc Archive*. https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/70218/

Apuke, O. D. (2017). Quantitative research methods: A synopsis approach. Arabian Journal of *Business and Management Review*, *6*(10), 40-47. http://dx.doi.org/10.12816/0040336

Bai, Q., Dan, Q., Mu, Z., & Yang, M. (2019). A Systematic Review of Emoji: Current Research and Future Perspectives. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *10*: 2221. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02221

Banerjee, A., & Chaudhury, S. (2010). Statistics without tears: Populations and samples. *Industrial Psychiatry Journal*, *19*(1), 60-65. http://dx.doi.org/10.4103/0972-6748.77642

Bashir, S., Farukh, A., Younis, R. (2022). An Analysis of the Role of Emojis and Digitally Created Discourse in the Construction of a Digital Global Communicative Society. *Hayatian Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, *6*(1), 3-23.

Bird, D. K. (2009). The use of Questionnaires for Acquiring Information on Public Perception of Natural Hazards and Risk Mitigation – A Review of Current Knowledge and Practice. *Natural Hazards and Earth System Sciences*, *9*(4), 1307-1325. http://dx.doi.org/10.5194/nhess-9-1307-2009

Caspi, A., Raz, G. (2024). Using Emojis That Alter the Meaning of Written Messages to Communicate Interpersonal Relations. *Media Psychology*. 1-27.https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2024.2374778

Chen, Z., Lu, X., Ai, W., Li, H., Mei, Q., & Liu, X. (2017). Through a Greater lens: An Empirical Study of Emoji Usage over Large-scale Android Users. *ArXiv preprint*, 1705.05546. DOI:10.48550/arXiv.1705.05546

Dalle Nogare, L.; Cerri, A.; Proverbio, A.M. (2023). Emojis Are Comprehended Better than Facial Expressions, by Male Participants. *Behavioral Science*, *13*(278), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13030278

Danesi, M. (2016). *The Semiotics of Emoji: The Rise of Visual Language in the Age of Internet.* London. Bloomsbury Academic.

Derks, D., Fischer, A. H., & Bos, A. E. R. (2008). The Role of Emotion in Computer-Mediated Communication: A Review. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *24*(3), 766-785. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2007.04.004

Erle, T. M., Schmid, K., Goslar, S. H., & Martin, J. D. (2022). Emojis as social information in digital communication. *Emotion*, *22*(7), 1529–1543. https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0000992

Etikan, I., & Bala, K. (2017). Sampling and sampling methods. *Biostatistics & Epidemiology International Journal*, *5*(6), 215-217. http://dx.doi.org/10.15406/bbij.2017.05.00149

Evans, V. (2017). *The Emoji Code: How Smiley Faces, Love Hearts and Thumbs Up are changing the Way We Communicate.* Michael O'Mara Books.

Gawne, L., & McCulloch, G. (2019). Emoji as Digital Gestures. *Language@ Internet*, *17*. 1-21

Gesselman, A. N., Ta, V. P., & Garcia, J. R. (2019). Worth a Thousand Interpersonal Words: Emoji as Affective Signals for Relationship-Oriented Digital Communication. *PloS ONE*, *14*(8), 1-14. http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0221297

Guibon, G., Ochs, M., & Bellot, P. (2016). From Emojis to Sentiment Analysis. *In Proceedings of the 2016 ACM on Conference on information and Knowledge Management*. 1059-1062.

Jain, A. (2024). The Changing Face of Everyday Communication: Emojis as Catalysts. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, *66*(2), 39-43.

Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Turner, L. A. (2007). Toward a definition of mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Method Research, 1*(2), 112-133. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1558689806298224

Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). Uses and Gratifications Research. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 37*(4), 509-523. https://doi.org/10.1086/268109

Kelly, R., Watts, L. (2015). Characterizing the Inventive Appropriation of Emoji as Relationally Meaningful in Mediated Close Personal Relationships. *Proceedings of the 33rd Annual ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 767-776.

Konrad, A., Herring, S. C., & Choi, D. (2020). Sticker and Emoji Use in Facebook Messenger: Implications for Graphicon Change. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 25*, 217-235. doi:10.1093/jcmc/zmaa003

Landau, S., & Everitt, B. S. (2004). *A Handbook of Statistical Analyses using SPSS. Chapman & Hall/CRC.*

Liu, M. (2023). Are you really smiling? Display rules for emojis and the relationship between emotion management and psychological well-being. *Frontiers in Psychology, 14*, 1-17. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1035742

Lo, S. (2008). The Nonverbal Communication Functions of Emoticons in Computer-mediated Communication. *CyberPsychology & Behavior, 11*(5), 595-597. https://doi.org/10.1089/cpb.2007.0132

Maiberger, T., Schindler, D., Koschate-Fischer, N. (2024). Let's face it: When and how facial emojis increase the persuasiveness of electronic word of mouth. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *52*, 119-139. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-023-00932-8

Memon, M. A., Ting, H., Cheah, J. H., Thurasamy, R., Chuah, F., & Cham, T. h. (2020). Sample Size for Survey Research: Review and Recommendations. *Journal of Applied Structural Equation Modeling, 4*(2), 1-20. http://dx.doi.org/10.47263/JASEM.4(2)01

Miller, H., Kluver, D., Thebault-Spieker, J., Terveen, L., & Hecht, B. (2016). Understanding Emoji Ambiguity in Context: The Role of Text in Emoji-Related Miscommunication. In Proceeding of the 10th International Conference on Web and Social Media. 152-161.

Neel, L. A. G., McKechnie, J. G., Robus, C. M., & Hand, C. J. (2023). Emoji Alter the Perception of Emotion in Affectively Neutral Text messages. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior, 47*(1), 83-97. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10919-022-00421-6

New York Post. (2024, December 4). People who use emoji are more emotionally intelligent, research shows. https://nypost.com/2024/12/04/health/texting-habit-means-you-have-higher-emotional-intelligence/

Prada, M., Rodrigues, D. L., Garrido, M. V., Lopes, D., Cavalheiro, B., & Gaspar, R. (2018). Motives, Frequencies and Attitudes toward Emoji and Emoticon Use. *Telematics and Informatics, 35*(7), 1925-1934. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2018.06.005

Pumble. (2023). Emoji Statistics in Internal Communication. https://pumble.com/learn/communication/emoji-statistics-internal-communication/

Ravi, R., Karmakar, M. (2023). The Problem of Gendered Emojis in Online Communication Platforms: A Study to Understand Digital Dependence on Using Emotions during Pandemic. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 13*(1), 257-265. DOI:https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1301.30

Riordan, M. A. (2017). Emojis as Tool for Emotion Work: Communicating Affect in Text Messages. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *36*(5), 549-567. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X17704238

Rodrigues, D., Prada, M., Gaspar, R., Garrido, M. V., & Lopes, D. (2018). Lisbon Emoji and Emoticon Database (LEED): Norms for Emoji and Emoticons in Seven Evaluative Dimensions. *Behavior Research Methods, 50*(1), 392-405. DOI 10.3758/s13428-017-0878-6

Shabir, G., Hameed, Y.M.Y., Safdar, G., Gilani, S.M.F.S. (2014a). Impact of Social Media on Youth: A Case Study of Bahawalpur City. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 3*(4), 132-151.

Shabir, G., Iqbal, Y.W., Safdar, G. (2014). Demographics‟ Differences in Social Networking Sites Use: What Communication Motives Does it Gratify? *International Journal of Social Work and Human Service Practice, 2*(5), 184-194.

Skovholt, K., Gronning, A., & Kankaanranta, A. (2014). The Communicative Functions of Emojis in Workplace Emails: Emoji as Emotion-Enhanced Markers. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 19*(4), 750-767. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12063

Suzuki, Z., Ujiie, Y., Takahashi, K. (2024). The Effects of Adding Emojis to Text Messages on Emotional Impressions and Recollection of Textual Content. *Japanese Psychological Research, 66*(1), 1-15. Doi: 10.1111/jpr.12536

Tang, y., Hew, K. F. (2019). Emoticon, Emoji, and Sticker Use in Computer-Mediated Communication: A Review of Theories and Research Findings. *International Journal of Communication, 13*, 2457-2483.

Telaumbanua, Y. A., Niat Telaumbanua, N. T., Halawa, M. D., Gulo, B., Halawa, D. M .E., Waruwu, E. K. (2024). The Use of Emojis in Language Communication on Social Media Platforms. *Journal of English Language and Education, 9*(4), 2597- 6850. https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v9i4.524

Tossell, C. C., Kortum, P., Shepard, C., Barg-Walokow, L. H., Rahmati, A., & Zhong, L. (2012). A Longitudinal Study of Emoticon Use in Text Messaging from Smartphones. *Computer in Human Behavior, 28(*2), 659-663. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2011.11.012

Verheijen, L., Mauro, T. (2024). Emoji use by children and adults: An exploratory corpus study. *Research in Corpus Linguistics, 13*(1), 57–85. https://doi.org/10.32714/ricl.13.01.04

Walther, J. B. ., & D'Addario, K, P. (2001). The Impact of Emoticons on Message Interpretation in Computer-Mediated Communication. *Social Science Computer Review, 19*(3), 324-347. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/089443930101900307