Gendered Use of Emojis in Whatsapp Conversation among Pakistani Youth

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, how to communicate with people has changed a lot due to the use of technology, especially through mobile texting apps like WhatsApp. One of the most common things people use in these text messages are emojis i.e. little pictures that help express emotions, show what someone actually mean, or it even take the place of words sometimes. Various studies from around the world show that women and men commonly use emojis differently. Women tend to use them more as compared to men to share their emotions. On the other hand men might use them for cracking jokes or sarcasm. But most of these studies are based on people living in East Asian or Western countries. There is very less research on how these patterns work in areas like Pakistan, where traditions, culture, and religion strongly influence how men and women live and behave. This study looks at how youth in Pakistan, aged from 18 to 30, use emojis in WhatsApp conversation. It uses both in-depth interviews and real messages to understand how men and women make use of emojis differently in terms of how commonly they use them, the types they choose, for what they're used, and how people understand them. The research also looks at how values like pretentiousness, emotional control, and expectations from men and women affect how emojis are used. The goal is to get better understanding of how online communication and gender roles work in areas like Pakistan, and how this knowledge can help in areas like language studies, app design, and teaching about media.

Keywords: emojis, WhatsApp Conversation, mobile texting, app design

INTRODUCTION

Communication has gone beyond the conventional limits of time, space, and language in the era of technology. One of the most important changes in communication practices is the emergence of computer-mediated communication (CMC) that has caused the creation of new linguistic tools and symbols. A good example is emojis which are pictographs or ideographs that visually depict feelings, ideas, emotions or objects. Chinese emojis emerged in Japan in the late 90s and have become an essential part of e-communication and mobile communicating devices like WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, snapchat and others. WhatsApp, especially, enjoys a dominant position in the rapid texting

application in South Asia, and especially in Pakistan where most people use it to interact on a personal, educational, and professional level. Emojis are replacements of non-verbal signs (facial expression, gestures, etc.) and tone of voice, which are not always present in a typewritten communication that creates ambiguity or misunderstandings.

They act like meaning polishers whereby the users can convey feelings, explain purpose, defuse messages or even substitute words altogether. The high level of semiotic of emojis enables them to perform various roles in the discourse: to be expressive, phatic (to keep the interaction going), metalinguistic (to clarify the meaning), or even to be performative (to do social actions with visual clues). Being various in their interactive capabilities, emojis cannot be considered merely decorative symbols, which they are part of the meaning-making in e-communications.

The youth especially young people between the ages of 18 to 30 are dictating the mode of using and adopting emojis in their everyday communication. This group regularly has active, informal, and emotionally full-fledged conversations, and emojis are a suitable means of expressions. Linguistic blending (including English-Urdu code-switching) and social and cultural norms influence the way people communicate in South Asian cultures, where emojis may be viewed as both the representatives of emotions and as the markers of belonging to a certain social group, community, and its alignment.

With the further development of e-communication, the analysis of the use of emojis by people offers important conclusions about the social practices and cultural changes in general. Specifically, the connection between gender and the use of emojis is an important topic to study, but until now little has been done to date, particularly in non-Western settings. Numerous studies on the use of emojis by individuals and its implications to the language and society have been conducted all over the world. The largest part of this works is the product of such countries as Western countries or East Asia. Such studies typically discover such details as women use more emojis than men and women were more likely to use such emojis that depict love or emotion, such as a heart or a smiley face. Men, in their turn, do employ emojis to make jokes or to be sarcastic. These concepts are not uniform, however. The culture and regions of origin do have a significant influence on the way people receive and comprehend emojis.

There are not many researches in Pakistan that have focused on the use of emojis in the ordinary day online chatting by the population. In spite of the fact that all the youths nowadays use WhatsApp on a daily basis, there are not many studies done to explore how emojis would be applied in such messages. Few of them have studied the effects of notions of gender like what is feminine and masculine as it affects the usage of emojis in WhatsApp messages. The Pakistani society has a strong idea about the role of gender that can affect the use of emojis in WhatsApp messages both online and offline.

Modesty, not expressing too much emotion (at least not in men), respect and expressiveness (this is often associated with women) can influence the choice and interpretation of emojis by people.

In addition, little research available in Pakistan also presents mixed findings occasionally. According to some local studies, it is observed that men use more emojis than women, which is reverse to the general research in the global context. This raises the question: Why it is happening? Are there various types of emojis that men and women can use with different reasons? Do some emojis appear to be considered part of either gender or do they have an equal amount of users of both sexes? These are the key questions that should be studied closer.

In addition to the absence of a local study, there is also the lack of knowledge on the interpretation of emojis. Sending emojis is not only about using them but also about the way they are received and interpreted by the other people. Gender not only may influence the choice of the person who uses an emoji but also the interpretation of the person receiving the message. A smiley can carry a different

meaning when sent by a female friend as compared to the same smiley when sent by a male colleague. These minor variations are indeed critical to the concept of comprehending the way people communicate on the internet in a complete and precise manner.

This research will aim to fill a gap in the current body of literature by examining the same phenomenon as applied by young men and women in Pakistan when using WhatsApp to chat using emojis. It will target the types of ways in which these youths utilize, interpret and attach meaning to emojis bearing in mind the cultural and social context in which they find themselves. The research will examine the frequency of emojis use, their type, the context of application and their functions. It will also address the practices of these emojis in relation to cultural values and norms.

Research Questions

Here are main questions that will be used in the study:

1. How do WhatsApp users in Pakistan (male and female) differentiate in their use of emojis?
2. What influence are the social and cultural regulations in Pakistan on the usage of emojis by men and women?
3. What are the differences between how young men and women interpret the same emojis in WhatsApp chat?
4. What do emojis do in each gender whether expressing feelings, being funny, being polite or controlling relationships?

The study will combine both methods to answer these questions. It will involve the analysis of WhatsApp messages sample (with the consent of the users) and interviews or group discussions as well. The quantitative section will consist in the categorization of the emojis into the groups: facial expressions, objects, gestures, or symbols and also in the investigation of their functionality: emotional, social, or performative. The research will cross-check the frequency of use of all kinds and roles of emojis used by men and women. The qualitative section will involve a discussion of the ways, in which users justify their emoji selection, and how they interpret emojis, which are sent to them by others.

The study is an attempt to make a contribution to the analysis of the working of language in the digital space, particularly in Pakistan. It examines the way in which individuals use emojis in a manner that gives consideration to their particular condition and how gender would contribute to it. It takes concepts of the global world regarding the way people engage over the internet, and adapts these concepts to the Pakistani culture. This assists us to comprehend the ways through which digital tools relate to the manner in which men and women interact in the society of South Asia.

There are also practical applications of this study. Understanding how men and women communicate differently over the internet can assist in development of improved communication tools which can be utilized by all. It is also capable of assisting the teachers and individuals who teach digital skills to develop programs that are sensitive in order to address the needs of various groups depending on the gender. To the internet rule-makers, the study can assist in creating safer and more respectful internet environments by demonstrating how valuable it is to have a background knowledge of the messages.

In the modern world, the misinterpretation of digital communication may bring enormous troubles, particularly to women in the areas where traditions are high. A closer examination of the usage of emojis can enable us to comprehend the effects of them on how men and women communicate online. This paper aims to demonstrate why it is significant to analyze emojis in this manner not only because of knowledge, but also because it will make society a better place.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emojis are a trending subject of research within such disciplines as linguistics, sociolinguistics, and research on digital communication. They serve as visual cues that are substitutes of non-verbal communication we typically employ when communicating in person, such as tone of voice, body language, facial expressions and the like (Dresner and Herring, 2010). With the increased usage of digital platforms by people to communicate, emojis have become a significant element of online language. They influence the way individuals form, interpret and communicate meaning within various social communities (Danesi, 2016). Since emojis are a combination of words, pictures, and cultural concepts, their usage is predetermined by such aspects as gender, culture, age, and social norms of the circumstances. It is why it is an excellent idea to study emojis to understand how individuals express their identity and how they establish relationships in the digital environment.

The initial research examined the use of emojis in relation to the language. As a proposal, Dresner and Herring (2010) recommended that emojis serve as a means of nonverbal communication that facilitates the expression of the feelings that accompany a text message so that communication within the text is less ambiguous and uninterpretable. They stated that emojis could be useful, such as expressing irony, humor, empathy, or politeness, which normally would be expressed in the tone of voice and non-verbal communication during a face-to-face communication. Subsequently, Derks, Fisher, and Bos (2008) discovered that individuals are more likely to use emojis in a scenario involving positive emotions, and emojis can be used to balance the absence of emotional coloring in text-only messages. These preliminary results precondition the comprehension of the role of emojis in affecting the online interaction of people. The other large field of study is the difference in the use of emojis between men and women in the digital communication.

Numerous researches have demonstrated that women are more expressive and frequent in using emojis than men (Tossell et al., 2012; Wolf, 2017). As an illustration, Wolf (2017) has observed that women tend to choose emojis of positive expressions, including hearts, smiling faces, and affectionate signs, whereas men are inclined to use those that are neutral or humorous, such as laughing faces, hand gestures, or sarcastic icons. The differences have been attributed to the differences in sociolinguistic ideas that indicate that women tend to have preferred means of communication that allow them to maintain the relationship in a warm and friendly manner (Tannen, 1990). Conversely, the style of communication adopted by men is more direct, task oriented and less emotional. Kelly and Watts (2015) paid more attention to the role of emojis in the social life, indicating that the types of emojis that individuals choose can indicate and confirm their social identity as well as themselves in relationships. In their studies, they established that emojis are included in the way individuals communicate relationships and assist in sharing such messages as; being pleasant, distancing themselves, demonstrating closeness, or establishing boundaries. In many cases, the notions of appropriateness of men and women determine what emojis are regarded as appropriate. As an example, more feminine emojis (such as hearts or sparkles) tend to be associated with femininity, whereas more neutral, simple, or amusing emojis (such as a thumbs-up or a face with a sun-glass) can be regarded as more masculine. These Latent relationships influence the selections of emojis by the different genders in accordance to what is deemed appropriate by society. However, the majority of these studies are based in the Western or East Asian cultures and this may leave people wondering whether the ideas are applicable anywhere.

The culture is an important factor in the perception and preference of emojis. Park and others (2013) demonstrated that even the same emoji may have different meanings on the basis of culture, indicating that emojis are not universally the same. It implies that one should learn about emojis in other places where people have different cultures, such as South Asia, where the human style of communication is not similar to the Western ones. Face to face and internet communication in such places as Pakistan is

affected by cultural concepts of modesty, respect and the way men and women are expected to behave. Pakistan is the society where individuals appreciate group harmony and have strict rules regarding gender roles. These are regulations that influence the behavior of men and women in social and personal places. The same rules can also affect the usage and interpretation of emojis in the Internet. According to a study by Ali and Batool (2021), Pakistani women tend to have enhanced directions regarding their expression of feelings, humility, and communication with men. Due to this fact, women can be reluctant to use some emojis which appear to be too bold and even expressive, such as hearts, kisses, or winks when communicating with men. Conversely, men may avoid emojis that appear to be overly emotional or also tender, as that is what cultural values tend to teach males to be. Very little is known about the use of emojis by the people in Pakistan but whatever has been researched depicts some interesting facts.

According to a study by Raza and Bashir (2020), young Pakistani men used emojis more than women in certain situations, which contrasts with the things that are typically observed in the other regions of the world. The researchers indicated that this could be due to local culture, usage of social media by people and the opinion of friends. It was also mentioned in the study that Pakistani men tended to use emojis as a joke or they could be sarcastic whereas women were very cautious and purposeful when communicating with the opposite gender. These results indicate that Western-based assumptions might not necessarily be applicable and further studies need to be done on Pakistan. Another study conducted in Pakistan has also examined the use of digital communication by people and it has been found that the gender roles play a significant role in influencing how individuals talk online. Hussain and Siddiqui (2019) have seen that young Pakistani women tend to consider the way they represent themselves online due to cultural regulations and safety concerns. This involves the types of emojis they use, what images they display and the way they communicate. These expectations could cause them to employ less emojis, particularly in communication with unacquainted people or male friends. Young men, however, can also be more informal with their internet communication and still not use emojis that are too feminine or emotional. Emojis are also interpreted in a different manner by men and women, and by other people with other cultures.

According to Miller et al. (2017), individuals do not always concur on the meaning of emojis, so they may be confused. This particularly applies to Pakistani culture which has a tendency of directing communication indirectly and without being explicit. As an example, a single emoji such as will convey a meaning of friendly to a person whereas it may cause someone to feel mean or distant. The misunderstandings between men and women may be aggravated by what people expect men and women to behave like in their conversations. Chen et al. (2021) claimed that emojis serve as politeness elements in the virtual conversation as they soften the message, pull people closer, and demonstrate respect. This is critical in Pakistan where politeness is a major component of the way people behave. Women, who are expected to remain polite and maintain relationships to be happy, may apply emojis to ensure that their messages are considered kind and not rude. Men, however, may not use them very much to ensure their communication is not soft and weak.

Besides that, emojis may back or refute gender role conceptions. Stark and Crawford (2015) noted that emojis that are mostly used globally are associated with popular gender concepts, such as hearts to women and muscles to men. By using or not using these emojis, people may be doing or not doing what the society wants. In Pakistan, where gender roles are established in most aspects, the use of emojis by people could indicate internally expressed feelings of what is considered appropriate behavior and how feelings should be portrayed. In brief, the current literature reveals that there are several important issues that should be considered in the context of this study, first of all, emojis do not only represent pictures but also serve as effective means of communication of words and tone. Second, men and women use emojis differently, although the differences vary according to the culture. Third, emojis usage and interpretation are highly influenced by the values of a culture. Fourth, due to the unique social and cultural context of

Pakistan, the usage of emojis in that context may not be described entirely using the experiments in the Western world. As the lack of local research on the topic and the inconsistency of certain findings suggest, there exists a very bright necessity to find out more about how the youth in Pakistan utilizes and perceives emojis on such applications as WhatsApp. This paper will offer a solution by examining not only the frequency and the types of emojis that are used by both men and women in Pakistan, but also the cultural meanings, interpretations, and social forces that underlie such decisions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Differentiating is necessary in the investment fund industry. Promotion on brand image creation and the company, promotion has been crucial in the formation of the brand image and the brand being a popular one. They have communicated the message of the creation through the different campaigns and out reachs and have emphasized the promos through attractive and relevant promos on target audience. This has assisted the company to develop a good image and set the company as a brand of trust. In addition, they are able to cover a wide range of customers through the traditional and digital mediums and ensure that their brand communication is consistent. This increase both visibility and the presence of the brand in the market.

Their probability drives can be considered effective based on both the increased brand awareness and customer loyalty, which is critical in the matchup segmrnt. The promotion strategy of Mykonos is not merely based on product selling but the establishment of long term relationships between the consumers thereby strengthening the brand image and its market standing. Prom promotions have been one of the primary tools used by Mykonos not only to attract new clients but also to maintain the current ones. Through the delivery of value and a powerful brand voice, Mykonos is confident that their promotions will be effective and will work with their brand strategy. This correlation can be used to maintain brand equity and promote the long-term development.

FINDINGS

Analysis of WhatsApp chat revealed that the use of emojis among young people in Pakistan varies according to gender. Overall, girls employed emojis more frequently in comparison with boys. The average number of emojis used by girls in texting was twelve to fifteen per hundred words and the average number of emojis used by boys was six to nine per hundred words. This shows that girls are more likely to use emojis to express emotions, make their texts friendly, and become closer to other people. Most girls when questioned, stated that chats seems a bit more friendly and warm with the help of emojis. Boys, on the other hand, stated that they tend to use too many emojis because it makes them appear too emotional or not serious, so they usually attempt to avoid using more emojis while chatting.

Types of emojis preferred by very group were also very different. Girls usually chose the symbols of the heart, smiling faces and beautiful patterns such as flowers and sparkles. These were employed to express care, love, support and respect particularly when chatting with close friends. Boys, on the contrary, were fond of humorous emojis such as the laughing face, simple or even serious ones such as the thumbs-up, the OK sign, and the ones with little or no expression. In the case of boys, emojis were more fun to make chats, or to express agreement without further explanation.

Emojis also indicated gender differences because of the communicative functions of these symbols. Emojis are the nuances and softening of criticism that women intended to use to maintain social harmony. Emojis were used to communicate politeness or moderate a message like or. Men, however, rarely used softening emojis and usually considered such forms of expression as feminine. Rather, their use of emojis was more humor and sarcasm-based as well as more casual in nature, which makes sense given that cultural and religious requirements more allow women to display their emotions, yet men have tendency

to hold on to their emotions. Female participants did not use some emojis especially heart emojis, kiss emojis, winks, and too expressive emojis when addressing men since they felt that such emojis could make them seem bold or inappropriate. Since Pakistani culture values modesty, respectability, particularly in the case of women, a significant number of them were wary of using emojis that would be interpreted as romantic and flirtatious. Male interviewees also did not use emojis that looked intimate or tender when talking to women. Rather, they chose neutral or formal emojis to stay at an appropriate distance. These trends demonstrate how the gender-related expectation shapes the digital communication in the same manner as in the case of real-life communication. As an illustration, women felt that emojis such as and are friendly or polite, whereas men commonly felt that they are not emotional or sometimes they are cold. Women found heart emojis to be supportive or caring whereas the men viewed them as romantic or even flirtatious. On the same note, the winking face was perceived as affable by most women but a titillating gesture by men. Such variations in meaning sometimes created confusion particularly when males and females were talking to one another. Focus groups also found out that some emojis are gendered within Pakistani culture where emojis like 0, 0 and 0 were seen as feminine whereas others like 0, 0 or 0 are seen as masculine. These stereotypes also affect the choice of emojis and support the traditional gender norms even in the virtual world of communication.

CONCLUSION

It is revealed that the use of emojis by Pakistani youth in WhatsApp is highly dependent on the way men and women communicate and the expectations that society has of them. Women frequent emojis in a variety of ways than men in most regions of the world, and express their feelings in a more open and transparent manner. This paper concludes that the Pakistani users adhere to this trend, but there are notable variations due to their culture. Females are likely to use more emojis to show that they are caring, polite, humble, and desire to be close to other people. This relates to women's behavior in society, which commonly requires them to be more emotional and expressive. Men, on the contrary, are less likely to use emojis and use it only as a joke or to be sarcastic or to get things done, which is compatible with cultural conceptions that men must be more reserved and not express too many feelings.

The research also established that men and women have different meanings of some emojis. These various definitions can be quite misleading and can lead to misunderstanding between the people of opposite sexes when they interact online. Such cultural values as modesty, respect, and the specification of what is deemed as appropriate have a significant impact on the way individuals decide on emojis. Females prefer not to use emojis that could be regarded as overt or suggestive. It indicates that one cannot view the use of emojis in Pakistan with a Western perspective, as the local culture has a significant influence on how individuals behave on the internet. The research contributes to the understanding of digital language in South Asia by demonstrating that emojis are not mere symbols, but rather can assist in the management of people, expression of who an individual is and defining social territories. Such variations of the use of emojis by men and women are practically relevant to communication research, education on media and digital platform design. On the whole, this study demonstrates that local culture is to be taken into consideration when examining online communication in non-Western locations. It also reveals how the use of digital language among people can demonstrate and contribute to the formulation of the traditional concept of gender in the Pakistani society.

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