

USE OF EMOJI TO EXEMPLIFY STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS E-LEARNING DURING COVID-19

Dr. Shamaila Amir^{*1}, Naheed Ashfaq Qureshi², Farheen Anjum³, Zuhaib Nishtar⁴,
Kashif Lodhi⁵

^{*1}Hamdard Institute of Education and Social Sciences, Hamdard University, Karachi, Pakistan, ²Assistant Professor, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan, ³Department of Psychology, Balochistan University of Information Technology Engineering and Management Sciences (BUIITEMS), Quetta, Pakistan, ⁴Department of Electrical Engineering and New Energy, China Three Gorges University, Yichang, China, ⁵Department of Management, Economics and Quantitative Methods, Università degli Studi di Bergamo via dei Caniana 2, 24127 Bergamo (BG), Italy,

^{*1}shaminhasan@hotmail.com, ²naheed.qureshi@umt.edu.pk, ³farheen.anjum@buitms.edu.pk,
⁴zuhaib.nishtar1991@gmail.com, ⁵k.lodhi@studenti.unibg.it

Corresponding Author: *

Received: 20 September, 2023 **Revised:** 25 October, 2023 **Accepted:** 02 November, 2023 **Published:** 08 November, 2023

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to talk about in what way emojis can define undergraduate students' attitudes towards e-learning during COVID-19. As electronic learning is growing at a noticeable rate to carry out the teaching-learning process, according to the current scenario, amid COVID-19, e-learning is the only solution to carry on the teaching and learning process. Educationists worldwide have switched to it in the hope of continuing efforts to teach their learners. According to Wagner (2008), e-learning makes reachable supplementary prospects for communication between the student and teacher amid content conveyance. According to Davis (1989), any individual can adopt any changes in technology depending upon their thoughts and opinions about how this new technology will benefit them. An emoji is a visual representation of an emotion, object, or symbol. To conduct the research, an activity worksheet was used in which students were supposed to use an emoji to define their attitude toward e-learning during COVID-19. They were also supposed to briefly express how that Emoji depicts their attitude by using adjectives and the way they feel about their e-learning experience. The sample size of 150 students has been analyzed by exploring theories of e-learning, especially Constructivism by McPherson and Nunes (2004) and Connectivism by Siemens and Downes (2004), along with the valuable viewpoint of various theorists regarding e-learning. Learners have used different emojis and adjectives to express their attitudes towards this modern process of learning. Data analysis revealed an unexpectedly not-so-positive attitude of students towards e-learning; for many, it is an unsatisfying, problematic, and anxious experience. Teachers play a key role in educational settings. Their perception and ability to use e-learning can also affect learners' attitudes towards e-learning. Although this research represents an effort to discover the attitude of undergraduate students towards e-learning during the COVID-19 environment, there were some limitations as well. Additionally, this research will open vistas for researchers who are interested in e-learning and the use of emojis.

Keywords: Emoji, adjectives, Learners, attitude, e-learning, Covid 19

INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus has affected every sector of the world, most importantly the "education sector."

According to an estimate, 300 million (and more) people faced interruption in their educational activities during this pandemic worldwide. And this

is the biggest disruption educational institutes have faced in ages. In the present era of ever-advancing technology, advancements were made every day, even before this pandemic. A huge amount of budget was utilized for technological advancements. According to estimates, in 2019, the expenditure on technology was US\$18.66 billion, and it was intended to increase up to \$350 Billion by 2025.

But, with COVID-19 spreading worldwide, there has been an enormous increase in the use of online learning applications, including language applications, video conferencing apps, and online tutoring tools.

Anyone who adopts E-learning, her interest in it will develop depending upon how accessible technology is to them and how inclined they are to use that technology. Information communication technology (ICT) 's reliability and convenience urge users to utilize E-learning best.

During this period, when everything, including communication, is going digital, one of the most important problems faced by people is that they need help to interact like they do when they meet in person. They are unable to share their facial expressions and bodily motions.

But thanks to "emoji," this problem can be solved.

Emoji is the best way to express emotions and feelings in digital communication.

Not just that, emojis have become very popular among the new generation, whose communication is almost impossible without these.

Yet, there is a whole lot of the population who, despite using Emoji daily, still needs to learn how to use them appropriately so that the actual and right meaning of the sentence is conveyed to the receiver. (Walther & D'Addario, 2001).

RESEARCH QUESTION

How does the use of emojis along with adjectives exemplify the experience of undergraduate students towards e-learning during COVID-19?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Constructivism Learning Theory

Constructivism theory is one of the most useful theories instructors use to teach students.

This theory thinks that learners form or construct their knowledge by themselves, and by their experiences, reality is determined.

In short, learners keep in mind the knowledge they have obtained and add new things they learn with time. So, due to this quality, every learner's experience is different and this difference makes their learning unique for them. This theory is very important as it describes student's learning ways. The teacher/instructor who has a strong grip on this theory admires the ideas brought up by their students, as they know that their ideas reflect their ability to learn. For being an ambitious instructor, the knowledge of learning theories is equally important as the education itself. An instructor should know how these theories affect their teaching and their student's learning.

Principles of Constructivism

The theory of constructivism comprises many rules and procedures based on which this theory functions. To understand this theory, it is important to seek knowledge about its principles and how it can be applied to the learners/students.

- Knowledge is constructed.
- People learn to learn as they learn.
- Learning is an active process.
- Learning is a social activity.
- Learning is contextual.
- Knowledge is personal.
- Learning exists in the mind.
- Motivation is key to learning.
- Methodology

Constructivism in Education

One of the major applications of this theory is in a classroom setting. The teacher must know how to practice this theory on their students to enhance their learning. Like setting the atmosphere so students feel free to interact with the teacher and with each other, hence reading their knowledge by sharing ideas.

The major role of the teacher is to master the previous knowledge and incorporate the new knowledge in students depending upon their level of understanding.

It is crucial to comprehend how educators can implement constructivism in their classrooms, fostering an exceptional learning atmosphere for students. Within constructivist learning environments, teachers play a pivotal role in establishing a collaborative setting, where students are actively engaged in their educational journey.

Rather than serving as traditional instructors, teachers act as facilitators of learning. They are tasked with the responsibility of grasping students' existing ideas and comprehension levels and subsequently tailoring their instruction to align with these preexisting notions. Teachers must be prepared to adjust their instructional approaches to cater to the unique levels of understanding exhibited by individual learners.

Connectivism Learning Theory

Connectivism is a comparatively advanced learning theory. This theory proposes the combination of general information, hypotheses, thoughts, and comprehensive knowledge so that the students can utilize it in a productive manner. It promotes learning not only in a particular individual but also in that of media (digital, social, blogs), online networks, or information databases.

This theory believes that technology has become a crucial and fundamental contributor to the learning process; it promotes and provides opportunities for decision-making, problem-solving, and handling complex situations in a well-structured manner, which includes:

- Co-operation
- Discourse
- Accountability
- Vast range of perspectives

History of Connectivism Learning Theory

In 2005, the theory of connectivism was initially formulated by George Siemens and Stephen Downes. In the year 2004, George Siemens issued an online article titled "Learning as a Network Creation." In the following year, 2005, Stephen Downes issued an article titled "An Introduction to Connective Knowledge."

Though being of different perspectives, both "Siemens and Downes" have since perpetuated and addressed subject. Siemens' center of attention is the Social aspects of Connectivism, whereas Downes' center of attention is the non-human appliances and machine-based learning.

This relatively new digital era has demonstrated its importance in the student's learning processes, including the increasing momentum at which they grasp and access information.

What are the Principles of Connectivism?

Connectivism has been constructed on previously authorized theories. It acknowledges the change.

Siemens and Downes have established eight main principles of connectivism.

The principles comprise the following:

Learning and knowledge rest in the diversity of opinions.

Learning is a process of connecting.

Learning may reside in non-human appliances.

Learning is more critical than knowing.

Nurturing and maintaining connections are needed for continual learning.

The ability to see connections between fields, ideas, and concepts is a core skill.

Accurate, up-to-date knowledge is the aim of all connectivist learning.

The skill of Problem-solving, handling complex situations, and decision-making is a whole learning process of its own. All that we know of today may be different on another day. Information keeps on updating on such a rapid momentum that one thing may seem right today, but the same thing may be proven wrong tomorrow.

Before the establishment of the principles above, a majority of the studies/ theories suggested that students are merely receivers of the information they are being provided with.

However, the Connectivism Learning Theory has proven that information has a vast range; it is administered throughout various network connections, and connectedness informs learning.

Connectivism in the Classroom

Understanding Connectivism and its implementation in the classroom are two completely different things. Considering the perspectives of a connective, the learning process runs in a downward manner, i.e., from the teacher to the student. Unlike conventional teaching methods, such as constructivism and cognitivism, where the focus is on the teacher's role in guiding students, in this context, the teacher's role is to stimulate and nurture their students' motivation and the growth of their learning. The learning process and method are eventually up to the learner himself, having the ability to make decisions, solve problems, and accentuate and enhance their learning experience, process, and network.

To introduce connectivism in a classroom, the teacher must institute new opportunities for learning digitally. To name a few: Short Online programs or courses, different webinars, Blogs, and various social networks.

METHODOLOGY

A written questionnaire/worksheet has been used to conduct the research.

A sample size of 150 undergraduate Learners from a private University has been analyzed by exploring theories of e-learning, especially Constructivism by McPherson and Nunes (2004) and Connectivism by Siemens and Downes (2004), along with the valuable viewpoint of various theorists regarding e-learning. Respondents were from the age group of 18-25 years. These respondents were from various departments and disciplines, largely from the 4th semester.

Data Analysis



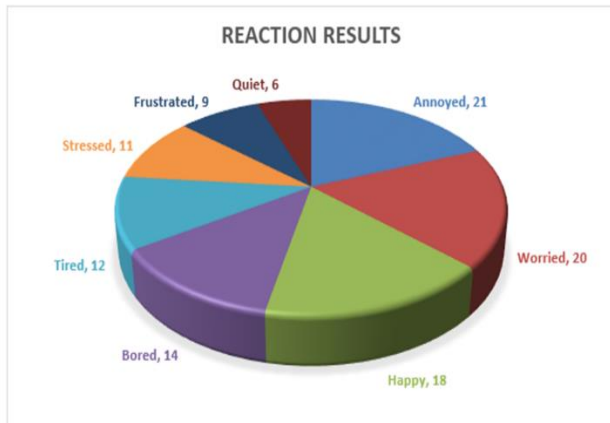
Serial #	Name	ID	Emoji	How this emoji defines your attitude towards e-learning during COVID-19
3	Ember	1501854527	😞	
5	Latif	1501854527	😞	
7	Hafiz	1501854527	😞	
20	Imam			COVID-19 LEARNING DURING LOCKDOWN E- LEARNING DEFINES YOUR HOW THIS EMOJI

SERIAL #	NAME	ID	EMOJI	HOW THIS EMOJI DEFINES YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS E-LEARNING DURING COVID-19
1	Muhammad Anwar	1501807591	😊	I was really happy while taking online classes during COVID-19 as I was taking my all lectures on my phone.
2	Muhammad Anwar	1501807593	😞	I was really tired while taking online classes during COVID-19 as I was working for my grades internet was not available all the time and there are many issues like background noise at home, technical problems etc.
3	Umera Nadeem	1501807594	😞	I was very disappointed while taking online classes during COVID-19. I am very worried about my grades.
4	Humaira Azeed	1501814101	😞	As we all know an empty mind is devil's workshop so during COVID-19 online classes are the only thing which is peaceful and stress free. Because of the pandemic situation we all are stressed so e-learning helps us to divert our mind and helps us to divert negative thoughts and the feeling.
5	Sania	1501814102	😊	I was really happy while taking online classes during COVID-19, as I am interested in learning online.
6	Duaa Siddique	1501807591	😞	I am totally frustrated by this e-learning system as it is not giving me any benefits or concepts it's just a formality to continue my studies.

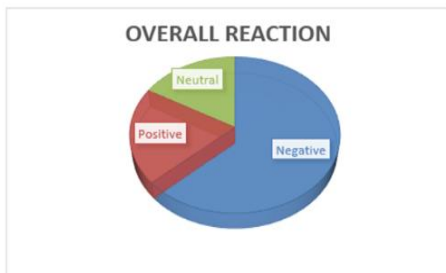
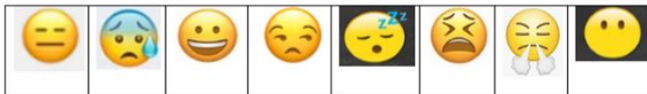
8	Fatima Aimal	1501814101	😞	I'm not satisfied with the e-learning system as I have to work a little harder to learn the material.
9	Muhammad AbduJah	1501814103	😞	I was bored while taking online classes during COVID-19, as I was thinking about exams that how it would be taken online.
10	Saniya Sadiq	1501814109	😞	Online classes are full of distraction, impatience and impatience because we didn't focus on them properly as there are so much noise in our surroundings, e-learning isn't as peaceful as classroom.
11	Alina about Faez	1501814108	😞	I am happy while taking online classes because I really enjoy online learning, and learn a lot of things.
12	Mariaa Bano	1501814157	😞	I was very scared while taking online classes during COVID-19 because I was very depressed about my grades and class.
13	Muhammad Ramzan	1501808703	😞	Difficult to learn online classes due to the least understanding of some courses.
14	Amira Azeed	1501808705	😞	I was really happy while taking online classes during COVID-19, as I am interested in learning online and really enjoyed online learning.
15	Maimoon	1501818080	😞	E-learning is the best option and frustration, it may cause lack of abilities in a learner.

16	Savera Abbas	1501814106	😞	The E-LEARNING has made me worried about my grades due to a lot of work burden along with constant deadlines. It's getting difficult for me to concentrate on online lectures as they are easily distracting because of home environment and also lack of proper routine is making my motivation towards studies to almost zero. Although teachers are cooperative to some extent but the situation is strenuous to handle.
17	Muhammad Talha Ishaq	1501814107	😞	I was very disappointed while taking online classes during COVID-19 due to poor internet connection. I am also worried about my grades because I am not attending classes.
18	Kashaf Fatima	1501814123	😞	I am really tired of this e-learning. I am already stressed due to quarantine. E-learning makes me more stressed about my grades. I can't get my 100% effort in online exams. Online classes are useless because physical learning is absent.
19	Moham Khalil	1500908073	😞	I come to my home in south Punjab and this is the biggest issue internet connection and I am really worried about my study. This is my last semester of my degree.
20	Muhammad Ali Farid	1501807594	😞	I am scared of my grades while taking online learning because online learning is not understanding when learning in class.
21	Maria Saheem	1501807591	😞	I was very disappointed and stressed while taking online classes because teachers and parents assign a

22	Fatma Hussain	1501814106	😞	I am really annoyed due to this e-learning as it is not giving me any benefits in fact it has made me lose my interest in studies because it requires strong self-motivation and time management skills.
23	Muhammad Farhan Shaukat	1500908084	😞	As we are in an era of e-learning, so being a student of the 21st century it is much thoughtful of what next is going to happen to my results, my degree and especially my future. As each and every teacher just uses a different way of teaching and assigns home activities completely in a different manner, that leads to much confusion. And there are many thoughts in my mind just because of the unsatisfactory e-learning mechanism.
24	Nouman Ahmad	1501808709	😞	Online studying is not helping at all. There is no sense of what we are being taught. There is no question for us who have to go outside for internet packages and material for assignments. Our future must be stopped being played immediately.
25	Muhammad Farhan Raza	1501808019	😞	E-learning experience is awesome as you don't have to get up early for the morning classes. Or have you taken in winters. Or there's no traveling of 40 minutes. To the university. Or for the Online class on my bed.



After getting to know the experience of 150 students through Emojis, we can gather that majority of the 8 top most used emojis or the most experienced emotions fall into negative category.



In today's world, emojis have taken over writing as they are more convenient for describing the message, filled with emotions to the receiver.

Using the right Emoji has made it convenient to express feelings (one sender is feeling at that particular time) accurately, which cannot be expressed otherwise without using these. Emojis help provide users with social and psychological satisfaction, which they achieve when their message is delivered effectively.

Moreover, emojis are used for the formulation of social bonds. They are used for expressing different sociocultural variances along with different characteristics (Derks, Bos, & Von Grumbkow, 2007; Schnoebelen, 2012; Park et al., 2013). Different research has discovered that emojis are being used widely in various cultures and values.

Learners have used different emojis and adjectives to express their attitudes towards this modern process of learning. Data analysis revealed an unexpectedly

not-so-positive attitude of students towards e-learning. For many, it is an unsatisfying, problematic, and anxious experience. They used adjectives like bored, stressed, frustrated, annoyed, worried, etc. The use of such adjectives gives an insight into the fear and anxiety created through online modes of education among undergraduate students.

Teachers play a key role in educational settings; their perception and ability to use e-learning can also affect learners' attitudes toward e-learning. Although this research represents an effort to discover the attitude of undergraduate students towards e-learning during the COVID-19 environment, there were some limitations as well. Additionally, this research will open vistas for researchers who are interested in e-learning and the use of emojis. They can further investigate the issue.

CONCLUSION

The result of the research was unexpected for us researchers since we thought that learners would enjoy and welcome this new shift. It revealed an unexpectedly not-so-positive attitude of students toward e-learning, and for many, it is an unsatisfying, problematic, and anxious experience. Further, the research could help us trace the reasons, but this could be because the learners were very much used to the traditional classroom teaching-learning mode.

REFERENCES

- Adewole-Odeshi, E. (2014). Attitude of Students Towards E-learning in South-West Nigerian Universities: An Application of Technology Acceptance Model Universities: An Application of Technology Acceptance Mod. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-Journal)*. Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=2504&context=libphilprac>
- Aixia, D., & Wang, D. (2011). Factors influencing learner attitudes toward e-learning and Development of an e-learning environment based on the integrated e-learning platform. *International Journal of e-Education, e-Business, e-Management and e-Learning*,

- 1(3), 264-268. Retrieved May 4, 2013, from <http://www.ijeecce.org/Papers/043Z0031.pdf>
- Aktaruzzaman, M., Shamim, M., & Clement, C. (2011). Trends and issues with integrating ICT in teaching-learning for the future world of education. *International Journal of Engineering & Technology*, 11(3), 114-119. Retrieved July 6, 2011 from <http://www.ijens.org/Vol%2011%20I%2003/118603-0202%20IJET-IJENS.pdf>
- Andersson, A., & Grönlund, A. (2009). A conceptual framework for E-learning in developing countries: A critical review of research challenges. *The Electronic Journal on Information Systems in Developing Countries*, 38(2), 1-16.
- Connectivism (Siemens, Downes). (2017, February 4). Retrieved May 6, 2020, from <https://www.learning-theories.com/connectivism-siemens-downes.html>
- Davis, F. D., (1989). Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, and User Acceptance of Information Technology. *Management Information Systems Quarterly*, 13(3), pp318--339.
- Derks, D., Bos, A. E., & Von Grumbkow, J. (2007). Emoticons and social interaction on the Internet: the importance of social context. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 23(1), 842–849.
- Farooq, U.M., Javid, Z.C., (2012), Attitude of Students towards E-learning: A Study of English Language Learners at Taif University English Language Centre. *NUML Journal of Critical Inquiry, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad Pakistan*, Vol 10 (2) December 2012
- Hussain, I. (2007). A Study Of Student's Attitude Towards Virtual Education In Pakistan. *The Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*. 8.
- Li, C., & Lalani, F. (2020, April 29). The COVID-19 pandemic has changed education forever. This is how. Retrieved May 7, 2020, from <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-education-global-covid19-online-digital-learning/>
- McPherson, M. & Nunes, M.B. (2004). Developing innovation in online learning: an action Research framework. London: Routledge Flamer.
- Rhema, A., & Miliszewska, I. (2014). Analysis of student attitudes towards e-learning: The case Of engineering students in Libya. *Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology*, 11, 169-190. Retrieved from <http://iisit.org/Vol11/IISITv11p169-190Rhema0471.pdf>
- Siemens, G. (2004). *Connectivism: A Learning Theory for the Digital Age*. Retrieved on 6-5-2020 from <http://www.elearnspace.org/Articles/connectivism.htm>
- Siemens, G. (2005). *Connectivism: A learning theory for the digital age*. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning*, 2(1), 3-10.
- Thakkar, S., & Joshi, H. (2017). Students Attitude Towards E-Learning. *International Journal of Advance Engineering and Research Development*. 4. 209-213. 10.21090/IJAERD.15380.
- Wagner, N., Hassanein, K., & Head, M. (2008). Who is responsible for E-learning in Higher Education? A Stakeholders" Analysis. *Educational Technology & Society*, 11 (3), 26-36.
- Walther, J. B., & D'Addario, K. P. (2001). The impacts of emoticons on message interpretation In computer-mediated communication. *Social Science Computer Review*, 19(3), 324–347.
- Western Governors University. (2020, October 21). What Is Constructivism? Retrieved from <https://www.wgu.edu/blog/what-constructivism2005.html>
- Western Governors University. (2021, May 27). *Connectivism Learning Theory*. Retrieved from <https://www.wgu.edu/blog/connectivism-learning-theory2105.html>
- Working and learning online during a pandemic. (n.d.). Retrieved May 6, 2020, from <https://www.pearson.com/news-and-research/working-learning-online-during-pandemic.html>