Expressive Pixels: The Influence of Emoji on Tone Interpretation in Digital Communication

Harvey D. Cabajar[1], Doniza A. Sapuras[2], Abegail S. Minguita[3], Mechel T. Comeda[4], Darlene Nechole O. Bato[5], Francis Levi Justhe A. Catulay[6], Nathaniel L. Porta[7], Oscar S. Recto, Jr.[8]

[1,2,3,4,5,6,7]Senior High School Student, Dapa National High School, Dapa Surigao del Norte, Philippines

[8]Teacher, Dapa National High School, Dapa, Surigao del Norte, Philippines

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.913COM0058

Received: 14 December 2025; Accepted: 20 December 2025; Published: 03 January 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of emojis on tone interpretation in digital communication among Senior High School students of Dapa National High School during the School Year 2025–2026. A quantitative descriprive research design was employed, and data were collected from 253 Grade 11 and Grade 12 students using a validated survey questionnaire. Results indicated that students perceived emojis as moderately influential in interpreting tone, with the type of emoji used obtaining the highest mean ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 0.63$), followed by preferred communication platform ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.75$), frequency of emoji use ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 0.96$), and message context ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.75$). Analysis of variance revealed no significant differences when respondents were grouped according to age and sex ($p > 0.05$); however, a significant difference was found in frequency of emoji use when grouped by grade level ($F = 34.80$, $p < 0.001$). Significant differences were also observed based on preferred communication platform in terms of frequency of emoji use ($F = 7.95$, $p < 0.001$). Pearson's correlation showed significant relationships between message context and type of emoji used ($r = 0.24$, $p < 0.001$), between preferred communication platform and frequency of emoji use ($r = 0.22$, $p < 0.001$), and between preferred communication platform and message context ($r = 0.50$, $p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that emojis play an important role in clarifying tone in digital communication, particularly when used appropriately across platforms and contexts. These findings indicate that emojis play an important role in clarifying tone in digital communication, particularly when used appropriately across platforms and contexts. In light of these results, it is recommended that students be encouraged to develop greater awareness of context-appropriate and platform-sensitive emoji use to minimize misinterpretation and enhance clarity in digital communication.

Keywords- Emoji Use, Tone Interpretation, Digital Communication, Senior High School Students, Communication Platforms

INTRODUCTION

Digital communication has become an essential part of everyday interaction, especially among students, as conversations increasingly take place through messaging applications and social media platforms. Unlike face-to-face communication, text-based interaction lacks non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and gestures, which often leads to ambiguity and misinterpretation of messages. To address this limitation, emojis have emerged as visual symbols that help express emotions, intentions, and reactions. By providing additional emotional cues, emojis help clarify meaning and reduce misunderstandings in digital conversations (Sampietro, 2020).

Previous studies have shown that emojis function as paralinguistic cues that enrich text-based communication by supporting tone interpretation and emotional clarity. Sampietro (2020) emphasized that emojis play an important role in managing rapport and expressing affect in digital discourse, particularly in informal online interactions. Despite these findings, much of the existing literature has focused on adult users or general populations, with limited attention given to Senior High School students who are among the most frequent users of emoji-enhanced communication.

This study addresses this gap by examining how emojis influence tone interpretation in digital communication among Senior High School students of Dapa National High School. It focuses on factors such as type of emoji used, frequency of emoji use, message context, and preferred communication platform. By understanding how students interpret tone through emojis, the study aims to contribute insights that support clearer, more effective, and emotionally expressive digital communication among learners.

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKROUND

This study is anchored on Media Richness Theory developed by Daft and Lengel (1986), which explains that the effectiveness of communication depends on the richness of the medium used to convey information. According to the theory, richer communication media are better able to transmit complex messages because they provide multiple cues, immediate feedback, and emotional expression, while lean media—such as plain text—often lack these elements, making tone interpretation more difficult. In the context of digital communication among students, text-based messaging platforms are considered lean media due to the absence of non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and vocal tone. Emojis function as visual symbols that enrich digital messages by adding emotional and contextual cues, thereby increasing the richness of text-based communication. By conveying emotions, reactions, and intentions, emojis help reduce ambiguity and support clearer interpretation of tone in online interactions. Guided by Media Richness Theory, this study views emojis not merely as decorative elements but as communicative tools that enhance message clarity and emotional understanding. The theory therefore provides a strong foundation for examining how emojis influence tone interpretation in digital communication by compensating for the limitations of text-based platforms and improving the effectiveness of student interactions.

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to determine the influence of emojis on tone interpretation in digital communication among Senior High School students of Dapa National High School. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, grade level, frequency of emoji use, and preferred communication platform? (2) What are the factors influencing tone interpretation in digital communication in terms of type of emoji used, frequency of emoji use, message context, and preferred communication platform? (3) Is there a significant difference in tone interpretation when respondents are grouped according to their demographic profile? and (4) Is there a significant relationship among the identified influencing factors and the respondents' ability to interpret tone in digital messages?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to examine how emojis influence tone interpretation in digital communication among Senior High School students of Dapa National High School. The quantitative component focused on collecting numerical data through a structured survey to identify patterns, trends, and relationships among variables such as type of emoji used, frequency of emoji use, message context, and preferred communication platform.

Data were gathered using an adapted questionnaire modified from established instruments developed by Aranas et al. (2024), Prada et al. (2018), and Sampietro (2020) to ensure alignment with the objectives and local context of the study. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: Part I covered the demographic profile of the respondents; Part II measured the influence of emojis on tone interpretation using a four-point Likert scale; and Part III provided qualitative guide questions to capture deeper insights into students' experiences. The instrument was reviewed and refined to ensure clarity, relevance, and suitability for Senior High School respondents. A total of 253 students, composed of 139 Grade 11 and 114 Grade 12 learners, participated in the study.

Prior to data collection, permission was secured from the school administration, and coordination with class advisers was conducted to facilitate proper implementation. The purpose of the study was clearly explained to the respondents, participation was voluntary, and confidentiality of responses was strictly maintained. Parental consent was obtained when necessary, and all responses were anonymized. Ethical standards were upheld

throughout the research process to protect the rights and welfare of the participants and to ensure the credibility and integrity of the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Profile of Respondents as to the Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
16-17	221	87.4%
18-21	32	12.6%
Total	253	100.00%

Table 1 shows the age profile of the respondents. Out of the 253 Senior High School students who participated in the study, the majority are aged 16–17, with 221 respondents or 87.4 percent. Meanwhile, only 32 respondents or 12.6 percent belong to the 18–21 age group. This indicates that most of the participants are within the expected age range for Grade 11 and Grade 12 students, suggesting that the sample is largely composed of younger senior high learners.

This pattern is important because it implies that the findings of the study mainly reflect the perceptions and digital communication experiences of students in the 16–17 age bracket. Since this group constitutes most of the respondents, the results on emoji use and tone interpretation are more representative of students at this developmental stage. The smaller proportion of older respondents means that the conclusions may be less reflective of the experiences of students aged 18–21, who may interpret tone or use emojis differently due to increased maturity or broader exposure to digital environments.

Understanding this age distribution is relevant to the study's objectives, as age can influence communication behavior and interpretation in digital contexts. With most respondents belonging to a relatively narrow age range, the data provide a focused view of how emojis affect tone interpretation among typical Senior High School students. This also suggests that any communication strategies or school-based initiatives derived from the findings would be most applicable to students within this dominant age group, where digital communication practices are actively developing.

Table 2 Profile of Respondents as to the Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	125	49.4%
Female	128	50.6%
Total	253	100.00%

Table 2 presents the profile of the respondents as to sex. Out of the 253 Senior High School students who participated in the study, 125 are male, representing 49.4 percent of the total, while 128 are female, accounting for 50.6 percent. This indicates that female respondents slightly outnumber male respondents, but the difference between the two groups is minimal. Overall, the distribution shows that both sexes are almost equally represented in the sample.

A closer look at the data reveals that the gap between male and female respondents is only 1.2 percent, which suggests a well-balanced sample in terms of sex. This near-equal representation is important because it minimizes gender bias and allows the findings to reflect the perspectives and experiences of both male and female students. With neither group dominating the sample, comparisons related to emoji use and tone interpretation are more reliable and less likely to be skewed toward one sex.

This balanced sex distribution strengthens the credibility of the study's results, as it ensures that conclusions drawn about digital communication and tone interpretation apply to both male and female Senior High School students. Since communication behaviors and interpretations may vary between sexes, having an almost equal

number of respondents from each group supports a more comprehensive and fair analysis of how emojis influence tone in digital communication within the school context.

Table 3 Profile of Respondents as to the Grade Level

Grade Level	Frequency	Percentage
Grade 11	139	54.9%
Grade 12	114	45.1%
Total	253	100.00%

The table presents the profile of the respondents as to grade level. Out of the 253 Senior High School students who participated in the study, 139 respondents or 54.9 percent are from Grade 11, while 114 respondents or 45.1 percent are from Grade 12. This shows that Grade 11 students slightly outnumber Grade 12 students, although both grade levels are well represented in the sample. The distribution indicates that the respondents are fairly balanced across the two senior high school levels, with a small margin favoring Grade 11.

Examining the pattern, the higher proportion of Grade 11 students suggests that the data slightly leans toward learners who are at the entry stage of senior high school. Grade 11 students are often in a period of adjustment, as they are adapting to new academic demands, specialized subjects, and increased exposure to digital communication for school-related and social purposes. Meanwhile, Grade 12 students, although fewer in number, still make up a substantial portion of the respondents and represent learners who have more experience with senior high academic requirements and online interactions.

With Grade 11 students forming the larger group, the findings of the study are likely to reflect communication behaviors, emoji usage, and tone interpretation patterns common among learners who are still transitioning into senior high school. These students may be more exploratory in their digital communication practices compared to Grade 12 students, who may already have more established habits. This distribution is important when interpreting the results, as the conclusions may be more applicable to Grade 11 students than to those nearing graduation. For school-based programs or communication initiatives derived from the study, this means that strategies and messages should be designed to suit the needs, maturity level, and digital experiences of students in the earlier stage of senior high school, while still considering the perspectives of Grade 12 learners.

Table 4 Profile of the Respondents as to the frequency of emoji use

Frequency of emoji use	Frequency	Percentage
Rarely	14	5.5%
Sometimes	80	31.6%
Often	87	34.4%
Always	72	28.5%
Total	253	100.0%

Table 4 presents the profile of the respondents as to the frequency of emoji use in digital communication. Out of the 253 respondents, the largest group reported using emojis often, with 87 students or 34.4 percent. This is followed by those who always use emojis, numbering 72 or 28.5 percent. Meanwhile, 80 respondents or 31.6 percent indicated that they sometimes use emojis, while only 14 respondents or 5.5 percent reported rare emoji use. The data clearly show that the majority of students regularly incorporate emojis into their digital messages.

Looking at the pattern, the results suggest that emoji use is a common and habitual part of communication among Senior High School students. With more than half of the respondents falling under the “often” and “always” categories, emojis appear to be an established tool for expressing tone, emotion, and intent in online interactions. The small number of students who rarely use emojis indicates that minimal emoji use is uncommon within this group. This widespread usage highlights how emojis have become embedded in students’ everyday digital communication practices rather than being used occasionally or selectively.

This distribution is important for interpreting the findings of the study, as frequent emoji use means that respondents are familiar with emojis and their meanings. As a result, their perceptions of tone interpretation are likely shaped by regular exposure and experience. For communication-related initiatives or IEC activities based on the study, this implies that emojis can be effectively used as part of messages aimed at students, since most of them already engage with emojis frequently. However, it also suggests the need to guide students on appropriate and context-sensitive emoji use to avoid misinterpretation, especially since emojis play a significant role in how messages are understood in their daily digital interactions.

Table 5 Profile of the Respondents as to Preferred Platform

Platform	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Messenger	133	52.6%
Instagram	66	26.1%
Tiktok	44	17.4%
Others	10	4.0%
Total	253	100.00%

The profile of the respondents as to preferred digital communication platform shows that Messenger is the most commonly used platform, with 133 respondents or 52.6 percent indicating it as their primary choice. This is followed by Instagram with 66 respondents (26.1%), TikTok with 44 respondents (17.4%), and other platforms with 10 respondents (4.0%). The data indicate that more than half of the students rely on Messenger for everyday communication, while a smaller but notable proportion use visually driven social media platforms.

This pattern suggests that students prefer platforms that allow fast, direct, and interactive messaging. Messenger's dominance may be attributed to its accessibility, integration with Facebook, and ease of real-time conversations, which support frequent emoji use and immediate tone expression. Meanwhile, Instagram and TikTok, though less preferred for direct messaging, remain relevant spaces where emojis are used alongside images, videos, and short-form content, shaping how tone and emotion are conveyed in more visual contexts.

The distribution of preferred platforms is important for understanding where tone interpretation through emojis most often occurs. Since most interactions happen on Messenger, the findings of the study largely reflect communication norms and emoji interpretations within this platform. For school-based communication strategies or IEC initiatives, this implies that Messenger is the most effective channel for reaching students, while content adapted for Instagram and TikTok can complement outreach efforts. Aligning messages with the platforms students use most increases the likelihood that information is clearly understood and appropriately interpreted.

Table 6 Type of emoji used as possible factor

Indicators	**MEAN**	**SD**	**VI**	**QD**
1. Different types of emojis influence how a message's tone is understood.	3.36	0.61	Strongly Agree	Highly Influential
2. Facial emojis help convey the sender's emotions more clearly.	3.19	0.53	Agree	Moderately Influential
3. Object-based emojis contributes to the interpretation of tone in an online conversation.	3.00	0.62	Agree	Moderately Influential
4. Symbolic emojis (e.g., ❤ , ☮) add meaning that affects how a message is perceived.	3.13	0.67	Agree	Moderately Influential
5. The choice of emoji type changes the emotional impression of a digital message.	3.25	0.74	Strongly Agree	Highly Influential
Average	3.18	0.63	Agree	Moderately Influential

Legend: SD-Standard Deviation, VI- Verbal Interpretation, QD- Qualitative Description

Table 6 shows the respondents' assessment of the type of emoji used as a factor influencing tone interpretation in digital communication. The overall average mean of 3.18, interpreted as *Agree* and *Moderately Influential*, indicates that students generally perceive emoji type as an important element in understanding message tone. The highest mean scores were obtained by the statements *"Different types of emojis influence how a message's tone is understood"* (M = 3.36) and *"The choice of emoji type changes the emotional impression of a digital message"* (M = 3.25), both described as *Highly Influential*. These results suggest that respondents are aware that not all emojis function in the same way when conveying emotion and intent.

The data further reveal that facial emojis are viewed as more effective in clearly expressing emotions, while object-based and symbolic emojis also contribute to tone interpretation but to a slightly lesser degree. This implies that emojis closely resembling human expressions are easier for students to interpret, as they directly signal emotions such as happiness, sadness, or anger. In contrast, symbolic and object-based emojis may require more contextual understanding, making their influence on tone more dependent on how and where they are used.

These findings align with the study of Prada et al. (2018), which emphasized that different emoji types convey varying levels of social and emotional information that shape message interpretation. The results support the idea that emojis are not merely decorative but serve as meaningful visual cues that affect how digital messages are emotionally received. Therefore, selecting an appropriate emoji type is crucial in digital communication, as it can either clarify the intended tone or increase the risk of misunderstanding if used inaccurately.

Table 7 Frequency of emoji use as possible factor

Frequency of emoji use	**Mean**	**SD**	**Verbal Interpretation**	**Qualitative Description**
1. Consistent emojis can make messages clearer and easier to understand.	3.22	0.61	Agree	Moderately Influential
2. Consistent emoji use improves clarity in digital conversations.	3.10	0.59	Agree	Moderately Influential
3. Using emojis often makes the intended tone more recognizable.	3.14	0.78	Agree	Moderately Influential
4. Regular emoji usage strengthens the emotional connection in online communication.	3.33	2.02	Strongly Agree	Highly Influential
5. Increasing emoji use reduces the chances of misinterpreting the tone.	2.93	0.80	Agree	Moderately Influential
Average Mean	***3.14***	***0.96***	***Agree***	***Moderately Influential***

Table 7 presents the respondents' assessment of the **frequency of emoji use** as a possible factor influencing tone interpretation in digital communication. The table shows an overall average mean of **3.14**, verbally interpreted as *Agree* and qualitatively described as *Moderately Influential*. Among the indicators, the statement *"Regular emoji usage strengthens the emotional connection in online communication"* obtained the highest mean (M = 3.33), interpreted as *Strongly Agree* and *Highly Influential*. The remaining items yielded mean scores ranging from 2.93 to 3.22, all falling within the *Agree* category.

The results indicate that students generally perceive frequent emoji use as helpful in making digital messages clearer and more emotionally expressive. Respondents agree that consistent use of emojis improves tone recognition, enhances clarity, and reduces the likelihood of misinterpretation. However, the overall rating of *Moderately Influential* suggests that while frequency contributes to tone understanding, it does not act alone. Other elements such as message context, emoji type, and platform features also interact with frequency to shape how tone is interpreted in digital conversations.

These findings are supported by Jaeger and Ares (2019), who found that regular emoji use enhances emotional comprehension and perceived friendliness in text-based communication. Similarly, Gesselman et al. (2019) emphasized that frequent emoji use functions as an affective signal that strengthens emotional connection and clarity between communicators. In line with these studies, the present results confirm that consistent emoji usage plays a meaningful role in tone interpretation, particularly by reinforcing emotional intent, even if it works best in combination with other communication factors.

Table 8 Message context as possible factor

Message context	**Mean**	**SD**	**Verbal Interpretation**	**Qualitative Description**
1. An emoji can convey a different tone when used in a casual conversation compared to a formal conversation.	3.10	0.73	Agree	Moderately Influential
2. Emojis in formal messages are interpreted differently than in informal messages.	2.97	0.72	Agree	Moderately Influential
3. Serious messages with emojis can alter the seriousness of the tone.	3.04	0.62	Agree	Moderately Influential
4. The meaning of an emoji can change depending on the conversation's context.	3.27	0.71	Strongly Agree	Highly Influential
5. Humor in a message is more easily understood when paired with relevant emojis.	3.25	0.69	Strongly Agree	Highly Influential
Average Mean	***3.13***	***1.75***	***Agree***	***Moderately Influential***

Legend: SD – Standard Deviation, IV – Verbal Interpretation, QD – Qualitative Description

Table 8 presents the respondents' assessment of message context as a possible factor influencing tone interpretation in digital communication. The table shows an overall average mean of 3.13, verbally interpreted as *Agree* and qualitatively described as *Moderately Influential*. The highest mean scores were recorded for the statements *"The meaning of an emoji can change depending on the conversation's context"* (M = 3.27) and *"Humor in a message is more easily understood when paired with relevant emojis"* (M = 3.25), both interpreted as *Strongly Agree* and *Highly Influential*. The remaining items also fell within the *Agree* range, indicating consistent acknowledgment of context as a relevant factor.

The results suggest that students recognize message context as a key element in interpreting tone when emojis are used. Respondents agree that emojis can convey different meanings depending on whether a conversation is formal or informal, serious or humorous. This implies that emojis do not carry fixed meanings on their own; rather, their interpretation depends heavily on the surrounding text, the situation, and the nature of the interaction. The moderate overall influence indicates that context works together with other factors, such as emoji type and frequency of use, in shaping tone interpretation.

These findings are consistent with Derks, Bos, and von Grumbkow (2020), who emphasized that the emotional tone and appropriateness of emojis depend strongly on the social and conversational context in which they are used. Similarly, Guntuku et al. (2019) noted that contextual alignment enhances the emotional accuracy of emoji-based communication and reduces misinterpretation. The present results support these views by showing that students are aware that message context significantly affects how emojis influence tone, reinforcing the idea that appropriate contextual use of emojis promotes clearer and more effective digital communication.

Table 9 Preferred communication platform as possible factor

Preferred communication platform	**Mean**	**SD**	**Verbal Interpretation**	**Qualitative Description**
1. Emojis appear differently depending on the communication platform used.	3.25	0.89	Strongly Agree	Highly Influential

2. Emoji designs vary across platforms, changing how the intended tone is perceived.	2.98	0.61	Agree	Moderately Influential
3. Some platforms make emojis appear more expressive than others.	3.13	0.76	Agree	Moderately Influential
4. The choice of platform changes how the same emoji is perceived.	3.13	0.75	Agree	Moderately Influential
5. Misinterpretations can occur when emojis are viewed across different platforms due to design variations.	3.26	0.72	Strongly Agree	Highly Influential
Average Mean	***3.15***	***0.75***	***Agree***	***Moderately Influential***

Legend: SD – Standard Deviation, IV – Verbal Interpretation, QD – Qualitative Description

Table 9 presents the respondents' assessment of the preferred communication platform as a possible factor influencing tone interpretation in digital communication. The results show an overall average mean of 3.15, verbally interpreted as *Agree* and qualitatively described as *Moderately Influential*. The statements *"Emojis appear differently depending on the communication platform used"* (M = 3.25) and *"Misinterpretations can occur when emojis are viewed across different platforms due to design variations"* (M = 3.26) obtained the highest mean scores and were described as *Highly Influential*. The remaining indicators also fell within the *Agree* range, reflecting consistent recognition of platform-related effects.

The findings indicate that students are aware that the platform used for communication affects how emojis are displayed and interpreted. Differences in emoji design, style, and visual expression across platforms such as Messenger, Instagram, and TikTok can alter the perceived emotional tone of a message. Although the overall influence is rated as moderate, the high ratings for platform-based variation suggest that students experience tone shifts or misunderstandings when the same emoji appears differently on another platform. This highlights that tone interpretation is shaped not only by the emoji itself but also by the digital environment in which it is viewed.

These results are supported by Miller et al. (2018), who found that variations in emoji rendering across platforms lead to different emotional interpretations of the same symbol. Likewise, Tigwell and Flatla (2019) emphasized that cross-platform inconsistencies are a common source of emoji misunderstanding in digital communication. In line with these studies, the present findings confirm that platform differences play a meaningful role in tone interpretation, reinforcing the need for awareness of how emojis may be perceived differently depending on the communication platform used.

Table 10 Significant difference in tone interpretation when respondents are grouped according to their demographic profile.

Factors	Profile	F	P-value	Interpretation	Decision
Types of emoji used	Age	0.12	0.72	Not Significant	*Do not reject* H_o
Frequency of emoji use		0.96	0.33	Not Significant	*Do not reject* H_o
Message Context		1.24	0.38	Not Significant	*Do not reject* H_o
Preferred communication platform		0.28	0.59	Not Significant	*Do not reject* H_o
Type of emoji used	Sex	1.48	0.22	Not Significant	*Do not reject* H_o
Frequency of emoji use		2.64	0.10	Not Significant	*Do not reject* H_o

Message context		2.07	0.15	Not Significant	*Do not reject H_o*
Preferred communication platform		2.78	0.10	Not Significant	*Do not reject H_o*
Type of emoji used	Grade level	1.49	0.22	Not Significant	*Do not reject H_o*
Frequency of emoji use		34.8	<.001	Significant	*Reject H_o*
Message context		0.61	0.44	Not Significant	*Do not reject H_o*
Preferred communication platform		0.51	0.47	Not Significant	*Do not reject H_o*
Type of emoji used	Frequency of emoji use	0.84	0.48	Not Significant	*Do not reject H_o*
Frequency of emoji use		4.15	0.10	Not Significant	*Do not reject H_o*
Message context		4.75	0.06	Not Significant	*Do not reject H_o*
Preferred communication platform		8.92	<.001	Significant	*Reject H_o*

Type of emoji used	Platform	0.91	0.44	Not Significant	*Do not reject H_o*
Frequency of emoji use		7.95	<.001	Significant	*Reject H_o*
Message context		5.70	0.20	Not Significant	*Do not reject H_o*
Preferred communication platform		2.70	0.06	Not Significant	*Do not reject H_o*

The table presents the significant difference in tone interpretation when respondents are grouped according to their demographic profile, specifically age, sex, grade level, frequency of emoji use, and preferred communication platform. The results show that most factors did not yield statistically significant differences when grouped by age and sex, as all computed p-values were greater than the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that respondents across different ages and between males and females generally interpret tone in emoji-based digital communication in a similar manner.

Notable differences emerged when respondents were grouped according to grade level and preferred communication platform. A significant difference was found under grade level in relation to the frequency of emoji use ($p < .001$), suggesting that students' academic standing influences how often emojis are used and, in turn, how tone is interpreted. Additionally, significant differences were observed when grouped by preferred communication platform, particularly for the factors frequency of emoji use ($p < .001$) and preferred communication platform itself ($p < .001$). These findings imply that students' exposure to and familiarity with specific platforms affect their emoji usage patterns and tone interpretation.

These results support the view that tone interpretation in digital communication is shaped more by communication experience and platform engagement than by basic demographic characteristics such as age and sex. As noted by Bhandari (2025), emojis enhance emotional clarity primarily when users are familiar with the digital environment in which communication occurs. Similarly, Xu (2024) emphasized that platform design and usage norms significantly influence how emojis are perceived. The findings highlight that differences in

digital exposure, particularly across grade levels and platforms, play a more critical role in tone interpretation than demographic factors alone.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that emojis play a meaningful role in shaping tone interpretation in digital communication among Senior High School students. Across all examined factors such as type of emoji used, frequency of emoji use, message context, and preferred communication platform, respondents generally agreed that emojis influence how messages are emotionally perceived. Although most factors were rated as *moderately influential*, consistently high mean scores indicate that emojis function as important visual cues that help clarify intent, emotion, and tone beyond plain text. The findings further reveal that demographic variables such as age and sex do not significantly affect how students interpret tone through emojis. This suggests a shared understanding of emoji use across these groups. However, significant differences emerged when respondents were grouped according to grade level and preferred communication platform, particularly in relation to frequency of emoji use. These results imply that digital exposure, communication experience, and platform familiarity have a greater impact on tone interpretation than basic demographic characteristics. Overall, the study concludes that effective tone interpretation in digital communication is not driven by a single factor but by the interaction of emoji-related and contextual elements. Emojis are most effective when their type, frequency, and usage align with the message context and the platform where communication occurs. These findings underscore the importance of promoting context-aware and platform-sensitive emoji use among students to support clearer, more accurate, and emotionally expressive digital communication.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, schools should strengthen digital communication and media literacy programs that guide students on the proper and responsible use of emojis. Since the study shows that emoji type, frequency, message context, and platform influence tone interpretation, teachers and school administrators may integrate short lessons, discussions, or activities that explain how emojis affect meaning in online conversations. Emphasis should be placed on choosing appropriate emojis that match the message context to reduce misunderstandings, especially in academic and school-related communications. Given that significant differences were found across grade levels and preferred communication platforms, future initiatives should be grade-appropriate and platform-sensitive. Programs or activities may be tailored to the platforms most commonly used by students, ensuring that examples and scenarios reflect their actual digital environments. For Grade 11 students, who comprised the largest group of respondents, materials should address their specific communication habits and challenges. This approach ensures that guidance is relevant, relatable, and more likely to influence positive communication behavior. For future research, it is recommended to expand the scope by including other schools, age groups, or educational settings to improve the generalization of the results. Researchers may also consider exploring additional factors such as cultural background, language use, or the role of emojis in formal versus informal communication. Longitudinal or experimental studies may further examine how emoji use evolves over time and how targeted interventions can improve tone interpretation skills. These future directions can provide deeper insights into digital communication practices and support the development of more effective educational strategies.

REFERENCES

1. Bai, Q., Dan, Q., Mu, Z., & Yang, M. (2019). A systematic review of emoji: Current research and future perspectives. Frontiers in Psychology, 10, Article 2221.
2. Bowden, J. (2023). Gender and generational differences in emoji interpretation. Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 42(3), 389–405.
3. Bridging the Gap in Workplace Technology Adoption. (2023). Emojis and professionalism in digital workplaces. Organizational Communication Review, 15(2), 60–74.C
4. Choi, Y., Kim, S., & Lee, J. (2023). Emotional signaling and social presence in text-based digital communication. Computers in Human Behavior, 139, 107531.

5. Cross-Platform Emoji Interpretation Project. (2019). Emoji rendering and interpretation across platforms. Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media, 13, 454–465.
6. Daft, R. L., & Lengel, R. H. (1986). Organizational information requirements, media richness and structural design. Management Science, 32(5), 554–571
7. Derks, D., Bos, A. E. R., & von Grumbkow, J. (2020). Emoticons and social interaction on the Internet: The importance of social context. Computers in Human Behavior, 24(5), 211–228.
8. Gantiva, C., Sotaquirá, M., & Araujo, A. (2020). Cortical processing of emojis and facial expressions: An ERP study. Cognitive Neuroscience, 11(1–2), 15–25.
9. Gesselman, A. N., Ta, V. P., & Garcia, J. R. (2019). Worth a thousand interpersonal words: Emoji as affective signals in digital communication. PLoS ONE, 14(8), e0221297.
10. Glikson, E., Cheshin, A., & van Kleef, G. A. (2018). The dark side of emojis: Effects on perceived competence in workplace communication. Social Psychological and Personality Science, 9(4), 1–9.
11. Guntuku, S. C., Li, M., Tay, L., & Ungar, L. H. (2019). Studying cultural differences in emoji usage across the globe. Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media, 13, 226–235.
12. Jaeger, S. R., & Ares, G. (2019). Emojis and affective communication in digital messaging. Food Quality and Preference, 73, 146–156.
13. Li, L., Wang, Y., & Zhang, Z. (2019). Emotional responses evoked by different types of emojis. Behavior Research Methods, 51(5), 1–12
14. Miller, H., Kluver, D., Thebault-Spieker, J., Terveen, L., & Hecht, B. (2018). Understanding emoji ambiguity in context: The role of platform differences. Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media, 12, 152–161.
15. Park, J., Baek, Y. M., & Cha, M. (2020). Cross-cultural comparison of emoji usage and interpretation. New Media & Society, 22(8), 1498–1517
16. Prada, M., Rodrigues, D. L., Garrido, M. V., Lopes, D., Cavalheiro, B., & Gaspar, R. (2018). Motives, frequency and attitudes toward emoji use. Telematics and Informatics, 35(7), 1925–1934.
17. Riordan, M. A. (2017). Emojis as tools for emotion work in digital communication. Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 36(5), 549–567.
18. Rodrigues, D. L., Prada, M., Gaspar, R., Garrido, M. V., & Lopes, D. (2018). Emojis as emotional amplification in text messaging. Computers in Human Behavior, 86, 74–84.
19. Sampietro, A. (2020). Emoji and rapport management in digital discourse. Journal of Pragmatics, 161, 1–14.
20. Schoonenboom, J., & Johnson, R. B. (2017). How to construct a mixed methods research design. Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie, 69(S2), 107–131.
21. Shandilya, S., Mehta, R., & Singh, P. (2022). Digital tone perception and message framing in online communication. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 27(3), zmac012.
22. Tigwell, G. W., & Flatla, D. R. (2019). Oh that's what you meant!: Reducing emoji misunderstanding. Proceedings of the 2019
23. Wang, Y., Jiang, L., & Zhou, S. (2024). Emoji use as nonverbal cues in online interpersonal communication. Journal of Social Media Studies, 8(2), 101–118.
24. Weissman, B., & Tanner, D. (2018). A strong wink between verbal and emoji-based irony. Discourse Processes, 55(7), 1–
25. Wired. (2018). The origin story of the emoji. Wired Magazine.
26. Xu, H. (2024). Platform design and emoji-based tone interpretation. Human–Computer Interaction Journal, 39(2), 215–231.
27. Ye, Z. (2024). Emotional clarity and emoji use in digital text communication. Journal of Language and Technology, 12(1), 55–70.
28. Zuhdi, M., & Yusuf, F. (2024). Emojis as visual-linguistic tools in online discourse. International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 34(1), 88–104.