

Self-Expression and Mental Wellbeing of Malaysian Youths on Social Media

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ABSTRACT

In today's fast-changing technological era, the new generation of youths, namely Gen Z and Millennials, wholeheartedly embrace and are profoundly influenced by the rapid development of social media. It is important to recognize that the impact of VUCA on youth and social media is not solely negative. It is crucial to promote digital literacy, encourage healthy online habits, and foster open conversations and self-expression. Social media platforms provide a constant stream of information, including news, opinions, and updates from friends and peers. The volatility and uncertainty of this information can contribute to feelings of overwhelm and anxiety, especially when it involves negative or distressing content. This study focuses on the use of emoticons and symbols in self-expression as well as the emotional reaction regarding one's own posts and others. A total of 500 participants were recruited for this study from various parts of Malaysia aged between 18 to 30 years old. Descriptive analysis of the study shows majority of the participants used emoticons and symbols for better self-expression. When it comes to emotional reactions, the Gen Z and Millennials generally show a preference for positive postings. However, they also demonstrate empathy and understanding towards those who share negative postings. This study enhances our understanding of how Malaysian youths express themselves on social media and sheds light on their emotional responses.

Keywords: *Self-expression, mental wellbeing, emotional responses, social media, youths.*

INTRODUCTION

Social media serves as an engaging platform where teenagers and young individuals have the opportunity to craft and enrich their daily life experiences, a dynamic shift compared to traditional media (Bartsch & Subrahmanyam, 2015). Consequently, social media hold a pivotal role in providing a dynamic platform for self-expression, facilitating their virtual interactions, and the creative act of generating user content. With over 85% of Malaysians using social media, primarily among younger demographics, these platforms have transformed traditional modes of communication, enabling users to curate and share their experiences, emotions, and identities (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2021; Jamilah et al., 2019). This shift has profound implications for the mental wellbeing of Malaysian youths, as the online environment can both positively and negatively influence their emotional states and psychological health (Khan et al., 2020).

Social media platforms like Facebook are deeply embedded in daily communication and self-expression, providing a space where individuals can publicly and privately express their emotions (Smith and Fischer, 2020). In today's rapidly evolving technological landscape, the younger generations, particularly Gen Z and Millennials, have enthusiastically embraced and are significantly impacted by the swift advancement of social media. These generations

have grown up in an era where social media are integral to their daily lives. They use these social media platforms not only for communication and entertainment but also as outlets for expressing their emotions, sharing experiences, and seeking validation from their peers. In other words, social media technologies significantly influence our emotions by providing features that make it fast, straightforward, and convenient to express feelings, thereby increasing the likelihood of emotional expression. These emotional affordances are inherently connected to the wellbeing of users, rendering our digital wellbeing particularly susceptible to manipulation if these features are misused (Steinert & Dennis, 2022).

Mental health is defined as a state of wellbeing where an individual possesses self-awareness of their abilities, effectively manages stress, maintains productivity, and actively contributes to society (MyHealth portal, 2020). This definition underscores that mental health encompasses the capacity to navigate diverse life pressures and demands while constructively expressing emotions. Mental health is not only influenced by internal factors but also by environmental conditions and daily activities (Julia et al., 2014).

Self-expression on social media allows Malaysian youths to articulate their thoughts and feelings, fostering a sense of community and belonging (Chou et al., 2020). However, the potential for misinterpretation and cyberbullying, coupled with the pressure to conform to idealized standards, can create emotional distress and impact mental wellbeing (Chakraborty & Sinha, 2021). Research has indicated that while social media can serve as a valuable outlet for emotional expression, it can also increase feelings of anxiety, depression, and loneliness (Keles et al., 2020; Drouin et al., 2020). Moreover, the cultural context of Malaysia, characterized by its diversity and varying social norms, adds another layer of complexity to how youths use the internet, engage with social media and navigate their emotional landscapes (Mohammad Fahmi et al., 2022). Understanding these relationships is essential, as they offer insights into how social media can be harnessed to promote positive mental health outcomes and support youth development in Malaysia.

This study aims to examine how social media users, particularly those on Facebook, express emotions through their posts. Subashini and Sobihatun (2017) explored how undergraduate students in Malaysia interpret WhatsApp emojis, finding that while some smileys were accurately understood, many were not. This discrepancy highlights the potential for miscommunication arising from differing interpretations of emoji meanings and underscores the influence of cultural and regional contexts on emoji comprehension (Harrison et al., 2020). Understanding how emotions are conveyed in digital environments is crucial, as it can illuminate patterns in how individuals process, share, and cope with their emotions online. The emotional content disseminated on social media does not only affect individual users; it can also create a "contagion" effect, influencing the emotional states of others interacting with these posts (Kramer et al., 2014; Niu et al., 2020). This emotional exchange shapes individual wellbeing and broader social dynamics, making it a critical area for research. The focus of this study is to investigate the patterns of emotional expression among young individuals aged 18-30 on Facebook. This demographic is particularly noteworthy as it represents a stage of significant social, emotional, and psychological development (Arnett, 2000; Steinberg, 2014). For this age group, social media platforms like Facebook often serve as primary outlets for self-expression, playing a crucial role in identity formation and the development of social relationships (Steinfeld et al., 2008; Jamilah et al. 2019; Papacharissi, 2010).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent studies have consistently demonstrated that both positive and negative emotions are frequently expressed on Facebook. Yang and Li (2020) found that Facebook users were more likely to express emotions such as anxiety, sadness, and fear in response to health risks, lockdowns, and social isolation. These expressions, however, were often framed within the context of seeking support or validation from social networks, highlighting Facebook's role in emotional coping during crises. Hollenbaugh and Ferris (2020) similarly observed that while users do express negative emotions, they often employ humor or sarcasm as a way to mask vulnerability. This aligns with Vraga et al.'s (2021) findings, which suggest that users engage in self-censorship when expressing highly personal or socially sensitive emotions, preferring to do so in private groups or closed communities on Facebook.

Moreover, platform-specific features also influence emotional expression. Jaidka et al. (2020) discovered that Facebook's algorithm tends to amplify emotionally charged posts—both positive and negative—resulting in increased visibility and engagement. This finding is supported by Guo et al. (2021), who demonstrated that emotionally intense posts, particularly those involving outrage or strong emotional responses, spread more rapidly, especially within political discussions. These studies reinforce earlier findings, indicating that while both positive and negative emotions are prevalent on Facebook, the nature of negative emotional expression has become more nuanced, particularly in light of social and political dynamics, personal crises, and the platform's algorithmic shaping of user interaction.

The role of emotions in the dissemination of information on social media is well-documented. Aldous et al. (2019) found that negative emotions, such as fear and anger expressed during humanitarian crises, significantly enhance the spread of information on Twitter, underlining the critical role of emotions in accelerating information dissemination. Similarly, Elhai et al. (2021) explored the relationship between social media use and mental health, suggesting that emotional engagement, exposure to negative content, and social interaction contribute to adverse mental health outcomes, including anxiety and depression. These studies underscore the significant influence of emotions in shaping both information diffusion and psychological wellbeing on social media platforms.

The impact of social media use on emotional wellbeing is a growing area of research. Vannucci et al. (2020) conducted a quantitative survey examining the relationship between social media use and anxiety levels in young adults, revealing a significant positive correlation between high social media engagement and elevated anxiety. Platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, which encourage social comparison, exacerbate this anxiety, especially through exposure to negative emotions and idealized portrayals of others' lives. Marengo et al. (2021) examined how social validation in the form of "likes" influences users' self-esteem, finding that receiving more likes correlates with improved psychological wellbeing. However, they also noted that an over-reliance on social approval can negatively impact self-esteem. Collectively, these studies highlight the dual role of social media in both exacerbating anxiety through negative interactions and promoting wellbeing through positive feedback, with the effects depending largely on how users engage with these platforms.

Research into the dynamics of emotion-driven information dissemination reveals complex interactions that shape user engagement. Fan et al. (2020), using natural language processing (NLP) techniques, found that negative emotions, particularly anger, drive the spread of information on Weibo, as posts expressing anger received more retweets and comments than those expressing joy. This suggests that social media users are more likely to

engage with negative emotional content, facilitating its rapid dissemination. Koch and Peters (2020) extended this by exploring how emotions are expressed not only through text but also through images, videos, memes, and emojis. They argued that these diverse forms of digital communication enhance the reception and understanding of emotional messages, promoting greater interaction. However, while negative emotions like anger boost engagement, they may also lead to polarization and less rational, emotionally charged debates, potentially increasing the spread of misinformation.

Similarly, Waterloo et al. (2018) examined emotional expression on Instagram, categorizing emotions into single or multiple emotions expressed through posts. The findings suggest that happiness, sadness, and anger are commonly expressed emotions on the platform. Garcia and Rodriguez (2019) further emphasized the role of visual elements, such as image captions, comments, and emojis, in emotional expression on Instagram, particularly in the context of political campaigns. Yin et al. (2019) explored the relationship between user emotions and content on Facebook, identifying themes in post content that influence emotional wellbeing. Their qualitative analysis revealed the complexity of emotional experiences on social media and the importance of mindful engagement for users' emotional health.

This research is grounded in Medium Theory, which explores how the characteristics of communication media shape user behavior, particularly in terms of emotional expression. On Facebook, structural elements such as posts, comments, likes, and shares significantly influence how users convey their emotions. Jaidka et al. (2020) and Guo et al. (2021) have claimed that posts with heightened emotional content receive greater visibility due to Facebook's algorithm, which amplifies both positive and negative emotions. By employing Medium Theory as a framework, this study seeks to understand how the platform shapes emotional content and emphasizes the profound impact that the medium has on emotional communication within social media contexts.

Moreover, Medium Theory helps explain how Facebook not only influences individual emotional expressions but also affects broader social dynamics. The focus on emotionally charged content can create a feedback loop, encouraging users to engage more with posts that elicit strong emotional reactions, particularly anger or outrage, as highlighted in previous research (Guo et al., 2021; Jaidka et al., 2020). This dynamic has important implications for mental wellbeing, suggesting that the nature of emotional engagement on Facebook may significantly impact users' psychological health.

METHOD

This study employed a comprehensive quantitative approach, engaging a sample of 500 young and active Facebook users aged between 18 and 30 in Malaysia. The focus on young people aged 18-30 is particularly important because this demographic is in a stage of life characterized by significant social, emotional, and psychological development (Arnett, 2000). Social media, including Facebook, often serves as a primary outlet for self-expression in this age group (Papacharissi, 2010), influencing identity formation (Jamilah, 2019) and social relationships (Steinfeld et al., 2008). Additionally, young adults are more prone to experiencing mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and loneliness, which are sometimes exacerbated by social media use (Twenge, 2019). By studying the patterns of emotional expression in this age group, researchers can better understand the potential positive and negative effects of Facebook on their mental wellbeing. This knowledge could help develop strategies for promoting healthier emotional communication and fostering stronger social connections online.

The primary objective of this research was to analyze and understand how various social activities and experiences related to mental health are represented in Facebook posts. The data collection process was meticulously designed and included a detailed survey with five distinct sections. The survey questions were developed using an adopt-and-adapt technique, drawing on previous studies, including the research by O'Reilly et al. (2018) that examined pattern pattern such as comments or posts observed on Facebook.

Section A of the survey was dedicated to gathering demographic information about the participants. This section included questions related to their ethnicity, age, gender, level of education, and the state from which they originated. By capturing these demographic details, the study aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of the diverse backgrounds of the respondents. Section B focused on the use of emojis and symbols in Facebook interactions. This segment of the survey sought to uncover patterns and preferences in how users employ these visual elements to convey their messages and emotions. In Section C, the study investigated how users express their emotions during social media interactions. This section aimed to provide insights into the range of emotional expressions and the contexts in which they occur on Facebook. Section D examined the empathy displayed by users in their interactions on Facebook. It sought to assess how users respond to and support one another emotionally through their posts and comments.

To analyze the data collected from the survey, for the purpose of this article, the study employs statistical descriptive methods, including calculating means and standard deviations. These methods will facilitate a thorough discussion on the use of emojis and symbols among young users, as well as the nature of emotional expressions during Facebook interactions. This research has been conducted in adherence to ethical standards and has received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). The study's design and implementation ensure that the data is collected and analyzed in a manner that respects participant confidentiality and integrity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents a detailed breakdown of the ethnic composition of the 500 respondents. Among the participants, 173 individuals, constituting 34.6% of the total, identified as Malay, making them the largest ethnic group represented in the study. In contrast, only 10 respondents, or 2.0%, were of Indian ethnicity. The remaining respondents categorized as were from a variety of other ethnic backgrounds. Specifically, individuals from ethnic groups including Bumiputera Sabah, Bumiputera Sarawak, and other minority groups collectively accounted for 136 respondents, representing 27.2% of the total sample.

Additionally, there were 92 respondents, representing 18.4% of the total, who identified as Iban. The Chinese ethnic group was represented by 38 respondents, accounting for 7.6% of the sample. Furthermore, 28 respondents, or 5.6%, identified as Bidayuh, while 23 respondents, or 4.6%, were Melanau. This distribution highlights the diverse ethnic makeup of the respondent pool, reflecting a broad range of backgrounds and cultural identities within the study.

The majority of respondents in this study were young individuals aged between 21 and 23, totaling 293 participants, which constitutes 58.6% of the sample. In contrast, the smallest age group comprised individuals aged between 27 and 30, with only 10 respondents, or 2.0%. Additionally, there were 162 respondents, representing 32.0%, who were aged between 18 and 20, and 35 respondents, or 7.0%, fell within the age range of 24 to 26.

Regarding gender distribution, the study had a majority of female respondents, with 296 individuals, making up 59.2% of the sample. Male respondents numbered 204, accounting for 40.8% of the total.

Table 1: Respondent demographics

Demographic Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Ethnicity	Malay	173	34.6
	Chinese	38	7.6
	Indian	10	2.0
	Iban	92	18.4
	Melanau	23	4.6
	Bidayuh	28	5.6
	Others	136	27.2
Age	18-20	162	32.4
	21-23	293	58.6
	24-26	35	7.0
	27-30	10	2.0
Gender	Male	204	40.8
	Female	296	59.2
Education Level	SPM	4	0.8
	STPM/Matriculation/Diploma	102	20.4
	Bachelor Degree	377	75.4
	Master Degree	15	3.0
	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	2	0.4
State of Origin	Johor	23	4.6
	Kedah	5	1.0
	Kelantan	13	2.6
	Melaka	6	1.2
	Negeri Sembilan	1	0.2
	Perak	14	2.8
	Penang	5	1.0
	Pahang	11	2.2
	Selangor	23	4.6
	Sabah	124	24.8
	Sarawak	264	52.8
	Labuan	3	0.6
	Kuala Lumpur	8	1.6

In terms of geographical distribution, the study captured a diverse range of locations. A total of 264 respondents, or 52.8%, were from Sarawak. Sabah followed with 124 respondents, representing 24.8%. Johor and Selangor each contributed 23 respondents, which is 4.6% of the sample for each state. Perak had 14 respondents, making up 2.8%, while Kelantan had 13 respondents, constituting 2.6%. Pahang was represented by 11 respondents, or 2.2%, and the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur had 8 respondents, accounting for 1.6%. Melaka had 6 respondents (1.2%), Kedah and Penang each had 5 respondents, or 1.0% each, and Negeri Sembilan had a single respondent, representing 0.2% of the sample.

Types of Emotion on Social Media

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of positive and negative emotions experienced by users while interacting on the social media platform Facebook. Positive emotions, as depicted in the figure, include joy, happiness, and excitement. Conversely, negative emotions encompass a broader spectrum, including sadness, anger, disappointment, offense, heartache, frustration, and jealousy. This breakdown provides a comprehensive view of the emotional landscape users encounter during their social media interactions. The distribution of positive and negative emotions, as shown in Figure 1, reflects the complex nature of social media interactions and the diverse range of experiences users have on platforms like Facebook.

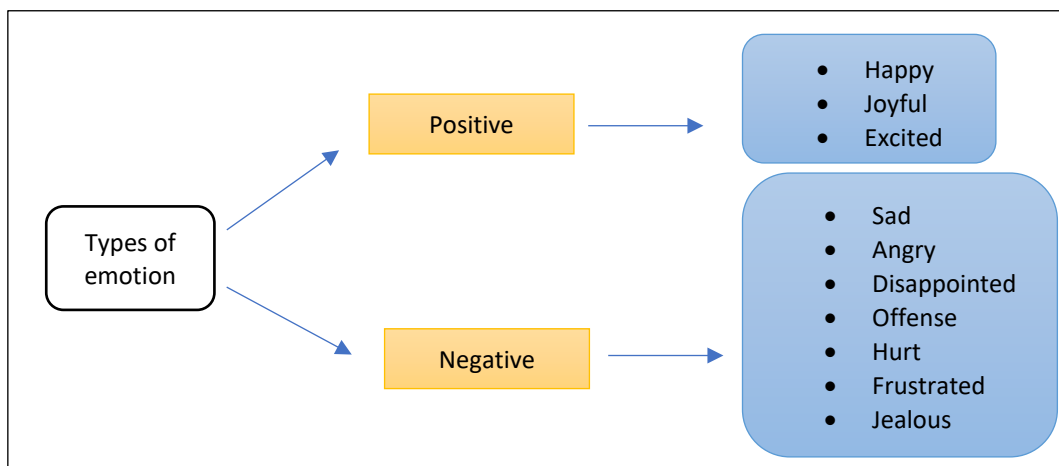


Figure 1: Types of emotions when using emojis and symbols

The Uses of Emojis and Symbols Based on Emotions

Table 2 provides a detailed analysis of the frequency and minimum values associated with the use of emojis and symbols across different types of emotions. The survey utilized a Likert scale to capture respondents' attitudes, with the following scale options: 1 - Strongly Disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Somewhat Agree, 4 - Agree, and 5 - Strongly Agree. For the purpose of this analysis, the responses were consolidated as follows:

- a. *Disagree Scale*: This combines the ratings of "Strongly Disagree" (1) and "Disagree" (2). This aggregation is used to simplify the data by grouping the lower end of the agreement spectrum.
- b. *Agree Scale*: This combines the ratings of "Somewhat Agree" (3), "Agree" (4), and "Strongly Agree" (5). This aggregation represents the higher end of the agreement spectrum, reflecting a more positive stance towards the use of emojis and symbols.

By combining these scales, the analysis aims to provide a clearer view of overall sentiment and frequency of emoji and symbol usage across different emotional contexts. The frequency values represent how often specific emojis and symbols are used to convey particular emotions, while the minimum values indicate the lowest level of agreement among respondents regarding the use of these visual elements to express emotions.

Based on Table 2, the highest minimum value is for the use of emojis and symbols in social media based on the emotion of joy (min=2.89), with 300 (68%) respondents agreeing and 200 (40%) respondents disagreeing. Next is the use of emojis and symbols when feeling happy (min=2.86) with a frequency of agreement from 300 (60%) respondents and

disagreement from 200 (40%) respondents. Following that is the use of emojis when feeling excited (min=2.85) with a frequency of agreement from 291 (58.2%) respondents and disagreement from 209 (41.8%) respondents. Furthermore, the use of emojis and symbols when feeling sad (min=2.19) with a frequency of disagreement from 328 (65.6%) respondents and agreement from 172 (34.4%) respondents.

Table 2: The uses of emojis and symbols

Item	Scale	Frequency	Percent (%)	Mean
Happy	Agree	300	60	2.86
	Disagree	200	40	
Joyful	Agree	300	60	2.89
	Disagree	200	40	
Excited	Agree	291	58.2	2.85
	Disagree	209	41.8	
Sad	Agree	172	34.4	2.19
	Disagree	328	65.6	
Angry	Agree	149	29.8	2.09
	Disagree	351	70.2	
Disappointed	Agree	132	26.4	2.08
	Disagree	368	73.6	
Offense	Agree	136	27.2	2.10
	Disagree	364	72.8	
Hurt	Agree	150	30	2.12
	Disagree	350	70	
Frustrated	Agree	143	28.6	2.10
	Disagree	357	71.4	
Jealous	Agree	82	16.4	1.85
	Disagree	418	83.6	

The use of emojis and symbols when feeling heartbroken (min=2.12) with a frequency of disagreement from 350 (70%) respondents and agreement from 150 (30%) respondents. The use of emojis and symbols when feeling offended (min=2.10) with a frequency of disagreement from 364 (72.8%) respondents and agreement from 136 (27.2%) respondents. The next emotion also has the same minimum value, which is anger (min=2.10) with a frequency of disagreement from 357 (71.4%) respondents and agreement from 143 (28.6%) respondents. Next, the use of emojis and symbols when feeling angry (min=2.09), the frequency of disagreement is from 351 (70.2%) respondents and agreement from 149 (29.8%) respondents. Furthermore, the emotion of disappointment (min=2.08) with the frequency of disagreement from 368 (73.6%) respondents and agreement from 132 (26.4%) respondents. Finally, the use of emojis and symbols when feeling jealous (min=1.85), the frequency of respondents who disagree is 418 (83.6%) and those who agree are 82 (16.4%) respondents only.

Respondents generally agreed that emojis and symbols are most frequently used in positive emotional states such as joy, happiness, and excitement. In contrast, the use of emojis and symbols for negative emotions like sadness, heartache, offense, anger, and jealousy is less common. This trend suggests that emojis and symbols serve as a tool to enhance positive emotional connections and maintain emotional harmony among users on social media (Hsieh & Tseng, 2017). Users are more inclined to use these visual elements when expressing positive feelings, which helps in fostering a supportive and cohesive online community.

Emotional Expression through Social Media

Respondents were surveyed on their perspectives regarding the use of emojis and symbols, reflecting their prevalence and application in digital communication. Table 3 provides an overview of how individuals utilize these visual elements in different social media contexts, showing the minimum values and standard deviations for various scenarios. The highest minimum value is noted for the "use of emojis when sending messages," with a minimum value of 3.69 and a standard deviation (SD) of 1.116. This indicates that respondents generally agree that emojis are frequently used in messaging. This is followed by the "use of symbols when sending messages," which has a minimum value of 3.51 and an SD of 1.173, suggesting that while symbols are also commonly used, they are slightly less prevalent than emojis in this context.

For status updates, the "use of emojis when writing status" has a minimum value of 3.45 and an SD of 1.184, indicating a solid level of agreement regarding their use. The "use of symbols when writing status" follows with a minimum value of 3.38 and an SD of 1.251, showing a slightly lower but still significant level of use compared to emojis. In terms of multimedia sharing, the minimum value for "use of emojis when sending photos" is 3.33 with an SD of 1.201, while the "use of emojis when sending videos" has a minimum value of 3.23 and an SD of 1.239. These results suggest that emojis are frequently employed when sharing photos and videos, though their use is less pronounced compared to messaging. The use of symbols in multimedia contexts shows lower minimum values. The minimum value for "use of symbols when sending photos" is 3.17, with an SD of 1.220, and for "use of symbols when sending videos," it is 3.06 with an SD of 1.250. These figures indicate that symbols are used less frequently than emojis in these scenarios.

Table 3: The use of emojis and symbols by Facebook users

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Using emojis when sending messages.	3.69	1.116
Using symbols when sending messages.	3.51	1.173
Using emojis when writing statuses.	3.45	1.184
Using symbols when writing statuses.	3.38	1.251
Using emojis when sending photos.	3.33	1.201
Using emojis when sending videos.	3.23	1.239
Using symbols when sending photos.	3.17	1.220
Using symbols when sending videos.	3.06	1.250

Overall, the data demonstrates that emojis are more prominently used across various social media contexts compared to symbols. Emojis are particularly prevalent in messaging and status updates, and they are also commonly used when sharing photos and videos. Symbols, while still utilized, show a slightly lower frequency of use, especially in multimedia

sharing. This trend reflects the integral role of emojis in enhancing communication and expression on social media platforms.

The results presented in Table 3 reveal a clear tendency among respondents to use emojis and symbols predominantly when writing status updates. Additionally, the data shows that emojis and symbols are frequently employed in text-based communication, particularly when sending messages. This pattern indicates a preference among younger individuals for using these visual elements in their social media interactions.

This observation aligns with Maryam's (2021) argument, which suggests that the use of emojis has become a common practice among social media users. Emojis and symbols enhance the ability to convey feelings and emotions, enriching the communication experience on these platforms. Similarly, Jannah (2021) supports this view by noting that the availability of emoji features makes it more enjoyable for users to express their emotions through text communication. Overall, these findings underscore the significant role that emojis and symbols play in facilitating emotional expression and enhancing user engagement on social media.

Table 4 provides an analysis of how male and female respondents use emojis and symbols when writing status updates on social media, categorized by various emotions. The data reveals a predominant trend where emojis and symbols are employed to express positive emotions such as joy, happiness, and excitement. For instance, 175 female respondents indicated agreement with using these visual tools when feeling joyful, whereas 121 disagreed. Similarly, 177 female and 123 male respondents utilized emojis and symbols when feeling happy, underscoring a clear inclination towards using these elements to convey positive emotions.

Table 4: Use of emojis and symbols on social media

Item	Scale									
	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Somewhat agree		Agree		Strongly agree	
	L	P	L	P	L	P	L	P	L	P
Happy	29	40	50	81	60	82	52	67	13	26
Joy	24	38	57	81	55	83	54	65	14	29
Excited	29	41	52	87	61	70	48	67	14	31
Sad	60	91	68	109	50	64	20	21	6	11
Agree	72	104	60	115	49	44	16	25	7	8
Disappointment	77	89	79	123	27	56	12	13	9	15
Offense	72	93	79	120	31	48	13	24	9	11
Hurt	72	93	72	113	42	51	11	28	7	11
Frustrated	70	94	66	127	48	43	14	21	6	11
Jealous	73	137	92	116	18	27	11	10	10	6

Conversely, the use of emojis and symbols is notably less frequent for expressing negative emotions. For example, 200 female and 128 male respondents refrained from using these tools when feeling sad, with only 96 female and 81 male respondents choosing to use them in such contexts. This trend extends to other negative emotions such as anger, disappointment, and jealousy, where a substantial number of respondents opted not to use emojis and symbols. Specifically, 219 female and 132 male respondents did not use these visual elements when feeling angry, and 253 female and 165 male respondents avoided them when feeling jealous.

This observation aligns with existing literature, which suggests that emojis and symbols are more effective in conveying positive emotions rather than negative ones. Lin (2019) supports this finding, noting that while emojis are frequently employed to express positive feelings, they are less effective in articulating intense negative emotions. Despite the significant number of respondents who abstain from using emojis and symbols in various emotional contexts, those who do display a marked preference for these visual tools when expressing positive emotions. Overall, although emojis and symbols are instrumental in conveying joy, happiness, and excitement, their use significantly diminishes for more complex or negative emotional states, reflecting a dynamic approach to digital emotional expression.

Table 5: Expression of emotions and interaction methods

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Uploading photos when feeling joyful.	3.06	1.150
Feeling disappointed when reading less pleasant comments.	3.05	1.186
Uploading photos when feeling excited.	3.01	1.127
Uploading photos when feeling happy.	3.00	1.147
Feeling irritated when reading unpleasant statuses.	2.95	1.292
Feeling disappointed when reading unpleasant statuses.	2.95	1.209
Writing a status when feeling happy.	2.89	1.159
Uploading a video when feeling excited.	2.87	1.150
Uploading a video when feeling happy.	2.86	1.140
Writing a status when feeling joyful.	2.86	1.160
Writing a status when feeling excited.	2.85	1.187

Based on the minimum values presented in Table 5, respondents show a preference for engaging in certain activities on Facebook when experiencing positive emotions. Specifically, the data indicates that respondents are more likely to "write status updates when feeling happy" (min=2.86, SD=1.160) and "upload photos when feeling happy" (min=3.06, SD=1.150). This trend extends to other positive emotional states, with respondents also frequently "write status updates when feeling joyful" (min=2.89, SD=1.159), "send photos when feeling joyful" (min=3.00, SD=1.147), and "upload videos when feeling joyful" (min=2.86, SD=1.140). Similarly, respondents exhibit a tendency to "write status updates when feeling excited" (min=2.85, SD=1.187), "upload photos when feeling excited" (min=3.01, SD=1.127), and "upload videos when feeling excited" (min=2.87, SD=1.150).

Conversely, the table also highlights that respondents report feeling "disappointed when reading unpleasant statuses" (min=2.95, SD=1.209) and "irritated when reading unpleasant statuses" (min=2.95, SD=1.292). Additionally, respondents express feeling "disappointed when reading unpleasant comments" (min=3.05, SD=1.186) written by other users. These observations suggest a pronounced preference for positive engagement, with respondents more inclined to share content reflecting positive emotions and to avoid interactions that could lead to negative feelings.

The findings underscore a broader trend where users curate their Facebook profiles to emphasize positive aspects of their lives. This inclination is reflected in the high minimum values associated with sharing status updates, photos, and videos during positive emotional states such as happiness, joy, and excitement. This trend aligns with contemporary social media practices, where individuals often project an idealized version of their lives to align with the broader social media community's expectations.

These results are consistent with the insights from Sakti and Yulianto (2018), who posited that social media users actively construct a favorable self-image that enhances their online identity and self-perception. The deliberate curation of content to highlight positive experiences suggests a strategic approach to managing one's digital persona and maintaining social harmony.

Furthermore, Table 6 reveals that respondents also believe that various forms of sharing on Facebook—such as statuses (min=2.54, SD=1.167), messages (min=2.49, SD=1.189), photos (min=2.63, SD=1.179), and videos (min=2.63, SD=1.180)—can contribute to stress reduction. Conversely, respondents report feelings of sadness (min=2.84, SD=1.235) and anger (min=2.61, SD=1.263) when their statuses receive negative comments. This indicates that while social media can serve as a tool for positive self-expression and stress relief, negative feedback can significantly impact emotional wellbeing.

Table 6: Expression of sad emotions through Facebook

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Feeling sad when reading statuses about other friends who are feeling down.	3.03	1.342
Feeling sad when reading comments about other friends who are feeling down.	3.02	1.349
Feeling sad when receiving negative comments about the status you have posted.	2.84	1.235
Feeling disappointed when receiving negative comments about the status you have posted.	2.81	1.255
Feeling offended when receiving negative comments about the status you have posted.	2.72	1.300
Reducing stress by sharing photos.	2.63	1.179
Reducing stress by sharing videos.	2.63	1.180
Feeling angry when receiving negative comments about the status you have posted.	2.61	1.263
Feeling hurt when receiving negative comments about the status you have posted.	2.61	1.286
Reducing stress by sharing statuses.	2.54	1.167
Reducing stress by sharing messages.	2.49	1.189

In summary, the data highlights a distinct preference for using social media to express positive emotions and manage self-image, while also acknowledging the emotional impact of negative interactions. This pattern reflects a strategic approach to digital communication and self-presentation in the contemporary social media landscape.

The findings presented in Table 6 offer a comprehensive view of the emotional responses experienced by respondents when their statuses receive negative comments. The data reveals that such interactions frequently lead to feelings of disappointment (min=2.81, SD=1.255), offense (min=2.72, SD=1.300), and hurt (min=2.61, SD=1.286). This indicates a significant emotional impact resulting from negative feedback on social media platforms. The result also reveal that the respondents reported experiencing sadness when encountering statuses or comments about friends who are feeling sad, with minimum values of 3.03 (SD=1.342) and 3.02 (SD=1.349), respectively. This suggests that not only do respondents react emotionally to negative comments directed at themselves, but they are also affected by the emotional states of others shared on the platform.

The results highlight the sensitivity and emotional vulnerability of respondents when it comes to negative feedback or encountering sad content on social media. It emphasizes the need for a supportive and empathetic online environment to ensure the wellbeing of users. The study findings further highlight the positive impact of supportive responses on social media sharing, fostering feelings of joy, happiness, and excitement while reducing stress levels. It is evident that utilizing Facebook in a positive manner, such as sharing status updates containing advice, creates a comfortable environment for other users as well. Additionally, Table 1.6 reveals that negative comments are not well-received by respondents, as they can trigger negative emotions such as sadness, anger, disappointment, feeling offended, and hurt among Facebook users.

These findings align with the research conducted by Sallehuddin & Sukimi (2014), who emphasize the role of friends on Facebook in providing comfort through conversations, exchanging ideas, and offering advice. The ability of Facebook to offer quick feedback through various forms, including photos, videos, puzzles, and emoticons, contributes to users finding solace and support. Positive feedback and supportive comments are instrumental in fostering a positive online experience, while negative comments can have a profound emotional impact, emphasizing the need for empathy and constructive engagement in digital spaces.

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that users navigate emotional expression through emojis and symbols on social media. It highlights a dominant preference for using these tools to express positive emotions, reflecting broader social media practices of maintaining emotional harmony and managing digital identities. The study also emphasizes the emotional sensitivity of users to negative feedback, underscoring the importance of empathy and support in online interactions.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the insightful findings, it can be concluded that emojis and symbols play a crucial role in social media sharing among young people. The data reveals that these individuals predominantly use emojis and symbols to express positive emotions such as joy, happiness, and excitement. Younger respondents (aged 18-23) showed a clear preference for using emojis and symbols in their social media interactions, particularly in messaging and status updates. The findings align with prior studies (Maryam, 2021; Jannah, 2021), which argue that emojis enrich digital communication by allowing users to convey complex emotions succinctly. This tendency highlights the therapeutic value of social media interactions, where sharing joyful statuses, messages, photos, and videos serves as a means to alleviate stress. In contrast, when faced with negative comments about their posts, respondents reported experiencing various adverse emotions, including frustration, anger, sadness, hurt, and offense. This trend reflects the broader cultural shift toward visual communication on social platforms, where emojis serve as emotional shortcuts. In other words, frequent use in messaging and status updates among younger users highlights a generational shift in communication practices. Emojis, in particular, have become integral to digital communication, contributing to a supportive online environment by promoting positive emotional exchanges.

It is essential to recognize that each social media platform has its own unique design, communication features, and social dynamics, which can significantly influence user behavior, including emotional expression and mental wellbeing. Given the significant role of Facebook in daily social interactions, future research should extend beyond this platform to include

other popular social media sites frequented by young people. Such an approach would provide a broader understanding of how different platforms impact youth's mental wellbeing in relation to their social media behavior.

Since this research focused on a specific sample, it's limiting the generalizability of the findings to broader social media users. Thus, it is suggested that expanding the sample to different age groups, geographical locations, or cultural backgrounds could yield more comprehensive insights into how emojis and symbols are used to express emotions across diverse populations. It is important to acknowledge that this study focused primarily on Facebook user interactions, with a sample limited to young users and focusing on status updates, comments, and likes. Private messaging and other forms of interaction were not considered. Therefore, future research should include a wider range of social media platforms and a more diverse demographic to understand social media's impact on mental wellbeing.

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