

Comparing Emoji Usage Habits: A Study on University Students

Hasan İFTÇİ¹ & Pelin YOLCU²

Abstract

Communication has been the most basic need of human beings since their existence. People have chosen different ways to communicate and have developed their own communication methods. In history, people have communicated by making indistinct sounds, making hand-arm gestures, and drawing pictures on cave walls. It is thought that the pictures and figures drawn on cave walls in history are the ancestors of today's emoji use. The rapid development of mass communication technologies has also allowed the emergence of virtual indicators called emoji. The main purpose of this research is to examine the emoji usage habits of university students in terms of the students' socio-demographic characteristics. The study group consists of 405 university students. The data of the study were collected by face-to-face survey method using the "Emoji Usage Habits" scale prepared by Bilge R. (2020). Statistical analyzes of the data were made using the SPSS 26.0 program. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to examine the normality distribution of numerical variables and normal distribution was obtained. Parametric tests were used in the data set. Frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values were used in the analysis of descriptive statistics. University students' emoji usage habits play a very effective role in communication. The use of emojis is increasing among young people, middle-aged people and even elderly individuals. It is seen that emojis, which are gradually replacing emotions and expressions, are on their way to becoming an effective communication tool in the future.

Keywords: Communication, Social Media, Emoji, Emoji Usage

Emoji Kullanım Alıřkanlıklarının Karşılařtırılması: Üniversite Öğrencileri Üzerinde Bir Çalışma

Abstract

İletişim kurmak insanlığın varoluşundan bugüne en gerekli ihtiyaç olarak ön plana çıkmaktadır. Kişiler farklı yollarla iletişim kurma yolu seçmiş ve kendilerince bir iletişim yöntemi geliştirmiştir. Tarihte insanlar belli belirsiz sesler çıkararak, el kol hareketleri ile, mağara duvarlarına resimler çizerek iletişim kurmuşlardır. Tarihte mağara duvarlarına çizilen resim ve figürlerin günümüzde emoji kullanımının atası olduğu düşünülmektedir. Kitle iletişim teknolojilerinin hızla gelişmesi emoji adı verilen sanal göstergelerin de meydana çıkmasına olanak sağlamıştır. Bu araştırmanın temel amacı, Üniversite öğrencilerinde emoji kullanım alışkanlıklarını öğrencilerin sosyo-demografik özellikleri bakımından incelemektir. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu üniversite öğrencilerinden olmak üzere 405 öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmanın verileri Bilge R. (2020) tarafından hazırlanan "Emoji Kullanım Alışkanlıkları" ölçeği kullanılarak yüz yüze anket yöntemiyle yapılmıştır. Verilerin istatistiksel analizleri SPSS 26.0 programı kullanılarak yapılmıştır. Sayısal değişkenlerin normallik dağılımlarına bakmak için Kolmogorov-Smirnov testi uygulanmış ve normal dağılım elde edilmiştir. Veri setinde parametrik testler kullanılmıştır. Tanımlayıcı istatistiklerin çözümlenmesinde de frekans, yüzde, aritmetik ortalama, standart sapma, minimum ve maksimum değerlerden faydalanılmıştır. Üniversite öğrencilerinin emoji kullanım alışkanlıkları iletişim kurmada çok etkili bir rol üstlenmektedir. Gençlerde, orta yaşta olan kişilerde hatta yaşlı bireylerde bile emoji kullanımı artış göstermektedir. Duyguların ve ifadelerin yerini gün geçtikçe alan emoji ler zamanlarda etkin bir iletişim aracı olabileceği yolunda düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: İletişim, Sosyal Medya, Emoji, Emoji Kullanımı


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¹ Prof. Dr. - Harran Üniversitesi, Birecik MYO, Şanlıurfa, Türkiye, hasanciftci@harran.edu.tr,

 ORCID: 0000-0001-5595-5726

² Öğr. Gör. Dr. - Dicle Üniversitesi, Diyarbakır Teknik Bilimler Meslek Yüksekokulu, Diyarbakır, Türkiye, pelin.yolcu@dicle.edu.tr,

 ORCID: 0000-0002-7235-4671



Introduction

The development of digital communication technologies has radically transformed human behavior and communication styles in many areas, from social relations to business life. Social media, in particular, has replaced physical contact in interpersonal interactions and has led to the emergence of new forms of communication in virtual environments. This transformation has pushed people to express themselves through texts on social media platforms, one of the fastest growing areas of the digital age. However, the lack of elements such as facial expressions, body language and tone of voice in text-based communication can leave the emotional meaning of messages incomplete. Emojis, used to fill this gap, have become the most common symbols of digital communication. Emojis add a new dimension to messages by allowing the visual expression of emotions and thoughts in the digital environment. It makes it possible to create short and effective language by reducing word usage. These visual expressions help individuals express their emotional states and thoughts more quickly and clearly. For example, a simple heart emoji can express many emotions, such as gratitude, love, or support. Therefore, emojis are seen as symbols that transcend the limitations of written communication and enrich the transfer of meaning between people. As the popularity of emojis and their use in digital communication increases, the role of these symbols on social media interactions has become a remarkable research topic. Emojis strengthen interactions by setting the tone and expanding the meaning of messages on platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp. Younger generations, in particular, are moving away from written language by embracing the practicality offered by emojis in communication and using these symbols as a powerful tool of emotional expression. In this context, emojis are considered the universal language of the digital age and play an active role in shaping communication. In this study, user perceptions regarding the use of emojis in social media and their effects on emotional expression will be examined. The study will focus on the contributions of emojis to digital communication, their roles in the meaning-making process between users, and their functionality in social media interactions. In this context, findings will be presented on how emojis express individuals' emotions, enrich the meaning of messages, and what functions they undertake in communication established via social media.

1. Evolution of Emojis

The origins of emojis date back to the late 1990s in Japan. The first emojis were designed by Shigetaka Kurita for NTT DoCoMo in 1999. Kurita developed this set of 176 symbols so that users can convey their emotional expressions more effectively through short messages (Kurita, 1999). The design of the first emojis aimed to provide users with the opportunity to express their emotions with simple and understandable symbols. This was part of an effort to overcome the limitations in communication at the time. The emoji set developed by Kurita quickly gained popularity in Japan and inspired other digital platforms. In 2010, the Unicode Consortium recognized emojis as an official character set. This has enabled emojis to become widespread across the world and gain consistency across different platforms (Unicode Consortium, 2010). This evolution of emojis has led to them becoming a global language of communication, not limited to Japanese culture. This allowed emojis to be used consistently across platforms and devices, allowing them to gain acceptance around the world. The proliferation of emojis on social media platforms is an important part of this process. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, in particular, have supported emoji integration, allowing users to express their emotions more effectively. Studies show that emojis increase social media interactions and attract more attention to users' posts (Kaye & Weller, 2017). The visual nature of emojis makes users' messages more meaningful, adding emotional depth to text-based communication. The visual nature of emojis plays a critical role in providing emotional depth and richness of meaning in text-based communication. Research shows that emojis increase the emotional expression in users' communications, contributing to messages becoming more effective and meaningful (Walther, 2011). Emojis transcend the limitations of written language and significantly enhance the emotional tone of messages. In text-based communication, expressing emotions can often be challenging, which is where emojis come into play. An emoji in a message provides a visual representation of the emotional context that words cannot convey, making it easier to create the desired reaction in the receiver (Derks, Fischer, & Fischer, 2008). For example, a "smiley face" emoji can convey a feeling of joy or friendliness that cannot be expressed in just one word. Such visual elements have a significant impact on the interpretation of messages, as people tend to express their emotional states not only with words but also with visual symbols (Huang et al., 2018).

In this context, the impact of emojis on text communication allows individuals to develop a clearer and more understandable communication language in their social interactions. Emojis add layered meaning

to messages, allowing recipients to better comprehend the message and thus strengthening the communication process (Kaye & Weller, 2017). Thus, emojis go beyond being just a fun tool and become an important element that deepens the emotional and social dimension of digital communication. Academic studies on emojis address the place, functions and cultural impacts of these visual symbols in digital communication within a broad framework. How emojis affect communication between individuals, their role in emotional expression, their contribution to creating meaning on social media, and the way they are perceived in a cultural context are the main topics frequently addressed in these studies.

1.1 The Role of Emojis in Emotional Expression in Digital Communication

In interpersonal communication in the digital environment, the emotional tone of written messages is made evident through emojis. Derks, Bos, and von Grumbkow (2008) argue that emojis strengthen emotional meaning in interpersonal communication and prevent misunderstandings. This research emphasizes that emojis replace elements such as facial expressions and body language that are missing in the digital environment and make the intonation in the text more understandable. For example, smile or tear emojis set the tone of the message and provide clues to the other party on how the message should be understood. In this way, emojis clarify the emotional content of the message, especially preventing misunderstandings.

Another study by Pavalanathan and Eisenstein (2016) emphasizes the importance of emojis in emotional expression, stating that these symbols create an expansion of meaning in written messages. For example, a smile or sad face emoji adds a different meaning to the sentence in which it is used and enriches the emotional content of the text. Emojis allow individuals to not only express their emotional states but also make themselves more understandable. These contributions of emojis in conveying emotions provide closer and more effective communication on social media platforms.

1.2 Cultural and Social Meaning Differences of Emojis

The meaning of emojis may vary depending on individuals' cultural background, social context, and individual experiences. Park, Baek, and Cha (2014) emphasize that cultural differences significantly affect the perception of emojis and that these symbols are used in unique ways in different cultures, integrated with local meanings. For example, while some emojis used in Japan reflect the social norms and emotional expressions of Japanese culture, the same emojis can carry different meanings in Western cultures. This indicates that emojis have become cultural symbols and complicate communication between people. Additionally, Miller et al. (2016) touched upon the function of emojis in intercultural communication and stated that emojis have the potential to create a universal language in the globalizing world. However, despite this effort to create a universal language, the meanings of emojis vary across cultures, and the same emoji can be perceived with different emotional tones in different cultural contexts. In this context, emojis also function as a tool for identity construction and cultural expression through social media.

1.3 The Meaning Creation and Interaction Power of Emojis in Social Media

The role and interactive power of emojis in the process of creating meaning on social media is an important element in digital communication. Duerden et al. (2020) show that the use of emoji on social media increases interaction rates and provides closer and more effective communication between users. For example, it has been observed that emojis used in messages sent on platforms such as Instagram and Twitter increase the number of likes and comments on the post. Emojis are seen as a tool that strengthens interaction on social media platforms by expanding the meaning of short messages and attracting the reader's attention. Emojis also allow social media users to share content that conforms to social norms in the process of self-expression. Individuals can strengthen their emotional expressions and increase the sincerity of their messages through emojis, enabling them to communicate more effectively in the social media environment. It is stated in the literature that the use of emoji on social media platforms helps individuals express themselves more clearly and effectively (Ge & Herring, 2018). In this context, emojis have become an important tool in the process of constructing individuals' online identities.

Purpose of the Research

In the last few years, the development of communication technologies has increased the rate of smart phone usage and the number of users, regardless of many demographic characteristics. Accordingly, smart phones have begun to be used for many purposes in our daily lives. The first of these is communication. The main purpose of this research is to comparatively examine emoji usage habits among university students. In line with this main purpose, the following research questions were developed:



Is there a significant difference in the emoji usage habits score of university students according to the gender variable?

Is there a significant difference in the emoji usage habits scores of university students according to their age groups?

Is there a significant difference in the emoji usage habits score of university students based on their active use of social media platforms?

5. Is there a significant difference in the emoji usage habits scores of university students based on their daily use of social media tools?

Is there a significant difference in the emoji usage habits score of university students based on the social media platforms where they use emojis extensively?

Universe and Sample of the Research

The research universe was determined as Dicle University undergraduate students and the sample of the research consists of active undergraduate students at Dicle University in the 2024-2025 academic year. The sample size was determined as 405 students with a 5% margin of error using the sample calculation method with a known number of universes. Balcı (2011) states that a sample size of 218 people would be sufficient from a population of 500 universes with a 0.05 margin of error. (Balcı, 2011:106).

Method of the Research

The research was conducted using the survey technique, one of the quantitative data collection techniques. In order to measure the emoji usage habits of university students, a face-to-face survey was conducted with 405 students using the "Emoji Usage Habits" scale prepared by Bilge R. (2020) as a data collection tool.

Statistical analyses of the study were performed using the SPSS 26.0 program. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to examine the normality distribution of numerical variables and normal distribution was obtained. Parametric tests were used in the data set. Frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values were used in the analysis of descriptive statistics. Since the scales were suitable for normal distribution, independent sample t-test was used to compare the means of 2 independent groups, One-Way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) test was used to compare more than 2 independent groups, and Tukey HSD multiple comparison test was used to compare the differences between the groups. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to test the reliability of the scale. The results were evaluated at a significance level of 0.05 with a confidence interval of 95%.

Working group of the research

The universe of the research consists of 405 university students, including Dicle University students studying in the 2024-2025 academic year. In this context, when the gender ratio of the students in the research sample is examined; 174 of the students participating in the survey are male and 231 are female.

Importance of Research

As communication technologies develop and offer new opportunities every day, emoji (icons) have emerged as a new communication tool and culture, while written and verbal communication has begun to decline. Emojis, which are frequently used in messaging and emotional expressions today, have become an indispensable communication tool in this age we live in. Various sources have shown that young people mostly communicate with each other using emojis and that this audience is increasing day by day. Therefore, it was aimed to evaluate the impact of emojis, which have become the communication channel of the age, on students. In this study, "emoji usage habits" were evaluated on students.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this research are,

- The research universe is limited to Dicle University undergraduate students.
- The research is limited by the data collection tool.
- The research is limited to Dicle University 2024-2025 data.

● Although the survey did not ask for student names or other personal information, students avoided spending time on the survey.

Data collection

In the study, the Emoji Usage Habits scale was used to evaluate the emoji usage habits of university students. The scale was prepared by Bilge R. (2020) to determine emoji usage habits. The scale consists of a total of 30 items and a single dimension. Data were collected from university students via face-to-face surveys. Quota sampling, one of the non-judgmental sampling methods, was applied. In the study, a survey was applied to 405 students using a scale. The convenience sampling method was preferred in collecting data within the scope of the study. The convenience sampling method is among the non-random sampling methods. In this sampling method, a method is applied in which the sample selected from the main mass is determined by the judgments of the researcher. In convenience sampling, data is collected from the main mass in the easiest, fastest and most economical way. (Malhotra vd., 2008). The reason for applying the survey to university students is that they use emojis more. When looking at the gender ratios; 231 of the students participating in the survey were girls and 14 were boys. Since the research was applied to associate degree students, it was observed that students in the 18-23 age group participated more. The basis of participation was volunteering. Personal information was not requested from those who answered the survey. The necessary ethics committee permissions were obtained with the decision of Dicle University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee dated 03.08.2024 and numbered E-E-14679147-663.05-424134.

Results

Table 1: Distribution of Socio-Demographic Characteristics

		n	%
Gender	Girl	231	57,0
	Male	174	43,0
Age	Between 18-20	161	39,8
	Between 21-23	163	40,2
	Between 24-26	38	9,4
	26 and above	43	10,6
Using social media platforms actively	Yes	323	79,8
	No	82	20,2
Frequency of emoji usage	Never	27	6,7
	Rarely	46	11,3
	Sometimes	110	27,2
	Frequently	137	33,8
	Always	85	21,0
Average daily use of social media tools	1-2 hours	97	24,0
	3-4 hours	139	34,3
	5-6 hours	91	22,5
	More than 7 hours	78	19,3
Facebook	Yes	79	19,5
	No	326	80,5
Instagram	Yes	301	74,3
	No	104	25,7
Twitter	Yes	144	35,6
	No	261	64,4
Whatsapp	Yes	333	82,2
	No	72	17,8
Youtube	Yes	174	43,0
	No	231	57,0
Diğer	Yes	96	23,7
	No	309	76,3

The study shows that 57% of the students are female, 43% are male, and 80% are between the ages of 18-23. It is seen that 79.8% of them actively use social media platforms and 82% of them often use emojis. It is seen that 24% of the students use social media tools for 1-2 hours a day, 34.3% for 3-4 hours, 22.5% for 5-6 hours, and 21% for more than 7 hours.

When the social media platforms where students use emojis intensively/frequently are evaluated, it is seen that they are WhatsApp (82.2%), Instagram (74.3%), YouTube (43%) and Twitter (35.6%),



respectively. Facebook (19.5%) and other platforms (23.7%) are seen as social media platforms where emojis are used less frequently.

Table 2: *Distribution of Thoughts on Emoji Usage Habits*

	N	\bar{X}	SS	Minimum	Maksimum
I use emojis in written communication in digital environments.	405	3,49	1,22	1	5
The use of emojis confounds my expectations.	405	3,54	1,14	1	5
Using emojis helps me communicate with people in a healthier way.	405	3,52	1,18	1	5
I think that using emoji alone is insufficient in the communication process I carry out in the digital environment.	405	3,35	1,18	1	5
Using emojis has a positive effect on communicating with people.	405	3,56	1,12	1	5
Using emojis increases interaction.	405	3,56	1,14	1	5
I use emojis mostly with my close friends.	405	3,70	1,19	1	5
When communicating digitally, I have difficulty understanding a message that comes only with emojis.	405	3,01	1,24	1	5
I need emojis when messaging someone digitally.	405	3,39	1,18	1	5
I use emojis for entertainment purposes only.	405	3,15	1,23	1	5
It makes me happy when the person I'm messaging uses emojis.	405	3,12	1,29	1	5
Using emojis is not enough to convey the message I want to give.	405	3,04	1,20	1	5
When the other person uses emojis, I get information about their emotional state.	405	3,63	1,11	1	5
Using emojis has become a necessity for me.	405	2,85	1,30	1	5
I believe that the emojis I use reflect my feelings.	405	3,48	1,17	1	5
I believe that the emojis I use reflect my thoughts.	405	3,46	1,18	1	5
The emojis I use do not contain any meaning.	405	2,69	1,27	1	5
I choose the emojis I use consciously.	405	3,73	1,15	1	5
I carefully choose the emojis I use depending on the subject.	405	3,74	1,16	1	5
The emojis I use support my communication.	405	3,68	1,14	1	5
I choose emojis according to the environment I live in.	405	3,40	1,24	1	5
I do not prefer to use emojis on social media platforms.	405	2,75	1,30	1	5
The environment we live in has a significant impact on emoji preferences.	405	3,29	1,21	1	5
In daily life, I use emojis to make my communication with people easier.	405	3,42	1,18	1	5
Using emojis makes a positive contribution to solving my communication problems.	405	3,40	1,15	1	5
It bothers me when the person I'm messaging replies to my message using emojis.	405	2,85	1,27	1	5
It is possible to communicate using only emojis.	405	2,81	1,31	1	5
I would understand even if my questions were answered with only emojis.	405	3,17	1,23	1	5
I only comment on posts shared on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter with emojis.	405	2,71	1,24	1	5
My followers on social media platforms only respond to my posts with emojis.	405	2,64	1,14	1	5

When the students' opinions on the items regarding emoji usage habits were evaluated in the study,

Among the emoji usage habits items, the item with the highest average is “I choose the emojis I use carefully depending on the subject” with 3.74; the item with the second highest average is “I choose the emojis I use consciously” and the item with the third highest average is “I use emojis mostly with my close friends.” As a result, students stated that they mostly use emojis when talking to their close friends and that they choose the emojis they use both consciously and carefully according to the subject.

Table 3: *Descriptive Statistics Results of Emoji Usage Habits Scale Score*

	N	\bar{X}	SS	Minimum	Maksimum
Emoji Usage Habits	405	3,27	0,69	1,0	5,0

When the descriptive statistics of the students' emoji usage habits scale score were evaluated in the study, the emoji average score was seen as 3.27.

Table 4: *Normality Distribution Analysis of Emoji Usage Habits Scale Score*

	Kolmogorov Smirnov			Skewness (Distortion)	Kurtosis (Kurtosis)
	Test statistics	Sd	p		
Emoji Usage Habits	0,102	405	0,000	-0,215	1,154

In the study, when the normality distribution of the students' emoji usage habits scale score was evaluated with the Kolmogorov Smirnov test, it did not show a normal distribution ($p < 0.05$). However, although the score did not show a normal distribution, since the kurtosis and skewness values, which are

accepted as other assumptions of normal distribution, were between ± 2 and the sample size was $n > 30$ and above, it was accepted that the data belonging to the scale scores were normally distributed.

Table 5: Reliability Analysis of Emoji Habits Scale

	Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
Emoji Usage Habits	0,929	30

Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the emoji usage habits scale is 0.929. This generally applied scale measured the phenomenon it was intended to measure very well and a reliable result was obtained.

Table 6: Comparison of Students' Emoji Usage Habits Scale Scores by Gender

	Gender	N	\bar{X}	SS.	t	p
Emoji Usage Their habits	Girl	231	3,28	0,62	0,327	0,744
	Male	174	3,26	0,77		

Independent sample t-test, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

When the average score of the students' emoji usage habits was evaluated according to gender using an independent sample t-test, no significant difference was observed ($p > 0.05$).

Table 7: Comparison of Students' Emoji Usage Habits Scale Scores by Age Groups

	Age groups	N	\bar{X}	SS	F	p
Emoji Usage Their habits	18-20	161	3,15	,67	5,277	0,001***
	21-23	163	3,27	,57		
	24-26	38	3,45	,89		
	26 and above	43	3,57	,82		

One-Way ANOVA test, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

In the study, when the students' emoji usage habits scale average score was evaluated according to age groups with one-way analysis of variance test,

The average score of emoji usage habits differs significantly according to the age groups of the students ($p < 0.05$). Tukey HSD test was used to test the difference between groups. According to the results of this test,

It is seen that the average score of emoji usage habits of university students aged 26 and over (\bar{X} : 3.57, SD: 0.82) is significantly lower than the average score of students aged 18-20 and 21-23.

Table 8: Comparison of Students' Emoji Usage Habits Scale Scores According to Their Active Social Media Usage Status

	Using social media	N	\bar{X}	SS.	t	p
Emoji Usage Habits	Yes	323	3,26	0,65	-0,598	0,551
	No	82	3,32	0,81		

Independent sample t-test, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

In the study, when the average score of the students' emoji usage habits was evaluated according to their active use of social media using an independent sample t-test,

The average score for emoji usage habits of students who actively use social media is $\bar{X} = 3.26$, and the average score of students who do not actively use social media is $\bar{X} = 3.32$. The average score of emoji usage habits does not show a significant difference between students' active use of social media ($p > 0.05$).

Table 9: Comparison of Students' Emoji Usage Habits Scale Scores According to Emoji Usage Frequency

	Frequency of emoji usage	N	\bar{X}	SS	F	p
Emoji Usage Habits	Never	27	2,47	0,95	34,905	<0,001***
	Rarely	46	2,93	0,62		
	Sometimes	110	3,12	0,59		
	Frequently	137	3,35	0,45		
	Always	85	3,79	0,65		

One-Way ANOVA test, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

In the study, when the students' emoji usage habits scale average score was evaluated according to their emoji usage frequency with one-way analysis of variance test,

The average score of emoji usage habits shows a significant difference according to the students' emoji usage frequency ($p < 0.05$). Tukey HSD test was used to test the difference between groups. According to the results of this test,

The mean score of emoji usage habits of university students who frequently use emoji ($\bar{X} : 3.35$, SD: 0.45) and always use emoji ($\bar{X} : 3.79$, SD: 0.65) is significantly higher than the mean score of students who sometimes and rarely use emoji and never use emoji.

Table 10: Comparison of Students' Emoji Usage Habits Scale Scores According to Daily Media Usage Frequency

	Daily social media usage time	N	\bar{X}	SS	F	p
Emoji Usage Habits	1-2 hours	97	2,92	0,71	22,358	<0,001***
	3-4 hours	139	3,19	0,53		
	5-6 hours	91	3,42	0,66		
	More than 7 hours	78	3,68	0,70		

One-Way ANOVA test, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

In the study, when the students' emoji usage habits scale average score was evaluated according to the daily social media usage time with one-way analysis of variance test,

The average score of emoji usage habits differs significantly according to the students' daily social media usage time ($p < 0.05$). Tukey HSD test was used to test the difference between groups. According to the results of this test,

The average score of emoji usage habits of students who use social media for more than 7 hours per day ($\bar{X} : 3.68$, SD: 0.70) is significantly higher than the average score of students who use social media for 1-2 hours, 3-4 hours and 5-6 hours per day. The average score of emoji usage habits of students who use social media for 5-6 hours per day ($\bar{X} : 3.42$, SD: 0.66) is significantly higher than the average score of students who use social media for 1-2 hours and 3-4 hours per day. The average score of emoji usage habits of students who use social media for 3-4 hours per day ($\bar{X} : 3.19$, SD: 0.53) is significantly higher than the average score of students who use social media for 1-2 hours per day.

Table 11: Comparison of Students' Emoji Usage Habits Scale Scores According to the Media Platforms Where They Use Emoji Intensively

	Gender	N	\bar{X}	SS.	t	p
Facebook	Yes	79	3,62	0,89	4,100	<0,001***
	No	326	3,19	0,60		
Instagram	Yes	301	3,35	0,71	4,390	<0,001***
	No	104	3,05	0,56		
Twitter	Yes	144	3,55	0,75	5,855	<0,001***
	No	261	3,12	0,60		
Whatsapp	Yes	333	3,34	0,65	4,133	<0,001***
	No	72	2,98	0,77		
Youtube	Yes	174	3,49	0,69	5,770	<0,001***
	No	231	3,11	0,64		
Other	Yes	96	3,73	0,78	7,016	<0,001***
	No	309	3,13	0,59		

Independent sample t-test, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

In the study, when the average score of the students' emoji usage habits was evaluated with an independent sample t-test according to the social media platforms where they use emojis intensively,

It is seen that the average score of emoji usage habits of students who use emojis more on Facebook ($\bar{X} : 3.62$, SD: 0.89), Instagram ($\bar{X} : 3.35$, SD: 0.71), twitter ($\bar{X} : 3.55$, SD: 0.75), WhatsApp ($\bar{X} : 3.34$, SD: 0.65), YouTube ($\bar{X} : 3.49$, SD: 0.69) and other ($\bar{X} : 3.73$, SD: 0.78) platforms is significantly higher than the average score of students who do not use emojis heavily on these platforms ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion and Discussion

This study aimed to examine emoji usage habits among university students. In this context, the differences in scale scores were examined in terms of gender, age groups, active use of social media, frequency of emoji use, daily use of social media tools, and social media platforms where emojis are used intensively, respectively.

Of the students participating in the study, 231 (57%) were female and 174 (43%) were male, and all of the students were university students (Table 1).

The majority of university students are between the ages of 18-23 (80%). The majority of students (79.8%) actively use social media. Students generally use emojis (82%). The average daily use of social media is 3-4 hours. Students mostly use emojis on social platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter (Table 1).

In the study, it was observed that the students chose emojis consciously and carefully according to the subject and used them mostly when communicating with their close friends (Table 2).

The findings regarding whether the university students participating in the study make a difference in terms of gender, age groups, active use of social media, frequency of emoji use, daily use of social media tools, and the social media platforms on which they use emojis intensively are included.

When we examined whether the emoji usage habits scores of the university students participating in the study showed a significant difference in terms of gender, the average scores did not show a significant difference in terms of gender (Table 6).

When it was evaluated whether there was a significant difference in emoji usage habits scores according to age groups of university students participating in the study, the average score of emoji usage habits showed a significant difference according to age groups, and the emoji usage habits of students aged 26 and over were higher than the habit levels of students aged 18-20 and 21-23 (Table 7).

There is no significant difference in the emoji usage habits score of the university students participating in the study according to their active use of social media (Table 8).

A significant difference was found in the social emoji habits score of the university students participating in the study according to their emoji usage frequency. The level of emoji usage habits of students who frequently and always use emojis was higher than the level of students who rarely, sometimes and never use emojis on social media (Table 9).

A significant difference was found in the emoji usage habits score of the university students participating in the study according to their daily social media usage time. The highest emoji usage habit was seen in students who used social media for more than 7 hours per day (Table 10).

A significant difference was found in the emoji usage habits score of the university students participating in the study according to the social media platforms where they use emojis extensively. Students who use emojis on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Whatsapp, YouTube and other social platforms appear to have higher levels of emoji usage habits than students who do not use emojis (Table 11).

As a result, university students' emoji usage habits scores differed among age groups, emoji usage frequency, daily social media usage, and social media platforms where they use emojis intensively. However, emoji usage habits scores did not show significant differences in terms of gender and active social media use. University students' emoji usage habits play a very effective role in communication. The use of emojis is increasing among young people, middle-aged people, and even elderly individuals. Emojis, which are gradually replacing emotions and expressions, are on their way to becoming an effective communication tool in the future.

Ethical Declaration

“Comparing Emoji Usage Habits: A Study on University Students” başlıklı çalışmanın yazım sürecinde bilimsel kurallara, etik ve alıntı kurallarına uyulmuş; toplanan veriler üzerinde herhangi bir tahrifat yapılmamış ve bu çalışma herhangi başka bir akademik yayın ortamına değerlendirme için gönderilmemiştir. The necessary ethics committee permissions were obtained with the decision of Dicle University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee dated 03.08.2024 and numbered E-E-14679147-663.05-424134.

Etik Beyan

“Emoji Kullanım Alışkanlıklarının Karşılaştırılması: Üniversite Öğrencileri Üzerinde Bir Çalışma” başlıklı çalışmanın yazım sürecinde bilimsel kurallara, etik ve alıntı kurallarına uyulmuş; toplanan veriler üzerinde herhangi bir tahrifat yapılmamış ve bu çalışma herhangi başka bir akademik yayın ortamına değerlendirme için gönderilmemiştir. Gerekli olan etik kurul izinleri Dicle Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Etik Kurulu'nun 03.08.2024 tarih ve 2022/112 sayılı kararı ile alınmıştır.



Statement of Contribution Rate of Researchers

The contribution rates of the authors in the study are equal.

Arařtırmacıların Katkı Oranı Beyanı

Yazarların çalışmadaki katkı oranları eşittir.

Declaration of Conflict

There is no potential conflict of interest in the study.

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Yapay Zeka ve Türleri Kullanım Beyanı

Bu makalenin yazımında yapay zeka ve türleri kullanılmamıştır.

Data Sharing Statement

We declare that, upon reasonable request for the purpose of verifying the findings, we can share the data of this study according to the conditions specified in the relevant section of the "ethical principles and publication policy".

Veri Paylaşım Beyanı

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GENİŞ ÖZET

Bu araştırma, üniversite öğrencilerinin emoji kullanım alışkanlıklarını inceleyerek, bu alışkanlıkların çeşitli sosyo-demografik faktörlerle nasıl ilişkili olduğunu ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Emojiler, dijital çağın sembolik dili olarak kabul edilmekte ve günümüz iletişimde giderek artan bir öneme sahip olmaktadır. Yüz yüze iletişimde duygular mimiklerle, beden diliyle ve ses tonu ile aktarılırken; dijital iletişimde bu duygusal aktarımı sağlamak çoğu zaman zordur. Bu eksikliği gidermek için emojiler oldukça işlevsel bir rol üstlenmektedir. İnsanlar yazılı mesajlarına duygusal ton katmak, ironi ya da mizahı yansıtmak ve karşı tarafla daha samimi bir bağ kurmak amacıyla emojilerden faydalanmaktadır. Özellikle gençler arasında bu sembollerin kullanımı büyük ölçüde artmış ve dijital platformlarda iletişimin ayrılmaz bir parçası haline gelmiştir. Araştırmanın örneklemini, 2024-2025 akademik yılında Dicle Üniversitesi'nde eğitim gören 405 üniversite öğrencisinden oluşmaktadır. Katılımcıların büyük çoğunluğu 18-23 yaş aralığındadır. Katılımcılardan 231'i kadın, 174'ü erkektir. Çoğu öğrenci sosyal medyayı aktif olarak kullanmakta ve günlük ortalama 3-4 saat bu platformlarda vakit geçirmektedir. En sık kullanılan sosyal medya platformları arasında WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube ve Twitter yer almaktadır. Emojiler, bu mecralarda duygu aktarımı, tepkileri ifade etme ve mesajlara anlam katma amacıyla sıkça kullanılmaktadır. Araştırma kapsamında toplanan veriler, Bilge R. tarafından geliştirilen "Emoji Kullanım Alışkanlıkları" ölçeği aracılığıyla toplanmış ve SPSS 26.0 programı ile analiz edilmiştir. Veriler, öğrencilerin emoji kullanımı konusunda bilinçli tercihler yaptıklarını, özellikle konuşma konusuna göre emoji seçimine dikkat ettiklerini ve yoğunlukla emojileri yakın arkadaşlarıyla iletişimlerinde kullandıklarını göstermektedir. Katılımcıların çoğu, emojilerin dijital ortamda iletişimi kolaylaştırdığını ve kişilerarası etkileşimi güçlendirdiğini düşünmektedir. Emojilerin mesajları daha sıcak hale getirdiği, duyguların daha net ifade edilmesini sağladığı ve karşı tarafın duygusal durumuna dair ipuçları verdiği ifade edilmiştir. Bununla birlikte, yalnızca emojilerle yapılan iletişimin çoğu zaman yetersiz olduğu ve yanlış anlamalara yol açabileceği görüşü de dile getirilmiştir. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre, emoji kullanım alışkanlıklarında bazı demografik değişkenler anlamlı farklılıklar ortaya koymuştur. Cinsiyete göre yapılan değerlendirmede, kadın ve erkek öğrenciler arasında anlamlı bir fark görülmemiştir. Bu durum, emoji kullanımının cinsiyete bağlı olarak değişmediğini göstermektedir. Yaş grupları açısından değerlendirildiğinde ise 26 yaş ve üzeri öğrencilerin emoji kullanım alışkanlıkları, daha genç öğrencilere kıyasla daha yüksek çıkmıştır. Bu bulgu, yaş ilerledikçe dijital araçlarla duygularını ifade etmede daha fazla emoji kullanımının tercih edildiğini göstermektedir. Sosyal medyayı aktif kullanma durumuna göre öğrencilerin emoji kullanım alışkanlıklarında belirgin bir fark görülmemiştir. Yani sosyal medyada aktif olup olmamak, emoji kullanım düzeyini tek başına etkilememektedir. Ancak emojileri ne sıklıkla kullandıkları önemli bir farklılık yaratmıştır. Emojileri "her zaman" ya da "sıklıkla" kullanan öğrenciler, "nadiren" veya "hiç" kullanmayanlara göre çok daha yüksek puanlar almıştır. Bu bulgu, emojilerin günlük dijital iletişim rutininde ne kadar yer ettiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Aynı şekilde, günlük sosyal medya kullanım süresi ile emoji kullanımı arasında da anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmuştur. Günde yedi saatten fazla sosyal medya kullanan öğrenciler, emoji kullanımında en yüksek düzeye sahip olmuşlardır. Bu, sosyal medya kullanım süresi uzadıkça emojilere olan eğilimin de arttığını göstermektedir. Emojilerin hangi platformlarda kullanıldığı da kullanım alışkanlıklarını etkileyen bir diğer faktördür. Öğrencilerin WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube gibi platformlarda daha yoğun emoji kullandıkları ve bu platformlarda emoji kullanım alışkanlıklarının anlamlı biçimde daha yüksek olduğu görülmüştür. Bu platformların etkileşime açık yapısı ve mesajlaşma özellikleri, emojilerin kullanımını teşvik etmektedir. Özellikle anlık mesajlaşma uygulamalarında emoji kullanımı, duyguların hızla ifade edilmesini ve karşılıklı anlayışı kolaylaştırmaktadır. Öte yandan, Facebook ve diğer sosyal medya mecralarında emoji kullanımı görece daha düşüktür. Öğrencilerin ifadelerine göre, emojiler yalnızca eğlence amacıyla değil, aynı zamanda düşünce ve duygularını daha açık şekilde ifade etmek için de kullanılmaktadır. Bazı katılımcılar emojilerin kendilerini ifade ederken yeterli olmadığını düşünse de büyük bir çoğunluk, emojilerin iletişimde destekleyici ve anlam zenginleştirici bir rol oynadığını belirtmiştir. Bu durum, emojilerin sadece basit görseller değil, aynı zamanda iletişimin derinliğini ve anlamını artıran güçlü araçlar olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu çerçevede emojilerin sadece bireysel ifade biçimi olarak değil, aynı zamanda kültürel bir sembol haline geldiği söylenebilir. Farklı topluluklar, benzer emojileri farklı anlamlarla yorumlayabilir. Bu durum, emojilerin

iletiřimdeki rolünü hem evrenselleřtirirken hem de kùltürel baėlamlara göre çeřitlendirir. Öğrenciler arasında da emojiilerin hangi baėlamda, kiminle ve hangi platformda kullanılacağına dair bilinçli tercihler söz konusudur. Katılımcıların büyük çoėunluėu, mesajın içeriėine ve iletiřimde buldukları kiřiye göre emoji seçimi yaptıklarını belirtmiřtir. Bu da emojiilerin geliřigüzel deėil, düşünülerek kullanıldığını göstermektedir. Ayrıca, emojiilerin dijital kimlik inřasında da önemli bir rolü vardır. Öğrenciler, sosyal medyada kendilerini ifade ederken duygusal kimliklerini, düşüncelerini ya da mizah anlayışlarını emojiiler aracılıėıyla dıřa vurabilmektedir. Bu yönüyle emojiiler, bireyin dijital benliėinin bir parçası hâline gelmiřtir. Sonuç olarak, bu çalıřma emojiilerin sadece iletiřimi kolaylařtıran araçlar deėil, aynı zamanda sosyal baėlamda anlam yaratan, etkileřim kurmayı güçlendiren ve bireylerin dijital kimliklerini řekillendiren kùltürel göstergeler olduėunu ortaya koymaktadır. Genel olarak bu arařtırma, üniversite öğrencileri arasında emoji kullanımının oldukça yaygın ve sistematik olduėunu ortaya koymuřtur. Emojiiler, öğrencilerin dijital iletiřiminde vazgeçilmez bir unsur haline gelmiřtir. Kullanım alışkanlıkları yař, kullanım sıklığı, sosyal medya kullanım süresi ve tercih edilen platformlara göre anlamlı deėiřiklikler gösterse de cinsiyet ve sosyal medyada aktif olma durumu gibi faktörlerin etkisi sınırlı kalmaktadır. Dijital çağın bu yeni sembolik dili, bireylerin duygusal ifade ihtiyacına cevap vermekte ve sosyal iliřkilerin sürdürülmesinde işlevsel bir rol oynamaktadır.