

# THE ROLE OF USE OF EMOJI IN BUSINESS ON COMMUNICATION AND EMPLOYMENT MOTIVATION

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## ABSTRACT

One of the main goals of today's organizations is to combine and integrate the goals of the employees with the goals of the organization. Organizations may have expectations from employees as well as employees' expectations from organizations and managers in achieving their goals. It is possible that these expectations, which are the source of the motivation, can be achieved through a natural and permanent communication within the organization. Communication should ensure that employees work together on the core values of the organization. The compliance process of the employee to the organization is accelerated and the productivity of the employee can be increased. The employee who adapts to the organization; sense of belonging and communication will increase and motivation process will accelerate. As a result of the development of technology, the use of digital tools has also become widespread. The individual, with the rapid development of technology and increased dependence in the field of communication, he expresses his feelings and thoughts and uses emojis. However, digital text messages are now part of everyday life. In these messages, the use of emoji is often preferred in order to convey their thoughts and ideas to the recipient correctly. The widespread use of emoji affects communication and also employees psychologically. In this regard, this study examines the role of emoji usage in the workplace and the motivation of the employee from a theoretical perspective.

Keywords: Motivation, Communication, Emoji, Emoji Usage.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Today, as a result of the developments in technology, the use of digital communication technologies is increasing rapidly. In addition, digital media applications such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Messenger allow individuals to convey their thoughts and feelings verbally and in writing, instantly and quickly to the other party. In these applications, it has been observed in the research that individuals prefer to use emoji in order to express their ideas, thoughts and feelings (Cioletti, 2015; Gökalliler & Saatçioğlu, 2016; Çeken et al. 2017; Toksöz & Kahraman, 2017; Ge & Gretsel, 2018). Emojis are included in the communication processes as they manage to express many emotions and thoughts with a single visual expression. From the figures drawn on the cave walls to the present day, the role and effect of emoji is very important in the field of communication.

Emoji in Japanese, the letter "e" means figure and "moji" means character (sense). In addition, small images are used to express emotions (face, animal, weather, building, food and drinks, etc.) (Kitamura & Sato, 2009; Act. Toksöz, 2018: 180). In other words, emoji is also called photo-word or photo-character (Danesi, 2017).

Toksöz and Kahraman (2017) state that emojis were designed for the first time in 1998 by Shigetaka Kurita, and were used in i-mode mobile phone in Japan (Figure 1). Towards the end of the 1990s, 722 emoji appeared. Apple started supporting emojis on its iphone devices in 2010. As a result, the use of emoji has gained global popularity and has become an alternative digital language.



Figure 1. The First Emojis Developed by Shigetaka Kurita

Kaynak: Yonemitsu, 2016; Toksöz, 2018: 180.

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Emojis are not only used in expressing emotions. Kelly and Watts (2015) state the other uses of emojis in three ways. These goals are as follows:

- ✓ Establishing a fun communication,
- ✓ Ensuring the continuation of the speech,
- ✓ There are also aims to create a unique and different form of expression.

As the use of emoji is becoming widespread in all areas of life, it is also increasingly used in business life. Emojis are an emotion-reflecting tool and play an effective role in reflecting the emotion that employees feel. The language used in traditional communication almost always provides emotional and physical cues, which are made up of the individual's hand or eye movements and other visual elements. Emoji emoticons provide a very creative and fun expression system, and emojis help express emotions (Azuma, 2012, 63-65). Emojis that provide a visual or symbolic communication opportunity are basically effective in establishing a link between the virtual self and the real self. Individuals sometimes choose to express their true feelings, and sometimes individuals prefer an emoji outside their emotions. The choice of emoji is related to how individuals want to reveal the digital environment.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this study, after defining and evaluating emotions, emotions in the workplace are mentioned the effect of the use of emoji on communication and motivation has been examined based on the literature in this field.

### 2.1. Identification and Evaluation of Emotions

Managers and individuals must be more knowledgeable, such as issues to be able to recognize emotions well, how emotions can affect behaviors, how emotions are expressed and how emotions can be directed in order to adapt quickly to changing conditions and organizational structures to follow the change to be satisfied with the environment to be able to feel emotional belonging to their job and to provide emotional satisfaction in the work environment. This process increases the importance of emotion management and the topic of positive emotional capital (tolerance, optimism, belonging, satisfaction, etc.) becomes a very important social capital for individuals and organizations.

Emotions are a source of life that make sense of life and provide the basis for existence. Emotional expression in Latin is defined as "the soul that drives us". Emotions provide individuals with useful information that is vital. The expression of emotions shows a universal feature. Research findings indicate that humans and many animals express some emotions in the same or similar way and show their needs with emotions (Baltaş, 2011: 10; Akt: Mert, 2018: 35).

Dökmen stated that the general function of emotions is the adaptation of the individual to nature and society (Dökmen, 2000). Goleman (2005), on the other hand, defines emotions as features that enable the individual to learn by activating the learning potential, enable him to ask questions, push the search for the unknown, develop his capacity, and take the learned behavior into practice.

Emotions that aren't uniform and appear in different types have common features. These features are as follows (Konrad & Hendl, 2003; Titrek, 2007):

- ✓ Previously, the world of emotion cannot be detected. Emotions occur spontaneously, and emotions develop out of will.
- ✓ When any emotion occurs, excitement is felt at the same time.
- ✓ Emotions can be pleasant sometimes and sometimes not.
- ✓ Emotions reflect themselves outside with body language and facial movements (gestures and facial expressions). It affects desires, goals, and movements.

In the use of emoji, it is aimed to express emotions. In the Oxford Dictionary, emotion was stated as “any mind, passion or feeling, and a violent or stimulated mental state”. Although there is no consensus among researchers, some theorists state that emojis are the main emotional clusters. These are anger, fear, sadness, love, pleasure, disgust, astonishment and shame (Goleman, 2000: 359; Akt: Mert, 2018: 36).

The process of managing emotions is accepted that it is the emotional maturity of the individual in the process of recognizing and directing emotions, adapting to emotions, and using them effectively. According to Goleman (2000) emotion management is the process of idea and decision making of individuals and managers not only to suppress their emotions and feelings or entirely under their influence, but also by confronting individuals with emotions. accepts it as their effective conclusion.

Emotions are behaviors of vital value (Barutçugil, 2004). Our emotions have a great influence on our thoughts and actions (Stevens, 1998: 23). Emotions affect behavior. Emotions guide us. Emotions promote behavior, and allow us to filter information and structure our experience (Merlevede et al., 2006). In fact, although emotions are the same, the rules of expressing emotion change for reasons such as culture, age, gender, profession, and status, and therefore, emotional communication differs according to individuals (Barutçugil, 2004). People are influenced by their emotions as well as their minds and logics. Emotions have an important place in the process of affecting people (Acar, 2007).

Table 1. Sub-Areas of Emotion Management

Self-Regulatory	Self-Consciousness	Communication	Social Skills	Empathy
Self control, conscience, self-esteem, to be innovative, reliability	Emotional awareness, self-assessment, optimistic approach	to be open, honor, leadership, motivate, avoid criticism	Compromise, managing conflict, creating common goals, creating team, to be open to cooperation	Caring about emotions, to care about expectations, be compatible assure, adopting a culture of love

Source: Töremen & Çankaya, 2008: 35.

Managing emotions effectively depends on having certain features, developing them and using them effectively. Sub-areas of emotion management are self-control, self-awareness, communication, social skills and empathy. The concepts that these sub-fields are related are specified in Table 1 (Yaylacı, 2006).

## 2.2. Emotions at Workplace

Hochschild in 1983 “Emotional Workforce” and Fineman in 1993 “Emotions in Organizations” introduced their work. In these studies, emotion is defined as “a mental state that causes people to feel”. This definition has aroused interest in organizational theory and organizational behavior literature (Domagalski 1999). In studies investigating the emotional workforce, the employees express that they manage their emotions according to the expectations of the institutions and customers they work with (Hochschild, 1983).

Research in the field of organizational theory and behavior states that emotions have an important place in business life. This is because organizations are made up of people and working individuals have feelings (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Domagalski, 1999). In the field of management, scientists such as Fineman, Worline and Rafaeli have stated that there is an emotional field in institutions, and that institutions will effectively manage and regulate employee emotions. Organizations are a tool for employees to express, control and keep their emotions under control.

Thus organizations; It can direct, increase and decrease the emotions of the employees (Levine, 2001; Akt: Mert, 2018: 36).

Emotions at work say a lot about individuals' attitudes, personality, how individuals perceive others and how individuals interpret their business environment. The main idea of understanding emotions in the workplace is to become aware of emotional triggers, to recognize the responses (reactions) of individuals to these triggers, and to attempt to change the response when the following behavior is inappropriate (Anderson, 2002).

Leaders, employees and organizational climate are the main factors affecting emotion management in organizations. In order to create effective and positive emotions in organizations and to manage emotions positively, the basic elements must be well known and the importance of these elements must be well understood. In order for these elements to create a positive emotional atmosphere in organizations, fulfilling their roles and interacting with each other are among the necessary conditions for good emotion management (Barutçugil, 2004). Working people try to achieve emotional satisfaction while satisfying their social and economic needs. In individuals, the emotional needs that come to the forefront in general are like the desire for activity, communication, achievement, being noticed, working as a team, belonging, participating in the decision, rewarding, caring about the skills and empowerment (Gary, 1996).

Emotions are natural, and diverse as thoughts. Everyone experiences different emotions and can explain in different ways. Emotional identity, the personal perception that emotions affect, in relation to the individual's character and how he sees the world and the way he behaves (Burgess et al., 2006). In terms of working life, emotional identity refers to one aspect that distinguishes the organization from other organizations. Emotional identity is more internalized forms of the concepts of emotional climate and emotional labor, and leads people to identify with their organizations. Emotional identity provides important advantages both in providing emotional climate and in identifying new individuals with the organization.

The basic needs and expectations of emotional origin, the different interests of individuals, and their level of fulfillment are the factors that affect individuals' satisfaction and positive attitude to the organization. There is a positive relationship between the attitudes and expectations of individuals towards the organizations and their relationship styles (Yaylacı, 2006). Organization managers to take into account the interests, needs and expectations of the employees it contributes to the increase in the emotional commitment of the employees to the organization and to manage their emotions.

### **2.3. The Effect of Emoji Usage on Communication and Employee Motivation**

Society from past to present has experienced great changes especially in the field of technology. In the process that extends from the times when primitive communication methods are used to instant messaging opportunities, the individual can realize his actions in life on the basis of technology. The widespread use of technology in the business environment has enabled communication to be more effective and increased productivity among the employees (Doğu Öztürk, 2014: 399-400).

With the developing technology, the use of emojis has increased with the widespread use of digital applications. It is also seen that the emojis used replace words and phrases (Danesi, 2017). Accordingly, the use of emoji has become more popular, especially by the new generation. It is accepted as an effective communication tool by people, because emojis express the emotions and make emotions easier to understand (Gökaliler & Saatçioğlu, 2016). The emojis used show emotions that, unlike the icons can reflect the expressions of the human face. In this way, human features are included in its communication. Emojis have the power to add anthropomorphological elements to the transfer of information in digital applications (Bacon et al., 2017).



In the technology world, emojis continue their important functions in communication processes such as messaging and chat. Emojis are a powerful tool to express people's feelings and feelings more clearly and to show reactions than written communication (Zeybek, 2017: 399).

Emojis that allow to quickly transfer an event, emotion or situation are the shortest way to communicate. Previously, events, emotions or situations were made with punctuation marks on the keyboard. The use of these punctuation marks is specified as emoticon. Today, emotions and thoughts can be conveyed with emojis that have a shape and color (İşler & Demir, 2019: 467). In business life where messaging is so much, the employee easily describes the thoughts and feelings through a few symbols. Employee's message or sharing is more prominent than other messages with the use of emojis.

Emojis created by combining codes and names may show differently on systems such as Google, Apple and Android. This situation may sometimes create communication problems between individuals using different digital infrastructures. Emojis facilitate nonverbal communication. However, users using different platforms face problems and can cause confusion in communication, due to differences from the Unicode system. Toksöz and Kahraman (2017: 248) attribute the loss of communication caused by system differences to the absence of factors such as gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice in people's non-verbal communication in digital media.

Emojis enable employees to manage the communication environment but also to create and express their selfies. Emojis contain emotional expressions and can be an effective tool for establishing and maintaining good relationships. Employees manage their emotions and transfer emotionally appropriate emotions with selected emojis. This helps them to know and adjust feelings about themselves and the employees they interact with. At the same time, managing emotions by using the right emojis also contributes to an efficient communication environment. Emojis express emotion, they are also used as an aesthetic expression. Employees choose the emoji to be used to express their feelings and thoughts and place them in the appropriate amount and carefully at the appropriate time and place. Thus, employees express their opinions and preferences (Sugiyama, 2015).

It is scientifically examined that using emojis in the business environment strengthens communication and increases work efficiency. In the experiment conducted by the University of New Mexico in 1996 a team of 12 people divides into two equal groups and these two groups communicate with computers. These two groups were given one project to complete. One of the groups agreed by using emoji in communication among themselves, while the other group did not use emoji. According to the experimental findings, the group using emoji, worked more efficiently in a shorter time and had fun while doing business (The Indispensable Language of the Communication Age: Emoji, 2014).

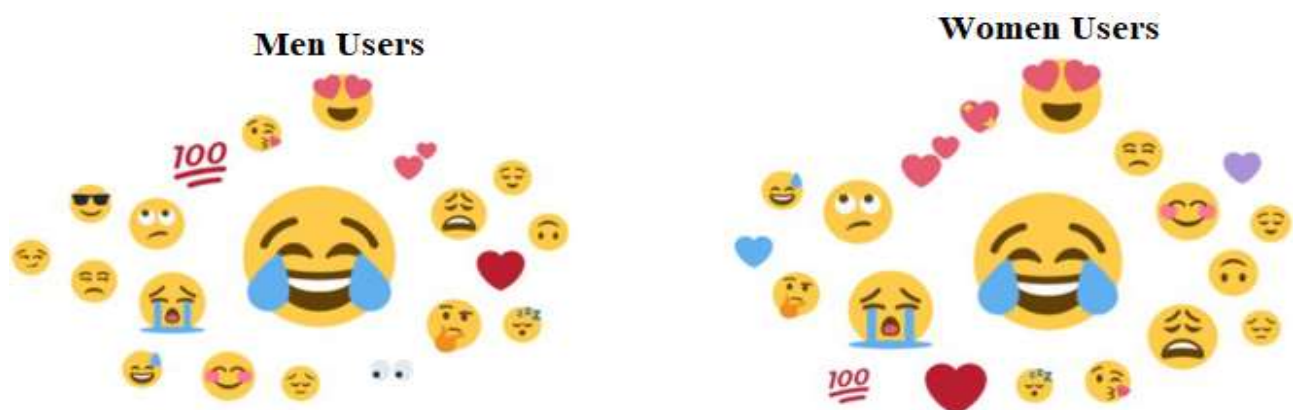


Figure 2. Most Used Emojis by Gender  
Kaynak: Pehlivan, 2018.

According to the results of the study reports showing that women use emoji more than men; women think that the language of symbolic communication gets richer with emojis (Figure 2). So, while women think that expressing their emotions with emojis will be more positive; men use emojis mostly for teasing or sarcasm. The researchers who stated that the use of emoji in their messages is more common among desk workers; saying that emojis are in negative use in the messages of active employees; They point out that the first place in the use of emoji is the public relations experts and the designers (Zeybek, 2017: 403-404).

One of the most important factors affecting the use of emoji is the demographic feature of the person. Among the people over the age of 35, ie the X generation, the use of emoji is not very common and is not preferred in business life. Another important factor is organizational culture. Employees tend to use emoji in companies that are emerging, startups, smaller and less hierarchy, because they are generally young (Have You Ever Sent Emoji to Your Boss?, 2016).

In the period between September 2015 and September 2017, "Emoji Report" was prepared by Brandwatch. According to the report, the use of emoji; While this rate is 61% for women, it is 39% for men. According to the research findings; women use negative emoji, as more than men (+6.83%) (Emoji Report: Using Emoji in Digital Marketing, 2018).

The most comprehensive research on emoji usage in business environment; made by Glikson at Ben Gurion University. In this study, the researchers examined the effect of emojis in correspondence within the organization in terms of communication and motivation. In the experiment, e-mails with smiley emoji were asked to be read in 549 participants from 29 countries. Afterwards, these readers were asked for their opinions, about the people who sent the e-mail, whether they were friendly and their expertise in the business. The participants did not express an opinion as to whether the persons were friendly or not. They stated that people who send business correspondence using emoji may not be good at their job. Participants were asked to respond to the e-mail. For e-mails without emoji, participants wrote more detailed answers. According to these results, Glikson; states that employees should be careful and attentive in the business environment and correspondence before using emoji. One of the results of the experiment states that unlike a real smile in digital media especially in business correspondence, smiley face emojis do not have a friendly effect on the side that reads the e-mail and the expertise in the work of the employee is also suspected (Should You Use Emoji in Business Correspondence?, 2018).

According to a study conducted in Scandinavia, it shows that emojis are used for very different purposes instead of adding emotions to the mails. According to the results of the research, it was stated that the most common uses were used to show positive situations, to show jokes, and to soften harsh discourses. Another study in America shows that emojis also reduce negative misunderstandings (Have You Ever Sent Emoji to Your Boss?, 2016).

Adobe published the results of its emoji research in the Emoji Trend Report in 2019. According to the report, 62% of users state that the main reason for using emoji in the business environment is to make the environment and their conversations more fun. 42% of users state that emojis express their feelings and thoughts better than words. 31% of users emphasize that using emoji in their correspondence provides faster communication ("Emoji Trend Report" of 2019 Has Been Published!, 2019).

The communication system of the organization is intended to inform the employees about the implementation of the prepared program and the decisions taken. The communication system also aims to adapt or change the psychological structures of the employees for organizational purposes. The communication system provides benefits such as directing the preferences and behaviors of the personnel, convincing the drawn goals to be achieved, and constantly motivating them to the specified goals (Sabuncuoğlu & Tüz, 2003: 170).

The quality of intra-organizational communication is a process for organizations that affects not only the success of the organization, but also the psychological status of the employees working in

the organization. This process is thought to have a significant impact on the level of motivation of employees.

When employees think that management is effectively communicating with them, they motivate themselves to perform better and develop a team spirit for the organization to work properly. A highly motivated employee adds value to the organization in ensuring organizational continuity and maintaining income growth (Rajhans, 2012: 81).

If effective communication channels cannot be established in organizations, negative psychological reflections of this situation are observed in the employees and it is known to cause loss of motivation. In addition, employees knowing how performance levels are met by managers and learning the way to improve themselves have a positive effect on employee motivation (Tinaztepe, 2012: 54).

Sunel (2004) aims to reveal how managers communicate with employees while making decisions in their study on "The Importance of Communication Skills of Managers in Businesses". The results of the research indicated that managers are in communication with their subordinates, that they use the communication tools correctly, and that communication skills play a role in motivating the employees.

### 3. CONCLUSION and SUGGESTIONS

The rapid development of communication technologies has led organizations to integrate the regulations and changes required by new systems into their own structures. While the individuals communicate in the digital environment, the emojis used visually or symbolically have also entered the business life as an indispensable element. Emojis have become a language of emotion that meets the emotional responses of the users, offering visuality as well as verbal communication. In the digital communication environment, both the number and the rate of use of emojis are increasing. New emojis are produced in accordance with the cultural and personal characteristics of individuals. New emojis add significant activity to individuals' self-presentation in the digital environment.

Today, when communication is experienced at the highest level with new technologies, employees are turning towards new communication environments. Today, new communication environments, especially the internet, are the biggest supporter of the modern communication system. Internet usage, which started especially in 1970s and continued rapidly after 1990s, increased the number of users with the spread of websites. In the 2000s, the internet has reached the points of interest for people from all walks of life after the social media became functional. The development of new communication environments, the increase in interest in information communication technologies increase the power of digital environments and add a new dimension to the concept of socialization. The internet is one of the most ideal tools, because of the reasons such as enabling fast communication of digital media, being open to multiple use, enabling virtual sharing. Along with the digital environment, people also turned to the use of emoji. With this tool, they can express and share their thoughts, even discuss them, and come up with new ideas. The frequent and effective use of digital technologies in communication causes attention to turn to this area. It can create a new conceptual framework on digital communication and its impact on the workplace.

In 2015, Jožef conducted emotional analysis research on emoji use at the Stefan Institute. Emotion analysis is about the views, evaluations, feelings and attitudes obtained by reading a text. In this test, 83 participants analyzed articles with and without emojis. The participants rated each emoji based on emotions (neutral, positive or negative) and set meanings. When researchers compare texts with and without emojis to emotions; They stated that the presence of emojis provides a positive impression and is interpreted more positively than the articles without emojis. When evaluated from this perspective, the study reveals that emojis positively persuade the readers and direct them to communicate (Küçükvardar, 2018).

Employees may not always share their ideas comfortably with their managers. The informal communication structure creates an environment of trust in the organization and employees convey their thoughts comfortably. The organization should manage the employees' thoughts for the purposes of the organization. It would be useful to allow informal communication as well, for different thoughts to make a profit for the business. Providing a comfortable communication, using emojis in communication methods contributes to the motivation of the employees.

It is a fact that organizational communication has an important role in the motivation and performance of employees. It is directly related to the effectiveness of the organization's communication process, where employees react positively to easily adapt to changes in their businesses. A good communication system is decisive in providing the correct information and feedback needed by the organization on time.

Motivating employees for organizational goals is not an easy task. There are many sources of motivation that can directly affect employee performance. Finding the right source of motivation for employees is a managerial skill. For the efficiency of the business, it is necessary to understand the employees and direct them to the resources that will motivate them. The fact that managers understand their employees' requests, develop common values with them, and combine the goals of the employees with the goals of the organization depends on mutual communication. Organizations that value their employees display this value through communication channels. This value can be a motivational tool that increases employee loyalty to the organization. Therefore, managers should be able to use motivational methods in their communication with their employees.

In future academic studies on communication and employee motivation in organizations, the effect of using emoji on intra-organizational communication and employee motivation by developing the questionnaire statistical research can be done. At the same time, organizational climate, employee emotions, emotion management and self presentation are included in the research and detailed findings can be reached.

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