The Emotional Response of Filipino Teachers-in-Training to Memes

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ABSTRACT

Memes on the internet are created content to express knowledge, entertain, ridicule, and self-actualize. The purpose of this study was to assess the emotional response to memes and their link to the profile of Filipino teachers-in-training. The descriptive-correlation research method was used in this study. A questionnaire-checklist was utilized to assess the effects of online memes on the emotions of teachers-in-training. The data was treated using frequency counts, percentages, and the average weighted mean. The association between profile and the emotional response to Internet Memes was investigated using Pearson-r (Pearson Product Moment of Correlation) and Chi-square. The outcomes of this study revealed that teachers-in-training are mostly females who concentrate in Enhanced General Education and spend 4-6 hours on social media. Teachers-in-training whose gender is female has a higher emotional response (whether positive or negative) to memes than their counterparts. The number of hours spent on social media has no bearing on the Teachers-in Training emotional responses to memes. Respondents who are specializing in Enhanced General Education have the highest positive emotional response to memes. However, there is no significant connection between negative emotional responses to memes and specialization.

Keywords: emotions, memes, Teachers-in-Training, social media, specialization

INTRODUCTION

Memes are familiar to most of our Teachers-in-Training. The majority of online memes are captioned photographs designed to be amusing, frequently mocking human behavior (Gil, 2018). Memes can also focus on seemingly insignificant—but highly shareable—sound snippets (Nasri, 2012). They can also be quickly made and spread, reaching a large audience without being constrained by geographic borders. Memes have a variety of goals and functions, but at their most basic level, they serve as a means of expressing people's thoughts and feelings (Duong, 2017).

Persons who had strong, powerful reactions to a meme were more likely to propagate it. The speed with which online users distribute information increases transmission, namely emotional contagion. Emotional contagion is a type of contagion in which a person's emotional condition converges with the emotional states of people with whom he or she is interacting or witnessing (Guadagno et.al, 2013). That is, when online users watch internet memes, they tend to feel the same emotions as the people in the memes, and by spreading the meme, they expect the recipient to feel the same way.

While memes may appear to be nothing more than amusing pictures, they can have severe consequences for people and life in general. Tide Pods is one of the most well-known examples. In 2018, 37 incidences of persons eating detergent pods were reported, with around half of them being purposeful. There are some situations where the effects are substantially more severe. The Star Wars Kid is one of them. Ghyslain Raza, the titular Star Wars Kid, became profoundly depressed when the video was uploaded on the internet due to the innumerable harsh comments it received. He lost a lot of friends and even left school to get private tutoring. Moreover, the Chubby Bunny Challenge and the Cinnamon Challenge both featured numerous deaths. Not all memes have bad consequences. Some of them may even provide a purpose for depressed people to live. Jacob Arnold, who regularly views memes, believes that they might serve as a source of inspiration in his daily life (Zehntner, 2018).

There are a lot of preceding studies regarding memes, however there is not much study on the emotional responses to memes.

This study, aimed to determine the positive and negative emotional responses to memes and its correlation with the profile of the Teachers-in-training of Pangasinan State University- Bayambang Campus in terms of specialization, sex and exposure to social media per day.

The hypothesis of the study that there is no significant relationship between the emotional responses to memes and the profile of the Teachers-in-Training was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher searched for twenty-eight (28) well-known online memes on the internet. Half of which are deemed to have captions and images that denotes positive emotions, and the other half have captions and images that denotes negative emotions. The participants of the study were shown 4 well-known online memes by the researcher each day for a week period. The respondents were asked to evaluate the emotions they have felt when viewing the memes prior to answering the questionnaire.

Research Design

In this study, the emotional responses to memes utilized by Teachers-in-Training were described using the descriptive-correlation approach. The said approach documented and analyzed what is, disclosed circumstances and relationships, activities that were common or not, opinions or points of view that were held or not held, behaviors that were perpetuated or not, and impacts that were experienced or trends that occurred (McBurney & White, 2009). Because the current study is concentrated on the impact of memes on respondents' emotions, this approach is perfect for analyzing the link between the two variables.

Subjects of the Study

The study's participants were 231 Teachers-in-Training enrolled in the second semester of the school year, 2019-2020. Enhanced General Education, Science, Math, Physical Education and Technology, and Livelihood Education are the specializations of the Teachers-in-Training involved. Stratified Random Sampling was used to determine the number of respondents.

Instruments

The study's main tool was a questionnaire-checklist created by the researcher. The first section of the questionnaire focused on the respondents' profiles, including their sex, social media exposure, and specialization. The second section of the survey focused on the different emotional responses to memes subdivided into different type of emotions and emotional levels. The questionnaire was validated by five (5) research experts in the university and was approved for distribution in November 2019.

Data Analysis

Frequency count and percentage rates were utilized to describe the student's profile, which included gender, social media exposure, and strand. Average Weighted Mean was utilized to measure the effects of memes on the emotions of Teachers-in-Training. Chi-Square and Pearson-r correlation were tested using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 to see if there was a significant association between the emotional responses to memes and the profile of Teachers-in-Training.

Ethical Consideration

Participants received informed consent before the questionnaire was sent out. Participants were not required to provide their identities on the survey instrument, and no extremely sensitive information was obtained from them. Nobody was compelled to complete the questionnaire if they declined to give their informed permission. No incentives or coercion were used to compel the subjects to divulge more information.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The profile of the Teachers-in-Training in terms of sex, exposure to social media and specialization is discussed in this section. Furthermore, the level of positive and negative emotional response to memes and its correlation to the profile is discussed.

Profile of the Respondents
Table 1: Profile of the Teachers in Training

Profile	f	%
Sex		
Male	70	30.30
Female	161	69.70
Exposure to Social Media		
2-3 hours	57	24.70
4-6 hours	80	34.60
7-8 hours	79	34.20
Others	15	6.50
Specialization		
Enhanced General Education	88	38.10
Mathematics	51	26.80
Science	62	22.10
Physical Education	19	8.20
Technology and Livelihood Education	11	4.80

Table 1 shows the gender, social media exposure, and specialization profiles of the respondents. According to said table, 69.7% of the 231 respondents are female, while 30.3 percent are male. In other words, females outnumbered males by 39%. Majority of respondents said they spend between 4-6 hours every day on social media. According to the table above, 38.1 percent of students are majoring in Enhanced General Education. Science and mathematics majors came in second and third, with 26.8% and 22.1

percent, respectively. Physical Education and Technology and Livelihood Education have the lowest percentage of responses (8.2% and 4.8%).

Emotional Impact of Memes
      The findings on the level of emotional response to memes of Teachers-in-Training in terms of different types of emotions and their related indicators are presented in this section.

Table 2: Level of Positive Emotional Response to Memes

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalence
Happiness		
1. I felt better despite being sad	3.40	High
2. I became more cheerful	3.51	High
3. I would enjoy sharing this meme in Social Media	3.30	Moderate
4. I laughed	3.41	High
5. I can't stop smiling	3.31	Moderate
Inspirational		
6. I felt enthusiastic	3.13	Moderate
7. I became energetic	3.23	Moderate
8. I forgot the negative things	2.97	Moderate
9. I gained self-confidence	3.13	Moderate
10. I realized I can do better.	3.41	High
Hopefulness		
11. I let that I am not alone	3.42	High
12. I felt motivated	3.42	High
13. I started believing n myself	3.44	High
14. I became optimistic	3.37	Moderate
15. I saw life in a different perspective	3.42	High
Average Weighted Mean	**3.32**	**Moderate**

      Table 2 reveals that when Teachers-in-Training encounter memes, they feel much better, become more joyful, and chuckle. The respondents enjoy sharing memes and have a modest amount of enthusiasm, energy, confidence, and optimism. In general, Teachers-in-Training have a moderately good emotional response to memes.

Table 3: Level of Negative Emotional Response to Memes

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalence
Irritation		
1. I got mad easily	2.50	Low
2. I had a mood swing	2.56	Low
3. I felt bullied	2.45	Low
4. I suddenly wanted to log out	2.43	Low
5. I wanted to overeat	2.31	Low
Stress		
6. I felt frustrated	2.39	Low
7. I think I'm being mocked	2.39	Low
8. I lost the appetite to eat	2.27	Low
9. I became pessimistic	2.42	Low
10. I can't sleep	2.56	Low
Sadness		
11. I felt worthless	2.39	Low

12. I'm overreacting to things	2.52	Low
13. I feel alone	2.37	Low
14. I lost confidence	2.37	Low
15. I get mad easily	2.33	Low
Average Weighted Mean	**2.42**	**Low**

Table 3 depicts the negative emotional responses of Teachers-in-Training to memes. As can be seen in the table, the average weighted mean of all the indicators is low. Reportedly, some Teachers-in-Training felt some negative emotions when exposed to memes but in low levels. The findings show that memes have very little detrimental impact.

Correlation between the Emotional Response to Memes and the Profile of Teachers-in-Training
This section looks at the relationship between emotional responses to memes and the profile of Teachers-in-Training, namely gender, specialization, and social media exposure. The Pearson-r and Chi-Square were used to show the association between Teachers-in-Training profiles and emotional response to memes. Pearson-r was tested for significance at the 0.05 level using the correlation value.
The computed chi-square values that establish the link between gender and meme impacts are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Correlation Between Emotional Responses to Memes and Gender

Emotional Response	Value	Df	Asymptomatic Significance
Happiness	49.784	34	0.039
Inspirational	52.301	28	0.004
Hopefulness	46.252	33	0.036
Irritation	67.658	40	0.004
Stress	122.359	46	0.000
Sadness	119.566	49	0.000

Table 4 shows that the computed chi-square values between emotions and gender. Positive emotional responses to memes which are Happiness, Inspirational and Hopefulness are computed with significance values of 0.039, 0.004 and 0.036, respectively. All the positive emotional responses have a significant relationship to gender. On the other hand, negative emotional responses to memes which includes Irritation, has computed with significance values of 0.004, which means that there is a significant correlation to gender. Moreover, Stress and Sadness with computed significance values of 0.000 and 0.000 are considered to have a highly significant correlation to gender. Reportedly, respondents whose gender is female has a higher emotional response (whether positive or negative) to memes than their counterparts.
The Pearson r correlation was used to show the association between Teachers-in-Training emotional responses to memes and social media exposure in Tables 5.1 and 5.2.

Table 5.1: Correlation Between Positive Emotional Responses to Memes and Exposure to Social Media

	Happiness	Inspirational	Hopefulness
Pearson Correlation	0.117	0.052	0.092
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.076	0.429	0.166

Table 5.1 illustrates the association between respondents' social media exposure and positive meme responses, such as happiness, inspiration, and hopefulness, with significant values of 0.076, 0.429, and 0.166, respectively, far below the 0.05 level of significance. It implies that the number of hours spent on social media by respondents does not guarantee the emotional responses to memes.

Table 5.2: Correlation Between Negative Emotional Responses to Memes and Exposure to Social Media

	Irritation	**Stress**	**Sadness**
Pearson Correlation	0.025	0.024	0.016
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.703	0.719	0.806

Table 5.2 shows the respondents' exposure to social media and the negative responses to memes in terms of irritation (.703), stress (.719), and unhappiness (.806), all of which are above the 0.05 level of significance. This means that the number of hours spent on social media has no bearing on the Teachers-in Training emotional responses to memes.

The considerable link between meme impacts and specialization is shown in Tables 5.3 and 5.4.

Table 5.3:Correlation Between Positive Emotional Responses to Memes and Specialization

	Happiness	**Inspirational**	**Hopefulness**
Pearson Correlation	0.169	0.327	0.178
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.010	0.000	0.007

Under positive reactions to memes are happiness which obtained a significance of 0.010, and hopefulness that obtained 0.007 which is believed to have significant relationship between specializations. In like manner, inspirational obtained a significance of 0.000 which is considered highly significant. Reportedly, respondents who are specializing in Enhanced General Education have the highest positive emotional response to memes.

Table 5.4: Correlation Between Negative Emotional Responses to Memes and Specialization

	Irritation	**Stress**	**Sadness**
Pearson Correlation	0.107	-0.076	0.051
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.106	0.248	0.444

Table 5.4 indicates the link between memes' negative effects on annoyance, stress, and sorrow (with significant values of 0.106, 0.248 and 0.444, respectively). These numbers are thought to be not significant. This means that memes do not provide respondents with content that is unpleasant, stressful, or sad. As a result, the connection isn't significant. It also indicates that the respondents' specialization does not ensure that their perspective on memes will be negatively influenced by it.

DISCUSSION

The Teachers-in-Training were female, specializing in Enhanced General Education and spends 4-6 hours a day on social media. Teachers-in-Training positively responded to memes in a moderate manner, and at a low level of negative emotional response. Teachers-in-Training whose gender is female has a higher emotional response (whether positive or negative) to memes than their counterparts. The number of hours spent on social media has no bearing on the Teachers-in-Training emotional responses to memes. Respondents who are specializing in Enhanced General Education have the highest positive emotional response to memes. However, there is no significant connection between negative emotional responses to memes and specialization.

CONCLUSION

Teachers-in-training nowadays are very much exposed to social media and memes are quite rampant. Memes allow us to express our emotions, whether they be ones of joy, grief, enchantment, adoration, relief, tranquillity, perplexity, nostalgia, entrancement, or boredom. Memes function as a kind of emotional language. They provide us a means to express the life's ordinarily restrained frenzy.

Memes can accomplish much in the field of education. It is recommended that college professors/ instructors can utilize memes to enhance positive emotions in the classroom during discussions. Future research into the impact of memes on educational factors can be considered.

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