Gender Differences in the Use of Emojis Among Genders

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Abstract

This study attempted to investigate the gender differences in the use of emojis on social media platforms. Furthermore, the differences in emojis preferences between men and women were investigated. The participants in this study included 10 of males and 10 of females. Data were collected through an adapted questionnaire from Persson (2019) consisting of 10 items. This study used a quantitative method; besides, the data were analyzed using descriptive statistical analyses. The results of this study revealed that there was no significant variation between men and women in the use of emojis. Moreover, the findings showed no significant variation among genders in their preferences of emojis.

Keywords: gender, gender differences, emojis, social media

1. Introduction

With the advent of technology, online communication is becoming the main source of interaction. Online communication can be either textual, visual, or audio effects. The interaction between the textual and the visual created other types, such as emojis (Ubeid, 2021). Nowadays, emojis are the most prominent phenomenon in online communication (Ubeid, 2021). Emojis were invented in 1999 by a Japanese artist, Shigetaka Kurita, for a Japanese internet platform. Since then, emojis have gained an incredible popularity and become a part of our daily communication. According to Al-Rashdi (2018), emojis are "Standardized computer codes which can be sent and transferred between computers and mobile devices and then are recognized and translated into pre-defined images that users can see on their devices" (p. 4). Emojis have been regarded as a tool that people use to convey thoughts and feelings in their communication devices as non-verbal signs in speech (Wirza et al., 2020). Furthermore, Pavalanathan and Eisenstein (2015) stated that emojis have a similar function as a human language; in other words, they can represent facial expressions that are used in non-verbal language.

Emojis were initially created with the purpose of expressing emotions or describing expressions vividly; however, the use of them might differ from individual to individual, especially between genders. The difference between men and women in their use of emojis has been the focus of gender difference studies (Chen et al., 2018). Some researches show that men and women use emojis differently on social media platforms (Fullwood et al., 2013; Hwang, 2014; Chen et al., 2017). Based on these findings, the current study attempted to investigate whether there are differences between men and women in the use of emojis among the Qassimi people. The Qassimi people are Saudi citizens who were born and raised in the Qassim region; consequently, they are native speakers of the Qassimi Arabic. The Qassimi Arabic is a dialect of Najdi Arabic that is spoken in the Qassim region in central Saudi Arabia (Al-Rojaie, 2020).

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The intention of the present study is to investigate the differences between men and women in the use of emojis on social media platforms. Moreover, this study intends to examine the gender differences in the emojis preferences among Qassimi people.

1.2 Hypotheses of the Study

The researcher hypothesized that the differences exist between men and women in their use of emojis. In particular, the hypothesis of the study is that women use emojis more than men. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that the differences exist among genders in their emojis preferences.

2. Literature Review

The issue of gender differences in language is not only viewed as a linguistic issue, but also as a social issue, and has become a popular subject in linguistics and sociolinguistics (Jinyu, 2014). Men and women have different norms and roles; therefore, they differ in a wide variety of areas. This study attempted to investigate the differences between men and women in the use of emojis on social media platforms; therefore, the extending research insights are classified into four sections. First, the researcher presents findings regarding gender differences in general, the second section is about gender differences in their use of language, the third one is about the differences between genders on social media uses, the fourth section presents findings about the differences between men and women in the expression of their emotions, and finally, the researcher presents findings regarding gender differences in the use of emojis.

2.1 Gender Differences

In sociolinguistics, gender differences have considerable academic significance and application value (Jinyu, 2014). Gender differences refer to the social and cultural differences between males and females (Cheshir, 2016). Many linguists (Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1990; Wardhaugh, 1998; Xia, 2013) have discussed the differences between men and women in social interactions and language use, such as differences in phonology, vocabulary and word choice, and grammar. Lakoff (1975) pointed out that males and females differ in the use of grammar. For example, females use tag questions; on the other hand, males use imperative questions. Furthermore, Crawford (1997) found that men tend to establish dominance in their use of language, while women tend to create and maintain relationships. Besides, according to Al-Moqbali and Al-Amrani (2021), men and women often interact and communicate differently. Males are more agentic, whereas females are more relational (Spence & Helmrich, 1978). Al-Moqbali and Al-Amrani (2021) added that "Since females and males have various attitudes towards technology, they differ in their use of technology and internet patterns" (p. 2). Weiser (2000) found that men typically use the internet to gain information and entertainment, while women use it for communication and education. In regard to language use, gender differences reveal the relationship between gender and language.

2.2 Gender Differences in Language Use

In studying the relationship between gender and language, the main focus is on the difference in language usage between men and women from different angles with different methodologies (Gu, 2013). Jinyu (2014) suggested that gender differences "Reflect that there is a long historical origin in language difference phenomenon" (p. 93). Moreover, Jinyu (2014) mentioned that gender differences allow us to better expound on the factors behind the internal change in language development. According to Al-Moqbali and Al-Amrani (2021), "Understanding the differences between males and females who use a specific communication tool requires knowing how males and females communicate" (p. 2). The interaction, communication styles, and language use, in general, differ between men and women. Robin Lakoff (1975), among the pioneers in this domain, claimed that women were more likely than men in the same situation to use extra-polite forms. Additionally, Mulac et al. (1988) found that questions are more likely to be found in women's contributions to dyadic interactions; on the other hand, directives that tell the audience to do something are more common in men's conversational contributions. Xia (2013) argued that men and women differ in their attitudes toward language. Women use standard language more than men; thus, they are concentrating on the rules of language more than men do (Xia, 2013). Besides gender differences in face-to-face interaction, gender differences are always an important issue in online interaction (Chen et al., 2018). Numerous studies (Wolf, 2000; Tossell et al., 2012; Hwang, 2014) have investigated the male and female differences in online communications.

2.3 Gender Differences in Social Media Use

Men and women use technology and social media platforms differently since they have different attitudes toward technology (Al-Moqbali & Al-Amrani, 2021). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (p. 61). Karatsoli and Nathanail (2020) suggested that social media are considered to be a major communication tool through which information can be exchanged, opinions expressed, enable decision-making, and business promotion. Anderson et al. (2012) reported that social media platforms are used to maintain long-term relationships. Furthermore, Anttiroiko and Savolainen (2011) stated that social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube facilitate communication and the sharing of information. Several studies (Boneva et al., 2001; Song et al., 2009; Park, 2014; Fashami, 2020; Twenge & Martin, 2020) found the different patterns in social media use between men and women. According to the findings of many studies, women use social media for communication and social

contact to keep their personal relationships strong. Men, on the other hand, used social media for information and entertainment (Orleans & Laney, 2000; Boneva et al., 2001; Muscanell & Guadagno, 2012; Krasnova et al., 2017). In terms of communication, Herring and Kapidzic (2015) found that men use social media platforms to make friends and meet new people, whereas women use these platforms to keep in touch with their current friends. Another study was carried out by Twenge and Martin (2020) to investigate gender differences in the use of social media by examining 13- to 18-year-old adolescents in the U.S. and UK. The findings revealed that girls spent more time using smartphones and social media than boys.

2.4 Gender Differences and Emotional Expression

The difference between men and women in their expression of emotion has been the interest of gender difference studies (Sun et al., 2020). Numerous studies (Brody & Hall, 2010; Kring & Gordon, 1998; Wolf, 2000) have demonstrated that there is a gender difference in how emotions are expressed. For instance, there have been several studies in the literature (Kring & Gordon, 1998; Wolf, 2000; Brody & Hall, 2010; Fashami, 2020) reporting that females are stereotypically more emotionally expressive than males. According to Michaud et al. (2006), women are better at showing emotions and empathy than men. Kring and Gordon (1998) examined gender differences in emotional expression in adults in the United States and Western Europe. The findings showed that women showed emotions more strongly than men. Similarly, Hwang (2014) examined the relationship between gender and emoticon usage and concluded the superiority of women in using emoticons. Men are better at controlling their emotions, while women let their emotions control them (Barrett & Bliss-Moreau, 2009). Moreover, Jurgens et al. (2017) observed that women in writing tend to write about personal topics and use more emotional words than men. Kelly and Hutson-Comeaux (1999), found that women express emotions such as happiness more than men, while men express anger more than women. In addition, Fischer (1993) found that women are more likely to express fear, while men are more likely to express pride or disgust. Rababah and Banikalef (2018) mentioned that "Most of the studies conducted to examine gender differences in emotional expressiveness have been focused on face-to-face interactions" (p. 181). Therefore, the study of emotional expression in online discourse is still in its infancy and should be further explored (Rababah & Banikalef, 2018). In a recent study, Parkins (2012) found that females express their emotions in online communication more than males do.

2.5 Gender Differences in the Use of Emojis

The study of emojis has become an attractive new subject for scientific research (Chen et al., 2018). According to Evans (2017), emoji is "an anglicized version of two Japanese words e, 'picture', and moji, 'character' … [E]mojis are colourful symbols the winks, smilyes, love hearts and so on embedded as single character images, or glyphs, in our digital keyboards" (p. 18). Emojis allow people to express their feelings, such as happiness, anger, surprise, shocks, and so on. Furthermore, there are many categories of emojis, including people, animals, nature, objects, food and drink, and symbols (Al-Rashdi, 2018). Expressing emotions with emojis is easier, faster, and less awkward than expressing them with words (Adams, 2017).

Emojis underline the senders' positive or negative attitudes (Manganari, 2021). Chang (2016) stated that emojis are more often used in positive contexts than negative contexts. In his study, Chang (2016) found that positive emojis were more often used (80%) than negative ones (20%). The research study by Vidal et al. (2016) also found that the majority of emojis used in tweets express positive rather than negative reactions. Tossell et al. (2012) claimed that emojis played a significant role in text messaging, particularly the frequency and variety of emoticons used by men and women.

Several studies (Tossell et al., 2012; Fullwood et al., 2013; Hwang, 2014; Chen et al., 2017) have investigated that there are differences between male and female users in the use of emojis. For example, Al-Rashdi (2018), in his study, investigated the emojis usage differences between Omani men and women in the WhatsApp application. The findings showed that females use emojis more than males. Another study was carried out by Chen et al. (2018) to investigate the differences in emojis usage between genders. The results revealed that 7.96% of female users were using emojis, whereas 7.02% of male users used emojis in their messages. Another study goes in the same line, Fullwood et al. (2013) examined 114 Chat room users. They found that women are more likely to use emojis than men. The above findings contradict the study by Wirza et al. (2020). Wirza et al. (2020) found no significant difference in emoji use between females and males.

Numerous studies (Provine et al., 2007; Ogletree et al., 2014; Chang, 2016; Persson, 2019) have examined the most frequently used emoji on social media platforms. Provine et al. (2007) investigated that the 'smiley face' and 'face with tears of joy' emojis were the most frequently used emoji by both males and females. Moreover, Ogletree et al. (2014) stated that the most commonly used emojis were 'smiley face' and 'face with tears of joy'.

Chang (2016) found that the 'smiley face' was the most popular emoji. According to Chen et al. (2017), men and women are different in their preferences for emojis.

The previous studies mentioned above have examined gender differences in emojis use; however, there is no previous attempt has been made to examine the gender differences in the use of emojis among Qassimi people. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap in the literature by investigating the differences in the use of emojis among the Qassimi people. The Qassimi people are Saudi citizens who were born and raised in the Qassim region; consequently, they are native speakers of the Qassimi Arabic. The Qassimi Arabic is a dialect of Najdi Arabic that is spoken in the Qassim region in central Saudi Arabia (Al-Rojaie, 2020).

This paper seeks to address the following questions:

1) What is the difference between men and women in the use of emojis?

2) What is the difference between men and women in terms of emojis preference?

3. Methodology

The methodological approach taken in this study is a quantitative descriptive approach. Since the aim of this study was to investigate the gender differences in the use of emojis, the descriptive statistical analysis technique was used.

3.1 Participants

Considering that the focus of the present study was on gender differences, the participants were 10 males and 10 females who were selected randomly. The participants are Saudi citizens who were born and raised in the Qassim region. Moreover, the range of their age is from 25 to 30. For a variety of reasons, the participants were from a certain age group. First, adults have greater use of social media than other age groups. According to a Digital Report by Data Report, the largest group of social media users is between the ages of 25 and 34. The second reason for choosing adults is the lack of previous studies that have already been conducted on this age group.

3.2 Instrument

To achieve the purpose of the study, an online questionnaire with 10 closed-ended items was used to collect data from the participants. The questionnaire was adapted from Persson (2019), which consists of 13 open-ended items. However, the questionnaire was modified to suit the researcher's requirements. There were 5 items removed from Persson's (2019) questionnaire since their focus was on emoji interpretation and the effect of age on the use of emojis, which are not the focus of this paper. Furthermore, 3 items were created by the researcher that were not included in Persson's (2019) questionnaire; however, 7 items of Persson's (2019) questionnaire were used without modification. The format of the present study's questionnaire had 5 items that were assessed by a Likert scale rating, which had three options, 'Disagree', 'Neutral', and 'Agree' and other closed-ended questions; on the other hand, the format of Persson's (2019) questionnaire had dichotomous questions, 'yes-or-no questions' and open-ended questions.

3.3 Data Collection and Procedure

A descriptive research design was used to describe the differences in the use of emojis between men and women. In this quantitative research, an adapted questionnaire from Persson (2019) was used to collect data from the participants. The online questionnaire was distributed among 10 males and 10 females through WhatsApp application groups. "WhatsApp is a cross-platform instant messaging application for smart phones" (Alrashdi, 2018, p. 7). The participants were informed about the purpose of the questionnaire and its scope before the it was distributed. Then, the questionnaire was distributed to the participants. The first thing they were required to answer a question concerning gender identity. After that, they were asked to determine if they use emojis in general, if they replace actual words/letters with emojis, and if they use emojis to complement actual words/letters. The participants were asked further whether they would use an emoji to request lunch with a friend, which emoji they would use. Lastly, the rest of the questionnaire aimed at collecting information about emoji preferences between genders; moreover, the frequency of emoji use between men and women. To determine which emojis are preferred by females and males, the participants were asked to mark their preferences out of the 25 emojis presented (see Table 2 and Appendix B). The researcher selected these emojis based on the world's most commonly used emojis (Emojitracker, 2018, as cited in Persson, 2019).

Table 1. Explanatory of emojis

Emoji	Explanation	N
☺	Face with tears of joy	E- 1
😍	Smiling face with heart shaped eyes	E- 2
❤	Red heart	E- 3
💕	Two hearts	E- 4
😎	Smiling face with sunglasses	E- 5
	Rolling on floor laughing	E- 6
😭	Loudly Crying face	E- 7
😘	Face throwing a kiss	E- 8
😊	Smiling face with smiling eyes	E- 9
😜	Face with stuck out tongue and winking eye	E- 10
😌	Relieved face	E- 11
	Expressionless face	E- 12
😅	Smiling face with open mouth and cold sweat	E- 13
😃	Smiling face with open mouth	E- 14
😉	Winking face	E- 15
🌹	Red rose emoji	E- 16
😞	Disappointed face	E- 17
😡	Enraged face	E- 18
😩	Weary face	E- 19
	Face with monocle	E- 20
😒	Unamused face	E- 21
✌	Victory hand	E- 22
👍	Thumbs up sign	E- 23
🙌	Person raising both hands in celebration	E- 24
	New moon face	E- 25

Note. N = Number.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28. In this study, the statistical technique that used to analyze the data was descriptive statistical analysis. The first part of data was descriptive data, which were revised, coded, and tabulated. The data were statistically analyzed using the proportion percentage, arithmetic means, standard deviation, and range. The second part of the data analysis dealt with the relation between different variables. Furthermore, the mean and standard deviation of the total score were calculated. The items in the questionnaire were rated on a three-point Likert scale using the following options and values: 'Disagree' 1 point, 'Neutral' 2 points, 'Agree' 3.

4. Findings

After gathering and analyzing the data, this section will present the results of this study. The study will report its results based on the research questions.

1) What is the difference between men and women in the use of emojis?

The following tables present the descriptive statistics of the participants' responses to the questionnaire.

Table 2. Distribution of participants' responses about their emojis use and their emojis preference (N=20)

N	Item		Male		Female		Mean	STD
			N	%	N	%		
1	Do you use emojis in instant messages?	Agree	8	80%	10	100%	2.9	0.308
		Neutral	2	20%	0	0.0%		
		Disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%		
2	Do you use emojis in instant messages in order to replace your use of actual words/letters?	Agree	7	70%	8	80%	2.65	0.671
		Neutral	2	20%	1	10%		
		Disagree	1	10%	1	10%		
3	Do you use emojis in instant messages in order to complement your use of actual words or letters?	Agree	6	60%	9	90%	2.70	0.571
		Neutral	3	30%	1	10%		
		Disagree	1	10%	0	0.0%		
4	Do you agree that emojis convey emotions more than words?	Agree	5	50%	9	90%	2.60	0.681
		Neutral	3	30%	1	10%		
		Disagree	2	20%	0	0.0%		
5	How often do you use emojis?	Never	1	10%	0	0.0%	2.40	0.598
		Occasionally	7	70%	3	30%		
		All the time	2	20%	7	70%		
Main			2.65					
STD			0.378					

Note. N = Number, STD = Standard Deviation.

Table 2 indicates the number of participants, the proportion percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The total number of the participants were 20. Table 2 reports the proportion percentage of the questionnaire items. It has been found that 100% of females agreed that they use emojis in instant messages, while 80% of males agreed with this and 20% of them neutral. According to the use of emojis in order to replace words or letters, 80% of the females agreed with this, 10% were neutral with this, 10% disagreed, while for males 70% agreed, 20% neutral and 10% disagreed. The results display that 90% of females use emojis to complement words or letters and 10% were neutral, whereas only 60% of males agreed, 30% were neutral, and 10% disagreed. The majority of females believe that emojis convey emotions more than words; on the other hand, 50% of males agreed, 30% were neutral and 20% of them disagreed. According to the frequency of using emojis by the participants, 70% of females use them all the times, 30% use them occasionally; on the other hand, only 20% of males use them all the times, 70% use them occasionally, and 10% never use emojis.

Table 3. Distribution of the participants' respond to the question 'If you were to ask a friend the following question in an instant message "Would you like to go out for lunch?", Would you'

N	item	Male		Female	
		N	%	N	%
1.	Abstain from including emojis in the presented question.	8	80%	2	20%
2.	Use emojis in the presented question.	2	20%	8	80%

Note. N = Number.

Table 3 shows that 80% of males respond with abstain from including emojis in the presented question, while only 20% of females do so. Moreover, only 20% of males would use emojis in the presented question, whereas 80% of females would use them.

Table 4. T test for the variation in the emojis use between male and female

	N	Mean	STD	t	Sig
Male	10	2.460	0.422	- 2.557	0.020
Female	10	2.840	0.2066		

Note. N = Number.

Table 4 shows that there is no significant variation between men and women in the use of emojis as P > 0.005.

2) What is the difference between men and women in terms of emojis preference?

Table 5. Distribution of the participants' response to the emojis preferences (N=20)

Item		Male		Female		Mean	STD
		N	%	N	%		
Are there certain emojis you prefer over others?	Agree	9	90%	10	100%	2.95	0.224
	Neutral	1	10%	0	0.0%		
	Disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%		

Table 5 illustrates that 100% of females have certain emojis they prefer over others, while 90% of males have agreed with that and 10% of them were neutral.

Table 6. The most preferred emojis by the participants (N = 20)

N	Emojis	Male		Female		Total
		N	%	N	%	
1.	☺	8	80%	8	80%	80%
2.	😊	5	50%	5	50%	50%
3.	❤	5	50%	7	70%	60%
4.	💕	2	20%	2	20%	20%
5.	😎	4	40%	3	30%	35%
6.		4	40%	2	20%	30%
7.	😄	1	10%	6	60%	35%
8.	😳	4	40%	1	10%	25%
9.	☺	2	20%	0	0.0%	10%
10.	😁	3	30%	1	10%	20%
11.	😌	0	0.0%	2	20%	10%
12.		0	0.0%	1	10%	5%
13.	😂	5	50%	1	10%	30%
14.	😆	1	10%	0	0.0%	5%
15.	☺	1	10%	1	10%	10%
16.	🌷	0	0.0%	5	50%	25%
17.	😉	2	20%	1	10%	15%
18.	😕	2	20%	0	0.0%	10%
19.	😕	0	0.0%	1	10%	5%
20.		1	10%	0	0.0%	5%
21.	😑	2	20%	0	0.0%	10%
22.	✌	1	10%	1	10%	10%
23.	👍	7	70%	5	50%	60%
24.	🐰	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
25.		5	50%	1	10%	30%

Males' and females' responses were compared and ranked based on the order in which the emojis were presented in the questionnaire. As the results show, the most preferred emoji by both male and female participants was (☺), 80% of males and 80% of females selected it. For male users, the next most used and preferred emoji was (👍) which used by 70% of them. The next emojis that male users preferred were (😊, ❤ , 😂,) with 50% for each. After that, (😎, , 😳) came with 40% for each, while only 30% of males prefer (😁). Furthermore, Table 2 shows that only 20% of male users prefer (😉, ☺, 😕, 💕, 😑), 10% of them prefer the emojis (😄, 😆, ☺, , ✌ , 🐰), and no males prefer the emojis (😌, , 🌷, 😕). According to females, the next most used or preferred emoji after (☺) was (❤) which used by 70% of them. After that, female users prefer (😊, 😂, 🌷, 👍) with 50%, while only 30% of females prefer (😎). In addition, only 20% of female users who selected (💕, , 😌), 10% of them use and prefer the emojis (😳, 😁, , 😂, ☺, 😉, 😕, ✌ ,), and no females prefer (☺, 😆, 😕, , 😑, 🐰).

Table 7. T test for the variation in emojis preferences between male and female

	N	Main	STD	t	Sig
Male	10	0.2885	0.155	0.654	0.522
Female	10	0.2462	0.133		

Table 7 shows that there is no significant variation between men and women in their emojis preferences as P > 0.005.
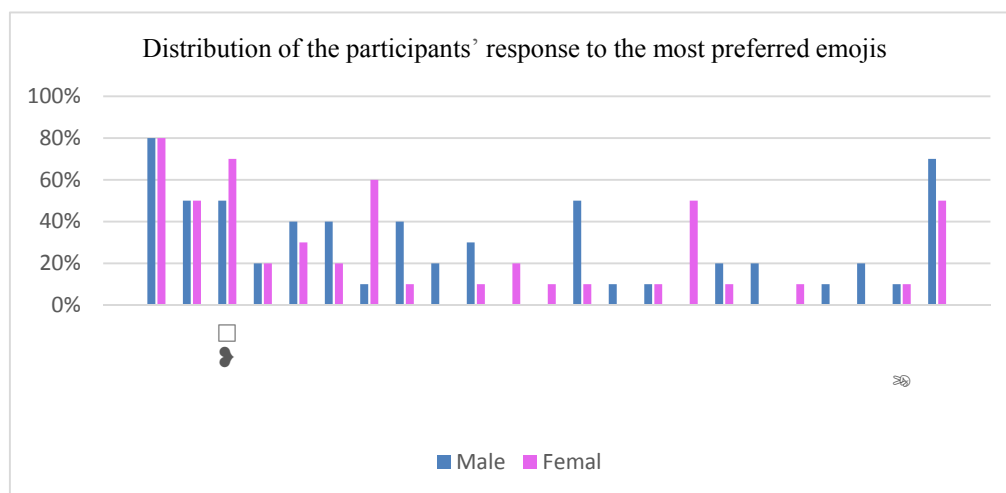

Figure 1. Distribution of the participants' response to the most preferred emojis

5. Discussion

This study examined the gender differences in the use of emojis among Qassimi people. Two research questions were used to shed light on the differences between genders in the emojis uses and preferences. The discussion of the results begins with the differences in the use of emojis between men and women. Then, in the second question, the differences among genders in their emojis preferences will be critically discussed.

5.1 Gender Differences in the Use of Emojis

The findings indicated that all of the females use emojis in their instant messages, while the majority of the males use them. The suggested reason beyond that is that women are stereotypically more emotional than men (Wolf, 2000). Concerning replacing words with emojis, one out of 10 female participants, as well as one out of 10 male participants, did not use them in order to replace words. According to using emojis to complement words or letters, the findings correspond with a previous study by Cramer et al. (2016) which suggested that people prefer using emojis in order to complement words. Furthermore, the majority of females believed that emojis conveyed emotions more than words. In line with a previous study by Evans (2015) found that emojis are more powerful than words. On the other hand, only half of the males believed that emojis convey emotions more than words. Regarding the participants' responses to the question 'If you were to ask a friend the following question in an instant message: "Would you like to go out for lunch?", Would you' abstain from including emojis or use emojis in the presented question. Ron (2018) found that men tend to express their thoughts concisely and use abbreviations liberally; on the other hand, women are more likely than men to convey a sense of social interaction in their texts. Consequently, the majority of the female participants would use emojis, whereas only two out of 10 male participants would use emojis in the presented question. The second part of this question was about the frequency of the use of emojis on social media platforms. The results demonstrated that the majority of females in this study use emojis all the time, whereas only two out of 10 male participants stated that they use them all the time. This may be due to the fact that women use social media platforms more than men (Chen et al., 2017).

Despite the minor differences among genders shown above, the results revealed that there is no significant variation in the use of emojis among men and women. Thus, the results refuted the present study's hypothesis.

The norms, roles, and personalities of men and women vary; thus, they differ in many aspects. Although several studies (Tossell et al., 2012; Fullwood et al., 2013; Hwang, 2014; Chen et al., 2017; Al-Rashdi, 2018) have found gender differences in the emojis use, the findings of this study found that gender differences do not exist in the use of emojis among Qassimi people. In the present study, there are some factors that have been proposed that contributed to the unexpected findings. First, all of the participants were from the same age group, both males and females were adults. Herring and Dainas (2020) suggested that adults use emojis more than older people. Therefore, adult females and adult males may use emojis in the same way. The second factor is the instrument,

the questionnaire could have included more and better-developed questions. In other words, the researcher proposed that the questionnaire might affect the participants' responses.

In contrast to the results reported in previous studies, Chen et al. (2017) found in their study of gender differences in the use of emojis that females use emojis in their messages more than males. Furthermore, the findings of this study are contrary to the findings of Al-Rashdi's (2018) study. Al-Rashdi (2018) found that Omani females use emojis more than Omani males in the WhatsApp application. However, the findings of the present study are similar to findings in a previous study by Wirza et al. (2020) which demonstrated that there is no significant difference in emoji use between females and males. Overall, the results of this study revealed that there is no significant variation between men and women in the use of emojis; consequently, this study's first hypothesis was not verified.

5.2 Gender Differences in the Preference of Emojis

The results of the present study revealed that all of the females have certain emojis they prefer over others, and 90% of males do so. Regarding the most preferred emojis, the findings of this study revealed that there is no significant variation among genders in their emojis preferences. Thus, the results refuted the present study's hypothesis.

The current study's findings contradict the results of Chen et al.'s (2017) and Persson's (2018) studies. Chen et al. (2017) found that men and women differ in their emojis preferences. Moreover, Persson (2018) conducted that there are differences in emojis preferences between men and women. Persson (2018) also found that the participants' preferences differed in such a way that males preferred a higher amount of emojis, while females preferred less amount of emojis. On the other hand, the current study's results showed that females and males have the same amount of emojis preferences.

According to the most preferred emojis by the participants, the results showed that the most preferred emoji by both male and female participants was 'face with tears of joy' which symbolized as (😂). This emoji was voted as the 2015 'word of the year' by Oxford Dictionary, since it demonstrates the mood, ethos, and the preoccupation of the world (Li et al., 2019). The findings of this study are in line with the findings from Al-Rashdi (2018) regarding the most preferred emojis, and found that the emoji 'face with tears of joy' was the most preferred emoji by both males and females. Furthermore, Wirza et al. (2020) found that both men and women prefer 'face with tears of joy' over other emojis. Similar to findings in a previous study by Chen et al. (2018) and Persson (2019), 'face with tears of joy' is the most frequently used and preferred emoji by both females and males. According to females, the next most preferred emoji was 'red heart' which is symbolized as (❤). In line with a previous study, Al-Garaady and Mahyoob (2021) found that the 'red heart' is used and preferred more by females rather than male learners. After that, women prefer (☺, 😄, 🌷, 👍) emojis. The 'red rose' emojis were clearly preferred by women; on the other hand, no males prefer it. Indeed, women tend to express positive emotions that represent love and beauty. In addition, no females preferred (☺, 😃, ☹, , 😬, 🙆), since some of these emojis convey negative emotions, women tend to avoid using them. According to males, the next most preferred emoji after (😂) was the 'thumbs up sign' which is symbolized as (👍). 'Thumbs up sign' emoji may be preferred by males because it shows both agreement, approval, and encouragement in a faster way. After that, males preferred (☺, ❤, 😄,), interestingly, both men and women prefer the 'smiling face with heart shaped eyes' equally. These results were contradicted by the studies of Ogletree et al. (2014) and Chang (2016) who considered that the 'smiley face' is the most preferred emoji by both men and women. Furthermore, the findings of this study are contrary to the findings of Chen et al. (2017) and Persson (2019) who showed that significant differences do exist in the emojis preferences between genders. In general, the results of this study revealed that there is no significant variation between men and women in their preferences of emojis; therefore, this study's second hypothesis was not verified.

6. Conclusion

The present study aimed at investigating first, the difference between men and women in the use of emojis. Then, it explored the differences in emoji preferences among genders. This study revealed that, with regard to the first purpose of the study, there is no significant variation between men and women in the use of emojis. As to the second objective of the study, the results showed no significant variation among genders in their preferences of emojis. Furthermore, the results of this study indicated that the emoji called 'face with tears of joy' was the most preferred by both men and women. The main limitation of the current study was the questionnaire, it could have included more and better-developed questions. There is also very limited literature concerning gender differences in the use of emojis. As for the recommendation, more studies are needed to investigate the differences in emoji use among genders in the Qassim region.

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Appendix A

Dear participant, this research seeks to investigate the differences in the emoji uses between men and women. Furthermore, the differences in the emoji preferences among genders. Kindly, choose the statement or the emoji that suits you.

N	Item	Choices	
1	Gender		
	[ ] Male	[ ] Female	
2	Do you use emojis in instant messages?		
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
3	Do you use emojis in instant messages in order to replace your use of actual words/letters?		
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
4	Do you use emojis in instant messages in order to complement your use of actual words or letters?		
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
5	Do you agree that emojis convey emotions more than words?		
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
6	How often do you use emojis?		
	All the time	Occasionally	Never
7	Are there certain emojis you prefer over others?		
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
8	Which of the following emojis do you most prefer? Mark one or more emojis which you most probably would prefer. (See Appendix B).		
9	If you were to ask a friend the following question in an instant message "Would you like to go out for lunch?", Would you:		
	[ ] Abstain from including emojis in the presented question.	[ ] Use emojis in the presented question.	
10	If you would rather use emojis in the question which is presented above, which of the following emojis would you choose? Mark one or more emojis which you most probably would use. (See Appendix B).		

Appendix B

Explanatory of emojis

Emoji	Explanation	N
☺	Face with tears of joy	E- 1
☺	Smiling face with heart shaped eyes	E- 2
♥	Red heart	E- 3
♥	Two hearts	E- 4
☻	Smiling face with sunglasses	E- 5
	Rolling on floor laughing	E- 6
☺	Loudly Crying face	E- 7
☺	Face throwing a kiss	E- 8
☺	Smiling face with smiling eyes	E- 9
☺	Face with stuck out tongue and winking eye	E- 10
☺	Relieved face	E- 11
	Expressionless face	E- 12
☺	Smiling face with open mouth and cold sweat	E- 13
☺	Smiling face with open mouth	E- 14
☺	Winking face	E- 15
⚘	Red rose emoji	E- 16
☹	Disappointed face	E- 17
☹	Enraged face	E- 18
☹	Weary face	E- 19
	Face with monocle	E- 20
☹	Unamused face	E- 21
✌	Victory hand	E- 22
👍	Thumbs up sign	E- 23
🙌	Person raising both hands in celebration	E- 24
	New moon face	E- 25