

Emotional Influence on Communication Effectiveness: | A Study of Taylor's University Students |

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the profound relationship between emotions and communication. Emotions, expressed through cues like facial expressions, are central to daily interactions, influencing how individuals communicate and perceive others. The research distinguishes between primary, instinctive emotions (e.g., pleasure, frustration) felt similarly across cultures, and secondary emotions (e.g., love, guilt) that involve higher-order thinking, develop over time, and are often interpersonal. The core problem is that emotions frequently hinder communication, leading to discomfort and conflict. Recognizing and managing these emotional states is crucial for effective dialogue and resolving differences. This quantitative study aimed to determine the relationship between emotions and their impact on communication. Employing a survey design, data were collected from 140 students at Taylor's University's School of Media and Communication using stratified random sampling. Questionnaires adapted from Goleman (1995) and Millard J. Bienvenu (1971) measured emotions and the impact on communication, respectively. Results demonstrate a significant positive relationship between emotions and their impact on communication ($r = .644$, $p < .000$). This confirms that emotions strongly contribute to communication outcomes. The study emphasizes the critical role of emotional awareness for improved communication, fostering stronger social bonds, and enhancing both personal and professional interactions.

Keywords: *Emotions, Communication Effectiveness, Emotional Awareness, Interpersonal Communication, Emotional Intelligence, University Students, Social Interaction.*

How to Cite

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INTRODUCTION

Emotions play a pivotal role in human communication, significantly shaping how individuals express themselves and interpret others' interactions. The manifestation of emotions through facial expressions, body language, and even pheromones not only enhances communication but also acts as a vital mechanism for social interaction and understanding. For example, emotional responses tied to medical conversations, such as those involving diabetes, emphasize that successful communication must transcend mere information sharing to encompass the emotional experiences of both parties involved (Nash, 2015). Effective communication in situations where emotional dynamics are crucial, such as in neonatal intensive care units (NICUs), highlights how parents' emotional perceptions significantly influence the overall quality of care and emotional well-being of both parents and healthcare staff (Jones et al., 2007). This connection underscores the importance of addressing the emotional aspects of communication to foster relationships and patient satisfaction in clinical settings.

Moreover, primary emotions, such as surprise and disappointment, are quick and often universally recognized across cultures (Knobloch et al., 2007). In contrast, secondary emotions like guilt and jealousy involve more complex processing and are shaped by individual experiences and social contexts. Research suggests that while these secondary emotions may lack universally consistent expressions, they can still be recognized through improved emotional awareness and management strategies (Watson & Gallois, 1999). This ability to understand and regulate both primary and secondary emotions is critical to overcoming the communication barriers these feelings can create. Effective emotion management facilitates understanding of others' feelings and enhances one's own responsiveness in conversations, thereby significantly influencing relational dynamics (Jones, 2004).

Additionally, communication difficulties can arise when emotions escalate, leading to what is termed emotional interference. This obstruction often manifests in counterproductive behaviors, such as avoidance during disagreements, which can harm relationships. Recognizing emotional triggers and employing strategies like mindfulness or seeking external support can help individuals navigate emotional undercurrents effectively, maintaining focus on rational discussions rather than reactive outbursts (Neal & Espinoza, 2022). For instance, fostering an environment where feelings can be expressed without fear of escalation is essential for sustaining healthy interactions, particularly in sensitive contexts such as end-of-life conversations in healthcare settings (Gonella et al., 2022). Addressing both the affective and cognitive components of such encounters can lead to improved patient outcomes and satisfaction.

The relational turbulence model illustrates how emotional uncertainty can heighten communication difficulties, particularly in personal relationships. Emotional reactivity stemming from relational uncertainty influences how individuals engage during conflicts and can either facilitate or hinder effective communication (Theiss et al., 2009). Enhancing emotional competency through training and support can reduce the likelihood of emotional interference and cultivate a more constructive communication environment, which is vital across various relational contexts. Evidence suggests that communication skills training, particularly within healthcare professions, is beneficial for managing emotional conversations and improving patient satisfaction (Beusekom et al., 2019).

Overall, emotional awareness and regulation are essential for effective communication, especially when navigating complex interpersonal dynamics. The synergy between interpersonal and intrapersonal emotional management not only advances personal communication competence but also enhances relational quality across contexts by enabling individuals to connect more authentically and empathetically.

This study aims to raise public awareness about the impact of emotions on everyday communication, helping individuals understand the important role emotions play in interaction. Emotions significantly influence human cognitive processes, including perception, attention, learning, memory, and problem-solving, shaping how people interpret and respond to the world and contributing to the quality of life. The study deepens understanding of human reactions and motivations in situations, and their physical and mental effects during communication, highlighting the role of emotions in the positivity or negativity of communication. Developing an emotional vocabulary is also emphasized, reducing ambiguity for message decoders and enabling individuals to convey emotional intensity (e.g., mildly happy, moderately delighted, intensely overjoyed).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotions

Emotions represent a complex interplay among affective, cognitive, conative, and physiological dimensions. This multifaceted nature allows for a nuanced understanding of how emotions influence behavior and decision-making processes. The interaction between emotion and cognition is critical; emotions not only inform cognitive assessments but also shape behavioral responses in contingent situations, creating a dynamic system that facilitates social navigation and relationship-building (Gray et al., 2002; Pessoa, 2010).

One significant aspect of emotions is their capacity to prepare individuals for appropriate responses to environmental stimuli. For instance, physiological arousal often precedes conscious emotional experience, influencing behaviors such as fight-or-flight responses to perceived threats (Bechara et al., 2003). Neurobiologically, structures such as the amygdala play a crucial role in processing emotional stimuli and determining appropriate social responses, thereby integrating emotional and cognitive functions (Bechara et al., 2003; Adolphs et al., 1994). Researchers emphasize that emotional control beliefs can significantly affect how individuals choose to engage with both positive and negative situations, suggesting that cognitive frameworks regarding emotion can modulate emotional experiences and responses (Rovenpor & Isbell, 2018; Ford et al., 2018).

The concept of Emotional Schemas illustrates how individuals' beliefs and interpretations about their emotional experiences influence their psychological responses and coping mechanisms. These schemas can shape emotional processing during significant life transitions or stressful situations, impacting overall well-being and emotional regulation strategies (Mohammadkhani et al., 2022; Leahy, 2018). Notably, individuals who believe they have limited control over their emotions tend to exhibit heightened negative affect and distress, while those with an incremental view of emotion tend to be more resilient and adept at emotion regulation (Ford et al., 2018; Castella et al., 2013).

Emotional intelligence also plays a pivotal role in this complex interaction, enabling individuals to recognize their emotional states and regulate their responses effectively. High emotional intelligence is correlated with better identification of emotional triggers and reduced susceptibility to incidental emotional influences, thereby facilitating more rational decision-making (Izard et al., 2000; Gross & John, 2003). Furthermore, emotion regulation can occur at multiple junctures, from situation selection to response modulation, underscoring the process-oriented nature of emotional management (Gross, 1998).

In synthesizing these perspectives, it is evident that emotions are central not only to individual psychological functioning but also to broader social interactions. They serve as a "grammar of social living," structuring interpersonal exchanges and moral judgments while embodying both individual and contextual influences (Pessoa, 2010; Storbeck & Clore, 2007). Consequently, a comprehensive understanding of emotions must integrate their physiological, cognitive, and social dimensions, considering how culture, learning, and personal history affect emotional experiences (Tamir et al., 2007).

Impact on Communication

Communication is a fundamental component of human interaction, essential for the creation, understanding, and reproduction of social realities. It is traditionally viewed as the dissemination of information from a sender to a receiver. However, contemporary research recognizes communication as a complex, dynamic process characterized by ongoing interaction that shapes and is shaped by the context of relational engagements among individuals or groups. This nuanced understanding resonates with Bateson's relational communication theory, which posits that every communicative exchange conveys not only material information but also the underlying relational dynamics between participants (Ven & Johnson, 2006).

The theoretical landscape surrounding communication has evolved significantly over the years, with various frameworks seeking to elucidate its multifaceted nature. For instance, relational communication theory emphasizes the importance of context, mutual interpretation, and the construction of meaning through interaction, which is also evident in the insights provided by Saifan et al. (Saifan et al., 2021). They highlight that in nursing education, communication is a pivotal element that bridges the connection between theoretical knowledge and practical application in clinical settings. This is essential not only in health-related contexts but across diverse communicative scenarios, underscoring the interdisciplinary relevance of communication theories.

Current research trends in communication predominantly focus on enhancing understanding in collaborative processes, particularly within organizational settings. Effective communication strategies are linked to organizational success, with evidence suggesting that two-way communication fosters collaboration and reduces uncertainties in group dynamics (Shoghi et al., 2019; Israel et al., 1998). A recent study by Maben et al. underscores that addressing communication issues can mitigate the theory-practice gap in nursing, suggesting that improving communication between nursing educators and practitioners is critical (Maben et al., 2006). Moreover, communication is increasingly studied through the lens of technology, as seen in Brown et al.'s examination of word-of-mouth communication within online communities, which highlights the need for theories that account for the unique dynamics of digital interaction (Brown et al., 2007).

Despite the advances in communication theories and their application across various fields, significant gaps remain in both theoretical frameworks and practical implementation. Many scholarly articles note that an imbalance still exists between academic findings and their practical utility, particularly in nursing and education (Abdullahi et al., 2022; Greenway et al., 2019; Spouse, 2001). Communication approaches often fail to address the complexities of real-world interactions or neglect the importance of feedback mechanisms, which are vital for effective communication (Fischer et al., 2021). Additionally, the persistent theory-practice gap across disciplines remains, with insufficient alignment between educational curricula and practical job requirements a prominent challenge (Abdullah & Norin, 2008; Chakraborty et al., 2021). This

discrepancy emphasizes the ongoing need for research that not only explores communication methodologies but also critically examines how these can be effectively woven into professional practices.

In conclusion, communication remains an invaluable yet challenging aspect of human interaction that necessitates ongoing theoretical exploration and practical refinement. The transition from theory to practice is essential in addressing existing gaps and ensuring that communication theories translate effectively into actionable strategies that enhance interpersonal and organizational relationships. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive review of existing literature, iterative dialogue between academia and practice, and a commitment to fostering environments where effective communication can thrive.

Theoretical Framework

Attribution Theory, conceptualized by Fritz Heider, provides a framework for understanding how individuals interpret and explain behavior through causal attributions. This framework has profound implications for social psychology, particularly in shaping our understanding of emotions, communication, and interpersonal dynamics. Attribution serves not just as a cognitive process but also informs how we engage with one another, influencing emotional responses, expressions of sympathy, or anger depending on the perceived controllability and intent behind behaviors (Neumann, 2000; Sanford, 2006; Pearce & Halford, 2008).

Attribution processes elucidate the mechanisms through which individuals assess behavior in social contexts. Heider identified dimensions of attribution that encompass stability, responsibility, and effort, which are critical in determining emotional outcomes (Neumann, 2000; Mao et al., 2011; Pearce & Halford, 2008). For instance, when an unfortunate event is attributed to stable, controllable factors, individuals tend to feel frustrated and lack sympathy. Conversely, attributions that depict the situation as uncontrollable and transient can elicit compassion (Neumann, 2000; Mao et al., 2011). This dynamic is particularly observable in relational contexts, such as marital conflicts, where attributions between partners significantly influence communication styles and emotional outcomes (Sanford, 2006; Pearce & Halford, 2008).

In examining communicative behaviors, such as the use of humor, the interplay of attributions becomes evident. Research indicates that negative outcomes, such as conflict arising from humor, often stem from internal attributions about an individual's personality (Vaughan-Johnston et al., 2021). This perspective prompts a reevaluation of how communication is perceived and understood through the lens of attributed intentions and traits, reinforcing the importance of contextual factors in attribution (Vaughan-Johnston et al., 2021). Moreover, the attribution of emotions to communicative behaviors illustrates a broader interpretative framework, which encompasses nonverbal cues, thereby extending Heider's theory into realms of social complicity and emotional engagement (Vaughan-Johnston et al., 2021).

Further expansion of Attribution Theory can be seen in contexts outside traditional psychological boundaries. For instance, in online environments, attribution dynamics can influence trust and engagement in digital interactions, particularly within brand communities (Ho & Benbasat, 2014; Lee et al., 2011). Here, the roles of interactivity and community dynamics blend to reshape attributional processes, highlighting how online behaviors are interpreted and lead to specific emotional or behavioral outcomes among community members (Tajvidi et al., 2021; Das et al., 2021). Thus, the integration of attribution across domains illustrates its versatility as a theoretical lens for dissecting and understanding behavioral explanations.

To summarize, Attribution Theory touches upon critical aspects of human cognition and social interaction, affecting emotional responses and interpersonal communication. The framework not only facilitates the understanding of individual behaviors but also underpins the relational dynamics that govern social interactions. By recognizing the causal interpretations individuals assign to behaviors, we can gain insights into the emotional landscape of human interaction and the subsequent communicative behaviors that emerge from various attribution patterns.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design, which relies on empirical methods and declarations to understand the "actual world". Quantitative methods explain phenomena through data collected from respondents and analyzed using mathematical analysis, especially statistics. This approach begins with problem formulation, followed by theory development, literature review, and then the quantitative method.

Type of Research Method:

A questionnaire was used, divided into three sections: Part A for respondent background (age, gender, education level); Part B for identifying emotions (25 questions using a tick-box format); and Part C for identifying impact on communication (25 questions using a tick-box format).

Unit of Analysis:

The target population was students from Taylor's University, specifically those in the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences: School of Media and Communication. Taylor's University, established in 1969, is a private university in Malaysia, recognized as a top institution by QS World University Rankings. Its Lakeside Campus, opened in 2010, includes commercial and student housing facilities. As of 2021, Taylor's University offers various field majors across its faculties, including Media & Communication.

Sampling

From the total population of 220 students in the School of Media and Communication, a sample size of 140 respondents was determined using Krejcie (1970). Probability sampling, specifically stratified random sampling, was employed. This technique divides the population into smaller subgroups (strata) based on shared attributes such as income or educational attainment, ensuring each subgroup is properly represented and allowing researchers to control representation.

Data Collection

Prior to distribution, the researcher obtained a letter of consent from the lecturer. Questionnaires were created using Google Forms and distributed via a WhatsApp Group to facilitate access and contact with respondents.

Instrument Development:

The questionnaire was developed based on existing research to ensure validity and consistency. For the independent variable, Emotions, 25 questions were selected from Goleman (1995)'s questionnaire. These questions aimed to identify assertive elements, unique physical states related to perception, and neurobiological activity in emotion. For the dependent variable, Impact on Communication, 25 questions were chosen from Millard J. Bienvenu's (1971) questionnaire. This instrument sought to investigate communication as a continuous process, a means of reducing uncertainty, and a process of creating psychological, social, and cultural meaning.

Pre-Test

A pre-test was conducted on 50 students from the same target group (Taylor's University, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences: School of Media and Communication).

- i. **Respondent Background:** The pre-test sample comprised 42.0% male (n=21) and 58.0% female (n=29). Age distribution was 18-20 years (38.0%, n=19), 21-23 years (44.0%, n=22), 24-26 years (14.0%, n=7), and 27-30 years (4.0%, n=2). Education levels included Diploma (46.0%, n=23) and Degree (54.0%, n=27).
- ii. **Instrument Reliability:** Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess internal consistency. For Emotions, $\alpha = .814$, and for Impact on Communication, $\alpha = .799$, both deemed acceptable for the study.
- iii. **Correlation Inter-Item:** Item correlations for both the Emotions and Impact on Communication variables were significant and accepted, with no changes made to the questionnaire.

FINDINGS

Frequency of Respondents (Main Study)

The main study involved 142 respondents. Demographics were 29.6% male (n=42) and 70.4% female (n=100). Education levels were Diploma (35.2%, n=50), Degree (51.4%, n=73), Master (9.9%, n=14), and PhD (3.5%, n=5). Age distribution was 18-20 years (30.5%, n=43), 21-23 years (50.0%, n=71), 24-26 years (13.3%, n=19), 27-30 years (4.9%, n=7), and others (1.4%, n=2).

Instrumental Reliability (Main Study)

Cronbach's Alpha for the main study demonstrated high internal consistency: Emotions ($\alpha = .899$) and Impact on Communication ($\alpha = .874$), both acceptable.

Correlation Inter-Item

The correlation between items for both Emotions (Table 4.3) and Impact on Communication (Table 4.4) variables was significant and accepted, indicating no need for changes.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between emotions and their impact on communication. The analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between emotions and their impact on communication ($r = .644$, $p < .000$). This indicates that emotions contribute to communication. Therefore, the hypothesis was not rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This research successfully achieved its first objective: to determine the relationship between emotions and their impact on communication. The findings confirm a significant relationship between these variables, supporting the hypothesis that emotions influence communication. This aligns with previous research suggesting that people communicate emotions through their voices, and that communication involves creating meaning psychologically, socially, and culturally, addressing how messages are acknowledged and how uncertainty is resolved. The flow of ideas, emotions, and thoughts through various representations is central to communication. This study's findings contribute new insights, consistent with past researchers such as Rosengren (2000), Ince (2001), and Dacher Keltner (1996).

Contribution to the Theory

The study reinforces s Attribution Theory by Fritz Heider. The theory's premise that attribution explains behavior, including communicative behaviors, is supported by the findings. The research highlights that human opinions are more complex than object perception and involve beliefs, desires, emotions, and personality traits. Every human statement and action is subject to attribution analysis, influencing how individuals react to others' behavior. The crucial role of emotions in daily life and communication is evident. This study provides knowledge to both present and future researchers, emphasizing the importance of an extensive literature review from past researchers to gain a clear, reliable, and valid understanding of the subject.

Implication of the Study

The study offers several implications. It suggests that expressing emotions by communicating the circumstances, thoughts, and feelings surrounding an emotional event provides intrapersonal and interpersonal benefits, fostering inner satisfaction and relief, and strengthening social bonds. Communication serves as the cornerstone of successful professional and private relationships, requiring not only the sharing of factual information but also the expression of emotional states through verbal and nonverbal cues to foster long-lasting connections. Furthermore, the research process itself provided significant knowledge gain for the researcher, which will be valuable for future endeavors.

Recommendation for Future Research

Future researchers exploring this topic should be prepared for the complexity and potentially "high-level words" involved. It is recommended that future research consider qualitative methods, such as face-to-face interviews. This approach could provide a deeper understanding of the topic by directly engaging respondents and exploring their experiences in greater detail, rather than relying solely on questionnaire data. |

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in the paper.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Author 1 contributed to the conceptualization, research design, and writing of the original draft.

Author 2 was responsible for data collection, analysis, and validation of the results.

Author 3 provided supervision, critical review, and editing of the final manuscript.

All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia and the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical approval was obtained from the **Review Board** under reference number JE212. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided written informed consent prior to participation. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and the data collected were used solely for academic purposes.

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- 1.3 Research Question R.Q.1 What is the relationship between emotions and their impact on communication?