

Internet Memes and Its Emotional Impact on Pre-Service Teachers

Vemma Mae R. Guinto

Abstract

Internet Memes are generated contents to express their information, to entertain, to ridicule and to self-actualize. This study aimed to determine the emotional impact of memes and its relationship with the profile of the Pre-Service Teachers of Pangasinan State University- Bayambang Campus. The study made use of descriptive-correlation research method. To test the impacts of internet memes towards the emotions of Pre-Service Teachers a questionnaire-checklist was used. Frequency counts, percentages average weighted mean was used in the treatment of data. Pearson-r (Pearson Product Moment of Correlation) and Chi-square was used to determine the relationship between profile and the emotional impacts of Internet Memes. The findings of this study showed that the Pre-Service Teachers predominantly specialize in Enhanced General Education, are females, and spend 4-6 hours on social media per day. There is a significant relationship between gender and impacts of memes in terms of positive emotions aside from hopefulness. The relationship between gender and impacts of memes specifically negative emotions are found to be highly significant. There is no significant relationship between exposure to social media and impacts of memes. Internet memes greatly affect the emotions of Pre-Service Teachers. Future studies on the impact of Memes to Educational and Political factors may be conducted.

Key Words: Emotions, Internet Memes, Pre-Service Teachers

Introduction

Most of our pre-service teachers are exposed to internet memes. Majority of internet memes are captioned photos that are intended to be funny, often to publicly ridicule human behaviour [1]. Additionally, memes are rapidly created and distributed, reaching an extended audience without being limited by geographic boundaries, they also can focus on seemingly unimportant—but highly shareable—sound bites [2]. Memes serve many purposes and functions, but at a fundamental level, they serve as an expression of people's opinions and emotions [3].

A recent study indicates that people reporting strong, effective responses to meme showed greater intent to spread it. The recent study indicated that the rapidity with which online users spread information enhances contagion which is—emotional contagion. Emotional contagion, a form of contagion, leads to convergence of a person's emotional state with the state of emotions of those with whom he or she is interacting with or observing [4]. That is when, online users watch internet memes, they tend to experience similar emotions as the people in the memes, and by spreading that meme, they anticipate that the recipient will experience similar feelings.

While it may seem like memes are just cute pictures and nothing else, they could have negative impacts on people and just life in general. One of the well-known cases is that of Tide Pods. In just 2018, there have been 37 cases of people eating detergent pods, with about half of them being intentional. There are other instances

Vemma Mae R. Guinto, Faculty, Pangasinan State University, Bayambang, Pangasinan.

where the consequences are far more serious. One of them is the Star Wars Kid. After the video was released on the internet, Ghyslain Raza, the titular Star Wars Kid, became severely depressed over the countless negative comments video received. He lost multiple friends and even left the school campus for private tutoring. Furthermore, Chubby Bunny Challenge and Cinnamon Challenge included countless deaths. Not all memes bring negative effects. In fact, some of them may even make depressed people have a reason to live. Jacob Arnold, who looks at memes every day, believes that memes have become an inspiration for his daily life [5].

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

Objectives of the Study

Generally, this study, aims to determine the emotional impact of memes and its relationship with the profile of the Pre-Service Teachers of Pangasinan State University- Bayambang Campus.

Specifically, this excerpt of a study, aimed to answer the following specific questions:

1. What is the profile of the Pre-Service Teachers in terms of Specialization, Sex and Exposure to Social Media per day?
2. What is the impact of internet memes towards the positive and negative emotions of the Pre-Service Teachers?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the emotional impact of internet memes and the profile of the Pre-Service Teachers?

Materials and Methods

The descriptive-correlation method was employed in this study to describe the impacts of memes towards the emotions of Pre-Service Teachers. Since the present study is concerned with the influence of memes towards the emotions of the respondents, this method is appropriate to examine the relationship between the two variables.

The respondents of the study are 231 Pre-Service Teachers who are enrolled during the Second Semester S.Y. 2019-2020. The specializations of Pre-Service Teachers involved are Enhanced General Education, Science, Math, Physical Education and Technology and Livelihood Education.

A researcher - made questionnaire-checklist was used as the main instrument in the study. The first part of the questionnaire was on the profile of the respondents which determined their sex, exposure to social media and specialization. The second part of the questionnaire was on the impacts of memes on the emotions of the students. The questionnaire-checklist were distributed by the researcher to pre-service teachers.

To determine the student's profile which consists of sex, exposure to social media and strand, frequency count and percentage rates was used. To determine the impacts of memes on the emotions of Pre-Service Teachers, Average Weighted Mean was used. To determine if there is significant relationship between the impact of memes and the profile of Pre-Service Teachers, Chi-Square and Pearson- correlation was used.

Result and Discussion

Profile of the Respondents:

Table 1	Profile of the Pre-Service Teachers	
Profile	(f)	(%)
Sex		
Male	70	30.3
Female	161	69.7
Total	231	100
Exposure to social Media		
2-3 hours	57	24.7
4-6 hours	80	34.6
7-8 hours	79	34.2
Others	15	6.5
Total	231	100
Specialization		
EGE	88	38.1
Math	51	26.8
Science	62	22.1
PE	19	8.2
TLE	11	4.8
Total	231	100

Table- 1 presents the profile of the respondents according to gender, exposure to social media and specialization. The Table 1 indicates that out of 231 respondents, 69.7% are female while 30.3% are male. This means that females outnumbered males by 39%.

The highest percentage of the respondents reported that their exposure to social media is between 4-6 hours a day. Based on the Table, 38.1% of the students are Enhanced General Education major, followed by Science and Mathematics majors, with 26.8% and 22.1% respectively. Physical Education and Technology and Livelihood Education has the least percentages of 8.2% and 4.8% of respondents.

Emotional Impact of Memes

This part presents the findings on the level of emotional response in memes of the Pre-Service Teachers in terms of the two kinds of emotions with their respective indicators.

Table 2 Positive Emotional Impact of Memes to Pre-Service Teachers		
Indication	Average Weighted Mean	Equivalent
Happiness		
1.I feel better despite being sad	3.40	High
2.I become more cheerful	3.51	Hight
3.I enjoy sharing and posting on social media	3.30	Moderate
4 I can always laugh	3.41	High
5 I can't stop smiling	3.31	Moderate
Inspirational		
6 I feel enthusiastic about my works	3.13	Moderate
7 I become energetic	3.23	Moderate
8. I don't think negative things	2.97	Moderate
9. I gain self confidence	3.13	Moderate
10 I realized I can do better	3.41	High
Hopefulness		
11. I think I am not alone	3.42	High
12. I feel motivated	3.42	High
13. I start to believe in myself	3.44	High
14. I become optimistic	3.37	Moderate
15.I see life in a new perspective	3.42	High
Average Weighted Mean:	3.32	Moderate

Table 2 shows that the Pre-Service Teachers highly feel better, became more cheerful, and laugh when they see memes. The respondents enjoy sharing memes, feel enthusiastic, energetic, confident, and optimistic in a moderate level. Overall, there is a moderate positive emotional impact of memes to pre-service teachers.

Table 3 shows the negative impacts of meme to the respondents' emotions. As seen in the Table, all the indicators average weighted mean is interpreted as low. It concludes, that memes do not give any negative

Table 3 Negative Emotional Impact of Memes on Pre-Service Teachers		
Indicators	Average Weighted Mean	Equivalent
Irritation		
1. I get mad easily	2.50	Low
2. I suffer mood swings	2.56	Low

3. I feel like I am bullied	2.45	Low
4. I suddenly want to log out	2.43	Low
5. I overeat	2.31	Low
Stress		
6. I feel frustrated	2.39	Low
7. I think I'm being mocked	2.39	Low
8. I lose appetite to eat	2.27	Low
9. I become pessimistic	2.42	Low
10. I can't sleep	2.56	Low

emotions to the respondents even when they are exposed to it. The results indicate that the negative influences of memes are very low.

Relationship between the Impact of Memes and the Profile of Pre-Service Teachers

This part discusses the relationship between the impact of memes and the profile of Pre-Service Teachers with certain profile variables, which consists of gender, specialization, and exposure to social media. The Pearson-r and Chi-Square was used to show the relationship between the profiles of the pre-service teachers and the impact of memes. Correlation value was used to test the significance of Pearson-r at the 0.05 level.

Table 4 presents the computed chi-square values which determine the relationship between sex and impacts of memes.

Table 4 Relationship between Emotional Impact of Memes and Sex			
	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Sex*Happiness	49.784 ^a	34	.039
Sex*Inspirational	52.301 ^a	28	.004
Sex*Hopefulness	46.252 ^a	33	.063
Sex*Irritation	67.658 ^a	40	.004
Sex*Stress	122.359 ^a	46	.000
Sex*Sadness	119.566 ^a	49	.000

It is observed in Table 4, the computed chi -square value between happiness and sex is .039 with a critical chi-square value of 49.784 with degree of freedom (df) 34 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Also, the computed chi-square value between inspirational and sex is .004 with a critical chi-square value of 52.301 with df 28 at 0.05 level of significance. In contrast, it is shown in the same Table that the computed chi-square value between hopefulness and sex is .063 with the critical chi-square value of 46.252 with df 33

that is far below at 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is no significant relationship between hopefulness and sex. Most of the respondents found memes as source of happiness and inspirational, it is because it is relatable and realistic.

Table 4 also shows the relationship between the negative impacts of memes namely, irritation, stress and sadness which were found to have significant relationship with gender. The computed chi-square value of .004 between irritation and gender with the critical chi-square value of 67.658 and a df of 40 is found to have a significant relationship. In addition, the computed chi-square value between sex and stress is .000, same with sadness and sex with the critical chi-square value of 119.566 with df 49 which is way below 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is highly significant relationship between sex and emotions such as irritation, stress, and sadness. It illustrates that regardless of their sex, the respondents do not find memes as irritating, stress-causing, and saddening but its counterpart.

Tables 5.1 and 5.2, present the relationship between impacts of memes and exposure to social media using the Pearson r correlation.

Table 5.1 Relationship between Positive Impact of Memes and Exposure to Social Media				
	Hours	Happiness	Inspirational	Hopefulness
Pearson Correlation	1	.117	.052	.092
Sig. (2-tailed)		.076	.429	.166
N	231	231	231	231

Table 5.1 shows the relationship between the respondent's exposure to social media and positive impacts of memes namely, happiness, inspirational and hopefulness with significant values of .076, .429 and .166 which is far below 0.05 level of significance. It implies that the number of hours the respondents spend on social media does not guarantee the impacts of memes to their emotion. This means that the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between positive impacts of memes and exposure to social media is not rejected.

Table 5.2 Relationship between Negative Impacts of Memes and Exposure to Social Media				
	Hours	Irritation	Stress	Sadness
Pearson Correlation	1	.025	.024	.016
Sig. (2-tailed)		.703	.719	.806
N	231	231	231	231

Table 5.2 illustrates the respondent's exposure to social media and negative impacts of memes in terms of – irritation which gained .703, stress with significance value of .719 and sadness with .806 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the number of hours the respondents spend on social media has nothing to do with the impacts of memes. It is not necessary for the respondents to react from it.

Tables 5.3 and 5.4 present the significant relationship between impacts of memes and specialization.

Table 5.3 Relationship between the Positive Impacts of Memes and Specialization				
	Specialization	Happiness	Inspirational	Hopefulness
Pearson Correlation	1	.169*	.327**	.178**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.031	.000	.007
N	231	231	231	231

Under positive impacts are happiness which obtained .010, and hopefulness that obtained .007 which is believed to have significant relationship between strands. In like manner, inspirational obtained .000 which is considered highly significant.

Table 5.4 Relationship between Negative Impacts of Memes and Specialization				
	Specialization	Irritation	Stress	Sadness
Pearson Correlation	1	.107	-.076	-.051
Sig. (2-tailed)		.106	.248	.444
N	231	231	231	231

Table 5.4 shows the relationship between negative impacts of memes in terms of; irritation with a significance value of .106, stress with .248 and sadness with .444. These values are believed to be greater than 0.05 level of significance. This means that memes do not give off irritating, stressing and saddening content towards the respondents. Therefore, the relationship is not significant.

It also means that regardless of what specialization the respondents are in, it does not guarantee that it will affect their perspective with memes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are arrived at:

1. The respondents were female dominated with 161 or 69.7 percent over 70 or 30.3 percent of male respondents. Majority of the respondents are specializing in Enhanced General Education. Most of the respondents spend 4-6 hours a day on social media.
2. Internet memes positively affects the Pre-Service Teachers moderately while it does not negatively affect the respondents.
3. There is significant relationship between sex and impacts of memes in terms of positive emotions namely, happiness and inspirations, aside from hopefulness which is found to have no significant relationship. In addition, the relationship between sex and impacts of memes specifically negative emotions, irritation, stress and sadness are found to be highly significant.

4. There is no significant relationship between exposure to social media and impacts of memes is accepted.
5. There is a significant relationship between specialization and the impacts of memes positively. However, there is no significant relationship between specialization and the impacts of memes negatively.

Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations are provided from this study:

1. College Instructors can make use of memes in introducing a new lesson to make it entertaining in an educational way.
2. Future studies on the Impact of Memes to Educational and Political factors may be conducted.

References

- Duong, I. (2017). Why does memes matter look good dank and viral. Young Post. <https://yp.scmp.com/news/features/article/107044/why-do-memes-matter-look-good-dank-and-viral>
- Gil, P. (2018). What is a Meme?. Lifewire .<https://www.lifewire.com/what-is-a-meme-2483702>
- Guadagno, R., Rempala, D., Murphy, S., & Okdie, R. (2013). What makes a video go viral? An analysis of emotional contagion and Internet memes. Computers in Human Behavior, 29 (6) 23122319
- Nasri, G. (2012). Presidential Candidates Don't Always Meme What They Say. <http://www.digitaltrens.com/social-media/memes/memes-and-elections/>
- Zehntner, C. (2018). How are memes affecting society?. The BroncWriter: The Student News Site of Blackfoot High School <https://thebroncwriter.online/1708/opinion/how-are-memes-affecting-society/>