

Emotional Impact of Social Media Buttons “Like, Share, and Comment” Among Somali Youth.

Received 20th Mar. 2024Revised 19th May 2024Accepted 28th June. 2024

Shafie Sharif¹, Mohamed Adam Isak²
*Somali Researchers Association (SRA)*¹*
*Darul Hikmah University*²*
[¹sra@sra.so](mailto:sra@sra.so) [²drmaisak@dhu.edu.so](mailto:drmaisak@dhu.edu.so)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70806/9e261783>

Abstract

Social media reaction buttons have become the center of youth's social debate, and Somali youth have developed an obsession with social media reaction buttons. Young individuals get self-esteem from accomplishing social media milestones, and conversely, they feel anxious when they don't obtain a "Like, Share, or Comment."

This survey comes at a time when social media has sparked online arguments between youth and created conflict and violence in the capital city of Mogadishu.

Purpose: The utilization of social media reaction buttons is undergoing a significant transformation. The objective of this study is to assess the emotional effects of social media buttons "Like, Share, and Comment" on Somali youth. The study also examines the impact of reaction buttons on the promotion of group unity, the pursuit of romantic connections, and the experience of both positive emotions and feelings of unease.

Methodology: We gathered data utilizing the quantitative approach. The study focused on 1,000 social media users who were given a questionnaire to complete on their own. Out of the 1,000 individuals, 856 responded, resulting in a response rate of 86%. Both men and women were given equal opportunities to participate, ensuring a balanced representation of gender among the responses. The data analysis employed a descriptive methodology.

Findings: The findings revealed that youth use reaction buttons to pursue romantic relationships, foster clan solidarity to gain happiness, and avoid anxiety.

Research limitations: This research focused solely on the emotional impact of social media buttons among Somali youth. Thus, the results might not be applicable to other countries.

Originality/value: To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study sheds light on the emotional impact of social media buttons among Somali youth.

Keywords Social Media, Emotional, Like Share, or Comment.

Introduction

The prevalence of social media has reached a worldwide scale, with a significant portion of Somali youth actively engaging on platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. In a study conducted by Mohamed et al. (2022), it was discovered that 90% of secondary students in Somalia possess a social media account.

Young individuals utilize social media platforms for a multitude of purposes, including uploading photographs and videos, disseminating information, amusing themselves, and accessing news articles. In their study, Fasaie and Iwari (2016) contend that a majority of young people, namely two-thirds, utilize social media on a regular basis. They do so in order to stay informed about current events and news that are popular, as well as to fill their leisure time when they are feeling unoccupied.

In addition to other factors, social media platforms incorporate reaction buttons that individuals utilize to respond to uploaded content. These buttons can be employed in diverse manners, such as expressing approval, agreement, empathy, curiosity, or uncertainty. Reaction buttons have a global usage.

According to a study conducted by Quintly in 2020, it was discovered that users hit reaction buttons over 300 billion times per day in the

first year. Furthermore, the number of reactions used experienced a significant growth of 433%.

Fox (2018) contends that individuals have an intense preoccupation with emotional social media reaction buttons. According to Antoniadis et al. (2019), the absence of post responses has an adverse impact on the moral of young people. Bagić (2023) discovered that reaction buttons exert an emotional impact on social media interactions.

Conversely, religious leaders and older people express critics of social media, contending that it disseminates immoral movies and misinformation that opposes cultural values to the general population.

Despite the prevalence of unfavorable headlines and increasing worries regarding the influence of social media on young people, teenagers persist in utilizing these platforms at significant levels.

In 2023, the Somali government announced a ban on the video platform TikTok and the messaging app Telegram, but the youth and telecommunication companies rejected this decision, preventing its implementation.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study, to shed light on the emotional impact of social media buttons such as "Like, Share, or Comment" among Somali youth.

Methodology

The researchers gathered data through both online and offline means by utilizing a self-administered questionnaire. A cohort of 1000 adolescents who actively engage in social media was selected as the desired sample size. The sample size was determined using the Yamane (1973) formula, which suggests a up to 381 respondents. Therefore, we collected data from a sample of adult participants (n= 856), which accounted for 86% of the total respondents.

We inquired with the participants regarding their utilization and conduct on social media, as well as their perspectives on reaction buttons. The questionnaire was translated into Somali to facilitate the respondents' comprehension and response to the research inquiries. Additionally, two research specialists affiliated with the Somali Researchers Association (SRA) verified the validity of the instrument.

Findings

The study's findings suggest that young people in Somalia are becoming increasingly emotionally responsive to social media reaction buttons.

Demographic Profile

Social media platforms exhibit variations in usage patterns based on criteria such as age, gender, and educational attainment.

Gender

In terms of gender, men and women had equal opportunities to participate, but about six out of ten (62%) respondents were male, and about four out of ten (38%) were female.



Figure 1 the respondents gender result

Age: According to age, respondents ranged from 18 to 40 years old and above. Roughly one-third (34%) of the respondents are aged 18-23, close to a quarter

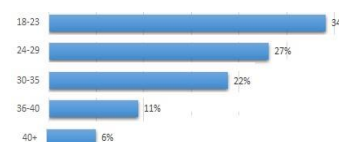


Figure 2 the respondents age result

(27%) are aged 24-29, while about two-in-ten (22%) are aged 30-35, and only 11 percent and 6% percent, respectively, are aged 36-40 and above 41.

Education

We asked the respondents about their educational background. The majority of the respondents (46%) were bachelors, followed by secondary school (35%), masters (17%), and only (2%) informal education. The study did not

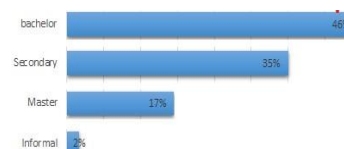


Figure 3 the respondents' education

investigate if there's a correlation between respondents' opinions on button reactions and their level of education.

Years of Using Social Media

The emergence of social media began in the early 2000s. While established social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube have been operational for over a decade, TikTok, a relatively new entrant, has already amassed billions of users worldwide. Thus, we asked respondents, how long have you been using social media? The majority 69% of the participants reported using it for a duration of 7-10 years, while 20% stated that they have been using it for over 10 years. The remaining 11% reported using it for a period of 3-6 years.

Posting on Social Media

The primary goal of social media account owners is to promote and interact with their friends by sharing images or videos.

We asked respondents if they posted on their social media accounts. The findings revealed that

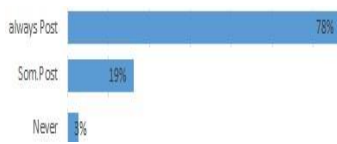


Figure 4 the posting result

approximately eight-in-ten (78%) stated that they always post, while 19% responded that sometimes only 3% said they never post.

Begging others to Like, Share, or Comment

It is common for YouTubers and TikTokers to beg people to like, share, or comment on their posts. However, individuals have also started pleading with others to react to their posts,

hoping to extend their reach beyond what they would typically receive.

We asked respondents if they had received a private request from friends to react to their posts.

Slightly more than half (54%) said friends



Figure 5: Ask for Like, Share

always ask to react to their posts on social media, while 37% said we receive them occasionally, and only about one in ten (9%) stated that none have asked to react to posts.

Show Respect for those Who React

Reaction buttons are considered a source of pride for social media users. Youth also use buttons to foster friendship and establish relationships. We asked respondents if they showed respect for those who liked, shared, or commented on their post. Interestingly, the study found that

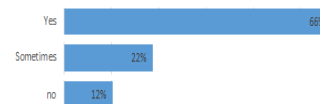


Figure6: Show Respect Reaction Givers

about two-thirds of the respondents (66%) agreed that they show respect for those who react to their social media posts. About two in ten (22%) stated that sometimes they show respect, and only 12% argued that regardless, they don't show regard at all.

Obsess on Checking Post Viewers

Having more than one social media account is common among youth. However, whenever they post video or photos, they obsessively monitor their viewers. We asked respondents if they obsess over checking post-reactions. The study revealed

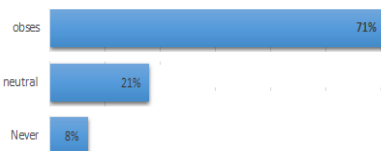


Figure 7: Obsess on Checking Post View

that approximately 71% of respondents were obsessed with constantly checking their post views and reactions, whereas 21% argued they are neutral in this regard, and only 8% said they were not obsessive about everything. During data analysis, researchers observed that women are far more likely to check than men (65% vs. 35%).

Usage for Reaction Buttons: “Tit for Tat”

Reaction buttons are a type of nonverbal communication that allows the audience to actively express their desire and satisfaction with the post. We asked respondents if they reward, like, share, or comment on those who have given them before as a gesture of goodwill. The study found that about five-in-ten (55%) reward

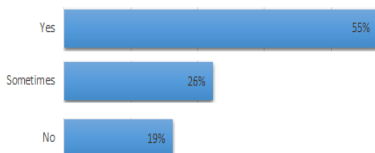


Figure 8: Tit for Tat Reaction Buttons

reactions for those who have given them before. Only 26% and 19%, respectively, responded occasionally and never.

Sometimes, friends may feel hesitant and decide not to react to the post. In this scenario, the account owner feels “sad” or “angry” and aims to retaliate against friends by not reacting to their posts which becomes tit for tat.

As a follow-up question, we inquired whether respondents use reaction buttons as a form of retaliation, meaning they refrain from reacting to someone who has not previously reacted. The majority (48%) said we took revenge, while 19% and 33% said sometimes and never respectively. However, women are more likely than their male counterparts to admit they use the reaction buttons as a form of revenge.

Reaction Partners

Social media allows its users to create groups based on their similarities and interests. However, there are unnamed partners united to give reaction buttons; for instance, when a member posts something regardless of the message’s content, partners should like, comment, or share that post immediately.

We asked respondents if they have reaction partners who help each other by giving likes, shares, or comments. About five-in-ten (51%) confirmed that they have reaction partners. While nearly half (49%) acknowledged that they lack reaction partners.

Clan Solidarity on the Reaction Button

Clans play a major role in Somalia. There are social media influencers who use clan slogans. People may view reaction buttons as a chance to demonstrate unity and endorse their clan members on social media platforms. We asked respondents if their reaction stemmed from the clan-

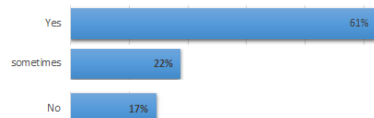


Figure 9: clan solidarity Reaction Buttons

motivated outcome. The study found that 61% of the respondents reacted to posts from clan members. About 22% said we do it sometimes, and 17% said we never do.

Reactions are a source of happiness.

People don't necessarily want to post pictures or videos, but they want reactions from others to express themselves. Thus, social media gives users a method to express how they feel about their friends' posts. Receiving more reactions boosts the account owner's confidence and self-esteem.

We asked the respondents whether receiving reactions (like, share, or comment) makes them happy.

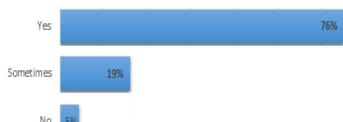


Figure 10: Happiness from the reaction button

The study revealed that the majority of the respondents (76%) feel happiness when friends react to their posts.

19% argued they sometimes feel good, while only 5% said they were not emotional at all.

Social media reactions cause anxiety.

Social media is a tool for many people to stay connected with others, get entertainment, or find happiness, but it could also potentially create anxiety, depression, or demoralization. For example, if a person posts a video or photo and does not get likes, comments, or shares, there's a possibility of getting negative reactions that can cause anxiety, which may lead them not to post anything the next time.

We asked respondents if they feel anxiety when they don't get a reaction from their post. The majority (52%)

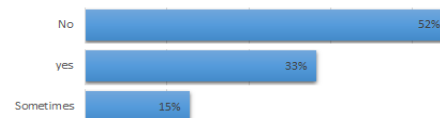


Figure 11: Anxiety from Social Media reaction

responded that they don't feel anxiety; however, about one-third (33%) admitted that they feel anxiety, and 15% said they feel it sometimes. During offline data collection, a respondent said, "If the post does not get a reaction, we delete it." We asked a follow-up question about whether respondents had experienced a conflict stemming from social media reactions. About six-in-ten (61%) stated that we have never experienced it, while 39 percent argued that we have experienced it once or twice.

Dating Relationship Starting from Reaction

Social media has an undeniable impact on dating culture. Among users, there's blind data, which starts with a like, share, or comment. In this regard, the person reacts positively to the post in order to attract the account holder.

We asked respondents if they had experienced blind data beginning with like, share, or comment.

According

to the study

findings, about two-thirds (64%) of the respondents said no, and about a quarter (26%) said yes.



Figure 12: Dating started from reaction

Congratulations on the Reaction!

Receiving more reactions from the audience can be very exciting for an account owner. We asked respondents if they received a congratulations message for getting more reactions. The majority (80%) said yes, while 13% confirmed sometimes, and only 7% said no.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to assess the emotional impact of social media buttons "Like, Share, or Comment" among Somali Youth. Study findings indicate that approximately 71% of the youth are obsessed with constantly checking their post views and reactions. However, the literature shows

similar findings. Fox (2018) argues that people become obsessed with emotional, social media reaction buttons. The study noted that about one-third (33%) admitted that they feel anxiety if they don't get a reaction from their post; however, past studies have found that a lack of post reactions has a negative effect on youth morale (Antoniadis et al. 2019).

Conclusion

This study aims to evaluate the emotional impacts of social media buttons "Like, Share, and Comment" among Somali youth. The findings revealed that people use reaction buttons to foster clan solidarity, pursue romantic relationships, and experience both happiness and anxiety. Receiving more reactions boosts the account owner's confidence and self-esteem. The study also discovered that anonymous partners collectively provide reaction buttons, regardless of the message's content. Among youth buttons are also used for "Tit for Tat."

Funding

The authors stated that there is no financial support linked to the research presented in this paper.

Conflict of Interest

The authors assert that they have no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the respondents who willingly and actively participated in the survey. The author would also like to express gratitude to their colleague from the Somali Researchers Association (SRA) for providing helpful feedback to enhance the paper's quality.

Reference

Antoniadis, I., Paltsoglou, S. and Patoulidis, V. (2019), "Post popularity and reactions in retail brand pages on Facebook", *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, Vol. 47 No. 9, pp. 957-973. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-09-2018-0195>.

Bagić Babac, M. (2023), "Emotion analysis of user reactions to online news", *Information Discovery and Delivery*, Vol. 51 No. 2, pp. 179-193. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IDD-04-2022-0027>

Fasae, J.K. and Adegbilero-Iwari, I. (2016), "Use of social media by science students in public universities in Southwest Nigeria", *The Electronic Library*, Vol. 34 No. 2, pp. 213-222. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EL-11-2014-0205>

Fox, J. (2018). An unlikeable truth: Social media like buttons are designed to be addictive. They're impacting our ability to think rationally. *Index on Censorship*, 47(3), 11-13

Mohamed, S. S., Shire, D. O., Isak, M. A., & Ahmed, A. A. (2022). Impact of Social Media on Students' Performance in Secondary School Examination. *Horn of Africa*, 2(1), 26-34.

Yamane, T. (1973). *Statistics: An introductory analysis*.