

## Abstract

Human interaction is an important focus of study because humans always adapt the way they communicate. In the digital transformation era, human communication systems are now mediated through computerized systems. However, there are several cues that are eliminated when humans interact via computer-mediated communication (CMC). One of them is the nonverbal cues; scholars call this as the *cues filtered out*. According to Walter's Social Information Processing (SIP) Theory, the lack of cues in CMC affects the time required for the relationship to be developed. However, since technology is getting more advanced, emojis were created and used for the representation of nonverbal cues in text-based communication. Therefore, this research tried to answer whether the use of emojis can challenge Walter's argument on the 'extended time' in developing relationships through CMC. Thus, the formulated research question is "how does emoji usage on Line application contribute to the development of romantic relationships amongst Gen Z Indonesian couples?". This research generates qualitative data from a netnographic approach to understanding the relations between emoji usage to the development of intimate relationships. While using the Miles and Huberman method of analysis, the data was systematically reduced, displayed, and concluded. After conducting the research and analyzing the data from four informants, it was found that the usage of emojis helps accelerate the process of relationship development by increasing the level of intimacy. In addition, the research also uncovered other factors that help increase interaction intimacy, which was by using additional & capital letters, and sending stickers on the Line application. The empirical data shows that developing the relationship development through CMC is possible when emojis, stickers, and additional & capital letters are used in order to reduce the level of uncertainty by depicting voice tones, intonation, emotions, and nonverbal gestures, which automatically increase the level of intimacy.

**Keywords:** Emoji, CMC, Nonverbal Communication, Interpersonal Communication, Netnography