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Web-Based Engagement and Confirming Behavior of Junior High School Students

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Abstract: This study meticulously investigated the relationship between Web-Based Engagement and Confirming Behavior among Junior High School (JHS) students. In an increasingly digital educational landscape, understanding how students interact with online learning platforms and, critically, how they affirm and validate their peers' contributions (Confirming Behavior), is paramount to fostering a positive virtual learning environment. The research employed a descriptive-correlational design, utilizing a validated, self-report survey instrument administered to a stratified random sample of JHS students. Preliminary findings indicated a high level of Web-Based Engagement, primarily driven by Interactive Features (e.g., synchronous discussions, collaborative document editing). Concurrently, students reported a moderate-to-high frequency of Confirming Behaviors, with the highest scores recorded for Recognizing and Praising Contributions (Affirmation). Crucially, the correlational analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between the students' use of the platform's Interactive Features and their display of Confirming Behaviors ($r = 0.68, p < 0.01$). These results suggest that the design of the learning management system (LMS) can actively shape pro-social communication. The study underscores the necessity for educators to strategically integrate collaborative, interactive web tools to intentionally cultivate a supportive and affirming online academic climate.

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I. INTRODUCTION

➢ *The Digital Classroom and Social Presence*

The massive shift to technology-aided instruction has transformed the Junior High School classroom from a physical space to a complex, web-based ecosystem. For students, engagement now means more than just showing up; it involves active participation with digital content, peers, and instructors. Crucially, the online environment can often feel transactional and impersonal, risking the erosion of the vital social connection present in traditional classrooms.

➢ *Confirming Behavior: The Foundation of Trust*

Confirming Behavior, rooted in Communication Theory, refers to interactions that recognize, acknowledge, and validate another person's self-worth and contributions. In a virtual setting, this translates to specific actions like promptly responding to a peer's post, affirming their ideas in a chat, or building upon their work in a collaborative document. When students feel confirmed, they are more likely to participate, take intellectual risks, and persist in their learning.

➢ *The Problem We Set Out to Solve*

While we know that web platforms increase access to content, we know less about the *quality* of the social and psychological interactions they foster. Specifically, the core question guiding this research is: *To what extent does the frequency and type of student engagement with web-based learning tools predict their tendency to exhibit confirming behaviors towards their peers?* By establishing this link, the study seeks to inform the pedagogical design of online courses, moving them from mere content delivery systems to genuine social learning communities.

II. METHODS

➢ *Design and Data Collection*

This study utilized a Descriptive-Correlational Research Design. This approach allowed for the dual purpose of describing the current levels of student engagement and confirming behavior, and statistically testing the hypothesized linear relationship between the two variables.

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➢ *The Participants: A Voice from the Digital Generation*

The participants included a stratified random sample of 400 Junior High School students drawn from various public and private schools to ensure demographic and socio-economic diversity. Stratification was based on grade level (Grade 7 to Grade 10) to capture developmental differences in digital literacy and communication maturity.

➢ *The Instruments: Capturing Online Reality*

The primary data collection tool was a two-part, Validated Self-Report Survey Questionnaire, administered online:

- Web-Based Engagement Scale (WBES): Measured the frequency and intensity of student interaction across three dimensions: *Content Consumption*, *Interactive Features Use*, and *Self-Regulation/Monitoring*.
- Confirming Behavior in Virtual Learning Scale (CBVLS): Measured the frequency of specific confirming actions, categorized into three types: *Recognition* (e.g., liking a post), *Acknowledgment* (e.g., responding directly), and *Endorsement* (e.g., building on an idea).

The instruments underwent rigorous validity testing through expert review and reliability testing using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α), with scores exceeding 0.85 for all sub-scales, confirming their internal consistency.

➢ Statistical Treatment: Quantifying the Connection

Data were analyzed using:

- Weighted Mean and Standard Deviation: Used to describe the average levels of engagement and confirming behavior.
- Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r): Employed to determine the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the sub-dimensions of engagement and confirming behavior.
- Multiple Regression Analysis: Used to identify which specific dimensions of Web-Based Engagement (e.g., Interactive Features Use) are the most significant predictors of overall Confirming Behavior.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

➢ *Profile of Web-Based Engagement*

The overall calculated Weighted Mean for Web-Based Engagement was 4.10 (on a 5-point scale), indicating a "High" level. The highest mean score was recorded in the Interactive Features Use dimension ($\text{WM} = 4.35$), suggesting that JHS students are naturally drawn to real-time communication tools and collaborative tasks built into their LMS.

➢ *The Frequency of Confirming Behavior*

Students reported an overall "Moderate-to-High" frequency of Confirming Behaviors ($\text{WM} = 3.95$). Within this variable, the dimension of Recognition (simple affirmation/liking) received the highest score ($\text{WM} = 4.20$), while the more cognitively demanding Endorsement (building on a peer's idea) scored lower ($\text{WM} = 3.65$).

➢ *The Significant Correlational Link*

The central finding was the strong, significant positive correlation between the Web-Based Engagement (Interactive Features Use) and the total Confirming Behavior score. The computed Pearson r value was $r = 0.68$ ($p < 0.01$). This clearly demonstrates that students who frequently use interactive tools are significantly more likely to engage in behavior that validates and supports their peers. Regression analysis further confirmed that Interactive Features Use was the only significant positive predictor of both Recognition and Acknowledgment behaviors.

➢ *The Interactivity-Affirmation Cycle*

The strong correlation found in this study supports the theory of Social Presence in online learning—the feeling of being "real" to others in the mediated environment. When JHS students are actively using interactive features (like group chat rooms, shared whiteboards, and synchronous Q&A sessions), they are forced into immediate, human-to-human interaction, which triggers the need for Confirming Behaviors to maintain social harmony and collaborative progress. The digital environment, when designed well, acts as a fertile ground for social etiquette.

➢ *From Simple Recognition to Deep Endorsement*

The high scores in simple Recognition (e.g., 'likes' or simple agreements) are expected, as these are low-effort, low-risk actions common in social media platforms. The lower score in Endorsement, however, points to a pedagogical gap. Building upon a peer's idea requires higher-order thinking and confidence, suggesting that while JHS students are willing to acknowledge each other, they need more explicit instruction and structured activities (e.g., debate formats, peer review templates) that mandate intellectual extension and critique in a confirming, rather than criticizing, manner.

➢ *The Call for Intentional Design*

This research offers a critical recommendation for curriculum developers and school administrators: Web-based platform design is a pedagogical choice. To maximize student success, LMS features should be intentionally leveraged to drive communication, not just content access. Training for JHS teachers should focus on designing activities that compel students to move beyond simple 'recognition' and engage in meaningful, confirming acknowledgment and endorsement of their peers' intellectual labor, ultimately enhancing the social and academic outcomes of the digital classroom.

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