A Comparative Study of Mechanisms Across Different Online Social Learning Types

Authors : Xinyu Wang

Abstract : Given the rapid development of Internet technology and the mainstream trend of online social media, people are spending increasingly more time online. This digital communication method has altered human social behavior. Concurrently, social learning phenomena occurring frequently on various online platforms have attracted significant attention. Past research has categorized social learning into affective, social learning and cognitive, social learning based on the content of learning. Recent studies have observed both types of social learning occurring in online contexts. However, few studies have simultaneously addressed both types of social learning or explored their underlying mechanisms and differences. This study aims to investigate through three behavioral experiments. Experiment 1 manipulates the content of experimental materials and two forms of feedback, emotional valence, sociability, and repetition, to verify whether individuals can achieve online emotional social learning through reinforcement using two social learning strategies. Results reveal that both social learning strategies can assist individuals in affective and social learning through reinforcement, with feedback-based learning strategies outperforming frequency-dependent strategies. Experiment 2 similarly manipulates the content of experimental materials and two forms of feedback to verify whether individuals can achieve online knowledge and social learning through reinforcement using two social learning strategies. Results show that similar to online affective and social learning, individuals adopt both social learning strategies to achieve cognitive and social learning through reinforcement, with feedback-based learning strategies outperforming frequency-dependent strategies. Experiment 3 simultaneously observes online affective and cognitive social learning by manipulating the content of experimental materials and feedback at different levels of social pressure. Results indicate that online affective and social learning exhibits different learning effects under different levels of social pressure, whereas online cognitive social learning remains unaffected by social pressure, demonstrating more stable learning effects. Additionally, to explore the sustained effects of online social learning and differences in duration among different types of online social learning, all three experiments incorporate two test time points. Results reveal significant differences in pre-post-test scores for online social learning in Experiments 2 and 3, whereas differences are less apparent in Experiment 1. To accurately measure the sustained effects of online social learning, the researchers conducted a mini-meta-analysis of all effect sizes of online social learning duration. Results indicate that although the overall effect size is small, the effect of online social learning weakens over time.

Keywords : online social learning, affective social learning, cognitive social learning, social learning strategies, social reinforcement, social pressure, duration

Conference Title : ICP 2024 : International Conference on Psychology
Conference Location : Melbourne, Australia
Conference Dates : July 22-23, 2024