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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL NETWORK SITES AND SOCIAL ANXIETY AMONG UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS.

Royal Owunna¹, Alice Omoefe Ajobi², Amaefule Angela Adanna³, Fadero Oluwafemi Emmanuel⁴

> ¹ Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang Malaysia royalowunna@gmail.com ² Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang Malaysia aliceajobi234@gmail.com ³Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna, Nigeria. angelbabe4nice@gmail.com ⁴Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

The study explore the relationship between social media communication and social anxiety among undergraduate students. The respondents were selected using a simple random technique. The data was collected by self-administered interview among 100 undergraduate students in Universiti Putra Malaysia. The Instruments used for data collection includes; Social Anxiety Questionnaire for Adults (SAQ-A30) and The Internet Addiction Test (IAT). Study revealed that Facebook was the most common social media patronized with 36 (36.70%) patronage, followed by Instagram with 33 (33.70%), WhatsApp 19 (19.40%) and finally Twitter with 10 (10.20%). Based on the respondents, most students use the social media for social communications and seeking information. The level of social anxiety among most undergraduate students of Human Ecology faculty in Universiti Putra Malaysia is high because approximately two third of the respondents possessed the higher score in social anxiety level. This implies that most undergraduate students of Universiti Putra Malaysia are up to date in information gathering and the use of social network has helped to facilitate social interaction among fellow students and friends thereby reducing the likelihood of students suffering social anxiety disorder.

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INTRODUCTION

The use of Internet is most prevalent among youths age 16-24¹. A study taken by industrial organizations in 1999 revealed that 44 percent of youths around the world who fall between the age range of 13 and 17 are internet users², and internet usage is not free of charge. A study by Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr³ revealed that 73 % of American teens who are wired utilize social networking sites (SNS) which was a significant rise from proceeding studies, about 55% of online teens used SNS's in November 2006, however as at February 2008 the percentage had increased to 65 %. Apart from teens young adults have similar tendencies to utilize SNS's, found that about 72% of youths aged 18-29 utilized SNS's, a percentage which is higher than 39% of youths above age 30⁴. They also found that Facebook is the most commonly utilized social network among young adults below 30 and adults above 30 with percentages of 71% and 73% respectively. Communication on the internet has been proved to reduce the risk of individuals criticizing others being rejected and facing disapproval which are common characteristics of face to face communication. Hence young people may experiment new communication channels, new identities, social roles and sexual roles in a safe context of computer screen⁵. Also Social network has the advantage of enhancing communication where proximity is a challenge.

Social anxiety is also known as socio phobia is a disorder in which people experience intense fear, anxiety, and self-consciousness that is usually excessive and disproportional in everyday social interactions with other people (The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV). This fear usually comes from the feeling that such persons will do or say something that would be embarrassing or humiliating, especially in social situations. According to a national comorbidity survey after depression and SAD is the third largest health care problem in the world, Individuals with this disorder are afraid of (and tend to avoid) the scrutiny of others. This condition can cause impairment in social and occupational areas of functioning because it is considered a personal enemy to the achievement and peace of mind of youths in our society.

Social anxiety disorder varies in disablement and severity from performance anxiety and shyness (a temperament) as individuals with social

¹ Odac, H., & Kalkan, M. (2010). Problematic Internet use, loneliness and dating anxiety among young adult university students. Computers & Education 55, 1091–1097.

² Gün, B. &. Bayraktar (2007). Incidence and correlates of Internet usage among adolescents in North Cyprus. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 191-197.

³ Lenhart, A., Purcell, K., Smith, A., & Zickuhr, K. (2010). Social media and mobile internet use among teens and young adults. Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Social-Media-and-Young-Adults.aspx

⁴ Lenhart, A., Purcell, K., Smith, A., & Zickuhr, K. (2010). Social media and mobile internet use among teens and young adults. Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Social-Media-and-Young-Adults.aspx

⁵ Gün, B. &. Bayraktar (2007). Incidence and correlates of Internet usage among adolescents in North Cyprus. Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 191-197.

anxiety disorder are seen to exhibit intense physical and emotional symptoms of heart racing, trembling, sweating, fear, and withdrawal from unfamiliar social settings, It has difficulty adapting to the social environment⁶. People who suffer (from SAD) often have few friends, fewer social networks, and are less likely to marry⁷. In some severe cases, they are likely to drop out of school, seek jobs that do not require social contact, or be unemployed. Some individuals also avoid using the restrooms when others are present, this is popularly known as "The shy bladder syndrome", some others avoid eating in restaurants because they cannot stand the sight of people watching them eat. In general social anxiety disorder is chronic and begins in childhood or during the early teenage years and tends to persist into adulthood if not treated.

The primary focus of this study is to examine the relationship between usage of Social network sites and the development of social anxiety among youths. Perhaps its greatest advantage is bridging the communication and geographical gap between people, it can be argued that the internet cuts people off from genuine social relationships. Kraut et al., argued that the positive and negative effect of social internet use reckons on how it influences the balance of both strong and weak network bonds that individuals keep, they stressed that relationships related to frequent contacts, intense feelings of affection and obligation are strong ties, on the other hand relationships characterized by superficial and easily broken bonds with less frequent contacts and narrow focus are weak ties⁸. And since the internet lessens the relevant physical proximity that people need, establishing and maintaining networks of strong social ties becomes a challenge for individuals.

Lots of studies have attempted to examine the Internet's usage among students, for example a study by Yung, Fadhilah, & Ishak⁹ examine the internet usage among Malaysian students and found that all students in the study are actively using the internet every day, also they found that nearly half of the students spent over 20 hours a week on the internet and of the top activities, emailing ranked top with (98%), information search 2nd with (88%) while online chatting ranked 3rd with (78%). In a similar study majority of samples indicated that they own their own computer or laptops and also have access to WIFI and subscribe to several internet services both in the university and elsewhere, 95%

⁶ Yusuf, M., Zuzana, M., & Witro, D. (2020). Literacy Education Urgency for Centennial Generation in Industrial Revolution 4.0. *Paedagogia: Jurnal Pendidikan, 9(2),* 1-14. https://doi.org/10.24239/pdg.Vol9.Iss2.61

⁷ American psychiatric association, A. (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders*, fourth edition DSM-IV (Washington DC: American psychiatric association). P. 224

⁸ Kraut, R., Patterson, M., Lundmark, V., Kiesler, S., Mukopadhyay, T., & Scherlis, W. (1998). Internet Paradox. American Psychologist, 53(9), 1017–1031. https://doi.org/10.1037//0003-066x.53.9.1017

⁹ Yung, C. S., Fadhilah, M. Y., & Ishak, W. H. W. (2013). Internet Usage among Undergraduate Student in Malaysia School of Technology Management School of Computing, (25–27 June), 224–227.

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of the respondents also claim they have never uploaded files on the internet however they are heavy information gatherers as 71% claim they use search engines to seek for information on the internet¹⁰.

One reason for the rise in young people use of Social Network Sites is because youths without much friends and who have a higher level of loneliness and social anxiety are more prone to establishing relationships with strangers on the internet. However too much of internet use can result into problematic internet use especially its non-functional use¹¹, stressed that problematic internet use occurs when a person is unable to manage his or her use of the internet hence is exposed to functional impairment and distress, they also argued that people who have problematic internet use are more likely to suffer higher grades of depressive symptoms. Studies have shown that the use of the internet for over five hours or more is considered problematic¹², however there is an exception for individuals whose profession require them to use the internet as most professions today does.

The internet is also likely to disintegrate individuals from their surroundings and this happening physically around them, Wellman, et.al argued that it is less likely that online communication would promote the growth of complex relationships or provide emotional support as well as tangible material assistance also when individuals are online they are less likely to pay attention to their immediate physical and social environment¹³. Also Bayraktar & Gün argued that the Internet could be a "poisoning" communication tool in which alcohol, cigarette, and music productions are sold to teenagers, extremely violent games are played, and adolescents are used as a trading substance¹⁴. Previous studies highlighted above has examined the effect of the internet (a major computer-mediated communication channel¹⁵) on various aspects of life's of individuals and youths generally, however, there is limited knowledge on the effect of the internet on the development and prevalence of social anxiety disorder among youths in

¹⁰ Muniandy, B. (2010). Academic Use of Internet among Undergraduate Students: A Preliminary Case Study in a Malaysian University. International Journal of Cyber Society Education, 3(2), 171–178.

¹¹ Shapira, N. A., Goldsmith, T. D., Keck, P. E., Khosla, U. M., & McElroy, S. L. (2000). Psychiatric features of individuals with problematic internet use. Journal of Affective Disorders, 57(1–3), 267–272. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0165-0327(99)00107-X

¹² Odac, H., & Kalkan, M. (2010). Problematic Internet use, loneliness and dating anxiety among young adult university students. Computers & Education 55, 1091–1097.

¹³ Wellman, B., Haase, A. Q., Witte, J., & Hampton, K. (2001). Does the Internet Increase, Decrease, or Supplement Social Capital? The Internet and Social Capital, 45(3), 436–455. https://doi.org/10.1177/00027640121957286

¹⁴ Gün, B. &. Bayraktar (2007). Incidence and correlates of Internet usage among adolescents in North Cyprus. Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 191-197.

¹⁵ Wellman, B., Haase, A. Q., Witte, J., & Hampton, K. (2001). Does the Internet Increase, Decrease, or Supplement Social Capital? The Internet and Social Capital, 45(3), 436–455. https://doi.org/10.1177/00027640121957286

Malaysia with specific reference to Universiti Putra Malaysia students, therefore, this project hopes to bridge such gaps.

Methods

The survey was carried out in Universiti Putra Malaysia. Universiti Putra Malaysia comprises of students that belong to 16 faculties and 9 institutes in total. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 random students to participate in the study. Responses are within the range of likert scale from (1) use social media between 2 and 3 time during the day but spent less than 10 minutes at a time (2) Use social media between 2 and 3 time during the day but spent between 10 and 30 minutes at a time, (3) use social media more than 3 time during the day but spent less than 10 minutes at a time and (4) use social media more than 3 time during the day but spent more than 30 min at a time. The highest possible score for the scale of Social network was 120 and the score range within 30 to 113. The social network reliability score for the respondents was group into 2 categories which were low (65 below) and high (66 above). The higher score indicates that more undergraduate students from faculty of Human Ecology rely on social networks as mean of communication vice – versa. The highest score for the social anxiety scale was 80 and the score range was within 0 to 80. For this particular study, the level of anxiety score for the respondents was categorized into two groups which were low (35 and below) and high (36 and above). The higher score indicates higher level of social anxiety while lower score represent low level of social anxiety.

The first section which is the demographic section of the questionnaire request that respondents provide background information such as gender, age, Nationality and preference of social network platform; while the second section consist of Social Anxiety Questionnaire for Adults designed by Caballo, Salazar, Irurtia, Arias and CISO-A Research Team. While the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) designed by Kimberly Young 1995 was used to measure social media usage among students. Data were collected from 150 students and about a hundred were returned valid. Afterward, the data was coded into the statistical package for social science SPSS version 22 and cleaned properly to ensure there were no missing values. Afterward, data were analyzed by descriptive and

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Age Distributions with Gender

Findings revealed that the minimum age of respondent is 19 years while the maximum age was 26 years. The median age of students that took part in the survey was 22 years with the mean of 22.3 (SD= 1.487). Results show that the highest respondents in this study were majorly students in their 6th, 2nd and 4th semesters with 40 (40.40%), 24 (24.24%) and 16 (16.16%) respectively. The result reveals, too, that the most common social media among undergraduate students of the Faculty of Human Ecology, Universiti Putra Malaysia is facebook. Facebook

was seen to be the most common social media patronized with 36 (36.70%) patronage, then followed by Instagram with 33 (33.70%), WhatsApp 19 (19.40%), and finally Twitter with 10 (10.20%).

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Why students like Social Media?

Findings reveal the reasons why the undergraduate students of faculty of Human Ecology, UPM like some social media. The four most commonly patronized social media network was used as variables. Based on the respondents, most students uses the social media for social communications and seeking information. This could be due series of assignments and research that is required for academic purposes. Also, the availability of free communication on these social media platforms made to be the favourite mode of communication among students.

Purpose of Using Social Media

The result reveals that the reasons why undergraduate students of the faculty of Human Ecology, UM use social media. The respondents' most popular reason for using social media is to seek information (38%). This reason could be attributed to the fact that all respondents were current students and it is their duty to carry out their assignment and search for information to enhance their academic knowledge. While leisure (15%) was the second most popular reason for using social media. After the hard day work, most students always decide to cool off by chatting with friends and family to make them rejuvenate before another day.

Social Networks

Responses are within the range of likert scale from (1) use social media between 2 and 3 time during the day but spent less than 10 minutes at a time (2) Use social media between 2 and 3 time during the day but spent between 10 and 30 minutes at a time, (3) use social media more than 3 time during the day but spent less than 10 minutes at a time and (4) use social media more than 3 time during the day but spent more than 30 min at a time. The highest possible score for the scale of Social network was 120 and the score range within 30 to 113. The social network reliability score for the respondents was group into 2 categories which were low (65 below) and high (66 above). The higher score indicate that more undergraduate students from faculty of Human Ecology rely on social networks as mean of communication vice – versa. Two third of the respondents (n=68, 68.68%) obtained high score in 66 above while only few respondents (n=31, 31.31%) had the low score range in 65 below. The minimum score of the respondents was 30 and the maximum score recorded was113. The mean value recorded was 70.85 with standard deviation of 17.08 in this study. It can be concluded base on this result that majority of undergraduate students in Faculty of Human Ecology rely on internet for communication.

Level of Social Anxiety

Respondent's level of social anxiety was measured by obtaining the faculty of Human Ecology undergraduates' total score in the Social Anxiety

Questionnaire for Adults. Based on the research findings, the majority of the faculty of Human Ecology, UPM students (n=60, 60.60%) obtained high scores while a few of the undergraduate students (n=39, 39.39%) achieved a low score in the level of social In this study, the higher level of social anxiety exhibited among the undergraduate students of faculty of Human Ecology in UPM might be due to lack of exposure to social interaction programs such as few programs like camping, speaking competitions, traveling, etc. Also, another major factor that could have contributed to these findings is cultural beliefs.

It is widely common in Asia that you don't associate with strangers. For example, starting conversion with someone you are just meeting for the first time. These beliefs are usually passed down from parents which eventually end up to parental influence. The reports of Rapee & Spence¹⁶; Taylor & Alden¹⁷, shows that some social disorder treats are been triggered by parents among youths behavior toward the child up breaking such as over-protection/ over control, lack of warmth or affection, rejection, insensitivity, criticism, concern with other people's opinion among others.

Also, two third of the respondents (n=68, 68.68%) obtained high score in 66 above while only few respondents (n=31, 31.31%) had the low score range in 65 below. The minimum score of the respondents was 30 and the maximum score recorded was 113. The mean value recorded was 70.85 with standard deviation of 17.08 in this study. It can be concluded base on this result that majority of undergraduate students in Faculty of Human Ecology rely on internet for communication.

In this study, the social network among undergraduate students of faculty of Human Ecology in UPM using internet can be attributed to readily availability of internet on the campus of UPM. Internet technology has become a way of life for everyone due to its low cost and numerous service providers. Internet have proven advantageous in everyday life includes but not limited to problem solving, instant feedback and networking, entertainment, business and critical thinking ¹⁸.

Table 1. Relationship between Social Networks and Social Anxiety Disorder

	Soci	Social Anxiety	
Variable	Correlation (r)	Sig. (2-tailed) (p)	
Social Network	0.289**	0.004	

p is significant at value ≤ 0.01 .

¹⁶ Sharifpoor, E., Khademi, M. J & Afsaneh, M. (2017). Relationship of Internet Addiction with Loneliness and Depression among High School Students. International Journal of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences. 7(4), 99-102

¹⁷ Wellman, B., Haase, A. Q., Witte, J., & Hampton, K. (2001). Does the Internet Increase, Decrease, or Supplement Social Capital? The Internet and Social Capital, 45(3), 436–455. https://doi.org/10.1177/00027640121957286

¹⁸ Yung, C. S., Fadhilah, M. Y., & Ishak, W. H. W. (2013). Internet Usage among Undergraduate Student in Malaysia School of Technology Management School of Computing, (25–27 June), 224–227.

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Also, the provision of internet to university campuses and encouragement of online learning contributed to reliability of students on internet for communication. The report of Adzharuddin (2013) state that the adoption of Learning Management System (LMS) by universities worldwide has been able to bridge the gap between lecturers and students. Most universities now provide email account for both lecturers and students to enhance communication via the web¹⁹.

Relationship between Social Networks and Social Anxiety

The correlation between Social Network (SNS) and Social Anxiety disorder was computed to determine the relationship between Internet communication and Social Anxiety disorder. The results show that there is significant relationship between social media usage and social anxiety disorder (p≤ 0.01). The positive correlation indicates low level of contribution of internet to social anxiety disorder among majority of undergraduate students in Faculty of Human Ecology, Universiti Putra Malaysia. The result in this present study was found to be supported by the research findings of Koo et al., (2015). They concluded in their research that social network sites such as Facebook, WeChat, Blackberry messenger, twitter etc have all contributed to the way people communicate with each other with minimal effort. This has resulted in people suffering from social anxiety disorder to overcome it. Similar findings were also described by Jacobsen & Forste²⁰ that social media network sites help to facilitate social interactions.

CONCLUSION

It is crystal clear that the findings of this study revealed that most of the respondents mostly utilize social media in their everyday life for one reason or the other and it was also discovered that level of social anxiety disorder is minimal among students who patronized social media networks. The summary of the research findings in this study can be explained based on the research objectives. Firstly, findings show that the majority of UPM undergraduate students in the Faculty of Human Ecology rely on the internet as a means of communication with friends and families. Also, the research also reviewed high level of social anxiety disorder among the undergraduate students and finally it was significantly indicated that student that patronizes or that often use the internet for communication or in any way are not likely to have online social anxiety disorder.

¹⁹ Yung, C. S., Fadhilah, M. Y., & Ishak, W. H. W. (2013). Internet Usage among Undergraduate Student in Malaysia School of Technology Management School of Computing, (25–27 June), 224–227.

²⁰ Skues, J., Williams, B., Oldmeadow, J., & Wise, L. (2016). The Effects of Boredom, Loneliness, and Distress Tolerance on Problem Internet Use Among University Students. Int J Ment Health Addiction, 167–180.

From the findings of this study some recommendations were made for future research. In this current research, it was only relationship between social network (SNS) and social anxiety among undergraduates in the faculty of Human Ecology, UPM due to the constraint of time and cost. Thus, future research is suggested to focus on increasing the representative sampling size and method such as inclusion of undergraduates from other faculty and possibly from other universities in Malaysia. This will result in more comprehensive information in other to have a wider population to generalize. Secondly, the target samples of this research focuses only on undergraduates. It is suggested that future study should involve people from different personal background and different age range to ensure characteristics of the whole transitional stage of human developmental phases between childhoods to adulthood which could explore different usage of social network by the public.

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