

## Exploring Ethical and Social Issues in Social Media Among University Students

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### ABSTRACT

Social media (SM) is a rapidly evolving set of technologies primarily encompassing a group of social networking sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter, that enable efficient, accessible global communication within a social network. For many people, SM is reshaping their social world, rewriting the rules of social engagement and sociability. The use of SM has grown drastically in the past decade. Referring to data released by the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), more than half of the population are internet users, and more than half of the population of internet users visit social networking platforms as their online activities. The data also showed that most internet users are between the ages of 20 to 40. Despite the drastic changes in SM uses, many ethical and social issues have arisen and have not been given attention. Among university students, some critical issues resulting from the existence of SM are the spread of fake news, online harassment, privacy issues, and cyberbullying. Therefore, this research aims to explore the ethical and social issues in SM among university students in Malaysia. The research applied a qualitative research methodology whereby purposive sampling was used to seek respondents with some knowledge or expertise relevant to the study. The results revealed that university students' ethical and social issues are internet addiction, fake news, digital privacy, plagiarism, and cyberbullying. The Ministry of Higher Education can focus on the ethical and social issues prevalent among university students in Malaysia so that they can overcome these issues and thus find the best solution to prevent these issues from happening among the students. These ethical and social issues can, to some extent, threaten their status as students, which can affect the quality of their studies.

**Keywords:** Ethical Issues; Social Issues; Social Media; Students; University

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### INTRODUCTION

New advancements in information technology (IT) have provided unique scientific advantages to humanity. However, it must be remembered that entrance into the latest scientific and technical fields still has ethical challenges and limitations. Among critical and recent subjects in information and communication technology (ICT) are ethical and social issues such as internet addiction, fake news, digital privacy, plagiarism, and cyberbullying (Kilis et al., 2018; Suson & Roberto, 2019). Currently, the Internet has a user population of more than five billion globally, and Malaysia, with a population of more than 33 million, ranks as the 20th largest Internet user in Asia out of 35 countries (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2020). The statistics clearly show that the number of internet users in Malaysia has been rising from 2020 (26 million) to 33 million in 2022.

In the rapidly changing technological environment in which we live, ethical and social issues have increasingly been raised, demanding attention and efforts toward resolution. Referring to data released by the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), as many as 88.7% of the population were projected to

be internet users in 2020 compared to 2018, when the figure was 84.7%. Although the data does not reflect an exceedingly high number of users, it proves the increase in internet usage in Malaysia (MCMC, 2020).

Social media platforms are easily reached via the internet. According to the official portal of the Department of Statistics, Malaysia (2021), the most popular activity by individual internet users in Malaysia was participating in social networks at 99%, followed by other online activities. In data from the MCMC (2020), more than half of the social media population is between the ages of 18 to 25 years old. Data from MCMC clearly show that most undergraduate students whose ages range from 18 to 25 years old are likely exposed to the negative influences of social media. Previous studies have reported that social media has a negative influence on students' concentration i.e. in learning (Al-Rahmi et al., 2021).

Instantly getting up-to-date information locally and globally has made social media the primary news source (Norasikin et al., 2021). Yet, most of us tend to get the latest information without checking the source. As a result, misinformation tends to go viral mainly using SM platforms. According to the MCMC (2020), social media is one of the most prominent mediums for spreading fake news. More than 70% of the Gen-Z population in Malaysia use social media to get information. The information provided by MCMC concludes that the spread of false news can occur among the younger generation or, more worryingly, among university students. Fake news also has a stronger effect on consumers than mainstream news and can be difficult for some consumers, including college students, to identify (Herrero-Diz et al., 2019; Lazer et al., 2020; Leeder, 2019; Wright et al., 2021).

Academic misconduct is a significant issue in higher education across the globe and needs massive attention (Awasthi et al., 2022). According to Hussein et al. (2021), with the increased use of digital technologies in education, the trend of academic misconduct, mainly plagiarism, is mounting, especially in higher learning institutions. Among the reasons for the increased student involvement in academic dishonesty are poor educational standards, time constraints, laziness, peer pressure, and fear of failure. Academic misconduct can affect study quality, and these issues will give an initial impression of a student's attitude.

Personal data and its processes are regulated, and personal data protection has become a fundamental right, either from a right-to-privacy perspective or as a separately formulated right to the protection of personal data (Dimin et al., 2021). However, for social media users, many are unaware that their privacy is more vulnerable (Barret & Lynch, 2020). According to Wang et al. (2021), privacy needs exceed the protection of personal information as online social media expands to more domains of private life. Some issues triggered by digital privacy leaks are spying or scamming through data generated from social media accounts and information mishandling. Furthermore, some sites often use cookies and keep your personal information. In addition, social media users need to be more aware of updating personal information online or on social media as the information will expose users to online hazards.

Cyberbullying is usually any class of bullying that occurs through digital devices and the internet, where the community can see, remark, and share. Cyberbullying is a new type of bullying activity due to advancements in digital technology; it is different compared to traditional bullying (Choi et al., 2019). In Malaysia, issues of cyberbullying have shown a worsening trend; almost 70% of Malaysians are using social media as their platform for bullying others, and cyberbullies are mainly teenagers and adolescents (Tarzilah, Lazim & Ismail, 2022). As cyberbullying can psychologically impact a student, these issues need to be focused on and rigorous studies need to be done to solve the problem.

This paper is organized as follows. The first part of this paper illustrates the introduction and an overview of the paper; the section literature review discusses and argues in more detail the prior, relevant, past, and most current research related to this study and the importance of the study. The second part of this paper is its methodology, which discusses the method applied in achieving the study's objective and focuses on the method used in the research to achieve the significant objectives of the study. The next section is the result and discussion. The final part is the conclusion of the study.

## **BACKGROUND OF STUDY**

The usage of the internet has been increasing exponentially over the last decade and has become part of everyday life, delivering global connectivity, access to information, and entertainment. However, the internet's vast usage has contributed to the neglect of other critical aspects of existence, such as sleep, work, and academic achievement (Rathakrishnan et al., 2021). A rapid upgrade of facilities such as fast internet speed facilitates all transactions that take place online. For example, online banking, buying goods online and connecting. However, some issues

have arisen among internet users. Among them is the spread of fake news, online bullying, internet addiction, pornography addiction, and plagiarism. What is more worrying is that these issues are happening to university students. Unrestricted student freedom in their online activities is one of the main reasons they are involved in ethical and social issues in IT.

## **Ethical and Social Issues in Social Media**

### **Data Privacy**

The growth of social networking sites (SNSs) has challenged the management of personal information and the notion of privacy (Warner & Wang, 2019). Personal data that were collected from university students, shared and stored online, could be used for different purposes and by other parties. It was expected that privacy attitudes would vary depending on who was accessing people's data. Privacy is inherently linked to a question of trust – those who trust a given institution are more likely to be less bothered by potential privacy intrusions towards university students' data (Cayford et al., 2019). With the rise of SNSs that encourage users to create personal profiles and networks with friends and strangers, self-disclosure appears to be necessary for forming and maintaining connections. Updating profile information, publishing status updates, uploading pictures and videos, and commenting on others' postings, to mention a few, are all activities that disclose elements of one's identity (Tsay et al., 2018).

### **Internet Addiction**

Access to the internet via smartphones, tablets, and laptop computers has made it possible for anyone to enjoy many work and leisure activities regardless of time and physical location; for example, the availability of internet facilities provided by a university facilitates the freedom of students in accessing the internet. They can access the internet and engage in any online activities. According to Kim et al. (2016), misuse of the internet can be categorized into online socializing, online gambling, sex, or pornography material, which can lead to unhealthy behavior. The concept of internet addiction is generally characterized as an impulse disorder by which an individual experiences intense preoccupation with using the internet, difficulty managing time on the internet, becoming irritated if disturbed while online, and decreased social interaction in the real world (Ryding & Kaye, 2018). The potential of the internet to facilitate help-seeking and address mental health issues in post-secondary education has become increasingly evident (Ebert et al., 2017). One of the internet misuses is access to sex or pornographic materials. A study of seven colleges in Penang, Malaysia, showed a high prevalence of pornography exposure among Malaysian college students, especially involving males (Aliffitri et al., 2021).

### **Cyberbullying**

In the context of university students, cyberbullying is one of the issues that need to be considered further for research. However, research does suggest that high-status/high-profile university students in the United States (for example, athletes, and student government officers) are often targeted by cyberbullies (Myers & Cowie, 2019). Furthermore, Faucher, Jackson, and Cassidy (2014) found that sex cyberbullying was more common at a university than at school. On top of that, cases such as cyberbullying are a new form of bullying through internet technologies that have been spreading worldwide (Lai et al., 2018). In Malaysia, issues of cyberbullying have shown a worsening trend. Almost 70% of Malaysians are using social media as a platform for bullying others and the cyberbullies are mainly teenagers and adolescents (IPSOS, 2018). However, in terms of variability in the reported prevalence of cyberbullying, the prevalence rates suggest that for some adolescents experiencing cyberbullying is a regular occurrence (Tazilah et al., 2022).

### **Fake News**

New paradigms in the revolution of technology change how people obtain news today. People likely look for a summarized version of news over social media, where shortened versions of the full news can be gathered quickly from social media platforms. The drastic changes in how people obtain news are due to easy access to news that are readily available over social media platforms like TikTok, Twitter, and Facebook. Taking advantage of this inevitable dependency, people with malicious intent use this platform to spread fake news. According to a survey conducted by CIGI-IPSOS and Internet Society (2019), Facebook and Twitter are the top two platforms for spreading fake news. As mentioned by the MCMC (2020), more than half of the population who used social media is between the ages of 20 to 30 years old. This concludes that undergraduate students who are in this age range could be highly exposed to the spread of fake news.

In summary, the literature review highlighted a few ethical and social issues in social media that occur among university students in Malaysia. This research acknowledges the ethical and social issues in social media that occur among university students based on the literature study. However, further argument on the ethical and social issues in social media among university students in Malaysia needs more attention. Therefore, the following

section will elaborate on some of the ethical and social issues in social media among university students in Malaysia and the current identified problem that needs further investigation.

This research presents the following questions: (a) What are the ethical and social issues related to social media among university students in Malaysia? (b) How can ethical and social issues in social media affect university student activity in Malaysia? These questions were elicited using a literature review of past studies and the interview session conducted with university students.

## METHOD

### Research Site

Creswell and John (2019) highlighted five approaches when conducting qualitative research. The five approaches are narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. This research applied a narrative research approach. A narrative research approach is a form of qualitative research in which the interview session or the story illustrates the study's raw data (Yin, 2016). According to Michelle (2015), the narrative approach involves analysis directed at the description of human experience or inquiry that produces data in narrative forms. The analysis examples yield narrative data, including interviews that illustrate the stories of humans.

### Sampling

Sampling is the process of obtaining information about an entire population by examining only a portion of it (Creswell, 2015). This research employed purposive sampling. Purposive sampling seeks to find subjects who have some specific knowledge or expertise relevant to the topic. In other words, they are rich in the information needed for this study.

According to data from the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC, 2020) than 70% of internet and social media users are between 20 to 30 years old. Thus, this study aims to discover the ethical and social issues on social media that occur among university students in Malaysia and the effect of these ethical and social issues on these students. The primary data gathering method used is open-ended interview questions with five undergraduate students at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), whose ages ranged from 20 to 30 years old, all of whom are social media users.

The respondents targeted for this research are UTM undergraduate students who are social media users. The data collection for the interview session took place from April 2022 to June 2022 through an online meeting. Therefore, the results of this study are based on five interviewees who were interviewed throughout the interview session. The interview questions consisted primarily of open-ended questions. A total of five respondents participated in the study. As mentioned by Robert Yin (2016), the sample size for the qualitative research method is not straightforward, as "there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry". According to Creswell (2015), the sample size for the qualitative research method is unclear, and it depends on the answers given by the participants, the theoretical framework, the type of data collected, resources, and time. A minimum sample size is determined, and the need for an increase in the sample size is necessary to reach redundancy of the data. Table 1.1 gives an overview of the demographic profiles of the participants or interviewees. Based on the interview session, three of the interviewees were female and two were male.

**Table 1.1: Demographic Profiles of the Participants**

No	Nickname/ Gender	Degree/ Year of Study	No. of Interviews/ Total Time
1	Raihan (Female)	Engineering/ 2nd	1 (45 mins)
2	Rabbani (Male)	Engineering/ 2nd	1 (35 mins)
3	Siti (Female)	Engineering/ 2nd	1 (37 mins)
4	Maryam (Female)	Engineering/ 2nd	1 (40 mins)
5	Aneeq (Male)	Engineering/ 2nd	1 (46 mins)

## DATA COLLECTION

This research used an open-ended and in-depth interview in collecting data. A one-to-one interview or in-depth interview is a direct conversation with the participants. The method is able to gain a clear understanding of the opinions of participants about a given topic. In-depth interviews give an advantage in research in which direct interaction between interviewer and interviewee can lead to open-ended answers from the participants.

All participants must answer six open-ended interview questions which can lead to this research understanding more about participants' perceptions and experiences of the ethical and social issues on social media that occur among university students. The interview questions were created to achieve the goal of the interview session. The procedure for the data collection process includes:

- Obtaining permission to carry out the research through the UTM Razak faculty.
- E-mailing the participant consent forms.
- Scheduling the interview session.
- Organizing interviews.
- Transcribing the interview.
- Analyzing the information gathered and making a final discussion

Throughout the interview session, the conversation between the interviewer and interviewee was recorded using an audio recorder on a mobile phone. The main purpose of audio recording is to record the details of the participant's answers in a detailed and sensitive manner.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis was applied in this research, which involved six phases (Yin, 2016): i) familiarizing the data set from both participants and interviewer, ii) generating systematic codes by identifying the relevant data within the data set, iii) tagging the data with specific phrases or words, iv) processing the pattern formation and v) identification of the first version of theme development. Theme development involves examining codes and combining, clustering, or collapsing the codes together into more meaningful patterns. Finally, vi) generating and reviewing the top critical points per theme, in addition to the key issues related to the research. The thematic analysis integrates a widely used application software such as Microsoft Word that is suitable for organizing, coding, and classifying data.

The transcribed interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Data analysis was completed with the help of Microsoft Word. The unit analysis was an individual interview document. In the first step, the interview comments were transcribed part by part according to the recording. Second, the interview documents were re-read several times so the comments could be familiarized with the research objective. Next, the data were organized and grouped based on the keywords in the transcribed interview.

## Ethical Consideration

The interviewing process supported the ethics approval from UTM. Prior to the start of the process of interviewing, the participants were sent the full consent form for the interview, which included a description of the study, what their participation involved, and what would happen to their data, and they did not have to answer any question if they wished so along with assurances of their anonymity, and the confidentiality of their personal information. The participants were also sent a consent form to sign, which sought their consent to participate in the interview, their right to withdraw at any time during an interview, their permission for the researchers to audio record the interview session, and information on whom to contact if they had any complaints about the ethical conduct of the interview. The signed consent form was collected from participants before the interview began.

Thematic analysis was applied to identify the theme related to the ethical and social issues on social media. The researcher needed to observe the interview to ensure the authenticity of the findings. The researcher needed to fulfill four trustworthiness criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Trustworthiness is the attitude of the researcher throughout the research process. To ensure the study followed the trustworthiness criteria, the interview session was recorded and the audiotape was repeatedly played and listened to before transcribing the data. The whole conversation throughout the interview session was transcribed authentically and verbatim without changing any conversation. The concern of trustworthiness is to demonstrate the authenticity of the study. The whole concern of the recording session was asked before the recording started.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The main research question is designated to answer specific research questions as illustrated in Table 1.2.

**Table 1.2: Research Questions and Interview Questions**

Research Question	Interview Question
RQ1: What are the ethical and social issues related to social media among university students in Malaysia?	<p><i>Q2. In your opinion, how can the privacy of internet users relate to or expose the users to cyberbullying?</i></p> <p><i>Q3. Easy access to the internet can ease internet users to use the internet everywhere. How will easy access to the internet affect and create a sense of addiction to the internet?</i></p> <p><i>Q4. The accuracy of the news dramatically impacts the quality of the news. How can the accuracy of the news contribute to fake news?</i></p> <p><i>Q5. Plagiarism is one of the crucial issues in the context of university students. What is the main reason for the students to be involved with plagiarism activity, and whether the works of others can be claimed as the property of the writer?</i></p>
RQ2: How ethical and social issues in social media can affect university student activity in Malaysia?	<i>Q1. How do ethical and social issues affect you as a student?</i>

**Result for Research Question 1**

Table 1.3 below illustrates how the data is organized and grouped on the “ethical and social issues in social media,” based on the keywords in the text (i.e process of thematic analysis). The answers to the research questions comprise two parts. The first research questions were answered based on the ethical and social issues related to social media that occurred among university students in Malaysia. The second research question answered the impact of ethical and social issues related to social media among university students in Malaysia.

**Table 1.3: Process of Thematic Analysis**

Words Transcribed	Coding of Theme	Final Theme/ Ethical and Social Issues on Social Media
<p><i>“I once bought things online. I’m not mistaken, I bought a mobile phone ..... but there was no “response” from the store and I tried to call also could not get any answer as I was “blocked” from making calls to the number.” (Raihan)</i></p> <p><i>“I like to buy “second-hand” items, one day I saw on IG that there is an account selling “second-hand” shoes and claimed that all the items he sells are original. I sent a Direct Message (DM) to the seller to ask, but he didn’t want to answer. I asked for a full picture but he didn’t want to give it, he said to tell me to make the payment first before giving the picture. But I made a mistake and just bought it without checking it, hmmm no luck. The goods didn’t arrive, I couldn’t get anything hahahahaha” (Aneeq)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No response from the seller</li> <li>• Minimal conversation</li> <li>• Minimal information about the product</li> <li>• No proof of product</li> </ul>	Online Scam
<p><i>I think people on “social media” are busy taking care of people’s think like they have no other work.....(Maryam)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hate Speech</li> <li>• Being Judged</li> <li>• Body Shaming</li> </ul>	Cyberbullying

<p><i>"People now like to give "hate comments" near other people's posts, never thinking about other people's feelings hmmmmmm."</i> (Aneeq)</p> <p><i>"Most often I notice that many social media users don't care about IG, TikTok, or Facebook, they all love to make hate comments about people they don't know, to the point where they want to judge everything. The worst thing is body shaming people we don't know..."</i> (Siti).</p> <p><i>"I was once ridiculed on social media, but it didn't affect my emotions. I was just angry ....."</i> (Rabbani)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send an Appropriate Message</li> </ul>	
<p><i>"covid time much fake news spread ....."</i> (Maryam)</p> <p><i>when covid 19 I received a lot of fake news that I receive from social media, everyone wanted to share the news but didn't check the sincerity of the news first ....."</i> (Rabbani)</p> <p><i>"There are a lot of facts on Facebook that make me laugh when I read them, like us people who are used to reading, sometimes there is some kind of logic. That's what I sometimes share with my friends hahahahaha. But I don't share it with other people, just close friends, make gossip between us hahahahahaha"</i> (Siti)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meticulous source</li> <li>• Unknown source</li> <li>• Unformal message</li> </ul>	<p>Fake News</p>
<p><i>"I think if we always expose our daily activities, the book can expose us to cybercrime ....."</i> (Siti)</p> <p><i>"I've been bothered by social media, I don't know who messaged me, said weird things ....."</i> (Raihan)</p> <p><i>"I always get spam messages with jackpot, I win prizes of all kinds, I don't know how to get my number ....."</i> (Aneeq)</p> <p><i>"Because if the social media account is not private everyone can see the post and because he caused them to be bullied ....."</i> (Siti)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harassment</li> <li>• Voice phishing</li> <li>• Anonymous message</li> </ul>	<p>Internet Privacy</p>
<p><i>"Sometimes I play social media, consciously or unconsciously, I've been facing the phone for two hours ....." that's just one social media hahahahahaha ....."</i> (Raihan)</p> <p><i>"It's usually at night if I don't play games on the phone, I have to look at social media for a long time, until I go to bed late....., but now before I go to bed I throw my phone far away so that I can go to sleep early.."</i> (Rabbani)</p> <p><i>"if I start playing the game, until late at night sometimes hahahahaha"</i> (Aneeq)</p> <p><i>"like me, it's hard to put my phone down before I go to sleep, I just scroll through IG or TikTok until I fall asleep, look at that sometimes I can't sleep until late at night...hmmmmmmmm"</i> (Maryam)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excessive time spent on social media</li> <li>• Having problems to stop playing with the phone</li> </ul>	<p>Internet Addiction</p>

<p>“do homework just a little, but play on the phone a lot.....” (Siti)</p>		
<p>“But when we always play social media, we see beautiful people, we are a little cool, compare ourselves with other people, that's my opinion .....” (Siti)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of being judged</li> <li>• Explicit content</li> <li>• Fear of being compared</li> <li>• Mental judgment</li> </ul>	<p>Internet Anxiety</p>
<p>“I'm afraid sometimes the content on social media doesn't seem suitable for public viewing .....” (Aneeq) Other people's writings or reprimands can also hurt other people's hearts because everyone is free to write anything ..... (Raihan)</p>		

Based on the themes resulting from the interviewees’ transcribed video and voice recordings, and the assistance of Microsoft Word as a tool to help gather the data, the findings indicated that university students are involved with ethical and social issues on social media. The opinions give a clear picture of the issues that they face. Among the issues that can be concluded are online scams, internet privacy, plagiarism, copyright, cyberbullying, fake news, internet anxiety, and internet addiction. As these issues that have been defined are related to the literature review, the best solutions need to be considered to reduce these recurring issues for university students because these issues also can affect their quality of life as a student.

**Internet Addiction**

Addictive behavior is a form of deviant behavior characterized by a constant desire for a pleasant subjective emotional state, which is expressed in an active change in their mental state (Arakelyan, 2014; Arestova, Babanin & Voiskounsky, 2000; Bubnova & Tereshchenko, 2016; Neverkovich, 2018). Therefore, internet addiction can drive various psychological problems, which only worsen the existing social issues in the young generation and lead to a lack of social experience. The influence of the internet is undeniable, particularly in the lives of young people. It is not surprising that time spent online is increasing. The MCMC found that 76.1% of internet users are youths between the ages of 20 and 49. This data proves that people aged 20 to 40 are more likely to use the internet. This can make them more vulnerable to internet addiction. In addition, various mental health comorbidities have also been reported among individuals with internet addiction such as insomnia, depression, low self-esteem, and anxiety disorders (Lokesh et al., 2022).

**Fake News**

Social media offers a robust platform with the potential to reach more people worldwide due to its easy access and fast dissemination. However, fake news on social media platforms can harm society. Misinformation is more quickly disseminated through social media when there is high uncertainty and high demand for public information about issues such as crises (Spence et al., 2016; Jang et al., 2018) and health concerns.

**Internet Privacy**

According to Kokolakis (2017), privacy is a primary concern for citizens in the digital age. On the one hand, individuals reveal personal information for relatively small rewards, often to draw the attention of peers in an online social network. On the other hand, internet users’ attitudes show that users are highly concerned about their privacy and about the collection and use of their personal information (e.g., TRUSTe, 2014, Pew Research Center, 2014).

**Cyberbullying**

Evidence from UNICEF (2019) has shown that 3 out of 10 young Malaysians have been the victims of cyberbullying. Malaysia ranked sixth among 28 countries in a survey on cyberbullying worldwide (Tech Review Site Comparitech, 2020). When they reduced the scope to Asian countries, Malaysia ranked number two while India took first place on the list of cyberbullying victims. According to statistics from Cybersecurity Malaysia 2020, cyberbullying is among the top five cyber-related threats to the Malaysian people. Cyberbullying is a serious problem among Malaysian adolescents. Statistics obtained from Cyber-Security Malaysia’s first quarter report of 2017 showed that a total of 1524 (65% of 2333) cases of cyberbullying have been reported and recorded among university and high school students in the last six years; this does not include the various unreported cases because of shame and ridicule that victims are most likely to face if they reported the attacks. In one of the worst cases, a 20-year-old student attempted suicide in May 2020 because a video of her with a Nepali went viral on social media platforms and she became a victim of cyberbullying with hateful comments and criticisms against her and her family (The Star, 2020). All this evidence demonstrates that cyberbullying is a serious issue in Malaysia.



### Online Scam

Social media has become important in everybody's life. It is also a platform to explore the world with just a single click from a phone and computer. Many companies now use social media as a platform to promote and sell their products and services to consumers. Consumers also accept and like to purchase products and services through social media especially the youth because they access social media platforms regularly and this access is easy for them. As reported in The Star (2020), the Royal Malaysian Police received 672 reports of fake investment scams, with losses estimated to be over RM90 million from January to July 2020. The Securities Commission Malaysia announced that they had received 370 queries and complaints of illegal investment scams as of September 2020 compared with 317 for the whole of 2019 with a reported loss of RM914 million. This problem is expected to continue due to the rapid and large-scale use of multimedia and the internet (Tessuto et al., 2020; Feng et al., 2019).

### Result for Research Question 2

This phase of transcribing the interview session aims to answer the second research question on how ethical and social issues in social media affect university student activity in their life as a student. The answers below were given by the participants who answered the second research question:

*"sometimes I play social media, consciously or unconsciously, I've been facing the phone for two hours ..... that's just one social media hahahahahahah ....."* (Raihan)

*"It's usually at night if I don't play games on the phone, I have to look at social media for a long time, until I go to bed late....., but now before I go to bed I throw my phone far away so that I can go to sleep early.."* (Rabbani)

*"if I start playing the game, until late at night sometimes hahahahaha"* (Aneeq)

*"like me, it's hard to put my phone down before I go to sleep, I just scroll through IG or TikTok until I fall asleep, it depends.... sometimes I can't sleep until late at night hmmmmmmmm"* (Maryam)

*"I do homework just a little, but play on the phone a lot....."* (Siti)

The findings indicated that social media addiction has different effects on an individual. Moreover, the usage of social networking platforms has been found to influence the mental health of some users in terms of depression, eating disorders, loneliness, and low self-esteem (Bakry et al., 2022). Some studies stated that social media has some negative effects on university students (Phu & Gow, 2019; Kim et al., 2020; Ayildiz et al., 2022). However, if social media use increases, it is associated with negative consequences such as decreased productivity, unhealthy social relationships, and reduced life satisfaction (Sun & Zhang, 2020). Excessive use of the internet has affected the performance of undergraduate students. The students would spend more time on their social media platforms rather than focus on their studies. Nevertheless, despite social media having a negative effect on its users, social media still has a positive impact if the platform is used correctly.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main objective of the study is to explore the ethical and social issues in social media. The data conclude that ethical and social issues in social media exist among university students. As suggested, future studies need to develop appropriate solutions to prevent ethical and social problems among social media users, especially university students. The generalizability of these results is subject to certain limitations. For instance, the research only focused on ethical and social issues on social media that occur among university students in Malaysia, specifically students from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM).

The study's findings provide a detailed picture of ethical and social issues on social media that occur among university students. The results reveal that ethical and social issues on social media that occur among university students in Malaysia are online scams, internet privacy, plagiarism/copyright, cyberbullying, fake news, internet anxiety, internet addiction, and game addiction. This research could help higher education institutions recognize the main issues among university students that might affect the study of the students, understand the main issues that need to be highlighted and find a solution to the problems. In the future, further research for understanding the ethical and social issues on social media that occur among university students in other public and private universities in Malaysia needs to be done. Therefore, a comprehensive study on this topic could get more attention for the benefit of educational institutions.

## TRANSPARENCY STATEMENT

The lead author affirms that this manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study being reported; that no important aspects of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned (and, if relevant, registered) have been explained.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All the authors of this paper, hereby declare that they have no conflict of interest in this study.

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