Exploring Social Media Addiction among Malaysian University Students

Nurul Fatin Najihah Zulkifli
Muhammad Zaiamri Zainal Abidin*

Universiti Malaya, Malaysia

Corresponding email: zaiamrizainal@um.edu.my*

Abstract

Social media platforms have become integral to the lives of university students in Malaysia, presenting both benefits and risks. The pervasive use of social media has revolutionized communication and information-sharing among university students in Malaysia. However, excessive engagement with social media platforms can lead to addictive behaviours, negatively impacting students' academic performance, mental health, and social relationships. This qualitative research article aims to explore the phenomenon of social media addiction among university students in Malaysia, examining the underlying factors contributing to addictive behaviours. Through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, this study identifies three key themes related to social media addiction and provides insights into the experiences, perceptions, and coping mechanisms employed by university students which include the relationship between social media and hedonic satisfaction, the relationship between social media and functional satisfaction, and the relationship between social media and social satisfaction. The findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge on social media addiction and inform interventions to promote healthy social media use among this population.

Keywords: *Social Media, Social Media Addiction, University Students, Uses and Gratification Theory, Excessive Engagement.*

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Ketagihan Media Sosial dalam kalangan Pelajar Universiti di Malaysia: Suatu Kajian Penerokaan

Abstrak

Platform media sosial telah menjadi bahagian yang penting dalam kehidupan para pelajar universiti di Malaysia; ianya memberi manfaat atau risiko kepada mereka. Penggunaan media sosial yang meluas telah merevolusikan komunikasi dan perkongsian maklumat dalam kalangan pelajar universiti di Malaysia. Walau bagaimanapun, penglibatan yang berlebihan dengan platform media sosial boleh mengakibatkan tingkah laku ketagihan, memberi kesan negatif terhadap prestasi akademik, menjejaskan kesihatan mental dan mengganggu perhubungan sosial pelajar. Makalah kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk meneroka fenomena ketagihan media sosial dalam kalangan pelajar universiti di Malaysia, dengan menumpukan kepada faktor asas yang menyumbang kepada tingkah laku ketagihan. Melalui temu bual mendalam dan analisis tematik, kajian ini mengenal pasti tiga tema utama yang berkaitan dengan ketagihan media sosial dan cuba menyalurkan pandangan tentang pengalaman, persepsi, dan mekanisme daya tindak yang digunakan oleh para pelajar universiti. Ianya mencakupi perhubungan antara media sosial dan kepuasan hedonik, perhubungan antara media sosial dan kepuasan fungsi, dan perhubungan antara media sosial dan kepuasan sosial. Penemuan ini menyumbang kepada induk pengetahuan sedia ada mengenai ketagihan media sosial dan mencadangkan intervensi bagi menggalakkan penggunaan media sosial yang sihat dalam kalangan mahasiswa.

Kata kunci: *Media Sosial, Ketagihan Media Sosial, Pelajar Universiti, Teori Penggunaan dan Pemuasan, Keterlibatan melampau.*

Introduction

The advent and widespread adoption of social media platforms have revolutionized the way people connect, communicate, and consume information globally. University students, in particular, have embraced social media as an integral part of their daily lives, providing opportunities for networking, sharing experiences, and accessing academic resources. However, the excessive and uncontrolled use of social media among university students has raised concerns about the emergence of addictive behaviors and the potential impact on their academic performance and overall well-being (Hou et al., 2019).

From a global perspective, studies have consistently highlighted the prevalence and consequences of social media addiction among university students. Research conducted by Kuss and Griffiths (2017) revealed that a significant proportion of university students displayed addictive behaviors towards social media platforms. Factors such as excessive time spent on social media, the need for social interaction, and fear of missing out (FOMO) were identified as contributors to addictive tendencies. These findings underscore the need for interventions and support systems to address social media addiction among university students worldwide.

In the Malaysian context, social media addiction among university students has become a pressing issue. Malaysia is a country with high internet penetration rates and a tech-savvy youth population (Sabri, F., & Rahimi, M. K. A. B., 2022). Social media usage among Malaysian university students is widespread and continues to grow. According to a report by We Are Social and Hootsuite, as of January 2021, Malaysia had a social media penetration rate of 83%, indicating that a significant portion of the population, including university students, are active users of social media platforms. A survey conducted by Nielsen in 2019 revealed that 99% of Malaysian students aged between 15 and 24 years old were active social media users.

Platforms such as *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *WhatsApp*, *Twitter*, and *YouTube* are among the most popular social media platforms in Malaysia (MCMC, 2022). These platforms provide avenues for communication, information sharing, and entertainment, catering to the needs and preferences of university students. According to the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), the top three applications that Malaysians have always used are *Facebook* (91.7%), *YouTube* (80.6%), and *Instagram* (63.1%). In addition, the *TikTok* application also recorded a high user rate among teenagers in Malaysia, with a total of 17 million. With the increasing availability of affordable smartphones and easy access to social media platforms, Malaysian university students are more susceptible to social media addiction.

Social media addiction is a form of internet addiction in which people have a strong need to use social media (Griffiths, 2000; Starcevic, 2013, Hou et al., 2019). Malaysians aged 16 to 34 watch *YouTube* videos for an average of 80 minutes, which is double the global average (Moghavvemi et al., 2017). Teenagers and young adults have embraced social networking sites as a means of connecting with their friends all over the world, sharing knowledge, reinventing themselves, and posting social updates. These findings reveal that the young generation's usage of social media apps has expanded, and this has created concern about the use of social media, particularly among students. Students' academic success is related to their grades.

Social media addiction, also known as problematic social media use or social media dependency, is a condition in which people have an obsessive and excessive desire to engage with social media platforms, which often has negative consequences for their daily lives, well-being, and overall functioning. It is characterized by a loss of control over social media use, preoccupation with social media activities, and an inability to reduce or stop using social media despite negative consequences.

Social media addiction is similar to other types of behavioral addictions, such as gambling or internet addiction, and is associated with several key characteristics. Tolerance (the need to spend more time on social media to achieve the desired effect), withdrawal symptoms (distress or irritability when unable to access social media), unsuccessful attempts to cut back or control social media use, and interference with various aspects of life, including academic performance, work productivity, relationships, and mental well-being, are among these characteristics. According to research, social media addiction can have a negative impact on people's mental health, including increased anxiety, depression, loneliness, low self-esteem, and poor sleep quality (Andreassen et al., 2016; Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). It can also result in decreased academic performance and reduced face-to-face social interaction.

While global research has shed light on the prevalence and consequences of social media addiction among university students, there is a need for localized studies that consider cultural, societal, and contextual factors specific to Malaysia. Addressing social media addiction among university students in Malaysia requires a comprehensive understanding of its underlying factors and consequences. This research article aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by examining social media addiction among university students from Malaysian perspectives.

The objectives of this study to explore the factors that lead to addiction to social media among university students in Malaysia. Through a qualitative research approach, this study will employ in-depth interviews and thematic analysis to gather rich and nuanced data on the experiences, perceptions, and coping mechanisms of university students struggling with social media addiction.

The findings of this research will provide valuable insights into the prevalence, factors, and consequences of social media addiction among university students in the Malaysian context. The study aims to inform interventions, support systems, and educational programs tailored to

address social media addiction among university students, promoting responsible and healthy social media use. Ultimately, by addressing the issue of social media addiction, universities and stakeholders can foster a positive and conducive academic environment that nurtures the holistic development and well-being of their student.

Literature Review

Social media addiction among university students has been widely explored in the literature, highlighting its prevalence and potential negative consequences. Several studies have examined the prevalence of social media addiction among university students. A study conducted by Kuss and Griffiths (2017) found that a significant proportion of university students displayed addictive behaviors towards social media platforms. Similarly, a study by Eldeleklioğlu and Uzun (2018) reported high levels of social media addiction among university students. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to address the growing issue of social media addiction among university students.

Various factors have been identified as contributors to social media addiction among university students. A study by Andreassen et al. (2016) highlighted factors such as the need for social interaction, fear of missing out (FOMO), and excessive time spent on social media in the development of addictive behaviors. Similar findings were discovered by the study conducted by Al-Menayes in 2019. Al-Menayes (2019) identified distractions, decreased focus, and time mismanagement resulting from excessive social media use as factors contributing to social media addiction among university students. These findings emphasize the importance of understanding the underlying factors that drive social media addiction among this population.

Both studies also examined the consequences of social media addiction among university student. For example, Andreassen et al. (2016) found a strong association between social media addiction and symptoms

of anxiety and depression among university students. Meanwhile Al-Menayes (2019) revealed a negative relationship between social media addiction and academic achievement among university students. These findings highlight the detrimental impact of social media addiction on the mental health and academic performance of university students.

Other than on the contributors and consequences of social media addiction among university students, past studies also investigated on the coping mechanisms for social media addiction. For instance, Eldeleklioğlu and Uzun (2018) found that self-regulation techniques, seeking social support, engaging in alternative activities, and setting usage limits were commonly employed coping strategies. These findings emphasize the importance of fostering self-regulation skills and providing support mechanisms to assist university students in combating social media addiction.

While there is a growing body of literature on social media addiction among university students, there remains a significant research gap when it comes to understanding the specific factors contributing to addiction among this population in the Malaysian context. Most of the existing studies have predominantly focused on Western countries, and limited attention has been given to the socio-cultural and contextual factors that may uniquely shape social media addiction among Malaysian university students. Factors such as cultural values, societal norms, peer influence, and the educational environment specific to Malaysia have the potential to play a significant role in the development and maintenance of social media addiction. However, there is a dearth of research exploring these factors and their impact on social media addiction in the Malaysian context.

Uses and Gratification Theory

The uses and gratification theory (U&G) posit that individuals actively select and use media to fulfill their specific needs and desires (McQuail,

1994). It suggests that people have different motivations for consuming media and that they choose specific media platforms or content that they believe will gratify those motivations (Cantril, 1942). The theory emphasizes that individuals are not passive recipients of media messages but active users who actively seek out and engage with media content based on their personal goals and needs.

According to the theory, individuals have various needs and motivations that drive their media consumption. These needs can be categorized into several broad categories, including information-seeking, entertainment, personal identity, social interaction, and diversion or escape. For example, individuals may use social media to seek information and stay updated, entertain themselves through engaging content, express their identity or opinions, connect with others, or simply escape from the pressures of everyday life.

U&G theory has been widely applied to various media, such as smartphones, television, newspapers, and internet options, to measure individuals' motivations for using media. Individuals utilize media to meet certain needs, such as being educated, amused, or escaping reality, according to this viewpoint. According to this notion, people have the power to pick the media they use and how they use it based on their needs and interests. This theory is applied to comprehend how and why individuals consume media, as well as the consequences it has on them (Lowery & DeFleur, 1983). It is frequently used in studies of media impacts and media psychology.

The theory suggests that individuals choose media that they believe will satisfy these needs and that they will actively select different media based on their specific needs at a given time (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948; Merton, 1949). People are thought to be motivated to consume media content that aligns with their needs and that they perceive as providing gratification or satisfaction.

Moreover, the U&G theory emphasize that individuals are not passive consumers but actively engage with media content to derive gratification (McQuail, 1994). The theory identifies four key processes through which individuals seek gratification from their media use:

1.Selection: Individuals actively select specific media platforms or content that they believe will fulfill their needs and provide gratification. This selection process is influenced by personal preferences, interests, and goals.

2.Interaction: Once individuals have chosen their preferred media, they engage in active interaction with the content. This can involve various activities such as reading, watching, sharing, commenting, or participating in discussions.

3.Use: During the interaction process, individuals use the media content in ways that they believe will satisfy their needs and goals. They may seek information, entertainment, social connection, self-expression, or other gratifications.

4.Effects:The final step involves assessing the effects or gratifications obtained from the media use. Individuals reflect on whether their needs and goals were fulfilled, and if so, to what extent. This evaluation of gratification can then influence future media choices and use patterns.

When examining the relationship between the U&G theory and social media addiction, it is important to consider how the gratifications sought through social media use can contribute to addictive behaviors. Social media addiction refers to excessive and compulsive use of social media platforms that leads to negative consequences and interferes with daily life functioning (Griffiths, 2000; Starcevic, 2013; Hou et al., 2019).

The gratifications derived from social media use can be one of the contributing factors to addiction. For example, individuals who are addicted to social media may seek gratification in the form of social interaction, validation, or entertainment. Social media platforms provide a means for individuals to connect with others, receive feedback, and gain social validation through likes, comments, and shares. This gratification can reinforce addictive behaviors, as individuals become dependent on the constant validation and attention they receive from their online interactions. The need for social interaction and validation can drive individuals to engage in excessive and compulsive social media use, leading to addiction.

Moreover, social media platforms often offer a diverse range of entertaining content, such as videos, memes, and games, which can provide individuals with a sense of pleasure and escape from reality. The gratification derived from the entertaining content can lead individuals to continuously seek out and engage with social media, contributing to addictive behaviors. The question is what are the factors that lead to social media addiction among university students in Malaysia? Do the elements of uses and gratifications also lead to social media addiction among university students?

Methodology

To achieve the research objectives and answer the research questions, a qualitative research approach was employed. This approach allows for in-depth exploration and understanding of the phenomenon of social media addiction among Malaysian university students. In-depth interviews serve as the primary method of data collection, enabling participants to share their experiences, insights, and perspectives (Minichiello, Aroni, & Hays, 2008).

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner where a summary of questions was provided as a guide for the researcher. This interview was conducted with 10 informants who are students at a university in the Klang Valley. The Klang Valley was chosen as the study

location due to the high rate of social media use in the area, as well as the high number of higher education institutions. As a qualitative study, this study does not require a large number of informants because the most important thing is the depth of the information obtained. This is because this study is exploratory and not intended to test the relationship between variables, and the findings of this study cannot be generalized to the entire population involved (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). Each interview took between 40 minutes to an hour.

The selection of informants was done through purposive sampling according to criteria that have been set according to the needs of the study. The criterion for selecting informants was based on the age category and rate of social media use according to the definition set by Kuss and Griffiths (2017). According to Kuss and Griffiths (2017), there is no clear consensus on the number of hours of social media usage that can be considered as social media addiction. However, excessive use characterized by spending an inordinate amount of time on social media platforms, neglecting other important activities and responsibilities, and experiencing negative consequences as a result of this excessive use is indicative of social media addiction.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data gathered from the interviews and focus group discussions. The analysis process involved transcribing the interviews, familiarizing with the data, and conducting open coding to generate initial codes related to social media addiction. A coding framework was developed and applied to the entire dataset, systematically coding and categorizing data segments. Emerging themes and sub-themes were identified, ensuring they align with the research objectives and questions. Member checking and participant validation were sought to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

Details of Informants

As mentioned, 10 informants were interviewed in depth in order to understand the factors that led to social media addiction among university students. The informants selected were all undergraduate students from a university located in the Klang Valley.

Table 1: Demographic details

Informant	Age	Gender
1st	22	Female
2nd	22	Male
3rd	23	Male
4th	22	Male
5th	22	Male
6th	22	Female
7th	22	Female
8th	24	Female
9th	22	Female
10th	22	Female

Findings

After analyzing the results of the in-depth interviews, this study discovered three main themes that were frequently mentioned by the informants in explaining the factors that caused them to become addicted to using social media. The three themes are hedonic satisfaction, functional satisfaction and social satisfaction.

Hedonic Satisfaction

Under this theme, there are two sub-themes that can be classified as factors that lead to social media addiction. One of the major reasons that the university students frequently use social media is to seek enjoyment

during their leisure time. Some of the activities they had described that could entertain them online include using social media to find anything related to their hobbies, and watching short videos that can improve their mood and reduce their stress. They also use social media time during their leisure time to watch short movie clips on *TikTok*, create trending *TikTok* videos, and watch influencers' blogs while they are doing something.

According to their feedback, the feeling of fun or enjoyment is the primary reason they spend more time on social media. *TikTok* is the most popular social media platform that keeps them scrolling for hours because the contents often make them laugh. *TikTok* is described as an entertaining social media platform and it also contains many memes and international jokes that improves their emotions. One of the informants had described:

> *"I could spend hours scrolling TikTok. I don't know, sometimes I am not aware of the time until I'm feeling sleepy. TikTok applications can be dangerous sometimes. I'm scrolling and scrolling until I realized I am almost 3 hours on that application even though my assignments are still waiting. At first, I just want to release so much stress but, in the end, I'm just procrastinating" (2nd informant, 22 years old, Male).*

There were a few of the informants who spend most of their time on *Instagram* rather than *TikTok*. They often watch short videos on the platform's 'reels'. They believe that the algorithms on *TikTok* and *Instagram* reels are different which makes *Instagram* more appealing. One of the informants had elaborated in length:

> *"Most people would say TikTok is gonna be their first platform to entertain themselves, but for me, I would love to spend more*

time on Instagram because the algorithm is different. I love seeing gummy's videos and random cute baby videos on Instagram reels. Sometimes the video content is about a mother who restocks all their gummy needs for their children every month with the autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR). Even though the video has no dialog and no body language or eye contact with the viewers, the sound of ASMR is enough to make me stay until the end of the video. Not only that, sometimes all the cute baby's name suggestions interact with to me even I am not a mother yet (laughing)" (10th informant, 22 years old, Female).

According to 3rd informant, social media platforms are very easy for teenagers to explore themselves and suitable for those who are looking for a new hobby. One of the informants' timeline is filled with images and videos of cars such as the various car models, car repair videos, and recommendations of car accessories. Cars are one of the informant's hobbies and hobbies can entertain him and easily influence him to watch the video until the end. Another informant (9th informant) discovered a new hobby via *TikTok* which is crafting. She believes that the crafts can be used or sold to others. She explained:

"Some days I feel so bored, and I want to entertain myself by finding new hobbies. I am attracted to some international TikTokers making videos on crafting like making a handbag by crafting, making a cute hat by crafting and many more. So, I tried, and I feel happy by doing it. I just need to watch a tutorial video on TikTok because it is easy and faster to learn. Things that I have crafted, sometimes I use it for my own self-satisfaction, and sometimes I can sell it to others. So, I think there are many benefits for me doing crafting but most importantly I feel so much enjoyment." (9th informant, 22 years old, Female).

The observation that gained from this in-depth interview is 4 of 10 informants said that movie clips or anime comics on social media are one of the reasons why they spend so much time, especially on *TikTok* platforms. Social media platforms can be addictive because of this. When they are scrolling through *TikTok* and finally find a short movie clip of around 5 to 10 minutes, they feel attracted and want to watch the next clip. They often click on the *TikTok* account to find out more about another part of the movie. To attract the viewers, of course, the marketing strategies need to be strong, so they put the scene of the movie that is interesting and amazing for viewers to keep on watching and to follow their account and gain more followers. Sometimes, my informant can finish 2 to 3 episodes on *TikTok* without them noticing. Easily accessible and long-duration videos make advantage of both sides which are the viewers and the account's owners. This was acknowledged by the 2nd informant, who shared his experience.

Another informant is not using social media for them to watch movie clips but instead, they use it to watch anime comics. When it comes to comics, the first thing that comes to mind is printed comics that are collected as a collection, but the informants said it is different. According to her:

> *"I love anime comics very much. I have read all the comics since I was in primary school until now. Back then, yes, I used to buy comics for my reading and collection but for now, I can read it online and for free. Especially on TikTok platforms, I can easily find a new episode of the comics on TikTok platforms even if the new episode is not officially published yet. Another reason why I love reading comics on TikTok is that the features of TikTok are that we can upload photos that automatically slide into a short video with some interesting music. I do not have to use my fingers to slide the comics and at the same time, the music is so attractive to me. Besides I can save my money, I also can save energy and avoid being sleepy while reading. I really love the new features of*

> *TikTok that make my life easier. I can spend reading comics for hours until I fall asleep with my phone in my hand" (1st informant, 22 years old, Female).*

The 7th informant also acknowledged and shared the same experience, saying that she spends more time on social media making videos. She makes a video on two different social media platforms with two different types of content for each platform. For instance, there are some trending simple dances on *TikTok*, so she tried to learn the dance for hours and kept reshooting the video to get a good and satisfying one for her. She will keep redoing the dance practice and the video-making until everything is perfect in her eyes. She said she is passionate about making videos and dancing, so she doesn't mind spending hours on it. Even though she knows that she has a lot more activities to do with their friends and their family, she tends to spend hours creating content. She loves making videos on *TikTok* because there is no copyright for every song that she uses. The maximum time that she can spend on making a video is 5 hours including the editing and she feels crazy about it.

Another factor that makes the informant spend so much time on social media is that she enjoys watching vlogs from the influencers especially when they are eating alone. According to her:

> *"Cupcake Aisyah is the one influencer that is always updating their life on her YouTube channel. If let's say on that day all my friends are busy and I have no one to accompany me while I am eating, I will watch Cupcake Aisyah's vlogs. The average duration for one of her videos is about 30 minutes to 45 minutes. I love her videos because she influences me to study hard until I can pursue my study overseas or more likely to be known as 'beauty with brain'. Not only that, but their confidence in themselves also makes me want to challenge myself and be brave to talk in front of the camera*

> *or even in public. My self-esteem feels so motivated when I am watching her videos. She also can afford by buying luxury items, clothes, makeup, and skincare by the same age as me. While I am at this age still craving for something that I cannot afford. So, I do not mind spending hours watching her vlogs because it can boost my mood, can easily build my confidence level, and be my virtual friend while I am eating (9th informant, 22 years old, Female).*

Another informant who loves to watch videos while eating indicated that she often watches live videos of bundle stores on *TikTok*. She explained:

> *"It sounds weird to others but by watching the bundle live on TikTok is enough to satisfy me without even buying. I love seeing all the pretty used clothes, dresses, pants, and more. There are several accounts on TikTok that I have followed, and they are selling bundles, especially clothes. Most of the time, I just watch her live without commenting and buying. It doesn't sound supportive, but I just need something I love to accompany me. When I follow their TikTok accounts, every time they are going on life, the notifications will pop up on my phone, so it is easier for me to join their live bundle (8th informant, 24 years old, Female).*

Functional Satisfaction

Aside from enjoyment, social media is also utilized as a source of information. This is evident since knowledge can be gained in the blink of an eye by just browsing current social networks. As a result, individuals are increasingly relying on social media to receive the information they require, leading to social addiction. This is because much of the time spent in everyday life is spent using social media to stay up to date on information or to obtain information. Furthermore, as an everyday culture, an individual does not hesitate to absorb information from the media. In truth, society exploits information gathered from social media sites to

develop itself in the future. Teenagers, for example, utilize social media to stay current with the fashion industry and to supplement what they lack in the fashion department. According to one of the informants (8th informant):

> *"The algorithm of TikTok is very powerful. Sometimes the video that comes up for my timeline is like what I want. I don't have to bother myself to search for something I want, it will automatically be on my timeline. That makes me feel very amazing because technology can finally understand me better than people. For instance, outfit ideas for convocation day and some tips since I am a third-year student and want to graduate soon. From the top which is hijab styling to the bottom which is the perfect shoes I need to wear during my convocation day has been explained in that video. Even the smallest details I need to take note of for me to be comfortable during my big day. Just to be clear, I do not talk about this to anyone but one time I did search for hijab styling for convocation day and after that, there are a lot of videos regarding that topic. My point here is, Tok platforms are very useful and the fastest for me to gain information or ideas (8th informant, 24 years old, Female).*

Furthermore, unique individuals utilize social sites to communicate their message to the community through campaigning on their social sites. This is because, when election season begins, people will utilize social media to review the manifestos of other candidates before making an informed selection. For example, during the 15th Malaysian election (PRU15), we can observe all the parties promoting on social media via all the influencers and artists. This was one of their marketing methods for gaining more supporters for their party's victory. In this study, two informants had indicated that they use social media for political purposes. For instance, one of the informants enjoys getting the latest updates on political issues, especially on their favourite political party. The 5th

informant said that he follows all of the social media accounts of the party that he supports just to get the latest updates on how many votes the party had won. Aside from watching it on the television, he enjoys scrolling on *Facebook* and *TikTok* because both platforms have live streaming for 24 hours.

Current issues like news about accidents and celebrity controversies are also one of the reasons university students nowadays get addicted to social media. For instance, one of the female informants often follow news on Malaysian celebrities via *TikTok* and *Instagram*. She explained:

> *"As we know the main controversy among celebrities in Malaysia that is still ongoing is about our popular and handsome director Shamsul Yusof Haslam who married twice with Ira Kazar without getting permission from his family and her first wife, Puteri Sarah Liyana. I can feel his first wife's feelings and kept everything by herself for 4 years and that is the reason why I am spending so much time on social media. At first, I knew about this issue on TikTok platforms and then I went to their personal Instagram account which is Puteri Sarah, Ira Kaza and Shamsul Yusof accounts. Reading all their emotional feelings, watching their conference video, and reading all the comments takes my time. I, as a netizen, really want to know what happened with their marriage so that is why I got all of this complete information on TikTok and Instagram. It is more controversial when some news for Malaysian celebrity Mstar put some 'spicy' headlines to attract the netizen to read. I am the one who spends so much time reading all the articles and watching all the videos regarding this issue (8th informant, 24 years old, Female)*

Other than the mentioned, social media has been used by the university studies for the purpose of education. The informants who participated

in this study are mostly media studies students. Most of them are taking software and designing classes that expects them to be equipped with powerful technical skills. One of the informants indicated that she uses social media to search on ways to use Adobe XD to create a landing page for the informant's multimedia production subject this semester. According to the 6th informant, she used to refer to *TikTok* for a simple design because it does not take too much time and most technical skills are taught by speeding up their video so the viewers can easily catch up and apply their assignments immediately. However, if she intends to learn skills that are considered complicated, she will opt *YouTube* as the platform has better explanations and is often made in a more relaxed way thus, she can learn the skill peacefully.

Social media is also regularly used to project a different image of the user (in this case, the university student) to his or her followers. This can be referred to as self-presentation. Self-presentation is when users on social media have the power to modify how they display themselves to their audience. On social media, most people choose to project a positive self-image. This, however, may be contingent on the strength of their ties to the audience who can view their work. One of the informants who have garnered a large number of followers on *TikTok* and *Instagram* and can be considered as an 'influencer' explained:

> *"The number of followers that I get until now is all the efforts that I put so much into building myself on social media. Influencing others is not as easy as others think, I need to create creative and trending content to attract viewers. My content should be rare, which is different from the others and that is my value. Me, I can say that I represent myself on social media in terms of aesthetic fashion to teenagers nowadays. I re-try any of those rare fashions to mix and match my outfits and become an outfit of the day that represents, oh, this is me ya something like that. I don't like to be just like typical influencers out there that we all know but I do not*

say that they are failed as influencers. An influencer is a general term, and everyone can influence others through their originality. So, I think that is why I spend so much on social media. I need to be careful of my content so there is no issue. I copy others' content and I need to make sure my followers are not bored with my content. If you think being an influencer is easy money or popularity only, you're wrong. I sacrifice most of my time on social media only just to entertain and influence my followers (9th informant, 22 years old, Female).

Social Satisfaction

The last theme identified in this research is social satisfaction. Under this broad theme, social interaction was identified as the sub-theme as social media is often used to socialize with other virtually.

Social interaction is an exchange between two or more people that serves as a foundation for society. Social interaction can be examined in groups of two (dyads), three (triads), or bigger. People build the norms, institutions, and systems within which they desire to exist by interacting with one another. One of the informants acknowledged this:

"When I wake up in the morning, the first thing that I do every day is checking my phone's notifications and the first application that I clicked is WhatsApp. WhatsApp is the main platform for others to communicate with each other more easily and fast even people from hundreds of kilometers away from you. That is why I cannot leave social media because if not, I will be missing out. Missing out from information, lifestyle updates from my friends and family, and more (4th informant, 22 years old, Male)

Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the qualitative data obtained in this research article, it can be concluded that many university students rely on social media for a variety of reasons. To aid comprehension, all components discovered will be shown as flow charts in figure 2.

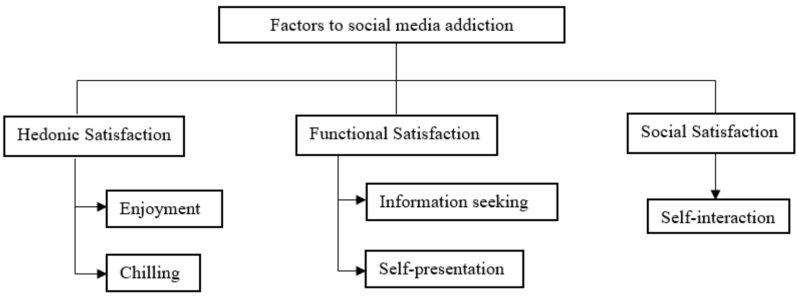

Figure 2: Framework for factors influencing social media addiction among Malaysian youth

This study found three main factors that influence social media addiction among university students. This can be explained through the theme of the research obtained, which explains how the factors of hedonic satisfaction, functional satisfaction, and social satisfaction become an attraction for university students to use social media for a long period of time, leading to the occurrence of addiction among them.

Hedonic satisfaction refers to the pleasure and emotional gratification individuals derive from using social media platforms. Malaysian university students often turn to social media to seek entertainment, escape daily stressors, and engage in enjoyable activities. Other research has found that hedonic satisfaction significantly influences social media addiction (Andreassen et al., 2017). When students experience positive emotions, such as enjoyment and excitement, while using social media, they

are more likely to engage in excessive use, leading to addiction. This suggests that the pursuit of pleasure and the gratification derived from the hedonic aspects of social media use contribute to the development of addiction among university students.

Functional satisfaction, on the other hand, relates to the perceived usefulness and effectiveness of social media platforms in meeting individuals' specific needs and goals. Malaysian university students utilize social media for various functional purposes, such as information seeking, academic support, and professional networking. Kuss and Griffiths (2017) also found that when students perceive social media as effective tools for fulfilling these functional needs, they may become more reliant on these platforms, increasing the risk of addiction. For example, students who heavily rely on social media for academic information may feel compelled to constantly check their accounts, leading to compulsive and addictive behaviors. Thus, the functional satisfaction derived from social media usage can contribute to social media addiction among university students.

Social satisfaction refers to the sense of connectedness and social interaction individuals experience through social media platforms. Malaysian university students often use social media to maintain relationships, connect with peers, and engage in online communities. Social media platforms offer a virtual space where students can express their identities, share experiences, and seek social validation. Research done by Kircaburun et al., (2020) shown that social satisfaction significantly influences social media addiction. When students derive a sense of belonging, social support, and validation from their online interactions, they may become more inclined to engage in excessive and addictive social media use. The desire for social interaction and the gratification derived from social connections contribute to the development and perpetuation of social media addiction among university students.

It is important to recognize that hedonic satisfaction, functional satisfaction, and social satisfaction are not mutually exclusive but often interact and influence each other in the context of social media addiction. For example, students may experience hedonic satisfaction by engaging in entertaining content on social media, which may enhance their functional satisfaction if they perceive that the platform effectively meets their informational needs. Similarly, social satisfaction derived from social media interactions can enhance hedonic and functional satisfaction if students feel validated, supported, and entertained within their social networks.

However, this does not negate other factors that influence social media addiction among university students, as there are academic opinions and other research results that show several elements, including psychological, behavioral, and environmental factors, interact with aspects of fun to create addictive behavior. Self-esteem, coping strategies, the fear of missing out, and platform design elements all play a role. role in the development and maintenance of social media addiction among university students.

However, this study explores different perspectives and findings by including elements such as hedonic satisfaction, functional satisfaction, and social satisfaction that led to the frequency of use, causing addiction to use in accordance with what is stated in the uses and gratification theory.

In conclusion, hedonic satisfaction, functional satisfaction, and social satisfaction have significant influences on social media addiction among university students in Malaysia. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing targeted interventions and strategies to promote healthier digital behaviors and address the growing issue of social media addiction in this population.

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