The Use of Social Media and Social Anxiety among Secondary School Students in Melaka: A Concept Paper

Siti Haziqah Shaban*, Fazurah Mustaffa, Norhasima Abdullah, Norli Yusuf, Tun Mastura Wan Lokman

Faculty of Social Sciences, Universiti Islam Melaka, Malaysia
Corresponding Author Email: *sitihaziqah@unimel.edu.my

Abstract
The use of social media is extremely important in contemporary life. The rate of social media usage is increasing according to the needs and age of the users. Adolescents are the group that is said to use social media most frequently. The obsession with the use of social media can lead to social concerns as users are often exposed to excessive information and a diminished need for engagement. This issue is increasingly being discussed now and requires attention, especially among students. This is because this issue can have a significant impact on social development, self-confidence, and may undermine emotional well-being among students, particularly adolescents. Therefore, students should be aware of the use of social media to avoid the effects of social anxiety occurring to them. This concept paper aims to discuss the use of social media and the social concerns that are known and experienced among students. The primary objective is to determine the level of social media usage and social anxiety among students. Research on this issue has found that social media usage can lead to social anxiety among students. The summary of this study indicates that there is a need for information disclosure about the effects of media usage on social anxiety to prevent this issue from worsening. With this, it is expected that this concept paper can make a new contribution to society and serve as a reference for practitioners and researchers in the future.
Keywords: Social Media, Use of Social Media, Social Anxiety, Students, Effects of Social Media

Introduction
Social media is an important tool for students' lives today. The development of digital communication technology has established social media as the primary medium for adolescents to interact, acquire information, and express themselves to their peers in the virtual realm. It not only serves as a tool for communication but also as a medium for the formation of social identity. Platforms frequently used by students such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter serve as venues for sharing experiences, obtaining feedback, and adapting to

online social norms (Nesi, 2020). It is undeniable that this social usage has numerous benefits when used appropriately, but the increased dependence on social media is associated with psychological effects including social anxiety (Marino et al. 2020).

Syarul Heiry Yahaya & Norazah Umar (2022) state that anxiety is an emotional reaction that involves discomfort such as fear or worry, which can range from mild forms to more serious levels. It is identified as one of the most prevalent mental disorders within society. According to the American Psychiatric Association (2022), this social anxiety involves negative evaluations in social situations or performance that can disrupt the daily functioning of students. Individuals who experience social anxiety tend to avoid social interactions or feel uncomfortable being in a group of people. Several studies indicate that excessive use of social media may exacerbate symptoms of social anxiety through social comparison, attention addiction, and pressure to maintain an online self-image (Boursier et al., 2020; Keles, McCrae, & Grealish, 2020).

Furthermore, the high usage of social media among secondary school students has raised concerns among parents, teachers, and psychological experts. Although social media provides opportunities for virtual social interaction, it also triggers significant psychosocial pressure, particularly among adolescents who are undergoing the phase of identity and self-development (Nesi, 2020). Previous studies indicate that intensive use of social media can lead to increased social anxiety due to the pressure to meet online social standards, unhealthy social comparisons, and the need to gain social recognition through the number of 'likes' and comments (Casale & Fioravanti, 2020; Vannucci et al., 2021). In Melaka, the phenomenon of students with low self-confidence, fear of direct interaction, and experiencing social stress is increasingly on the rise. In the context of students, social anxiety can impact academic performance, classroom interactions, and overall psychological well-being. Furthermore, the lack of local data hinders the parties involved from planning contextual and relevant mental health interventions.

Although various international studies have been conducted to examine the impact of social media on the mental health of adolescents, research in the context of Malaysia remains relatively limited, particularly regarding the relationship between social media use and social anxiety among secondary school students. Moreover, most local studies focus more on issues of social media addiction or depression, rather than specifically addressing social anxiety (Dhir et al., 2021). Therefore, this study is proposed to specifically explore the relationship between social media usage and social anxiety among high school students in Malaysia. This study is important for filling the existing knowledge gap and providing a foundation for more comprehensive and contextual emotional support interventions.

Literature Review
Introduction to Literature Review
Social media has become an essential element in the daily lives of modern individuals, especially among adolescents who are active users of digital technology. According to a report by We Are Social and Meltwater (2024), Malaysia recorded 28.68 million social media users, equivalent to 83.1% of the total population. This statistic places Malaysia among the countries with the highest social media penetration rates in the world.

This increase indicates that a significant portion of the Malaysian population, including the youth, is now more reliant on social media for interaction, information retrieval, and conducting daily activities. The rapid use of this is also influenced by the development of digital technology, high internet access rates, and the increase in ownership of mobile devices such as smartphones. This phenomenon has significant implications for communication patterns, the formation of social identities, and the psychological well-being of users, particularly among adolescents. This literature review will discuss five main themes, namely the use of social media among adolescents, the characteristics and effects of social media, social anxiety, the relationship between social media use and anxiety, as well as related theories.

The Use of Social Media Among Adolescents
Adolescents are the most active group in using social media. A study by the Malaysian Ministry of Communications and Multimedia (MCMC, 2021) indicates that over 90% of adolescents in Malaysia use at least one social media platform. Among the most popular platforms are TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Social media is used for various purposes including entertainment, communication, education, and the search for self-identity (Hashim & Yunus, 2020). Among the most popular platforms are TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Social media is used for various purposes including entertainment, communication, education, and the search for self-identity (Hashim & Yunus, 2020).

The motivation for social media use among adolescents is significantly influenced by the need for peer acceptance, obtaining current information, and self-expression (Utz et al., 2012). At the same time, there is a high degree of dependence on interactions and feedback received through social media, which indirectly affects the emotional well-being of young users.

Characteristics of Social Media and Its Implications
Social media is defined as a collection of internet-based applications built on the foundation of the ideologies and technologies of Web 2.0, which enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This indicates that social media serves not only as a medium of communication but also as a space for identity creation and self-expression online.

In Malaysia, social media is also defined by several local scholars. Zulkiple et al. (2011) explain that social media is a form of communication based on ICT that enables individuals to create and share content in various forms. Zaini Amir (2017) emphasizes the aspect of interactive content creation as the foundation of social media. Meanwhile, according to Ramli Musa (2020), social media is also viewed as a boundaryless space that facilitates connections and interactions within online communities.

One of the main features of social media is the ability for real-time interaction, high accessibility, as well as the users' capability to create and distribute their own content, also known as user-generated content. These characteristics make social media more appealing compared to traditional media, as it provides users with greater control over the communication process. However, this advantage can also lead to exposure to excessive information, social pressure, and psychological disturbances.

Social Concerns among Adolescents

Social anxiety is a form of anxiety disorder that has increasingly garnered attention among researchers in psychology and communication, particularly concerning adolescents. This term refers to the feelings of fear, unease, or discomfort experienced by an individual during social interactions, especially when the individual perceives that they are being observed, evaluated, or judged by others (Yaakub, 2013).

Adolescents are exposed to social anxiety as they are still in the process of developing interpersonal communication skills. Situations such as speaking in public, voicing opinions in class, or participating in social activities often trigger profound discomfort. In more serious cases, adolescents may completely withdraw from social life and experience loneliness, depression, as well as disruptions in daily functioning (Zubaidah, 2020).

The Relationship between Social Media and Social Anxiety

Several studies have demonstrated the relationship between social media use and mental health issues such as social anxiety, social comparison stress, and symptoms of depression. Chou and Edge (2012) found that social media users tend to compare themselves with the lives of others presented online, which are often depicted in an idealistic and unrealistic manner. This situation can lead to the perception that others are happier or more successful, thereby increasing levels of dissatisfaction and anxiety regarding oneself.

A study by Tandoc, Ferrucci, and Duffy (2015) found that excessive use of social media can lead to feelings of envy and depression, particularly when users regard social feedback as a measure of self-worth. The obsession with social media usage can raise concerns as users are often exposed to excessive and sometimes irrelevant information. Moreover, the pressure to always appear attractive, active, or 'perfect' on social media also contributes to negative self-consciousness, which is a primary trigger of social anxiety among adolescents.

Related Theory: Social Cognitive Dissonance Theory

The Cognitive Theory of Social Anxiety by Clark and Wells (1995) states that individuals with a tendency towards social anxiety will evaluate themselves excessively and negatively, particularly when they believe that others are observing or assessing them. In the context of social media, adolescents face not only real social interactions but also experience virtual interactions that are open and unpredictable, which can reinforce negative thinking about themselves.

This theory also emphasizes that adolescents with social anxiety tend to interpret social information through a negative cognitive lens. For instance, if they do not receive likes or praise from peers for a certain post, they will interpret this as social rejection. This establishes a form of post-event processing, wherein individuals will revisit the interaction and repeatedly contemplate how they may have embarrassed themselves.

Research Gap

A significant portion of previous studies examining the relationship between social media usage and social anxiety has been conducted in Western countries and among higher education institution students. Research focusing on school students in Malaysia, particularly in Melaka State, remains limited. Furthermore, the use of Social Anxiety Cognitive Theory as

the primary framework in the context of social media usage among Malaysian adolescents has also been insufficiently explored. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by examining how social media usage influences social anxiety among secondary school students in Melaka.

This literature review demonstrates that social media plays a significant role in the lives of today's adolescents, not only in terms of communication but also in the formation of identity and psychological well-being. The interactive features of social media that provide users the opportunity to receive immediate social feedback can have both positive and negative effects on users' emotions. Previous studies have shown a significant relationship between social media use and social anxiety; however, research focusing on school students in Malaysia, particularly using a cognitive theory approach, remains insufficient. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding in the local context.

Research Objectives
1. To identify the level of social media usage among high school students in Melaka.
2. To analyse the relationship between social media usage and social anxiety among high school students in Melaka.
3. To analyse the relationship between social media usage and social anxiety among high school students in Melaka

Research Questions
1. What is the level of social media usage among high school students in Melaka?
2. What is the level of social anxiety among high school students in Melaka?
3. Is there a significant relationship between social media usage and social anxiety among high school students in Melaka?

Methodology
The design of this study employs a quantitative approach to obtain data that is objective, measurable, and can be statistically analysed. This approach was chosen because it aligns with the purpose of the study to identify the relationship between the level of social media usage and social anxiety among students. This study chooses the survey technique as the method of data collection. The sampling method employed is simple random sampling. The total population of secondary school students in the state of Melaka cannot be determined at this time. Therefore, when the actual data is obtained, the researcher will determine the number of respondents involved according to the sample size determination table by Krejcie & Morgan (1970) using a confidence level of $p < .05$. The data obtained from the questionnaire will be analysed based on the objectives and research questions.

Table 1.0
Selection of Analysis for Research Objectives and Questions

No.	Research Question	Research Objectives	Analysis
1.	What is the level of social media usage among high school students in Melaka?	To identify the level of social media usage among high school students in Melaka.	Descriptive Mean
2.	What is the level of social anxiety among high school students in Melaka?	To analyse the relationship between social media usage and social anxiety among high school students in Melaka.	Descriptive Mean
3.	Is there a significant relationship between social media usage and social anxiety among high school students in Melaka?	To analyse the relationship between social media usage and social anxiety among high school students in Melaka.	Correlation Inference

Research Instrument

This study utilizes a questionnaire as the research instrument. The research instruments employed were derived from two sources, namely the Social Media Usage Scale adapted by Mohd Fikri Yazan (Mohd Fikri, 2019) and the Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SAS-A), which was translated from the Social Anxiety Scale – Adolescent proposed by La Greca and Lopez (1998). The questionnaire used in this study consists of three main sections:

1. **Section A:** Demographic profile of respondents (gender, age, school placement, educational level, ethnicity, religion, parental income, and frequency of social media usage).
2. **Part B:** The level of social media usage, utilizing the Social Media Usage Scale instrument by Mohd Fikri Yazan (Mohd Fikri, 2019).
3. **Part C:** The level of social anxiety is measured using the Adolescent Social Anxiety Scale (ASAS) introduced by La Greca and Lopez (1998).

This questionnaire contains 45 questions, and the scale used for both sections A and B is a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Social Media Usage Survey

The Social Media Usage Scale (SPMS) was developed by Mohd Fikri Yazan (2019) in his study titled 'The Influence of Parenting Styles, Peers, Teachers, and Religious Beliefs on Social Media Usage Among Adolescents.' He is the principal founder who developed and assessed the validity and reliability of the instrument in the context of adolescents in Malaysia.

The instrument obtained from his study consists of 8 sections (A, B, C, D, E, F, G). This study focuses on only one section, namely Section D, which pertains to the level of social media usage among students. In this questionnaire, students are required to select only one answer and circle the code in the space provided for each statement. The scale used in Section D is a five-point rating scale, which ranges from scale 1 to scale 5, to facilitate respondents in answering the questions posed.

Social Concern Survey
The Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SAS-A) was developed by La Greca and Lopez in 1998 to measure the level of social anxiety among adolescents. This instrument is among the most widely used scales in adolescent psychology research, particularly concerning social anxiety disorder.

La Greca and Lopez (1998) developed this scale based on an earlier version, the Social Anxiety Scale for Children-Revised (SASC-R). They adapted the items in the scale to make it more suitable for the adolescent population, which typically faces more complex social challenges compared to children.

To assess social concerns, two primary instruments have been developed, namely the Social Phobia and Anxiety Inventory (SPAI) and the Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SAS-A) by La Greca and Lopez (1998). SAS-A is an adaptation of the Social Anxiety Scale for Children-Revised and was constructed based on the studies of Watson and Friend and Leary. This instrument consists of 22 items (18 main items and 4 supplementary items), utilizing a 5-point Likert scale, and comprises three subscales: Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE), New Social Isolation & Depression (NSI-D), and General Social Isolation & Depression (GSI-D).

The SAS-A has been proven to have high validity and reliability in measuring social anxiety among adolescents, particularly in the context of English language. This instrument has been translated into Malay as the Adolescent Social Anxiety Scale (ASAS). However, studies on its validity and reliability in the context of Malaysian adolescents are still needed to ensure its suitability for use in local psychological interventions.

Importance of Research
This concept paper holds significant importance in the effort to understand the implications of social media usage on social anxiety among high school students. In an era of rapidly evolving digital technology, social media has transcended being merely a communication tool; it has become the primary medium for adolescents to shape their identities, express themselves, and build social relationships virtually. However, excessive and uncontrolled use has the potential to generate various psychosocial issues, including social anxiety, which can adversely affect students' mental well-being and daily interactions.

From an educational perspective, this concept paper makes a significant contribution to school staff such as teachers, counsellors, and administrators in understanding how social media can influence student behaviour both inside and outside the classroom. Students experiencing social anxiety may exhibit withdrawal behaviour, lack confidence in participating in class activities, or face difficulties in building relationships with peers. This understanding allows schools to develop a more comprehensive pedagogical approach and psychosocial support. Programs such as digital literacy that emphasize the responsible use of social media, emotional education to build mental resilience, and stress management workshops can help students navigate the digital world in a healthier and more balanced way (Vannucci et al., 2017). Furthermore, this approach supports efforts to create a school environment that is more attentive to the overall mental well-being of students.

From a parenting perspective, this concept paper aims to raise the level of awareness among parents and guardians regarding the various psychological risks closely associated with social media usage among adolescents. In today's digital era, children are increasingly exposed to unfiltered content, social pressure from online peers, and the tendency to compare themselves with others who portray a perfect image on social media. This pressure can undermine self-esteem, lead to feelings of inadequacy, and further exacerbate social anxiety among adolescents, particularly when they do not receive the attention or recognition they expect online (Andreassen, 2015).

Meanwhile, from the dimension of research and the development of knowledge, this concept paper serves to fill the gap in the local literature that still lacks specific examination of the relationship between social media usage and social anxiety among high school students. Most existing studies are influenced by international contexts that may not fully align with the cultural background, educational system, and lifestyle of adolescents in Malaysia. Therefore, the findings of this study can enrich local scientific understanding and serve as an important foundation for further research and the formulation of educational policies and psychosocial interventions that are more suitable and effective within this country's context (Primack et al., 2017; Woods & Scott, 2016).

Conclusion

Overall, this concept paper highlights an increasingly pressing issue among school students, namely social anxiety that may arise from excessive and uncontrolled use of social media. In this digital era, social media has not only become a medium of interaction but also shapes the way students perceive themselves and the world around them. Therefore, this concept paper aims to explore in greater depth the relationship between social media usage and social anxiety, particularly in the context of culture and education in Malaysia.

This concept paper is hoped to provide meaningful contributions to various parties such as educators, counsellors, parents, and policymakers in understanding the psychosocial challenges faced by adolescents, particularly those related to social anxiety due to social media usage. On top of that, the findings of this study could serve as a foundation for creating different forms of interventions like digital awareness modules, emotional literacy programs, and guidelines for safer and more balanced social media use based on good values. Other expectations include the creation of more focused and practical support strategies in schools, increased parental awareness of the impact of technology use on children's well-being, and the formulation of more inclusive digital education policies. In the long term, it is hoped that this concept paper will contribute to the efforts to strengthen the overall mental well-being of students and prepare them to be more ethical, resilient, and responsible social media users in both the virtual and real worlds.

In this concept paper, the Cognitive Theory of Social Anxiety by Clark and Wells (1995) is seen to be able to provide basic theoretical knowledge into the context of social media use among high school students. This theory, which originally emphasized face-to-face interaction, is seen as relevant to understanding how cognitive factors influence students' social behavior in digital spaces, including how they interact, express themselves, and build relationships virtually. From a contextual perspective, this study adds specific knowledge to the student environment in the State of Melaka, thus providing relevant guidance in

developing more appropriate educational strategies and interventions to promote healthy and balanced use of social media.

Acknowledgement

References

American Psychiatric Association. (2022). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed., text rev.; DSM-5-TR)*. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.

Andreassen, C. S. (2015). Online social network site addiction: A comprehensive review. *Current Addiction Reports, 2(2), 175–184*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40429-015-0056-9

Boursier, V., Gioia, F., & Griffiths, M. D. (2020). Do selfie-expectancies and social appearance anxiety predict adolescents' problematic social media use?. Computers in Human Behavior, 110, 106395. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106395

Casale, S., & Fioravanti, G. (2020). Why narcissists are at risk for developing Facebook addiction: The need to be admired and the need to belong. *Addictive Behaviors, 101*, 105933. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2019.04.002

Chou, H. T. G., & Edge, N. (2012). "They are happier and having better lives than I am": The impact of using Facebook on perceptions of others' lives. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *15(2), 117–121.*

Clark, D. M., & Wells, A. (1995). A cognitive model of social phobia. In R. G. Heimberg, M. R. Liebowitz, D. A. Hope, & F. R. Schneier (Eds.), *Social phobia: Diagnosis, assessment, and treatment* (pp. 69–93). The Guilford Press.

Dhir, A., Yossatorn, Y., Kaur, P., & Chen, S. (2021). Online social media fatigue and psychological well-being—A study of compulsive use, fear of missing out, and social comparison. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 172, 121019*.https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2018.01.012

Halim, M. S. A. A., Hashim, H., & Yunus, M. M. (2020). Pupils' Motivation and Perceptions on ESL Lessons through Online Quiz-Games. Journal of Education and E-Learning Research, 7(3), 229-234.

Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59–68.

Keles, B., McCrae, N., & Grealish, A. (2020). A systematic review: The influence of social media on depression, anxiety and psychological distress in adolescents. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, 25*(1), 79–93. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2019.1590851

Krejcie, R.V., & Morgan, D.W., (1970). Determining Sample Size for Research Activities. Educational and Psychological Measurement.

Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia. (2022). *Laporan Tinjauan Kesihatan Mental Remaja Malaysia 2022.* Putrajaya: KKM.

La Greca, A. M., & Lopez, N. (1998). Social anxiety among adolescents: Linkages with peer relations and friendships. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 26(2),* 83–94. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022684520514

Marino, C., Gini, G., Vieno, A., & Spada, M. M. (2020). The associations between problematic Facebook use, psychological distress and well-being among adolescents and young

adults: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Affective Disorders, 226*, 274–281. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2017.10.007

Yazan, M. F. (2021). *Pengaruh gaya keibubapaan, rakan sebaya, guru dan pegangan agama terhadap penggunaan media sosial dalam kalangan remaja*. Tesis Doktor Falsafah. Universiti Utara Malaysia.

Nesi, J. (2020). The impact of social media on youth mental health: Challenges and opportunities. *North Carolina Medical Journal, 81*(2), 116–121. https://doi.org/10.18043/ncm.81.2.116

Primack, B. A., Shensa, A., Sidani, J. E., Whaite, E. O., Lin, L. Y., Rosen, D., Colditz, J. B., Radovic, A., & Miller, E. (2017). Social media use and perceived social isolation among young adults in the U.S. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 53(1),* 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2017.01.010

Musa, R. (2020). *Psikologi media sosial: Pengaruh terhadap tingkah laku pengguna*. Penerbit UiTM.

Suruhanjaya Komunikasi dan Multimedia Malaysia (MCMC). (2021). Laporan tahunan SKMM 2021. https://www.mcmc.gov.my/skmmgovmy/media/General/Report/Laporan-Tahunan- 2021.pdf.

Yahaya, S. H., & Umar, N. (2022). Kenali Apa Itu Kebimbangan Dan Kemurungan. *E-buletin JSKM, Vol.8.*

Tandoc, Jr, E. C., Ferrucci, P., & Duffy, M. (2015). Facebook use, envy, and depression among college students: Is facebooking depressing? *Computers in Human Behavior, 43*, 139–146.

Tan, S. M. (2021). Media sosial dan kesihatan mental pelajar IPT di Malaysia: Satu tinjauan awal. *Jurnal Psikologi Malaysia, 35*(1), 45–58.

Utz, S., Tanis, M. A., & Vermeulen, I. E. (2012). It is all about being popular: The effects of need for popularity on social network site use. Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 15(1), 37-42. Article 6. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2010.0651.

Vannucci, A., Flannery, K. M., & Ohannessian, C. M. (2017). Social media use and anxiety in emerging adults. *Journal of Affective Disorders, 207,* 163–166. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2016.08.040

We Are Social & Meltwater. (2024). *Digital 2024: Malaysia*. Data Reportal. https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-malay

Woods, H. C., & Scott, H. (2016). #Sleepyteens: Social media use and adolescent sleep patterns. *Journal of Adolescence, 51,* 41–49. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2016.05.008

Yaakub, N. F. (2013). *Psikologi pendidikan*. Penerbit Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Amir, Z. (2017). *Komunikasi media sosial: Isu, trend dan cabaran*. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

Zubaidah, I. (2020). Persepsi kebimbangan sosial dalam kalangan pelajar IPT: Satu kajian tinjauan. *Jurnal Psikologi Malaysia*, 34(2), 77–89.

Ghani, Z. A., Hj. Abdullah, M. Y., & Osman, M. N. (2011). *Media sosial: Perspektif komunikasi, teknologi dan budaya*. Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.