



**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT AND SOCIAL CONNECTION IN
THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY UTAR STUDENTS IN SUNGAI LONG CAMPUS**

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CHOONG XIN YEE

DECLARATION

I declare that the material contained in this paper is the end result of my own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to ALL sources be they printed, electronic or personal.

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This research paper attached hereto, entitled “Relationship between Social Support and Social Connection in the Use of Social Media by UTAR Students in Sungai Long Campus” prepared and submitted by Choong Xin Yee in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Corporate Communication (Honours) is hereby accepted.

Supervisor

Ms. Chew Wee Lee

Date: _____

ABSTRACT

The amount of time spent on social media by students is relatively higher as technology has become part of their essentials for social interaction. Social connection is important for university students to build and maintain social ties. The research objective of this paper aims to identify how social support influences social connection in the use of social media by the students in UTAR, Sungai Long Campus. This research focuses on the relationship among the main aspects of social connection, social support and usage of social media, in particular to identify how social connection is affected when social support happens in social media in a symbolic interactionism analysis. Thus, to address the research objective, quantitative research was employed by distributing online survey questionnaires to the targeted participants and the data collected is analysed using descriptive analytics. The results presented that with the explanation of symbolic interactionism theory, individuals evaluate social support as the reaction of others, and have developed a positive self-concept leading to enhancement of social connection. However, the findings also suggested social support does influence the social connection in the use of social media, but not strongly influenced as there are neutral findings in a few statements. Therefore, the main research findings highlighted that there is a slight positive relationship between social support and social connection in the use of social media.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Social Media

Social media allows users to exchange ideas and information virtually to interact, create content for sharing, and build online communities with the apps of Facebook, Instagram, and Youtube. This can be a way to define social media formally, however there is also another potential explanation. Social media are channels based on the Internet that allow users to interact opportunistically and selectively self-present, be it instantaneously or not synchronously, with a wide or narrow range of audiences who gain value from generated content by users and others' perception of interaction (Carr, & Hayes, 2015). Social media gives us an option to present what we want to show by thinking how others perceive the information sent.

Social media was started as a platform for interacting among friends and family but was expanded to serve others purposes later (Dollarhide, 2023). Hence, it could be said that social media was created to strengthen the bond between people. The existence of social media platforms enables people to access real time information and connect with each other in finding niche communities creating a world that is more interconnected (Dollarhide, 2023). Users of social media are increasing as it has provided a channel to communicate conveniently and effectively. An estimate of the number of social media users has grown to a record of 4.9 billion people across the world (Wong, 2023). Social media changes from time to time, so it's needed to keep track with the evolution of the social media platforms and searching ways to optimise the availability of tools.

In the era of technology, innovation is important for improving and people are obtaining knowledge easier than before causing expectations in terms of skills and knowledge on individuals

to be higher to keep track with the society. Social media exists as a fast-moving active domain that what may be up-to-date in this moment would have been lost in the virtual landscape the next day (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Every second and minute, there will be new information posted by the users which sometimes can be overwhelming as there is information overloading across the network sites.

1.2 Social Connection

Social connection is defined by the experience of being pleurably or subjectively feeling close to someone with the social bond for the sake of well-being (Inagaki, 2018). Social connection works as a fundamental for well being as it creates a sense of belonging or closeness between each other. To have social connection for an individual, they'll need to have their social relationship being built for interpersonal and group communication. The acknowledgement of an individual on social roles fulfilments might be beneficial in influencing self-esteem and gives a sense of controllability and meaning in life (Cash & Toney-Butler, 2022).

Social connectedness could influence not only mentally, but also our bodies and behaviours. Being connected to each other gives a sense of belonging to feel companionship instead of loneliness. People who were engaged in more social interactions have reported higher levels of social connectedness and positive emotions were shown by experiments (Okabe-Miyamoto et al., 2021). The components of social connectedness can be referred to socialising, social support and sense of belonging with the combination of socialising and connection. People who are engaged with relationships that are positive are better at facing life challenges (Healthwise, 2022). So, even

though it's unpreventable to have life challenges as we grow, when there are positive ties of connection, individuals could be more optimistic in overcoming them.

1.3 Communication

"No man is an island" taken from the poem by John Donne means that every human being is interconnected and should not be isolated with strong relationships for fulfilling life. According to Berko, R. (1994, as cited in Morreal et al, 2000), "Communication is the vehicle which allows humans to recall the past, think in the present and plan for the future". It shows that communication is needed throughout our lives at all of our growing phases. Therefore, communication is extremely important which causes the advance of development on communication tools and now we have social media. It's human ability to use language and words as the symbol to transfer and receive specific messages with meanings (Nordquist, 2019). So as human beings, we have our common language and communication is the channel for us to understand each other to form relationships.

1.4 Social Support


Interpretation of social support can vary to individual and in different stages of life to address the functions of social support. Social support and social adjustments are the elements that were adopted in describing social well-being by majority researchers even though there might be differences in interpreting social well-being (Larson, 1993). Poor perceived social support has been found to be associated with depression and anxiety symptoms (Roomaney et al, 2019). Cao et al (2020, as cited in Szkody et al, 2020) found that among Chinese college students, living with parents at home, having stable financial in the family, perceiving more social support were associated with lesser rates of stress and anxiety during the COVID-19 time. Communication is

important not once in a while but everyday, as conversations could strongly impact the social well being of an individual. Intentionally or without intention, social support happens in the behaviours of being valued or cared with communicating directly in a daily interactional process. In the viewpoint of social support as resources, it's possible that the support may have negative as well as positive outcomes on wellbeing (Cohen & Syme, 1985). It's not a guarantee that social media could help individuals to gain social support, and some might not have strong social support as others. Revealing social support that was unwanted was always experienced as attacking independence and self-determination (Palant & Himmel, 2019).

The qualitative aspect in social support includes an appraisal of a person of the social support he/she experiences, or the person's integration in the social network (Drageset, 2021). Appraisal support works as an effective support, however there are also different functions of social support in communication. In a social network, the specific functions that members could provide such as emotional, instrumental and informational are the important aspects of social support (Drageset, 2021). The support could be explained as emotional support; listening, care and compassion, informational support; guidance and advice, instrumental; tangible or physical assistance, and appraisal support also known as esteem support; reminding a person's strength to encourage and enhance confidence.

1.5 Social Support and Social Media

Social media was described as a place that reduced the feelings of being isolated (Selkie et al., 2020). Social media is interesting as it also serves an entertainment purpose where people will not miss out on certain information circulating on the internet. Gaining emotional support, enhancing

ability to mobilize others and creating social networks are the reasons most students are more likely to use social media platforms, in order to increase their social belongingness (Ostic et al., 2021). It was found that self and social connections are the needs that could be satisfied by using social media that could enhance motivational self beliefs that results in promoting the behaviours of sharing information (Kim et al., 2022). 

1.6 Problem Statement

Enhancing the connection between individuals is the start of why social media was created. Active social media use could contribute a general sense of social support if the users sees their connection online as a supportive community (Yue et al., 2023). Mental health is equally important to physical health and strong social support is one of the ways to enhance both mental and physical health. Strong social support appears to be protecting against the crucial impact on mental and physical illness (Ozbay et al., 2007).

Social support plays the role of building people up when they encounter a stressful period in giving strength to carry on and thrive (Cherry, 2023). In another way, lack of social support is not gaining strength to be confident in carry on for hard times. Poor social support was linked to being depressed and feeling loneliness and affecting their thoughts which increase the risk of having physical and mental health issues (Cherry, 2023).

Social support can be strong but also be weak that could influence a person's self-esteem, resulting in the effect of an individuals' desire to build the social connection. People with higher introversion were sensitive to loneliness and loss of social connection (Card & Skakoon-Sparling, 2023). Technology might seem to be connecting people more than ever, however technology has also

parted us from disconnecting people from nature, our inner self, as well as others (Scottatmachine, 2021).

Thus, this study is to address if social support on social media will influence the social connection of an individual among students in UTAR, Sungai Long Campus. This research seeks to figure out if social support is important for social connection and how social media has made an impact on UTAR students in Sg Long Campus.

1.7 Significance of Study

By researching this study, it allows us to understand how social support from social media will influence the social connection of an individual. There can be strong social support, but also weak social support as well. The concept of social support is clearly worth the study as it provides a meaningful and simple combination of diverse results of findings on health. Both social support and social connection are important for our mental and physical wellbeing. Most individuals use social media for positive health outcomes and one of it includes seeking social support (Rosen et al., 2022) Thus, social support from social media could enhance a positive mindset for reducing the feeling of loneliness and lack of support resulting in self-isolation.

Social connection facilitates ways that are meaningful in gaining support and provides resources for good health and well-being (Wilkinson et al, 2019). Social connection needs to be built and maintained with time, understanding and positive input. For many people, the idea of connecting brings emotional discomfort (Gallo, 2015). So, does social support give individuals a sense of

belonging to start or build a social connection? Therefore, this study is to find out how social support in social media is linked with social connection.

1.8 Research Objective

- 1) To identify how social support influences social connection in the use of social media by the students in UTAR, Sg Long Campus.

1.9 Research Question

- 1) How does social support influence the social connection in the use of social media by the students in UTAR, Sg Long Campus?

CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Having a theoretical framework serves as a structure to support a research study. This theoretical framework for this study uses symbolic interactionism theory to explain the concepts of the research topic. This chapter discusses the theoretical framework applied in this study.

2.2 Symbolic Interactionism Theory

Symbolic interactionism has provided a framework that's valuable in understanding how individuals use communication, symbols, and meaning to develop their own social worlds. It's believed that people behave by what is believed to be and not only on what is true objectively (Crossman, 2020). Meaning can be socially constructed in where everyone has different interpretations from various social contexts.

The individual development was a social process when individuals assign meanings to things and individuals might change by the interactions with events, ideas, things which they assign meaning to things to decide on how to act. Symbolic interactionism theory assumes individuals respond to elements of their own environment based on the subjective meanings of the elements that they were attached to (Nickerson, 2023). So, it's an action depending on the meaning where different people assign different meanings to things where the meaning can be changed based on the interaction. A cycle of five elements includes surrounding symbols, establishing meanings, developing their view, and communicating with each other and society.

2.3 Expansion of Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism pays attention to these individuals' subjective viewpoints and how they make sense of the world from their own perspective (Carter and Fuller, 2015, as cited in Nickerson, 2023). Symbolic interactionism focuses on the importance of interactions that helped to shape the social reality where individuals interpret the social situation and other's reaction to constantly modify their behaviour.

The key theorists of symbolic interaction theory were created by George Huber Mead from 1863-1961, expanded by Hebert Blumer in 1900-1987 and Charles Horton Cooley from 1864-1929. George Herbert Mead created the brief accounts of symbolic interactionism but the phrase of "symbolic interactionism" theoretical perspective was coined by Herbert Blumer, who developed a clear definition of the term. Drawing from the theory from Mead, in 1937, Blumer coined "symbolic interaction" (Cole, 2019).

According to Reck (1863) & Blumer (1968), "self", "society", and "environment" are the elements that the theory can be utilised in leading the way of thinking (Husin et al, 2021). According to Collins (1994, as cited in Nickerson, 2023) society is about as structured as the interactions among individuals themselves. It can be understood as meaning is constructed by interactions among individuals where meaning is unfixed and everyone can have different interpretations on the meaning.

Blumer's theoretical orientation on symbolic interactionism can be simplified in three elements includes 1) human's behaviour toward things based on the meaning the things have for them, 2) the meaning of the things is determined by the social interaction that person has with others, 3) the

interpretive process used for handling and modifying the meaning by the things that the person encountered or deal with (Carter & Fuller, 2016).

Moreover, there is expansion on this theory by Snow. According to Snow (cited in Carter & Fuller, 2016) she believes symbolic interactionism can be conceived within the principle of interactive determination, symbolization, emergence and human agency. Symbolic interactionism gives a direction on how society is developed and maintained by repeated interaction along with individuals.

2.4 Symbolic Interactionism and Social Media

An area of inquiry related to relationships among individuals, technology and society are one of the few areas that was mentioned that future interactionists should attend to. It was undeniable that in the past decade, we had witnessed the advancement of communication technology among mostly every individual. According to Carter & Fuller (2015, as cited in Nickerson, 2023), the developments of technology assisting or taking place in interaction need to be a focus for symbolic interaction in moving forward. Symbols can be constructed in various ways such as materials goods, education or the way we interact with others being the instrument on development of the self.

Symbolic interactionism was a theory demonstrated by social media which defined meaning as was found in a situation given based on reflecting upon our actions through the views of others. Even though social media themselves do not create any information, they have power in shaping public opinion. Their power in influencing whole societies comes from their position as interactions are enabled by platforms to convey meanings to participants (Drew, 2023).



This theory helps media researchers to understand the field better as the important role of the media works in developing and propagating shared symbols and due to the media's power, it can create its own symbol (Libretexts, 2023). A person can dive into the way social media changes the interaction between people with the knowledge of symbolic interactionism perspective.

Interpretation can be arised in two ways including when individuals identify things in meaningful situations and during an internal dialogue on how to respond to the object that was found meaningful (Nilsson, 2012). Blumer suggests that humans construct the meaning of their experience and act based on the meanings.

The meaning comes from the interpretive interaction, process of reflective, linguistic and behavioural interactions among others in the diverse systems people stay and constantly interact with (Ali et al, 2022). Hence that's how people construct the society continuously and in turn society continuously constructs the perception and people's experiences. It emphasises on self and identity development via social interaction which isn't a solid entity but evolves in the process of socialising.

The looking glass self concept was given by Charles Horton Cooley which was an important concept in symbolic interaction theory (Drew, 2023). According to Cooley, how our thoughts on what others perceive us shaped our self image. We view others as mirrors who reflect back to us, where ourself is constructed by the interactions with the society (Drew, 2023).

2.5 Glass-looking Theory in Symbolic Interactionism influencing Social Connection

In the theory of “looking glass self” by Cooley, he claims that our self-concept and identities are the reflection of how we were perceived by other people (Crossman, 2019). The thoughts of us living in the mind of others without noticing it is profoundly important (Scheff, 2005). Intersubjectivity, a perception facilitated by empathy, was defined as the interchange of both unconscious and conscious thoughts and feelings between two individuals (Cooper-White, 2014). Intersubjectivity is ingrained into the nature of human beings.

The idea of the theory in looking glass self (LGS) was formulated by Charles Cooley (1992) and now being an accepted part of not only modern social psychology but also part of symbolic interactionism (Scheff, 2005). Our internal interpretation of others' reaction towards us is more important than reality (Crossman, 2019). By observing the reactions of others and interpreting them, they could start to develop a self-concept and have a negative or positive sense of self by making conclusions on how others evaluate them. This self-idea then creates the elements of imagination of how we appeared in other's point of view, imagination of the judgement by others and lastly the self-feeling identified by our own imagination of others' judgements.


Self-evaluations that are negative created from unreciprocated relations from a sociological perspective (Krawczyk et al, 2019). Thus, social interaction needed to form a relationship can affect an individual's behaviour when making self-evaluation after interacting with others. When individuals go through threats in a domain of contingency self-worth, the desire for social connection in a prioritised manner versus self-protection lies on their overall level of self-esteem (Park & Maner, 2008).

2.6 Social Support and Social Connection: Symbolic Interactionist Analysis

Symbolic interactionist theory has also focused on two aspects: role taking and importance of social control which are useful to analyse the manner in social control facilitated by role-taking sentiments (Shott, 1979). Role taking sentiments were parted in two different areas which both facilitate social control. Roles taking emotions contained guilt, shame, embarrassment, pride and vanity directed to one's own self. Role taking refers to looking at a situation from the viewpoint of a third party, basically to understanding their thoughts and actions. Sociologists explain social control as the way of how norms, rules, laws, structure regulate human behaviour in a society. (Crossman, 2019). By the limits set within social norms and internal stimuli, individuals developed their emotions and their meaning and interpretations are significant to this important process that often occurs (Shott, 1979).

Individuals conform to a society in the perspective of mutual benefit of gaining support in the society. A study by Taylor et al (2007, as cited in Abduhul, 2021), research was conducted on cultural support among different cultures including Asians, European and Asian American on seeking support to deal with their emotional stress, and the study showed Asians were unable to express their emotions and social stress from outside of their social units to take advice. The reason is because the social norms bond had shaped their orientation regarding expressing.

Symbolic interactionism is greatly suited being the central of the construction of feeling which brings the interplay between impulse, definition and socialisation (Shott, 1979). According to Clark (1997) & Franks (2003), as cited in Fields & Copp & Kleinman, 2006), symbolic interactionists claim that both social and emotion are never separable, but indeed signals engagement among others, cultural and subcultural memberships. Clark (1990), states that we rely

on emotion cues and practice interactional strategies of daily interactions to examine and know ours and others social status (Fields et al, 2006). Therefore, the relationship between social support that influences the emotions of an individual certainly affects the social connection when we use symbolic interactionism that shapes our identity in social interaction with others. 

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is on the methodology used in conducting this research. This chapter includes the research design, research instrument, data collection method, questionnaire design, research populations, ethical considerations and data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

A goal of descriptive research study is to explore, to get familiarity with a phenomenon or to receive new insights (Kramer, 1985). Descriptive research mainly focuses on what instead of how or why something happened (Nassaji, 2015). It is a study that presents trends, beliefs, publics' opinion, their point of view and attitude, and their development of trends. The research is completed without the subjects being influenced (Librarianship Studies, 2022). Descriptive research can be viewed as more than just data collection, there is also measurement, classification, comparison and interpretation involved (Librarianship Studies, 2022). In this study, descriptive research is used to determine the relationship of social support and social connection in the use of social media with the data collected by the respondents from UTAR, Sungai Long campus.

3.3 Research Instrument

Descriptive research can be conducted by using different types of methods to obtain and one of it is by using surveys. When a large sample is required to access certain information, the best tool for the researchers may be using surveys (Moore, 2022). Online survey research is evolving as

the advancement of technology. Researchers in the communication field might find the Internet an especially rich area in conducting survey research (Wright, 2017). Communication fields can have various research areas such as social media, marketing and communication, sustainable communication, etc. Other than that, researchers in various disciplines may also find the Internet a suitable place to conduct survey research. In today's environment, web-based survey or online survey tools have transformed to be a common data collection instrument (Raju & Harinarayana, 2016). According to an interesting observation from Lin & Wang (2015, as cited in (Raju & Harinarayana, 2016), it was found that online surveys are more reliable as compared to face-to-face surveys. Therefore, online survey is a suitable method in collecting data for this study in maintaining time effectiveness and efficiency with the reliability of the data.

3.3.1 Data Collection Method

Data collection refers to the process of gathering and analysing data on variables that allows one to address stated research questions, test hypotheses and evaluate the outcome (Kabir, 2016). Data collection method is considered common in different fields of study including social sciences, humanities and business. Data collection methods are significant as it could generate how the information collected is used and the explanations it can provide are determined by the application of the methodology and analytical approach of the researchers (Paradis et al., 2016). The purpose of data collection is to reach the goal by collecting quality data that works as evidence and transforms to rich data analysis for defining data, accurate data collection is necessary in maintaining research integrity (Kabir, 2016).

Questionnaires will be distributed to collect data for this research. Google Survey Form is the preferred method in conducting this questionnaire. The availability of the tool for free and automatic recording of responses from respondents have made data collection and analysis easy (Raju & Harinarayana, 2016). Google Forms is a classroom tool that is valuable in facilitating data collection and analysis (Hsu & Wang, 2017). The strength of using google forms allows the data collection to be effective, efficient, and accurate with its auto generalised data. Therefore, the most suitable web-based survey in this study to conduct the questionnaire is by using google form. What the study is all about including a brief background of the researcher, research topic and the purpose of research is written in the description. All participants in this study are participating on a completely voluntary basis. Last but not least, the participants are rest assured that all information collected will be kept private and confidential.




3.4 Questionnaire Design

There are a total of five sections for the questionnaires for respondents to provide data for the study. The first section includes the main introduction for this study and confirms their eligibility to participate in this study. The other sections include demographics, usage on social media, social support in social media, and social support and social connection in the use of social media.

Section A includes informing the participants about the research purpose and asking for their eligibility to participate by identifying if they are a student in UTAR, Sungai Long campus to ensure the students met the criteria as the target respondents in this study. They can proceed to the next section if their answer is yes and will be prompted to the submit section if the answer is no.

All data will only be collected and analysed from students in UTAR, Sg Long Campus.

Section B consists of demographics with questions regarding their age, gender, nationality, faculty using multiple choice questions. Moving on, Section C aims to know the respondent's usage on social media with a total of six questions allocated with a mixture of multiple-choice questions and checkboxes questions. Going on to Section D, it's about social support in social media consisting of seven questions with likert scale applied. Lastly, Section E, the last section contains 7 questions in total about social support and social connection in the use of social media, with the use of likert scales questions as well. Both Section D and E uses a five-point likert scale which consists of a statement for the respondents to choose from 1-5. A likert scale is a scale for rating in measuring opinions, attitudes and behaviour (Bhandari & Nikolopoulou, 2023). The format of five-level Likert scales are (1-strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- neutral, 4- agree, 5- strongly agree). Therefore, respondents are required to rate based on their opinion for the statement to measure the level of agreement and disagreement within the range. Likert scales do not expect only yes no answer but allow for a certain degree of opinion or no opinion. When quantitative data is applied, the data could be analysed relatively easily. Therefore, one of the most suitable types of collecting data in this research is by using likert scales. 

3.5 Research Population


The target audience of this study are students from UTAR, Sungai Long Campus. Certificate, diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate studies are the study opportunities in higher education. Generally, higher education for diploma level usually ages 17 onwards whereas bachelor degrees acquired qualifications from post-secondary school such as foundation or A-level usually in the age of 19 onwards. However, UTAR's entry level of higher education does not include diploma

but only foundation. Thus, the age of the targeted respondents will be students from the age above 16 in UTAR, Sungai Long campus. Identifying the availability in terms of time could determine where and what sort of research location to be chosen. To make this research an efficient and effective one, UTAR, Sungai Long Campus is chosen as the site for this research paper. Instead of going for the option to collect data from respondents with different backgrounds or settings, conducting the research on the same settings with the same criteria as a student could provide more specific and focused data throughout the research. Hence, choosing UTAR, Sungai Long Campus as the research setting includes the consideration for time and validity of the respondents. To ensure the validity of the responses, only UTAR email is allowed to be the respondents in this questionnaire and limited to only 1 response per one email address, to ensure there are no repeated participants. A total of 150 respondents were targeted for this study to provide more accurate findings and analysis to be made in this research area. This study was conducted as primary research as all data for finding and analysis are based on the data collected first hand.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

All respondents are notified that this research is conducted on a completely voluntary basis. The questions were sent for ethical clearance before distributing. All participants were aware of their responses being collected and agreed to participate in the study with the awareness of the purpose of this study as an academic final year research paper. The participants were also rest assured that all information and response will be kept private and confidential.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data for this study was analysed in descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis, also referred to as descriptive analytics and descriptive statistics (Bush, 2020). Descriptive analysis seeks to describe or summarise current or past data that helps to create data insights to be accessible (Bush, 2020). Descriptive statistics can provide the summary of the data in the form of quantitative measures such as percentage in visual form summaries in histograms and box plots (Kaliyadan & Kulkarni, 2019). Descriptive statistics can be categorised into sorting illustration and visual displays or summarise statistics. The data summarised automatically by google form with the visual displays or percentage summarise in a form of bar chart or pie chart allows descriptive analysis to be used for data analysis in this study. 

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analysed the findings from data collected from the questionnaire for this study via google form. A total of 150 respondents participated in this survey which comprised 5 sections and 25 questions all together.

4.2 Eligibility- Section A

1. Are you a student in UTAR, Sungai Long campus?

150 responses

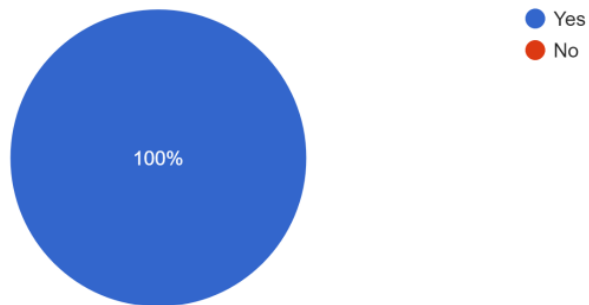


Figure 4.1 Students in UTAR, Sungai Long campus.

Figure 4.1 shows all 150 respondents for this questionnaire are from UTAR, Sungai Long campus with a percentage of 100% (150).

4.3 Demographics- Section B

1. What is your age?

150 responses

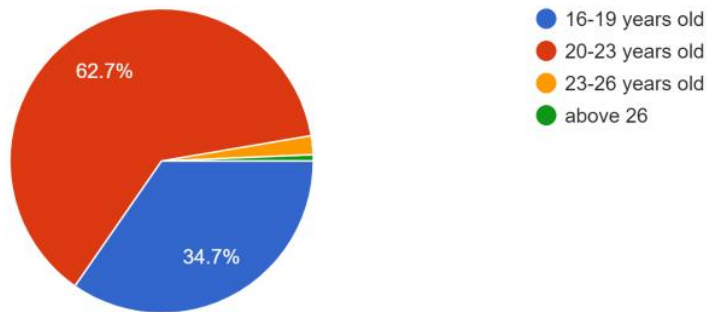


Figure 4.2.1 Age of the Respondents

Figure 4.2.1 shows the respondents' age. The highest percentage of respondents fall under the age category of 20-23 with a percentage of 62.7% (94). The age category of 16-19 has the second highest percentage of respondents with 34.7% (52). It was followed by the percentage of 2% (3) of respondents in the age category of 23-26. Lastly only 0.7% (1) of respondents are categorised under the age of above 26.

2. Gender

150 responses

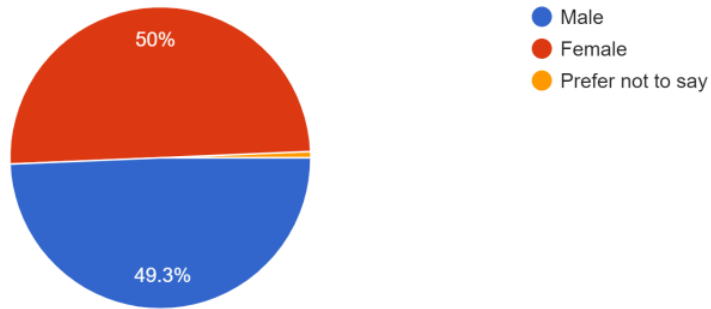


Figure 4.2.2 Gender of the Respondents

Among the respondents in this study, 50% (75) respondents are female while 49.3% (74) respondents are male. 0.7% (1) respondent prefer not to reveal his/her gender.

3. Nationality

150 responses

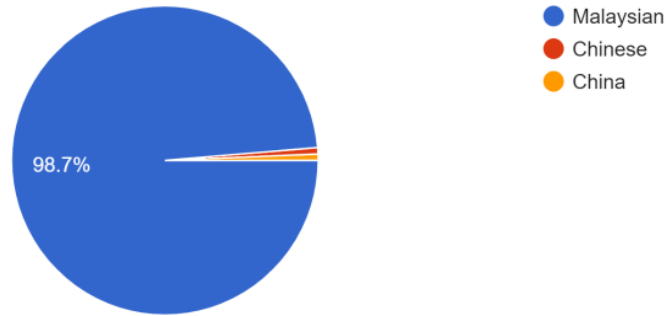


Figure 4.2.3 Nationality of the Respondents

Based on figure 4.2.3, out of 150 respondents, 98.7% (148) respondents are Malaysian and 1.4% (2) are not Malaysian.

4. Faculty

150 responses

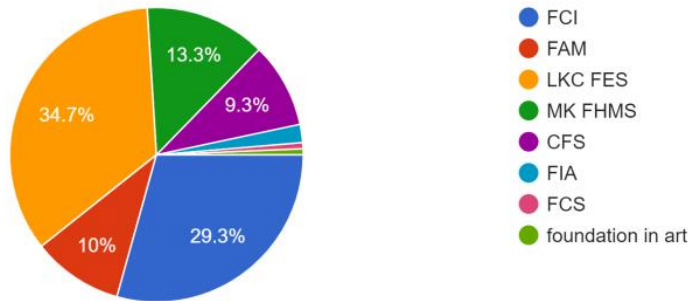


Figure 4.2.4 Faculty of the Respondents

According to figure 4.2.4, the highest number of respondents are from Faculty of Engineering and Science (LKC FES) which have 34.7% (52), followed by respondents from Faculty of Creative Industries (FCI) with a percentage of 29.3% (44). A 10% (15) percentage of respondents are from Faculty of Accounting and Management (FAM), and 13.3% (20) respondents are from M.Kandiah Faculty of Medicine and Science (MK FHMS) while the others, 12.7% (19) are from Centre of Foundations Studies.

4.4 Usage of Social Media - Section C

1. How long do you use social media in a day?

150 responses

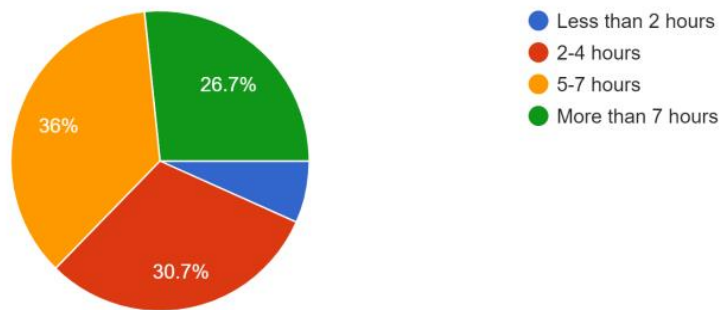


Figure 4.3.1 Social media usage for daily life.

Figure 4.3.1 shows the percentage of the use of social media in a day by the respondents. The highest percentage of respondents, 36% (54) respondents' daily use of social media is 5-7 hours a day. The second highest percentage is 30.7% (46) of respondents' daily use of social media is 2-4 hours a day. Followed by 26.7% (40) respondents who use social media more than 7 hours a day. Lastly, the least percentage of respondents, 6.7% (10) uses less than 2 hours of social media in a day.

2. What is the main purpose for you to use social media?

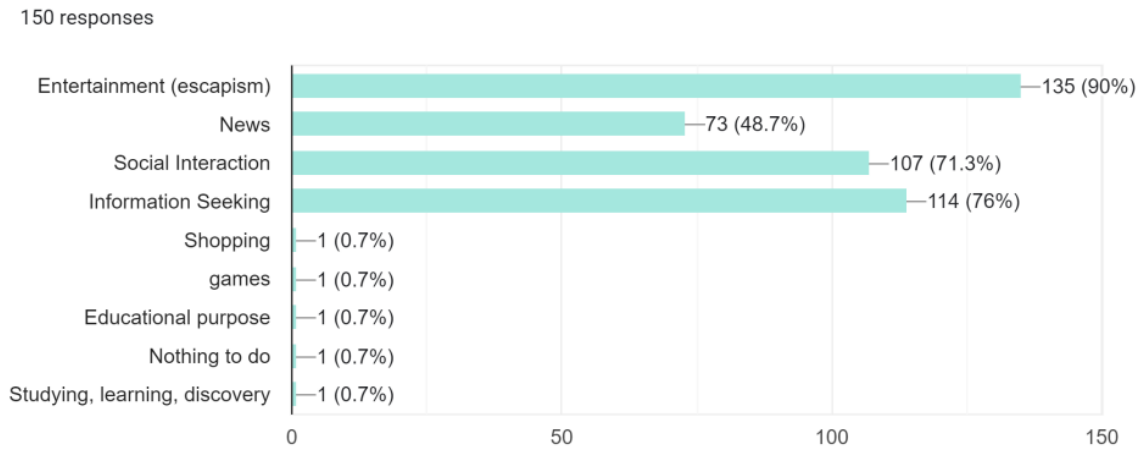


Figure 4.3.2 Main purpose of using social media

The respondents are allowed to choose more than 1 option to figure their main purpose of using social media. Among all purposes, 90% (135) of the respondents use social media for entertainment (escapism) contains the highest percentage of all. Moving on, 76% (114) of respondents use social media for information seeking. It was then followed by the third highest percentage of 71.3% (107) of respondents using social media for social interaction. 48.7% (73) of the respondents also use social media to obtain news. Last but not least, there are respondents who filled in the purpose of using social media as games, nothing to do, educational purpose, studying and learning, shopping with a percentage 0.7% (1) respondents respectively.

3. Does using social media affect your daily behaviour?

150 responses

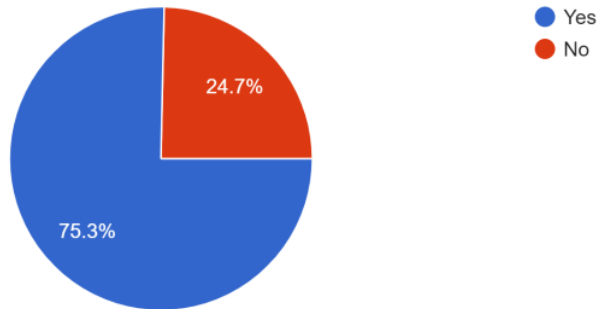


Figure 4.3.3 Effects on behaviour in using social media

Out of 150 respondents 75.3% (113) of the respondents' are affected by social media whereas the other 24.7% (37) respondents' behaviour are not affected by social media.

4. Does using social media increase your sense of belonging?

150 responses

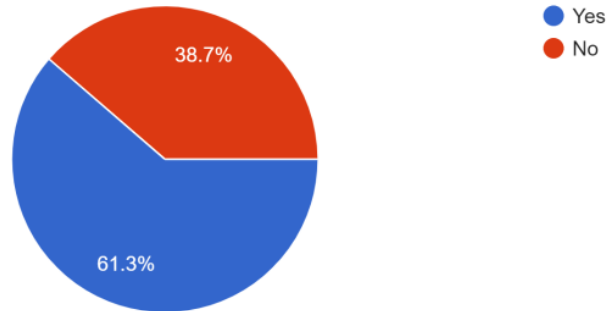


Figure 4.3.4 Sense of belonging in using social media

Figure 4.3.4 shows that 61.3% (92) of the respondents feel that using social media increases their sense of belonging. The other 38.7% (58) of the respondents do not feel that social media increases their sense of belonging.

5. Have you ever received social support from social media?

150 responses

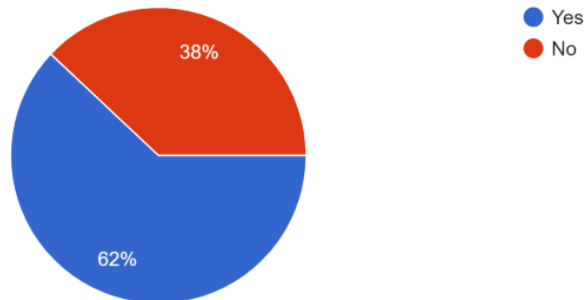


Figure 4.3.5 Social support in the use of social media

Based on figure 4.3.5, the respondents were asked if they have ever received social support from social media. A percentage of 62% (93) of the respondents stated that they did with answering yes and 38% (57) of them answered no.

6. How does social support in social media make you feel?

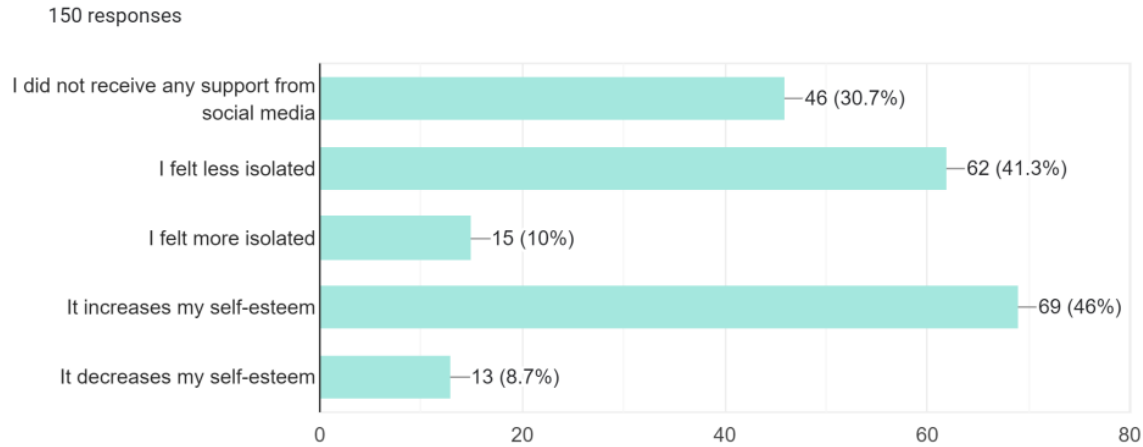


Figure 4.3.6 The feeling of social support in the use of social media

Based on figure 4.3.6, the respondents were asked to choose on how social support in social media made them feel. More than one answer is allowed for this question. The highest percentage of respondents, 46% (69) states that it increases their self-esteem, followed by 41.3% (62) of respondents states that they felt less isolated. However there is also a percentage of 30.7% (46) respondents who did not receive social support from social media. In contrast, the least percentage answer to this question includes 10% (15) mention they felt more isolated and 8.7% (13) states that it decreases their self esteem.

4.5 Social Support in Social Media- Section D

1. It's important to get social support from others in social media.

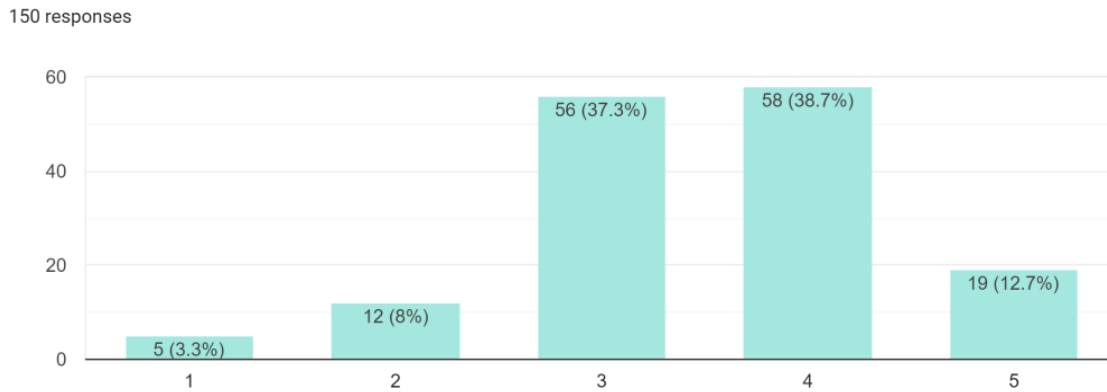


Figure 4.4 Importance of social support in social media

Based on the graph in figure 4.4, 38.7% (58) of respondents agree and 12.7% (19) respondents strongly agree that it's important to get social support from others in social media. 37.3% (56) of respondents are neutral, while 8% (12) respondents disagree and 3.3% (5) strongly disagree with the statement.

2. Emotional support from social media increases my feeling of self-worth.

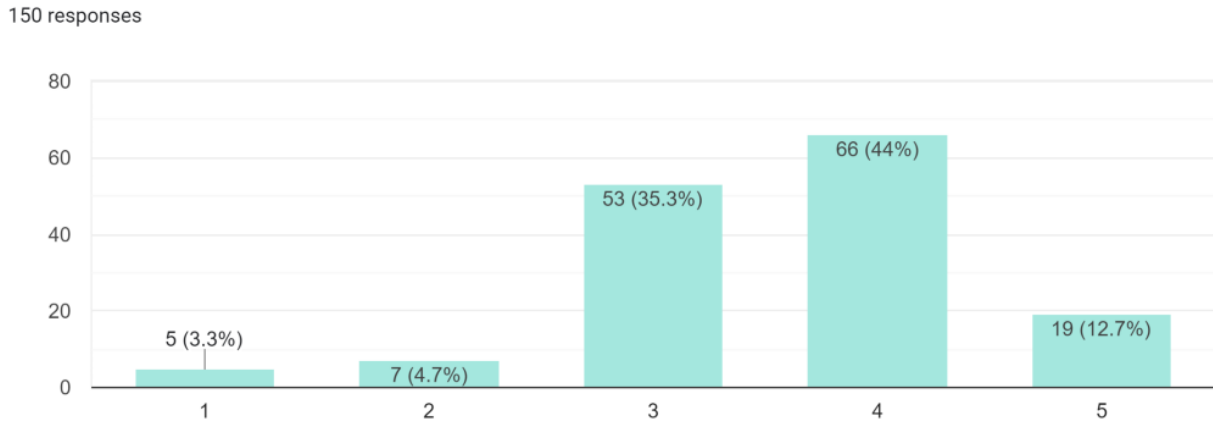


Figure 4.4.1 Emotional support and self-worth in the use of social media

Care and Compassion were given as the example of emotional support. 44% (66) of the respondents agree and 12.7% (19) strongly agree that emotional support increases their feeling of self-worth. 35.3% (53) neither agree or disagree with the statement, while 4.7% (7) of the respondents disagree and 3.3% (5) respondents strongly disagree with the statement.

3. Instrumental (physical) support from social media makes me feel valued.

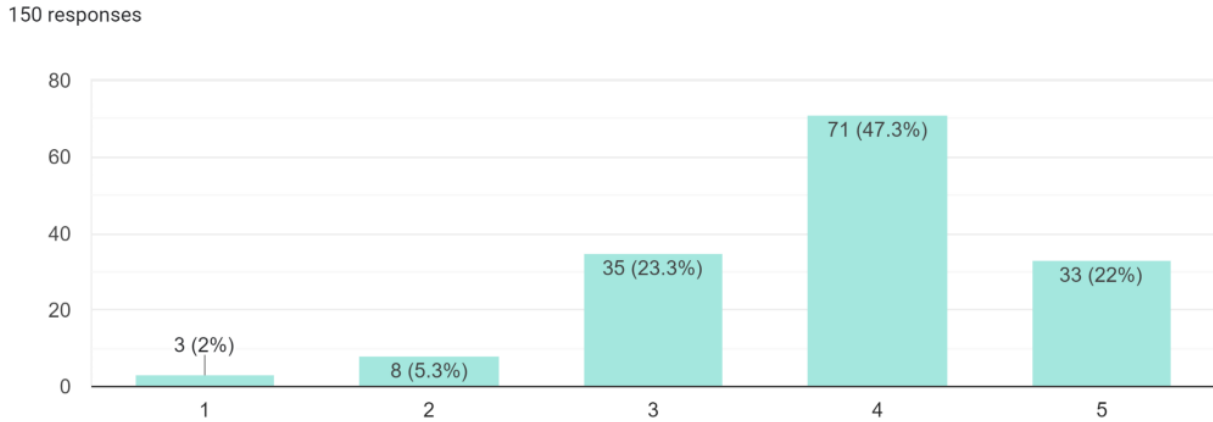


Figure 4.4.2 Social media and instrumental support in the use of social media.

With the example of “friends sending you daily needs when you are sick after they know through social media/ other physical support as instrument support”. Majority of respondents 47.3% (71), agree that instrument support also known as physical support from social media makes them feel valued. 22% (33) of the respondents strongly agree while 23.3% (35) are neutral with this statement. Only 5.3% (8) respondents disagree, and 2% (3) respondents strongly disagree on the statement.

4. Given or received informational support from social media makes me feel more connected to my peers or society?

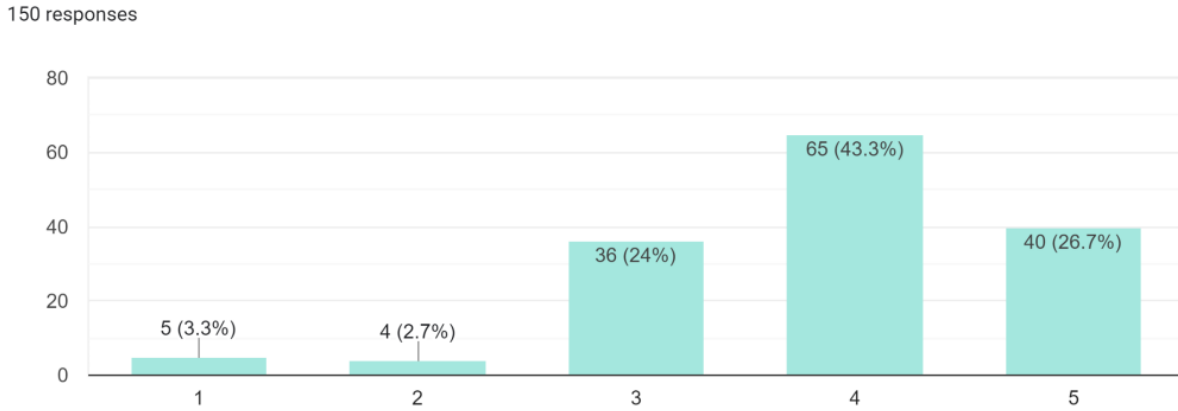


Figure 4.4.3 Social media and informational support in the use of social media

The highest percentage of respondents, 43.3% (65) agree and the second highest percentage of 26.7% (40) strongly agree that the given or received informational support from social media makes them feel more connected to their peers with the example of sharing or gathering information on a topic or how to solve a problem. 24% (36) respondents opted neutral while 2.7% (4) respondents disagree and 3.3% respondents (5) strongly disagree with the statement.

5. Appraisal support in social media makes me feel more confident.

Appraisal support in social media makes me feel more confident. (Eg. Friends and family praising your strength or special traits.)

150 responses

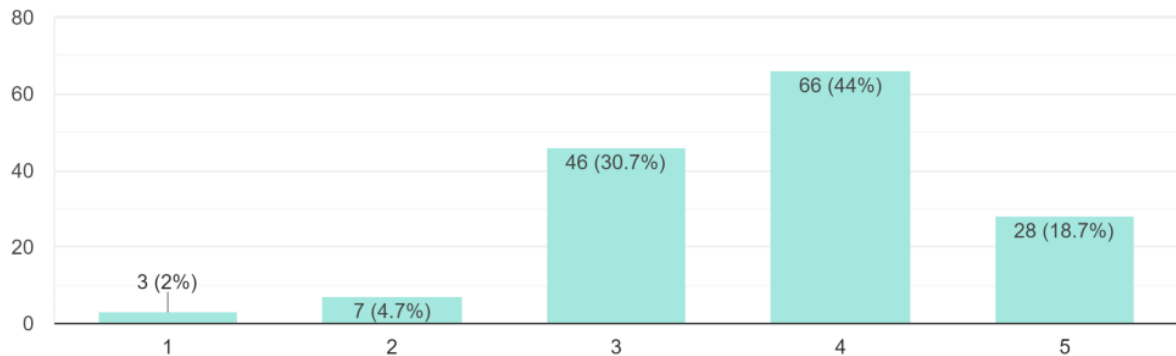


Figure 4.4.4 Social media and appraisal support in the use of social media

With the given example of friends and family praising your strength or special traits from social media as appraisal support, 44% (66) respondents agree and 18.7% (28) strongly agree that appraisal support makes them feel more confident. 30.7% (46) neither agree nor disagree whereas 4.7% (7) respondents agree and 2% (3) strongly disagree on the statement.

6. Social support in social media for my side is always positive.

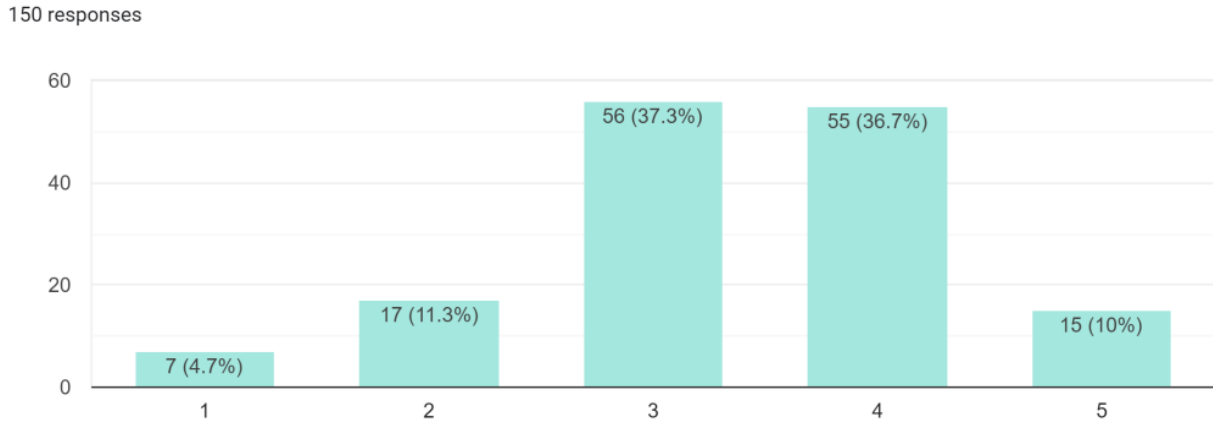


Figure 4.4.5 Positivity of social support in the use of social media

According to the graph in figure 4.4.5, 36.7% (55) respondents agree and 10% (15) strongly agree that social support in social media on their side is always positive. 37.3% (56) respondents are neutral while 11.3% (17) respondents disagree and 4.7% (7) strongly disagree with the statement.

7. My self-esteem decreases when I do not get social support from social media.

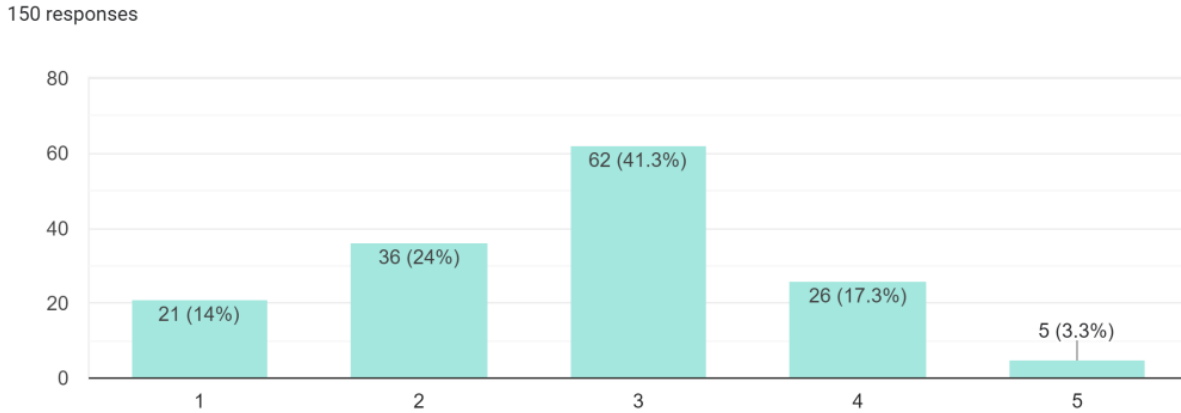


Figure 4.4.6 Social support and self esteem in the use of social media

The statement of self-esteem decreases when they do not get social support from social media was opted neutral by 41.3% (62) respondents. 24% (36) respondents disagree and 14% (21) strongly disagree with the statement. 17.3% (26) respondents agree and only 3.3% (5) respondents strongly agree on the statement.

4.6 Social Support and Social Connection in the Use of Social Media - Section E

1. Gaining social support in social media increases my social connection with others.

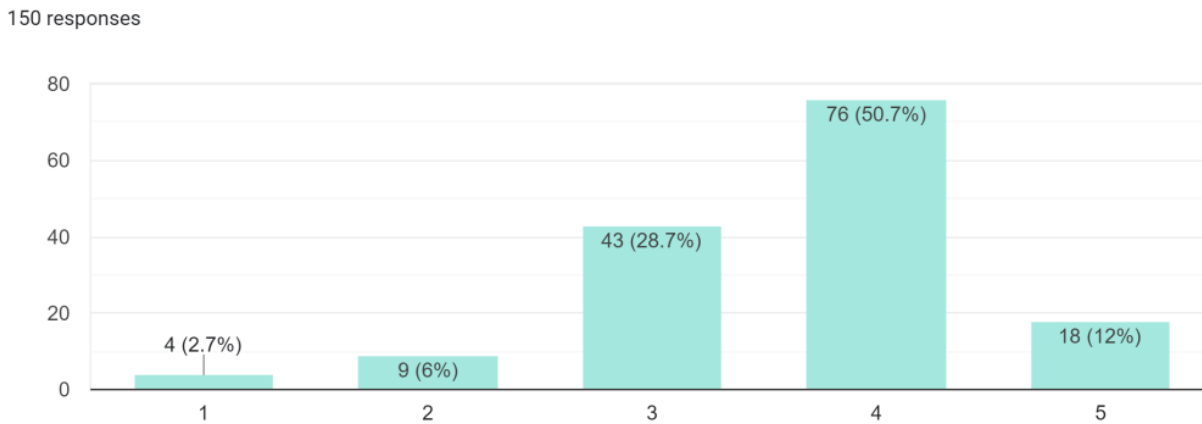


Figure 4.5 Social support and social connection in the use of social media

Based on the graph on Figure 4.5, 50.7% (76), which is more than half of the respondents agree and 12% (18) strongly agree that social support increases their social connection with others. 28.7% (43) respondents are neutral with the statement whereas 6% (9) respondents disagree and 2.7 (4) strongly disagree with the statement.

2. Social support in social media increases my confidence.

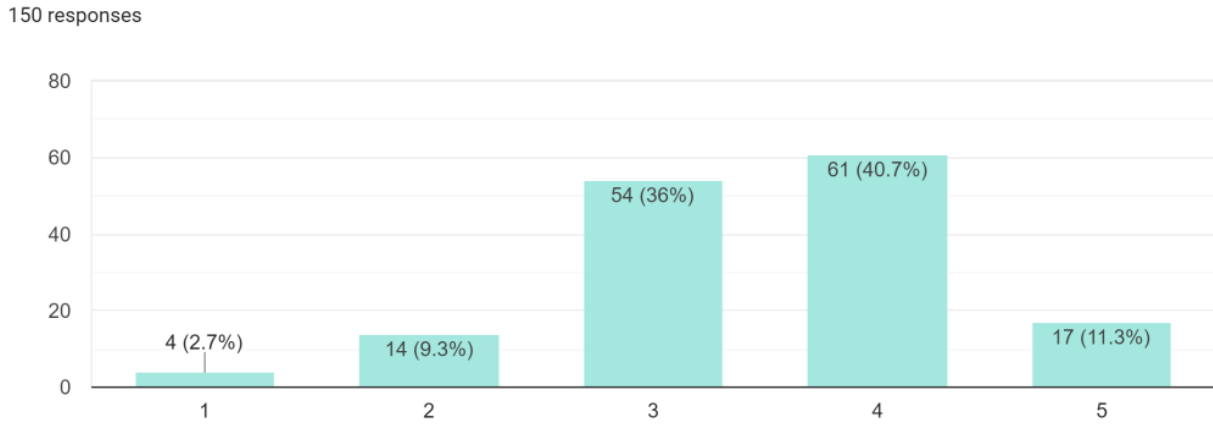


Figure 4.5.1 Social support and confidence in the use of social media

Based on figure 4.5.1, the highest percentage, 40.7% (61) respondents agree and 11.3% (17) respondents strongly agree that social support increases their confidence in the use of social media. 36% (54) neither disagree nor agree with this statement whereas in contradict, 9.3% (14) respondents disagree and 2.7% (4) strongly disagree with the statement.

3. Social support in social media makes me want to build connections with others.

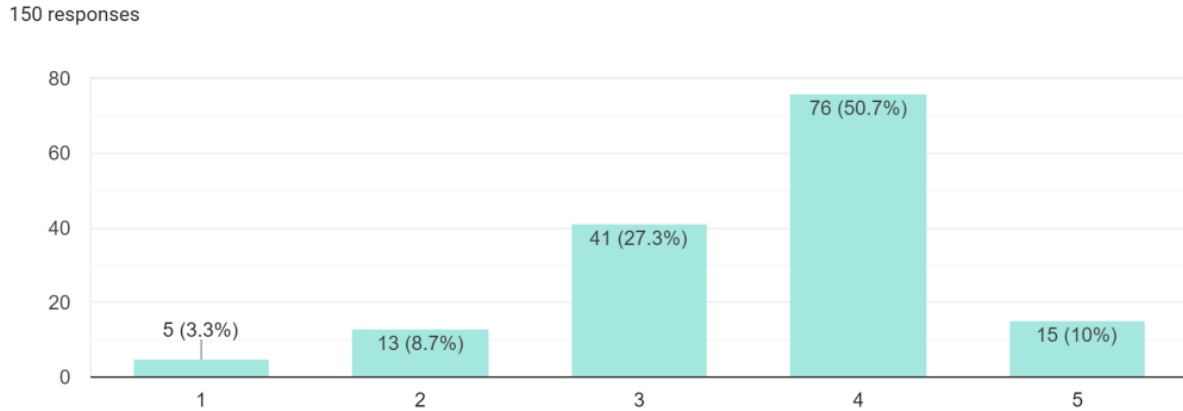


Figure 4.5.2 Social support and desire for building connections in the use of social media.

More than half of the respondents, 50.7% (76) respondents agree and 10% (15) respondents strongly agree that social support in the use of social media makes them want to build connections with others. 27.3% (41) respondents are neutral with this statement whereas 8.7% (13) respondents disagree and 3.3% (5) strongly disagree with the statement.

4. Social support in social media makes me want to maintain relationships with others.

Social support in social media makes me want to maintain relationships with others.

150 responses

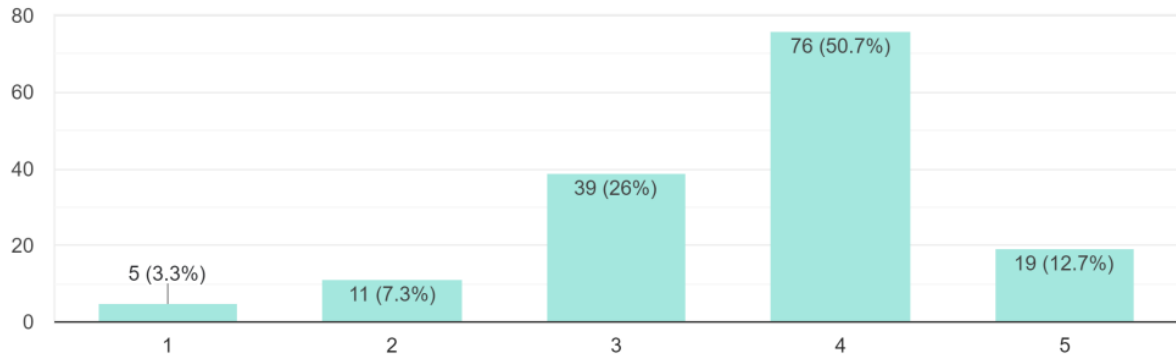


Figure 4.5.3 Social support and relationship in the use of social media

Majority of the respondents agree and strongly agree with this statement. There are 50.7% (76) respondents who agree and 12.7% (19) respondents who strongly agree that social support makes them want to maintain relationships with others. 26% (39) respondents are neutral while 7.3% (11) respondents disagree and 3.3% (5) strongly disagree with the statement.

5. Social support in social media changes my behaviour towards others in a positive way.

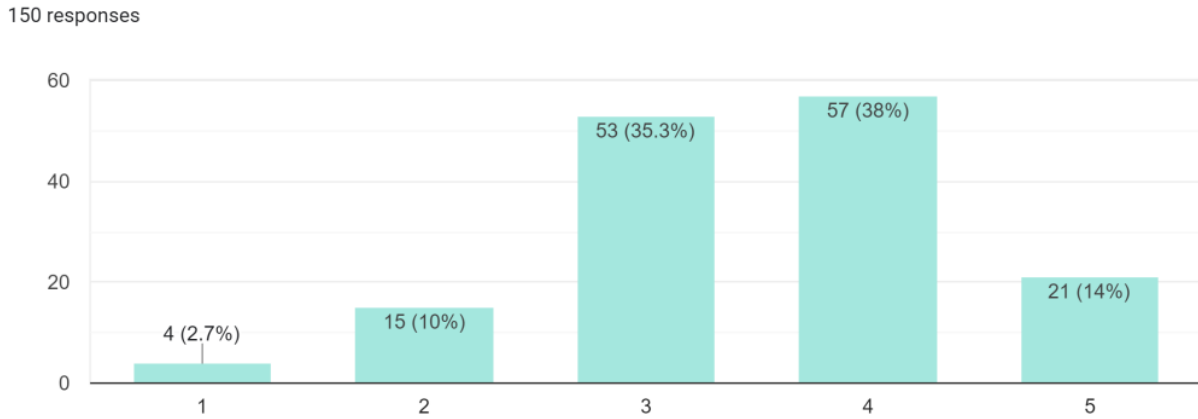


Figure 4.5.4 Social support and positive behaviour by the of social media

Based on figure 4.5.4, 38% (57) of respondents agree and 14% (21) strongly agree that social support changes their behaviour towards others in a positive way. 35.3% (53) respondents were neutral with this statement. Only 10% (15) of respondents disagree and 2.7% (4) of respondents disagree with the statement.

6. Social support in social media encourages me to be myself when socialising.

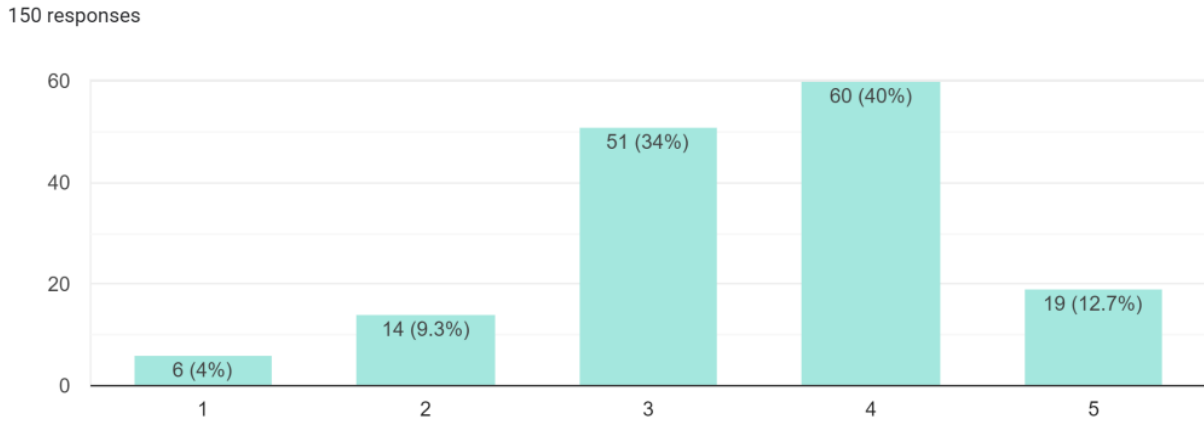


Figure 4.5.5 Social support and the encouragement in being yourself in the use of social media.

The highest percentage of respondents, 40% (60) agree that gaining social support in the use of social media encourages them to be themselves when socialising. 12.7% (19) of respondents strongly agree to the statement. 34% (51) of respondents neither disagree nor agree with the statement and a minority of the respondents with 9.3% (14) disagree and 4% (6) strongly disagree with the statement.

7. Social support in social media is a burden to me.

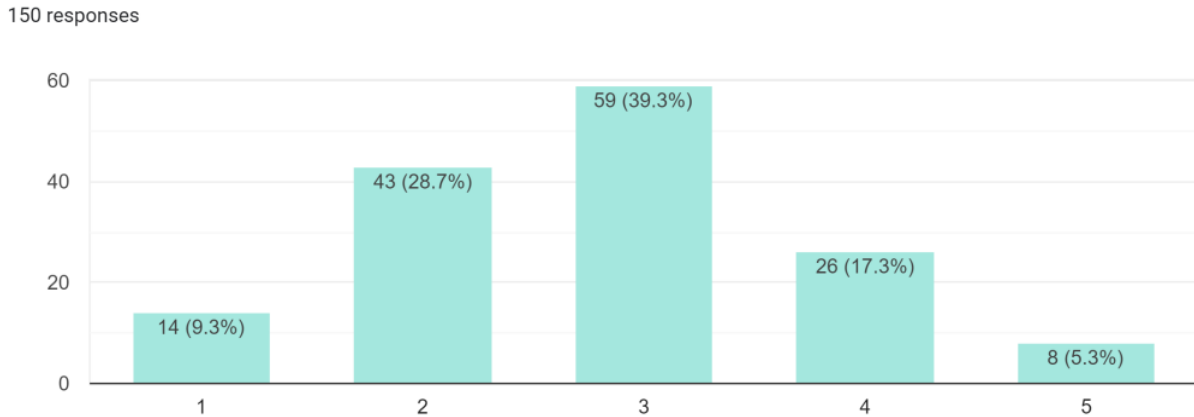


Figure 4.5.6 Social support as burden in the use of social media

Many of the respondents were neutral with the statement that social support in the use of social media is a burden to them with a percentage of 39.9% (59). It was then followed by 28.7% (43) disagree and 9.3% (14) strongly disagree with the statement. There are also 17.3% (26) of respondents who agree and 5.3% (8) strongly agree with the statement.



CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the data analysed from the questionnaire in Chapter 4. The overview of this chapter wraps up the paper by results and findings, discussion, limitation, recommendation and conclusion of the study.


5.2 Summary of Findings

The results of this study in general found that gaining social support in social media increases their social connection with others with a combination of 62.7% (94) of the respondents agree and strongly agree with the statement. To identify the usage of social media, the results came out with 36% (54) of the respondents use social media for 5-7 hours a day and 26.7% (40) of the respondents use social media more than 7 hours a day, showing that most respondents spent more than quarter or more than half of their day using social media.

71.3% of the respondents chose social interaction as the main purpose of using social media being the second highest percentage that respondents chose, along with entertainment (escapism) receiving 90% (135) as the highest percentage. With the high percentage of social interaction as the main purpose in using social media, it can be determined that social interaction is one of the significant functions provided in the use of social media.

More than half of the respondents, 61.3% (92) of respondents mentioned that using social media increases their sense of belonging. For the statement of how social support made them feel, where multiple answers are allowed, 46% (69) of respondents stated that it increases their self-esteem,

while 41.3% (62) mentioned that they felt less isolated. Social media use was felt to strengthen or maintain connectedness among peers who have less opportunity to socialise offline, giving a protective effect from the risks in loneliness and lack of peer connectedness (Winstone et al, 2021). Hence, the findings have increased the reliability of the statement that the use of social media protects risks in loneliness and lack of peer connectedness by the findings of gaining social support in the use of social media that increases individuals' sense of belonging, self-esteem and feel less isolated.


There are also neutral findings that get the highest percentage in some statements such as social support in social media for their side is always positive, their self-esteem decreases when they do not get social support from social media, and social support in social media is a burden to them. Thus, based on the results mentioned, it can be explained that social support does influence the social connection in the use of social media, but not heavily or strongly impacted. 

5.3 Discussion: Symbolic Interactionism analysis

The positive associations in between well-being and social media use are typically connected to the advantage of increased connection, such as social support whereas the negative associations resulted in behaviour that does not meet the users' needs in acceptance and belonging (Clark & Algoe & Green, 2017). To explore further, data analysed are discussed using the main conceptual framework, symbolic interactionism theory for clearer and more complete explanation in this research. A majority of the respondents, with 69.3% (104) of them found instrumental support from social media makes them feel valued. Moreover, 70% of the respondents which comprises


105 out of 150 respondents either agree or strongly agree that receiving informational support from social media makes them feel more connected to their peers or society.

In symbolic interactionism theory, individuals conform to a society in the perspective of mutual benefit of gaining support in the society. A high number of respondents 60.7% (91) claims that social support in social media makes them want to build connections with others. In support of this, 63.4% (95) of the respondents who agree and strongly agree that social support in social media makes them want to maintain relationships with others. 52% (78) find that social support in social media increases their confidence. The significant motive for using social media seems to derive from our wants to be socially connected (Valez, 2021).

Based on the results analysed, to explain it with symbolic interactionism theory, when the main desire for individuals on using social media is to be socially connected, different types of social support plays the role to push the desire. The individuals developed a positive self-concept when the interpretation of how others view them is positive. The results from the findings of gaining social support in the use of social media, proves that their confidence increases from social support, which also was interpreted as an increase in their initiative or motive to build connection and maintain relationships with others to be strong. 

To recall glass looking theory in symbolic interactionism, it is by observing and interpreting the reactions of others where they start to develop their self concept negatively or positively by making conclusions on how others evaluate them. Using glass-looking theory to discuss the data analysis in this questionnaire, it was found that 50.7% (76) of the respondents agree and 14% (21) of the

respondents strongly agree that social support in the use of social media changes their behaviour towards others in a positive way respectively. In addition to that, 52.7% (79) claim that social support in social media encourages them to be themselves when socialising.

Hence, based on the data analysed above, it was found that more than half of the respondents who receive social support in the use of social media change their behaviour in a positive way and encourage them to be themselves when socialising. It then concluded that more than half of the respondents developed a positive self-concept, not afraid to show their strengths and true side by evaluating social support as the reaction of others and gained confidence to maintain and build relationships leading to enhancement of social connection . Consequently, it was identified that social support can enhance social connection in the use of social media. 

5.4 Limitations

With the use of quantitative data, the survey questionnaires couldn't collect more specific and in-depth opinions of the respondents, especially when the respondents neither agree nor disagree with a statement with the use of Likert-scale without further elaboration allowed. In addition to that, distributing the questionnaires into a larger scale group also lacks the focus of monitoring the process of all respondents answering the questionnaire that might affect the accuracy of the data. Lastly, the limitation also includes that the target respondents for this questionnaire is only limited to students in UTAR, Sungai Long Campus to maintain the effectiveness and focus of this study in this short period of time, which could not represent other students from other universities.

5.5 Recommendations

For the topic under discussion, the recommendation for future research in this research area are by using another research method that could explain respondents' options to gain insights of the reason why they chose a particular answer and might conduct it by doing qualitative method by interview or focus group for better understanding and have deeper understanding in this area. Other than that, further research could be done in a wider geographical area collecting data from different locations.



5.6 Conclusion

To conclude the study, this research focuses on the area in social media effects and emphasises on the relationship between social support and social connection in the use of social media by the students in UTAR, Sungai Long Campus. To recap and address the problem statement in chapter 1, it was stated that there is weak social support and strong social support that could influence a person's self-esteem, resulting in the effect of an individuals' desire to build the social connection. By reviewing the results analysed and discussed with symbolic interactionism theory, this research paper has discovered the research question on "How social support influences the social connection in the use of social media by the students in UTAR, Sungai Long Campus?". It was concluded that social support in social media is effective with a higher number of respondents agreeing that emotional support increases their feeling of self-worth, physical support makes them feel valued, gaining informational support makes them more connected to their peers, and having appraisal support increases their confidence. An even higher number of respondents feel that social support in social media makes them want to build and maintain relationships with others. However, even though the highest percentage of answers agree with the positive findings for social support

and social connection, there are still many of the statements received one-third or more of the respondents have neutral findings to the statement to positive effect on social support and social connection which were suggested as social support in social media does not really affect their social connection. Therefore, with more than half of the respondents supported social support enhances the social connection by the discussions made above, the results have proved and summarised the study that there is a slight positive relationship between social support and social connection in the use of social media.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX B – SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Relationship between Social Support and Social Connection in the Use of Social Media by UTAR Students in Sg Long Campus



Dear participants,

My name is Choong Xin Yee, a final year student of Bachelor of Corporate Communication (Honours) and is currently conducting a research for my final year project. The purpose of this research is to examine if social support is important for social connection and how social media has made an impact on UTAR students in Sg Long.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. All of the information and response of the participants will be kept private and confidential.

You are eligible to participate in this study if:

- You are a student in UTAR, Sg Long.

Feel free to contact me via email at xyee195@utar.my or Whatsapp at 017-5745288 if there are any questions regarding this questionnaire.

Lastly, I would like to express my appreciation for your time and effort in completing this questionnaire.

This form is automatically collecting emails from all respondents. [Change settings](#)



Are you a student in UTAR, Sg Long *

Yes

No

Demographics

What is your age? *

- 16-19 years old
- 20-23 years old
- 23-26 years old
- above 26

Gender *

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

Nationality *

- Malaysian
- Other: _____

Faculty *

FCI

FAM

LKC FES

MK FHMS

Other: _____

Usage on Social Media

How long do you use social media in a day? *

- Less than 2 hours
- 2-4 hours
- 5-7 hours
- More than 7 hours

What is the main purpose for you to use social media? *you can choose more than 1 answer *

- Entertainment (escapism)
- News
- Social Interaction
- Information Seeking
- Other: _____

Does using social media affect your daily behaviour? *

- Yes
- No

Does using social media increase your sense of belonging? *

Yes

No

Have you ever received social support from social media? *

Yes

No

How does social support in social media make you feel? *you can choose more than 1 answer *

I did not receive any support from social media

I felt less isolated

I felt more isolated

It increases my self-esteem

It decreases my self-esteem

Instrumental (physical) support from social media makes me feel valued. *

(Eg. Friends sending you daily needs when you are sick after they know through social media/ other physical support.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Given or received informational support from social media makes me feel more connected to my peers or society? *

(Eg: Sharing or gathering information on a topic or how to solve a problem?)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Appraisal support in social media makes me feel more confident. *

(Eg. Friends and family praising your strength or special traits.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Social support in social media for my side is always positive. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

My self-esteem decreases when I do not get social support from social media. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Social support in social media makes me want to build connections with others. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Social support in social media makes me want to maintain relationships with others. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Social support in social media changes my behaviour towards others in a positive way. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Social support in social media encourages me to be myself when socialising. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Social support in social media is a burden to me. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

APPENDIX B – TURNITIN REPORT

FYP_CHOONG XIN YEE

ORIGINALITY REPORT

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