

Association Between Perceived Stress, Self-Control, Subjective Well-Being and Social Media Addiction During the Covid-19 Pandemic in Malaysia

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Abstract: *According to Malaysia's statistic result from 2016 to 2021, people spend more and more time in social media and eventually addicted to it especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. The purpose of this study is to examine the predictive roles of perceived stress, self-control, and subjective well-being on young adults' social media addiction in Malaysia during the period of Covid-19 pandemic. There were 152 respondents participated in this survey. They were 62 males and 90 females who are within the age of 18-30. The results showed that self-control and subjective well-being significantly predicted social media addiction while perceived stress did not significantly predict social media addiction. This study prove that self-control and subjective well-being are the factors to predict social media addiction. The findings are beneficial in developing an intervention or program to minimize social media addiction.*

Keywords: Perceived stress, self-control, subjective well-being, social media addiction

1. Introduction

During the Covid-19 pandemic, most of the people preferred staying at their house instead of going out (Zack, 2020). According to Bahar Moni et al. (2021), most of their collected survey responses on online surveys are from young adults who are active on social media during this Covid-19 pandemic. According to Malaysia's statistical results, 73% and 78% of Malaysians are active users on social media in 2017 and 2019 respectively. This also indicated that the number of active users on social media had increased 5% within two years. However, in 2020 the number of active users on social media in Malaysia was 81% and in 2021, the number of active users on social media in Malaysian has been increasing to 86% during the Covid-19 pandemic period (Müller, 2021).

Social media is a platform that covers many types of media that allow people to search or look for the latest information and also to socialize (Nazir et al., 2020). By accessing social media, society was able to connect themselves to the latest news. However, even though social media brought many advantages and convenience to society, it also led an individual to have excessive use of it which caused an addictive behaviour on using social media. Social media addiction can be referred to as a failure to control the usage of social media (Nazir et al., 2020). People with social media addiction behavior will be always craving for internet connection (Sophia, 2018). As consequences for social media addiction, people can be distracted and drop in their productivity and they will be always experiencing fatigue and stress (Sophia, 2018). According

to Baccarella et al. (2018), addictive using on social media accompany by several negative outcomes. Social media addiction has a negative correlation with life satisfaction as well as self-esteem (Hawi & Samaha, 2016).

Self-control has played an important role in predicting social media addiction as self-control is able to regulate a person's level of social media use (Brevers & Turel, 2019). According to Brevers & Turel (2019), self-controlling strategies are used to prevent social media addiction and high traits of self-controlling are better in avoiding social media addiction symptoms. Therefore, the present study hypothesizes that self-control is associated with social media addiction negatively with the people who aged between 18 to 30 years old during the time of Covid-19 pandemic.

The Covid-19 pandemic is increasing the stress of Malaysians (Bahar Moni et al., 2021). According to Zhao et al. (2021), stress is one of the factors which cause the problematic social media usage. In the research of Webster et al. (2020), it explained that people who often facing daily stress and feel depressed had spent more time in using social media because social media network can increase a person's wellbeing. In the study of Zhao (2021), subjective well-being has significant association with social media use. Individual who has low well-being would like to engage in using social media to improve their well-being (Longstreet & Brooks, 2017). Besides, individual who has high level of depression are more likely to have lower subjective well-being (Malone & Wachholtz, 2017) and show higher addiction to social media (Senturk et al., 2021).

1.1 Research Questions

- i. Can perceived stress predicts social media addiction during the Covid-19 pandemic in Malaysia?
- ii. Can self-control predicts social media addiction during the Covid-19 pandemic in Malaysia?
- iii. Can subjective well-being predicts social media addiction during the Covid-19 pandemic in Malaysia?

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The present study has utilized a quantitative and cross-sectional research design. A total of 152 young adults were recruited in this study. Among the 152 respondents, there were 62 males (40.79%) and 90 females (59.21%). The respondents' age range were range from 18 to 30 ($M=22.86$, $SD=2.33$).

2.2 Sample Size

According to Kessler (2021), the age range for the respondents were between 18 years old to 30 years old. To obtain the suggested sample size, application G*power was used to compute the result. The results showed a sample of 148 participants was needed in the present study.

2.3 Instrumentation

2.3.1 Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)

This scale was developed by Cohen et al. (1983). Perceived stress scale is to measure an individual's perception of stress. In this scale has 10 items which were rated through 5-Likert scale from 0 (Never) to 4 (Very often). The perceived stress can be obtained by totaling up the score on each item. The scores ranging from 0-13 can be indicated as low perceived stress, the

scores ranging from 14-26 can be indicated as moderate perceived stress, the scores ranging from 27-40 can be indicated as high perceived stress. The PSS-10 showed a good internal consistency in a study from Liu et al. (2020), the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .79.

2.3.2 Brief Self-Control Scale (BSCS)

This scale was developed by Tangney et al. (2004). The purpose of this scale is to measure individual differences in self-control. Brief self-control scale contained 13-item which were rated through the 5-Likert scale from 1 (Not all like me) to 5 (Very much like me). The higher score indicated a higher level of self-control by summing up all items' score. The BSCS showed a high internal consistency in a study from Fung et al. (2020), in which the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .80.

2.3.3 Personal Wellbeing Score (PWS)

Personal Wellbeing Score was developed by Benson et al. (2019). Personal Wellbeing score is to measure a person of subjective well-being. Personal wellbeing score contained 4 items which covered a 4 dimension of personal well-being which was life satisfaction (1 item), worthwhile (1 item), happiness (1 item) and anxiety (1 item) and graded through 4- Likert Scale, ranging from 0 (Disagree) to 3 (Strongly agree). The higher the score indicated the more personal well-being. The PWS had a high internal consistency ($\alpha=0.90$) in research from Benson et al., (2019).

2.3.4 Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS)

This Scale was developed by Andreassen et al. (2017). Bergen social media addiction scale is to measure an individual's risk of social media addiction on the internet. Bergen social media addiction scale consisted of 6-items which was rated on 5-Likert scale from 1 (very rarely) to 5 (very often). The overall score can be obtained by summing up the scores of each item. Higher score indicated higher addiction. The BSMAS showed an excellent internal consistency in the study of Soraci et al. (2020).

2.4 Reliability Study

A pilot study has been conducted among 40 young adults in Malaysia. The reliability level had been categorized into unacceptable ($<.59$), problematic (.60-.69), tolerable (.70-.79), good consistency (.80-.89) and excellent consistency ($>.90$) (George & Mallery, 2003). The pilot study showed that the Cronbach's Alpha for the scale was ranged from .76 to .89. This indicated that the scales using in the present study were reliable. In the actual study, the Cronbach's alpha of the scales also indicated the reliability was high as the Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .72 to .83.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Multiple Linear Regression

The Table 4.1 showed that the Multiple Liner Regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 148) = 23.384$, $p < .001$ and accounted for 30.8% of variance. In Table 4.2, perceived stress ($\beta = .130$, $p = .110$) did not significantly predicts social media addiction. In contrast, self-control ($\beta = -.533$, $p < .001$) and subjective well-being ($\beta = .172$, $p = .023$) were the significant predictors of social media addiction.

Table 4.1: Summary of ANOVA for Regression Model

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1037.348	3	345.783	23.384	.000
	Residual	2188.487	148	14.787		
	Total	3225.836	151			
Adjusted R ²		0.308				

Dependent Variable: Social media addiction
 Predictors: Perceived Stress, Self-Control, Subjective Well-Being

Table 4.2: Coefficients Summary Table for Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) Analysis

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	24.427	4.134		5.909	.000
	Perceived Stress	.125	.077	.130	1.610	.110
	Self-Control	-.370	.053	-.533	-6.924	.000
	Subjective Well-Being	.300	.131	.172	2.295	.023

Dependent Variable: Social media addiction
 Predictors: Perceived Stress, Self-Control, Subjective Well-Being

The results showed that perceived stress was not a significant predictor of social media addiction. This could be explained by the alternative options to minimize stress level during the time of Covid-19 pandemic. According to Panarese and Azzarita (2021), unstructured leisure activities among individuals had increased during pandemic. Unstructured leisure activities like cooking, reading, physical exercising are more often carried out during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown instead of surfing the internet or social media (Panarese & Azzarita, 2021). In the study of Hirshmann (2021), it stated that instead of spending time on social media, the statistics of main leisure activities among Malaysian during Covid-19 pandemic shown that 40% of the Malaysian spent their time exercising during Covid-19 pandemic, 38% of the Malaysian spent their time playing video or online games, 37% of the Malaysian spent their time reading books or magazines, 24% of the Malaysian spent their time doing gardening and 19% of the Malaysian spent their playing board games or offline games. By having leisure activities, individual will have better mood, lower heart rate, healthier psychological well-being which could resulted a person's stress level to become lower (James, 2015).

The results indicated that self-control is a significant predictor of social media addiction. According to Du et al. (2018), social media users are often in a dilemma situation which they must choose between high-effort activities (such as doing assignments or tasks given by a company which are long-term goals) and low-effort activity (surfing social media which gives a sense of short-term pleasure). However, to decide which activity to perform, people must exhibit their level of self-control or inhibit their desire toward short-term pleasure which is surfing social media (Du et al., 2018; Schulz van Endert, 2021). Furthermore, lack of self-control toward social media may affect by procrastination which is delaying of long-term goal's activities and search for short-term pleasure like excessive surfing on social media (Gökalp et al., 2022). As social media has the function to remove boredom (Lin et al., 2019), it will lower one's self-control ability that wanted to seek short-term pleasure and it causes excessive using social media (Gökalp et al., 2022). This shows consistent results with Du et al. (2018) self-control has significantly predicted social media addiction. In Sağar (2021), the younger adult who is addicted to social media are the one who has lower self-control ability and the reason behind of low self-control is their cognitive inflexibility which one could not adapt alternatives

in various situation such as stressful event and they will seek for social media for relieving their negative emotional states.

The results also showed that subjective well-being predicted social media addiction. This finding is consistent with the past studies (Longstreet & Brooks. 2017; Senturk et al. 2021; Stead & Bibby. 2017). This can be explained by the social media addicts who have a low level of subjective well-being believes that surfing social media will be able to let them relieve negative emotion and feeling in the short term and to recover their subjective well-being (Senturk et al., 2021). Moreover, the addicts think that surfing social media can help them to relieve stress to resilient their low level of subjective well-being (Gökalp et al., 2022). According to Satici (2018), subjective well-being is the predictor of Facebook addiction (one of the social media) and the reason behind is the sense of loneliness and shyness, which cause them to use online social media to make friends excessively. Also, the level of subjective well-being predicts social media addiction because of fear of missing out on their social circles, and one's personality did influence the level of fear of missing out which affects the level of subjective well-being (Stead & Bibby, 2017).

4. Conclusion

The current study revealed that subjective well-being and self-control were significantly linked to the social media addiction among young adults during the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia. Through the findings of this study, it is expected that the researchers in Malaysia to discover how self-control and subjective well-being affect social media addiction. The related study in Malaysia is scarce. Thus, this study will provide some literature to improve and enhance the future studies in the Malaysia context. In this research, with the findings of subjective well-being and self-control are the predictor of social media addiction, it will provide an idea how they influence on social media addiction.

The findings of this study can provide insight on what are the factors that can influence on social media addiction. Furthermore, with the insights and ideas, it helps the therapists or social workers in planning preventive and intervention programme. For instance, therapists can emphasize on one's level of subjective well-being and self-control in order to modify the behaviour of excessive surfing social media. Other than that, this study provided an insight on how to improve employees' problematic social media usage during the working time. Setting a program or policy by focusing on the factors such as how to increase one's subjective well-being and how to effectively exert self-control in reducing the frequency of surfing social media during the working hours.

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