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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTENTION-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AND SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION AMONG STUDENT SOCIETIES OF UPSI

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the relationship between attention-seeking behavior and social media addiction among student societies of Sultan Idris Education University (UPSI). This study was conducted to achieve the following objective: to determine the relationship between attention-seeking behavior and social media addiction among student societies of UPSI. A quantitative approach with a correlational design was used in this study. For sampling, we used a probability sampling method in which the respondents were chosen randomly. Two research instruments were employed: the Need to Belong Scale (NTBS) and the Social Media Addiction Scale Student Form (SMAS-SF). Pearson's correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between attention-seeking behavior and social media addiction among the societies of UPSI. The findings showed that the level of attention-seeking behavior and social media addiction among the student society of UPSI was mostly moderate. Pearson correlation analysis showed a significant relationship between attention-seeking behavior and social media addiction among the student societies of UPSI. This study is useful for future researchers, parents, the Student Affairs Department (JHEPA), and clinical psychologists to use as a reference to deepen their understanding of students' social media addiction and attention-seeking behavior.

Keywords: Attention seeking, Social media addiction, Student Society

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media is an integral part of modern human life. Social media has various functions that have both positive and negative effects on users. According to Kapoor et al. (2018), social media technologies are no longer perceived as platforms for socialization and congregation but are acknowledged for their ability to encourage aggregation. Social media is indeed satisfying for consumers. However, excessive use can lead to addiction. According to Dalvi-Esfahani, M., Niknafs, A., Kuss, D. J., Nilashi, M., & Afrough, S. (2019), if using social media is prohibited, addicts are often distracted, restless, disturbed, or irritable, and feel uncomfortable if they cannot re-engage in social media (withdrawal).

Attention-seeking behavior often occurs among students when they want to adapt to a new community. They need a good support system because they are far from their families. Students need attention to motivate themselves or satisfy their desires. According to Savci, M., Turan, M. E., Griffiths, M. D., & Ercengiz, M. (2019), it was found that the need for social approval and desire for being liked positively affected social media addiction. UPSI is a university that produces students who are active in various fields, especially those who are involved in student societies. Students involved in student societies use social media to promote the association and also for the purpose of being a medium of communication with other students. This encourages them to regularly use social media. According to Van Den Eijnden, R. J., Lemmens, J. S., & Valkenburg, P. According to Ophir et al. (2016), higher levels of media multitasking, that is, the use of media while engaging in non-media activities, such as completing homework and engaging in face-to-face interactions, is related to deficits in cognitive control, particularly the ability to sustain attention.

Mental health problems remain a hot topic of debate in this age of globalization. This problem has existed since ancient times, but the acceleration of digital advancements has stimulated this behavior in society. In a time when technological sophistication is at their fingertips, university students especially use social media as an entertainment and information platform. According to Hawk et al. (2019), social media offers a convenient way for individuals to seek and receive positive social feedback from an audience, which may, but does not necessarily, include friends and close acquaintances. University students who are active in student societies also use social media to promote educational content and obtain feedback from other students. Based on MCMC (2018), the most common content shared online was educational material (71.3%). As such, there is a group of social media users who are too addicted to social media because they demand more attention from their followers. According to Berryman and Ferguson, J., & Negy, C. (2018), it is possible that some forms of social media use may function as a 'cry for help' among individuals with pre-existing mental health problems.

Attention-seeking behavior shares the same traits as narcissism and will lead to severe histrionic disorders if not properly controlled. According to Lewis, K. C., & Mastico, E. R. (2017), individuals with this disorder are characterized by frequent engagement in dramatic, seductive, or attention-seeking behaviour, exaggerated emotional displays that carry a theatrical quality, an impressionistic or reactionary approach to understanding their environment, and heightened suggestibility and openness to influence by others. The problem of attention-seeking behavior is that students are more likely to spend time on social media because of the desire to gain attention. According to Mehrad J., & Tajer P. (2016), the more a person feels that the real content fulfils his/her need, the more possible the selection of that content is.

If this social media addiction is not appropriately curbed, it will negatively impact student performance. According to Vasugi, S., & Hassan, N.C. (2019), the effect of excessive stress on students are depleting their efficiency in studying and causing long term behavioural consequences such as low attendance and skipping class, as well as poor academic performance that resulted in dropout and expulsion. This is because social media cannot fulfil their need for attention and decreases their self-esteem. According to Hou, Y., Xiong, D., Jiang, T., Song, L., & Wang, Q. (2019), social media addiction was associated with reduced mental health partly through lowering individuals' self-esteem. The following research question was raised: What is the relationship between attention-seeking behavior and social media addiction among the student societies of Sultan Idris Education University? The main objective of this research was to determine the relationship between attention-seeking behavior and social media addiction among the student societies of Sultan Idris Education University.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A limitation of our findings is the lack of past studies on attention-seeking behavior. There has yet to be an updated and objective study or measure for the topic, although it has been shown to be related to the fear of isolation (Kim & Oh, 2019) and the desire for acceptance and belonging (Leary et al., 2013). A positive correlation was found between histrionic personality disorder and the need to belong. According to Starcevic and Aboujaoude (2017), “Internet addiction” is not a proper term since the Internet is just a medium, as is social media, and it is the activities carried out with the Internet that show excessive and obsessive behavior that can be considered an addiction. Still, “addiction” is a widely used and self-explanatory term when describing the misuse of technological devices and applications (Fidan, 2016; Sahin, 2017). Thus, “social media addiction” is the term we shall use to describe the dysfunctional use of social media that leads to negative consequences in other aspects of life (Adreassen & Pallesen, 2014; Sahin, 2017).

2.1 Behavioural and Personality Factors

In previous studies, we found that attention-seeking behavior was mostly seen as a symptom of personality disorders, such as histrionic and narcissistic personality disorders. These disorders were then studied in relation to the use of social media. Most of these studies (Akca et al., 2020) found that those with such pathologies showed higher levels of addictive social media use. Past studies (Hawk et al., 2019; Edwards, 2017) found that those with narcissistic personality disorders and attention-seeking tendencies turn to social media to gain the attention they feel they have been denied in real life. If they experience ego threat, they will most likely utilize social media and post something they know will elicit a response from people, which they will then monitor closely. Another study related narcissism to problematic social media use. Lee (2017) found that there was a correlation between narcissistic personality disorder and attachment instability. Narcissism was significantly correlated with avoidant and anxious attachment, which were also significantly correlated with problematic social media use. Those with covert narcissism and anxiety attachment may find themselves overly immersed in social media because they are more anxious about their evaluation by others. Individuals with overt narcissism and avoidant attachment may prefer online relationships because they tend to be uncomfortable with intimate relationships. No studies were found on the correlation between attention-seeking behavior and social media addiction, and none were conducted on a Malaysian population. Thus, this is a research gap that our study seeks to fill to find out if there is indeed a correlation between such variables among the students of Sultan Idris Education University. Our study had two variables: one independent variable and one dependent variable. Our independent variable will be the level of addiction-seeking behavior, and the dependent variable will be the level of social media addiction because, as shown in our findings from previous studies, a person with attention-seeking tendencies is more likely to be addicted to social media. The strength and direction of this relationship are also of interest in this study.

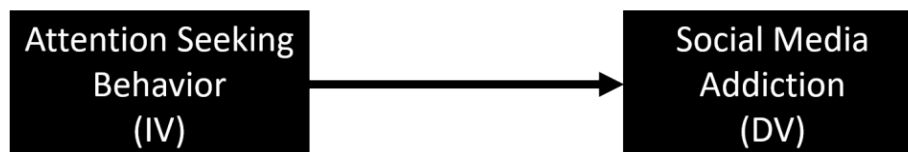


Figure 1: Research framework of the study

2.2 Research Hypotheses

- **Alternative Hypothesis:** There is a significant relationship between attention seeking behaviour and social media addiction
- **Null Hypothesis:** There is no significant relationship between attention seeking behaviour and social media addiction

Past studies have shown a significant relationship between personality disorders with attention-seeking tendencies and social media use. However, no study has been conducted on the relationship between attention-seeking behavior and social media addiction. Thus, our goal is to fill this research gap. Our study will be on whether there is a significant relationship between attention-seeking behaviour and social media addiction

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter will cover the research methodology that has been carried out to conduct our study. The data collection and analysis methods are discussed in the following sections.

3.1 Research Design

The correlational quantitative approach has been used to run our study to look at the correlation between attention seeking behaviour and social media addiction among the student societies of Sultan Idris Education University. In our study, we adopted a quantitative approach because of its structured way of gaining data by using a questionnaire as our instrument. It is considered a more reliable and precise way of obtaining consistent data due to the questions that have been included in the questionnaire. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the approach will be less time-consuming and will be able to reach many respondents for data collection.

3.2 Population Sampling

The targeted population for this study is UPSI students. The sample used in this study will be narrowed down to the student societies of Sultan Idris Education University. A sample can be defined as a set of observations taken from a larger group (the population). As for sampling, we used a non-probability sampling method where the respondents were not chosen randomly. This is because the questionnaires were spread out and passed on to students who have been or are still in student societies through social media.

3.3 Development of Instrument

To identify the level of social media addiction among student societies of Sultan Idris Education University, we had used ordinal sets of questions adopted and adapted from the Social Media Addiction Scale Student Form (SMAS-SF) (Şahin, C.,2018). The sets of questionnaires were used for our pre-test and data collection, which consisted of 28 questions in Section A. Numerous extensive studies have been conducted on Social Media Addiction. One instrument that we found to fit our chosen population culturally and generationally is by C. Sahin (2017). Thus, we used this instrument to measure our dependent variable. The instrument used to collect the data of the objective, which consisted of the level of attention-seeking behavior among student societies of Sultan Idris Education University, was a questionnaire consisting of ordinal questions that were adopted and adapted from the Need to Belong Scale (Leary, 2013). The sets of questionnaires were also used for our pre-test and data collection, which consisted of 10 questions in Section B, whereas Section C was designated for the demographic information of the respondents. There has yet to be an updated and objective measure for our independent variable: attention-seeking behavior. However, it has been shown to be related to the fear of isolation (Kim & Oh, 2019) and the desire for acceptance and belonging (Leary et al., 2013).

Hence, as the extensively studied instrument by Leary et al. (2013) is the latest one developed that is closely related to attention-seeking behavior, we decided to use this instrument to measure our independent variable. Since the instrument was not developed specifically to measure attention-seeking behavior and little research has been done using this instrument with personality disorders in mind, we expect to have to make some modifications based on the results of our reliability test.

3.4 Test of Reliability

The sets of questions included in the questionnaires were adopted and adapted from past research for both the pre-test and data collection. The attention-seeking behavior questions differed from the pre-test, and during the actual data collection, we had to remove Question 7 to increase reliability. The Cronbach’s alpha obtained during the pre-test was 0.759, which was consistent with the result of the actual data collection. The Cronbach’s alpha we gained on the actual data collection was 0.881 in the pre-test, and it increased to 0.928 in the data collection.

Table 1: Reliability Coefficient of Study Instruments

Variables	Number of Items	Pre-Test Cronbach Alpha (<i>n</i>)	Actual Data Collection Cronbach Alpha (<i>N</i>)
Attention Seeking Behaviour	9	0.759	0.759
Social Media Addiction	28	0.881	0.928

3.5 Data Processing

The data processing methods we used included the Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Shapiro-Wilk, histogram and stem Leaf, the normal Q-Q plot, and the detrended normal Q-Q plot to test for the assumption of normality. For our independent variable, which is attention-seeking behavior, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests yielded results of .004 and .001 for the sig (p), respectively, which are smaller than the alpha value; hence, the data we had are not normal for the variable. However, the results for the histogram and stem leaf came out with the result of the mean, which was 3.15, and the standard deviation was .555. When performing the reliability test, the result of the test turned out to be bell-shaped; hence, the data that we had gained were, in actuality, normal. For the dependent variable, which is social media addiction, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests we had come out with the result of .005 and .020 for the sig (p) respectively which is bigger than the alpha value hence the data we had is normal for our dependent variable. The result for the histogram and stem leaf came out with the result of the mean, which is 2.82 and the standard deviation with .613. When performing the reliability test, the result of the test turned out to be a bell-shaped graph; hence, the data that we had gained were also normal.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter first discusses the respondents’ profile, supported by demographic data. For both variables, a normality test was performed to ensure the normality of the data obtained. In addition, we performed Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficient test for each of our variables. The results of the data are discussed in the following sections.

4.1 Profile of Respondent

Based on the data we obtained through our questionnaire, the number of female students who answered the questionnaire was larger than the number of male students, with 81% and 19%, respectively. The majority of the respondents (58 %) were aged between 20 and 22 years. The second largest group was those aged 23 to 24 years (19 %), followed by those under 20 years (13 %), those aged 27 years and above (6%), and those aged 24 to 26 years (4 %). Regarding marital status, 95% of the respondents were single, 2% were married, and 3% were in other categories. Regarding the society that the respondents

were involved in, the majority of the students were involved in *Persatuan/Kelab Bukan Akademik*, with a percentage of 33%. *Persatuan/Kelab Akademik* had 32%, *Persatuan Anak Negeri* 29%, and *Jawatan Kuasa Mahasiswa Kolej* 6%.

The most used social media among the respondents was Instagram, with the highest percentage of all (42%), and 33% of the respondents spent more than three hours on social media. Lastly, the frequency of the respondents checking on their social media with the highest percentage will be 2 to 5 times daily with the percentage of 39%

Table 2: Demographic profile of the respondents

Variables	Freq	Percent
Gender		
Male	19	19%
Female	81	81%
Age		
<20	13	13%
20 ± 22	58	58%
23 ± 24	19	19%
24 ± 26	4	4%
≥27	6	6%
Marital Status		
Single	95	95%
Married	2	2%
Other	3	3%
Semester		
Semester 1 or 2 (Year 1)	36	36%
Semester 3 or 4 (Year 2)	30	30%
Semester 5 or 6 (Year 3)	26	26%
Semester 7 or 8 (Year 4)	6	6%
Above Semester 8	2	2%
Type of Society		
Persatuan Anak Negeri	29	29%
Persatuan/Kelab Akademik	32	32%
Persatuan/kelab Bukan Akademik	33	33%
Jawatan Kuasa Mahasiswa Kolej	6	6%
Most Used Social Media Platform		
Instagram	42	42%
Facebook	14	14%
Twitter	27	27%
Snapchat	1	1%

Other	16	16%
Time Spent on Social Media per Day		
<30 minutes	7	7%
30 ± 60 minutes	24	24%
1 ± 2 hours	19	19%
2 ± 3 hours	17	17%
>3 hours	33	33%
Frequency Checking Social Media per Day		
Not everyday	3	3%
Once a day	2	2%
2 ± 5 times a day	39	39%
5 ± 10 times a day	22	22%
>10 times a day	34	34%

4.2 Attention Seeking Behaviour and Social Media Addiction

This study aimed to determine the relationship between attention-seeking behavior and social media addiction among the student societies of Sultan Idris Education University. Based on Table 3, with the result gained, there is a significant relationship between attention-seeking behaviour and social media addiction at .05 level of significance.

Table 3: Pearson Product-Moment Correlations

Variables	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Attention Seeking Behaviour	0.307	0.002
Social Media Addiction		

Based on Table 3, the result gained is *r* with 0.307 and the sig-*r* (*p*) with 0.002. The *r* value for attention-seeking behavior and social media addiction is 0.307; thus, there is a positive and low relationship between attention-seeking behavior and social media addiction. In conclusion, we reject our null hypothesis, and there is a significant relationship between attention-seeking behavior and social media addiction at the .05 level of significance. In a nutshell, 100 respondents (81% female and 19% male) were involved in this study, and up to 77% fell under the moderate level of attention-seeking behavior. Meanwhile, 73% of the respondents fell under the moderate level of social media addiction. Lastly, we can conclude that there is a significant relationship between attention-seeking behaviour and social media addiction at 0.5 significance level.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to determine the relationship between attention-seeking behavior and social media addiction among student societies of UPSI. A quantitative approach with a correlational research design was used in this study. A probability method, which is simple random sampling, was chosen for the study because Google Form links were given to random UPSI students through social media. One hundred undergraduates from UPSI (aged 18–30 years) were involved in this study. Two research instruments were employed: the Not to Belong Scale (NTBS) and the Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS). A pilot study was performed. The result of a pre-test for 30 respondents found high reliability with alpha Cronbach's coefficient ($\alpha = .759$) for the Not to Belong Scale (NTBS) and alpha Cronbach's coefficient ($\alpha = .881$) for the Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS). On the other hand, the result of actual data collection for 100 respondents found high reliability with alpha Cronbach's coefficient ($\alpha = .759$) for Not to Belong Scale (NTBS); alpha Cronbach's coefficient ($\alpha = .928$) for

Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS). Pearson correlation analysis showed a significant relationship between attention-seeking behavior and social media addiction at the 0.5 level of significance. In conclusion, there is a significant relationship between attention-seeking behavior and social media addiction among the student society of UPSI.

Future studies should evaluate and focus on several demographic factors, such as gender, academic performance, race, and others. This may provide different findings from various perspectives. Next, it would be interesting for future researchers to look into different target audiences, such as students from various faculties or students from different nationalities. This may provide a broader view of this research. Future researchers can use a longitudinal study design to test the relationship between social media addiction and attention-seeking behavior. This may provide details of changes over time.

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