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Governmental Social Media Effectiveness on Mental Health Issues in Malaysia During the Covid19 Endemic Phase

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the relationship between social media usage and mental health outcomes among the Malaysian public during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research utilizes a quantitative research approach and includes survey responses from 378 individuals in the Klang Valley region of Malaysia. Data was collected through online surveys disseminated via popular social media platforms. The majority of respondents were female, aged between 21 and 30, Malay, and held a bachelor's degree or higher. The study employed frequency distribution, descriptive, reliability, and correlation analyses to explore the association between social media usage and mental health outcomes. The findings suggest a modest positive correlation between social media usage and mental health outcomes during the pandemic. However, after controlling for confounding variables, this relationship lost significance, indicating that social media usage alone may not be a reliable predictor of mental health outcomes. Furthermore, the study identified significant relationships between social media usage and economic factors, government factors, the theory of uses and gratification, and media trends. The study highlights the potential benefits of social media in government communication but recommends further research to assess the effectiveness of government initiatives utilizing social media in addressing mental health concerns during the pandemic.

Contribution/Originality: The study investigates how social media affects the mental health of people in Malaysia during COVID-19. It surveyed 378 individuals and found a small link between social media use and mental health. But when other factors were considered, this link became less clear. The study also found that social media had connections to economic, government, and media trends. This research suggests that social media could help with government communication but calls for more study on its role in addressing mental health during the pandemic.

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1. Introduction

COVID-19, which first appeared in mid-2020, has already caused a health catastrophe and economic instability. It has an unmatched impact on businesses and societies around the world, and as the world continues to take precautions, social media in particular—especially its position in digital communication—has assumed a crucial role. However, this fast-moving channel for information also developed into a haven for false information. The internet dominated as a source of information and solace for individuals during worldwide lockdowns. This increase in digital dependency, which is being driven by health-related worries, emphasises how important online platforms are to how we interpret current world events (Casero-Ripollés, 2020).

This coronavirus, a member of the larger coronavirus family, first emerged in Wuhan, China, in late 2019. It has since spread throughout the world and caused frightening uncertainty and mental strain. The consequences on the economic front are dire; estimates suggest that up to 600 million people may slip into abject poverty (Gelaw, 2020). As an example, Malaysia is experiencing economic hardships that are similar to those experienced during the Asian Financial Crisis almost three decades ago. Impacts on mental health are a further important issue. People on the front lines of the epidemic have increased stressors, such as heightened anxiety and transmission anxieties (Moni et al., 2021). However, a thorough investigation of the general implications for mental health is still needed, particularly in settings like Malaysia.

Concern over the pandemic's long-lasting repercussions on mental health is mounting, made more acute by their unanticipated emergence and resulting socioeconomic consequences (Reger et al., 2020). Although preventive actions were essential, they unintentionally increased the severity of mental health issues on a global scale (Williams et al., 2020; Yunus et al., 2021). The ramifications for mental health, especially in the midst of the mis informational haze, call for closer examination in Malaysia as the virus's complexity and mutations cause widespread worry. This study aims to clarify the relationship between COVID-19-related social media content and its subsequent impact on Malaysians' mental health. This research aims to provide policymakers with sophisticated insights by analysing the variations in mental health across demographic strata, opening the path for precise psychological assistance methods.

2. Literature Review

This study tries to comprehend how social media usage affects people's mental health in Malaysia in the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak. Focus has been placed on the virus's spread globally, particularly in Malaysia, where various standard operating procedures (SOP) have been put in place. The Malaysian media, which is essential for the spread of information, has been vital in facilitating governmental activities throughout this crisis and serving as a frontline in the fight against the pandemic by guaranteeing accurate public knowledge. The interaction between mental health, social media, and this epidemic has had a significant impact on Malaysia's social, economic, and political contexts. Malaysians frequently use social media during emergencies like lockdowns. The advantages of increasing communication are clear, but so too are the drawbacks of growing isolation and a stronger comparison culture. A constant stream of pandemic news and pressure to present an ideal online identity have made anxiety and depression symptoms worse, especially in young people.

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The financial instability of many people was in jeopardy due to the economic disaster the epidemic brought about. Social media was both a source of solace and anxiety for its users during the tough economic times. Despite the fact that job searching was made easier by websites like LinkedIn, people frequently felt worse about themselves as a result of continually being reminded of the accomplishments of others. Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) were more severely impacted by this economic hardship than their bigger counterparts. Business owners now experience new levels of anxiety due to the pressure to maintain a strong online presence in the face of growing competition. During the pandemic, Malaysia's political environment was unstable. The public was drawn into a vortex of unreliable information as debates and conversations took place on social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. The fact that people could see the pandemic being politicised in real time on social media undoubtedly contributed to the widespread anxiety. These spaces helped new hazards to mental health, such cyberbullying and heated disputes, to arise despite their value in promoting political involvement.

Two years after the beginning of the pandemic, little research has been done on how the unpredictable nature of COVID-19, the accompanying preventive measures, and the ensuing economic collapse have impacted Malaysians' mental health. COVID-19 misinformation is widespread. Therefore, for the purpose of disseminating accurate information, governments and international organisations like the World Health Organization (WHO) use digital platforms, particularly social media. As noted by van der Linden et al. (2020), people must distinguish between reliable information and false information. To this aim, official social media platforms are essential for disseminating reliable information, especially in times of emergency (Aisha et al., 2015; Dominic & Gisip, 2021). The COVID-19 crisis emphasises the requirement for innovative, two-way communication solutions. Social media's interactive features have made it crucial for controlling public opinion and calming fears (Chen et al., 2020).

Although social media provided many Malaysians with a lifeline during the pandemic, its impact on mental health was exacerbated by its link to the nation's socio-economic and political reality. To solve this, a comprehensive plan combining internet service providers, lawmakers, mental health experts, and community networks is necessary.

3. Methodology

The participants in this study were a sample of 400 people drawn from the Malaysian Klang Valley. Both convenience sampling and voluntary participation were used to find participants. 378 valid replies were included in the final sample after probable outliers were eliminated. Through an online survey that was distributed on several social media sites, including Facebook, Email, and Whatsapp, data was gathered. The survey was completed by respondents using a Google form. The poll asked questions about demographic data, COVID-19-related concerns, COVID-19 usage patterns, and mental health state. Software from SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used to examine the data that had been gathered. Using the non-parameter test method, frequency distribution analysis, descriptive analysis, reliability analysis, and correlation analysis were performed to investigate the connection between social media use and outcomes for the general Malaysian population during the COVID-19 epidemic.

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4. Result

4.1. Demographic Characteristics:

The majority of respondents were female (77.50%), aged between 21 and 30 (71.70%), Malay (89.20%), and held a bachelor's degree or higher (54.50%). Most respondents reported being single (74.90%), earning between RM1,000.00 and RM2,000.00 (62.20%), and being students (57.70%).

4.2. Descriptive Analysis

Data collection and analysis are required to put this study's theory to the test. It will decide and establish the study's quality as well as its future direction. To ensure that all of these are qualified, some fundamental tests, such as recognising data normality and outliers, have been tried and resolved. Every tool utilised in this investigation has been proven to be reliable and valid.

Table 1 provides a snapshot of key variables, including mean and standard deviation values, related to mental health, social media usage, economic perceptions, governmental social media engagement, uses gratification theory, and media tendencies. These statistics offer a quick overview of the central aspects under investigation, setting the stage for further data analysis. The average of the calculated values is above 2.00 which considered moderate. This result shows that the respondents perceive all of the factors mentioned to be of some significance in relation to their understanding and recognition of the influence of governmental social media on Malaysians during the pandemic period COVID-19.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis

	Label Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
B	IV - Mental Health	3.07	0.56
C	DV - Social Media	2.76	0.78
CC	DV – Economy	2.82	0.75
CCC	DV - Governmental Social Media	2.49	0.82
D	DV - Uses Gratification Theory	2.48	0.85
DD	DV - Media Tendency	2.65	0.78

4.3. Normality Test

In Table 2, a normality test is conducted on various variables, including B - Mental Health, C - Social Media, Cc - Economy, CCC - Governmental Social Media, D - Uses Gratification Theory, and DD - Media Tendency. The table includes statistics for these variables, with a sample size (N) of 378 and no missing data. The data analysis shows that the means and kurtosis of the six variables (B-mental health, C-social media, CC-economy, CCC-governmental social media, D-uses gratification theory, DD-media tendency) are all low. This suggests that each variable is distributed consistently across the population. Each variable's skewness ranges from mildly to substantially positively skewed, thus most observations are on the lower end. The variables take longer to attain their higher values, which may not be reached by all sample members. The skewness

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and kurtosis standard errors are likewise minimal, confirming the original findings. This data analysis shows that the variables have equal distributions across the population, with some marginally to moderately positively bias.

Table 2: Normality Test

	Variance Details	*B - Mental Health*	*C - Social Media*	*Cc - Economy*	*CCCC - Governmental Social Media*	*D - Uses Gratification Theory*	*DD - Media Tendency*
N	Valid	378	378	378	378	378	378
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.0655	2.761	2.823	2.4902	2.4807	2.6464
Skewness		0.152	0.116	-0.103	0.374	0.569	0.137
Std. Error of Skewness		0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125
Kurtosis		-0.318	-0.634	0.157	-0.365	-0.391	-0.181
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25

The skewness and kurtosis standard errors

4.4. Spearman's correlation coefficients

Table 3 presents the Spearman's correlation coefficients for the relationships between various variables in the study, including Mental Health, Social Media, Economy, Governmental Social Media, Uses Gratification Theory, and Media Tendency.

The Spearman's rho values provide insights into the strength and direction of the correlations between these variables. Significant correlations are indicated with asterisks: * for $p < 0.05$ and ** for $p < 0.01$ (both two-tailed).

During the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia, official government social media showed a small but fa5.vourable link with citizens' mental health (rho = 0.128, p = 0.013). More frequent use of government resources appears to have a weak correlation with better psychological well-being. Many Malaysians, however, have voiced reluctance to fully rely on such platforms, citing issues with trust, accessibility, and involvement. However, during times when people were unable to freely move around, social media's vast terrain became an extremely vital resource for sharing news, expressing emotions, and connecting with others. Evident was everyone's want to know what's going on, to feel included, and to do their part.

The results of the analysis on the relationship between social media use and mental health, on the other hand, were more complicated. Not statistically significant (p = 0.424), however there was some evidence of a positive connection (rho = 0.041). This indicates that other elements, such as social support and economic stability, play crucial roles in ensuring mental health during times of crisis, despite the fact that social media may give platforms for connection and assistance. One's own life experiences and cultural norms and values both have a role in how social media affects one's mental health.

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Table 3: Spearman's correlation coefficient

					Mental Health	Social Media	Economy	Governmental Social Media	Uses Gratification Theory	Media Tendency
Correlations										
					B	C	CC	CCC	D	DD
	Mental Health	Correlation Coefficient			1	0.041	-.112*	.128*	0.025	-0.033
		Sig. (2-tailed)			.	0.424	0.029	0.013	0.627	0.527
		N			378	378	378	378	378	378
		Bootstrap[c]	Bias		0	-0.002	0.001	0.002	-0.002	-0.001
			Std. Error		0	0.054	0.054	0.055	0.054	0.054
			95% Confidence Interval	Lower	1	-0.07	-0.218	0.022	-0.083	-0.141
				Upper	1	0.146	-0.003	0.236	0.128	0.07
	Social Media	Correlation Coefficient			0.041	1	.424**	.543**	.599**	.444**
		Sig. (2-tailed)			0.424	.	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
Spearman's rho		N			378	378	378	378	378	378
		Bootstrap[c]	Bias		-0.002	0	0.001	-0.001	-0.001	0
			Std. Error		0.054	0	0.044	0.042	0.042	0.046
			95% Confidence Interval	Lower	-0.07	1	0.334	0.456	0.512	0.344
				Upper	0.146	1	0.515	0.618	0.673	0.532
	Economy	Correlation Coefficient			-.112*	.424**	1	.361**	.411**	.253**
		Sig. (2-tailed)			0.029	<.001	.	<.001	<.001	<.001
		N			378	378	378	378	378	378
		Bootstrap[c]	Bias		0.001	0.001	0	-0.001	0	0.002
			Std. Error		0.054	0.044	0	0.051	0.045	0.05
			95%	Lower	-0.218	0.334	1	0.264	0.326	0.155

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		Confidence Interval	Upper	-0.003	0.515	1	0.461	0.503	0.356
Governmental Social Media	Correlation Coefficient			.128*	.543**	.361**	1	.707**	.515**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			0.013	<.001	<.001	.	<.001	<.001
	N			378	378	378	378	378	378
	Bootstrap[c]	Bias		0.002	-0.001	-0.001	0	-0.002	-0.001
		Std. Error		0.055	0.042	0.051	0	0.034	0.045
		95% Confidence Interval	Lower	0.022	0.456	0.264	1	0.635	0.424
			Upper	0.236	0.618	0.461	1	0.768	0.601
Uses Gratification Theory	Correlation Coefficient			0.025	.599**	.411**	.707**	1	.695**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			0.627	<.001	<.001	<.001	.	<.001
	N			378	378	378	378	378	378
	Bootstrap[c]	Bias		-0.002	-0.001	0	-0.002	0	-0.001
		Std. Error		0.054	0.042	0.045	0.034	0	0.032
		95% Confidence Interval	Lower	-0.083	0.512	0.326	0.635	1	0.628
			Upper	0.128	0.673	0.503	0.768	1	0.754
Media Tendency	Correlation Coefficient			-0.033	.444**	.253**	.515**	.695**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)			0.527	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.
	N			378	378	378	378	378	378
	Bootstrap[c]	Bias		-0.001	0	0.002	-0.001	-0.001	0
		Std. Error		0.054	0.046	0.05	0.045	0.032	0
		95% Confidence Interval	Lower	-0.141	0.344	0.155	0.424	0.628	1
			Upper	0.07	0.532	0.356	0.601	0.754	1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

c. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

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5. Discussion

While both official and unofficial social media played a role in the morale of the Malaysian people during COVID-19, their role was limited and subject to a number of confounding variables. All the more reason to take a comprehensive approach to mental health that takes into account the wide variety of factors affecting it and each person's specific requirements.

There are two competing hypotheses such as the null hypothesis (H0) and the alternative hypothesis (H1). In this study the hypotheses stated as follow:

1st Hypothesis

H1 - Social Media does affect Public Malaysian Mental Health during the endemic phase of COVID-19.

H0 - Social Media does not affect Public Malaysian Mental Health during the endemic phase of COVID-19.

2nd Hypothesis

H1 - There is a relationship between social media and mental health issues towards Malaysian public during the endemic phase of COVID-19.

H0 - There is no relationship between social media and mental health issues towards Malaysian public during the endemic phase of COVID-19.

The Ho will be rejected if p-value < significant value (a) = 0.05. It means that there was a significant mean difference between Governmental Social Media effectiveness on Public Malaysian Mental Health and relationship between social media and mental health issues towards Malaysian public during the endemic phase of COVID-19 based on gender and vice versa.

5.1. The effectiveness of Governmental Social Media towards Malaysian public mental health issues during the COVID-19 pandemic

Social media has become increasingly important as a communication tool as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, which happened at a time of global unrest. In this context, a fascinating trend linking governmental social media engagement with users' mental health appeared in Malaysia. Although weak (rho = 0.128, p = 0.013), the association points to a complex interaction between the state's internet communication tools and the general psychological health of the populace.

The Malaysian populace relied on government programmes for mental health support during the pandemic, despite the potential advantages. There was scepticism about the veracity of information from official sources, as well as a belief that these sources had a small audience and were difficult to obtain. Reluctance was also sparked by the inherent

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public nature of social media discussions and the pervasive stigmas around mental health. Furthermore, it is obvious that Malaysians favoured a variety of viewpoints over solely depending on official narratives. This sentiment was reinforced by the government's glaring inaction regarding important mental health issues.

Due of the pandemic's restricted nature, which was characterised by little physical interactions, there was a significant emotional gap. Some of this gap was filled by social media, which has grown into an essential tool for maintaining social connections, exchanging firsthand accounts, and providing support to one another. The rapidly shifting conditions of the epidemic also produced a pressing need for information. By providing instant access to information on everything from virus-related news to shifting governmental rules, social media platforms satisfied this requirement.

In the midst of the turmoil, people's emotional discomfort was clear. According to studies like Jumin et al. (2017) social media has evolved into a haven for many people as well as a means of expression. A notable trend among Malaysians at the same time was their pro-active online support for health safety laws, demonstrating a shared commitment to eradicating the virus.

In summary, there is a complex web of cultural nuances, personal predispositions, and outside variables at play in the nuanced interaction between official social media programmes and their impact on mental health during Malaysia's endemic phase. Although the connection is tenuous, it emphasises the significance of focused interventions that take Malaysia's unique sociocultural fabric into account in order to assure successful future strategies.

5.2. The relationship between Social Media and Mental health issues towards Malaysian public health during the COVID-19 pandemic

The findings of the correlation coefficient test indicate a somewhat favourable relationship between social media use and mental health, with a rho value of 0.041. The p-value of 0.424, however, shows that there is no statistically significant connection between the two. This suggests that social media may not have a consistent or significant impact on mental health during the pandemic.

The identified weakly positive association gives credence to the idea that social media may be utilised to build community, foster connections, and spread information. These features could lead to better outcomes in terms of mental health. The mildness of the connection, however, shows that factors other than social media most likely had a more significant impact on mental health throughout the epidemic.

The lack of a substantial relationship between social media use and mental health after adjusting for any confounding factors suggests that other variables may offer a more thorough understanding of the dynamics of mental health throughout this time. As Baharudin et al. (2021) point out, a person's mental health can be significantly impacted by a variety of variables, including social support, economic stability, access to healthcare, and their own personal circumstances. Therefore, as Chua (2020) argues, it is crucial to take these factors into account while examining the connection between social media and mental health.

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Notably, there is no clear-cut good or negative relationship between social media use and mental health. Its effect varies significantly based on certain situations, usage habits, and the type of content that users engage with. Long-term use of social media, dealing with misinformation, experiencing cyberbullying, or making social comparisons can all be detrimental to one's mental health. On the other side, it has been demonstrated that beneficial interactions, availability of supporting groups, and access to instructional materials may all have benefits for mental health (Ni et al., 2020).

In conclusion, while there is a weak positive link between social media usage and mental health among Malaysians during the COVID-19 crisis, its lack of statistical significance, compounded by confounding variables, suggests that social media's role in determining mental health outcomes may not be essential or consistent.

6. Conclusion

This study examined how social media use by the Malaysian government during the COVID-19 virus' endemic period affects the general public's mental health. The findings revealed that the government's use of social media during the epidemic had only a marginally favourable impact on outcomes related to mental health. Regular use of social media was linked to greater mental health, but this link was not statistically significant, indicating that other factors might be at work. These findings demonstrate the capacity of state-run social media to disseminate trustworthy information and inspiration. The complicated relationship between social media and mental health necessitates a greater comprehension of content type, online relationships, and abuse. To raise awareness of the value of digital literacy, foster positive online interactions, and combat false information, the government is urged to collaborate with mental health organisations and social media platforms. More study is urgently required to better understand the complex connection between social media use, governmental measures, and mental health outcomes as this pandemic spreads. If the potential of governmental social media is leveraged and these dynamics are understood, a more complete public mental health support system can be developed during health emergencies.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The researchers used the research ethics provided by the Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Teknologi MARA (RECUiTM). All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants according to the Declaration of Helsinki.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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