

Navigating Social Media Usage and Perceived Behavioural Control in Lowering Youth's Moral Decadence

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ABSTRACT

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The development of the Internet shifted people's attention away from traditional media and towards new media. People utilize an abundance of social media platforms to remain informed about news, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X (previously known as Twitter), and others. However, modern technology allows users to look for information on economic, political, and entertainment issues. Thousands of bytes of data were released worldwide to inform and draw attention. Youth's perceptions of the media usage's credibility were being questioned as a result of the unchecked news spreading through the social media platform. Hence, this study was conducted quantitatively and data were collected via an online survey consisting of 80 questions and were analyzed using SPSS. A total number of 44 undergraduate students from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Negeri Sembilan was selected as a sample for this pilot study. An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was also conducted to assess the number of constructs or factors involved, as well as item quality, item loading factors, and construct validity. The result shows that the items involved in measuring the variable were reliable and normally distributed. The reliability test reveals that the internal consistency is considered excellent except for two factors (Cronbach's alpha = .70), which is considered good.

Contribution/Originality: This study is one of the very few studies that have investigated lowering moral decadence among youths in Malaysia.

1. Introduction

According to [Vidal et al. \(2020\)](#), the Internet, social media, mobile applications, and other virtual communication technologies now infiltrate billions of people's daily lives. According to recent statistics, over 4.60 billion people worldwide are active Internet users, which represents approximately 59.5% of the global population. According to [Statista \(2022\)](#), there were 4.2 billion active social media users and 4.32 billion mobile Internet users. Since its creation, social media had an extensive effect on youth development. [Memon et al. \(2018\)](#) hypothesize that youths use social media to address offline developmental difficulties such as identity, autonomy, peer connections, sexuality, risk-taking, and sensation-seeking behaviours that occur during the developmental period ([Srivastava et al., 2019](#)).

According to studies, social media is widely used among youth (93-97%) ([Barry et al., 2017](#); [Pew Research Centre, 2018](#)). On average, youth use three different social media sites every day, with some utilizing up to eight ([Barry et al., 2017](#)). Furthermore, youths spend a significant amount of their free time on social media, with an average of approximately five hours per day ([Barry et al., 2017](#); [Berger et al., 2022](#)). These usage trends indicate that social media is a compelling and vital part of youth's everyday lives, both online and offline. Research has linked social media use to several elements of youth psychosocial development, including self-esteem, interaction with others, peer victimization, absorbed difficulties, delinquent behaviour, and sexual self-exploration ([Seabrook et al., 2016](#); [Popat & Tarrant, 2023](#); [Uhls et al., 2017](#); [Wang et al., 2019](#)).

Today's society has access to a wide range of public information sources. The use of media by youth becomes an essential component in deciding their behaviour. Random sex or prostate prostitution, on the other hand, is nevertheless common and, at worst, fatal ([Mulisa & Getahun, 2018](#)). Previously, this prostitute's symptoms were commonly associated with adult males. The symptoms of this prostitute have expanded among students aged 15 to 17 ([Shapiro & Margolin, 2019](#)). According to [Nesi and Prinstein \(2018\)](#), researchers discovered a comment made by a 25-year-old woman who gives services to students stating that she is always coming together, especially on weekends. In Malaysia, there were approximately 22,008 addicts due to pharmaceutical use, including 11,477 (52.15%) new addicts and 10,531 recurrent addicts. They are 99 percent male, ages 20 to 24, mostly Malays, followed by Chinese, Indians, and non-natives ([Vannucci & Ohannessian, 2019](#)).

These situations and data demonstrated that the media is unable to serve as effective weapons in fighting against moral decadence. [Scott, Biello and Woods \(2019\)](#) investigated whether most of the information portrayed by the media is not being suppressed. Media has become freely accessible in the hands of people due to the rapid growth of technology and its impact on culture and daily life. Radio, television, films, videos, and online resources have all played important roles in our young people's daily lives in this new environment. Media exposure influences their values, attitudes, and behaviour, for better or worse. Unfortunately, the outcomes of these events had an impact on the well-being of youths.

In conclusion, more broadly, public awareness campaigns can educate people on the effects of inappropriate digital media use and encourage good habits in this field is still lacking. Several social media networks have banned and restricted self-harm-related content. The majority of them supported automatic monitoring in situations beyond

their control. Moral decadence, as shown by this study, is accountable for a wide range of illegal acts within today's society. Youths engaged in immoral behaviours such as stealing, drug misuse, violence, political thuggery, examination malpractice, and indecent dressing. Immoral behaviours might impede society's development and progress if not tackled. Therefore, this study aimed to validate the items of social media usage and perceived behavioural control in lowering youth's moral decadence through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) by using SPSS.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social media usage among youth

According to [Boursier, Gioia and Griffiths \(2020\)](#), social media is a group of Internet-based networks that allow users to communicate visually or verbally. Almost half of the global population (49%; 3.8 billion) actively utilizes social media ([Kemp, 2020](#)). The objective of social media use ranges from sustaining relationships to gathering information and amusement ([Uhls, 2017](#)). Social media adds meaning by capturing behavioural factors such as individual thought, mood, communication, activity, and socialization ([Acar et al., 2022](#)). According to [Livingstone and Helsper \(2010\)](#) and [Uhls \(2017\)](#), social networking sites lead to these benefits and positive outcomes.

According to [Baccarella et al. \(2018\)](#) claimed that despite the benefits of social media content, its extensive use has led to global concerns. Studies by ([Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2022](#); [Caner et al., 2022](#); [Obeid et al., 2019](#)) indicate that excessive and compulsive use of social media networks might lead to negative outcomes. Thus, throughout the last decade, research has turned from addressing the benefits of the Internet and social media to the negative consequences of excessive use, referred to as social media addiction ([Moreno et al., 2022](#); [Mohsenpour et al., 2023](#)). This paradigm shift has been linked to an increase in negative outcomes, particularly those involving juvenile moral decadence, especially among youths ([Acar et al., 2022](#); [Baccarella et al., 2018](#)).

Another adverse effect of utilizing social media is that it has the potential to lead to moral decadence or degeneration in youths. According to [Oyediran \(2020\)](#), individuals in a society consistently abandon and neglect moral rules of action. For example, certain young people have used these social media platforms to share rude, nude, and sexual photographs, especially of themselves. Another example is that excessive use of social media without adequate direction can lead to indecent behaviour and sexual harassment ([Liu et al., 2022](#)).

2.2. Social issues and their effect on youth moral decadence

[Marino et al. \(2018\)](#) describe moral decadence as our culture's failure to maintain a healthy morality. According to [Monacis et al. \(2020\)](#), moral decadence is the process of acting in a way that violates moral norms. It represents a dramatic fall in a society's moral ideals. As a result, moral degeneration appears to indicate a decline in society's moral norms. Our cultural values, beliefs, norms, and ethical standards seem weakening or crumbling. Given this, it is possible to presume that it takes various forms. [Afuge \(2015\)](#) cites cultism, examination malpractice, adolescent pregnancy, student prostitution, sexual harassment, grade selling, student demonstrations, drug abuse, obscene attire, and other manifestations of moral deterioration.

Today's media is very technical, and it simplifies all forms of communication and social interaction. Whatever happens, good or terrible, people learn about it through the media. The media also spreads information on the issues of juvenile moral degeneration. Modern-day people frequently replicate the lifestyles of celebrities as portrayed in the media. They replicate even eternal deeds performed by their idols or social media stars. According to [Obeid et al. \(2019\)](#) research, media, specifically videos, and films, is the most significant contributor to poor behaviour and violence. There are far too many media images, films, and games that not only normalize but also celebrate violence. Youth are always amused by all of this, rather than appalled or scared. Based on the above situation, the media is blamed for the immoral ways displayed by young people whom they learned from the media ([Sujarwoto & Yumarni, 2023](#)).

The effect of media such as unpleasant films, pornographic websites on the Internet, and obscene texts hastens moral degeneration among the youth. It is critical to instill social principles in youths and socialize them adequately. Socialization research focuses on how adults pass down behavioural standards to youth through parenting approaches and why those values become embedded or not ([Bilkisu, 2019](#)). According to this view, moral growth entails youth's increased conformity with and internalization of adult rules, requirements, and behavioural norms. Using these concepts, researchers discover that parental behaviours differ in how much they enable youth to internalize values and that these impacts are influenced by child characteristics such as age and temperament ([Chinedu et al., 2020](#)).

[Umeogu et al. \(2020\)](#) state that the Internet, particularly social media, hurts youth education, morals, and culture. Since the arrival of social media in the country, there has been an increase in the loss of dignity among youths. It has become a platform for some youngsters to post naked or pornographic photographs ([Chukwuebuka, 2021](#)). The hazards linked with the harmful effects of social media on youth are evident daily in the form of a changing mental setup, an unhealthy lifestyle, and a deteriorating ability to concentrate. Concentration and quality time appear to diminish as people struggle to function without the media daily. Previously, youths were highly addicted to traditional press and nowadays they are addicted to smartphone usage and social media.

2.3. Credibility information received from media by youth

[Jiang et al. \(2020\)](#) highlighted that youth may face stronger social pressures to use digital media in ways consistent with their peers than adults, which could explain how much they depend on it. According to [Yin and Zhang \(2020\)](#), studies demonstrate that social and group-based digital media applications, such as social networking sites, are extremely popular among young people, and youth may feel more inclined and have the opportunity to broaden their social networks and locate influential people through these media, potentially taking greater benefit of opportunities for developing credibility construction and assessment, as discussed previously.

According to [Alsmadi and O'Brien \(2020\)](#), the trustworthiness of information received from digital media is critical for youth, not only because they are active information seekers, but also because there are significant differences between youth and adult information seekers, particularly in their seeking knowledge goals ([Chang, Zhang, & Gwizdka, 2021](#)). Youth are more habituated to digital media than adults due to their upbringing in a technologically advanced society. There is also evidence that youths

consume as much or more information through digital media than adults, indicating that they may use these tools to find information more naturally (Le et al., 2020).

Based on relevant research, this study claims that information credibility is largely concerned with youths' perceptions of the quality of social media online information and their level of credibility in terms of reputation (Song et al., 2021). With the rapid advancement of Internet communication technology, almost anyone is capable of posting online comments on social media comment platforms. Previous research indicates that readers are less likely to pay attention to information they do not trust (Gaziano, 1988). As a consequence, perceived information reliability has been deemed critical to the survival of new media outlets. Information credibility is the amount to which one perceives information to be believable and is a strong predictor of the reader's subsequent behaviours, such as recommendation or willingness to adopt a viewpoint of the received information (Mackay, & Lowrey, 2019).

According to Tennant et al. (2015), educational interventions regarding how to use social media should be implemented for youth and improving for them to navigate online information stand to gain from the information quality framework, as the search, assessment, and creation processes will progressively impact the modern information economy (Radovic et al., 2021). Education and employment training must adapt to the new information ecosystem as more jobs require digital skills. As civic engagement, cultural participation, and employment become increasingly dependent on digital technologies, education must adapt to the new information ecosystem to ensure that disparities in support structures and access do not further deprive disadvantaged populations of opportunities for advancement.

3. Methodology

This research utilised a quantitative research method and the data were collected using online survey forms to evaluate the social media usage and perceived behavioural control in lowering youth's moral decadence among undergraduate students at Universiti Teknologi MARA's (UiTM), Negeri Sembilan. Using purposive sampling, the researcher purposely selected participants who used social media in their daily lives. A questionnaire was devised and consisted of 80 items measuring eight variables involved. A total of 44 undergraduate students from different faculties in UiTM Negeri Sembilan participated in this pilot study. A pilot study is crucial because it improves the precision of the study instrument (Ybarra et al., 2015). It involves gathering data from a smaller sample that is consistent with the primary data collection activity (Hassan, Schattner, & Mazza, 2006). According to Lancaster, Dodd and Williamson (2004), a pilot study helps detect the research instrument's performance. The pilot study serves several purposes. For example, it detects instrument flaws and errors (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). It enhances the instrument's preliminary reliability and validity (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2010).

In terms of questionnaires, a pilot study aids in correcting questionnaire wording issues (Kraemer et al., 2006), clarity and understanding issues, adequacy of instructions or directions issues (Morgan, 1993), layout and attractiveness issues, and timing and length of questionnaire issues. Pilot testing enhances instrument reliability and validity (Morgan, 1993; Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2010). As a result, this study with pilot testing is significant for research findings.

A Likert scale is an interval scale that is often used in survey research where data is collected via a questionnaire. The Likert scale measures the intensity of respondents' feelings about the questionnaire items (Conley et al., 2008). The survey used the five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and the questionnaire's items were only offered in English and Bahasa Melayu. The data was subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using SPSS version 26 to identify the number of constructs or factors associated with social media usage and perceived behavioural control, item quality, item loading factors, and construct validity. Cronbach's alpha test is used to evaluate the reliability (internal consistency) of a group of scale or test items based on their relationship with other factors. Cronbach's alpha coefficients range from 0.00 to 1.00. Cronbach's Alpha value was calculated because it is a widely used reliability indicator in social science research (Malmqvist et al., 2019).

4. Findings

4.1. Demographic information

This section begins with the discussion background of the respondent, as shown in Table 1. The survey instrument's measurements and data-collecting procedure are then outlined.

Table 1: Demographics profile of the respondents (n=44)

Profiles	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Gender		
Male	26	59.1
Female	18	40.9
Age		
18 – 21	28	63.6
22 – 25	16	36.4
Race		
Malays	39	88.6
Other	5	11.4
The Most Used Social Media		
TikTok	19	43.2
Instagram	18	40.9
Twitter	7	15.9

The demographic profile showed that males denominated 59.1% and females 40.9% respectively, the targeted respondents' ages were distributed in two intervals which are 18-21 years old (63.6%) and 22-25 years old (36.4%). Respondents' race was Malay, equivalent to 88.6%, followed by others (11.4%). Meanwhile, the education level represents the highest are Diploma which is 70.5%, and Bachelor's Degree (29.5%). As for the regions of the respondents, the highest is from Southern (29.5%), followed by East Malaysia (25.0%), Central (22.7%), Northern (18.2%), and East Cost (4.5%). The most used social media among the respondents is TikTok (43.2%), followed by Instagram (40.9%), and Twitter (15.9%).

4.2. Reliability test

Cronbach's alpha is a measure of validity that compares the amount of shared variation, or covariance, across items in an instrument to the total variance. The idea is that if the

instrument is reliable, the items should have a high degree of correlation with the variance. In this study, a value of Cronbach's alpha was 0.70 and above and the internal consistency is regarded as excellent and considered good. Table 2 shows the reliability test results for construct Attitude, Subjective Norm, Perceived Behavioral Control, Social Interaction, Youth's Perception, Credibility of Information, Misuse of Social Media, and Social Construct.

Table 2: Cronbach's alpha value

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No of items
Attitude	0.704	10
Subjective Norm	0.806	10
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.707	10
Social interaction	0.753	10
Youth's Perception	0.864	10
Credibility of information	0.765	10
Misuse of Social Media	0.791	10
Social Construct	0.820	10

Table 3 shows that all variables were above their respective means score above 3.00. Regarding the study's independent variable, it has the highest mean score, Attitude (4.341%). It is indicated that among the three independent variables, the respondents have a high attitude toward social media. Meanwhile, the mediating variable in this study is social interaction, youth's perception, credibility of information, and misuse of social media have the highest mean score of 4.100. It shows that the respondents perceived misuse of social media as representing lowering the moral decadence competencies.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Attitude	4.341	3.62
Subjective Norm	3.970	5.01
Perceived Behavioral Control	4.000	4.81
Social Interaction	3.911	4.80
Youth's Perception	3.284	6.41
Credibility of Information	3.307	4.70
Misuse of Social Media	4.100	4.84
Social Construct	4.041	5.53

4.3. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to extract how many factors were needed to represent this study and examine the construct validity. According to Marsh, Balla and McDonald (2014), the role of EFA is to find the smallest number of common latent factors that can account for correlations and more meaningful constructs, and simultaneously retain as much information as possible (Yong & Pearce, 2013). Factors were extracted using the principal component method and rotated using varimax rotation. When extracting the factors for this study, a few criteria were taken into

account which are item loadings (loadings less than 0.40 and loaded on multiple factors were removed during the EFA procedure), eigenvalue, and variance percentage. The result of the exploratory factor analysis is shown in [Table 4](#). After the retaining items, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy was at .912, exceeding the recommended value of .6 ([Kaiser & Rice, 1974](#)), and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity ([Bartlett, 1954](#)) reached statistical significance ($X^2= 3120.413$, $df=353$, $p<.000$). While [Table 5](#) below shows the factor loadings of the Media Usage.

Table 4: KMO and Bartlett’s Test of adequacy and suitability of sample size

KMO and Bartlett’s Test	
Kaiser-Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.912
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity = .000	
	Approx. 3120.413
	Chi-Square
	Df 353
	Sig. .000

The initial EFA results revealed that a few items were deleted due to having higher or lower factor loading than set or being cross-loaded on several factors across were removed accordingly. Following that, items were removed for the next iteration as [Pett et al. \(2013\)](#) suggested. After that, the [Kaiser and Rice \(1974\)](#) factor-extraction criterion was taken into consideration which showed eight factors being extracted with eigenvalues greater than 1, explaining 75.652% of the variance considering the value .30 as the cut-off point to assign an item to the factor, the structure of each of the eight obtained factors was obvious. Factor 1 consisted of 10 items (12.312 variances explained) concerning Attitude, Factor 2 consisted of 10 items (11.475 variances explained) concerning Subjective Norms, Factor 3 consisted of 10 items (11.204 variances explained) concerning Perceived Behavioural Control, Factor 4 consisted of 10 items (10.496 variances explained) concerning Social Interaction, Factor 5 consisted of 10 items (10.203 variances explained) concerning Youth Perception, Factor 6 consisted of 10 items (2.216 variances explained) concerning Credibility of Information, Factor 7 consisted of 10 items (2.216 variances explained) concerning Misused of Social Media, Factor 8 consisted of 10 items (7.276 variances explained) concerning Social Construct (refer to [Table 5](#)).

Table 5: Factor loadings and promax rotation factor pattern following the principle component method

Items	A	SN	PBC	SI	YP	CI	MSM	SC
Attitude (A)								
A1	.764							
A2	.770							
A3	.725							
A4	.492							
A5	.720							
A6	.743							
A7	.676							
A8	.785							
A8	.769							
A9	.749							

A10		
Subjective Norm	.828	
(SN)	.802	
	.780	
SN1	.815	
SN2	.824	
SN3	.758	
SN4	.784	
SN5	.498	
SN6	.708	
SN7	.717	
SN8		
SN9		
SN10	.786	
Perceived	.823	
Behavioural	.667	
Control (PBC)	.756	
	.793	
PBC1	.763	
PBC2	.510	
PBC3	.651	
PBC4	.769	
PBC5	.776	
PBC6		.875
PBC7		.867
PBC8		.818
PBC9		.887
PBC10		.780
Social Interaction		.782
(SI)		.769
SI1		.795
SI2		.547
SI3		.830
SI4		
SI5		.786
SI6		.823
SI7		.667
SI8		.756
SI9		.793
SI10		.763
Youth's		.510
Perception (YP)		.651
		.769
		.776
YP1		.799
YP2		.841
YP3		.837
YP4		.407
YP5		.801
YP6		.825
YP7		.810
YP8		.800
YP9		.868
YP10		.862

Credibility of Information (CI)									662
CI1									.744
CI2									.756
CI3									.774
CI4									.765
CI5									.807
CI6									.557
CI7									.728
CI8									.770
CI9									.772
CI10									.722
Misuse of Social Media (MSM)									.669
MSM1									.752
MSM2									.555
MSM3									.664
MSM4									.679
MSM5									.762
MSM6									.823
MSM7									.809
MSM8									.806
MSM9									2.992
MSM10									10.20
Social Construct (SC)									2.686
SC1									9.054
SC2									3
SC3									11.47
SC4									4
SC5									10.49
SC6									10.47
SC7									3
SC8									2.216
SC9									7.276
SC10									0
Eigenvalue Percentage of Variance (%)									04

Note: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = .912
 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity; df = 353, p = 0.00

5. Conclusion

A greater priority was placed on the user's perceptual skills from a psychological standpoint. Perceived risk had a beneficial impact on perceived diagnostic, even when information quality is taken into account. The findings are intended to enhance the standards of information on social media review sites and encourage their use. Our research generated several different kinds of recommendations. However, the following restrictions are highlighted. Our sample age ranges from 18 to 25 years. Youth

particularly college students, make up the majority of social media users, although they do not always represent all platforms. Therefore, the sample collection should cover a larger group. The resulting conclusion in future research should be universal and promotional.

Social media has been found to have an important effect on the moral growth of youths, with both positive and negative consequences. On the negative side, it has been associated with moral decadence, such as character assassination, media violence, and the promotion of nudity and obscene content (Marek & Walulik, 2021). The platform also promotes narcissism, which undermines moral standards (Bjarehed et al., 2024). Unchecked and excessive use of social media has been linked to a decline in moral values in youth, affecting their health and education. However, social media can also positively impact problem-solving, creative, and critical thinking skills, as well as promote communication (Jerkovic & Ilic, 2020).

Social media platforms provide an innovative platform for youths to express themselves truthfully and exchange information relevant to their everyday lives. It feels beneficial to see more unfavourable information being disseminated, but this is poor information for Malaysian youth and the country's future leaders. Positive information-sharing practices should be encouraged and inculcated in Malaysian youth. Therefore, as a result, parents, police officers, and other relevant authorities should be aware of this situation. In any case, the youth remain responsible. Prevention efforts are also crucial before depression cases caused by social media addiction worsen irreversibly. Further studies should look into a variety of communication methods that may lead to addiction and psychological issues among youths to ensure a healthier future generation. Although there is extensive evidence pointing to the negative effects of social media usage, more research is needed to provide conclusive results on the causal relationship and how social media can be used to lower moral decadence. Therefore, further in-depth studies are required.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The researchers used the research ethics provided by the Research Ethics Committee from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Shah Alam. All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted following 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 declare no conflict of interest in this study.

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