



Public Perception of Social Media Usage Among Primary School Children in Johor Bahru

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Abstract

In the era of the rapid development of digital technology, social media has become one of the most important things for most people, including children and it raises concerns of the public regarding the impact of social media on their well-being. The aim of the study is to examine the Public Perception of Social Media Usage Among Primary School Children in Johor Bahru. The study aims to examine the positive and negative effects of social media on primary children. The data collected through an online questionnaire distributed among 150 residents in Johor Bahru. The data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) through descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. With a mean score of 4.517 and Cronbach's alpha value 0.941, The findings show that respondents highly agreed that social media gives positive benefits towards children. Results of this study also indicated that parents and teachers view support in the form of guidance and supervision as important in teaching responsible social media use. Overall, the findings indicate that the public perceives guidance and supervision as essential in fostering children's responsible social media use, highlighting the importance of continuous support in promoting responsible online behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Public Perception of Social Media Usage Among Primary School Children in Johor Bahru discusses how people feel and think about the current issue of increasing use of social media by primary school children, particularly in urban areas. Public perception itself refers to the way people in society think, feel and form opinions about a certain issue or situation. These perceptions are normally affected by personal experiences, surroundings or any social values. Technology is continually evolving and children are increasingly exposed to social media, leaving them with varying responses and perspectives from society (Ahmad & Ibrahim, 2021). For example, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram and Facebook because it is easy to get access to the internet and due to the rapid growth of

development in modern society. Social media is an online platform where users can share information with others via the internet and communicate with one another. Nowadays, the use of social media for entertainment, learning and communication and social interaction has been found to be a popular practice amongst children in primary schools. Social media use is more prevalent among young children because of easier access to smartphones, tablets and internet connections (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

There are many concerns on the negative effects of social media usage among primary school children. Some parents, teachers, and even community members worry that excessive use of social media may affect the academic performance of their children. Since primary school children are still in the process of emotional and mental development, many people believe that they require proper guidance and monitoring while using social media (O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). According to Ofcom (2025), a large percentage of parents expressed their concerns about the issue of over usage of screen time, cyberbullying and online safety among children as well as children’s exposure to inappropriate materials. However, there are also those who believe that the internet has numerous educational benefits, enhances communication skills and fosters creativity in children.

This study is conducted in Johor Bahru because of the development of the city and modern lifestyle, the usage of technology and internet access among children is slowly increasing. A lot of families have smartphones and digital devices, which makes it more convenient for kids to access social media anytime. This has led to rise in public awareness and concern about children’s social media usage. Hence, this study is conducted to gain insights into the public perception towards the usage of social media among primary school children in Johor Bahru. This study aims to focus on the public perception of the positive and negative effects of social media on children especially in terms of education, behaviour, communication and social development. People may have different opinions and experiences on this matter as social media has become part of children’s daily lives. Therefore, this study hopes to create a better awareness among parents, teachers and society on the importance of guiding and monitoring children to ensure that social media is used in a healthy and responsible manner.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital technology has revolutionized the way children communicate, learn and access information. Social media has become a way of living in today's world, with people across the world connecting to others via their social networks, sharing information, and joining communities in cyberspace (Ibrahim et al., 2022). Due to the use of mobile phones and internet access, more kids in Malaysia have begun using social media earlier (Nazir et al., 2020). This increase in usage has worried parents and teachers, both of whom are important for a child's growth.

Next, many people believe social media can help children learn and grow as well. Children have access to many different types of educational resources, including digital learning materials, through social media that they would not have in a traditional classroom (Nazir et al., 2020). Social media can also help develop children's creativity, improve their problem-solving skills, and improve their digital literacy. These are all important skills to help develop ways in which children learn and grow in today's digitally connected world (MJSSH). Additionally, online platforms help children to stay connected to friends and family while also developing new social relationships with others. (Elkatmış, 2024). Parents generally appreciate the educational and developmental advantages of digital technology. They see social media as a way to spark curiosity, improve technological skills, and expand knowledge of the world. Therefore, they believe that it is important for children to learn to use such platforms responsibly, not to ban children from using them (Mohamed et al., 2024).

Although there are positive aspects to social media use, parents state they are worried about the potential dangers as well. For example, children's daily activities, behavior and self-development are influenced by internet addiction (Nazir et al., 2020). As a parent, they do not want their children to be exposed to inappropriate content such as violent or explicit material which might affect their attitudes and values (UNICEF, 2020). To address this, most parents decided to set a screen-time limit and monitor their children’s online activities in order to prevent their children from getting involved in negative activities (UNICEF, 2020).

On the other hand, teachers also have mixed views on the use of social media by children. On the positive side, digital platforms can offer students and teachers flexibility for information in their education and learning (Ishak et al., 2022). For instance, social media apps like WhatsApp and TikTok are now seen as useful tools for communication and knowledge sharing among students (Abas et al., 2025). Clearly, technology can enhance students’ digital skills and prepare them for future educational and professional work (Ishak et al., 2022). Nevertheless, teachers also express concerns about the problems associated with social media use. Students’ attention spans and concentration during class will be affected when it comes to social media use (Ishak et al., 2022). This is due to the fact that attention given through social media may not be sufficient compared to during

face-to-face learning in the classroom. Long-term screen time may also negatively impact students' academic performance and well-being (UNICEF, 2020). Last but not least, parents and teachers shared the same concern towards children from low socio-economic families. This is because they tend to face barriers in accessing digital devices and to have stable internet connections due to family financial conditions (Ishak et al., 2022).

Public perception is also influenced by the social and behavioral impacts of social media, along with educational concerns. Excessive Internet usage can negatively impact children's love of outdoor activities and their ability to communicate with people face to face (Nazir et al., 2020). Early exposure to social media increases a child's chances of being involved in cyberbullying, being influenced by dangerous trends, and ultimately damaging their emotional well-being (Hjetland et al., 2021). As a result, many members of the public believe that children should have supervision and direction when they use digital platforms (Livingstone et al., 2017).

Although there has been a number of previous research into social media use, internet addiction and youth behavior in Malaysia, few studies have included public perceptions of social media use in primary school children, especially in Johor Bahru (Nazir et al., 2020). Most studies have focused on adolescents or older students, leaving little understanding about how parents, teachers as well as the wider community perceive social media use among younger children. Thus, this study aims to investigate the public perception of social media use in primary school children in Johor Bahru for benefits, risks and developmental effects.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a quantitative cross-sectional study design to assess the public perception of social media usage among primary school children in Johor Bahru. The target population for this study encompassed individuals aged 18 years and above in Johor Bahru district, including parents, teachers and the public as these groups were considered capable in providing relevant opinions on the issue. Convenience sampling technique was selected for this study as it is practical and efficient in recruiting readily accessible respondents. The study was participated by a total of 155 respondents. Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire distributed through Google Forms links and QR codes shared across online platforms. The questionnaire comprises demographic items alongside closed-ended questions evaluated via a five-point Likert scale. The scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) used to measure the respondents' perceptions about the issue being studied. Statistical Package software for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the collected data. To summarize and interpret the data collected from the respondents, descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used. The purpose was to determine respondents' perception of benefits, risks and impacts of using social media among primary school children. The findings are presented in tables and figures and discussed with respect to the aims of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Respondents

The socio demographic characteristic of the 155 respondents in the study is shown in Table 1.0. Respondents were more male with 54.8% than the females with 45.2% based on gender. The respondents in the age group of 18-25 years were more with 50.3%, followed by 16.8% of 26-35 years, 16.1% of 36-45 years and 12.3% above 45 years. Respondents below 18 years were the minimum with 4.5%. From the data it can be described that the respondents of this study are mainly young people. The largest occupational group that participated was students 48.4%, followed by civil servants 14.2%, self-employed 13.5%, teachers 12.3% and private sector workers 10.3% and the least was retired 1.3%. The largest respondents' relationship to the primary school children were relatives 30.3%, community members with 19.4%, respondents' who were related to students as parents or guardians with 16.8%, teachers with 11.0% and lastly, siblings with 2.6%.

Table 1.0
Profile of Respondent (N=155)

Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	85	54.8
	Female	70	45.2
Age	Below 18 years old	7	4.5
	18 - 25 years old	78	50.3
	26 – 35 years old	26	16.8
	36 - 45 years old	25	16.1

	Above 45 years old	19	12.3
Occupation	Student	75	48.4
	Teacher	19	12.3
	Civil Servant	22	14.2
	Private Sector	16	10.3
	Self-Employed	21	13.5
	Retired	2	1.3
Relationship to Primary School Children	Parent or Guardian	26	16.8
	Sibling	35	22.6
	Relative	47	30.3
	Teacher	17	11.0
	Community Member	30	19.4

According to Pallant (2016), Cronbach's Alpha is a statistical measure used to assess the internal consistency of a scale by evaluating how closely related the items are within a construct. The reliability of a scale is interpreted based on its alpha coefficient: values of 0.90 and above indicate excellent reliability, 0.80 to 0.89 indicate good reliability, 0.70 to 0.79 indicate acceptable reliability, 0.60 to 0.69 indicate questionable reliability, 0.50 to 0.59 indicate poor reliability, and values below 0.50 are considered unacceptable.

Table 1.1 shows the reliability analysis for the variable Public Perception of Social Media Usage Among Primary School Children in Johor Bahru. The construct consisted of 15 items and recorded a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.769. Hence, this value is classified as acceptable, indicating that the items used to measure respondents' perceptions are internally consistent and reliable for further analysis.

Table 1.1
Reliability Test

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Assumed
Public Perception of Social Media Usage Among Primary School Children In Johor Bahru	15	0.769	Acceptable

In the following Table 1.2, there is a scale to indicate how a mean score is high, medium and low, where from 1.00 to 2.33 will have a mean score interpreted as low, values between 2.34 to 3.67 indicate a medium level and from 3.68 to 5.00 are considered high value.

Table 1.2
Level of Mean Score Range

Mean Score Range	Level
1.00 – 2.33	Low
2.34 – 3.67	Medium
3.68 – 5.00	High

Mean and Standard Deviation

The mean and standard deviation analysis provides insight into respondents' overall engagement with perception of social media usage among primary school children in Johor Bahru. Respondents evaluated their level of participation and agreement using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Table 1.3 reveals that with a N=155, the Public Perception of Social Media Usage Among Primary School Children in Johor Bahru had a mean of 4.157 and a standard deviation of 0.544. Based on the interpretation Table 1.2, the mean scores are within the high level. It shows that there was a high level of agreement that children from primary school use social media in a positive way. Overall, respondents were aware that social media, if used correctly, can be a useful tool for learning, for communication skills and for the access to useful information. There is high agreement that respondents have a positive view of social media use by primary school children, indicating that although there are benefits, social media use should be managed and monitored to achieve positive outcomes.

Table 1.3
Mean and Standard Deviation

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Public Perception of Social Media Usage Among Primary School Children In Johor Bahru	4.157	0.544	155

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study shows that the increasing use of social media by primary school children in Johor Bahru has created a serious social issue as digital technology rapidly develops. Societal norms, values and perceptions of society have been changed significantly with the use of social media. Communication, learning and interacting with your natural environment have been impacted by the usage of social media by children. Although there are many advantages for children by using social media for example providing access to educational resources, enhancing digital skills and providing opportunities for communication the increasing use of social media by children has also caused concern from parents, teachers, community members. Therefore, understanding public perception towards children's social media usage is important to ensure that technology is used in a beneficial and responsible manner.

The findings of this study indicate that the public acknowledges the positive contribution of social media towards children's development. Social media can become an effective learning platform by allowing children to explore new knowledge, access educational resources, and develop creativity outside the traditional classroom environment. This study supports previous research which explains that digital platforms can enhance children's learning experiences and improve their digital literacy when technology is used appropriately with proper guidance (Mohamed et al., 2024). However, the positive impacts of social media depend on the way children interact with online platforms and the support provided by adults.

This study also concluded with the discovery that surveyed participants are more concerned with how using social media negatively affects their children than they are about the potential positive impacts. Survey responses show that excessive use of social media can potentially influence a child's ability to perform academically, behave appropriately, develop emotionally and relate to other people within their peer group. Children who are still in primary school are still developing their thinking skills and have not reached full emotional maturity. Therefore, they are more susceptible to the potential dangers of using social media such as being exposed to cyberbullying, inappropriate content and unhealthy behaviours (Hjetland et al., 2021).

Additionally, the high level of agreement regarding parental control and guidance shows that respondents believe supervision is necessary to encourage responsible digital behaviour. Adults need not completely ban children from using technology rather, adults can help children learn how to use technology responsibly. Adults need also to provide appropriate limits and monitor children's use of the internet. Livingstone et al. (2017), shows that parent involvement and providing children with digital guidance are very important for children to develop healthy and safe online behaviours. In summary, it suggests that social media should not be thought of as providing a wholly negative influence on primary school-aged children. The primary issue related to social media usage by primary school children is the lack of monitoring, guidance and responsible use. When social media is used properly, the potential exists to support educational and developmental aspirations of children, conversely inappropriate usage of social media has the potential to create risks for children's overall well-being.

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