UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA LITERACY AND BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION TOWARD SEXTING PREVENTION COMPETENCIES AMONG SOCIAL MEDIA USERS IN MALAYSIA

SITI NASARAH BINTI ISMAIL

PhD

March 2025

ABSTRACT

In an era dominated by digital communication which is social media platforms, the study explores the significant concern of sexting, aiming to contribute to the development of effective prevention strategies. This study aims to determine the level of sexting prevention competencies among social media users and to identify the impact of social media literacy and behavioural intention toward sexting prevention competencies. The primary objective of the study is to determine the mediating impact of behavioural intention towards relationship between social media literacy and sexting prevention competencies. The study utilises a comprehensive multistage cluster sampling process to guarantee a wide range of participants, which accurately represents the heterogeneous environment of social media users in Malaysia. In order to achieve the research objectives, a questionnaire was developed as a main tool for data collection. The questionnaire consists of 99 items which are divided into three (3) variables (social media literacy, behavioural intention, and sexting prevention competencies). A total of 412 respondents who are social media users and randomly selected from five states which are Perlis, Selangor, Melaka, Pahang and Sarawak. Statistical Packages for the Social Science for Windows version 28 (SPSS 28.0) and AMOS 28 for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) are used to process and analyse the data results. The findings of the study indicate that behavioural intention significantly mediates the association between social media literacy and sexting prevention competencies. The importance of social media literacy in shaping individuals' capacity to ethically navigate the social media environment becomes evident. Social media users who possess higher levels of social media literacy demonstrate enhanced awareness and comprehension of the possible risks linked to sexting. As a result, this promotes the development of efficacious preventive competencies. The research findings have practical significance for politicians, educators, and social media platforms, surpassing their theoretical confines. Given the critical importance of social media literacy in fostering responsible conduct on the social media, stakeholders could develop focused interventions aimed at improving the sexting prevention competencies of social media users in Malaysia. In addition, comprehending the mediating role of behavioural intention underscores the significance of cultivating a proactive mentality among individuals who utilise social media platforms, urging them to engage actively in initiatives aimed at preventing sexting. In summary, this thesis makes a valuable contribution to the ongoing dialogue surrounding social media literacy and its influence on the development of sexting prevention competencies through behavioural intention.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

The advancement in technology benefits users in many ways, and daily life becomes easier. Social media technology has revolutionised the way people communicate and socialise in the virtual world. Moreover, the rapid evolution of social media platforms has brought about substantial changes to the communication environment, providing individuals with unprecedented opportunities for establishing connections and expressing themselves. Greenhow and Chapman (2020) highlighted that social media technology has facilitated social connections through mobile applications, enabling users to not only access information but also communicate with others and share ideas. David (2024) showed that the arrival of social media has significantly altered the way individuals, communities, and organisations communicate and interact. In fact, this technology offers applications that help people communicate information in many formats, such as text, pictures, audio, and video (Nicolaou et al., 2019).

According to the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) (2023), in the Internet Users Survey 2022 (IUS 2022) report, 38.5 percent of internet users in Malaysia use the Internet for a minimum of nine (9) hours a day, and mostly for social reasons such as communicating by text and social media visits. According to the recent statistic by Data Reportal (2024), until January 2024, there were reported to be five (5) billion social media users in the world. Like several other countries, Malaysia has experienced a notable surge in the utilisation of social media platforms throughout a wide range of demographic segments. This can be proven with the data from the Data Reportal (2024); in January 2024, there were 28.68 million, or 83.1 percent, of active social media users in Malaysia, which is an increase from 26.8 million, or 78.5 percent, in 2023. Hence, social media have become an indispensable part of how people communicate with one another.

Social media's influence on our world has grown to such proportions that we could not have anticipated it only a few years ago. The characteristic of social media itself offers two-way communication, as in face-to-face communication, and enables