

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**SOCIAL MEDIA DEPENDENCY IN
INCREASING CANCER
AWARENESS AND SCREENING
BEHAVIOUR AMONG B40
POPULATION IN KLANG VALLEY:
A FACEBOOK CANCER SUPPORT
GROUP STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

Social media has transformed the health communication landscape, offering unprecedented opportunities for disseminating information. However, its effectiveness depends on how users perceive its credibility, usefulness, and their level of dependency on it. With rising cancer mortality in Malaysia, particularly among the B40 population, there is growing concern over low awareness and screening rates in this group. Hence, there is an urgent need to seek an in-depth understanding of the dependency on social media for cancer awareness and screening behaviour among the B40 population in Klang Valley. Grounded by Media Dependency Theory and the Theory of Planned Behaviour, a quantitative survey was conducted with 400 B40 respondents aged 20 and above, selected from Facebook cancer support groups. Descriptive results showed moderate to high levels of social media use and moderate levels of awareness and screening. Spearman's rank correlation revealed significant positive relationships between social media use variables and both cancer awareness and screening behaviour. Factor analysis supported TPB constructs, and Mann-Whitney U tests found a significant gender difference in screening behaviour, with males scoring higher. The findings indicate that social media, when trusted and perceived as useful, can effectively support cancer education and encourage screening, especially in underserved communities. This study highlights the role of social media in public health efforts and the need for tailored digital strategies to reach vulnerable populations like the B40 group.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Cancer remained one of the most pressing global health concerns, reporting around 10 million fatalities in 2020 alone (World Health Organization, 2022). Over the decades, cancer cases in Malaysia had increased, accounting for 12.18% of all deaths in 2019, which was up from 9.54% in 2004, and currently the fourth leading cause of death in the country (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2021; Md Yusof & Wan Ishak, 2023). Despite significant advancements in treatments, early detection continued to be the most effective efforts in reducing mortality rates, considering that approximately two-thirds of cancer patients were diagnosed at late stages which severely diminished their survival outcomes (Mustapha & Chandran, 2020; Tan et al., 2025).

An increase in cancer cases placed a complex burden on individuals, families, and healthcare systems, especially towards low-income groups like the B40 population in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Klang Valley, Malaysia's most populous and urbanised area with dense B40 population served as a centre for healthcare, education, and digital infrastructure, making it an ideal location for research on social media health information seeking, public disease awareness, and the impact of health interventions (Lim & Tham, 2020; Manickam & Alivi, 2024; Noman et al., 2020). This group often faced socioeconomic constraints such as limited access to healthcare, education and economic vulnerabilities which increased the risk for cancer diseases (Rani et al., 2022; Sabri et al., 2025; Shahar et al., 2019).

These significant health issues underscored the need for comprehensive efforts including prevention, early diagnosis, treatment, and palliative care, alongside collaborative initiatives among governments, healthcare providers, research bodies, and advocacy groups to increase awareness, including targeted interventions via social media. Social media referred as a modern form of communication that provided comfort, convenience, and often used for social interaction and dissemination of information through platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube and more (Avhad, 2023; Kanchan & Gaidhane, 2023; Rhee et al., 2020; Wandu & Andriana, 2021).