

## THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT CYBERBULLYING PREVENTION

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### Abstract

Cyberbullying that we often hear today is not a tacit case as it has been a long-standing issue that has drawn public attention worldwide. Additionally, cyberbullying is no longer regarded as a minor societal issue to be dismissed. Hence, if this issue is not addressed, it will lead to negative repercussions for internet users including depression and even death. Several approaches have been proposed to address this issue, one of them is the application of the legislation. This study aims to assess the effectiveness of social media in raising awareness about cyberbullying in Malaysia. The research involved 305 social media users from UiTM Alor Gajah, Melaka students, with 64.6% of respondents being female and 35.4% male. The findings clearly indicate that respondents recognize social media as an effective tool for spreading awareness about cyberbullying. This effectiveness can be measured through promoting positivity, providing minor exposure, and advocating for policies and laws.

**Keywords:** Cyberbullying Awareness, Cyberbullying Prevention, Social Media Influence, Emphasize Positivity, Social Media Advantages.

### 1.0 Introduction

Over the past ten years, cyberbullying has been recognized as a significant issue among young people worldwide. In the evolving digital era, cyberbullying has become more prevalent in today's society [1]. According to a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), three out of ten young people in Malaysia were said to be cyberbullying victims in 2019. In 2020, UNICEF ranked Malaysia second in Asia for youth cyberbullying [2]. Several studies define cyberbullying as any form of hurtful and negative behavior from one person to another in online environments such as social media, messaging apps, gaming platforms, and mobile devices [3], [4]. Traditional bullying, on the other hand, refers to violent behavior that takes place in face-to-face settings, such as schools or workplaces [5]. Repetition of harmful actions is a clear characteristic of both traditional and cyberbullying, though they occur in different ways and platforms. Cyberbullying involves unethical behavior such as distributing or sharing harmful, false, or mischievous information about another person online [6], while traditional bullying typically includes verbal abuse, spreading rumors, and physical aggression in-person [5]. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying can occur at anytime and anywhere there is online social interaction [7].

Internet usage has increased dramatically in Malaysia, with 97.4% of the country's population using it in 2024 compared to 89.6% in 2020, indicating that internet use has become a priority for many [8]. The

extensive use of smart devices and easily accessible online tools has led to more opportunities for cyberbullying [9]. The fact that such conduct can be carried out in silence, without face-to-face interaction, and without immediate consequences, emboldens perpetrators [10]. Studies show that victims of cyberbullying are at risk of long-term emotional impacts, even after the bullying has stopped. In [11], it was noted that these long-term impacts include mental health issues such as depression, stress, anxiety, self-harm, and difficulties in social relationships. This is due to the constant fear of being harassed, and the chance that more people will see or take part in the bullying makes victims feel vulnerable [4]. According to [12], because cyberbullying can spread widely and provide a false sense of anonymity, it has the potential to be more harmful than traditional forms of violence. A recent case of a social media user's death due to cyberbullying in July 2024 has prompted the Malaysian government to consider stricter punishments [13].

Therefore, preventing cyberbullying is crucial for the well-being of individuals, especially young people. Various prevention measures can be implemented to address this issue. In [14], self-regulatory strategies were proposed to boost self-confidence as an early intervention to combat cyberbullying. In [15], it was suggested that society should be consistently informed about cyberbullying and related topics, including the advantages and disadvantages of internet interaction. Campaigns against cyberbullying, such as speeches and television commercials launched by the Malaysian government, are examples of prevention measures that can raise awareness and educate the public. In [16], it was emphasized that the media plays a significant role in engagement, raising awareness, and portraying the real status of society. Public awareness can also be strengthened through social media platforms [17]. Living in a persistently shifting digital era, social media has become a crucial part of daily life, especially among the younger generation in Malaysia. As of January 2024, the number of social media users had increased from 78.5% to 83.1% of the total population [18]. These platforms have the power to rapidly spread information and mobilize people. Social media offers a first-hand view of pressing global issues by individuals personally affected. Consequently, raising awareness about a problem is where social media has the most benefit [19]. Young children and teenagers are now exposed to social media, where they can access additional online resources. The more people continuously access such content, the more debate it sparks, increasing its influence. The potential of social media should be leveraged as an educational tool to promote awareness of cyberbullying [15]. The effectiveness of social media in spreading awareness can be measured through its ability to emphasize positivity, control exposure, and implement policies and laws.

Thus, this study was conducted to explore the influence of social media in raising awareness on cyberbullying as a preventive measure. The main objectives of this study are to describe how social media advantages such as emphasize positivity, minor level exposure, policies and law contribute to the effectiveness of social media in spreading awareness.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

Many forms of personal communication have slowly been replaced by social networking through internet communication technologies, such as social media platforms [20]. Social media can facilitate the occurrence of cyberbullying while also serving as a tool for its prevention. As the internet evolves, cyberbullying continues to increase; however, intervention measures must also be continuously taken to slow down this issue by leveraging the advantages of social media [15].

### ***2.1 The Roles of Social Media in Creating Awareness in Cyberbullying***

As an influential tool for distributing information, educating the public, and encouraging action, social media plays a significant role in creating awareness about cyberbullying [21]. Several factors contribute to social media's effectiveness as a reliable platform for raising awareness and preventing cyberbullying [16]. These factors include its ability to emphasize positivity, manage minor exposure through privacy settings, and incorporate policies and laws to support awareness initiatives.

#### ***2.1.1 Social Media as a Platforms to Emphasize Positivity***

Social media platforms have the capability to foster a positive environment that can help spread awareness and prevent cyberbullying [22]. By building positive online communities through various social

platforms, a safe environment can be created. This can be achieved by promoting a culture of kindness through sharing supportive messages, promoting empathy and respect, and simultaneously spreading positivity [2]. Awareness campaigns on cyberbullying through hashtags on social media are also widely used as preventive measures. With the use of hashtags among users, these campaigns can effectively spread and reach a large audience [23]. In addition to serving as platforms for awareness campaigns, social media also functions as a source of educational content. According to Bartlett et al. [23], educational posts, infographics, or any eye-catching content created by educational organizations or social media influencers can help emphasize positivity while promoting preventive measures against cyberbullying. Content created by these sources is often more trusted and has a greater impact on the audience.

### *2.1.2 Minor Level Exposure to Cyberbullying*

According to [24], a minor refers to any individual under the age of 18, who may be incapable of managing themselves. With the emergence of the internet and social media platforms, the number of minors who own social media accounts has also evolved [18], as many parents tend to pamper their children with smart devices, such as smartphones and tablets. This is concerning, as it can expose them to negative influences in the virtual world at such a young age [25]. However, this issue can be addressed by managing minors' screen time [26]. Due to rising concerns about cyberbullying, governments are taking initiatives to establish a minimum age for social media users [25]. Additionally, the advanced and updated features of social media platforms, such as privacy control settings, interaction management, and the ability to block suspicious users or report harmful activities, can enhance the safety of minors [23]. These features provide a significant advantage to social media as platforms to prevent cyberbullying, especially for minors. They create a safer environment by reducing exposure to harmful content, as these features are continually restructured to meet current needs [26]. With all these protective features, the level of exposure of minors to cyberbullying can be minimized.

### *2.1.3 Policies and Law in Using Social Media*

In line with the advancement of information technology and rapid developments today, several policies and laws have been established to regulate activities related to media platforms, especially social media. To prevent these problems from escalating, various approaches have been implemented, including civil and criminal law enforcement [20]. There is no specific legislation that renders cyberbullying unconstitutional; however, it is covered by numerous statutes, such as the Protection Against Harassment Act (1997), the Malicious Communications Act (1988), the Communications Act (2003), the Obscene Publications Act (1959), and the Computer Misuse Act (1990) [15]. According to [21], many instances of cyberbullying result in assault charges being filed. Consequently, some lawsuits end up in civil court, while others may lead to felony complaints and convictions for hate crimes, impersonation, stalking, and violations of the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (CFAA). This clearly demonstrates that users can defend themselves against becoming victims of cyberbullying by being aware of and utilizing the laws and policies established to protect personal rights in cyberspace. Through these policies and laws, legal organizations and governments can highlight the legal consequences, such as criminal charges or penalties [24].

## **3.0 Methodology**

In this study, the researcher selected student participants specifically targeting the student population of UiTM Alor Gajah, Melaka. According to [27], the total student population at UiTM Alor Gajah is 8,000. The study employed simple random sampling, focusing on diploma and bachelor's degree students as respondents. In [28], it is recommended that a suitable sample size for studies analyzed with SPSS should be between 100 and 400 participants. Additionally, G\*Power was used to confirm whether the sample size was adequate based on statistical considerations. An online questionnaire was sent to the selected respondents, and 305 individuals participated in the study. The survey approach was utilized to obtain quantitative data for this research. This questionnaire was designed and formulated according to the research objectives, which consisted of five sections.

Section A comprised four questions that focused on respondents' demographic profiles such as sex, education level, faculty and social media platform. Items in Section B were concerned on social media as a tool for emphasizing positivity whereas Section C comprised minor level exposure to cyber bully. Meanwhile Sections D and E covered the questions about policies and laws in using social media and the effectiveness of social media to spread cyberbullying awareness respectively. All items in Sections B, C, D, and E used a Likert scale of 1 to 5 where the scale of 1 represents strong disagreement while scale 5 represents strong agreement. All of the data were used and analysed by using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 27.0. Frequency distribution was used to present the overall frequency of all variables and descriptive analysis was used to gauge an overview of respondent characteristics. Next, two independent samples t-tests were conducted to determine if there were significant differences between genders in terms of the effectiveness of social media in raising awareness about cyberbullying. Additionally, Pearson correlation analysis was employed to further explore the relationships among the variables.

## 4.0 Results and Findings

### 4.1 Demographic Profiles of Respondents

The demographic profile of the research was analysed descriptively in this segment. Most respondents were female, with 64.6% of 197 respondents. Meanwhile, there were 108 male respondents (35.4%). It was revealed that almost half of the total respondents were from the Faculty of Business and Management by 42.6% (130 respondents), followed by the College of Computing, Informatics and Mathematics by 16.7%, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies by 14.1%, Faculty of Art and Design by 9.8%, Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management by 8.2%, Faculty of Plantation and Agro-technology by 5.9%, and the Academy of Language Studies by 2.6%. The respondents that participated in this research were mostly Bachelor's Degree students by 49.5%, followed by Diploma with 100 respondents (32.8%). A majority of the respondents used Twitter as their social media platform to share or send information by 134 respondents (43.9%), followed by Instagram, Facebook and TikTok with 26.6% (81 respondents), 17.7% (54 respondents), and 7.2% (22 respondents), respectively. The least used social media platforms to share or send information are WhatsApp and Snapchat with 10 respondents and 3 respondents, respectively.

### 4.2 Assessing Internal Reliability for the Instrument Across All Constructs

**TABLE 1**  
Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient

Construct	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Emphasize Positivity	5	0.778
Minor level exposure	5	0.750
Policies and law	4	0.733
Effectiveness	5	0.824

The internal reliability of the constructed questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. As suggested in [29], a value of 0.7 or higher is considered indicative of good reliability. The findings revealed that all constructs achieved a Cronbach's Alpha above this threshold, confirming their reliability. This is consistent with [30], which emphasizes the importance of reliable measurement instruments in research. Table 1 displays the Cronbach's Alpha values for constructs such as emphasizing positivity, level of exposure, policies and laws, and the effectiveness of social media in raising awareness about cyberbullying. These results indicate that the items demonstrate good internal reliability for measuring all constructs (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7).

### 4.3 Descriptive Analysis

Table 2 below shows a summary of the descriptive analysis on the items for all four variables. A total of 19 items from 4 different variables were analyzed using summated score.

**TABLE 2**  
Descriptive Analysis

B. Social Media As a Platform to Emphasize Positivity		
Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
B1	4.53	0.679
B2	4.54	0.673
B3	4.42	0.726
B4	4.49	0.753
B5	4.46	0.692
Overall	4.49	0.7046
C. Minor Level Exposure to Cyber Bully		
Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
C1	4.57	0.593
C2	4.57	0.593
C3	4.47	0.765
C4	4.52	0.659
C5	4.49	0.753
Overall	4.52	0.673
D. Policies and Law in Using Social Media		
Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
D1	4.58	0.665
D2	4.49	0.618
D3	4.53	0.702
D4	4.46	0.756
Overall	4.52	0.685
E. The Effectiveness of Social Media to Spread Cyberbully Awareness		
Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
E1	4.58	0.703
E2	4.43	0.68
E3	4.16	1.035
E4	4.35	0.724
E5	4.31	0.814
Overall	4.37	0.549

#### *Social Media as a Platform to Emphasize Positivity*

The results show that respondents largely agree on the positive effects of social media. The highest average score was for the belief that social media is a valuable platform for conveying positive messages over time ( $M = 4.54$ , item B2). This was closely followed by the belief that social media effectively spreads positive messages ( $M = 4.53$ , item B1). Many respondents indicated that they would block users who share

negative content ( $M = 4.49$ , item B4). Additionally, a significant number believed that the positive messages shared on social media often come from themselves ( $M = 4.46$ , item B5), and they felt that social media platforms should focus on sharing positive content ( $M = 4.42$ , item B3). Overall, these findings indicate that respondents see social media as a powerful tool for promoting positivity, highlighting the importance of encouraging positive interactions and content among users.

#### *Minor Level Exposure to Cyberbully*

The majority of respondents agreed that parents should educate their children about the dangers of cyberbullying, especially on social media ( $M = 4.57$ , item C1). They also believed that teenager's group have the potential to become cyberbullies on social media ( $M = 4.57$ , item C2), and that parents should monitor their children's activities on social media to prevent them from engaging in cyberbullying ( $M = 4.52$ , item C4). Furthermore, respondents felt that minor exposure to the effects of cyberbullying could raise public awareness ( $M = 4.49$ , item C5) and that campaigns aimed at raising awareness of cyberbullying on social media could positively impact users ( $M = 4.47$ , item C3). In conclusion, the findings indicate that a significant majority of respondents believe parents should educate their children about the dangers of cyberbullying on social media and monitor their online activities. They also recognize that teenagers can potentially become cyberbullies. Additionally, respondents agree that even minor exposure to cyberbullying can enhance public awareness, and that awareness campaigns can have a positive effect on users.

#### *Policies and Law in Using Social Media*

Most respondents strongly believe that cyber policies and laws in Malaysia need to be strengthened to better protect the rights of media platform users ( $M = 4.58$ , item D1). They feel that appropriate punishments should be in place for individuals who engage in cyberbullying ( $M = 4.53$ , item D3). Additionally, respondents emphasized the importance of having a solid understanding of cyber laws and policies to prevent social media users from becoming involved in cyberbullying cases ( $M = 4.49$ , item D2). Furthermore, many agreed that incorporating cyber policies and laws into the education system in Malaysia should be mandatory ( $M = 4.46$ , item D4). The findings clearly show that respondents overwhelmingly support the need for stricter cyber policies and laws in Malaysia. They also recognize the importance of educating the public about these regulations to effectively address and prevent cyberbullying.

#### *The Effectiveness of social media to Spread Cyberbullying Awareness*

Most respondents believe that social media is a crucial platform for raising awareness about cyberbullying in the community ( $M = 4.58$ , item E1). They also agree that using social media to disseminate awareness messages can significantly impact the community ( $M = 4.43$ , item E2) and that they have previously shared messages regarding cyberbullying on these platforms ( $M = 4.43$ , item E3). Additionally, respondents feel that awareness campaigns on cyberbullying can effectively combat instances of cyberbullying ( $M = 4.35$ , item E4). Lastly, they frequently use social media to share only positive content ( $M = 4.31$ , item E5). In conclusion, the findings indicate that respondents recognize the vital role of social media in promoting awareness about cyberbullying and its potential to create a positive impact on the community through effective campaigns and responsible content sharing.

### **5.0 Conclusion**

The findings of this study underscore the effectiveness of social media as a key platform for raising awareness about cyberbullying. In today's interconnected society, social media plays a vital role in shaping public perceptions and behaviors, making it an ideal avenue for awareness campaigns. The prevalence of

cyberbullying on these platforms highlights the need for proactive measures to promote positive interactions and discourage unethical behavior among users. As internet users, we must commit to sharing content that upholds ethical standards and seek credible sources of information. Furthermore, early exposure to the realities of cyberbullying is crucial in preventing its occurrence, particularly among teenagers. The involvement of parents is essential, as they influence their children's understanding and responses to cyberbullying. However, the current trend of providing children with smartphones and tablets without adequate guidance may contribute to the problem. Besides, through policies and law, victims of cyberbullying can be protected, as can perpetrators of cyberbullying crimes. Malaysia has strict laws and policies to punish offenders and protect victims of cyberbullying. Among the acts include the Protection against Harassment Act (1997), the Malicious Communications Act (1988), the Communications Act (2003), the Obscene Publications Act (1959), and the Computer Misuse Act (1990). This clearly shows that Malaysia is very serious in combating cyberbullying.

Despite these findings, the study is not without limitations. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias, and the sample may not fully represent the diversity of the population. Future research should explore longitudinal effects of social media campaigns and involve a wider demographic to gain a more comprehensive understanding of cyberbullying dynamics. Additionally, examining the role of educational institutions in preventing cyberbullying could provide valuable insights. In conclusion, leveraging social media for awareness, involving parents, and strengthening legal protections are critical steps in addressing the issue of cyberbullying in Malaysia.

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