Influence of Social Networking on Malaysian Female Secondary Students: A Qualitative Study Across Three Schools

Pengaruh Rangkaian Sosial ke atas Pelajar Sekolah Menengah di Malaysia: Satu Kajian Kualitatif di Tiga Buah Sekolah

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ABSTRACT

Social networking (SN) allows individuals to make connections with each other for both social and business purposes. The purpose of this research study is to find out the influence of SN on students from three Malaysian secondary schools by comparing their attitudes and behaviour towards SN besides finding out whether they are aware of the risks and danger involved, and how they handle them. These schools are all normal day schools and are located in three different types of school environments in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur namely: urban, suburban and rural. Focus groups interviews were conducted on these students who were asked to give their response to seven scenarios depicting negative situations involving SN such as texting, cyberbullying, and hacking and identity theft. The findings revealed that these students were not very different from those in the west in that they are aware of risks involving in SN and will stay clear of risky behaviours. However, students in these three schools handled the problems related to SN in a more direct manner compared to the elite students in Thang et al.'s (2016) study. In particular, students in School C which is a rural school seemed to be less perturbed over the negative consequences of SN compared to students in the other schools.

Keywords: Malaysian teenagers; cyberbullying; social networking; attitudes; risks

ABSTRAK

Rangkaian Sosial (RS) membolehkan individu berkomunikasi antara satu sama lain untuk tujuan sosial dan perniagaan. Matlamat kertas kajian ini adalah untuk mengetahui pengaruh RS ke atas pelajar-pelajar perempuan dari tiga buah sekolah menengah di Malaysia dengan membandingkan sikap dan tingkah laku mereka terhadap RS dan mengetahui sama ada mereka sedar akan risiko dan bahaya yang terlibat disamping bagaimana mereka menanganinya. Sekolah-sekolah ini adalah sekolah harian biasa dan terletak di tiga jenis persekitaran yang berlainan di sekitar Selangor dan Kuala Lumpur iaitu bandar, pinggir bandar dan luar bandar. Temubual kumpulan fokus dijalankan keatas pelajar-pelajar ini untuk mendapat reaksi mereka terhadap 7 senario yang memaparkan situasi negatif yang melibatkan RS seperti pemesejan teks, buli siber, penggodaman dan kecurian identiti. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan pelajar-pelajar ini tidak begitu berbeza dengan pelajar di negara barat dari segi kesedaran mereka terhadap risiko dan lantas menjauhi dari tingkah laku berisiko. Selain dari itu, didapati pelajar-pelajar ini menangani masalah yang berkaitan dengan RS secara langsung berbanding dengan pelajar di sekolah elit dalam kajian oleh Thang et al. (2016). Pelajar-pelajar Sekolah C, sebuah sekolah luar bandar, seolah-olah tidak peduli dengan kesan negatif RS berbanding dengan pelajar-pelajar lain.

Kata kunci: Remaja Malaysia; buli siber; rangkaian sosial; sikap; risiko

INTRODUCTION

Social networking can be described as the use of internet-based social media programmes for social or business purposes which includes connecting with friends, family, classmates, customers and clients. It is now acknowledged that social networking (SN) plays significant roles on the younger generation as it can be a pervasive technology which can result in unfavourable after-effects. Some privacy issues arising from SN include disclosure of embarrassing personal information, blackmailing through the use of photos found online, social scams and users' backlash against newly introduced features (Bonneau & Preibusch 2010; Sapiah, Juhana & Tengku Mohamad 2012).

Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to such risks as they are less aware of the necessity for self-regulation and are more susceptible to cyberbullying, privacy issues and sexting (O'Keeffe, Clarke-Pearson & Council on Communications and Media Executive Commitee 2011; Cassidy, Faucher & Jackson 2013). These issues have caused concerns and led to increased efforts to comprehend the attitudes and behaviours of children and teenagers toward SN.

This article is a direct result from the desire to investigate to what extent SN has invaded the privacy of Malaysia teenagers. It is particularly interested to find out Malaysian teenagers' attitudes and behaviour towards SN and the degree they are concerned with the risks involved and how they manage these risks. These issues have been studied in a variety of Internet contexts and applications abroad (Berkman & Shumway 2003; Iachello & Hong 2007) However, it has hardly been studied in the Malaysian context. Specifically the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How important is SN to Malaysian secondary school students across three types of
schools: urban, suburban and rural?
2. How different is the role of SN in the social life of these students?
3. How different are their awareness of the risks involved and their handling of these risks?

The following section discusses issues related to SN and its impact on teenagers' lives.

RELATED STUDIES

While SN is an integral part of the lives of teenagers, there are a number of risks associated with its use. These risks which include cyberbullying, sexting, hacking as well as online sexual solicitation can bring about harmful effects on teenagers' mental health.

Cyberbullying can be defined as using an electronic version of contact to carry out deliberate hostile action against victims who do not have the means to protect themselves (Smith et al. 2008). This includes sending threatening, harassing or humiliating communication to them.

Researchers have pointed out that approximately 50 % of students admitted being bullied and worse, these students were unaware of Internet safety (Kite, Gable & Filippelli 2013; Goebert et al. 2011). It is the most common online risk for all teens and can lead to profound emotional distress and psychosocial outcomes such as depression, anxiety, severe isolation, and, tragically, even suicide just days after reading hurtful comments (Kowalski 2010; Patchin & Hinduja 2010; Cappadocia, Craig & Pepler 2013).

Another risk involved is texting or also known as sexting which can also be used as an instrument of bullying or humiliation. Exchanges of sexual messages, images or video recordings that are shameful or hurtful can in a blink of an eye exchange hands or be uploaded to shared websites such as Youtube using cellphones (Ringrose et al. 2012; Drouin et al. 2013). Although teens generally use messages responsibly there have been many incidences of misuse as well (Lenhart et al. 2010). Studies on texting/sexting revealed that 20% of teenagers had at some time sent or posted nude or semi-nude photographs or videos of themselves while almost 50 % of them have reported regret sending messages that they have sent (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy & CosmoGirl.com. 2008; Lenhart et al. 2007). This is most probably due to senders being unable to see the reaction of the recipients of the messages hence they may not know that the messages sent may be hurtful to others.

At the same time, other studies (Collins, Martino & Shaw 2011; Schultz et al. 2016) have reported teenagers engaging in sexual solicitations. According to Davidson and Gottschalk (2010), sexual solicitations can be defined as request to engage in sexual activities or sexual talk or provide

personal sexual information that are unwanted or when made by an adult to a young person with or without their consent. Schulz et al. (2016) claimed that 47.5% of these solicitations involved sexual outcomes which was not affected by the minor's age while Collins, Martino and Shaw (2011) found that there is a higher tendency among same-age youth to participate in online sexual solicitation, however a lot of these solicitations come from connections that are made offline. Sadly, 76% did not know of people or place where they could report such cases. These studies suggest that teenagers are vulnerable and are easily influenced but at the same time may be extremely upset or afraid as a result of online solicitations. Thus, teenagers should be educated on awareness of internet safety which includes how to respond to online sexual solicitations as well as disclose and report such encounters when they occur.

Despite these shortcomings, previous studies (Youn 2009; Cox Communications 2007) have revealed that teenagers, while online, have shown to care about their privacy and will carry out privacy protecting measures to keep away from risks. Such measures include modifying their online profiles from "public" to private access, not providing information regarding their own identity, providing inaccurate information or staying away from dubious websites. Nevertheless, Cox Communications (2007), surprisingly revealed that there are many youths that do bother to read websites' privacy policies or would not reveal personal details to third parties. These youths seem to be worried about communicating to individuals they don't know online but are less wary about posting private information and photos online to a public profile such as Facebook.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study draws on two media theories: the "uses and gratifications" theory (Rosengren Palmgreen & Wenner 1985) and the theory of "ritualized media use (Debatin et al. 2009)". These theories are utilised as the analytical background and framework to enable a better understanding of the findings of the study. The needs under the gratifications theory explored in this study are: (1) the need for diversion (2) the need for entertainment, (3) the need for (para-social) relationships, and (4) the need for identity construction. This study explores

how SN is used by the students to accomplish the above mentioned needs. The study is also interested to find out whether gratifications from using SN sites leads to diminishing concern over privacy and personal matters among Malaysian secondary school students.

The second theory of ritualized media use explains that the media serves not only informational and entertainment purposes but are used every day as a routine in life as well as for diversion and pastimes. It can be such an important ritual that other aspects of the students' lives are neglected. This study is interested to find out whether this is happening to these students.

THE MALAYSIAN SCENE

Studies that explore risks on the use of SN among Malaysian teenagers are rare. However, there a few studies worth looking into. Vimala and Azra's (2013) study identified the motives of using Facebook among Malaysian university students as SN, psychological benefits, entertainment, self-presentation and skill enhancement. They also discovered that these students exhibited some addictive symptoms (both cognitive and behavioural) with regard to the use of Facebook such as a loss of control, withdrawal symptoms and relapse and reinstatement. However, their study failed to identify the reasons for these addictive behaviours. In another study, Farah and Melati's (2013) study discovered that the top three online activities that university students engaged in included (1) sharing comments, photos and videos in social media and (2) blogging and (3) searching online materials for assignments and self-improvement.

In a more related study, Norsaremah, Ramlah and Norshidah's (2012) study reported that most university students were aware of the importance of keeping their information on SN sites private. They also realised that misuse might lead to negative consequences such as intrusion by unknown individuals or companies and are aware of the danger of identity theft and other security issues on SN sites. These findings are consistent with those reported in studies from the west (Lipford, Besmer & Watson 2008; Youn 2009; Banks, Onita & Meservy 2010).

Nosaremah, Ramlah and Norshidah's (2012) study further discovered that their respondents were aware of benefits of participating in SN sites such

as making new friends. However, they tended not to believe that the misuse of the SN sites would lead to serious d a m a g i n g consequences. They appeared generally prepared to face both the negative consequences (such as receiving spam, hoax) as well as the positive consequences (such as new connection, enhance business channels, etc.) involved in using social media apps.

However, the studies reviewed above only provided information on the use of SN among university students in Malaysia. A study that looked into secondary schools students' use of SN sites was undertaken by Thang et al. (2016). This study was undertaken on a group of four female students from an elite secondary girls' school in Malaysia. An elite school can be defined as a school comprising students who are selected based on their high academic achievements in the Malaysian Primary School Assessment (Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah) (UPSR). All these students had to stay and study in a fully residential school. The study used focus group interviews to elicit the students' responses to seven scenarios showing situations involving the negative consequences of using SN apps. The findings of that study revealed that four students from that school were all avid users of SN sites and they felt that SN enriched their lives in helping them in their studies as well in enabling them to be in touch with their friends and family members at all times. They had some stressful and emotional experiences with SN which made them wary and cynical of SN but they w o u l d n o t g i v e u p S N a n d c o n t i n u e t o use the sites actively. On the whole they were very aware of the risks and danger of SN and had taken numerous measures to protect themselves. The present study used the same seven scenarios as used by Thang et al. (2016) but this time on a different sample population.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE POPULATION

Focus groups interviews were conducted on three groups of secondary school students from three different schools. Each group comprised four Form Four students. The schools are:

School A: an urban school
School B: a suburban school
School C: a rural school

School A – Urban School This is a secondary school about 17 km from Kuala Lumpur (labelled as school A). The medium of instruction for all subjects except English and Bahasa Malaysia is in Mandarin. All of the students come from National Type Chinese School (with Mandarin as the medium of instruction). The performance of students in this school for the Form 3 Assessment (PT3) (Pentaksiran Tingkatan Tiga) for all subjects is generally mixed with high and average performing students. The PT3 results are classified into three bands or categories (i.e. good – A, average – B and C, poor – D and E)

School B – Suburban School This school is located in Putrajaya which is about 30 km from Kuala Lumpur (labelled as school B). The students were Malay students who all came from national primary schools. The interview was conducted in Malay and English as the students preferred to be interviewed in their native language though some English was used. All four students were 16 years old. Their results in the PT3 ranged from good to below average. They all spoke Malay at home and came from middle income families. Most of the students' parents were civil servants and lived around Putrajaya. Two of them had smart phone with data plan.

School C – Rural School The rural school is located in Semenyih, about 30 km from Kuala Lumpur (labelled as School C). This is the normal type of Malaysian school where students are drawn from the surrounding areas. The medium of instruction for all subjects except English is in Malay. However, the students in this school came from mixed primary school background. Some would have studied their primary education in a National Type Chinese school (with Mandarin as the medium of instruction, some in National Type Tamil schools (with Tamil as the medium of instruction) and some in National school (with Malay as the medium of instruction). The performance of students in this school for the PT3 was mixed with more low performing students than high performing students.

The convenience sampling approach was used as it is faster and easier approach for data collection. The choice of schools also depended on the willingness of the principals to allow their students to be involved in the study. However, it was deemed important to ensure participation of

schools from different geographical locations (i.e. urban, sub-urban and rural). Hence efforts were undertaken to seek for these three types of schools. Form 4 students (16 years old) were selected because they were more mature and probably would have used SN sites on a regular basis. Form Five students were not included as the principals involved did not allow them to be included as they would be sitting for a public examination soon.

<div align="center">RESEARCH INSTRUMENT</div>

Focus group methodology was used to engage students in discussions about the influence of SN on them. The aim of this study was to learn about how students think, feel, or act regarding 7 scenario depicting situations involving the negative consequences of using SN apps. Focus group is believed to be a qualitative research technique that is most suitable for female teenagers because they are generally shy and reluctant to be interviewed on their own. This is a study focusing on female students, therefore a convenient sampling approach consisted of 12 female students was used. The sample was selected from three different schools located in the Klang Valley and Selangor i.e. an urban school, a sub-urban school and lastly a rural school. The size of a focus group seldom goes beyond a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 12 participants (Krueger & Casey 2009; Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook 2007; Kitzinger 1995; Bender & Ewbank 1994). According to Fern's experimental study, more information can be obtained by conducting two groups of four participants then one group of eight participants (Fern 1982). Due to time constraints, this study used a sample size of four participants per group from three different types of schools. Despite the small sample size the research was able to come up with research data that were rich in scope and depth.

<div align="center">RESEARCH PROCEDURE</div>

The following procedures were followed:
1. Each group of students began by filling a form to elicit their personal background information and SN habits.
2. An open discussion where students were required to share their views on the benefits and problems in using such sites.
3. Students were showed 7 scenarios, one at a time and asked to give their opinion of each scenario. The teacher had a list of prompt questions that she would use when necessary.

Descriptions of scenarios
Scenario 1: showing a girl (Lily) posting a sexy selfie of herself on her Facebook.
Scenario 2: showing a girl (Jenifer) receiving a pop-up message asking for her password while talking to a friend online.
Scenario 3: showing a boy expressing delight because he is able to enter the account of a person who has been a jerk to him illegally to take revenge.
Scenario 4: showing a girl in a state of excitement because a boy she has been corresponding online has asked her to go on a date.
Scenario 5: showing a girl being very upset because someone has posted pictures of her in a costume she has worn at a friend's birthday party and making fun of her by calling her stupid, silly, ugly etc.
Scenario 6: showing a rabbit (representing an innocent student) finding pornography materials and violent images in his/her computer.
Scenario 7: showing a boy (Ahmad) who is very upset because materials suggesting he is a homosexual have been circulating in SN sites. In actuality he is not a homosexual.

(See Appendix A for the list of prompt questions asked during the focus group interview and a sample of the scenario given).

<div align="center">DATA ANALYSIS</div>

The data were analysed for patterns and themes in line with the research questions and the conceptual framework.

<div align="center">RESULTS</div>

<div align="center">FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION</div>

School A (Urban School) All four students from School A responded that there was nothing wrong in uploading selfies online. They did not condemn Lily's behaviour (in Scenario 1) and did not feel she was at risk but they did advise her against uploading too many selfies online. Student A1 (student 1 from School A) felt that if Lily

posted too many selfies "people will think she is showing off and it will be irritating" to them. A3 (student 3 from School A) thought Lily was "proud of herself since she posted so many pictures but A2 (student 2 from School A) thought she lacked confidence and that was why she sought approval through the "likes" she received. An interesting point to note here was that none of these students were concerned about the dangers of self-exposure through posting selfies and they generally felt that it was acceptable to post selfies online if done in moderation.

The respondents were aware of the danger of being hacked and all advised that Jennifer (in Scenario 2) to click the exit button and log in again if she wanted to continue. Regarding Scenario 3, they knew immediately that the boy was hacking into someone's account. They all agreed that his action was wrong. A4 (student 4 from School A) said," I think it is not right at all. Because there will be no different between him and his friend. He would be a jerk too" and A3 added that the action was an invasion of personal space and privacy. This clearly showed that they were aware that invasion of privacy and hacking were wrongful acts and they would not condone such activities.

For scenario 4, all four students stated that they would not meet up with the boy. A1 suspected he was out to cheat money and A2 doubted that the photo was genuine. Thus, it seemed that these girls were aware of the danger of meeting up with strangers and would not indulge in such behaviour.

The respondents were aware that the girl in scenario 5 was upset because she had received a negative text message. However, all felt that she cared too much of what others said. They generally felt that if they were in the same position they would not take it so seriously. A1 said she "will let it go and I'll learn a lesson and keep a distance from so called friends who don't treat me well". A4 even said "I'll ask the person to remove the picture and if he/she person is unwilling she will avoid the person." Thus, it is clear that although they were aware of the negative consequences of texting, it was not something to be unduly worried about since it was within their control.

Regarding Scenario 6, all of them said they felt disgusted when pornographic materials popped up and would quickly shut down their computers when that happened. Two respondents expressed concern about these materials polluting the minds of children and one mentioned that people who put up such materials had no moral values.

Regarding scenario 7, A1 said, "I feel pity for Ahmad and feel it's a kind of bullying". In general all four students empathised with Ahmad as two respondents had similar friends like Ahmad. All agreed that supporting and offering sensible advice to Ahmad were important. A1 suggested that Ahmad ignored the comments and be himself. A2 and A4 proposed Ahmad stood up and clarified his sexuality and A3 even suggested he reported the bullies to the authorities.

Overall, the respondents from school A claimed they were active users of SN. Students were told to classify themselves as active users if they used the Internet for more than five hours per day. The students were well aware of the weaknesses of SN. They were aware that they could gain a lot of knowledge, socialize easily, share worries and discuss homework with friends when SN. However, they were quick to point out that SN could be a distraction and two of them said it did affect their studies.

School B (Suburban School)   Two of the four students from this school said they did upload selfies online. B2 (student 2 from School B) explained:

"*For me, it's the right thing to do because mostly through selfie, tangkap gambar, kita boleh cherish. That moment you know, bila kita keluar, maybe dah besar-besar ni kita tak ingat dah, kita take selfie untuk ingat balik kenangan tu.*"
(Translation: "For me, it is the right thing to do because through selfies we capture pictures we can cherish. The moment we grow up we will not remember those moments and selfies help use to remember them.")

However, B1 and B3 (students 1 and 3 from school B) were quick to point out the negative points about posting selfies. B1 said that within two seconds of posting a picture, it would become viral and it could not be removed if saved by someone. B4 (student 4 from school B) further added that the picture would more likely invite "rubbishy" comments rather than praises.

Similar to students in School A, the respondents from this school were aware of the dangers of being hacked and all recommended that Jennifer (in Scenario 2) ignored the message. However, none of them had experienced being hacked before and they were not aware of any friends who had similar encounters. They were also against the action of the boy (in Scenario 3) who hacked into his friend's account for revenge and they all would

advise him to stop his action. B2 even suggested he asked for forgiveness from the person whose account he had hacked.

Regarding Scenario 4, two students (B2 and B4) said they would need to check up whether the boy was really handsome through intensive questioning and checking up his Facebook account. However they were unsure whether they would meet him or not. B3 felt she was too young to indulge in such activities whereas the others were not really interested but would still go if they had friends accompanying them.

As for the girl in Scenario 5, the respondents totally sympathised with her and understood that she would be very upset and might consider running away from school or became suicidal. However, they strongly felt she needed to learn to move on. B3 suggested she went for counselling; B2 suggested she report to Malaysian MCMC (Communications and Multimedia Commission) while S1 suggested meeting up with the perpetrator to ask for an explanation.

For Scenario 6, the respondents mentioned that they had been exposed to pornography as early as Form 1. However they claimed that they would quickly close the images if they popped up as these images had negative effects on students especially in the case of primary school students who could become addicted and try to imitate the actions they saw.

Finally, for Scenario 7, they all felt sorry for Ahmad and said they would try to console or help him. Some of their methods of helping him include reporting to Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (B1), asking him to toughen up (B4) and marrying him to show others he was not a gay (B3).

At the end of the interview session, two respondents mentioned that they were active users of social media networking sites while the other two said that they were passive users. They also pointed out that it could be a major distraction as many students spent too much time SN and neglected their homework. However, they also pointed out the strengths of SN in enabling them to obtain knowledge easily, while offering a platform for them to discuss their work with their friends as studying alone could be very boring.

School C (Rural School) The students from School C were also not worried about the danger of self-exposure arising from uploading selfies

online. In generally they did not feel it was a wrong thing to do and all except C3 (student 3 from school C) had uploaded selfies of themselves online and the reason why C3 did not do so was because she was shy and not because she felt it was a wrong thing to do. She said "*generally it is ok (to upload selfies)...the society now is like this*". C1 (student 1 from school C) declared nonchalantly that when she received requests asking her to be friends she would just ignore them. She claimed it was necessary for her to put her pictures up as she had a very common name. However, all four agreed that it was not good to upload photos that were too sexy and said the picture of the girl in Scenario 1 was not considered sexy at all.

Despite being less concerned about getting unwanted attention, they were very alert to the possibility of being hacked and would definitely not type in their passwords when asked to do so by an unreliable source. C4 (student 4 from school C) experienced her account being hacked and C1 mentioned her friend's account was hacked. They knew immediately what the boy in Scenario 3 was doing and quickly pointed out that his action was wrong. Thus, they were aware of the danger of invasion of privacy and hacking and would not condone such activities. C2 (student 2 from school C) further pointed out other illegal activities done by people she knew. She said one used false accounts of famous people to cheat money and another asked to be appointed as an agent to get goods from an online supplier but did not sell the goods and instead went into hiding. This showed that these respondents had experiences of instances of witnessing actual hacking and cheating online.

The students were also aware of the danger involved in meeting strangers and C3 pointed out that "*the Government advised us not to go out at night*" and she said she would definitely not go but the rest said they would go but would take safety measures. Thus, it seemed that these girls from a rural town were bolder as far as meeting strangers were concerned though they did take some precautions like bringing a friend or meeting at a more open place. More interestingly, two respondents (C1 and C4) claimed to have boyfriends presently.

They were also very aware of the negative effects of texting. They reacted strongly to Scenario 5 and commented that they would ask for an explanation from the one who put the pictures up and made negative comments about them. Only

one student reported the experience of someone putting funny pictures of her online but she did not feel very bad about it. She said, "*Sometimes, some funny pictures will be taken and posted up. If they are funny and can make others feel happy, I won't mind*". They added that they had funny pictures of their friends but would never put them up online as they realized it was wrong to do so. They seemed less perturbed than students from the other two schools. Maybe this was because they were passive users of such websites or they had more experiences.

Regarding Scenario 6, three respondents mentioned that they had experienced pornography materials popping up when they were using the computers and all claimed that they would turn off the computers when that happened. C2 said she would turn off the computer because it would be embarrassing if her younger brother or sister came unexpectedly into their room. This seemed to suggest that they believed that they were mature enough to watch such sites except they did not indulge in them.

All four students sympathised with Ahmed in Scenario 7 and felt that the best way to handle such a situation was to approach those who put up those messages. They had not experienced such encounters before; however, C2 had some experiences with cyberbullying. She gave an example of a friend who was teased online for being a playboy and he was so upset that he wanted to commit suicide. She said she advised him not to take it seriously as what he suffered from was nothing compared to those who were chased by "*Ah Long*" (money lenders). These students seemed to be more exposed as they were familiar with money lenders and online "*cheaters*". Hence their handling of disturbing issues was more direct and they did get upset unduly over such experiences.

All four students described themselves as non-active users of SN sites. As for the effects of SN sites, they mentioned problems such as difficulty to access Wi-Fi and exposure to pornographic or violent materials which they felt is bad for children but did not describe SN as affecting their daily life. They mentioned many advantages such as easy access to the Internet, getting news from Facebook, connecting and chatting with friends easily, using *Google* search to get information and for words they did not understand. They also discussed homework and problems with friends through *WeChat*, buying things from Internet, playing interesting games and watching movies too.

DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that students from all three schools find SN beneficial and useful for entertainment, to keep in touch with friends online and also for learning purposes; for example discussing homework with classmates and looking up materials for assignments.

Referring to the gratifications theory, it can be concluded that the students do see the advantages of SN for diversion and entertainment and for establishing relationship and friendship but there is no evidence of the use of SN for identity construction. In addition to that there is no evidence of gratifications from using SN sites leading to diminishing concern over privacy and personal matters among these students even among the active students.

Generally all of them are aware of the dangers of SN and know of ways of protecting themselves from being hacked, cyberbullied and exposed to pornographic materials. These findings corroborate with the findings from previous studies (Arumugam, Ruuhina & Paramjit 2014; Cassidy, Faucher & Jackson 2013). These students are also less negatively affected by SN than the students in Thang et al.'s (2016) study. This may be due to the fact that they are living at home; hence they are more exposed to the realities of daily life and happenings in society unlike students in Thang et al.'s study who live in a protected environment of a residential college.

The second research question investigates the role SN plays in the students' social lives. The findings reveal that students in School A (urban school) are the most active users of SN sites. Students in School B (suburban school) and C (rural school) do undertake SN activities but to a lesser extent. In accordance to the theory of ritualized media use it can be seen here that SN is more of a ritual for students in School A than the other two schools. This is similar to the case of the students in the study of Thang et al. (2016). Similar to the students in Thang et al. (2016), the students in School A also come from families that are more educated and are more exposed to the western cultures and ideas. Thus, it can be concluded that students who are more exposed to western culture are more ritually involved in SN whereas less exposed students are more interested in outside social activities. However, there is no evidence in the findings that indicate that SN leads to these students neglecting their studies and other aspects of their lives.

The final research question is interested to find out the extent of awareness of risks and ways these students handle these risks. The findings show that these students are not very different from those in the western countries (Lipford, Besmer & Watson 2008; Youn 2009) in that they are aware of viruses and identity theft and other security issues on SN systems and will stay clear of risky behaviours when SN. However, the students in these three schools do not believe that uploading selfies is dangerous and most of them do it on a regular basis. All three groups also do not take the consequences of texting and cyberbullying seriously and generally feel the thing to do is to take things easy and then move on. The students in Schools B and C also indicate willingness to meet strangers they met online. This is particular evident among students in School C who believe that this is a norm of the society. Thus, it appears that the students in these three schools are less perturbed over the negative consequences of SN compared to students in the elite school in the study of Thang et al. (2016).

CONCLUSION

Students from these three schools are aware of most of the risks and danger related to the use the SN sites. Out of the three schools, School C can be described as the group that is least worried regarding the risks of SN. This may be due to the fact that all of them are not active users of SN sites. Furthermore, this group of students come from the rural area which is less sheltered compared to students in A and B as well as the elite students in Thang's et al. (2016) study. They have more practical experiences or knowledge regarding negative effects of the society; thus they are more street-wise and see things in a less personal way compared to students from the other schools. In view of that they are less affected by their negative SN experiences. Despite the differences between the various groups of students, it is safe to conclude that the students from these three schools are all aware of the dangers and risks involved in using the SN sites and are capable of handling the problems they face with regard to SN with sufficient wisdom and maturity.

This research has a significant impact on the societal debates and concerns about the effects of SN on Malaysian teenagers. The findings have revealed the level of risk awareness among Malaysian teenagers and also the way they handle the risks. While this research has provided a clear evidence for the influence of SN on Malaysian teenagers, there is still much to study about the underlying effects of SN on teenagers' attitudes and behaviour. Finally, more importantly, it provides insights which will aid teachers, parents and policymakers in coming up with better monitoring and protective measures to safeguard and protect Malaysian teenagers from various educational backgrounds against the risks posed by SN.

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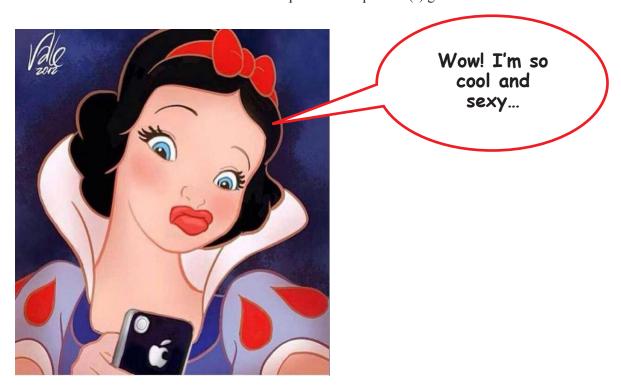Malaysia
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APPENDIX A:
FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

Section A:
(i) Would you describe yourself as an active or passive user of social network sites?
(ii) Share your experiences in using social network sites (benefits or problems encountered, what have you learnt from your experiences etc. -- you can also share your friends' experiences.)
(iii) Do you think your use of Social networks has helped you in learning? If yes, please give some examples.
(iv) Has it helped to improve your English? Please give some examples.

Section B
 Please look at each of the scenario below and respond to the question(s) given.

Scenario 1

Lily posts a cool/pretty/sexy selfie on her facebook and she watches eagerly to see how many 'likes' the photo gets and how many complimentary comments she received such as "You're so gorgeous" or "Why are you so perfect?"
What do you think of Lily's action?