

The effect of social media and religiosity towards sexual misconduct among adolescence**Azlina Abu Bakar^a, Nurul Ain Hidayah Abas^a, Tengku Sarina Aini Tengku Kasim^b, Jumadil Saputra^c, R Zirwatul Aida R Ibrahim^c, Mazidah Mohd Dagang^{c*} and Taufiqnur Selamat^d**^aFaculty of Human Development, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, 35900 Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia^bAcademy of Islamic Studies, Universiti Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Malaysia^cFaculty of Business, Economics and Social Development, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, 21030 Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, Malaysia^dUniversiti Teknologi MARA, Puncak Alam Campus, 42300 Puncak Alam, Selangor, Malaysia**CHRONICLE****ABSTRACT***Article history:*

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Social networking sites are built to be user-friendly, easy to navigate, easily connect to new people, can be obtained for free, and make them open to everybody. This quantitative study was conducted to identify the influence of social media on sexual misconduct behavior among adolescents. A total of 191 secondary school students from the northern zone of Peninsular Malaysia were involved in this study by random sampling. Data were analyzed using SPSS-23. This study found that the use of social media among secondary school students is high, where the majority spend more than five hours a day. The purpose of dating among young Malays is more focused on discussing matters of love. The study also found that social media does not influence sexual misconduct, but a negative relationship exists between religiosity and sexual misconduct. The predictor of sexual misconduct purpose items contributes 30.6% ($p < 0.01$) of the variance change in religiosity. Also, sexual misconduct among males is much higher than in female adolescence. The more surprising finding is that there are samples of social media accounts for gays, and some Malay youth's interest in dating is meant to do evil or discuss sex. Therefore, social media users could partake in more risky sexual behaviors because of a larger peer network influencing their attitudes and social norms. The current findings are expected to signal parents, teachers, the community, and the Ministry of Education Malaysia to take proactive measures to address this issue.

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1. Introduction

Sexual misconduct refers to behaviors that violate the boundaries of intercourse between men and women that Islam has outlined from holding, watching, pornographic communication, undressing and dating (Ahmad, 2015; Carroll, 2018). Social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, WeChat, Instagram and others are available and easily accessible through the Playstore and Applestore applications. The applications can be obtained for free, and users only need internet access. These social media applications are very easy to use and offer a wide variety of ways for users to interact online. Some teenagers are confused and unable to assess an accurate picture of social interaction. Teenagers' social interactions are virtual, full of freedom, and even personal in real life, but in the cyber world, personal meaning is different (Rajeev, 2015). It encourages teenagers to tend to engage in negative behaviors in cyberspace. A total of 184 cases of sexual crimes were reported in 2015, and of that number, 138 cases involved victims who were identified through WeChat, Facebook (35 cases), and the rest through WhatsApp and Beetalk. These statistics show the occurrence of sexual misconduct as a result of the influence of social media use on adolescents, and this situation is a matter of concern because the average adolescent involved in this case is under 16 years old and is still in school (Sexual Crime Statistics Involving Social Media, January - December 2015). The theoretical framework in this study is Bronfenbrenner's Theological Ecology. Eric Bronfenbrenner introduced this theory in

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1917. The theory states that the sociocultural environment influences individual development. It presents four ecological systems in which these systems interact with an individual involved. This interaction occurs between the individual and the family, fellow peers and other people close to the individual, including the sociocultural influence of the family, community and social media (Ismail, 2016).

Statistics released by the Ministry of Health Malaysia in 2015 stated a total of 3,980, which is 28.8 percent of 13 831 adolescents aged 10 to 19 years pregnant with illegitimate children. As many as 25 percent of the total are unmarried, and on average, there are 1,500 cases of teenage pregnancies in a month, and 50 cases a day are reported nationwide. This report was submitted to Utusan Online dated 10 September 2016. A total of 532158 births of illegitimate children were registered with the National Registration Department from 2005 to 2015. These statistics show the phenomenon of sexual abuse that occurs in Malaysia. This statistic illustrates the most worrying social problem because it is clearly observed that teenagers in schools are involved in the problem of sexual misconduct, which needs attention.

The effects of this sexual abuse involve an increase in the statistics of pregnant adolescents and contribute to an increase in statistics in cases involving abortion where there are 432 cases of abortion from 2011 to June 2015 issued by the Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM). Rape crime cases involving friends known through social media are also among the cybercrimes in the press. Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre (2011) found that exposure to sexual images on the internet significantly affects sexual coercion. Landry, Turner, Vyas, & Wood (2017) stated that social media for experienced individuals leads to sexually-oriented communication. His study also found a positive relationship between SMS frequency and increased sexual risk behavior. Social media gives space for teenagers to communicate, but this abuse of social media risks teenagers engaging in sexually explicit communication. Accordingly, this study will focus on several types of social media applications that are trending among adolescents today and examine the influence on adolescent sexual misconduct. This study aims to identify the level of use of social media (e.g., Facebook, WeChat, Twitter, Bigo Live, WhatsApp, Instagram) and to examine the influence of social media and religiosity on sexual misconduct. Also, investigate the difference in sexual misconduct between gender among secondary school students in the northern district of peninsular Malaysia

2. Literature review

A study on the influence of mass media on the moral appearance of Malaysian Polytechnic Islamic Students was conducted by Hamat (2017). They found the mixing score is moderate, but from certain items such as shaking hands with non-mahram, they think mixing between men and women should not be restricted nowadays. The wearing of tight shirts and pants facilitates the movement to record a high score. The findings showed a significant relationship between the level of social media exposure with a moral appearance in terms of socializing, dressing, communication and entertainment. Overall, the level of moral appearance of polytechnic students in the study positively influences students where students can choose and distinguish between which is beneficial and vice versa. Yet certain items show a small proportion of these students admit to being influenced by negative moral appearances due to shows found on social media.

Pakianathan (2016) showed that his respondents agreed that advertisements from mass media, either electronic media or print media, influence adolescents involved in sexual misconduct. The case study results also showed that the samples were interested in advertisements that were pornographic and sexy. Dusra (2017) studied the influence of internet media on adolescent deviant behaviour, found that there is a significant influence between watching porn videos or movies on internet media with sexually deviant behaviour. Her findings also found that adolescents who often watch pornographic videos agree that flirting- kissing and cuddling with a partner is common among loving couples.

Collins et al. (2017) stated a significant relationship between sexual exposure in the media with adolescent sexual behaviour. This study also recommends that parents and certain agencies develop specific interventions or reduce sexual exposure in the media that is certain will affect adolescents. A report released by the Department of Health and Human Services in the United States in 2009 stated that as many as 47 percent of teens in high school had ever had sex, and 33.7 percent of those were currently sexually active. According to this report, teenagers under the age of 15 are the highest group of pregnant teenagers, followed by teenagers between the ages of 18 to 19 and then teenagers aged 15 to 17 years old.

Abd Halim (2017) stated that applying religious values is a crucial and significant mediator in the relationship between the social environment and sexual misconduct. It shows that religious commitment and the application of religious values are needed to be built as early as 7 years old. Based on the Theory of Spiritual Development (Islamic View), when these adolescents are in society and exposed to negative values, religious values will prevent teenagers from behaving that violate the boundaries of religion. According to Maimunah (2016), the more an individual is committed to religion, the lower the probability of the individual engaging in premarital sex.

3. Materials and methods

In this study, samples are secondary school adolescents in the northern district of peninsular Malaysia. The process performed by this quantitative research is a random sampling process where through this sampling, each district has the same opportunity

to be selected to represent the population. This study collected data from two states, namely Perak and Kedah (including Langkawi) because they meet the criteria of the study sample. The researcher determines the number of samples for research from the target population according to the model from Krejcie & Morgan introduced in 1970. All samples are 16-year-old Malays.

The questionnaire of this study is divided into 3 parts. Part A is the sample demographic information such as gender, owned social media accounts, and social media usage per day. Part B is the use of social media, which includes items such as communicating and interacting with others, expressing themselves and feelings, finding information such as news, adding contacts, being a source of income, and finding entertainment. This questionnaire was validated and confirmed by two experts in educational psychology. Five Likert scales accompany part B of this questionnaire to give space to the samples to show their level of agreement about the given statement. Section C is the Religiosity Scale which was developed by Boswell (2003). Section D involves the Checklist for Sexual Misconduct, which was developed by (Ahmad, 2015). This section contains 5 sub-constructs: holding, watching, pornographic communications, undressing, and dating.

4. Results

Table 1
Results of Social Media Categories used by Teenagers

Category	Description	Percentage
Gender	Male	47.1
	Female	52.9
Facebook	Yes	77.9
	No	22.1
WeChat	Yes	54.6
	No	45.4
Twitter	Yes	29.0
	No	71.0
Bigo Live	Yes	14.2
	No	85.8
WhatsApp	Yes	97.8
	No	2.2
Instagram	Yes	83.3
	No	16.7
Others	Yes	31.9
	No	68.1

Table 1 shows the number of respondents based on gender, almost 53% females and 47% males. The table also shows the percentages of respondents' application-related data on social media. The findings show that among the 191 respondents, 97.8% of samples have WhatsApp accounts, while 83.3% have Instagram Accounts; Facebook accounts (77.9%), followed by WeChat accounts (54.6%), Others (31.9%), Twitter accounts (29%) and Bigo Live Accounts (14.2%).

Table 2
Results of Reliability Measurement Scales

Variable(s)	No. Item	Cronbach Alpha
Sexual behaviour	27	0.923
Religiosity	8	0.983
Social media	6	0.681

Table 2 displays the reliability test results of Cronbach alpha. It indicated that the instruments work very well with the samples (above 0.90), except for social media is 0.681. However, according to Ahmad and Mustaffa (2008) and Ahmad (2015), the instrument's reliability is high, with a Cronbach Alpha of 0.70.

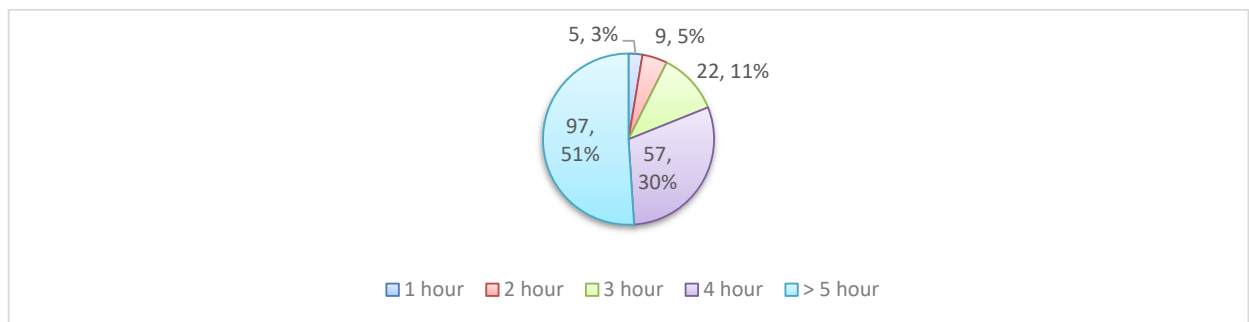


Fig. 1 Result of the usage of social media per day (N=191)

Fig. 1 shows the total frequency of use of social media. It shows that the use of social media (Facebook, WeChat, Twitter, Bigo Live, WhatsApp, Instagram) among the sample is very high (51%).

Table 3
Correlations between Social Media and Religiosity

		Sexual Misconduct
Social Media	Pearson Correlation	0.105
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.149
	N	191
Religiosity	Pearson Correlation	-0.931**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	191

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 captures the result of correlations between social media and religiosity. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the linear relationship between social media and sexual misconduct; and between religiosity and sexual misconduct. There was a strong negative correlation between religiosity and sexual misconduct, $r = -0.931$; $p < 0.01$, while there was no correlation between social media and sexual misconduct, $p = > 0.05$. This suggests higher religiosity will lead to lower sexual problems among adolescence. R^2 is the coefficient of determination. It measures how much of the variability in the outcome is accounted for by the predictors with the range lying between 0 and 1. Therefore, the results of the coefficient test in Table 4 shows that the social media usage model explains by 30%. In other words, the predictor of sexual misconduct purpose items contributes 30% of the variance change in social media usage.

Table 4
Results of Hypothesis Testing

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.763	0.176		15.707	0.000
	Social Media	0.030	0.051	0.016	0.600	0.549
	Religiosity	-0.306	0.009	-0.930	-34.803	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Sexual Misconduct

Table 4 shows that the religiosity model explains 30.6%. In other words, the predictor of sexual misconduct among adolescents' purpose items contributes 30.6% of the variance change in religiosity. The results of the statistical test showed that the items of social media and religiosity ($b = 0.030$; $b = 0.306$; $p < 0.01$) were significant predictors of sexual misconduct. From the beta aspect, for every change of 1 unit in sexual misconduct items, the change in social media usage ($p > 0.05$) and religiosity ($p < 0.01$) are about 0.030 units. It can be concluded that social media has no influence on sexual misconduct, while religiosity influences sexual misconduct among samples by negative correlation. This means the stronger the religiosity, the lower sexual misconduct. Hypothesis accepted at 95% confidence level.

Table 5
Result of descriptive statistics using independent t-test for Sexual Misconduct

	Jantina	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Sexual Misconduct	Male	92	1.955	0.310	0.0323
	Female	99	1.409	0.447	0.0449

A two-sample t-test was performed to compare sexual misconduct between genders against the population mean.

Table 6
The result of the independent sample t-test for Sexual Misconduct

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means		
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	27.920	0.000	9.733	189.000	0.000	0.546
Equal variances not assumed			9.859	175.311	0.000	0.546

Table 6 indicates there is not much difference in sample size between males and females sampled. The mean value of sexual misconduct ($M = 1.96$ for males, $SD = 0.311$) was significantly higher than females ($M = 1.41$, $SD = 0.45$; $p < 0.01$). The mean of almost 2.0 for males shows that sexual misconduct among male adolescence is much higher than the female.

5. Discussion

Internet facilities catalyze the existence of social media. This social media is a communication network with interactive and communication features that combine various types of communication elements, including oral, written, visual, sound and

video, that make virtual communication interesting. Adolescents nowadays are influenced by modern lifestyles in line with the development of the internet and social media. Social media offers a way to connect and communicate with new and old friends without limits to the rest of the world. The use of mobile phones by these teenagers has become a global phenomenon where they are so easy to access various types of social media mediums.

Rostosky, Wilcox, Wright, & Randall (2004) found five negative effects of excessive internet use. Also, interpersonal problems, behavioral problems, physical problems, psychological problems, and problems involving adults between internet users and social media are addicted to the internet and internet abuse for immoral purposes such as accessing pornographic sites. There are also some internet and social media users involved in problems such as engaging in cyber sexuality (sexually explicit media sites, pornographic videos, pornography), involvement in online relationships and online gambling and this indirectly affects individuals and people around where involvement in online relationships and cyber sexual addiction can lead to sexual misconduct (Hamid, 2016).

The Research Discourse on the Study of Risk and Protective Factors on Sexual and Reproductive Health of Adolescents states that the statistics of the Ministry of Health in 2015, revealed as many as 3,980 or 28.8 percent of 13,831 adolescents aged 10 to 19 years pregnant out of wedlock. Findings obtained through a study found that young people who use the internet excessively actually have many problems including problems in establishing social relationships, attitude problems, physical and health problems, psychological problems (difficulty controlling emotions, difficulty making decisions), and also affect the quality of individual work (Alam et al., 2014; Frappier et al., 2008).

If roughly estimated, most teenagers in Malaysia's use of time in a day is 8 hours to sleep, 6 to 7 hours in school, and the remaining 8 hours for other activities. These teenagers spend half of the remaining hours in a day of 5 hours and above socializing in cyberspace. Excessive time in cyberspace to socialize is feared to impede adolescents' emotional, intellectual and social development. According to Putri, Nurwati, & Budiarti (2016), adolescents who are too obsessed with cyberspace will not help through a healthy and orderly development process. It is feared that the use of too much time in cyberspace to socialize will stunt adolescents' emotional, intellectual, and social development. According to Baharudin & Zakaria (2009), adolescents who are too stubborn in cyberspace will not help through the development process in a healthy and orderly manner. This finding is in line with information reported by Harian Metro, where Malaysians are the third-highest internet users in Southeast Asia after Singapore and Brunei.

As with the use of the internet, using social media excessively or over a long time has various implications for an individual. Limiting the medium is very difficult to implement, where various parties must sit together and work together to either restrict or limit its use. In a Kosmo Online press interview dated 16 April 2018 with Dr. Azlin Baharudin, he stated that the use of Facebook, which is one of the social media for too long, can be a factor that leads to changes in students' behavior and emotions, including changes in solitary behavior, that is lack of direct interaction with other individuals, antisocial, shy when dealing with people and lack of confidence. Social media sites, which are the latest trend in the community to establish relationships, are gaining ground in society, especially among teenagers.

These findings explain that most of the Muslim adolescents involved in this study were involved in the activity of watching pornographic material on social media. It is common knowledge that the dumping of pornographic materials is indeed found on social media, which is why the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) in 2015 blocked a total of 557 pornographic websites from abroad and a total of 209 were self-produced pornographic websites by local people. The enthusiasm of society especially individuals who become idols among teenagers in action and show their black side with pornographic video recordings indirectly attracted the interest of these teenagers to find such videos on social media sites and made them get caught up in sexual misconduct that is clearly prohibited in Islam.

In the theory of Ecology put forward by Eric Bronfenbrenner, he states that the environment in which individuals interact directly consists of the people such as parents, family, teachers, peers and other individuals around them. As a result of these facilities, many teenagers have abused them for bad purposes. If seen from the findings of this study, the researchers found that teenagers not only chat about things that are pornographic, but some of them are hardcore to sharing pictures, videos, and acting porn live to be displayed and shown to their virtual friends. The display of pornographic acts, whether in pictures, videos or live acts, and communicating verbally or non-verbally invites passion and can be a catalyst for other more serious sexual misconduct.

The 15th National Symposium on Adolescent Health stated that 2,873 cases of premarital pregnancy occurred in 2018. Although the trend of cases was found to decrease compared to previous years, this may be due to adolescents involved in extramarital pregnancies having had abortions and these activities difficult to be affected by the Ministry of Health. This finding is also supported by the findings obtained by (Hamat, 2017), who stated that moral decay due to various social applications leads to adultery, incest, skipping school and forgetting responsibilities as servants of God, children and students. According to Bakar, Ibrahim, Dagang, & AlBakry (2019), the awareness and strong religious beliefs in adolescents will help them avoid engaging with negative symptoms or behaviours that violate the boundaries of sharia stated in Islam's teachings.

In this context, adolescents should be provided with a clear knowledge of religion and things forbidden be done in the teachings of Islam. This knowledge will be a bulwark preventing adolescents from engaging in sexual misconduct. A study conducted by Vasilenko & Vasilenko & Lefkowitz (2014) explained that adolescents, whether male or female, who have a high commitment to religion can reduce and delay their desire to have sex before marriage.

Religiosity is the protective factor in this study. The finding shows a negative correlation between religiosity and sexual misconduct. The studies support this finding by Abd Halim (2017) and Maimunah (2016), the more an individual is committed to religion, the lower the probability of the individual engaging in premarital sex. It can be concluded that social media shows no relationship with sexual misconduct among adolescents in this study. The hypothesis was rejected at the 95% confidence level. This finding is slightly different from the findings from other studies. Still, it is not something new or surprising because it refers to Brenfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (1917) framework. It clearly states that human development is influenced by various factors, such as parents, family, peers, schools, teachers, community, media, and ethnic, cultural values, customs, and religious values.

Various elements around us shape human development. A study conducted by Abd Halim (2017) stated that the attachment between parents and children as well as the application and appreciation of Islamic values are elements or factors that influence wrong sexual behavior among Muslim adolescents. It means that among the factors that influence adolescents to engage in sexual misconduct is the role played by parents in applying Islamic practices and values to children in the process of their development. It means that religious consolidation and reinforcement in family institutions applied by parents in raising children influence the actions of adolescents engaging in sexual misconduct.

In addition to parents, peers are among the factors that influence adolescent development. It is clearly explained in Eric Brenfenbrenner's Theory of Ecology (1917) where he stated that peers located in the microsystem are among the factors influencing human development. It is supported by a study conducted by Arifain, Sulaiman, Badayai, & Abdullah (2022), who stated that peers are the highest risk factor for adolescents' at-risk sexual behavior.

In a study conducted by Pakianathan (2016), family factors are the highest factor influencing adolescent sexual misconduct, followed by adolescent sexual experience factors, peer factors, electronic media, and community factors. These findings indicate that, although electronic media is often associated with adolescent moral problems nowadays, in certain cases and situations, other factors are also the biggest influence on sexual misconduct among adolescents.

6. Conclusion

The findings from this study are expected to signal parents, teachers, all members of the community and indeed the Ministry of Education Malaysia to take proactive measures to address this issue. This study hopes to open the minds of parents to monitor their children in the process of interacting using social media to curb negative influences that will increase health risk such as internet addiction, anxiety, obesity, and social isolation. It is hoped that the findings of this study will open up space and become a bridge of discussion among policymakers. For instance, the Ministry of Education Malaysia or State Education Departments look at the issue more critically and find concrete solutions to strengthen religious beliefs. Subsequently, construct modules or introduce measures related to sexual misconduct involving secondary students in Malaysia.

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