

## THE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON YOUTH'S SELF-DEVELOPMENT: A FRAMEWORK

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify the impacts of social media on youth's self-development. This paper proposes a framework to identify how these impacts affect youth's self-development. In order to achieve this aim, the proposed framework identifies two main aspects which directly contribute to youth's self-development. These aspects are personality and psychology respectively. As a result, the study reveals the significance of the relationship between these two affected aspects on youth's self-development. This paper is also expected to act as a medium to look for chances in helping the area of study called 'personality psychology' in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Youth Self-Development, Social Media, Personality, Psychology

### 1. Introduction

We have entered the digital era where in everything that we do, we are accompanied by developed technologies for example phones, computers, tablets and many more. Thanks to the existence of smart people in the technology field, let's say Bill Gates and Steve Jobs, they opened up a whole new era for the world. Ten or twenty years ago, having these so called "gadgets" were a symbol of luxury for majority of people, but now they are a need for everybody especially for those who crave for faster communication. Starting from being able to do just calls and messages, the world citizens now can do video calls, instant messages and so on due to the development of the technology and introduction of the internet. Internet is part of the electronic media. Compared to its traditional cousins, such as radio and television, the new electronic media allows people to know about what is happening inside and outside their surroundings in real time.

When the developed gadgets met the internet, many things were born from the combination. One of them is an application or app in short. An application is a software program established by a company to promote their product or services. Examples of today's famous applications are WhatsApp and Facebook. They are a new type of social platform for people to socialize with their peers and even strangers anytime, anywhere, thus they are what people nowadays called as social media. What is social media? As stated by Nations (2017), social can be referred to the interaction between people, as they share information among them and also receive information from each other. While the word media means a medium of communication. People who enjoy socializing like the young generation might have many social media applications mostly

on their mobile phones. As a result, social media has become a norm in everybody's life. According to Perrin (2015), nearly 76% of people around the globe use social media to interact with one another. Only approximately 24% who did not involve in the use of social media. This proved that social media have affected our daily life.

Studies on the aspects of youth that tend to be affected by social media grow since the late 20th century. However, studies were found focused on either one of them, personality or psychology. In personality, studies focused on factors like extraversion (Lynn et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2012; Muscanell and Guadagno, 2012; Balmaceda, Schiaffino and Godoy, 2014), openness (Hong et al., 2016; Lynn et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2012; Muscanell and Guadagno, 2012; Balmaceda, Schiaffino and Godoy, 2014) and self-concept clarity (Davis, 2013). Under psychology, studies have investigated various factors such as social support (Zhang, 2017; Fergie et al., 2016) and social comparison (Burnette et al., 2017; Fardouly et al., 2017; Young et al., 2017). Similarly, the authors for the social comparison factor also focused on behavior. Furthermore, only a few prior studies that discussed on the mental health factor for instances, researches by Fardouly et al. (2017), Zhang (2017) and Fergie et al. (2016). Unfortunately, there are limited studies talking about both of these affected aspects together and their relation to youth's self-development.

The aim of this study is to identify the impacts of social media on youth's self-development. In order to achieve this objective, this research proposes a framework to determine the impacts of social media toward youth's self-development through personality and psychology aspects. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 is literature review. Proposed framework is in Section 3. Final section contains some concluding remarks.

## **2. Literature Review**

This study is expected to analyze the impacts of social media to youth's self-development. For the impacts of social media on youth's personality, we focused on three main factors which are extraversion, openness and self-concept clarity. In addition, other personality traits and model are also involved. In other hand, the impacts of social media on youth's psychology are focused in terms of social support, social comparison, behavior and mental health. This literature review will unveil all the researches that have been done concerning this problem.

### ***2.1 The Impacts of Social Media on Youth's Personality***

In extraversion, Lynn et al. (2017) conducted a study to examine the respondents with a scale to determine which personality traits they possessed. The scale approach was not efficient among the respondents as there were flaws existed. Respondents were reluctant to answer scale-based questions. The finding of this study showed, extraversion was more likely to have information sharing compared to rumor sharing. On the other hand, Muscanell and Guadagno (2012) took a measure in distributing online survey for participants to fill in and answered. Participants completed a 50-item survey assessing demographic information and also the information on participants' use

of online social networking sites. The findings showed that extraversion in this study were more likely to share and posted about photographs. Balmaceda, Schiaffino and Godoy (2014) conducted a study to analyze the use of languages by the MySpace users. The pattern was discovered by analyzing the relationships among personality traits of users. Extraversion traits showed that 80% of the respondents were extrovert which portrayed attitudes of enjoying human interactions and to be enthusiastic and talkative. This is very similar to Wang et al. (2012) which showed result of extraversion was talkative and loves to interact with other person for instance positively related to number of friends, posting comments, posting self-photos, and updating status on social media.

Openness is one of the features in the big five model personality traits. Hong et al. (2016) conducted a study of determining the personality traits and mindfulness behavior while on social media. Researchers applied confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with structural equation modeling (SEM) to explore the correlates between constructs. The measurement used was a set of questionnaire with first-order CFA. The finding of the research showed the influence of openness on mindfulness was negatively correlated to each other. Besides that, Muscanell and Guadagno (2012) found that respondents with openness traits were attracted to socialize more on social media and tried out new things such as blogging and playing online games. Respondents with openness trait found to be adventurous and love to explore new things on the social media. This is similar to Wang et al. (2012) results showed that respondents with openness trait experience positively in activities related to playing online games. In addition, Lynn et al. (2017) also discovered respondents with openness were open to new experiences. Openness was related more to information sharing compared to rumor sharing. Thus, it decreased the propensity of individuals to share rumors in online social networks. Another research done by Balmaceda, Schiaffino and Godoy (2014) showed that respondents with openness trait have highest standard deviation in personality dimension distribution for all posts and initial texts. This proved that openness person intend to start the conversation first on social media.

For self-concept clarity, according to Davis (2013) a study was conducted by distributing set of questionnaires to 2079 students which were 57% female between the ages of 11 and 19 years. The students were attending one of seven secondary schools located in Bermuda. Using structural equation modeling, the study found out that mothers and friends play an important role in adolescents' lives, with both relationships contributing in positive ways to respondents' self-concept clarity. The results showed adolescents who were motivated to go online on social media loved to express and explore different aspects of their identities tended to experience lower self-concept clarity.

## *2.2 The Impacts of Social Media on Youth's Psychology*

The term social support means getting care and attention from other people in overcoming your difficulties. Fergie, Hunt and Hilton (2016) conducted a research on the youngsters' experiences in gaining and creating the user-generated health content on social media and how those tools supported them. Those who are high in the level of

online engagement were labeled as “prosumers” by the researchers. One of their descriptions is that they are a group of people who appreciate peer support and sharing of first-hand experience. It was found that those young adults used social media to see those who experienced the same health issues, allowing them to interact and get motivational support from each other. In addition, it was exposed that one of the participants used social media to disclose about her health status. It allowed her colleagues, mainly her manager to be aware of her condition. It also helped her to provide rationale for her mood sometimes. Zhang (2017) also suggested that self-disclosure on Facebook was positively related to endorse social support. This hypothesis was largely supported by results that showed disclosure intimacy, honesty and intent were considerably related to endorse it. It was concluded that letting it all out on social media enabled people to trigger social support. This is similar to the previous study done by Fergie et al. (2016). These studies present that social support can be found on social media despite having negative sides.

Social comparison is often related with our value within a society. Burnette, Kwitowski and Mazzeo (2017) investigated on how social media influenced these young girls to compare themselves to others. The qualitative result showed they did endorse some level of social comparison in all focus groups. Participants endorsed appearance-based comparisons with peers on social media. Some girls admitted that they did not post selfies due to their own appearance concerns or lack of confidence. However, they demonstrated awareness of the consequences of this aspect. In most groups, they also revealed various strategies they used to weaken the effects for instance, implementation of media literacy, acceptance and appreciation of differences, and confidence. These strategies were encouraged by their school that wanted a healthy environment for all students. On the other hand, what about those female students at the university? Fardouly, Pinkus and Vartanian (2017) discovered 11.8% social comparisons were done on social media and those students were more likely to compare on it than any other media forms such as magazine and television. Plus, they also greatly made upward comparison which is the act of comparing oneself to another person who might be superior in one’s eyes which eventually hurt one’s self esteem. It was decided that women primarily make upward appearance comparisons on social media. This theory was also discussed by Burnette et al. (2017). Young, Len-Ríos and Young (2017) studied social comparison on teenagers. They came up with the hypothesis that social comparison will be positively related with online aggression such as cyberbully and harassment. At the end, this theory was supported as tendency for social comparison was a positive predictor for problematic behaviors. These studies show that the usage of social media can lead to social comparison that further downsizing youth’s identity development.

Social media can also affect the behavioral aspect. Frequent usage can give positive and negative outcomes. Burnette et al. (2017) discussed about acceptable and unacceptable social media behaviors. In the research, more unacceptable behaviors were found compared to the acceptable ones. These include having massive amount of followings, unnecessary amount of uploads, and rude remarks. Anyhow, it was reported that their parents were not worried about their doings online although there were some

girls expressed the need of having parental supervision to overcome this matter. Next, diet and exercise behavior were examined by Fardouly et al. (2017). In the study, they saw women would have more urge to control their food intake and workout after being on social media. Besides that, Young et al. (2017) mentioned about aggressive behavior when teenagers go online. They proposed the usage of social media will be positively connected with online aggression similar to Burnette et al. (2017). This hypothesis was proven to be true as they found youths who had romantic motivations were more likely to involve in online aggression as both victim and offender. These researches present that social media can encourage behaviors that can affect both individual and others.

Mental health is a topic that was thoroughly examined. Fergie et al. (2016) talked about one of the participants, where she would engage with contents produced by users on social media like Facebook pages. The engagement avoided her from feeling lonely and isolated as she had suffered from depression. Hence, this shows that social media can spark one's psychological wellbeing. In contrast, Zhang (2017) revealed that confessing on social media had no impact on depression and life satisfaction. It signifies that the usage of social media did not directly contribute in improving one's mental health. In other way, social support given by other people who saw those confessions was the one that could help these mental health sufferers. This result is related to the findings by Fergie et al. (2016) in the social support aspect. When it comes to mood, Fardouly et al. (2017) in their paper identified that the students were in a slightly negative mood after experienced upward comparisons through social media. Precisely, low body satisfaction, less positive mood and further weight lost thoughts were found in participants with high traits of body dissatisfaction. From there, it was determined that upward comparison can affect one's mental health compared to lateral and downward comparisons. These researches show that social media is a tool that can both improve and worsen youngsters' mental health.

Table 1 below shows the review from the previous studies. There are three personality traits which were pointed out by a few authors who had done the researches. The most talked about factor in these articles is openness, followed by extraversion and one article on self-concept clarity. In the impacts of social media on youth's psychology, we can see that many studies focused on social comparison, behavior and mental health. Each aspect was discussed in three researches. Burnette et al. (2017), Fardouly et al. (2017) and Young et al. (2017) investigated on the same two aspects, social comparison and behavior. Social support was the least discussed with two researchers done by Fergie et al. (2016) and Zhang (2017).

Table 1. Analysis of review

Author(s)	The Impacts of Social Media on Youth's Personality	The Impacts of Social Media on Youth's Psychology
Balmaceda, Schiaffino and Godoy (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extraversion</li> <li>• Openness</li> </ul>	
Burnette et al. (2017)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Comparison</li> <li>• Behavior</li> </ul>
Davis (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-concept clarity</li> </ul>	
Fardouly et al. (2017)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Comparison</li> <li>• Behavior</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul>
Fergie et al. (2016)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Support</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul>
Hong et al. (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Openness</li> </ul>	
Lynn et al. (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extraversion</li> <li>• Openness</li> </ul>	
Muscanell and Guadagno (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extraversion</li> <li>• Openness</li> </ul>	
Wang et al. (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extraversion</li> <li>• Openness</li> </ul>	
Young et al. (2017)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Comparison</li> <li>• Behavior</li> </ul>
Zhang (2017)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Support</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul>

### 3. Proposed Framework

Prior studies show that social media usage among youth depends on two vital components which are personality aspect and psychology aspect. Thus, both components are considered as the independent variables while the impacts of social media on youth's self-development are considered as the dependent variable. Extraversion, openness and self-concept clarity are the main types of personality. As for psychology, social support, social comparison, behavior and mental health are grouped in the same category. Figure 1 shows the proposed research framework to guide this research. This research is expected to identify the impacts of social media that could influence on youth's self-development. This research is also expected to be able to be used in all domains and will contribute to the existing literature towards social media usage and youth's self-development.

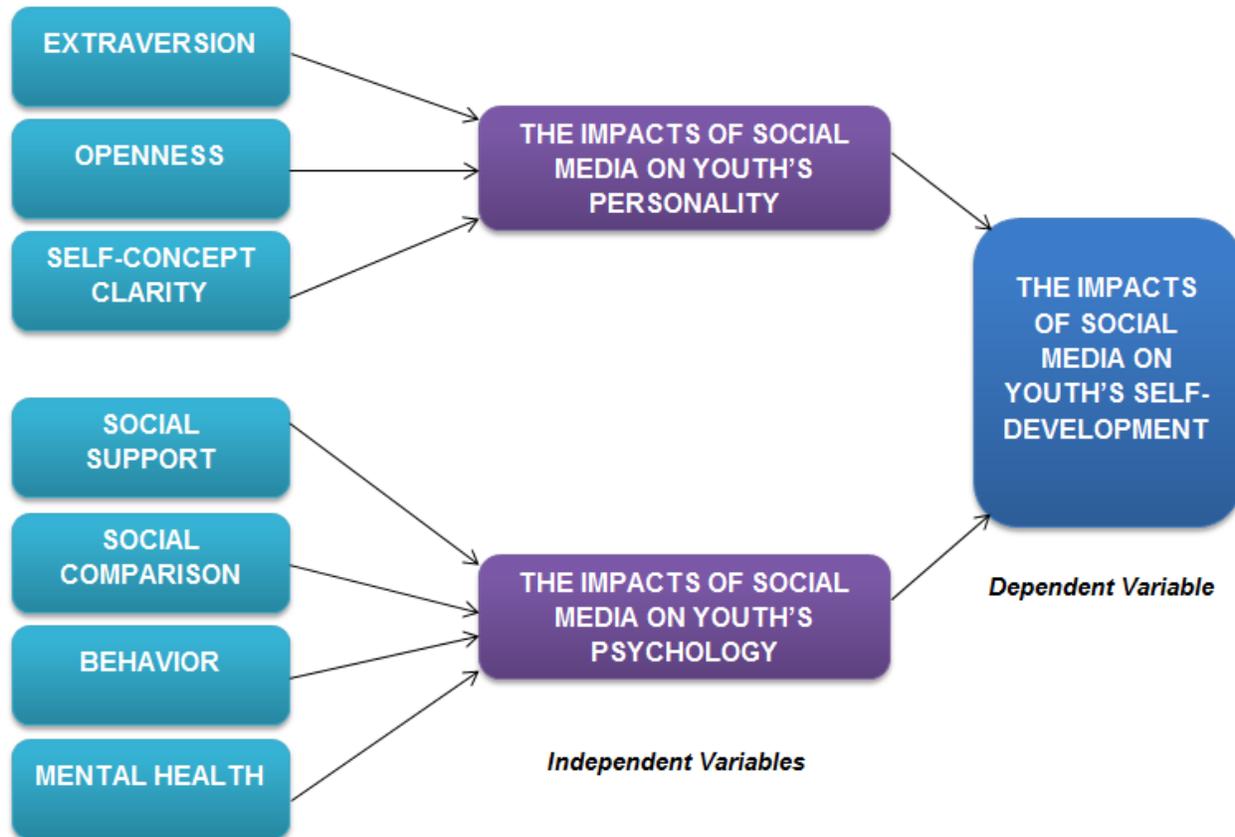


Figure 1. Research framework

#### 4. Conclusions

Social media indeed gives impacts to youth's self-development. In personality, the youngsters possessed traits such as extraversion, openness and self-concept clarity. Some researches proposed that extraversion person was talkative and loved to interact with others. Similarly, young people with openness trait were found to be attracted to socialize more on social media. The social media can also motivate adolescents who loved to express and explore different parts of their identities which mean they are experiencing lower self-concept clarity. Majority of the studies also agreed that social media affects one's psychology in positive and negative ways. In psychology, youngsters are mostly influenced through social support, social comparison, behavior and mental health. Teenagers loved to seek for social support on social media because they can be more open without being judged doing so. Some experienced social comparison after interacting with the content of social media while others went under behavior and mental changes during and after being on these sites. In conclusion, there is so much to learn regarding the relationship between these two affected aspects to youth's self-development.

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