

Perception of Female Students towards Social Media-Related Crimes

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ABSTRACT

Various social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp are often used by youths today to socialise, entertain themselves and to obtain the latest news. However, it has also led to rampant crimes. The objective of this paper is to investigate the perceptions of Malaysian female university students on social media crimes. Sixty female undergraduate students from Universiti Sains Malaysia were selected as respondents using simple random and convenient sampling. Meanwhile 10 of them were chosen for in-depth interviews. All respondents have social media accounts such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp. Majority of them were aware of crimes involving social media, however only 28% of them decided to limit their usage of social media due to concerns of becoming a potential victim. Meanwhile, 72 per cent use social media without any limitation. This study contributes to the knowledge of perceptions of young women at Malaysian universities and their vulnerability to social media crimes. It is suggested relevant bodies should take into account the possible dangers that can be generated from social media which can affect the psychological health of young women.

Keywords: Perception, social media crimes, female university students, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Social media is a relatively new medium that appeals to all segments of society, especially the youth. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, YouTube and Yahoo have brought changes to the way people communicate from face-to-face meeting to meeting online. The diverse ways of socialising online through social media

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has made Malaysia the fifth highest user of social media in the Asia-Pacific region, in which in 2015, it is expected that there will be around 25 million people using social media compared with 18 million people in 2012¹. Social media exposes youths, especially females, to crimes. Youth are said to be the most frequent users of social media in Malaysia and it is estimated that 94 percent of Internet users are teenagers². Around 90% per cent of 8.5 million children and teenagers between ages 5 and 18 in Malaysia are exposed to negative elements of the cyber world³. The National White Collar Crime Center (NW3C) (2011) suggests that social networking is a potential 'gold mine' for criminals to take advantage of users' personal details for unlawful financial gain. This paper focuses on matters that are of concern to today's community, which is social media-related crimes and how it affects female youth.

In recent years, many crimes involving social media have been widely reported in the local media. Among them are fraud, smuggling, blackmailing, illegal investment activities, hacking, cyber bullying, drug abuse, pornography, casual sex, rape, and molestation (Malek & Kamil, 2010). In addition, social media has become a weapon to discredit, defame, and to expose users to dangerous situations. The Harian Metro (2014) report on 'Keyboard Warriors' showed how users arrogantly preached ideas they believe are right while maintaining

their anonymity through pseudonym. Their activities are considered irresponsible to the public at large as it may cause public panic and may affect others, while the 'Keyboard Warriors' remain safe and anonymous. Thus, it is important for social media users, especially the youth, to be aware of this and to take precautions when using social media. The involvement of youth in social media could not be constrained in today's globalised world; however, it is important for society to make sure youths are aware of the risks involved in using social networks.

Section two of this paper reviews past research on social media crime while section three outlines its research methodology. Section four discusses results and findings while the final section summarises the paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social network is defined as a web-based service in which a user is able to create a public or semi-public profile, connect and share connectivity with a list of other web users, and view the list of relationships that were made by other individuals in the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social media attracts youth mainly because they allow them to read social updates and informative articles which they can respond to. More importantly, they can socialise and communicate with their friends with virtually no limitations, post a video or stream an audio, share information, send pictures, and receive and send information interactively (Ghazali, Mapjabil, Nor, Samat & Jaafar, 2012; NW3C, 2011; Thelwall, Sud, & Vis, 2012; Wright & Ross, 1997).

¹Berita Harian (2014). Accessed: 25 June 2015

²Berita Harian (2012). Accessed: 18 June 2015

³Berita Harian (2012). Accessed: 18 June 2015

Social media offers an opportunity to its users to interact without the limitation of time and distance. As people become increasingly savvy in using technological gadgets, they could form a network of communication across cyberspace at any time (Tang, Tang, & Chiang, 2012). Personal data of a person ceases to be private and almost everything is voluntarily shared in social media. Youth are accustomed to sharing everything on their *wall*, updating their statuses or *tweets* when anything exciting happens in their life (House of Lords, 2014). Youths aged between 16 and 24 are the largest consumers of media via the mobile Internet, spending 1.88 up to 2.77 hours per day in 2012 (Mander, 2014). Globally, Internet users in 2014 spent an average of 6.09 hours a day on online media, compared with 2012. The online population in Thailand, Malaysia and Brazil are the most digital oriented of all, typically consuming eight hours or more a day (Mander, 2014).

Majority of youths use the social media for entertainment. Due to the long hours they spend on the Internet, youths are more exposed to the dangers of crimes that are often associated with social media, such as identity theft, cyberstalking, hacking, and cyberbullying. A federal study of offline stalking in the US (NW3C, 2011) found that one in every 12 women (from 8.2 million women studied) and one in every 45 men (from 2 million men studied) claim to have been stalked at some point. Women are twice as likely as men to be victims of stalking by strangers and eight times as likely to be victims of stalking by intimates

(NW3C, 2011). In addition, youths are more vulnerable to cyberbullying due to their lack of experience in using the Internet and their low awareness of its potential dangers (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children Service, 2009). According to Feinberg and Robey (2010), cyberbullying refers to online fights, threats, insults, and disguise. For example, when a person updates a status, he or she may receive hateful comments.

The existence of social media also contributes to identity theft. According to Reznik (2013), the usual scenario of online identity theft begins with the perpetrator creating a fictitious profile of the victim and uses that identity for online communications. The second technique is by stealing the victim's password, or indirectly gaining access to their social media account and then impersonating them by using that account. Sexual harassment is also often associated with the use of social media. The vast number of media reports regarding sexual offences over the Internet have shown that such activity is a widespread phenomenon. The exact rate of occurrence of sexually motivated crimes involving social media is difficult to determine, particularly when these cases involve young people (Loizou, 2012). For Yar (2006), sex offences mediated by social websites are not limited to sexual grooming although these cases attract the most media attention. Online exploitation of children can include 'cyber-rape', sexually explicit conversations and 'fantasy enactment' of sexual scenarios (Yar, 2006). According to Urban Dictionary (2005), cyber-rape means

the act of raping a person via the Internet. It is similar to cyber-sex, except that one of the two people does not consent to the sexually oriented messages, and the receiving party feels harassed and scared as the cyber rapist posts vulgar remarks.

Social media can influence youths to engage in sexual activities and in some instances, premarital pregnancy (Alavi et al., 2012). The influence and accessibility of social media has made it easy for both children and the youth to navigate themselves to access crime related and adult websites. Pornographic websites are among the most visited, which are in the fourth and fifth place out of the 100 sites frequented by children and youth in 2009 (Hassan & Rashid, 2012). Ideologies and sexual images, supported by the media, rumours, first-hand experiences and warnings from others, have a role in constructing fear in public space (Pain, 2000).

The New York Police Department has a social media unit that mines Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites for evidence of crimes and potential criminal activity (Murphy & Fontecilla, 2013). Youth criminal behaviours are becoming increasingly more common and the various developments in social media have caused them to be more vulnerable (Malek & Kamil, 2010). Articles in the dailies, such as “Malang Si Gadis Sunti di Facebook (The Unfortunate fate of a Virgin on Facebook)” in *Berita Harian*, 2013, “Remaja dirogol kenalan WeChat di bilik kosong pasar (A teenager raped by WeChat acquaintance in empty supermarket room)” in *Berita Harian*,

2015, and “Jururawat Dikurung dan Dirogol Kenalan Facebook (Nurse locked up and raped by acquaintance from Facebook),” in *Berita Harian*, 2014 prove that social media users are increasingly being preyed upon by criminals and syndicates.

Studies have found that social networking sites are most popular with women and young adults under the age of 30. A study showed young adult women aged between 18 and 29 are the dominant users of social networking sites (Madden & Zickuhr, 2011). Liska and Baccaglioni (1990) found that the influence of social media is the strongest among females, elderly and poorly educated people - all of which are segments of the population who are more likely to be victimised (Davis & Dossetor, 2010). Nevertheless, researchers argue that women in particular should be careful so as to not expose themselves to criminals. Jewkes (2013) meanwhile says that “while we should be cautious not to make sweeping claims about media ‘effects’ or the media being responsible for ‘causing’ fear of crime, we should remain alert to the ways in which media are integral to the processes of meaning-making by which we make sense of our everyday lives”. This paper therefore, identifies the extent to which social media has been involved in the meaning-making, namely how young Malaysian women make sense of their everyday lives.

The Malaysia Computer Emergency Response Team (MyCERT) was formed under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) in 1997 to provide a point of reference for the Malaysian

Internet community to deal with cybercrimes (MyCERT, 2017). MyCERT provides assistance in handling incidents, such as intrusion, identity theft, malware infection, cyber harassment and other computer security related incidents. MyCERT

classified cybercrime into nine categories as shown in Table 1, which, in 2016, Fraud was the top cybercrime followed by Intrusion, Spam, Cyber Harassment, and Malicious Codes, among others (MyCERT, 2017).

Table 1
Reported incidents based on general incident classification statistics (2010-2016)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Content related	39	59	20	54	35	33	50
Cyber harassment	419	459	300	512	550	442	529
Denial of service	66	78	23	19	29	38	66
Fraud	2212	5328	4001	4485	4477	3257	3921
Intrusion	2160	3699	4326	2770	1125	1714	2476
Intrusion attempt	685	734	67	76	1302	303	277
Malicious codes	1199	1012	645	1751	716	567	435
Spam	1268	3751	526	950	3650	3539	545
Vulnerabilities report	42	98	78	19	34	22	35
Total	8090	15218	9986	10636	11918	9915	8334

Source: MyCert, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016

This table shows that cybercrime is serious and prevalent. Cybercrime may affect the well-being of victims and society at large. Cybercrimes cause fear and distrust among Internet users, whether they have been victims or not. Thus, the vulnerability of the public, especially young women, must be tackled. This is because young women are among the most active social media users, as well as they are easily influenced by social media (Liska & Baccaglioni, 1990; Madden & Zickuhr, 2011).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Learning Theory posits that social determinants affect adolescents' personality. The Social Learning Theory has three underlying themes, namely environmental, personal and behavioural. Figure 1 shows how behavioural, environmental and personal factors are interconnected with one another and influence adolescents' behaviour. Social Learning Theory suggests that children and youth learn by observing their surroundings, particularly those who are close to them (Bandura, 1977).

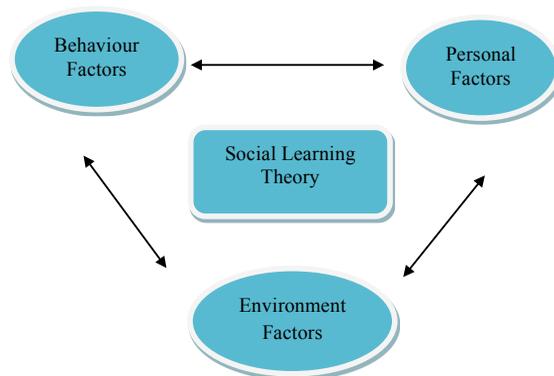


Figure 1. Social learning theory (Source: Bandura, 1977)

Youths live in a social environment defined as the space for interaction and activities in their daily lives (Ghazali & Rahim, 2013). Aggressive behaviour learned from their social environment during everyday interaction with family, peer group, mass media, and also their individual self-concept shapes youth's and children's behaviour. Since humans are influenced by their social environments, they would choose the environment that is dominant to them. If they are exposed to negative behaviours, there is a possibility that they would imitate such behaviours (Mohamed, 2001).

Entertainment media affects our lives. Behaviours viewed from television and movies that are considered appropriate to us will be learned and imitated in everyday lives (Anderson & Dill, 2000). Children and youth are easily influenced by actions and behaviours that they see in films, including those that are aggressive and violent (Huesmann & Taylor, 2006; Mohamad et al., 1998).

Huesmann and Taylor (2006) examined how children and adolescents are exposed

to violence in the media, for example television, which causes an increase in aggressive behaviour among the children and adolescent. In the US, children and adolescent spend an average of three and four hours per day watching television. Their findings showed children and adolescents who watch violent films behave more aggressively immediately afterwards than those who don't. This is explained by observational-learning theory, in which, when violence is portrayed as justified, viewers are likely to come to believe that their own aggressive responses to a perceived offence are also appropriate, which leads them behave aggressively.

Ghani and Ghazali (2016) found that Malaysian youths have the tendency to record violent behaviours using their smartphones and upload those in the YouTube. These videos usually record a large number of viewers, with some of them indicting "like" (thumbs up) to such aggressive behaviour, and even praise such behaviour as brave and heroic. This finding was supported by Huesmann and Taylor

who showed that some even imitate such aggressive behaviours in their daily lives. This also supports Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which states that people learn through observation, and learning from observation includes mimicking, imitating, and matching.

In recent years, high profile criminal cases have been discussed in social media (Ghani & Ghazali, 2016). Since youths are a vulnerable group and are active users of social media, it is inappropriate to broadcast violent behaviours in social media. However, to date, it seems that there is no way to limit social media users from uploading crime scenes or to prevent users from watching them.

While some adolescents may mimic criminal behaviours they see in the social media, others especially women, may experience fears. Past studies show that women experience fear of crime more than men, due to their vulnerability to sexual aggression, in which, women are 10 times more likely to be sexually assaulted than men (John Howard Society of Alberta, 1999; Crowell & Burgess, 1996). Therefore, this study will explore how female university students respond to the crimes they witness in social media especially, how it influences their pre-emptive behaviour, namely not to fall victim.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used inductive approach in designing methods of collecting data. Based

on the literature review and observation, we constructed a questionnaire survey using open and close-ended questions. The questions were designed to understand how female university students perceived crimes in social media and steps taken by them to avoid falling victim to social media crimes. The study sample was undergraduate women aged between 20 and 24 at Universiti Sains Malaysia, representing one of the vulnerable groups. Sixty ethnic Malay students, were randomly selected to fill in the questionnaires, and 10 of them were selected for in-depth interviews. The perception of respondents towards the use of social media and crimes associated with it was discussed at the interview. In Malaysia, university students use social media widely (Ghazali, Mapjabil, & Nor, 2011) thus, they could be easy prey (Liska & Baccaglioni, 1990; Madden & Zickuhr, 2011). Additionally, the local media commonly features social media crimes involving Malays (Ghazali, Mapjabil, & Nor, 2011).

Data from open ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews were analysed using manual qualitative method. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and this data was analysed using manual qualitative analysis as suggested by Power and Renner (2003) based on the study objective. Content analysis was carried out using respondents' own words and which were described and discussed as recommended by Ghazali and Atang (2006) as an appropriate way in presenting qualitative data such as this.

THE PERCEPTION OF FEMALE STUDENTS TOWARDS SOCIAL MEDIA AND CRIME

This section discusses the perception of respondents towards social media and crime in three parts. The first part discusses the crime incidents witnessed by the respondents while using social media, the second part discusses crime incidents that hinder the respondents from using social media while the third discusses steps taken by the respondents to avoid falling victim to social media crimes.

Criminal incidents witnessed by the respondents while using the social media

Table 2 shows a list of crimes that were witnessed by the respondents when they use

social media. According to the respondents, Facebook, Instagram, Google, YouTube and WhatsApp contained the highest number of criminal incidents. Among the offences witnessed at these media include bullying, pornography, image theft, disinformation, robbery, abuse, abandonment of babies, defamation, murder, hacking, and sexual harassment. The criminal cases listed by the respondents show that they have often witnessed criminal events in social media. This finding was supported by a survey conducted by NW3C (2011) on stalking, Feinberg and Robey (2010) on cyber bullying, Loizou (2012) and Yar (2006) on sexual offences and pornography in social media, and Reznik (2013) on identity theft in social media.

Table 2

Criminal incidents witnessed by respondents while using the social media

Types of Social Media	Criminal incidents witnessed by respondents while using the Social Media
Facebook	Bullying, abandonment of babies, robbery, theft, slander, pornographic videos, hacking, abuse, cheating, image theft, spreading of rumours, phishing, paedophilia, rape, suicide, political crimes, murder, falsifying of images, sexual harassment, insulting, making sensitive issues viral
Instagram	Abandonment of babies, bullying, image theft, false images, pornography, indecent images, misuse of images, hacking, abuse, stalking, false information, vandalism, gangsterism, outrageous videos
Google	Pornography, cyber bullying, stalking, slander, kidnapping, hacking, false information, theft, child abuse, abandonment of babies, murder, rape, robbery, drugs
Twitter	Slander, hacking, bullying, beatings, false information, robbery, vandalism, murder, theft
Blog	Fake accounts, hacking, abuse, spreading of gossip, making sensitive issues viral
YouTube	Exposure of pornographic actions, bullying, abuse, beatings, editing false videos, spreading videos without permission, phishing, kidnapping, rape, murder, vandalism, robbery, theft, inappropriate videos
WhatsApp	Cyber bullying, bullying, blackmail, theft, false information, phishing, slander, beatings, sexual harassment, spreading of false information, making sensitive issues viral, spreading computer viruses
WeChat	Bullying, hacking, beatings, image theft
Viber	Hacking, abuse

Out of all the crimes described by the respondents, teenage girls being sexually harassed and raped tops the list. These cases occur because they use social media such as Facebook to communicate with strangers. Typically acquainted via social media, they would later be asked to meet in real life and this would sometimes lead to adultery and out of wedlock pregnancy. As Alavi et al. (2012) remarked, social media enable teenagers to access inappropriate contents, which has the potential to influence them. According to Yar (2006), online exploitation can include ‘cyber-rape’, sexually explicit conversations and ‘fantasy enactment’ of sexual scenarios. In addition, exposure to pornographic materials in social media has normalised the subject matter. This is supported by Loizou (2012) who states that the vast number of media reports with regards to sexual offences over the Internet have created the perception that such activity is a common phenomenon.

Do cybercrimes hinder female students from using social media?

A total of 28% of the respondents decided to limit their use of social media after watching crimes uploaded on the social media. They feared the same would happen to them. Among their reasons were fear, anxiety attacks and psychological disturbance. For example, Respondent 1, aged 22, explained;

“I limit my use of social media because the crimes I see affect my thinking”. (Respondent was shocked at what she saw on social media, as

she explained), “...someone sent me a YouTube link to my Facebook wall and I didn’t know what the content was all about. When I opened it, I was so shocked...there was a dead body of a woman...and a group of men, believed to be the guards of the mortuary, were raping the dead body. It was unbelievable that they could do it to the dead body! This makes me so scared. Imagine if the content of videos like these is seen by children or people who are inclined to do such things, they may imitate it! Inhumane acts such as these make me feel scared of people around me, and they always make me feel unsafe”.

Respondent 2, aged 22, said:

“I limit my use of social media because when I see them (the crimes) I got messed up and sometimes I become afraid of using social media. Crime articles and videos posted on Facebook by other people are always appearing on my Facebook wall. They are theft cases, murder, rape, slander and many others. I feel pity for the victims. I also once had become a victim of social media. My Facebook was hacked; my pictures that I uploaded were stolen, and they changed my pictures into pornographic images. At first, I did not notice that my pictures were stolen, but

then my close friend told me. I was so shocked and felt very ashamed. Now I do not share my pictures on social media any more. I'm afraid that this would happen again".

Respondent 3, aged 21, also shared her experience:

"Before I post something, I will think first. I won't believe the information I get straight away. If I think the news or the videos are rubbish, I will not view it. People always update their Facebook and whether we like it or not, it will appear on our wall. Therefore, we must be smart in picking up the information. Don't believe in everything that we receive. Social media is rife with slanders purposely uploaded to tarnish peoples' image - such as, gossip on artists, divorce cases, household rifts – all these are dispersed quickly".

Meanwhile, Respondent 4, aged 21, said;

"I now feel phobia in expressing my feelings or in sharing my opinions on Facebook. Since now everything can become viral, even though we post something as entertainment, it can become slanderous. I have posted something that I got from a cooking book in someone's Facebook. In that page there are a number of followers. In my post,

I simply asked, "can we drink the water that have ants in it?". My purpose for asking was just for fun, and furthermore, I asked because I want to know what people think about it. Unexpectedly, I received hundreds of comments, and most of the comments cursed me with words that hurt me. Many said that I'm stupid; I live in a cave that makes me don't even know simple things like that (can we drink the water that have ants in it); they accused my parents as guilty for not teaching me Islamic law; I am sinned because I have made the followers in that page fight each other... I was so traumatised and for almost a week I deactivated my Facebook because I fear if they will attack me on my Facebook account".

Four respondents mentioned above fear of crime after becoming victims of cybercrime (Respondent 1, 2, 3 and 4). Respondent 1 fell victim to cybercrime after watching a criminal incident in a video that was uploaded in YouTube. The crime traumatised her making her fearful always. This has made her live in the shadows of fear and she was not sure if that would last a life time. This proves that crimes watched online by the public can have a negative impact on the victim.

Respondent 2 was also a victim of cybercrime when her Facebook account was hacked, had her pictures stolen and then

edited onto pornographic images which was then posted online for everyone to view. This act has shamed the victim and leaving her a deep sense of fear. It invades the privacy and rights users while leaving long-lasting damage since anything uploaded onto the Internet remains there forever, as long as someone had saved the item.

Respondent 3 admitted to behaving cautiously on the social media, as he fears it can lead to potentially unsafe and humiliating situations. Furthermore, Respondent 4's experience who was attacked on social media for posting a comment with no ill will shows that such actions could have a negative impact on a user's psychological well-being, especially the victim's. A victim could suffer from trauma and phobia due to unexpected and unnecessary insults from social media users. It is clear that all four victims have been affected by cybercrimes with a long-lasting impact on their psychological well-being.

These cybercrimes are faced by many social media users, and they suffer similar negative outcomes, both emotionally and psychologically. According to Bridging Refugee Youth and Children Service (2009), Schneider, Smith, and O'Donnell (2013), Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009) and Lieberman and Cowan (2011), victims of cyber bullying faced issues such as anxiety, stress, isolation, low self-esteem, have troubles in forming social relationships, become panicky and aggressive, harm themselves physically, mentally, socially leading to low educational attainment and worst of all, they could be

driven to suicide. Some of them even resort to drug abuse just to deal with emotional damage caused by cybercrimes. In the cases studied, the respondents responded to cyber bullying by limiting their social media usage.

This was in order to avoid falling prey. This finding was supported by Murphy and Fontecilla's (2013) that social media are rife with evidence of crimes and potential criminal activities. Trends and patterns of crime in social media can be used by the responsible bodies be it government or civil society to minimise crimes by avoiding behaviours that may inadvertently lead them to resort to criminal activities, whether as criminals or as victims.

Regardless of the dangers of social media, 71.7% of the respondents stated they did not limit their use of them but instead took necessary precautions in order not to fall victim.

Precautions taken by respondents to avoid being victims

Among the precautions taken by the respondents are, they become cautious with the strangers that they met in social media, and they do not simply approve new friend requests from strangers. Respondents also tend to not to expose their personal details and their locations to the public. They also tend to be more careful when posting pictures or statuses in social networks. Respondents regard these steps as crucial and they believe most crimes involving young women in social media took place due to the carelessness of victims for trusting

strangers that they met in social media. The introduction of girls and young women to social media has led to the increase in criminal cases such as rape, murder, beatings and intimidation. The respondents' narrative is also supported by the local newspaper articles as discussed before (Berita Harian, 2015, 2014). Regarding this, Respondent 5, aged 22 said:

"If I see the crime incidents on Facebook, I become interested in wanting to know more about it, and I will find more information from the Internet. This is mainly because I'm the type who likes to walk alone, therefore, if there are any news about crimes from the social media, I will search the place where it happened, whether the crimes are bully, abandoning babies, or rape...I will become more alert... that way, I will no longer go the that place alone".

On the same matter, Respondent 2, aged 22, said;

"I try my best not to give out personal information and I would always log out after using any social media....so I know how to control myself in order not to become a victim".

Respondent 6, age 21 said;

"I will keep my personal details that can become the interest of criminals...such as my location, my biodata, my handphone number; all I make private. Even my pictures I did not upload; I am afraid someone will misuse it".

The three steps above were taken by Respondents 5, 2 and 6, in order to prevent them from becoming victims of cybercrime. Respondent 5 explained that she has strong feelings of wanting to know the details of the crimes that she watches in social media, such as the types of crime; either bully, rape, killing, and etc., and where the crimes took place. This information is important to her, so that she can take safety precautions and not go to such places alone. Meanwhile, Respondent 2 said that in order to avoid falling victim to cybercrime, she does not share any information about herself and always log out after using social media. Respondent 3 explained that she will not disclose her personal information, such as location, biodata and mobile phone number for fear of its misuse. Disclosure of personal information may threaten users, even if they have set their account at the highest security settings (Adweek, 18 November 2013). There will always be ways for hackers and cyber criminals to track and steal the personal information of internet

users. Most social network sites have information that is required, such as email address, telephone number, or birth date. All these information enable thieves to hack an email account (Adweek, 18 November 2013). Meanwhile, Gangopadhyay and Dhar (2014) found that some users were forced to delete their profiles due to embarrassment after their social media accounts were hacked. Hackers usually create fake profiles of the actual users, while continuing to update and post things that are disgraceful, using the account and profiles of actual users. Cases of identity theft, hacking of profiles and sharing of personal information is quite common among young users (Gangopadhyay & Dhar, 2014).

The above cases prove that the social media provides a platform for criminal activities. Therefore, precautionary measures by the respondents are very important. The number of youths using social media network increases every day, and this is not only due to its diverse functions, but also because it is seen as a part of modern lifestyle. Therefore, safety measures are crucial and all social media users, especially youths, must be aware of their dangers and take precaution in order to not fall victim. Among the precautions are: regulate privacy settings; prohibit strangers into our social networks; limit the personal information shared, and always stay informed. This study supports Jewkes's (2013) argument that we should not make claims about the media being responsible for causing fears of crime. Instead, social media is crucial in disseminating information, thus

assisting people in the process of meaning-making. From our case, we suggest that social media-related crime assists young Malaysian women youth today to redefine the meaning of safety in space and place, and thus become more aware of potential dangers that await them.

CONCLUSION

This study has discussed the perception of female university students in Malaysia on the dangers of social media. A majority of young women are aware of their vulnerability to crime while using social media. However due to the importance of social media in today's life, young women continue to use them for work, study, and most importantly, for leisure. This has exposed them unwittingly to dangers.

This study has shown how young women, as the main users of social media, are exposed to its dangers. Cruel crimes as witnessed on social media has disturbed the private lives of these young women who have become victims and are forced to live in fear, affecting their well-being. This study also contributed by exposing the behaviour of online community, with vulnerable young women being the main target of perverts and syndicates. Furthermore, this study highlights negative impacts of cybercrimes on vulnerable groups such as young women. As victims of assault and bullying, these women suffer from stress and trauma which affects their well-being. Social media crimes have denied the rights of a segment of the community to live a happy and free life. Though there have been campaigns

encouraging users to be more careful, these campaigns have not stopped the crimes from spiralling.

In line with Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory on how environment, personal and behavioural factors affect adolescents' personality, this study suggests that young women in Malaysia live in an environment where social media has become a necessity in life for both social, work and educational use. While they will continue to use social media, some of them would learn to compromise with crimes they seen in social media, while others would become its victims. The young women would define the meaning of safety/danger in the cyber world. This can be regarded as a process in meaning-making, namely to make sense of their everyday life. Thus, another contribution of this study is to help women to be aware of the dangers of social media and in real life. Media has influenced young women's perception towards crime, and the way they react to it. Meaning-making in this context is the way they give meaning to their safety according to their everyday experiences, and it is the media that shape their everyday experiences.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaires

Title: Perception of Malaysian Female University Students on Social Media Crimes

Personal information:

-Age; Place of Residence; Types of Social Media used.

Questions:

- 1) Explain the types of crime in social media that you have ever seen and the types of social media involved.
 - 2) Is/are the crime/s scene you watch on social media has restricted you to using social media?
 - 3) Explain how you can limit the use of social media.
 - 4) Do you take precautionary measures to avoid becoming a victim of cybercrime?
 - 5) Explain the precautionary measures you should take to avoid becoming a victim of cybercrime.
 - 6) Provide suggestions.
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