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The Role of Mental Health as A Moderator of Social Climbers Phenomenon Tendency Factors and Student Involvement as Influential Individuals in Social Media

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Abstract

Issues related to the involvement of students or youths as influential individuals on social media in Malaysia are increasing every year in line with statistics released by the Communications and Multimedia Commission showing that youths aged 19 and above have a higher internet usage rate of 54.7 percent focused on using social media. However, the blind use of social media has encouraged youths to engage as influential individuals on materialistic social media as a condition for popularity. This situation can have an impact on the role of influential individuals as opinion leaders which will have a negative influence on their followers. Thus, this study wanted to identify the effects of mental health as a moderator between the relationship of social climber phenomenon tendency factors and student involvement as influential individuals on social media. The approach of the study is quantitative with cross-sectional surveys. This survey research method involved 267 respondents among students in selected East Coast IPTAs. Samples were selected using purposive sampling online. Data analysis using system statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 2.3 to test descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of the study indicate that there is a significant relationship between mental health with the tendency factor of the social climber phenomenon and the involvement of students as influential individuals on social media. Therefore, mental health effects played a significant role as a moderator in this study.

Keywords: Mental Health, the Phenomenon of Social Climbers, Students, Influential Individuals on Social Media.

Introduction

Social media has provided a space for all human beings in this world to communicate with each other in the most convenient and fast way (Severin & Tankard, 2001; Omar et al., 2011). Cyber communication has provided opportunities to internet users in the process of learning, employment, data information, sharing views, and so on (Wakefield & Rice, 2008; Omar et al., 2011). Among the largest modern social networks are Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram,

and Twitter. Whereas traditional social networks are television, newspapers, or radio (Toni, 2008; Collins, Shiffman & Rock, 2016).

In the future, everyone has the opportunity to become a famous person within 15 minutes (Andy Warhol, 1969; Nursyamimi, 2017). Social media has created an environment where anyone can become famous. They use all the advantages available and recognize who their target audience is. Likes, followers, shares, snaps, and retweets are relevant terms among social media users today. With millions of active users every day, the internet has become part of their needs (Nursyamimi, 2017).

The popularity they have gained has opened up opportunities for them to get involved as influential individuals on social media. The character of a person who has the ability to influence other people's decisions about purchases. The influence is due to the strength of the information or its relationship with the audience. Become an influential individual by achieving the goal of having high popularity on social media in the hope that they have the opportunity to engage in doing business online or become distributors of other people's products to get revenue from that person (Chung Wha Ki, 2018).

The Concept of Influential Individuals on Social Media

People with high social status on social media are often associated with influential individuals and they can play an important role in influencing others in deciding to buy something (Kotler & Armstrong, 1997; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Uzunoğlu, 2014; Hashim et al., 2019). Along with that statement as well, according to Li, Lee & Lien (2012), these influential individuals are also able to change the perception of their followers on social media towards a recommended product and can influence their followers to try and buy the recommended product (Li, Lee, & Lien, 2012; Hashim et al., 2019).

Influential individuals on social media are known as third parties in online business marketing on social media through their recommendations, photo sharing, and other content on social media can shape consumer opinions, attitudes, and actions and thus influence their purchasing decisions (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014; Szmigin & Piacentini, 2015; Gashi, 2017). Social media influential individuals can be identified as individuals who have the ability to influence someone or an audience who may follow them through their social media medium. According to Vaibhavi & Leena (2018), in today's popular social media mediums, most social media users will follow popular social media accounts, so, understandably, a new generation of opinion leaders are termed as influential individuals on social media.

The Concept of the Social Climber

A social climber is an ascending vertical social mobility which means the change of position of an individual's social status from the lower social hierarchy to the upper social hierarchy in society (Jayanti, 2015; Lestari, 2017). Besides, the social climber is a social phenomenon when society needs a high social standard and makes it a necessity in life. This is done by reconstructing the conditions to make a person perfect according to the views of social climbers (Jayanti, 2015). Among the conditions are the need to have strong popularity, a good self-reputation, a perfect family background, and a social spirit. Also, one needs to showcase branded and reputable items that are often used by rich people such as Gucci, Channel, Louis, and Hermes brands (Dewi et al., 2017).

A social climber is a person's desire to gain recognition of higher status as compared to the actual status one possesses. Nowadays, the latest fashion style has become a necessity for teenagers not to be outdated and categorized as people who do not follow the currents of the times (Dewi et al., 2017). While according to another study, social climbers are those who have a moderate social economic status but they claim to society that they are rich and affluent people. The allegations will be expressed face to face or through social media so that the public is aware of their social status (Siagian, 2019).

The Concept of Mental Health

Health is a condition in which a human being has a perfect and adequate physical, mental, and social and not only measured by the absence of disease alone (World Health Organization (WHO), 1998; MyHealth Official Portal, Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2011). Besides, according to the statement, it is a condition that causes the person to be aware of their own abilities, to be able to manage the stress well, to be able to work well and the behaviour can contribute to the functioning in society.

Mental health according to Imam Al-Ghazali, if a person has good mental health then this person can maintain 7 limbs such as ears, eyes, stomach, tongue, genitals, hands and feet. This statement can be concluded that according to Islam if human beings can control their seven limbs then they can weather various trials of life, in that way only able to maintain good mental health (Roslee, Shariff & Ramli, 2015).

The term mental is often associated with the personality possessed by a human being who is represented by thoughts, emotions, behaviors and feelings. These elements when combined are capable of shaping the human soul and will shape attitudes, how a person deals with a situation that gives feelings of frustration, joy, sadness and stress (Safari et al., 2011). Mental illness occurs when the brain is dysfunctional which results in those who face it feeling confused about feelings, lacking confidence in themselves and others as well as lacking motivation (Esser & Lacey, 1989; Sandra & Supadmi, 2019). Therefore, social climbers among the youth who are involved as influential individuals are associated with mental illness because these groups do not have confidence in themselves as well as consider themselves not as good as others. An attitude that likes to compare their lives with the lives of others will reduce their self-confidence and in turn slowly those traits damage themselves.

This statement is also in line with the view of Danek (1978), this mental health problem occurs when a person does not feel comfortable with themselves and their way of life (Sandra & Supadmi, 2019). Mental health problems are a disorder that is closely related to thinking, emotions and behavior. Due to this condition, it provides complexity for a person to go through their daily life (Azizi Yahya & Soon Yin, 2007; Jiwa & Masroom, 2016).

Research Objective

Analyze the role of mental health as a moderator on the relationship of tendency factors of the social climber phenomenon and student involvement as influential individuals on social media.

Literature Review

The Relationship Between Mental Health And Student Involvement As Influential Individuals In Social Media

According to Sohana (2019), mental health problems do not mean that a person is insane because the term mental is not the same as the term insane. Therefore, the surrounding community needs to know about the symptoms of mental problems because extreme anxiety, depression and emotional stress are categories of mental problems but it does not mean that a person is crazy. Influential individuals on social media are also not left behind to suffer from mental health problems. The situation of influential individuals on social media has a similar situation to that of a social climber. Because of this situation, these influential people on social media do not shy away from accepting the same problem as a social climber which is the problem of dealing with their own mental problems.

Moreover, according to Chow & Wan (2016) in a statement submitted by Baker (2019) who stated in addition to addiction, young people will tend to be exposed on social media to compare themselves with their peers or unrealistic beauty standards maintained by influential individuals on social media among young people who use social media to gain popularity. This comparison will cause this group especially young people do not have confidence in themselves. As previous studies have stated social media is associated with depression and other problems, such as social-environmental disorders, sleep disorders, anxiety, jealousy, and low self-esteem in others. This jealousy starts from the problem of young people who always make comparisons between themselves with others and over time the feeling of jealousy appears because they do not have the opportunity to look beautiful like others.

The Relationship between Mental Health and the Social Climber Phenomenon

Social climbers have abnormal behavior because they are trapped in a self-created hope so that the hope must be fulfilled in various ways even to improve social status to a higher social status even if they are incapable (Zakiah Darajat, 1983; Siangian, 2019). Humans do not have a calm heart and spirit due to two main things. The first thing is when they feel too frustrated for not having the material commensurate with their desires. Next, the second thing is, they do not fill spiritual values in themselves (Haron Din, 2011; Jiwa & Masroom, 2016). As a result, social climbers will experience excruciating frustration if they don't get what they expect.

Besides, usually the social climbers will have feelings of restlessness, and lack of self-confidence. Therefore, this group is considered to have mental health problems because they will feel anxious and afraid to look poor and unable to accept the reality with the real status they have (Mahyuddin, 2019). These groups are also able to show the latest lifestyles, thus being able to change the original identities they possess due to the influence of social media. There is a connection between adolescents with a disease known as narcissism which is a situation where a person is impressed by the appearance they have. This situation occurs, especially when they update their self-related status on social media such as Facebook (Leung, 2013). The relevance of this statement also bears a resemblance to the actions taken by influential groups on social media that tend to the phenomenon of social climbers.

Statement of Problem

Internet usage statistics conducted by the Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) found that there will be 29 million internet users in Malaysia in 2020. This figure is an increase of 3 million internet users compared to 2018 which was 28.7 million users. Demographics of Internet users by age have also been listed, namely, between the age of under 20 years is 9.7%, the age range of 20 years is 45.39%, the age range of 30 years is 21.2%, the age range of 40 years is 12.3%, while the age range of 50 years is 7.4% and the age range of 60 years is 3.4% (Official Portal of the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2020). Statistics released according to age demographics show that the age range of youths, namely the age range of 19 years and above has a higher utilization rate compared to other age ranges of 54.69 %, which is half of the other age ranges.

Their involvement with social media has led them to become involved as social climbers as in a study done by Kembau (2017), human behavior on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram showcases many glamorous and luxurious lives. Their behavior is like racing each other to show who is richer, more popular and up to date so they tend to engage in negative social climber phenomena simply to be known as materialistic people by other social media users. Their actions will make luxury and materialism a condition for being happy so much so that people see the action as racing to be better or on par with them to show luxury.

Most students in institutions of higher learning or university are young people (Hazuad, 2014). For that reason, the researcher has selected students as an appropriate population. According to Hazuad (2014), university students or undergraduates are the largest group that is one-third of Malaysians are undergraduates. Therefore, in this age of globalization, students are the most important hope of the country because the knowledge they learn at the university can be applied to realize the vision of the country. Therefore, the selection of university students representing the youth is relevant to this study.

In addition, researchers also chose young people to be involved in this study as young people are often involved with social media and many researchers from abroad and locally have done a lot of research on adolescents and their use in social media. Most of these studies are often conducted because they state that young people are an active group in the use of social media (Twenge et al., 2018). In addition, young people are also active and persistent users of social media and are known for their intensive use (Hofstra et al., 2015).

Social media influential individuals or also known as social media personalities play an important role in being role models or models of behavior to others. Therefore, bad behavior should not be emulated by others as a role model or as a model of behavior. This situation also causes young people to be more likely to compare their social situation such as the appearance of the next level comparing them with others. Especially for the influential, they will always be concerned with the people around them who have a higher level of appearance than their own. This is very worrying because it can affect the emotions of the youth, if left dormant for longer in the heart will disrupt their mental health. Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate the effect of mental health (moderator) on the relationship of factors that tend to the phenomenon of social climbers and the involvement of students as influential individuals on social media.

Research Methodology

This study chose to use the type of survey study cross-section by using questionnaires and is very suitable because the study population is large. This method is used to obtain an accurate explanation of the characteristics found in the respondents in the population studied (Ku, 2014). A total of 267 respondents who are suitable for this study are students who are involved as influential individuals on social media from East Coast public universities. Data collection from these respondents was done using an online-based survey form through Google Form.

According to a study by Eaton and Struthers (2002), reporting answers are more complete and more accurate for online surveys compared to paper-based surveys, where this is actually the purpose of the evaluation (Harlow, 2010). Glover and Bush (2005) agree that the greatest value of online surveys is driving deeper results than those developed in the paper-based surveys in which people respond according to available space (Harlow, 2010). This means that an individual who answers a question based on a survey on paper needs a limited time to answer that is they are burdened with a short scope while an individual who answers a question based on a survey online or online has no time limit, they have the opportunity to answer with calm without being burdened as they have a chance to think before answering.

Google Form is one of the main choices for researchers because the facilities available in this web application make it easy for respondents to answer easily by just using a smartphone because it is also easy to access anywhere and anytime. Another advantage is that google form saves costs because it is a 100 percent free web application by using only the internet (Vasanth & Harinarayana, 2016). The Google survey form can be linked by disseminating a link of the survey form in email or other social media applications. Therefore, it will prevent the researcher to face directly with the respondents.

This questionnaire uses the answers of the evaluation scale which contains 7 scores of the evaluation scale that is started with strongly disagree to strongly agree. The selection of scale 7 was also chosen because according to the view of Preston and Colman (2000) who suggested the level of the recommended number of scale scores are 7, 9 and 10 based on the stated criteria (Budiaji, 2013). Questionnaire for mental health moderators, researchers use only 4 scale evaluation scales because the scale has been adapted through previous studies to measure the level of mental health (level of depression, anxiety and stress) which has been recognized by the Ministry of Health Malaysia. Therefore, in order to maintain the validity and reliability of the study, the researcher did not change the scale. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan *Statistical Package for Social Science* (SPSS). Data were analyzed using the *Statistical Package for Social Science* (SPSS). To measure the effect of mental health moderators on the relationship of tendency factors of the social climber phenomenon and student involvement as influential individuals on social media, researchers have studied using the Partial Correlation test.

Results and Discussion of the Study

The Level of Student Involvement as an Influential Individuals in Social Media

The level of involvement of students as influential individuals according to factors influencing the tendency of social climber phenomenon is as shown in table 1 where the measurement

scale for this study is between values 1 to value 7 where value 1 indicates a low measurement scale while value 7 indicates a measurement scale the highest.

Table 1: Mean Involvement of Students as Influential Individuals on Social Media According to Factors Influencing the Phenomenon of Social Climbers

| Factors Affecting the Social Climber Phenomenon | Minimum | Maximum | Mean |
|---|---------|---------|------|
| Student Self-Motivation | 3.57 | 7.00 | 5.44 |
| Social Environment (Society) | 3.63 | 7.00 | 5.55 |
| Social Environment (Peers) | 3.77 | 7.00 | 5.63 |
| Obsessed With Branded Goods | 3.75 | 7.00 | 5.45 |

Based on table 1, all factors that influence the phenomenon of social climbers, namely student self-motivation, social environment (society), social environment (peers) and obsession with branded goods recorded a mean value greater than 4. If the value is greater than 4, this indicates the level of student involvement as an influential individual according to this factor is very good because the median for this scale is a value of 4. If the value is greater than 4, it is considered very well because it is getting closer to the value of 7. In this study, this level means that the factors influencing the social climber phenomenon have a very good relationship with the level of student involvement as influential individuals on social media. In other words, the involvement of students as influential individuals is due to the factors influencing students in the phenomenon of social climbers.

The researcher using this measurement scale refers to the study of Baizura Harun (2018) who also refers based on the study of Mohd Shalahudin et al., (2006). Next, table 4.16 shows the level of student involvement as influential individuals as a whole.

Table 2: Mean Student Involvement as Influential Individuals on Social Media Overall

| Variables | Minimum | Maximum | Mean |
|---|---------|---------|------|
| Factors Affecting the Social Climber Phenomenon | 3.94 | 7.00 | 5.52 |
| Student Involvement as Influential Individuals | 4.00 | 7.00 | 5.70 |

Based on this study, the mean involvement of students as influential individuals of social media is 5.70. This indicates that it is a value greater than the median value of 4. This means that the level of student involvement as influential individuals on social media is high overall, as well as factors that influence the phenomenon of social climbers that are at a high level.

The Role of Mental Health Variables as Moderator Variables

To identify mental health as a moderating variable, several analyzes need to be used namely correlation analysis and partial correlation.

Table 3: Correlation between Variables the Tendency Factors of the Social Climber Phenomenon and Mental Health towards Student Involvement as Influential Individuals in Social Media

| Variables | r | Sig. |
|---|---------|-------|
| Tendency Factors of the Social Climber Phenomenon | 0.166** | 0.007 |
| Mental Health | 0.400** | 0.00 |

** The correlation was significant at the level $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)

The correlation analysis conducted provides an initial overview of the role of mental health variables in the relationship between the tendency factors of the social climber phenomenon and the involvement of students as influential individuals on social media through the value of r as in table 3. Based on the table shows that there is a very weak significant relationship between the tendency factor of social climber phenomenon with the involvement of students as influential individuals on the social media with a value of $r = 0.166$, $p < 0.01$. The mental health variable showed a moderately strong significant relationship with the involvement of students as influential individuals on social media where the value of $r = 0.400$, $p < 0.01$.

Meanwhile, to determine the role of mental health as a moderator, partial correlation analysis was used. As stated in table 4. The tendency factor of the social climber phenomenon has five factors, namely the self -motivation factor of students, social environment (society), social environment (peers) and obsession with branded goods.

Table 4: The Relationship between the Tendency Factors of the Social Climber Phenomenon with the Involvement of Students as Influential Individuals on Social Media After Controlled by Mental Health Moderator Variables

| Factor | Value (r) base | Value (r) control |
|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Students Self-Motivation | 0.214 | 0.203 |
| Social Environment (Society) | 0.340 | 0.332 |
| Social Environment (Peers) | 0.216 | 0.208 |
| Obsessed With Branded Goods | 0.338 | 0.318 |

Referring to table 4, the difference for motivation factor with a baseline correlation value of 0.21, compared with a partial correlation value of 0.203. For social environment factors (society) the baseline correlation value is 0.340, while the partial correlation value is 0.332. In addition, social environment factors (peers) also showed a basic correlation value, 0.216, while the partial correlation value was 0.20. Furthermore, for the obsession factor with branded goods, it shows a baseline correlation value of 0.338, while the partial correlation is 0.318.

Findings from the partial correlation analysis of each social climber phenomenon tendency factor with the level of student involvement as influential individuals on social media found that mental health serves as a moderating factor to the relationship of social climber phenomenon tendency factor with the level of student involvement as influential individuals on social media the value of r correlation between Pearson and partial correlation where it affects the relationship of the two variables. In a study Baizura Aaron (2018) stated according to James & Brett (1984), Baron & Kenny (1986), Holmbeck (1997), Frazier, Tix & Baron (2004) and Wu & Zumbo (2008), if there is a change of the relationship between the independent variable with the dependent variable, so the variable that affects or controls is called the moderator.

Based on that statement the motivation factor has shown a decreasing value from 0.214 to a value of 0.203 when the mental health factor is able to influence both the independent variable and the dependent variable. This means that mental health factors serve as moderators to the relationship between student self -motivation and student involvement as influential individuals on social media. Similarly, other factors in the tendency factor of social climber phenomenon, namely social environment (society), social environment (peers) and obsession with branded goods were found to have decreased correlation value when mental health factors were controlled. This suggests mental health affects both the dependent variable and the independent variable. Referring to the partial correlation analysis it can be concluded that mental health factors play a moderating role by having an impact in increasing the involvement of students as influential individuals on social media.

Conclusion

The rapid development of technology from time to time has made social media one of the options of all groups, especially for the young. The Internet has provided freedom for millennials to access social media for a variety of uses. It is because of this freedom that a handful of irresponsible people will use social media arbitrarily without thinking long. In other words, these irresponsible people will be willing to do anything to gain popularity so much so that they are willing to pawn the humanity and manners taught in society.

It is not a mistake if a person engages in social media to gain popularity but what is a problem is when they abuse it in a direction that can disrupt their own mental health such as often comparing themselves to others who look perfect for them. This situation of self-comparison is one of the problems of mental illness because they will be exposed to various problems such as depression, anxiety and extreme emotional stress if their desires cannot be fulfilled. Self-comparisons that involve emotions to the point of lack of self-confidence are one of the root causes of mental health problems. If the self -comparison is done to improve self-performance it is not an offense but capable of increasing self -confidence but that is a problem when they tend to compete to get the same thing as others which is beyond their ability. This depression, anxiety, and stress will occur when they are unable to meet the needs of their desires.

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