

# SOCIAL ANXIETY EXPLORATION THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA EXPOSURE: A THEORETICAL EXPLORATION OF TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL

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**Abstract.** This conceptual paper explores the relationship between social media exposure and social anxiety among Malaysian university students through the lens of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Thus, TAM has been widely applied to understand technology adoption across various contexts, including education. This study examines how key TAM constructs Perceived Usefulness (PU), Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU), Social Influence (SI), and Trust shape students' engagement with social media and its potential impact on their academic performance, social interactions, and psychological well-being, particularly social anxiety. While social media serves as a tool for communication, learning, and networking, its excessive use may contribute to anxiety, digital stress, and feelings of social isolation. Furthermore, this paper highlights challenges associated with social media adoption, such as privacy concerns, digital distractions, and the psychological implications of prolonged exposure. By analyzing these factors, this study offers insights into how universities and policymakers can promote a balanced approach to social media use, ensuring that students harness its benefits while mitigating its negative effects. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on technology acceptance, digital well-being, and mental health in higher education in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** *perceived ease of use, social influence, perceived usefulness, social media, social anxiety*

## Introduction

In the digital era, social media has become an integral part of daily life, particularly among university students who rely on these platforms for communication, entertainment, and social interactions (Burnell et al., 2024). While social media offers numerous benefits, such as fostering connections and providing access to information, its impact on mental health, particularly social anxiety, has raised significant concerns (Brailovskaia, 2024). Research suggests that excessive or maladaptive social media use can contribute to heightened anxiety, fear of judgment, and avoidance of real-world social interactions (Alwuqaysi et al., 2024; Orben et al., 2024). Social media has revolutionized how individuals communicate, form relationships, and engage with the world (Nik Jaafar et al., 2021). While these platforms provide opportunities for social interaction, self-expression, and information sharing, they also raise concerns about their impact on mental health (Koh et al., 2024). One growing area of research focuses on the link between social media exposure and social anxiety an intense fear of social situations that can lead to avoidance behaviors and impaired daily functioning, for many individuals, especially university students, social media serves as both a tool for connection and a potential source of anxiety (Sala et al., 2024; Owunna et al., 2022).

Excessive engagement with social networking sites (SNS) can foster unrealistic social comparisons, fear of judgment, and dependence on online validation, which may

contribute to or exacerbate social anxiety (Yu et al., 2024). Furthermore, the curated nature of online interactions can heighten self-consciousness and increase feelings of inadequacy, making real-world social interactions even more challenging (Godard and Holtzman, 2024). Similarly, studies suggest that excessive or maladaptive social media use may contribute to heightened social anxiety among university students, factors such as fear of missing out, negative social comparisons, and cyberbullying have been identified as potential contributors to increased anxiety levels (Feng et al., 2025; Jones et al., 2024). Unlike traditional forms of engagement, social media provides an accessible entry point for diverse youth demographics who might otherwise feel disengaged from conventional systems. Likewise, a study by Alodat et al. (2023) highlights how these digital activities blur the boundaries between formal and informal participation, reshaping the definition of social engagement in the digital era. The immediacy and expansive reach of social media make it a powerful tool for academic participation and ensuring that students' perspectives are represented in educational discourse.

While social media has revolutionized students' participation, it also presents significant challenges, the spread of misinformation, the formation of echo chambers, and the rise of performative activism, which can weaken genuine efforts and obstruct meaningful discourse. However, research indicates that when approached critically, social media can serve as a powerful tool for youth empowerment, enabling them to actively shape their communities and influence public policy. By fostering a dynamic and interactive space, social media has transformed the way young people engage with increasing internet accessibility, young people are leveraging online platforms to express opinions, and participate in civic discourse. Internet use in institutions of learning is not only widespread among students but also among their lecturers (Emeka et al., 2024) stressed that for students its uses cut across educational purposes, entertainment, and social purposes. However, lecturers (Ladrón de Guevara Rodríguez et al., 2022 argued that its uses range from disseminating course syllabi, assignments, readings, and grades to students.

The dispersion of the Internet coupled with the rise in Noticeable heterogeneity of information propagation through the Web is having a significant impact on its educational use (Hass et al., 2023; Lei al., 2021). And since education's sole aim is to impart skills and knowledge, and the internet facilitates information dissemination, an effective marriage of the two entities would be of great benefit to the students (Wang et al., 2024). Additionally, Nneji et al. (2022) found that a properly handled flow of information in institutions of learning can bring about better equality and also amplify the standards of learning. Similar to education Some of the other ways the internet has proven advantageous in everyday life include but are not limited to problem-solving, instant feedback, networking, entertainment, business, and critical thinking (Nygaard et al., 2024), it has also proven to be useful in areas like research and travel (Peikos and Sofianidis, 2024). In essence, the internet has revolutionized learning activities and has permeated our everyday lives serving as a warehouse of diverse assessable information, a tool for innovative idea generation, and most importantly a channel of boundless information dissemination particularly for research and development in education institutions (Chowdhury, 2025; Badr et al., 2024).

Social anxiety, also known as social phobia, is a psychological disorder characterized by intense fear, anxiety, and self-consciousness in social interactions that are often excessive and disproportionate. This fear typically stems from concerns about behaving

in a way that may lead to embarrassment or humiliation, particularly in social situations (Stein and Stein, 2020). According to the National Comorbidity Survey, social anxiety disorder (SAD) is the third most prevalent mental health condition worldwide, following depression and substance use disorders (Fehm et al., 2022). Individuals with SAD tend to avoid social scrutiny and interactions, which can lead to difficulties in both personal and professional settings (De Ponti et al. 2024; Spence and Rapee, 2016). Among youths, social anxiety is particularly concerning as it impairs self-esteem, peer relationships, and overall well-being (Salari et al., 2024; Jefferies and Ungar, 2020). In the digital age, computer-mediated communication (CMC) comprising social networking sites, instant messaging, and online forums has reshaped how individuals interact, while CMC offers a sense of safety for socially anxious individuals by reducing face-to-face pressures (Baruah, 2024; Brussee, 2024). Research found that excessive reliance on online communication may reinforce avoidance behaviors and exacerbate social anxiety symptoms (Valkenburg and Peter, 2022; Pierce, 2021).

This paper explores the relationship between social media and social anxiety through the framework of the TAM, examining how the perceived benefits and challenges of social media influence students' social behaviors, self-perception, and anxiety levels, by integrating psychological and technological perspectives. Understanding the relationship between social media and social anxiety is crucial for developing effective interventions and promoting healthy digital habits among university students. This study aims to provide a deeper understanding the function of social media in shaping social anxiety among university students.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Background***

Social media has become an integral part of students' lives, reshaping how they communicate, engage in academic activities, and build relationships (Karsodikromo et al., 2022). While these platforms offer opportunities for self-expression and social interaction, they have also been associated with increased mental health concerns, particularly social anxiety. Social anxiety disorder (SAD) is characterized by an intense fear of social situations, self-consciousness, and a tendency to avoid interactions due to fear of negative judgment (Dewitz, 2024). In Malaysia, where internet penetration continues to grow, university students are among the most active users of social media, relying on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter for academic and social engagement (Zhu et al., 2021). However, despite the benefits, excessive social media use presents significant challenges that may contribute to social anxiety among students (Zulkifli and Abidin, 2023).

Many socially anxious students use social media as a substitute for face-to-face interactions, avoiding real-world socialization (Arifin et al., 2023). While this may initially reduce stress, over time, it can lead to increased isolation and a lack of essential interpersonal skills, exacerbating social anxiety (Wu et al., 2024). Moreover, social media platforms expose students to peer judgment, fostering anxiety about their self-image and online presence, cyberbullying remains a significant issue in Malaysia, with students facing online harassment, negative comments, and public shaming, all of which heighten social anxiety levels (Joorabchi et al., 2024; Zeng et al., 2024). The competitive nature of Malaysian higher education, combined with societal expectations, places immense pressure on students. Social media often amplifies these pressures

through unrealistic portrayals of academic success and social lifestyles, leading to self-doubt and increased anxiety (Rahman and Wahab, 2023).

Also, the growing use of social media for academic and personal interactions raises concerns about data privacy and digital footprints. Many students experience anxiety about being constantly monitored online, leading to heightened stress regarding their social media activity. Studies indicate that excessive social media use is linked to higher levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness among students. Continued exposure to filtered realities and social comparisons on these platforms can contribute to low self-esteem and increased feelings of inadequacy (Huang et al., 2024). Given these challenges, it is essential to investigate the relationship between social media exposure and social anxiety among Malaysian university students. This study aims to understand how social media usage patterns influence students' mental well-being, particularly in the context of social anxiety, the research will provide valuable insights into how students can navigate social media in a way that supports rather than harms their psychological well-being.

### ***The scenario of social media and social anxiety among Malaysian university students***

Social media has become an essential part of students' daily lives in Malaysia, shaping how they interact, learn, and perceive the world around them (Zhao et al., 2023). With these platforms offering spaces for self-expression and virtual engagement, Malaysian university students spend significant time online, often as a means of socializing, entertainment, and academic collaboration (Zulkifli and Abidin, 2023). Though, despite the numerous benefits, excessive social media exposure has been associated with an increase in social anxiety among students (Jun et al., 2024; Paiman and Fauzi, 2023). Several university students in Malaysia rely on social media as a primary means of communication, sometimes at the expense of face-to-face interactions. This dependence on virtual interactions can hinder their ability to develop essential social skills, making real-world conversations more daunting and anxiety-inducing (Isah, 2024). Social media also fosters an environment of constant social comparison, where students frequently measure their academic achievements, lifestyles, and personal appearances against curated and often unrealistic online portrayals, this pressure to meet unattainable standards can lead to feelings of inadequacy and heightened anxiety (Ismail and Azmi, 2024).

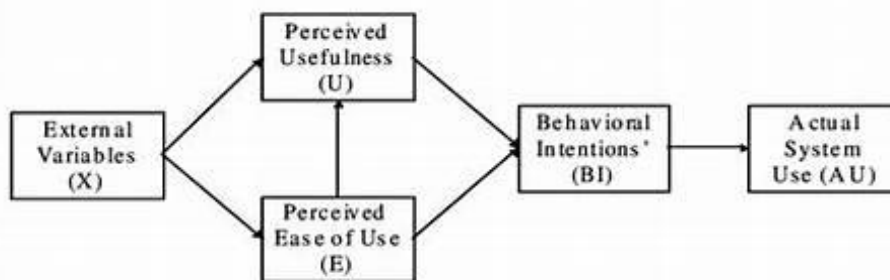
Cyberbullying is another significant challenge, many students experience negative comments, public shaming, or online harassment, which further exacerbates social anxiety (Samsudin et al., 2024; Li et al., 2024). The fear of judgment and criticism online can cause students to withdraw from both virtual and real-life interactions, limiting their social engagement and opportunities for personal growth, moreover, the "fear of missing out" (FOMO) phenomenon, where students feel pressured to keep up with trending events and social activities, can lead to increased stress and anxiety. Furthermore, the academic culture in Malaysia, which emphasizes high performance and competition, adds to students' mental health struggles. Social media often amplifies this pressure, as students compare their academic successes and career prospects with their peers, sometimes leading to stress, self-doubt, and social withdrawal. The lack of proper digital literacy and awareness about the psychological effects of excessive social media use further compounds the issue, leaving many students vulnerable to its negative impacts. Addressing social anxiety among Malaysian university students requires a balanced approach to social media use. Universities and policymakers must implement

awareness campaigns, provide mental health support, and promote digital well-being strategies to help students navigate social media responsibly.

Encouraging offline socialization, fostering a culture of self-acceptance, and creating safe online spaces are crucial steps in mitigating the adverse effects of social media exposure on students' mental health. Amidst this evolving digital landscape, the need for a paradigm shift in understanding technology adoption among students becomes increasingly evident. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) highlights that students' willingness to embrace digital tools is shaped by their perceived usefulness and ease of use. However, the expansion of technology use in education must go beyond conventional academic applications to address the psychological and social dimensions of student experiences, by fostering a more inclusive and student-centered approach to technology adoption, educational institutions can bridge the gap between digital accessibility and meaningful engagement, ultimately enhancing learning outcomes and student well-being.

### *Hindrances to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in Malaysia*

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) serves as a framework for understanding the adoption and use of technology, particularly in educational settings (Schorr, 2023). The model emphasizes two key factors: perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU), both of which influence an individual's intention to adopt technology (Ali and Warrach, 2024; Davis, 1989) (*Figure 1*). However, in Malaysia, several challenges hinder the seamless adoption of technology, particularly among students and educators in higher education institutions (Shehata et al., 2025; Devisakti et al., 2023). These barriers range from digital inequality and technological anxiety to cultural influences and institutional limitations, all of which play significant roles in slowing down the integration of digital tools in education. One of the primary challenges is the digital divide, where students from urban areas have better access to high-speed internet and advanced digital tools compared to those in rural and underserved regions.



**Figure 1.** Generalized conceptual Model for the use and perception technology acceptance model.

Source: Davis (1989).

Limited access to affordable devices and reliable internet services further exacerbates this divide, preventing many students from fully utilizing educational technologies (Christanti et al., 2024). Without adequate infrastructure, students struggle to engage with online learning materials, making the adoption of digital platforms less effective (Khan, 2024). Additional major barriers are technological anxiety and resistance to

change. Despite the increasing integration of digital learning platforms, some students and educators experience fear and uncertainty when using new technologies. Studies suggest that students who lack confidence in their digital skills often resist transitioning from traditional learning methods to technology-driven education (Ndibalema, 2025; Ibrahim and Jibia, 2024; Anthonysamy, 2020). This reluctance stems from a lack of prior exposure to technology, concerns about making errors, and difficulties in adapting to digital learning environments. Moreover, inadequate digital literacy and training among students and educators limit the effectiveness of technology adoption.

While many universities in Malaysia provide digital learning platforms, students and faculty members often struggle to navigate these systems efficiently due to insufficient training (Hamid and Abdullah, 2024; Mastam et al., 2024). Without structured digital literacy programs, users may perceive technology as complex and difficult to use, discouraging engagement with digital education tools. The lack of technical support and user-friendly interfaces also contributes to low adoption rates. Cultural and social influences also play a crucial role in technology acceptance among Malaysian students. Malaysia's diverse sociocultural landscape affects attitudes toward technology adoption, particularly in educational settings where traditional hierarchical structures are still prevalent (Dalle et al., 2024; Zainal and Zainuddin, 2020). Some educators and parents favor conventional face-to-face learning over digital approaches, believing that technology-based learning is less effective. Additionally, social expectations and peer influence can shape students' willingness to embrace digital tools, further impacting the overall adoption of technology in education.

Furthermore, another significant hindrance is privacy and security concerns, which make students and educators skeptical about using online learning platforms. As digital education expands, issues such as data breaches, hacking incidents, and the misuse of personal information have become major concerns (Li et al., 2023; Fouad, 2021). Many students fear that their data may not be adequately protected, leading them to be cautious about engaging with online platforms, the absence of strict cybersecurity regulations and inadequate user awareness further contribute to these concerns. Technical issues and system reliability also impact the perceived ease of use (PEOU) of digital learning platforms. Frequent problems such as software glitches, system downtime, and compatibility issues make it difficult for students to access learning materials efficiently (Rahman et al., 2024; Belay, 2020). If students repeatedly face difficulties in submitting assignments, attending online lectures, or interacting with course content, they may become discouraged from adopting technology-based education. Finally, the lack of institutional support and policies poses another challenge to technology adoption in Malaysian higher education. Some universities lack comprehensive frameworks for integrating technology into their curricula, leaving students and educators without clear guidelines on how to effectively use digital tools (Bećirović, 2023; Ntorukiri et al., 2022). Without structured policies, financial support, and long-term strategies for digital education, institutions fail to create an environment conducive to technology adoption.

### ***Theoretical underpinning***

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Davis (1989), is a generally accepted theoretical framework used to explain and predict user adoption of technology, ingrained in Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), TAM suggests that the acceptance of new technology is determined by two vital

variables: perceived usefulness (PU) the extent to which users believe that technology increases their performance and perceived ease of use (PEOU) the degree to which users find the technology free from effort. Researchers have extended TAM to accommodate the evolving nature of digital technologies, including the emergence of social media networking sites (SNSs), which have transformed the way people interact, communicate, and access information (Ozili, 2024; Martín-García et al., 2022; Venkatesh and Bala, 2008). TAM demonstrates that users focus on perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use when determining whether to use a technology. The student's decision to use a technology may also be motivated by social influence or behavior intention which controls user attitude toward the technology (Davis et al., 2023; Davis, 1989), the most essential component of Davis' TAM is the stress on the insights of the likely user.

With the fast spread of social media networking sites, investigators have been required to integrate TAM into examinations of social media adoption and usage. Unlike traditional software or workplace technology, social media is mainly determined by user engagement, peer interaction, and digital content creation (Medjanova and Atayeva, 2024; Fraccastoro et al., 2021). Therefore, while PU and PEOU remain central to TAM, further factors such as social influence, trust, enjoyment, and privacy concerns have been incorporated to better explain user behavior on social media platforms (Lumare et al., 2024; Gruzd et al., 2023). For instance, social influence plays a critical role in the adoption of social media, unlike conventional technologies, social networking sites thrive on user-generated content and peer interactions. Students are more likely to adopt and continue using social media if they see their friends, colleagues, or influencers actively engaging with these platforms (Licong and Ghosh, 2023; Al-Quran, 2022; Hong, 2022). Moreover, trust and privacy concerns are essential in social media adoption, as users often share personal information, opinions, and experiences online. Studies indicate that concerns over data security, misinformation, and identity theft significantly impact the willingness of students to engage with social media (Cao et al., 2024; Lumare et al., 2024;).

Perceived Usefulness (PU) is a critical determinant of technology acceptance, particularly in the context of social media adoption. Davis et al. (2023) as well as Davis (1989) originally defined PU as the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system will enhance their performance. In the case of social media platforms, students are more likely to adopt and continuously engage with these platforms if they perceive tangible benefits, such as improved communication, professional networking, education, and career development. This perception of usefulness influences their decision to incorporate social media into students' daily lives, shaping their digital behaviors and engagement levels (Zahira and Kurniawati, 2022; Oliveira et al., 2020). Furthermore, studies by Jo (2022) as well as Hunt and Krishnan (2021) underscore the significance of perceived ease of use in providing utilitarian value to SNS users and increasing social media use. Apart from professional development, PU is also important in educational settings. Social media sites have become more and more popular as educational tools because they allow students and teachers to access online learning resources, share academic information, and engage in debates. Research suggests that social media enhances student engagement and facilitates knowledge sharing, thereby improving learning outcomes (Sivakumar et al., 2023; Alalwan, 2022). Platforms such as YouTube provide learners with diverse educational content, from instructional videos to scholarly discussions, making these digital tools highly valuable for academic growth

(Su et al., 2024; Xie et al., 2024). The integration of social media into e-learning environments further supports the argument that perceived usefulness directly influences technology acceptance in educational settings (Fauzi et al., 2024).

Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) is a fundamental factor influencing the adoption and sustained engagement with social media platforms. According to Davis (1989), PEOU refers to the degree to which individuals believe that using a particular system will be free of effort. Social media platforms with user-friendly interfaces, intuitive navigation, and minimal technical barriers tend to attract more users because they reduce the cognitive and physical effort required for interaction (Khraim, 2020). Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (X) invest heavily in design optimization to ensure smooth user experiences, enabling individuals to create profiles, post content, and engage with others effortlessly. Studies have shown that when users find a platform easy to use, their willingness to adopt and continuously engage with it increases (Gabriel and Park, 2024). This aligns with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which posits that ease of use directly impacts users' attitudes toward technology adoption (Adesunloye and Arowosafe 2022). Furthermore, intuitive design elements, such as drag-and-drop features, customizable profiles, and AI-driven recommendations, enhance usability and reduce learning curves, making platforms more appealing to a diverse range of users, including those with limited technical proficiency (Perera et al., 2022).

Social Influence (SI) plays a critical role in the adoption and engagement of social media platforms, as individuals are more likely to use a platform if their peers, friends, or online communities actively participate in it. According to Venkatesh et al. (2016) in the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), SI refers to the degree to which individuals perceive that important others believe they should use a particular technology. Social media platforms thrive on network effects, meaning that as more people within an individual's social circle join and engage with a platform, the perceived necessity of participation increases (Galani and Anagnoste, 2024). For example, studies have shown that university students are more likely to use platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter (X) if their friends are actively sharing content and networking on these sites (Boruzie et al., 2024; Owunna et al., 2022). Likewise, LinkedIn adoption among professionals is often driven by industry norms and peer influence, where being active on the platform is perceived as essential for networking and career growth (Cheng et al., 2024). Further than peer influence, trending topics, viral challenges, and influencer endorsements further reinforce social media adoption, as individuals seek social validation and a sense of belonging in digital spaces (Muftah, 2024), this phenomenon underscores the power of social media in shaping student's behavior and highlights the importance of social networks in driving the sustained use of digital platforms.

Similarly, Yuan et al. (2021) emphasized that student attitude plays a crucial role in shaping cognitive values, reflecting an individual's positive or negative feelings toward performing a particular behavior. In the context of social networking sites, a student's mindset significantly influences their perception and engagement, ultimately affecting their willingness to use these platforms. Previous research has consistently demonstrated a positive relationship between attitude and social media usage, for instance, studies found that student's mindset directly impacts their desire to utilize social media (Gabriel and Park, 2024; Jo, 2022; Khraim, 2020; Phang Ing and Ming, 2018). This influence extends beyond mere usage intentions; it also affects how users

interact with digital content. Similarly, studies highlighted that customers' favorable attitudes toward word-of-mouth information on social media positively impact their purchasing intentions (Muftah, 2024; Yan et al., 2022). This suggests that a student's attitude towards social media can enhance their likelihood of using it for various purposes, including learning, networking, and professional development, thus, fostering a positive mindset towards social media engagement can play a pivotal role in enhancing user participation and interaction across digital platforms.

### ***Theoretical influence of Technology Acceptance Model***

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) serves as a foundational framework for understanding students' engagement with social media, highlighting the critical factors that drive adoption and sustained usage (Schorr, 2023). TAM posits that Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) are key determinants of technology acceptance, both of which significantly influence students' interaction with social media platforms (Barz et al., 2024; Davis et al., 2023; 1989). Research by Gabriel and Park (2024) suggests that students are more likely to adopt social media for academic and social purposes if they perceive it as beneficial for communication, collaboration, and learning. Furthermore, Venkatesh and Bala (2008) expanded TAM by incorporating external variables such as social influence and facilitating conditions, which are particularly relevant in the student context, were peer engagement and institutional support shape adoption behaviors. Also, studies found that the user-friendly nature of social media platforms encourages higher engagement levels among students, making them essential tools for knowledge sharing and academic networking (Boruzie et al., 2024; Zhao, 2024). Though, while TAM explains the motivations behind social media exposure, concerns related to privacy, trust, and digital well-being remain critical challenges that influence students' long-term engagement (Lumare et al., 2024; Alzaidi and Agag, 2022). Hence, understanding the theoretical underpinnings of TAM provides valuable insights into how students navigate social media platforms, balancing both opportunities and challenges.

### ***Challenges of the Technology Acceptance Model***

The application of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in understanding social media use among students in Malaysia faces several challenges, including privacy concerns, digital literacy gaps, and socio-cultural influences. Studies found that students often hesitate to fully engage with social media due to fears of data breaches, cyberbullying, and misinformation, which can negatively impact their perceived trust in these platforms (Pérez-Escoda et al., 2024; Sun, 2023). Additionally, disparities in digital literacy and technological accessibility among Malaysian students create barriers to effective social media adoption for academic and social purposes (Mastam et al., 2024; Saraih et al., 2024; Rahim et al., 2023). While TAM emphasizes Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) and Perceived Usefulness (PU) as key determinants of technology acceptance (Al-Rahmi et al., 2022; Jo, 2022; Hunt and Krishnan, 2021), highlight that students' engagement is also influenced by external factors such as internet connectivity, institutional support, and socio-cultural norms, which TAM does not fully address. Furthermore, studies argued that excessive reliance on social media can lead to distractions, decreased academic performance, and mental health concerns, raising questions about the long-term sustainability of social media adoption among students

(Chowdhury, 2025; Sun and Chao, 2024; Venkatesh et al., 2016). These challenges indicate that while TAM provides a useful framework for understanding social media usage, additional contextual factors must be considered to ensure a holistic analysis of technology acceptance in the Malaysian student population.

## Conclusion

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) provides a valuable framework for understanding social media adoption among students in Malaysia, stressing Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) as vital determinants. However, the successful integration of social media into students' academic and social lives requires addressing additional factors such as privacy concerns, trust, digital literacy, and accessibility. Given Malaysia's diverse student population and evolving digital landscape, a one-size-fits-all approach may not be effective. Institutions and policymakers must develop tailored strategies that promote meaningful engagement by fostering digital competency, ensuring ethical online practices, and enhancing the overall user experience. By aligning TAM assumptions with the unique challenges faced by students, social media can be transformed from a mere communication tool into a powerful platform for education, collaboration, and professional development. Ultimately, the effectiveness of social media adoption in Malaysia hinges on creating an inclusive, secure, and user-friendly digital ecosystem that empowers students to maximize its potential.

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## Conflict of interest

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