

# Exploring determinants of social media addiction in higher education through the integrated lenses of technology acceptance model (TAM) and usage habit

Determinants  
of social media  
addiction

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This research aims to build on the pre-existing corpus of literature through the integration of the technology acceptance model (TAM) and usage habit to more accurately capture the determinants associated with social media addiction among university students. This study seeks to delineate how usage habit and TAM may be used as predictors for addiction potential, as well as provide greater insight into current trends in social media usage across this population demographic.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A cross-sectional research design was employed to investigate the determinants of social media addiction among university students in Malaysia at the onset of their tertiary education. A self-administered survey, adapted from prior studies, was administered to a sample of 217 respondents. The hypotheses on social media addiction were subsequently tested using a partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) approach.

**Findings** – Usage habit was found to be a direct and strong predictor of this type of addiction, as well as all TAM variables considered in the research. Additionally, by integrating TAM with usage habit, the study revealed a comprehensive and multi-faceted understanding of social media addiction, providing an important insight into its complexity in the Malaysian context. Although several other factors have been identified as potential contributors to social media reliance and addictive behavior, it appears that usage habit is paramount in driving these addictive tendencies among university students.

**Research limitations/implications** – This expanded model holds significant implications for the development of interventions and policies that aim to mitigate the adverse effects of social media addiction on students' educational and psychological well-being. The study illustrates the applicability of the TAM in examining addictive behaviors within emerging contexts such as the Malaysian higher education sector, thus contributing to the extant literature on the subject.

**Practical implications** – The integrated TAM and habit model is an effective predictor of social media addiction among young adults in developing countries like Malaysia. This highlights the importance of actively monitoring and controlling users' interactions with technology and media platforms, while promoting responsible usage habits. Educators can use these findings to create tailored educational programs to educate students on how to use technology responsibly and reduce their risk of becoming addicted to social media.

**Originality/value** – This study provides a unique perspective on social media addiction among university students. The combination of TAM and usage habit has the potential to shed significant light on how variables such as perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) may be associated with addictive behaviors. Additionally, by considering usage habit as an explanatory factor, this research offers a novel approach to understanding how addictions form over time.

**Keywords** Social media addiction, Technology acceptance model, Habit, University students, Higher education

**Paper type** Research paper



The authors thank the undergraduate students for the participation in this study.

**Ethics statement:** The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP).

**Conflict of interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.