Social Media Exposure among Children Leads to Growing Numbers of LGBT Community in Malaysia

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Abstract

Many past studies have showed several negative effects of the internet and social media on children including increased risk of exposure to pornographic material, internet sexual addiction, and greater exposure to pedophilic predatory relationships also on LGBT. LGBT is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender yet another term that is worrying among parents in Malaysia as it become increasing in our community day by day. In social media like Instagram and Facebook, we can see that LGBT community become more aggressive to show their movements and clearly want to be as a role model to other people. This situation might influence our children's behavior and thought. Thus, this paper aim to study on social media exposure among children leads to growing numbers of LGBT community in Malaysia. The results from this study will be significant to many parties including media as they can control the movement of LGBT community in the social media and parents also can control their children's activities on social media to avoid them from get influenced by these LGBT community.

Keywords: LGBT; Social Media; Children

1. Introduction

In this current digital world, social media were said to give a huge impact on the way we live and the way we interact among each other. Social media also is the most important platform to communicate, distribute information, act as searching tool, advertising tool and to promote some social movements (Kidd & McIntosh, 2016). Social media like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and You Tube allows people to share content with others quickly and easily with time minimization as well as at free cost (Subramanian, 2017). Children nowadays loves to spend their time with mobile phone and accessing to social media without any supervision from their parents. Over exposure to social media will put our children at high risks of personal safety, identity theft, and privacy concerns and enable them to access to inappropriate materials like pornographic and violence content (Dyer, 2018). Social media sometimes impacted people in negative ways like it can affect children's mental and behavior because they are unable to differentiate between the good or bad post which they highly exposed to these kind of social media (Sabbarwal, Singh, & Amiri, 2017). Those who aged under 18 years old are categorized as children (NSPCC, n.d.). These children are easily get influenced by what they watch, what they see or what they exposed too especially on social media sites (Atieno, 2018). Mrunal (2018) stated that children also will get huge influence of community surrounding especially any movements through social media, including new culture, new trend, and new ideas and not to be left aside, negative movements like LGBT. In Malaysia, LGBT community contributed to growing numbers of HIV diseases where it was reported that in 2017, there are 50% of HIV patients belong to LGBT community and these percentage keep increasing year by year (Utusan Online, 2018).

1.1 Problem statement

LGBT is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender yet another term that is worrying among parents in Malaysia as it become increasing in our community from day by day. Any activities or slightly spread of lifestyle done by LGBT is prohibited in Malaysia (Zainudin, 2018). In social media like Instagram and Facebook, we can see that LGBT community become more aggressive to demonstrate as well as practice their movements and clearly want to be as an imitation to other people. This situation might influence our children's behavior and thought. Malaysia is a developing Islamic country that against the practice of LGBT lifestyle. Surprisingly, Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM) had revealed that in 2018, there are 310 000 gays in Malaysia compared to 173 000 in 2013 (Balula, 2018). This statistic shows that LGBT community is increasing and need to be worry. Our future generation might be influence by these forbidden community, because they are seeming to be very open and brave to be in public especially in social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and continue to live the way they are. Government used practiced proactive measures in addressing the issue which was against Islamic teachings. Even though there are law which had implemented in Malaysia to prevent the movement of LGBT to become wider such as Section 377A of the Penal Code which was carnal intercourse against the order of nature as well as the Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment at the state level regarding acts of sodomy, lesbians and men behaving like women, the number of LGBT community keep growing (Bernama, 2018). Bernama (2018) added, statistics also showed that 80 per cent of 'mak nyah' or transvestites are involved in the sex industry.

1.2 Research objectives and questions

There are three objectives in conducting this study:

- To find out the role of social media in promoting the lifestyle of LGBT community in Malaysia.

- To explore the level of acceptance by Malaysian towards LGBT community in Malaysia.

- To examine the effect of social media exposure among children towards the growing number of LGBT community in Malaysia.

In achieving research objectives, there are three research questions for the study:

- What is the role of social media in promoting the lifestyle of LGBT community in Malaysia?

- What is the level of acceptance by Malaysian towards LGBT community in Malaysia?

- How the social media exposure among children can lead to the growing number of LGBT community in Malaysia?

1.3 Literature review

1.3.1 Social media

There are presently 2.8 billion social media users worldwide (Willis, 2017). This means that more than a third of the world's population is using some form of social media to communicate, making social media marketing an imperative tactic for boosting leads for higher education programs. Plus, Martin (2014) said modern-day users rely on social media for virtually everything they used to turn to traditional websites, emails, and search engines for: communicating, shopping, researching, disseminating content, staying informed, and finding new friends and fans. Social networks have drastically changed how people communicate with each other, creating a means of everyday use by which information is created and shared in a simple, instantaneous way with the rest of the world (Froment, et al., 2017). Voonaputra (2018) added that with the mass media, a person or group inculcates a message through information that its presentation is often set first. With the mass media people can imaged themselves, raise the prestige of certain figures or even drop the opponent figure. Mass media itself has several roles, one of which is in influencing attitudes and behavior of a person or a group of people or society. Media influences people's views in the process of creating their opinions or point of view. Mass media also can be said as a powerful weapon for the seizure of image (Voonaputra, 2018).

1.3.2 Effects of social media on children

Social media offers broad communication opportunities in promoting lifestyle and idea of certain culture as well as supporting the community building in country but rapid increasing source of information will expose high risk to those who are unable to control it especially among the children (Collin, 2015). Collin (2015) explained that this is where social media can affect children in term of their mental health, cyberbullying as well as social isolation. Akram (2018) discussed that due to the advancement of technology, people nowadays are forced to accept different lifestyle and children has been extraordinarily influenced by bad people on the off chance that they are permitted to utilize them. The reason for this situation to happen is because that occasionally individuals share photographs via web-based networking media that contains violence and sex, which can harm the behavior of children and youngsters (Akram, 2018). Other than that, Bryant (2017) reported that there is growing number of children signing up for social media at younger age without parent's permission and supervision. Negative outcome and possible harm will engage with these children where their cognitive development will be affected by any posting or inappropriate content shared in the social media (Bryant, 2017). Children attempt to imitate other person that they think perfect for them and want to be like even in terms of body images.

1.3.3 Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community

LGBT is serious issue at the present time and the term referred to those who have different identity from the original identity where Lesbian and Gay are those who having relationship with same sex while Bisexual are a man or woman who engages in sexual relation with the opposite sex and their own and Transgender refer to those who transform their gender to opposite such as male change to female and female change to male (Sani, Musa & Fatinah, 2014). Musa & Sani (2014) stated that in Malaysia, since Islam is the main religious state, LGBT lifestyle is strongly prohibited not only in religious but also in law as the Constitution Malaysia had stated that the Shariah court has the mandate to act against any individual or group who engage in any unnatural sexual relationship. Even so, these LGBT community is still wanting to fight for their right to freely express their sexual freedom and orientation by showing their practice of life and promoting their lifestyle through social media because social media is the effective way in distributing information (Musa & Sani, 2014). In order to fight for the right of LGBT community, there are few illegal groups, clubs and organizations that actively promoting their members by organizing parties, annual dinners, events and others such as *Seksualiti Merdeka* (Sexual Independent) and these kinds of movements invaded public spaces and schools. In 2013, Pew Research Centre revealed that there were 86% of Malaysian rejected LGBT and among 323 articles related to LGBT were published in the newspaper, New Straits Times, 64 from 86 analyzed articles were portrayed negatively by the netizens (Ting, Kwin, & Xinyi, 2016).

1.3.4 Violence against LGBT community

Malaysia has the lowest acceptance in the world towards LGBT community which there were only 9% in 2013 of Malaysian can accept LGBT to be practice in this country (Bee, 2018). There were seven violence against LGBT community in Malaysia as stated by Sa'dan, Jaffary and Farhana (2018) which are violence in the name of religion, violence in school, violence by medical and health professionals, violence on the streets, violence by family and friends, physical violence and sexual violence. LGBT is not only forbidden in Islam but also in other religion as interviewed done with a transgender Chinese Malaysian where she is a Catholic said that church keep rejected her until she felt insecure and self-degradation (Sa'dan, Jaffary, & Farhana, 2018). Violence in school faced by LGBT community seems like a serious issue when they experienced homophobic and trans-phobic bullying at schools, making LGBT persons felt unsafe and uncomfortable (Pizmony-Levy & Kosciw, 2016). Violence by medical and health professionals towards LGBT happened when nurse or doctors refused to give treatment to LGBT people and there were only one over three LGBT persons believed that healthcare professionals have enough knowledge about LGBT while less than half of them felt respected during treatment process (Sharek, Sheerin, Glacken, & Mccann, 2014). Verbal attacks towards LGBT community on the street and being harshly called by using words like *pondan*, *bapok*, *ombote*, dyke, goddamn lesbian, tomboy and *pengkid* are common things happened in Malaysia as well as being insulted like throwing something to them while walking on street (Sa'dan, Jaffary, & Farhana, 2018). LGBT community also faced violence by family and friends like half of the respondents said that their friends keep insults and do not want to continue the friendship because of the belief of their family while some parents cannot accept the facts that their children as LGBT person and thinks that they failed to raise their children in a good way (Ocampo, Anne, Balmonte, & Juli-ann, 2016). Last but not least, these LGBT community also faced physical and mental violence where they being hit,

sexually abused like raped, oral sex, being touched at sex part and mentally abused causing them to have depression and suicidal thought (Russell & Fish, 2016).

2. Method

In order to achieve research objectives and answer the research of this study, qualitative data collection method will be used in this study. This research will be in phenomenological research approach as phenomenology helps researcher to understand the meaning of people's lived experience, construct perceptions, give perspectives of particular situation and explores what people experienced and focuses on their experience of a phenomena (CIRT.edu, n.d.). The purpose of this study is to study on social media exposure among children leads to growing numbers of LGBT community in Malaysia. Thus, this study is designed as a qualitative semi-structured interview. The respondents or participants will purposely and wisely be selected and analyzed by researcher. The post by participants were selected based on the criteria that had been set which were related to social media, children and LGBT community. The interview questions will set to open-ended questions as well as close-ended questions related to the area of the study and then will be analyzed by researcher in order to look at the variables that researcher wants to analyze. Themes were set based on the previous study that discussing on the topic which social media exposure among children and about LGBT community. The interview process will be transcribed and then insert into Nvivo software for qualitative study. Interpretative research paradigm is applied in this study as it is to describe and interpret phenomenon in an attempt to get shared meaning with others (Dean, 2018).

3. Result and discussion

There are six attributes that emerged based on the interview conducted with informants which are lifestyle, entertainment, attitude, aggressiveness, social imitation and social interaction. Findings in this study will answer the research questions and achieve research objectives of the study.

3.1 Role of social media in promoting the lifestyle of LGBT community in Malaysia

Based on the conducted interviews, we found that in Malaysia, LGBT community are actively promoting themselves in social media to fight for their right of freedom as they claimed that LGBT is nature creation. There are few LGBT people in Malaysia that shows themselves openly on Instagram such as Safiey Ilias, Nursajat, Faiz Roslan and Viviana Abdullah. They claimed that they are beautiful women and cannot accept the fact that they were born in opposite gender. Every time they post their videos or pictures on Instagram, many children who left comments said want to be beautiful like them and praised them. Children will try to imitate the way of LGBT community dress up and want to live like them. Thus, if our children become like one of LGBT community, the numbers of LGBT will keep increasing. LGBT community also use social media to run their online business and widen their influences in Malaysia. For example, famous transgender Nur Sajat have her own business like Nur Sajat Beautician, Lets Bengkung, Ajramjat Saloon, Nur Sajat Gold and a few more while another famous transgender Safiey Ilias have Aurora SX, Perlashine DSI Empire and so on. They also use social media to gain express money by making paid-review and in return, people will use them to promote other business online. These kinds of business deal will be making them more popular on social media and easily to get accepted by society. Some of the LGBT community also produce their own songs and use social media to promote the songs, hence our children will easily get attracted to them. Even though society keep bashing their songs and music videos, but it will make the songs more popular and many people did covers of that songs the uploaded it in the accounts of social media. As their songs are catchy and sounds funny, children liked it so much. This is another way to influence our children.

3.2 Level of acceptance by Malaysian towards LGBT community in Malaysia

Supporting, following and commenting LGBT community in social media will making them want to expose more about their lifestyle and making them feel important to society. Thus, these LGBT community will take this chance to express their voice aggressively and fight for their freedom in Malaysia. As mentioned, and discussed in the interviews, pundits stated that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender is prohibited by religious and shariah law in Malaysia. LGBT lifestyle is obviously not a good thing to be follow as they will leads to negative effects towards themselves, society and national development such as involving with illegal activities like prostitution and increasing numbers in HIV and AIDS in Malaysia. Malaysia has the lowest acceptance towards LGBT community in the world and those who practice the LGBT lifestyle will face lots of

violence which can harm themselves. Thus, our children need to be avoided from being trapped in the LGBT lifestyle as youngster is an asset to the nation and will be our nation's future leader. They cannot destroy their future by practicing unhealthy lifestyle. There are few cases in Malaysia that related to LGBT community being killed, hit and many more such as at Sabah, Kelantan and others. This kind of punishment are totally a wrong way to teach them but we as a good society need to be thoughtful and try to advise them deliberately or maybe may refer them to the authority and now make our own action. We cannot individually judge them because they are also a human being.

3.3 Effect of social media exposure among children towards the growing number of LGBT community in Malaysia

Based on the interviews, results has shown that social media exposure among children will came out with many negative effects towards their behavior and cognitive development as children are those who will easily get influenced by whatever they watch, hear and listen to. Children will always have curiosity about something and then want to try it without knowing the good and bad things. Children are not mature enough to differentiate between good or bad sites thus, they will tend to visit unhealthy sites that they think it is good and fun to spend their time with.

3.4 Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura

This study is attempting to study on social media exposure among children leads to growing numbers of LGBT community in Malaysia. Findings shows that children will easily get influenced by whatever they watch and see on social media hence, they will try to imitate anyone they find interesting includes LGBT community. So, Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura is the best theory that fits this situation as Social Learning Theory is theory that highlight about people learn through observing other's behavior, attitudes and emotional reactions (Harinie, Sudiro, Rahayu, & Fatchan, 2017). Social learning theory has sometimes been called a combination between behaviorist and cognitive learning theories because it encompasses attention, memory, and motivation. Children are more likely to adopt a modelled behavior from LGBT community if they think it will provide value to their life.

3.5 Uses and Gratifications Theory by Bulmer and Katz

As discussed in the findings for research objective number one which is to find out the role of social media in promoting the lifestyle of LGBT community in Malaysia. This means LGBT community use social media for their own purpose. Thus, the best theory that can be relate to this study is Uses and Gratifications Theory by Bulmer and Kats. For decades, the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) has been the main theory of communication that explains what people do with the media (Musa, Latiff, & Salina, 2015). This theory explains about people use social media to satisfy their needs which include cognitive needs, affective needs, personal integrative needs, social integrative needs, tension release needs as well as medium appeal needs.

4. Conclusion

In short, social media exposure among children will distribute to unhealthy activities and will lead to growing numbers of LGBT community in Malaysia. Children need to limit their usage in social media and use it for good way for example, to stay connected with friends and family also to enhance communication with those who have language differences. So, in order to control and decrease the number of LGBT community in Malaysia, our children need to be given the complete knowledge and information about the negative effects or practicing LGBT and they need to know what will happen to them if they get influenced by LGBT community or insist to join them. Other than that, government should also implement new subject in the education sector in Malaysia about culture, and the use of social media in proper way, also provide more knowledge on managing LGBT's problems in Malaysia. Children need to have an appropriate knowledge not only from their parents but also from school, teachers and authorities.

Parents need to always monitor their children's activities on social media so that they will have an adequate amount of guidance about how to use social media in a correct way. Parents need to limit the social media's usage and spend more time with their children as well as not to use mobile phone or social media to baby sit or as a method to control their children. Lack of love and attention from parents will make children spend their time more on social media because they can effortlessly find friends, and even love through social media. LGBT lifestyle need to be avoided as that lifestyle is not accepted in our religion. Even though in West County they support LGBT, but Malaysia do not do that and even our Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir

Mohamad said, marriage between same sexes are strictly not allowed in Malaysia. Nevertheless we cannot harshly put aside these LGBT community. We need to be friends with them and provide knowledge to them intelligently. Social media also have so much positive effects if we know how to use it in an appropriate way.

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