

Enhancing Business Performance Through Social Media Platforms Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Study on Shopee in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Since the corona-virus disease (COVID-19) has caused a major economic shock, entrepreneurs including small business owners, agencies, and retailers face enormous obstacles to carry through their businesses. This study aims to investigate the extent of social media platforms such as Youtube, Facebook, and Instagram in attracting customers to Shopee, leading its business performance. This brief discusses how the COVID-19 catastrophe is accelerating an expansion of e-commerce especially Shopee towards customers, likely involving a long-term shift of e-commerce transactions from luxury goods and services to everyday necessities in conjunction with driving users' satisfaction, leading to business performance improvements. An online survey questionnaire is used for data collection and the respondents consist of a total of 150 Shopee users (buyers) from Malaysia. The findings of this study serve a valuable insight and guidelines for businesses to integrate into social media platforms for effective marketing as well as potential future development.

Keywords: Business Performance, COVID-19, E-commerce, Entrepreneurs, Shopee, Social media.

INTRODUCTION

In spread of the Coronavirus pandemic, e-commerce has witnessed remarkable growth in the whole world and in Malaysia in particular, after citizens widely have been buying online, and the switch to e-commerce has become mandatory for entrepreneurs as well as for citizens, due to the closure for long periods, after the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic. E-commerce in Malaysia nowadays has become the most dynamic economy in Southeast Asia. As said by Lim, Sook Fern, and Bhajan Singh (2021) that the way e-commerce expands and grows so fast creates an opportunity for retailers to make a good profit. New national and foreign companies are aggressively entering the attractive Malaysia market. Global, regional, and national e-commerce websites successfully take the largest share of the Malaysian market; however, global economic states that the current and new participants are able to change the forces in place as a huge opportunity to expand Malaysia's e-commerce market still available to cover the total population Malaysia of 31 million people (Ching, Hasan, & Hasan, 2021).

Shopee is an electronic marketplace that connects sellers and buyers to do a purchase, some items can be found such as clothes, and electronics. Shopee earns money through marketplace commissions, transaction fees, CPC advertising on its platform, fulfillment services, payment fees, together with the share given by the restaurant. This platform is one of the most important players in the region which has organizational agility, competitive capabilities, and high marketing advantages. It is an expanded store that provides a regular and wonderful shopping experience and is considered a foremost program in Southeast Asia. You can also find Shopee in Singapore, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, and so Taiwan (Ching et al., 2021). As everyone knows the main office of this platform is in Singapore. This company was established by Forrest Li in 2009. The platform is launched in Singapore in 2015 and it has spread to Malaysia, Thailand, Taiwan, Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines. Not only that, but it has a huge users in Southeast Asia and Taiwan for its marketing. Shopee is one of the five e-commerce companies that have been actively operating starting in 2015 (Shopee Career, 2021). This platform gives easy access for the customer to buy and enjoy their shopping, therefore this platform is accessed by more than tens of millions of customers daily (Sea Shopee, 2021).

The online consumer shopping platform allows shopping any time and anywhere with a wide range of mall sellers. The monthly visit rate of the application and website has reached 14,330,200 users, making it second place after Lazada, and overcoming other candidates such as 11th Street, Zalora, eBay, and others (Gabriel & Agus, 2021). Malaysian Shopee store contains different products that consumers want from all categories, and among these products, are electronics, sports supplies, clothes and shoes, mobile devices and their accessories, all electronics, cosmetics, and everything that concerns women. The process of shopping in Shopee is very easy, customer can access the site at any time, either through a computer or directly from a mobile device, select the item desired to purchase, Copy the link to the product and paste it into a new order on the well-known buying broker "Zone" then the broker will calculate the value of the order, purchase the order, collect it, wrap it and ship it to the desired address (Gabriel & Agus, 2021).

This study aimed to identify the reasons for the increasing trend towards electronic commerce considering the Corona crisis. Not only that, but to examine the reasons for the sudden boom of the e-commerce pattern based on social media platforms, and the relationship of this boom to population growth that depends on digitization to a high

degree, as well as the sudden rise in consumer demand. Furthermore, we also want to know some aspects that influenced the customer to purchase online on Shopee on the East Coast of Malaysia. Finally, this study wishes to investigate the relationship between customer satisfaction and marketing strategy, customer engagement, and the development of an online marketplace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An overview of e-commerce

Global competitiveness has become increasingly intense due to the accelerating industrial digitalization. According to statistics, in the first quarter of 2021, e-commerce revenue in Malaysia increased by 30% year-on-year to RM254.6 billion; Malaysia's total e-commerce revenue in 2020 grew 32.7% year-on-year to RM896.4 billion. In the first quarter of 2020, E-commerce revenue in Malaysia reached RM195.9 billion, RM216.9 billion in the second quarter, RM238.2 billion in the third quarter and RM245.4 billion in the fourth quarter, with growth in each quarter (The Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, 2021). Shopee, Lazada, and PG Mall, the top three most popular e-commerce providers, all saw a steady increase in page views in 2020 and 2021, respectively, with local e-commerce platform PG Mall seeing a 158% jump in page views compared to the same period last year (Oriental Daily News, 2021).

Consumer Behaviour towards Online Shopping

Paypal does research on Malaysian people and discovers that they prefer to shop online, this is because doing online shopping will save their time. Nevertheless, they wish that their order will be completed in less than a week. The cheap cost are also becoming one of the major reasons why they prefer to shop online. Furthermore, most people in Malaysian usually do their payments using a bank transfer or e-wallet. Meanwhile, in Penang, they preferred to use a credit card (28%), Glasscity (40%), Selangor (25%), and Kuala Lumpur (34%). Electronic wallets called Dompert Digital in Malaysia, are the fourth most used method of payment. On the other hand, it is recommended to provide COD as a method of payment, because people aged 45-54 still prefer COD when shopping online (BeyondNext, 2021).

Development through social media

With the development of the Internet, the e-commerce industry is also growing rapidly. From the perspective of the development space of the e-commerce mobile and online shopping market, mobile terminal accounts for more than 70% of Shopee in Southeast Asian countries. Therefore, sellers now entering Shopee are also in line with its development trend (Sohu, 2021). Using e-commerce in social media is one of the significant ways to promote a certain brand, even the unpopular brand can be found there. This is because people nowadays share their consent and use social media most of the time. This "discovery through social content" process is necessary for startups that have not enough financial budget to endorse their products. The trendy tools became the easiest way for the creator to introduce their product to be seen by a lot of people (SmartBrief, 2020).

Customer Satisfaction

Market Strategy

Malaysia's economy has developed rapidly in recent years, which has made the social population richer. It has improved the consumption base and promoted the rapid development of Shopee. Because of the country's policy guidance, the Malaysian market has been pushed to other Southeast Asian regions, and foreign companies are actively entering the attractive Malaysian market. Shopee's ability to integrate its

resources helped to complete the expected tasks and marketing goals. Companies with abundant resources and with Malaysia's national policy must be able to outperform other companies, such as Lazada. From the beginning, Shopee has integrated shopping and social. This platform allows the customer to update or upload their goods to certain sites which link immediately with the customer and supplier (Madan et al., 2022). Shopee always emphasizes its marketplace and user behaviors throughout many organized projects. The domestic company manages its own market place which focuses on serving goods and promotion that is suitable to the market trends. Here, Shopee discovers a major issue following the users' transaction in the Malaysia marketplace which is the unreasonable delivery price for the regional area. In spite of that, the retailer gave an alternative for the purchase of items above five kilograms with free delivery (dataSpring, 2021). Through Shopee's preferred seller system and ShopeeMall customers are shown the most sold items and are given a guarantee by Shopee for the originality of products being sold. This helps the customer by giving the satisfaction of purchasing the best original product being offered by vendors.

H1: There is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and marketing strategy

Customer Engagement

In the latest years' customer engagement has become increasingly important to any business exist. Also, the trend in e-commerce and recent years, it leads to competition and an increase the customer engagement. Nurhadi and Hanis (2018), analyze the consequences of service quality and customer loyalty which turn out that both elements affect positively customers. Shopee keeps its engagement with customers constant through different promotional activities like sale feasts and no shipping fee offers (Manila Bulletin, 2021). It attracts the customers by giving them some incentive. Shopee also makes membership deals with its seller customers and they earn profit through Shopee which in turn earns Shopee profit and it benefits both parties equally. The mentioned research paper has thoroughly explained the consumer policy of Shopee along with some of its rivals. The research paper by Tran (2019) on Shopee's competitive strategies compares it with its direct competitors and does that very eloquently. The research tells that Shopee was established in a competitive market, and it had to deal with the giants of its region like Amazon, Ali Express, and Alibaba. To stand out in such a crowded environment, the shop used the differentiation strategy and used its unique qualities of page traffic, no commission, and promotional offers to get an edge over its competitors (Boxme Blog, 2020). Through various promotional activities and incentives being offered, customers will be more inclined and satisfied to make a purchase at Shopee as they will get great value in return for their money.

H2: There is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and customer engagement

Development of online marketplace

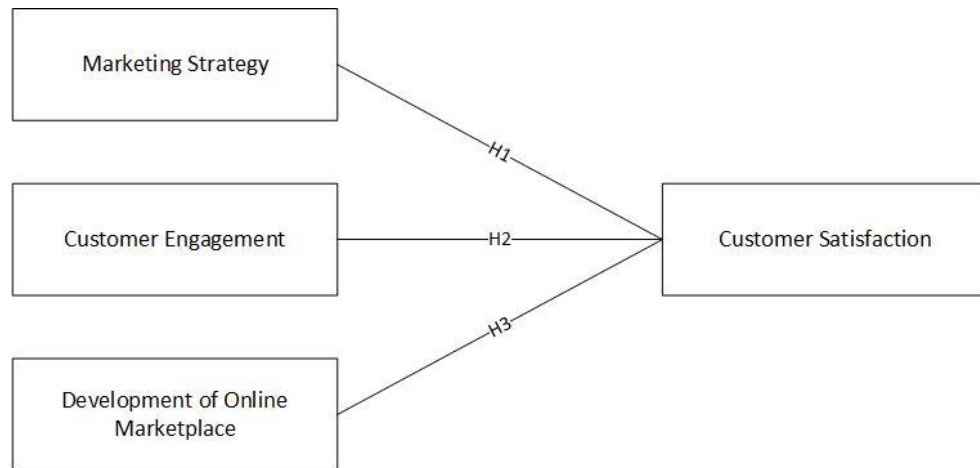
E-commerce explains that online marketplaces have become essential to grow any business in the past few decades. This change in shifting markets from physical locations to online web pages and applications occurred very fast. With the recent pandemic, everyone realized the need for such digital marketplaces and Shopee is among those top marketplaces that have emerged in the last few years as the hub of e-commerce in Asia as well as other continents. Shopee is a platform that reduces the gap between a seller and a buyer cost-effectively and benefits both buyer and seller, that is why people use these online marketplaces extensively these days. This will help a lot of new sellers to build a competitive advantage in the market competition (Prasetyo, 2021). Therefore, due to continuous development and improvements being done to the online marketplace for Shopee via social media and many other platforms in order to

make the marketplace more customer-friendly, customers will be satisfied with the developments being made and will likely continue using Shopee.

H3: There is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and the development of an online marketplace

Thus, the researchers have derived three hypotheses for investigation. The figure below specify the research framework of our study.

Figure 1. Research Framework



RESEARCH METHOD

Sample

The purpose of the survey being conducted is to study the extent of social media in attracting customers towards Shopee, leading to its business performance amid the pandemic which is advancing its e-commerce growth. A quantitative method is used in this study as the sample used convenience sampling. This kind of sampling usually chooses the contributor depending on their availability and promptly (Taherdoost, 2016). The researchers set sample size of 150 respondents and achieved our target through social media and contacts to fulfill the survey successfully from Malaysians with experience of using Shopee. This sample is dense and convenient enough for us to complete our data collection.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers used Google Forms to create a set of questionnaires. The data was collected using an online platform, which makes it easier for respondents to fill out and for us to review the data. The data collected from the questionnaire was brought to the next process and analyzed. Completed surveys have been checked thoroughly to make sure every section is filled accordingly because an incomplete survey will affect the accuracy and consistency of the result obtained. Then the data was imported into IBM Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) to further analysis.

Measures

A four-section questionnaire was used in this study specifically demographic, personal experience, user satisfaction, and enhancing business performance. Employing a 7-point Likert scale for the measurement of responses. The researchers have asked respondents to imply "1" for strongly disagree and "7" for strongly agree for each part of the questionnaire except the demographic part of the questionnaire. The 7-point Likert scale was chosen instead of the 5-Point Likert scale because there are more variants

for the respondents to choose, as a mean to raise the possibility of attaining the objective reality (Joshi, Kale, Chandel, & Pal, 2015). Section 1 titled demographic information consists of eight items to access the respondent's personal information. Section 2 named personal experience contains 13 questions on the respondent's knowledge of using Shopee and whether social media gave insight on Shopee. Section 3 called user satisfaction contains six items to evaluate the impact of utilizing Shopee and whether it meets the customer's expectations. Section 4 titled influence on business performance inspects business performance based on the satisfaction of using Shopee. This segment contained 6 questions, two questions for every variable. Data which was obtained from Section 3 and Section 4 were used for descriptive analysis, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis.

RESULTS

Most of our respondents were from the following age groups which are from 20-21 years old (54%), and we had a balanced number of respondents for both male (50.7%) and female (49.3%). Additionally, most of the respondents were students (76%), while working professionals were only (22%) out of the 150 respondents. The table below summarizes the respondents demography.

Table 1 Summary of Respondent's Demography (N=150)

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	76	50.7%
Female	74	49.3%
Age		
18-19 years old	18	12%
20-21 years old	81	54%
22-23 years old	14	9.33%
24-25 years old	13	8.67%
26-27 years old	6	4%
28-29 years old	4	2.67%
Above 30 years old	14	9.33%
Occupation		
Housewife	2	1.3%
Student	114	76%
Unemployed	1	0.7%
Working Professional	33	22%

Figure 2 and 3 below summarizes the 150 responses to the user's behavior. The survey shows that (24.7%) of respondents have 2 years experience of using Shopee and (23.3%) had 3 years experience of using Shopee. The majority of the respondents (89.3%) use Shopee for shopping purposes and (9.3%) of respondents use Shopee for shopping and business purposes.

Figure 2. Summary of Shopee users' behavior (N=150)



Figure 3. The Purpose of Using Shopee

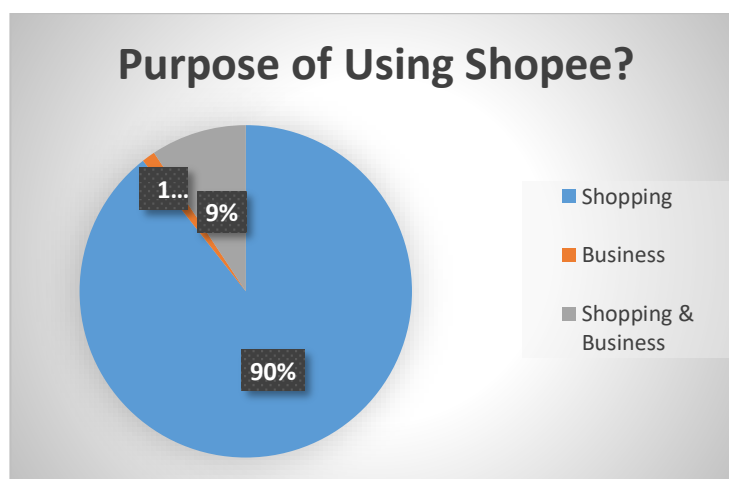


Table 2 below, summarizes the 150 responses on customer usage of Shopee and social circles and social media influences on Shopee. The survey shows that a cumulative of (71.3%) of the respondents choose between agree, slightly, and strongly agree that their friends encouraged them to use Shopee. A cumulative (83.4%) of respondents agreed that social media gave them an insight into Shopee. Moreover, the majority of the respondents (79.5%) agreed that they have the resources, knowledge, and skills needed to use Shopee. Besides, (55.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that it was convenient to purchase products through Shopee during the pandemic.

Table 2. Summary of Customer usage of Shopee and influence of social circle and social media (N=150)

Summary of Customer usage of Shopee and influence of social circle and social media						
Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly Disagree (3)	Neutral (4)	Slightly Agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)

My friends and acquaintances find it convenient to use Shopee	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	11.3%	28.7%	14.7%	43.3%
Did social media give you an insight on Shopee?	0.7%	2%	2%	12%	28.7%	18%	36.7%
Do you have the resources, knowledge, and skill needed to use Shopee?	1.3%	2.7%	2%	14%	34%	10%	35.5%
My friends encouraged me to use Shopee	2.7%	4.7%	3.3%	18%	20.7%	13.3%	37.3%
I believe in e-commerce platforms to bring a change in purchasing products	2%	6%	2%	9.3%	34.7%	8%	38%
It's very convenient for me to buy some things with Shopee during the Covid-19 pandemic	2.7%	4.7%	2.7%	7.3%	22%	5.3%	55.3%
I use Shopee to purchase products to avoid going out during the pandemic	3.3%	4%	2%	5.3%	24%	8%	53.3%
I share the Shopee products in social media to others	8%	12.7%	10%	12.7%	16.7%	16.7%	23.3%

Table 3 below is listed with the descriptive statistics, scale characteristics, and interrelationships amid the factors. The table shows the means, standard deviations, correlations, and Cronbach Alpha for each factor. Pearson product-moment correlation was applied to test the relationship between variables.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's Coefficients Alpha, and Zero-order Correlations of All Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Customer Satisfaction	0.845			
2. Marketing Strategy	0.591**	0.565		
3. Customer Engagement	0.504**	0.671**	0.640	
4. Development	0.454**	0.627**	0.621**	0.716
Mean	3.65	3.77	4.05	3.86
Standard Deviation	1.64	1.70	1.75	1.92
No. of Items	5	2	2	2

*Note: N=150; *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. Diagonal entries indicate Cronbach's Coefficients Alpha.*

In this study, the first variable (customer satisfaction) used five items while the second (marketing strategy), third (customer engagement) and fourth (development) variables employed two items each. Each and every element in these variables were demonstrated on a 7-point Likert scale in the questionnaire. An accepted rule is that 0.6-0.7 indicates an acceptable level of reliability, and 0.8 or greater a very good level (Ursachi, Horodnic, & Zait, 2015). The Cronbach alpha for customer satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.845$) and development ($\alpha = 0.716$) denote strong relationships between the items in the variables as the value of α is in the range of 0.7 to 0.9. Simultaneously, the Cronbach alpha for customer engagement ($\alpha = 0.640$) indicates an insignificant positive relationship amid the set of items of this variable, hence, to be accepted as the value of

α is below 0.65.

The coefficient value ($\beta = 0.671$) indicates a stronger relationship between marketing strategy and customer engagement. Even though a huge profit comes from the inflows of clients and labels, eCommerce is created to fulfill the fast-changing necessities of customers. This way, they will remain using this platform even after the pandemic (Ecomeye, 2021). Advertisements on items and promotions, along with reviews on social media platforms for instance Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, also TikTok describe how customer engagement leads to a practical promotion effect. With this, the advertisement-like or soft-selling promotion produced on social media platforms will be highlighted to many audiences. Satisfied consumers will continue to shop on the Shopee platform; thus, it leads to enhancing business performance. Consequently, as a final observation, there is a significant positive relationship between marketing strategy and customer engagement.

As presented below, marketing strategy, customer engagement, and development were entered as independent variables, while customer satisfaction was entered as the dependent variable. Considering this, the researchers experimented with the hypotheses using regression analysis.

Table 4. Summary of Regression Analysis

Variables	Customer Satisfaction
Marketing Strategy	0.441**
Customer Engagement	0.028
Development	0.210**
R ²	0.379
F Value	29.704
Durbin-Watson Statistic	1.835

*Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.*

The relationship between marketing strategy and development was positively correlated to customer satisfaction with beta values of 0.441 and 0.210. The value of R² was 0.38, which means that 38% of the variation in customer satisfaction was explained by marketing strategy and development. Therefore, the findings revealed that marketing strategy and development of an online marketplace are the two important factors influencing customer satisfaction towards Shopee in Malaysia, leading its business performance. Customer engagement did not significantly influence customer satisfaction towards Shopee in Malaysia.

Table 5 below shows the summary of the hypothesis of the study

Table 5. Summary of hypothesis

Hypothesis	Conclusion
H1: There is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and marketing strategy	Accepted
H2: There is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and customer engagement	Rejected

H3: There is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and the development of an online marketplace	Accepted
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The results reveal that e-commerce is in rapid development, added that Global competitiveness has become increasingly intense due to the accelerating industrial digitalization. According to statistics, in the first quarter of 2021, e-commerce revenue in Malaysia increased by 30% (The Star Online, 2021).

DISCUSSION

The hypothesis shows a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and marketing strategy. The β value of 0.441** infers that the user's satisfaction has a positive influence on marketing strategy. E-commerce ensures its customers and buyers stay put during the pandemic by accomplishing customer needs (Sachitanand, 2020). The core point of the shopping strategy in the modern Shopee marketing platform is based on the consideration that the customer is the starting point and the end goal of the marketing activity. Thus, the first hypothesis (H1) is supported.

The second hypothesis (H2) indicates a positively insignificant relationship. The β value of 0.028 underlined that customer satisfaction has a significant impact on customer engagement towards Shopee. Customer engagement is only restricted to rating the product and giving a review which at times is not enough for other customers to be satisfied with the product being offered. Shopee at the same time doesn't have any means of communication such as a Hash-tag to directly engage with the targeted audience. That increases the searchability of the brand or the company and creates two-way communication with customers (Öztamur & Karakadılar, 2014). Therefore it can be said that customers at times although satisfied with the Shopee platform aren't keen to engage. Accordingly, the hypothesis is not supported.

Hypothesis 3 shows a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and the development of the online marketplace. The β value of 0.210** indicates that user satisfaction significantly impacts the development of the online marketplace. With these positive impacts, the researchers recommend using social media as a platform to increase business performance concerning the increasing social media. E-commerce in Malaysia should rearrange its strategy in order to lead the marketplace, such as having a unique design for its storefronts (Har & Eze, 2011). From those explanations, it can be seen that social media is a popular way to endorse and develop goods/businesses in Malaysia. Particularly, this is a promising way to establish certain products shortly. Nowadays, social media becoming the most eminent and useful tool in business. These findings reveal that using social media for promotion is the most effective way during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the pandemic happens worldwide, these results might be relevant to be used by other countries. Therefore, the third hypothesis (H3) is accepted.

CONCLUSION

According to the findings above, it can be concluded that marketing strategy and development of an online marketplace are correlated with the user of Shopee. This study proved that social media is an effective promotion during the pandemic. However, customer engagement did not significantly influence customer satisfaction with Shopee in Malaysia. The user of social media platforms is highly increasing during the pandemic.

As a result, Shopee's users in Malaysia also increased. It is recorded that around 54 million people visit this platform.

The users are motivated to utilize social media to increase business performance. This study shows that social media is now a popular platform for promoting and developing business. In other words, the future of promoting one's brand or business lies through social media. The importance of social media in business is now more prominent than ever. Because of this research, everyone knows that social media is a prominent tool that beneficial in marketing. The fact that pandemic is happening worldwide, this study might also be useful to be used everywhere.

We suggest every similar platform like Shopee always give their best innovation and renewal, therefore the customer will always look forward. We also recommend Shopee to give some rewards to their clients, as well as improve their advertising. Therefore, their customer will not get boring with the same thing. That way, the customer will be loyal to them. Some constraints can be enhanced for future studies. For instance, the next studies can use other countries as their sample. Also, the researchers can expand their data and not be limited to the students only. Nevertheless, they can further investigate using a quantitative and qualitative method where the data is not limited to the ranges of age.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest

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