The Impacts of Viral Video Through Whatsapp Among Adolescents in Penang, Malaysia

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Abstract. WhatsApp was launched in 2009 as the most popular messaging app that owned more than 600 million users worldwide. The statistic in Social Bakers indicates the growth of WhatsApp users in Malaysia is increased 334 by week and 1225 by month. Being alert towards the nature of social media sites becomes important because not all the contents of WhatsApp produce a good context for children and adolescents. Some of the potential problems of WhatsApp are cyberbullying, sexting, and vulnerability of improper contents. Even though, the outstanding advantage of WhatsApp is included the ease of communication; however, WhatsApp also have the possibilities to demolish an individual’s or organization’s status, and create a sense of depression to the public. This study was conducted to investigate the types of viral videos that spread among adolescents in Penang as well as to explore the impacts of viral videos through WhatsApp. Participants of the study made up of nine adolescents aged between 15 to 19 years old from Penang, Malaysia. The methodology of this research is a qualitative method by using in-depth interviews. The findings showed that there are six types of viral videos that spread among adolescents involved in this study. Meanwhile, both negative and positive has been identified as impacts of viral videos in this study.

1. Introduction
Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp are the types of social media that act as a latest tool for a fast and effective medium in distributing and obtaining information [16] (Paquette, 2013). The process of communication such as sharing information or knowledge can be done easily within few seconds with the emergence of social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Skype, Myspace and etc [19]. Social media are characterized by openness since it allows people to post content, provide feedback and facilitate two-way communication as in face to face communication [13]. Therefore, social media can connect people around the world irrespective of differences and geographical boundaries. In Malaysia, the process of globalization has led to the development of communication technology rapidly. This changes bring many changes to an individual, society, organization and country [2]. Based on the study by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism in The Digital News Report 2017, it is proved that 51% Malaysian consume WhatsApp for searching, sharing or examine news in a week [16]. Recently, a statistic demonstrates the quantity of interpersonal organization clients in Malaysia from 2015 to 2022. In 2022, it is assessed that there will be around 20.42 million informal organization clients in the nation, up from 18.62 million out of 2017 [18].
Based on the statistics in the report that prepared by Southeast Asia Mobile Communications and Mobile Data report in 2007, some countries in South-east Asia own highest mobile penetration rate [11]. There is an increasing in number of requirement for smart phones among the adolescents. Moreover, smartphones which exaggerate (4G) capacity such portable Internet, mobilize computing, chatting, taking picture, recording video, calling, texting or music are common among adolescents [6]. Relative to the general population, adolescents and young adults are the heaviest computer and Internet users, primarily using it for completing school assignments (46%), e-mail and/or instant messaging (36%), and playing computer games (38%). These days a standout amongst the most widely recognized movement among youngsters and teenagers is utilizing online networking sites. Online networking website is any site that approve social cooperation including interpersonal interaction locales, for example Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, MySpace and recently WhatsApp. These sites provide entertainment and communication for user [14].

WhatsApp is defined as a corrective, multi-platform fastest messaging subscription amenity especially for communication. People are able to consign the information, video, pictures, audio, documents and location through WhatsApp. The news from Bernama dated 12th September 2017 proved that Malaysians are the highest WhatsApp users in worldwide. According to the research by TNS Global, Malaysians are categorized as highest WhatsApp users (77%) followed by Facebook users (44%) [11]. In year 2009, WhatsApp was launch by Brian Acton and Jan Koum. WhatsApp developed as the most popular messaging app that own more than 600 million users in worldwide level during year 2014 [10]. Now, the word “viral” is becoming popular in social media. A basic clarification for viral video is the video that pick up prominence by being shared and suggested through online [9]. While the conventional meaning of a viral video just assesses internet sharing and suggestions, in all actuality the circumstance is more perplexing. There are many types of viral video such as viral marketing, violence video, parody and social media challenge video. Then, users also will experience a kind threats from WhatsApp such as spread of vulgar pictures or videos[8].

According to Department of Statistics Malaysia, our country citizens had been increased 1.3% to 32.0 million people in 2017. Therefore, the percentage of citizens that aged 13–64 years old had been increased from 69.5% in 2016 to 69.7% in 2017. This scenario gives the direct impact to the middle-aged Malaysia citizens category to increase. The statistics in Social Bakers indicates the growth of WhatsApp users in Malaysia is increased 334 by week and 1225 by month. Seems the range of age 13–64 years old had been increased 0.2 % from 2016 -2017, majority of the WhatsApp users from that range of age. So, it is proven that the highest users of WhatsApp in Malaysia are adolescents that ranges from 15-29 years old [12]. According to Ministry of Youth and Sports, a citizen of Malaysia that aged 15 years old till 29 years old are considered as adolescent.

Based on the data that provided by Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), accessing social media become the major activity for Malaysian Internet users with 89.3 %. Apart from that, being alert towards the nature of social media sites becomes important because not all the contents of WhatsApp produce a good context for children and adolescents. Some of the potential problems of WhatsApp are cyberbullying, sexting, and vulnerability of improper contents [17]. According to [8], in terms of privacy there are high chances that the users profile picture misused by those having our mobile number and utilizing this application without our consent. According to [1], there are 500 million of WhatsApp users in worldwide that distribute around 700 million of pictures and around 100 million of shares everyday. Even though, the outstanding advantage of WhatsApp is included the ease of communication but WhatsApp also have the possibilities to demolish an individual’s or organization’s status, and create a sense of depression to the public. Hence, notify the public that they must be responsible and careful towards any spreading of information or media content through WhatsApp. This indicates that there are advantages and also disadvantages in usage of WhatsApp [8].
2. Methodology of Research

This present study utilized qualitative methodology on data collected from in-depth interviews with adolescents in Penang. Qualitative methodology was employed to investigate the types of viral videos that spread among adolescents in Penang as well as to explore the impacts of viral videos through WhatsApp. Purposive sampling was used in determining the participants with provisions that these participants must actively used WhatsApp, multiracial and age between 15 to 19 years old. The need for purposive sampling in this study is crucial because participants should have experienced with the phenomena studied, and researchers must identify participants who are proficient in local knowledge [4] or those who can discover them. There is a wealth of information on the central phenomenon of research intentions [15]. Based on these criteria, nine participants were identified. Table 1 below provide the participants characteristics.

| Research Participant | Age | Gender | Race     | Profession            |
|-----------------------|-----|--------|----------|-----------------------|
| Participant 1         | 19  | Male   | Malay    | Marketing Assistant   |
| Participant 2         | 18  | Male   | Chinese  | College student       |
| Participant 3         | 15  | Female | Indian   | Secondary school student |
| Participant 4         | 17  | Male   | Chinese  | Secondary school student |
| Participant 5         | 16  | Male   | Malay    | Secondary school student |
| Participant 6         | 18  | Male   | Chinese  | College student       |
| Participant 7         | 19  | Male   | Indian   | College student       |
| Participant 8         | 19  | Female | Malay    | Housewife             |
| Participant 9         | 18  | Male   | Indian   | Mechanic              |

Semi-structured interview were conducted for data collection in which the researcher asked participants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions which is based on the objective of the study. The main instrument used in this study was self-study through the interview findings. In qualitative research, the central instrument is simply the researcher themselves [5]. According to [5], this research instrument is very important as this study needs a researcher to analyze every word mentioned by the participants to fulfill the research requirements. By applying an in-depth interview method, it will help the researcher to understand in detail of every data that has been delivered by the participants [5].

Further to that, the deductive approach in analysing the data were framed by pre-determined themes based on objectives of the study. The themes were later coded into types of viral videos that spread among adolescents in Penang and the impacts of viral videos through WhatsApp. From the coding, the research were then allow for emerging sub-theme that provide interpretation to the outlined themes. Aside from transcripts obtained from the interviews with the adolescents, richness of
the data in terms of speech patterns, repetitions, vocal intonations, and accuracy which provide crucial interpretation in order to confirm the saturation of the data obtained was also observed.

3. Results and Discussion
Based on the analysis that was run manually, it was discovered that two major themes has emerged from this study. Each theme represented objectives of the study which were to investigate the types of viral videos that spread among adolescents in Penang and to explore the impacts of viral videos through WhatsApp. The first theme resulted six (6) subthemes meanwhile seven (7) subthemes emerged from the second major theme. The figures below show the main themes and sub-themes.

**Figure 1.** Main Theme 1: Types Of Viral Videos

**Figure 2.** Main Theme 2: Impact Of Viral Videos
One of the subthemes for the first main theme is entertainment video which could be categorized into parody, news about celebrities and videos by social media users that has many followers or simply known as “social media celebrities”. According to participant 5, the parody and videos of “social media celebrities” become favourite viral videos to them. The participant also describes that the videos by “King Coco” and “Awek Cendol” become the choices of others including themselves to do the parody viral video.

“Yes, I love to watch parody and videos by “social media celebrities”. Most of the people including myself did parody about King Coco, Awek Cendol and many more.” (Participant 5)

Meanwhile, participant 8 claimed that a video on news about celebrities especially video with element of controversy were the most frequent video he received on this WhatsApp.

“Recently, the viral video of Malaysia’s famous artist Neelofa...she had launched her latest hijab tudung in Zouk. This video became viral few days back. Many people including myself were against her because her act was totally opposite with the Islamic religion.” (Participant 8)

Apart from that, violence video seems to be the second subthemes for the types of viral video spread among adolescent in Penang. According to participant 7, there are some types of violence video that become viral such as kidnapped, abused and murdered. Another participant also added that the incident of a lady being slashed near Klang by two men seems to be one of the abusing video that become viral in 2018.

“Yes... Hmmm.. Mostly it will be about violence that also can be considered as crime. There are some types of violence video such as kidnapping, abusing and murdering. These kind of video will be recorded by public or CCTV and went viral in WhatsApp..i received it from my friend.” (Participant 7)

“Ermm...I had watched many viral videos about violence. Recently, the incident of a lady being slashed near Klang by two men. I think it happened about 2 weeks ago...so scary.” (Participant 9)

Then the third subtheme that formed for types of viral video was obscene video. Based on participant’s experienced, the obscene videos were the most recurring video he received through WhatsApp. Meanwhile, participants 8 claimed that he always received viral videos on politics.

“Almost everyday I received pornographic video through WhatsApp groups..its really make my day..ha..ha..ha..” (Participant 5)

“Hmmm. I think no. Ahhh, wait. Nowadays, I come across these politics video too. Those kind of video will fill my gallery even in two-three days (Informant 8).

Meanwhile, tutorial videos also listed as one of the subthemes that formed under the first main theme. According to participant 3, the tutorial videos that become viral through WhatsApp are mainly related to make-up tutorials and cooking tutorials that turned to be favourite video for them.

“I love to watch make-up tutorials and cooking tutorials. Those videos really occupy my free time. Besides, I had learned a lot from those tutorial viral videos.” (Participant 3)

“Sometimes, I will received viral video about famous foods in Malaysia through WhatsApp and Facebook. I also had viewed some viral video about new place. It become really useful for me and also my family. It is because we love to travel and explore a lot.” (Participant 9)
"Once I bought the skincare products through online. I watched the viral marketing video that product...aaa...known as "QuPuteh". Now, I’m become the fan of Dato Vida and her skincare product. For your information, I’m still using it because I like the products very much." (Participant 8)

The participants also emphasized that recently the viral marketing about famous foods, places and products in Malaysia become one of the technique used by people because it can spread widely through social media especially WhatsApp. Participant 3 and 8 added that, the viral marketing video about the famous skincare products had influenced them. The features of the products had been narrated in those kinds of videos which become viral in WhatsApp. The videos make them impressed and buy those products.

The second main theme is to explore the impacts of viral videos through WhatsApp to participants. Through this study, seven (7) impacts that mostly affected the participants are awareness, enhance skills, information, emotions, share with others, tendency to follow the video and negative impacts. The participants experienced awareness about violence that happened around them from the viral videos. Besides that, participant also learnt about safety tips or footage of real violence incidents that becoming viral in our country which helped them to be more aware and alert about incidents that happened around them. Participant 2 added that viral videos can create the awareness among the parents. It is very important for parents to be alert especially on the cases about child kidnapping.

"I can be more aware about the violence that happening around me such as snatch theft, abusing, sexual harassment and more. Sometimes the video that have safety tips can make me become more careful and alert." (Participant 1)

"It can create awareness among parents. Parents need to know what is happening in our country and around the world." (Participant 2)

Apart from that, enhanced the skills had emerged to be another subthemes under the main theme of impact of viral videos. According to participant 8, she enhanced their skills on cooking, make-up and house decoration after get exposed to viral video through WhatsApp. Another participant claimed that viral videos had improved her skills on singing, cooking and drawing.

"Hmm... I think it can enhance my skills on cooking, make-up, decorating home and so on.ahaa...aha..." (Informant 8)

"To me viral video helps me improve my singing and cooking skills as long as my drawing skills..great." (Informant 3)

Emotion was likely to be another subtheme for impact of viral videos. Depicting from participant’s opinions, viral videos had touched their emotion. Some video that contain violence contents able to make them angry or sad. Another participant added that, they can also get excited and sometimes guilty or sad when watch some of the viral videos.

"Some video make me happy and some video that contain violence or abusing elements make me feel sad and sometimes angry too." (Participant 4)

"I will feel excited and enjoy it. However, some video will make me feel guilty and sad. Example, abusing and violence." (Participant 5)

Apart from that, sharing videos with others turned to be another subthemes for impact of viral video through WhatsApp. Participants which are adolescents have the intention to forward and share those viral videos with their contacts such as family, friends and relatives if the contents are interesting. Tendency to follow the video also increasing among adolescents. They involved
themselves in producing the viral videos. Some adolescents will try a viral video which can show off their skills to public. There are also adolescents that have the tendency to try what they watched from any viral videos and recorded it into video. After the tried of making video success, they will send it to some WhatsApp groups as a way to make it viral and also to achieve publicity. The finding have similarities with a study done by [3] which claimed that involving to act in video became the way of adolescents to portray themselves as entertainers and to get publicity.

Last subtheme identified from the second main theme was negative impacts. Participant 1 claimed that viral videos from WhatsApp can cause spreading of fake information or slander others easily. Another participant also added that viral videos also spread the false information about an incident that can cause many negative effects.

“At the same time, people can be easily slandered by others that personally want to revenge them.” (Participant 1)

“One of the impacts is viral video is it can spread wrong information about an issue. It can cause the reputation of a person, organisation or place get damaged.” (Participant 7)

“If the contents of any viral video cause some dissatisfaction for anyone, any parties or community it will cause problem to many people...viral video gives more negative impacts than positive impacts.” (Participant 4)

There are more negative impacts than positive impacts from viral video. The participant also mentioned that people nowadays are wasting their precious time by doing viral video. However, findings from this study differed from previous study by [20] which concluded that WhatsApp brought positive impact in term of communication among staff members at plastic and reconstructive surgery section.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation
As the technology is growing the social media especially WhatsApp has become the routine for each and every person especially adolescents. They are seen to be addicted with these technology every day. With different fields its impact is different on people. WhatsApp has various merits but it also has some demerits which affect people negatively. There are few impacts of the viral videos that spread through WhatsApp among adolescents. The impacts can be divided into two types which is positive and negative.

This study has discovered the positive impacts as awareness, enhanced skills, information, emotions and share with others. Whereas, negative impacts are tendency to follow the video and dissemination of fake information. Although there are more positive impacts compare to negative, but the negative impacts may reflected long term damaged to the victim. Viral videos through WhatsApp can cause the spreading of fake information or slander others easily. Some suggestions or steps can be taken to provide awareness about positive and negative impacts of viral videos to the society especially youngsters and adolescents in Malaysia. Among the steps that can be taken are awareness campaigns. Through the campaign, adolescents will have the awareness of the disadvantages or legal action which can be taken to whom purposely commit with libel or fake information especially through viral videos.

Apart from that, researchers suggested embedding syllabus about viral on social media in Civic subject at schools. In today's age, adolescents are often using the social media for information. Through this syllabus, adolescents will be aware of the implications and consequences that will be encountered by them if they involved in viral cases. Future research could investigate the culture impact of viral videos that occurs among Malaysian.
There are still many impacts of viral video through WhatsApp or social media as this study is subject to the participants that involved. In conclusion, it can be summarized that this study has meet the purpose which is to investigate the types of viral videos that spread among adolescents in Penang as well as to explore the impacts of viral videos through WhatsApp.

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