



# The Impact of Social Media Information Literacy on Malaysian Youth's Emotional Intelligence

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**Abstract:** Social media has evolved into a network that helps users find information. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are now important sources of up-to-date news and information. In order to give people, the ability to assess, inform about potential threats or effects, and be aware of false information in the network, social media information literacy (SMIL) has been developed. However, that social media can have negative emotional effects that decrease in emotional quotient (EQ) among young people will directly lead to social problems like crime. In this quantitative study, Malaysian youth between the ages of 19 and 40 were examined to determine the impact of social media information literacy (SMIL) on emotional intelligence (EQ). 241 students from three universities in Malaysia who were selected through proportional stratified random sampling and simple random sampling made up the respondents. Data are gathered using a "Google Form" questionnaire and data analysis uses descriptive and inferential statistical analysis to get the results. Social media information literacy (SMIL) and emotional intelligence (EQ) were found to be significantly correlated by Pearson correlation inference analysis. The results of this study have implications for institutions seeking to develop human capital, technology, and media. Other organizations interested in exploring the field of social media information literacy (SMIL) and emotional intelligence (EQ) can use it to meet the sustainable development goals (SDG) in digital sustainability as recommended by UNESCO.

**Keywords:** Social media information literacy, emotional intelligence, social media, youth

## 1. Introduction

The presence of digital media like smart phones helps people get current issues quickly and without time and place limits (Arafah *et al.*, 2022) With advances in information technology, internet users can not only receive information but also send information in the form of comments and share information (Arafah *et al.*, 2022; Ariska *et al.*, 2023). Today's internet media that is the gateway to information is social media (Arafah *et al.*, 2022) and research findings show that 90.03% of people access information through various types of popular social media namely Facebook,

WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter and Tiktok. Bandiling *et al.* (2022), stated that social media has enabled people to engage in social media marketing and that it is one of the best tools and strategies for any promotion. With the rise of social media, consumers can easily share, learn, and access information from any location. As a result, it is critical to understand how to use the internet wisely. There are numerous cases of scams affecting the minds of internet users today (Ariska *et al.*, 2023).

The discussion surrounding inaccurate information in the news and on social media is not new. Over the years, a lot of academics have talked about the caliber of information in the media (Jadir *et al.*, 2022). As a result, a lot of them are curious about digital literacy as a way to protect themselves from media information pollution. Ariska *et al.* (2023), mentioned the achievements in this literacy activity can encourage and influence adolescent perceptions of information media consumption in the form of digital media, changing adolescent beliefs and behavior. There appears to be an urgent need for students to improve their ability to evaluate content and sources, without which their decision-making may suffer (Shabani *et al.*, 2021).

Furthermore, the Sobel statistic and its level of significance suggest an indirect effect of media literacy ( $P < 0.024$ ) and emotional intelligence ( $P < 0.011$ ) on social network addiction via social support. As a result, government social support and authentic sources can mediate the relationship between social network addiction and emotional intelligence among university students and improve their media literacy. Therefore, the focus of this study is to analyze the impact of social media information literacy on the emotional intelligence of youth in Malaysia.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Social Media

The rapid development of web and internet technology has enabled users to build their own businesses, establish social relationships, and share information in real time (Dhian Tyas *et al.*, 2020). Social media is a medium based on internet technology that changes the way information is disseminated from one individual to many audiences (Dhian Tyas *et al.*, 2020) and also becomes a medium that democratizes information, shifting users' roles from receivers to content creators. Social media has become a part of society's routine, and it is an important way for them to communicate, shop, find something to do, and check the news (Jan Hruska, 2020). The increased use of social media has created new opportunities to study various aspects and patterns in communication, such as social media data analysis to gain perspective on issues, trends, influencers, and other types of information (Jan Hruska, 2020). The use of social media has grown in recent years, and the number of users worldwide is expected to reach 4.41 billion by 2025 (Statista, 2021). The string, social media can cause negative emotional effects due to differences in views and beliefs among its users, resulting in negative behavior in expressing their emotions. This finding was also explained by Panger (2017), who stated that the emotions highlighted by users on social media by expressing themselves and their emotional experiences can affect the current emotions of the individual concerned.

### 2.2 Social Media Information Literacy (SMIL)

Digitization makes society reliant on social media as a source of current news information to obtain the desired information (Khan & Idris, 2019; Newman *et al.*, 2020). Social media literacy has been proposed as a potential option for addressing and meeting the needs of young social media users (Tamplin, Mclean, & Paxton, 2018). According to Schreurs and Vandenbosch (2020), social media literacy is defined as the extent to which cognitive and affective structures exist among users to ensure that the risk of interacting with social media content is minimized while the opportunity is maximized. Hamdani and Febri (2020), discovered that university students in Aceh, Indonesia, have a low level of social media literacy to process fake news. Several previous studies have focused on the relationship between social media literacy, the spread of fake news, and school and university students (Hamdani & Febri, 2020). Solntseva and Elena (2022), provided a broad definition of media literacy that includes the ability to read and write, distinguish false from true and verify facts, distinguish opinion from fact, recognize the emotional context of a message, think critically, and evaluate a message. Polanco *et al.* (2023), found the studies show that the concept of social media literacy is based on media literature to then integrate the features and implications of digital platforms. This is associated with the development of cognitive skills, where critical thinking, socio-emotional competence, and technical competence are fundamental, considering the social context.

Media literacy and media ethics must be integrated in order for students to be involved in the educational process from a young age in order to create critical thinking and develop their own answers to life's questions (Hadzialic *et al.*, 2023). The study's findings revealed that two of the three domains of digital literacy competence, technical literacy and cognitive literacy, had a positive correlation in reducing misinformation among university students, while socio-emotional interference had the opposite effect (Anthonysamy *et al.*, 2022). Digital literacy can aid in the identification of misinformation through proper authentication and analysis, particularly in the digital age where everyone is exposed to misinformation. According to Mona *et al.* (2023), in order to be truly digitally and media literate, a person must possess both hard (the ability to use the internet and understand technology) and soft (creativity, persuasion, emotional

intelligence, cooperation, and adaptability) skills. The development of socio-emotional competence is prominent because social media is a place of frequent interaction between people (Polanco *et al.*, 2023).

Several significant issues related to this study include: the digital literacy of cyber communities on the spread of fake news related to the Covid-19 vaccination and intolerance is a major problem with social media as a gateway to information (Arafah *et al.*, 2022); only a small percentage of students critically evaluate information before believing it (Nwawih *et al.*, 2022); people who spend a lot of time on social media are ignoring the consequences that they have in everyday life (Polanco *et al.*, 2023) while many young adults in Malaysia are unable to distinguish the difference between true and fake news.

### 2.3 Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is the ability to recognize the meaning of emotions and their relationship to something that can dominate and solve problems using emotions (Mayer *et al.*, 1999). Emotional intelligence as “the ability to use emotions to shape behavior and thoughts that push toward achieving a goal.” The USMEQ-i, according to Muhamad Saiful *et al.* (2011), divides emotional intelligence into seven aspects, each of which is based on a common basic emotional intelligence dimension:

#### a. Emotional Control

Emotional control is defined as the ability to restrain oneself from distressing emotions and urges in order to effectively control impulsive feelings and unpleasant emotions.

#### b. Emotional Maturity

Emotional maturity can relate to the ability to facilitate and guide emotional tendencies to achieve the desired goal-oriented results with a strong desire to meet their goals and standards.

#### c. Emotional Conscientiousness

Emotional conscientiousness refers to the ability to accept responsibility and maintain integrity in personal performance by taking a firm and principled stance, even if they are not as popular as the leader.

#### d. Emotional Awareness

Emotional awareness is the ability to recognize and understand one's own and others' internal states, choices, sources, and intuitions, as well as their consequences, in order to identify the feelings, they are experiencing and why they are experiencing them.

#### e. Emotional Commitment

Emotional commitment is defined as the ability to coordinate and cooperate with others in a group or organization toward a common goal, as well as the willingness to negotiate in order to achieve a larger goal.

#### f. Emotional Resilience

Emotional resilience refers to the ability to negotiate and solve problems, as well as convey persuasive messages, diplomacy, and tact when dealing with difficult people and uncomfortable situations.

#### h. Emotional Expression

Emotional expression is the ability to transmit and change one's feelings, ideas, and behavior in any changing situation or condition, allowing one to respond appropriately to one's own and others' sentiments.

### 2.4 Social Media Information Literacy (SMIL) and Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

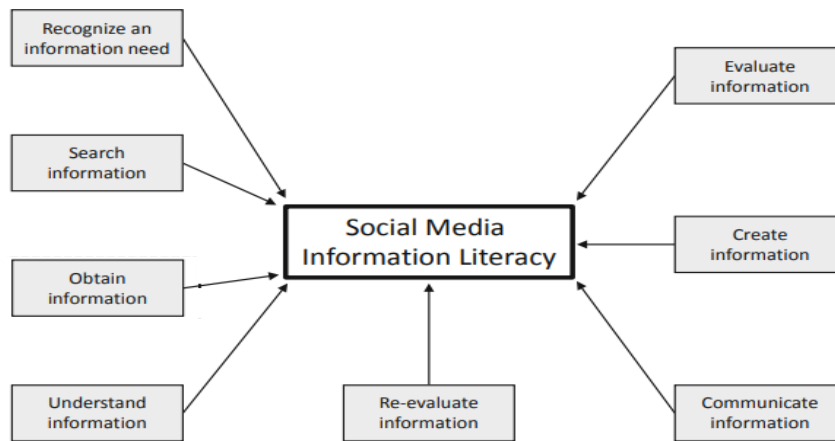
Several previous studies have found a clear link between low emotional intelligence and an increase in problematic use of communication technology such as smartphones, the internet, and video games (Che *et al.*, 2017). Previous research has also shown that emotional intelligence increases and improves the use of knowledge management systems and social software. Recent emotional intelligence research has also linked human traits that lack emotional intelligence to problematic social media use. Emotional intelligence is also consistently linked to general well-being and mental health (Sanchez Alvarez *et al.*, 2016). Lower emotional intelligence scores have been linked to substance-related addictions (Pereira *et al.*, 2019) as well as violent behavioral addictions such as gambling, problematic internet use (Parker *et al.*, 2008) and problematic smartphone use (Arrivillaga *et al.*, 2020; Che *et al.*, 2017).

According to Taylan *et al.* (2008), emotional intelligence includes the ability to share feelings and communication skills with others in social situations. The mass media is a major influence on both personal development and community socialization. Alpian *et al.* (2023), found that there was a positive and significant relationship emotional intelligence with digital literature had a correlation factor of 0.651. This means that there is a positive and meaningful relationship between emotional intelligence and digital literacy. Eskandari *et al.* (2020), discovered that social support

( $r=0.84$ ,  $P<0.0001$ ), media literacy ( $r=0.698$ ,  $P<0.0001$ ), and emotional intelligence ( $r=0.798$ ,  $P<0.0001$ ) were all significantly correlated with network addiction virtual social. Meanwhile, mental health among children and adolescents is a critical public health issue which adolescents are at greater risk (Coyne *et al.*, 2023); and social media are consistently linked to adolescent mental health (Anthonysamy *et al.*, 2022).

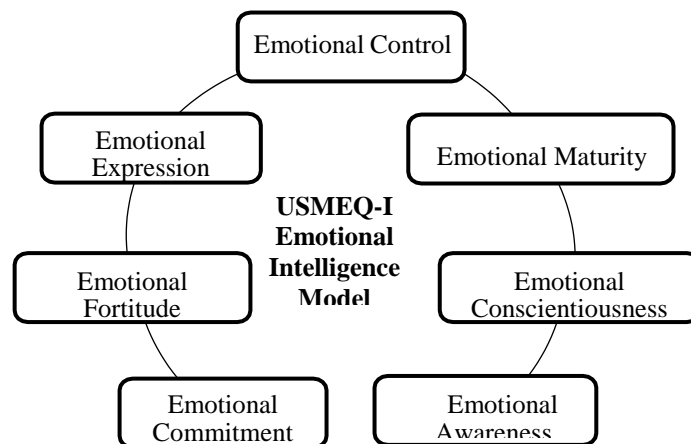
### 2.5 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study's implementation uses two theories as a study guide: The Social Media Information Literacy Model (SMIL) and the Theory of Emotional Intelligence (USMEQ-i). Matthias *et al.* (2019), created the Social Media Information Literacy Model (SMIL) to answer questions about information literacy in the context of social media and how it can be measured. Individual social media users' ability to: (1) identify needed information; (2) search for information; (3) obtain for information; (4) understand information; (5) evaluate information; (6) create information; (7) communicate information; and (8) reevaluate information in the social media environment.



**Fig. 1 - A theoretical framework for social media information literacy (SMIL)**

Muhamad Saiful *et al.* (2011), developed the USM Emotion Inventory (USMEQ-i) using a mixed model approach. The USMEQ-I has seven dimensions that were created using the methodology of the mixed model theory of emotional intelligence. The items in this inventory were derived from a review of the literature on the subject of emotional intelligence. According to Muhamad Saiful *et al.* (2011), the USMEQ-i divides emotional intelligence into seven aspects, each of which is based on a shared basic emotional intelligence dimension: Emotional Control; Emotional Maturity; Emotional Conscientiousness; Emotional Awareness; Emotional Commitment; Emotional Fortitude; Emotional Expression.



**Fig. 2 - A theoretical framework for emotional intelligence USMEQ-I**

Figure 3 depicts the study's conceptual framework, which demonstrates how social media information literacy (SMIL) and its domains can influence young people's emotional intelligence.

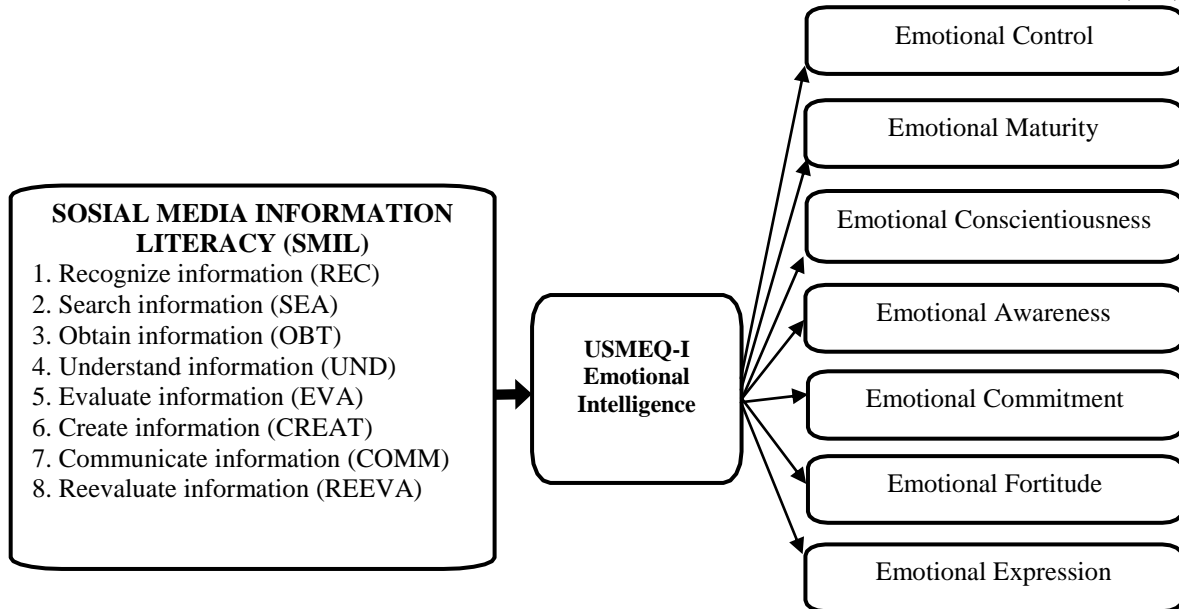


Fig. 3 - Research conceptual framework

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

A survey-based quantitative research approach was used to explain and find relationships between the variables in this study involving two variables, namely social media information literacy (SMIL) and emotional intelligence (EQ). The use of online questionnaires is used as a research instrument for data collection from respondents among youth who are university students in Malaysia. This method of distributing survey questions is more practical when it is needed to identify a variable in a large population.

#### 3.2 Population and Sampling

Malaysian youth aged 18 to 40 years old were used as a study population. The youth group is also an important community group in the catalyst of the country's well-being because it is responsible for shaping the direction of the country in the present and future (Safiah *et al.*, 2016). As a result, the youth group was chosen from among students at Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP), Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Shah Alam Campus, and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) as shown in Table 1. The total sampling from each university was determined using a ratio of stratified random sampling and simple random sampling. In this instance, stratified random sampling (stratified sampling) is a sampling technique that divides the population into sub-populations before using random sampling techniques for each sub-population and each specific population is adequately represented in the entire sample population of the research study (Neil, 2010).

Table 1 - Sample size for each university's studies

Total Population	University Population	Sampel Population	No. of Sampel
35473	Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP) 13000 (37%)	13000/35473x200	74 people
	Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Shah Alam 6473 (18%)	6473/35473x200	36 people
	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) 16 000 (45%)	16000/35473x200	90 people
	100%	Total	200 people

Source: topuniversities.com, ir.uitm.edu.my, global.unimas.my (\*estimated number)

The study population sample size was determined by the researcher using the G-Power software. Figure 4 illustrates the size of the study population for the 15 predictors that were used, using the G-Power method, which included a total of 199 respondents from the three universities.

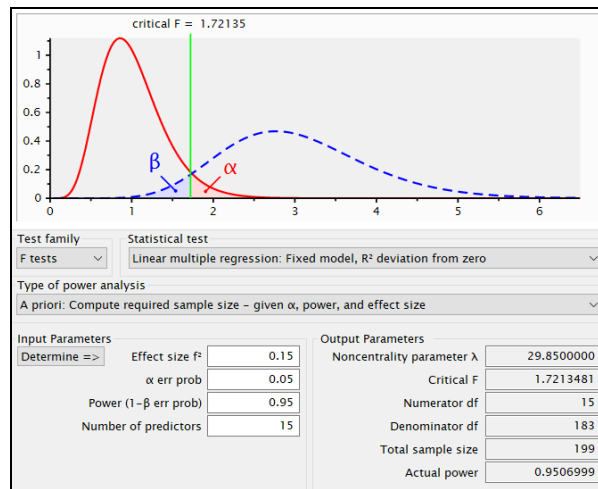


Fig. 4 - G-Power sampling population

### 3.3 Validity and Reliability

In terms of validity, the researchers discussed and solicited feedback from the project team members. Corrections and suggestions were made in accordance with the context of the study. The validity of the measure is directly related to its reliability. The reliability method was used in this study to ensure that the instrument measured consistently. The variables' dependability was very good and acceptable. The instrument's reliability is high because, as shown in Table 2, all predictors for the social media information literacy instrument (SMIL) and emotional intelligence USMEQ-I have Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.9 in both the pilot test and the real study. According to Stikker (2023), a Cronbach's Alpha value of = 0.50- 0.7 is high; = 0.70-0.90 is extremely high; and = 0.90-1.00 is nearly perfect.

Table 2 - Reliability of the pilot test and actual study for the social media information literacy instrument (SMIL) and emotional intelligence USMEQ-I

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	
	Pilot test n=31	Real Study n=241
Social media information literacy (SMIL)	.947	.963
Emotional intelligence USMEQ-I	.955	.970

### 3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Questionnaire forms that have been repaired after the pilot test are distributed online through student representatives at the universities involved to be distributed to WhatsApps groups of students are used as a platform to communicate. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used by the researcher to analyze the data. In this study, descriptive statistical analysis and inferential statistical analysis were both used as types of analysis. Demographic data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine frequencies and percentages. In the meantime, correlation analysis was done to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and social media information literacy (SMIL) among Malaysian youth.

## 4. Results

The distribution of respondent data is described in Table 3 as a result of the descriptive analysis conducted on the 241 respondents who participated in this study. The study's findings included the frequency and percentage for each demographic measure item, including the respondents' gender, age group, level of education, year of study, and university.

Table 3 - Respondents' demographic data (n=241)

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	103	42.7
Female	138	57.3
<b>Age group</b>		
19-23	146	60.6

24-27	88	36.5
28-39	7	2.9
<b>Level of study</b>		
Pre-graduate	228	94.6
Post-graduate	13	5.4
<b>Years of study</b>		
Year 1	34	14.1
Year 2	58	24.1
Year 3	108	44.8
Year 4	24	10.0
Graduation	16	6.6
Other	1	0.4
<b>University</b>		
UniMAP	112	46.5
UiTM (Shah Alam)	46	19.1
UniMAS	83	34.4

According to the findings of Pearson's correlation analysis in Table 4, there is a significant relationship between social media information literacy (SMIL) and emotional intelligence (EQ) among Malaysian youth. The analysis of the results of the relationship study on the domain includes the strength of the relationship ( $r$ ) and significant value ( $p$ ), as detailed below: SMIL versus emotional control (EQCON) ( $r = 0.643$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ); SMIL versus emotional maturity (EQMAT) ( $r = 0.685$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ); SMIL versus emotional thrift (EQCONS) ( $r = 0.642$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ); SMIL versus emotional sensitivity (EQAWAR) ( $r = 0.643$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Because the  $r$  value is greater than 0.61, there is a strong relationship between these four domains. Meanwhile, the other three EQ domains have moderately strong relationships, with  $r$  values ranging from 0.40 to 0.60. There is a significant relationship between social media information literacy (SMIL) and emotional commitment (EQCOMM) ( $r = 0.585$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ); SMIL and emotional resilience (EQFOR) ( $r = 0.571$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ); and SMIL and emotional expression (EQEXP) among Malaysian youth ( $r = 0.582$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ).

**Table 4 - The relationship between SMIL and EQ**

EQ Domain	Analysis	SMIL
EQ (CON)	Pearson Correlation	.643**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
EQ (MAT)	Pearson Correlation	.685**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
EQ (CONS)	Pearson Correlation	.642**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
EQ (AWAR)	Pearson Correlation	.643**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
EQ (COMM)	Pearson Correlation	.585**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
EQ (FOR)	Pearson Correlation	.571**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
EQ (EXP)	Pearson Correlation	.582**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

The study's hypothesis verification results (referred Table 5) show that social media information literacy (SMIL) has a strong influence on the four domains of emotional intelligence (emotional control, emotional maturity, emotional conscientiousness, and emotional awareness). SMIL had a moderately strong effect on the other three EQ domains (emotional commitment, emotional fortitude, and emotional expression). In conclusion, all hypotheses are accepted with the argument that social media information literacy influences the emotional intelligence of Malaysian youth.

**Table 5 - Results of hypothetical relationship between SMIL and EQ**

Hypothesis	Strength	Result
H1: A significant relationship exists between social media information literacy (SMIL) and EQ (Emotional Control) among Malaysian youth.	Strong	Accepted
H2: A significant relationship exists between social media information literacy (SMIL) and EQ (Emotional Maturity) among Malaysian youth.	Strong	Accepted
H3: A significant relationship exists between social media information literacy (SMIL) and EQ (Emotional Conscientiousness) among Malaysian youth.	Strong	Accepted

H4: A significant relationship exists between social media information literacy (SMIL) and EQ (Emotional Awareness) among Malaysian youth.	Strong	Accepted
H5: A significant relationship exists between social media information literacy (SMIL) and EQ (Emotional Commitment) among Malaysian youth.	Moderately strong	Accepted
H6: A significant relationship exists between social media information literacy (SMIL) and EQ (Emotional Fortitude) among Malaysian youth.	Moderately strong	Accepted
H7: A significant relationship exists between social media information literacy (SMIL) and EQ (Emotional Expression) among Malaysian youth.	Moderately strong	Accepted

## 5. Discussion

The demographic profile of respondents is gender balanced, in line with the composition of student enrollment at the university and the Malaysian population. The majority of respondents are between the ages of 20 and 30 because they are postgraduate students, though just a few of postgraduate learners are involved as respondents. Meanwhile, 16 respondents waiting for graduation and a repeat student. The proportion of respondents for each university is also equivalent in terms of the percentage strata of the total student population. The study's findings successfully test the hypothesis and achieve the goal by demonstrating that social media information literacy has an impact on the emotional intelligence of Malaysian youth. Although each domain has a moderate or strong influence, it is significant as an input to stakeholders in an effort to empower media and technology-related literacy education advocacy programs that support MyDigital: Malaysia's digital transformation goals by 2030. The emotional intelligence aspect of media use should also be considered as part of the digital well-being aspect (Yue *et al.*, 2021).

Meanwhile, Digital Intelligence Institute-DQi (2023) supported these two components as important skills for enhancing digitalization: media information literacy skills: the ability to find, organize, analyze, and evaluate media and information with critical reasoning; and digital emotional intelligence: the ability to critically recognize, evaluate, and express one's emotions as well as demonstrate empathy towards other people in digital interactions and environment (Digital Intelligence Institute-DQi, 2023). The information and media literacy and digital emotional intelligence are among 12 skills are commonly identified as important future-readiness skills for individuals to obtain in order to achieve their life well-being as well as their career development based various reports and literatures developed by the international organizations like Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Economic Forum (OECD, 2018; WEF, 2020).

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study's implementation uses the Social Media Information Literacy Model (SMIL) and the Theory of Emotional Intelligence (USMEQ-i) has shown a good measurement instrument and is applicable to this kind of research related to media and psychology. Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that SMIL has an impact on Malaysian Youths' Emotional Intelligence (EQ), achieving the study's goals and supporting the formed hypothesis. In order to empower the EQ of young people who are more digitally savvy in the global trend toward digitization by 2030, this point explains the significance of social media information literacy. The social media literacy advocacy program contributes to shaping digital well-being by making sure that the online community can use technology in a setting that is secure, healthy, and peaceful.

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