

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Adolescents' motivation to use social network sites from a psychological needs perspective

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Abstract

Introduction: Adolescents' social network sites (SNS) use is prominent during the developmental period. Various adolescents' motivations for using SNS have been reported. However, there is a lack of psychological perspectives in understanding the reasons for adolescents to use SNS. This study explored adolescents' motivation to use SNS, and a comprehensive psychological framework was used to dismantle adolescents' reasons and purposes for using SNS. Adolescents' ways of using SNS were explored to contextualize teens' SNS use.

Methods: Semistructured interviews with 18 Malaysian adolescents ($M_{\text{age}} = 15$; 50% female; 10 Malay, 5 Chinese, 1 Indian, 1 Other *Bumiputera*) were conducted. The qualitative data were collected in 2021 in Malaysia through online video calls. Reflexive thematic analysis was the analytic approach.

Results: Six motivations for using SNS were identified: social interaction, content subscription and exploration, emotional support, participation, distraction, and self-expression. Each of the motivations was explicitly linked with different psychological needs. Adolescents were found to use SNS differently in three aspects: deliberate use (i.e., on purpose of use and time spent on SNS), content-selective, and audience-selective.

Conclusion: This study demonstrates that psychological needs are the psychological reasons for adolescents' motivations for using SNS. Adolescence developmental tasks like strong peer identification and identity explorations are parts of the basic and compound psychological needs. Teens are pursuing a sense of self-coherence by using SNS. Adolescents demonstrated to use SNS differently at being deliberate and selective, which is speculated to be a result of the conflict between reflexive and reflective thought processes during SNS use.

KEYWORDS

adolescents, motivation to use SNS, psychological needs, SNS use

1 | INTRODUCTION

Social network sites (SNS) have become an integral part of young people's daily and social lives. SNS is a type of communication platform that allows users to: (1) create a profile with their own or other users' content and/or site-level information, (2) display a list of connections on the site that can be viewed by other users, and (3) create, consume, and/or respond to content created by other users (Ellison & Boyd, 2013). These social platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) are considered networked public spaces where adolescents like to hangout (Boyd, 2014), which has led to them spending a significant amount of time on SNSs (Lenhart et al., 2015). This phenomenon has made adolescents' motivation to use SNS a subject of interest in the field.

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In the present study, motivation to use SNSs was defined as the purpose and reasons for starting and/or maintaining SNS use. Different studies reported various motivations for adolescents' use of SNSs. For example, to make and maintain friendships, explore and experiment with identities (Spies Shapiro & Margolin, 2014; Uhls et al., 2017), connect with others, seek information, and relieve boredom (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020). To better understand the psychological reasons for SNS use, several studies have included different types of psychological needs in their analysis. For example, the need to belong and the need for self-presentation were found to be the main motivators for Facebook use (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). Another study employed the need to belong and the need for popularity as antecedents for examining adolescents' Facebook use and found that fear of missing out mediated the relationship between needs and SNS use (Beyens et al., 2016). A focus group study with 42 adolescents in the United Kingdom suggested that the need for control of relationships, content, self-presentation, and impression may drive increased SNS use (Throuvala et al., 2019). Overall, various motivations and needs related to SNS use have been reported. However, adolescents' psychological reasons for using SNS are still under-explored.

Furthermore, a psychological perspective is crucial in understanding adolescents' motivation for using SNS. According to Dweck (2017), "motivation derives from basic human needs, including psychological needs" (p. 689). This view implies that adolescents' motivation to use SNS can be derived from psychological needs. As mentioned earlier, this study defines motivation to use SNS as the *reasons* and *purposes* for using SNS. This is similar to the concept of motivation construct, which entails the *energisation* (e.g., psychological reasons for using SNS) and *directional* (e.g., purposes for using SNS or the end goals of using SNS) aspects of motivation as the forces that steer one's behavior (Dweck, 2017). Consequently, applying a broader psychological framework is pivotal in unpacking adolescents' motivation to use SNS because it provides an entry point and a psychological context for understanding the *energizing* aspects of adolescents' SNS use behavior, specifically, the psychological reasons that drive adolescents to use SNS.

Therefore, this paper will contribute to the literature by investigating adolescents' motivation to use SNS through a comprehensive psychological framework, namely, Dweck's needs psychological framework (2017). Dweck's framework is utilized in the present study because its conceptions of needs and motivation are aligned with the current study's conception of adolescents' motivation to use SNS. Subsequently, it provides explanatory power in unraveling the psychological needs underlying adolescents' motivations to use SNS by including basic and compound psychological needs, which renders itself a broader psychological framework (more details in Section 2.4). The current study also aims to explore *how* adolescents use SNS beyond the generic description of the frequency and duration of SNS use. Eliciting information on various strategies, if any, which adolescents have adopted in interacting with SNS was intended to provide additional context and gain a fuller picture of adolescents' SNS use.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | SNS use and psychological needs

In general, there were two theories that have been most widely used in explaining the motivation to use SNSs, namely: (i) uses and gratification theory (UGT; Katz et al., 1974), which postulates that media users choose to use media that satisfy their gratification needs and (ii) self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000), which describes three basic psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, competency, and relatedness) that drive SNS use. Based on UGT, different motivations for SNS use have been developed, such as relaxation, social interaction, companionship, habitual pastime, professional advancement, expressive information sharing, or escape (Smock et al., 2011). However, these motivations for SNS use have been used interchangeably with psychological needs (see Wang et al., 2017), blurring the distinction between motivation and psychological needs. The UGT was also used to illustrate the role of SNSs in providing gratification and needs satisfaction, but the nature of the psychological needs in question was not discussed further in this framework. For example, the need for companionship, described as a desire to avoid loneliness, was found to motivate the use of SNSs (Smock et al., 2011), but the type of the psychological needs that companionship or loneliness represents were not explored. This is where SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000) may be of use, where the need for relatedness in SDT can explain the desire for companionship.

Moreover, SDT was commonly used to explain the psychological mechanism of SNS use, that is, innate psychological needs motivate SNS use (Beyens et al., 2016; Przybylski et al., 2013). However, SDT is limited to three basic psychological needs, which limits the coverage of other types of needs. For example, the type of need underlying the motivation to explore identities, which is one of the developmental tasks for adolescents (Christie & Viner, 2005), is not captured in the SDT framework. Although Nadkarni and Hofmann (2012) have referred to this need as the need for self-presentation, it is considered an independent need and not a component of a psychological theory. Therefore, a more comprehensive psychological framework was used in this study to unpack adolescents' motivation for using SNSs, namely Dweck's (2017) psychological needs framework (is explained in greater detail in Section 2.3), which is a part of her proposed unified theory integrating motivation, personality, and development. For example, the identity component in the need for self-coherence in Dweck's (2017) framework can explain the motivation for identity exploration among adolescents when using SNSs, which

was not accounted for in SDT and can be understood by a holistic psychological framework rather than an independent psychological need. In brief, it has been shown that there is a gap in applying a more comprehensive framework to understand how SNSs meet adolescents' psychological needs.

2.2 | SNS use and adolescence development

SNS as a digital landscape adolescents are immersed in, was found to be closely linked with adolescence development (Manago, 2014; Spies Shapiro & Margolin, 2014; Subrahmanyam & Šmahel, 2011), which plays a role in shaping adolescents' reasons and purposes in using SNS. During the developmental period, adolescents experience biological, psychological, and social changes that come with various developmental tasks, for example, developing personal identity, forming strong identification with peers, and establishing social autonomy (Christie & Viner, 2005). In general, past studies have discussed the interplays between SNS use and adolescents' psychosocial development, for example, identity development (Papacharissi, 2011; Spies Shapiro & Margolin, 2014; Valkenburg et al., 2005; Yang et al., 2022), and formation and maintenance of interpersonal relationships with peers or close others (Boyd, 2014; Coli et al., 2023; Davis, 2012; Spies Shapiro & Margolin, 2014).

SNS allows adolescents to self-disclose the personal information they want to share with SNS audiences and receive feedback from the same community, which was described as one of the central processes for identity development in relation to SNS use (Davis, 2012; Manago, 2014; Spies Shapiro & Margolin, 2014). Besides, teens can explore the groups or community they identified with on SNS (e.g., ethnicity group, hobby or interest group), which foster a sense of identity affiliation with the groups and subsequently helps adolescents with the identity experiment developmental process (Spies Shapiro & Margolin, 2014). In addition, SNS enables adolescents to constantly hang out with peers online in a networked public space (Ellison & Boyd, 2013) and to keep in touch with peer group members on SNS (Brailovskaia et al., 2020; Gray, 2018), which is helpful for teens who are in a developmental phase that place great emphasis on their relationships with peers and seek to form friendship for a sense of belonging (Davis, 2012). It appeared that adolescents' developmental tasks like identity development and close relationships with peer groups are contributing to adolescents' motivations for using SNS and potentially interplaying with adolescents' psychological needs in shaping the motivations. For instance, the need for self-presentation (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012) intersects with identity developmental tasks, and the need for belonging (Davis, 2012) intersects with strong peer identification. Therefore, it is important to consider the psychosocial changes that adolescents are experiencing as a backdrop when unpacking adolescents' reasons and purposes for using SNS through a lens of psychological needs.

2.3 | Adolescents' ways of using SNS

Another important aspect of SNS use by young people is how they use them. A qualitative exploratory study on 10 adolescents between 12 and 18 showed that teens appeared conscious of choosing who they trust in online social interactions (Coli et al., 2023). The study revealed that adolescents tend to interact with peers they have already known in real life or online communities with which they identified similarities in interest, age, ways of thinking, and things they are passionate about (Coli et al., 2023). In contrast, a focus group study with UK adolescents suggested that adolescents who perceive SNS as different from face-to-face interactions are more likely to engage with strangers online (Gray, 2018). A qualitative study with adolescents and young adults in Sweden identified three types of SNS use, namely interval, ritual, and emotional use (Bengtsson & Johansson, 2022). Interval use was described as a way to fill time gaps in the day, ritual use referred as a mundane task at the beginning of the day, and emotional use as a way to manage moods, for example, to relax or relieve boredom (Bengtsson & Johansson, 2022). Different descriptions of how adolescents approach SNSs or use SNSs contribute significantly to understanding adolescents' SNS use and contextualizing their motivation for using it.

Put it together, adolescents' motivation to use SNSs can be better understood through the lens of a broader psychological framework, and their approaches to SNS use should also be explored. The following section discusses Dweck's (2017) framework used in the current study to understand why adolescents want to use SNSs.

2.4 | Dweck's psychological needs framework

As illustrated in Figure 1, Dweck's (2017) seven needs framework comprises three basic needs (i.e., acceptance, predictability, competence), three compound needs (i.e., control, trust, self-esteem/status), and one central need (i.e., self-coherence). Needs were defined as having high universal values in which lacking needs can lead to deteriorated wellbeing (Dweck, 2021). Dweck (2017) referred to basic needs as those that cannot be deduced from other needs and reduced to simpler needs required for



FIGURE 1 Dweck's proposed needs framework (Dweck, 2017, p. 691).

psychological wellbeing since infancy; compound needs are a conjunction of basic needs. First, Dweck proposed that the need for acceptance represents the most fundamental form of social need, illustrating one's need to be involved in a supportive relationship. The need for predictability demonstrates the desire to understand the association between events. The last basic need is competence which is about having the capabilities and needed skills to act in the living world.

Moving on to the compound needs, for instance, the need for control refers to the desire for a sense of agency and take charge of a situation that matters to them, which is the combination of the need for predictability and competence. Further, the need for trust is the conjunction of the need for acceptance and predictability, which can be seen as a form of predicted acceptance. The need for self-esteem or status is the combination of a need for acceptance and competence in which the sense of merit one receives is based on the extent to which one feels they are accepted and competent from the outcome of goals pursuits. Lastly, self-coherence is core and emergent of all six needs and is described as a sense of being psychologically intact instead of falling apart. Dweck (2017) argued that in feeling self-coherent, one is constantly answering the question of *who I am* (i.e., identity) and *how does/should the world works* (i.e., meaning), which are subcomponents of the need for self-coherence. In other words, all three primary and three compound need work together to serve the sense of self-coherence in making one feel grounded and psychologically well.

The needs framework was formed by drawing upon various theories and concepts in diverse literature, including personality, social, cultural, evolutionary, motivational, developmental, and clinical psychology (see Dweck, 2017). As articulated by Dweck (2017) in reflecting on past needs categorization, the proposed seven needs are similar to the five social needs proposed by Stevens and Fiske (1995) (i.e., belonging, understanding, controlling, enhancing self, and trusting) and the psychological needs from the SDT by Deci and Ryan (2000) (i.e., autonomy, competency, and relatedness). However, Stevens and Fiske's social need for belonging aligns with Dweck's basic need for acceptance, and the social need for understanding reflects Dweck's basic needs for predictability and competence. On the other hand, the need for competence and relatedness in SDT matched directly with the need for competence and acceptance in Dweck's framework; their need for autonomy is viewed as a compound need which is the need for control in the current framework. The proposed *hub* of all needs, self-coherence, was not previously appeared in both theories. It can be seen that Dweck's framework offers a more comprehensive view of human psychological needs by recognizing the basic and compound nature of needs and proposing a central psychological need that comprises two elements, namely, identity and meaning. The framework offers more explanatory power on human psychological needs, which can be utilized in the present study to explain adolescents' psychological reasons for using SNS. As mentioned before, the identity component in need for self-coherence can explain adolescents' need for identity exploration in using SNS, which was not accounted for in SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and the five social needs (Stevens & Fiske, 1995). Therefore, Dweck's framework was adopted for the present study's theoretical framework.

In short, a psychological perspective is needed to unravel adolescents' motivation to use SNS to gain deeper insights into the driving forces underlying adolescents' purposes to use SNS. Previous studies have not adopted a comprehensive psychological framework to explain adolescents' reasons and purposes for using SNS. The present study aimed to fill this gap by identifying the motivation for SNS use among adolescents and then dismantling each motivation from the perspective of psychological needs using Dweck's (2017) framework. The framework is chosen because its holistic view of psychological needs on human development and motivational behavior provides comprehensive explanatory power on adolescents' SNS use. This study also explored adolescents' different ways of using SNS to contextualize adolescents' SNS use experience. As Dweck's (2017) framework has not been considered in this field previously, and adolescents' voice is crucial in providing an

in-depth insight into their SNS use experiences, the present study was designed to be a qualitative exploratory investigation which aimed to address the following two research questions:

1. Why do Malaysian adolescents want to use SNS?
2. How do Malaysian adolescents use SNS?

3 | METHODS

3.1 | Participants

Small and purposive samples are appropriate for the qualitative and exploratory nature of the study. Participants ($N = 18$) aged from 13 to 17 years old from different ethnic groups in Malaysia were recruited through social media and collaboration with local secondary school authorities in the central region of peninsular Malaysia. Ten participants were Malay, 5 Chinese, 2 Indians, and one was in the *Other Bumiputera*¹ category. The ethnic ratio of participants in this study attempted to reflect the ethnic proportion in the Malaysia population (i.e., Malay 57.8%, Chinese 22.7%, Other Bumiputera 12.2%, Indians 6.6%, Others 0.7%) (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023). The particular region (i.e., Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, Selangor) is selected for participant recruitment because the internet infrastructures in the area are well developed and maintained. The availability of stable internet ensures the recruited participants were in the region where they could use internet whenever they wanted to and/or were allowed to, which is vital for interpreting the collected data.

3.2 | Design

A qualitative study with semistructured interviews was designed to explore Malaysian adolescents' motivations for using SNS and the associated drives behind identified reasons and investigate how adolescents use SNS. The rationale for adopting the qualitative method is to capture adolescents' voices in describing their SNS use experiences, which eliciting and valuing students' accounts of experiences through students' voices provide researchers deeper and more meaningful insights into students' lives (Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007). Subsequently, a significant advantage of semistructured interviews is that it allows participants to describe their SNS use experience in breadth and depth about the prepared interview questions.

Previous studies informed questions for the interviews on adolescents' SNS use and motivation to use SNS (Best et al., 2014; Gray, 2018; Spies Shapiro & Margolin, 2014). For instance, "what made you start to use SNS," "what makes you keep using SNS now?," "how often do you use SNS," "what do you usually see on your SNS?," "how do you feel when you use SNS?." Prompts such as "can you elaborate more?," "can you give me an example..." and "what do you mean by..." were used to elicit further accounts from participants. The semistructured interviews were conducted online, one-to-one with each participant, and took 60 min on average. Online video call was chosen to adhere to the safety guideline for COVID-19² pandemic restriction in Malaysia at the time.

3.3 | Procedure

Research materials, including research design plans, interview questions, consent forms, and information sheets for parents and participants, were approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge. Parents and participants were aware and assured they could withdraw from the project at any point in the study. Participants could choose the languages they are most comfortable expressing themselves, that is, Malay, Chinese, or English, in which the researcher was proficient. Before each interview began, participants were told explicitly about aspects such as no right or wrong answers to avoid conformity due to cultural tendencies (Sedikides et al., 2003). It is worth mentioning that the data collection was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, from when movement control orders were enforced to when social distancing restrictions were slowly lifted. Therefore, participants' social experiences against this backdrop were accounted for in the collected data and subsequent data analysis. For instance, when students described their SNS use during the pandemic as needing emotional support during the lockdown period, it was reported as such in the findings.

¹*Bumiputera* means "sons of the soil" (Siddique & Suryadinata, 1981, p. 666). *Other Bumiputera* refers to non-Malay indigenous ethnic groups (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023).

²COVID-19 refers to the Coronavirus disease-2019 pandemic, which occurred at the end of December 2019 (World Health Organization, 2020).

3.4 | Data analysis

The analytic approach for the interview data was reflexive thematic analysis (Braun et al., 2019). A researcher's reflexivity and active role are critical in this study due to the researcher's role in interpreting two different languages (i.e., Malay and Mandarin) into English for generating codes and themes. The researcher's positionality as a Malaysian Chinese who went to the same school system as all of the participants, that is, national secondary schools,³ contributes to the rapport building with participants and shapes the subjectivity required to interpret and make meanings of participants' SNS use experiences from their daily schooling lives. Hence, the researcher's active roles include being sensitive to the power dynamics that students have become accustomed to in the national school's structure, being considerate of cultural differences across ethnicity, being deliberate in creating a safe space for participants to express their experiences, and being constantly critical about the language interpretations during the interviews and analysis process.

All recordings were transcribed in the original languages used in the interview. However, all codes were generated in English as the researcher coded directly using English on the non-translated transcripts. That is because the researcher is proficient in Malay, Mandarin, and English; hence, the researcher can interpret the non-English transcripts directly in English during the analysis. Having the same person conduct interviews and code the transcripts was a way to ensure the coherency of the data's interpretation and meaning. The excerpts used to illustrate the findings were translated into English for the same purpose. Data were analyzed using ATLAS.ti version 9 (2022).

Themes are conceptualized as "patterns of shared meaning" (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 39), reflecting a higher-level concept encapsulating all the generated themes. In the present study, there are two separate thematic analyses per two separate research questions. In the first thematic analysis, motivation for SNS use was the central concept constituted by the generated themes from the collected data. Themes were identified at both semantic (e.g., social interaction with peers) and latent levels (e.g., the sense of belonging from participating in the SNS community). Adolescents' reasons for starting or to keep using SNS were tagged and categorized into different strands of motivation for SNS use. After the formation of themes, the motivations for using SNS were then interpreted and unpacked from the perspective of psychological needs in the write-up process. In the second thematic analysis, another central concept is different approaches to using SNS, which aimed to describe how Malaysian adolescents use SNS that is not limited to only frequency and duration of SNS use but also different ways of navigating through it.

Specifically, the data analysis was conducted in a recurrent process: familiarization of transcripts data, generations of codes, development of initial themes, review of generated themes with the other researcher, refining the themes' names, and writing up the process of theme development. In the write-up process, a coding system was created to make references for quotes from participants.⁴

4 | RESULTS

The following section presents the findings per the research questions: first is the motivation to use SNS (RQ 1) followed by approaches to using SNS (RQ 2).

4.1 | Motivation to use SNS

Six themes were generated to reflect adolescents' motivation in using SNS stemmed from their psychological needs: (i) social interaction, (ii) participation, (iii) distraction, (iv) content-subscription and exploration, (v) emotional support, and (vi) self-expression. Table 1 summarizes these themes with exemplification and presents them descending from the most frequently discussed motivations to the least. The developed themes are delineated by patterns of meanings and with respective underlying psychological needs, which are further explained in the discussion section. There might be little overlap between themes (see Section 4.1.5 differentiating social interaction and emotional support), which is inevitable given one's psychological needs interplay with each other. However, the themes are sufficiently distinctive to form a theme.

4.1.1 | Social interaction

Social interaction refers to the desire of wanting to interact with people. It includes using SNS to keep in touch with real-life and online friends (whom they have never met in person before) and establish new relationships. Those who mentioned this

³National secondary school (*Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan*) in Malaysia provides free secondary education with a national syllabus that is open for all Malaysian. Within this structure, Malay is the primary medium for teaching and learning. English is a compulsory school subject, and Mandarin is an optional subject.

⁴The coding system: *pseudonym*, *age* (16 = 16 years old), *ethnicity* (M = Malay, C = Chinese, I = Indian, OB = Other Bumiputera), and *gender* (F = Female, M = Male). For example, 'Shafiqah, 16MF' referred to Shafiqah as a 16-year-old Malay female participant.

TABLE 1 Six developed themes about motivation to use SNS among adolescents.

Themes	Definition	Quotations examples
Theme 1: Social interaction	Want to interact with people	<p>“Except for talking to friends, I don't really do anything else.” (Shafiq, 16MF)</p> <p>“...you know, I want to keep in touch with my friends...” (Isla, 13MF)</p> <p>“I use it every single day to contact with my friends...” (Sheyla, 14IF)</p> <p>“...I am happy that I can increase the number of my friends online... although they are not in real life friends, but friends on social media is okay too...I can invite them to play mobile games together...or I can ask to meet them in real life.” (Karis, 14MM)</p>
Theme 2: Participation	Want to be a part of something and do not want to be missing out.	<p>“...because a lot of my friends they started to use Instagram so not a lot of people are on Facebook anymore. So it is very easy to transform.” (Shafiq, 16MF)</p> <p>“because I saw people around me started to use SNS...so I try to download it and started to use it...” (Catherine, 16CF)</p> <p>“On Reddit, I just lurk.” (Olaham, 16CM)</p>
Theme 3: Distraction	Want to remove boredom, past time and/or get away from current state of thoughts, feelings, or tasks.	<p>“Because I am bored...have got nothing else to do...” (Zhi Yao, 14CM)</p> <p>“because of lockdown during pandemic...I started to use it (Tik Tok) because I am bored.” (Faruk, 16MM)</p> <p>“It helps...it distracts...it actually takes me (away) from reality for like a few minutes, (Olivia, 14CF)”</p> <p>“if I am boring and got nothing else to do...I use SNS to get away from boredom.” (Aisha, 16MF)</p>
Theme 4: Content-subscription and exploration	Want to follow the contents or figures of interest	<p>“...because I like basketball very much and Instagram has a lot of news about it...like updates about game matches or latest news about the sport. So, most of my time on Instagram are used to follow NBA stuff.” (Rynion, 16CF)</p> <p>“...mostly are movie excerpts...because I can use the shortest time to finish watching a movie.” (Zhi Yao, 14CM)</p> <p>“I want to see if the person I follow has updated any new videos...” (Tommy, 16MM)</p> <p>“...like learning about society, things, and issues I never knew and issues I never thought about in depth.” (Olivia, 14CF)</p>
Theme 5: Emotional support	Want to receive emotional support, assurance, or acceptance from others.	<p>“During lockdown period, it was very lonely, I could not go out and could not play basketball, so what do I do? I watch people play basketball on the SNS...it is like...feeding on illusions.” (Rynion, 16CF).</p> <p>“we talk about something particular about our life, like something we stress over about...” (Sheyla, 14IF)</p> <p>“when I feel lonely...and I have this group of people (on SNS), they are like supportive people...” (Mishella, 16MF)</p>
Theme 6: Self-expression	Want to express one's thoughts, feelings, experiences, or creations.	<p>“(SNS is) an outlet for me...I feel like it is really important for me because I don't get to express myself...I really can't be myself, especially for all expectations and things I have to meet up to... that is kind of why I had social media...” (Olivia, 14CF).</p> <p>“...improve the way I wear my clothes by looking at the styling advises from the content creators...so that when I go outing, I can imitate their styles and see what the effects is...” (Catherine, 16CF)</p> <p>“I post about what I was feeling sometimes because I don't follow a lot of people on Twitter, so there is not a lot of judgement.” (Shafiq, 16MF)</p>

motive often emphasized the importance of being able to talk to someone, e.g., “SNS are really helping us to keep in touch with each other and meeting new people, which is very important...because when someone doesn't have anyone to talk about, they go online, find friends and they will have someone to talk about instead of being lonely...” (Sheyla, 14IF).

The conversation with real-life friends usually includes schoolwork or activities in school. Whereas the topic of common interest mainly initiates interaction with new online friends, for example, mobile or computer games, hobbies, celebrities of interest, or Korean pop culture. Developing a supportive relationship with online friends they have never met before by interacting online is not uncommon among Malaysian adolescents. The strength of the relationship is reflected by: “when I am sad, it is easy to talk to these people (a group of online friends on Discord) (Mishella, 16MF),” and “I have a lot of online best friends (Sheyla, 14IF). The role of SNS as a means to connect with school friends became salient during the lockdown period in Malaysia due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 (Malaysian National Security Council, 2020). Teaching and learning were temporarily shifted to online mode; hence, adolescents were not meeting their friends in school. Malaysian adolescents use the SNS to keep in touch with their school friends. For instance, “...to talk to my friends. Like during the pandemic when we can't meet each other, I can use SNS to video call my friends for chatting (Catherine, 16CF).”

However, it was frustrating for those who could not contact their school friends because their friends did not have access to SNS or had to rely on their parents' permission to use SNS. “Usually, I have a group of friends to hang out with in the school. But during lockdown, it all went quiet, because it is difficult to get in touch with them...because they had to use their parents' handphone...it was difficult for me...until I found a group of online friends on SNS (Mishella, 16MF).” It took them some time to get used to the fact that they could not talk to their school friends as usual during the lockdown period. However, SNS enabled them to meet people with shared interests and provided a space for social interaction.

In contrast, it remains a challenge for those who did not have autonomous access to SNS during the pandemic to interact with school friends. “If ranging from one to ten, not even at level one (my interaction with school friends) ...even if it happens, I had to do it secretly...because I do not own a mobile device... I can borrow my mum's device for online classes, I can borrow from my older brother for entertainment but that entirely depends on his mood (Tommy, 16MM).” Their desire to talk to peers heightened during the pandemic; hence, not having access to SNS for socialization was a challenging experience for them. In short, wanting to talk to people, real-life or online friends, was one of the primary motivations for Malaysian adolescents to use SNS.

4.1.2 | Participation

This category refers to the desire to be a part of something or be in the know. Some part of the reasons reflects the fear of missing out; which first use of SNS was commonly described as just wanting to try it out because it is the trending SNS application, e.g., “it is like a really famous social network, like something many gamers will use, (Sheyla, 14IF)”. It is also because peers have started using it and want to be a part of the users' community. For example, “because I saw people around me started to use SNS...so I tried to download it and started to use it..., (Catherine, 16CF).” Subsequently, adolescents were not necessarily having a clear purpose of logging into their SNS. As one participant said, “On Reddit, I just lurk. (Olaham, 16CM).” They needed to be aware of what their friends were doing or just wanted to *know* what people were discussing on the SNS. Logging into SNS gave them a sense of participation in a community, albeit a virtual and networked one.

4.1.3 | Distraction

This theme includes wanting to alleviate boredom by getting stimulated through various content on SNS. For example, “My friend introduced Tik Tok to me, saying it can remove boredom, so I have decided to download it to reduce feeling bored (Shafiqqa, 16MF).” They described the feelings of not knowing what to do other than going onto SNS to see if anything was interesting. Commenting on why they use SNS, one participant commented: “because I have got nothing else to do...even before (the enforcement of stay-at-home policy during pandemic)... (Zhi Yao, 14CM).” This motivation also captures the notion of wanting to get away from the current state of thoughts or feelings, which resonates with the desire to get distracted from stimulation. As the comment illustrates, “(when) I feel like I am depressed about things...so I will just go on there and just be scrolling and relax my mind... (Mike, 16IM).” The short clips from SNS served as entertainment or a distraction from stresses like examination. Hence, getting distracted from boredom and what they were feeling and thinking at the time have motivated adolescents to use SNS.

4.1.4 | Content subscription and exploration

This theme includes following content or figure of interest and exploring new content on the SNS. Following an SNS page is like subscribing to a weekly or monthly magazine to update oneself about the latest news or issues about subscribers'

interests. An SNS page could be content-oriented (the page is dedicated to a particular content, e.g., chess) or figure-oriented (the page is dedicated to a person). For example, “The first instance I learned about Instagram, I searched and found ‘Stephen Curry! I was so happy! (Rynion, 16CF).” In this case, the participant subscribed to figure-oriented content (i.e., the basketball player) and news about the sport.

Exploring content for information or inspiration is included in this category too. Adolescents stated that features like the “For you” page in Tik Tok, the “Search” page in Instagram, the “Trending” page in Twitter, and the “server room” in Discord were helpful when looking for information or inspiration. For example, “I just look at what appeared on my ‘for you’ page... there is poems, bullet journals...bedroom decoration ideas... (Shafiq, 16MF).” Adolescents were happy to try out the suggestions on these pages and liked that similar content would keep appearing. This includes watching and observing different gaming strategies from other players who have uploaded their gameplay on the SNS (the gaming process can be recorded and uploaded as a video). However, it was noticeable that all male participants mentioned competitive gaming as one of their primary interest content on the SNS, as opposed to only two female participants who mentioned casual gaming. As such, following different types of content or exploring different ideas is one of the main reasons to use SNS for Malaysian adolescents.

4.1.5 | Emotional support

This theme refers to the desire to receive emotional support like reassurance, advice, or just talking about stresses in life by interacting with friends on SNS. This motivation differs from *social interaction* (Theme 1) in that desiring emotional support is a conscious state of mind, not a mere by-product of social interaction. For instance, adolescents who desire emotional support can choose to interact with their friends on SNS. However, those who wanted to interact with their friends on SNS were not necessarily seeking emotional support. For example, “when you are stressed about your studies...you can go on SNS and see your friends posted that they are having the same stress too...then your stress will be eased a little bit...because there is someone with you in this together...you will reply to their post saying ‘let us do this together’...(Rynion, 16CF).” In this case, emotional support was in the form of assurance because knowing peers are in a similar stressful learning situation makes them feel connected and supported.

Emotional support can be in the form of soothing loneliness too. One participant stated, “when you are lonely, you need friends...so you can be like hello, my name is this, and my age is this...we can message each other...(Sheyla, 14IF).” Consuming favorite content on SNS can be a form of emotional support too; for instance, “during lockdown period, it was very lonely, I could not go out and could not play basketball, so I watch people play basketball on the SNS...it is like satisfying my needs to play... (Rynion, 16CF).” These reasons were described as the drive to keep them using SNS, especially at the time in need of emotional comfort. Therefore, yearning for emotional support has motivated adolescents to use SNS.

4.1.6 | Self-expression

This category included reasons for expressing one's thoughts, feelings, experiences, or creations. SNS was described as an outlet for adolescents to convey their inner struggles via an SNS platform comfortably. For example, “I post about what I was sometimes feeling because I don't follow a lot of people on Twitter, so there is not a lot of judgement (Shafiq, 16MF).” Experiencing unpleasant feelings on the SNS from expressing too much or *oversharing* did not stop them from using it. Instead, they adapted their strategies to make themselves more comfortable on the platform. “I did unfollow a lot more people...I share less... (Shafiq, 16MF).” More details about *how* adolescents use SNS are discussed in the next section.

Self-expression also refers to showing others what they have created, including handcrafts, drawings, recorded gameplay, or live game streaming. For instance, “uh, income doesn't really motivate me. I guess it's more like wanting people to watch my content, (Olivia, 14CF).” Indirect self-expression was achieved by exploring identity presentation on the SNS. For instance, adolescents mentioned they would notice how people wear their clothes and experiment with presenting themselves similarly in real life. SNS became one of the spaces for adolescents to express themselves and used to explore their identities.

4.2 | Approaches to using SNS

This section addresses the research question “How do Malaysian adolescents use SNS?”. Approaches to using SNS refer to the different ways adolescents engage and interact with SNS, which showed adolescents are different in being deliberate or selective on three dimensions: purpose and time spent on SNS, type of content (i.e., customize preferred content or filter uninterested content), and type of audiences (i.e., online and/or offline friends). The themes reflect the three dimensions of conscious SNS use: deliberate use, content-selective, and audience-selective (see Table 2).

TABLE 2 Three developed themes on approaches to using SNS.

Themes	Definitions	Quotations examples
Theme 1: Deliberate use	Use SNS consciously in relation to purpose and time.	“If I finish watching that part, but then I don't have anything (to do on SNS), Ok just off. Off them and then I just do my other stuff like watching TV, maybe do my homework and chat with friends.” (Mike, 16IM)
Theme 2: Content-selective	Being critical or particular about content on their SNS.	“if Instagram recommend things that I interested in, then I would try to watch it. And sometimes I am not interested in it, I will search my interest on my own...” (Isla, 13MF)
Theme 3: Audience-selective	Being selective about viewers or connection made on SNS.	“my Instagram and Facebook...are all my good friends (in school).” (Rynion, 16CF)

4.2.1 | Deliberate use

This theme refers to a conscious use of SNS by keeping the purpose of use and time spent on SNS in mind. Some participants reported they were conscious of their time spent on the SNS. One participant commented: “I think of Tik Tok...once I start scrolling, I will never stop, and I get very distracted and cannot concentrate on my studies. I need to get rid of this then (that is why) I just deleted it, (Mike, 16IM).” They stopped using and uninstalling some SNS because they found them addictive and distracting. In contrast, adolescents also reported they kept scrolling the short clips on SNS before sleep until they were too excited to fall asleep. “If I was on the bed and very hard to go to sleep...then I was like just let me check Tik Tok out for a few minutes, and it ended up doing for hours (Shafiq, 16MF).”

They also mentioned that they have different purposes for each SNS. For example, Twitter was used to update world news, Instagram was used to check out in-real-life friends, Tik Tok was for escaping reality, and Discord was for a gaming community. As one participant mentioned: “I use Twitter a lot for the news...I use Tik Tok because it is fun, (Shafiq, 16MF)”. They were mindful of what they were getting from the SNS. One participant commented: “There (Instagram) is no important stuff...I don't get anything in my life from it...some more wasting my time on social media, (Mike, 16IM).” Some reported parents helped to control their time spent on mobile devices, for example, “I am allowed to go on it for 2 h per day, and I used it for competitive gaming, I will go on Tik Tok if I have leftover time, (Daniel, 14OM).” In sum, adolescents are different at being conscious about occupied time on SNS and purposes on the use. Some can control their time spent on SNS, but some need parental intervention.

4.2.2 | Content-selective

This theme refers to having a preference for content and acting on it by filtering the content that appears on their SNS. Adolescents reported actively ignoring the content they find uninteresting, and the SNS will come back with the content they prefer by learning their preference. “If Instagram recommends things that I am interested in, then I would try to watch it. And sometimes I am not interested in it, I will search my interest on my own (Isla, 13MF).” On the contrary, adolescents who were not selective about content type would watch or consume the recommended content. “I do not follow any particular content-creator...I just watch what is available... (Zhi Yao, 14CM).”

Interestingly, one reported not relating school learning to what she sees on SNS, “I do not like to mix school with what I like because I don't like school in general...as a teenager, I feel like we are given many responsibilities to act as an adult...I am asked to do all the chores in the house apart from my school homework, too (Shafiq, 16MF). This particular account of how adolescents tailored their SNS content to avoid what they do not like can be seen as a way to get away from feeling overwhelmed by seeking by seeking distraction from SNS, which was one of the motivations for SNS use (discussed in Section 4.1.5).

4.2.3 | Audience-selective

This theme includes being selective about the connection made on the SNS. Some stated they do not like having a stranger on their SNS and only accept friend requests from the people they know in real life. They felt uncomfortable sharing personal life moments with people they did not know before, for instance, “I am not close with you (offline acquaintance)...why do I want you to be in my SNS and let you know stuff about myself? (Rynion, 16CF).” Some choose SNS platforms that have less connection to post their personal feelings, for example, “I post about what I was sometimes feeling because I do not follow many people on Twitter, so there is not much judgement, (Shafiq, 16MF).” Due to

worries about the nature of comments on their post, adolescents were mindful of the audiences that could view their posted content.

On the other hand, some reported they enjoy making friends online, including those they have never met in person. "Mainly online friends are way more than offline (friends) right now...I interact with them over time (Olivia, 14CF)." Adolescents mentioned they had found supportive friendships on SNS with people they have met online, so they do not mind keeping connections online. For instance, "I have been very close with friends I meet online...we talk about a lot of stuff..." (Sheyla, 14IF).

5 | DISCUSSION

This qualitative study explored Malaysian adolescents' motivation to use SNS and approaches to using SNS. Six motivations (i.e., social interaction, participation, distraction, content subscription and exploration, emotional support, and self-expression) were found to describe adolescents' various reasons for SNS use which were linked to different psychological needs (Dweck, 2017). In addition, the present study found that adolescents are using SNS differently at being deliberate or selective in three aspects: deliberate use (on purpose or time spent on SNS), content-selective, and audience-selective. In discussing these findings, first, the linkages between each motivation and the associated psychological needs in Dweck's framework (see Table 3), then adolescents' SNS use in relation to their developmental tasks from the perspective of the psychological needs are discussed. The last part discusses the three dimensions of being a conscious SNS user in an attempt to understand how Malaysian adolescents use SNS.

First, for *social interaction* reasons for using SNS, the underlying psychological need was suggested to be the need for acceptance, which was described as the most basic form of social need (Dweck, 2017) or, similarly, the need for connectedness by Deci and Ryan (2000). Consistent with previous research, adolescents use SNS to maintain and establish a relationship with others by seeking social interaction on SNS (Brailovskaia et al., 2020; Throuvala et al., 2019). By interacting with others (e.g., chatting on SNS, commenting or replying to others' posts), adolescents feel connected with peers, and thus the need for acceptance is fulfilled. Adolescents reported that the need for social interaction became salient during home-based learning during the pandemic. Although SNS use satisfied the need for social interaction, those who did not have access to SNS yearned more for SNS use. Besides, the need for acceptance can be linked with adolescents' developmental task of strong peer identification in which adolescents sought a sense of belonging from their friendships. Therefore, the adolescence developmental needs for acceptance, mainly through interpersonal relationships with peers, contribute to the motivations for social interaction. These findings support previous studies that interacting with peers was the most dominant motivation for using SNS (Barker, 2009; Stockdale & Coyne, 2020).

The second theme, participation, reflects the need for self-esteem or status, which combines a need for acceptance and competence (Dweck, 2017). Participation refers to the desire to be involved and/or in the know, including affiliation with friends by existing on the SNS or fear of missing out on what friends were doing, knowing, or experiencing. The findings suggested that the *desire to be a part of something* addresses the need for acceptance, and the notion of *not missing out* addresses the need for competence. As the results show, adolescents want to use SNS because the social platform was the well-known one at the time when most of their peers were using it. If they did not know the experience of using the latest SNS, they were missing out. Fear of missing out (FoMO) refers to the worry of not experiencing what others have experienced due to absence (Przybylski et al., 2013). A possible explanation is that missing out appeared less favorable or incompetent because they needed to learn or experience the latest trend or news. In addition, acceptance may be an indicator of competency, and hence being a part of something provides a sense of self-esteem to adolescents. As stated by past studies, non-western people might pursue feelings of worthiness through group acceptance in which *self-esteem* was defined as identity or self-worth in collectivist culture (Sedikides et al., 2003). Therefore, the feeling of worthiness through group

TABLE 3 Adolescents' motivation to use SNS and underpinned psychological needs.

Motivation to use SNS	Underlying psychological needs	Nature of the psychological need
1. Social interaction	Need for acceptance	Basic
2. Participation	Need for self-esteem or status	Compound (need for acceptance and need for competence)
3. Distraction	Need for control	Compound (need for predictability and need for competence)
4. Content subscription and exploration	Need for control	Compound (need for predictability and need for competence)
5. Emotional support	Need for trust	Compound (need for acceptance and need for predictability)
6. Self-expression	Need for self-coherence	Core of all basic and compound needs

acceptance is in line with the need for self-esteem under this theme. These findings support previous studies where FoMO was a leading drive for adolescents to use SNS (Beyens et al., 2016; Throuvala et al., 2019). In addition, adolescents are sensitive to changes in social environments during the developmental period (Blakemore & Mills, 2014). They are good at recognizing cues that help them attain social competence, and a desire for peers' respect or status in their social context (Yeager et al., 2017). The transformative framework from Nesi et al. (2018) has illuminated that social media, which includes SNS, is a conducive environment for adolescents to pursue *peer status*, particularly peer-perceived popularity, by heightening their awareness of their own and others' popularity and enabling adolescents' engagement in status-seeking behavior. Therefore, it can be understood that adolescents satisfy their needs for self-esteem or status by using SNS for participation motivation to demonstrate their social competence.

The third theme was distraction, which denotes the desire to remove boredom and/or to get away from the current state of circumstances through getting distracted by SNS content. Boredom is commonly described as an emotional state that is "low in arousal and of slightly negative valence," which is not merely about the lacking of interest or positive emotion but a state that one wants to avoid (Goetz et al., 2019, p. 468). The underlying psychological need for distraction was a need for control. The justification of the theme is that the notion of control was in line with boredom in the learning context, where research found out boredom occurred when students lacked control over learning activities and did not perceive them as valued (Pekrun et al., 2010). Therefore, it is hypothesized that the need for control drives adolescents to use SNS to eliminate boredom. That can happen through exercising control in choosing what content to distract them and help them to withdraw from boredom. This process can be supported by Control-value Theory (Pekrun, 2006) where students felt bored in high control situation (i.e., the learning task is not adequately challenging) and low-control situation (i.e., the learning task is too challenging) and hence, the optimal level of perceived control is needed by students not to feel bored. Adolescents reported that boredom makes them keep going back to SNS. The present findings confirmed that of a previous study where the motivation to remove boredom was the primary motivation to use SNS across three time points in adolescence (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020). Previous studies argued that adolescents would always choose SNS for pastimes because they were unfamiliar with other ways to remove boredom (Brailovskaia et al., 2020). The present study supported this explanation because interviewees who mentioned "other things to do" did not mention boredom as the main reason to use SNS. It implies adolescents who found satisfaction from doing other activities in their spare time or occupied with other activities outside the classroom did not find the need to use SNS to remove boredom. It is reasonable to think that engagement in these activities is not motivated by being bored. For instance, playing basketball with schoolmates (*Rynion, 16CF*), playing football with neighborhood peers and gardening (*Iman, 16MM*), listening to music and reading lyrics (*Ju Kyung, 13MF*) and packed routine with additional tuition classes outside of school hours (*Mike, 16IM*). In contrast, *Zhi Yao (14CM)*, who described nothing to do at home and became a regular SNS user to withdraw from boredom, and *Shafiqa (16MF)*, overwhelmed by house chores and schoolwork, had illustrated how distraction from SNS helped her to feel in control. As such, seeking distraction to remove and avoid boredom motivated adolescents to use SNS.

Content subscription and exploration formed the fourth theme. The underlying needs were suggested to be the need for control which is a combination of a need for predictability and a need for competence (Dweck, 2017), which means feeling in control is a result of being able to predict the outcome of one's behavior and feeling competent about it. Adolescents reported wanting to be "in the loop" regarding their interests, for example, sports news, celebrities, gaming, and the content creator they were interested in. The findings suggested that this desire reflects the need to be in control, as adolescents can actively control their knowledge acquisition regarding valued interests. Subscribing to the content probably makes adolescents feel they can predict the situation by being in the know. These findings further support the claim that adolescents use SNS to seek information (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020; Young et al., 2017) and inspiration (Brailovskaia et al., 2020).

The fifth theme was emotional support. Adolescents reported they sought support from their friends on SNS when they felt sad, stressed, or needed to talk about things that happened in life. The findings suggested that the underlying psychological need with this theme is the need for trust, a combination of a need for acceptance and predictability (Dweck, 2017). That is because a sense of trust is formed when adolescents receive emotional support (i.e., acceptance) after anticipating it (i.e., predictability) from their friends. The finding is consistent with past studies, for instance, emotional enhancement and mood modification (Throuvala et al., 2019), and mood regulation (Shin & Lim, 2018) as reasons for SNS use among adolescents and young adults.

The last theme was self-expression which refers to the desire to express oneself, including thoughts, feelings, and different ways to present oneself (e.g., profile on SNS). The hypothesized underpinning need for this motivation is the need for self-coherence, which is the core of all needs in Dweck's framework (2017). As mentioned earlier, self-coherence comprises two elements: identity (i.e., "who am I?") and meaning (i.e., "how does/should the world work in the way that matters to me?") (Dweck, 2017, p. 695). The present study interprets adolescents' desire to express themselves as a part of the identity exploration processes, which resonates with the first element in self-coherence, and hence the theme formation. Identity exploration and development is a critical developmental task for adolescents (Christie & Viner, 2005). The findings suggested that the adolescence developmental needs for identity formation are complemented with the psychological need for self-coherence, contributing to the motivation for using SNS—self-expression. It appeared that adolescents utilized SNS in

identity exploration, consistent with claims from previous studies (Spies Shapiro & Margolin, 2014; Subrahmanyam & Šmahel, 2011). Notably, the present study supports the two aspects proposed by Spies Shapiro and Margolin (2014) about how SNS can promote identity exploration among adolescents. The first aspect was self-disclosure on SNS, in which adolescents constantly decided what information to disclose and how to present themselves on SNS. The decision-making process was further supported by the feedback they received on SNS (e.g., comments and reactions) and the comparison between their and others' profile. The second aspect was affiliation, in which adolescents strengthen their identity by affiliating with like-minded groups that can reflect their identity (Spies Shapiro & Margolin, 2014). Therefore, it is reasonable for self-expression to become a motivation to use SNS when exploring one's identity is the main developmental task during adolescence. However, self-expression is the least mentioned theme. A possible explanation is that it is a latent motivation, which is not the easiest to articulate by teens compared to other explicit reasons, such as wanting to talk to their peers.

In addition, the findings also indicated that adolescents' SNS use is instrumental in discovering the second element of self-coherence, that is, meaning, which means working out the general principles that govern the world (the first element—identity—was discussed under the self-expression theme). It is believed that adolescents try to make sense of the world's affairs by participating in a networked public space (Boyd, 2014), watching discourses about social issues and/or subjects of their interest, or even evaluating what behavior is acceptable by their peers' group or in a larger scale, by the society. This notion of *participation* was mainly illustrated by two developed themes from the empirical results in the current study: "content subscription and exploration" and "participation" in which the information consumed from the SNS can contribute to their mental representation of the world (Dweck, 2017) which eventually helps adolescents interpret their living experiences. However, the consistency or discrepancy between the world's order that they have learnt on SNS and the world's reality is out of the scope of this study. The present study argues that adolescents tried to make sense of the world by using the resources available, that is, SNS.

Putting this together, the present study advances the theoretical understanding of *why* students use SNS from a psychological perspective using Dweck's needs framework (2017). It can be seen that psychological needs are the energizing force that drives adolescents to use SNS for different purposes, which were framed as motivation to use SNS (see Table 3). Considering adolescents' developmental tasks as the backdrop and Dweck (2021) asserted that the proposed framework is applicable to human development from infancy to adulthood, the present study contends that the developmental needs are part of the psychological needs for adolescents during this developmental period. For instance, the developmental need for strong peer identification can be linked to the need for acceptance and the need for self-esteem and status, represented by motivations for social interaction and participation. Besides, the developmental task of identity formation can be linked to the need for self-coherence, represented by motivation for self-expression. Therefore, the present study demonstrates that adolescence developmental needs are part of the psychological reasons driving adolescents to use SNS.

This study contributes to the research area by providing a *cohesive* context to make sense of *why* adolescents want to keep using SNS through a comprehensive psychological framework, which the present study argued to be achieving a sense of self-coherency by pursuing both basic needs (i.e., acceptance, competence, predictability) and compound needs (i.e., control, self-esteem/status, trust). According to Dweck, (2017, 2021), a sense of self-coherence can be understood as feeling psychologically grounded or composed, which also can be seen as an indicator of wellbeing for oneself. It was hypothesized that fulfillment of all needs-related purposes can reinforce a sense of self-coherence (Dweck, 2017). Viewing this from the present study's context, all adolescents' motivation for using SNS plays a part in promoting feelings of self-coherence. As illustrated in Figure 1 and Table 3, the compound needs located outside the circle were all accounted for in the identified motivations in the present study. The need for trust is manifested by emotional support, the need for control is accounted for in distraction and content subscription and exploration, and lastly, the need for self-esteem or status is associated with participation.

Further, social interaction is in the circle of basic needs, and self-expression is at the center of the circle, which shows its nature as a core of all needs. This mapping indicates that all motivations to use SNS seem to serve the need for self-coherence, which includes two elements: identity and meanings. However, it should be noted that whether SNS can facilitate optimal identity development is another subject that is out of the scope of the present study. That is because optimal identity development is intertwined with strong family connections and friendships where constructive narrative processes occur (Branje, 2022). The current study only established that SNS is a platform that adolescents utilize to achieve self-coherency. The present study did not investigate the presence of a narrative construction process through communication with peers on SNS or the quality of friendships formed on SNS. Besides, it is essential to note that the present study does not advocate SNS use as the only way to fulfill psychological needs and does not hold the view that using SNS does not come with negative consequences. As suggested by a previous study, adolescents who use SNS to eliminate boredom and socially connect with people are more vulnerable to developing compulsive SNS use behavior (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020). Both motivations can be identified in the current study. Therefore, although SNS use can satisfy some of the adolescents' psychological needs, they need alternative ways for needs satisfaction so that they will not hold onto SNS to fulfill all their psychological needs, potentially leading to problematic SNS use. In sum, the current study adds to the literature by shedding light on the type of psychological needs that underlie different motivations for using SNS, which appeared to serve the needs for self-coherence.

Regarding *how* adolescents use SNS, the present study found adolescents were using SNS differently in terms of the degree of conscious use, which can be explained by their internal self-regulation process while using it. As suggested by a previous study, SNS users were experiencing two different thought processes simultaneously while using SNS: a reflexive (habitual reaction) and a reflective (self-regulations) process in which habits encourage SNS use; in contrast, self-regulations keep SNS use under control (Osatuyi & Turel, 2018). What the SNS user ultimately acted upon is the dominant of the two thoughts. The examples of self-regulation processes identified from the current study were when participants questioned themselves at the necessity to keep scrolling SNS while realizing they were being distracted from their studies (*Mike* in Section 4.2.1), alert to the type of content that they do not like to see on SNS (*Shafiqqa* in Section 4.2.2), and reflecting on the needs to add acquaintance in real life to their SNS friends' list (*Rynion* in Section 4.2.3). The self-regulation process restrained them from using SNS when reaching distraction level, filtered the SNS content to their favorite type, and limited connections on SNS to the people they were close with in real life. However, regulating usage at one of three identified dimensions (i.e., the purpose of use and time spent on SNS, content type, and audience connections type) does not imply the user has the same level of regulation process on the other aspects of SNS use. For instance, *Shafiqqa* (Sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2) was particular about the type of content she could see on SNS but did not regulate the time spent scrolling *Tik Tok* before sleep. Thus, adolescents appeared to be experiencing internal thoughts conflict between reflexive and reflective thinking, which can drive their SNS use behavior and different aspects of SNS use (i.e., purpose and time spent on SNS, consumed content, and audience on SNS). Participants in the present study demonstrated that adolescents were capable of being reflective on their SNS use, while others operated on a reflexive basis while using SNS. It is, therefore, likely for adolescents' self-regulation in using SNS to have a vital role in facilitating healthy SNS use while utilizing it for identity development, in part to achieve self-coherency. In contrast, without adequate levels of conscious SNS use, adolescents will likely rely on SNS to fulfill their psychological needs and potentially develop problematic SNS use behavior.

Furthermore, there were no observed differences in motivation to use SNS and approaches to using SNS across the different ethnic groups. This could be due to the study's small sample size, which warrants a larger sample size in future research. However, the undetected difference in users' experiences is probably due to all ethnic groups belonging to the collectivist culture in Malaysia. Considering one's psychological system is partly shaped by cultural and societal institutions (Sedikides et al., 2003); therefore, it is possible for Malaysian of all ethnicity that a part of their cultural self-perspective is similar, which was influenced by the ideals and values set by the multicultural society. Lastly, it is believed that the social distancing and lockdown policy during the pandemic had intensified the underlying need for using SNS, which heightened adolescents' motivation to use SNS, for example, wanting to connect with peers (social interaction) or wanting to participate in the outer world (participation). Nevertheless, we believed the underlying psychological needs for each motivation existed before the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.1 | Limitations of the study

The participants from the current study were from diverse ethnic backgrounds across Malaysia. However, a limitation is the lack of representation of some ethnic groups, such as indigenous people from East and West Malaysia. A more diverse sample would have a better capacity to detect potential differences in motivation for using SNS among adolescents from diverse ethnic groups in Malaysia. Second, the participants recruited from social media adverts might potentially include adolescents comfortable with their SNS use. Hence, their accounts of SNS usage experiences could be limited to positive ones, and they did not view potential problematic SNS use as a concern. Third, the age factor in motivation to use SNS and approaches to using SNS within adolescence is still under-researched. Lastly, the findings from the present study are bounded by the COVID-19 pandemic context and warrant a replication study in a post-pandemic context.

5.2 | Implications and future research

Empirical evidence from the current study implies that Dweck's psychological needs framework (2017) provides explanatory power in making sense of adolescents' motivation to use SNS. Future studies can leverage the framework to understand adolescents' SNS use behavior. This line of investigation can contribute to interventional research on adolescents' problematic SNS use. The identified psychological needs in relation to adolescents' reason for using SNS could serve as an entry point for intervention. The findings allow needs-specific resources to be developed to support adolescents who might need alternative ways to satisfy the psychological needs they were seeking in using SNS. For instance, activities that allow students to exercise their control and/or express their creativity, like sports and performing arts in schools, can be promoted as an alternative way to *pass the time* and *have fun*. Designing these activities with adolescents' needs in mind and welcoming participation from all levels of skills and competence can alter the narrative for the involvement, that is, to have a *good time* instead of *being good* at something. This potentially can fulfill needs for acceptance and control.

Besides, future research should further investigate adolescents' self-regulation levels in using SNS. Exploring the relationship between adolescents' motivation to use SNS and levels of self-regulation can offer insights into the psychological needs in question for teenagers who require helps in strengthening self-regulation strategies. Lastly, future studies should examine the differences in SNS use between early and late adolescents to better understand the developmental trajectory over adolescence.

6 | CONCLUSION

The present study identified six motivations for using SNS, namely, (i) social interaction, (ii) content subscription and exploration, (iii) emotional support, (iv) participation, (v) distraction, and (vi) self-expression. The present study contributes to the literature by spelling out the type of psychological needs that are associated with adolescents' motivation to use SNS through a more comprehensive framework, that is, Dweck's needs framework (2017). This study establishes that psychological reasons are the underlying forces that energize adolescents' motivation for using SNS. Besides, it was found that adolescence developmental needs are parts of the basic and compound psychological needs, which contributes to the motivations for using SNS. Adolescents' motivation for SNS use appeared to link with basic and compound psychological needs, which add up to serve the needs for self-coherence. That is to say, adolescents were driven by different psychological needs to use SNS, and ultimately, they were trying to achieve a sense of self-coherency. Specifically, the two components in self-coherency (i.e., identity and meaning) were found to be supported by SNS use in the present study, which was mainly demonstrated under the theme of self-expression, content-subscription and exploration, and participation. On the other hand, Malaysian adolescents were found to use SNS differently in three aspects: deliberate use (purpose of use and time spent on SNS), content-selective, and audience-selective. The findings indicate teenagers underwent a reflective and reflexive process while doing SNS, exhibiting different self-regulations during SNS use. Understanding adolescents' motivation to use SNS from the perspective of human psychological needs contributes to unraveling the complex relationship between young people and social network sites.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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