

**FROM VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT TO REAL-WORLD ACTION:
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA INTENSITY,
EXPOSURE TO ISRAEL-PALESTINE ISSUE, PARASOCIAL
INTERACTION AND INTENTION TO SUPPORT PALESTINE
ON SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG IUM STUDENTS.**

BY

MUHAMMAD SYAHMI BIN MOHAMAD ZALANI

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

2026

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MUHAMMAD SYAHMI BIN MOHAMAD ZALANI

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the
degree of Master of Human Sciences in Communication.

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Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences
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ABSTRACT

There are many Muslim influencers (MI) around the globe who used social media to promote their brands and lifestyles, and to disseminate information to their fans. In the modern era, the method of engagement between influencers and fans evolved from simple face-to-face interaction to the use of technology and new media that are more sophisticated and intricate. The concept of MI also evolved alongside modern technology. They used new media such as social media to spread information and interacted with fans through these platforms. The concept of MI had already been discussed in past literature, but when it came to responses or intentions to support geopolitical issues such as the Israel-Palestine conflict on social media, many questions arose regarding the effect of MI in shaping the views of social media users. The aim of this study was to identify the relationship between parasocial interaction and the intention to support Palestine. The main questions highlighted were: What type of responses did International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) students have regarding their relationship with MI, and did the students show solidarity because of their interaction with MI on social media? A quantitative analysis was conducted to obtain a general view of Muslim influencers. A total of 354 students from the IIUM were chosen using stratified sampling to answer the survey questionnaire. There were six components in the questionnaire, namely demographics, exposure to the Israel-Palestine issue on social media, parasocial interaction towards MI, and the intention to support Palestine through online activism. The finding of this study revealed that the majority of the students who followed Muslim influencers, used social media regularly and were exposed to the Israel-Palestine issue on social media, thus tend to show greater support for Palestine on social media.

Keyword: Muslim influencers, Online activism, Israel-Palestine issues, Parasocial Interaction, Social media, Quantitative Analysis.

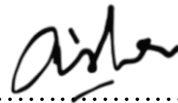
ملخص البحث

هناك العديد من المؤثرين المسلمين حول العالم الذين استخدموا وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي للترويج لعلاماتهم التجارية وأنماط حياتهم، ولنشر المعلومات بين متابعيهم. وفي العصر الحديث، تطورت أساليب التفاعل بين المؤثرين ومتابعيهم من التفاعل المباشر البسيط إلى استخدام التكنولوجيا ووسائل الإعلام الجديدة الأكثر تطورًا وتعقيدًا. كما تطور مفهوم المؤثرين المسلمين بالتوازي مع التكنولوجيا، حيث استخدموا وسائل الإعلام الجديدة، مثل وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، لنشر المعلومات والتفاعل مع متابعيهم عبر هذه المنصات. سبق أن نوقش مفهوم المؤثرين المسلمين في الدراسات السابقة، ولكن عند التطرق إلى ردود الفعل أو النوايا لدعم قضايا جيوسياسية كالصراع الإسرائيلي الفلسطيني على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، برزت تساؤلات عديدة حول تأثير المؤثرين المسلمين في تشكيل آراء مستخدمي هذه الوسائل. هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد العلاقة بين التفاعل شبه الاجتماعي والنية في دعم فلسطين. تمحورت الأسئلة الرئيسية حول: ما نوع ردود فعل طلاب الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بشأن علاقتهم بالمؤثرين المسلمين، وهل أظهر الطلاب تضامناً نتيجة تفاعلهم معهم على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؟ لقد أُجري تحليل كمي للحصول على نظرة عامة عن المؤثرين المسلمين. تم اختيار 354 طالباً من الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا باستخدام أسلوب العينة الطبقية للإجابة على استبانة الدراسة. وتضمنت الاستبانة ستة محاور، هي: البيانات الديموغرافية، والتعرض لقضية فلسطين وإسرائيل على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، والتفاعل شبه الاجتماعي مع المؤثرين المسلمين، والنية لدعم فلسطين من خلال النشاط الإلكتروني. أظهرت نتائج هذه الدراسة أن غالبية الطلاب الذين يتابعون المؤثرين المسلمين، ويستخدمون وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي بانتظام، ويتعرضون لقضية فلسطين وإسرائيل على هذه الوسائل، يميلون إلى إظهار دعم أكبر لفلسطين على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المؤثرون المسلمون، النشاط الإلكتروني، قضية فلسطين وإسرائيل، التفاعل شبه الاجتماعي، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، التحليل الكمي.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in Communication.



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Supervisor

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Hafiz bin Zakariya
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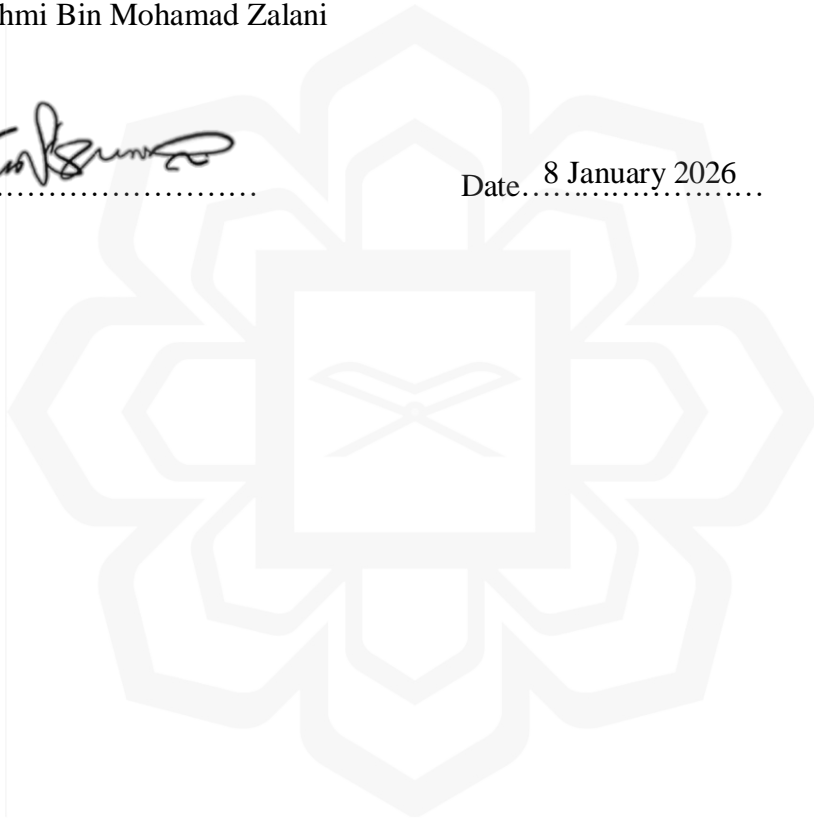
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I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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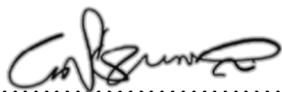
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List of Abbreviation for Postgraduate Programmes

Ph.D	All doctoral programmes
MCL	Master of Comparative Laws
MEC	Master of Economics
MSACC	Master of Science (Accounting)
MSFIN	Master of Science (Finance)
MAIRK (FQ)	Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (Fiqh and Usul al-Fiqh)
MAIRK (QS)	Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (Qur'an and Sunnah Studies)
MAIRK (UD)	Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion)
MAASL	Master of Human Sciences (Arabic as a Second Language)
MALT	Master of Human Sciences (Arabic Literary Studies)
MAL	Master of Human Sciences (Arabic Linguistic Studies)
MHSLG	Master of Human Sciences (English Language Studies)
MAESL	Master of Human Sciences (Teaching of English as a Second Language)
MHSL	Master of Human Sciences (English Literary Studies)
MHSPSY	Master of Human Sciences (Psychology)
MHSCM	Master of Human Sciences (Communication)
MHSPS	Master of Human Sciences (Political Science)
MHSHC	Master of Human Sciences (History and Civilization)
MHSSA	Master of Human Sciences (Sociology and Anthropology)

MSCIE	Master of Science (Computer and Information Engineering)
MSMFG	Master of Science (Manufacturing Engineering)
MSMCT	Master of Science (Mechatronic Engineering)
MSMAT	Master of Science (Materials Engineering)
MSCE	Master of Science (Communication Engineering)
MSEE	Master of Science (Electronics Engineering)



CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

Among the longest-running and most complicated wars in the world is the conflict involving Israel and Palestine. There is a lot of background to this story but for a lot of people, the United Nations' decision in 1947 to divide the area in the British mandate of Palestine into two states—one Jewish and one Arab—followed the Holocaust's devastation of a large portion of Europe's Jewish population (McGreal, 2023). Following their conquest of Palestine during World War I, the British committed to help the Jewish people build a national home in Palestine when they made the Balfour Declaration (Al-Jazeera, 2023).

Thousands of Palestinians were driven from their homes during the Nakba, or Palestinian Exodus, during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. According to Sa'di and Abu-Lughod (2007), in a book called *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, And The Claims of Memory*, “Nakba is often reckoned as the beginning of contemporary Palestinian history, a history of catastrophic changes, violent suppression, and refusal to disappear. It is the focal point for what might be called Palestinian time” (p.5). Israel now controls most of Palestine after Egypt and Jordan took control of Palestinian territory during the conflict. Israel successfully destroyed Egypt, Jordan, and Syria after launching a preemptive strike against them in 1967. It then seized control of the remaining Palestinian territories, including the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Israeli control of Palestinian territory continued for the following fifty years after the Six-Day War caused yet another round of Palestinian displacement.

On 7th October 2023, the wall that Israel had erected around the Gaza Strip to keep more than two million Palestinians had been breached and this is an act of liberation by the people in Gaza. The largest open prison break became a symbol of Palestinian perseverance. Walking around the hills of Nazareth, cuddling a cow, and enjoying a prickly pear for the first time in 20 years. They shared the breath of freedom, as though they were theirs as well (Al-Jazeera, 2023). But, this was not for long. Israel announced that Hamas has declared war as its army mobilised and air force launched strikes on Gaza with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu promising harsh retaliation. The continuous bombardment on Gaza forces nations and countries around the world to respond and provide their stance towards the conflict.

As a predominantly Muslim country, Malaysians consistently support Palestinians in numerous ways, such as organising rallies, giving donations and humanitarian aid, and protesting against Israel on social media. Many celebrities either locals or internationals, show their support and solidarity towards Palestine on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Tik-tok, X and Youtube. For example, a popular Malaysian singer Siti Nurhaliza, has nine million Instagram followers, has continued to upload pro-Palestinian messages on Siti Nurhaliza account, including a post for the Special Palestinian Fund that has earned almost 18,000 likes, despite reports on October 18 that the platform blocked her postings (The Straits Times, 2023). Other than that, with an Instagram following of 8.7 million, Malaysian actress and businesswoman Neelofa has also shown support for Palestine, stating that Israel has not beaten the Palestinians in 60 years of conflict because of Allah's protection. There have been almost 217,000 likes on the post (The Straits Times, 2023).

Further, Neelofa's husband, a Muslim influencer, actor and also reality show contestant, *Pencetus Ummah* (PU) Riz, or Haris Ismail, often shows his support by unfollowing international celebrities who clearly indicate support Israel on social media. PU Riz also always reminds his Muslim followers to not just help and donate but to prove that we care and love our brothers and sisters in Islam (Harian Metro, 2021).

Considering the religious significance, these popular individuals are just a few over many Malaysians who are vocal about their support towards Palestinians in this conflict. Social media influencers have also been known to use the platform to spread awareness and many of them act as role models and often demonstrate support for Palestinian through donating and delivering humanitarian aid to trusted non-governmental organisations (NGO's). As such, social media is a powerful tool to create awareness on social issues such as the Israel-Palestine conflict. According to a study by Safko and Brake (2009), social media is more participatory than traditional media since it allows users to share personal information with one another within the same network. Therefore, through watching their videos, leaving comments on their posts, and liking their images, social media users who follow influencers on Instagram have the chance to become closer to their favourite influencers.

Thus, a well-known media personality may have an immense influence on their fans through celebrity-fan interaction on social media by sharing their lifestyle and interacting with them regularly, including influencing their followers' perception on global issues

such as the Israel-Palestine conflict and how people express support for this issue. Scholars have examined celebrity-fan interaction particularly through parasocial interaction. Parasocial interaction is an interaction between media consumers and media personalities which celebrities and fictitious characters (Giles, 2002). The nature of parasocial interaction has changed as social media has grown in popularity. Through comments, likes, and shares, followers may now communicate with influencers directly, increasing the parasocial link and giving the impression of a two-way friendship. Their product endorsements are quite powerful because of this apparent familiarity (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). According to Balaban et al. (2022) parasocial relationships can enhance an influencer's persuasive power by increasing perceived source credibility and positive brand attitudes. In 1956, psychologist Donald Horton and Richard Wohl originally proposed the idea of parasocial interaction to explain how viewers relate to media personalities. Early studies concentrated on figures from traditional media, like television newsreaders and radio hosts. But in the social media age, followers of online influencers may also form comparable parasocial ties, which could affect how they interact with the media. Social media platforms, in contrast to conventional media, allow consumers and influencers to communicate directly, which gives these pseudo-relationship a more genuine and intimate sense.

Although the terms "celebrity" and "media influencer" may have different meanings, they are simultaneously related (Schouten et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2024; Li & Tian, 2021). Social media is where "media influencers" are born and gain popularity (Khamis et al., 2017). According to Abidin (2016), Influencers are "microcelebrities" that cultivate strong bonds with their followers and frequently hold significant persuasive power, particularly through perceived relatability and authenticity. It's understood that '*Muslim influencers*' refers to popular people on social media who hold Islamic faith and also promote Islamic values, lifestyle, and products that align with Islamic teachings. According to Shamsuddin (2024), Apart from to having a strong Muslim identity, Muslim influencers are social media personalities who have a moral and religious obligation (*amanah*) to make sure that their lifestyle portrayals, product endorsements, and online content adhere to Shariah teachings and Islamic ethical principles. According to the research by Robiansyah (2025), Muslim influencers are social media content creator who deliberately integrate Islamic-oriented themes like religious instruction, modest clothing, and the promotion of halal products into their online activities in order to draw in and keep followers while staying true to Islamic principles. Muslim communities are becoming more visible online, where they seek to represent their belief and lifestyle while also attending to the needs and interests of their followers. This has led to the emergence of Muslim influencers (Dozan & Hadi, 2020). Accordingly, this

study will examine how followers of Muslim influencers (MI) engage with them on social media and how they influence their followers, including their intention to participate in the Palestinian Israeli issue by supporting Palestinians through using social media. What makes this study of social media engagement important is the role and responsibility of celebrities, especially Muslim influencers and the Malaysian social network community, in using social media as a tool to express support for Palestinian brothers and sisters in Islam and maintaining a good narrative about Palestine in social media platforms, where social media communities are divided in this issue.

1.2 Statement of problem

In this digital era, in light of the ubiquitous usage of social media especially among youth, it is crucial to understand how the engagement with online platforms can influence people's behaviour and attitude towards current geopolitical issues like the Israel-Palestine issue. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the social media intensity (IV1), exposure to the Israel-Palestine issue (IV2), and parasocial relationship (mediating variable), with international Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) students' intention to support Palestine on social media (DV). It specifically aims to investigate how these independent variables affect students' levels of online advocacy and participation both separately and jointly. Furthermore, this research tries to provide greater insights into how virtual interactions and media engagement might translate into concrete support and real-world advocacy for the Palestinian cause. By looking at these interconnected concepts, the study advances our knowledge of how social media influences young people's sociopolitical consciousness and behavior in an Islamic and digital context.

Despite social media's increasing significance as a vital platform for political communication and civic engagement, there is still a significant conceptual and methodological gap in understanding how social media intensity and exposure to politically charged content translate into intentions to engage in activism, particularly in the context of contentious issues like the Israel-Palestine conflict. Research indicates that youth online political participation has increased as a result of social media use, but the mechanisms underlying why and how exposure leads to engagement remain unclear, especially in non-Western cultures (Zainurin, 2024). Although research shows that youth turn to social media for political information and mobilisation, most studies still treat social media use as a general construct and do not capture platform specific intensity, exposure, and algorithmic curation in relation to highly polarised issues like the Israel-Palestine conflict (Abid & Harrigan, 2020).

However, new studies reveal that parasocial relationships with social media influencers have a major influence on dependence on political information, efficacy beliefs, and plans for collective action. However, these studies are mostly found in Western or secular contexts and seldom ever discuss activity relating to Palestine or Muslim influencers (Harff & Schmuck, 2024; Hasell & Chinn, 2023). Social media encourages emotional connection, solidarity, and transnational activism, according to parallel study on Muslim and digital Palestine solidarity. However, these studies are mainly descriptive, platform or message focused (e.g., Instagram storytelling, X framing, hashtag campaigns), and they rarely use validated parasocial measures to examine how Muslim youths' intense, platform-specific following of Muslim influencers translates into concrete online pro-Palestine activism, particularly in Muslim majority university settings like IIUM. By addressing these particular issues and challenges might help the researcher to conduct an investigation and find the significant data and information that can help any group that finds this research beneficial.

1.3 Significance of the study

In examining the use of social media related to Muslim influencers, this study will attempt to bridge a gap in literature concerning parasocial interaction, particularly in demonstrating the role played by Muslim influencers in encouraging their fans to engage in online activism. As such, the results of this study will help social media activists such as government sectors or NGO's, in understanding how to use social media effectively via MI, and to gain support in their campaigns. Other than that, this study will benefit the social media activists in the aspect of choosing the right, good reputation Islamic celebrity figures that will represent them and become the face of the campaign.

Next, the results of the study will provide valuable insights to the social media activist on intention and gratifications derived from media use and also help to understand the impact of media and also social media influencers towards individuals' everyday lives. With the increasing reliance on social media for information and interaction, It is essential to understand how positive virtual interactions can lead to real action in the real world.

Finally, the findings of this study are expected to enhance scholarly understanding of Muslim Influencers (MI) by examining their definition, societal perception, and the multifaceted impacts they generate within contemporary Muslim communities. Beyond conceptual clarification, this research provides empirical insights into how social media users interact with

and respond to Muslim Influencers, particularly in relation to issues of faith, identity, and global socio-political concerns. This study clarifies how digital personalities affect followers' opinions, emotional bonds, and involvement with social cause by examining the reasons for and results of parasocial interactions with these influencers. Additionally, it provides a sophisticated view of how Muslim influencers in the internet era act as both drivers for social activism and mediators of religious debate. By highlighting the changing dynamics of influence, faith-based communication, and online community development, these findings together add to a larger conversation on media, religion, and digital culture.

1.4 Research questions and objectives

Based on the previous literature and the uses and gratification perspective, this study will focus on how celebrities influence their social media followers to provide support for the Palestinians through the close relationship they form with their followers. The research questions for this study are as follows:

RQ1: What is the relationship between social media intensity and intention to support Palestine by online activism?

RQ2: What is the relationship between exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media and intention to support Palestine by online activism?

RQ3: What is the relationship between parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers and intention to support Palestine by online activism?

RQ4: What is the mediating role of parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers in the relationship between social media intensity and intention to support Palestine by online activism?

RQ5: What is the mediating role of parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers in the relationship between level of exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media and intention to support Palestine by online activism?

The research objectives for this study are as follows:

RO1: To examine the relationship between social media intensity and intention to support Palestine by online activism.

RO2: To examine the relationship between exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media and intention to support Palestine by online activism.

RO3: To identify the relationship between parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers and

intention to support Palestine by online activism.

RO4: To study the mediating role of parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers in the relationship between social media intensity and intention to support Palestine by online activism.

RO5: To study the mediating role of parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers in the relationship between level of exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media and intention to support Palestine by online activism.



CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Literature review

Social Media Platforms and Online Activism

The widespread use of social media in contemporary society has fundamentally altered how people interact, communicate, and consume information. Because of its dependability and quick information consumption, Malaysians are adopting this advanced technology as a way of life. Although there isn't a clear definition for social media, it's usually accepted to be a contemporary technical instrument that facilitates two-way communication and lets people express their opinions to others (Kulnazarova et al., 2014). Without a question, social media is gaining popularity all over the world. People can now interact both individually and in groups online more easily thanks to the development of new communication tools. People can collaborate on a range of projects and exchange content on these platforms.

According to Hussain et al. (2024), social media platforms like Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, and Twitter significantly reshape the behavior of the users. Based on their primary function, social media platforms can be broadly divided into four categories: media-sharing websites like Instagram, YouTube, microblogging sites like Twitter/X, social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and professional networking sites like LinkedIn. In addition to reducing distances between and/or among people, social media platforms have made a substantial contribution to the creation of forums and information-sharing websites among a wide range of individuals, groups, and communities. Besides that, it has been highlighted by Corrada et al. (2020) which emphasises how using social media affects buying and repurchasing goods and services, stressing the different gratifications that come from different demographic traits and information-seeking requirements.

In the crisis state of time, we can see the use of social media give high impact and give major influence to build the people's narrative on certain situations. Political dialogue, participation, and mobilisation are greatly influenced by social media (Darshan et al., 2019). Using social media also can be a form of modern activism or peaceful resistance while deploying new communication (Monshipouri et al., 2018). Deliberately participating in political, social or cultural endeavours with the goal of challenging the existing power structures and fostering change can be defined as activism. In order to change laws, customs, and social circumstances, activists

purposefully mobilise resources, public opinion, and collective identities (Carabelli. 2019;, Alkhaled, 2021). Therefore, online activism can be understood as a form of digital political activities, low cost, high benefit and are a complement to, not a substitute for its offline counterparts (Freelon et al., 2020). Citizen journalism and online activism that have been facilitated by social media tend to use virtual communities and digital networks to share ideas, hobbies, and other kinds of expression while also framing perceptions of uprisings and violence. This incline to become a problem because it has become increasingly difficult to trust the veracity of information and the many sources from which most of it is obtained, social media has in turn fed television networks and worldwide media (Monshipouri et al., 2018).

Despite much online activism in social media that we see, the impact of celebrity and social media influencers on the intention of social media users towards specific causes, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has not been extensively studied.

Therefore, **H1: Social media intensity has a positive relationship with the intention to support Palestine by online activism** has been suggested.

Exposure to socio-Political Content on Social Media

Social media users' political engagement and activism intents have been found to be significantly predicted by their exposure to socio-political information. According to Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2012), social media use for news consumption builds social capital and civic engagement, hence promoting political participation. Other than that, Hassan et al. (2016) used political information efficacy theory to demonstrate how young people's exposure to political content on social media increases their inclinations to participate in politics.

Social media has become a crucial tool for discussing and understanding the Israel-Palestine conflict in the context of geopolitics, as it is constantly exposed to textual and visual narratives that frame Palestinian experiences of occupation, violence, and resistance. Scholarly research on the conflict demonstrates that this kind of exposure is both informational and mobilising, since activists can use digital platforms to organise protests, spread calls for solidarity, and create compelling narratives that encourage users to adopt a position and support Palestinian rights (Shonholtz & M. Jackson, 2024). Social media serves as a crucial platform for digital activism, enabling regular users to interact with pro-Palestine content, see graphic depictions of suffering, and come across human rights framings. All of these things can inspire empathy, moral outrage, and a sense of duty to take online action in

support of Palestine (Cervi & Divon, 2023; Al Mousawi, 2025). Cervi and Divon (2023) also show that how Tiktok users employ memetic and playful performances combining Palestinian symbols, images of suffering, and emotional self-presentation to express closeness to the Palestinian cause and encourage others to share, remix, and align with these expressions of resistance. At a wider scope, research on digital activism and public opinion during Gaza-related crisis indicates that social media campaigns around brands, humanitarian appeals, and political demands can reshape attitudes and encourage users to participate in favorable online actions like boycotts, petitions, and disseminating campaign messages (Bany Mohammed et al., 2025). Analyses of pro-Palestinian activism on X reveal that influential users and their followers create dense networks where protest information, messages of solidarity, and visual evidence of repression circulate widely, creating an environment where repeated exposure to such content is closely intertwined with expressing support for Palestine and participating in online protest repertoires (Tawfic, 2025). Taken together, these academic studies on pro-Palestinian social media campaigns, Palestinian youth's strategic communication, and grassroots mobilisation provide strong conceptual and empirical grounds for **H2: The exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media has a positive relationship with the intention to support Palestine by online activism.**

Muslim influencers as Endorsers in Online Activism

Parasocial contact has been widely used to describe how viewers form one-sided yet emotionally significant relationships with media celebrities and how these relationships influence attitudes and behaviours. This body of studies provides a strong conceptual basis for the hypothesis that parasocial connection with Muslim influencers who discuss the Palestine issue is positively connected with the intention to support Palestine through online activism.

Thanks to digital technology and platforms, social media influencers and other users can now create, consume, and share religious material with a range of online groups. In the Muslim world, there have been hybrid religious education programs that blend education with entertainment, according to Wise (2004). Amr Khaled, a televangelist, is one example. He developed a chat show style that involves audience involvement and offers marketing-inspired testimonies from celebrities such as football players, actors, actresses, and regular young Muslims. Some academics and media experts believe that Amr Khaled was inspired by Billy Graham's Christian televangelist act (e.g., Hardaker, 2006). The emergence of technology has changed the media landscape and created a new platform called social media. A Muslim influencer is an individual

who uses their social media platforms to advocate for Islamic lifestyle choices, beliefs that support Islamic teachings. According to Zaid et al. (2022), Muslim influencers are instrumental in reconfiguring traditional religious authority through digital media, thereby facilitating a modern expression of Islamic identity and practice. For example, Studies have looked at how social media interactions between celebrities and followers affect how Muslim women in Malaysia perceive the hijab culture (Shariffadeen & A. Manaf, 2019). This clarifies how interaction between celebrities and their fans on social media may influence cultural beliefs and practices within certain Muslim groups.

Furthermore, a systematic review has examined the reliability of celebrities in social advertising and their endorsement of a range of campaigns, including social cause campaigns (Gopal & Elangovan, 2022). Comprehending the legitimacy and efficacy of celebrity endorsements is imperative for guaranteeing the success of digital social campaigns among Muslim communities. Some of the past research has proven that using celebrity endorsements on social media advertising give positive audience attitude and perceptions and significantly influence behaviour (Melati et al., 2018). In the context of this study, the body of research generally indicates that Muslim influencers can be essential to online social efforts aimed at Muslim audiences. The effectiveness of campaigns supporting social concerns within Muslim communities, as well as consumer behaviour and cultural attitudes, may be greatly influenced by Muslim influencers influence, credibility, and participation on social media platforms.

In the specific case of Palestine, research on pro-Palestine activism on social media shows that influential accounts and activists on platform such as X/Twitter act as central nodes that diffuse information, document events, and encourage participation in protests and digital campaigns (Tawfic, 2025). Research on Palestinian and pro-Palestinian digital activism explains how social media is used to coordinate online and offline repertoires of contention, such as hashtag campaigns, petitions, fundraising, and boycott initiatives, as well as to narrate experiences of violence and resistance and to call for global solidarity (Hayes, 2023).

On this basis, the existing literature provides a coherent rationale for using parasocial interaction toward Muslim influencers will be positively associated with intentions to support Palestine by online activism, leading to **H3: Parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers has a positive relationship with the intention to support Palestine by online activism.**

Parasocial interaction toward Muslim influencers

According to Merz and Sikorski (2025), parasocial interaction with influencers is commonly viewed as a one-sided but affectively significant relationship that grows via repeated mediated encounters and has the power to influence attitudes and behaviours in both collective and political spheres. Exposure to messages from lifestyle influencers can boost intentions to participate in collective political actions and strengthen beliefs about the efficacy of collective responses, according to experimental and quasi-experimental research, particularly among followers who report stronger parasocial ties to those influencers (Merz and Sikorski, 2025). This evidence supports the idea that parasocial interaction functions as a psychological pathway through which social media content and influencer communication are translated into political engagement and activism.

Influencer-led campaigns use parasocial interaction, perceived credibility, and value alignment to encourage prosocial behaviors like online donations, according to studies on social media influencers in Islamic charitable contexts (Ariffin et al., 2025). According to Ariffin et al. (2025), research on sadaqah campaigns among college students reveals that social media platforms offer emotionally compelling, real-time content, and that stronger intentions to donate are linked to influencer trust, alignment with Islamic values, and perceived authenticity of influencer messages. These findings suggested that broad social media involvement can be turned into specific religiously framed actions, including donations to Islamic charitable groups, by parasocial bonds and the perceived credibility of Muslim influencers. In addition, research on Muslim Gen Z's usage of digital platforms for sadaqah and infaq shows how consistent exposure to religious and ethical content online might foster intentions to accords with Islamic moral norms (Bonang et al., 2025). This study demonstrates that digital environments can sustain ongoing Islamic philanthropic behavior when users feel confident and emotionally connected. It also shows that system quality, information quality, perceived risk, and particularly trust are critical predictors of continuance intentions to donate through online payment systems (Nur Hamidah et al., 2024). Together with evidence on influencer-led sadaqah campaigns, this suggests that Muslim influencers who regularly use religious and ethical language in their appeals may direct their followers' intensive social media usage into repeated acts of solidarity and prosocial behavior.

Once such parasocial ties are established, followers are more likely to accept these influencers' framing of Palestine as a religious and moral concern and to translate this identification into digital support behaviors, such as sharing information, amplifying solidarity

messages, or participating in online campaigns, thereby justifying **H4: Parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers will mediate the relationship between social media intensity and intention to support Palestine by online activism.**

Social media exposure and political engagement

Social media sites are now crucial venues for political conversation. Increased online political activity is linked to exposure to political content on social networking sites, which serves both informational and motivational functions. For instance, exposure to like-minded political viewpoints on blogs and social networking sites mediated the relationship between social media use and political engagement, according to an analysis of social media usage and online political engagement. This suggests that what people see on social media platforms helps explain how use translates into political action (Kim and Chen's, 2016).

Qualitative research also underscores the psychological mechanisms through which influencers impact political participation. According to Saad (2025), thematic analysis of social media influencers in electoral contexts, narrative framing, perceived authenticity, and parasocial interaction all impact digital audiences' political awareness and engagement. Influencers-led narratives frequently resonate with followers' pre-existing identities and values, encouraging interpretive alignment and emotional engagement that may motivate followers to take part (Saad, 2025). Collectively, this body of work suggests that parasocial interaction may serve as a mediating factor between exposure to political content on social media and inclinations to participatory intentions. Even while social media exposure makes political information accessible, passive exposure can be turned into active political intention through the relational and affective engagement linked to parasocial bonds.

Social media exposure introduces users to political issues, but without relational engagement, exposure may remain informational rather than motivational. Political content becomes more meaningful and personally relevant as a result of parasocial engagement, which cultivates perceived relationship closeness, trust, and affiliation with influencers who articulate political issues. As a result, followers who have a strong emotional connected with influencers are more inclined to match their political goals with the causes they support. The empirical evidence highlighted this proposition are exposure to repeated political messaging on social media platforms leads to stronger collective political action intentions when followers maintain strong parasocial

relationship with the messengers (Durotoye et al., 2025). Other than that, Hidayanto et al. (2025), also mention that political parasocial experiences evoke emotional processes that are linked with political outcomes such as electronic Work-of-Mouth (eWOM) and voting intention. These findings illustrate how PSI not only shapes attitudes but also contributes to motivational mechanisms that precede activism. In conclusion, current research shows that although social media exposure to political issues is a precondition for digital political activism, whether exposure results in deliberate action is frequently determined by the parasocial interactions with influencers. Emotional engagement, normative identity and motivational alignment with causes framed by digital influencers are all improved by parasocial interaction. Based on this synthesis, **H5: Parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers will mediate the relationship between exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media and the intention to support Palestine by online activism** has been suggested.

2.2 Conceptual framework

Based on the past literature on parasocial interaction and the uses and gratification theory, the following hypotheses are proposed for this study:

H1: Social media intensity has a positive relationship with the intention to support Palestine by online activism

H2: The exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media has a positive relationship with the intention to support Palestine by online activism

H3: Parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers has a positive relationship with the intention to supported Palestine by online activism

H4: Parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers will mediate the relationship between social media intensity and intention to support Palestine by online activism

H5: Parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers will mediate the relationship between exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media and the intention to support Palestine by online activism

The conceptual framework of the study is summarised in figure 1 below:

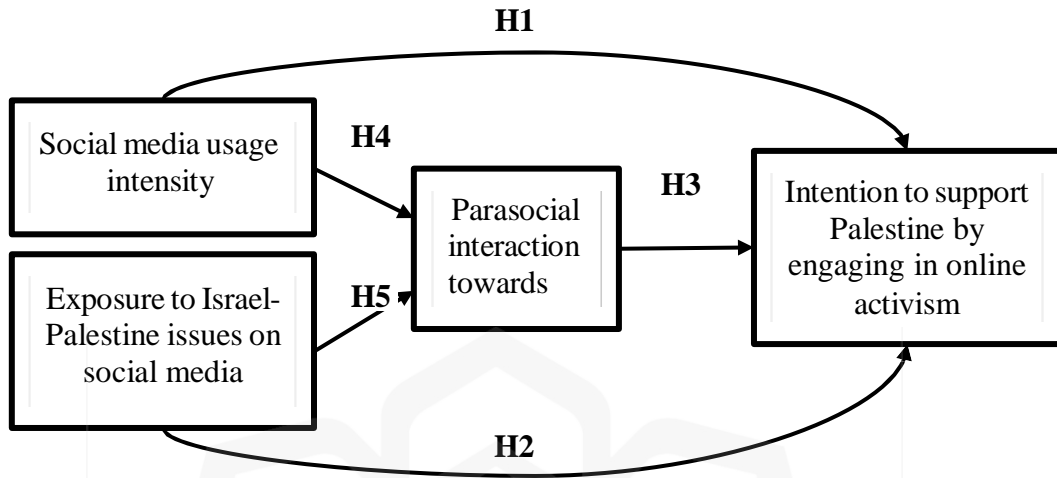


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for From Virtual Engagement to Real-World Action: Understanding the intention of Individuals Who Support Palestinian Issues Through Parasocial Interaction on Social Media.

The next chapter will deliberate the main research methodology used in the study.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Methods and procedures

The main reason for this dissertation is to study the relationship between social media intensity, exposure to Israel-Palestine issue, parasocial relationship and intention to support Palestine on social media among IIUM students. Chapter two already provided a review of relevant literature and also offered the hypotheses and research questions that will be tested in the present study. This chapter covers the methods applied to look into the study's relevant research objectives. First, this section presents the research design employed to examine individuals' intention to support Palestine through parasocial interaction on social media, including the sampling method and data collection procedures. Second, it provides a description of the respondents and their demographic characteristics. Finally, it offers a detailed explanation of the scales used to measure the independent, mediating, and dependent variables in this study.

3.2 Research Design and Method

This study used a quantitative research design and the cross-sectional survey method to examine the intentions of people who support Palestinian issues through parasocial interactions on social media. A self-administered questionnaire was used as the research tool to gather data. A quantitative research approach allows for the objective assessment of variables and uses statistics to draw conclusions from the study (Berger, 2014; Kathayat, 2022). In addition, research can use quantitative methods to test hypotheses and evaluate a range of parameters in order to provide relevant findings (Padil & Nudin, 2021).

3.3 Target Population

Undergraduate students from Abdulhamid AbuSulayman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), who frequently used social media or relied on it as a primary source of information, were the respondents targeted. They took part in the study by completing an online survey created with Google Forms. Young adults were chosen as the main target respondents for this study, as

the study required active social media users who followed Muslim influencers regularly and used social media to seek information on the Israel-Palestine crisis. All of the respondents were actively registered to courses during Semester 1, 2024/2025.

3.4 Sampling technique and sampling size

The study used probability sampling because it enabled the researcher to identify people who could represent the population and generalise the findings (Al-Sekait et al., 1992). Stratified sampling was used in this research, as respondents were stratified based on their department and major. The sampling frame, consisting of the total number of students in AHAS KIRKHS, served as the basis on which subgroups were stratified. According to Reddy and Khan (2023), researchers could effectively capture the variability within the population by ensuring that each stratum was internally homogeneous but different from other strata.

Based on the number of predictor variables, G*Power was utilised as a tool to calculate the study's minimum sample size. It made sure the study had enough power to find meaningful effects in the target population. The generalisability and reliability of research findings depended on adequate sample sizes, which provided the researcher with confidence that the results were not exclusively due to random variations in the sample (Majid, 2018).

To ensure that the sample size met the requirements for data analysis, G*Power was used to calculate the minimum sample size based on the following parameters: medium effect size (.15), alpha value of .05, medium power (0.80), and four predictors. Therefore, the sample size of $N = 134$ that was produced was more than sufficient to test the study hypothesis. Using the sampling size determination by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a minimum sample of $N = 350$ respondents was determined as appropriate for the study. The researcher utilised the stratified sampling technique for sample selection. Data collection for this research was conducted from October to December 2024.

Table 1: Determining sample size of a known population.

N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368

Source: Krejcie and Morgan (1970)

Potential participants for the main sample were notified about the study by their individual course instructors, and an invitation email with a survey link was sent to course instructors from selected classes. Participation in the study was voluntary. Informed consent was obtained at the beginning of the survey; by filling in the informed consent section in the survey's initial page, the

respondents agreed to participate in the study voluntarily. Since English is the primary language of instruction at the university, the Malaysian respondents were able to comprehend and finish the research instrument in English without the need for translations.

3.5 Data collection

This study collected the data in October to December 2024. The duration for data collection was three months. The researcher distributed questionnaires among target respondents at classes. The total sample for this study was obtained from the Kulliyah administration officers. The sample involved students from all departments under the AHAS KIRKHS. The total population of students was 3,812, and based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, a minimum of 350 respondents was deemed appropriate for this study.

AHAS KIRKHS comprised eleven departments, namely: the Department OF Arabic Language and Literature, Department of Fiqh and Usul al- Fiqh, Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies, Department of Qur'an and Sunnah Studies, Department of Usul al-Din, Comparative Religion and Philosophy, Department of Communication, Department of English Language and Literature, Department of History and Civilisation, Department of Political Science and Madani Studies, Department of Psychology, and Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

To ensure fair representation across departments, the number of students from each department was calculated proportionally. The total number of students in each department was divided by total number of overall students in AHAS KIRKHS and then multiplied by 350. This process determined the minimum number of respondents required from each department, allowing for an equitable distribution of questionnaires across all units within the Kulliyah. They participated in the study by filling in an online survey questionnaire that will be constructed using Google form. Each questionnaire took 15-20 minutes to be filled up.

3.6 Research Instrument

There were five main variables in this study: exposure to social media, social media usage activities, exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media are the independent variables, while the intention to support Palestinian was serve as the dependent variable in this study. Parasocial interaction serves as the mediating variable in this study. Social media use was measured by using seven distinctives items in order to determine their exposure to social media. Among the items that

been asked include types of social media account average daily use.

Next, to measure social media intensity scale, the researcher adapted the scale from (Labrague, 2014). The original item measured Facebook intensity scale using 12 items. Sample items include: “I use social media to find new friends”. Response to this scale is based on a 5-point Likert scale with responses that range from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) and 5 (*Strongly Agree*).

Further, exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media was measured using the 11 items adapted from the social networking activity scale (Li et al., 2016). Sample items include “I commented on the post related to Israel-Palestine issues on social media”. The respondent completed this scale based on a 5-point Likert scale, where response items range from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Very Frequently*).

Parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers was measured based on the Parasocial Interaction Scale (Rubin et al., 1985). The researcher adapted this scale based on the study context. This scale has 10 items overall which is to cover the respondents feelings towards MI. Sample items include “I feel sorry for Muslim influencers when she/he makes mistakes”. The respondent indicated the frequency using 5-point Likert scale, where the response items ranged from 1 (*Totally disagree*) and 5 (*Totally agree*).

Finally, the dependent variable, level of intention to support Palestine by engaging in online activism was measured based on the scale of willingness to engage in activism created by Poorisat et al. (2018). This scale has four items measuring online activism activities. Sample items are: “Sign an online petition to tell the government to help the Palestinian”. Respondents indicated the frequency of engaging in such behaviour based on a 5-point Likert scale, where the response was ranging from 1 (*Never*) and 5 (*Very Frequently*).

3.7 Data analysis

This study utilised both descriptive and inferential statistics to examine the research questions and to test the hypotheses of the study. Descriptive statistics include means, frequencies, percentages and standard deviations. To establish the relationships between all variables, a zero-order correlation analysis was run. To test hypotheses H1-H3, the multiple linear regression analysis was utilised in this study. Finally, to examine the mediating role of parasocial interaction (H4 and H5), the process macro Hayes (model 4) was used. Process models are suitable to examine mediating relationship (Hayes, 2018). The questionnaire was sent to an expert to verify the survey instrument. Based on the expert suggestions, the items have been edited before the final data collection phase.

3.8 Reliability test for pilot study

Table 2: Reliability test for pilot study

Item details	Pilot Study (N=30)			Source
	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	No. of Items	Measurement	
Social Media Intensity (SMI)	.919	12	5-point Likert scale	J. Labrague. (2014)
Exposure to Israel-Palestine Issues on Social Media (EIPSM)	.948	12	5-point Likert scale	Li et al. (2016)
Parasocial Interaction Towards Muslim Influencers (PSI)	.980	10	5-point Likert scale	Rubin et al. (1985)
Intention to Support Palestine by Engaging in Online Activism (ISPOA)	.907	9	5-point Likert scale	Poorisat et al. (2018)

To test the reliability of the research instrument, the Cronbach alpha values were examined in the pilot testing phase. The pilot study reliability test above shows the values obtained. The test was conducted prior to the actual study to test the consistency with the total sample of 30 respondents consist of family members, friends and undergraduate students from various department and major from other kulliyah than AHAS KIRKHS in International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Gombak campus who use social media regularly or use it as one of the main sources of information.

For social media intensity (SMI), Cronbach's alpha for the variable is .919 which is highly reliable considering minimum score is 0.7. For the next variable which is exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media (EIPSM), Cronbach's alpha value is .948 and the value score is higher than minimum score is 0.7. For the mediating variable which is parasocial interaction

towards Muslim influencers (PSI), Cronbach's alpha for this variable is .980 which has good internal consistency because it exceeds 0.7 minimum value score. Lastly, for the intention to support Palestine by engaging in online activism (ISPOA), the Cronbach's alpha for this variable is .907. Hair et al. (2013) highlighted that values should be above the cut-off value of .70, and with CA scores for all scales that ranged from 0.809 to .920, this implies that all scales in this study achieve good internal consistency.

3.9 Data Cleaning

After completion of data collection, the data was keyed into SPSS and data pre-processing was conducted to ensure that the data is ready for analysis. Data cleaning was done by identifying missing and straight-lined data. In the process, using Microsoft Excel, four responses had to be deleted due to straight-lining, rendering the sample size from N=358 to N=354.

3.10 Model Fit, Reliability and Validity

Further, to establish reliability and validity of the scales used in the study, and to establish the measurement model, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was run using the JAMOVI software. A number of indices were used to assess the model fit. The model's covariance structure considerably differs from the observed data, according to the statistically significant chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 2189$, $df = 588$, $p < .001$). However, alternative fit indices were also looked at because of how sensitive the chi-square test is to sample. Both the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI = 0.744) and the comparative fit index (CFI = 0.761) fall below the suggested cutoff of .90 for a decent model fit, indicating a less than ideal fit to the data. A certain amount of inconsistency is shown by the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR = 0.0854), which is marginally above the allowable cutoff of 0.08. Poor model fit is further suggested by the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.0877; 90% CI = [0.0838, 0.0916]), which is also beyond the acceptable criterion of 0.06.

As recommended by the literature (i.e., Hair et al., 2011; Gefen & Staub, 2005), items with low factor loadings (i.e., values should be at least above .50) should be eliminated when evaluating the measurement model. In this study, some items are below cutoff values and have been deleted. According to Hair et al. (2011), the composite reliability (CR) should be above .70, and every value was higher than the cut off value. Finally, the average variance extracted (AVE) should be above the cut-off value of .50 (Hair et al., 2011), and just one variable that met the cut-off value is

parasocial interaction (PSI). However, scholars have reiterated that .40 is acceptable, if the CR is higher than 0.6, and therefore the convergent validity of the construct is still adequate (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 4 displays the factor loadings, reliability and validity of each of the constructs.

Table 3: Factor loadings, reliability and validity

Items	Loadings	CA	CR	AVE
<i>Social media intensity (SMI)</i>		0.809	0.856	0.421
SMI_1	0.632			
SMI_2	0.632			
SMI_3	0.667			
SMI_4	0.711			
SMI_5	0.598			
<i>Exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media (EIPSM)</i>		0.889	0.930	0.410
EIPSM_1	0.776			
EIPSM_2	0.697			
EIPSM_3	0.615			
EIPSM_4	0.652			
EIPSM_5	0.611			
EIPSM_6	0.582			
EIPSM_7	0.727			
EIPSM_8	0.707			

EIPSM_9	0.674			
EIPSM_10	0.555			
EIPSM_11	0.523			
EIPSM_12	0.507			
<i>Parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencer (PSI)</i>		0.920	0.944	0.528
PSI_1	0.635			
PSI_2	0.739			
PSI_3	0.659			
PSI_4	0.846			
PSI_5	0.730			
PSI_6	0.795			
PSI_7	0.602			
PSI_8	0.704			
PSI_9	0.798			
PSI_10	0.804			
<i>Intention to support Palestine by engaging in online activism (ISPOA)</i>		0.876	0.931	0.465
ISPOA_1	0.756			
ISPOA_2	0.529			
ISPOA_3	0.733			
ISPOA_4	0.355			

ISPOA_5	0.763
ISPOA_6	0.618
ISPOA_7	0.658
ISPOA_8	0.722
ISPOA_9	0.760

Note: *CA*= Cronbach Alpha, *CR*=Composite Reliability, *AVE*=Average Variance Extracted.

Next, discriminant validity was examined, by focusing on each construct's correlation coefficient, where the square root of AVE should be greater than the correlation coefficient value between the construct (Hair et al., 2011). Good discriminant validity was proven because this criterion was satisfied in this study. The discriminant validity of this study is shown in Table 5

Table 4: Discriminant validity

Factor	SMI	EIPSM	PSI	ISP
SMI	0.649			
EIPSM	0.077	0.640		
PSI	0.151	0.355	0.727	
ISPOA	0.006	0.451	0.140	0.682

Note: *SMI* = social media intensity, *EIPSM* = exposure to Israel-Palestine issue on social media, *PSI* = Parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencer, *ISPOA* = intention to support Palestine by engaging in online activism

3.11 Multicollinearity Assessment

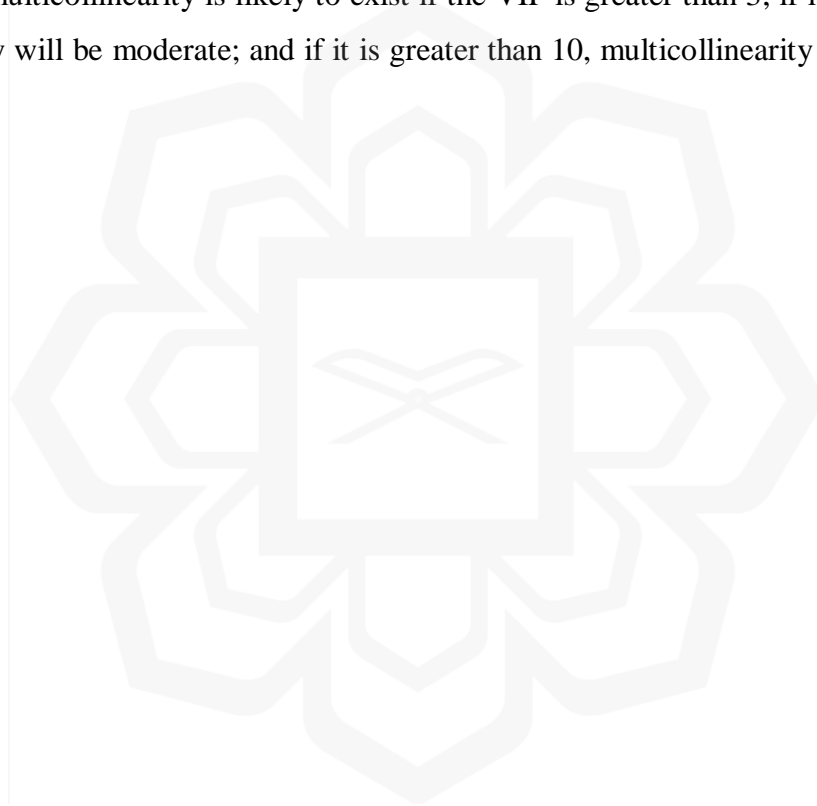
According to Hair et al. (2010), the link between two or more exogenous factors where the independent variables show little correlation with one another is known as multicollinearity. Multicollinearity problem occurs when the independent variables are highly correlated to each other (Hair et al., 2010; Pallant, 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Therefore, a high degree of correlation between two or more variables indicates that they include extraneous information. All variables are not needed in the same analysis because they increase the error terms. Furthermore, the standard error of the regression coefficient rises with large levels of multicollinearity between variables, making these coefficients less dependable in terms of statistical significance. The most reliable statistical test of multicollinearity is an examination of tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) with the thresholds more than 0.1 and VIF of 10 (Hair et al., 2010; Pallant, 2010). Thus, multicollinearity was assessed in this study by looking at the correlation matrix first, then the tolerance and VIF level for the independent variables. The independent variables' correlation matrix was analysed to determine whether there is any sign that the variables have strong relationships with one another. Hair et al. (2010) and Pallant (2010) stated that multicollinearity occurs when there is a correlation of 0.9 or greater between independent variables. However, Pallant (2010) also proposed a threshold for multicollinearity among independent variables: a correlation value greater than 0.7. Table 5 shows the collinearity statistics of each variable.

Table 5: Collinearity statistics

	Collinearity statistics	
	Tolerances	VIF
Social Media Intensity	.915	1.093
Exposure to Israel-Palestine on Social Media	.870	1.150
Parasocial Interaction	.860	1.162

VIF= Variance inflation Factor

Multicollinearity was tested through examination of tolerance and VIF using regression results provided by the SPSS collinearity diagnostics results. As recommended by scholars (Hair Jr et al., 2010; Pallant, 2010), this is the most important and reliable test of multicollinearity. In table 5 above it is clear that the tolerance ranges between .860 and .915 substantially greater than 0.1 and VIF ranges from 1.150 to 1.162, thus, is acceptable as being less than 10. In line with Hair Jr et al. (2010) and Pallant (2010), the result shows that multicollinearity does not exist in this study since tolerance values above 0.10 and VIF values are below 10. However, some scholars also think that multicollinearity is likely to exist if the VIF is greater than 3; if it is greater than 5 multicollinearity will be moderate; and if it is greater than 10, multicollinearity will undoubtedly exist.



CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 Descriptive analysis

To study the background of the respondent, descriptive analysis was carried out. Table 6 displays the demographic background of the respondents. According to analysis, the respondents N=354 consist of undergraduate students from IIUM and their age range from 18 to 30 years old and above. Almost half were aged between 21 to 23 years old (57%), with two-thirds being female (67%) and a majority were Malaysians (84%). Other than that, one-quarter of the respondents are active on social media platforms, and reported spending 3 to 4 hours in a day (28%). Additionally, a substantial proportion of respondents indicated that social media has become part of their daily routine (46%)

Table 6: Demographic of respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	118	33.3
	Female	236	66.7
	Total	354	100
Age (Years old)	18-20	84	23.7
	21-23	201	56.8
	24-26	55	15.5
	27-29	7	2.0
	30 years old and above	7	2.0
	Total	354	100
Nationality	Malaysian	297	83.9

International	57	16.1
Total	354	100

4.2 Normality test

A normality test was conducted to evaluate whether the distribution of Social Media Intensity (SMI) scores follows a normal distribution. Results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, ($D(354) = 0.064, p = .001$) and the Shapiro-Wilk test, ($W = 0.987, p = .003$), indicate a significant deviation from normality. Based on these findings ($p < .05$), suggesting that the variable scores are not normally distributed.

Additional examination of the data showed non-normality traits. Examining the histogram and Q-Q plot visually revealed that the distribution was leftward skewed, with the left side having a longer tail. As has been suggested by Curran et al., (1996), the cut-off point for skewness should be between -1 and +1. The data is slightly skewed to the left (skewness = $-.288$) and this suggests a non-symmetric distribution.

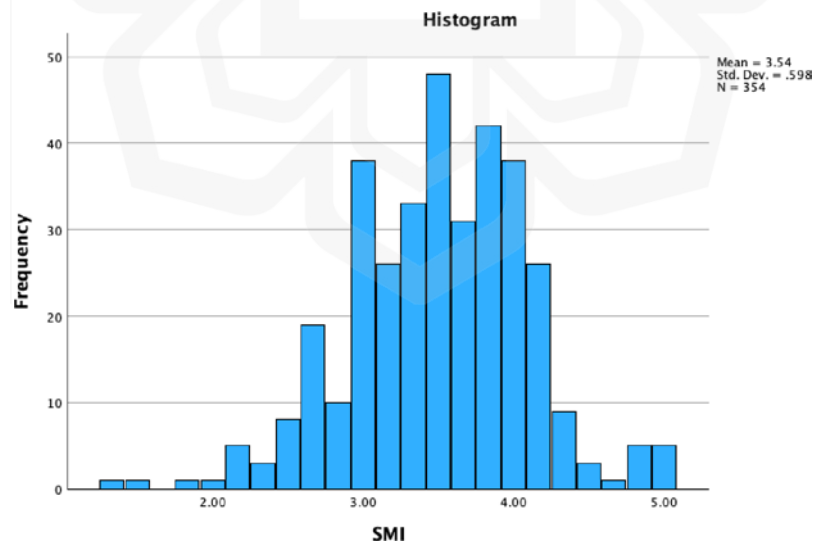


Figure 2: Histogram for Social Media Influencer

Next, a normality test also was conducted to evaluate the distribution of Exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media (EIPSM). Results indicated a statistically significant deviation from normality for both tests, (Kolmogorov-Smirnov: $D = 0.056$, $p = 0.010$; Shapiro-Wilk: $W = 0.990$, $p = 0.017$). These findings suggested that the data for EIPSM are not normally distributed.

Descriptive statistics showed that the distribution was slightly negatively skewed (skewness = -0.26 , $SE = 0.13$) and mildly leptokurtic (kurtosis = 0.33 , $SE = 0.26$). However, the skewness and kurtosis values were each less than twice their standard errors, showing that the departure from normality was not severed.

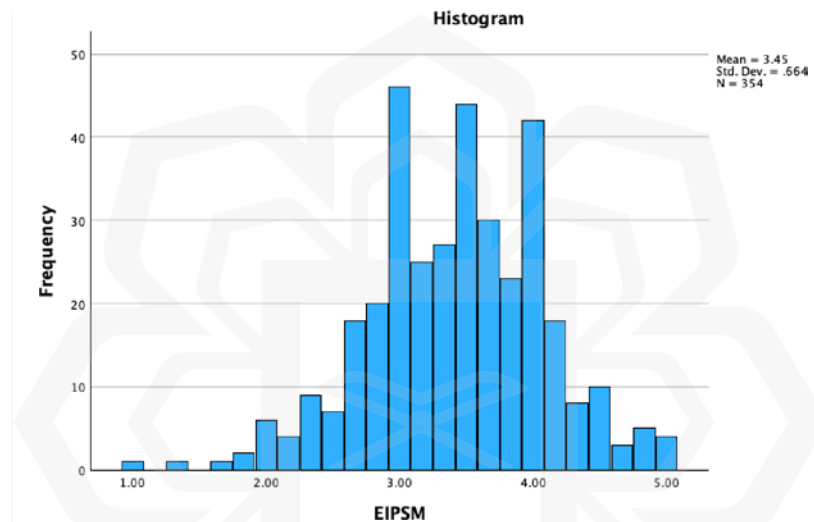


Figure 3: Histogram for Exposure to Israel-Palestine Issues on Social Media

Next, Parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers (PSI) was also tested for normality using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test revealed a statistically significant deviation from normality ($D = 0.076$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, the Shapiro-Wilk test also indicated a not normal distribution, ($W = 0.988$, $p = 0.004$).

Although these tests suggest that the PSI data are not perfectly normally distributed, the skewness (-0.187 , $SE = 0.130$) and kurtosis (-0.244 , $SE = 0.259$) values are relatively small and fall within acceptable ranges for normality (i.e., between -1 and $+1$). This indicates only a slight negative skew and mild platykurtosis, which may not substantially affect analyses that assume normality, particularly with a large sample size ($N = 354$).

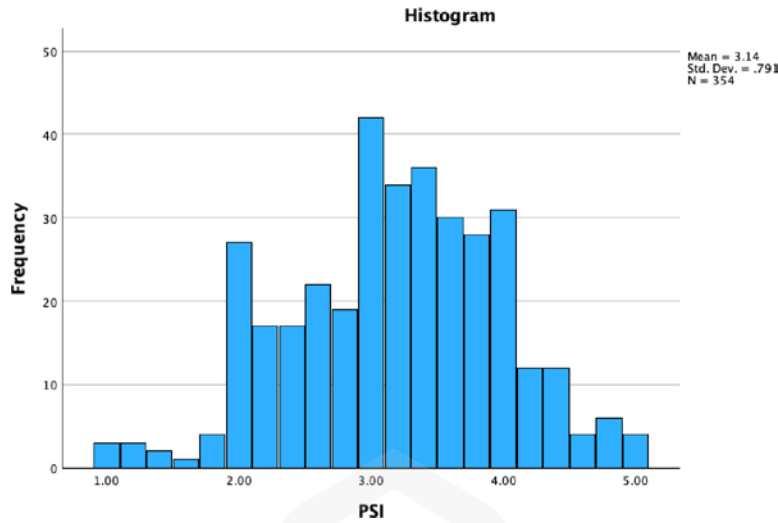


Figure 4: Histogram for Parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers

The Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests were used to determine whether the intention to support Palestine by online activism (ISPOA) scores were normal. Shapiro-Wilk, $W(354) = 0.986$, $p = .002$, and Kolmogorov-Smirnov, $D(354) = 0.055$, $p = .013$ both showed statistically significant deviations from normality. These findings imply that the ISPOA scores do not follow a perfectly normal distribution.

Nonetheless, the kurtosis (-0.339 , $SE = 0.259$) and skewness (-0.149 , $SE = 0.130$) values are both quite low and well within the normally accepted range of -1 to $+1$. This suggests only a small deviation from normality, with a slight negative skew and mild platykurtosis. The influence of these differences on parametric analysis is probably minimal because of the high sample size ($N = 354$).

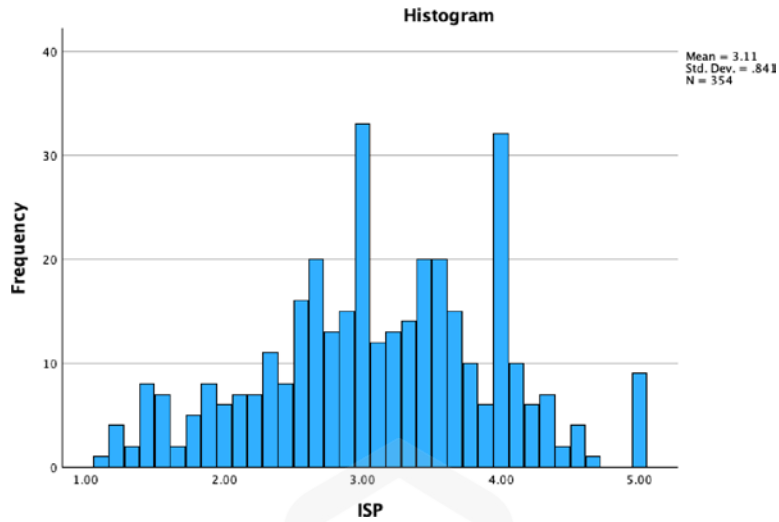


Figure 5: Histogram for Intention to Support Palestine by Online Activism

4.3 Mardia’s multivariate skewness and kurtosis

As advised by Hair et al. (2017) and Cain et al. (2017), the structural model's multivariate skewness and kurtosis were assessed following the acquisition of suitable reliability and validity in order to explore the study's hypotheses. The results demonstrated that the collected data were not multivariate normal based on Mardia's multivariate skewness ($\beta = 29323.065$, $p < 0.001$) and multivariate kurtosis ($\beta = 8.370$, $p < 0.001$). The path coefficients, standard errors, t-values, and p-values in the structural model are therefore reported using a sample resample of 5,000 bootstrapping procedures, as suggested by Ramayah et al. (2018), in accordance with recommendations made by Hair et al. (2019).

4.4 Hypotheses testing

Table 7: Multiple-linear regression

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficient	R ²	F	t-value	p-value	Hypotheses Supported
H1	SMI → ISPOA	-.015	.000	.040	-2.586	.841	No
H2	EIPSM → ISPOA	.574	.205	90.876	9.238	<.001	Yes
H3	PSI → ISPOA	.176	.027	9.939	.863	.002	Yes

Note: * $p < 0.05$. SMI: Social Media Intensity, EIPSM: Exposure to Israel-Palestine Issues on Social Media, PSI: Parasocial Interaction Towards Muslim Influencers, ISPOA: Intention to support Palestine by Online Activism

H1: Social media intensity has a positive relationship with intention to support Palestine by online activism.

One objective of this study is to examine the relationship between social media intensity and the intention to support Palestine. The dependent variable ISPOA was regressed on predicting variable SMI to test hypotheses H1. SMI not significantly predicted ISPOA, $F(354) = .040$, $p = 0.841$, which indicates that the SMI does not play a significant role in shaping ISPOA ($b = -.015$, $p = 0.841$). These results clearly show there is no significant relationship between social media intensity (SMI) and intention to support Palestine by online activism (ISPOA). Moreover, the $R^2 = .000$ depicts that the model has no impact at all of the variance in ISPOA. This indicates that an increase or decrease of social media intensity are not affecting the intention to support Palestine by online activism.

H2: The exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media has a positive relationship with intention to support Palestine by online activism.

Based on data output from SPSS, The dependent variable ISPOA was regressed on predicting variable EIPSM to test hypotheses H2. EIPSM significantly predicted ISPOA, $F(354) = 90.876$, $p = <.001$, which indicates that the EIPSM can play a significant role in shaping ISPOA ($b = 0.574$, $p = <.001$). These results clearly show there is a positive effect between the exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media (EIPSM) and intention to support Palestine by online activism (ISPOA). $R^2 = .205$ depicts that the model explains 20.5% of the variance on ISPOA and it make EIPSM the best predictor variable. These findings suggest that higher exposure of Israel-Palestine issues on social media will make the intention to support Palestine by online activism increase. This underscores the power of social media platforms in influencing youth political engagement and supports the view that sustained exposure to socio-political issues can foster digital forms of solidarity and advocacy.

H3: Parasocial interaction with a Muslim influencers has a positive relationship with the intention to support Palestine by online activism.

A simple regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers (PSI) towards the intention to support Palestine by online activism (ISPOA). The results revealed that PSI significantly predicted ISPOA, $F(354) = 9.939$, $p = .002$, which indicates that PSI give impact in shaping ISPOA ($b = 0.176$, $p = .002$). However, despite its significance, the relationship is very weak. $R^2 = .027$ shows that PSI only has 2.7% of the variance on ISPOA. This finding indicates that higher levels of parasocial interaction with Muslim influencers are associated with a slight increase in the intention to support Palestine through online activism.

Table 8: Mediation analysis summary

Relationship	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval		t-statistics	Conclusion
				Lower bound	Upper bound		
SMI -> PSI -> ISPOA	-.062	-.077	.062	0.017	0.119	2.384	H4 is supported
EIPSM -> PSI -> ISPOA	.573	.566	.007	-0.035	0.054	0.411	H5 is not supported

Note: *SMI* = Social media intensity, *EIPSM* = Exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media, *PSI* = Parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers, *ISPOA* = Intention to support Palestine by online activism.

H4: Parasocial interaction with a Muslim influencer will mediate the relationship between social media intensity and intention to support Palestine by online activism.

To identify the mediated effect in H4, mediation analysis (model 4) has been performed to test main relationship analysis (H4-H5). Indirect effect indicates a significant mediation because there is no '0' straddling between the LLCI and the ULCI. The result revealed a significant indirect effect of impact of social media intensity (SMI) on the intention to support Palestine by online activism (ISPOA) ($b=0.062$, $t=2.384$) thus supporting H4. Furthermore, the direct effect of social media intensity (SMI) on intention to support Palestine by online activism (ISPOA) in presence of the mediator was found to be insignificant ($b= -0.077$, $p=0.308$). Hence, parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers mediated the relationship between social media intensity (SMI) and

intention to support Palestine by online activism (ISPOA). Table 8 displays a summary of the mediation analysis results.

H5: Parasocial interaction with a Muslim influencers will mediate the relationship between exposure to Israel-Palestine conflict and intention to support Palestine by online activism.

To examine mediated effects for H5, the mediation analysis (model 4) is also being used. Indirect effect indicates no significant mediation because there is a '0' straddling between LLCI and ULCI ($b = 0.007$, $t = 0.411$). Therefore, H5 is not supported. Despite the absence of significant indirect effect, the direct effect of EIPSM on ISPOA remained positive and statistically significant even after controlling for PSI ($b = 0.566$, $p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media independently and directly predicts individuals' intentions to engage in online activism, rather than operating through parasocial relationship with Muslim influencers.

Taken together, these results indicate a direct-only (non-mediated) relationship, whereby increased exposure to Israel-Palestine content on social media enhances online activism intentions without relying on parasocial interaction as an explanatory pathway. Substantively, this implies that the motivational force of issue exposure such as heightened awareness, moral urgency, or emotional arousal may be sufficient to stimulate online activism, regardless of the strength of individuals' parasocial ties with Muslim influencers. Table 8 displays a summary of the mediation analysis results.

4.5 Hypotheses summary

Table 9: Hypotheses summary

No	Hypotheses	Results
H1	Social media intensity has a positive relationship with the intention to support Palestine by online activism	Not supported
H2	The exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media has a positive relationship with the intention to support Palestine by online activism	Supported
H3	Parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers has a positive relationship with the intention to supported Palestine by online activism	Supported
H4	Parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers will mediated the relationship between social media intensity and the intention to support Palestine by online activism	Supported
H5	Parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers will mediate the relationship between exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media and the intention to support Palestine by online activism	Not supported

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Discussion

The first objective was to examine the relationship between social media intensity and the intention to support Palestine through online activism. Next, the second objectives was to examine the relationship between exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media and the intention to support Palestine through online activism. Additionally, this study aimed to identify the relationship between parasocial interaction with Muslim influencers and the intention to support Palestine through online activism. Further, this study attempted to examine the mediating role of parasocial interaction with Muslim influencers in the relationship between social media intensity and the intention to support Palestinians through online activism. Finally, the last objective of this study was to examine the mediating role of parasocial interaction with Muslim influencers in the relationship between the level of exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media and the intention to support Palestine through online activism.

Based on the Uses and Gratification (U&G) theory as a guiding framework, several tests were employed to analyse the relationships among the variables. Thus, the study's results in relation to these research objectives were discussed in the current chapter, along with their implications. The limitations of the study and directions for future research in this field were also discussed.

5.2 Summary and Implication

A relationship between social media intensity and the intention to support Palestine by online activism (H1). Findings from H1 indicated no significant relationship between social media intensity and intention to support Palestine with online activism. There is no doubt that intense use of social media can lead to behavioral change among its users. But in this research context, the relationship between social media use and political participation is frequently statistically non-significant or extremely weak, according to a number of extensive reviews and empirical studies. Strong claims like Lee and Lim (2015), who established that social media is known as the most powerful communication tool that enhances human behaviour in all aspects of life, and Kuss and Griffiths. (2017) highlighted that social media use, particularly among younger individuals, has been linked to changes in self-esteem,

are called into question by Boulianne's meta-analysis of social media networking site (SNS) use and political participation, which revealed that while most correlations were positive in direction, only about half reached statistical significance and the overall effects were weak. Kim et al. (2025) similarly notes, from a "normalisation" perspective that using social media for political objectives does not greatly increase total involvement because individuals who are already politically active gain the most while broader engagement remains low.

According to Min and Wohn's (2018) analysis of cross-cutting political exposure through social media, exposure from strong ties did not significantly correlate with political participation. This suggests that having more intense or varied political contact on social media does not necessarily translate into increased political engagement. According to Hassan et al. (2016) research on Malaysian youth, a large number of young people used Facebook mainly for social communication and had little political interest or involvement. This suggests that high levels of social media intensity can coexist with low levels of political participation. "Slacktivism" also directly supports non-significant or negative links between online support and deeper activism. Galais and Anduiza (2016) defines online political participation as "slacktivism" when it satisfies hedonistic or self-presentation needs but has no impact on more serious political engagement, or even a negative one. Other than that, Moussaoui et al. (2022), shows that an initial low-cost online action (e.g., posting a supportive comment) can reduce willingness to join later offline actions, indicating that online support does not necessarily build intentions for stronger activism and may even dampen them.

When considered collectively, these studies support the empirical finding that: first, "social media intensity has no positive relationship with intention to support Palestine by online activism." Second, they demonstrate that the connection between social media and participation is often weak or non-significant. Third, low political activism can coexist with high social media use and lastly, low-cost online actions can fail to translate into, or even undermined stronger activist intentions. Doing the interpretation of these results, multiple-linear regression has been run using SPSS software and the test indicates that there is negative relationship but there is no significant relationship between social media intensity and the intention to support Palestine by online activism and it shows that increase or decrease of social media intensity are not affecting the behavior or attention of social media user on supporting Palestine by online activism.

This research give significant implications for activism strategies and social media campaigns. Creating interesting, informative, and engaging content that speaks to the beliefs and

interests of their target audience should be a top priority for organisations, activists, and content producers hoping to gain online support for social or political issues. It is not enough to simply boost social media presence or encourage high screen time, the focus must be on conveying messages that have an impact and have substance. These findings are also important and can be used by governments, educational institutions and also media industries to improve digital literacy, equipping people to interact with social media information and critically assess it in a way that encourages informed action.

The exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media and the intention to support Palestine by online activism (H2). According to Monshipouri et al., (2018), using social media also can be a form of modern activism or peaceful resistance while deploying new communication.

So it indicates that at the time of crisis, managing narrative on social media is very important, hence making online activism be one of the main objectives from this study. It is interesting to see that when it comes to social media intensity, it will not give significant impact toward the intention to support Palestine by online activism but if social media users have an amount of exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media, it have positive relationship towards shaping the intention to support Palestine by online activism. This suggests that individuals who are frequently exposed to Israel-Palestine related content on social media are more likely to engage in online activism. Such engagement include participating in online discussion, signing digital petitions, and sharing pro-Palestinian content. This aligns with previous study demonstrating that social media serves as a powerful tool for raising awareness and creating support for social and political causes (Tufekci, 2017). The results also support the idea of slacktivism, which holds that even though low-effort online activities don't always result in offline action, they can nevertheless promote a sense of solidarity and involvement (Christensen, 2011).

These findings have important implications for understanding how exposure of news on social media influences activism and public opinion. First, social media can be used to elevate unrepresented viewpoints and raise awareness of complicating geopolitics issues like the Israel-Palestine conflict. Next, as exposure to one-sided or biased narratives can affect people's views and behaviour, they emphasise the significance of digital literacy and critical engagement with online content (Kahne & Bowyer, 2016). Digital literacy enables users to evaluate the credibility of information sources, recognise misinformation, and engage thoughtfully rather than reactively with political content. In this context, the findings suggest that social media campaigns can be an

effective strategy for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and activists supporting Palestine, provide that such efforts are accompanied by responsible content framing and fact-based communication. At the same time, issues of divisiveness, algorithmic amplification, and disinformation prevalent on social media must be carefully addressed. Furthermore, these findings highlight the role of educators and policymakers in promoting digital literacy and critical engagement, as these competencies empower users to participate constructively in online political discourse and support democratic and ethical forms of digital activism.

Next, the research discusses the relationship between *parasocial interaction with Muslim influencers and the intention to support Palestine by online activism (H3)*. It was already discussed in the previous chapter about Parasocial interaction with Muslim influencers has a positive influence toward the intention to support Palestine by online activism. According to this finding, individuals are more likely to show their support for Palestine on social media if they have deeper parasocial interaction with Muslim influencers or figures who show solidarity towards Palestine online. Despite the relatively small effect size, the relationship's relevance suggests that

parasocial interaction does give impact on online activism actions. This aligns with past research demonstrating that parasocial interaction can influence audience attitude and behaviours, specifically in the context of social media and behavioral changes (Shariffadeen & A. Manaf, 2019; Iqbal et al., 2023).

The researcher believes that this finding can contribute to the extension of literature on social media engagement and digital activism. It is important to know that social media influencers or figures do give an impact towards social media audience behavior and decision making. The developing parasocial interaction among social media users and Muslim influencers provide a powerful and innovative avenue for advertising practice and public relations (Leslie, 2018). Other than that, this finding also helps the media player such as TV and radio station, news agency or official government media unit to carefully choose the best persona that can lift up the brand, image and information that need to disseminate and also can persuade social media users to be involved hence give an impact towards activism activity. To guarantee that people critically participate in digital activism rather than only passively absorbing content, educators and media literacy programs should also examine the influence of parasocial ties on online behaviours (Hobbs, 2020). High credibility and good image and reputation are the factors that need to be considered when selecting an ambassador or the face of the company because a good image can grow the sense of interpersonal closeness between influencers and social media users (Frederick, Choong, Clavio & Walsh, 2012).

The process underlying this connection, such as perceived credibility, emotional attachment and degree of involvement with social media content, should be investigated in future studies. Moreover, beyond social media advocacy, investigating whether PSI translates into offline action would offer a more thorough understanding of the influence of parasocial relationships on real life social movements.

Parasocial interaction toward Muslim influencer mediated the relationship between social media intensity and the intention to support Palestine by online activism (H4). One of the objectives of this study is to identify parasocial interaction as a mediating effect between social media intensity and the intention to support Palestine through online activism. Using Macro Hayes mediation analysis (model 4), the finding revealed that they have a significant indirect effect of the impact of social media intensity on the intention to support Palestine by online activism and it highlights the importance of influencer-follower dynamics in shaping online activism behaviour.

This finding is consistent with the majority of past research on parasocial interaction, which indicates that people frequently form emotionally charged, one-sided connections with media figures, which leads to their admiration for the causes or ideas these influencers advocate (Horton & Wohl, 1956). In the context of the study, Muslim influencers play a crucial role in aiding the online action of support for Palestine since they may have cultural, religious, or ideological connections with their followers. Hence, it is important for media players such as TV and radio stations, or government agencies to identify their target audience so that it is easy for them to elect respectable, high credibility influencers to carry out the company agenda.

There are several implications that can be discussed. First, it has been proven that Muslim influencers have a potential to be a change factor for behavioral change, especially in gaining support for the geo-political cause like Palestine. These influencers could be used by groups and activists that want to encourage online activism to spread their views and reach a wider audience. Next, the study highlighted how social media platforms can serve as a space for the nurture of parasocial relationships, suggesting that social media platforms should consider fostering authentic and meaningful interactions between influencers and their followers. The ethical implications of influencer-driven activism should be taken into account by social media owners and policymakers. Influencers can be powerful advocates for social causes, there is also a risk of misinformation or manipulation. To guarantee that influencer content is truthful, moral, and accurate, rules and regulations should be developed. Other than that, initiatives in education that support digital literacy are necessary. Social media users should be able to analyse online information critically and can understand the dynamics of interactions between influencers and followers. This can help individuals engage in online activism more responsibly and effectively. This finding also contributes to the broader understanding of how social media consumption affects behavior in the real world and provides insights for researchers examining the relationship between social impact, media psychology, and activism activity.

Parasocial interaction with Muslim influencers will mediate the relationship between exposure to Israel-Palestine conflict on social media and intention to support Palestine by online activism (H5). The data were analysed in the previous chapter, and the findings show that exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media has a significant direct effect on the intention to support Palestine through online activism when parasocial interaction with Muslim influencers is included in the model. However, parasocial interaction with Muslim influencers did not function as mediating variables in this relationship. This indicates that exposure to conflict-related content

directly influences individuals' intention to engage in online activism, without requiring a parasocial bond with influencers to transmit this effect. To put it differently, people are more likely to be inspired by the content itself than by their perceived connection to the influencers. These results demonstrate how social media material may spread knowledge and rally political support without the need for influencer-driven parasocial connections.

There are several implications that can be taken out from this finding. First, the content of social media plays an important role in shaping attitude and behaviours. People's intentions to participate in online activism are directly influenced by their exposure to content about the Israel-Palestine issues, indicating that the content's emotional, educational, or moral appeal is enough to drive social media users' intention to support Palestine's cause online. Other than that, this finding also suggests that instead of depending on influencer relationships to gain support, advocacy groups, activists or even journalists should focus on creating compelling, emotionally content. Clear information, compelling narratives, and images that evoke urgency and empathy should be given top priority in campaigns. The assumption that influencers play an important role for shaping political action is questionable by parasocial interaction's lack of mediation. This may be the case because personal ties to Muslim influencers are less important in political activism than ideological alignment, moral convictions, or a sense of justice than by personal connections to influencers. It might be a reflection of the complexity of the Israel-Palestine conflict, where people's responses are more influenced by their pre-existing beliefs and values than by the influence of any single personality.

This finding also shifts our understanding about influencers. Influencers or figures are not mediators but rather as amplifiers. While parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers did not mediate the relationship, it may still be useful and have a potential role of influencers in amplifying messages or raising awareness. Influencers are still important for disseminating information, particularly to audiences who might not encounter it. Their influence may be less about creating a personal connection that drives activism and more about visibility and reach. This has practical implications for how organisations and activists work and collaborate with influencers. Rather than relying on influencers to persuade their followers, campaigns might focus on leveraging their platforms to disseminate content to a wider audience. Next, this study adds to

the expanding body of research on influencers in political contexts and social media activism. It draws attention to the necessity that more research can be conducted in which parasocial interaction may mediate political behaviors. For example, Muslim influencers might play a more significant role in less polarised or less emotionally charged context, where personal connections to influencers could sway opinions or behaviors. Finally, these findings may have ethical implications for influencers who engage with politically sensitive topics or contents. Even influencers might not mediate the intention to involve in activism directly, they hold a great deal of responsibility for their role in disseminating information. Influencers need to be aware of the possible consequences of their content, especially in context where false or misinformation, biased narratives could evoke tensions or harm vulnerable groups.

In conclusion, it suggests that when doing campaigns on social media, impactful messaging and storytelling should be prioritised while recognizing the limitations of influencers collaboration in highly politicised contexts. This study advances our knowledge of the complex relationships that exist between social influence, media exposure, and political behavior and provides insightful information to scholars, activists, policymakers, and media organisations.

5.3 Limitation and Directions for Future Research

There are several limitations that have been identified in this study. First, the sample is rather narrow. The study focused exclusively on undergraduate students from the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), and this can be limited to generalise the results. A majority of the sample is Muslim, young, and from a specific educational and cultural background, which may not represent the broader population. So, it can be suggested that the study should include a more diverse sample, focusing on different age groups, nationalities and religious backgrounds to enhance the external validity of the findings. Another limitation is the research design. This study uses quantitative methods and survey questionnaires as a tool to collect data. The data does not provide a more in-depth finding because it captures numerical data at a single point in time, i.e., using a cross-sectional survey. Because it focused on numerical data, quantitative research might not fully capture the context or deeper meanings of the data, the “Why” behind the phenomenon isn’t always addressed; only the “What”.

Another limitation is its limited scope of variables. The study only focused on social media intensity, exposure to Israel-Palestine conflict, parasocial interaction towards Muslim influencers

as mediators and the intention to support Palestine by online activism as a dependent variable. Other elements, such as political ideology, religious beliefs, and emotional responses to the conflict, were not explored. These variables could significantly influence individuals' intentions to support Palestine and should be considered in future research. Observing in a cultural context, the study was carried out in a predominantly Muslim country and Islamic academic institutions where religious and cultural unity are frequently linked to positive support towards Palestinians. Including target respondents from non-Muslim communities, or non-Muslim influencers, may yield different perspectives on the Israel-Palestine issues. Hence, this cultural context might not apply to them. Future research should examine how cultural and religious contexts moderate the relationship between social media engagement and activism.

Beside that, using a scale adapted from Rubin et al. (1985) to measure parasocial interaction may not fully capture the essence of parasocial relationship in the context of social media influencers. Although this scale is widely used, future research could develop and validate a more contemporary scale that reflects the dynamic and interactive nature of social media, such as the "The Celebrity Worship Scale" (CWS) developed by Dr. John Maltby, Lesley A. Day, and Antony M. McCutcheon in 2001. Lastly, the limitation that can be addressed in this study is, it only focuses on online activism. Online activism such as sharing content, signing petitions, and commenting on posts was the primary focus of the study. The shift from online activism to offline activities, such as participating in protests, donating to causes, or engaging in advocacy work was less covered. Future research should investigate how online activism translates into offline actions and the factors that help the transition from online activism to offline actions.

Based on the mediating analysis (model 4), it demonstrated that the direct effect between exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media and the intention to support Palestine by online activism was significant. Future study could benefit from exploring the role of emotional and moral appeals in shaping online activism. For example, how the narrative that has been used on social media can evoke empathy, anger, or moral outrage and how it can influence people's willingness to engage in activism. Methods such as experimental designs can be involved which can manipulate the emotional tone of social media content to apply its impact on behavioral intentions. The Israel-Palestine conflict is highly politicised and religious in nature, so future research should look at how religious beliefs and political ideology moderate the relationship between social media engagement and activism. For instance, do people who have strong religious beliefs or particular

political affiliations react differently to conflict-related social media content? This could involve stratified sampling based on political or religious orientation.

Additionally, the ethical implication of influencer-driven campaigns should be studied in the future studies, especially in politically sensitive contexts. What are the risks of misinformation or manipulation, for example, when influencers promote political or social causes? How can media players, policymakers and social media companies guarantee that influencer content is truthful, moral, and accountable? To go deeper into these topics, qualitative interviews with activists, influencers, media players and policymakers may be necessary. The previous chapter highlighted that social media intensity has no significant impact towards the intention to support Palestine by online activism. To know further the reason behind it, future study needs to explore the role of social media algorithms in shaping individuals' behavior. Future studies could examine the effect of algorithmic filtering on activism and how it affects the visibility of particular narratives. Do social media algorithms amplify or suppress content related to the Israel-Palestine conflict, and how does this affect social media users' engagement with the issue? These are some of the questions that can be lifted up for the next study. Role of digital literacy is one of the suggestions for future studies. It's important because future research could explore how digital literacy programs influence people's ability to critically evaluate online information and engage in activism responsibly, online or offline. For example, do individuals with higher levels of digital literacy engage in more informed and effective online activism? This could involve interventions that affect the impact of digital literacy training on social media behavior.

In conclusion, this study examines the relationship between social media intensity, exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media, parasocial interactions towards Muslim influencers, and the intention to support Palestine by online activism among IIUM students. After conducting this study, some key insights that can contribute to the literature on parasocial interaction, social media engagement and digital activism.

First, this study suggested that the intention to support Palestine through online activism was not significantly impacted by social media intensity alone. This implies that as long as social media users are exposed to important and valuable content, merely spending time on social media does not necessarily translate to engagement with social or political causes. This research emphasises the significance of content quality and relevance in promoting online activism,

highlighting the necessity for organisations and activists to focus on developing engaging stories that connect with their target audience.

Second, this study found that there is a significant positive relationship between exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media and the intention to support Palestine by online activism. This finding aligns with past literature showing the function of social media as a powerful tool for cultivating awareness and spreading information for social and political causes (Tufekci, 2017). According to the finding, those who frequently come across content about the conflict are more inclined to take part in online activism, such as sharing posts, signing petitions, or participating in discussion. This demonstrates how social media can amplify unrepresented voices and encourage a sense of solidarity among social media users.

Next, this study found a weak but significant positive relationship between parasocial interactions with Muslim influencers and the intention to support Palestine through online activism. This suggests that people that use social media are more inclined to participate in online activism if they feel a connection or intimacy with Muslim influencers who support Palestine. This result is consistent with previous studies on parasocial interaction, which indicate that these one-sided connections may have an impact on attitudes and behaviors, especially when it comes to social media (Shariffadeen & A. Manaf, 2019). However, the relatively small effect size suggests that while parasocial interactions play a role, they are not the primary driver of online activism in this context.

Fourth, the study found that parasocial interaction mediated the relationship between social media intensity and the intention to support Palestine. This implies that social media use can increase participation in online activism when social media users develop parasocial relationships with influencers who advocate for the cause. This finding emphasises the importance of influencer-follower dynamics in shaping online activism and suggests that influencers can serve as catalysts for behavioral change, particularly when they align with their followers' values and beliefs.

But, this study also found that parasocial interaction did not mediate the relationship between exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media and the intention to support Palestine by online activism. This suggests that people's intentions to participate in online activism are directly influenced by their exposure to conflict-related content, rather from their parasocial relationship with influencers. This finding suggests that the content itself, rather than the relationship with the influencer, is the primary driver of online activism in this context. This has

significant implications for activists and organisations since it raises the possibility that producing emotionally engaging and educational content could be a more effective strategy for increasing involvement than depending solely on influencer endorsements.

Finally, the study discovered that IIUM students preferred online activism over offline action. This is consistent with the idea of "slacktivism," which suggests that people find low-effort online activities, like sharing content or signing petitions, easier to engage with and appealing than more conventional forms of activism, such as participating in protests or writing letters to policymakers (Christensen, 2011). This finding highlights the potential of social media as a platform for mobilizing support for social and political causes, particularly among younger, digitally savvy populations.

In conclusion, this study advances our knowledge of how exposure to geopolitical content, social media engagement, and parasocial interaction affect online activism. According to these findings, exposure to relevant content and parasocial interaction with influencers can significantly influence people's intentions to support social and political causes, even though social media intensity alone may not be the primary factor of activism. These insights have important implications for activists, media organisations, and policymakers, as they highlight the need for compelling content, strategy, how to use influencers, and digital literacy initiative to promote responsible online activism. Future research should build on these findings by exploring the transition from online activism to real-world actions, the role of emotional and moral appeals, and the ethical implications of influencer-driven activism in politically sensitive contexts.



APPENDIX

Questionnaire: From Virtual Engagement to Real-World Action: Relationship Between Social Media Intensity, Exposure to Israel-Palestine Issue, Parasocial Relationship and Intention to Support Palestine on Social Media Among IIUM Students.

CONSENT FORM

Assalamualaikum W.B.T. Greetings.

My name is Muhammad Syahmi Mohamad Zalani and I am a postgraduate student from the Department of Communication, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, Kulliyah Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, IIUM. I am currently conducting research on **“From Virtual Engagement to Real-World Action: Relationship Between Social Media Intensity, Exposure to Israel-Palestine Issue, Parasocial Relationship and Intention to Support Palestine on Social Media Among IIUM Students.”**

To be eligible to participate in this survey, you must be an IIUM student and use social media platforms on a daily basis.

This questionnaire consists of **six** sections, which are: Demographics, Exposure to social media, social media intensity, Exposure to Israel-Palestine issues on social media, Parasocial Interaction towards Muslim influencers and The intention to support Palestinian by engaging in online activism. It will take approximately 15 minutes to finish the survey. Choose the option that most closely resembles you. There are no correct or incorrect answers. All information collected will only be used for study and will be kept private between you and the researchers involved.

Your involvement is completely optional. You can leave the survey at any time without charges, and your information won't be kept or used in other manners after that.

We really appreciate your insightful comment, which will help us finish this project. If you have any inquiries, please contact me:

NAME: Muhammad Syahmi Mohamad Zalani

EMAIL: syahmizalani@iium.edu.my

SUPERVISOR: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tengku Siti Aisha Tengku Azzman Shariffadeen

I [*respondent's name*]_____ hereby give my permission to **Muhammad Syahmi Mohamad Zalani** (*researcher*) so that I may answer a questionnaire in an academic research paper. I am aware that their material is intended for academic use.

I also accept that, should the researchers ever publish this material in an academic publication or in electronic form online, I renounce any claim to copyright for it.

I understand that the Research Title is ***“From Virtual Engagement to Real-World Action: Relationship Between Social Media Intensity, Exposure to Israel-Palestine Issue, Parasocial Relationship and Intention to Support Palestine on Social Media Among IIUM Students”***.

I also understand that these researchers, hereby named Muhammad Syahmi Mohamad Zalani, will maintain my confidentiality about my responses to Questionnaire items.

I now grant my consent by signing my name beneath.

Signature _____

Date _____

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICS

Instruction: Kindly respond to the questions in this section on your demographic background.
Please choose the one that most accurately describes you.

Age:

- 18-20 years old
- 21-23 years old
- 24-26 years old
- 27-29 years old
- 30 years old and above

Gender:

- Male
- Female

Kulliyah: _____

Years of study:

- First
- Second
- Third
- Fourth

Nationality:

- Malaysian
- International (Please specify) : _____

SECTION B: EXPOSURE TO SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG IIUM STUDENTS

Instruction: Please tick (✓) where applicable.

Q1. Which of the following social media platforms do you access most often?

- Instagram
- Facebook
- Twitter/X
- TikTok
- Youtube

Q2. When did you establish your social media account?

- Less than 1 year ago
- 1-2 years ago
- 3-4 years ago
- 5- 6 years ago
- More than 6 years ago

Q3. How many social media account(s) do you have?

- One
- Two
- Three
- Four
- Five or more

Q4. On average, how long do you spend being online on social media in a day?

- Less than 1 hour
- 1-2 hours
- 2-3 hours
- 3-4 hours
- 4-5 hours
- more than 5 hours

Q5. How long on average do you spend time on social media **per session**?

- Less than 10 minutes
- 1 to 30 minutes
- 30 minutes to up to one hour
- 1 to 2 hours
- 2 to 3 hours
- 3 to 4 hours
- 4 to 5 hours
- more than 5 hours

Q6. When do you **normally** surf your social media?

- Morning
- Afternoon

- () Evening
- () Midnight

Q7. How many social media profiles are you following?

- () Less than 100
- () 100-200
- () 201-300
- () 301-400
- () 401-500
- () 501-600
- () 601-700
- () 701-800
- () 801-900
- () 901-1000
- () 1001 and above

SECTION C: SOCIAL MEDIA INTENSITY

Instruction: The following statements measure the frequency of you using different social media activities. Choose the response that most closely represents your social media usage intensity. This scale was adapted from (J. Labrague, 2014).

No	Statement	Survey scale: 1=Strongly Disagree , 2= Disagree 3=Slightly Agree 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree				
1.	I use social media to find new friends	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I use social media to better understand the interests and activities of my friends.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Social media accurately displays my relationships with others.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I use privacy settings to select what parts of my profiles I share with others.	1	2	3	4	5

5.	I use social media “Lists” to create different levels for friends like “Close Friends,” “Home-Town Friends,” “College Friends,” etc.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Social media helps me feel closer to my friends	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Social media is part of my everyday activity	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I am proud to tell people i’m on social media	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Social media has become part of my daily routine	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I feel out of touch when I haven’t logged onto social media for a while	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I feel I am part of the social media community	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I would be sorry if social media shut down.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION D: EXPOSURE TO PALESTINE-ISRAELI ISSUES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Instruction: The following statements measure your exposure to Palestine-Israeli issues on social media. Choose the response that best represents your experience. This instrument has been adapted by (Li et al., 2016).

No	Statements	Survey scale: 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Very Frequently				
1.	Sent messages to friends on message board about Israel-Palestine issues	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Chatted with friends via instant messaging function on social media about Israel-Palestine issues	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Replied to comments made by social media friends about Israel-Palestine issues	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Commented on friends’ status, logs, and photos about Israel-Palestine issues	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Shared/Forwarded content about Israel-Palestine issues	1	2	3	4	5

6.	Browsed others' logs/photos/statuses/albums about Israel-Palestine issues	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Updated self-status about Israel-Palestine issues	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Posted photos/videos/reels about Israel-Palestine issues on social media profiles.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Writes posts about Israel-Palestine issues on social media	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Decorated social media profile (changed image/information supporting Palestine).	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Watched video/listened to podcast about Israel-Palestine issues	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION E: PARASOCIAL INTERACTION TOWARDS MUSLIM INFLUENCERS (MI)

Instruction: Having in mind the Muslim influencers (MI) that you follow on social media platforms, please indicate by choosing the number that better corresponds to the degree of your agreement with the following statements. This instrument has been adapted by (Rubin et al., 1985).

No	Statement	Survey scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Slightly Agree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree				
1.	I feel sorry for Muslim influencers if he/she make a mistake.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Muslim influencers make me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I see Muslim influencers as a natural, down-to-earth person.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I look forward to watching Muslim influencers when he/she's on television.	1	2	3	4	5

5.	If Muslim influencers appeared on any social media platforms, I would follow that platform	1	2	3	4	5
6.	If Muslim influencers show me how she feels about a situation, it helps me make up my own mind about the situation.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	If there were a story about the Muslim influencer on social media, I would read it	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I miss seeing Muslim influencers when she or he not post on social media.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I would like to meet Muslim influencers in person.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I think Muslim influencers are attractive.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION F: INTENTION TO SUPPORT PALESTINE BY ENGAGING IN ACTIVISM.

Instruction: The following statements measure the level of intention to support Palestine by engaging in activism. Choose the response that best represents your experience. This instrument has been adapted by (Poorisat et al., 2018).

No	Statement	Survey scale: 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Very Frequently				
1.	Sign an online petition to tell the government to help the Palestinian. (Online activism act)	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Share online content to encourage others to help the Palestinian (e.g., forward emails, post or repost information, share a link, click 'Like'). (Online activism act)	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Chat with your friends online about the need to help the Palestinian. (Online activism act)	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Write on your personal web page (e.g., blog, Facebook, Instagram, Tik-Tok, X) about the need to help the Palestinian. (Online activism act)	1	2	3	4	5

Your participation is much appreciated!



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