

IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

Acquiring wisdom on social media often derailed

IT goes without saying that the world we are living in now has become smaller due the interconnectedness of its population in an unlimited, extreme and tremendous way.

The rapid development of information technology enabled people from far away to interact with each other in a matter of seconds, while the advancement of technology has brought down geographical boundaries. People share information and ideas more widely.

Various social media platforms have widened the circle of friends, partners and connections. Statistics show that there are around 3.5 billion social media users globally. Facebook and WhatsApp alone manage 60 billion messages daily.

Looking at this positively, this advancement of information digital technology can be seen as a good sign of human development, with people becoming more knowledgeable with up-to-date information.

Peter Drucker, an Austrian author, described as the father of modern management, talked about the rise of the knowledge worker as the primary unit of the



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contemporary information and innovation-based knowledge society.

But, on a more critical note, there are worrying trends on the impact of social media on society — socially and epistemologically. Socially, digital advancement has created what is called “social displacement” where time spent in social media sites is replacing “face-to-face” time, especially for close friends and family.

Research shows that there is a decline of social interaction, especially among teens due to increased digital media use. Studies also found that adolescents who spend the most time on social media and the least time in face-to-face social interactions reported the most loneliness.

Among other psychological im-

pacts of excessive social media use are depression, anxiety, body-image concerns, bullying, fear of missing out and sleep quality.

On the issue of epistemology and knowledge, the question raised is: does the abundance of information necessarily bring us wisdom, the highest and most virtuous level of human knowledge? We recall the saying of the American biologist, E.O Wilson: “We are drowning with information while starving for wisdom.”

Wisdom implies a systematic, balanced and harmonious state of human understanding from the information that they receive, regarded as the highest level of knowledge due to its virtuous nature in grasping universal knowledge and recognising the proper places of things in the global scheme.

Wisdom is regarded as one of the cardinal virtues by the sages of the past. Plato, the ancient Greek philosopher, said wisdom is knowledge that is pure, eternal, immortal, unified, and unchanging. The Quran regards wisdom as the highest gift from God and closely connected with goodness.



Technology has made it easier for people to share ideas about anything, but it can lead to confusion and misinformation. FILE PIC

“He grants wisdom to whom He pleases and he to whom wisdom is granted receives indeed a benefit overflowing; but none will grasp the message but men of understanding.” (Surah al-Baqarah 2:269)

Hence, the question remains: how can the abundance of information in this highly digitalised world be transformed into wisdom? One of the obstacles to this process is that social media, due to its open and free-flow nature, lacks control mechanisms.

How many times have discussions in WhatsApp or Facebook groups suddenly become derailed when a new message is posted? Also, due to the disparity of the level of knowledge among members of the group, there are also imbalances in the content of the discussion, especially when everybody can express whatever they wish, from the most simple matter to the most difficult one.

This is not yet taking into account those who left the chat

group because of dissatisfaction, emotion and anger, especially when political issues come up.

With this nature of discussion, not only is it challenging to arrive at wisdom, as far as social media is concerned, it may also lead to the contrary, namely confusion and error in understanding and knowledge, especially when information that is presented is contradictory and false.

It is of course too ambitious to expect digital technology and social media to lead society towards wisdom since they are only technical means that keep changing over time.

But, since this means has left great impact on people’s lives, especially the new generations, and is slowly replacing the traditional way of educating and imparting knowledge, it is indeed something worth contemplating.

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