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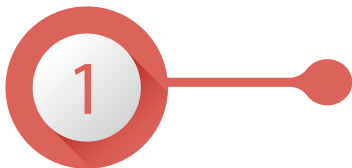
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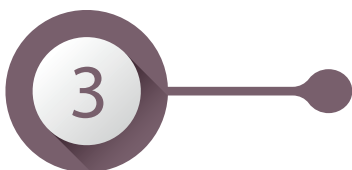
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# PREVALENT CULTURE OF ONLINE SHAMING AMONGST UiTM LAW STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper reports the prevalent culture of online shaming amongst UiTM law students in Malaysia. A survey questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection involving 320 UiTM law students. A cross-sectional data was collected from the survey population. The findings of the survey suggest the prevalent culture of online shaming amongst UiTM law students. The research is beneficial in raising awareness on the culture of online shaming. The survey revealed that online shaming postings are commonly found in social media application and the most prevalent anti-social behaviour associated with online shaming is on sexism, racism or religious bigotry. The survey also revealed respondents' experience in posting or being shamed online. This paper concludes that the culture of online shaming in Malaysia is real and prevalent. This paper recommends for an awareness programme to be conducted among UiTM Law students and nationwide to emphasize on the legal implications of online shaming.*

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## 1. Introduction

The objective of the research is to investigate the prevalent culture of online shaming amongst UiTM law students in Malaysia. Internet is an excellent resource for sharing and gaining information but at the same time, it also enables personal attacks and criticisms on the offenders to flourish online without control. The advance of internet while gives the public an avenue of online public discourse, including disseminating information that has the effect of shaming other people. Shaming that occurs online is known as online shaming and has been categorized as a form of cyber bullying, or cyber harassment (Fagbenle, 2013; Poole, 2013; Dewey, 2015). While online shaming serves as a court of public opinion, it can is also arbitrarily used to condemn a perceived wrongdoer and impose real life consequences. Online shaming is feared by many as it is known to have the power to shape public perception and impact lives, for better or worse.

Online shaming is an anti-social behavior practiced by the internet community that borders between criminal offence and unethical conducts (Ho, 2015). The online media becomes a platform for the public to enforce their personal values, believes and mores against any breach of societal expectations and norms. The intrinsic motivation for online shaming is to punish real or perceived violation of a social norm (Klonick, 2016).

Online media shaming becomes a popular private surveillance method and has established a 'sousveillance' culture whereby members of public taking over the roles of public legal authority, by acting as an unofficial watchdog (Mann, Nolan and Wellman, 2003). This vigilant group of public members utilize social media as a mode of informal social control, regarded by sociologists as cyber social control (Wehmhoener, 2010). This new method of social control regulates the public behavior by naming and shaming the wrongdoers publicly (Phillips and Miltner, 2012). Online shaming often entails the publication of private information of a person on the internet to intimidate the person, teen-shaming, slut-shaming, revenge porn, negative reviews and 'name & shame' commonly used by the government to punish publicize tax evasion, environmental violations and minor crimes like littering (Carson, 2015), Among Muslim nations, including Malaysia, hijab shaming is amongst the most common type of online shaming (Nurulsyahrah, 2015). In addition, online shaming also targets socially undesirable behaviours such as unsafe driving and bad parking among members of society, to shame social media users who send impolite, aggressive or insulting text messages (Allen, 2014).

The rise of online shaming marks the revival of shame as a modality for social control. Online shaming becomes an avenue for those who are upset or offended to impose some discipline (Ho, 2015). Although online shaming has been accepted as one of the modalities for social control (Little, 2012), online shaming in Malaysia is still classified as informal sanction as currently it is not part of a government endorsed shaming sanction like imprisonment or community service. Online shaming is largely enforced by Malaysian online community through social media applications, open forums, online news portals and blogs (Klonick, 2015). Being an informal sanction, online shaming addresses transgressions of norms and other social values which is a subjective judgment by large and does not rely on laws to indicate when an offence deserves a punishment (Skoric, 2010). Therefore, unlike formal sanction, the type of violations and deviant behaviours that would attract online shaming varies between societies and the severity of online shaming is also not fixed and uncertain at best.

Literature review disclosed that discussions on online shaming mainly revolved around the legal consequences and the negative implications of using online shaming as a modality for social control, since it is disproportionate to the offence and inherently cruel (Goldman, 2015; Moukalled, 2015); gives rise to culture of humiliation (Schulten, 2015; Cheung, 2012); and open to abuse as it lacks procedures (Skoric, 2010). Despite the negativity, several scholars treat online shaming as a form of internet vigilantism (Wehmhoener, 2010) and as a tool for justice and equality for women (Kaplan, 2015), helps the marginalized group to get attention (Dewey, 2016) and provide recourse in the absence of a meaningful legal solution (Philips & Milner, 2012).

A review on the literature reveals a gap in the study of online shaming in relation to prevalent culture of online shaming in Malaysia. In Malaysia, there is yet an empirical study conducted to investigate the prevalent culture of online shaming, which involve types of offences or anti-social behaviours commonly associated with online shaming such as having read, posted, shared, liked or commented by netizen, personal experience in posting or being shamed online and the social media platform where online shaming is widely practiced.

Assessing the prevalent culture of online shaming is deemed important as the findings of the research will benefit the netizens, public and legislature in curbing the negative effects of online shaming. By having firsthand knowledge and information on the culture of online shaming, appropriate measures can be proposed and implemented with the objective of curbing the widespread of the negativity of online shaming amongst UiTM Law students and Malaysian generally. Although



the research focused only on UiTM law students in Malaysia, the research will benefit not only the Malaysian community, but also to the world at large as online shaming is a universal phenomenon.

## 2. Research Method

The research employs a survey method for primary data collection. A survey questionnaire was developed for this research and used as an instrument for data collection. The population for the survey comprised of 1780 undergraduate and post-graduate students who have enrolled as students in UiTM Law Faculty as at 30th September 2016. This study is limited to UiTM law students. While law students make up a small number of population (1780) compared to the entire population of students in UiTM Shah Alam (which is over 15 000), it is hereby submitted that the law students are the best survey population for this research since they study jurisprudence and could better understand the aim/function of shaming as modality for social control.

The sample size of the research is calculated based on Krejcie and Morgan table (1970). For a target population of 1800, the sample size required is 317 with 95% confidence level and margin of error at 0.05. In order to avoid sampling bias, a stratified random sampling method is used. The relevant stratum for the sampling is the student's academic level i.e. Bachelor, Advance Diploma, Master and Doctorate. Based on proportionate stratified sampling equation, the sampling fractions are as follows:

**Table 1: Sampling Data**

Academic Levels	Layer Size	Sampling Fraction
Bachelor Degree	1387	247
Advance Diploma	76	13
Master Degree 2	89	51
Doctorate	23	6
Total Population Size	1780	320

From 1 October 2016 until 1 April 2017, a self-administered survey questionnaire was distributed by hand using random sampling techniques to 320 respondents. A total of 320 completed questionnaires were returned by the respondents.

In achieving the research objective, the research analyzed:

- i) type of social media application commonly logged-in by the respondents;
- ii) whether the respondents had been shamed online;
- iii) whether the respondents had made online posting that shamed others; and
- iv) whether the respondents had liked, shared or commented online posting that shame others; and
- v) the types of offences or anti-social behaviours commonly read, shared, liked and commented by the respondents surveyed. The types of abuse or anti-social behaviours asked in the survey were derived from the literatures as discussed earlier.

For the purpose of this research, the scope of culture of online shaming comprises of; whether they had ever made online posting that shamed others, they had shared or commented online posting that shame others and form of online social media platform where they commonly logged-in where online shaming postings are commonly found. The type of offences or anti-social behaviours prevalent will also be analysed.

The completed survey questionnaires were then collected by the researchers themselves. Out of 320 respondents, 230 (71.9%) are females and 87 (27.2%) are males with 281 (87.8%) being single and 39 others, either married (11.3%) or divorced (0.9%). Majority of the respondents are Malay (94.1%) and about 6% are either Bumiputra Sabah or Sarawak. It follows that 96.3% of the respondents are Muslim while the remaining respondents are Christian. In terms of academic program enrolled, 249 (77.8%) of the respondents are undergraduate students, 14 respondents are from Advance Diploma programme, while 51 Master Degree students and 6 PhD students also participated in the survey.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS v. 24 as a statistical tool for quantitative data analysis. The survey data was entered into the computer by the researchers themselves. The collected data was analysed using both descriptive and statistical data analysis.

### 3. Findings

Type of offences/ anti- social behaviours	Child abuse / Domestic violence	Poor service/ product	Insensitivity /inconsiderate	Corrupt acts/ abuse of power	Bad/illegal parking	Reckless/ dangerous driving	Crude display of privilege	Fighting/ bullying	Littering/ g/splittng/okng	Degrading /insulting messages	Impolite/ rude/ aggressive behaviour	Cheating/ pick pocketing/ stealing	Sexism/racism /religious bigotry	Unpatriotic act	Others	Respondent's Code
Valid	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sum	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311

**Table 2:** Type of offences/anti-social behaviours commonly read/posted/share/liked/commented online

Table 2 shows the type of offences or anti-social behaviours that can be seen online thus inviting the netizens to either read, post, share, like or comment online. The most prevalent offence is on sexism, racism or religious bigotry whereby 232 respondents have responded on the same, followed closely behind by 224 respondents who also responded online on impolite, rude or aggressive behaviours. A total of 215 respondents normally respond to offences involving child abuse or domestic violence whilst 208 responded to offences on corrupt acts or abuse of power. Fighting or bullying is the least type of prevalent offences whereby 200 out of 320 respondents either read, post, share, like or comment online on such offence.

**Table 3:** Have You Ever Been Shamed Online?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
0	5	1.6	1.6	1.6
Yes	67	20.9	20.9	22.5
Never	162	50.6	50.6	73.1
Not sure	86	26.9	26.9	100.0
Total	320	100.0	100.0	

**Table 4:** Have You Ever Made Shaming Posting?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	3	.9	.9	.9
	Yes	38	11.9	11.9	12.8
	Never	209	65.3	65.3	78.1
	Not sure	70	21.9	21.9	100.0
	Total	320	100.0	100.0	

**Table 5:** Have You Ever Like/Share/Comment Shaming Posting?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	4	1.3	1.3	1.3
	Yes	97	30.3	30.3	31.6
	Never	148	46.3	46.3	77.8
	Not sure	71	22.2	22.2	100.0
	Total	320	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 demonstrates that 20.9% (67 respondents) had been shamed online and 11.9% (38 respondents) had made online posting to shame other people as shown in Table 4. Table 5 reveals that 30.3% (97 respondents) used to like, share or made comments on online shaming posting.

**Table 6:** Online Social Media Application Commonly Associated with Online Shaming

	Social media application commonly	Social media application logged-in: facebook	Social media application logged-in: instagram	Social media application logged-in: twitter	Social media application logged-in: googleplus	Social media application logged-in: youtube	Social media application logged-in: telegram	Social media application logged-in: whatsapp
Responent's	commonly	logged-in:	logged-in:	logged-in:	commonly	commonly	commonly	commonly
Code	logged-in:facebook	instagram	twitter	googleplus	logged-in:youtube	logged-in:telegram	logged-in:whatsapp	
N	Sum	Sum	Sum	Sum	Sum	Sum	Sum	Sum
Grand Total	320	187	236	182	104	204	37	305

Table 6 illustrates the most common social media application the respondents commonly logged-in is Whatsapp, followed by Instagram and Youtube, Twitter and Facebook. This finding is consistent with Table 7 where it indicates that the most common platform for online shaming postings commonly found is a social media.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The findings show the prevalent culture of online shaming among the respondents surveyed. Whilst some of the respondents claimed that they were never been shamed online, there are still respondents who said they had been shamed online. Even though only 11.9% of respondents surveyed admitted to posting shaming comments on online media, over 30% respondents had responded to online shaming posted by other peoples. The most common offence or anti-social behaviour linked to online shaming activities is a prejudicial issue on sexism, racism and religion intolerance. This is followed by posting on impolite, rude or aggressive behaviour, corrupt acts and abuse of power. It can be seen further that the culture of online shaming is widespread via social media application instead of open forums and blog. This is evident where 300 respondents chose social media application where online shaming postings are prevalent in Whatsapp, Youtube, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. These social media applications are amongst the most visited and popular social media application in Malaysia and the world at large.

In view of these findings, this paper concludes that the culture of online shaming amongst the UiTM law students is prevalent and consistent with the concerns raised by several scholars (Goldman, 2015; Moukalled, 2015; Schulten, 2015; Cheung, 2012 and Skoric, 2010) where the practice of online shaming could lead to abuse. The finding also revealed a disturbing fact where 232 respondents had responded to online shaming postings on sensitive issues involving sexism, racism and religion. Matters involving these issues have been known to be capable of eliciting tension and social unrest amongst the multi-cultural and multi-religion society in Malaysia.

From these findings, it is recommended for an awareness programme on the negative effects of online shaming culture be conducted amongst UiTM Law students and can be extended to the public at large. The awareness programme should emphasize on the legal implications of online shaming arising from section 114A of the Evidence Act 1950 (presumption of online publication), section 211 of the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (prohibition of online publication of false, annoying and threatening materials), Sedition Act 1948, Official Secrets Act 1972 and Data Protection Act 2010. It is hoped that by communicating to the respondents and the public on the legal consequences of online shaming, it will curtail the negative effects of online shaming.

This recommendation is in line with the recently announced guideline by the Malaysian Ministry of Education on online shaming where sharing and posting criticisms of government and school policies are now banned alongside cyber bullying covering both students and teachers. The new guideline also lists sharing someone else's embarrassing photos and spreading rumours as cyber bullying (Sarban, 2017). The teachers and students are barred from making or sharing any sensitive information related to political, religious and racial matters, especially if these could threaten national security. It is evident from this recent move by the Malaysian government that the culture of online shaming is prevalent and had produced negative effects, thus there is a need to curtail and control the online shaming culture.

#### 5. Conclusion

The research has achieved its aim to investigate the prevalent culture of online shaming among UiTM law students in Malaysia. It identified social media application commonly logged-in; personal experience of the respondents in posting or being shamed online; types of offences or anti-social behaviours most commonly found online by the respondents. Though the findings are limit-

ed to the number of respondents surveyed, they provide an insight to prevalent culture of online shaming in Malaysia generally. Future research is needed to extend these findings to other respondents at national level in providing a far-reaching understanding on the prevalent culture of online shaming in Malaysia.

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