

Digital Resilience: Learning to Endure Without Self-Pressure

Article Summary

In today's hyperconnected world, younger generation face mounting mental health challenges shaped by the digital environment. The NHMS 2023 reports that one in four Malaysian teens show signs of depression, with social media comparison emerging as a major cause.



In today's hyperconnected world, young generation face a new and complex dimension of mental-health challenges shaped by the digital environment. According to the National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2023, one in four Malaysian teenagers aged between 13 to 17 experiences symptoms of depression, while nearly a third struggle with moderate to severe emotional stress. The growing trend of comparing lives on social media has become a key factor affecting the psychological well-being of today's youth.

For many young adults, especially university students, social media has evolved far beyond a space for sharing daily moments. It has become a stage to showcase achievements, lifestyles and success stories—often fuelling pressure to seek validation and acceptance from others. This has given rise to what experts call “digital performance pressure”, where self-worth is measured by online engagement and how one appears in the eyes of the virtual community.

According to Nurul Syazwani Muhamed Zabidi, Research Assistant at UPM Consultancy & Services (UPMCS), the current generation of youth should not be labelled as weak, as often perceived by some quarters. Instead, they are grappling with growing psychological pressures in a digital world that never stops flooding them with information and opportunities for comparison.

She explained that constant notifications, exposure to seemingly perfect lives of peers, and the perpetual need to keep up with others have reshaped the very idea of resilience. “The type of endurance young people need today is different because the challenges they face are not the same as previous generations,” she said.

In this context, digital resilience has become a vital survival skill. Resilience is not about staying strong all the time, but it is about recognising when to pause, reflect and give oneself room to recover from mental strain. Additionally, an awareness of how to balance online and real-world life helps maintain emotional stability and a sense of self-worth that are not defined by the number of likes or comments.

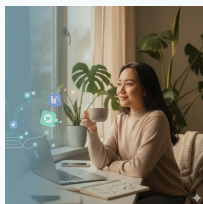
Although often dismissed as the ‘strawberry generation’, today's youth are far from inherently fragile; they are reacting to the intensity of a digital era unlike

any before. Support from families, educational institutions and communities is crucial to ensure that they are not left to struggle alone in this demanding reality.

A change in narrative is urgently needed where society need to stop expecting young people to show the same kind of resilience as those who lived before the current digital explosion. Instead, we should help them understand that vulnerability is a natural part of building strength. Prioritising mental health and setting healthy boundaries with technology are key steps toward holistic well-being.

Ultimately, digital resilience is not about who can stay afloat the longest in a sea of endless information – it's about knowing oneself, having the courage to pause when needed, and moving forward with calm and clarity. Amid the constant noise of the digital world, may the current generation learn not just to survive, but to live with mindfulness, balance, and purpose.

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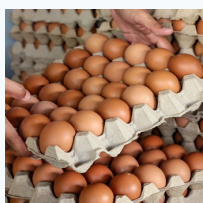
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