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THE ROLES OF ATTITUDE AND SOCIAL MEDIA FACTORS IN THE SOCIAL DISTANCING OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN THE EAST COAST OF PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

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The effects of social distancing on mental health range from increased attention to injury, suicide, and reluctance to seek specialist treatment. This study aimed to identify the influence of attitudes and social media on the social distancing of students from public universities towards the mentally ill people. A total of 450 students studying at four public universities on the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia were selected as the sample for this study using a simple random sampling method. The findings of the study showed that the level of social distance towards mental patients among public university students was at a moderate level. This study also found that there were a significant relationship between social media factors and social distance of mental people and there was a significant relationship between attitudes towards mental people and social distance of mental people. Regression analysis showed that there was an influence of social media and the attitude of public university students of social distance towards mental people. In practical terms, the findings of the study can give understanding to certain parties and the general public about the effects of social distance on mental people and can reduce the isolation gap between the community and mental people. In addition, using the biopsychosocial theoretical framework, this study enhances the corpus of literature in the field of study, especially in the context of Malaysia.