

Scam in Malaysia: An Analysis of Digital Platforms, Evolving Techniques, and The Social Implications

Nurin Mardiana Humaira Binti Ruslan¹, Nurul Aina Firzanah Binti Rosnan²

¹*Faculty of Computer and Mathematical Sciences, Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam, Selangor
(2023189725@student.uitm.edu.my)*

²*Faculty of Computer and Mathematical Sciences, Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam, Selangor
(2023388953@student.uitm.edu.my)*

Abstract – Scams have become a serious and widespread issue in Malaysia, which affects individuals from all social and educational backgrounds. This paper examines the growing problem of scams in Malaysia, focusing on how scam techniques have evolved in tandem with digital technology. Recent reports indicate that Malaysians are exposed to frequent scam attempts each year, highlighting the increasing aggressiveness and persistence of scam activities [1]. Through a literature review approach, this study discusses the key factors that contribute to scam incidents, including the misuse of digital platforms, emotional manipulation, and false assumptions about personal immunity based on social status. The paper also explores the social, psychological, and economic impacts of scams on individuals, families, and the nation. By analyzing real-life cases and recent studies, this paper highlights the urgent need for stronger preventive measures, digital responsibility, and coordinated national efforts to address scam-related threats.

Keywords – Scam, Cybercrime, Digital Platforms, Malaysia, ICT Ethics

I. INTRODUCTION

Scams are no longer isolated criminal activities but have become a major social and technological issue in Malaysia. With the rapid growth of digital communication, online banking, and social media platforms, scammers now have easier access to potential victims [1]. According

to a Malay Mail report, Malaysians are exposed to an average of 140 scam attempts per year, which shows how frequent and aggressive scam activities have become [1]. The same report also reveals that victims include professionals, retirees, business owners, and educated individuals, which proves that social or academic status does not guarantee protection from scams.

Modern scams take many forms, such as fake investment schemes, impersonation calls, online job offers, and fraudulent messages sent through messaging applications [2]. Scammers continuously adapt their techniques, often staying ahead of existing protection systems and enforcement measures [3]. As digital platforms become deeply integrated into daily life, scams have evolved into a serious ethical, social, and professional issue in information and communication technology (ICT).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. History of Scams in Malaysia

Scam activities in Malaysia have existed for many years and initially appeared as traditional phone scams and face-to-face fraud. In the early stages, scams mainly involved impersonation and simple deception techniques that relied on direct communication. However, the rise of the internet, smartphones, and digital banking has significantly changed how scams operate [4]. As digital communication becomes more common, scammers shift from basic phone calls to more complex online methods. These methods include

messaging applications, social media platforms, and fake websites designed to look legitimate [2]. As Malaysia moved to a digital economy, scam activities increased in scale and complexity. Hence, cyber scams become the most common ICT-related crimes in Malaysia and are increasingly difficult to detect [5].

B. Factors That Contribute to Scams

Several factors contribute to the increasing number of scam cases in Malaysia. One major factor is the false belief that academic achievement, professional background, or social status can protect individuals from being scammed. Many victims assume that scams only target the elderly or less educated groups, which lowers their level of caution. However, reports show that scammers often target educated and financially stable individuals because they are perceived as more credible and capable of making larger payments [1]. Another contributing factor is the rapid evolution of scam techniques driven by technological advancement. Scammers continuously adapt their strategies faster than existing security systems and preventive measures can respond [4]. The gap between scam innovation and protection systems increases the success rate of scam attempts.

The misuse of digital platforms and messaging applications also plays a significant role in scam activities. Scammers exploit trusted platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and social media to appear legitimate and convincing [2]. These platforms allow scammers to reach a large number of users quickly and anonymously. In addition, emotional manipulation within family institutions has become a growing tactic used by cybercriminals. Scammers impersonate family members or trusted individuals to exploit emotional bonds and urgency [6]. Weak digital literacy further increases vulnerability as users may not recognize warning signs. Over-reliance on digital communication without proper

verification also makes individuals more open to scams.

C. Implications of Scams in Malaysia

Scams have serious implications for the individual, social, and national levels in Malaysia. At the individual level, victims often suffer significant financial losses that may take years to recover. Many victims also experience emotional distress, anxiety, and loss of confidence after being scammed [6]. Feelings of shame or embarrassment may prevent victims from reporting scam incidents to authorities. At the social level, frequent scam cases weaken public trust in digital systems and online communication. This loss of trust affects how people engage with online transactions and digital services [4]. As a result, society becomes more cautious and fearful of digital interactions.

At the national level, scam-related losses in Malaysia amount to billions of ringgit each year. These financial losses place heavy pressure on financial institutions, law enforcement agencies, and regulatory bodies [6]. Resources that could be used for development are instead spent on damage control and investigations. The increasing number of scam cases also exposes weaknesses in cybersecurity governance. Ethical responsibility and professional accountability within the ICT sector are challenged by these incidents. Failure to address scams effectively may reduce public confidence in national digital initiatives. Thus, scams represent not only personal problems but also a broader economic and technological concern

D. Case Studies on Real-Life Events

Real-life scam cases reported in Malaysia clearly reflect the issues discussed in the Malay Mail article. For example, professionals such as doctors and business owners have lost hundreds of thousands of ringgits through fake investment

and impersonation scams. These cases prove that social or academic status does not guarantee immunity from scams [1]. Many victims trusted the scammers due to professional-sounding communication and convincing digital materials. In other reported cases, scammers targeted family institutions by impersonating relatives through messaging applications. Emotional trust and urgency were used to pressure victims into transferring money quickly [2]. These incidents demonstrate how emotional manipulation has become a powerful scam tactic.

Other than that, many scam cases involve the misuse of digital platforms. Scammers often pose as legitimate sellers, employers, or government authorities on social media and messaging platforms [2]. These platforms provide a sense of familiarity that lowers victims' suspicion. Fake profiles, cloned accounts, and fraudulent websites are commonly used to support scam activities. Victims often realize the scam happened only after financial losses have occurred. These real-world events strongly support the discussion on evolving scam techniques. Thus, the cases highlight the seriousness and widespread nature of scam issues in Malaysia.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a literature review-based methodology to examine scam issues in Malaysia. The methodology consists of 6-step processes that help ensure a systematic and critical review of existing studies, reports, and real-world cases related to the scams. The methods include selecting a topic, searching the literature, developing an argument, surveying the literature, critiquing the literature, and writing a review.



Figure 1. Literature Review Process

A. Select a Topic

The topic “Scam in Malaysia” was selected because of the rising number of scam incidents that have been reported nationwide. Another reason is due to its significant impact on social, ethical, and economic implications. Moreover, this topic is related to ethical, social, and professional issues in ICT, especially in terms of technology misuse and digital responsibility.

B. Search the Literature

A comprehensive search was conducted to find a relevant literature related to scams in Malaysia. These literatures include different types of sources such as online news portals, academic publications, and government reports, which were taken from reputable online sources. The keywords used in searching and identifying the literature include ‘scam in Malaysia’, ‘digital literacy and fraud in Malaysia’, and ‘scam report in Malaysia.’. In addition, to ensure comprehensive coverage, both local and international publications that discuss scams in the Malaysian context were included.

C. Develop the Argument

Several key issues related to scams in Malaysia are found after conducting a thorough review of the selected literature. These issues include misconceptions that social or academic status guarantees protection from scams, the rapid evolution of scam techniques outpacing existing protection systems, the exploitation of family institutions becoming a new ground for cybercriminals, and the misuse of digital platforms, as well as messaging applications for scam activities. These recurring issues formed the core argument of this study.

D. Survey the Literature

A detailed survey of the selected literature revealed a consistent pattern across different sources. Many studies emphasized that human vulnerability, emotional manipulation, weak digital literacy, and extensive reliance on digital communication platforms play an important role in contributing to scam incidents. This step further enhances the understanding of the broader landscape of scam issues that are happening in Malaysia.

E. Criticize Literature

The critique of the literature showed that while many sources report scam cases, statistics, trends, and financial losses by the victim, there are a few studies that focus on evaluating the effectiveness of prevention strategies or long-term policy implementation by the Malaysian government. Additionally, some reports emphasize the frequency of incidents but do not deeply explore the behavioral and ethical aspects of them.

F. Write the Review

The findings from the selected literature are then synthesized into a more structured and coherent understanding of scam issues in Malaysia. The

review highlights the interconnected roles of technology, human behavior, and institutional responses. This step further provides meaningful insights into scams in Malaysia for research findings and discussion.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this section, the research findings for this case study are derived from the six-step literature review methodology. These findings reflect the outcomes observed at every stage of the research process. Therefore, the following shows the key insights obtained from the reviewed literature at each stage.

A. Select a Topic

The scam issue in Malaysia is growing, and it is no longer isolated cases, but it is a widespread problem that can cause financial loss and psychological distress as well as loss of trust in digital systems. Therefore, the topic ‘Scam In Malaysia’ was deemed suitable as it is relevant to ICT ethics, social responsibility, and professional accountability in the digital environment

B. Search the Literature

The literature search revealed numerous reports and studies related to scams that occur in Malaysia. The reviewed literature shows a consistent report of Malaysian people nowadays facing frequent scam attempts involving phone calls, messaging applications, and social media platforms every day [1][7]. This has become a national concern. This is further supported by the government's source, which also highlights an increase in legal reforms, budget allocations, and institutional restructuring aimed at preventing scams. [2]

C. Develop the Argument

Across multiple sources, it became evident that academic and social status do not guarantee

protection against scams, as most reported cases show that the victims are mostly professionals, educated individuals, and even young adults who are confident with their digital skills[1][7]. In addition, the literature consistently highlights that scam techniques are rapidly evolving and often outpacing the existing detection as well as prevention solutions [2][8]. Another significant argument is that family institutions have become a new ground and target for scammers, either through manipulating emotional trust or exploiting family members.[9].

D. Survey the Literature

A survey of the literature revealed consistent patterns across multiple sources regarding the nature of scam activities in Malaysia. Several studies highlighted that scams often happen across multiple communication channels, especially through phone calls and messaging applications [1][7]. The studies also emphasized that factors like human vulnerabilities, emotional distress, and lack of digital literacy contribute to scam attempts on an individual [6][8]. Furthermore, the national reports and organizational studies acknowledge that scams not only affect individuals but also families and society. [9]

E. Criticize Literature

Numerous sources offer detailed statistics, real-life case studies, and descriptions of scam methods. There are only a few studies that focus on ethical responsibilities and professional accountability of every person involved, either directly or indirectly. Most articles are heavily focused on reporting accidents and their financial losses rather than analyzing why the existing measures fail to detect and prevent the victim from falling into a scam. Additionally, some reports emphasize policy initiatives and budget allocations but lack evaluation of their actual long-term impact and their effectiveness

F. Write the Review

Overall, the literature provides useful and comprehensive descriptive information on scams in Malaysia but lacks deeper discussion on ethical issues, accountability, and the long-term effectiveness of current prevention efforts.

V. DISCUSSION

Scam issues in Malaysia have reached an alarming stage because they combine advanced technology with psychological manipulation. Scammers no longer rely on simple tricks, but instead they use well-planned methods that look professional and convincing. A major concern is that scam activities now target everyone, including educated and digitally confident individuals. This shows that having knowledge or experience with technology does not automatically protect someone from being a victim. The frequent exposure to scam attempts has also created fear and uncertainty when using digital services. People are starting to question whether online communication can be trusted at all. As digital platforms continue to grow, scam activities seem to grow alongside them. This situation highlights a serious ethical and social issue within the digital environment. Overall, scams are no longer just criminal acts but a reflection of weaknesses in how technology is used and managed.

This issue has significantly affected daily interaction with digital communication. Greater caution and occasional anxiety are experienced when receiving unexpected calls or messages. Even messages that appear normal can raise suspicion, especially when they involve urgent requests or financial matters. Concern also extends to family members, particularly those who may not be familiar with common scam tactics. Constant exposure to scam cases highlights how easily mistakes can occur under pressure. A reduced sense of comfort is felt when

using online platforms for communication or transactions. Trust in the digital systems now requires careful judgment rather than blind confidence. Besides, scam-related issues can also create stress because the consequences can be severe and long-lasting. Hence, the perceptions of safety in the digital world have changed.

Due to the increasing threat of scams, several daily digital habits have changed. Calls from unknown numbers should be avoided unless the caller is clearly identified. Messages claiming to be from banks or authorities are verified through official websites or customer service channels. Links received through messages or emails are no longer clicked without proper verification. Other than that, more time is taken to read messages carefully instead of reacting emotionally or urgently. Scam awareness information is also shared with family members and friends. This helps others become more alert and cautious in handling suspicious communications. Lastly, official communication from trusted sources should be followed to stay informed about new scam tactics. These precautionary actions help reduce the risk of becoming a scam victim.

From a perspective, addressing scam issues requires a combination of education, enforcement, and cooperation among all parties involved. Public awareness campaigns should move beyond only simple warnings and include real examples of scam methods. Education on digital safety should begin early and continue regularly across all age groups. Financial institutions also need to strengthen verification processes and improve response time when scam cases are reported. On the other hand, law enforcement agencies also require better tools and faster coordination to manage scam cases effectively. Other than that, digital platform providers should actively monitor suspicious activities and take immediate action against scam accounts, whilst clear and accessible reporting

channels must be made available to the public. Lastly, victims should be supported rather than blamed when reporting incidents. Thus, through these combined efforts, the impact of scams can be reduced over time.

Finally, ICT professionals play an important role in reducing scam activities and protecting users. They are responsible for designing systems that prioritize security, privacy, and user protection. Developers should implement stronger authentication, fraud detection, and warning mechanisms in digital platforms. Ethical responsibility is important as technology should not only focus on convenience but also on safety. ICT professionals should regularly update systems to respond to new scam techniques. They should also work closely with regulators and security agencies to improve their digital protection. Transparency in system design can help users understand potential risks better. In addition, ICT professionals should promote ethical standards in their work environments. Thus, by taking the responsibility seriously, they can help in creating a safer and more trustworthy digital ecosystem.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, scam activities in Malaysia have become critical issue that is becoming more complex to detect and prevent as the scam techniques rapidly evolve alongside technology development today. The academic achievement or professional status does not guarantee protection, as the scams affect all individuals regardless of their social and educational backgrounds. The misuse of digital platforms, emotional manipulation, weak digital literacy, and over-reliance on online communication are the key factors contributing to scam incidents on an individual. Therefore, these scam issues not only reflect weaknesses in digital practices and

system management but also highlight ethical and professional concerns within the ICT environment. Thus, it is essential to strengthen digital responsibility, ethical awareness, and accountability within the community, especially in the use of digital technologies and online platforms.

REFERENCES

- [1] Malay Mail. (2025, October 2). *With Malaysians each facing 140 scam bids a year, experts call for urgent and concerted response*.
<https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2025/10/02/with-malaysians-each-facing-140-scam-bids-a-year-experts-call-for-urgent-and-concerted-response/193091>
- [2] Fintech News Malaysia. (2025, September 8). *Millennials and Even Children Increasingly Drawn into Scams, Study Shows*.
<https://fintechnews.my/54004/security/scams-malaysia/>
- [3] Rogers, S. (2024, November 7). *International Scammers Steal Over \$1 Trillion in 12 Months in Global State of Scams Report 2024*. GASA; GASA.
<https://www.gasa.org/post/global-state-of-scams-report-2024-1-trillion-stolen-in-12-months-gasa-feedzai>
- [4] CSA Editorial. (2024, October 10). *GASA & Whoscall: Malaysians Lose USD \$12.8 Billion To Scams In A Year, Equivalent To 3% Of The Nation's GDP*. Cyber Security Asean; Cyber Security Asia.
<https://cybersecurityasia.net/malaysians-lose-usd-12-billion-to-scams/>
- [5] Rogers, S. (2024, September 25). *37 Billion Reasons the Citizens of Malaysia, Taiwan, and Thailand Need Better Scam Protection*. GASA. <https://www.gasa.org/post/where-did-the-billions-go-in-malaysia-thailand-taiwan>
- [6] Nordin, R. (2024, January 28). *RM1.3bil lost to scammers*. The Star.
<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2024/01/29/rm13bil-lost-to-scammers>
- [7] Abdullah, I. N. (2025, October 10). *New cyber crime bill and RM32 million boost to tackle scams in Malaysia*. Fintech News Malaysia.
<https://fintechnews.my/54535/security/malaysia-cybersecurity-budget-2026-cyber-crime-bill-national-scam/>
- [8] Penang Institute, Combating Scam Syndicates in Malaysia and Southeast Asia, Penang, Malaysia, Mar. 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://penanginstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Combating-Scam-Syndicates-in-Malaysia-and-Southeast-Asia.pdf>
- [9] (GASA), G. A.-S. A. (2025, August 19). *Comprehensive study reveals devastating impact of scams on Malaysian families and mental health*. GASA.
<https://www.gasa.org/post/comprehensive-study-reveals-devastating-impact-of-scams-on-malaysian-families-and-mental-health>
- [10] Muhammad, F., Mohd Hussin, M. Y., Mohammed Shaarani, A. Z., & Awang, S. amirah. (2024, July). *Scam awareness gaps: A survey on Malaysian youth's digital habits and Knowledge | International Journal of Religion*. ResearchGate.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/382042517_Scam_Awareness_Gaps_A_Survey_on_Malaysian_Youth's_Digital_Habits_and_Knowledge