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# **CASE STUDY**

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**LECTURER'S NAME:** Dr. Leong Hong Yeng

Name	Madina Suraya Binti Zharin
Matric No.	A20EC0203

## **The Cruelty of Scam**

In recent years, ‘Macau Scam’ are being a hot topic in Malaysia. ‘Macau Scam’ is a media transmission extortion via telephone call starting from partners in Taiwan and China. The scammers claimed that they are from any trusted authorities such as court and police. They scared the victims by saying that their identities are connected to a crime. Other than that, they claimed to be from Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) and accused the victims of having a credit card payments arrears. They are also forced for immediate response so that name will not be blacklisted. However, this case had been investigated by the Chief Commissioner of Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), and there were 20 suspects that had been charged.

*(Farhana S.Yahya, 2020)*

Online fraud or scam have become a major problem not only in Malaysia but also all around the world. Although the advancing technologies give a lot of positive impact in our daily life, people also need to be overthinkers by worrying about the negative impacts which could involve safety issues. Our personal information such as identity card number, house address, email and passwords could be known and used by other people without our knowledge. Therefore, there are some causes of scams in terms of psychology, behaviors, knowledge, and life experience.

“How can people be so gullible?” – it is a thoughtless question. Some people also can fall for psychological techniques employed by fraudsters. There are some psychological reasons why people fall for scams.

Firstly, scammers use “enforced indebtedness” where the fraud offers an exclusive opportunity to the victims such as offering them to invest their money. So, the victim feels someone is doing them a favor. Thus, they need to return it by continuing to listen to their well-planned sales presentation strategy.

Secondly, some people wanted to do what other people do. The fraud trick peoples by claiming that more than 80 per cent people had joined their financial scheme. So, people are more likely to fall for that although secretly they feel doubt. Thirdly, the fraud used an error inducing triggers which is the behavioral commitment. This is when they start from a little step where they talk in

a friendly way until the prey gets fooled by answering to their trivial questions. These questions could lead to more personal questions. The prey will feel guilty not to answer it as they feel like they need to be helpful and polite.

Besides, people also fear of missing out and the scammers themselves use the scarcity cues. The fraud forced the prey to react quickly within a period so that they are not missing out with such a great offer. Thus, the time limitation had made people drawn to it. Lastly, the fraud might seem so nice. People tend to like other people who share the same personal characteristics or experiences such as life experience or financial status. (*Ketchel, 2018; Button, M., Nicholls, C. M., Kerr, J., & Owen, R., 2014*)

Next, in terms of behavior, a person could be a victim by a simple kind of actions such as clicking on pop-ups, opening email from unknown sources, downloading apps, answering telephone calls from an unknown person and even when purchasing through an online payment transfer site.

Other than that, some people are also unaware of how they managed their bank accounts. I am sure that a person could have more than one bank account for safety issues. However, if the passwords of the accounts are the same, there is no such thing as a safety purpose. The fraudster could find out their password when there is a security breakdown on any of the internet banking sites. If the victim uses the same password for their social networking sites, this could also bring a huge problem.

In terms of knowledge, visiting a website which needs us to read a privacy policy is even more concerning as people are too lazy to do so. People just accept the 'agree' button without reading it. There is also a high tendency for any organizations or websites to share the information to

other companies. Next, people are also unaware that banks will not send emails to ask them to verify their personal information.

In terms of life experiences, being concerned about debt, loss of a job or negative change in financial status are also the factors of scams. Usually, scammers have their own specific traits which are elderly or a less educated person. (*Shadel, Pak, Jennifer, 2014*). There are three reasons why elderly is prone to be the scam victims.

Firstly, elders already have a stable financial status and are in the desirable economic position. Usually, they will save a lot of money in the bank and not frequently use it as they have less commitment. Secondly, elders are born in the generation where everything needs to be done face-to-face as there is no internet banking like nowadays. Therefore, they are being more polite and easily trust people unlike the younger generation which will immediately feel suspicious. Thirdly, if the elderly lodge a report, they might have a poor witness as they would have difficulties to testify for the investigation after noticed the scam within a long period of time. (*Carlson, E. L. ,2006*)

Recently, an old woman named Ms. Dolly Ng is one of the scamming victims. Her parents had inherited more than RM 4 million to her for about 30 years back then. However, without her knowing, she had been scammed. A person claiming to be a policeman contacted her and said that her money was under investigation by the authorities and asked to open a new bank account and transfer all the money there. She realized that she had been scammed during the casual conversation with her friends which is about two months later. Soon after that, she quickly lodged a police report seeking for her to get all the money back with a lawyer assistance. (*The Straits Times, 2020*).

Therefore, to steer clear of scam, there are several ways that we can do. Firstly, always be suspicious so that we could easily spot the fraud. For instance, we can spot the fake document by checking if there are any grammatical or spelling errors as it represents their presentation quality. Secondly, do more online searching. We can acknowledge the company's reliability by typing the company name into the search engines and doing more research so that you know who you are dealing with. Thirdly, always secure your personal details such as password or pin number. If you save your password inside your device, it is advisable to encrypt it. Moreover, after using any applications such as social media, make sure to always log out.

Furthermore, mobile devices also need to be secure. Use passwords that are difficult to guess and make sure there are combinations of upper case, lower case, and symbols. Do not use the same password for every account so that if one of the accounts have been hacked, the others will still be secured. Other than that, we need to always be aware of our internet connection. Although free internet is much more convenient, it is the worst in terms of security. The hackers or the owner of the public network could access our activity without us knowing. Therefore, VPN or virtual private network is one of the best options as it can encrypt the web traffic. We can check whether the websites are secured or not by simply clicking the URL and checking whether it is 'http' or 'https'. 'https' is encrypted and can protect your data, so it is much safer.

However, one does not run from making mistakes. What if we are already being scammed? What action can we take? Firstly, one needs to protect themselves from any further risk. If the scammer contacts again, make sure to record the conversation or screenshot the text so that it can be the evidence when you make a police report. Next, let the bank know if you have been scammed so that they can protect your account. One can also check their transaction history via the bank sites so that they can monitor if there are any unusual transactions. Furthermore, if you

accidentally had transferred the money, report it immediately to the police. Lastly, a caring society can also share their experience to spread awareness. (*Ketchell, 2016*).

Finally, the reason why I choose this topic is because scamming activities are being wider day by day. Lately, the 'Macau Scam' has been a hot topic, especially in the news. I personally had experience getting phone calls from people claiming from the authorities. However, I acted by ignoring it. Sometimes, I questioned how people could fall for it, but this case study had changed my perspective towards them as the fraud are smarter than we think. There are many strategies that they used and by that, I am worried if I could possibly fall for it. Therefore, with some simple actions, we could avoid it. I hope that the readers of this case study and I could implement the precautions well in our daily life.

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