



01 JUL, 2025

When sharing is not caring

The Star, Malaysia



WE'VE heard the expression "sharing is caring". I'm sure we've all at one point told a version of it to our children and grandchildren when they squabble over a toy, or teach it to young pupils at school. But nowadays, in a world dominated by social media, sharing is not a good thing to do as it can have the opposite effect, with consequences more severe than most people realise.

I will "share" my thoughts on this idea of sharing our opinions and thoughts on social media in social, political, and religious contexts.

One of my children loves social media and posts anything and everything on it, including personal matters. I have warned her against such a practice because I feel that we should not be too open in public. But because I am of a different generation, I didn't insist, holding my peace and keeping silent on the matter as she continued.

When my daughter graduated with a PhD after a challenging eight years – during which she gave birth to two of my grandchildren – we were all elated and thankful to God that she had completed it. Over those eight years I told her many times to quit as I could see the stress affecting her health and relationship with her family. But she persevered, and I am proud that she ignored my advice.

She would post about her problems with her work to her friends on social media. But when she completed her PhD and shared her joy, some of her followers seemed to suggest that she was "showing off" and being unkind to those who have not finished or have yet to begin a PhD. Such comments caused her anguish to

When sharing is not caring

The columnist believes Malaysians have reached the limits of 'free speech' with the unfiltered, unthinking sharing of comments on social media.

MOHD TAJUDDIN MOHD RASDI



Over the top

"We need to be more discerning about what and how we share our lives online."

the point of being sickened by the situation.

Many of my wife's friends post pictures of their travels and how much weight they have lost – I have never cared to know even if my wife does. But I can see how those who have health issues or financial constraints might feel unhappy at seeing these posts and could be filled with envy or even anger.

Do we share to care or do we share to flaunt? The line is unclear. Thus, this kind of sharing without caring for any consequences or backlash of negative feelings to me is a terribly destructive act socially. We need to be more discerning about what and how we share our lives online to make sure we're sharing to care and not to flaunt.

In the realm of politics, I am most distressed to read some of the opinions and comments shared about Prime Minister

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. Those who hide behind anonymity and post disrespectful and downright disgusting comments have no thought about caring, not just for the PM but also for the dignity of another human being.

There was no social media when Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was prime minister and it was barely beginning during Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's time. Datuk Seri Najib Razak was arguably the first PM to have to deal with it, although it was not as pervasive back then, and he reportedly had "cybertroopers" fighting back against negative comments.

I don't believe Anwar spends money on personal identity management. So under Anwar's idea of freedom of speech, he has to bear the brunt of the unkindest public comments I have ever seen about a PM.

Those who comment do not

have an iota of caring for a person trying his hardest to do a good job – even for those who are actually hurling verbal abuses.

Sharing such comments without caring about how a person has to do a difficult job under special circumstances and assuming that they can do better is ludicrous. Where did we learn to share such thoughts openly? Where is the adab (etiquette) of addressing a leader – or even just another person – with decorum?

I sometimes feel like writing to Anwar and telling him to retire and let somebody else take over, someone who does not mind taking all this abuse.

Malaysians, I feel, do not deserve Anwar. Malaysians deserve someone who does not care two sen about what the people think, and who only cares about his own rigid way of looking at the world.

Why care about people who do not care when they share their destructive comments?

How some people share their thoughts about religion and religious issues on social media is the worst to me. The thoughts they share are not just about not caring, they are more like inciting – inciting people to hate and fear.

So many of such people seem to think only of their own religious perspectives and do not care at all how their posts would affect

adherents of other religions.

I believe such people were taught that only their religion is good while others are not and are to be hated or feared, so when they share their opinions and comments about any issue on social media, they often skirt creating a racial or religious conflict – in fact, there are some who openly call for such conflict.

If I'm being charitable, such single-perspective sharers might post the way they do to feel good about contributing to the "preservation" and "goodness" of their religion – but certainly, taking into account the feelings of others does not enter their minds at all.

Whatever the thinking behind such comments, they inevitably elicit more thoughtless sharing from adherents of other religions, and the rolling stone becomes an avalanche that threatens to smother the whole country.

I truly believe that we have reached the limits of "free speech" with unfiltered, unthinking sharing.

Prof Dr Mohd Tajuddin Mohd Rasdi is Professor of Architecture at the Tan Sri Omar Centre for Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Studies at UCSI University. The views expressed here are entirely the writer's own.



01 JUL, 2025

When sharing is not caring

The Star, Malaysia



SUMMARIES

The columnist believes Malaysians have reached the limits of 'free speech' with the unfiltered, unthinking sharing of comments on social media.

WE'VE heard the expression "sharing is caring". I'm sure we've all at one point told a version of it to our children and grandchildren when they squabble over a toy, or teach it to young pupils at school.