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An Educational Framework for Character Development among Secondary School Students in Engaging with Social Media in Malaysia

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Abstract

As digital technologies advance, social media increasingly influences adolescents by influencing how they connect with others and contributing to the formation of their values, conduct, and identity. The primary objective of this study is to develop an educational framework that supports the formation of positive character in the digital age in Malaysia. The study instrumented a qualitative interview method, comprising four individual sessions and one group session with four students and was analysed using thematic analysis. The Framework was developed through network visualisation, which mapped conceptual connections and supported framework development using graphical representations in ATLAS.ti software. The findings highlighted the constructive influence of social media in fostering self-directed learning, interpersonal skills, and communication abilities. Six core values were identified as particularly relevant, namely, independent, responsibility, respect,

rationality, tolerance, and moderation. However, the study also revealed that social media can negatively affect students' time management, self-discipline, and cognitive orientation. This educational framework significantly contributes to character education by promoting ethical and responsible social media use, ultimately shaping a generation of digitally literate, morally grounded individuals. The findings of this study offer valuable implications for educational stakeholders, including students, educators, schools, parents, and the broader community. © 2026, Institute for Human Rehabilitation. All rights reserved.

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Character Development; Educational Framework; Malaysian Secondary School Students; Social Media

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