



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

Research article

Halim Ismail, Arifin Mamat, Hasniza Ibrahim, Nazatul Akmar Mokhtar and Muhammad Noor Aiman Zailan

Kulliyah of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Received: 2025/08/06

Accepted: 2025/11/14

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.

Keywords: *Character Development, Educational Framework, Malaysian Secondary School Students, Social Media*

In the digital era, social media has become deeply embedded in the daily lives of adolescents, influencing not only how they communicate but also shaping their values,

behaviours, and identity development. In Malaysia, the widespread use of social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube among secondary school students

underscores the urgent need to address the ethical and character-related aspects of online engagement (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, MCMC, 2023). While social media offers opportunities for learning, civic participation, and creative self-expression, it also presents significant challenges, including cyberbullying, misinformation, digital addiction, and the erosion of traditional values (Parnes et al., 2024; O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011; Van den Eijnden, R. J. J. M., et al., 2016).

Character development, which includes moral, emotional, and civic competencies, is a key element of holistic education. It empowers students to act with integrity, show empathy, and engage responsibly in both physical and digital environments (Lickona, 2004). In Malaysia, subjects such as Moral Education (*Pendidikan Moral*) and Islamic Education (*Pendidikan Islam*) aim to instil core values. Nevertheless, they often fall short in addressing the complex ethical dilemmas students encounter online (Ministry of Education Malaysia, MOE, 2019).

Despite ongoing efforts to integrate values-based learning into the national curriculum, a structured and contextually relevant framework for character education tailored to the realities of the digital age remains lacking. Existing initiatives frequently overlook the unique behavioural patterns and ethical challenges arising from students’ daily use of digital platforms. This gap poses difficulties for educators in nurturing essential qualities such as empathy, responsibility, and digital resilience.

To address this challenge, this study proposes an educational framework for character development through the lens of social media engagement among Malaysian secondary school students. Grounded in empirical research and theoretical insights, the study aims to bridge the divide between conventional moral education and contemporary digital realities. It offers practical guidance for educators, parents, and policymakers in cultivating ethical, responsible, and civic-minded digital citizens.

Literature review

This literature review examines key themes in digital literacy, social media’s role in character development, and the

integration of core values in education. It begins by exploring digital literacy as a multifaceted competency, encompassing technical skills, ethical engagement, and critical reasoning. Next, it discusses how social media influences students’ moral and psychological development, highlighting both its benefits and risks. The review then analyses educational frameworks that promote character development through core values. Finally, it contextualises these discussions within the Malaysia’s National Education Philosophy (NEP), which emphasises holistic, value-based learning, before identifying the existing research gap.

Digital Literacy and Citizenship

Digital literacy encompasses technical, cognitive, and sociocultural competencies. Rahim (2021) identified three key aspects of digital citizenship education, namely, online safety (e.g., protecting personal information), respectful communication (e.g., combating cyberbullying), and civic engagement (e.g., using social media for advocacy). Ethical engagement on social media involves responsible, respectful, and reflective platform use, including demonstrating privacy awareness and practising active digital citizenship (Al-Ketbi et al., 2025). Ismail (2022) found a moderate level of ethical behaviour among female preparatory students, with social media use strongly linked to ethical awareness. Additionally, social media fosters self-directed learning, consequently improving academic performance (Sitorus, 2023), while digital reasoning skills help users discern credible sources from misinformation (Wineburg & McGrew, 2017).

Social Media and Character Development

Social media platforms can support psychological independence and identity formation (Michikyan et al., 2014) while promoting openness and acceptance (Kligler-Vilenchik & Thorson, 2016). However, without self-regulation, excessive use can lead to personal and social challenges (Baumeister & Tierney, 2011). Guided social media use can cultivate time management, digital well-being (Oggers & Jensen, 2020), and mutual respect in intercultural interactions (Choi & Park, 2014; Livingstone et al., 2017). This aligns with Turiel’s (2006)

view that ethical development is shaped through moral judgment and reciprocal social interactions.

Educational Frameworks and Core Values

A structured character development framework should integrate core values such as respect, responsibility, honesty, and empathy. Lickona (1991) asserted that character education rooted in these values is essential for cultivating ethical citizenship. From an Islamic perspective, Al-Attas (1980) highlighted *adab* (proper conduct) as foundational to moral and spiritual development, including digital behaviour. Digital literacy further reinforces these values by equipping students with critical and ethical online skills in order for the to navigate online environments responsibly (Ribble, 2011; UNESCO, 2018). Equally important are social-emotional skills, which enable students to manage emotions and form meaningful online relationships (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).

The Malaysian Context: Educational Philosophy and Curriculum Integration

The Malaysian National Education Philosophy (NEP) emphasises holistic development, encompassing intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects, and is anchored in faith and moral values (Al-Hudawi et al., 2014). It fosters well-rounded individuals with strong ethical principles, aligning with democratic principles and multicultural harmony (Zin et al., 2022). Current reforms, such as the Standard Curriculum for both primary and secondary schools, namely KSSR and KSSM, embed moral and civic education, reinforcing the NEP's relevance in digital-era character development in Malaysia (Rosli & Mohamad Nasri, 2024).

Study Gap

While existing studies highlight digital literacy, ethical engagement, and core values in character development, a comprehensive framework integrating these elements, particularly within the Malaysian NEP Framework, remains underdeveloped. Further research is needed to design a structured educational framework that systematically guides students' character development in digital spaces, bridging moral education, digital citizenship, and social-emotional learning.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to comprehensively explore the multifaceted aspects of student character development within social media in Malaysia, ensuring methodological rigour through a structured, multi-phase approach. The research adopted purposive sampling (Patton, 2015) to select the relevant participants. The data were gathered through four semi-structured individual interviews and one focus group discussion (FGD) (Krueger & Casey, 2015) involving four secondary school students in Kuala Lumpur. The interview protocol was grounded in a theoretical framework on character development and social influence (Lickona, 1991; Bandura, 1977). It utilised open-ended questions to elicit rich, exploratory responses. The interview aimed to investigate in-depth the impact of social media engagement on character development among secondary school students and to propose an educational framework for character development through social media use in education, as explained in Table 1:

Table 1.*The Examples of the Interview Questions*

Social Media Engagement	Examples Of the Interview Questions
Positive Impacts of Social Media Engagement	Can social media positively impact students' character development? If yes, could you describe any positive impacts that social media engagement has had on students' character development?
Negative Impacts of Social Media Engagement	Can social media harm students' character development? If yes, could you describe any negative impacts that social media engagement has had on students' character development?
Challenges and solutions in engaging with social media	What challenges do you face when using social media? How do you overcome the challenges? What are your suggestions for improving the content shared on social media platforms?

Data analysis followed Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, involving iterative coding, theme development, and refinement to identify key patterns. To enhance analytical depth, ATLAS.ti (Hecker & Kalpokas, 2024) was employed for network visualisation, enabling the mapping of conceptual connections and supporting framework development through graphical representations (Saldaña, 2021). This process contextualised the findings within the Malaysian setting, illustrating the interplay between adolescents' social media use and character development. Methodological trustworthiness was ensured via member checking (Birt et al., 2016) to reinforce validity.

The final conceptual framework was systematically derived from empirical findings, thoroughly documented (Maxwell, 2012), and theoretically anchored in character education and digital behaviour research (Berkowitz, 2012). By integrating thematic analysis, network visualisation, and multi-stage validation, this study adhered to best practices in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018), ensuring credibility, dependability, and confirmability of its findings.

Findings and Discussions

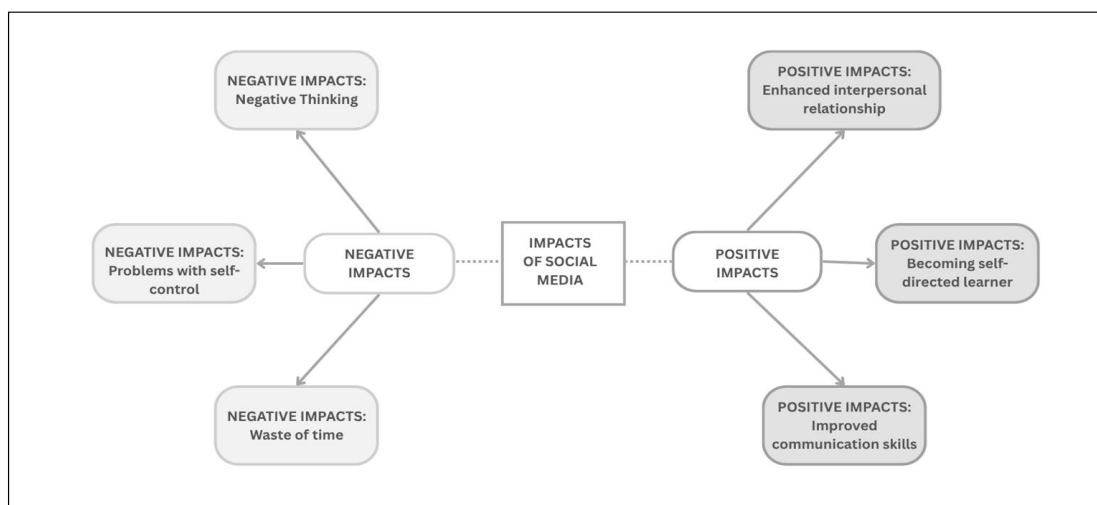
This section presents the key findings on the impact of social media engagement on character development among secondary school students, highlighting its dual role as both a catalyst for self-directed learning, social relationships, and communication skills and a potential source of distraction and emotional challenges. The analysis then introduces an educational framework for character development through social media use, synthesising core values derived from these impacts. By bridging empirical insights with theoretical models, this discussion underscores the need for structured guidance to maximise social media's benefits while mitigating risks, ultimately proposing a balanced approach for holistic student development.

a. The impact of social media engagement on character development among secondary school students

The findings revealed two main themes: "Positive Character Development" and "Character Decline", as illustrated in Figure 1, generated using Atlas t.i Software.

Figure 1.

The Impact of Social Media Engagement on Character Development among Secondary School Students



For the first theme, interview responses indicated that social media use can contribute positively to character development by (1) promoting self-directed learning, (2) fostering positive interpersonal relationships, and (3) enhancing communication skills.

"I enjoy mathematics because on social media, I can easily and quickly learn methods for solving problems. The videos I refer to are local." (Student D)

The finding aligns with Sitorus (2023), who reported a significant improvement in students' academic performance when engaging in self-directed learning to foster independent learners. The use of social media is particularly suggested, given the prevalence of trustworthy accounts and educational applications. Mahmud and Bukhari (2019) found that accounting students in Malaysia were able to enhance their academic performance through the strategic use of social media. Furthermore, Muhammed et.al (2021), in a study involving 644 local university students, identified a positive correlation between social media usage, multitasking on social media platforms, and students' academic self-efficacy.

Social media plays a significant role in building and strengthening relationships. Although modern reliance on mobile devices can sometimes diminish the quality of real connections, social media, when used thoughtfully, can enhance interpersonal bonds. This aligns with the findings of

Livingstone and Helsper (2007), who noted that children's online behaviour and emotional well-being are closely connected, with strong social-emotional skills fostering safer and more meaningful digital interactions.

According to the students interviewed, social media enables them to strengthen bonds with family members, both near and distant, as well as with parents, friends, and teachers. Also, social media was cited to facilitate the development of new connections, allowing students to learn about diverse cultures and languages. In some cases, motivational videos help to strengthen family ties. Teacher-student relationships were perceived to improve through social media, particularly with educators who are receptive to flexible language use, recognising that today's youth often communicate in a modern, less formal tone. *"There are some teachers who do not mind if students communicate with them like friends on social media. This makes students feel closer and more comfortable with the teacher."* (Student C)

Communication skills are among the most significantly enhanced abilities resulting from the effective use of social media. Many students acknowledged that their communication competencies have improved, as social media provides platforms for them to interact, collaborate, and engage in meaningful social exchanges.

"Before I knew anything about social media, I was quiet. I found it difficult to talk or

communicate with others. But after getting to know my friends, I have become much more talkative.” (Student B)

Some students began by imitating positive behaviours observed on platforms such as TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube. Others reported becoming more confident speaking in person, no longer relying solely on social media for self-expression, especially after being inspired by the eloquence or positive behaviours modelled by other users online. For socially anxious individuals, they found online communication more manageable due to its asynchronous nature and the absence of non-verbal cues, allowing them to express emotions and communicate more effectively, consistent with the findings of Angelini and Gini (2024) and Pierce (2009).

Conversely, there were respondents who acknowledged that the use of these platforms may have adverse effects, particularly on their (1) time management, (2) self-discipline, and (3) thinking or mindset.

While social media can contribute positively to character development, it is not without its negative influences, particularly those that may hinder the holistic development of adolescents. One of the most frequently mentioned negative impacts during the interviews was time wastage. A majority of the students admitted to spending between four and twelve hours daily, especially during school holidays, browsing the internet and social media platforms. As such, students require guidance in order for them to responsibly use online platforms, which include time management and digital well-being (Odgers & Jensen, 2020).

“Sometimes, social media wastes my time because I tend to overlook my schoolwork or chores like hanging the laundry, which I forget to do.” (Student D)

“It wastes my time. I find it difficult to divide my time between resting and doing schoolwork and other responsibilities.” (Student A)

“Sometimes when we search for educational content on TikTok, it starts off well with 5 to 6 relevant videos, but after that, the algorithm starts showing unrelated entertainment videos. So, TikTok doesn’t really help fulfil our original intention to find educational content, and we end up getting distracted and absorbed into unrelated videos.” (Student C)

“It wastes time, especially when using TikTok. Even though the videos are only about 10 seconds long, it encourages endless scrolling through an infinite stream of content.” (Student B)

Although many of these sessions began with educational intentions, students often found themselves struggling to regulate and limit their engagement, particularly when it became driven more by entertainment than academic purposes. This led to an inability to manage time effectively, thereby affecting their ability to complete schoolwork, revise, or assist with household responsibilities.

“It wastes time, especially when using TikTok. Even though the videos are only about 10 seconds long, it encourages endless scrolling through an infinite stream of content.” (Student B)

“We’ve wasted our one hour of morning exercise just spending time on social media, when in fact the morning should be used to do what’s necessary—like making the bed, showering, or having breakfast.” (Student C)

Excessive social media use undermined students’ self-discipline. Several issues were highlighted, including addiction, cyberbullying, failing to start the day with meaningful routines, and withdrawal from real-life social interactions. These issues reflect a broader pattern of diminished self-regulation, where prolonged passive engagement, such as endlessly scrolling through social media, leads to neglect of physical and productive activities, like exercising, participating in sports, or simply going outdoors.

“We have wasted our one hour of morning exercise just spending time on social media, when in fact the morning should be used to do what is necessary—like making the bed, showering, or having breakfast.” (Student C)

“One of the challenges in learning is that sometimes the content misleads. I can’t tell whether the content is educational or just for entertainment. For instance, I once followed a coding tutorial on Basic of Computer Science (ASK) from a video, but it turned out to be incorrect and was just for fun. I only realised this after confirming it with ChatGPT.” (Student B)

“They seem to be influenced by the negative aspects of social media... It’s not that change is impossible — it is possible — but once someone has become accustomed to such situations, it becomes difficult to change.” (Student E)

The findings align with the study by Parnes et al. (2024) and O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson (2011), which stated that while social media offers opportunities for learning, civic participation, and creative self-expression, it also presents significant challenges, including cyberbullying, misinformation, digital addiction, and the erosion of traditional values. Several participants also raised concerns about the negative cognitive and psychological impacts associated with social media usage. These issues, reported in both individual and group interviews, highlight how unrestricted access to online platforms can adversely affect adolescent cognitive and emotional development.

“Spreading bad rumours about someone even though you do not know the real story.”
(Student F)

Among the concerning patterns identified were impulsive online shopping, spreading harmful rumours, and exposure to inappropriate or culturally subversive content, including immodest videos or material promoting non-normative values. The findings support the studies by Victor et al. (2024) which associated social media addiction with symptoms of depression, and Yusoff et al. (2025) which noted that habitual procrastination from overuse negatively affects productivity and overall student well-being.

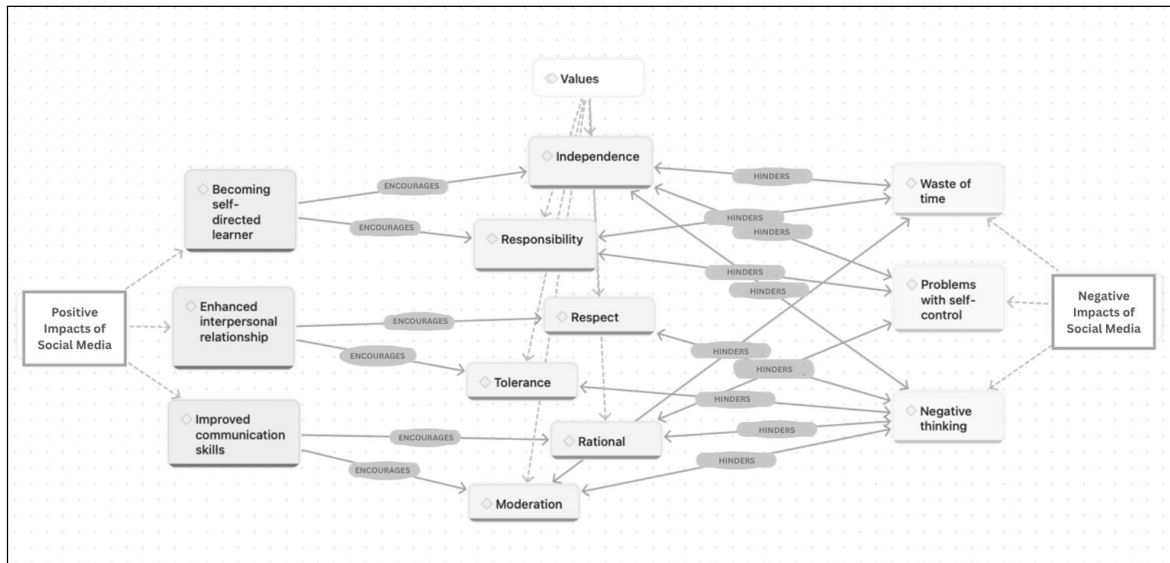
b. An Educational Framework for Character Development in Social Media Use by Students

Values from the Malaysian Ministry of Education’s Form Three Moral Education curriculum (MOE, 2017) are relevant for mitigating the negative effects of excessive

social media use, particularly: independence, responsibility, respect, rationality, tolerance, and moderation.

According to the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2017), independence refers to the ability and willingness to act without reliance on others. Responsibility entails an individual’s readiness and capacity to perform tasks and obligations thoroughly and with integrity. Rationality involves the ability to think logically, guided by sound reasoning and factual evidence, to make appropriate decisions. Moderation is defined as maintaining a balanced perspective and behaviour, avoiding extremes while considering both personal and collective interests. As for respect, it encompasses valuing and honouring others, as well as adhering to social norms and institutional regulations. Lastly, tolerance reflects the capacity to exercise patience, self-restraint, and acceptance, contributing to personal harmony and social cohesion.

Prior studies have linked ethical development to social media engagement, highlighting values such as independence (Michikyan et al., 2014), responsibility (Livingstone et al., 2017), respect (Choi & Park, 2014), rationality (Wineburg & McGrew, 2017), tolerance (Kligler-Vilenchik & Thorson, 2016), and moderation (Odgers & Jensen, 2020). These values are crucial for guiding today’s adolescents, who are increasingly engaged with social media in their daily lives. Figure 2 illustrates an educational framework for character development in social media use by students, generated using Atlas t.i Software.

Figure 2.*An Educational Framework for Character Development in Social Media Use by Students*

The educational framework identifies three key positive impacts of social media on students' character formation: fostering self-directed learning, strengthening interpersonal relationships, and enhancing communication skills.

Social media supports self-directed learning by providing students access to vast informational resources, peer-driven learning communities, and educational content. Such experiences nurture the values of independence and responsibility. It also strengthens interpersonal relationships by connecting individuals across diverse contexts, and fostering respect as well as tolerance as students engage with people from different cultures, religions, and backgrounds. These relational values are critical for fostering peaceful coexistence in both digital and real-life communities, as suggested by Turiel (2006).

Improved communication skills are another key cognitive and social benefit of social media use. Platforms that encourage content creation, dialogue, and expression help students develop articulation, clarity, and persuasion, which consequently reinforce rational thinking and moderation. Rational thinking enables students to engage in constructive discourse, evaluate information critically, and avoid impulsive reactions. Moderation involves exercising restraint and discernment in digital interactions, important traits in an environment prone to information

overload and emotional reactivity (Ribble, 2011).

The central section of the framework highlights six interrelated values: independence, responsibility, respect, tolerance, rationality, and moderation, functioning as buffers against three common adverse consequences of social media: waste of time, problems with self-control, and negative thinking.

Waste of time is a frequent consequence of unregulated social media use, where students may engage in excessive scrolling or passive consumption of content. However, the values of independence, responsibility, and moderation play a crucial role in mitigating this risk. Independence supports the ability to prioritise and self-manage, while responsibility entails understanding the consequences of one's actions. Moderation further encourages students to limit their screen time and strike a balance between digital and offline life (Van den Eijnden et al., 2016).

Problems with self-discipline, such as compulsive checking, addiction, or online aggression, are also commonly reported. The framework suggests that values like responsibility, respect, tolerance, and moderation can mitigate such behaviours. For example, respect for others discourages online harassment, while tolerance helps students refrain from reactive or divisive comments. Moderation plays a key role

in managing impulses and reducing overdependence on digital gratification (Baumeister & Tierney, 2011).

Negative thinking, including anxiety, social comparison, and exposure to harmful content, is another common consequence of frequent social media use. Cultivating rational thinking helps students critically evaluate content and build emotional resilience. Tolerance allows them to navigate diverse views without internalising harmful narratives, while respect reinforces self-worth and mutual dignity in online exchanges, as suggested by Lickona (1991). Collectively, these values create a psychological buffer against the harmful aspects of digital culture.

This framework holds significant implications for education, particularly in the realm of digital literacy and character education. It underscores the need for a value-based approach to teaching social media education, where teaching goes beyond technical skills or platform mechanics to incorporate ethical considerations and personal virtues. This aligns with efforts to cultivate responsible citizens who uphold democratic principles, multicultural harmony, and national identity, as outlined in the curriculum (Rosli & Nasri, 2024). In addition, this framework also encourages integrated moral education where values such as responsibility, moderation, and rationality are reinforced through real-life digital practices, discussions, and reflective exercises.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study proposed an educational framework for character development among secondary school students in Malaysia. Insights from interview supported the constructive influence of social media in fostering self-directed learning, interpersonal skills, and communication abilities. Six values were identified as particularly relevant: independent, responsibility, respect, rationality, tolerance, and moderation. However, social media use can pose risks to students' time management, self-discipline, and cognitive orientation. The framework was reinforced by empirical evidence, emphasising the need for character education that is both value-driven and digitally responsive. To ensure social media positively influences students' character development,

educational stakeholders, including schools, teachers, parents, and communities, should collaborate to implement the proposed values by co-constructing guidelines for ethical and balanced social media use, as recommended by UNESCO (2021). By operationalising these values, Malaysian schools can better equip students to navigate digital environments with integrity, responsibility, and emotional intelligence.

Limitations and Future Studies

This study, while offering valuable insights into the educational framework of social media in character development among secondary school students, was subject to several limitations. The use of qualitative data alone, without quantitative, longitudinal, or experimental approaches, restricted the ability to draw causal conclusions regarding the influence of social media on students' character traits.

By utilising the findings of this study, future research should consider expanding its scope to include larger and more diverse samples from various geographic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds, thereby enhancing generalizability. A longitudinal design is recommended to track changes in student character development and digital behaviour over time, providing stronger evidence of causality.

Acknowledgements

We thank the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia MOHE for funding this research via the Fundamental Research Grant Initiative for Early Career (FRGS-EC) Reference Code. FRGS-EC/1/2024/SSI09/UIAM/02/4. We also extend our gratitude to the Ministry of Education MOE for granting permission to conduct the research, as well as to the Research Management Centre, International Islamic University Malaysia (RMC-IIUM), and the Kulliyah of Education IIUM for their support. Finally, we appreciate all the researchers who contributed to the progress of this study.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

References

- Al Ketbi, N., Habes, M., Shaheen, L., Attar, R., Tahat, D., & Alhazmi, A. H. (2025). The impact of social media use on tolerance, community peace, online ethical awareness among adolescents in the United Arab Emirates. *Frontiers in Psychology, 16*, Article 1500727. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1500727>
- Al-Attas, S. M. N. (1980). *The concept of education in Islam*. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC).
- Al-Hudawi, S.H.V., Fong, R.L.S., Lokman, M.B.M. & Tahir, M (2014). The actualisation of the Malaysian national education philosophy in secondary schools: Student and teacher perspectives. *International Education Studies, 7*(4), 57–67. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v7n4p57>
- Angelini, F., & Gini, G. (2024). Differences in perceived online communication and disclosing e-motions among adolescents and young adults: The role of specific social media features and social anxiety. *Journal of Adolescence, 96*(3), 512–525. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jad.12256>
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice Hall.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Tierney, J. (2011). *Willpower: Rediscovering the greatest human strength*. Penguin Press.
- Berkowitz, M. W. (2012). *The science of character education*. Hoover Press.
- Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health Research, 26*(13), 1802–1811. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Choi, M., & Park, H. W. (2014). An exploratory approach to a Twitter-based community centered on a political goal in South Korea: Who organized it, what they shared, and how they acted. *New Media & Society, 16*(1), 129–148. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444813479596>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Hecker, J., & Kalpokas, N. (2024). Qualitative research - Part 3: Presenting qualitative data. *ATLAS.ti*. <https://atlasti.com/>
- Ismail, M. A. (2022). Ethical behavior and its relationship to social media uses among female students at preparatory schools in Baghdad. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Researches, 19*(74).
- Kligler-Vilenchik, N., & Thorson, K. (2016). Good citizenship as a frame contest: Kony2012, memes, and critiques of the networked citizen. *New Media & Society, 18*(9), 1993–2011. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444815575311>
- Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (5th ed.). Sage.
- Lickona, T. (1991). *Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility*. Bantam Books.
- Lickona, T. (2004). *Character matters: How to help our children develop good judgment, integrity, and other essential virtues*. Touchstone.
- Livingstone, S., & Helsper, E. J. (2007). Gradations in digital inclusion: Children, young people and the digital divide. *New Media & Society, 9*(4), 671–696. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444807080335>
- Livingstone, S., Mascheroni, G., & Staksrud, E. (2017). European research on children's internet use: Assessing the past and anticipating the future. *New Media & Society, 20*(3), 1103–1122. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816685930>
- Mahmud, R., & Bukhari, M. (2019). Usage intensity of social media and academic performance. *International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering, 8*(4), 6675–6678. <https://doi.org/10.35940/ijrte.C6452.118419>
- Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission. (2023). *Internet users survey 2023*. CFM Annual Report.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Michikyan, M., Subrahmanyam, K., & Dennis, J. (2014). Facebook use and the development of self-concept clarity in adolescents. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 17*(12), 791–796. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2014.0010>
- Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2017). *Standard curriculum for secondary school Malaysia for Moral Education Form Three*. MOE.
- Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2019). *Education blueprint 2013 (Annual report 2019)*. MOE.
- Mohammed, M. T. S., Ibrahim, F., & Yunus, N. (2021). Exploring the relationship of social media usage and multitasking of social media

- on self-efficacy and academic performance. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 37(1), 227–243. <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2021-3701-13>
- O’Keeffe, G. S., & Clarke-Pearson, K. (2011). The impact of social media on children, adolescents, and families. *Pediatrics*, 127(4), 800–804. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2011-0054>
- Odgers, C. L., & Jensen, M. R. (2020). Annual research review: Adolescent mental health in the digital age: Facts, fears, and future directions. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 61(3), 336–348. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.13190>
- Parnes, M. F., Amort, J., Calderon-Smith, M., Chambers, D., & Musicaro, R. (2024). The role of social media in promoting civic engagement and mental well-being. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 53(1), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-023-01874-7>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Pierce, T. (2009). Social anxiety and technology: Face-to-face communication versus technological communication among teens. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 25(6), 1367–1372. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2009.06.003>
- Rahim, M. N. (2021). A critical review of the impacts of digital citizenship on teachers and students’ educational development. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*, 2(7). <https://doi.org/10.11594/IJMABER.02.07.035>
- Ribble, M. (2011). *Digital citizenship in schools: Nine elements all students should know* (2nd ed.). ISTE.
- Rosli, H., & Nasri, N.M (2024). Implementation of primary school standards-based curriculum (Revision, 2017) for music education: A focus on resources and teacher knowledge. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 13(3). <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v13-i3/22641>
- Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Sitorus, N. (2023). The use of social media to enhance self-directed learning (SDL) in English. *International Conference on Religion, Science and Education*, 2, 2023.
- Turiel, E. (2006). The development of morality. In W. Damon & R. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology* (6th ed., Vol. 3, pp. 789–857). Wiley.
- UNESCO. (2018). *Digital literacy global framework*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- UNESCO. (2021). *Guidelines for the governance of digital platforms*. <https://www.unesco.org/en/internet-trust/guidelines>
- Van den Eijnden, R. J. J. M., Lemmens, J. S., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2016). The social media disorder scale. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 61, 478–487. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.03.038>
- Victor, S. A., Ibrahim, M. S., Yusuf, S., Mahmud, N., Bahari, K. A., Yoke Ling, L., & Abd Mubin, N. N. (2024). Social media addiction and depression among adolescents in two Malaysian states. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 29(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2023.2292055>
- Wineburg, S., & McGrew, S. (2017). Lateral reading: Reading less and learning more when evaluating digital information. *Stanford History Education Group Working Paper*. <https://purl.stanford.edu/fv751yt5934>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage.
- Yusoff, S. H., Rahman, S. H. A., Sabran, R., Hassan, F., Hussin, R., & Baharin, N. H. S. (2025). Cultivating consciousness: Unveiling TikTok’s detrimental effects on youth mindset and behaviour. *SEARCH Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 2025(Special Issue), 87–101. <https://doi.org/10.58946/search-SpecialIssue.ICIMaC2024.P6>
- Zin. S.A.M., Hamzah. I.S., M.R., Ramli. A.F., & Zain. M.F.M. (2022). Character Education Based on the Application of the National Education Philosophy to the Formation of Leadership among Students. *International Journal of Education, Philosophy and Counselling*, 7 (47). pp. 563–577. DOI: 10.35631/IJEPC.747045