

## Exploring the Adverse Impact of Social Media Use Among Secondary School Students in Malaysia

### Halim Ismail

Associate Professor and Head of the Kulliyah (Faculty) of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

### Arifin Mamat

International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

### Hasniza Ibrahim

International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

### Nazatul Akmar Mokhtar

International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

### Muhammad Noor Aiman Zailan

International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

### Abstract

In an increasingly hyper-connected world, social media has become an integral yet potentially disruptive force in the lives of Malaysian secondary school students. This study examines the adverse impacts of social media engagement on teenagers, with a focus on the decline of character. Based on four semi-structured individual interviews and one group interview, conducted on eight secondary school students in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the study uncovered three main themes: (1) time management, (2) self-discipline, and (3) thinking or mindset. For time management, two subthemes emerged: (i) wasting time and (ii) disrupting their ability to complete schoolwork, revise, or help with household responsibilities. Uncontrolled engagement with social media was also found to harm the self-discipline of adolescent students. Two subthemes were highlighted: (i) addiction and (ii) failing to start the day with meaningful routines, resulting in unproductivity. Unrestricted access to online platforms can harm the development of the adolescent mindset and thinking. Among the sub-themes identified were (i) content misleads, (ii) spreading slander or harmful rumours about others, and (iii) exposure to inappropriate content. The findings underscore the need for collaborative efforts among all stakeholders to curb this character decline and support the formation of a well-rounded, disciplined, and emotionally resilient youth population.

### Keywords

Character decline, social media, secondary school students, Malaysia.