



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
MODERN EDUCATION
(IJMOE)
www.ijmoe.com



PROMOTING SOCIAL MEDIA LITERACY AND
STRENGTHENING SCHOOL RESOURCE CENTRES:
A COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICE LEARNING STUDY IN
MALAYSIA

Nor Azlina Azmi¹, Nordibradini Selamat², Salasiah M Said³, Sharunizam Shari^{4*}

¹ Faculty of Information Science, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah, 08400 Merbok Malaysia
Email: nazlina@uitm.edu.my

² Faculty of Information Science, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah, 08400 Merbok Malaysia
Email: nordi314@uitm.edu.my

³ Faculty of Information Science, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah, 08400 Merbok Malaysia
Email: salasiah@uitm.edu.my

⁴ Faculty of Information Science, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah, 08400 Merbok Malaysia
Email: nizam057@uitm.edu.my

* Corresponding Author

Article Info:

Article history:

Received date: 09.06.2025

Revised date: 07.07.2025

Accepted date: 28.08.2025

Published date: 18.09.2025

To cite this document:

Azmi, N. A., Selamat, N., Said, S. M., & Shari, S. (2025). Promoting Social Media Literacy and Strengthening School Resource Centres: A Community-Based Service-Learning Study in Malaysia. *International Journal of Modern Education*, 7 (26), 1018-1037.

DOI: 10.35631/IJMOE.726067

This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)



Abstract:

The rapid growth of social media has reshaped how young learners in Malaysia access, share, and evaluate information, presenting both opportunities for collaboration and risks related to misinformation, online safety, and declining engagement with traditional literacy practices. School Resource Centres (SRCs) have been positioned as critical hubs for fostering information literacy, yet their effectiveness depends on student motivation and meaningful integration with digital platforms. This study evaluates the outcomes of a community-based Service Learning Malaysia-University for Society (SULAM) program aimed at strengthening social media literacy and enhancing SRC engagement among primary school students. Using a mixed-methods design, data were collected from 30 SRC prefects through pre-post surveys, structured observations, semi-structured interviews, and social media analytics. Quantitative findings indicate notable improvements in students' confidence in sharing information online (+38.6%), use of social media for learning (+20%), and interest in literacy campaigns (+23.3%). Qualitative insights from the Guru Perpustakaan dan Media (GPM) revealed enduring recognition of NILAM and AINS programs, while highlighting persistent digital divides and uneven readiness for digital engagement. The integrative analysis suggests that structured service-learning interventions can reframe social media as a purposeful learning resource, build digital confidence, and reinforce SRCs as literacy ecosystems. However, the short duration, small

sample, and absence of a control group limit generalizability. The study underscores the value of university-school partnerships in cultivating responsible digital citizenship, while calling for sustained, equitable investments in digital infrastructure and teacher capacity to maximize impact.

Keywords:

Digital Citizenship, Digital Divide, Information Literacy, Service-Learning Malaysia (SULAM), Social Media Literacy

Introduction

The contemporary learning environment in Malaysia is deeply entwined with social media and digital connectivity. As of January 2025, there were 25.1 million social media user identities, equivalent to approximately 70.2% of the national population and 34.9 million internet users, representing 97.7% of the population. Notably, 12.1% of Malaysians are between the ages of 5 and 12, the cohort of primary school pupils who constitute the focal group of this study (DataReportal, 2025). Official statistics corroborate these figures. In 2023, 97.7% of Malaysians reported using the internet, with social networking cited as the most common online activity (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2024). Within this highly digitised landscape, School Resource Centres (SRCs) assume renewed significance as institutional anchors for information and media literacy, particularly in alignment with the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013 - 2025, which emphasises 21st century competencies and equitable access to quality learning (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013; Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2024).

While the diffusion of social media provides unprecedented opportunities for engagement, it also exposes young learners to a spectrum of risks. Global evidence has documented the pervasive spread of misinformation, the pressing need for evaluation tools and guidelines, and the importance of cultivating affective; social as well as cognitive competencies; to support critical participation online (Suárez-Lledó & Álvarez-Gálvez, 2021; Squires et al., 2023; Schreurs & Vandenbosch, 2020; Tsortanidou et al., 2020). Within Malaysia, scholars have highlighted authenticity verification and the cultivation of media literate responses to fake news as urgent educational priorities (Rahim, 2025; Rahim & Jusoh, 2025). These concerns align with broader debates in media literacy, which emphasise civic dimensions (Hobbs, 2019; Eserol, 2025) and the embedding of digital citizenship practices in K-12 contexts (Gillern et al., 2022).

At the school system level, SRCs are conceptualised not merely as repositories of information but as dynamic learning hubs. Research suggests they can scaffold guided inquiry, support resource - based learning, and encourage critical engagement, particularly when embedded within project-based pedagogy or in collaboration with public libraries (Bakhtiar et al., 2024; Bakhtiar et al., 2025; Yu et al., 2016; Hobbs, 2016). Malaysian scholarship on innovative pedagogy has likewise underscored the importance of digital readiness, instructional design, and assessment strategies to strengthen both school and higher education outcomes (Suyansah et al., 2023; Had & Rashid, 2019; Jamil et al., 2023). Despite these advances, persistent equity gaps, notably those rooted in urban-rural and socioeconomic divides, continue to shape connectivity, device access, and digital competencies. These inequalities risk undermining the transformative potential of social media literacy, since gains in confidence or motivation may

not translate into sustainable practice across all learner groups (Norman et al., 2022; Devisakti et al., 2023; Yap et al., 2024; Salleh et al., 2023).

Against this backdrop, service-learning emerges as a viable pedagogical pathway for bridging theory and practice. By linking universities with schools and communities, service-learning fosters co-designed interventions that strengthen social media literacy, enhance information literacy, and revitalise the role of SRCs as literacy ecosystems (Galvin, 2019; Scharrer, 2020; Gillern et al., 2022). In Malaysia, this agenda is embedded within the Service Learning Malaysia - University for Society (SULAM) initiative. The present study examines a SULAM driven program implemented with SRC prefects at a national primary school. It seeks to determine: (i) the extent to which the intervention enhanced pupils' awareness and motivation to engage with SRCs; (ii) how participation shaped their responsible and ethical use of social media; and (iii) which pedagogical strategies proved most effective in sustaining engagement and knowledge retention.

Despite near-universal internet penetration and high levels of social media participation, Malaysian primary school students continue to confront three interrelated challenges: (i) credibility and safety risks within digital spaces; (ii) unequal digital access and readiness across demographic groups; and (iii) limited, fragmented integration of SRCs into everyday learning practices. Addressing these issues requires carefully structured, school-embedded interventions that reframe social media as a learning resource, reinforce SRCs as pivotal sites for literacy development, and cultivate digital citizenship as a core competency. These imperatives provide the foundation for the present study.

Literature Review

The literature on digital and information literacy increasingly recognises the intersection between social media use, school-based learning environments, and community engagement. For the purposes of this study, three strands of scholarship are particularly relevant. The first concerns social media literacy (SML), which has evolved beyond cognitive evaluation to include affective, motivational, and civic dimensions of online participation. The second addresses the role of SRCs as literacy ecosystems, highlighting their potential to bridge traditional and digital learning practices. The third focuses on service-learning approaches, such as Malaysia's SULAM framework, which link academic inquiry with community-based action to strengthen literacy and civic responsibility. Reviewing these strands provides the conceptual foundation for understanding how SRCs, social media literacy, and service-learning intersect, and how these intersections shape the present study.

Social Media Literacy in Education

Social media has emerged as both a powerful educational tool and a source of risk. While platforms provide opportunities for collaboration, peer learning, and rapid access to information, they also expose students to misinformation, privacy threats, and ethical dilemmas (Schreurs & Vandenbosch, 2020; Tsortanidou et al., 2020). These realities suggest that social media literacy (SML) must be understood as more than critical thinking, it is a multidimensional construct that integrates cognitive, affective, motivational, and social competencies to support safe and responsible digital participation (Schreurs & Vandenbosch, 2020; Tsortanidou et al., 2020).

Recent studies identify several developments in this field. First, scholars argue for the integration of social-emotional and motivational dimensions alongside cognitive evaluation in literacy programs (Tsortanidou et al., 2020). Second, practical tools such as structured checklists and evaluation frameworks have been developed to guide students' online practices, particularly in distinguishing credible from false information (Squires et al., 2023). Third, conceptual models such as the SMILE framework illustrate how psychological biases, including positivity bias, shape online judgement, reinforcing the importance of emotional regulation and social cognition (Schreurs & Vandenbosch, 2020).

The literature also situates SML within broader civic and public health contexts. Systematic reviews document the prevalence of misinformation on social media, especially in health domains, highlighting the importance of literacy practices that empower students to critically evaluate online content (Suárez-Lledó & Álvarez-Gálvez, 2021). In Malaysia, Rahim (2025) and Rahim and Jusoh (2025) stress the urgency of youth media literacy to combat fake news and support authenticity verification. From a civic education perspective, Kahne, et al. (2016) argue that digital-age civic learning must prepare students to evaluate online information not only for accuracy but for its democratic implications. Similarly, Stoilova et al. (2021) highlight that literacy must encompass data privacy and children's digital rights, ensuring that ethical considerations underpin digital engagement.

Theoretically, these perspectives align with constructivist learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which positions learners as active participants in constructing knowledge through interaction and inquiry. They also reflect digital citizenship frameworks (Gillern et al., 2022), which emphasise the cultivation of civic responsibility, safe online practices, and ethical participation in digital society.

Role of School Resource Centres

Within Malaysian schools, School Resource Centres (SRCs) are central to literacy development, providing curated resources, scaffolding guided inquiry, and fostering information literacy (Bakhtiar et al., 2024; Bakhtiar et al., 2025; Yuet al., 2016). Research suggests that SRCs achieve their greatest impact when embedded within wider school-library collaborations that enable resource sharing, professional exchange, and sustainable literacy ecosystems (Bakhtiar et al., 2024).

The effectiveness of SRCs is also shaped by student engagement. Without motivation, even well-resourced centres risk underuse, but when students are actively engaged, SRCs function as dynamic hubs for literacy and lifelong learning (Scharrer, 2020; Hobbs, 2016). Digital integration has further expanded their role by connecting traditional information literacy with digital practices, thereby supporting inquiry- and project-based learning and cultivating responsible digital citizenship (Gillern et al., 2022). Guided inquiry models (Green & Chassereau, 2023) highlight how librarians and teachers can co-design inquiry-driven experiences that build both cognitive and socio-emotional dimensions of literacy.

Service Learning and Community Engagement

Service-learning (SL) provides a structured means of linking academic study with community service, thereby producing reciprocal benefits for both learners and communities (Galvin, 2019; Scharrer, 2020). Its theoretical grounding lies in experiential learning theory (Kolb,

1984), which emphasizes cycles of action and reflection, and transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991), which stresses critical reflection as a catalyst for perspective change.

In Southeast Asia, SL has been shown to enhance digital inclusion, promote information literacy, and strengthen civic engagement (Hobbs, 2016; Gillern et al., 2022). Partnerships between universities, schools, and libraries have created sustainable platforms for embedding digital and information literacy into everyday practice. In Malaysia, this vision is embodied in the Service Learning Malaysia - University for Society (SULAM) framework, which mobilises university expertise to support SRCs and embed responsible digital practices into school learning environments (Rahim, 2025; Rahim & Jusoh, 2025; Bakhtiar et al., 2024).

Summary of Past Findings

The studies reviewed reveal consistent patterns across contexts, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges of integrating social media literacy, school resource centres, and service-learning into educational practice. Table 1 synthesizes these contributions to provide a comparative view of key findings and representative studies.

Table 1: Summary of past findings on social media literacy, civic and ethical contexts, School Resource Centres (SRCs), and service-learning.

Theme	Key Findings	Representative Studies
Social media literacy	Multidimensional, integrating cognitive, affective, and social skills; evaluation tools needed to counter misinformation.	Schreurs & Vandenbosch (2020); Tsortanidou et al. (2020); Squires et al. (2023)
Civic and ethical contexts	Literacy must address misinformation, democratic engagement, and children's data privacy.	Suárez-Lledó & Álvarez-Gálvez (2021); Rahim (2025); Rahim & Jusoh (2025); Kahne et al. (2016); Livingstone et al. (2021)
SRCs and literacy ecosystems	Effective when embedded in collaborative networks; strengthened by engagement and digital integration.	Bakhtiar et al. (2024, 2025); Yu et al. (2016); Scharrer (2020); Hobbs (2016); Gillern et al. (2022)
Service-learning	Enhances inclusion and civic literacy; grounded in experiential and transformative learning.	Galvin (2019); Scharrer (2020); Kolb (1984); Mezirow (1991)

The literature discussed in this section converges on four key insights: (i) social media literacy must integrate cognitive, affective, and ethical dimensions; (ii) School Resource Centres (SRCs) operate most effectively as literacy ecosystems when supported through collaboration, student engagement, and digital integration; (iii) service-learning provides a practical framework to operationalise these aims; and (iv) civic and ethical considerations, including data privacy and democratic participation, remain central to literacy initiatives. Together, these insights establish the foundation for the present study, which situates a SULAM-based intervention within the dual aims of strengthening SRCs and cultivating responsible digital citizenship among Malaysian primary school students.

Methodology

This section outlines the methodological framework employed to evaluate the impact of the SULAM intervention on students' social media literacy and engagement with the School Resource Centre (SRC). It details the research design, participants, intervention structure, data collection methods, analysis techniques, and ethical considerations to ensure transparency and rigour.

Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods pre–post intervention design, which allowed us to capture both measurable changes in student attitudes and rich qualitative insights into their experiences. The decision to use a mixed-methods framework was informed by the nature of the research questions, which sought not only to assess shifts in knowledge and motivation but also to understand the lived experiences of students as they engaged with the program. Quantitative data provided a structured measure of change, while qualitative data offered depth and context, enabling a holistic picture of the intervention's effectiveness.

The study followed a quasi-experimental design without a control group, which is common in school-based educational interventions where ethical and logistical considerations limit the possibility of randomization. By administering surveys before and after the intervention and complementing these with observations, interviews, and social media analytics, the study sought to triangulate findings, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the results.

Participants

The participants consisted of 30 student librarians, or prefects, of the SRC at a national primary school in northern Malaysia. These students were drawn from Years 4, 5, and 6, representing the upper primary cohort of the school. The sample included both boys and girls, with a gender distribution of approximately 65% female and 35% male. This demographic profile is typical of SRC prefects, who are often selected based on responsibility, academic performance, and leadership potential.

The decision to focus on SRC prefects was intentional. Prefects occupy a unique role within Malaysian primary schools: they act as ambassadors of the library, facilitate peer learning, and are often tasked with promoting reading culture and information literacy within their school community. As such, they were seen as an ideal group for piloting a program that aimed to integrate responsible social media use with enhanced engagement in the SRC. This choice was also pragmatic, as SRC prefects were the most accessible group for piloting the intervention; however, this may limit how representative the findings are of the wider student body.

Intervention

The intervention took the form of a half-day SULAM program delivered on 15 June 2025. The program was co-organized by UiTM Kedah students and schoolteachers, combining academic input from higher education with practical school-level facilitation. The design of the program was rooted in interactive and experiential learning principles, emphasizing participation and reflection rather than passive reception.

The intervention was structured into two major slots:

- **Slot 1: Strengthening SRC Literacy and Awareness**
This session focused on enhancing students' understanding of the role and functions of the School Resource Centre. It began with a short lecture that explained how SRCs support inquiry, information literacy, and lifelong learning. To reinforce learning, a quiz was conducted to test knowledge retention. The session then transitioned into interactive games, which encouraged collaboration among students and reinforced the importance of teamwork in navigating the SRC as an academic hub.
- **Slot 2: Responsible Social Media Use**
The second session addressed issues related to social media literacy and digital citizenship. Students participated in a lecture-discussion on responsible social media practices, including privacy, cyber safety, and the evaluation of online information. To keep the session engaging, a Kahoot quiz was introduced, which allowed real-time feedback and friendly competition. The highlight of this slot was a group treasure hunt, where students were tasked with locating and interpreting information through both physical resources in the SRC and digital prompts. This activity was designed to simulate authentic information-seeking behaviors, linking offline and online literacy practices. During the treasure hunt, for instance, some students instinctively turned to Google first rather than the SRC shelves, which highlighted the tension between digital immediacy and library-based inquiry.

The flow chart of the intervention process is provided in Figure 1.

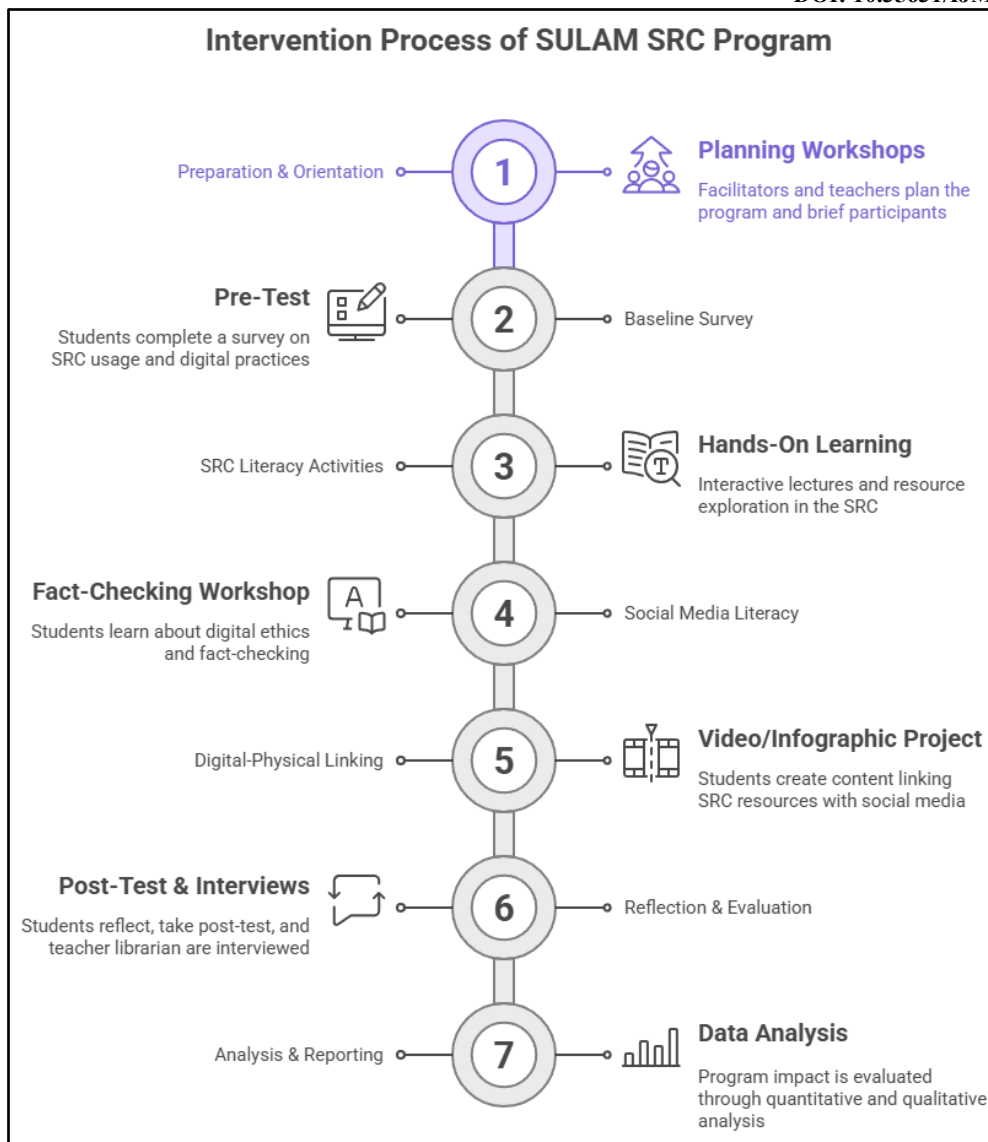


Figure 1: Flow Chart of the SULAM SRC Intervention Process, Showing Preparation, Program Slots, Data Collection, And Analysis

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through two complementary methods to ensure robust triangulation:

1. **Surveys:** Pre- and post-program questionnaires were administered to all 30 participants. Each survey included five Likert-scale items that measured attitudes toward SRC usage, confidence in digital communication, awareness of online safety, and willingness to share educational content online. These items were adapted from established media literacy and information literacy frameworks to ensure validity.
2. **Interview:** At the end of the intervention, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the school's Guru Perpustakaan dan Media (GPM), who has more than two decades of professional experience managing the SRC. The interview explored her perceptions of the program, her assessment of students' understanding of social media ethics, and her reflections on the broader role of SRCs in promoting literacy.

Data Analysis

Quantitative survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentages, means, and comparative pre-post differences. While inferential testing was not conducted due to the small sample size, descriptive comparisons provided clear indications of trends in student learning and motivation.

Qualitative data from interview was subjected to thematic analysis. The process involved iterative reading, coding, and clustering of themes (e.g., “increased awareness of SRC functions,” “responsible social media use,” “enjoyment of gamification”). Thematic findings were then cross-checked with survey results to identify convergences and divergences.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the program was obtained from UiTM Kedah’s research ethics committee, and consent was secured from the school administration. Parents provided written consent for their children’s participation, and students gave verbal assent. To ensure confidentiality, all responses were anonymized, and pseudonyms were used in reporting qualitative findings. Participation was voluntary, and students were reminded that they could withdraw at any point without consequences.

Findings

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to assess the impact of the SULAM program on students’ social media literacy and their engagement with the SRC. The findings are presented in two strands: the quantitative results from pre- and post-intervention surveys (n = 30), followed by the qualitative insights from an in-depth interview with the school’s GPM. Together, the results provide a multidimensional understanding of the program’s outcomes.

Quantitative Findings

The survey data collected before and after the SULAM intervention provides useful insights into students’ evolving perceptions of social media and the role of the SRC. Responses to the five survey items are summarized in Table 2.

The first item, which asked whether students had ever used social media, showed no difference between the pre- and post-program surveys. All students (100%) reported social media use at both times. This finding does not indicate growth but highlights that social media use is already universal among children in this age group. For educators, this may suggest that avoidance-based strategies are unrealistic, and that attention should instead be paid to developing skills for critical and responsible use.

Table 2: Pre- and Post-Intervention Survey Responses (n = 30)

No.	Survey item	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Δ Change
1	I have used social media such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram.	100.0	100.0	0.0
2	I have obtained learning information from social media.	63.3	83.3	+20.0
3	I like to follow literacy campaigns on social media.	56.7	80.0	+23.3
4	I feel more confident sharing information on social media.	48.5	87.1	+38.6

5	The School Resource Centre supports my academic success.	87.9	90.3	+2.4
---	--	------	------	------

Note: Δ Change = percentage difference between pre- and post-intervention responses. Percentages are based on total responses (n = 30).

The second item asked whether students had obtained learning information from social media. Before the program, fewer than two-thirds (63.3%) indicated that they used social media for learning purposes. After the intervention, this proportion increased to 83.3%. The 20% increase may suggest that the activities helped students see social media as a platform that could support their learning. Although entertainment remains a dominant use, the change indicates that with proper guidance, students may begin to view social media as a legitimate source of educational content.

A similar pattern was seen in the third item, which measured students' interest in following literacy campaigns on social media. At the pre-intervention stage, just over half of the students (56.7%) expressed interest. After the program, this rose to 80.0%. The 23.3% increase suggests that the intervention may have raised awareness of the wider possibilities of digital platforms, including their role in promoting literacy and community-oriented initiatives. While causation cannot be firmly claimed, the upward trend provides an encouraging sign that structured engagement can help foster digital civic participation among school-aged learners.

The most striking change was recorded in the fourth item. Students' confidence in sharing information on social media increased from 48.5% before the program to 87.1% afterwards, a gain of nearly 39 percentage points. This represents the most substantial shift among all items. The finding suggests that the intervention may have reduced apprehension and given students more tools and reassurance to share content responsibly. Confidence in digital participation is often a prerequisite for long-term skill development, and this result may point to the potential of gamified and interactive activities to create safe spaces where children feel able to practice communication skills without fear of judgment.

The fifth and final item asked whether the School Resource Centre supports students' academic success. Here, responses were already high before the program, with 87.9% agreement, and rose slightly to 90.3% after the intervention. Although the increase is modest (+2.4%), the stability of the high scores is noteworthy. It suggests that the SRC already held a valued place in students' academic lives, and that the SULAM activities may have reinforced or reaffirmed this perception rather than altering it.

Taken together, these results suggest that the SULAM program may have had the strongest influence in two areas: building students' confidence to engage online and encouraging them to see social media as a resource for learning and civic participation. At the same time, the consistently positive responses regarding the SRC point to the enduring role of school-based resource centres in supporting students' learning journeys.

Qualitative Findings

The semi-structured interview was conducted with the GPM with more than two decades of experience, provided a nuanced insider perspective into the everyday realities of managing the SRC. Her reflections illuminate how literacy practices are embedded in the school, how students encounter both opportunities and barriers in digital engagement, and how the SULAM

program was perceived to influence students' motivation and understanding. Four major themes emerged:

Theme 1: The SRC as a literacy hub and space of achievement

The GPM emphasized that the SRC is not a peripheral space but rather an established hub where literacy is cultivated, recognized, and celebrated. She highlighted the pivotal role of the NILAM program and its digitized version, the Advanced Integrated NILAM System (AINS), in shaping how students engage with reading and literacy practices. Importantly, she framed these activities as sources of both academic growth and recognition, noting: "Alhamdulillah... dalam pencapaian NILAM murid-murid memberi kerjasama yang baiklah, dan pernah membawa murid untuk NILAM ke peringkat daerah."

Such accounts point to the SRC as more than a static repository of books. Instead, it operates as a dynamic site where literacy intersects with identity, pride, and aspiration. Participation in NILAM activities was described as something that could elevate students' confidence, linking their literacy efforts to public acknowledgment at school and even district levels. The GPM's emphasis on achievement underscores the symbolic weight that literacy carries within the school, positioning the SRC as a legitimate "stage" for students' intellectual and personal growth.

Theme 2: Uneven digital literacy and access

A second theme concerned disparities in access to digital tools and platforms. The GPM explained that while a handful of students had access to laptops, the majority did not, with many relying on borrowed devices: "...ada yang tak ada telefon, guna telefon ayah. Laptop ni segelintir murid... lebih kurang dalam 100 lebih itu cikgu yang tolong buat, sebab mereka tak ada akses."

Her observations revealed how structural inequalities manifest in everyday learning. Students without personal devices not only faced barriers in engaging with social media for literacy purposes but also required teachers' direct intervention to complete digital tasks. This dependency underscores the uneven terrain of digital participation: while some students could extend their learning independently into online spaces, others were effectively constrained to traditional modes of engagement.

From her perspective, this divide meant that any intervention, including SULAM, inevitably encountered differential baselines of readiness. For some, the program may have enhanced already existing digital practices; for others, it may have been their first structured introduction to these tools. This recognition helps explain why quantitative gains in confidence and literacy related social media use, though significant, cannot be assumed to represent uniform outcomes across the entire student cohort.

Theme 3: Cautious but emerging use of social media promotion

The GPM described how SRC prefects had been exposed to the idea of using social media as a promotional tool for SRC activities, particularly during prefect leadership training sessions. However, she was candid that this exposure remained superficial: "...mereka hanya tahu tapi hanya sekadar tahu je lah."

In practice, promotion of the SRC continued to be anchored in traditional, school-based events such as assemblies, NILAM launches, and literacy campaigns. Digital elements were limited to occasional use of WhatsApp groups, primarily to share updates among students and teachers. The GPM's reflections suggest a transitional stage, there is clear awareness of the potential role of social media in literacy promotion, but little evidence of systematic or sustained application.

This cautious stance may reflect multiple underlying factors, which are lack of training for prefects, insufficient digital infrastructure, or institutional hesitancy to fully integrate social media into school-based literacy practices. Nonetheless, her account indicates that students are not entirely disconnected from the digital dimension; rather, they are at the early stages of experimenting with it.

Theme 4: Positive appraisal of the SULAM program

Finally, the GPM expressed strong appreciation for the SULAM intervention. She described it as "impactful" despite its short duration, emphasizing that it left students feeling both energized and validated. As she explained: "...feedback daripada pengawas pusat sumber sendiri, mereka rasa seronok dan kemudian rasa begitu dihargai... walaupun kursus tu sehari kan... memberi impak yang positif."

This evaluation highlights two layers of significance. First, the program was seen as imparting practical knowledge about SRC functions and responsible social media use. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it was experienced as an affirmation of students' roles as SRC prefects. The sense of being recognized, "dihargai", appears to have been central to the program's impact, instilling a sense of ownership and pride.

From the GPM's perspective, the collaboration with university facilitators added credibility and novelty. Students were exposed to fresh teaching methods and saw older peers as role models. This intergenerational interaction appeared to resonate strongly, suggesting that community-university partnerships can serve as catalysts for reenergizing school-based literacy initiatives.

Integrative Insights

When viewed together, the quantitative and qualitative strands provide a coherent yet nuanced understanding of the SULAM program's outcomes. The survey data captured measurable shifts in student perceptions, particularly around confidence to share information (+38.6%), use of social media for learning (+20%), and interest in literacy campaigns (+23.3%). The interview data, meanwhile, contextualized these numbers by shedding light on why these changes may have occurred and where limitations remain.

The surge in digital confidence aligns with the GPM's account of student enthusiasm and engagement during program activities. Gamified approaches such as Kahoot and treasure hunts likely created safe spaces where students could experiment with sharing knowledge and collaborating without fear of judgment. These experiences may help explain why confidence levels increased so markedly in the quantitative results.

The rise in literacy-focused social media engagement also resonates with the GPM's descriptions of SRC prefects beginning to explore digital promotion, albeit tentatively. While she acknowledged that students had only a superficial grasp of social media's potential, the

quantitative data suggest that even limited exposure, when structured, can reorient students' perceptions of what social media can be used for.

At the same time, both strands point to structural barriers. The high baseline valuation of the SRC in surveys (87.9% to 90.3%) is consistent with the GPM's emphasis on the NILAM program as a long-standing and prestigious initiative. However, her reflections on the digital divide highlight why increases in digital practices were not uniform. Students' enthusiasm and confidence may have grown, but their actual capacity to act on these shifts remains constrained by inequities in device ownership and access.

Finally, both the quantitative and qualitative findings converge on the importance of recognition. The SRC is valued because it celebrates literacy achievements; the SULAM program was appreciated because it validated students' roles as prefects. Recognition, whether institutional (NILAM competitions) or interpersonal (university facilitators affirming students' contributions), emerges as a central mechanism for motivating and sustaining engagement.

The integrative analysis suggests that the SULAM program may have achieved three interrelated outcomes: (i) reframing social media as a platform for learning and literacy, (ii) building students' confidence in responsible digital participation, and (iii) reinforcing the symbolic and practical centrality of the SRC. These outcomes, however, remain mediated by persistent inequalities in digital access and by the tentative integration of social media into school practices.

As summarised in Table 3, the intervention demonstrated its strongest effects in enhancing students' confidence in digital participation and reframing social media as a platform for literacy, while also reinforcing the established centrality of the SRC.

Table 3: Summary of Main Findings from the SULAM SRC Intervention

Strand	Key Finding	Supporting Evidence
Quantitative	Social media use universal among students (baseline).	100% of students reported use pre- and post-intervention (Item 1).
	Increased use of social media for learning (+20%).	63.3% pre to 83.3% post (Item 2).
	Greater interest in literacy campaigns via social media (+23.3%).	56.7% pre to 80.0% post (Item 3).
	Strongest gain: confidence in sharing information online (+38.6%).	48.5% pre to 87.1% post (Item 4).
	High and stable valuation of SRC as academic support (+2.4%).	87.9% pre to 90.3% post (Item 5).
Qualitative	SRC as literacy hub and space of achievement.	NILAM and AINS programs positioned as sources of recognition and confidence.
	Uneven digital literacy and access constrain participation.	Many students relied on borrowed devices; teachers intervened to complete tasks.

Integrative	Emerging but cautious use of social media for SRC promotion. Positive appraisal of SULAM program.	Prefects aware of potential, but practice remained superficial and traditional. Students described feeling “seronok” and “dihargai,” viewing it as impactful.
	SULAM reframed social media as a tool for literacy and learning.	Quantitative rise in learning-related use (+20%) matched with prefects’ new outlook.
	Program built confidence in responsible digital participation.	Gains in confidence (+38.6%) aligned with GPM’s observation of engagement.
	Reinforced centrality of SRC through recognition and collaboration.	High survey scores + GPM’s emphasis on NILAM and prefect roles.

Discussion

This mixed-methods study provides a multidimensional account of the SULAM program’s influence on students’ social media literacy and their engagement with the SRC. Across both quantitative and qualitative strands, the findings converge on three key insights: first, a reframing of social media as a resource for learning and civic participation; second, an increase in students’ confidence to share information responsibly in digital spaces; and third, the enduring importance of the SRC as a literacy hub that legitimizes and sustains students’ literacy practices. These patterns are situated within Malaysia’s educational landscape, where long-standing literacy programs such as NILAM (and its digitized form, AINS) intersect with persistent digital divides that continue to shape access and participation (Devisakti et al., 2023; Yap et al., 2024; Salleh et al., 2023). The discussion that follows synthesizes these findings with existing literature on digital inclusion, information literacy, school-based literacy ecosystems, and the policy–practice interface in Malaysian education.

Social Media as a Ubiquitous Yet Meaningful Platform

The quantitative strand showed that social media use was universal among participants (100% both pre- and post-intervention). This mirrors national and regional evidence that young people across low- and middle-income countries have pervasive exposure to mobile technologies, rendering avoidance-based approaches to digital media both impractical and ineffective (Devisakti et al., 2023; Yap et al., 2024). Rather, the challenge lies in shaping how social media is used. SULAM’s contribution, therefore, appears to rest not on increasing access but on reframing digital engagement as purposeful and responsible. This interpretation is consistent with the digital inclusion literature, which stresses that equitable access must be coupled with targeted literacy training to ensure meaningful use (Norman et al., 2022). Within this framing, the SRC functions not as a repository but as a convergence zone where digital access, information literacy, and reading practices intersect (Salleh et al., 2023).

Social Media as a Learning Resource

Post-intervention data revealed a marked rise in students reporting that they obtained learning information from social media (63.3% to 83.3%). This suggests that structured guidance can help reposition digital platforms as legitimate sources of learning rather than mere entertainment. Such a shift is consistent with research showing that when literacy initiatives are embedded in credible school structures, they can guide more purposeful use of digital tools (Yap et al., 2024; Norman et al., 2022). The literature also emphasizes that teachers’ digital

readiness is pivotal to sustaining such practices, as professional development and institutional support are required to translate access into meaningful pedagogy (Foo et al., 2017; Had & Rashid, 2019). The present findings support the idea that digital engagement can be effectively redirected toward learning when it is anchored in institutional frameworks such as the SRC.

Engagement with Literacy Campaigns

Students' interest in following literacy campaigns on social media rose from 56.7% to 80.0%. This increase reflects the potential of digital campaigns to mobilize youth engagement when they resonate with students' identities and provide recognition for participation (Salleh et al., 2023). Qualitative accounts reinforced this by underscoring the prestige of NILAM and AINS, which serve as visible platforms where students' literacy practices are validated and celebrated. The literature suggests that such recognition is central to sustaining engagement, as it links literacy practice to affective and aspirational dimensions of identity formation (Foo et al., 2017).

Confidence to Share Information Online

The largest quantitative gain was in students' confidence to share information online, which increased from 48.5% to 87.1%. This substantial improvement indicates that structured, low-risk activities may help students build digital agency. Research on digital participation suggests that interactive learning environments, such as gamified activities or collaborative group tasks, can reduce anxieties about negative evaluation and foster responsible online communication (Norman et al., 2022). In this study, the program's use of games, quizzes, and facilitated discussions likely created a safe space for practicing responsible sharing. This aligns with broader arguments that situated learning and guided practice are key levers for developing digital citizenship (Salleh et al., 2023).

The SRC's Established Value

Students already regarded the SRC as a valuable academic resource prior to the program (87.9%), and this sentiment remained stable post-intervention (90.3%). This stability highlights the SRC's embedded role in the school's literacy ecosystem. The continuity of NILAM and its digitized successor, AINS, has reinforced the SRC as a site of recognition and achievement, consistent with literature that views libraries and resource centres as dynamic hubs of learning (Salleh et al., 2023). Rather than disrupting these traditions, SULAM appears to have complemented them, suggesting that integration with existing literacy infrastructures may be a key factor in sustaining program outcomes.

Persistent Digital Divides

Despite these positive shifts, qualitative data underscored the unevenness of digital access. Students often relied on shared or borrowed devices, echoing national studies documenting disparities in device ownership and home connectivity (Devisakti et al., 2023; Yap et al., 2024). Such inequalities may constrain the extent to which program benefits are distributed evenly across student populations. The present findings thus mirror broader digital inclusion challenges in Malaysia, where access alone is insufficient without systemic investments in equity and infrastructure.

Recognition and University–School Collaboration

The program's success was also attributed to recognition and role modelling. Teachers and students described the involvement of university facilitators as refreshing and motivating,

affirming students' roles as SRC prefects and positioning them as leaders within their school. Literature on cross-generational mentorship highlights similar benefits, with university–school partnerships providing credibility, exposure to new pedagogical styles, and aspirational role models (Jamil et al., 2023). This dimension of SULAM reflects a broader policy interest in leveraging community–university collaborations to revitalize school-based literacy programs.

Limitations and Future Directions

While the mixed-methods design strengthens internal validity, caution is warranted in interpreting findings. The study was conducted at a single school with a modest sample size, limiting generalizability. Moreover, without a control group, observed changes cannot be attributed solely to SULAM; external factors may also have influenced outcomes. The absence of longitudinal follow-up further constrains insights into the durability of observed shifts. Future research should examine similar interventions across diverse contexts, incorporate quasi-experimental or longitudinal designs, and disaggregate outcomes by socioeconomic and demographic variables to better understand equity implications (Devisakti et al., 2023; Norman et al., 2022).

Overall, the findings suggest that SULAM may help reframe social media as a site for learning and civic engagement, strengthen students' confidence in digital participation, and reinforce the SRC's position as a hub of literacy and recognition. Yet these gains unfold within a context marked by persistent digital divides, highlighting the need for parallel investments in access, infrastructure, and teacher capacity. By aligning with established literacy traditions such as NILAM/AINS while introducing structured digital literacy practices, SULAM provides a practical model for integrating digital citizenship into school literacy ecosystems. At the same time, it serves as a reminder that structural inequalities must be addressed if such initiatives are to achieve their full potential.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the impact of a community-based SULAM program in promoting social media literacy and strengthening the role of the School Resource Centre (SRC) in a Malaysian primary school. The objectives, to assess shifts in students' perceptions and confidence in digital participation, and to understand the institutional role of the SRC through the perspective of the Guru Perpustakaan dan Media (GPM), were achieved. The findings demonstrate that the program helped reframe social media as a legitimate learning platform, enhanced students' confidence to share responsibly online, and reinforced the centrality of the SRC as a literacy ecosystem.

This research contributes to the growing body of literature on media and information literacy by illustrating how service-learning initiatives can be applied within primary school contexts. It extends existing knowledge by linking social media literacy with SRC engagement, showing how recognition (institutional and interpersonal) functions as a motivating mechanism. Practically, it demonstrates how university–school partnerships can inject credibility and innovation into school literacy programs, while highlighting the persistent equity gaps that shape the uptake of digital practices.

Practical Implications

Several implications emerge for practice and policy:

1. **Strengthening SRCs as Literacy Ecosystems**
SRCs should be positioned not only as repositories but as hubs where digital and traditional literacies intersect. Programs like SULAM illustrate how integrating structured activities with existing initiatives (e.g., NILAM) can anchor social media literacy within established school traditions.
2. **Leveraging Recognition as a Motivator**
Recognition, both institutional and interpersonal, proved central to sustaining engagement. Schools may benefit from expanding public acknowledgment of student literacy efforts, through campaigns, competitions, and visible platforms for achievement, while encouraging student leadership in SRC activities.
3. **University–School Partnerships**
The involvement of university facilitators injected novelty, credibility, and mentorship into the program. Policymakers and school leaders might formalize such partnerships, ensuring continuity of expertise and exposure to innovative pedagogical practices.
4. **Addressing Equity Gaps in Digital Access**
Without parallel efforts to improve infrastructure and device ownership, literacy gains will remain uneven. Schools, districts, and policymakers should explore targeted measures, such as shared device programs, subsidized connectivity, and after-school digital literacy workshops, to address this persistent divide.
5. **Teacher Capacity Building**
Teachers' readiness to guide students in responsible digital use is critical. Investment in professional development and structured training can ensure that social media literacy becomes an integral, sustained element of pedagogy rather than a one-off initiative.

Limitations and Future Research

While the study contributes valuable insights, several limitations should be noted.

1. The study was conducted in a single primary school with 30 SRC prefects. As such, findings may not be generalizable to other schools with different demographics or resource profiles.
2. The absence of a control group limits causal claims. Changes observed cannot be attributed solely to SULAM, as other school or external factors may have played a role.
3. The intervention was short (half a day), and data were collected only at the immediate post-program stage. Longer-term follow-up is needed to determine whether observed gains in confidence and engagement are sustained.
4. While qualitative insights captured disparities in access, the study did not systematically measure variables such as device availability, internet bandwidth, or time spent online, which could provide a clearer picture of equity issues.

Future studies should therefore broaden the scope by including multiple schools across rural and urban settings, employing quasi-experimental or longitudinal designs, and integrating richer metrics of digital access and engagement. Such research would help determine the durability of program impacts and identify strategies to ensure equitable outcomes across diverse student populations.

Closing Remark

This study highlights the promise of service-learning models such as SULAM for cultivating responsible digital citizenship and sustaining literacy cultures within schools. By bridging traditional literacy infrastructures with structured digital engagement, and by leveraging recognition and community–university partnerships, such initiatives can meaningfully prepare students for participation in digital society. Yet, the persistence of digital divides serves as a reminder that literacy futures will only be equitable if structural access gaps are addressed alongside pedagogical innovations.

Acknowledgement

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the Research Management Unit of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Kedah for their valuable assistance, direction, and provision of resources during this study. We are grateful for the support received from our colleagues and faculty, along with the helpful feedback from the reviewers, which enhanced the quality of this publication.

References

- Bakhtiar, H. A., Abu, R., & Shaifuddin, N. (2024). Sustainable collaboration between public libraries and school resource centers: Advancing digital information literacy in the digital age. *Journal of Information and Knowledge Management*, 14(2), 50–60. <https://doi.org/10.24191/jikm.v14i2.4467>
- Bakhtiar, H. A., Abu, R., & Shaifuddin, N. (2025). Sustainable collaborative digital information literacy index framework for state public library and school resource centre in Malaysia. *International Journal of Modern Education*, 7(24), 1377–1397. <https://doi.org/10.35631/ijmoe.724098>
- DataReportal. (2025, March). *Digital 2025: Malaysia*. DataReportal – Global Digital Insights. Retrieved from <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-malaysia>
- Department of Statistics Malaysia. (2024, April 22). *ICT use and access by individuals and households survey report (ICTHS) 2023*. Putrajaya: Department of Statistics Malaysia. Retrieved from https://storage.dosm.gov.my/icths/icths_2023.pdf
- Devisakti, A., Muftahu, M., & Hu, X. (2023). Digital divide among B40 students in Malaysian higher education institutions. *Education and Information Technologies*, 28(11), 12015–12034. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-11847-w>
- Eserol, N. D. (2025). The role of new media literacy in the perception of trust in social media. *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 8(1), 75–94. <https://doi.org/10.34135/mlar-25-01-04>
- Foo, L., Lai, W., & Elamzazuthi, C. (2017). Narrowing the digital divide in Malaysia: Issues and initiatives. *ASEAN Journal on Science and Technology for Development*, 19(2), 97–110. <https://doi.org/10.29037/ajstd.342>
- Galvin, S. (2019, April). Reading, writing, and fake news: A review of K–12 digital literacy on social media. In *Proceedings of the 2019 AERA Annual Meeting*. <https://doi.org/10.3102/1440324>

- Gillern, S. V., Gleason, B., & Hutchison, A. (2022). Digital citizenship, media literacy, and the ACTS framework. *The Reading Teacher*, 76(2), 145–158. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.2120>
- Green, L. S., & Chassereau, K. (2022). Modeling guided inquiry and school librarian instructional partnerships to pre-service teachers through digital video production. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, 64(2), 189–204. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jelis-2022-0015>
- Had, M. Z. C., & Rashid, R. A. (2019). A review of digital skills of Malaysian English language teachers. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (iJET)*, 14(2), 139–146. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v14i02.8732>
- Hobbs, R. (2019). Media literacy foundations. In R. Hobbs & P. Mihailidis (Eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Media Literacy* (pp. 1–19). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118978238.ieml0063>
- Jamil, M. R. M., Hasyim, A. T. M., Othman, M. S., Muqsith, A., Noh, N. M., & Kamal, M. F. M. (2023). Digital pedagogy policy in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Malaysia: Fuzzy Delphi approach. *Journal of Technical Education and Training*, 15(2). <https://doi.org/10.30880/jtet.2023.15.02.001>
- Kahne, J., Hodgin, E., & Eidman-Aadahl, E. (2016). Redesigning civic education for the digital age: Participatory politics and the pursuit of democratic engagement. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 44(1), 1–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2015.1132646>
- Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2013). *Malaysia education blueprint 2013–2025*. Putrajaya: Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia. Retrieved from <https://www.pmo.gov.my/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Malaysia-Education-Blueprint-2013-2025.pdf>
- Ministry of Education Malaysia, Delivery Management Unit. (2024, August). *Malaysia education blueprint 2013–2025: Annual report 2023*. Putrajaya: Ministry of Education Malaysia. Retrieved from [https://www.moe.gov.my/storage/files/shares/Dasar/PPPM/PPPM%20Laporan%20Tahunan%202023%20\(BI\).pdf](https://www.moe.gov.my/storage/files/shares/Dasar/PPPM/PPPM%20Laporan%20Tahunan%202023%20(BI).pdf)
- Norman, H., Adnan, N. H., Nordin, N., Ally, M., & Tsinakos, A. (2022). The educational digital divide for vulnerable students in the pandemic: Towards the new Agenda 2030. *Sustainability*, 14(16), 10332. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141610332>
- Rahim, N. B. A. (2025). Navigating the digital news landscape: Strategies for authenticity verification. *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation*, 12(1), 732–735. <https://doi.org/10.51244/ijrsi.2025.12010063>
- Rahim, N. B. A., & Jusoh, N. M. (2025). The role of media literacy in combating fake news: Insights from Malaysian youth. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9(13), 98–101. <https://doi.org/10.47772/ijriss.2025.913com0010>
- Salleh, N., William, R. M., Ramli, R., Zakaria, N. S., Saikim, F. H., Amat, A., & Merican, A. M. M. (2023). Digital poverty in Sabah: Socioeconomic factors shaping digital accessibility during the post-COVID-19 era. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 13(12), 19881. <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v13-i12/19881>
- Scharrer, E. (2020). Media literacy in childhood and adolescence. In J. Van den Bulck (Ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Media Psychology* (pp. 1–15). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119011071.iemp0238>

- Schreurs, L., & Vandenbosch, L. (2020). Introducing the social media literacy (SMILE) model with the case of the positivity bias on social media. *Journal of Children and Media*, 15(3), 320–337. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2020.1809481>
- Squires, K., Brighton, A., Urquhart, L., Kocanda, L., & Heaney, S. (2023). Informing online professional dietetics practice: The development and pilot testing of the social media evaluation checklist. *Nutrition & Dietetics*, 80(4), 351–361. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1747-0080.12794>
- Stoilova, M., Livingstone, S., & Nandagiri, R. (2019). *Children's data and privacy online: Growing up in a digital age. Research findings*. London: London School of Economics and Political Science. Retrieved from https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/101282/1/Livingstone_childrens_data_and_privacy_online_research_findings_published.pdf
- Suárez-Lledó, V., & Álvarez-Gálvez, J. (2021). Prevalence of health misinformation on social media: Systematic review. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 23(1), e17187. <https://doi.org/10.2196/17187>
- Suyansah, A. I., Said, N., & Jawing, E. (2023). Exploring digital assessment literacy in Malaysian ESL tertiary institution instructors' innovative pedagogy. *International Journal of Modern Education*, 5(17), 431–439. <https://doi.org/10.35631/ijmoe.517033>
- Tsortanidou, X., Daradoumis, T., & Barberà, E. (2020). Convergence among imagination, social-emotional learning and media literacy: An integrative literature review. *Early Child Development and Care*, 192(2), 173–186. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2020.1753720>
- Yap, P. S. Y., Moses, P., Cheah, P. K., Khambari, M. N. M., Wong, S. L., & Yu, F. (2024). Digital divide: Facilitating conditions and usage of Google Classroom for teachers in rural and urban secondary schools in Malaysia. *Journal of ICT in Education*, 11(2), 66–76. <https://doi.org/10.37134/jictie.vol11.2.6.2024>
- Yu, H., Abrizah, A., Ratnariah, E. R. K., & Abdullah, S. N. M. (2016). Reinforcing information literacy development through a subject-focused resource-based project. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 50(4), 386–398. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000616667799>