



Roles of Social Media in Promoting the Values of Moderation and Centrism: A Case Study of Saudi Youths

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Paper ID: 12A10A

Volume 12 Issue 10

Received 03 May 2021

Received in revised form 09 July 2021

Accepted 12 July 2021

Available online 19 July 2021

Keywords:

Saudi youth group;
Adopting positive ideas;
Cultural benefits; Social value; Skill values;
Online communities;
Youth Internet use;
Virtual societies;
Negative dimensions of social media; Positive dimensions of social media; Moral value; The Internet and youth culture; Social networking.

Abstract

Youths are the most social media user group. They are the most vital group on which society depends a lot in achieving development and progress. As well, they are considered the most affected, positively or negatively, by the cultural and value data that these social media produce. From this point of view, this study sought to know the role of social media in promoting the values of moderation and centrism, especially among the youth group in Saudi society, as an applied scientific contribution to diagnosing the actual reality, and a foreseeing of the hoped-for future in light of the Kingdom's vision 2030. The study used the analytical descriptive method of a sample of Saudi youth, consisting of 1325 individuals. In its results, the study found several indicators related to the values of moderation and centrism namely adopting positive ideas that are applicable on the ground, striving to benefit from cultural diversity, and adopting positive ideas in the light of modern knowledge, enhancing the participation of all society components in various issues, reconciling personal and others' interests, tolerance and respect for personal and others' freedom of opinion. Accordingly, the study recommended working on designing practical programs for young people on how to deal with modern social media to support cognitive, moral, and skill values.

Disciplinary: Sociology and Social Engineering; Information Technology; Youth Study.

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Cite This Article:

Al Asmari, M. B. G. (2021). Roles of Social Media in Promoting the Values of Moderation and Centrism: A Case Study of Saudi Youths. *International Transaction Journal of Engineering, Management, & Applied Sciences & Technologies*, 12(10), 12A10A, 1-12. <http://TUENGR.COM/V12/12A10A.pdf> DOI: 10.14456/ITJEMAST.2021.190

1 Introduction

Human societies live in a changeful system not only imposed by most of the facts of the modern technological era but also as a result of the human aspiration to keep pace with scientific progress and to benefit from the data created by the communication and information revolution. However, the proper keeping pace with development is done through continuous evaluation of everything that is presented through these technologies; So that what suits the needs of the individual and society is chosen, without affecting the system of human values and concepts of the society in which he lives. The certainty of scientific and informational progress is inexhaustible, and its various fields have rooted deep in society, which has brought about a change in the behavior of the individual, his values, and his tendencies, and this change must be accompanied by a certain amount of caution. Facing challenges that conflict with the society's culture and human values, and enabling it to make optimal use of its natural and human resources (Al-Sha'er, 1996). Communication and information transfer technologies have become an essential tributary and an important pillar in building human social, economic, political, and cultural life in light of the cognitive transformations and developments in this era, and which caused our informational and interactive capabilities to increase (Al-Majali, 2007: 23).

According to the global report (Kemp, 2021), statistics indicate that the number of active users of social networks in the world will reach about 4.2 billion users at the beginning of the year 2021, as the service penetration rate has increased to about 53.6% of the total world population estimated at 7.8 billion people, and that the average time a user spends on social networks is 2 hours and 25 minutes. The Corona crisis and its accompanying repercussions and measures that limited the movement of people had a significant impact on the increase in the use of the Internet and various means of technology, including social networks, where during the year 2020 they received nearly half a billion new active users.

At the level of Saudi society, statistics show that the age group (15-34 years) amounted to 36.70% of the total population and that the percentage of young people who use social networking sites reached 98.43%, while the percentage of young people whose social relationships were affected by social networks was 35.83% (SA-Gov-Stat, 2021).

The observer of the prevailing social conditions realizes that the use of social networking sites is on its way to impact the social construction of human societies, and has led to the rapid and effective spread of different patterns of values in art, language, clothing, food, and entertainment, which carry a specific vision of the world that differs radically from the vision of societies at the local level (Abdullah, 1999: 55) as many studies have proven that social networks users have recorded a decrease in the rates of interaction with family and the social circle surrounding them (Al-Sha'ya, 2001: 71). This requires a re-examination of the value system presented by social networks, as nations, in their march towards progress, need to pay attention to their value heritage, to review it, and the changes it may undergo. Despite the severe criticism of social media, which accuses it of having a direct negative impact on society, some see it as an important means for

promoting cohesion between societies, bringing concepts and visions closer with each other, learning about the cultures of different people, and promoting the values of moderation and centrism, especially in its active and distinguished role as an effective means of communication in mass change movements (Samir, 2008).

This study contributes to the scientific and cognitive context for understanding the relationship between social media and social values, in addition to the applied indicators that can be used to enhance such values. Accordingly, the study aims at knowing and diagnosing the roles of modern means of communication in promoting the values of moderation and centrism in Saudi society. It tries to answer the questions: What is the current reality of the use of modern means of communication? What is the positive role of modern means of communication in supporting and promoting the values of moderation and centrism in Saudi society?

2 Social Values

Values: a concept that denotes a set of central normative trends that define the individual's goals in social situations, which are evident through his social or verbal behavior (Abdel-Aal, 1986: 34). **The social values** are the set of beliefs that are characterized by a degree of relative continuity, and that represent directives for people towards goals or means to achieve them or behavioral patterns chosen and preferred by these people as an alternative to others (Al-Husniya, 1426: 18). Some view it as the trends and tendencies of individuals for certain situations that move them in the surrounding environment, and through which it is possible to better identify their trends, as their interaction in the future depends on their values (Al-Abawi, 2007: 173). Hence, positive social values can be defined as a set of rules, principles, and norms that govern behavior and serve as the main criterion in formulating and directing public behavior in a manner that serves the progress of society. It means adherence to the controlling values of the movement of individuals and society such as honesty, moderation, centrism, sincerity, loyalty, fairness, and transparency (Mesbah, 2008: 24).

For Durkheim, values actually exist as things and are considered common between certain people and groups, and individuals find fulfillment in them for their desires that they are looking for in diverse and different situations, and each unit in society has its own values regulating the behavior of its members, and Parsons considers values as an essential reference point for analyzing the structure, processes, and interactions of social systems (Faraj, 1980: 46). Perhaps among the indicators of values in the light of the current study is the set of acquired rules that regulate human behavior, and through which a judgment is made on what is desirable and what is undesirable in terms of life and behavioral patterns, and what these values constitute in the end from the values of moderation and centrism.

3 Concept of Moderation and Centrism

Centrism in its linguistic status refers to a middle substance, and the middle is a name for what is between the two ends of a thing, and the middle thing is the best and fairest, and it is said the middle of his people, i.e. their best. Al-Hasan Al-Aarabi said: The best of matters is the middle

one. Ibn Al-Atheer said in this speech (hadith) that every good trait has two blameworthy sides, for generosity is a medium between miserliness and wastefulness, and courage is a medium between cowardice and recklessness (Ibn Manthur, 310). As for moderation: Ibn al-Aarabi said, "Justice is righteousness, and moderation is a state of mediation between two states in terms of quantity or quality, as they say of a moderate body between height and shortness, and everything proportional is moderate." (Ibn Manthur, 459). The term moderation may not be applied to a matter unless it has the features of charity, integrity, interfaith, ease or relief of embarrassment, the balance between capabilities and duties, between authenticity and modernity, in addition to justice and wisdom (Bilal, 2008). In the common custom, moderation is applied to belief, attitude, behavior, order, treatment, and morals (Emad, 2012: 158). The indicators of moderation and centrism in light of the current study are balancing rights and duties, respecting diversity and difference, and working to select what is positive and stay away from what is negative.

Social media and values: There is no doubt that modern means of communication have become more effective and attractive by creating an open space for the transfer of knowledge and culture and the rapprochement of human beings in different countries, which made them a key role in shaping public opinion, especially in intellectual issues, and an effective means of broadcasting and consolidating lofty concepts, values, and principles among the members of society. Hence, appears the importance of investing modern social media in the fields of education, promoting positive values, and instilling new values required by the social future, which is consistent with the pillars of the vision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (2030) in establishing a solid base for economic and social prosperity stemming from the belief in the importance of building a vibrant society which members live according to the principles of moderation, centrism, and pride in the national identity.

Given the data of previous studies and by following the prevailing social conditions, it is noted that the use of social networking sites is on its way to influence the social and value building of human societies. This requires a re-examination of the value system provided by social networks to society members in general and to youth in particular, as societies, in their march towards progress and development, need to pay attention to their value heritage, and the changes it may undergo. Despite the severe criticism that social networks are subjected to, accusing them of having a negative and direct impact on the individual, family and society, which were indicated by the results of some previous studies namely the Arab studies (e.g. Kawash 2018; Al-Saidi, 2020; Al-Mulla, 2021; Fouda, 2021; Shaker 2021) and the foreign studies of (Niemz et al., 2005; Krout et al., 2007; Vansoon, 2010; Iordachescu, 2013) which refer to some indicators, including the control of social media on the individual, behavioral patterns that are somewhat inconsistent with moral values and social norms, weakness and disintegration of family and social relations, psychological isolation, the moral vibration of young people and their weak moral immunity, avoiding social activities without opening effective social horizons with those around them, there are those who see it as an important means of harmony and cohesion between societies, bringing concepts and

visions closer with each other, getting acquainted with the cultures of different people, and promoting the values of loyalty, identity and belonging, especially in light of its active and distinguished role as a successful means of communication, by creating an open space for the transfer of knowledge and culture, and increasing their interests in areas that were far from them, in light of the false image or media blackout practiced by some media outlets, which made many people resort to modern means of communication as an alternative means or alternative media.

As for theoretical approaches, **the symbolic interactionist theory** considers that social life, both real and virtual, and the processes, phenomena, and incidents that surround it, is nothing but a complex network of interactions and relationships between individuals and groups that make up society, whether virtual or real, which is the final outcome of the use of modern means of communication. Social life's true manifestations can be understood and assimilated by looking at the interactions that occur between individuals and their objective and subjective motives. The symbolic interaction theory clarifies the human model through the role he plays and the behavior he performs towards the other individual who forms a relationship with him during a specific period through the virtual community. To get acquainted with the characteristics and features of the other individual through the interactive virtual relationship that arises between them, and after some time on the emergence of such an interactive virtual relationship between the two persons occupying equal or different social roles, each individual evaluates the other and knows the most important values that he acquired through this knowledge, However, the assessment depends on the language and communication that occurs between them, as well as the elements of the common culture. **The theory of uses and gratifications** depends on some psychological facts believing that each individual has a special structure of interests, needs, and values that play a role in shaping his choices, as he seeks to satisfy them through exposure to the content he targets through modern means of communication. Perhaps the hypotheses of this theory - in light of the current study - emphasize that young people choose what they prefer and what is consistent with their own values and interests, taking into account the individual differences of young people that control those motives and choices through the content of those means themselves. Based on the foregoing, the current study adopted the positive view that sees the effective and distinguished role of social media in supporting and promoting the values of moderation and centrism among young people in Saudi society.

4 The Study Community and Methodology

This study belongs to a type of analytical descriptive studies. It relied on the method of a social survey by sample, using the questionnaire as a tool for collecting data, which was distributed directly (on paper) and electronically to students of King Abdulaziz University - in Jeddah, during the 2021 AD first semester. The study included a sample of 1325 individuals. The majority of the study sample came from males 65.7%, while females 34.3%, and in the age group 17-22 years 65.0%, followed 27.2% for the age group 23-28 years, while the age group (29 years and over) 7.8%. Respondents with an urban background are 77.4%, followed by those belonging to rural life 12.4%.

It was found that a large percentage of the study sample 69.20% spend more than 4 to more than 6 hours per day on social networks.

Among the most important sites that are accessed, ranked according to the most preferred, were entertainment (54.6%), sports (37.6%), social (37.4%), cultural (28.1%), news (24.1%), artistic (17.8), then religious (14.2%). Among the most important motives behind the use of modern means of communication according to their importance were knowing everything new in different fields, spending free time, being an important daily habit, communicating with others, in addition to overcoming the barrier of shyness and free expression of opinion.

5 Results & Discussion

Looking at the reality of using social media, the sample 59.7% believe that it is not possible to coexist with life away from these means, and that the respondents 53.1% do not see that the drawbacks of modern means of communication are more than its advantages. The respondents 82.1% believe that virtual societies have a role in building our real societies, and 77.1% believe that virtual societies have become a reality in our world today. From the results, 68.8% believe that the problem is not in the means of social communication as much as it is in the way people use them, and 23.7% believe that the problem is in the content of the medium itself, while only 7.5% view that the problem is the means itself, which indicates that the issue is the goal of using the means and not the means itself.

When dealing with some negative dimensions of social media, from Table 1, among the most important negative effects of means of communication, in order of importance, are acquiring some unfamiliar values for the community, unconstructive criticism of some societal issues, penetrating privacy, and acquiring some behaviors that violate the traditions of society. This is consistent with what was indicated by Al-Shawaqi (2003) that the Internet has an effective role in developing new behavioral patterns, and that the acquired behavioral patterns are incompatible with moral values, and that the Internet is an effective means of weakening values among the youth group, and Al-Owaidi (2004) confirmed that the Internet has a negative impact on Saudi society, religiously and morally, to a high degree, followed by escaping from reality, not investing free time in a positive way, entering into some illegal relationships, and the existence of a gap between the individual and his family. Al-Khulaifi (2002) confirmed that many drawbacks result from the use of social networking sites for long periods that may reach addiction, which makes these sites completely in control of the individual's life, and Al-Owaithi (2004) added the existence of a significant correlational relationship between the duration of children's use of the Internet and the effect of that use on the relationship between parents and children, and that the high demand for social networking sites is the most common cause of psychological and social isolation. Sari (2005) also found that there is instability in the family relationship between young people and their families, which represents a kind of concern about the reality of stability in social life.

This was confirmed by Obaidat (2003) in terms of the existence of social dangers for the use of the Internet and satellite channels by Gulf youth represented in isolation, and weak social

relations. Krout (2007) added that the increasing use of the Internet significantly and negatively affects the individual's ability to social interactions with those around him, and lead to depression and social isolation.

Table 1: Some negative dimensions of social media

#	Variable	Yes		No	
		Number	Rate	Number	Rate
1	Acquisition of some values unfamiliar to the community.	1101	83.1	224	16.9
2	Unconstructive criticism of some societal issues.	1075	81.1	250	18.9
3	Privacy breach.	1072	80.9	253	19.1
4	Acquisition of some behaviors contrary to the traditions of society.	1071	80.8	254	19.2
5	Escape from reality.	1020	77.0	305	23.0
6	No free time positive investment.	1010	76.2	315	23.8
7	Engaging in some illegal relationships.	1003	75.7	322	24.3
8	There is a gap between the individual and his family.	977	73.7	348	26.3
9	Tendency to introversion.	916	69.1	409	30.9
10	Not paying attention to education matters.	905	68.3	420	31.7
11	Adopt some extremist ideas.	901	68.0	424	32.0
12	Seeking to avoid others.	848	64.0	477	36.0
13	Encouraging social isolation.	842	63.5	483	36.5
14	Neglecting religious rites.	829	62.6	496	37.4

By conducting a T-test to find the differences in the answers of the study sample members according to their opinions on the negative aspects of the means of communication, it was found that there are statistically significant differences for all determinants of the negative impact of social media at a lower level of significance of (0.05), which means that there are significant statistic differences between the average opinions of the study sample due to the difference in their opinions on the negative aspects of modern social media.

On the other hand, when addressing some of the positive dimensions of social media, it is clear from Table 2 that the priority, in order of importance, is for cultural and intellectual exchange with others, knowing the opinions of others on some societal issues, interaction with people of different cultures, widening the circle of acquaintances and friendships, acquiring the values of self-education and experiences and skills to raise the level of knowledge, openness to the outside world. Al-Khulaifi (2002) added that there is a positive aspect of using social networking sites, which is to bridge the distances between individuals, especially the youth, students, and university students, and help them carry out their scientific tasks and try to bring ideas and points of view closer, in addition to the fact that the presence of the Internet introduced positive changes in the ideas of young people, and the idea of buying everything new in order to keep pace with others, and even the availability of modern communication technologies gives a feeling of independence and self-confidence, as shown by Al-Sheikh (2007).

The next in order were expressing freely my opinions and thoughts, entering into positive social relationships, respecting the opinions of others, adopting the values of teamwork, and avoiding selfishness and harming the interests of others. Al-Majali (2006) indicated that the most

use of the Internet is for scientific and research purposes. Faqira (2006) confirmed young people believe that their use of modern means of communication helped them connect more with values and that one of the strongest reasons that motivate female young people to use these means is the ease of expressing their opinions and the intellectual trends that they cannot express, in addition to intellectual openness and cultural exchange (Al-Shehri, 2012). Added to that, adopting ideas and opinions are to support the customs, traditions, and values of society, taking into account the value of honesty and not misleading others when sending information, and investing time in a positive way. Niemz (2005) confirmed that university students use the Internet in many situations for social supports.

Table 2: Some positive dimensions of modern means of communication

#	Variable	Yes		No	
		Number	Rate	Number	Rate
1	Cultural and intellectual exchange with others.	1267	95.6	58	4.4
2	Knowing the opinions of others on some societal issues.	1245	94.0	80	6.0
3	Interact with people of different cultures.	1223	92.3	102	7.7
4	Expanding the circle of acquaintances and friendships.	1215	91.7	110	8.3
5	Acquiring the values of self-education, experiences, and skills to raise the level of knowledge.	1211	91.4	114	8.6
6	Opening up to the outside world.	1199	90.5	126	9.5
7	See the opinions of scientists on some scientific issues.	1199	90.5	126	9.5
8	Express freely my opinions and ideas.	1156	87.2	169	12.8
9	Engaging in positive social relationships.	1131	85.4	194	14.6
10	Respect the opinions of others.	1119	84.5	206	15.5
11	Adopting the values of teamwork and avoiding selfishness and harming the interests of others.	1067	80.5	258	19.5
12	Adopting ideas and opinions that support the customs, traditions, and values of society.	1042	78.6	283	21.4
13	Respect the value of honesty and not misleading others when sending information.	991	74.8	334	25.2
14	Investing time in a positive way.	924	69.7	401	30.3

By conducting a T-test to find the differences in the answers of the study sample members according to their opinions on the positive aspects of the means of communication, it was found that there are statistically significant differences at a lower level of significance (0.05), for the determinants of the positive impact of modern means of communication with regard to respect for the opinions of others, expanding the circle of acquaintance and friendships, expressing freely my opinions and ideas, positive investment of time, interacting with people of different cultures, adopting ideas and opinions that support the customs, traditions, and values of society, acquiring the values of self-education, experiences, and skills to raise the level of knowledge, adopting the values of teamwork and distance from Selfishness and harm to the interests of others. The level of statistical significance for the previous determinants was less than the level of moral significance (0.05), indicating there are statistically significant differences between the average opinions of the study sample due to their different opinions on the positive impact of modern social media.

Table 3: The role of modern means of communication in spreading and strengthening the values of moderation and centrism

#	Variable	Answers Options						Arithmetic Average	SD
		Agree		Agree to some extent		Disagree			
		Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate		
1	Adopting positive ideas that are applicable to reality.	885	66.8	392	29.6	48	3.6	2.63	0.553
2	Seeking to benefit from the cultural diversity of others.	853	64.4	416	31.4	56	4.2	2.60	0.570
3	Enhancing the participation of all segments of society in various issues.	842	63.5	401	30.3	82	6.2	2.57	0.607
4	Acquiring the tolerant values of Islam through influential models and examples.	827	62.4	404	30.5	94	7.1	2.55	0.624
5	Tolerance with others.	796	60.1	441	33.3	88	6.6	2.53	0.618
6	The ability to understand and discuss.	800	60.4	427	32.2	98	7.4	2.53	0.630
7	Apologies if I misunderstood.	797	60.2	430	32.5	98	7.4	2.53	0.630
8	Respecting diversity and difference in light of the culture of my society.	814	61.4	404	30.5	107	8.1	2.53	0.641
9	Reconciling my personal interest with the interest of others.	780	58.9	455	34.3	90	6.8	2.52	0.621
10	Adoption of many positive ideas through scholars of religion and thought.	789	59.5	434	32.8	102	7.7	2.52	0.636
11	Respect my freedom of opinion and that of others.	793	59.8	422	31.8	110	8.3	2.52	0.645
12	Selecting what is consistent with the culture of my society from other cultures.	761	57.4	452	34.1	112	8.5	2.49	0.648
13	Think about what is best for the majority.	739	55.8	482	36.4	104	7.8	2.48	0.638
14	Acceptance of commitment to societal regulations.	744	56.2	453	34.2	128	9.7	2.46	0.665
15	Commitment to the etiquette of conversation and dialogue.	769	58.0	400	30.2	156	11.8	2.46	0.696
16	Adopting the ideas of others in the light of the Islamic law(Shariah) reference.	672	50.7	537	40.6	116	8.8	2.42	0.648
17	I deal with other people's opinions without prejudice.	699	52.8	476	35.9	150	11.3	2.41	0.685
18	Stay away from ideas that are characterized by extremism and fanaticism.	710	53.6	449	33.9	166	12.5	2.41	0.702
19	Moderation in attitudes and behaviors.	628	47.4	575	43.4	122	9.2	2.38	0.648
20	The ability to accept criticism.	633	47.8	560	42.3	132	10.0	2.38	0.659
21	Be careful in judging others.	657	49.6	516	38.9	152	11.5	2.38	0.682
22	Avoiding ethnic and religious conflicts.	702	53.0	386	29.1	237	17.9	2.35	0.765
23	Selection of incoming intellectual currents.	636	48.0	501	37.8	188	14.2	2.34	0.713
24	Compromise for the good of others and society.	552	41.7	550	41.5	223	16.8	2.25	0.724
25	Stay away from ideas that are characterized by moral decay.	544	41.1	520	39.2	261	19.7	2.21	0.750
The average of all phrases								2.54	0.655

From Table 3, among the most important variables related to the value of moderation and centrism are adopting positive ideas that are applicable on the ground with an arithmetic average of 2.63, seeking to benefit from the cultural diversity of others with an arithmetic average of 2.60, enhancing the participation of all groups of society in various issues with an arithmetic average of 2.60, enhancing the participation of all segments of society in various issues with an arithmetic average of 2.57, acquiring the values of tolerant Islam through influential models and examples

with an arithmetic average of 2.55, respect for freedom of opinion and the other opinion, with an arithmetic average of 2.52.

In light of these results, it can be noticed that the realistic understanding of the concept of moderation is not restricted to its meaning, but rather casts its shadows on the social and cultural aspects of daily life at all levels. Among which, Al-Fa'ouri (2008) indicated the belief in civilizational, cultural and social pluralism, in addition to focusing on the value system in our relations with the other, which is based on the unity of human origin and the principle of divine honor for man. AbdulNabi (2014) indicated the role of modern means of communication in promoting a culture of moderation and centrism.

In addition, other variables that would be referred to include dealing with the opinions of others without fanaticism, and staying away from ideas that are characterized by extremism and fanaticism, with an arithmetic average of 2.41 bearing in mind the fact that the campaigns to promote the ideas and values of extremist organizations and groups take the social networks as their stage. Issa (2016) emphasized the importance of separating the concept of moderation from sectarian, intellectual, and philosophical currents, emphasizing that it is a way of life and a behavioral basis and that it is not a recently innovated concept, but rather a solid principle, and one of the logical constants and historical evidence in the human heritage and the heavenly religions.

6 Conclusion

In the context of the reality of dealing with social media and some of the positive and negative dimensions of that reality and the extent of its reflection and impact on the values of moderation and centrism in the system of life in the Saudi society - according to the studied sample - it was generally found that there is a positive impact of social media that enhances the variables related to the values of moderation and centrism, including positive ideas that are applicable on the ground, seeking to benefit from the cultural diversity of others, enhancing the participation of all segments of society in various issues, acquiring the values of tolerance with others, respecting diversity and difference, reconciling personal interest and the interest of others, respecting personal freedom of opinion and that of others, in addition to dealing with the opinions of others without fanaticism and away from ideas that are characterized by extremism and fanaticism. In light of these results, it may be recommended in this context to working on designing practical educational programs for young people on how to deal with social media in order to enhance cognitive values (optimal use of communication means - discussion of ideas and opinions about community development - benefit in the scientific and academic scope - positive investment in leisure time), behavioral ethical values (values of honesty and fairness in dealing with the informational content of the means of communication - positivity and avoiding isolation to escape to the virtual community - belief in the value of dialogue and accepting criticism of the other), the skill values (the skill of effective communication - the skill of organized thinking in dealing with societal issues - the skill of dialogue with others - the skill of solving the problem in light of the various and diverse experiences of others).

7 Availability of Data and Material

Data can be made available by contacting the corresponding author.

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