



## EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON CHILDREN: A STUDY OF PARENTAL PERSPECTIVES

**Dr. Shad Ahmad Khan**

Assistant Professor, College of Business, University of Buraimi, Oman  
khan.shadahmad@gmail.com

**Dr. Soni Sharma**

Associate Professor, Jaipuria School of Business, Ghaziabad, India  
sonisharma0378@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

Social media (SM) has become an important part of modern society. In light of SM a new profession has emerged i.e. Social Media Influencer (SMI). Children have become large consumers of SM these days. With the rise in the use of SM and SMI culture, children are exposed to various SMIs that shape their preferences, behaviors, and aspirations. Understanding how SMI affects children and adolescents is crucial in navigating the complex digital environment and safeguarding the well-being of the younger generation. This study seeks to understand the parental perspective on the impact of SMI on their children's development. This study employs qualitative methods through structured interviews with parents who have their child in the age group of less than 18 years. This study has explored the analyzed parental strategies for mediating and regulating their children's exposure to SMI content. The findings suggest that parents show mixed feelings about the SMIs and SM exposure of their children. The findings emphasize the need for parental vigilance and proactive measures to mitigate the potential negative effects of influencer content on children's well-being and behavior.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Social Media Influencers, Children, Parents, Adolescent, Media and Children

### 1. Introduction:

Social media (SM) has become an integral part of present society, shaping the way people interact, consume information, and perceive the world around them (Swart, 2021, Khan, 2023; Khan et al., 2024). Social Media Influencers (SMI) are individuals with sizable followings, they have the power to shape opinions, preferences, and behaviors (Hudders et al., 2021; Kay et al., 2020). In the contemporary world, it has emerged as a new profession referred to by various names such as digital creators, content creators, digital/online influencers, etc. Several SM platforms, including YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, have coined the concept of influencer marketing (Arora et al., 2019). These SMIs carry significant influence, particularly among younger demographics.

Children have become large consumers of SM these days. It happened primarily after the Pandemic attack when they were largely dependent on online education and classes. Due to their longer span on the internet, they

are inclined to watch other platforms. During the COVID-19 Children were pressurized to learn and play because of house confinement, social alienation, school closures, and restricted access to outdoor activities (López-Bueno et al., 2021; Bocar et al., 2022; Magd & Khan, 2022; Khan & Magd, 2021). Many children began playing online games during the lockdown and quarantine measures, leading to a 19% increase in European mobile game downloads in March 2020. The rise of new-age gaming, with advancements such as virtual reality and immersive multiplayer experiences, has made it popular among children. According to previous surveys, 80% of children aged 0-7 (Neumann and Herodotou 2020), 73% aged 8-11, and 87% aged 12-15 watch videos on YouTube (Ofcom 2019).

In the current scenario, most children prefer watching content on YouTube over traditional TV programs (Ofcom 2019). Consequently, children-centric content on YouTube has been surmounting and is growing in popularity.

Kids-oriented YouTube channels feature cartoons, kid-friendly characters, nursery rhymes, kid influencers, and more. The concept of kid influencers, specifically, on the channels that feature young children—sometimes even younger than five years old—as leaders or "stars."

Understanding how SMI affects children and adolescents is crucial in navigating the complex digital environment and safeguarding the well-being of the younger generation (Rasmussen et al., 2022). While the influence of SMI is undeniable, its impact on children has garnered increasing attention from researchers, policymakers, and parents alike (Yeager et al., 2014; Boerman & Van Reijmersdal, 2020). SMI can communicate with, observe, and impact the attitudes and actions of their followers while creating a community (Enke & Borchers, 2021). The idea of the "creator economy," refers to the idea of an SM-facilitated economy carried out through content creators and SMI on SM platforms (Weerasinghe & Wijethunga, 2022). In this process, content creators receive payment directly from their audience and their interaction with the content (Lee et al., 2019). The rise of SMI has significantly transformed the way we advertise, brand, and create content (Vidani & Das, 2021). These individuals can be celebrities or everyday people with specific interests, but they all amass followers who actively engage with their content (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). For children and adolescents, SMI often serves as role models, influencing their aspirations, attitudes, and consumption patterns (Chung et al., 2021). As a result, studying the impact of SM influences on children has become a pressing concern with far-reaching implications (Yeager et al., 2014; Boerman & Van Reijmersdal, 2020; Rasmussen et al., 2022).

### 1.1. Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are to comprehend how parents perceive the impact SMI on their children's attitudes, values, and behaviors, to pinpoint the main concerns and challenges faced by parents regarding their children's exposure to SMI, and to explore the strategies that parents employ to regulate and monitor their children's interactions with influencer content on social media platforms. The objective of this study is to examine this impact through these three objectives:

- To explore parental perceptions of the influence of SMI on their children's attitudes, values, and behaviors.
- To identify the primary concerns and challenges faced by parents regarding their children's exposure to SMI.
- To investigate the strategies employed by parents to regulate and monitor their children's interactions with influencer content on SM platforms.

### 1.2. Need & Significance for the Study

The impact of SM on children is a complex issue with significant implications for child development, consumer behavior, and mental health. Most marketers are of the view that although a child is a consumer the role of the customer is played by parents (Calvert, 2008). The decisions on behalf of the children are made by their parents. Thus, parental perspectives play an important role. Research that explores parental perspectives on this matter can offer valuable insights into the challenges and concerns facing families in the digital age. It is essential to understand the influence of SMIs and the internet on children to develop evidence-based interventions and policies that promote healthy digital habits and protect the well-being of the younger generation.

This study is important for understanding the changing role of SM in shaping children's individualities, aspirations, and behaviors, along with the challenges and opportunities in the digital age that require parental mediation in child development. As SM continues to evolve, studies like these will remain relevant in shaping the future of online communication and media consumption. This study's outcome can help inform policymakers, educators, and families about the significance of responsible media consumption. This study may facilitate healthy digital literacy skills among children.

## 2. Literature Review

Around the world, more and more children prefer to spend their leisure time on screens and viewing videos (Thomas et al., 2021). SM in the contemporary world has evolved as an integral aspect of modern communication, profoundly shaping how individuals connect, share information, and interact globally, transcending geographical boundaries, and fostering unprecedented levels of connectivity and engagement (Sharma et al., 2023a; 2023b;

Saleem et al., 2023, Khan et al., 2023). For young children, the most popular SM platforms are those that allow them to share content, like YouTube and TikTok (Yeung et al., 2022; Basch et al., 2022). Child influencers are the primary creators of material for this channel on all these platforms, nonetheless, they are frequently run and produced by their parents (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2020). It is accurate to say that these kids are "stars" in their networks (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2020). Popular young influencers can be found on a variety of SM sites, including YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and others (Basch et al., 2022; Yeung et al., 2022). This research focuses on SM consumers who are under the age of 18 and reside in metropolitan & urban areas. The reasons of the selection of metropolitan and urban areas for were that it offered the the opportunity to explore a wide range of social, economic, environmental, and policy-related issues that are characteristic of densely populated urban environments. The urban population uses SM more in comparison to the rural population. As per the research of Neumann and Herodotou (2020), child influencers or child YouTubers are young children with a strong following who are regarded as likable by their audience (Boerman & Van Reijmersdal, 2020).

According to Djafarova & Rushworth (2017) and Sokolova & Kefi (2020), SMI are also seen as reliable information providers and enthusiastic supporters of goods and services. Influencer marketing is developing more quickly, enabling thousands of home-based creative ideas to pursue independence. The kid community on YouTube contains everything from entertaining culinary videos to trendy DIY ideas (Pires et al., 2021). With a little assistance from their parents, they may produce tales that are quite captivating! Kid influencers are using their incredibly relatable and entertaining videos to position themselves as role models for kids all over the world (Van den Abeele et al., 2024). Children are becoming more and more enamored with SMI, and these "microcelebrities" are regarded as the new voice for opinion on SM platforms (Marwick, 2015; Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014).

### **2.1. Shaping Identity and Self-Image:**

SMI often presents a highly curated image (often, referred to as an artificial image) of themselves, projecting an idealized version of

beauty, success, and lifestyle that can influence how young people view themselves and their self-worth (Panjraht & Tiwari, 2021). At one place these is instill the audience with the feeling of inspiration and motivation, however, on the flip side, the exposure to these idealized images can lead to body image issues, low self-esteem, and even eating disorders among impressionable children and adolescents (Leonard, 2021). Researchers can gain valuable insights into how children internalize these influencer-driven narratives and how they affect their self-image by examining the perspectives of parents (Van den Abeele et al., 2024).

### **2.2. Influence on Consumer Behavior:**

SMI often works with brands to promote products and services to their followers. Marketers refer this concept as influencer marketing (Ki et al., 2020). As these SMIs have developed a good rapport with their followers, these marketers take the benefit of the same and utilize these SMIs for promoting their products among consumers. Thus, this strategy relies on the trust and credibility that SMI has established with its audience to encourage purchasing decisions (AlFarraj et al., 2021). It is important to note that children are particularly susceptible to the influence of products endorsed by their favorite SMI (Rasmussen et al., 2022). These children often do not realize the impact of such behavior on them as consumers. Therefore, understanding parental attitudes toward influencer marketing can provide insights into the extent to which children are affected by sponsored content, as well as its implications for their consumption habits and financial literacy (Van Reijmersdal et al., 2020; Coates et al., 2020).

### **2.3. Impact on Mental Health and Well-being:**

As per Schmuck (2021), the dominance of SMI in children's online environments has a significant impact on their mental health and well-being. Young viewers may experience emotions of anxiety, despair, and inadequacy as a result of being constantly exposed to meticulously manicured lifestyles and unachievable ideals of beauty (Kassai, 2020; Leonard, 2021). Investigating parental concerns regarding the impact of SM influences on children's mental health can help to develop strategies to promote digital resilience and encourage healthy online

behaviors (Hartas, 2021). Moreover, the pressure to emulate influencer lifestyles and receive validation through likes and comments can worsen issues of social comparison and online harassment (Hamdan, 2023).

#### **2.4. Role of Parental Guidance and Regulation:**

Parents play a crucial role in regulating their children's interactions with SMI as primary caregivers (Schmuck, 2021). However, navigating the digital landscape can be challenging for parents who may not fully understand the dynamics of influencer culture, or the risks associated with excessive screen time (Van den Abeele et al., 2024). By understanding the perspectives of parents on SM use, influencer engagement, and strategies for managing children's online experiences, we can develop educational initiatives, parental guidance resources, and policy interventions that promote responsible digital citizenship (Hartas, 2021).

#### **2.5. Impact of Children's Influencers on Children**

Children SMI on YouTube produce a wide range of content, including pranks, unpacking (opening boxes of products/toys) videos, video game plays, product reviews, and films of their everyday lives. User-generated content (UGC) has been king of the Internet since SM took control. Since UGC is trusted by consumers of the time over marketing content, millions of people produce and consume UGC daily (Cheong & Morrison, 2008; Al-Abdallah & Jumaa, 2022). User-generated content has the power to inform, amuse, and close prospects. When carefully included in marketing plans, UGC gives brands a genuine, approachable, and trustworthy means of showcasing customer viewpoints, which makes it a useful tool for advertising (Cheong & Morrison, 2008). Influencer marketing is becoming a more popular tool used by companies to promote their goods and services, which causes the lines separating non-advertising and advertising content to become less distinct (Leaver, 2022).

#### **2.6. Children as the source of brand interaction**

Children's interactions with their peers over time through SM entail buying or consuming goods. These kinds of encounters can impart

consumer skills to kids. Children engage in these kinds of interactions regularly and are also exposed to marketing-related materials like brand messaging (Katharine Jones, Mark Glynn, (2019).

Children are the future generation of customers, and they have a lot of opportunities to engage with companies in the online marketplace because they have easy access to the internet. Because kids utilize SM, these interactions involve their being exposed to brand advertisements on these platforms. Brands tactfully plan to impact parents through these interactions with children on SM. According to Statista report (2024), the Children's Apparel market in India generated a revenue of US\$23.37bn. It is projected to have an annual growth rate of 3.20%.

The "Kids Digital Advertising Market" predicted that this trend would continue, increasing by 21.8% between 2022 and 2031 and surpassing a valuation of 21.1 billion dollars by the end of that year (Transparency Market Research, 2022). This study also shows how the purchase behavior of children is impacted by SMI. Most of the parents agreed that their children demanded the products that they experienced during brand interactions through SMI (Febrian et al., 2022; Ho et al., 2020; Jiow et al., 2017).

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1. Theoretical Framework**

This study utilizes three theories in building its theoretical framework in addition to the research gaps explored in the literature review. These theories and their relation in the context of this study is mentioned below:

##### **3.1.1. Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)**

SCT was proposed by Bandura (2001) and emphasizes the role of observational learning and modeling in shaping individuals' behavior, attitudes, and cognitive processes. From a parental perspective, this theory suggests that children are likely to observe and model the behaviors, attitudes, and lifestyles portrayed by SMI they follow on SM platforms (Krcmar, 2019; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

The impact of observational learning is influenced by factors such as attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Lim

et al., 2020). These SMI can serve as important models, particularly for children who perceive them as attractive, relatable, or aspirational figures. SCT highlights the potential influence of SMI on children's behaviors, attitudes, decision-making processes, self-esteem, body image, and consumption patterns, which may raise concerns about the types of behaviors and values being modeled by influencers (Chung et al., 2021). Furthermore, as the respondents of the study are parents, this SCT can help to understand the ways parents' own SM use and engagement with SMI shape their attitudes and mediation practices regarding their children's exposure to influencers. This means that the perception is related to the influence of SMI. Thus, the first theme identified for the thematic analysis is the 'perception of influence'.

### **3.1.2. Family System Theory (FST)**

FST developed by Bowen (1978), suggests that families are interdependent systems, where each member affects and is affected by the others (Malik, 2020). For this study, FST offers insights into the way family dynamics and parental mediation practices around SMI impact child development and well-being (Procentese et al., 2019; Dworkin et al., 2018). Parents' perceptions and concerns about their children's exposure to SMI may germinate from a broader understanding of how such exposure could disrupt family norms, values, and interactions (Dworkin et al., 2018). FST highlights that the influence applied by these SMI extends beyond the individual child and can affect the entire family dynamics, relationships, and communication patterns (Malik, 2020). Further, the family value system such as communication styles, conflict resolution strategies, and parenting approaches, may shape how parents respond to and mediate their children's engagement with SMI. The impact of SMI on children may extend beyond the individual child and affect family values, relationships, and communication patterns. FST significantly backs the theme of challenges and concerns.

### **3.1.3. Parental Mediation Theory (PMT)**

PMT was proposed by Nathanson (1999) and focuses on the strategies parents use to manage and regulate their children's media consumption. Co-viewing, restrictive mediation, and active mediation are some of these tactics. PMT looks at how parents

moderate and control the media that their kids consume (Collier et al., 2016). This idea becomes extremely relevant when considering how parents view how SM influencers affect their children (Jiow et al., 2017; Ho et al., 2020). Different mediation techniques can be used by parents, including co-viewing (interacting with the content alongside their children), restrictive mediation (establishing restrictions and limits on exposure), and active mediation (talking about the content and its implications with their children). These mediation strategies chosen by parents are influenced by their perceptions related to the potential risks and benefits associated with their children's engagement with SMI (Bloemen & De Coninck, 2020; Ho et al., 2020).

In the context of this study, PMT deals mainly with regulation and monitoring strategies (Steinfeld, 2021; Dedkova & Smahel, 2020). As per PMT, the mediation approach helps to mitigate potential negative impacts, foster critical thinking, and promote responsible consumption of SMI content. PMT provides a framework to understand how parents' concerns, values, and beliefs shape their efforts to guide and regulate their children's interactions with SM influencers.

## **3.2. Identification of Themes for the thematic analysis**

Based on the theoretical framework and the objectives of the study, five themes i.e., Perception of Influence (adopted from SCT); Concerns and Challenges (adopted from FST); Regulation and Monitoring Strategies (adopted from PMT); Navigating Discussions (adopted from PMT); Perceived Benefits and Drawbacks (adopted from SCT; FST; and PMT). Based on these five themes, the interview questions were drafted and administered for the data collection. Questions under these themes were designed to achieve the overall objective of the study. These Questions are given in Appendix-I.

## **3.3. Data Collection Procedure**

The data collection for this research involved conducting structured interviews with parents especially mothers who worked as educators, software engineers, and journalists. These interviews took place in various dance schools, primary schools, and urban areas. The purpose of selecting mothers was their natural engagement with children in their activity

classes or pre-education. The interviews were conducted one-on-one with participants in their natural settings to understand their intentions, behaviors, interactions, and contexts related to the research topic.

This study aimed to study the impact of SMI on children, from the parent’s perspective, using a qualitative research design. Forty-five parents of children exposed to SM participated in the study. Data was collected through open-ended questionnaires and structured interviews, with an attempt to have a representative sample from different age groups, educational qualifications, and areas of residence. The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

The qualitative data in the form of parent’s responses was analyzed employing thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes using NVIVO (qualitative data analysis software). Ethical considerations were considered, with informed consent obtained from participants, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. While acknowledging potential limitations such as sample size and generalizability inherent in qualitative research, this methodology aimed to provide valuable insights into how parents view the influence of SMI on their children, contributing to the existing body of knowledge on this topic.

**Table 1: Respondents Profile**

Age Group	30-35	8
	35-40	11
	40 and above	26
Area of Residence	Rural	1
	Semi-Urban	14
	Urban	30
Educational Qualification of Parent		
	12th	3
	Graduate	17
	Post-Graduate	13
	PhD	12
Number of Children	1.0	19
	2.0	25
	3.0	1

**N= 45**

#### 4. Analysis and Findings

As a part of qualitative research, thematic analysis is performed addressing the five themes mentioned in the methodology section, each theme has been provided with a commentary by the authors on the feedback from respondents, word cloud, and word tree table analysis.

##### 4.1. Perception of Influence (PI)

The prominent keywords identified under this theme are children, cause, impact, influencers, personality, and media (as presented in Figure 1). The responses reflect a diverse range of perspectives on the influence of SMI on children's attitudes, behaviors, and values. While some respondents believe that SMI primarily focuses on garnering followers and likes without contributing positively to moral and ethical values, others highlight the potential for SMI to shape children's perceptions and behaviors, both positively and negatively. Many note the tendency for children, particularly adolescents, to emulate SMI’s behavior, language, and lifestyles, sometimes leading to concerns about unrealistic expectations, decreased self-esteem, and exposure to inappropriate content. It is noteworthy to mention that SMIs have been playing a significant role in introducing cultural diversity and modern lifestyles to children. Some parents are actively Some parents contend that SMI has a major influence on how children perceive the world and make decisions, others stress the value of parental supervision and education in reducing any potential harmful effects. Many parents believe that SMIs can set an example of behavior, mold ideas of success and beauty, and affect children's purchasing decisions.



Figure 1. Word Cloud for Perception of Influence



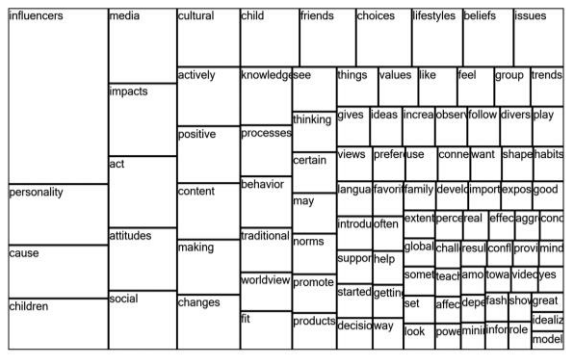


Figure 2. Tree Map for Perception of Influence

#### 4.2. Concerns and Challenges (CC)

The top keywords identified under this theme are content, cause, influencers, related, may, and act (as presented in Figure 3). The responses reveal many CC parents face regarding their children's exposure to SMI. These include worries about the influence of SMI on shaping children's perceptions, behaviors, and values, especially in terms of consumerism, body image, and cultural identity. Parents express concerns about distinguishing between authentic content and advertisements, safeguarding their children's online safety, and managing their time spent on SM. Additionally, there are apprehensions about the influence of SMI on children's language, behavior, and academic performance, as well as the potential for exposure to inappropriate content. Balancing modern perspectives with cultural values emerges as a recurring challenge, as parents seek to guide their children through influencer-driven trends while preserving traditional teachings and customs.

The responses regarding concerns about the content children consume from SMI reveal that the parents are worried on multiple fronts. Primarily, the potential exposure to inappropriate or harmful material such as explicit language, sexualized imagery, or misinformation. Concerns related to SMI promoting unrealistic beauty standards, materialism, and consumerism, might negatively impact their children's self-esteem, values, and spending habits. Parents also showed concerns related to the impact on academic performance and family values. Parents expressed the need to monitor and guide children about the content they are consuming on the SM. Ensuring that the SM content aligns with family values and

promotes positive development was also emphasized in the interaction. The worries mainly revolved around children's language, behavior, and academic performance, as well as the potential for exposure to inappropriate content. Many explicit content creators use SM platforms that provide links to their explicit content. Overall, achieving a balance between modern perspectives and cultural values emerges as a recurring challenge, as parents try to guide their children through influencer-driven trends while preserving traditional teachings and customs.

Parents have concerns about the content their children consume from SMI. They worry about exposure to inappropriate or harmful material, unrealistic beauty standards, materialism, and consumerism promoted by SMI, which could negatively impact their children. Additionally, parents are concerned about the impact of SMI on their children's academic performance, family dynamics, and cultural values. They demonstrated the need to monitor and guide their children's interactions with SMI content to promote positive development.



Figure 3. Word Cloud for Concerns and Challenges

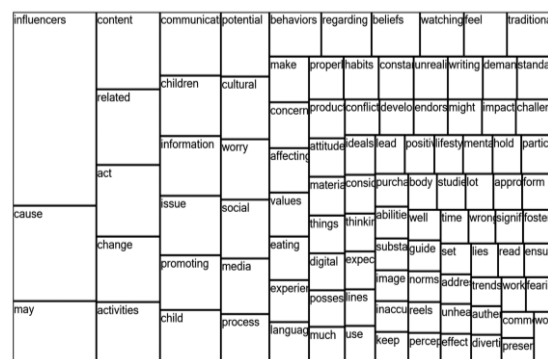


Figure 4. Tree Map for Concerns and Challenges

### 4.3. Regulation and Monitoring Strategies (RMS):

Major keywords identified are child, cultural, media, influencers, personal, and change (as seen in Figure 5). Parents use various strategies to regulate and monitor their children's interactions with SMI content. Strategies such as open communication, setting clear boundaries, using parental controls, discussing critical thinking and media literacy, and actively involving themselves in their child's online activities are included in this. Parents need to ensure that the SM content consumed by their children aligns with family values, this can be achieved by monitoring responsible social media use and gaining the trust of children through open discussion with children. Measures like implementing time limits, changing passwords, monitoring SM activity, and co-viewing SMI content to maintain a safe and good online environment, are adopted by the parents. The parents were also found to understand the importance of quality over quantity when it comes to the SMI their children follow, often restricting access to those who promote content inconsistent with their cultural norms. The respondents demonstrated a diverse range of approaches and strategies employed by parents to regulate and guide their children's engagement with SMI.



Figure 5. Word Cloud for Regulation and Monitoring Strategies

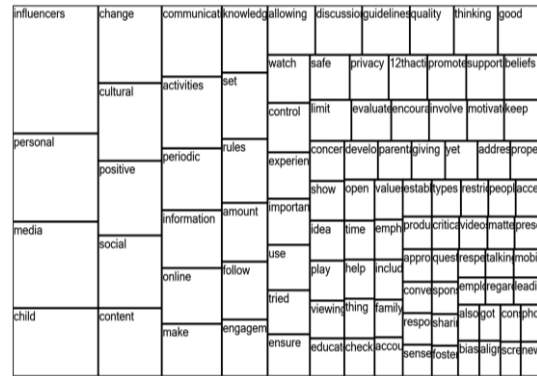


Figure 6. Tree Map for Regulation and Monitoring Strategies

### 4.4. Navigating Discussions (ND):

The prominent keywords identified under this theme are Relatable, content, influencer, discuss, events, and knowledge (as presented in Figure 7). Parents indicate a variety of approaches taken by them when discussing the authenticity and commercial aspects of influencer content with their children. Many parents highlighted transparency, honesty, and fostering open dialogue. Parents commonly explain the concept of influencer marketing, highlighting the difference between genuine content and sponsored or paid material. Some parents use real-life examples, cultural relevance, and societal impact to contextualize these discussions. Parents encourage critical thinking, empowering their children to evaluate the credibility of SMI and their content.

Additionally, many emphasized the importance of discernment and the need to question the motives behind endorsements. It is found that a collective effort among parents to educate their children about navigating influencer content responsibly while promoting critical thinking and awareness of commercial influences. Also, an intensive effort by parents to empower their children with the skills necessary to use digital platforms and SM with confidence and discernment was identified.

The responses provided complete insight into various strategies and experiences parents employ to help their children critically evaluate influencer content. ND involves a few common approaches that include open discussions while consuming SM content, encouraging children to question the authenticity and motivations behind



influencer recommendations, and providing real-life examples and stories to illustrate key concepts.

The importance of cross-verifying information from multiple sources, identifying sponsored content, and teaching children to recognize subtle cues indicating promotional aspects can also be achieved through ND. Further, providing children with exposure to diverse perspectives and orienting them to appreciate authentic cultural representation while fostering a discerning mindset. For ND, the parents also were found to be making use of current events and controversies related to SMI to initiate discussion about critical evaluation and the consequences of compromising authenticity.

values. Many parents feel SMI is a source of inspiration and motivation, nurturing creativity and self-expression while fostering a sense of community and connection. Improved language skills, increased awareness of social issues, and the development of digital literacy and self-confidence are notable advantages. Moreover, SMI often promotes positive values, such as environmental consciousness, wellness practices, and empathy, further enriching children's growth and development. However, they also showed concerns over the promotion of unrealistic beauty standards, excessive screen time, and potential risks to mental and physical health. Parents highlighted the importance of vigilance, parental guidance, and promoting critical thinking skills to use the digital platform, especially SM safely. There's a consistent theme of excessive screen time leading to a lack of focus on studies, diversion from real-life interactions, and potential risks to mental and physical health. In addition to this, the parents demonstrated worry about the privacy issues of their children along with the issues related to peer pressure, and the influence of misinformation or cultural stereotypes propagated by SMI.

Figure 7. Word Cloud for Navigating Discussions

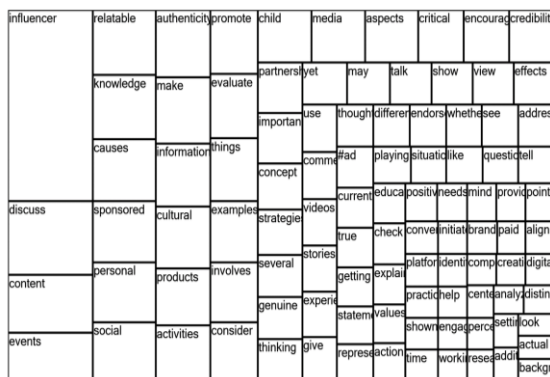


Figure 8. Tree Map for Navigating Discussions

#### 4.5. Perceived Benefits and Drawbacks (PBD):

The keywords identified under this theme are act, issues, cause, influencers, individual, and media (as presented in Figure 9). On account of benefits that children may get include educational enrichment, inspiration, improved language skills, and the promotion of positive

The parents do understand potential risks, the consensus underscores the potential for SMI to positively impact children's lives through a balanced and mindful engagement with their content. Despite recognizing the potential for exposure to diverse perspectives, many respondents express significant reservations about the overall impact on their child's well-being, emphasizing the importance of vigilance, parental guidance, and promoting critical thinking skills to navigate the digital landscape safely.



Figure 9. Word Cloud for Perceived Benefits and Drawbacks

influencers	media	cultural	positive	friends	thinking	events	possess	education	potential
		content	experienc	learning	diverse	study	involve	possibil	perspect
	issues			bad	differe	things	decreas	see	feel
		community	social	effects	part	set	includes	creativ	connect
individual	activities			practic	expos	fest	mean	time	cook
		benefits	may	power					conce
cause	knowledge	information	skills	ideas	12th	currer	motiv	outsid	offer
				addition	12th	negat	magi	relati	projec
act	group	drawbacks	following	children	inspira	sever	tradit	deal	share
									use
									man
									more

#### 4.6. Word Summary Analysis

To have more clarity on the study through the data collected, a word summary analysis was performed on the overall responses collected in this study. Word summary analysis as presented in Table 2 is presented. This analysis gives an overview of keywords and associated similar words (as suggested by the NVivo). This helps to develop better insights into the responses gathered. Total number of words identified were 839, out of which the top 15 words are presented in table 2 based on their weightage percentage.

Figure 10. Tree Map for Perceived Benefits and Drawbacks

Table 2. Word Summary Analysis

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words
influencers	11	469	5.59	bias, effect, exposure, fix, form, impact, influence, influenced, influencer, influencers, influencers', influences, influencing, issue, manipulation, overexposure, power, pressure, purchase, regulate, regulating, result, shape, shaped, shaping, time, use, work, working
media	5	93	1.70	media
child	5	222	1.47	child, issue, kids, son, young
issues	6	366	1.45	check, child, content, free, issue, issues, matter, number, numbers, provision, return, son, subjects, taking, topics
related	7	262	1.38	alignment, balance, child, conflict, connect, family, grandparent, hold, issue, list, narrate, place, point, quality, relatable, related, substance, tell, tutor, word
periodic	8	174	1.27	age, daily, day, end, even, hours, instant, issue, life, maturity, may, number, periodic, point, points, review, school, shift, span, stop, time, times, value, watch, week, weekly, years
social	6	190	1.24	change, cultural, educate, fix, fostering, friendly, nature, openness, set, social, socialization, societal, upbringing
cultural	8	289	1.18	content, cultural, culture, cultures, discernment, social
act	3	618	0.99	abuse, accept, act, action, activity, address, adoption, affairs, aggression, allow, appearance, approach, art, ask, associate, attention, balancing, battle, begin, behavior, behaviour, build, business, career, change, channel, channels, check, choice, class, commitment, communication, compromise, concentration, conflict, confusion, connect, consent, contribution, control, craft, create, creation, dance, decision, delivery, demand, development, diversion, education, effect, effort, emphasizing,

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words
				engage, engagement, enjoyment, entertainment, evaluation, exchange, exploit, exploitation, exposure, express, expression, face, fashion, fit, fix, flip, gaming, get, getting, give, giving, going, group, guidance, help, hold, impact, imparting, influence, isolation, issue, keep, kindness, laughter, lead, leading, let, line, looking, loss, make, making, management, manipulation, means, mention, model, modeling, motivation, number, numbers, observation, offensive, offer, order, part, participate, patronize, pattern, pause, payment, perception, perform, perseverance, place, play, playing, pose, post, practice, presence, presentation, pressure, process, procrastinate, project, provision, purchase, pursue, race, raise, reading, record, regulating, reinforcement, representation, responsibility, return, risk, rivalry, role, romanticize, routine, schooling, search, see, seek, serve, service, set, share, sharing, shift, shot, shy, simulate, socialization, speak, spreading, start, stay, steering, step, stop, striking, switch, table, taking, talk, teaching, thing, trick, try, usage, use, validation, violence, visit, voice, waste, way, work, working, writing, wrong
activities	10	389	0.95	abuse, act, action, actively, activities, activity, aggression, aim, alignment, approval, art, attention, battle, behavior, behaviour, building, business, career, center, change, character, check, class, commercialization, contribution, control, copying, craft, creation, dance, demand, development, diversion, driving, education, effort, end, engagement, enjoyment, entertainment, exploitation, fashion, feedback, first, fit, foul, gaming, going, guidance, habit, hearing, help, hold, initiate, involved, issue, laughter, lead, leading, life, line, listening, live, look, looking, model, modeling, observation, offensive, offer, open, order, part, participate, participating, pattern, perception, perseverance, place, play, playing, post, practice, presentation, process, progressive, project, provision, quick, race, reading, regulating, reinforcement, representation, research, review, role, routine, schooling, search, service, services, set, share, shot, show, source, start, steering, teaching, technology, trick, try, usage, use, using, voice, waste, work, writing, wrong
knowledge	9	538	0.94	ability, aim, appearance, art, attention, background, believing, block, blur, case, center, check, concept, content, craft, creativity, culture, deterrent, discernment, education, end, esteem, example, experience, form, habit, history, idea, image, imagination, influence, information,

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words
				informed, initial, initiate, initiating, inspiration, instance, issue, know, knowing, knowledge, language, lead, learning, level, life, literacy, living, matter, mind, mindset, model, observation, open, opinion, particular, pattern, perception, perspective, place, point, power, practice, problem, process, purpose, reading, reality, reinforcement, representation, science, search, sense, set, shape, scepticism, skill, specific, study, substance, superstition, system, thinking, tolerance, track, trust, truth, understanding, values, view, world
positive	8	267	0.93	activity, address, aim, align, aligned, aligning, alignment, aligns, amount, attention, attitudes, balance, business, celebrity, centre, certain, concentration, confidence, confident, develop, dress, emphasis, end, esteem, first, fix, formal, ground, hold, importance, insist, landscape, lay, lead, level, line, list, openness, opinion, order, part, perspective, perspectives, place, placements, play, point, pose, poses, positive, positively, post, posts, presentation, priority, provision, put, putting, quality, range, reputation, role, set, setting, settings, side, sight, sit, situations, step, sure, true, view, viewing, views
children	8	50	0.92	children
content	7	491	0.91	abuse, account, aim, appearance, approval, blur, body, business, center, commitment, communication, competitive, concept, confidence, conflict, consent, content, contents, controversies, copy, culture, difference, education, effect, end, etiquette, example, experience, expression, eyes, fantasy, feedback, fit, fulfilment, fulfilment, ground, guidance, guide, happiness, hope, idea, image, information, inspiration, issue, knowledge, latest, law, lead, learning, life, list, living, major, material, matter, messages, mind, misinformation, model, moral, mother, news, okay, opinion, order, part, particular, password, pattern, perception, picture, point, presence, pride, project, purpose, quantity, reading, reality, record, reinforcement, report, representation, result, rivalry, schedule, science, sense, shape, significance, skepticism, source, study, subjects, substance, superstition, teaching, technology, thing, trust, truth, value, values, view, word, world
change	6	474	0.90	access, action, addition, address, affect, age, align, appreciate, approach, become, better, blend, block, blur, broaden, broadening, build, career, change, changed, changes, changing, check, chip, clear, clothing, come, complete, concentration, conform, confuse, confusion, connection, cooking,

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words
				cool, creation, culture, delivery, detract, develop, development, deviation, difference, differentiate, diversify, dress, driving, eat, effect, elaborate, encounter, end, enhance, even, exchange, expand, experience, firm, fit, fix, flip, focus, following, form, foul, gain, get, glamorization, glamorize, glorify, going, gratification, habit, harm, help, hurt, impact, impair, implement, incorporate, increase, inspiration, instill, involve, issue, key, know, let, level, limit, line, live, loss, lower, make, mature, mitigate, mix, mobile, number, people, perfect, play, point, pollute, process, produce, propagate, provide, raise, receive, regulate, restrict, result, return, romanticize, service, set, shape, shift, shot, span, start, stay, step, stop, switch, teach, tender, thing, think, time, top, total, tracking, true, try, upset, utilize, visit, walking, waste, work

## 5. Discussion

According to Dolan et al. (2016), SM is quickly taking the lead as a channel for consumer-brand interactions. In general, people are encouraged to utilize SM actively and are seen favorably by businesses. To boost sales and brand preference, many brands urge their customers to interact with them online (Pagani et al., 2011). However, nothing is as prevalent about how parenting is impacted by SM use. We show that when parents use SM actively, it has a cascading effect and may increase the amount of mediation that occurs between their child and SMI. Through this research, we discuss how society impacts almost every child. SM also dominates the power of their thought process and decision-making ability (Chung et al., 2021). The SCT (Krcmar, 2019; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020) was found to be appropriate in this regards. The SM comes with positive as well as negative impacts, and this fact was well accepted by their parents who participated in this research.

The parents reported improvements in children's learning experience, public speaking skill, and socialization skills. Also, Few parents reported improvements in the children's learning ability and public speaking skills. Many children learn to become social and make friends through SM. This learning through the contents of DIY activities, arts & crafts, and music through SM, can be instilling great skills among children.

Many parents accepted the fact too that their children are used as consumers by SMI. Children are more inclined to buy the products that are used or endorsed by their favorite SMI aligning with the study of Rasmussen et al. (2022). Their preference also converted into rigidity if parents didn't buy it. Such cases were reported through our research. Hence, we can analyze the power of engagement by SMI. The power of SM is like an iceberg. It creates a deep impact. Almost all parents accepted the wider impact of SM on their children. This research also presented its effect as it is creating a value system in children that is inspired by SMI. This research exhibited the wide impact and concern of parents about their children. Many children were found losing sleep, weakening eyesight, and showing aggression in nature. Few parents stated in research about the absence of any regulatory body regarding sexual and violent content on SM. This research shows parents' concern regarding obscenity and violence and its adverse impact on children. On the contrary, the research also discussed the advantages parents felt due to the usage of SM. They found that their children improved their skills. Parents also sense the complexity and confusion between cultural norms and their representation by influencers which is impacting the family value system.

Parents seem to be stuck in judging the influence of SMI. They did not hesitate to accept the learning, update of knowledge, and

skill enhancement that was adopted by their children but it was somehow overshadowed. Several influencers create videos on classroom problems which certainly help students off school. Few SMI can create awareness through their channel and videos on the environment but predominantly such numbers of SMI's videos, reels, or shorts are less in number. The intensity of the negative influence of SMI could fade if educational and healthy content by SMI surges.

Essentially, we discover that parents who actively utilize SM have a greater understanding of SM marketing strategies, which raises their self-efficacy. They also have the ability and control beliefs to balance the influence of SMI on their children. In particular, parents reported in this research that they are also instrumental in making their children passive or active users of SMI as the device was mostly owned by them.

### **Conclusions**

The objectives of the study were achieved, concerning the parental perceptions of the influence of SMI on their children's attitudes, values, and behaviors; the finding suggests, a complex interplay between SMI and children's attitudes, with varying degrees of impact depending on individual values, family dynamics, and cultural contexts. Also, the findings suggest a complex interplay between influencer content, parental guidance, and societal norms in shaping children's beliefs and behaviors. On the front of the primary concerns and challenges faced by parents regarding their children's exposure to SMI, Parents face numerous challenges and concerns regarding their children's exposure to SMI. Children's values, behaviours, and perceptions, particularly in areas such as consumerism, body image, and cultural identity emerged as a major challenge to the impact of SMI. Distinguishing between real and fake content is also found to be a point of worry among parents. The exposure to inappropriate and explicit material was also found to be a point of concern. Parents also worry about SM promoting unrealistic beauty standards, materialism, and consumerism, which could negatively impact their children's self-esteem and values. On the front of RMS for their children's interactions with social media influencers, parents use various

strategies including setting limits, promoting media literacy, encouraging positive online behavior, monitoring activities, and ensuring that the content aligns with family values.

### **Recommendations**

This study makes an emphasis on the significance of parental involvement and communication in encouraging responsible online behavior and protecting children's well-being. Parents must educate children about accessing SMI content responsibly and promote critical thinking. Empowering children with skills to interact with digital platforms confidently is also found to be important. Similar recommendations are made to the educational setups like schools and colleges to conduct sessions on responsible consumption of SM and Media in general. SMIs can have a positive influence on children by exposing them to diverse perspectives, inspiring creativity, and promoting positive values. Children must be given orientations about unrealistic beauty standards, excessive screen time, and potential exposure to harmful behaviors. Further, the findings emphasize the need for parental vigilance and proactive measures to mitigate the potential negative effects of influencer content on children's well-being and behavior.

### **Research Implications**

This study has implications for the government, and policy makers, who in turn make policies that govern the fair and ethical use of the SM platform to reduce the negative impact on the children in particular and youth in general. This study also has implications for the parents, future parents, and all the beings who are exposed to SM and can become victims of the negative aspects of SMIs.

### **Future Directions**

As this study is purely based on the qualitative aspect, future researchers can attempt to bring the quantitative touch to this study by forming a model of study. As per the research findings, it would be great to utilize the mixed method. Further, qualitative studies can also be conducted on children using the focused group interview method to explore the children's perspectives on this subject matter.



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## APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE

Your Age (Age of the parent): \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Children: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Area: Rural/ Urban/ Semi Urban

Educational Qualification (Parent Qualification): \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. Perception of Influence (PI)

- 1.1. Can you describe how you perceive social media influencers impacting your child's attitudes, values, and behaviors?
- 1.2. How do you believe social media influencers shape your child's worldview and decision-making processes?

### 2. Concerns and Challenges (CC)

- 2.1. What are the main concerns or challenges you face regarding your child's exposure to social media influencers?
- 2.2. Can you elaborate on any specific worries you have about the content your child consumes from social media influencers?

### 3. Regulation and Monitoring Strategies (RMS):

- 3.1. What strategies do you employ to regulate and monitor your child's interactions with influencer content on social media platforms?
- 3.2. Are there any particular rules or guidelines you've established regarding your child's engagement with social media influencers?

### 4. Navigating Discussions (ND):

- 4.1. How do you approach discussions with your child about the authenticity and commercial aspects of influencer content?
- 4.2. Can you share any experiences or strategies you use to help your child critically evaluate influencer content?

### 5. Perceived Benefits and Drawbacks (PBD):

- 5.1. From your perspective, what are the benefits your child gains from following social media influencers?
- 5.2. On the flip side, what drawbacks or negative effects do you associate with your child following social media influencers?

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