

The Influence of Social Media Influencers on Adolescent Behavior: An Analysis of Positive and Negative Effects

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Abstract

This phenomenon of social media influencers (SMI) gaining increasing attention among teenagers, who are active social media users, is a significant topic. SMIs not only act as digital content creators but also influence how teenagers think, act, and make decisions. The influence of SMIs on social media is often appealing to teenagers due to various factors, but not all effects are positive because they can also have negative impacts in the short and long term. This study was conducted to examine the influence of SMIs on teenagers' behavior by exploring both positive and negative effects. The research used a quantitative approach through a survey involving 164 teenagers aged 13 to 17 years. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 29 through descriptive analysis. Overall, the findings show that the influence of SMIs on adolescent behavior tends to have more positive effects than negative ones. All positive effect elements—lifestyle, attitude, ethics, knowledge, and education—were at a high level with an overall mean of 3.78, while the negative effect elements recorded a much lower mean of 2.36. Knowledge and education emerged as the most dominant dimension within the positive effects group (mean = 3.83), whereas ethics recorded the highest score within the negative effects group (mean = 2.49), though still in the low range. The significant difference in mean values between positive and negative effects indicates that teenagers generally accept constructive influences from SMIs, particularly in the form of increased literacy, positive attitudes, critical thinking, and healthy lifestyles. The lower standard deviation values in positive effects suggest stability and consistency in respondents' perceptions of the positive impact, strengthening the belief that SMI influence on adolescent behavior occurs constructively and in a controlled manner. These findings also imply that teenagers' engagement with SMIs should be strategically guided to maximize positive potential and minimize negative influences through media literacy and self-filtering strategies.

Keywords: Social Media Influencer, Social Media, Teenagers, Behavior, Social Influence

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving digital world, we have witnessed the swift rise of celebrities of the current generation who attain fame through social media, commonly referred to as social media influencers (SMIs). In the digital era, SMIs hold a significant sway over adolescent behavior through the content they share. This influence often captivates the attention of teenagers due to various factors compelling them to follow SMIs on social media. However, this influence does not always yield positive outcomes for teenagers, and can also have negative impacts, whether in the short or long term. Statistics from the Department of Statistics show an uptick in crime cases among teenagers, rising from 1,239 cases in 2022 to 1,567 cases in 2023. While this increase may not directly stem from SMIs, their influence does have a certain effect on teenage behavior. This assertion is supported by Baron and Bryne (1991), who posit that exposure to negative SMI content can lead to the development of aggressive behavior. Moreover, the National Health and Morbidity Survey 2023 revealed that 16.5 percent of teenagers in the country experience depression, with half of them attributing it to the advancements in today's digital era. Therefore, there is a pressing need to comprehend the factors driving teenagers to become SMI followers, the impacts of SMI influence, and the varying influences of this group based on teenage demographics within the local Malaysian context. This is because SMI influence is unique and varies according to cultural and social norms. Previous studies have primarily examined the overall effects of social media but have not sufficiently delved into the specific factors that attract teenagers to SMIs, particularly in Malaysia. Factors such as engaging, relevant, easily accessible content (Lin et al. 2018), as well as various attractions like interesting information (Martínez & Olsson 2019) and entertainment (Jerslev 2016), are among the elements that have the potential to influence teenagers' inclination to follow SMIs.

Additionally, active SMIs who interact with followers in real-time by responding to comments and questions can enhance their rapport with followers, making teenagers feel valued and thereby increasing follower satisfaction and loyalty (de Veirman et al. 2017). Due to these factors, social media has now surpassed traditional television watching in importance for teenagers (Smit et al. 2019). Furthermore, the influence of SMIs is categorized into two dimensions, consisting of positive and negative effects on teenagers (Chew & Shahlan Surat 2021). Positive effects encompass education and social awareness (Dolan et al. 2016), information sharing (Abdullah et al. 2023), exploration of new concepts (Chew & Shahlan Surat 2021), inspiration and motivation, enhanced digital literacy (Abdullah et al. 2023), and the self-esteem of adolescent students (Chew & Shahlan Surat 2021). Conversely, negative effects include the fear of missing out (Schmuck 2021), portraying luxurious and unrealistic lifestyles (Monica 2017; Khan & Sharma 2024), depression (Noor Amila et al. 2023), dwindling educational and academic performance (Mohany 2023; Sim Yong Jing 2023), the cultivation of aggressive behavior (Baron & Bryne 1991), antisocial conduct (Sim Yong Jing 2023), addiction (Filyntiana et al. 2020; Abdullah et al. 2023). Drawing from research, there are studies in Malaysia examining the influence of SMIs on teenagers, yet they predominantly focus on the implications for product purchases (Akmal Arfan & Ammar Redza 2023) and self-esteem issues (Chew & Shahlan Surat 2021). Moreover, most studies exploring SMI influence are conducted outside the country, leaving a gap in the Malaysian context that requires exploration. Furthermore, research examining the variations in SMI influence based on teenage demographics remains limited, particularly within the local landscape. Hence, this

paper aims to investigate the extent of SMI influence on teenage behavior in terms of positive and negative effects.

The Impact of SMI Influence on Adolescent Behavior

The influence of social media influencers (SMIs) on adolescent behavior becomes increasingly pronounced in the digital era as social media content becomes a routine part of daily life. Adolescents, being the most active group of social media users, are directly exposed to various forms of visual and interactive content produced by SMIs through platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. Through parasocial relationships and credibility held by SMIs, adolescents tend to evaluate, emulate, and shape their behavior based on the influence received from these digital idols (Abidin 2016; Djafarova & Rushworth 2017). This process occurs not only through imitation of lifestyles, language, and norms but also involves adapting values and forming social identities among teenagers (Valkenburg & Peter 2011). The repeated interaction between adolescents and SMI content further enables the formation of new behavior patterns, aligning with Bandura's (1997) concept of social learning that emphasizes observation as the basis for behavioral change. Therefore, SMIs play a crucial role as digital socialization agents that have a significant influence on the lives of today's teenagers, whether positive or negative.

Positive Impacts

Social Media Influencers (SMIs) have great potential to shape adolescent behavior in a more positive direction if they adopt a responsible and authentic approach in the content they share (Audrezet et al. 2020; Sokolova & Kefi 2019). This influence can have positive effects across various dimensions of a teenager's life, including lifestyle, attitudes, ethics, as well as knowledge and education.

Lifestyle

In terms of lifestyle, SMIs who highlight healthy and balanced living often serve as sources of inspiration for teenagers to adopt healthy eating habits, engage in fitness activities, and take care of their mental health. SMIs who share daily routines such as morning practices, exercise, or activity schedules can help youths manage their time and organize activities more productively (Sokolova & Kefi 2019). A study by Jyoth and Vinodh (2020) found that 54 percent of teenage social media users are influenced by the lifestyles displayed by SMIs and popular figures on these platforms. This influence encourages teenagers to imitate such lifestyles and form aspirations to achieve a comparable standard of living. Moreover, the content shared by SMIs can instill positive values such as stress relief, emotional stability, and inspiration for youths (Hibaya et al. 2024), as well as raise awareness about environmental care and healthy living practices (Abdullah et al. 2023). Akmal and Ammar (2023) also stated that creative and concise content such as TikTok videos portraying healthy lifestyles can significantly motivate teenagers to imitate such positive behaviors.

Attitudes

In terms of attitude, SMIs who promote values such as optimism, resilience, and self-confidence can foster more open-minded, empathetic, and competitive attitudes among teenagers. SMIs who support campaigns related to mental health or anti-bullying indirectly raise social awareness and encourage teens to be more empathetic and compassionate (Ki et al. 2020).

Furthermore, the parasocial relationships formed with SMIs allow adolescents to feel emotionally understood and supported, even in the absence of physical interaction (Sokolova & Kefi 2019). Engel et al. (2024) explain that SMIs provide motivation through sharing personal journeys and success stories, which can inspire teenagers to pursue life goals and adopt a positive mindset.

In this context, parents also see the influence of SMIs as a source of motivation and inspiration that has the potential to help teens develop critical thinking and become more socially aware (Abdullah et al. 2023). Additionally, social media shapes new value systems and attitudes inspired by SMIs, which subsequently influence how adolescents make decisions and build their personal beliefs (Khan & Sharma 2024). Lim (2017) also supports the idea that SMIs who convey positive messages such as self-confidence, mental health awareness, and motivational content can assist teenagers in developing a healthy sense of identity.

Content that emphasizes self-acceptance, persistence, and determination can inspire youth to believe more in their own potential. Moreover, Hibaya et al. (2024) suggest that teens who follow SMIs have a better ability to make choices and decisions in their lives.

Ethics

The ethical dimension not only includes negative impacts but also shows positive effects that contribute to the development of character and moral values among adolescents. According to Abdullah et al. (2023), some SMIs spread positive messages and instill noble values in teenagers, such as awareness of environmental care, healthy living, and social responsibility. This educational content can shape more positive attitudes and ethics in youth that align with societal norms and cultural values.

Exposure to content that includes elements of humanity, compassion, and core values like empathy, honesty, and humility also has a constructive impact on the ethical development of adolescents (Hibaya et al. 2024).

SMIs also serve as agents of social change when they display respectful behavior, promote cultural diversity, and uphold moral values, thereby becoming role models for teenage followers (de Veirman et al. 2017; Abidin 2016; Ki et al. 2020). Teenagers exposed to such ethical behaviors are more likely to emulate and apply them in their daily lives.

Content such as short videos, awareness campaigns, and personal stories shared by SMIs provide opportunities for teens to understand ethical values in a contextual manner, thus helping them develop a more solid value system. Furthermore, the honesty and transparency shown by SMIs in disclosing sponsored content, openly admitting mistakes, and giving credit to original creators demonstrate a high level of integrity and can serve as examples in shaping ethical principles among teens.

Active involvement of SMIs in volunteer work, human rights advocacy, and environmental awareness campaigns also shows that social media can function as an effective platform for cultivating ethical values and civic awareness among adolescents (de Veirman et al. 2017).

Knowledge and Education

The influence of Social Media Influencers (SMIs) also brings positive effects to the domain of knowledge and education among adolescents. This includes the enhancement of digital literacy (Khan & Sharma 2024), development of analytical thinking (Abdullah et al. 2023), informal education (Gwenn et al. 2021), and access to up-to-date information (Hibaya et al. 2024).

A study by Khan and Sharma (2024) found that parents believe SMIs have the potential to contribute to the development of digital literacy through the acquisition of problem-solving skills, thereby enhancing creativity among teenagers. In addition, SMIs can improve adolescents' learning experiences, as social media platforms function as tools for informal education that facilitate access to information (Gwenn et al. 2021). Moreover, educational content shared by SMIs, such as tutorials or interactive videos, helps students understand academic topics more effectively.

Abdullah et al. (2023) found that high-quality SMI content can foster analytical thinking in adolescents by encouraging them to evaluate facts, compare ideas, and solve problems—thus enhancing their critical thinking skills. Hibaya et al. (2024) also identified the positive intellectual and educational impacts of SMI influence, as it helps teenagers explore new ideas, broaden cultural awareness, and acquire current information. Furthermore, Lou and Yuan (2019) stated that informative and authentic content from SMIs can increase adolescents' interest in learning and expand their knowledge beyond the classroom environment.

Negative Impacts

Although SMIs have the potential to exert a positive impact, they can also negatively influence adolescent behavior—especially when the content shared promotes negative norms or contradicts core values. This situation can lead to unhealthy implications in various areas including lifestyle, attitude, ethics, as well as knowledge and education.

Lifestyle

Among the negative effects of SMI influence on adolescents' lifestyles are tendencies toward luxurious and unrealistic living (Lim et al. 2020; Chwialkowska 2019), decreased self-esteem (Chew & Shahlan Surat 2021; Khan & Sharma 2024), the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) (Schmuck 2021), physical and mental health issues (Hoge et al. 2017), as well as unhealthy eating habits and obesity (Radesky et al. 2020; Folkvord et al. 2021).

Additionally, content that showcases branded goods, vacations to exclusive destinations, and elite lifestyles may lead teenagers to develop unrealistic life aspirations (Lim et al. 2020). This can result in negative social comparisons, leading to feelings of inadequacy and dissatisfaction with oneself (Lim et al. 2020; Chwialkowska 2019). When adolescents fail to attain the lifestyle standards portrayed on social media, they may experience financial stress, identity crises, and body image disturbances (Chew & Shahlan Surat 2021).

This influence also contributes to declining self-esteem and chronic disappointment due to constant comparisons with the lives of SMIs (Khan & Sharma 2024). As a result, teenagers become increasingly dependent on social media for self-validation, triggering FOMO—an overwhelming desire to stay updated with the latest social media trends. This phenomenon

can lead to loss of focus, social anxiety, and a constant need to stay "in the loop" (Schmuck 2021).

Excessive social media use for following SMI content also negatively impacts the physical and mental health of adolescents. Studies show a direct link between high screen time and sleep disturbances such as insomnia, eye strain, chronic fatigue, and feelings of loneliness (Hoge et al. 2017).

In terms of eating habits, SMI influence has also been shown to affect adolescents' dietary patterns. Research by Coates et al. (2019) and Théodore et al. (2021) indicates that teenagers are easily influenced by the promotion of unhealthy foods and beverages such as fast food, sugary drinks, and snacks featured by SMIs. This leads to increased consumption of high-calorie foods and, consequently, a higher risk of obesity. Furthermore, studies by Radesky et al. (2020) and Folkvord et al. (2021) found that SMIs indirectly encourage unhealthy eating behaviors, especially when the promotion of such foods is not adequately regulated by social media platforms.

Attitudes

Although there are benefits in terms of attitude, the influence of SMIs also brings negative impacts and various risks related to social media use, such as antisocial tendencies and lack of empathy (UNICEF 2024; Nur Anis Atira et al. 2023), cyberbullying and aggressive behavior (Okada et al. 2021; McNamee et al. 2021; Tahir et al. 2020), depression (Hoare et al. 2020; Ma et al. 2021; Keles et al. 2020; Rutter et al. 2021; Kim & Kim 2021), and exposure to inappropriate content (Desai 2022; Belangee et al. 2015).

One of the main effects is adolescents' tendency to display antisocial behavior and show less empathy toward others. Content that features cynical, sarcastic, or mocking communication styles is often seen as entertaining and imitated by teens, without awareness of its social implications (Nur Anis Atira et al. 2023). This leads to a decline in sensitivity to social cues and reduced empathy (UNICEF 2024).

Cyberbullying and aggressive behavior have also been linked to exposure to violent content shared by SMIs. Content such as extreme pranks, violent challenges, or the use of vulgar language can increase teenagers' tendency to behave aggressively, think rigidly, and act impulsively (Okada et al. 2021; McNamee et al. 2021). Tahir et al. (2020) found a significant relationship between exposure to violence in social media content and increased anger and aggressive tendencies. In this context, teenagers who are frequently exposed to SMI content are at risk of becoming perpetrators or supporters of cyberbullying, especially as online communication norms become increasingly relaxed (Hamm et al. 2015).

The influence of SMIs on adolescents' self-confidence and emotional stability is also increasingly concerning. Repeated exposure to content portraying "perfect" appearances can trigger feelings of inferiority, depression, and social anxiety, as teens often compare themselves to these idealized images (Hoare et al. 2020; Ma et al. 2021; Keles et al. 2020). Moreover, excessive use of social media to follow SMIs contributes to mental stress, further lowering self-esteem and leading to feelings of worthlessness (Kim & Kim 2021; Rutter et al. 2021).

Teenagers are also prone to imitating negative behaviors shown in SMI content, especially when cynical communication or social challenges are perceived as entertaining. This encourages teens to adopt inappropriate behaviors in daily interactions, thereby shaping new social norms that conflict with the community's core values (Nur Anis Atira et al. 2023). Furthermore, exposure to inappropriate content such as violence, explicit sexual elements, and the spread of misinformation can disrupt adolescents' value systems, distort their thinking and attitudes, and hinder their understanding of attitude formation and social relationships (Desai 2022; Belangee et al. 2015).

Ethics

Among adolescents, the development of ethics is influenced by various factors including social norms, religion, family institutions, peer groups, and the increasingly dominant digital environment (Abdullah et al. 2023). In this context, SMI influence can negatively impact the ethical development of adolescents. Key affected elements in the ethical dimension include honesty and transparency (Audrezet et al. 2020), social and religious responsibility (Khan & Sharma 2024; Abdullah et al. 2023), as well as social interaction and cultural adaptation (Favotto et al. 2019; Sim Yong Jing & Shahlan Surat 2023; Hibaya et al. 2024).

Honesty and transparency are core elements in shaping adolescent ethics. However, serious challenges arise when SMIs fail to display honesty in their content—such as hiding sponsored content, manipulating their image, or sharing unverified information. Audrezet et al. (2020) found that such situations may normalize dishonest behavior among teens, ultimately eroding their trust in social media overall. Teens frequently exposed to dishonest content are at risk of adopting unethical behaviors such as lying and manipulation in daily life (Colliander & Erlandsson 2015).

Social and religious responsibilities are also often neglected when teens focus excessively on SMI content, leading them to overlook fundamental duties such as prayer, participating in family activities, and showing sensitivity toward religious and cultural values (Abdullah et al. 2023; Khan & Sharma 2024). The clash between traditional values and modern norms promoted by SMIs can lead to ethical confusion, especially when such content contradicts the values taught by family or educational institutions (Khan & Sharma 2024). Abdullah et al. (2023) also stated that unsupervised teens are likely to ignore religious practices and social responsibilities due to their addiction to entertainment and lifestyle content promoted by SMIs.

From the perspective of social interaction and cultural adaptation, SMI influence also alters the pattern of social relationships among adolescents. Content focused heavily on virtual life may cause teens to neglect real-life interactions with their families and communities. Favotto et al. (2019) and Sim Yong Jing & Shahlan Surat (2023) found that teens who are too absorbed in the online world tend to isolate themselves, experience weakened communication skills, and exhibit antisocial behaviors.

More concerningly, continuous exposure to harsh or unrealistic content by SMIs can trigger social pressure, confusion about moral values, and distorted perceptions of culture (Hibaya et al. 2024). Additionally, content that normalizes negative behavior—such as inappropriate conversations, unrestrained lifestyles, and absolute freedom without responsibility—

passively shapes adolescents' ethics. This has long-term effects on how teens perceive self-discipline, social boundaries, and personal responsibility (Boerman et al. 2017).

Knowledge and Education

The knowledge and education aspect is also negatively impacted by SMI influence, especially among adolescents who are at a critical stage of intellectual and character development. Key affected elements include dependency on unreliable information, neglect of formal learning, and academic procrastination.

Dependence on unverified information becomes increasingly worrying when adolescents rely too heavily on SMIs as their main source of information. This can lead to misunderstandings, inaccurate decisions, and diminished ability to assess the credibility of information (Chetty et al. 2023). Many SMIs share guidance or information in areas such as health, finance, or education without a clear professional background. Worse still, teens tend to trust whatever SMIs share without verifying the accuracy first. This is supported by findings from Pew Research Center (2022), which reported that over 60% of teenagers trust information on social media directly—especially when it is delivered by SMIs they admire.

The neglect of formal education occurs when teens prioritize entertainment content over actual learning processes. According to Khan and Sharma (2024), adolescents who frequently watch SMI content tend to lose focus on their studies, interact less physically with their surroundings, and ultimately neglect their responsibilities as students. Research by Bozzola et al. (2019) also shows that excessive exposure to social media results in weaker task completion abilities, attention difficulties, and reduced interest in learning.

Furthermore, procrastination in learning and academic performance often occurs when engaging and entertaining content from SMIs causes teens to delay their educational activities. A study by Mohany and Muhammad Syawal (2023) found that content such as daily vlogs, reaction videos, and luxury lifestyle portrayals lead teens to become addicted and delay schoolwork and other educational responsibilities. This makes teens more susceptible to unproductive academic behavior and loss of self-discipline in time management.

Overall, the presence of SMIs in today's digital communication landscape has become a major factor influencing adolescent life, particularly in shaping lifestyle, attitudes, ethics, as well as knowledge and education. SMIs function as new agents of socialization that directly or indirectly influence teenagers' perceptions, values, and behaviors (Abidin 2016; de Veirman et al. 2017; Ki et al. 2020). This influence can be constructive when the content shared conveys positive values; however, it can also have negative implications if not managed wisely.

In conclusion, SMI influence on adolescents is dual in nature—it brings beneficial outcomes while simultaneously presenting challenges and risks in terms of lifestyle, attitudes, ethics, and education. Therefore, studying both the positive and negative impacts of SMI influence is crucial to fully understand its role and implications in adolescent development in the digital age. This is especially important as research findings suggest that SMI influence on teenagers is complex, encompassing both complementary positive and negative effects. Thus, further investigation into the impact of SMI on adolescents is necessary to provide a clearer picture of the local context in Malaysia, considering the uniqueness of its culture and social norms.

Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research design. Data collection was conducted through a survey questionnaire distributed online via the Google Forms platform to the study's respondents. The data analysis process was carried out using SPSS version 29, with the implementation of several statistical tests to ensure the accuracy and validity of the research data.

A normality test was conducted to assess data distribution, while a reliability test (Cronbach's Alpha) was used to determine the consistency of the items within the developed questionnaire. A multiple regression test was employed to identify the extent to which the factors of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness of SMIs influence adolescents' tendency to follow them.

The analysis aimed to explain the effects of SMI influence on adolescent behavior by examining both positive and negative dimensions. In the context of this study, the analysis focused on four key elements: lifestyle, attitude, ethics, and knowledge and education.

In addition, descriptive statistical analysis comprising frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation was also applied to provide a comprehensive overview of the level of SMI influence on each element of adolescent behavior (Field, 2013; Pallant, 2020). The purpose of this analysis was to identify the dominant factor that most significantly influences adolescent behavior in the context of following SMIs on social media.

This study did not involve a specific population; instead, sample size calculation was performed using G*Power software version 3.1. This software is advantageous as it supports a variety of statistical tests and offers flexibility in adjusting parameters such as effect size, alpha level, and statistical power.

The research sample was selected based on several criteria aligned with the study's objectives, as follows:

- i. Adolescents aged 13 to 17 years old; and
- ii. Individuals who watch content from SMIs on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, or Facebook.

Analysis Of Adolescent Demographic Profile

This analysis describes the demographic profile of adolescents, involving a total of 164 respondents aged 13 to 17 years, who watch SMI content on social media. Two main components were analyzed, namely:

- Demographic information, and
- Social media usage information as presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic information

Aspek	Kategori	Kekerapan	Peratus (%)
Sex	Male	78	47.6
	Female	86	52.4
Age	13 year	37	22.6
	14 year	7	4.3
	15 year	21	12.8
	16 year	27	16.5
	17 year	72	43.9
Location	Urban	113	68.9
	Rural	51	31.1
Mother Occupation	Unemployed / Housewife	57	34.7
	General worker (manual laborer, cleaner, security guard, plantation worker etc.)	1	0.6
	Factory worker / production operator	4	2.4
	Small trader / hawker / self-employed	4	2.4
	Civil servant (supporting grade)	20	12.2
	Private sector worker (non-executive)	11	6.7
	Civil servant (professional grade)	39	23.8
	Private sector worker (non-executive)	15	9.1
	Civil servant (professional grade)	1	0.6
	Private sector worker (professional / executive)	3	1.8
	Entrepreneur / owner of medium or large business	4	2.4
	Senior manager / Company director / CEO		
	Independent professional - doctor, lawyer, architect, lecturer etc.		
	Retired		
	Others		
Father Occupation	Unemployed / Housewife	6	3.7
	General worker (manual laborer, cleaner, security guard, plantation worker etc.)	3	1.8
	Factory worker / production operator	13	7.9
	Small trader / hawker / self-employed	17	10.3
	Civil servant (supporting grade)	8	4.9
	Private sector worker (non-executive)	3	1.8
	Civil servant (professional grade)	24	14.6
	Private sector worker (non-executive)	11	6.7
	Civil servant (professional grade)	32	19.5
	21	12.8	
	4	2.4	

	Private sector worker (professional / executive)	3	1.8
		6	3.6
	Entrepreneur / owner of medium or large business	10	6.1
		3	1.8
	Senior manager / Company director / CEO		
	Independent professional - doctor, lawyer, architect, lecturer etc.		
	Retired		
	Others		
Estimate income parent (RM)	Less RM2,500	30	18.3
	RM2,500 - RM5,249	45	27.4
	RM5,250 - RM7,689	37	22.6
	RM7,690 - RM11,819	20	12.2
	RM11,820 above	32	19.5
Social media account participation	Yes	159	97.0
	No	5	3.0
Social media platform used	Instagram	102	62.2
	Facebook	48	29.3
	Tiktok	146	89.0
	Youtube	102	62.2
Watching SMI content	Yes	164	91.1
	No	16	8.9
Number of SMIs followed on social media	Not attending any SMI	24	14.6
	1 to 5	80	48.8
	6 to 10	29	17.7
	11 SMI and above	31	18.9
SMI content type	Entertainment	119	72.6
	Health	45	27.4
	Fashion and Beauty	78	47.6
	Food	95	57.9
	Education	85	51.8
	Games and Sports	85	51.8
	Others	6	3.6
Frequency of watching SMI content	less 1 hour	55	33.5
	1 until 3 hour	71	43.3
	3 until 5 hour	27	16.5
	5 hour and above	11	6.7

Source: Field study 2025

Analysis of Adolescent Demographic Profile

A total of 164 adolescents participated as respondents in this study. In terms of gender, 86 respondents (52.4%) were female, while 78 respondents (47.6%) were male. This percentage reflects a relatively balanced participation between both genders, with a slight predominance of females.

In terms of age, the majority of respondents were 17 years old, accounting for 72 individuals (43.9%). This was followed by 13-year-olds (22.6%), 16-year-olds (16.5%), 15-year-olds (12.8%), and 14-year-olds (4.3%). The data shows that most respondents were in the late adolescence phase, a stage in which young people are typically more active on social media and more exposed to content from social media influencers (SMIs). This is consistent with findings by Vannucci and Ohannessian (2019), who reported that adolescents in this age group are more likely to be influenced by SMIs.

With regard to place of residence, a total of 113 respondents (68.9%) lived in urban areas, while 51 respondents (31.1%) came from rural areas. This distribution suggests that the majority of respondents had greater exposure to digital media and online content due to their urban environment.

From the perspective of mothers' occupations, 57 respondents (34.7%) indicated that their mothers were not working or were housewives. Other occupations listed included government servants in the professional grade (23.8%), support-grade government employees (12.2%), private sector professionals or executives (9.1%), and non-executive workers in the private sector (6.7%). A smaller number of respondents, ranging from one to four individuals, reported that their mothers were factory workers, small traders or self-employed, senior managers, general labourers, entrepreneurs or business owners, freelancers, retirees, or others.

For the fathers' occupations, the most common was professional-grade government servant, as reported by 32 respondents (19.5%). This was followed by support-grade government servants (14.6%), private sector professionals or executives (12.8%), small traders or self-employed individuals (10.3%), factory workers (7.9%), non-executive private sector workers (6.7%), and retirees (6.1%). Other occupations, reported by between three and eight respondents, included general labourers, drivers or riders, service workers, entrepreneurs or business owners, senior managers, freelancers, unemployed individuals, or other unspecified roles.

In terms of household income, 45 respondents (27.4%) reported a combined parental income between RM2,500 and RM5,249. This was followed by 37 respondents (22.6%) in the RM5,250–RM7,689 range, 32 respondents (19.5%) with incomes of RM11,820 and above, 30 respondents (18.3%) earning less than RM2,500, and 20 respondents (12.2%) in the RM7,690–RM11,819 range. These income levels were then categorised according to Malaysia's household income classification: 75 respondents (45.7%) were from the B40 group, 57 respondents (34.8%) from the M40 group, and 32 respondents (19.5%) from the T20 group. This classification reflects a sample made up of adolescents from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

In terms of social media usage, 159 respondents (97.0%) reported owning a social media account, while five respondents (3.0%) did not. For the purposes of this study, only 164 respondents who actively watched SMI content were selected from the total of 180 participants. Analysis of platform usage revealed that TikTok was the most frequently used platform, with 146 respondents (89.0%). This was followed by Instagram and YouTube, both

used by 102 respondents (62.2%). Facebook was the least used platform, with only 48 respondents (29.3%).

Interestingly, this finding contrasts with a report by the Social and Economic Research Initiative (SERI, 2024), which stated that Instagram is the most popular social media platform among Malaysian adolescents. This discrepancy may be attributed to factors such as the geographic scope of the study, the timing of data collection, or the fluid and rapidly changing nature of social media trends among teenagers.

In terms of engagement with social media influencers (SMIs), a total of 80 respondents (48.8%) reported following between one and five SMIs, while 29 respondents (17.7%) followed between six and ten. Additionally, 31 respondents (18.9%) followed more than eleven SMIs. However, 24 respondents (14.6%) stated that they watched SMI content without officially following them. This finding indicates a high level of adolescent engagement with SMI content, even if not all adolescents are formal followers. According to Hudders et al. (2021), consistent exposure to SMI content can still influence adolescent behaviour, even without formal participation or following.

The most popular type of content consumed by respondents was entertainment-related (72.6%), followed by food-related content (57.9%). Gaming and educational content each accounted for 51.8%, fashion and beauty (47.6%), health (27.4%), and other categories (3.6%). These findings suggest that SMIs play a multifaceted role in adolescents' lives, covering areas such as entertainment, information, education, and health. This is supported by de Veirman et al. (2017), who noted that lifestyle and entertainment content has a significant impact on adolescents' interactions with SMIs.

In terms of the frequency of viewing SMI content, a large proportion of respondents reported spending one to three hours per day (43.3%), followed by less than one hour (33.5%), three to five hours (16.5%), and more than five hours (6.7%). These findings reinforce the notion that adolescents are incorporating SMI content into their daily routines. This aligns with the findings of Ki et al. (2020), who found that increased exposure time to SMIs is closely associated with behavioural changes among adolescents.

Overall, the demographic profile of respondents reflects active adolescent engagement with SMI content and highlights a diverse socioeconomic background. These findings not only support the analysis of how SMI influence differs across demographic groups but also justify the implementation of this study. Furthermore, they provide a strong foundation for understanding the impact of SMIs on adolescent behaviour within the current digital context.

The Impact of SMI Influence on Adolescent Behavior

This section discusses in depth the findings related to the impact of Social Media Influencers (SMI) on adolescent behavior. The discussion aims to provide a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the extent to which SMI influences shape various dimensions of adolescent behavior, especially within the local context that possesses unique cultural values and social norms.

To assess these effects, Table 1.2 has been developed to compare the mean and standard deviation values for each element of positive and negative influences studied. These elements cover four main domains of adolescent behavior: lifestyle, attitude, ethics, as well as knowledge and education. Comparing these statistical values enables a direct analysis of the strength and significance of SMI influence in shaping these aspects.

Through this analysis, it is possible to identify whether the influence of SMI tends to have more constructive or adverse effects among adolescents. This is important to understand the balance between the benefits and challenges brought by the presence of SMIs in today's digital ecosystem. This study also contributes to existing knowledge regarding adolescent development in the social media era and assists stakeholders such as parents, educators, and policymakers in designing appropriate interventions.

Table 2.

The Impact of SMI Influence on Adolescent Behavior

Effect/element	Mean (Positive)	SP (Positive)	Level (Positive)	Mean (Negative)	SP (Negative)	Level (Negative)
Impact of influence	3.78	0.589	H	2.36	0.846	L
Lifestyle	3.72	0.649		2.48	0.970	
Attitude	3.77	0.678		2.09	0.981	
Ethics	3.78	0.672		2.49	0.879	
Knowledge and Education	3.83	0.682		2.39	1.018	

(Level min: very low = 1.00 – 1.80; Low = 1.81 – 2.60; moderate = 2.61 – 3.40; High = 3.41 – 4.20; very high = 4.21 - 5.00)

Based on Table 1.2, it was found that all elements recorded a higher mean for positive effects compared to negative effects, indicating that the influence of SMI on adolescents tends to produce a more constructive impact rather than a harmful one. The element of knowledge and education showed the largest gap between positive effects (mean = 3.83) and negative effects (mean = 2.39), illustrating that SMI's influence contributes more to improving cognitive skills and information literacy among adolescents than to affecting academic focus or spreading misinformation. This finding is supported by studies from Gwenn et al. (2021) and Abdullah et al. (2023), who emphasize the role of SMI as informal educational agents that help adolescents access knowledge in more flexible ways. This finding is further reinforced by Khan and Sharma (2024), who state that active engagement with informative content on social media can enhance adolescents' digital literacy, problem-solving abilities, and analytical thinking.

The attitude element also showed a significant gap between positive effects (mean = 3.77) and negative effects (mean = 2.09), indicating that messages conveyed by SMI are more capable of building confidence and positive attitudes among adolescents, rather than encouraging negative behaviors such as bullying, loss of empathy, or aggression. This argument is supported by Engel et al. (2024), who found that motivational messages delivered by SMI have a significant impact on building self-confidence and optimistic thinking among young followers.

Regarding ethics, there was a significant difference between the mean positive effect (3.78) and negative effect (2.49), indicating that although there is exposure to unethical content, adolescents still demonstrate the ability to evaluate and filter such content ethically. The study by Audrezet et al. (2020) notes that adolescents are now more sensitive to sponsorship disclosures and honesty in digital content, which indirectly strengthens their ethical values. In terms of lifestyle, the mean positive effect score was 3.72 compared to 2.48 for the negative effect. This finding shows that although there is influence toward unhealthy habits, overall adolescents are more inspired by the productive and healthy lifestyles portrayed by SMI, as stated by Jyoth and Vinodh (2020).

Overall, the study findings show that the influence of SMI on adolescent behavior yields more positive effects than negative effects. All positive effect elements, namely lifestyle, attitude, ethics, and knowledge and education, were at a high level with an overall mean of 3.78, while the negative effects for the same elements recorded a much lower overall mean of 2.36. The knowledge and education element emerged as the most dominant dimension among the positive effect group (mean = 3.83), while the ethics element recorded the highest value within the negative effect group (mean = 2.49), though still within a low range.

The significant gap between the mean scores of positive and negative effects indicates that adolescents generally receive constructive influences from SMI, particularly in the form of improved literacy, positive attitudes, critical thinking, and healthy lifestyles. The lower standard deviation in positive effects also signifies stability and consistency in respondents' perceptions of the positive impact received, thereby strengthening confidence that the influence of SMI on adolescent behavior occurs in a constructive and controlled manner.

These findings also have important implications, suggesting that adolescents' engagement with SMI should be strategically guided so that the potential for positive effects can be maximized, and negative influences minimized through media literacy and self-filtering. Based on the presented table, the subsequent discussion will focus on a detailed analysis of each effect of SMI influence according to the elements and questionnaire items.

Positive Effects of SMI on Adolescents

The analysis of the positive effects of SMI influence on adolescent behavior was conducted using 20 questionnaire items divided into four elements: lifestyle, attitude, ethics, and knowledge and education. Table 1.3 presents these findings in detail, illustrating the extent to which the items received agreement or disagreement from the study respondents.

Table 3

Positive Effects of SMI on Adolescents

No.	Item	STS	TS	KS	S	SS	Mean	SP	Level
Gaya Hidup							3.72	0.649	H
C1.1	I was motivated to adopt a healthy lifestyle after following influencer content	2 (1.2)	9 (5.5)	38 (23.2)	88 (53.7)	27 (16.5)	3.79	0.827	
C1.2	Content shared by influencers helps me organize my daily activities more productively	5 (3.0)	5 (3.0)	58 (35.4)	78 (47.6)	18 (11.0)	3.60	0.841	
C1.3	I was inspired to take care of my mental health from influencer sharing	4 (2.4)	5 (3.0)	42 (25.6)	83 (50.6)	30 (18.3)	3.79	0.861	
C1.4	Influencers encourage me to be more active in sports	3 (1.8)	5 (3.0)	58 (35.4)	74 (45.1)	24 (14.6)	3.68	0.828	
C1.5	Short video content by influencers makes me aware of the environment	3 (1.8)	7 (4.3)	45 (27.4)	81 (49.4)	28 (17.1)	3.76	0.852	
Attitude							3.77	0.678	H
C1.6	Influencer content pushes me to be more positive and optimistic	1 (0.6)	4 (2.4)	36 (22.0)	94 (57.3)	29 (17.7)	3.89	0.735	
C1.7	I became more empathetic towards others through social messages delivered by influencers	1 (0.6)	6 (3.7)	45 (27.4)	82 (50.0)	30 (18.3)	3.82	0.793	
C1.8	Influencers help me build self-confidence	2 (1.2)	5 (3.0)	49 (29.9)	76 (46.3)	32 (19.5)	3.80	0.830	
C1.9	I have a life goal after watching influencer success stories	6 (3.7)	10 (6.1)	47 (28.7)	71 (43.3)	30 (18.3)	3.66	0.967	
C1.10	I respect others after following influencers	8 (4.9)	7 (4.3)	41 (25.0)	79 (48.2)	29 (17.7)	3.70	0.974	
Ethics							3.78	0.672	H
C1.11	Influencers promote socially responsible practices	4 (2.4)	7 (4.3)	47 (28.7)	79 (48.2)	27 (16.5)	3.72	0.876	

C1.12	The content shared by influencers educates me to be ethical on social media	1 (0.6)	3 (1.8)	42 (25.6)	88 (53.7)	30 (18.3)	3.87	0.744	
C1.13	Influencers set a good example in interacting with followers.	4 (2.4)	5 (3.0)	46 (28.0)	87 (53.0)	22 (13.4)	3.72	0.826	
C1.14	I was motivated to help others after seeing influencers involved in humanitarian activities.	4 (2.4)	5 (3.0)	45 (27.4)	81 (49.4)	29 (17.7)	3.77	0.862	
C1.15	I learned the value of honesty and sincerity from influencers who are honest in their content	7 (4.3)	4 (2.4)	35 (21.3)	86 (52.4)	32 (19.5)	3.80	0.926	
Knowledge and Education							3.83	0.691	H
C1.16	I get educational information through influencer content	4 (2.4)	5 (3.0)	35 (21.3)	88 (53.7)	32 (19.5)	3.85	0.855	
C1.17	Influencer content helps me understand a learning topic better	2 (1.2)	7 (4.3)	35 (21.3)	85 (51.8)	35 (21.3)	3.88	0.835	
C1.18	Influencers increase my interest in current issues and culture	3 (1.8)	4 (2.4)	41 (25.0)	82 (50.0)	34 (20.7)	3.85	0.838	
C1.19	I am more interested in learning when information is creatively presented by influencers.	5 (3.0)	2 (1.2)	37 (22.6)	70 (42.7)	50 (30.5)	3.96	0.926	
C1.20	Influencers encourage me to think critically and analytically	6 (3.7)	8 (4.9)	51 (31.1)	81 (49.4)	18 (11.0)	3.59	0.885	
Overall Positive Impact							3.78	0.589	H

Indicators: STS = Strongly Disagree; TS = Disagree; KS = Disagree; S = Agree; SS = Strongly Agree; SP = Standard Deviation; ST = Very High; T = Height; S = Medium; R = Low; SR = Very Low

Source: Field study 2025

Lifestyle

For the lifestyle element, five questionnaire items (C1.1 to C1.5) were analyzed, with a recorded mean of 3.72 and a standard deviation of 0.649. This indicates that the influence of SMI on the formation of adolescent lifestyles is at a high level. Item C1.1, which states "I am motivated to adopt a healthy lifestyle after following influencer content," recorded the

highest score (mean = 3.79, SD = 0.827). This finding shows that content featuring healthy eating, exercise, and self-care practices by SMI successfully encourages adolescents to imitate a healthier and more active lifestyle. Jyoth and Vinodh (2020) found that 54 percent of adolescents were directly influenced by the healthy lifestyles promoted by SMI, especially through visual content related to healthy eating and physical fitness. This finding indicates that the appearance and lifestyle of SMI can serve as positive role models for adolescents who are building their identities and daily living patterns.

Item C1.2, which states “The content shared by influencers helps me organize my daily activities more productively,” recorded the lowest score in this element (mean = 3.60, SD = 0.841). Although this is the lowest value within this element, it still reflects a high level and signifies a positive impact on adolescents’ ability to structure their daily routines influenced by SMI content. Abdullah et al. (2023) support this finding by stating that creatively delivered short videos by SMI can help adolescents in time management and prioritization, including organizing more balanced and structured daily activities. Content related to daily routines, planning tips, or viral productivity challenges on social media also acts as a catalyst for more orderly behavioral changes among adolescents.

Overall, the mean range for the five items within this element is between 3.60 and 3.79, reflecting a consistent positive tendency among adolescents towards the influence of SMI in the aspect of lifestyle. Hibaya et al. (2024) also emphasize that content focusing on mental health can enhance adolescents’ emotional well-being, while Abdullah et al. (2023) highlight that awareness of environmental care can also be nurtured through creative and easily accessible content delivery. These findings further strengthen the argument that the positive influence of SMI in the lifestyle aspect is not only related to physical elements but also involves self-development, mental well-being, and broader social awareness among adolescents.

Attitude

The attitude element includes five questionnaire items (C1.6 to C1.10), which recorded a mean score of 3.77 with a standard deviation of 0.678, indicating that the influence of SMI on the formation of adolescent attitudes is at a high level. Item C1.6, “Influencer content encourages me to be more positive and optimistic,” recorded the highest score (mean = 3.89, SD = 0.735). This finding shows that motivational messages and emotional support from SMIs have a positive effect on how adolescents view themselves and their environment. Engel et al. (2024) support this finding by stating that content promoting positive thinking and emotional balance can foster optimistic attitudes among adolescents. Meanwhile, Ki et al. (2020) emphasize that parasocial relationships between adolescents and SMIs increase self-confidence and emotional openness when adolescents emulate inspiring figures.

Item C1.9, “I have life goals after watching influencers’ success stories,” recorded the lowest score (mean = 3.66, SD = 0.967). Although lower compared to other items, this score remains high and reflects the significant influence of SMI content in helping adolescents set life goals. Lee and Watkins (2016) show that consistent exposure to SMI success narratives and life experiences can influence adolescents in defining their personal direction and long-term goals. Additionally, Sokolova and Kefi (2019) emphasize that parasocial relationships with

SMIs can nurture social awareness and self-reflection values among adolescents building their identities.

The mean range for all items in this element is between 3.66 and 3.89, reflecting a strong and consistent positive influence of SMI on adolescent attitude formation. Abdullah et al. (2023) found that social and motivational messages from SMIs effectively enhance empathy, ambition, and openness to challenges. Sokolova and Kefi (2019) assert that emotional digital interactions through high-impact content can continuously drive attitude changes. This indicates that SMI influence not only shapes adolescents' daily attitudes but also plays an important role in building value systems and self-motivation towards a more positive life.

Ethics

For the ethics element, five questionnaire items (C1.11 to C1.15) were analyzed, with a mean score of 3.78 and a standard deviation of 0.672, indicating that the influence of SMI on the formation of ethical values among adolescents is at a high level. Item C1.12, "Content shared by influencers educates me to behave ethically on social media," recorded the highest score (mean = 3.87, SD = 0.744). This finding shows that adolescents recognize SMIs' role as role models in interacting politely and responsibly on social media. Audrezet et al. (2020) state that honesty and transparency in content influence followers to practice ethical online behavior, while Abdullah et al. (2023) emphasize that SMIs who consistently demonstrate positive behavior encourage adolescents to develop strong moral values in daily life.

Items C1.11 and C1.13 recorded the same lowest mean score in this element, both at 3.72 (SD = 0.876 and 0.826 respectively). Both items relate to values of responsibility and appreciation towards others. Although at the lower end within this element, they still fall in the high category, indicating that SMI influence on building social values such as responsibility and respect remains significant. Hibaya et al. (2024) found that adolescents tend to imitate polite and ethical behavior when they observe SMIs interacting with tact and empathy. Additionally, Abdullah et al. (2023) reported that content promoting social responsibility—such as awareness campaigns, humanitarian work, and advocacy for noble values—positively impacts adolescents' civic awareness.

Overall, the mean range for the five items in this element is between 3.72 and 3.87, reflecting strong agreement on the positive role of SMIs in fostering ethical and moral values among adolescents. This finding is also supported by Audrezet et al. (2020), who stress that the credibility and ethical role modeling exhibited by SMIs enhance integrity among young followers. This clearly shows that SMIs not only act as content creators but also serve as agents in shaping digital and social ethics among adolescents who are increasingly active in the online world.

Knowledge and Education

The knowledge and education element comprises five questionnaire items (C1.16 to C1.20), recording a mean score of 3.83 with a standard deviation of 0.691, making this element the highest scoring in the overall positive impact dimension of SMI influence. Item C1.19, "I am more interested in learning when information is delivered creatively by influencers," recorded the highest score (mean = 3.96, SD = 0.926). This finding shows that adolescents are greatly influenced by the engaging and friendly presentation style used by SMIs in delivering

information or knowledge. Lou and Yuan (2019) support this finding by stating that creative and casual delivery by SMIs can attract young users' interest in informative content.

Conversely, item C1.20, "Influencers encourage me to think critically and analytically," recorded the lowest score (mean = 3.59, SD = 0.885). Although this is the lowest in this element, it still falls within the high category, reflecting some adolescents' willingness to engage with intellectually challenging and critical discussion content. Hibaya et al. (2024) explain that critical thinking among adolescents can be stimulated if the content shared includes interactive elements such as Q&A, self-reflection, or simulations. However, Lou and Yuan (2019) also emphasize that general educational content is easier to accept than content requiring deep thinking, so the effect on critical thinking might be more apparent among users who are truly active and interested.

The mean scores for the five items in this element range between 3.59 and 3.96, indicating a high level of agreement on the positive role of SMIs in empowering adolescents' knowledge and education. Gwenn et al. (2021) also assert that SMIs serve as a non-formal educational medium that can convey knowledge in a more relaxed and easily understood manner. Abdullah et al. (2023) state that informative content by SMIs contributes to understanding academic concepts and their real-world applications in adolescent lives. Although challenges to effectively fostering critical thinking still exist, overall, this finding proves that SMIs play a significant role in making the learning process more engaging, relevant, and responsive to the cognitive styles of the younger generation.

Based on the overall analysis in Table 4.7, it can be concluded that the positive influence of SMIs on adolescent behavior is at a high level, with an overall mean range between 3.72 and 3.83. All four analyzed elements recorded consistently high mean values, reflecting strong agreement among adolescents on the positive impact of SMIs.

This finding aligns with studies by Jyoth and Vinodh (2020), Lou and Yuan (2019), and Abdullah et al. (2023), which show that positive content from SMIs can contribute to a healthy lifestyle, foster optimistic attitudes, nurture ethical values, and increase interest in learning. Furthermore, the parasocial relationships formed between adolescents and SMIs, as described by Sokolova and Kefi (2019) and Ki et al. (2020), also play an important role in shaping adolescent behavior and value systems indirectly through imitation and social modeling.

However, despite the clear dominance of positive effects among study respondents, excessive dependence on SMI content still requires attention. Without sufficient digital literacy guidance, the potential for positive learning may be compromised by biased or one-sided information. Therefore, it is crucial to strengthen media literacy education among adolescents so that they can critically evaluate content and wisely choose constructive digital role models for long-term well-being.

Negative Effects of SMI on Adolescents

An analysis of the negative effects of SMI influence on adolescent behavior was also conducted through 20 questionnaire items divided into four elements: lifestyle, attitude,

ethics, and knowledge and education. Table 1.5 presents these findings in detail, illustrating the extent to which the items received agreement or disagreement from study respondents.

Table 5.

Negative Effects of SMI on Adolescents

No.	Item	STS	TS	KS	S	SS	Mean	SP	Level
Lifesytle							2.48	0.970	S
C2.1	I always compare my lifestyle to the luxurious lives highlighted by influencers	36 (22.0)	40 (24.4)	37 (22.6)	34 (20.7)	17 (10.4)	2.73	1.297	
C2.2	Influencer content makes me feel like I'm not good enough compared to others	40 (24.4)	35 (21.3)	50 (30.5)	33 (20.1)	6 (3.7)	2.57	1.167	
C2.3	I feel pressure to look perfect like an influencer on social media.	48 (29.3)	40 (24.4)	41 (25.0)	27 (16.5)	8 (4.9)	2.43	1.209	
C2.4	I'm sleep deprived from watching influencer content for too long	57 (34.8)	30 (18.3)	41 (25.0)	23 (14.0)	13 (7.9)	2.42	1.306	
C2.5	I eat fast food more often after seeing food promotions by influencers	59 (36.0)	35 (21.3)	42 (25.6)	25 (15.2)	3 (1.8)	2.26	1.154	
Attitude							2.09	0.981	L
C2.6	I get angry easily after seeing aggressive content from influencers	53 (32.3)	33 (20.1)	44 (26.8)	25 (15.2)	9 (5.5)	2.41	1.238	
C2.7	I tend to imitate the sarcastic communication style of influencers	79 (48.2)	33 (20.1)	30 (18.3)	19 (11.6)	3 (1.8)	1.99	1.140	
C2.8	Negative content from influencers makes me lose sympathy for others	80 (48.8)	33 (20.1)	31 (18.9)	16 (9.8)	4 (2.4)	1.97	1.137	
C2.9	I like to bully after watching influencer content	100 (61.0)	24 (14.6)	20 (12.2)	16 (9.8)	4 (2.4)	1.78	1.141	
C2.10	I feel sad after watching influencer content that is too perfect	61 (37.2)	32 (19.5)	40 (24.4)	23 (14.0)	8 (4.9)	2.30	1.239	
Ethics							2.49	0.879	L
C2.11	I don't evaluate the information shared by influencers before trusting them.	45 (27.4)	28 (17.1)	58 (35.4)	27 (16.5)	6 (3.7)	2.52	1.164	

C2.12	Influencers are dishonest when hiding paid content	21 (12.8)	18 (11.0)	64 (39.0)	37 (22.6)	24 (14.6)	3.15	1.191
C2.13	I rarely spend time with my family because I'm too focused on influencer content.	75 (45.7)	31 (18.9)	32 (19.5)	19 (11.6)	7 (4.3)	2.10	1.225
C2.14	Influencer content makes me confused about judging what is right or wrong	51 (31.1)	35 (21.3)	49 (29.9)	24 (14.6)	5 (3.0)	2.37	1.157
C2.15	Frequent viewing of influencer content caused me to neglect religious and social responsibilities such as praying, studying, and helping my parents with homework.	64 (39.0)	31 (18.9)	36 (22.0)	22 (13.4)	11 (6.7)	2.30	1.293

Knowledge and Education							2.39	1.018	L
C2.16	I believe information from influencers without verifying it	61 (37.2)	35 (21.3)	41 (25.0)	20 (12.2)	7 (4.3)	2.25	1.200	
C2.17	I procrastinated on schoolwork because I watched too much influencer content	73 (44.5)	21 (12.8)	39 (23.8)	21 (12.8)	10 (6.1)	2.23	1.304	
C2.18	Influencer entertainment content causes me to lose focus in learning	59 (36.0)	36 (22.0)	40 (24.4)	21 (12.8)	8 (4.9)	2.29	1.217	
C2.19	I am no longer interested in reading books or studying after following too much influencer content.	74 (45.1)	24 (14.6)	34 (20.7)	24 (14.6)	8 (4.9)	2.20	1.286	
C2.20	I am confused about the real facts because influencers are not experts in a field	31 (18.9)	23 (14.0)	44 (26.8)	49 (29.9)	17 (10.4)	2.99	1.273	
Overall Negative Effects							2.36	0.846	L

Indicators: STS = Strongly Disagree; TS = Disagree; KS = Disagree; S = Agree; SS = Strongly Agree; SP = Standard Deviation; ST = Very High; T = Height; S = Medium; R = Low; SR = Very Low

Source: Field study 2025

Lifestyle Elements

The lifestyle element comprises five questionnaire items (C2.1 to C2.5), which recorded a mean of 2.48 with a standard deviation of 0.970. This indicates a moderate level and suggests

that while negative influence from social media influencers (SMIs) on teenagers' lifestyles exists, it is not dominant. Item C2.1, which states *"I often compare my lifestyle with the luxurious lives portrayed by influencers"*, recorded the highest score (mean = 2.73, SD = 1.297). Although this item recorded the highest score in this element, it still falls within the moderate level, indicating that teenagers are not overly inclined to directly compare their lifestyles with the luxurious lives showcased by SMIs.

This finding reflects the ability of some teenagers, particularly those who are more mature, to critically assess content due to a higher level of media literacy (Hudders & De Jans, 2022). Furthermore, teenagers from more stable socioeconomic backgrounds are also reported to be more cautious in evaluating the authenticity of information, thereby reducing the negative impact of social comparison (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).

Meanwhile, item C2.5, *"I eat fast food more frequently after seeing food promotions by influencers"*, recorded the lowest score in this element (mean = 2.26, SD = 1.154). Although it falls within the low level, this finding still signals a tendency among teenagers to be affected in terms of sleep and eating habits due to excessive social media use. The study by Twenge et al. (2017) supports this finding, stating that high screen time can disrupt sleep patterns among teenagers. Additionally, Brown and Witherspoon (2002) emphasized that not all teenagers are influenced to imitate the eating habits promoted by SMIs due to varying levels of self-control and health awareness.

Overall, the lifestyle element shows a mean range from 2.26 to 2.73, reflecting a moderate level of negative influence. However, this moderate score does not necessarily indicate that SMIs exert a strong negative effect on teenagers' lifestyles. A significant number of teenagers may merely act as passive observers rather than active followers of SMI content. This is supported by Valkenburg and Peter (2011), who stated that not all social media users engage deeply with the content they consume; some simply watch without fully understanding or adopting the behaviors portrayed.

Attitude

The attitude element, in the context of negative effects, analyses five questionnaire items (C2.6 to C2.10), recording a mean score of 2.09 with a standard deviation of 0.981. This falls within the low level and indicates that the influence of social media influencers (SMIs) on negative attitudes among teenagers is minimal and not particularly significant. Item C2.6, *"I get angry easily after viewing aggressive content from influencers"*, recorded the highest score within this element (mean = 2.41, SD = 1.238), yet still remains at a low level. This finding suggests that only a small number of teenagers are emotionally affected when exposed to aggressive content, and overall, the negative influence is minimal.

However, this finding contrasts with the study by Tahir et al. (2020), which reported a higher mean score of 3.14 for the same item, indicating that in different demographic contexts, such as age and location, teenagers may be more emotionally affected by aggressive content from SMIs.

On the other hand, item C2.9, *"I like to bully others after watching influencer content"*, recorded the lowest score (mean = 1.78, SD = 1.141), falling within a very low level. This clearly

shows that teenagers are not directly involved in imitating bullying behavior as a result of SMI influence. This finding suggests that although SMI content may contain cynical or aggressive elements, the teenagers in this study do not tend to adopt such behaviors in the form of bullying or harsh communication.

This result contradicts studies by Okada et al. (2021) and McNamee et al. (2021), which showed that repeated exposure to aggressive content, such as violent challenges or sarcastic communication, can foster a tendency among teenagers to engage in social or verbal bullying. This difference may be linked to stronger social norms and higher levels of parental supervision in Malaysia, which help mitigate such negative tendencies among teenagers.

The study by Hamm et al. (2015) also noted that teenagers who follow SMIs with harsh communication styles are at higher risk of becoming perpetrators or supporters of cyberbullying, particularly as boundaries of civility in digital communication become increasingly blurred.

In conclusion, the attitude element recorded a mean range of 1.78 to 2.41, indicating that the negative influence of SMIs on teenagers' attitudes in this study is limited. Nevertheless, the contrast with previous international studies suggests that cultural context, level of exposure to aggressive content, and respondents' age groups can influence the variation in findings. Therefore, assessments of the negative effects of SMIs on teenagers' attitudes should take into account local context and differing socioeconomic backgrounds.

Ethics

The ethics element consists of five questionnaire items (C2.11 to C2.15), which recorded a mean score of 2.49 with a standard deviation of 0.879. This indicates a low level and suggests that the negative influence of social media influencers (SMIs) on teenagers' ethics is not alarming. Item C2.12, *"Influencers are dishonest when they hide paid content"*, recorded the highest score within this element (mean = 3.15, SD = 1.191), placing it at a moderate level. This finding shows that respondents are aware of transparency issues related to content shared by SMIs, particularly when paid promotions are disguised under the appearance of authenticity.

A study by Audrezet et al. (2020) supports this finding, noting that teenagers are becoming increasingly critical of branded content that is not clearly disclosed, which can affect their perception of the honesty and integrity of SMIs.

Meanwhile, item C2.13, *"I rarely spend time with my family because I am too focused on influencer content"*, recorded the lowest score (mean = 2.10, SD = 1.225), falling into the low level. This suggests that the influence of SMIs on the neglect of social and family values is not yet a major concern among the respondents in this study. However, this low mean score does not rule out the existence of a tendency toward the neglect of religious and social responsibilities, especially if SMI content becomes the main focus in teenagers' daily routines. A study by Khan and Sharma (2024) pointed out that parents have begun to observe a growing trend among their children to neglect basic practices such as prayer and family time due to an overconsumption of entertainment content from SMIs. Nevertheless, in the context of this study, such influence was not strongly felt among the respondents.

In conclusion, the ethics element recorded a mean range between 2.10 and 3.15, indicating a low to moderate level of negative influence—particularly related to content transparency issues and the potential neglect of social and religious values among teenagers.

Knowledge and Education

The final element is knowledge and education, which includes five questionnaire items (C2.16 to C2.20) that recorded a mean of 2.39 with a standard deviation of 1.018, indicating a low level and showing that the negative impact of SMI (Social Media Influencers) on adolescents' cognitive aspects is minimal. Item C2.20, "I am confused about the actual facts because influencers are not experts in a particular field," recorded the highest score in this element (mean = 2.99, SD = 1.273) and is at a moderate level. This finding indicates that some adolescents experience confusion in evaluating the authenticity of facts, especially when they overly rely on content shared by SMIs who lack expertise in specific fields. The study by Chetty et al. (2023) supports this finding by asserting that reliance on SMIs as sources of information poses a risk of exposing adolescents to inaccurate or mixed information.

The item related to learning influence that recorded a low score is item C2.19, "I am no longer interested in reading books or studying after following too much influencer content" (mean = 2.20, SD = 1.286). This finding aligns with Mohany's (2023) study, which showed that social media does affect academic focus, but the effect is not uniform and depends on the level of self-discipline among adolescents. In the context of this study, it is evident that the majority of respondents have a high level of self-discipline, making them less susceptible to negative influences in learning or academic achievement.

Overall, the knowledge and education element reflects a controlled negative influence, although there is some effect on the ability to evaluate facts and manage study time. Therefore, while the influence of SMIs on adolescents' cognitive and educational dimensions exists, its impact is seen as limited among the study respondents.

Based on the overall analysis of Table 4.8, it can be concluded that the negative influence of SMIs on adolescent behavior is at a low to moderate level, with a mean range between 1.78 and 3.15. Although there are some items indicating adolescents' awareness of issues such as information transparency (C2.12) and factual confusion (C2.20), the majority of the analyzed items are at a low level. These findings suggest that overall, the negative effects of SMIs are still under control among the study respondents.

The moderate to high standard deviation values in most items also signal that there is variation in responses among adolescents, indicating that while some are affected, others are not. This phenomenon is likely influenced by factors such as media literacy level, demographic background, and self-discipline, which play a role in determining adolescents' ability to assess and filter digital content.

These findings are consistent with studies by Lim et al. (2020) and Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019), which state that not all adolescents are easily influenced directly by negative SMI content, due to more critical information filtering and a high level of skepticism among them. However, comparisons with international studies such as Tahir et al. (2020), Okada et al. (2021), and Hamm et al. (2015) indicate that in certain demographic and cultural contexts,

aggressive and unethical content disseminated by SMIs can significantly affect attitude formation and disrupt adolescents' social responsibilities.

Therefore, even though this study's findings indicate that the negative influence of SMIs on adolescents is under control, the need for continuous monitoring and effective digital literacy education is crucial. This step aims to ensure that adolescents are equipped with the ability to critically assess content, thereby reducing the risk of exposure to more extreme negative influences in the future.

Conclusion

In addition to contributing to the understanding of factors that influence adolescents to follow social media influencers (SMIs), the findings of this study also explain how source credibility directly impacts adolescent behavior, whether in the form of positive or negative effects. Overall, positive effects were found to be more dominant, reflecting the influence of SMIs in enhancing motivation, shaping moral values, and expanding knowledge among adolescents. The strong appeal of SMIs—particularly in terms of visual communication and presentation style—is seen as a key factor contributing to these positive outcomes. However, when this appeal is not accompanied by ethical values and responsible content, adolescents are also at risk of negative effects such as shallow thinking, excessive imitation, and attitude changes. Therefore, source credibility in the social media ecosystem plays not only a role in capturing attention but also directly shapes the direction and quality of adolescent behavioral change. Overall, these findings affirm that in today's social media ecosystem, source credibility must be understood more dynamically—not merely in terms of trustworthiness and expertise, but also in relation to how well SMIs can build perceptions of being engaging, authentic, and approachable individuals.

Theoretical and Contextual Contributions

This study makes a significant contribution to the sociological literature on youth development by advancing the integration of classical socialization theories with the complexities of contemporary digital culture. Whereas traditional sociological paradigms predominantly emphasize the roles of primary socializing agents (such as family) and secondary agents (such as schools and peer groups), this research reconceptualizes social media influencers as a distinct and hybrid category of socializing agents. These influencers operate simultaneously across personal, commercial, and parasocial spheres, thereby mediating adolescent socialization in ways that transcend traditional spatial and institutional boundaries. From a theoretical standpoint, this study builds upon and extends social learning theory by demonstrating that adolescents engage with influencer content not merely through passive imitation but also via active negotiation, internalization, and resistance, processes that are mediated by their social positioning, digital literacy, and cultural context.

Furthermore, by critically examining both the emancipatory and adverse effects of influencer content—ranging from enhanced motivation, creativity, and identity formation to challenges such as body image dissatisfaction, consumerist tendencies, and the normalization of risk—this study complicates reductive binary frameworks that have often characterized media influence research. Contextually, it situates these sociocultural processes within the lived experiences of adolescents embedded in educational environments, where formal pedagogical practices are increasingly intertwined with informal, digitally-mediated

knowledge networks. This dynamic shapes students' self-concepts, academic engagement, and peer relationships in ways that remain underexplored within formal curriculum frameworks.

The findings underscore an urgent imperative for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers to critically engage with the sociocultural power of digital media—not solely as instructional tools but as pervasive structures that shape youth worldviews and behaviors. Ultimately, this study enriches theoretical discourses on adolescent socialization in the digital era and provides empirically grounded recommendations for the development of culturally responsive, critically informed, and media-literate educational frameworks.

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