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Social Media and Influencers; Trends & Effects on Holistic Development of Adolescents

Rohit Patidar*

Junior Research Fellow, Devi Ahilya University, India

***Corresponding Author:** Rohit Patidar, Junior Research Fellow, Devi Ahilya University, India.

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Abstract

Social Media use among teens specially YouTube, Instagram or Snapchat is on peak today, creators on these platforms are of diverse age groups but dominated by Teenagers and Young adults whom the audience of the same age find easy to relate with. This research seeks to figure out the viable fruits teenagers are able to consume from the help of Social Media and Influencers (SM&I) for the five aspects of their development i.e. 'holistic development', while briefly touching the type and category of content. In this descriptive research we used a quantitative survey to analyze the perception of teens about influencers and their effects on their development. The research is solely focusing on holistic development with social media uses trends and prevalence. It does not dwell on quality quantity and negative sides of this phenomenon. This could be observed after this survey research that adolescents in rural settings too are heavily using social media, impact of social media on teens is huge teens are not only using social media for Identity formation but for formative development as well.

Keywords: Social Media, Influencers, Holistic Development, Adolescents, Teens

Introduction

In today's world social media is demonstrating its multiple utilities across the field from Sales to Service, From Treatment to care, From Education to Career or from Tourism to Adventure one such significant utility can be noticed in the field of Adolescent learning and development. In some of the cases teens learn things which are crucial to their development like identity formation, relationship and intimacy development, competence and confidence building etc. but on the other hand it might have a bad influence too like glorifying foul language, use of alcohol, toxication, smoking etc.

Holistic development approach is a comprehensive approach to development it covers all aspects of human life, which is physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being [1]. It addresses the interconnectedness of these different dimensions and focuses on the importance of addressing all of them for achieving sustainable and equitable development, in this descriptive research we want to assess the impact of SM&I on teenagers' holistic development; while touching the trending categories of social media use, prevalence, dependence and major categories of content to figure out the impact these influencers on different channels have on teenage learning.

This research uses quantitative survey containing the question about the use, prevalence, frequency and prominent categories to understand the noticeable impact of SM&I on their development, specifically keeping their Physical, Mental, Social, Emotional and Spiritual development in mind.

Research Objectives

- To figure out the nature, category, utility, prevalence, of content and creators among teenagers.
- To point out their impacts on holistic development of teenagers,

Research Questions

- What are the most popular sources of content (if Independent Creator/Institutional and their content Niche)?
- What are the noticeable effects that social media shows on their holistic development (Physical, Mental, Social, Emotional, Spiritual)?

Important definition

- **Holistic Development:** According to Ministry of Education govt. of Singapore "Holistic development takes into account the whole child and emphasizes the importance of their physical, social, emotional, cognitive, moral, creative and aesthetic abilities. Every aspect of a child's development should be recognized and valued in order to maximize the potential of the child".
- **Social Media:** According to British Council "social media facilitates the sharing of ideas and information through virtual networks. From Facebook and Instagram to X platform (formerly Twitter) and YouTube, social media covers a broad universe of apps and platforms that allow users to share content, interact online, and build communities".
- **Social Media Influencers:** An influencer is a person who can influence the decisions of their followers because of their relationship with their audience and their knowledge and expertise in a particular area, e.g. fashion, travel or technology.

Literature Review

For this study I went through various research literature available at different platforms on Holistic development, Social Media Effects, YouTube and its utility, character development topics, to find out the already available knowledge about the subject. I got to know that some exciting trends have already been studied like Identity formation; Integration and Differentiation with society, personality formation etc. with the help of social media.

The holistic development approach to Adolescent Education is one of the most advanced among contemporary approaches, holistic education does not only fulfill the students but gratifies the teachers; this includes nature, sustainability and wildlife in its ambit [2]. Most advanced countries like New Zealand, Singapore etc. are following this approach In India this approach has been implemented. This review article by Brigita and Irina (2022) could help understand this better.

The impact of Youtube influencers on the teens: Influence of YouTubers on teenagers is significant, it could be from buying behavior to physical and mental wellbeing, sometimes to copying actions like foul language but overall they heavily rely on influencers and ask personal advice (Westernberg 2016) another study in Egypt suggests similar results, 33 Dülgerler & Bilgin (2022) suggested that influencers have a huge role in identity formation among teenagers; they describe this process among two headings i.e. Integration and Differentiation which are processes of recognizing themselves among a group of like-minded peers and distinguishing themselves from others respectively [3,4]. Influencer over the internet affects teenager's behavior in a distinctive manner; they tend to be honest with their audience and incite their positive impact on them [5].

Social media a tool for child's development: Research by Ah Ram and Hosley (2017) suggested that Peers found to experience facilitation between online and offline tools resulting in development of six traits i.e. 1. competence, 2. Confidence, 3. connection, 4. character, 5. compassion, and 6. Contribution which contributes to positive youth development. Another research by Reich and Subrahmanyam (2012) suggests that adolescents significantly use social media platforms for their development needs like building relationships, developing intimacy among others. The negative influence of SM&I should also be noted like Glorifying Smoking and Alcohol consumption, use of foul language etc. however this research is not covering this aspect [1].

Materials and Methods

In this research we conducted the quantitative survey on questions about social media preferences, use prevalence, favorite content category, favorite influencers, favorite platform along with quotations about likelihood of benefits they gained by using these platforms and following influencers on Likert scale, the participants were simply asked to fill out the form after giving the context of the research.

We took a sample size of 70 students. The sample population was chosen by random sampling method from a few schools of different villages situated in Madhya Pradesh, India. The socio-economic profile of this population is likely to be a lower to lower-middle income group from various castes and religions prevailing in the region. The age group is targeted to be adolescents between 12 years to 18 years old, gender diversity is ensured to be minimum 40% of female population while caste and religion diversity is ensured to be at least 20% of the population.

In the survey questionnaire 8 questions were asked about their preferred medium, content category, frequency of use and preferred influencer while 15 questions were asked about how they perceive their development in terms of five aspects of holistic development i.e., Physical, Mental, Social, Emotional and Spiritual.

We used MS Forms for these surveys and shared the link with students to fill out the form, the responses then collected and analyzed with the help of Advanced Excel, MS forms and various other tools.

The questions asked were listed below in the appendices. Link of the survey form containing the recorded response is also attached there.

Demographic Details

- Age: 12-19 Years old, the average age of sample population is 15.65
- Gender Ratio: Male 56% Female 44%
- Caste Category: General - 23%, OBC - 55%, ST - 9%, SC - 9%, Minority- 4%
- Social Category: Lower income to Lower Middle-Income Groups/Village Dwellers
- Grade of Education: 8th Grade to 12th Grade

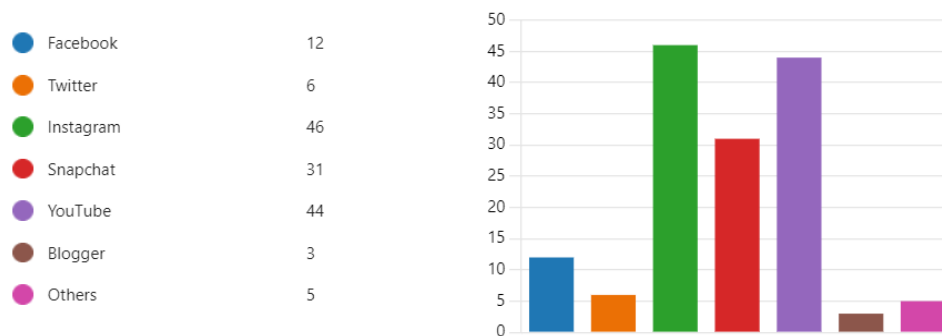
Observations & Findings

Key finding observed were listed below: The finding of this research can be categorized in three different vertices:

- Prevalence, Frequency of Social Media Use and Preferred Medium.
- Reasons to follow influencers top categories of Content and Influencers.
- Sentiments towards their development on five aspects.

Frequency and Prevalence and Preferred Medium

From the respondents surveyed 97% respondents use any type of Social Media account while 79% of them have accounts on one or more than one social media platform. Among various platforms Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube are Most popular platforms. In the poll type question Instagram is most favored with 31% votes, followed by YouTube with 30% and Snapchat with 21% Facebook got 8% votes and Twitter 4% only among virtual media platforms.



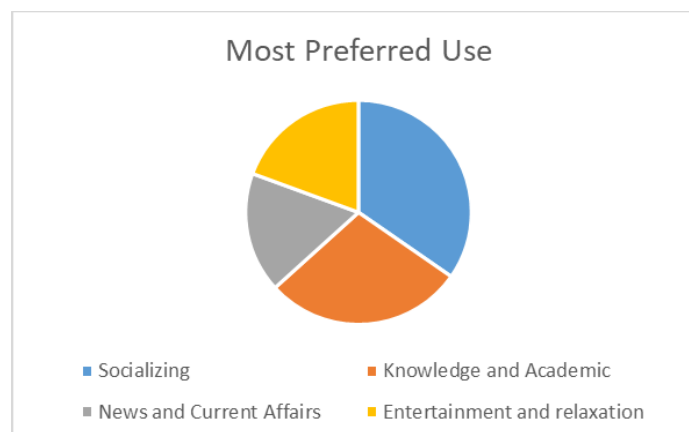
Figure

Out of surveyed respondents, 80% of the respondents said that they use Social Media at least once in a day, while 40% of them use it more than that. Only 20% respondents use Social media less frequently once or twice in a week.

61% of respondents say that they use social media less than 10 hours a week, 39% of them said that they use it more than that.

Reason to Follow Influencers, Top Categories of Influencers and Content

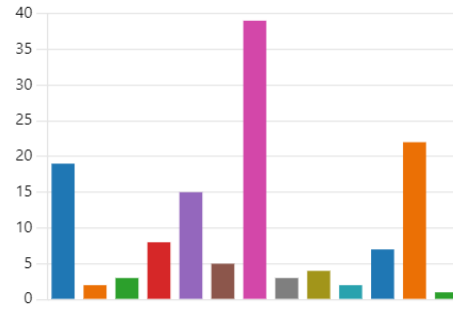
On the question "why do you follow internet influencers" Socializing is the most voted purpose with 35% vote, gaining knowledge and education is second with 29% vote share followed by Entertainment and relaxation with 19% and News, current affairs and updates with 17%.



Figure

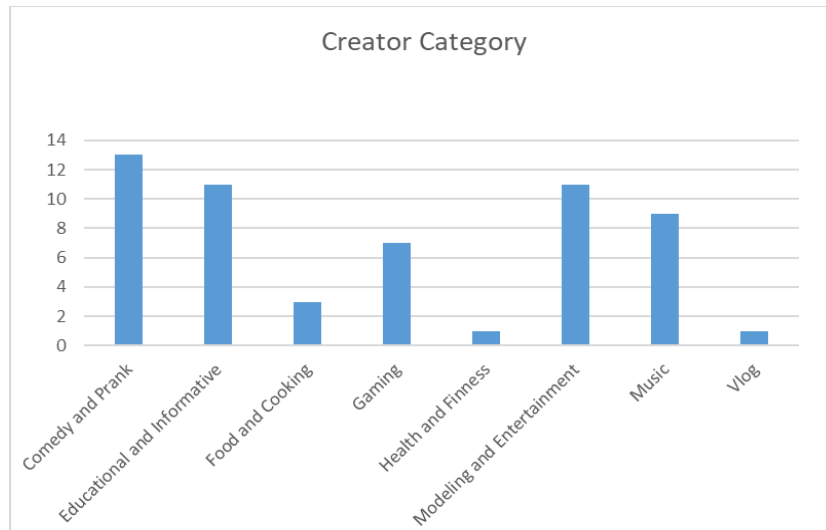
On the question of popular categories of content Music is most popular category with 30% votes, Followed by Education and Information with 17%, Gaming 15%, Health and Fitness 12%, Vlog 6%, Food and Cooking 5%, Prank and Challenges 4%, Comedy 3% among other.

Gaming	19
Make-up & Beauty	2
Reviews & Unboxing	3
Vlog	8
Health & Fitness	15
Prank & Challenges	5
Music	39
Travel and Adventure	3
Parody & Comedy	4
Tutorials	2
Food & Cooking	7
Educational and Informative	22
Other	1



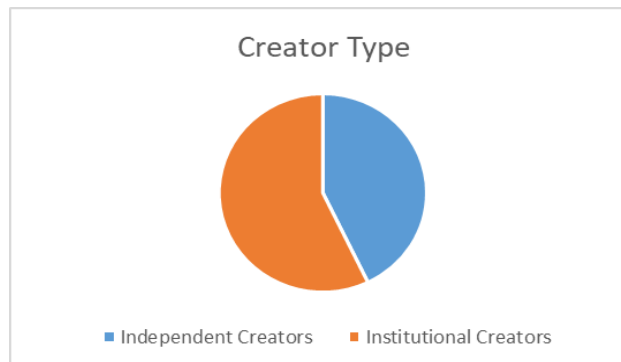
Figure

In the open-ended question about their favorite Instagram influencers, after analyzing the responses we find it out that most preferred category of creator is Comedy and Prank with 13 votes out of 56, second is Educational & Informative along with Modeling & Entertainment 11 votes each followed by Music with 9 votes and gaming with 7 Votes please visit through the chart.



Figure

If we categorize them in the category of independent creator vs Institutional Creators the division could be seen like this 24 out of 56 Creators are institutional while 32 are Independent. One more notable thing is most of the independent creators have a team of more than 1 individual.



Figure

Sentiments towards their development on five aspects.

- Physical
- Social
- Emotional

- Intellectual and
- Spiritual

• **Physical:** On the question of physical health 71% adolescents believe that they have learned physical exercises and they tried several at home, while 60% respondents believe that they search for different food, diet and health practices on the internet or social media. On questions about the effect on their Sleep, Rest and Metabolism the responses are mixed i.e., some says affected others believe not significantly.

• **Social:** On the aspect of social development, we asked three questions out of which one is about creating friendship and retaining it. 65.7% of respondents believed that social media and influencers helped them socialize and make more friends, approx. 67% agreed that they got consciousness about the importance of friendship and relationship thanks to social media. While approx. 66% students believe that understanding others emotion is crucial after and social media helped them acknowledge it.

• **Emotional:** On the question about emotional awareness more than 50% students agreed that they experienced better awareness with their own emotions post their encounter with social media & influencers or their content. The question about comedic sense got a mixed response with 43% neutral votes. While approx 76% of students denied the question about feeling shy after getting active on social media.

• **Intellectual:** 71.4% respondents agreed that their knowledge about surrounding world or real world got significant boost due to influence of social media and Influencers, approx. 52% students believe that they learned life skills like problem solving, and judging with the help of SM&I, approx. 70% feels their general knowledge to be boosted with the help of Social Media & Influencers.

• **Spiritual:** About 45% adolescents agree that they become familiar with the complex questions of life like where they came from and what is the purpose of life, 61.5% believe that why prayer is important and what is the meaning of its SM&I impacted largely their understanding of these. 62.5% of respondents felt that they understood the meaning of charity, forgiveness and good deeds on the internet.

Discussion

Observing the findings of this research this could be said that social media has huge prevalence among adolescents, its reach is wide, its effects are pervasive so can be said of its influence. If content adolescents are guided in an appropriate way, social media could help effectively develop various aspects of their personalities. The research about various interference is needs to be done to figure out the kind requirements.

Analysis & Conclusions

After observing the finding of this research following things can be concluded -

- Social media use among adolescents is pervasive and Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube are the three most popular channels among them. Almost all of the people of this age have social media handles and are active enough on the internet, most of them use the internet more than 5 hours a week.
- Socializing and knowledge acquisition are their favorite things to do on the internet followed by entertainment and getting updated with news and current events.
- Music is the highest consumed category of content followed by Education, Information, Gaming, Health and Fitness etc.
- Among content creators or Influencers Comedy, Education and Entertainment are the top categories that adolescents prefer. Regarding the type of creator Individual creators are most popular however institutions are more preferred when we talk about education or academics.
- After analyzing the sentiments this could be said that social media could be a game changer for adolescents in their own development as most of them are involved in physical exercises, food and diet, most of them are intrigued with the social world identifying their personality type, integrating and differentiating themselves in the society making personal and social bonds they get influenced over social media and it is playing a crucial role in their formative development. It is not only limited till their Physical, social and psychological life but it is more pervasive and adolescents are actively involved in their intellectual development considering social media as a tool. Spiritual development through social media could be debated but this research shows that spiritual values like charity, empathy, forgiving and tools like prayer and meditation could be a good point to start with their spiritual development aspect.

• **Supplementary Materials:** The following supporting information can be downloaded at: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1_26QrCbBdikWJaXazSKwTcmv1_4o3IUedit?usp=sharing&oid=109693201990333207958&rtfpof=true&sd=true .

• **Funding:** "This research received no external funding

• **Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

● **Data Availability Statement:** Data supporting this research can be find through the link given in Supplementary Material heading

● **Conflicts of Interest:** There is no conflict of interest involved in this research.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

Section A: Demographic Profile

In this section, we would like you to fill in some of your personal details. Please fill or tick your answer.

- Age: _____
- Gender
- Male
- Female
- Category
- General
- ST
- SC
- OBC
- Minority

● Class of Education

- 8th
- 9th
- 10th
- 11th
- 12th

Section B: Personal Usage of social media

Please fill or tick your answer.

Do you Use Any Type of Social Media?

- Yes
- No

Do you have One or More Social Media Handles on any Platform?

- Yes
- No

Which Social Media Sites do you Use? (Select All that Apply)

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram

- Snapchat
- YouTube
- Blogger
- Others

How Often do you Visit Social media of any kind including games?

- Once in a week
- Twice in a week
- Once in a day
- Twice in a day
- More than this

How Many Hours Do you Spend on the Internet in a Typical Week?

- 1-5 hours
- 5-10 hours
- 10-20 hours
- More than 20 hours

What are the Types of Content that you Commonly Watch or Consume?

- Gaming
- Make-up & Beauty
- Reviews & Unboxing
- Vlog
- Health & Fitness
- Prank & Challenges
- Music
- Travel and Adventure
- Parody & Comedy
- Tutorials
- Food & Cooking
- Educational and Informative

Why do you Use the Internet/Social Media?

- To constantly be updated on the current trends
- To socialize and make new friends
- As a source of entertainment and relaxation
- For knowledge and academic purposes

Can you Name your Favorite Influencers?

Section C: Social Media's Impact on their Development

Please select one that applies (Likert Scale)

- I learned different types of exercises on internet and I tried them at home
- I frequently search about different food, diet or health practices on internet
- My sleep gets disturbed due to mobile phone and social media
- Social media helped me make more friends and retain the older ones better
- Social media made me better aware with importance of friendship and relationship
- Supporting each other is a good thing I learned this better via social media
- Social media made me more shy
- Social media helped me become more sensitive towards others problem
- I am more aware with my own emotions because of social media
- I gained a lot of knowledge about the real world with the surrounding world
- My general knowledge increased significantly due to social media
- My life skills like problem solving, Comprehending and judging things improved
- I am aware about complex life questions life where I came from and what is the purpose of my life thanks to social media
- I meditate/pray to God daily after understanding its meaning on the internet.
- I am better knowledgeable about the importance of forgiveness, charity and moral values thanks to social media.