How do influencers impact teenagers through social media?

Over the past years, influencers have populated massively in numbers as social media has become accessible world-wide, meaning there are more influencers on platforms promoting ideas and themselves, therefore they are reflecting on the youth and society depending on what they post. In today's day and age, it is unlikely that there is a possibility to ignore this world that has nearly moved fully digitally in every way. Social media have become powerful as its impossible to overlook them in any way.

"*Social media influencers are individuals who have built large and active audiences within online platforms like Instagram, TikTok and Twitter. An influencer would have developed a trustworthy online presence and can share their opinions on a product or brand which will encourage their followers to make a purchase or drive interaction on their page*" (Birmingham City, n.d.)

These influencers would usually come from a normal background, being an ordinary person sometimes after posting a certain video or post and going viral end up becoming an influencer or many times they are a hardworking ordinary person trying their best to engage with some fans and stay active on platforms.

"*They make regular posts about that topic on their preferred social media channels and generate large followings of enthusiastic, engaged people who pay close attention to their views.*" (Geyser, W. 2022).

One very famous influencer called *"Mr Beast"* that is on YouTube he has *"128M Subscribers"* meaning that is a wide population of people around the world look up to him and watch his daily videos, each video has up to *"100 million"* views. He is an American influencer at the age of 24 years he has been able to leave an effect on all generations. His real name is Jimmy Donaldson.

The positive impact influencers have on youth are helping them indirectly without wanting anything in return by becoming individuals role models and people them look up at.

"*Influencers can be role models who inspire young people to pursue their passions, strive for success, and live healthy and fulfilling life. Influencers can be role models who inspire young people to pursue their passions, strive for success, and live healthy and fulfilling life*." (Anon, 2022)

From this source we can infer that even resources and other research infer that influences have a positive impact on the youth. For example, when an influencer posts positive thinking, healthy diets the youth watching and admiring their lifestyle they are more determined to try and involve it in there day to day life's. Bringing healthy changes to a regular basic routine can make the people from the youth take healthy decisions and pursue new admiration in trying to work hard. Moreover, many influences are very helpful for individuals for when they share their personal stories, traumas and health journeys it benefits them as it keeps them away from stress and depression, reminding them that they are not alone and there are many people around them and us going through similar situations and challenges.

The negative impact influencers have on the youth is making them find defaults in themselves, helping them develop new insecurities and damaging their mental health. Making them develop false expectations they think they need to reach up to under different sectors for example lifestyle, *"False beauty standards,"* "*figure-size*" *(Azeem, A. 2022).* and routine. This then effects their education progress.

"*Children and teenagers have enough peer pressure from in-person interactions without adding stress from social media influencers. Since influencers often present a clean, shiny, and fun version of their lives,*

it can create a sense of comparison for young followers. This increased <u>social comparison has been linked</u> <u>to anxiety, depression, sleep issues, and negative body image</u> *among youth." (Zapal, H. 2022).*

This source helps infer the fact that many influencers only show what they want they don't show behind scenes and that's when it creates a standard mentally individuals head that they feel like they desperately need to reach to be able to fit in the society and not get bullied or picked on for not reaching that expectation that society has for them but they influencers have created these expectations for the youth not society. Due to the *"peer pressure"* they receive indirectly it is reflected in many ways either in reducing their focus or in their lack of communication or academic progress in schools.

Influencers are an open reason to why many teenagers in adolescent years to major decisions of their life in which it could affect their lives as adults. They tend to lose interest in education as even sources state *"Reward sensitivity states that social influence has such dramatic effects on adolescent risk-taking" (Tomkins and Eatough, 2018).* With the help of this resource, we can put together the idea that influences do play a big part in teenagers' life's without controlling them physically but training their mind mentally through the posts and videos they post on regular basis, making them take decisions which tend to be "*risky*" as they don't understand what the bigger picture looks like.

Very well-known people and famous celebrities have also stated their beliefs and feelings towards influencers in general. Whilst researching about influencers I came across a website which states *"Influencers aren't robots, they're people." (Influencer, 2017)* this is a valid point to why they are more prone to make *"make mistakes — really, really, really dumb mistakes — all the time"* because they are basic human beings trying to make a little money for living by posting videos and posts to get more followers. Meaning posting snaps that they think will give them more views, they tend to forget if it is healthy or unhealthy for the society and if it is going to benefit the youth or destroy them mentally.

Moreover, there has been a recent case study to when "*the decision-making of reality TV star Scott Disick (…) accidentally posted (to his nearly 20-million Instagram followers) a private message between him and Bootea, the company paying him to be an influencer" (Influencer, 2017)* this is where people need to realise that online world can be fake and gives fake hope, building fake standards in the innocent maturing minds of teenagers. Damaging them in building insecurities and lower self-esteem before even seeing the reality of the big world and of all they different people with different beauty standards, body type, figure size and lifestyle.

Back to the beginning, the main benefits manufacturers and businesses have because of social media influencers is that the societies youth get to find out about new products and get to hear honest reviews about products and new launched sales quicker through these influencers before businesses usually would through advertising. As the 21st century we tend to look online for honest product reviews before going out our way and buy them especially after watching one advert where 10/10 times they make the product look and sound very good this makes it *"increasingly difficult for brands to get attention on the Internet" (GRIN, 2019).*

Overall, this essay finishes with the conclusion that influencers have both positive and negative effects on teenagers. Now it depends on individuals how they treat influencers either as role models or some to get honest reviews from. They should always try to remind themself that "*don't always know what these influencers are about and what they stand for*" (*Liebenson, D. 2021*) meaning they should do separate

research themselves and not believe each word as we unaware of what is happening behind the screen. We shouldn't dwell on all the negatives of social media influencers as there is many positives such as promoting good health lifestyles, diets and behaviour which come initially help individuals in the future through their adult life.

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