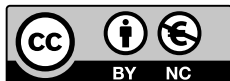


Disconnected: parental ignorance vs. the relevance of influencers in adolescents' lives.

Desconectados: el desconocimiento parental frente a la relevancia de los influencers en la vida de los adolescentes



ARTICLE



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Abstract:

This study analyzes parents' knowledge about the effect of influencers on their children's lives. Twenty semi-structured dyadic interviews were conducted with parents and children aged 11 to 17 in Spain. Topics such as perceptions of social media, relationships with influencers, and their impact were explored. The results reveal a generational digital gap, where parents minimize the reach of influencers in their children's lives, limiting their mediating role. The study concludes that there is a significant discrepancy between parents' perceptions of influencers and their actual impact on their children. While influencers play a key role in shaping adolescents' values, habits, and aspirations, adults tend to underestimate their importance, making effective mediation difficult. Reducing this gap is essential to fostering critical digital consumption.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, parental mediation, media literacy, social media, adolescents, digital divide.

Resumen:

Este estudio analiza el conocimiento de las madres y los padres sobre la influencia de los

influencers en la vida de sus hijos. Se realizaron veinte20 entrevistas semiestructuradas en diadas con progenitores/as e hijos/as de entre 11 y 17 años en España. Se abordaron temas como la percepción de las redes sociales, la relación con los influencers y su impacto. Los resultados evidencian una brecha digital generacional, donde las madres y los padres minimizan el alcance de los influencers en la vida de sus hijos, al limitarlimitando su capacidad mediadora. El estudio concluye la presencia de una brecha significativa entre lo que los padres perciben sobre los influencers y el impacto real que tienen en sus hijos. Mientras que los influencers desempeñan un papel clave en la formación de valores, hábitos y aspiraciones de los adolescentes, los adultos tienden a subestimar su importancia, lo que dificulta una mediación efectiva. Cabe destacar que es necesario reducir esta brecha para fomentar un consumo digital crítico.

Palabras clave: Marketing de influencers; mediación parental; alfabetización mediática; redes sociales; adolescentes; brecha digital.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Spain, the use of social networks has grown steadily in recent years. According to data from Statista (2023), 90% of users between 16 and 24 years of age use at least one social platform. In general terms, 80% of people use these networks mainly as a hobby (Statista, 2024). On the other hand, IAB Spain (2023) points out that, in the case of adolescents aged 12 to 17, 89% use social networks for entertainment purposes, 65% to interact, and 43% recognize that these platforms have influenced their purchasing decisions.

The accounts most followed by teenagers are those of family and friends. However, 82% of respondents claim to follow influencers, especially on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. This fact reflects the key role played by these commercial figures in the lives of young people, who not only see them as intermediaries between brands and consumers but also as aspirational referents and sources of inspiration, information, and role models (Silva *et al.*, 2021; Zozaya-Durazo *et al.*, 2023a).

Given the significant influence of these referents in the development of young people, it is crucial to analyze the interest and supervision of mothers and fathers regarding the content followed by their children. This is especially relevant because of the parental mediation they can exert in the digital consumption of adolescents, an aspect that this study seeks to explore.

The involvement of adults in their children's digital environment becomes a crucial factor in mitigating the adverse effects of adolescents' digital exposure. Moreover, they can foster critical use of social networks by promoting skills such as advertising literacy and informed decision making (Evans *et al.*, 2018; Yang *et al.*,

2017). On the other hand, adults who actively use social networks develop a more critical understanding of the content their children consume, allowing them to implement more effective mediation strategies. However, a mismatch in perceptions between mothers/parents and children has been observed, which may limit productive dialogue about digital consumption and weaken the mediating role of adults (Lafuente-Pérez *et al.*, 2025).

This article proposes to explore the level of knowledge that mothers and fathers have about the prevalence of influencer marketing in their children's lives. Through interviews with parents and children, we seek to identify adults' perceptions of influencers and their relevance, as well as the influence they have on adolescents' daily lives. The research is based on the premise that a better understanding by adults of the impact of influencers can strengthen their ability to mediate their children's digital consumption, thus contributing to a safer and more enriching digital experience.

2. EFFECTIVENESS OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON ADOLESCENTS

In recent years, influencers, known as SMI (Social Media Influencers), have established themselves as key figures in the commercial arena, collaborating with brands to promote products and services on digital platforms. Influencer marketing has gained relevance due to its high competitiveness, based on its effectiveness and return on investment. Studies have pointed out that the impact of advertising generated by these creators lies in the connection their followers establish with them. "Influencers are agents that have a great capacity for dissemination because they have accumulated many

followers. Their activity shapes trends, disseminates content, and influences consumer behavior” (Rodriguez-Amat, 2024, p. 17). To strengthen this connection, SMIs combine commercial content with aspects of their personal lives, creating narratives that favor a more authentic interaction by simulating a friendly relationship with their audience (Chung & Cho, 2014; Lou & Kim, 2019). Furthermore, it is worth highlighting that the effect of influencers on youth can transcend the realm of marketing and product promotion, by also extending to influencing ideologies and political opinions. Thus, the influencer becomes “an opinion leader on products, places and ideas” (Acosta & Sanchez, 2024, p. 77).

The consolidation of influencers as new opinion leaders in the digital ecosystem has transformed the communication and decision-making processes of contemporary society. Traditionally, opinion leaders emerged from specific fields such as politics, entertainment, or journalism and exerted their influence through the mass media (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 2006). However, with the increasing interactivity of social networks, influencers have assumed a central role in the dissemination of information, acting as key intermediaries between the original broadcasters and the final audience (Thelwall *et al.*, 2022). Their ability to generate content that is perceived as authentic and the closeness projected to their followers gives them a level of credibility and persuasiveness that in many cases exceeds that of traditional media (Audrezet *et al.*, 2020; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). This change reconfigures the dynamics of influence, where the relationship between sender and receiver is no longer unidirectional, but framed in a network of constant and bidirectional interactions (McQuail, 1997).

In this new paradigm, influencers not only amplify messages but also reinterpret, filter, and adapt them to the expectations and needs of

their followers; they become mediators between the original sources and the final audience (Lou & Kim, 2019). This process of filtering and curating content reinforces their role in shaping public opinion and building trends, from consumption to participation in sociopolitical debates. Unlike traditional opinion leaders, whose authority was based on formal credentials or institutional recognition, influencers build their influence on trust and personal identification with their audience (Kamins *et al.*, 1989; Schouten *et al.*, 2020). In this way, social networks have redefined the very concept of opinion leadership and have given a central role to figures that operate at the intersection between digital communication, product marketing, and the shaping of values and lifestyles (Silva *et al.*, 2021).

The concept of parasociality, introduced by Horton and Wohl (1956), describes the perception of a close relationship with a media figure. Social networks have intensified this phenomenon by allowing imaginary connections to develop rapidly, thanks to the time invested and frequency of influencers' posts. Hyperconnectivity, marked by the simultaneous consumption of visual and audio content during other activities, also reinforces this dynamic (Lepa & Seifert, 2016; Torre & Reed, 2019). Unlike traditional media, these platforms allow users to establish more active communication practices with influencers (Lacalle *et al.*, 2021). “The importance of SMIs lies in the influence they exert on key consumer groups, as is the case with teenagers and young people, who no longer use traditional media” (Sádaba *et al.*, 2024, p. 3).

In addition to being brand promoters, SMIs act as sources of information, entertainment, and inspiration for teenagers (Lou & Yuan, 2019). The parasocial relationship explains how influencers manage to influence the beliefs and behaviors of their followers through different con-

tent formats, such as posts, stories, and videos, consolidating them as defining broadcasters for young audiences (Lou & Kim, 2019).

The impact of influencers on adolescents is mainly manifested in their behavior, habits, and language due to the atmosphere of closeness generated by parasocial interaction: they adopt behaviors and lifestyles promoted by influencers, from how they interact on social networks to consumption decisions. For example, they replicate routines or practices that they consider aspirational, such as exercise habits, eating habits, or fashion patterns. Adolescents incorporate expressions and ways of speaking of their favorite influencers, reflecting how these figures can even influence cultural and identity aspects. These adaptations strengthen their sense of belonging to a community that shares common interests (Zozaya-Durazo *et al.*, 2023b).

As Knoll *et al.* (2015) point out, the effect of this closeness increases trust in the influencer's messages, which positions them as effective intermediaries for brands. The perception of authenticity and familiarity reinforces the impact on teens' decisions and behaviors.

3. MOTHER AND FATHER MEDIATION

Due to the relevance of influencers for adolescents, and the literary evidence that highlights the importance of parental mediation, exploring the interest of their guardians in their consumption routine has a determining academic and social value. Adults' mediation regarding their children's digital exposure can mitigate adverse effects on them, which plays a key role in avoiding risks and ensuring a flattering digital experience (Collier *et al.*, 2016). In the case of social networks, because the devices are usual-

ly personal, monitoring or viewing as a whole is difficult (Dans & Muñoz, 2021).

The level of parental mediation varies depending on their understanding of the digital environment and their perception of risks. Some parents may actively engage through co-browsing or discussions with their children about influencer content, while others prioritize concerns such as cyberbullying or online predators over digital advertising. Mediation models can be "grouped into three types, restrictive, based on imposing rules and limits; accompanying, focused on guiding and explaining; and permissive" (Lafuente-Pérez *et al.*, 2025, p. 5).

Active mediation, such as co-browsing and setting digital consumption rules, helps improve adolescents' advertising literacy and ability to identify sponsored content (Evans *et al.*, 2018; Yang *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, adults who actively use social networks not only develop a more critical understanding but also implement active mediation strategies, such as clear rules and co-browsing, which strengthen adolescents' media literacy skills (Hsieh *et al.*, 2018; Evans, 2014). In contrast, mothers or fathers with passive social media use tend to rely on third parties to address digital risks, which may leave adolescents more vulnerable to influencers' persuasion strategies (Fadda *et al.*, 2017).

Although adults' understanding of advertisements disguised as organic content may be limited, mothers and fathers are an essential filter. They can be considered "gatekeepers" of their children's exposure to persuasive online messages (Cornish, 2014). Due to the aforementioned, this research aims to know the degree of knowledge parents have about the incidence of influencer marketing in their children's lives. For this purpose, the study poses the following research questions:

RQ1: How do mothers and fathers perceive the figure of influencers, and how do these perceptions affect their mediation in the digital environment of their teenage children?

RQ2: What evidence do adolescents provide about the impact of influencers on their daily habits and behaviors?

The following table details the questions asked of parents and children:

Table 1

Details of the interview questions

Questions to adolescents	Questions to progenitors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you understand by an influencer? Why? - How do you feel about influencers talking about brands? Why? - Why do you think influencers talk about brands? Are they experts or just giving their opinion? Do you believe what the influencer says? - Do you like the influencer talking about specific products? - How do you feel about influencers collaborating with brands and saying so? Do you think that whenever they do, they always tell? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you know any influencers? Do you follow them, and what do you think of the content they generate? - Does your child follow any influencers? Do you consider these celebrities to have any influence on your child? - Do you think your child realizes when they are consuming entertainment, disclosure, or advertising on networks? - Do you think they differentiate well between different content, for example, in the case of influencers?

4. METHODOLOGY

For this study, virtual dyadic interviews were conducted with twenty minors between the ages of 11 and 17, and with each of their parents. Interviews have proven to be an appropriate tool for collecting testimonies from children and adolescents, as at this age they are considered to have the necessary skills to maintain a successful verbal exchange (Zarouali *et al.*, 2019). This methodological approach responds to the need for new qualitative studies that allow us to explore human digital skills in more depth, including those related to critical competence (Van Deursen *et al.*, 2016).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with an average duration of 30 minutes (slightly shorter for minors, between 20 and 25 minutes). An interview script was designed to discuss the following topics with minors and parents: perceptions of social networks (use, exposure, opportunities, and risks), relationship with influencers, and misinformation on social networks. This study analyzes the block dedicated to influencers, in which two topics related to the research questions were addressed: awareness of the phenomenon and its identification. In order to facilitate the accuracy of the answers, real examples, both minors and parents, were chosen to guide the questions and answers. The interviewer mentioned the names of content creators and real practices in order to put the interviewees in context.

4.1 SAMPLE

The 40 interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams or Zoom platforms between November 2021 and April 2022. Minors were interviewed first, followed by their father or mother. During the interview, participants were asked not to be together in the same room to avoid mutual influences and allow each interviewee to express themselves freely. In the case of the minors, eleven girls and nine boys were interviewed; four were in the 6th grade of primary school, six were in the first cycle of CSE, eight were in

the second cycle of CSE, and two were in high school. In the case of progenitors, participation was predominantly female, with a predominant presence of mothers in the interviews (16 mothers). Regarding the socioeconomic level of the participating families, five belonged to a high level (income over 30,000€); ten to a medium level (between 11,450€ and 30,350€); and five to a low level (less than 11,450€), according to data from the National Statistics Institute (Andrino *et al.*, 2021).

The sample was selected from a previous phase of a research project of which this study is part. In that phase, 62 minors, organized in twelve focus groups, were consulted about their use and exposure to social networks (references are not cited to ensure anonymous review). From these families, twenty were selected who agreed to continue participating in the project and who met the filter variables defined for this qualitative stage: age, gender, and socioeconomic level.

To protect the integrity of the study participants and the researchers, authorization was requested from both legal guardians and minors to collect information. Adults signed an informed consent form, while minors were asked for verbal consent. All documents linked to the research project were previously reviewed and validated by the university's Ethics Committee. As for storage, personal data were anonymized to avoid identification of participants, and were safeguarded under restricted access only to authorized researchers.

5. RESULTS

The most relevant results of the twenty pairs of interviews are extracted below, where the level of coincidence of the answers between parents and their children is analyzed.

5.1 ADULTS' PERCEPTION OF THE INFLUENCERS THAT THEIR CHILDREN FOLLOW

To resolve research RQ1: How do mothers and fathers perceive the figure of influencers, and how do these perceptions affect their mediation in the digital environment of their adolescent children, the adults' responses are analyzed. It is observed that most of them, regardless of the grade their children are in, devalue the role of influencers and even ridicule their work: "well, it seems absurd to me, that is, what they are doing (...) totally absurd" (Mother of a 6th grade boy, mid socioeconomic status). "On the other hand, the contents are a bit pathetic" (Father of girl, second cycle CSE, high socioeconomic status). "To me, it seems like nonsense" (Father of girl, high school, mid socioeconomic status).

Adults not only refer to influencers in a derogatory manner, but also to those who follow them, "but to me, following a family to see what they do, to see I don't know what, seems silly" (Mother of a boy, 6th grade, high socioeconomic status). The perception that mothers and fathers have about influencers is due to a lack of information about the digital world of their children and a lack of knowledge about the content they follow on social networks, as follows:

"And do you know if your daughter follows any influencer?" (Interviewer).

"I don't know, eh, but I don't think so" (Mother of girl, 2nd cycle CSE, low socioeconomic status).

"Man, I think so, I don't know if he follows them daily or if she follows them, but he does know them...I don't remember the names now [Laughs]... the one who rang the bells" (Father of

boy, 2nd cycle CSE, low socioeconomic status).

“As far as I know, no, she doesn’t follow any influencer (...) She does follow youtubers, this guy... Ibai, maybe?” (Mother of girl, 2nd cycle CSE, low socioeconomic status).

While adults discredit the value of influencers: “They seem like so much bullshit to me. I don’t really care about this” (Mother of a boy, 2nd cycle CSE, middle socioeconomic status), young people value the work and effort behind these content creators: “an influencer, first of all, has worked hard to get to where they are. In other words, no influencer has arrived overnight. They have taken years to progress” (Boy, 6th grade, high socioeconomic status). In addition, they consider that they are people with criteria who provide value and promote engaging and valuable products: “for example, Ibai, you see him and you say, he is not a person who says things without thinking, he seems to be a pretty sensible person (Girl, 2nd cycle CSE, low socioeconomic status). “Influencers or celebrities usually promote more, I don’t know, serious things” (Boy, 2nd cycle CSE, middle socioeconomic status).

Of the 20 interviews conducted, only one parent was found to show greater commitment to the digital education of their children in relation to the influence of content creators.

For example, when they address teenagers... saying swear words, for example... I have taken it away from my son. He sometimes doesn’t understand, “bah, but he just said... such and such. And that’s what they say in my class, or you sometimes say it”, I say, ‘yes, but I understand that a content aimed at children your age should not say swear words’ It’s my opinion, that’s how I have

been educated and that’s how I do it. Or at least I, when I teach, and I address the students, no matter how angry I am, I try not to swear. And then it is true that there is content such as that famous guy who was walking down the street, teasing people, and got a slap... I think that is of the worst quality. They are not looking for anything positive for the entertainment of the broadcaster, but rather to keep people entertained or fascinated (Father of a boy, 1st cycle CSE, middle socioeconomic status).

5.2 EFFECT OF INFLUENCERS ON THE LIFE OF TEENAGERS

To resolve research RQ2, What evidence do adolescents provide about the effect of influencers on their daily habits and behaviors, we first studied the responses of mothers and fathers to identify the knowledge they have about the effect that influencers have on their children’s lives. On the other hand, the effect of influencers on the lives of minors is investigated by analyzing the responses of adolescents, in order to understand the influence of content creators according to their own observations and perceptions.

As shown in Table 2, most adults consider that influencers have no authority over their children, while others think that they influence them, but only in superficial matters (Table 3).

Contrary to what mothers and fathers think, children have a powerful emotional bond with content creators. They are a reference for their children and have an impact on several aspects, such as their tastes and purchases, and the way they dress. Moreover, they also influence what they buy, what they read, and the clothes they wear. They also influence their language,

Table 2

Influencers' effect on children I

Influencers do not have any effect on their children	INTERVIEWER: Do you consider that they have any influence on your child?	No, no, not really (Mother of girl, 1st CYCLE CSE, MID SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS).
		I don't know, it's just that she, I tell you, I leave her the phone number and since she has to study and everything, I don't know what.... I just tell her to be careful and that's all (Mother of girl, HIGH SCHOOL, MID SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS).
		No. I don't think so, I think he just thinks it's funny the way he is, what he says, the jokes, but I don't think he has any influence at all (Mother of boy, 6th grade PRIMARY, MID SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS).
		No. Maybe some joke, some phrase, something that we can highlight, but in terms of behavior or behavioral change, I don't think so (Mother of boy, 2nd CYCLE CSE, MID SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS).

Source: Own elaboration (2024).

the video games they play, and what they play, as shown in Table 4.

As shown in Tables 2, 3, and 4, the level of agreement between adults' and minors' responses is very low.

Content creators strongly influence their digital communities, and young people spend many hours on social media. They even admit to watching and listening to them while doing other activities, such as studying ("well, my mom doesn't know this, but when I was studying for the written driving test, I had Ibai in the background, the video popped up and I played it in the background. I think so, I'm going to try to convince my family to watch them with him"

Table 3

Influencers' effect on children II

Influencers only influence their children in superficial things	INTERVIEWER: What type of influence does he/she have on your child?	He wants to have the same hairstyle; he wants to dress the same. Even recently, I had to make him a hairstyle like one of them (Mother of boy, 6th grade PRIMARY, HIGH SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS).
		She may have some kind of influence in terms of fashion, clothes, where to buy them, in that sense, but of course I don't know (Mother of girl, 1st CYCLE, MID SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS)..
		Yes, it is true that they influence them, but I think it influences them a little, or maybe I want to see it that way, because the clothes they wear, or he wants to know them (Mother of girl, 1st CYCLE, MID

Source: Own elaboration (2024).

(Girl, high school, mid socioeconomic status). Furthermore, from the interviews, it is inferred that many adults are unaware of how much time their children spend consuming content on social media.

Adolescents believe that influencers bring something positive to them through recommendations, entertainment, or relevant information. Some of these beliefs are shown in Table 5, which presents the adolescents' responses about how they are influenced by social media influencers (SMIs). (Table 5)

Table 4

Influencers' effect on children III

Influence on shopping and video game consumption	<p>INTERVIEWER: What type of influence do they have on you?</p>	<p>Maybe... of recommendations and products. For example, a piece of clothing, perhaps. Thanks to the fact that a person I follow has seen it, and I like their style, well, I decide if I like it, if I don't like it, if I decide to buy it, if not, and with that it can also be... books... or... anything else, actually (Girl, 2nd cycle CSE, mid socioeconomic status).</p>
		<p>Influencers, now you see them wearing a T-shirt, and you also say, "That's cool. I'll buy it" (Girl, 1st cycle, mid socioeconomic status).</p>
		<p>They show the clothes, whatever it is, and if a person likes them, maybe they end up buying them (Girl, 1st cycle, mid socioeconomic status).</p>
		<p>A person who really influences society and sometimes even manages to change certain people's habits or tastes. Influencer, in an unconscious way, affects me in terms of the language they use. I don't know some new expressions that they adopt, which I think are cool, and which my friends also know, above all. And beyond the language, and they have a lot of influence on those of us who like video games, the video games we play. Very much so, because, of course, it becomes quite... the videos they make become quite viral, then we start playing that and that. And of course, we are still playing it for a long time (Boy, 2nd cycle CSE, mid socioeconomic status).</p>

Source: Own elaboration (2024).

6. DISCUSSION

In addition to revealing the digital divide between the two groups interviewed, the results highlight the significant relevance of content creators in adolescents' online consumption habits, as well as in their way of speaking, downloading programs or online applications, and so on. While this finding is confirmed by other studies (Silva *et al.*, 2021; Zozaya-Durazo *et al.*, 2023a), the present research also brings to light the distinction between two types of consumption: active consumption and passive consumption. The former refers to instances where adolescents specifically watch content from social media influencers (SMIs) and even guide their families to watch it together; the latter refers to situations in which, despite engaging in other activities, they still interact with the content, at least in audio format. This way, they listen to influencers while performing other tasks such as studying. This behavior is also present among adult audiences and, although it is categorized as a superficial and fragmented listening experience (Lepa & Seifert, 2016; Torre & Reed, 2019), it is interesting to observe how, from an early age, users choose the company of influencers to carry out individual and non-digital tasks.

Influencers not only inspire purchasing decisions but also influence adolescents' language, expressions, and behavior, as supported by various studies on the subject (Maldonado *et al.*, 2024; Moral & Olivares, 2024; Ruíz *et al.*, 2025). This highlights their role as agents of socialization whose influence extends beyond mere entertainment. This finding reinforces previous studies on the ability of influencers to shape young people's preferences and behaviors by acting as opinion leaders in the digital age (Zozaya-Durazo *et al.*, 2023a). On the other hand, the results show that some parents tend

Table 5*Influencers' effect on children IV*

Positive influence and recommendations	I think there are like different types of influencers. First, there are the positive influencers, right? The ones that help you, motivate you, or, for example, keep you informed every week about what's happening, like positive things. I follow a girl who always shares positive news happening around the world. And also another one who introduces you to NGOs and how you can help. (Girl, high school, mid socioeconomic status).
Influence on the way of speaking	The influencer I like has published four books, and I've read them all. (Girl, 6th grade, high socioeconomic status).
Downloading online programs or apps	That's how that person's content spreads—like, if that person uses a word a lot, then people start using it, and a lot of people end up saying it. (Boy, 1st cycle of CSE, mid socioeconomic status).
Entertainment and usefulness	Once, I think they talked about an app, and I installed it because it seemed interesting, but that was it. (Girl, 2nd cycle of CSE, low socioeconomic status).
Entertainment and usefulness	Personally, I love those who make videos about fashion, alternative stuff, and make-up, and that's it. Those are the influencers I follow (...) I find them useful, they serve a purpose for me, or they're just really entertaining to watch, you know, for me. (Girl, 2nd cycle of CSE, mid socioeconomic status)

Source: Own elaboration (2024).

to minimize or deny the influence of influencers, attributing their impact solely to superficial aspects. However, young people show how influencers affect deeper dimensions of their identity, interests, and cultural consumption. These limited perceptions are consistent with theories on the digital divide, in which adults lack the digital literacy necessary to understand the practices and values of the younger generation, as well as the positive impact that an active role of mothers and fathers in these matters can have on minors (Hsieh *et al.*, 2018; Evans, 2014; Fadda *et al.*, 2017).

Parents' knowledge of influencers' practices and their relevance to their children directly af-

fects their ability to mediate adolescents' digital consumption. Progenitors who acknowledge the influence of social media influencers (SMIs) and actively engage in their children's digital environment are better able to mitigate risks and foster critical use of social media, thereby strengthening skills such as advertising literacy and informed decision-making (Evans, 2014).

The results reveal a mismatch in perceptions. These perceptions can limit the possibilities for productive dialogue between adults and their children regarding digital consumption, which in turn weakens the mediating role of adults. Therefore, the need to assume a more active and effective mediating role in response to the impact of influencers on adolescents' lives is emphasized, as reinforced in prior research by Lafuente-Pérez *et al.* (2025).

This study presents several limitations that should be taken into consideration. First, the sample is limited to twenty progenitor-child dyads, which hinders the generalizability of the results to other contexts or socioeconomic profiles. Additionally, while the qualitative approach allows for in-depth exploration, it does not provide quantitative data that could complement the analysis and offer a broader perspective.

On the other hand, the data collection through virtual interviews may have influenced the spontaneity and sincerity of the responses, especially in the case of adolescents, who may feel some pressure when sharing their experiences in this format. Also, as the study was conducted in a specific cultural context (Spain), the conclusions may not directly apply to other socio-cultural realities.

Finally, the phenomenon of influencers and their impact on family dynamics is complex and multidimensional. Therefore, future studies could incorporate other methodologies, such

as large-scale surveys or longitudinal analyses, to better understand the long-term implications of this phenomenon.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The results of this research highlight a significant disconnect between the perceptions of mothers and fathers and the experiences of adolescents regarding the phenomenon of influencers. While adults tend to dismiss digital creators' content as irrelevant or superficial, adolescents acknowledge their influence not only on their consumer decisions but also on broader aspects of their identity, language, and everyday behaviors. This generational and digital gap underscores the need for families to adopt a more active role in mediating their children's digital environment.

In particular, it is concluded that mothers and fathers with a limited understanding of the impact of influencers face challenges in guiding their children toward more critical digital consumption. However, those actively engaging in media consumption can better mitigate associ-

ated risks and foster skills such as advertising literacy and informed decision-making.

On the other hand, adolescents perceive influencers not only as aspirational figures but also as sources of entertainment, information, and valuable recommendations. Their presence in the daily lives of young people, even during moments such as studying, demonstrates their ability to shape habits, preferences, and values. This finding reinforces the importance of considering influencers as socializing agents whose impact extends beyond entertainment.

Finally, this study highlights the importance of promoting intergenerational dialogue about the use of social media and digital content consumption. Bridging the understanding gap between parents and children regarding the influencer phenomenon can strengthen the mediating role of adults and contribute to a safer, more critical, and enriching digital experience for adolescents. Future research could explore concrete strategies to reduce this disconnect and evaluate how family dynamics may influence minors' digital decisions.

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