

Social Media Influencers: Inspiration or Digital Deception

Outline

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Social media influencers are more a digital deception than inspiration due to promotion of highly fake lifestyle, consumerism culture, misinformation and unrealistic comparison, posing a threat in the form of sweet poison.

2- Social Media Influencers – A Digital Deception

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- i) Promote self confidence and motivation
— indirectly promoting selfishness and "Me" attitude
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4. Conclusion

THE ESSAY

"The problem with the world is that the foolish is certain while the wise is doubtful." A line by Bertrand Russell clearly depicting the problem faced today. In the time of social media, the negative impacts of social media are known to all however, the

damage caused by social media influencers remains doubtful to the people. Supporters argue in favour of social media influencers as a source of inspiration, however, a closer and deeper analysis presents the picture otherwise. Social media influencers are a source of digital deception. They make or break the opinion affecting lives of thousands on the directions of a few. People consider social media influencers as their saviour while the influencers are actually chasing fame and money through viewership. Kids and teens of modern age are specially the most affected by these influencers. They prefer influencers over their parents, teachers and other persons. People are influenced by their promotion of fake lifestyle, and their unrealistic success narratives. Political figures use them as tools for their populism. Brands use them to promote consumerism culture. To have the most viewership, the influencers do not hesitate to speak on the sensitive topics like health and religion and spread misinformation. Genuine role models are now replaced by social media influencers. They use their leverage to exploit their followers as consumers.

In short, social media influencers are more a digital deception than an inspiration due to promotion of fake lifestyle, consumerism culture, misinformation and unrealistic comparison, posing a threat in the form of sweet poison.

The digital deception of social media influencers can be realized by their promotion of fake lifestyle. Most of the social media influencers promote a luxurious lifestyle and a world of imagination. Birthday parties, marriages, proposals all are presented in an imaginative, novelistic style by these influencers. The effect of this lifestyle can easily be seen in our lives as most of the girls, especially on their marriages consider themselves more like an actress than a real life bride and use all their money to make their day incredibly awesome just like a movie or whatever they have seen on the pages of influencers. Thus, social media influencers are promoting an imaginative life far from reality which causes both monetary and psychological shocks in the real life.

Another argument on the digital deception of social media influencers is their presentation of unrealistic success narrative. They present success as some magic which can be achieved overnight and all the struggles and tough time behind that success is completely ignored. The teenagers with their immature minds consider it as a reality and mostly leave their education in midway ~~and~~ to become a star overnight. Logan Paul an international youtube influencer shows his luxury villas, private jets, luxury cars, watches and visits to world expensive places is a thrill of the young generation who are captivated by his intense money and fame. All this unrealistic success badly affects the minds of people, especially the teens.

Another deception posed by social media influencers is political manipulation of the people. Populist culture favours politicians so they hire social media influencers to promote their campaign in an unnoticed way. These influencers use their leverage to influence public opinion in the favour

of those leaders. Cambridge analytica is also an example of this manipulation which ~~exp~~^{used} an app which collected data of people from social media to know their likes and dislikes and add them in the manifesto of political party to win elections. This was also promoted by influencers to make people use this app. Trump 2016 election campaign was based on this. Putin also used influencers to manipulate elections in USA. So the influencers can also affect on democratic process.

Social media influencers are also hidden paid promoters of certain brands and parties. They use these things in their content either by wearing it or in some other way influencing people's choice for those objects. In an Indian movie a person was giving a business idea to his friend that how to sale a 50 rupee pouch in 5000 rupees. He send gift some of these pouches to social media influencers, mostly the actors. They will use it at least once and once they are captured in camera the price will go up and no one will question the quality. In this way even low quality things earn

too high by using people so, hidden promotions also cost a lot to common people.

Social media influencers are also a source of setting false beauty standards. They use multiple products and apply certain filters before uploading their content or coming live. In this way, a false and imaginative beauty standard is set which causes trouble to the public. The ordinary boys and girls are specifically targeted by this. A report by Pakistan Mail reflected that over 1 crore women above 35 years of age in Pakistan still await marriage. This cannot only be attributed to the social media influencer but yet much share is of these influencers of social media who are setting false beauty standards.

Furthermore, social media influencers are a source of promoting consumeristic culture. They spend lavishly on food and clothing. Their trips to foreign countries all are promoting a consumeristic culture.

which becomes a source of dissatisfaction for the people who cannot afford it. The people in South Asian region and other middle class people try to imitate this high culture which pushes them to seek money by hook or by crook. Consumeristic culture indirectly becomes the cause of crimes and theft. So, the consumerism culture by social media influencers causes serious consequences.

Social media influencers even do not hesitate to speak on health and medicines. To have an increasing number of viewership they talk on every health hazard and also suggest so-called remedies. The ~~epid~~ pandemic of COVID also produced many influencers because people were confined to homes and they had nothing to do except to use social media. In this way, many "social media doctors" also originated which keep on giving tips and tricks to people that cause more harm to people than good. Most of the people get seriously affected by these quacks.

Social media influencers have not even left the religion out of

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their influence. They use fake stories to influence people and enhance their viewership. They have made fun of religion by modernizing it in their own way. Some eight years ago a couple was famous on social media - Umm-e-Abdullah and Hasnat - showing themselves as a purely religious couple and sharing their fake daily routines. After some time people discovered that girl as a bold model with another name and the boy as an atheist who were living a dual life just for fame. Social media influencers has caused more harm to the religion than anything else.

The social media influencers are yet free from accountability as no universal laws for digital content creation exist. Each country handles them according to its own laws and own benefits. The politicians who use these content creators to come to power least try to control them after coming to power because of their usefulness and for future campaigns. In this way these content creators remain free from

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accountability and does not take care of ethics as well. They openly support even enemies and yet remain unaccountable. A number of drugs are introduced by these influencers in the name of style and promotion of ads which influences millions of people. So the lack of accountability also provides a free hand to their digital deception.

A very depressing effect of this digital deception of influencers is that it has replaced the genuine role models with fake ones. Kids are more influenced by the social media influencers than their parents.

A report published by European Union Social Media platform presented the figures of Europe that 70% of teens listen to social media influencers more than their parents and trust on these influencers. The teachers at school are replaced by the "Edutainment" of social media. Their false and short tricks are moving kids away from the mandatory subject practices and influencing their education.

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The worst effect of social media influencers is the psychological pressure on ordinary people because of social comparison. When those influencers show their real or fake lifestyles, the deprived population unconsciously compares itself to them. This produces great depression in public and psychologically harms people. Many people even commit suicide just because of feeling deprived out of this fake comparison. "Fan" movie of India starring Shahrukh Khan is also related to this comparison culture where one of his fan becomes so obsessive with SRK that he even harms SRK and his family. This is clearly the manifestation of public attitude when they are psychologically obsessed by the influencers.

Social media influencers does not even spare their followers and use them as consumers. Instead of being thankful to them for following their content they further exploit them by their own products. Ducky Bhai a famous influencer also used his influence to buy his uploaded ^{paid} courses of online earning and is arrested because of his

promotion of apps that are not allowed in an Islamic society. The influencers are mostly devoid of emotions that public have with them. The strong affections and love of public for them is missing in these influencers and they only see them as a source of monetization even by risking their lives.

Social media influencers are also considered as a source of inspiration by some of its supporters and they present multiple arguments which exist in reality but are not much convincing.

Social media influencers promote self confidence and motivation as Pakistani influencer Syed Muzammil influence public to be self reliant. However, in the absence of proper guidance the followers are indirectly forwarded towards selfishness and "me" attitude. They start hating the state and develop resentment against state measures. They develop an attitude that they have to snatch their right as the world is not doing justice with them.

Social media influencers now-a-days are also becoming an inspiration for free lancing. Hisham Sarwar a Pakistani influencer is guiding the public for free lancing. This seems so attractive to public but yet it again poses the teen towards online scams. The teenagers in the fantasies of becoming wealthy overnight easily become a prey to the online frauds and thus cause financial damage to their parents and sometimes they become so distressed that they even commit suicide just because of their dream not coming true as promised by the influencers.

Motivation for donation and charity can also be considered as an inspiration as supported by many people yet it too ultimately leads to chasing fame by using the name of "public welfare". These influencers themselves share their work of public welfare to influence people which also harms the dignity of the affected people. Thus these influencers become the cause of

of a chain that uses affected people for their fame.

Some social media influencers talk about the awareness of certain health and mental issues which is a good thing but still it is not as effective as it seems. Every person is going through different circumstances. The things that people ignored in past and moved on from that phase is now presented as a psychological trauma which must be considered but it causes more harm than good. Many meaningless things are presented in an exaggerated manner that people believe themselves to be suffering from a lot of diseases and promotes victimization culture.

To conclude, influencers cannot be blindly trusted as role models. In Pakistan specifically and the world generally, digital deception dominates. A number of examples are presented in this essay which clearly show the prevalence of deception more than inspiration. So, only with ethical regulation and critical thinking, positive influence can be maximized.