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The Influence of Social Media Influencers on Life Satisfaction among Gen Z in Malaysia

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of Social Media Influencers (SMIs) on life satisfaction among Malaysian Generation Z (Gen Z). In today's digital era, SMIs significantly shape the attitudes, behaviours, and well-being of young adults, who are highly active on social media platforms. Exposure to influencers can provide motivation and lifestyle guidance but may also encourage social comparison or unrealistic expectations, potentially affecting life satisfaction. A quantitative, cross-sectional design was employed, involving 386 Malaysian Gen Z participants aged 13 to 28 years who actively follow at least one influencer. Data were collected using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and the Susceptibility to Being Influenced by Social Media Influencers (SUSIS) Questionnaire. Descriptive analysis showed that respondents reported a high level of life satisfaction (M = 5.49, SD = 1.28) and a moderate level of susceptibility to influencer influence (M = 3.47, SD = 0.53). Correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between influencer engagement and life satisfaction, while regression analysis indicated that SMIs significantly predicted 25% of the variance in life satisfaction. These findings suggest that positive, authentic influencer content can enhance well-being among Gen Z, highlighting the importance of mindful social media engagement. The study offers valuable insights for educators, policymakers, mental health practitioners, and content creators in promoting healthier digital practices and supporting the psychological well-being of young people in Malaysia.

Keywords: Social Media Influencers, Life Satisfaction, Generation Z, Social Media Engagement, Psychological Well-Being

Research Background

The growth of Social Media Influencers on social media platforms has significantly shaped the daily lives of Generation Z, individuals born between 1997 and 2012, who are now the most active demographic (Dimock, 2019; Mude & Undale, 2023; Setia, 2016). Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are central to their social interactions, information gathering, and entertainment, with many young people following social media influencers who create

content on lifestyle, fashion, beauty, fitness, entertainment, and education (Kemp, 2025b; Luisa et al., 2023). In Malaysia alone, there are approximately 23.1 million social media users aged 18 and above, indicating that young adults constitute a substantial portion of the online population (Kemp, 2025a). A significant proportion of this group actively engages with influencer content, making Generation Z particularly susceptible to the impact of online personalities.

While social media and influencer engagement offer benefits such as entertainment, knowledge sharing, and social connection, they also present risks. Exposure to idealized lifestyles and curated content can lead to upward social comparisons, unrealistic expectations, and negative self-perceptions, potentially affecting life satisfaction and overall well- being (Jack et al., 2024; Muqaddas et al., 2017). Mental health statistics highlight the urgency of this issue. Globally, adolescent depression prevalence is 19.2 percent, higher than 8.7 percent in older adults, and in Malaysia, 60 percent of youth report mild to severe depressive symptoms while 30 percent experience anxiety (Debra & Jeffery, 2025; Loi, 2025). These findings suggest that exposure to social media influencers may exacerbate psychological distress, reduce happiness, and decrease life satisfaction among young people.

Despite the prominence of social media influencers and their potential influence on youngsters' well-being, research on the specific effects of influencer content on life satisfaction among Malaysian Generation Z remains limited. Most studies focus on general social media use or the psychological effects of online interactions, without examining susceptibility to influencer content or differentiating between types of influencer engagement (Cismariu et al., 2019; Mohd Noor Abdul et al., 2022). Understanding this relationship is crucial for addressing the mental health and well-being of youth, guiding social media users in making healthier engagement choices, and informing influencers about the psychological impact of their content.

Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the level of life satisfaction among Malaysian Generation Z and examine how social media influencers shape their well-being. By exploring the relationship between influencer engagement and life satisfaction, the study aims to fill a critical research gap, extend relevant theoretical frameworks such as Social Comparison Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, and Self-Determination Theory to the Malaysian digital context, and provide insights for youth, mental health practitioners, educators, and social media influencers to promote positive psychological outcomes.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to determine the level of life satisfaction among Generation Z in Malaysia, examine the level of influence of social media influencers on this population, examine the relationship between social media influencers and life satisfaction, and assess the extent to which Social Media influencers affect overall well-being. By exploring these, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence on how social media influencers influence the psychological and emotional well-being of young adults in Malaysia and to offer insights for promoting healthier social media use while engaging with the influencers online.

Literature Review

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction is an important aspect of subjective well-being, reflecting a person's overall judgment of their life rather than temporary emotions (Diener et al., 1985). For Generation Z, life satisfaction is shaped by developmental transitions such as forming their identity, managing academic and career pressures, and navigating online environments. Research indicates that intrinsic factors like autonomy, personal growth, and social connections are strongly linked to higher life satisfaction, while reliance on extrinsic factors such as social recognition or material gains has a smaller or less consistent impact (Rodrigues et al., 2023). Additionally, heavy engagement with social media may lower life satisfaction when it encourages frequent social comparisons, particularly upward comparisons that highlight gaps between oneself and others (Abdellatif, 2022). These findings suggest that Generation Z's well-being is influenced by a combination of personal motivation and the social pressures inherent in digital life.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), proposed by Ryan and Deci (2000), suggests that life satisfaction and well-being depend on the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy involves having control over one's actions, competence refers to feeling capable in tasks, and relatedness reflects meaningful social connections. Research supports that satisfaction of these needs predicts higher life satisfaction (Niemiec et al., 2009). In the context of Gen Z and social media, SDT helps explain how digital interactions may affect well-being. Autonomy can be challenged by pressures to follow trends, competence may be undermined by comparisons to idealized content, and relatedness may be weakened if online connections replace real-life relationships. Therefore, SDT provides a useful framework for understanding how social media influencers can influence life satisfaction among young people.

Social Media Influencers (SMIs)

Social media influencers (SMIs) are individuals who have gained credibility and popularity by regularly posting content on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, forming personal brands and building strong connections with their followers (Duffy, 2020; Luisa et al., 2023). Their influence extends beyond entertainment or product promotion, affecting followers' attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyle choices, particularly among Gen Z, who engage heavily with online content (Alves de Castro, 2023). Influencers often create parasocial relationships, where followers feel emotionally close despite one-sided interaction, increasing trust and the likelihood of emulation (Marwick & boyd, 2011) The impact of influencers can be positive, such as promoting mental health awareness, motivation, or body positivity, or negative, including unrealistic body ideals, materialism, or risky behaviors, which can affect psychological well-being (Alves de Castro, 2023; Han & Balabanis, 2024). Therefore, understanding the dual nature of influencer impact is crucial when evaluating their role in shaping the behaviors and perceptions of young audiences.

Social Comparison Theory (SCT)

Social Comparison Theory (SCT), proposed by Festinger (1954), suggests that individuals evaluate their thoughts, feelings, and life circumstances by comparing themselves to others. On social media, influencers often present idealized versions of their lives, highlighting

wealth, beauty, success, and happiness. Gen Z followers, who are still developing their identities and spend significant time online, may engage in upward social comparison, evaluating themselves against these curated portrayals. Such comparisons can lead to feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and reduced life satisfaction (Muqaddas et al., 2017). In this study, SCT explains how exposure to influencer content serves as a constant reference point, linking external social media experiences with internal psychological outcomes and illustrating how following influencers can shape perceptions of personal well-being.

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), introduced by Katz et al. (1973), highlights that audiences actively select media to satisfy personal psychological and social needs, such as information, entertainment, identity formation, social interaction, and emotional support. In the context of social media influencers, Gen Z followers may engage with content to learn fitness routines, find emotional comfort, or emulate desired lifestyles (Dolan et al., 2015; Yaman & Çakın, 2021). This demonstrates that followers are active participants rather than passive consumers. However, UGT also recognizes potential negative outcomes when gratifications are unmet, such as emotional fatigue or reduced life satisfaction caused by repeated exposure to unrealistic portrayals of beauty, success, or wealth (Yaman & Çakın, 2021). This theory is relevant to the study as it explains how follower motivations and expectations shape engagement with influencers and how such engagement can fulfill or frustrate psychological needs, influencing life satisfaction (Dolan et al., 2015).

Level of Life Satisfaction among Generation Z (Gen Z)

Existing literature indicates that life satisfaction among Generation Z varies considerably across cultural and socioeconomic contexts. Studies in South Korea have reported moderate to high life satisfaction supported by strong social capital and social support (Choi, 2024), while research in Malaysia shows that marginalized youth often experience lower levels of subjective well-being due to economic hardship and chronic stress (Koha et al., 2019). Similarly, studies conducted in Western Europe suggest that frequent social media use and social comparison may negatively affect life satisfaction despite relatively favorable living conditions(Corovic, 2022)These mixed findings suggest that life satisfaction among Gen Z is highly context-dependent and influenced by emerging psychosocial factors. Importantly, most prior research has focused on general social media use or structural determinants, with limited attention given to influencer-specific exposure, despite the increasing prominence of social media influencers in young people's daily lives (Kemp, 2025a; Luisa et al., 2023). Given that influencer content often promotes idealized lifestyles that may intensify social comparison processes (Muqaddas et al., 2017) examining life satisfaction without considering influencer influence provides an incomplete understanding of Gen Z well-being. Therefore, this study is imperative as it addresses this gap by investigating the level of life satisfaction among Malaysian Generation Z within the context of social media influencer influence.

Level of Influence of Social Media Influencers among Generation Z (Gen Z)

The level of influence that social media influencers have on Gen Z varies across contexts. Tuominen et al. (2023) reported a high level of influence among Finnish adolescents, especially regarding materialistic tendencies and impulsive buying when following luxury-focused influencers. Corovic (2022) found a moderate level of influence among young adults in Western Europe, with consumer behavior affected by social comparison and exposure to

aspirational content. Al-Ansi et al. (2023)observed a moderate level of influence in Middle Eastern adolescents, noting that marginalized youth experienced lower influence due to limited access to technology and socioeconomic constraints. Overall, these studies indicate that social media influencers can significantly shape Gen Z's attitudes and behaviors, with the level of influence ranging from moderate to high depending on cultural, social, and economic factors.

Life Satisfaction and Social Media Influencers

The relationship between social media influencers and life satisfaction is explained through social comparison and psychological need fulfilment processes. Influencer content that portrays idealized lifestyles may encourage upward social comparison, leading to negative self-evaluations and reduced life satisfaction (Muqaddas et al., 2017). Conversely, influencer content that supports autonomy, competence, and relatedness may enhance well-being and life satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Previous studies examining social media use and well-being have produced mixed findings, highlighting the need for further empirical research focusing specifically on influencer influence. Based on the reviewed literature and theoretical foundations, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: There is a significant relationship between social media influencers and life satisfaction among Generation Z in Malaysia.

H2: Social media influencers significantly influence life satisfaction among Generation Z in Malaysia.

Research Framework

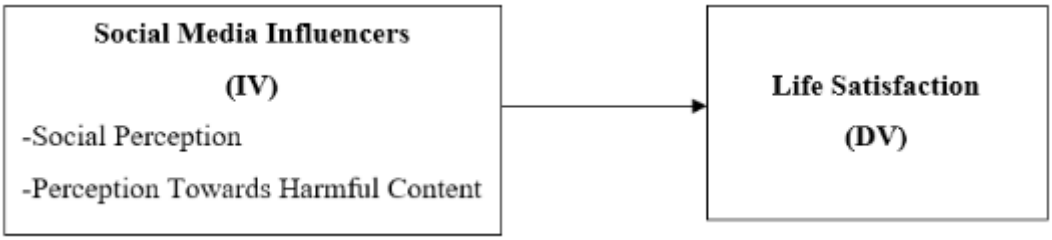


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates a conceptual framework in which social media influencer influence functions as the independent variable and life satisfaction as the dependent variable.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the relationship and influence between social media influencers and life satisfaction among Generation Z in Malaysia. The population consisted of Malaysian Generation Z individuals aged between 13 and 28 years. A total of 386 respondents were selected using convenience sampling. The reason of choosing convenience sampling is due to the accessibility of participants through online platforms. Data were collected through an online questionnaire that was created using Google Forms and distributed via online platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Telegram. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was assured. Life satisfaction was measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) developed by Diener et al. (1985). The scale consists of five items rated on a seven-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater life satisfaction. In the present study, the SWLS demonstrated good

internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.834, indicating that the items reliably measure life satisfaction among Malaysian Gen Z. The influence of social media influencers was measured using the Susceptibility to Being Influenced by Social Media Influencers (SUSIS) questionnaire developed by Alves de Castro (2023). The instrument consists of 25 items rated on a five-point Likert scale and measures susceptibility to influencers. This instrument has two dimensions, which are Social Perception, consisting of nine items, meanwhile, the second dimension Perception towards Harmful Content, which consists of 16 items. In this study, the SUSIS instrument showed good reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.831, suggesting good internal consistency in assessing the influence of social media influencers. The data collected through Google Forms was first transferred to Google Sheets and then imported into IBM SPSS version 30 analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the levels of life satisfaction and social media influencers among respondents. Spearman correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the study variables, while simple linear regression analysis was used to assess the predictive influence of social media influencers on life satisfaction. In addition to the quantitative analyses, two open-ended questions were included to allow respondents to elaborate on their experiences and perceptions regarding social media influencers. The purpose of these questions was not to address separate research objectives, but to provide explanatory context and support for the quantitative findings. Responses were analyzed using thematic categorization to identify recurring patterns and illustrative themes.

Results/Findings

Demographic Details of the Respondents

A total of 386 valid responses from Malaysian Generation Z were analyzed. As seen in Table 1, the sample comprised slightly more male respondents (51.8%) than female respondents (48.2%). In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents were aged between 21 and 24 years (54.1%), followed by those aged 17–20 years (28.2%). Smaller proportions were aged 13–16 years (8.5%) and 25–28 years (9.1%). Regarding time spent on social media, most respondents reported spending between 3 and 5 hours daily (33.9%), followed by 1–3 hours (31.6%). Additionally, 21.0% of respondents spent more than 5 hours on social media each day, while only 13.5% spent less than one hour. In terms of platform usage, TikTok (34.6%) and Instagram (32.8%) were the most frequently used social media platforms, followed by YouTube (16.6%), X (Twitter) (13.4%), and Threads (2.6%). These findings indicate a high level of social media engagement among Generation Z respondents, supporting the suitability of the sample for examining the influence of social media influencers on life satisfaction.

Table 1
Output for Demographic Details of the Respondents

Demographic		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	200	51.8
	Female	186	48.2
Age	13-16	33	8.5
	17-20	109	28.2
	21-24	209	54.1
	25-28	35	9.1
Hours Spent	Less than 1 hour	52	13.5
	1-3 hours	122	31.6
	3-5 hours	131	33.9
	More than 5 hours	81	21
Social Media Platforms	Instagram	310	32.8
	TikTok	327	34.6
	YouTube	157	16.6
	X (Twitter)	127	13.4
	Threads	25	2.6

Contextual Insights Supporting Quantitative Findings

The following findings are presented to provide context and further elaboration of the quantitative results. These insights do not represent a separate research objective but serve to explain patterns observed in influencer influence and life satisfaction among Generation Z. Respondents were asked to identify their favourite social media influencer, and the 386 responses were coded according to the influencer's primary content niche. As shown in Table 2, preferences were distributed across several niches, with the highest concentration in Food and Cooking (32.1%, *n* = 124) and Entertainment and Comedy (25.4%, *n* = 98), followed by Lifestyle and Fashion (18.9%, *n* = 73), Education/Role Model (13.2%, *n* = 51), and Motivational/Religious content (10.4%, *n* = 40). This distribution indicates that Generation Z respondents tend to engage more with content that is perceived as positive, relatable, and emotionally uplifting. Consistent with these preferences, the thematic analysis of motives for following social media influencers in Table 3 reveals that nearly half of the respondents follow influencers for Inspiration and Lifestyle purposes (49.0%, *n* = 190), making it the most dominant motive. Information seeking emerged as the second most common motive (26.0%, *n* = 101), suggesting that influencers also serve as important sources of practical knowledge and guidance. In contrast, Entertainment (14.0%, *n* = 54) and Social Belonging (11.0%, *n* = 41) accounted for smaller proportions of the sample. Overall, these findings suggest that Generation Z's engagement with social media influencers is largely driven by aspirational and lifestyle-oriented motivations rather than purely entertainment or social connection, highlighting the potential role of influencers in shaping values, behaviours, and life satisfaction among Gen Z.

Table 2
Themes of favorite Social Media Influencer Niches (N=386)

Influencer Niche	Example Names Mentioned	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Food and Cooking	Khairul Aming, Che Nom	124	32.1
Entertainment and Comedy	Ryan Bakery, Luqman Podolski	98	25.4
Lifestyle and Fashion	Farah Lee, Sofea Shra	73	18.9
Education/Role model	Syed Saddiq, Ahmad Faezal	51	13.2
Motivational/Religious	Ustaz Adnin, Hafreez Adam	40	10.4
Total		**386**	**100**

Table 3
Motives for following Social Media Influencers

Motives	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Entertainment	54	14
Information seeking	101	26
Inspiration/Lifestyle	190	49
Social Belonging	41	11
Total	386	100

Level of Life Satisfaction among Gen Z in Malaysia

The level of life satisfaction among Gen Z in Table 4 revealed that respondents reported a high level of life satisfaction, with an overall mean score of 5.49 (*SD* = 1.28). Most respondents scored above the midpoint of the scale, indicating generally positive evaluations of their lives. This result suggests that Malaysian Generation Z participants experience favorable subjective well-being, although variations in life satisfaction levels were observed across individuals.

Table 4
Output for Life satisfaction variable

Variables	*N*	Mean	*SD*	Level
Life Satisfaction	386	5.49	1.28	High

Note: level of Life Satisfaction: 1.00-3.00 (Low); 3.01-5.00 (Moderate); 5.01-7.00 (High)

Level of Influence of Social Media Influencers

The level of influence of social media influencers among Generation Z was found to be moderate to high. As shown in Table 5, the Social Perception dimension recorded a high mean score of 4.09 (*SD* = 0.73), indicating strong engagement, trust, and positive attitudes towards influencers. In contrast, the Perception towards Harmful Content dimension showed a moderate mean score of 3.11 (*SD* = 0.61), suggesting that respondents experienced moderate exposure to potentially harmful influencer content. Overall, the combined SUSIS score reflected a moderate-to-high level of susceptibility to social media influencer influence among respondents.

Table 5
Output for Social Media Influencers variable

Variables	*N*	Mean	*SD*	Level
SUSIS Dimension 1 (Social Perception)	386	4.09	0.73	High
SUSIS Dimension 2 (Perception towards Harmful Content)	386	3.11	0.61	Moderate
Social Media Influencers (Overall SUSIS)	386	3.47	0.53	Moderate

Note: level of influence of Social Media Influencers: 1.00-2.33 (Low); 2.34-3.67 (Moderate); 3.68-5.00 (High)

Relationship between Social Media Influencers and Life Satisfaction among Gen Z in Malaysia
Correlation analysis indicated a significant positive relationship between social media influencers and life satisfaction among Generation Z in Malaysia. As shown in Table 6, the Social Perception dimension demonstrated a moderate positive correlation with life satisfaction (ρ = 0.539, p < 0.001), while the overall SUSIS score also showed a positive association with life satisfaction (ρ = 0.443, p < 0.001). These findings indicate that higher levels of influencer engagement and positive perceptions towards influencers are associated with higher life satisfaction among respondents.

Table 6
Spearman Correlation Output

Constructs	*N*	Correlation Coefficient, ρ	Sig. (2-tailed)
Life Satisfaction (SWLS)	386	1	
SUSIS Dimension 1 (Social Perception)	386	.539	<.001
SUSIS Dimension 2 (Perception towards Harmful Content)	386	.079	.122
Social Media Influencers (Overall SUSIS)	386	.443	<.001

The Influence of Social Media Influencers on Life Satisfaction among Gen Z in Malaysia
In Table 7, regression analysis further confirmed that social media influencers significantly predict life satisfaction among Generation Z. The regression model produced a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.500, indicating a moderate positive relationship between influencer influence and life satisfaction. The R^2 value of 0.250 suggests that approximately 25% of the variance in life satisfaction can be explained by social media influencer influence. The model was statistically significant (F = 127.66, p < 0.001), and the positive regression coefficient (β = 0.500, t = 11.299, p < 0.001) indicates that higher levels of influencer influence are associated with higher life satisfaction, while the remaining variance is influenced by other factors not included in the model.

Table 7
Regression Output

Model	*R*	R^2	*F*	Sig.	*β*	*t*	Sig.
1	.500	.250	127.66	<.001	.500	11.299	<.001

Discussions and Recommendation

This study aimed to examine the relationship and influence of social media influencers on life satisfaction among Malaysian Generation Z. Overall, the findings indicate that Gen Z participants reported a high level of life satisfaction (M = 5.49, SD = 1.28) and a moderate level of influence from social media influencers (M = 3.47, SD = 0.53). These results suggest that, within the Malaysian context, social media influencers constitute a meaningful but not overwhelming presence in young people's psychological and social lives.

With regard to Objective 1, the findings show that Malaysian Gen Z participants generally experience a relatively high level of life satisfaction. Despite increasing concerns surrounding youth mental health, academic pressure, and digital stress, most respondents evaluated their overall quality of life positively. This finding is consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which posits that life satisfaction is enhanced when individuals experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In the Malaysian context, strong family ties, peer relationships, and online social connections may help sustain these psychological needs, thereby supporting positive well-being. While previous studies have reported lower life satisfaction among marginalized Malaysian youth (Koha et al., 2019), the present findings suggest that non-marginalized Gen Z may experience greater stability in well-being. Similarly, Corovic (2022) highlighted that life satisfaction among young adults is influenced more by psychological interpretation than material conditions, reinforcing the context-dependent nature of Gen Z well-being.

Regarding Objective 2, the findings indicate that social media influencers exert a moderate level of influence on Gen Z in Malaysia, with a stronger impact observed in the social perception dimension compared to perceptions of harmful content. This suggests that Gen Z generally views influencers as relatable, credible, and emotionally engaging, while maintaining some awareness of potential negative influences. This result aligns with Alves de Castro (2023), who found that perceived authenticity and trustworthiness enhance influencer impact, and with Tuominen et al. (2023), who reported that adolescents are more susceptible to influencers they perceive as socially similar and genuine. Corovic (2022) further demonstrated that lifestyle and inspirational influencer content tends to exert stronger psychological influence than purely commercial content. From the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory, these findings indicate that Gen Z actively engages with influencer content to fulfil needs related to identity formation, motivation, and social belonging rather than engaging passively.

The contextual insights obtained from the open-ended responses further support these quantitative findings by illustrating how Gen Z engages with influencers. Nearly half of the respondents (49%) reported following influencers primarily for inspiration and lifestyle guidance, indicating that influencer engagement is intentional and goal-oriented. Additionally, the frequent mention of wholesome and authentic influencers, such as Khairul

Aming, helps explain the high mean score for social perception, as these influencers are perceived as trustworthy role models rather than merely sources of entertainment. These insights help contextualize the measured level of influencer influence observed in the quantitative analysis.

Objectives 3 and 4 examined the relationship between social media influencers and life satisfaction, as well as the predictive influence of influencers on life satisfaction among Malaysian Gen Z. The findings demonstrate a significant positive relationship between influencer engagement and life satisfaction and further indicate that social media influencers significantly predict life satisfaction. This suggests that greater engagement with influencer content is associated with more positive evaluations of overall well-being. These results are consistent with prior research indicating that influencer credibility, authenticity, and emotional appeal are positively associated with subjective well-being among young social media users (Alves de Castro, 2023; Lee et al., 2021). Han and Balabanis (2024) similarly found that influencers who promote attainable lifestyles can enhance psychological outcomes by encouraging motivation and self-improvement.

From a theoretical standpoint, Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) helps explain this relationship, as upward comparison with influencers may foster positive self-evaluation when content is perceived as inspirational rather than unrealistic. The open-ended responses provide contextual support for this interpretation, as many respondents described influencer content as motivating and self-improvement oriented rather than comparison-inducing. At the same time, Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) suggests that influencer content supporting autonomy, competence, and relatedness contributes to higher life satisfaction. This theoretical explanation also helps clarify why the dimension related to harmful content showed no significant relationship with life satisfaction, indicating that Gen Z may be selectively engaging with content that aligns with their psychological needs.

Recommendations and Suggestions

Practically, this study highlights the importance of mindful engagement with social media. Gen Z should be encouraged to follow influencers promoting realistic lifestyles and personal growth to enhance well-being. Social media influencers are encouraged to create content that supports authenticity, motivation, and emotional support, as such content positively contributes to followers' life satisfaction.

Educational institutions can implement media literacy programs to help students critically evaluate influencer content and reduce negative social comparison. Policymakers and mental health practitioners should consider the role of influencer exposure in youth well-being strategies and guide fostering self-determination and resilience in digital spaces.

Future research should address limitations of this study, including its cross-sectional design, reliance on self-reported questionnaires, and focus on Malaysian Gen Z. Longitudinal or experimental designs could clarify causal relationships between influencer engagement and life satisfaction. Additionally, qualitative or mixed-method approaches may provide deeper insight into psychological processes, motivations, and individual differences in susceptibility to social media influencers. Examining moderating or mediating factors such as self-esteem, media literacy, personality traits, and resilience could further refine the

understanding of influencer effects. Comparative studies across generations or cultures may also enhance generalizability.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between social media influencers and life satisfaction among Generation Z (Gen Z) in Malaysia. The findings revealed that respondents generally reported a high level of life satisfaction and a moderate level of influence from social media influencers. Furthermore, significant associations were identified between certain dimensions of social media influencer engagement and life satisfaction, particularly those related to positive social perceptions. However, these relationships were not consistent across all dimensions, as the harmful-content dimension was not significantly associated with life satisfaction ($p = .122$). This finding suggests that while positive social perceptions of influencers were associated with life satisfaction, exposure to harmful content did not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship within the present sample. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily indicate that harmful content has no implications for psychological well-being, as other psychological outcomes were not examined in this study.

The study contributes to the existing literature by providing further evidence on the relationship between social media influencers and life satisfaction among Malaysian Gen Z, particularly by distinguishing different dimensions of influencer-related experiences rather than examining general social media use alone. The findings also offer additional perspectives for understanding these relationships through Social Comparison Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and Uses and Gratifications Theory. However, the findings should be interpreted with caution, as the cross-sectional research design and correlational analyses establish statistical associations and predictive relationships rather than causal effects. Furthermore, the use of convenience sampling may limit the generalisability of the findings to the broader Malaysian Gen Z population. Overall, this study highlights the relevance of considering different dimensions of social media influencer engagement when examining life satisfaction, while recognising that the nature and strength of these relationships may vary across individuals and contexts.

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