

# The Psychological, Social, and Consumer Behavior Impacts of Following Social Media Influencers: A Field Study on a Sample of the Kuwaiti Public

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## **Abstract**

The present study investigates the effect of following social media influencers by drawing on social comparison theory and the concept of celebrity imitation. Based on convenient survey sampling (N=447), the current study investigates how following social media influencers' content can lead to imitation and social comparison. The study adopts a cross-sectional survey methodology, as to test five hypotheses. Findings indicate that the first hypothesis (i.e. number of social media influencer followed) has been found to have a significant impact on influencer imitation and that the second one, i.e. that the influencer imitation affects social comparison holds true. A strong statistical correlation has proven that the more individuals tend to imitate influencers the more it affects social comparison with them. In verifying the third hypothesis, the variable "influencer imitation" has been found to affect materialistic variable i.e., the more influencers' imitation the higher the need to consume materialistic goods. The fourth hypothesis has been accepted in that there is a statistical correlation between the variable "materialistic" and the variable "purchase intention." Last, the study supported the fifth hypothesis that says social comparison significantly affects purchase intention i.e., the more individuals compare themselves to social media influencers, the stronger their desire to purchase promoted products or services.

The study recommends conducting further research focusing on the psychological and social effects of following social media influencers. It also calls for comparative studies to understand differences in influencer imitation and social comparison across different social groups and cultural contexts.

**Keywords:** Social media networks, influencers, social comparison, influencer imitation, materialistic bragging