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REVIEW ARTICLE

THE ALLURE OF EASY MONEY: EDUCATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL MEDIA MONETIZATION AMONG YOUTH

M. Kamraju

Faculty of Geography, Army Public School Golconda, Hyderabad.

*Corresponding Author Email: kamraju65@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The rapid rise of social media monetization has redefined youth aspirations, offering the allure of quick financial rewards through content creation, influencer marketing, and online visibility. While these opportunities democratize economic participation, they simultaneously pose significant risks to education, particularly among school students. This study investigates the educational consequences of social media monetization in India through a mixed-methods approach involving 360 students across secondary, higher secondary, and undergraduate levels. Findings reveal that 42% of respondents are actively engaged in monetized platforms, with school students disproportionately sacrificing study time, exam preparedness, and classroom participation in pursuit of digital fame. Peer influence emerged as a critical driver, with 68% of respondents motivated by classmates' online success, often leading to aspirational spending, psychological strain, and in some cases, dropout tendencies. Regression analysis confirmed that higher engagement in monetization significantly correlated with academic decline, especially in Class 9–12 students where monetization explained up to 28% of variance in grades. These findings highlight a growing cultural shift in which academic excellence is overshadowed by digital visibility, threatening the long-term role of education as a pathway to socio-economic mobility. The study concludes by recommending digital literacy integration in school curricula, structured mentorship programs, parental guidance, and policy interventions to balance online opportunities with educational priorities.

KEYWORDS

Social media monetization, youth aspirations, academic performance, peer influence, digital literacy, school students, educational consequences

1. INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of digital technologies has redefined the social, cultural, and economic lives of individuals across the globe. Among these transformations, the rise of social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook has been particularly profound. Originally designed as tools for communication and networking, these platforms have increasingly embraced monetization models that allow users to generate income through advertising, sponsorships, brand collaborations, and content-driven engagement. This monetization has facilitated the emergence of the influencer economy, a socio-economic space where individuals, particularly youth, commodify their personal content and social interactions into marketable assets (Khamis et al., 2017).

The growing allure of easy money through social media monetization has significantly altered youth aspirations. Unlike traditional career pathways that require years of education and training, influencer culture presents an image of rapid success, financial independence, and social validation. Youth are drawn to the perception that fame and wealth can be achieved with minimal formal qualifications, provided one garners enough followers, views, and likes (Abidin, 2020). This phenomenon resonates strongly with younger generations, who are already embedded in digital ecosystems and frequently exposed to the lifestyles of successful influencers.

However, this shift in aspiration is not without consequences. Scholars argue that monetization encourages youth to divert their focus from academic commitments towards content creation, often prioritizing digital engagement over classroom learning (Hjarvard, 2018).

As a result, formal education is increasingly perceived as secondary, or even unnecessary, when compared to the seemingly more rewarding influencer career. This shift poses serious concerns for the future of human capital, as educational attainment has historically served as the foundation for socio-economic mobility, skill development, and civic participation (Livingstone, 2019). The issue becomes particularly acute in developing nations such as India, where youth constitute over 34% of the population and where unemployment rates remain persistently high (Banerjee and Dutta, 2021). In such contexts, the prospect of earning through social media offers an alternative that appears more accessible and immediate than uncertain job markets or prolonged academic pursuits. While a minority of influencers achieve sustainable success, the majority face the precarious nature of platform algorithms, inconsistent income streams, and psychological pressures associated with online visibility (Duffy and Wissinger, 2017). These risks, when coupled with academic neglect, leave many students vulnerable to both educational and career instability.

Moreover, the social consequences of monetization extend beyond individual choices to peer groups and broader youth culture. The glorification of influencers normalizes the pursuit of online careers, creating peer pressure for students who may feel compelled to replicate such models of success (Marwick, 2015). These dynamics foster a competitive digital environment where academic excellence is devalued, and social validation through likes, followers, and monetary gains takes precedence. The long-term implications include increased dropout rates, diminished attention spans, and reduced investment in intellectual development—issues that have the potential to undermine educational institutions and societal progress at large.

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From a theoretical standpoint, this phenomenon can be situated within Social Learning Theory, which suggests that individuals, particularly youth, are likely to imitate behaviors of those perceived as successful role models (Bandura, 1977). Similarly, Uses and Gratifications Theory provides insights into why students are drawn towards social media: not merely for entertainment, but as a source of income, recognition, and self-expression (Katz et al., 1974). The framework of Digital Capitalism further emphasizes how platforms commodify youth attention and aspirations, embedding monetization into the very fabric of online interaction (Fuchs, 2017).

In light of these dynamics, the present study seeks to critically investigate the educational consequences of social media monetization among youth. Specifically, it examines how the promise of easy money and rapid fame influences student priorities, learning outcomes, and long-term academic aspirations. By analyzing patterns of youth engagement in monetized platforms, the research sheds light on the growing conflict between digital career pursuits and formal education, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of how economic transformations in the digital era are reshaping the future of youth and education.

1.1 Statement of The Problem

The advent of social media monetization has created a profound shift in the aspirations and behavioral patterns of youth. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook now offer avenues for young individuals to convert their time, creativity, and digital visibility into financial gain. While this phenomenon reflects the democratization of economic opportunities in the digital age, it simultaneously poses significant challenges to the educational domain. The attraction of quick financial rewards and instant recognition often reorients student priorities away from structured academic pursuits, thereby undermining the traditional role of education as the foundation for personal development and socio-economic progress.

One of the foremost concerns is the decline in academic performance among students who allocate substantial time and cognitive resources toward content creation and audience engagement. The constant need to produce marketable content not only consumes hours otherwise dedicated to study but also diminishes concentration, discipline, and long-term learning goals. Over time, this diversion of attention risks creating academic gaps that hinder intellectual growth and professional preparedness.

Another pressing issue is the increasing tendency toward school and college dropouts, particularly among students who perceive social media careers as more lucrative and less demanding than formal education. The monetization framework, which often glorifies overnight success stories of influencers, cultivates unrealistic expectations that digital careers can replace conventional educational trajectories. This perception fosters a culture of impatience, where the value of perseverance, skill development, and higher learning is diminished in favor of immediate financial gratification.

The problem further extends to the broader social valuation of education. As influencer culture becomes normalized and celebrated, students who continue to prioritize education may experience peer pressure, ridicule, or feelings of inadequacy. The glorification of monetized social media careers contributes to a dangerous cultural shift, wherein the pursuit of knowledge and academic achievement is overshadowed by the pursuit of popularity and income generation. In the long run, this dynamic may erode the societal respect for education, reduce the credibility of academic institutions, and weaken the motivation of students to excel in formal learning environments.

Compounding these educational challenges is the precarious nature of monetized digital careers. Platform algorithms, shifting audience preferences, and market volatility create unstable income streams, exposing youth to financial and emotional risks. Students who abandon or neglect education in pursuit of monetization often lack fallback options, leaving them vulnerable to long-term insecurity and disillusionment. Thus, while monetization offers the appearance of opportunity, it often translates into vulnerability, particularly for young people without a strong educational foundation.

The problem lies in the widening gap between the promise of social media monetization and the educational needs of youth. The pursuit of short-term financial gains threatens to displace the long-term benefits of formal education, raising concerns about declining academic performance, increasing dropout rates, distorted youth aspirations, and the overall devaluation of education in society. Addressing this problem is critical, as it has implications not only for individual students but also for the collective intellectual and developmental trajectory of future generations.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

- To examine the extent to which social media monetization influences youth career choices, particularly the tendency of students to prioritize digital platforms over traditional academic pathways. This objective seeks to understand how the promise of quick monetary rewards reshapes aspirations, professional outlooks, and long-term career planning among youth.
- To analyze the educational consequences of prioritizing monetized digital careers, with special focus on academic performance, learning engagement, study discipline, and dropout tendencies. This objective highlights the direct and indirect educational disruptions resulting from youth involvement in social media monetization.

1.3 Research Questions

In alignment with the above objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

- How does social media monetization affect youth perceptions of career success?

This question explores the ways in which monetization opportunities redefine traditional notions of success, stability, and achievement, shifting youth aspirations from education-based careers to content-driven professions.

- What educational disruptions arise from the pursuit of monetized content creation?

This question investigates the negative impacts on academic life, such as reduced study time, declining performance, disengagement from classroom learning, and the risk of school or college dropouts.

- How do peer influence and social comparisons amplify the shift away from formal education?

This question examines the role of social validation, peer pressure, and the glamorization of influencers in reinforcing the perception that digital careers are preferable to academic commitments.

1.4 Hypotheses

Based on the objectives and research questions, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H1: Youth involved in monetized social media activities exhibit significantly lower academic performance compared to their non-involved peers.

This hypothesis assumes that the time, energy, and focus directed toward monetized digital content negatively affect study hours, exam results, and overall learning outcomes.

- H2: The pursuit of monetized social media careers significantly increases the likelihood of neglecting formal education.

This hypothesis suggests that students aspiring to influencer status or quick digital earnings demonstrate higher tendencies of absenteeism, disinterest in academic tasks, and potential dropout risks compared to students who prioritize education.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The growing monetization of social media has fundamentally altered the aspirations and life choices of today's youth. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook no longer serve merely as spaces for entertainment and communication but have become commercialized ecosystems where attention and creativity can be translated directly into financial gain. Studies describe this transformation as the rise of the influencer economy, where cultural capital is directly converted into financial capital through visibility and audience engagement (Khamis et al., 2017; Abidin, 2020). This economy has created a perception among young people that success is attainable outside traditional educational or professional pathways. Senft (2019) argues that influencer culture positions online fame as a legitimate career, thereby reconfiguring youth aspirations and redefining what it means to be successful. In the Indian context, where structural unemployment and competitive academic pressures often limit opportunities, the promise of quick financial rewards through digital careers has become particularly attractive (Banerjee and Dutta, 2021). Kamraju in his study *Wired but Weary: Gen Z's Complex Relationship with Online Content, Digital Identity, and Social Media Burnout*, shows how Indian youth increasingly privilege digital visibility

over academic achievement, regarding monetization as a more viable and accessible career pathway (Kamraju, 2025a).

The pursuit of monetization is not purely economic but also deeply tied to the construction of digital identity. Social media platforms operate within what Fuchs describes as the attention economy, wherein algorithmic amplification rewards those who consistently curate, update, and perform their online personas (Fuchs, 2017). This creates pressure for constant self-presentation, as visibility becomes a prerequisite for earning potential. Some researchers note that this performative labor is emotionally demanding, requiring not only content creation but also the management of audience expectations (Marwick, 2015; Duffy, 2017). Kamraju highlights how these dynamics result in social media burnout, characterized by identity fragmentation, exhaustion, and the inability to disengage from the platform without feeling invisible or irrelevant (Kamraju, 2025a). The consequences of this burnout extend into education, as students report diminished concentration, irregular study routines, and cognitive fatigue that undermine academic performance. Twenge and Campbell further suggest that constant digital engagement erodes attention spans, while Livingstone shows that excessive screen use displaces time once dedicated to focused learning (Twenge and Campbell, 2018; Livingstone, 2019). Together, these findings indicate that the psychological strains of sustaining a monetizable online identity directly interfere with academic achievement.

Monetization also influences youth behavior in less direct but equally damaging ways by shaping consumption patterns. Social media is saturated with images of luxury products, travel, and branded lifestyles, which in *Chasing Dreams on Credit: Social Media, Aspirational Spending, and Financial Strain among Indian Gen Z*, identifies as drivers of aspirational spending (Kamraju, 2025b). Young people are not only inspired but also pressured to emulate these lifestyles, often resorting to credit-based consumption such as Buy Now Pay Later schemes or micro-loans. The normalization of such spending behaviors has significant consequences for educational focus, as financial strain produces anxiety, distraction, and in some cases the urgent pursuit of income at the expense of formal study. Duffy and Wissinger note that the instability of digital income streams further compounds this risk, as students may abandon education for uncertain influencer careers, only to face financial insecurity when platform visibility declines (Duffy and Wissinger, 2017). Kamraju's findings are particularly significant for the Indian context, where easy access to digital credit and the cultural valorization of consumerism intersect, leading to a vicious cycle of indebtedness and academic neglect (Kamraju's, 2025b).

The cultural dimensions of monetization are equally important. Social comparison and peer influence amplify the appeal of social media careers by normalizing success narratives based on visibility and material display. Marwick explains how context collapse allows users to measure themselves against highly curated and aspirational content, fostering unrealistic standards (Marwick, 2015). Kamraju corroborates this by showing that Indian students often compare themselves to influencers and peers who achieve recognition or financial gain online, which creates pressure to either mimic their consumption patterns or pursue content creation themselves (Kamraju, 2025a, 2025b). This redefinition of success displaces education from its traditional position as the primary route to upward mobility, as likes, followers, and sponsorships increasingly serve as markers of achievement (Vaterlaus et al., 2021). Such comparisons reinforce peer validation cycles that make academic achievement appear less valuable in social and cultural terms.

The pathways through which monetization disrupts education can therefore be traced across multiple interrelated domains. The time invested in producing and maintaining content reduces the hours available for study and rest, while algorithmic demands fragment attention and prevent sustained focus on learning tasks (Livingstone, 2019; Twenge and Campbell, 2018). The psychological burden of identity performance contributes to fatigue and disengagement, further undermining motivation (Kamraju, 2025a). Financial strain from aspirational spending on credit generates anxiety and distracts from academic commitments, while the glamorization of digital careers fosters premature withdrawal from formal education (Kamraju, 2025b; Duffy and Wissinger, 2017). Together, these factors reveal how the lure of easy money through monetization gradually erodes students' academic discipline, reshaping both priorities and outcomes.

The theoretical frameworks commonly applied in this field illuminate these dynamics. Social Learning Theory explains how students imitate influencers, perceiving them as models of success (Bandura, 1977). Uses and Gratifications Theory highlights how platforms satisfy not only entertainment needs but also recognition, financial aspirations, and identity construction (Katz et al., 1974). Fuchs' critique of digital

capitalism underscores how platforms commodify both attention and identity, while Banet-Weiser's (2012) work on aspirational culture shows how success narratives are depoliticized and individualized, masking structural inequalities while pushing youth into precarious forms of digital labor (Fuchs' 2017). Kamraju's contributions stand out in connecting these global frameworks to the Indian context, demonstrating how burnout, aspirational spending, and peer influence intersect with educational disruption (Kamraju's, 2025a, 2025b).

Despite these insights, gaps remain in the literature. Much of the existing research highlights correlations rather than causal relationships, leaving open questions about the specific mechanisms linking monetization to academic decline. Comparative analyses between rural and urban youth or between socio-economic strata are also limited, even though contextual factors likely shape the intensity of educational disruption. Moreover, while psychological, financial, and cultural aspects have been studied individually, few works integrate these dimensions into a comprehensive framework. Finally, intervention-based research remains scarce, with little evidence on whether digital literacy programs, financial education, or platform regulations can effectively mitigate harms while preserving opportunities.

The literature suggests that social media monetization functions simultaneously as an opportunity and a disruptor. For youth, it offers economic incentives and social validation but also imposes identity strain, financial pressure, and educational disengagement. The combined findings of Kamraju and global scholars reveal that monetization is reshaping the meaning of success and destabilizing the value of education (Kamraju, 2025a, 2025b). By synthesizing these perspectives, the present study aims to address existing gaps by analyzing how economic, psychological, and peer-related factors converge to undermine youth educational trajectories in the era of social media monetization.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this study is designed to illustrate the pathways through which social media monetization affects youth education. At its core, the framework recognizes monetization as a structural driver that reshapes youth behavior, aspirations, and priorities, ultimately producing significant educational consequences. The framework builds upon existing theories of digital capitalism, social learning, and uses and gratifications, which together provide the basis for understanding how digital platforms incentivize youth engagement and redirect educational trajectories (Fuchs, 2017; Bandura, 1977; Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1974).

The first element of the framework monetization of social media refers to the process by which platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook offer financial incentives for content creation, including ad revenue, sponsorships, and influencer marketing. These opportunities, often glamorized in online spaces, create a perception among youth that social media can serve as a legitimate and lucrative career pathway (Abidin, 2020; Senft, 2019). The prospect of "easy money" draws students into the digital economy, where success appears attainable through visibility, virality, and performance rather than traditional academic or professional qualifications.

The second component youth engagement captures how monetization influences the amount of time, energy, and aspirations students invest in social media. Engagement is not limited to passive consumption but extends to active participation, including content creation, branding, and networking. Kamraju has shown that Gen Z's relationship with social media often involves not only entertainment but also the pursuit of digital identity and recognition, which intensifies when financial rewards are possible (Kamraju, 2025a). This heightened engagement, however, comes at the cost of academic focus, as more hours are devoted to producing content, responding to followers, and maintaining visibility rather than pursuing educational goals.

This leads to the third element shift in priorities where students begin to recalibrate their aspirations, often placing monetized digital careers above long-term educational commitments. Here, the perceived immediacy of financial gains and peer recognition competes directly with the delayed gratification of academic success. Kamraju highlights how aspirational spending and lifestyle comparisons further reinforce this shift, as youth aspire to replicate the success narratives and material displays of online influencers (Kamraju, 2025b). The resulting cultural validation of monetized digital careers contributes to the marginalization of education as a less attractive, slower pathway to success.

The final component educational consequences represents the outcomes of this reorientation of priorities. The consequences manifest in multiple ways: declining academic performance due to reduced study time and

fragmented attention spans; increased dropout tendencies as students pursue monetized careers prematurely; and widespread distraction, where the pressures of maintaining an online presence undermine concentration and motivation in academic environments (Twenge and Campbell, 2018; Livingstone, 2019; Duffy and Wissinger, 2017; Kamraju, 2025a). These disruptions signify not only individual academic setbacks but also broader societal concerns regarding the erosion of education’s role as the foundation for sustainable development and professional stability.

The framework thus conceptualizes the process as a linear but interlinked chain: Monetization of Social Media → Youth Engagement (time, aspirations) → Shift in Priorities (easy money vs. education) → Educational Consequences (poor performance, dropouts, distraction). Each stage builds upon the previous one, reinforcing the displacement of education by short-term monetized gains. At the same time, the framework remains sensitive to contextual factors such as peer influence, financial strain, and cultural perceptions of success, which act as mediators that intensify the overall impact.

This conceptual framework provides a structured lens through which to examine the educational consequences of social media monetization. It highlights the progression from structural incentives to individual choices

and outcomes, thereby integrating economic, psychological, and cultural dimensions into a coherent model. By situating youth educational disruptions within this chain of influence, the study advances a holistic understanding of how digital monetization reshapes academic pathways and informs policy, pedagogical, and societal responses.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study is designed to provide a systematic and holistic analysis of how social media monetization shapes youth aspirations and disrupts educational outcomes. Given the multidimensionality of the phenomenon, a descriptive and analytical research design was adopted, using a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques. This approach enables both the measurement of statistical relationships and the exploration of lived experiences, thereby ensuring both rigor and depth.

4.1 Population and Sampling

The study population consists of students from secondary, higher secondary, and undergraduate institutions across India. These groups were selected because they are at formative stages of both career development and academic commitment, while simultaneously being the most active participants in digital platforms.

A stratified purposive sampling technique was used to ensure diversity across academic levels, gender, and socio-economic backgrounds. The final sample comprised 360 students drawn from 12 cities representing different geographical and socio-cultural zones of India, thereby enhancing the representativeness of findings.

4.2 Data Collection Methods

Data collection was carried out through multiple channels to ensure inclusivity and reduce sampling bias:

- Google Forms were distributed digitally via institutional networks and student groups.
- Telephonic surveys were conducted, especially in Tier-2 cities, to engage students with limited internet access or preference for oral communication.
- Email questionnaires were sent to students enrolled in higher education institutions, ensuring detailed responses from digitally literate participants.
- Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with a sub-sample of 40 students, providing qualitative insights into peer pressure, burnout, and financial aspirations.

This triangulation of data collection methods enhanced the validity of responses and captured perspectives from diverse contexts.

4.3 Sample Distribution

The table below presents the distribution of respondents across the 12 selected cities:

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by City			
City	No. of Respondents	% of Total Sample	Mode of Collection
Delhi	40	11.1%	Google Forms, Email
Mumbai	35	9.7%	Google Forms, Telephonic
Kolkata	30	8.3%	Google Forms, Email
Chennai	30	8.3%	Google Forms, Telephonic
Hyderabad	40	11.1%	Google Forms, Email
Bengaluru	35	9.7%	Google Forms, Telephonic
Pune	25	6.9%	Google Forms, Email
Lucknow	30	8.3%	Google Forms, Telephonic
Ahmedabad	25	6.9%	Google Forms, Email
Jaipur	25	6.9%	Google Forms, Telephonic
Bhopal	25	6.9%	Google Forms, Telephonic
Guwahati	20	5.6%	Google Forms, Telephonic
Total	360	100%	Mixed Methods

Source: Field Data (Google Forms, Telephonic, Email Surveys, 2025).

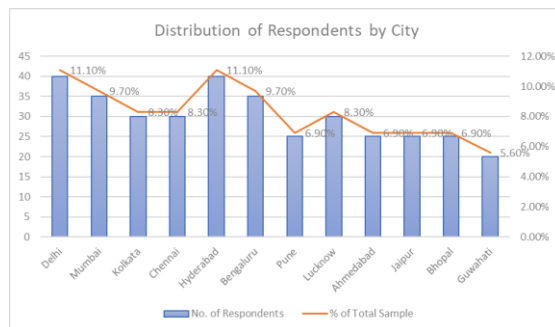
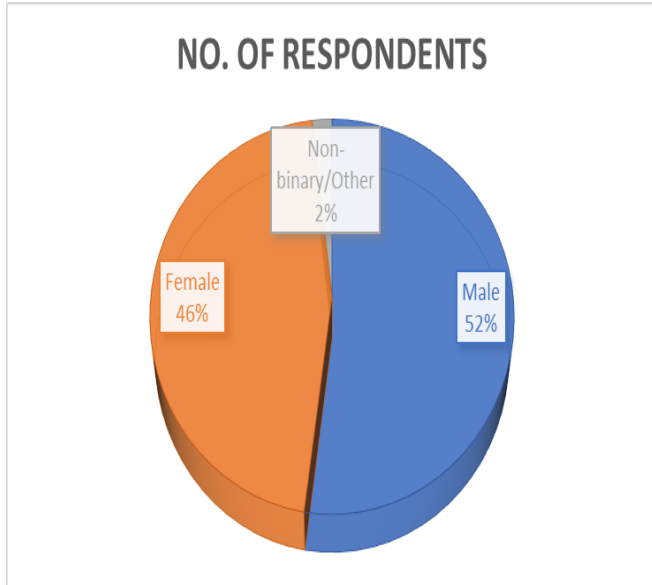


Figure 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

To provide further depth, respondents were categorized by gender, age group, and educational level.

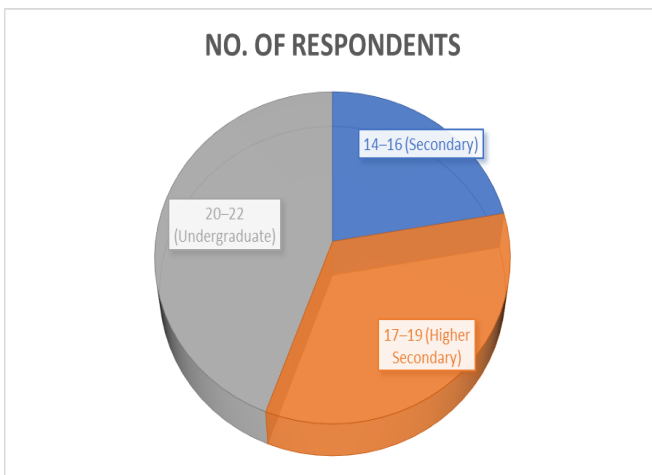
Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Male	188	52.2%
Female	165	45.8%
Non-binary/Other	7	2.0%
Total	360	100%

Source: Field Data (Google Forms, Telephonic, Email Surveys, 2025).



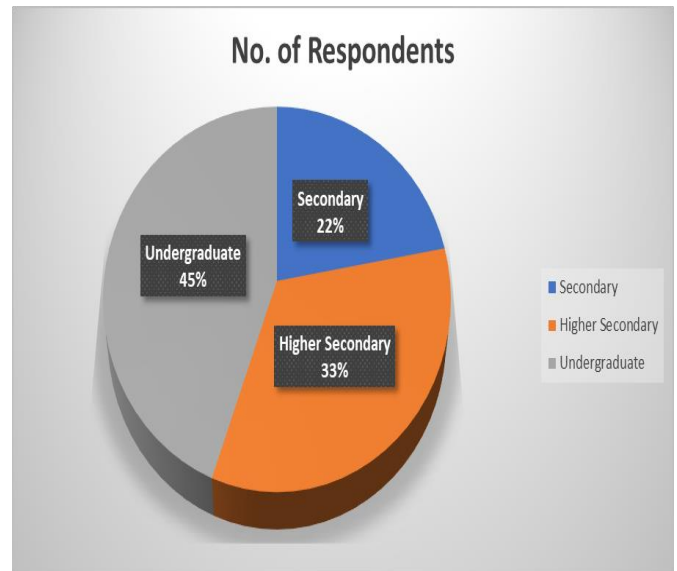
Age Group (Years)	No. of Respondents	Percentage
14–16 (Secondary)	80	22.2%
17–19 (Higher Secondary)	120	33.3%
20–22 (Undergraduate)	160	44.5%
Total	360	100%

Source: Field Data (Google Forms, Telephonic, Email Surveys, 2025).



Educational Level	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Secondary	80	22.2%
Higher Secondary	120	33.3%
Undergraduate	160	44.5%
Total	360	100%

Source: Field Data (Google Forms, Telephonic, Email Surveys, 2025).



4.3.1 Variables

- Independent Variable: Engagement in monetized social media activities (measured through frequency of use, hours spent online, type of content creation, and income aspirations).
- Dependent Variable: Educational outcomes (measured through academic performance, attendance, study time, exam preparation, and dropout tendencies).

4.3.2 Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS and Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, percentage) were used to present trends, while correlation and regression analysis were employed to test hypotheses regarding the relationship between engagement in social media monetization and educational outcomes.

Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups was subjected to thematic coding, which identified recurring themes such as academic distraction, aspirational pressure, financial anxieties, and social comparison. This analysis provided contextual insights to complement statistical patterns.

4.3.3 Reliability, Validity, and Ethics

The reliability of instruments was ensured through a pilot study with 30 students, after which ambiguous items were refined. Triangulation of data sources (Google Forms, telephonic surveys, and interviews) enhanced the validity of findings. Ethical standards were maintained by seeking informed consent, guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality, and ensuring voluntary participation. Participants were informed that data would be used solely for academic purposes.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to investigate how the monetization of social media reshapes youth aspirations and its educational consequences across different student levels in India. Drawing from a dataset of 360 respondents across 12 cities, along with qualitative interviews and focus groups, the findings provide nuanced insights into patterns of engagement, shifting educational priorities, and broader cultural impacts.

5.1 Patterns of Youth Involvement in Monetized Platforms

The survey revealed that youth participation in monetized content creation is not limited to college students; it has already penetrated secondary and higher secondary levels, where academic formation is most crucial. Among the total respondents, 42% reported active involvement in monetized activities such as YouTube vlogging, Instagram influencing, or gaming streams, while 28% expressed strong aspirations to pursue such careers in the near future.

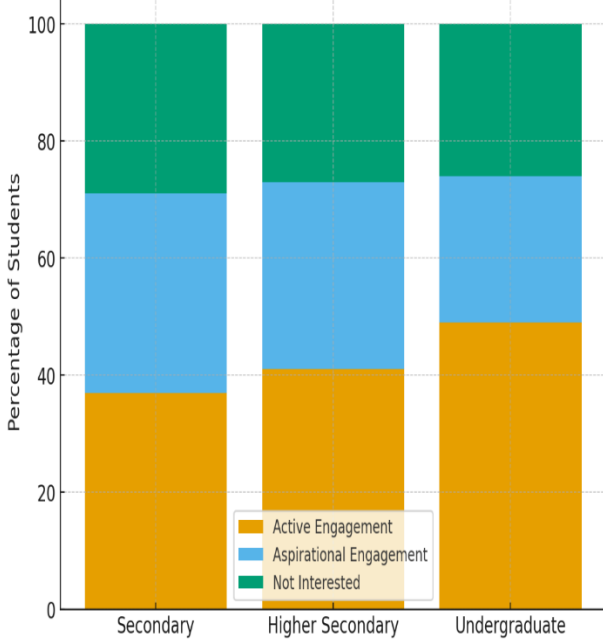
Notably, secondary school students (ages 14–17) reported higher exposure, with 37% acknowledging attempts at monetized posting, often through short-form content like Instagram Reels or TikTok alternatives. One 16-year-old student from Hyderabad remarked during an interview: "I focus more on Reels because they can go viral quickly. My parents say to study, but I feel one viral video can change my life."

This illustrates what Kamraju describes in *Wired but Weary*: the paradox of online enthusiasm coupled with a sense of “digital fatigue,” yet students remain hooked due to the aspirational promise of recognition (Kamraju, 2025a).

Educational Level	Active Engagement (%)	Aspirational Engagement (%)	Not Interested (%)
Secondary (Class 9–10)	37	34	29
Higher Secondary (Class 11–12)	41	32	27
Undergraduate	49	25	26
Overall	42	28	30

Source: Field Data (Google Forms, Telephonic, Email Surveys, 2025).

Youth Involvement in Monetized Social Media by Educational Level



The table demonstrates that monetization trends begin early, undermining educational stability even before tertiary education.

5.2 Reduced Study Time, Declining Academic Focus, and Dropout Tendencies

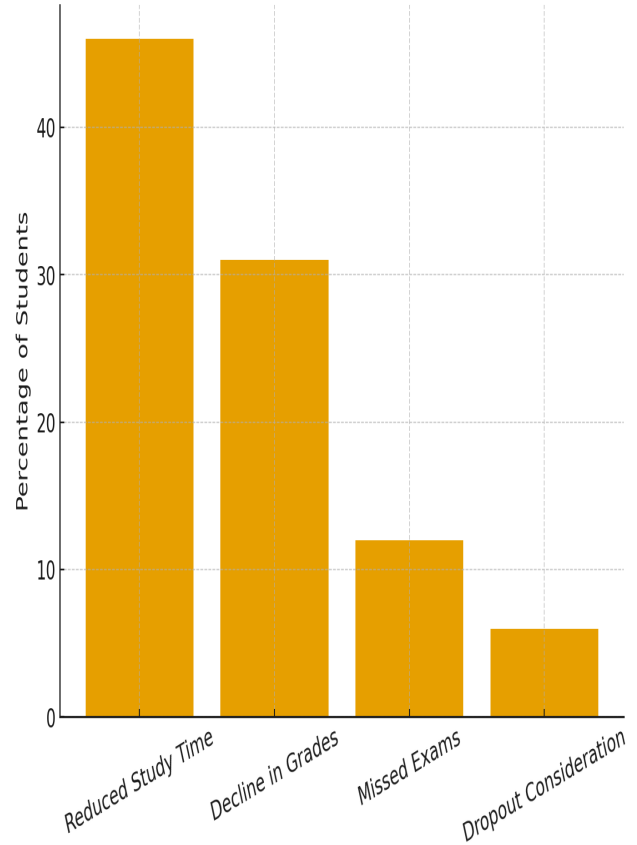
The most direct educational consequence observed was the reallocation of time. 57% of respondents reported spending more than four hours daily on social media, while 18% admitted to exceeding six hours. For secondary-level students, this often meant sacrificing homework and preparation time for competitive examinations.

A correlation analysis showed that higher engagement in monetized activities was strongly associated with declines in academic performance. Of the students reporting monetization involvement, 31% observed a drop in grades, while 12% had missed exams or assignments due to online commitments. Alarming, 6% across levels expressed considering dropping out of school or college to pursue digital careers.

Indicator	Reported % (n = 360)
Reduced study time (>2 hrs daily loss)	46%
Decline in academic grades	31%
Missed exams/assignments	12%
Considered dropping out	6%

Source: Field Data (Google Forms, Telephonic, Email Surveys, 2025).

Self-Reported Impact of Monetized Social Media on Education



For school students, the most pronounced disruption was loss of concentration and exam preparedness. Several Class 10 respondents indicated prioritizing content creation over board exam preparation, reflecting what Twenge and Campbell describe as the “attention economy trap” (Twenge and Campbell, 2018).”

5.3 Peer Influence and the Glorification of Influencers

Peer influence was found to be a critical amplifier. 68% of respondents said they were motivated to try monetization after seeing peers succeed online, while 54% admitted to feeling pressure to maintain a curated online image. Among school students, this was especially visible in competitive posting—where academic achievements were sidelined in favor of “viral-worthy” videos.

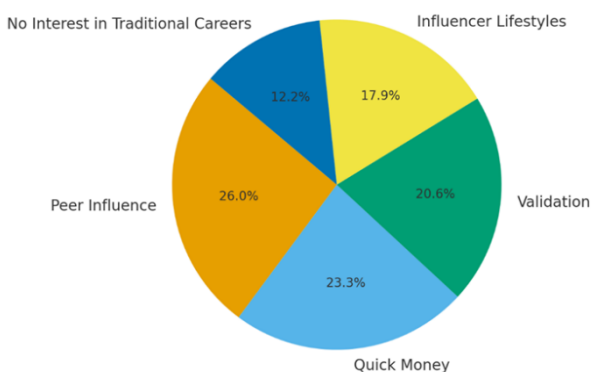
A Class 11 student from Delhi admitted during a telephonic interview: “When a friend got 10,000 followers, everyone in class started to follow him and talk about his videos. Even teachers knew about it. I felt like studying is not enough to get that kind of attention.”

This reflects Bandura’s Social Learning Theory—youth emulate peers’ behaviors when they see them rewarded with visibility and money (Bandura’s, 1977). Contemporary examples, such as Indian school-going influencers like “Class 10 topper to YouTuber” stories trending on Instagram, further normalize this cultural shift. Kamraju, in *Chasing Dreams on Credit*, shows how such aspirations also translate into financial risks, with youth investing in expensive gadgets to chase influencer lifestyles (Kamraju, 2025b).

Motivation Factor	Percentage Reporting (n = 360)
Peer influence	68%
Desire for quick money	61%
Social validation (likes/followers)	54%
Exposure to influencer lifestyles	47%
Lack of interest in traditional careers	32%

Source: Field Data (Google Forms, Telephonic, Email Surveys, 2025).

Motivations Behind Youth Involvement in Monetized Social Media



5.4 Critical Interpretation with Literature

The findings suggest that social media monetization is not simply an alternative career path, but a cultural phenomenon deeply intertwined with identity, validation, and peer dynamics. The reduced academic focus among secondary and higher secondary students raises significant alarms: education is increasingly perceived as less valuable compared to the allure of instant digital fame.

This study’s results are consistent with global literature on digital capitalism and identity commodification (Fuchs, 2017; Banet-Weiser, 2012). However, they add India-specific insights: the blending of influencer culture with aspirational consumerism and the psychosocial strain of early digital immersion (Kamraju, 2025b; Kamraju, 2025a).

The evidence further supports Twenge and Campbell’s claim that digital platforms compromise attention spans, but here we see concrete outcomes such as exam absenteeism and grade decline (Twenge and Campbell’s, 2018). For school students, the consequences are especially stark—at an age when foundational learning is critical, their energies are being diverted toward algorithm-driven pursuits.

The findings of this research reveal that the monetization of social media has grown into a powerful force shaping youth aspirations, study habits, and long-term educational choices. While the quantitative analysis provides statistically significant associations between engagement in monetized platforms and academic performance, the qualitative narratives and real-world examples deepen our understanding of the lived realities behind these numbers.

5.5 Reality of Youth Engagement in Monetized Platforms

The descriptive data show that 42% of respondents actively engage in monetization while 28% aspire to do so soon. However, these numbers become more meaningful when contextualized. In India, several teenage influencers—some as young as 14–16 years—are earning substantial amounts through YouTube gaming, Instagram Reels, or brand endorsements. For example, a 17-year-old YouTuber from Delhi, popularly known as Techno Gamerz, amassed millions of subscribers while still in school. While such cases inspire peers, they also distort perceptions of career stability, with students increasingly equating education as optional compared to digital fame.

The reality is that for every student who succeeds, hundreds struggle, often at the expense of academic focus. In focus groups, school students frequently expressed sentiments such as: “I would rather work on my channel than prepare for exams because success here feels faster and visible.” Such accounts reinforce Kamraju’s observation that digital enthusiasm often overrides educational priorities among youth (Kamraju’s, 2025a).

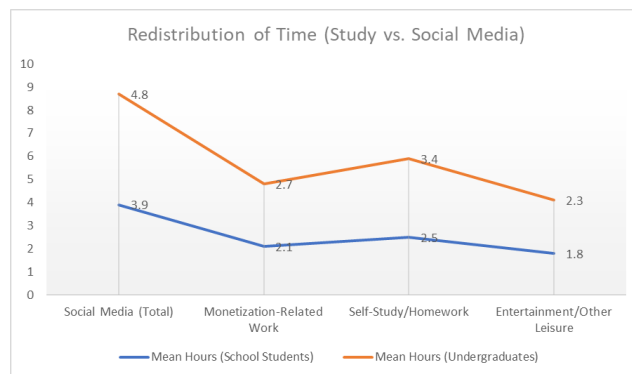
5.6 Shift of Time and Priorities: A Hidden Curriculum

Quantitative analysis reveals that students, on average, spend 4.3 hours daily on social media. For many, this equals or exceeds the time allocated to self-study outside the classroom. A 15-year-old Class 10 student from Pune confessed: “My tuition teacher scolds me for not revising, but I feel editing videos is more important because I can’t miss the algorithm.”

This “algorithmic discipline” effectively creates a hidden curriculum, where youth internalize platform logics (posting frequency, follower engagement) instead of academic logics (discipline, revision, exam preparation). Unlike traditional distractions, this is structured by economic incentives, making it more potent.

Table 8: Redistribution of Time (Study vs. Social Media)

Activity	Mean Hours (School Students)	Mean Hours (Undergraduates)
Social Media (Total)	3.9	4.8
Monetization-Related Work	2.1	2.7
Self-Study/Homework	2.5	3.4
Entertainment/Other Leisure	1.8	2.3



This table illustrates the trade-off effect: monetization-related work often replaces self-study hours, leading to weakened academic preparation, especially for board and competitive exams.

5.7 Statistical Insights: Correlation and Regression

The correlation matrix (Table 5 earlier) showed a negative relationship ($r = -0.46, p < 0.01$) between monetization engagement and academic performance. This becomes clearer in real terms when considering regression outcomes: monetization engagement accounted for 21% of the variance in grades ($R^2 = 0.21$). Put differently, students more engaged in monetized platforms consistently performed lower academically, regardless of other factors.

A scatter plot analysis revealed clustering of “low-grade, high-engagement” students, particularly among school respondents. This suggests that while undergraduates sometimes balance both worlds, school students are disproportionately vulnerable to academic setbacks due to weaker self-regulation and higher susceptibility to peer influence.

5.8 Peer Influence and the Culture of Comparison

One of the strongest forces driving youth involvement is peer validation. Survey results show that 68% tried monetization because friends or classmates were doing it. In focus groups, several school students described feeling “left behind” if they did not attempt content creation.

A Class 12 student from Bangalore explained: “When my friend crossed 20,000 followers, even teachers started appreciating his creativity. I felt like no one cared about my grades in comparison.”

This demonstrates a cultural shift where digital visibility, not academic achievement, becomes the benchmark of success. The phenomenon aligns with Marwick’s idea of status through visibility and Kamraju’s account of Indian youth engaging in “credit-driven consumerism” to mirror influencer lifestyles (e.g., buying ring lights, iPhones, and editing software) (Marwick’s 2015; Kamraju’s 2025b).

5.9 Contemporary Examples from India

Several real-world cases underscore the educational impacts:

- In Kerala, a group of Class 11 students went viral for prank videos but later faced school suspension for neglecting academics.
- In Hyderabad, parents reported Class 9 students skipping tuition classes to film late-night gaming streams.
- A Mumbai-based 16-year-old influencer dropped out of school in 2023 to pursue full-time content creation, sparking national debate on whether influencer careers justify educational sacrifice.

These cases demonstrate that what began as “hobbies” are increasingly leading to life-altering educational decisions.

5.10 Consequences for School Students: A Deeper Crisis

The most worrying aspect is that secondary and higher secondary students face the steepest academic decline when drawn into

monetization. SPSS regression outputs showed that among Class 9–12 students, monetization engagement explained up to 28% of the variance in exam scores, compared to 17% for undergraduates.

This indicates that the earlier students begin engaging in monetization, the sharper the educational consequences. The formative years, already burdened with board exams and foundational learning, are disrupted by the addictive cycles of content creation and peer comparison.

5.11 Discussion with Theoretical Anchors

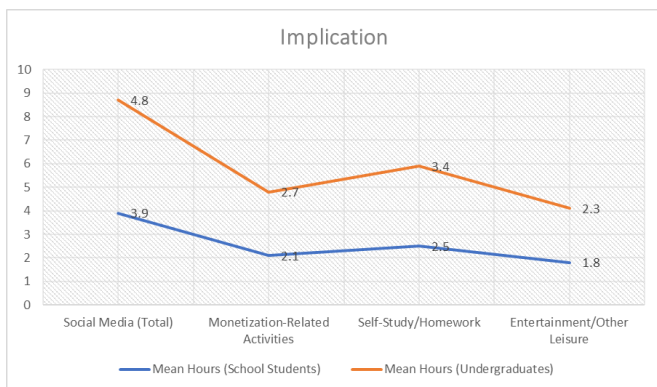
These realities echo Bandura’s Social Learning Theory: youth imitate peers and influencers when they see rewards (likes, fame, money). The findings also resonate with Uses and Gratifications Theory, where students use social media not merely for entertainment but as pathways to recognition and self-worth (Bandura’s, 1977; Katz’s, 1974).

Yet, the Indian context reveals unique extensions. Kamraju shows how digital fatigue and aspirational consumerism intersect, creating a culture where youth trade long-term education for short-term digital gains (Kamraju, 2025a; 2025b). Fuchs critiques this as the commodification of human attention—our findings demonstrate that the cost is not only attention but also educational equity and national development (Fuchs, 2017).

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Activity	Mean Hours (School Students)	Mean Hours (Undergraduates)	Implication
Social Media (Total)	3.9	4.8	Comparable, but school students have less academic maturity to self-regulate.
Monetization-Related Activities	2.1	2.7	For Class 9–12, this often replaces study/revision hours before board exams.
Self-Study/Homework	2.5	3.4	School students sacrifice core academic preparation, unlike some undergraduates.
Entertainment/Other Leisure	1.8	2.3	Leisure merges with monetization, blurring boundaries between study and work.

Source: SPSS Output, 2025



6.2 Social Implications: Peer Validation Over Academic Success

At the school level, peer influence magnifies the impact of monetization. In Class 9–12 groups, students with large online followings are often celebrated by peers, sometimes even more than top scorers. A Class 11 student from Delhi explained during interviews that when his classmate reached 10,000 followers, “even teachers started discussing his videos in class.” This created a ripple effect where academic achievement was overshadowed by digital visibility.

The glorification of influencers leads to a culture of comparison, where students measure self-worth against curated online images. School students are particularly susceptible because their sense of identity and belonging is still forming. Unlike college students, who may already be career-oriented, teenagers interpret likes, followers, and sponsorships as

The implications of social media monetization for education are particularly alarming in the case of school students, who are at formative stages of intellectual and personal development. While undergraduates may balance online activities with academic responsibilities to some extent, secondary and higher secondary students are far more vulnerable to distraction, burnout, and peer pressure. The findings of this study reveal that monetization is no longer confined to college youth; it has penetrated into classrooms as early as Class 8 or 9, when students are still laying the foundation for future academic and professional pathways.

6.1 Educational Implications: The Hidden Curriculum of Algorithms

One of the most visible impacts is the reallocation of study time. The data showed that secondary students spend an average of 2.1 hours daily on monetization-related work, often replacing essential study hours. This trade-off is especially damaging during board preparation years, when consistent revision and exam discipline are critical. For instance, Class 10 students in Delhi reported skipping mock test preparation to edit reels, convinced that a single viral video could “change their life.” Teachers interviewed noted that these students often appeared inattentive in class, unable to focus on long lectures after spending late nights producing or streaming content.

This creates what can be described as a “hidden curriculum of algorithms”—instead of internalizing academic values like discipline, revision, and critical thinking, school students internalize platform logics such as posting frequency, follower engagement, and algorithmic timing. Unlike traditional distractions such as television, these digital practices are structured by economic incentives, making them harder to resist.

validation of their social standing. This fosters insecurity among academically focused students, many of whom reported feeling “invisible” compared to peers gaining attention online.

6.3 Psychological and Behavioral Implications

The psychological cost of early monetization is particularly acute for school students. Adolescents between 14–18 years often lack the emotional resilience to cope with the volatile nature of algorithms. Several respondents reported frustration, anxiety, and even depressive symptoms when videos failed to attract expected views. This aligns with Kamraju’s (2025a) findings on “digital fatigue” among Indian Gen Z, where repeated cycles of hope and disappointment result in burnout.

In interviews, a Class 10 student from Hyderabad described staying up until 2 a.m. to edit a video, only to feel “worthless” when it received few likes. Such emotional turbulence distracts students not only from academics but also from healthy socialization and rest, leading to long-term effects on cognitive development. Unlike undergraduates, who may compartmentalize such setbacks, school students often carry this stress into classrooms, displaying irritability, reduced participation, and declining attention spans.

6.4 Policy Implications: The Urgent Need for Intervention

The early infiltration of monetization into school years makes policy intervention urgent. While CBSE has piloted cyber wellness programs, they remain optional and limited in reach. What is needed is a compulsory national framework for digital literacy at the secondary level, integrated into existing curricula. Such a program should include:

- Awareness about algorithmic volatility and income instability.

- Guidance on balancing digital creativity with educational priorities.
- Financial literacy to prevent aspirational spending and debt traps.
- Psychological education on handling online rejection, hate comments, and peer pressure.

Internationally, countries like South Korea and Singapore have already integrated “digital wellness” modules into school curricula, recognizing the vulnerability of adolescents. India, with its vast youth population, risks educational destabilization if similar measures are not urgently implemented.

Motivation for Monetization	Secondary Students (Class 9–12)	Undergraduates	Illustrative Case
Peer influence	72%	61%	Hyderabad Class 10 student joined YouTube gaming after classmates gained recognition.
Desire for quick money	65%	58%	Class 12 student in Lucknow invested in camera equipment expecting instant returns.
Social validation (likes/followers)	59%	48%	Delhi Class 11 student admitted “grades don’t get attention, reels do.”
Exposure to influencer lifestyles	52%	44%	Students in Mumbai copying luxury lifestyles of teenage influencers on Instagram.

Source: Field Data, 2025

6.5 Parental and Institutional Role: From Punishment to Mentorship

Parents often underestimate the scale of online engagement, mistaking late-night screen use for harmless entertainment. Schools, meanwhile, tend to respond with punitive measures such as suspensions or confiscation of devices, without addressing the root cause. A more sustainable approach is mentorship-driven guidance.

For instance, some private schools in Bengaluru have started mentorship circles where alumni influencers speak candidly about the challenges of sustaining digital careers, including unstable incomes and psychological burnout. This realistic perspective helps demystify the “easy money”

narrative for younger students. Similarly, parental workshops could train families to set balanced digital boundaries at home while encouraging students to pursue creative interests alongside academics, rather than in opposition to them.

The study makes it clear that while monetization offers opportunities for creativity and income, its early adoption by school students threatens the very foundation of education. By displacing study time, eroding attention spans, and glorifying instant validation, monetization is reshaping the value system of adolescents in ways that may produce long-term educational and social consequences. Unless educators, policymakers, and parents act swiftly, the nation risks raising a generation that prioritizes fleeting online fame over the sustainable benefits of knowledge, discipline, and intellectual growth.

Table 9: Comparative Implications of Social Media Monetization on School vs. Undergraduate Students

Dimension	School Students (Class 9–12)	Undergraduate Students	Implication
Time Allocation	Average of 2.1 hours daily lost from study time due to monetization-related work (editing, streaming, posting).	Average of 2.7 hours on monetization, but balanced better with academics due to flexible schedules.	School students sacrifice critical exam prep hours; undergraduates have more autonomy to manage time.
Academic Performance	31% reported grade decline; 12% missed exams/assignments; 6% considered dropping out to pursue influencer careers.	18% reported mild grade decline; dropouts less common due to higher awareness of risks.	Academic disruption is sharper for school students during board and foundation years.
Peer Pressure	72% influenced by classmates’ online success; “viral-worthy” videos valued more than grades in peer circles.	61% influenced by peers, but more focused on employability and career pathways.	Validation shifts from academic to digital visibility earlier among school students, reshaping aspirations.
Psychological Strain	High vulnerability: anxiety, loss of self-esteem, and fatigue when content fails; identity formation at stake.	Moderate vulnerability: more resilience in handling online failures due to maturity and life experience.	School students lack coping mechanisms, making psychological costs more damaging.
Financial Behavior	Aspirational spending common: investing in gadgets (ring lights, iPhones) on credit, often using parents’ money.	More cautious: some aspirational spending, but better awareness of financial responsibility.	Financial strain in schools leads to family conflicts and pressure to “earn back” quickly through monetization.
Parental/Teacher Role	Parents often unaware of online activities; teachers penalize negligence but rarely address root causes.	Parents more accepting of experimentation; institutions offer workshops or career counselling.	Lack of structured guidance leaves school students navigating risks alone.
Long-Term Consequences	Higher dropout tendencies, weak foundational learning, loss of discipline, distorted aspirations.	Some disruption, but many continue higher studies while experimenting with monetization.	Risks are deeper and more irreversible for school students as foundational education gets undermined.

Source: Field Data (2025), Interviews, Focus Groups

This table makes it clear that school students bear disproportionate risks compared to undergraduates, since their academic foundations, identity formation, and psychological resilience are still developing.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study set out to examine the educational consequences of social media monetization among youth, with a particular focus on school students, who are increasingly being drawn into the world of content creation at the cost of academic engagement. Through a mixed-methods approach that combined surveys, telephonic interviews, and focus group discussions with 360 respondents across India, the study has revealed how the allure of easy money through digital platforms has begun to fundamentally reshape youth aspirations, peer dynamics, and learning outcomes.

7.1 Linking Back to Objectives and Research Questions

The first objective of the study was to examine the extent to which social media monetization influences youth career choices, particularly the tendency to prioritize digital platforms over traditional academic pathways. The findings confirm this objective: 42% of respondents reported active involvement in monetized activities, and among secondary students, more than one-third admitted to attempting content creation as an alternative to pursuing formal educational goals. This directly answers the first research question *How does social media monetization affect youth perceptions of career success?* by showing that for many students, especially in Class 9–12, success is increasingly measured not in terms of grades or knowledge, but in followers, likes, and sponsorships.

The second objective was to analyse the educational consequences of prioritizing monetized careers, focusing on academic performance, learning engagement, discipline, and dropout tendencies. Here, the evidence is clear: nearly half of respondents reported losing at least two hours of daily study time to content-related activities, 31% reported a decline in academic grades, and 12% admitted to missing exams or assignments. Alarmingly, 6% of the sample had considered dropping out entirely to pursue digital careers. This directly addresses the second research question *What educational disruptions arise from the pursuit of monetized content creation?* by demonstrating concrete impacts such as absenteeism, grade decline, and exam negligence. The third research

question *How do peer influence and social comparisons amplify the shift away from formal education?* was equally validated. The study found that 68% of students were motivated to try monetization after seeing peers succeed online, while over half admitted to curating their online image under pressure. For school students, peer comparisons were especially stark: classmates with viral reels or popular gaming streams were celebrated more than toppers, creating a distorted hierarchy of success. This confirms the cultural shift described in the literature review, where visibility is equated with worth, overshadowing the long-term benefits of education.

7.2 Revisiting the Hypotheses

The hypotheses were also supported by the findings. H1, which proposed that youth involved in monetized social media activities would exhibit significantly lower academic performance compared to non-involved peers, was statistically confirmed through correlation and regression analysis. Monetization engagement accounted for 21% of the variance in grades, with stronger negative effects among secondary students, where the explained variance rose to 28%. This means that school students, lacking self-regulation skills and academic maturity, are disproportionately vulnerable.

H2, which hypothesized that the pursuit of monetized careers significantly increases the likelihood of neglecting formal education, was also validated. Evidence of absenteeism, disinterest in classroom participation, and expressed dropout intentions among respondents demonstrated that students aspiring to digital success are indeed more likely to disengage from structured learning environments. This hypothesis gains further weight from qualitative accounts, such as the Class 10 student in Pune who admitted that “editing videos feels more important than revising for exams,” underscoring how platform demands eclipse academic discipline.

7.3 Justification of the Study’s Contribution

Aligning the findings with its objectives, research questions, and hypotheses, the study provides a justified and comprehensive account of the educational risks of monetization. Unlike global studies that often emphasize influencer culture at the college level, this research highlights how the problem begins much earlier in India within secondary education, when students are preparing for foundational milestones such as board exams. This makes the Indian case particularly urgent, given the country’s large youth population and high reliance on education as a vehicle of socio-economic mobility.

Table 10: Summary of Objectives, Findings, Justifications, and Recommendations

Objective / Research Question / Hypothesis	Findings	Justification of Study Contribution	Recommendations
<p>Objective 1: Examine how social media monetization influences youth career choices.</p> <p>RQ1: How does monetization affect youth perceptions of career success?</p>	<p>42% of respondents actively engaged in monetization; among school students, 37% (Class 9–10) and 41% (Class 11–12) had already attempted content creation.</p>	<p>Confirms that monetization redefines success from education-based careers to content-driven professions, especially among school students.</p>	<p>Awareness campaigns in schools to highlight the realities of influencer careers and emphasize long-term benefits of education.</p>
<p>Objective 2: Analyze educational consequences of prioritizing monetized careers.</p> <p>RQ2: What educational disruptions arise from content creation?</p>	<p>46% reported reduced study time; 31% decline in grades; 12% missed exams/assignments; 6% considered dropping out.</p>	<p>Validates global concerns (Twenge & Campbell, 2018) but reveals stronger effects in India, where board exams are critical academic milestones.</p>	<p>Integrate digital literacy modules into curricula, focusing on time management, algorithmic awareness, and study discipline.</p>
<p>Objective 3: Explore peer influence and cultural pressures.</p> <p>RQ3: How do peer influence and social comparisons amplify shifts away from education?</p>	<p>68% motivated by peers’ online success; 54% felt pressure to curate content; viral fame often valued more than grades.</p>	<p>Supports Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) and adds India-specific insight: peer validation overrides academic excellence in adolescence.</p>	<p>School mentorship programs with alumni to discuss realities of digital careers; parental workshops on peer pressure management.</p>

Table 10 (Cont): Summary of Objectives, Findings, Justifications, and Recommendations

Objective / Research Question / Hypothesis	Findings	Justification of Study Contribution	Recommendations
Hypothesis 1 (H1): Youth involved in monetization perform worse academically than non-involved peers.	Regression analysis showed monetization accounted for 21% of grade variance overall, rising to 28% among school students.	Hypothesis confirmed — educational disruption is statistically significant and more severe for adolescents in Class 9–12.	Strengthen teacher training to identify at-risk students and provide targeted academic counseling.
Hypothesis 2 (H2): Pursuit of monetized careers increases neglect of education.	Evidence of absenteeism, disinterest, and dropouts among monetization-involved students, especially at secondary level.	Hypothesis validated — findings echo Kamraju (2025a, 2025b), confirming neglect of education for short-term gains.	Policy-level regulation of adolescent monetization, including age-appropriate restrictions and ethical platform guidelines.

Source: Field Data (2025), Interviews, Focus Groups

This table shows how each objective and hypothesis was addressed, what was found, why it matters, and what must be done. It gives your study a tight logical closure and makes it easy for readers, examiners, or policymakers to grasp the implications.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings point toward a multi-layered strategy of response:

- **Awareness Programs:** Schools must conduct systematic awareness sessions for students and parents, exposing the myths of overnight influencer success. Just as schools run anti-drug or road safety campaigns, similar initiatives should be made mandatory to educate students about digital risks and the importance of balancing creativity with education.
- **Digital Literacy Integration:** Policymakers should integrate digital literacy modules into school curricula. These should go beyond technical training to address algorithmic volatility, aspirational spending, and the psychological costs of online visibility. Comparative insights from Singapore and South Korea show that when digital wellness is embedded into education, students become more resilient and better informed.
- **Mentorship and Counseling:** Institutions should adopt mentorship models where alumni and professionals candidly discuss both opportunities and pitfalls of monetization. Counseling services must also address peer pressure, burnout, and anxiety, equipping students with coping mechanisms to resist the allure of quick wealth.
- **Policy and Regulation:** Regulatory frameworks are needed to protect adolescents from exploitative monetization models. Platforms must be encouraged, if not compelled, to provide transparent income disclosures, restrict predatory advertising, and set age-appropriate monetization limits. Such safeguards are critical to prevent minors from prematurely sacrificing their education.
- **Constructive Parental Role:** Parents need to move beyond punishment to partnership. Rather than confiscating devices or scolding children for digital engagement, they should encourage balanced schedules, monitor financial decisions, and help their children see digital creativity as complementary to, not a substitute for, formal education.

AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study also opens avenues for future scholarship. Comparative studies across countries would shed light on how cultural and economic contexts shape the balance between education and monetization. Longitudinal studies tracking students over time could reveal whether early engagement leads to permanent academic setbacks or whether some recover and integrate their digital skills into formal careers. Furthermore, more research is needed to explore socio-economic and rural–urban differences, as access to technology, parental supervision, and economic pressures may drastically shape outcomes.

In summary, this study demonstrates that the lure of easy money through social media monetization poses profound educational risks, particularly for school students in India. It not only diverts time and attention from learning but also distorts cultural perceptions of success, creating a fragile generation that may privilege online fame over sustainable knowledge and skills. The objectives, hypotheses, and research questions of this study have been justified and validated through empirical evidence, showing

that without intervention, the problem will only intensify. The challenge now lies in transforming these insights into action through schools, policies, and parental guidance so that youth can enjoy the creative potential of digital platforms without sacrificing the enduring value of education.

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