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Research Article

The Influence of Influencer Marketing Exposure and Parasocial Relationships on Impulse Buying Tendencies

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ABSTRACT

Influencer marketing is a popular form of social media advertising, and it is often targeted toward college students. It was observed that the consumers' purchase behavior was affected by the exposure to the influencer content. But the psychological mechanisms of this relationship, especially parasocial relationships, are still poorly understood. The study used a descriptive-correlational design to determine the relationship of influencer marketing exposure, parasocial relationships and impulse-buying tendencies of 412 university students in Cebu City. Data were collected using a structured survey involving Likert scale questions and analysed using regression techniques. The results showed that participants have a high level of exposure to influencer marketing ($M = 3.66$, Agree), weak parasocial relationships ($M = 2.76$, Neutral) and low impulse buying tendencies ($M = 2.47$, Disagree). Students considered themselves as careful consumers with low impulsive tendencies, but these descriptive findings did not exclude the possibility of behavioral susceptibility. Results of the regression analysis revealed that exposure to influencer marketing was a significant predictor of impulse buying tendencies ($R^2 = .12$, $p < .001$) and parasocial relationship strength ($R^2 = .11$, $p < .001$). The results show that exposure and parasocial relationships significantly predict impulse buying tendencies. The results suggest that mild low self-reported impulsivity is statistically related to higher tendencies for impulsive buying when perceived familiarity with the influencers is taken together with exposure. The findings reveal the complex but positive effect of influencer marketing on consumer behavior and the importance of ethical marketing, media literacy programs, and transparency in sponsorship disclosures. The study shows that exposure to influencer marketing is a significant predictor of college students' impulse buying behavior and the parasocial relationship plays an important role in the relationship.

Keywords: *Impulse buying tendency, Influencer marketing, Parasocial relationships, Regression analysis, Social-media exposure*

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Introduction

The use of influencer marketing has been on the rise in the digital age, especially on social media platforms where college students are very active. Influencers can also use these platforms to endorse products by being relatable through personalization, which often results in parasocial relationships (Koay et al., 2023). Nonreciprocal emotional bonds are expected to lead to followers' susceptibility to the influencers' recommendations that are likely to trigger impulse buying (Ma et al., 2023). They are at a developmental stage of independence and identity and it is evident that they may be particularly vulnerable to such influences (Mlambo et al., 2025). In the Philippines, 48.3% of Filipinos viewed online video content like influencer videos and vlogs in 2025, the third-highest (Howe, 2025). The importance of this research was the emotional attachment with the influencers and the exposure of influencer marketing that influences the impulsive purchasing behavior (Zaid & Zaid, 2025). This awareness can help marketers develop ethical advertising campaigns, and educators and legislators learn how to develop media literacy skills in future generations of consumers.

Social media is an important marketing platform that is increasingly becoming a channel through which university students are experiencing influencer marketing. This type of exposure is sometimes linked with impulse buying behaviors but the psychological grounds of such behaviors are yet not fully understood (Liu et al., 2023). More recent reports have attributed the rise in spending habits to Generation Z, with Generation Z making an average of 6 online purchases a month (Liamzon and Liamzon, 2025).

People of this age group tend to buy more with emotional decisions than rational thought (Sarmiento, 2024). Especially for the influencers, the creation of social media platforms and social media importance could be a huge factor behind it. This kind of relationship builds trust and familiarity, and is far more persuasive in its marketing and reduces resistance to a company's messages. Yan and Takahashi (2025) have studied the parasocial relationships between influencers and consumers in the digital environment and their effects on purchase intention. Chen et al. (2022) found that active

and passive social media use is important for college students' impulsive purchasing especially in terms of emotions and sense of authenticity. The current study will contribute to the literature by examining the effect of parasocial relationships on impulse buying among college students exposed to influencer marketing in the context of consumer well-being and ethical marketing. Thus, it could be useful to consider parasocial relationships, in addition to exposure to influencer marketing, to understand better why some students remain vulnerable to impulsive buying despite their claims to be careful consumers in general.

Much literature has been written on consumer behaviour focusing on influencer marketing and impulse buying, but little attention has been paid to the psychological influences related to these phenomena, especially in college students (Doshi, 2025). The present research emphasizes the direct influence of the influencer content on purchase intentions and, less so, on parasocial relationships (Almaida & Osman, 2021). The other issue is that many of these studies are on general demographics or teens, so it's hard to know what college students think of influencer content.

Thus, the present study examines whether parasocial relationships contribute additional explanatory power in predicting impulse buying tendencies, alongside exposure to influencer marketing among university students, thereby bringing a more dynamic view to the question of digital consumer behavior. While influencer marketing and impulse buying have been studied prior, not much research has scrutinized the influence of parasocial relationships on this association among university students. Therefore, this study aims to examine psychological influences associated with impulse buying induced by influencers among university students. Furthermore, the research questions are (1) What is students' exposure to influencer marketing? (2) How much do students use social media influencers as part of a parasocial relationship? (3) What is the level of impulse buying tendency among students? (4) Does exposure to influencer marketing affect the tendency to impulse buy? (5) Do influencer marketing exposures and parasocial relationships have a statistically significant association? (6) Do parasocial relationships signifi-

cantly predict impulse buying tendencies when considered together with exposure to influencer marketing? The hypotheses to test these questions are listed below in null form. (1) There is no significant relationship between exposure to influencer marketing and impulse buying tendency among college students. (2) There is no significant association between exposure to influencer marketing and parasocial relationships among college students. (3) Parasocial relationships do not significantly predict impulse buying tendencies when included as a predictor together with exposure to influencer marketing.

The conceptual model demonstrating relationships among the three variables in the study is illustrated in Figure 1. Influencer Marketing Exposure is shown at top left, Impulsive Buying Tendency at bottom left, and Parasocial Relationship with Influencers at right. One arrow connects exposure directly to impulsive buying; the other arrow connects from exposure to parasocial relationships and then an arrow connects from parasocial relationships to impulsive buying. It is a simple diagram that specifies direct and combined relationships considered in this work.

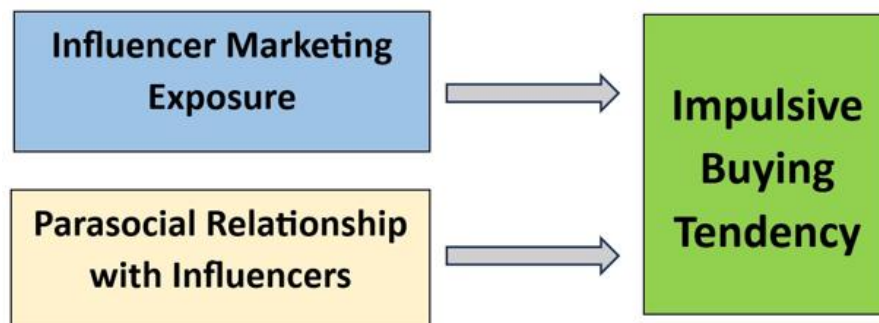


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Influencer Marketing Exposure, Parasocial Relationships, and Impulsive Buying Tendency

As a factor of social relationship, the figure indicates that the higher the exposure on the influencer content, the higher the parasocial connections with the influencers. In the current study, parasocial relationships were considered as a concurrent predictor, not as a mediating variable. Thus, impact of influencer marketing and parasocial relationships are studied independently as predictors of impulse buying tendencies. Exposure might have a direct effect on impulse buying, and parasocial relationships might have incremental explanatory power above and beyond exposure alone. This conceptualization aligns with the multiple regression model adopted in the study where both variables were examined for their unique and combined effects on impulse buying behaviour.

Methods

Research Design

It is a quantitative study with a descriptive-correlational approach whose objective is to know the associations between the variables of

exposure to influencer marketing, parasocial relationships and tendency to impulse buying that affect university students. Data will be collected through structured survey questionnaire with Likert scale statements. Data will be measured on five dimension scale for each variable. We will collect a sample of college students who are active users of different social networking platforms where the influencer marketing is a common practice. The data collected were used to carry out correlation and regression analyses to find out the strength and significance of the associations among the factors, and whether parasocial relationships significantly affect impulse buying tendency given influencer marketing exposure. It allows for empirical testing of the hypotheses and improves our understanding of the psychological factors that influence digital consumer behavior.

Respondents

The participants were university students of a university in Cebu City, Philippines. The

survey was successfully completed by 412 respondents which is a sample of over 385 individuals thus providing adequate samples for analysis. The participants were selected by voluntary response sampling. Students volunteered to participate based on availability and motivation. All the researchers were free to participate in the research. Before data collection, the general objective and objectives of the study were communicated to the respondents. One of the limitations of this study is the use of voluntary response sampling, which can lead to self-selection bias and restrict the ability to generalize. The findings should, however, be taken as the findings of the sample studied and not as representative of all the university students in Cebu City or elsewhere. The research process also included ethical standards of confidentiality and respondents' rights as an important part of the research process and informed consent of all participants.

Instruments

The measured study variables were obtained from a 3-part scale questionnaire (5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)). Reliability testing of collected datasets yielded coefficients of .7901 for Influencer Marketing Exposure, .8349 for parasocial relationship with influencers, and .8754 for Impulsive Buying Tendency because of Influencer, each of which represents from good to very good internal consistency. The reliability of the instrument showed good value with a Cronbach's alpha of .849. The first section includes statements for exposure to influencer marketing. As an emerging technology industry, university students are often exposed to influencer marketing through multiple channels on social media. We also hear how many are seeing influencers pitching things in their feeds, and as a result consumers have shown signs of skepticism about the same (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). In addition, followership of influencers that frequently post sponsored content has also appeared to be prevalent, indicating the increasing prevalence of branded messaging in personal online spaces (John et al., 2025). That has been intensified by short-form video productions where product placements become an entertainment medium in itself. For a number of students, influencer promotions

appear several times a week, which, in turn, serves to "saturation" marketing's influence (Hoang et al., 2025). Despite not being compelled to look for adverts, the influencer-oriented content still becomes more obvious for many as its presence can be more embedded and ambient in the social media environment (Martínez-López et al., 2020).

A second section, with five items, explored various aspects of the parasocial relationships students have with social media influencers. It tries to evaluate three major psychological aspects of this one-way emotional relationship; perceived familiarity, emotional attachment and trust on social media influencers. Parasocial relationships with influencers, a feature of digital engagement, have significant implications for the way individuals engage with content affectively and the consumers they decide to use (Sarkis et al., 2024). The first is a feeling that social media users know the influencers they follow personally. This sense is attributed to its frequent experience and perceived "closeness" (Su et al., 2021). This is a relation of emotional bonds. Recent studies have highlighted the ability of social media influencers to create individual narratives that resonate with their followers and are pertinent to influencer marketing experiences. Last but not least, emotional attachment leads to sincere concern in the end when these influencers show some vulnerable sides of their lives which again means investment in relationships (Shah et al., 2023). Others dream of seeing them in real life, another luxury offered to the more realistic, virtual influencers and immersive content in fashion today. And trust is a big part of that, too. The credibility of endorsement is also increased as many followers see influencers as friends, which further increases the brand loyalty effect (Almahdi et al., 2022).

The third part included five items to measure the different dimensions of the impulse-buying behaviors exhibited by the students. This questionnaire is used to detect most relevant behavioral markers of unplanned purchasing regarding influencer marketing. These include impulsive decision making, emotional influence and reaction to influencer marketing. Hence, influencer marketing in the online market has shown to be a strong power that can affect consumer behaviour in a short time (Djafa-

rova & Trofimenko, 2019). Most of the respondents reported that they spontaneously bought products after seeing influencer advertisements, as digital consumers prefer attractive and convincing visual content (Ilieva et al., 2024). If a follower believes an influencer believes it's a real message of urgency, influencer endorsement can translate into an immediate purchase. This is further worsened by the fact that consumers are exposed to unsolicited, unplanned product recommendations embedded somewhere in the content provided by influencers, which creates impulse buying fueled by emotional appeal and social validation (Ma et al., 2023). The discount provided by promotional codes by influencers is a lure to impulse purchase as a discount may have enough meaning for urgency and exclusivity (Kathuria & Bakshi, 2024). However, this kind of impulsive buying is not without consequence – most consumers regret impulse buying that is triggered by social media influencers, especially to buy impulsively, especially if bought in a panic situation (Li et al., 2021).

Data Collection

In order to make the context relevant and to get meaningful and high quality information university students were interviewed. The participants were asked to fill in a formal survey template. The use of Google forms made the questionnaire tool very accessible and an effective way of tracking responses was developed. Participants were asked to give electronic consent before entering the survey, which made clear the voluntary nature of participation. It was specified that all information must remain confidential and that anything obtained would be used only for academic purposes. This practice was also consistent with ethical considerations in research and contributed to a climate of honoring respect, and thus to the exchange of honestly thought provoking information.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were initially computed to determine mean scores of exposure to influencer marketing, parasocial relationship,

and impulse buying tendency in order to explain the general student response. For the hypothesised relationships, we performed a number of regression analyses as follows: simple linear regression to estimate whether exposure to influencer marketing significantly predicts impulse buying tendency—a test line showing the total impact; simple regression to see how much exposure to influencer marketing predicts the strength of parasocial relationships; and multiple linear regression for parasocial relationship as combined effects between exposure to influencer marketing and impulse buying tendency. These regression analyses allowed us to investigate the independent and joint influences of the variables of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Before participating, participants were informed in detail as to the study's purpose, the possible scope, and any potential risks. To ensure no personal identifiers were recorded, data were collected anonymously. Participation was completely voluntary, and participants could discontinue at any time without penalty. Research followed the ethical considerations in APA Ethics Code (2017): informed consent, confidentiality and appropriate handling of research data.

Result and Discussions

Influencer Marketing Exposure

Table 1 shows the mean scores for five indicators of university students' exposure to influencer marketing. They measure different kinds of encounters and involvement with influencer-related content—exposure to promotional materials, sponsored posts, product-related videos, frequency of weekly encounters, and unintended or incidental ads. Each indicator captures an aspect of influencer marketing presence within students' digital environments. As a summative measure of how often and in what ways students encounter influencer marketing content across platforms, the computed average scores provide a consolidated description of overall exposure.

Table 1. Means and Levels of Agreements of Influencer Marketing Exposure

Exposure to Influencer Marketing Criteria	Mean Scores	Levels
1. Influencer promotions frequently encountered	4.182	Agree
2. Influencer-sponsored posts regularly viewed	2.961	Neutral
3. Influencer product videos commonly seen	3.549	Agree
4. Weekly exposure to influencer content	3.876	Agree
5. Unintentional viewing of influencer ads	3.745	Agree
Average	3.663	Agree

Note. Interpretation of mean scores: 1.00-1.80 = Strongly Disagree; 1.81-2.60 = Disagree; 2.61-3.40 = Neutral; 3.41-4.20 = Agree; 4.21-5.00 = Strongly Agree.

The respondents agreed that they come across the influencer marketing in various formats overall mean 3.663 which is interpreted as Agree. The highest mean score criteria for influencer promotions were specific ($M = 4.182$). There was a strong consensus that influencer promotional content created by influencers has high visibility and influence. The Agree range consists of product videos ($M=3.549$), weekly exposure ($M=3.876$), and unintentional ads ($M=3.745$), suggesting that respondents are exposed to influencer marketing all the time, whether intentionally or unintentionally. On the contrary, sponsored posts ($M = 2.961$) were rated as Neutral implying that respondents may perceive sponsored posts to be less engaging or impactful than the other types of influencer content.

Parasocial Relationship with Influencers

Table 2 shows average scores for five variables assessing parasocial relationships with influencers of the participants. These indicators constitute a range of the one-way emotional and psychological connection such as perceived familiarity, emotional attachment, concern for influencers' personal disclosures, imagining potential real-life interactions, and levels of trust comparable to close friendships. Each is a proxy for a unique aspect of parasocial engagement developed via sustained media input. These average scores indicate the degree to which participants display parasocial relationships with influencers from these different dimensions.

Table 2. Means and Levels of Agreements of Parasocial Relationship with Influencers

Parasocial Relationships Criteria	Mean Scores	Levels
1. Feeling of familiarity with influencers	3.017	Neutral
2. Emotional connection with influencers	2.600	Strongly Disagree
3. Concern for influencers' personal disclosures	3.029	Neutral
4. Imagining meeting influencers in real life	2.765	Neutral
5. Trust in influencers like friends	2.403	Disagree
Average	2.763	Neutral

Note. Interpretation of mean scores: 1.00-1.80 = Strongly Disagree; 1.81-2.60 = Disagree; 2.61-3.40 = Neutral; 3.41-4.20 = Agree; 4.21-5.00 = Strongly Agree.

Results show that most respondents have a neutral attitude to parasocial relationships, as indicated by an overall average score of 2.763 interpreted as Neutral. Respondents' perception of familiarity with influencers ($M = 3.017$), concern for personal disclosures ($M = 3.029$) and visualizations of in-person meetings ($M = 2.765$) are among the four responses which fall within the range of Neutral, which means they don't strongly identify with or reject these features to create a parasocial bond. Respondents

could not develop emotional relation to influencers, as shown by the Strongly Disagree on emotional connection ($M = 2.600$). Similarly, trust in influencers that are "like friends" ($M = 2.403$) rated Disagree for the same reason; we show they are not optimistic about the creation of parasocial relationships based on feelings of trust. These results together suggest that respondents acknowledge some degree of knowing and imaginary engagement with influencers, however, also indicate caution for deeper

emotional and trust-based relationships. It is important to note that, whilst mean scores indicate low levels of parasocial bonding in general, that doesn't mean parasocial relationships are non-existent or trivial. Even within low-average scores, small differences might lead to statistically significant relationships in quantitative research (Huang & Mohamad, 2025). As the regressions will show, though students rarely identify strong emotional investment or trust in influencers, even small differences within these neutral ranges are statistically significant predictors of impulse buying differences. As a result, relationships with parasociality become weaker, yet still have behavioral significance.

The results show that the parasocial relationships of the respondents are to a small extent weak, which means that there is a minimum of emotional involvement and trust of the respondents in the influencer. Other relational cues such as social familiarity or perceived interaction (rarely known) could also affect consumer responses as suggested by the following regression analyses. In this case, even though the level of reported parasocial attachment was very low. This aligns with work showing that decisioning is still under mild parasocial influence, especially in the digital context.

Emotional connection or trust based influencer marketing strategies may be less effective for this audience (Balaban et al., 2022). Indeed strategies that promote authenticity and transparency, and that feature relatable content may hamper to improve engagement (Audrezet et al., 2020). Although the audiences may perceive influencers as participants of their online world, they may not be as deeply or authentically connected to their relationships as they do when neutral reactions to familiarity, concern, and fantasizing about meeting with influencers are presented (Balaban et al., 2022). Marketers and influencers should aim to create credibility and value-add content (Omeish et al., 2025) rather than strong parasocial ties.

Impulse Buying Tendency

Table 3 shows the average scores and values of each indicator of the propensity of respondents to impulse purchase. These include spontaneous buying after ads, immediate buying due to endorsement, unplanned buying, impulsive buying because of promo codes and feelings of regret after impulsive buying. A general average score indicating the general leaning of the respondents towards impulse buying is also shown in the table.

Table 3. Means and Levels of Agreements of Impulsive Buying Tendency due to Influencer Marketing

Impulse Buying Tendency Criteria	Mean Scores	Levels
1. Spontaneous purchase after influencer ads	2.383	Disagree
2. Immediate buying from influencer endorsements	2.330	Disagree
3. Unplanned purchases influenced by influencers	2.367	Disagree
4. Impulsive buying with influencer promo codes	2.393	Disagree
5. Regret from influencer-driven impulsive purchases	2.874	Neutral
Average	2.469	Disagree

Note. Interpretation of mean scores: 1.00-1.80 = Strongly Disagree; 1.81-2.60 = Disagree; 2.61-3.40 = Neutral; 3.41-4.20 = Agree; 4.21-5.00 = Strongly Agree.

The result indicated that respondents had a low level of agreement towards impulse buying behaviors influenced by social media marketing (mean = 2.469). Specifically, spontaneous purchases after an advertisement ($M = 2.383$), impulse purchases when endorsed ($M = 2.330$), unplanned purchases ($M = 2.367$), and impulses by promo codes ($M = 2.393$) are all in the Disagree range indicating that respondents likely will not lead to self-induced purchases in response to influencer promo-

tions. Though ($M = 2.874$) was rated as Neutral, it is unusual for respondents to feel regret after impulse purchase. Overall, the results indicate that respondents are cautious customers when confronted with the marketing effect of influencers, who approach purchase with a cautious intention, an aversion to impulse-buying behaviors. Research on Gen Z consumers – who often claim to be cautious consumers because of financial restrictions and a greater awareness of persuasive marketing tactics –

also tends to find the same results although in general respondents disagreed with a few proscribed statements that were related to spontaneous, impulsive buying behavior (Orecchia, 2025). Self-report measures of impulsivity are also subject to social desirability bias, where users may underreport based on their underreporting of behaviors that seem like reckless behavior (Holtgraves, 2003). Regression analyses results show that differences in impulse purchase tendencies are significantly related to exposure and parasocial relationships even though their descriptive means are low. This suggests that moderate to high levels of digital marketing dynamics are still associated with impulsivity.

The findings suggest that influencer marketing strategies based on impulse drivers, such as advertisement, endorsement or promo code, may not be very effective for this group (Casaló et al., 2020). Marketers should focus on interesting and educational content that is authentic to its consumers making rational choices rather than push impulse buying (Jin et al., 2019). It is possible to have intermittent impulsive buying, but it is not a dominant activity, and this is reflected in the neutral reaction to repurchase regret. Therefore, it appears that consumers in this group display a more deliberative and deliberate attitude towards consumption decisions (Rodrigues et al., 2021;

Iyer et al., 2020). Descriptive means suggest respondents are seemingly thoughtful and cautious but regression reveals two consumer tendencies – overall cautiousness, and tendencies to be sensitive to persuasive triggers if repeatedly exposed or if there are hints on relationships. This stresses the importance for marketers to build long-term engagement strategies, trust and credibility or long-term strategies (García de Frutos & Estrella Ramón, 2021), instead of relying only on short-term, impulsive strategies.

Exposure to Influencer Marketing and Parasocial Relationships

Model Summary. Table 4 presents an overview of the regression model used to investigate the association between exposure to influencer marketing and parasocial relationships. In this table the main statistical metrics illustrating the model characteristics are the correlation coefficient, the coefficient of determination and the adjusted coefficient of determination. Also shown are the standard error of the estimate and the total number of observations which were examined in the test. The indicators together provide a very brief statistical summary of the regression model and its general format for testing the association between the two variables.

Table 4. Model Summary for Exposure to Influencer Marketing Predicting Parasocial Relationships

Statistic	Value
Multiple R	0.34
R ²	0.11
Adjusted R ²	0.11
Standard Error	0.84
Observations	412

The regression model is constructed with Multiple R.34 What this number means is that there is a moderate positive correlation between exposure to influencer marketing and parasocial relationship scores. Students who more often see influencer content tend to say they feel more emotionally attached to influencers. Exposure explains 11% of the variance in parasocial relationship scores. This is to be expected as there are many more variables which play a part in psychological variables. The Adjusted R² also stayed at .11, indicating

that the explanatory power of the model is not dependent on sample size. The standard error of .84 is the average difference between the scores predicted and the actual responses. This is typical in human behavior research as responses naturally vary at different points in the work of researchers. The model is very powerful with data from 412 students which suggests that these findings are valid for similar student populations.

ANOVA. Table 5 reports ANOVA results for regression model investigating the contribution of exposure to influencer marketing to parasocial relationships. The levels of F-statistic and significance will determine the statisti-

cal significance of the underlying model. These numbers indicate whether exposure to influencer content can be used to accurately predict students' emotional connections with influencers.

Table 5. ANOVA Summary for Exposure to Influencer Marketing Predicting Parasocial Relationships

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p-value
Regression	1	37.81	37.81	53.25	< .001
Residual	410	291.10	0.71		
Total	411	328.90			

It is important to note that the model significantly predicts parasocial relationship scores, whose occurrence is unlikely to have happened by chance, based on the regression model's F-statistic of 53.25. The p-value (<.001) indicates significant statistical significance of the model so the null hypothesis of exposure to influencer marketing has no effect on parasocial relationships can be rejected. By providing a regression mean square of 37.81 the predictive relationship is reinforced by the significant difference between the residual mean square of 0.71 and regression mean square of 37.81, indicating that the variance explained by the model exceeds the unexplained variance at a large scale. Our results also lend weight to the proposition that repeated exposure facilitates perceived intimacy and trust, suggesting that stu-

dent emotional engagement with influencers gets significantly shaped by their exposure to influencer content. The ANOVA findings lend supporting theoretical background for examining joint influences in later research questions, confirming the robustness of the model as a whole, as well as providing empirical insight into psychological influences associated with influencer-led consumption.

Coefficients. Table 6 shows the regression coefficients of the model for the impact of exposure to influencer marketing on parasocial relationships. The table gives unstandardized coefficients, standard errors, t-values, p-values and 95% confidence intervals. These values indicate the direction, magnitude and statistical significance of the effect of the predictor.

Table 6. Regression Coefficients for Exposure to Influencer Marketing Predicting Parasocial Relationships

Predictor	B	Std. Error	t	p-value	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
(Intercept)	1.35	0.20	6.79	< .001	0.96	1.74
Exposure to Influencer Marketing	0.39	0.05	7.30	< .001	0.28	0.49

Results should be interpreted with the caveat that our initial descriptive analysis indicated mostly neutral to low parasocial scores. The regression results indicate that variations in these lower ranges are influenced by (and influence) even the less pronounced parasocial relationships. The results suggested that people can develop parasocial relationships with influencers over time, through exposure to their content, without any real-life personal interaction. As audiences continue to watch, follow and engage with influencers, they get to know them better, and begin to see them as approachable and relatable. This increased famil-

ilarity also further strengthens the one-directional social bond between the audience and the influencer (Jin et al., 2021; Lacap et al., 2023). Regression analysis also supports this interpretation by showing statistically significant effects of both parasocial relationships and exposure to influencer marketing. The Model Summary revealed a moderate correlation ($R = .34$) and that the regression model explained 11 percent of the variance in parasocial relationships scores. This is modest but the data show that this percentage is significant in psychology that emotional bonding is influenced by a lot of factors. The model was statis-

tically significant as shown by ANOVA analysis ($F(1, 410) = 53.25, p < .001$), which means that exposure is a predictor of changes in parasocial relationship strength. The regression coefficients showed a positive and consistent effect of exposure to influencer marketing ($B = 0.39, p < 0.001$). In Table 6, the coefficient ($B = 0.39$) for the model represents the expected change in parasocial relationship scores for a one-unit increase in influencer marketing exposure, and this should not be confused with the model correlation coefficient ($R = .34$) found in the model summary.

Implications. Design influencer campaigns cognizant of the relational implications. Closeness and familiarity can arise from exposure. Marketers have to choose between persuasion and trust. Campaigns that seem to be about closeness can lose credibility but campaigns that enable real participation can build lasting relationships. The stories and the engagement with the user have to be used carefully as they have to be personal. Thus, influencer marketing can still work while keeping consumer trust and responding to recent conversations about authenticity and responsible influencer-follower relationships (Libai et al. 2025).

The findings also highlight the need for better media literacy programs for students. These programs can help learners understand the impact of repeated exposure to influencers and the false sense of closeness that can be created over time. Students' critical thinking skills improve so they are more able to analyze content objectively, rather than react impulsively to content due to emotional attachment. Therefore, they are more likely to make independent and informed online decisions and rely on personal judgement (Sarkis et al., 2024). One important implication of this is ethical standards. Parasocial relationships also enhance susceptibility to persuasion in audiences and marketers must not exploit this trust. Transparency (e.g. clear sponsorship disclosures) maintains credibility. Influencers have to be authentic but responsible especially with young people be-

ing more impressionable (Boateng, 2022). Ethics in marketing is maintained without affecting the consumer's well-being.

Schools and colleges should teach parasocial etiquette, too. These relationships pertain to identity, self-esteem and consumer behaviour. Including discussion in the courses of media studies, psychology or consumer behavior will help the students to deal with some of these impacts. Programs on media literacy and self-awareness could build higher resilience in students to emotional manipulation (Vergara et al., 2025). These results warrant rejecting H_0 that exposure does not predict parasocial relationship strength. The results suggest exposure is an important predictor of parasocial relationships for college students. Therefore, students are more exposed to the influencers, so they are more familiar with them and can much more easily build up one-sided emotional connections over time. This result supports the significance of repeated exposure in strengthening parasocial relationships (Lou, 2021). This link is relevant when discussing the potential nature of parasocial relationship driven impulse purchases. The rejection of H_0 suggests that relational marketing in a digital space is practically useful (Pushparaj et al., 2026).

Joint Influence of Influencer Marketing Exposure and Parasocial Relationships on Impulse Buying

Model Summary. Table 7 shows the model summary statistics of the multiple linear regression analysis testing whether parasocial relationships are a predictor in addition to exposure to influencer marketing for impulse buying propensity. The table presents the key statistics that describe the performance and structure of a regression model. These include the multiple correlation coefficient, the coefficient of determination, the adjusted coefficient of determination and the standard error of the estimate. To briefly summarize how the predictors are incorporated into the model framework, the table summarizes the number of observations included in the analysis.

Table 7. Model Summary for the Joint Influence of Influencer Marketing Exposure and Parasocial Relationships on Impulse Buying Tendency

Statistic	Value
Multiple R	0.59
R ²	0.34
Adjusted R ²	0.34
Standard Error	0.74
Observations	412

Table 7 presents the model data summary from the multiple linear regression analysis performed to explore the combined effect of parasocial relationships and influencer marketing exposure on impulse buying propensity. The R value of 0.59 indicates that the model performance is positively significant and the R² value of 0.34 indicates that the model can explain 34% of the variance in impulsive purchase behavior. This would be considered a large effect size for behavioral research, especially for complex psychological constructs. The Adjusted R² is still 0.34, indicating the persistent explanatory power of the model even after adjusting the estimates for the sample size and the number of predictors. The standard error is 0.74, which indicates a good model was fitted for the behavioural data. This means that there is an acceptable amount of deviation

between observed and predicted values. The number of 412 observations provides a good statistical power to the sample size thus increasing the reliability and relevance of the findings. Overall, the results provide empirical support for the interaction of parasocial relationships and influencer marketing exposure on impulse buying tendency.

ANOVA. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) results for the regression model are presented in Table 8. The ANOVA test tests whether parasocial relations and exposure to influencer marketing together significantly predict impulse buying tendency. If the result is statistically significant it means that the model explains a significant amount of variation in the dependent variable.

Table 8. ANOVA Summary for Parasocial Relationships' Influence on Influencer Marketing Exposure on Impulse Buying Tendency

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p-value
Regression	2	116.93	58.46	106.52	< .001
Residual	409	224.49	0.55		
Total	411	341.41			

Table 8 shows that the ANOVA results indicate a statistically significant regression model ($F(2, 409) = 106.52, p < .001$), meaning that the joint predictors of exposure to influencer marketing and parasocial relationships significantly explain variance in impulse buying tendency. The residual sum of squares ($SS = 224.49$) is greater than the regression sum of squares ($SS = 116.93$) indicating that a large proportion of the variance is explained by the model. The model response to unexplained variance is also supported by the fact that the regression mean square ($MS = 58.46$) is significantly larger than the residual mean square ($MS = 0.55$). These values indicate good model fit especially in behavioral research where psy-

chological constructs are influenced by multiple variables. Also, parasocial relationships were included as an additional predictor. The significance of the ANOVA indicates that parasocial variables affect consumer's behavior. Overall, the results provide strong empirical support for a multiple regression model and argue for further investigation of the regression coefficients.

Coefficients. Table 9 shows the unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors, t-values, p-values and 95% confidence intervals (95% CI) of predictors considered in the multiple regression model. The present study tests the effect of exposure to influencer

marketing and parasocial relationships on the propensity of college students to engage in im-

pulsive purchases and calculates the direction, magnitude, and statistical significance.

Table 9. Regression Coefficients for Parasocial Relationships Influence on Influencer Marketing Exposure on Impulse Buying Tendency

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>95% CI Lower</i>	<i>95% CI Upper</i>
(Intercept)	0.32	0.18	1.77	.078	-0.04	0.69
Exposure to Influencer Marketing	0.20	0.05	3.98	< .001	0.10	0.29
Parasocial Relationships	0.52	0.04	11.86	< .001	0.43	0.60

The factors influencing impulse buying tendencies are affected by both exposure to influencer marketing and parasocial relationships as indicated by the regression coefficients in Table 9. As the effect of influencer marketing exposure increases, the level of impulsive buying behavior is positively associated ($B = 0.20$, $SE = 0.05$, $t = 3.98$, $p < .001$). Parasocial relationships influence even more strongly ($B = 0.52$, $SE = 0.04$, $t = 11.86$, $p < .001$), suggesting that consumers' impulsiveness is closely tied to emotions evoked by the relationship with influencers. Lacking exposure or relational influence, the intercept ($B = 0.32$) is not statistically significant ($p = .078$) and indicates little for baseline impulse buying propensity. The combined predictive effect is further supported by the small confidence intervals for the two predictors and this demonstrates the precision and dependability of these estimates.

Implications. Influencer campaigns are not without ethical considerations. Exposure can enhance the effects of parasocial relationships on impulsive buying. Therefore, marketers should not exploit the emotional trust (Cao & Belo, 2024). Even small relational cues can influence the consumer's behavior. Sponsorships must be transparent. The cost of editorial (paid) advertising must be well documented for the good of the public. Real storytelling has to have some credibility but not in a manipulative way. Ethical principles guarantee effectiveness and security against exploitation.

The regression analysis results indicate the need for training students with knowledge and skills on the assessment of influencer marketing. Most influencer content lives in that grey space between authentic connection and predatory marketing. Media literacy programs

must teach students how influencers build intimate, emotional connections with their followers. Teaching students to think critically might help them to analyze critically the content posted by the influencers and to avoid impulsive purchases and to promote positive online behaviour (Diano et al., 2025).

It's about being educated, being a responsible influencer, being regulated... "Influencers and businesses need to be held to account for misleading or deceptive conduct and policies need to require upfront and clear disclosure of sponsorship. The influencer's content is full of relational persuasion. These measures contribute to the creation of a fair, transparent and socially responsible environment for digital marketing and protect consumers from the abuse of emotional trust (Hoyer et al., 2020).

In school and counseling center settings, parasocial dynamics can be reduced (Xue et al., 2024). Influencers' emotions can affect identity, self-esteem and purchase decisions. Student counsellors can help students to cope with the effects of these by teaching students about digital relationships within the curriculum and providing counselling support. Programs for prevention of consumption and resilience.

Lastly, the results provide support for rejecting H03, that parasocial relationships are not significantly related to impulse buying tendencies when considered alongside influencer marketing exposure. The statistical analysis also suggests that parasocial relationships are important in influencing. This implies that the emotional attachment with influencers was among the main factors behind impulsive buying in digital environments (Huang & Mohamad, 2025). These findings support the theoretical framework of the study and demon-

strate a joint effect, not a sole effect (Zaid & Zaid, 2025).

Influencer Marketing Exposure and Impulse Buying Tendency

Model Summary. Table 10. Summary of the model for the simple linear regression analysis of the relationship between exposure to influencer marketing and impulse buying tendency among students. The table was supplemented with a set of core statistical indicators

describing the general structure and performance of the regression model. These are correlation coefficient, coefficient of determination, adjusted coefficient of determination and standard error of the estimate. In addition, the total number of observations used in the analysis is reported. These components collectively give a brief statistical description of the model to study the predictive relationship between exposure to influencer marketing and impulsive buying behavior.

Table 10. Model Summary for Exposure to Influencer Marketing Predicting Impulse Buying Tendency

Statistic	Value
Multiple R	0.34
R ²	0.12
Adjusted R ²	0.11
Standard Error	0.86
Observations	412

The model indicates a moderate relationship between exposure to influencer marketing and impulsive purchase behaviors (Multiple R = 0.34). The R² value of 0.12 indicates that the exposure of a student to influencer content can explain about 12% of the variance in impulse buying tendency; a nuanced phenomenon in consumer psychology. The model had explanatory power with an Adjusted R² of 0.11 with no excesses seen for number of predictors or observations that resulted in an exaggerated effect relative to controls. The standard error of 0.86 is the average distance the observed values fall from the regression line, which is a good fit for behavior data where var-

iance is often attributed to a number of external factors. The statistical power of the obtained effect can be confirmed since 412 observations are used and relevant for similar student populations.

ANOVA. The regression model's ANOVA results for the effect of exposure to influencer marketing on impulse buying tendency are shown in Table 11. This is the overall model evaluation of the prediction of how well the dependent variable is predicted. Significance of the model is quantified as significance score (F-statistic and p-value).

Table 11. ANOVA Summary for Exposure to Influencer Marketing Predicting Impulse Buying Tendency

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p-value
Regression	1	39.72	39.72	53.98	< .001
Residual	410	301.70	0.74		
Total	411	341.41			

The ANOVA results indicate the regression model is significant ($F(1, 410) = 53.98, p < .001$), suggesting influencer marketing exposure is a significant predictor of impulsive purchase propensity. The regression mean square ($MS = 39.72$) is significantly higher than the residual mean square ($MS = 0.74$). The model effect in terms of error is significant. This indicates that the presence of influencer marketing

significantly increases the probability of impulse buying by college students thus validating the rejection of null hypothesis. The robustness of F-statistic means that there is indeed a true relationship between influencer marketing and impulsive buying rather than the variance explained by randomness. Collectively, these findings indicate the robustness of the regression model and underscore the im-

portance of influencer exposure in the measurement of consumer impulsive behavior.

Coefficients. Table 12 reports the regression coefficients of the model predicting impulse buying tendency, given exposure to influencer

marketing. This type of analysis tells the direction and strength of correlations between predictor and outcome variables at the present time. The coefficients indicate the impact of different levels of exposure on impulsive buying by students.

Table 12. Regression Coefficients for Exposure to Influencer Marketing Predicting Impulse Buying Tendency

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>95% CI Lower</i>	<i>95% CI Upper</i>
(Intercept)	1.02	0.20	5.05	< .001	0.62	1.42
Exposure to Influencer Marketing	0.40	0.05	7.35	< .001	0.29	0.50

The regression coefficient for the exposure to influencer marketing is $B = 0.40$ meaning that the impulse purchase propensity increases by 0.40 points as a function of exposure. This effect is statistically significant ($t = 7.35$, $p < .001$). The 95% CI is .29-.50 indicating the strength of the estimate. Hence, the intercept value ($B = 1.02$) which is the level of impulse buying in the baseline group when the influencer exposure is zero indicates that the students have moderate impulsive buying tendency even without influencer exposure to an extent. This yields a coefficient estimate with stability at a narrower confidence interval, which lends further support to the robustness of the predictor effect. Collectively, the findings of this study provide evidence that exposure to influencer marketing has a statistically and practically meaningful effect on college students' consumer impulsivity.

Implications. The regression shows that exposure to the influencers predicts an increase in impulse buying, even though respondents didn't often report impulsive buying. So, it's a relative effect: Not all are highly impulsive people exposed to this behavior, and indeed the behavior becomes worse for susceptible ones. Influencer marketing is active, not passive, when it comes to shaping students' buying habits. Influencers probably put out persuasive and emotional material that encourages impulsive behaviour, especially when marketing is blended with entertainment. College students are especially susceptible; they spend a great deal of time on social media and fluidly form consumer identities. Trust built from digital immediacy and parasocial rela-

tionships expedites decision-making, highlighting the underlying psychologically involved impulsive buying behaviors (Shah et al., 2023).

Ethical marketing is important to the young consumers who are just beginning to form their attitudes and opinions about what should be good. This report makes it clear professionally. The influencer generated content affects the user's behavior and decision making and can affect the user emotionally before they make their own considerations (Lajnef, 2023). The ethical concerns of promotions emerge when the public assesses the promotions on the basis of credibility, transparency and sponsorship disclosures. Responsible practices will include clear labelling of paid partnerships and avoiding tactics that exploit emotional trust (Samosir et al., 2025). Such measures protect brands from acting for their commercial purpose at the expense of young audiences. Media literacy programs also teach kids to pause and think before reacting to influencers' content. Gen Z is also more receptive to emotional messages and is vulnerable to marketing that uses entertainment and more subtle promotional methods (Jeena et al., 2024).

In this article we share that teaching students about media literacy will create an audience who is skilled at identifying persuasive techniques and can differentiate what is real and what is sponsored leading to action. It's high time we had better rules around labeling sponsored posts and curtailing the use of aggressive persuasive techniques to protect vulnerable audiences. Government and industry institutions should adopt guidelines that foster transparency and accountability (Looi &

Kahlor, 2024). Good policies make the internet a more secure and credible place. Finally, the results support the rejection of H01 and confirm the exposure to influencer marketing as a significant predictor of impulse buying behaviour among college students. Thus, regression analysis revealed a strong, positive, and significant relationship between exposure and variance in impulse buying scores. This is in line with research that shows that consumption of influencer-generated content leads to emotional attachment (Angeles et al., 2024), and affects user response. This implies the need to have ethical, educational and regulatory aspects to the impact of digital marketing. Generally, influencer marketing is one of the important factors for impulsive consumption among students (Koay et al., 2021).

Summary of Findings

College students in Cebu City are often exposed to influencer marketing through short videos of products and commercial posts on social media, the study said. They were highly exposed to influencer content but did not develop strong parasocial interactions with the influencer. Most participants described a vague sense of familiarity, few imagined links but rather emotional or personal links. They bonded with influencers. But not at a high level of trust and intimacy.

The impulse buying tendency had been low, too. Students generally didn't make unexpected and unplanned purchases due to influencers, though some told of regrets over the purchase of products they had not intended. However, this meant that exposure still counted. Students who saw more influencer content had slightly higher scores for impulse buying and parasocial relationships, even if their impulsive buying behaviors did not have any strong descriptive results.

Moreover, examining the regression results also showed that parasocial relationships were significantly associated with impulse buying alongside exposure, even when those feelings are mild. The results suggest that repeated exposure to influencer content combined with small feelings of familiarity will influence student purchase decisions. All three null hypotheses in the study were rejected on the basis of these results.

Implications of the Study

The results of the research serve to shed light on how students react to influencer-related content displayed via social media platforms. While a majority of students did not feel a personal relationship with the influencers that they consume, they were nevertheless influenced in their perceptions of products and purchases by repeated exposure to such content. This just makes marketers even keener to craft their online content, because the most innocuous and informal, almost, can have persuasive effects on young people. The study illustrates the challenge facing online promoters today in carefully presenting their messages because influence can affect individuals in small ways and without them even realizing it right when they give their feedback.

From the students' viewpoint, the findings underscore the need for students to consider how day-to-day social media usage can influence spending behavior. People are generally unaware as to how subtle prompts delivered in the form of digital reminders can slowly prompt impulse purchases. In response, schools can integrate these issues with some discussions or classes to increase consumer behaviour knowledge and also consider how to deal with digital influence. Teaching students how to critically watch online content may ultimately lead them to purchase more intentionally. The implication of the findings is that increased mindfulness, especially when it comes to engaging within social media environments, can support students as well as other young consumers negotiating the influences of buying behavior they encounter.

Conclusion

The study found that Cebu City university students are usually exposed to influencer marketing through product posting and promotion on social media sites. Overall parasocial relationships with influencers were weak. Despite this level of exposure, emotional attachment and trust was low. Impulse buying was also relatively low. Regression analyses showed that parasocial relationships predicted impulse buying tendencies even when the relationships were weak or neutral. Thus, exposure to influencer marketing and parasocial relationships are an important concurrent pre-

dicator, not a mediating mechanism. Overall, the results suggest that repeated exposure to influencer content and the feeling of subtle familiarity generated by such exposure are enough to influence variation in impulse buying behaviour among college students.

Results showed that impulse buying and parasocial scores were influenced by exposure, and regression results further showed that parasocial relationships were part of the additional explanatory power of impulse buying tendencies. Small effects were found for small increases in exposure and relational cues but the combined model explained 34% of the total variance for impulse buying. But the study is not without its limitations. Voluntary response sampling has the limitation of generalizability and the data are self-reported and can be vulnerable to biases like social-desirability bias and recall mistake. More comprehensive context could be provided by future studies assessing platform specific dynamics, using probability sampling, and using longitudinal or mixed-methods designs.

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