



Children and Young People's Influencers - A Focus Group Study



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Summary

The report 'Barns och ungas influencers – en fokusgruppsstudie' [Children's and Young People's Influencers – A Focus Group Study] presents the second and final part of a research project at the Swedish Agency for the Media, which was conducted under the framework of Safer Internet Centre Sweden. The report takes its starting point in focus groups with children and young people, who contribute with their views and experiences concerning influencers and influencer culture. The 61 participants in the study – in lower and upper secondary school ages – have, as the report's thematic analysis highlights, a positive attitude towards influencers that emphasises opportunities for entertainment, learning and inspiration. With the premise that children and young people are actors who relate to influencers in creative and unexpected ways, the survey contributes with new knowledge in the area, given the current state of research. Research has repeatedly emphasised the importance of highlighting children's and young people's views in this area, and the report in question contributes to this. The report contributes to developing knowledge, which emphasises that: (1) children and young people relate to influencers both actively and appreciatively as well as critically, (2) influencers are an important part of children's and young people's everyday social lives, and (3) influencers are repeatedly highlighted as potential role models of significance for both individuals as well as for children and young people in general. Concerning the participants' critical attitudes, there is also reason to, (4) in conversations between children, young people and adults about influencers, raise complex issues about how norms and ideals associated with, for example, gender and sexuality are reinforced and/or challenged in influencers' content. The report further states that:

- The concept of 'influencers' has different meanings to participants in terms of content and how participants emphasise popularity or impact. This means that there is no one established concept for who an influencer is. In light of this, the influencer category can include different activities and content, as well as different ways of being known or popular on the internet.
- Children and young people relate to influencers as role models and interesting people. All influencers are not viewed as role models. This gives the impression that participants ascribe qualities and significance to specific influencers as well as to influencers as a broader category.
- Against the backdrop of children's and young people's generally positive attitudes towards influencers and their content, negative statements about influencers appear as exceptions or something that can be tolerated.
- Participants emphasise individual choices and control over the flows, and that they have the opportunity to relate critically to content.
- Following influencers appears to be important or self-evident, both for individuals and in a group context. It is also about following the right influencers, to fit in in social contexts.

- Children's and young people's participation in focus groups provides opportunities to understand how influencers constitute important elements in everyday life and media consumption, and are ascribed importance in relation to social relations and contexts.
- Speaking with others about (specific) influencers is not self-evident, which emerges from participants' statements both about adults and about talking with peers about who they follow. The report shows that conversations about influencers are based on familiarity, which includes or excludes information that may be 'intimate'.
- The study shows that children and young people have knowledge about influencers. The report highlights children's and young people's perspectives on positive dimensions and problems in the area. Taking a point of departure in what children and young people know about influencers is, as the report discusses, relevant in relation to the work with children's and young people's media and information literacy.
- Finally, the study responds to identified needs for current and relevant knowledge that provides a basis for further research, as well as the opportunity to discuss children's rights in relation to national efforts.