

Parenting in the Age of Influencers: How Instagram's Celebrity Culture Shapes Parenting Practices in Chottanikkara Panchayath

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Abstract

Social media has transformed parenting by reshaping how parents seek information and evaluate their own practices. Instagram, in particular, has become a major source of parenting content through celebrity parents and influencers who share childcare advice and product recommendations, creating new social and psychological pressures alongside inspiration. This study examines how Instagram's celebrity culture influences parenting practices among parents in Chottanikkara Panchayath, Kerala, focusing on its effects on decision-making, purchasing behaviour, perceptions of ideal parenting, and emotional responses.

Using a descriptive, quantitative survey design, the study finds that many parents rely on celebrity and influencer accounts for advice on childcare, nutrition, and lifestyle. This content shapes purchasing decisions for children's products and fosters social comparison, parenting anxiety, and pressure to meet idealized standards — even though parents often recognize such portrayals as unrealistic. The study concludes that Instagram functions as a significant cultural force in shaping parenting, underscoring the need for greater digital media literacy among parents.

Keywords: *Instagram, Parenting Practices, Celebrity Culture, Social Media Influencers, Digital Parenting*

1. Introduction

Parenting has traditionally been shaped by family values, cultural beliefs, and community experiences. In Kerala, child-rearing practices were largely influenced by joint family

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systems in which grandparents, relatives, and community elders actively participated in guiding parents. However, rapid technological development, increased internet accessibility, and the widespread adoption of smartphones have significantly transformed this traditional model of parenting. Parents now increasingly rely on digital media to obtain information, seek reassurance, and make decisions regarding their children's upbringing.

Among digital platforms, Instagram has emerged as one of the most influential social media applications because of its visually driven content and algorithm-based content delivery. Instagram enables celebrities, influencers, and content creators to share curated representations of family life through photographs, reels, stories, and sponsored content. Parenting influencers regularly publish content related to pregnancy, infant care, nutrition, education, child development, discipline, and family lifestyle. Consequently, Instagram has evolved beyond a platform for entertainment into an important source of parenting information and consumer influence.

Influencers often portray carefully curated images of successful family life that highlight well-organized routines, aesthetically pleasing homes, healthy meals, educational activities, and emotionally fulfilling parent-child relationships. While these portrayals can motivate parents to adopt healthier or more informed parenting practices, they also encourage continuous comparison with idealized standards that are often difficult to achieve in everyday life. Repeated exposure to such content may influence parents' perceptions of what constitutes "good parenting," resulting in feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, guilt, or pressure to emulate influencer lifestyles.

The commercial nature of Instagram further strengthens its influence on parenting decisions. Parenting influencers

frequently collaborate with brands to promote baby products, educational materials, clothing, toys, nutritional supplements, and healthcare services. These promotions are commonly integrated into personal narratives, making advertisements appear authentic and trustworthy. Such marketing strategies reduce the distinction between genuine parenting advice and commercial endorsements, encouraging parents to purchase products based on influencer recommendations rather than independent evaluation.

These developments are particularly relevant in semi-urban communities such as Chottanikkara Panchayath, where traditional cultural values continue to coexist with expanding digital media use. This interaction between local cultural practices and global digital influence creates a unique environment in which parenting decisions are continuously negotiated.

Although international research has extensively examined influencer culture and digital parenting, relatively few studies have explored these issues within the socio-cultural context of Kerala. Existing research has largely concentrated on Western societies or metropolitan regions, leaving limited evidence regarding how social media shapes parenting practices in smaller communities. Therefore, investigating parenting practices within Chottanikkara Panchayath contributes to a more localized understanding of the relationship between digital media, celebrity culture, and family life.

Against this background, the present study investigates how Instagram's celebrity culture shapes parenting practices among parents in Chottanikkara Panchayath. Specifically, the study examines parents' Instagram usage patterns, their engagement with influencer content, the influence of celebrity recommendations on purchasing decisions, and the

psychological effects associated with exposure to idealized parenting portrayals.

2. Review of Literature

The increasing use of social media has significantly transformed contemporary parenting practices. Digital platforms have evolved beyond communication tools to become important sources of parenting information, emotional support, and social interaction. Among these platforms, Instagram has emerged as one of the most influential due to its visual nature, interactive features, and the growing popularity of parenting influencers. Researchers argue that Instagram shapes parental attitudes, consumer behaviour, and perceptions of ideal parenting through continuous exposure to curated family content (Jorge et al., 2023).

Studies indicate that parents increasingly rely on social media for advice on childcare, nutrition, education, discipline, and child development. Parenting influencers often create online communities that provide emotional reassurance and practical guidance, particularly for first-time parents. While these platforms help reduce feelings of isolation and uncertainty, they also expose parents to idealized representations of family life that may encourage unrealistic expectations and continuous social comparison (Verstegen, 2025).

The effectiveness of influencer culture largely depends on the emotional connection established between influencers and their followers. Unlike traditional celebrities, influencers portray themselves as relatable individuals by sharing personal experiences from everyday family life. This perceived authenticity enhances trust and increases the likelihood that followers will adopt influencer recommendations regarding parenting practices, child care routines, and product purchases (Verstegen, 2025).

Researchers have also emphasized the commercialization of parenting on Instagram. Parenting influencers frequently collaborate with brands to promote baby products, toys, educational materials, clothing, and healthcare products. These endorsements often blend personal experiences with advertising, making commercial promotions appear credible and trustworthy. Such practices encourage consumer-oriented parenting and increase the influence of social media on household purchasing decisions (Shahzad et al., 2020).

Another important area of research concerns the psychological consequences of exposure to influencer content. Studies based on Social Comparison Theory suggest that repeated exposure to idealized parenting images often leads parents to compare their own parenting practices with those portrayed online. Such comparisons may result in anxiety, guilt, reduced parenting confidence, and emotional stress, despite simultaneously motivating some parents to adopt healthier parenting behaviours (Paliwal & Tripathi, 2024).

The growing digital representation of children has also attracted scholarly attention. Researchers argue that parents increasingly construct children's digital identities through photographs, videos, and milestone posts shared on social media. Although these practices strengthen online family engagement, they also raise ethical concerns regarding children's privacy, consent, and long-term digital footprints (Jorge et al., 2023).

Previous studies further demonstrate that celebrity endorsements and influencer marketing significantly affect consumer behaviour. While parental values and product quality remain important determinants of purchasing decisions, influencer recommendations enhance brand awareness, shape product preferences, and encourage parents to purchase child-

related products endorsed on social media (Shahzad et al., 2020).

Despite the expanding body of international literature, empirical research examining Instagram's influence on parenting within Kerala remains limited. Most studies have been conducted in Western societies or metropolitan settings, leaving a significant gap in understanding how digital parenting evolves within culturally rooted semi-urban communities. The present study addresses this gap by examining how Instagram's celebrity culture shapes parenting practices among parents in Chottanikkara Panchayath.

3 Objectives

- To examine the influence of Instagram's celebrity culture on parenting practices among parents in Chottanikkara Panchayath.
- To analyse how Instagram influencers affect parents' purchasing decisions regarding child-related products.
- To assess the relationship between exposure to influencer-generated parenting content and parental perceptions of ideal parenting.
- To identify the psychological and social effects associated with Instagram-based parenting comparisons.
- To understand how parents balance traditional parenting values with digitally influenced parenting practices.

3. Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive quantitative research design. Primary data were collected from parents residing in

Chottanikkara Panchayath, Ernakulam district, Kerala, using a structured questionnaire containing 25 closed-ended items covering demographics, digital-platform usage, parenting practices, social comparison, and consumer behaviour.

A convenience sampling technique was employed. The questionnaire was distributed both in person (at schools, temples, markets, and door-to-door) and online via WhatsApp groups and local parenting networks. Responses were anonymous. The final sample comprised 111 parents. Data collection occurred between December 2025 and April 2026.

Descriptive statistics (percentages and frequency distributions) were used for analysis. Operational definitions clarified key constructs: Instagram celebrity/influencer culture (visual lifestyle content by celebrities and micro-influencers), parenting practices (nutrition, discipline, milestone celebrations, sharenting), influence (adoption of tips or purchases), and consumer choice (purchases driven by endorsements).

Limitations include the geographically restricted sample, convenience sampling, reliance on self-reported data, focus primarily on Instagram, and the absence of children's perspectives.

4. Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant relationship between parents' exposure to Instagram celebrity/influencer content and the shaping of their parenting practices and product-purchasing decisions.

H1: There is a significant relationship between parents' exposure to Instagram celebrity/influencer content and

the shaping of their parenting practices and product-purchasing decisions.

Limitations include the geographically restricted sample, convenience sampling, reliance on self-reported data, focus primarily on Instagram, and the absence of children's perspectives.

5. Results

Of the 111 respondents, 74.8% were female and 25.2% male, indicating stronger maternal engagement with parenting-related digital content. Age distribution showed 45.9% of parents above 40 years, 22.5% aged 30–40, 18.9% aged 25–30, and 12.6% aged 18–25. Youngest children's ages were diverse: 38.7% 18 years or older, 32.4% 0–3 years, 16.2% 11–17 years, and 12.6% 4–10 years.

YouTube (58.6%) was the most used platform for parenting content, followed by Instagram (47.7%), WhatsApp groups (25.2%), and Facebook (21.6%). Daily Instagram time was moderate: 36% spent 30 minutes–1 hour, 30.6% less than 30 minutes, 22.5% 1–3 hours, and 10.8% more than 3 hours.

Preferred “celebrity” accounts were cooking/food pages (30.6%), lifestyle/mom influencers (27.9%), expert doctors/paediatricians (27%), and film stars (14.4%). Primary reasons for following were entertainment (50.9%), parenting tips and hacks (27.6%), community feeling (12.1%), and product recommendations (9.5%).

On comparison and pressure: 38.7% never compared their parenting style with Instagram families, 30.6% did so occasionally, 18% rarely, and 12.6% regularly. Regarding anxiety from “perfect” parenting images, 33.3% were neutral, 26.1% disagreed, 17.1% agreed, 13.5% strongly disagreed, and 9.9% strongly agreed. Most (57.7%) did not feel pressured by

Instagram trends to make children's milestones elaborate; 25.2% did, and 17.1% answered "maybe."

Sharenting was mostly occasional (61.3%); 17.1% never posted children's photos, 13.5% once a week, and 8.1% daily. Perceptions of realism were mixed: 51.3% answered "maybe" that Instagram celebrities' styles are unrealistic, 35.4% "no," and 13.3% "yes."

Consumer behaviour showed limited direct influence. 64.9% had never purchased a product for their child based on celebrity recommendation; 35.1% had. Among those who bought, clothing/fashion (27.9%) ranked highest, followed by health drinks/supplements (17.3%), toys/educational games (13.5%), and baby-care products (6.7%); 34.6% selected "not applicable." Trust in celebrity product reviews was low: only 9.8% fully trusted them, while 38.4% said "maybe," 29.5% "not yet," and 22.3% "no."

Most respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (51.3% combined) that they purchased expensive branded items to follow celebrity trends; 26.1% were neutral. Children sometimes requested items after seeing them on social media (53.2%), with 18.9% reporting yes and 27.9% no. Of those who had bought based on influencers, 26.1% regretted the purchase, 29.7% did not, and 44.1% had never bought anything on such recommendations. Influencer-promoted products were viewed as sometimes unaffordable by 68.5% of respondents. Finally, 38.7% did not attribute higher parenting expenses to Instagram celebrity culture, 31.5% answered "maybe," and 29.7% "yes."

6. Discussions

The findings support a nuanced relationship between Instagram exposure and parenting. Steady engagement with the platform and preference for practical and expert content indicate that

Instagram functions as an accessible information and entertainment resource. However, the low rates of regular comparison, limited felt pressure for elaborate celebrations, and cautious purchasing behaviour demonstrate that parents in Chottanikkara exercise considerable autonomy.

This pattern aligns with social comparison theory while illustrating its contextual limits. In a community where traditional values and financial realities remain salient, idealized images generate awareness and occasional aspiration rather than wholesale behavioural change. The predominance of entertainment motives over product-seeking further suggests that commercial influence is secondary. Low trust in reviews and selective purchasing (mainly clothing) reinforce the view that parents critically filter content.

Gender skew toward mothers is consistent with literature showing higher maternal engagement with parenting media. The age profile (many parents above 40 and a substantial share with adult children) may also moderate influence, as more experienced parents rely less on external validation.

Overall, H1 receives partial support: exposure shapes perceptions and creates a digital environment in which parenting decisions are made, yet it does not strongly dictate practices or expenditures. Influence is selective, moderated by critical judgment, cultural norms, and economic considerations. The null hypothesis cannot be fully rejected because direct causal dominance is absent.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Instagram's celebrity culture has become an integral part of the contemporary parenting environment in Chottanikkara Panchayath. It supplies visual models, practical tips, and commercial stimuli that expand parents' horizons beyond traditional local sources. Yet its power is neither absolute nor

deterministic. Parents largely retain agency, integrating digital inputs with personal experience, cultural values, and financial prudence.

Recommendations include:

- Strengthening digital and media literacy among parents so they can better distinguish authentic advice from paid promotion.
- Encouraging balanced use of traditional knowledge, professional expertise, and digital resources.
- Promoting realistic portrayals of parenting on social media and clearer disclosure of sponsored content.
- Supporting community-based parenting networks that offer locally grounded guidance.
- Practising mindful screen-time management within families.

Future research should expand geographical coverage, incorporate qualitative methods and children's perspectives, and examine longitudinal effects of sustained influencer exposure. In the interim, the evidence from Chottanikkara suggests that informed, critical engagement can turn Instagram from a potential source of pressure into a manageable resource for contemporary parenting.

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