

The impact of social media influencers on school-aged adolescents: a scoping review protocol*El impacto de los influencers digitales en los adolescentes en edad escolar: un protocolo de scoping review**O impacto dos influenciadores digitais nos adolescentes em idade escolar: protocolo de scoping review***Cláudia Sofia Dias Rocha^{1*}**

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This protocol aims to map the scientific evidence on the impact of digital influencers on school-aged adolescents, considering studies between 2022 and 2026. The protocol follows the recommendations of the Joanna Briggs Institute and will include primary, secondary, and grey literature studies that explore the impact of influencers in digital, social, and educational contexts. Studies addressing forms of digital influence not exerted by digital influencers will be excluded. The selection of studies, as well as data extraction and analysis, will be carried out by two independent reviewers, with the process presented through the PRISMA 2020 flowchart. The identified effects will be synthesized through tables and descriptive narratives, allowing for the characterization of benefits, risks, and mechanisms associated with digital influence. The resulting scoping review will allow us to identify significant repercussions, highlight existing gaps, and support relevant implications for research and practice with adolescents, families, and schools.

Descriptors: Adolescent; Digital Influencers; Social Networking; Internet; Health Impact Assessment.**Resumen**

Este protocolo busca mapear la evidencia científica sobre el impacto de los influencers digitales en adolescentes en edad escolar, considerando estudios realizados entre 2022 y 2026. El protocolo sigue las recomendaciones del Instituto Joanna Briggs e incluirá estudios de literatura primaria, secundaria y gris que exploren el impacto de los influencers en contextos digitales, sociales y educativos. Se excluirán los estudios que aborden formas de influencia digital no ejercidas por influencers digitales. La selección de estudios, así como la extracción y el análisis de datos, serán realizados por dos revisores independientes, y el proceso se presentará mediante el diagrama de flujo PRISMA 2020. Los efectos identificados se sintetizarán mediante tablas y narrativas descriptivas, lo que permitirá caracterizar los beneficios, riesgos y mecanismos asociados a la influencia digital. La revisión de alcance resultante nos permitirá identificar repercusiones significativas, resaltar las brechas existentes y respaldar implicaciones relevantes para la investigación y la práctica con adolescentes, familias y escuelas.

Descriptores: Adolescente; Influencers Digitales; Red Social; Internet; Evaluación del Impacto en la Salud.**Resumo**

Este protocolo visa mapear a evidência científica sobre a repercussão dos influenciadores digitais nos adolescentes em idade escolar, considerando estudos entre 2022 e 2026. O protocolo segue as recomendações do Joanna Briggs Institute e incluirá estudos primários, secundários e literatura cinzenta que explorem o impacto dos influenciadores em contextos digitais, sociais e educacionais. Serão excluídos estudos que abordem formas de influência digital que não sejam exercidas por influenciadores digitais. A seleção dos estudos, bem como a extração e análise de dados, será realizada por dois revisores independentes, sendo o processo apresentado através do fluxograma PRISMA 2020. Os efeitos identificados serão sintetizados por meio de quadros e narrativa descritiva, permitindo caracterizar benefícios, riscos e mecanismos associados à influência digital. A scoping review resultante permitirá identificar repercussões significativas, evidenciar lacunas existentes e apoiar implicações relevantes para a investigação e a prática junto de adolescentes, famílias e escolas.

Descritores: Adolescente; Influenciadores Digitais; Rede Social; Internet; Avaliação do Impacto na Saúde.

Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), adolescence encompasses the age range of 10 to 19 years and is characterized by rapid physical, cognitive, and psychosocial changes that influence how young people feel, think, make decisions, and interact with the world around them¹.

Neuroscience explains that there is a mismatch in the maturation of the adolescent brain². The incentive processing system, linked to rewards and emotions, matures much earlier than the cognitive control system (prefrontal cortex), responsible for impulse regulation and rational decision-making³. This makes young people biologically more sensitive to social rewards, such as approval from role models⁴.

During adolescence, a process of distancing from parents occurs⁴. In their quest for autonomy, young people turn to external role models, such as peers or digital influencers, to experiment with new identities and values, especially when they feel uncertain about their own preferences⁴. Social media, by establishing a system of immediate feedback based on likes, comments, and shares, amplifies external influence, operating on a much broader and more persuasive scale than traditional face-to-face interactions³.

In this context, digital influencers can be understood as individuals or individual accounts that, through the creation and regular sharing of content on social media, impact the attitudes and behaviors of a significant number of followers⁵. They wield this influence due to the reach and trust they establish with their audience, enabling them to shape users' decisions and actions⁶. They are also characterized by attracting large audiences, publishing consistently, and having a recognized ability to influence others in the digital environment⁷. These creators also build a sustained personal brand by continuously sharing perspectives, talents, lifestyles, and attitudes, generating trust and attracting consumers, while simultaneously earning income through partnerships with brands⁸.

The growing centrality of digital influencers on social media is particularly relevant when considering the high exposure of teenagers to digital environments such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, where content produced by digital influencers predominates^{9,10}. This age group, characterized by greater sensitivity to social influence and by being in the process of identity formation, tends to adopt norms, values, and behaviors observed online⁷.

To comprehensively understand the impact of these digital influencers on youth development, it is equally necessary to consider the role of other socialization contexts, among which the school stands out. The school context is a structured system of norms, practices, and purposes that guides the organization and transmission of knowledge, as well as the regulation of behavior. The effectiveness of this system depends on the actions of responsible adults, especially teachers and management bodies, and is framed by current educational policies, which define guidelines, objectives, and benchmarks for action^{11,12}.

At the same time, the school is conceived as a social space for the integral formation of the individual, in which knowledge, ethical values, citizenship practices, and forms of democratic participation are constructed. In this context, the school is configured as a relational context that, in articulation with the family and the community, contributes to the human, social, and cultural development of individuals^{13,14}.

However, understanding the socialization processes of young people today requires considering not only traditional face-to-face contexts, but also the digital environments in which they spend a large part of their time. This context is characterized by a set of means, platforms, tools, content, rules, and social relationships mediated by digital technologies in which psychological, educational, or organizational behaviors and processes occur^{15,16}.

The digital context is understood as the set of means (smartphones, virtual reality, etc.) and platforms (Instagram, TikTok, online games) where young people interact, express themselves, and receive feedback. Within the digital environment, there are spaces, relationships, or dynamics that perform functions like those traditionally performed by face-to-face contexts, such as family, school, or peer groups; however, these interactions occur through digital technologies¹⁶.

Beyond the school and digital contexts, it is equally relevant to consider the broader social context, which significantly shapes adolescents' experiences and behaviors. The social context is defined by a set of social conditions in which a person is embedded during interactions, exchanges, and behaviors, emphasizing the social characteristics of that environment. This includes social relationships, cultural norms, social roles, and rules of interaction that influence perception, thought, and action¹⁷.

In general, the social context can be conceptualized as a dynamic system of interrelated characteristics, including norms, shared meanings, relational patterns, and material resources, which, within a given temporal and spatial framework, conditions, enables, or restricts the activation of psychological mechanisms and the manifestation of certain behaviors¹⁸.

Given the multiplicity of contexts that influence adolescents' trajectories, it becomes essential to understand the processes through which they experience significant changes throughout their development. It is precisely within this framework that Meleis's Theory of Transitions is particularly relevant, as it offers a robust conceptual framework for nursing to understand and analyze the processes of change throughout the life cycle. In this context, adolescence constitutes a developmental transition, inherent to the normative stages of growth, marked by the passage from childhood to adolescence¹⁹.

This transition is characterized by a set of complex, dynamic, and multidimensional phenomena, involving predictable stages of biologically determined growth, namely physical and cognitive transformations, as well as psychosocial maturation processes regulated by social and cultural norms. In this sense, Meleis's Theory of Transitions allows us to analyze not only the developmental changes



themselves, but also the conditions, responses, and outcomes associated with experiencing this critical period²⁰.

In this protocol, Meleis's Theory of Transitions will be used as an interpretative framework to understand how the influence exerted by digital influencers can integrate and shape this transition process. Thus, the central concepts of the theory, including personal conditions, response patterns, and factors that facilitate or inhibit the transition, will guide the reading and interpretation of the narrative synthesis. Its application will allow us to understand how the effects described in the studies, whether behavioral or psychosocial, fit into the broader transition process experienced by adolescents, clarifying how digital influence contributes to, facilitates, or challenges this passage to new stages of development.

The impact of digital influencers is directly relevant to Nursing, especially in the areas of school health, public health, mental health, health promotion, and the prevention of risky behaviors. Nurses have a central role in the early identification of vulnerabilities and in intervening with adolescents, families, and schools. They should empower young people and parents to use the internet safely, including counseling on adaptive coping and mediating the influence of peers and digital figures on adolescent well-being^{21,22}.

Therefore, and considering the emerging nature of the problem, a preliminary search was conducted using terms related to the topic under study, using indexed databases, namely MEDLINE Complete (via EBSCOhost), CINAHL Complete (via EBSCOhost), Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI), Open Science Framework (OSF), PROSPERO and Google Scholar.

This preliminary search was conducted on January 16, 2026, using the following keywords: "Adolescent", "Social Media Influencer", and "Scoping Review". The preliminary results revealed the existence of one published scoping review in the MEDLINE and OSF databases, covering the period from 2012 to 2022⁷. Thus, the time frame 2022-2026 was defined as the criterion to ensure the timeliness of the scientific evidence and to include recent studies.

This decision is based on the fact that the impact of digital influencers remains widely present and relevant in the lives of adolescents. Therefore, the aim is to map and synthesize existing evidence on this phenomenon, as well as identify research gaps that can guide future studies, expanding current knowledge and understanding in the field.

In this sense, the objective of this scoping review protocol is to map the existing scientific evidence on the impact of digital influencers on school-aged adolescents, guided by the following review question: "What is the existing evidence on the impact of digital influencers on school-aged adolescents in digital, social, and educational contexts?"

Methodology

This scoping review protocol was conducted in accordance with the recommendations of the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) and the Preferred Reporting Items for

Systematic Reviews-Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) checklist^{23,24}. The protocol was registered in the Open Science Framework (OSF), with the PS3WJ registration accessible through the DOI: 10.17605/OSF.IO/PS3WJ.

The review question was structured according to the PCC mnemonic (Population, Concept, and Context), guiding the definition of eligibility criteria. The scoping review will include studies whose population consists of school-aged adolescents, between 10 and 19 years old, as defined by the WHO. Studies that include individuals outside this age range will be excluded.

Regarding the concept, studies that analyze the impact of digital influencers on the lives of adolescents will be included, considering effects on behavior, attitudes, mental health, self-esteem, identity construction, social relationships, school performance, and psychosocial well-being. Studies that explore forms of influence in the digital context not attributed to an influencer, such as institutional campaigns, automated ads, or programmatic advertising, will be excluded.

For context, studies addressing the digital, social, and educational environments in which adolescents interact with digital influencers or are exposed to their content will be included. The digital context is considered to encompass all social media platforms, applications, online communication spaces, and virtual environments where adolescents can follow, contact, or consume content produced by digital influencers. The social and educational context is also included, understanding that the impact of digital influence manifests itself in the school environment and in face-to-face social interactions. No geographical, cultural, or gender restrictions were applied, since digital influence is a global phenomenon that cuts across adolescents' diverse life contexts.

To ensure timeliness and avoid data overlaps, the period 2022-2026 was defined as the time interval. This option is particularly relevant, given that the impact of digital influencers remains highly prevalent among adolescents, amplified by the growing centrality of social networks and the evolution of digital formats. Studies published in Portuguese, English, and Spanish will be considered. Grey literature will be included. The inclusion criteria encompass primary and secondary studies. Duplicate publications will be excluded, with reviews prioritized when they integrate data from primary studies. However, primary studies will be retained whenever they present relevant additional information not included in secondary studies²³.

Search Strategy

The search strategy was developed in three complementary phases. In the first phase, an exploratory search was conducted in the MEDLINE Complete (via EBSCOhost) and CINAHL Complete (via EBSCOhost) databases, with the aim of identifying the most frequently used keywords in the literature on the subject. From this initial analysis, the most appropriate MeSH/DeCS descriptors and free terms were identified and selected, defined according to the PCC structure, to represent the essential concepts of the review rigorously.



In the second phase, a search strategy was developed for MEDLINE Complete (via EBSCOhost), combining descriptors, keywords, and related terms using Boolean operators, as shown in Chart 1. This strategy will be replicated and adapted for searches in the remaining databases, namely CINAHL Complete (via EBSCOhost),

Cochrane Library, Portuguese Open Access Scientific Repositories (RCAAP), and Google Scholar, respecting the specificities of each platform. Finally, a manual search of the bibliographic references of the included studies will be carried out to identify potentially relevant additional literature and ensure the completeness of the review.

Chart 1. Search strategy used in the MEDLINE Complete database (via EBSCOhost). Lisbon, Portugal, 2026

#	Search strategy	Results
S1	TI (adolescent*) OR TI (teen*) OR TI (teenager*) OR TI (young people) OR TI (student*) OR TI (high school student*) OR TI (secondary school student*) OR TI (youth)	(466,425)
S2	AB (adolescent*) OR AB (teen*) OR AB (teenager*) OR AB (young people) OR AB (student*) OR AB (high school student*) OR AB (secondary school student*) OR AB (youth)	(779,488)
S3	MH (adolescent) OR MH (students)	(2,429,188)
S4	S1 OR S2 OR S3	(2,871,042)
S5	TI (influencer*) OR TI (digital influencer*) OR TI (social media influencer*) OR TI (online influencer*) OR TI (content creator*) OR TI (influencer marketing) OR TI (social media engagement) OR TI (social media impact)	(790)
S6	AB (influencer*) OR AB (digital influencer*) OR AB (social media influencer*) OR AB (online influencer*) OR AB (content creator*) OR AB (influencer marketing) OR AB (social media engagement) OR AB (social media impact)	(3,294)
S7	MH (social media) OR MH (social networking) OR MH (internet) OR MH (marketing)	(118,150)
S8	S5 OR S6 OR S7	(120,795)
S9	TI (school environment) OR TI (education setting*) OR TI (school setting*) OR TI (digital environment) OR TI (youtube) OR TI (snapchat) OR TI (tiktok) OR TI (instagram) OR TI (facebook) OR TI (social environment) OR TI (digital context)	(8,812)
S10	AB (school environment) OR AB (education setting*) OR AB (school setting*) OR AB (digital environment) OR AB (youtube) OR AB (snapchat) OR AB (tiktok) OR AB (instagram) OR AB (facebook) OR AB (social environment) OR AB (digital context)	(34,924)
S11	MH (education) OR MH (schools)	(78,616)
S12	S9 OR S10 OR S11	(112,425)
S13	TI (impact*) OR TI (effect*) OR TI (influence*) OR TI (outcome*) OR TI (consequence*) OR TI (repercussion*) OR TI (behavior*) OR TI (wellbeing) OR TI (mental health) OR TI (self esteem) OR TI (consumption)	(4,306,451)
S14	AB (impact*) OR AB (effect*) OR AB (consequence*) OR AB (repercussion*) OR AB (behavior*) OR AB (wellbeing) OR AB (mental health) OR AB (self esteem) OR AB (consumption)	(11,247,341)
S15	MH (Health Impact assessment) OR MH (mental health) OR MH (behavior) OR MH (Health Behavior) OR MH (psychological well-being) OR MH (self concept) OR MH (consumer behavior)	(252,870)
S16	S13 OR S14 OR S15	(13,012,069)
S17	S4 AND S8 AND S12 AND S16	(2,066)
S18	Restrictions: Publication date: 01/2022 to 02/2026 Restrictions: Full text Restrict by language: Portuguese Restrict by language: English Restrict by language: Spanish	(277)

Study Selection

In the study selection process, all identified references will be imported and organized in the Covidence software, which will perform the initial automatic removal of duplicates. Prior to formal screening, a pilot test will be conducted with 20 to 30 titles and abstracts, evaluated by two independent reviewers. The minimum acceptable agreement will be ≥75% between reviewers to ensure consistency in the application of inclusion and exclusion criteria. Any identified discrepancies will be resolved through discussion and consensus and, when necessary, with the intervention of a third reviewer.

Subsequently, the eligibility will be screened based on title and abstract by two independent reviewers,

according to previously defined inclusion criteria. In cases of disagreement, a third reviewer will be consulted to resolve conflicts, ensuring the consistency of eligibility decisions. Studies deemed potentially relevant will proceed to full-text reading, which will again be conducted by two independent reviewers. Whenever discrepancies occur in the evaluation, a third reviewer will intervene to support the decision-making process. An appendix to the scoping review will also include a list of sources excluded after full-text reading, clearly and objectively presenting the reasons for their exclusion to guarantee complete transparency in the selection process. The selection of studies will be presented using the PRISMA 2020 flowchart²⁵, allowing for a graphical



representation of the sources' journey from identification to final inclusion in the review.

Data Extraction

After identifying and selecting the studies, the data extraction phase begins for the articles included in the review, which will be conducted in accordance with JBI recommendations²⁶.

Data extraction will be performed independently by two reviewers, both extracting data from the same studies.

Discrepancies will be resolved with the support of a third reviewer.

For the data extraction phase, the elements presented in the extraction table (Chart 2) were defined, which gathers the information considered essential to answer the review question. A pilot test of the extraction instrument will be carried out, allowing for the evaluation of the clarity, consistency, and adequacy of the items. This instrument can then be adjusted to better answer the scope review question, as needed²³.

Chart 2. Instrument for extracting data from articles. Lisbon, Portugal, 2026

Title	Author	Year	Country	Source type	Study method	Study objective	Participants (sample size/gender/age)	Dimensions/ effects analyzed	Context	Identified gaps	Suggestions for future research

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis will be conducted in accordance with the objective of this scoping review, combining descriptive, quantitative, and qualitative approaches. Data relating to the population characteristics of the included studies will be analyzed quantitatively and presented using simple frequencies in summary tables. Information related to the concept and context will be analyzed qualitatively through content analysis. The initial categories will be defined deductively, based on the elements of the PCC strategy and the theoretical framework of Meleis's Theory of Transitions, also allowing for the inductive emergence of additional categories from the data of the included studies.

The results will be presented in tables and narrative summaries, highlighting the extent and nature of the available evidence, as well as gaps in the literature and

possible directions for future research. Any changes to this protocol will be recorded and justified in the final version of the scoping review.

Expected Results

It is expected that the scoping review resulting from this protocol will allow us to map the extent and nature of the available literature on the impact of digital influencers on school-aged adolescents, identifying the effects described, the contexts, and the knowledge gaps, which may guide future research. Overall, the results of this review are expected to provide a comprehensive, organized, and up-to-date synthesis on the subject, constituting a useful resource for researchers, health professionals, educators, and political leaders working to promote safer and more conscious digital practices among adolescents.

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