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Legal Responsibility of Social Media Influencers for Harmful Content on Social Networking Platforms

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Abstract: The rapid expansion of social media influencers has raised questions about legal responsibility for harmful content disseminated through social networking platforms. Although existing legal frameworks regulate digital platforms and online users, influencers' legal status and duties remain fragmented and inconsistently defined. This study examines influencers' civil, criminal, and administrative liability, compares regulatory approaches in European, American, and Arab jurisdictions, and considers platforms' role in preventing and addressing harmful content. It employs a comparative doctrinal legal method, analysing relevant legislation, regulatory instruments, judicial approaches, platform governance policies, and case studies involving demonstrable harm caused by influencer content. The findings indicate that influencer responsibility is multidimensional and varies across jurisdictions. In the European Union, the Digital Services Act strengthens platform accountability and transparency but does not establish a comprehensive, influencer-specific liability regime. In the United States, Section 230 protects platforms from liability for third-party content, while creators may remain directly responsible under applicable laws. Arab jurisdictions tend to address influencer conduct through cybercrime, public order, advertising, and media regulations, although the scope and consistency of these rules differ. The study also finds that platform moderation remains reactive and that legal rules do not always clearly distinguish influencers' commercial, editorial, and personal activities. These gaps can weaken accountability and complicate remedies for affected users. This study contributes to comparative legal scholarship by developing an integrated framework for assessing influencers' civil, criminal, and administrative liability alongside platform responsibilities. It further advances comparative analysis of Arab regulatory approaches and proposes a

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balanced model that clarifies influencers' duties, strengthens proportionate platform oversight, and safeguards freedom of expression and users' rights.

Keywords: Administrative Liability; Digital Content; Harmful Content; Legal Responsibility; Social Media Influencers.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last ten years, social media has seen an unprecedented rise in influence, with influencers becoming key players in public opinion, social behavior, and followers' decisions. This influence has grown with the widespread adoption of digital platforms and their ability to provide direct, immediate access to large audiences. As a result, influencers have gained communicative authority that can rival mainstream media platforms, especially among younger audiences, and can reach far and wide. In tandem with this growth, some influencers have been spreading misinformation, hateful messages, violent challenges, and other harmful content. Other harms have also become apparent, including inaccurate health information, unsafe products, and content that negatively impacts the mental health of young people. These changes have raised scholarly and legal questions about the extent to which influencers can be held legally liable, especially where their legal duties and obligations in digital spaces remain unclear.[1]

The present study addresses the growing problem of harmful content proliferating on social media platforms, particularly through influencers. It raises complex legal questions about the extent of their civil and criminal duties and the effectiveness of current laws in addressing their activities. The study examines the nature of harmful content, its different forms and legal and social consequences, discusses the civil and criminal responsibility of influencers when it is harmful, analyses similarities and differences between international laws concerning the regulation of digital content and a duty of accountability toward influencers, discusses how social media sites can help in the detection and deterrence of harmful content, and proposes a balanced legal framework between the liberty of expression and safeguarding society from digital harms. The study is important from several perspectives. Legally, it aims to address gaps in law and regulations. Technologically, it improves platform governance structures. Socially, it protects users, especially minors, from harmful digital content. Academically, it provides an important contribution to the limited body of

[1] Mohammed Abou Adel, "Towards an Advanced Interactive E-Learning for the Language.," *Arab World English Journal*, 2022, https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1363386.

comparative Arab scholarship concerning the liability of social media influencers.[2]

Despite the growing body of literature on social media influencers and digital content governance, important gaps remain in the legal regulation of harmful influencer content. Previous studies have primarily examined influencers from communication, marketing, behavioral, or platform-governance perspectives. Meanwhile, comparatively little attention has been given to influencers as independent legal actors who may incur civil, criminal, and administrative liability for harm caused by their content. Existing comparative studies have also tended to focus on digital platforms' liability rather than systematically examining influencers' direct legal responsibility. In the Arab context, the literature remains particularly limited, with existing regulatory approaches largely relying on cybercrime, anti-rumor, advertising, and public-order provisions, and failing to establish a comprehensive legal framework that specifically addresses influencer responsibility. Accordingly, the present study addresses three major gaps in the literature.[3] First, the literature lacks a holistic legal approach that integrates the civil, criminal, and administrative dimensions of liability for influence into a single analytical framework. Second, doctrinal legal analysis is poorly integrated with qualitative case studies showing how harmful influencer content produces concrete legal and social consequences. Third, comparative legal analysis has largely concentrated on platform regulation rather than the specific legal status, duties, and responsibilities of social media influencers.[4]

This study's novelty lies in developing an integrated comparative legal analysis of influencer responsibility across selected European, American, and Arab legal systems. Unlike previous studies that examine platform accountability or the social and commercial influence of digital creators separately, this study connects the nature of harmful content with the legal elements of liability. It examines how different jurisdictions address influencer responsibility. It also integrates doctrinal legal analysis with selected qualitative case studies to assess the practical application and limitations of existing legal frameworks. In recent years, extensive research has examined social media influencers, particularly their influence on audiences and the risks they face if held liable. In examining how the concept of the "digital influencer" has developed, Smith (2020) argued that

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[2] Harith Yas et al., "Digital Advertising Regulation and Consumer Protection Policy In the UAE: Ethical Challenges and Consumer Trust in the Digital Era," *Acta Innovations*, 2026, 336–47.

[3] Nagwa Abouhaiba, Saed Ahmed Khouli, and Maya Khater, "Towards Protecting the Injured Party from Errors and Hallucinations of Artificial Intelligence: A Contemporary Legal Perspective," *F1000Research* 15 (2026): 569.

[4] Ali Jabbar Saleh et al., "Legal Aspects of The Management of Cryptocurrency Assets in the National Security System.," *Journal of Security & Sustainability Issues* 10, no. 1 (2020): 235.

the shift from traditional to interactive media has given digital influencers a degree of influence that sometimes surpasses that of conventional media.[5] The research highlighted a lack of clarity in the regulatory framework, making it difficult to establish liability in cases of harm. discussed how platforms like TikTok and Instagram have become breeding grounds for harmful challenges and misinformation, especially among young people. The study found that harmful material is not just violence and hate speech. It also includes content that encourages risky behavior or the use of dangerous products, which may create legal liability for influencers; in a comparative legal study, the authors analysed influencer liability. They explained that European jurisdictions have gradually adopted a stance of imposing direct liability on influencers for their content, especially when it is misleading or harms viewers' bodies and minds. The study emphasised the need to regulate the various relationships among influencers, digital platforms, and digital audiences through the European Digital Services Act (DSA)[6].

In another context, the study examined digital platforms' liability. It noted that platforms still have very broad liability protections in some jurisdictions, particularly in the United States under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. This legal shield makes it harder to hold influencers accountable. Although the study suggested assigning some responsibility to platforms, it did not claim this would reduce the spread of harmful content, nor did it shift responsibility away from influencers themselves. emphasised the psychological impact of harmful content, noting that some influencers are associated with spreading content that negatively affects adolescents' mental well-being, such as content related to body image and risky behavior.[7] The study proposed legal steps requiring influencers to disclose potential risks associated with the content they post. The study examined several real-world cases in which influencers' content caused harm, such as promoting an unlicensed product and sharing inaccurate medical information. The study found that, in most cases, financial settlements

[5] Ashraf Fatehi Al-Rai et al., "Violation of the Right to Privacy through Artificial Intelligence Entities under the Uae's Anti-Cybercrime Act," *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities.* 7, no. 1 (2026), https://www.royaliiteglobal.com/code/uploads/30042026025006.pdf.

[6] Ashraf Al-Rai, Dina Imad, and Maya Khater, "The Legal Regulation of Cybercrimes Related to Character Assassination under the Jordanian and French Legislation," *F1000Research* 15 (2026): 359.

[7] Vian Bakir and Andrew McStay, *Optimising Emotions, Incubating Falsehoods: How to Protect the Global Civic Body from Disinformation and Misinformation* (Springer Nature, 2022), https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/60780; Bakir and McStay.

or administrative measures resolved the problems, and no legal system exists to address influencers' liability in civil and criminal matters.[8]

Although countries such as the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia have laws against cybercrime and anti-rumor measures, legislation regulating influencers' activities remains nascent in the Arab context, according to Badar et al. (2026). The study highlighted that the concept of "influencer" is not precisely defined in the law, making it difficult to hold influencers accountable for damages[9]. The literature search shows that most research on social media influencers has focused primarily on communication, marketing, or behavioral aspects rather than directly on the legal implications of harmful content, and has made a useful contribution to the literature in studying how influencers are changing the face of communication but has failed to analyse the extent to which influencers can be held liable for harm caused. However, the study highlighted the need for legal regulation without proposing a comprehensive framework. Likewise, focused on harmful content and its social and psychological impacts, they did not draw a systematic link between harmful content and the components of influencers' civil and criminal liability. offer a valuable comparative study that highlights recent advances in European digital content legislation. However, they focused more on platform regulation and digital services governance than on influencers as autonomous individuals directly responsible for the content they create and share. Similarly, focused exclusively on platform liability and the immunity afforded by, for example, Section 230 of U.S. law, rather than offering significant discussion of what influencers might be liable for in the broader context of platform liability.

This study addresses the following central research question: how should the legal responsibility of social media influencers for harmful content be conceptualised and regulated across selected European, American, and Arab legal systems, particularly in relation to civil, criminal, and administrative liability and the corresponding responsibilities of digital platforms? This question matters because the rapid expansion of influencer activity has created legal challenges that existing regulatory frameworks have not adequately addressed. By examining differences and limitations in regulatory approaches across jurisdictions, the study seeks to clarify influencers' legal status, duties, and accountability while distinguishing their responsibilities from those of social networking platforms. Academically, it contributes to comparative legal scholarship by developing an

[8] F. A. Alazzam, K. K. Aldrou, and A. J. Salih, "Legal Problems and Challenges Facing Electronic Commerce Con-Tracts and Ways to Overcome Them in the Jordanian and Comparative Legislatures," *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change* 12, no. 9 (2020): 323–38.

[9] Nahla Alshalabi, Hanene Lahiani, and Ayman Yasin, "The Role of Culture in Abusive Language on Social Media: Examining the Use of English and Arabic Derogatory Terms," *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 14, no. 10 (2024): 3057–66.

integrated framework for assessing influencer liability across multiple legal dimensions, an area that remains insufficiently explored, particularly in Arab legal scholarship. Practically, the findings are expected to inform policymakers and legislators in designing clearer, more proportionate regulations, strengthening platform accountability, and improving legal protection for users, particularly children and other vulnerable groups. Ultimately, the study seeks to establish a balanced regulatory approach that ensures accountability for harmful digital content without imposing disproportionate restrictions on freedom of expression and legitimate online activities.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative comparative doctrinal legal research design to examine the legal responsibility of social media influencers for harmful content disseminated through social networking platforms. The doctrinal approach is appropriate because the study primarily identifies, interprets, and critically evaluates the legal rules, principles, duties, and liability forms applicable to influencers and digital platforms.[10] The comparative approach identifies similarities, differences, strengths, and regulatory gaps across selected European, American, and Arab legal systems. The qualitative case study component complements the doctrinal analysis by examining selected cases in which harmful influencer content resulted in demonstrable physical, psychological, financial, commercial, or social harm. The methodology was selected because influencer liability represents an emerging legal issue that cannot be adequately examined through a single national legal framework. The interaction between influencers, users, regulators, and social media platforms requires an analysis of statutory rules, regulatory instruments, judicial approaches, platform governance mechanisms, and practical examples of harmful content. Accordingly, combining doctrinal, comparative, and qualitative case-study approaches enables the study to address the research questions from both normative legal and practical perspectives.

The study relies primarily on secondary legal and documentary sources. These sources include national legislation, regulatory instruments, legal and regulatory policies, judicial approaches, academic literature, and social media platform policies and community standards.[11] The comparative legal analysis

[10] Karem Sayed Aboelazm et al., "Policies of Civil Service Leadership Reform in Egypt and the United Arab Emirates in Light of the United Kingdom's Experience," *Journal of Lifestyle and SDG'S Review* 5, no. 2 (2025), https://zu.elsevierpure.com/en/publications/policies-of-civil-service-leadership-reform-in-egypt-and-the-unit/.

[11] Judith Borghouts et al., "Barriers to and Facilitators of User Engagement with Digital Mental Health Interventions: Systematic Review," *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 23, no. 3 (2021): e24387.

covers selected European, American, and Arab jurisdictions, with particular attention to the European Union Digital Services Act, the United States legal framework concerning intermediary liability, and relevant cybercrime, public-order, media, and advertising regulations in selected Arab jurisdictions, including the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. The study also examines the content-governance policies of major social media platforms, including TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat, particularly their mechanisms for reporting, removing, restricting, labeling, and detecting harmful content. These materials help assess the relationship between public legal regulation and private platform governance.

Data were collected through a systematic review of documentary and legal literature. We identified and examined relevant legal materials for their relevance to the legal status and responsibilities of social media influencers, harmful online content, platform accountability, consumer protection, cybercrime, misinformation, privacy, advertising, and freedom of expression. The study reviewed academic studies to establish the theoretical and scholarly context and identify gaps in the literature. In addition, the study examined selected qualitative case studies to illustrate how harmful influencer content can lead to concrete legal consequences. The cases were selected for their relevance to the study's central issues, including dangerous online challenges, misleading health information, unsafe product promotion, and misleading financial or cryptocurrency-related promotions. The case studies were treated not as statistical observations but as qualitative legal examples to evaluate the practical application and limitations of existing legal frameworks.

The collected materials were analysed using qualitative doctrinal and comparative legal analyses. First, the study examined relevant legal provisions and regulatory instruments to identify the legal characteristics of harmful influencer content and the conditions under which liability may arise. Second, the study classified influencer responsibility into three principal dimensions: civil, criminal, and administrative liability. The study analysed civil liability through the elements of fault, damage, and causation. In contrast, the study examined criminal liability in relation to unlawful content, incitement, misinformation, privacy violations, fraud, and other relevant cybercrimes. The study analysed administrative liability in terms of regulatory sanctions and platform-based measures, including fines, content removal, account suspension, and restrictions on content distribution. Third, the study conducted a comparative analysis to determine how different legal systems allocate responsibility between influencers and social media platforms. The analysis particularly considers three regulatory patterns: the European emphasis on platform regulation and transparency; the United States' approach that distinguishes platform liability from content creators' liability; and the predominant reliance of Arab jurisdictions on

cybercrime, public order, advertising, and media regulations. Finally, the doctrinal and comparative analyses were integrated with the selected case studies to identify regulatory gaps and propose a legal approach that balances influencer accountability, platform responsibility, freedom of expression, and protection from harmful digital content.

The study is doctrinal and qualitative rather than statistical; conventional quantitative validity and reliability tests are not applicable. Instead, the credibility of the analysis was strengthened through source triangulation and comparative legal verification. Legal conclusions were assessed by examining multiple categories of authoritative and scholarly materials, including legislation, regulatory instruments, judicial approaches, academic literature, and platform governance policies. Comparing multiple jurisdictions also provides a basis for identifying whether particular regulatory approaches reflect broader legal trends or jurisdiction-specific practices. The qualitative case studies served as supporting evidence rather than a basis for statistical generalisation. They tested the practical relevance of the legal analysis by examining concrete instances of harmful influencer content and the responses adopted by platforms and regulatory authorities. This approach strengthens the connection between the doctrinal findings and their practical implications while avoiding unsupported empirical generalisation.[12]

The overall analytical framework consists of four interconnected stages: (1) identification and classification of harmful influencer content; (2) determination of the applicable forms and elements of influencer liability; (3) comparative assessment of influencer and platform responsibilities across selected jurisdictions; and (4) identification of legislative gaps and development of a balanced regulatory framework. This framework enables the study to systematically connect the nature of harmful content with the corresponding legal consequences and regulatory responsibilities. Because the present study does not specifically investigate a Sharia-based legal question, it does not apply a separate Sharia analytical framework. Instead, the study focuses on statutory, regulatory, comparative, and doctrinal legal analysis within the selected jurisdictions.[13]

A social media influencer is an individual who can sway others' opinions, attitudes, and behaviors through their content on digital platforms. This impact stems from several factors, including digital presence, credibility, and regular interaction with followers. As a new type of communication actor, influencers

[12] Nashwa Ahmed Mohamed, Ahmad Fadli, and Karem Sayed Aboelazm, "Exclusion of the Applicability of Foreign Law in Disputing Its Constitutionality before the UAE Judiciary," *Corporate Law & Governance Review* 8, no. 1 (2026): 24–33.

[13] Molly Kaelin Kadota, *Investigating Strategies for Addressing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Following Exposure to Extreme Weather Events in Low-and Middle-Income Countries: A Scoping Review*, 2022, https://open.uct.ac.za/handle/11427/37297.

differ from traditional media in their interactive communication with audiences. Recent studies identify follower count as a key dimension for classifying social media influencers. Researchers have categorised influencers into four groups by audience size. Nano-Influencers have fewer than 10,000 followers; Micro-Influencers have between 10,000 and 100,000 followers. A macro-influencer typically has anywhere from 100,000 to 1 million followers, while a mega-influencer has more than 1 million followers. The categories give researchers and marketers insight into the size of an influencer's online presence. However, follower numbers are not the only indicator of real influence; engagement, credibility, audience trust, and content relevance can also play a role.

According to a study, genuine audience interaction, content credibility, and the capacity to influence attitudes and behaviors are factors in actual influence. Apparent influence, however, focuses mainly on the numbers associated with a profile and can be easily manipulated by fake followers or fake engagement. For this reason, it is better to attach legal liability to the influencer's actual influence rather than to the figure of his/her followers. Harmful content refers to any content on the Internet that has the potential to cause material, psychological, or social harm to users, directly or indirectly. Propose a general scheme for classifying harmful content into four major categories, including "misleading content." This category includes content that spreads misinformation or false claims, especially in health and financial spheres. Given influencers' wider reach and influence, warn that misinformation spread by influencers is more hazardous than that spread by ordinary users. On the other hand, this content can directly or indirectly encourage aggressive, dangerous, or harmful behavior. Identified some situations where harmful online challenges by adolescents could be linked directly to content shared by influencers. Furthermore, this content may include, but is not limited to, content that can promote eating disorders, that limits self-worth, or that can encourage dangerous behavior. Influencer-produced content can profoundly affect adolescents' mental health and well-being. Content may also take the form of material that violates legal or societal standards, such as content that encourages illegal or unethical actions. This type of content has been explored in the Arab context.[14]

On the other hand, the types of harm resulting from harmful content include: As the contemporary literature shows, harmful information from influencers can trigger different types of harm, varying in nature and extent. Material harm encompasses actual financial losses due to the promotion of unsafe products and/or misleading investment opportunities. Several instances have been reported in which users have lost money because of influencers' recommendations. Moral and psychological harm encompasses anxiety,

[14] Harith Yas et al., "Social Media Platform Accountability: How Uae Law Addresses Misleading Content and Platform Responsibility," *Acta Innovations*, 2026, 747–57.

depression, loss of self-esteem, and other psychological effects. Content that perpetuates negative social comparisons has been shown to cause a significant amount of psychological damage. Social harms can arise from hate speech, the spread of harmful values, or the undermining of social cohesion. Discussed the effect of negative online material on social relations and public confidence. One of the most serious harms is children's lack of critical thinking when evaluating online information. Concluded that children and teenagers are especially vulnerable to the harmful content produced by influencers, particularly those that involve dangerous challenges and those that are related to body image.[15]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are presented according to the four research questions and are derived from comparative doctrinal analysis and qualitative case studies. The findings show that social media influencers' legal responsibility is multidimensional and that significant differences exist among the selected European, American, and Arab legal approaches. The results also reveal substantial regulatory gaps regarding influencers' specific duties and social media platforms' preventive responsibilities.

Civil, Criminal, and Administrative Liability of Social Media Influencers

The first research question examined the civil, criminal, and administrative responsibility of social media influencers for harmful content. The analysis demonstrates that influencer responsibility can arise under three interconnected forms of liability. First, civil liability arises where harmful influencer content results in legally recognisable damage and the required elements of liability are established. The principal elements are fault, damage, and causation. Harm may be financial, physical, psychological, reputational, or social. The analysis indicates that influencers may be responsible where they intentionally disseminate harmful information or fail to exercise reasonable care when providing information concerning health, finance, products, or potentially dangerous activities. Second, criminal liability may arise where an influencer's conduct constitutes an offense under applicable criminal or cybercrime legislation. The principal categories identified include unlawful dissemination of content, incitement to harmful or illegal conduct, misinformation, privacy violations, fraud, and other cybercrimes. The findings indicate that influencers' large audiences and persuasive capacity may amplify the consequences of unlawful content, particularly when vulnerable users are involved. Third, administrative liability may arise independently of judicial criminal proceedings. It includes regulatory fines, content removal,

[15] Yangmi Lim and Okin Lee, "Relationships between Parental Maltreatment and Adolescents' School Adjustment: Mediating Roles of Self-Esteem and Peer Attachment," *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 26, no. 2 (2017): 393–404.

account suspension, restrictions on content distribution, and other enforcement measures imposed by regulators or social media platforms. These measures demonstrate that influencer accountability increasingly operates through both public regulation and private platform governance[16].

Comparative Findings Across Legal Systems

The second research question examined how selected European, American, and Arab legal systems regulate influencer responsibility. The comparative analysis identified three principal regulatory approaches. The comparison shows no uniform international model governing influencer liability. The European Union has moved toward stronger platform accountability and transparency through the Digital Services Act. The United States maintains a distinction between platform liability and content creators' direct responsibility. Arab jurisdictions primarily address harmful online conduct through cybercrime, public order, media, and advertising provisions rather than through comprehensive legislation dedicated specifically to influencers.[17]

Findings from the Qualitative Case Studies

The third set of findings concerns the practical consequences of harmful influencer content. The selected cases show that influencer-generated or influencer-promoted content can cause different categories of harm, including physical injury, public health risks, financial losses, commercial deception, psychological harm, and broader social consequences. The case studies demonstrate four recurring patterns: (1) the promotion of dangerous activities can contribute to physical harm; (2) misleading health claims can create public health risks; (3) undisclosed or unsafe product promotion can result in consumer and financial harm; and (4) misleading financial and cryptocurrency promotions can cause substantial monetary losses. The cases also show that platforms often intervene only after harmful content has already achieved significant reach. Content removal, account suspension, demonetisation, warning labels, and other restrictions can reduce further dissemination, but these measures do not necessarily prevent the initial harm.[18]

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[16] Sura Qiqieh, Elham Hussein, and Mohammed Abou Adel, "The Impact of WhatsApp on First-Year Students' Transition to University Life," *Frontiers in Education* 10 (2025): 1552278, https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/education/articles/10.3389/feduc.2025.1552278/full.

[17] João Pedro Quintais and Sebastian Felix Schwemer, "The Interplay between the Digital Services Act and Sector Regulation: How Special Is Copyright?," *European Journal of Risk Regulation* 13, no. 2 (2022): 191–217.

[18] Amira Badr et al., "Compensation for Environmental Damages Occurring within the Transition towards Sustainable Development: A Comparative Study Regarding the UAE Legislation," *Humanities* 7, no. 2 (2026), https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Nadia-Yas-2/publication/408523897_Compensation_for_Environmental_Damages_occurring_within_the_Transition_towards_Sustainable_Development_A_Comparative_Study_regarding_the_UAE_

Role and Responsibility of Social Media Platforms

The analysis indicates that social media platforms play an essential role in detecting, moderating, and limiting harmful influencer content. The principal mechanisms include automated detection, user reporting, content removal, warning labels, account restrictions, reduced visibility, and suspension or termination. However, the findings show that these mechanisms remain predominantly reactive rather than preventive. Harmful content may reach substantial audiences before detection or removal. Automated systems can also create challenges relating to accuracy, contextual interpretation, transparency, and the potential removal of lawful content. Consequently, the results support stronger preventive mechanisms, clearer enforcement standards, greater transparency in moderation decisions, and a clearer allocation of responsibility between influencers and platforms.

Interpretation of the Multidimensional Nature of Influencer Liability

The findings establish that social media influencers cannot be treated solely as ordinary users when their content has significant persuasive reach and produces foreseeable harm. Identifying civil, criminal, and administrative dimensions of responsibility supports a broader conception of influencer accountability.[19] This finding extends earlier research that recognised the growing influence of digital creators but did not sufficiently integrate the different forms of legal liability into a single framework. The civil liability findings are consistent with the traditional legal structure requiring fault, damage, and causation.[20] However, the digital environment creates particular difficulties in establishing causation because harm may result from multiple factors and users may independently decide whether to act upon influencer content. The persuasive relationship between influencers and followers nevertheless creates circumstances in which the causal connection may become legally significant, particularly where the influencer provides specific advice, promotes a product, or encourages risky conduct.

The findings concerning criminal liability similarly demonstrate that influencer status does not create immunity from generally applicable criminal law. Where an influencer disseminates unlawful content, facilitates fraud, violates

Legislation/links/6a4cad4d1681584dea2d4efd/Compensation-for-Environmental-Damages-occurring-within-the-Transition-towards-Sustainable-Development-A-Comparative-Study-regarding-the-UAE-Legislation.pdf.

[19] Ghazi Ayed Alghathian et al., "Contemporary Issues in Arbitration Agreements: Sharia Public Order and Civil Law Perspectives," *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 5, no. 2 (2026): 1071–1102; Alghathian et al.

[20] Enas Qutieshat et al., "Governing Legal Chatbots: Ethics, Professional Responsibility and Liability in Comparative Perspective," *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities* 7, no. 1 (2026), https://www.royalliteglobal.com/advanced-humanities/article/view/2487.

privacy, spreads legally prohibited misinformation, or incites harmful conduct, existing criminal and cybercrime provisions may become applicable. This supports the broader literature that emphasises the growing legal significance of online misconduct by high-reach digital actors.

Comparison with Previous Studies

The results broadly align with Frosio and Geiger (2023), who identified the growing importance of legal responsibility in the digital content environment, particularly under the European Digital Services Act. However, this study extends this perspective by placing the influencer, rather than the platform alone, at the centre of the legal analysis. Similarly, the findings complement Iglesias Keller (2021), whose analysis emphasised the importance of intermediary liability and platform protections. The present study differs in that it demonstrates that platform responsibility should not replace or eliminate the independent responsibility of influencers who create or promote harmful content. The findings also support concerns identified in the Arab literature about the lack of precise legal definitions and dedicated regulatory frameworks for influencers. However, this study advances the discussion by integrating Arab regulatory approaches into a broader comparative framework and linking them to European and American models.

Theoretical and Legal Implications

The findings contribute to a more comprehensive theoretical understanding of digital responsibility by demonstrating that influencer liability should be analysed through the interplay among influence, harmful content, damage, causation, and regulatory responsibility. The study therefore proposes an integrated conceptual relationship in which the legal assessment of influencer conduct depends not merely on follower numbers but on the nature of the content, the degree of influence, the foreseeability and severity of potential harm, and the applicable legal duties. This aligns with the study's conceptual framework, which recognises that actual influence involves credibility, engagement, audience trust, and the capacity to affect behavior, not follower numbers alone. The findings further demonstrate that platform governance has become an important component of digital regulation.[21] Platforms function as private regulators through their content standards, reporting systems, algorithmic detection mechanisms, and enforcement measures. This creates a regulatory environment in which public law and private governance operate simultaneously.

[21] Nadia Yas et al., "Civil Liability In Digital Markets: A Legal Analysis of E-Commerce Merchants'obligations And Their Basis," *Acta Innovations*, 2026, 297–312.

Contribution to Existing Scholarship

The study's principal contribution is a holistic comparative framework for influencer liability that integrates civil, criminal, and administrative responsibility with platform accountability. Previous research has frequently examined these dimensions separately or focused predominantly on communication, marketing, psychological effects, or platform liability.[22] This study connects these dimensions in a single legal analysis. The study also contributes to comparative Arab legal scholarship by demonstrating that existing cybercrime, public order, media, advertising, and consumer protection provisions can address certain forms of influencer misconduct but do not yet provide a coherent, comprehensive framework that specifically defines influencers' rights, duties, and responsibilities. Finally, the study contributes to the ongoing debate concerning the balance between freedom of expression and protection from digital harm. Rather than advocating unrestricted liability, the findings support a proportionate approach in which liability corresponds to the nature and severity of the harmful conduct. At the same time, platforms must adopt transparent and effective preventive governance mechanisms.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the legal responsibility of social media influencers for harmful content is multidimensional and cannot be adequately addressed through traditional platform-focused regulation alone. The findings show that influencers may incur civil, criminal, and administrative responsibility depending on the content, the harm caused, and the applicable legal framework. The comparative analysis also shows significant differences among European, American, and Arab approaches, while revealing a common regulatory gap regarding influencers' precise legal status, duties, and responsibilities. The study contributes to legal scholarship by developing a holistic comparative framework that connects influencer liability with platform accountability and distinguishes the civil, criminal, and administrative dimensions of responsibility. It also contributes to the emerging Arab literature by demonstrating the limitations of relying primarily on general cybercrime, public-order, advertising, and media provisions to regulate influencer activities. The proposed approach can help legislators, regulators, courts, and social media platforms develop clearer, more proportionate mechanisms to prevent and address harmful digital content while maintaining an appropriate balance between freedom of expression and user protection. The study has several limitations. First, it is based primarily on doctrinal and documentary analysis and does not include interviews, surveys, or

[22] Ahmad Awwad Albnian et al., "Civil Liability and Cyber Insurance for Electronic Bank Account Hacking under Jordanian Law: A Doctrinal and Comparative Analysis," *Frontiers in Human Dynamics* 8 (2026): 1790473.

quantitative empirical data from influencers, users, regulators, or platform representatives. Second, the comparative analysis is limited to selected European, American, and Arab legal systems and therefore cannot represent all jurisdictions. Third, the qualitative case studies are illustrative rather than statistically generalisable. These limitations indicate the need for future empirical and comparative research examining how influencer liability operates in practice across a broader range of jurisdictions.

Future research should investigate the effectiveness of emerging influencer-specific regulations, examine the practical impact of algorithmic content moderation and artificial intelligence on legal responsibility, and explore cross-border enforcement mechanisms. Further studies may also develop empirical models to assess the relationship among the degree of influencer influence, the foreseeability of harm, and the proportionality of legal liability. Such research would further strengthen the development of effective, transparent, and rights-compatible regulatory frameworks for the rapidly evolving digital environment.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Nadia Yas, Ahmed Mohamed Barak, Raed S. A. Faqir, Hussein Ahmed Alghushami, and Maha Mustafa Omer Abdalaziz collectively contributed to the development and completion of this study. Nadia Yas and Ahmed Mohamed Barak contributed to the conceptualisation and research design. Raed S. A. Faqir and Hussein Ahmed Alghushami contributed to data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Maha Mustafa Omer Abdalaziz contributed to the literature review, manuscript development, and critical revision. All authors participated in reviewing and approving the final version of the manuscript and agreed to take responsibility for its content.

AI USAGE STATEMENT

The authors acknowledge the limited use of artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted tools during the preparation of this manuscript. These tools were used solely to support language refinement, grammar correction, translation, and improvements in writing clarity and academic presentation. AI tools were not

used to generate research data, fabricate findings, conduct substantive legal analysis, or determine the study's conclusions. All research processes, interpretations, arguments, and final decisions remain entirely the responsibility of the authors, who have carefully reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest, whether financial, personal, or professional, that could have influenced the research, its findings, or the preparation and publication of this manuscript.

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