Exploring momfluencers ethics as social media micro-influencer in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Background: The tight business competition in Indonesia has made branding practitioners develop the most effective strategy to increase brand awareness by collaborating with influencers. In Indonesia, the number of influencers increases annually. One of the biggest is Insta-moms, mom influencers, or momfluencers. Momfluencers have challenges to ensure that their content does not violate ethics, such as advertising rules, and does not mislead the audience. Unfortunately, their lack of awareness of influencer ethics lets them create content based on briefs from clients or management and rely on their common sense. **Purpose:** This study aimed to analyze the contents of momfluencers, as micro-influencers, through an ethical perspective. **Methods:** We conducted a quantitative content analysis of 569 posts from 12 momfluencers. **Results:** Momfluencers' posts predominantly consist of commercial content in videos or reels featuring influencer portraits with long descriptions. Ethically, momfluencers fail to meet the ethical norms. Aspects that have not been fulfilled are interaction with the audience, respect, participatory activities, social responsibility, connectedness, and loyalty. Meanwhile, aspects that have been fulfilled are trustworthiness, expertise or credibility, appearance, content quality, and communication quality. This study also found two potential ethics violations of momfluencer, engagement bias, and sharenting. **Conclusion:** Influencers have become an industry. Normalizing unethical practices due to a lack of information should be avoided. Influencer management and influencers under their auspices should know what is permissible and impermissible in their roles. Although there is no code of ethics for influencers in Indonesia, rules for public relations, journalism, and advertising can be a guide. **Implications:** The results of this study could be an evaluation for influencers in Indonesia and can be input for formulating an influencer code of ethics in Indonesia.

Keywords: Ethics; micro influencer; momfluencer; sharenting; social media influencer

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INTRODUCTION

The tight business competition in Indonesia has made branding practitioners develop the most effective strategies to increase product awareness. The most effective way is to collaborate with Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs), better known as influencers (Alam et al., 2024; Ren et al., 2023; Shuqair et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2024).

Social media influencers are new types of opinion leaders who consider followers to be role models and strongly affect their attitudes and behaviors (Dinh et al., 2023). They create content, art, and entertainment vloggers, online streamers, online gamers, and other activities related to social media (Cox & Paoli, 2023; Ooi et al., 2023). They have become a significant part of the media the public consumes today because they have many followers (Farivar et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2023). Unfortunately, high follower numbers are often misleading because they only show the influencer's reach, not their effectiveness (Ooi et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2023).

Indonesia is ranked the 6th as a country with the largest number of Instagram influencers (Anestia, 2024). Influencers have succeeded in bridging the interaction between brands and audiences. Indonesians also prefer to follow influencers over brand accounts (Taslaud, 2024). Social media influencers can be distinguished based on the number of their followers, such as celebrities, mega, macro, micro, and nano-influencers (Xie-Carson et al., 2023).

The brands that use the most influencers include beauty, fashion, entertainment, food, beverages, travel, gadgets, and family (Taslaud, 2024). More than 26% of brands in Indonesia run campaigns with influencers once a month (Statista, 2024). Recent research found that 68% of Indonesians buy products endorsed by an influencer (Statista, 2024).

The largest number of influencers in Indonesia is the micro-influencer, which has 55,293 influencers (Statista, 2023). Micro-influencers are currently considered the most effective influencers because they are closest to the audience (Balaban et al., 2022; Cox & Paoli, 2023; Droz-dit-Busset, 2022; Ooi et al., 2023). Micro-influencers have followers between 1,000-100,000. The main characteristics of micro-influencers are having a strong influence on their followers who are a specific community or niche, having a uniform audience, and being considered highly credible by their audience (Chen et al., 2024).

The advantage of using micro-influencers is that they can reach local audiences with a higher level of trust and relevance (Walter et al., 2024), as well as excellent engagement rates. In addition, micro-influencers are perceived to be effectively increasing engagement through likes and comments (Britt et al., 2020; Marques et al., 2021). A close relationship with the end users or target audience is also an advantage when working with micro-influencers (Casaló et al., 2020). In addition, micro-influencers are considered authentic by their followers; recommendations conveyed by micro-influencers are similar to word of mouth. Another advantage is more affordable service fees (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Moffitt & Azarfar, 2021; Porteous, 2020; Sinkwitz, 2020).

Micro-influencers are weak at reach and visibility because they have fewer followers and brand equity than influencers. Large-scale activation is also more difficult. There is less control over the output, and the Return on Investment is unstable and more difficult to measure (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Moffitt & Azarfar, 2021; Porteous, 2020; Sinkwitz, 2020).

The high demand for influencers has become a business opportunity to create influencer agencies or management. This practice has also increased annually, along with the increasing number of influencers and Instagram users in Indonesia. One of the most popular is influencer management for mothers, better known as momfluencers. Mothers are very close to social media, and even influencers have become a source of information for mothers (Kirkpatrick & Lee, 2024; Lee et al., 2024).

The term momfluencer or Insta-Moms exists because of the use of Instagram by mothers, which has content and audiences that focus on mothers for mothers (Holiday et al., 2021). Momfluencer is one of the oldest influencers on the internet (Wiley, 2018). The content shared comes from personal experiences, creating a sense of intimacy with other mothers for over a decade (Lopez, 2009). Momfluencer content has created a social support and belonging community for mothers and contributed to

women's digital culture (Archer & Kao, 2018; Duffy & Hund, 2015; Morrison, 2011; Webb & Lee, 2011).

Being a momfluencer means playing two roles: an influencer and a mother. The success of momfluencers depends on social media followers. Therefore, research is required on followers to appropriate momfluencer content. Momfluencer should focus on more than just the brand to promote. They must also show good skills in providing meaningful content for followers and being themselves. Thus, the digital community of mothers will survive while maximizing the Instagram platform as a source of income (Wiley, 2018).

The demand of momfluencers in Indonesia is increasing as much as the number of Instagram users in Indonesia. Brands that require their services are those related to babies, toddlers, and children. In addition, household appliances, food, drinks, tourist attractions, and lifestyle brands related to women also need influencers.

Unfortunately, momfluencer management does not function as a content gatekeeper. The content produced does not go through an initial evaluation process. The impact is that the content seems unprofessional because it does not maintain the quality. This unprofessionalism is also seen in their personal branding. They seem to not have a content plan, so the Instagram feed only contains endorsements. This is unfortunate because momfluencers must ideally be differentiated from other influencers. They should build personal branding authentically by creating harmony between content on Instagram and real lives (Efrida et al., 2020).

The management of momfluencers also does not build branding from both management and influencers under their auspices. Many variations of brands taken by management and the content created by momfluencers. The many variations of these brands then affect the public's trust in momfluencers because the loyalty aspect is questionable.

The management and momfluencers should know that social media has its own rules, especially for promotional content. The roles are getting stricter and stricter today. Momfluencers are an extension of public relations that creates good public opinion about the brand. However, they also practice advertising in the content they create. In other words, they lie at the intersection of public relations and advertising practices.

The unclear position of influencers and the absence of a code of ethics that regulates how they work make them work harder. Public relations officers must be more careful in creating influencer briefs so that blunders do not occur, which results in cancel culture on social media and negatively impacts brand image.

One of their biggest challenges is ensuring that the content they create does not violate advertising rules and does not mislead the audience (Antoniou, 2024). Influencers often commit several violations when creating commercial content, including false claims, false or inaccurate or not verifying product safety, failure in disclosing the endorsement, failure in disclosing brand relationship in posts, and vague or confusing attempts at disclosing brand relationship (Karagür et al., 2022; Mena et al., 2020a, 2020b; Musiyiwa & Jacobson, 2023; Van Der Goot et al., 2021; Xie & Feng, 2023).

Misleading claims occur when they create content that presents false, deceptive, or over claims about a brand (Antoniou, 2024). If the audience believes in the misleading claim, it will damage the influencer's credibility (Wellman et al., 2020). The impact is the loss of trust from the audience, loss of followers, and legal problems. In other words, an influencer must comply with credibility ethics by being responsible, transparent, honest, and providing accurate information.

In creating content, influencers should prioritize transparency (Xie & Feng, 2023). This can be as simple as indicating that this post is an advertisement, endorsement, or paid partnership. On Instagram, influencers should be able to tag brands in posts, mention brands in captions, and use the post collaboration feature (Xie & Feng, 2023). However, they often violate this ethic under the guise of a soft selling strategy or engaging in other concerning practices (Van Der Goot et al., 2021). Influencers deliberately hide that this is advertising content so that the audience is confused about whether this is advertising content or not.

Previous studies examined how claims of impartiality in brand-focused social media posts affect credibility, intention to engage with the message and attitudes. They found that posts claiming non-sponsorship were

perceived as less likely to be advertising or to have sales intent. These non-sponsorship claims also increased audience trust. Meanwhile, claims of honesty increased the influencer's expertise. The dimensions of honesty and non-sponsorship combined powerfully to increase trust, expertise, and attitudes (Lee et al., 2021).

Studies on social media influencers are rising, either from the perspective of public relations, advertising, or journalism. Previous research concluded that there needed to be more certainty in understanding the impact of social media on public relations and advertising practices. The presence of influencers provides several advantages, but there are ethical problems regarding sponsorship and promotional content (Gupta et al., 2020). In this study, ethics as the analytical tool relates to the ethics of social media influencers in Public Relations and Advertising.

Research on social media influencers needs to be conducted to further explain the specific constellation of ethical issues in the influencer industry and clarify the differences between sponsored content and organic content. The ethics of social media influencers are at the intersection of public relations, advertising, and journalism studies (Borchers & Enke, 2022). Several factors that influence the power of influencers on social media are as follows: (1) Expertise or Credibility; (2) Trustworthiness; (3) Quality content; (4) Quality presentation; (5) Public relations; (6) Appearance; (7) Quality of communication; (8) Participatory activities; (9) Affability to the audience; (10) Connectedness (Cho et al., 2022).

Previous research on influencer industry ethics focused on three issues: transparency of collaboration, payment to influencers, and authenticity of influencers (Borchers & Enke, 2022; Holland et al., 2018; Kauffmann & Vaičiūnaitė, 2024; Mackay, 2021; Wellman et al., 2020). An exploratory study conducted on influencer industry players in Germany, such as influencers, clients, and intermediaries such as agencies, found 10 influencer ethical issues. These issues include (1) Autonomy; (2) Transparency; (3) Sincerity; (4) Truth; (5) Caring; (6) Professionalism; (7) Reciprocity (8) Respect; (9) Loyalty; (10) Social responsibility (Borchers & Enke, 2022). Other researchers have also formulated ten issues related to influencer ethics, among which are autonomy, transparency, sincerity, honesty, caring, professionalism, reciprocity, respect, loyalty, and social responsibility (Borchers & Enke, 2022).

This study addresses the gaps unexplored in the previous literature since there has been no study on the ethics of influencer practices in Indonesia. Unlike previous research in Indonesia, which mostly focused on measuring the effectiveness of communication strategies using influencers, the influence of influencer use on campaign effectiveness and purchasing behavior (Al-Ansi et al., 2023; Andonopoulos et al., 2023; Cheung et al., 2022; Muñoz et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). The present study analyzed the content of momfluencer posts as micro-influencers through an ethical perspective. We conducted a quantitative content analysis of 569 posts from 12 momfluencers. The data collection involved women 17 to 50 years old, who are included in micro-influencers category (have 10,000 to 100,000 followers) on Instagram, with a maximum price of IDR 500,000 for each Instagram post, engagement rate between 3% and 7%, marital status is married and have toddlers. Our findings are expected to evaluate influencer practitioners in Indonesia and can be input for formulating an influencer code of ethics in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a quantitative content analysis method. Quantitative content analysis examines messages behind the texts in the media (Neuendorf, 2017). The content analysis aims to systematically identify the content of the communication objectively (Neuendorf, 2017; Stockemer et al., 2019). The content of momfluencers was analyzed in three steps: (1) selecting momfluencers, (2) coding, and (3) data analysis.

Initially, we identified Indonesian women between 17 and 50 years old because the dominant group in the influencer industry was women (Statista, 2024). Based on the pre-research results, influencer practitioners in Indonesia had no data recorded.

Second, we chose momfluencers who belonged to the micro-influencers level. Micro-influencers were selected based on the number of Instagram followers, ranging from 10,000 to 100,000. Micro-influencers are recognized for having the closest connection to their followers. In addition, micro-influencers have proven effective in leading their followers (Chen et al., 2024; Moffitt & Azarfar, 2021; Walter et al., 2024).

Third, we chose a maximum price of IDR 500,000 for each Instagram post. The price determination threshold is based on the results of preliminary research that the average price for a single upload by momfluencers in Indonesia is IDR 500,000.

Fourth, we limited the engagement rate of momfluencers as micro-influencers between 3% and 7%. Engagement rate indicates the high or low level of audience interaction with influencer content. The determination of this range referred to the previous findings, that the minimum engagement rate of Micro-influencers with good performance is in that range (Scott, 2024).

Fifth, we determined the marital status of women. This research selected influencers who were married and had toddlers. This selection was informed by the observation that being a mom influencer is a job currently trending among young mothers in developing countries such as India (Routh, 2023). In addition, mom influencers also highly dominate the influencer industry in many countries (Abeele et al., 2024; Chee et al., 2023; Wiley, 2018), including Indonesia. The decision to become a mom influencer is also based on women's desire to be empowered after marriage. Statistically, mom influencer is a popular job worldwide today, with more than 4.2 million people becoming mom influencers (Kevin, 2024).

We included these five criteria in an Indonesian influencer open platform called Sociobuzz. The Sociabuzz platform brings together clients with content creators, talents, and influencers in Indonesia, and it can be adjusted to the client's needs. SociaBuzz does branding as a marketplace for content creators and talents. This platform allows you to search for influencers, talents, and creative services.

Based on the results of the Sociobuzz search with these six criteria, we found 25

Table 1 Momfluencer Selection Results

Influencer	Area	Followers	Engagement Rate
A	Lampung	10.154	6.6%
B	Balikpapan	51.168	3.2%
C	Jakarta Selatan	20.243	5.0%
D	Bekasi	17.788	3.2%
E	Tangerang Selatan	75.381	4.6%
F	Pati	11.831	8.2%
G	Balikpapan	10.838	5.5%
H	Malang	16.030	5.7%
I	Cilegon	10.091	5.0%
J	Jakarta	15.532	7.6%
K	Kediri	45.100	5.2%
L	Candi	13.441	6.1%

Source: Research Results, 2024

momfluencers. To ensure that the filtered influencers met the criteria, we conducted a double-check. We removed momfluencers who were no longer active, and finally, 12 micro-influencers were selected (Table 1).

Coding: data was collected using a coding sheet by entering the predetermined coding criteria. This study used manual coding. Manual coding is perceived to perform a good validity and make it easier for the researchers to consider the context of text, images, and audiovisuals (Krippendorff, 1989).

We developed a code to guide technically visible content analysis and ethical assessment. Technically, there are several dimensions and indicators, identifying the upload identification dimension with commercial upload indicators or commercial captions. This first dimension identified commercial posts, both the clear commercial and hidden commercial. Second, we identified the upload format dimension with photo, video/reels, or carousel indicators. Third, we identified visual codes with influencer portraits, material objects, or setting indicators. Fourth, we identified textual codes with hashtags, brand tags, emojis, descriptions, personal tastes, or mood indicators. Finally, we identified momfluencer ethics. Table 2 explains

Table 2 Momfluencer Ethics Dimension Analysis Unit

Dimension	Indicator	Interpretation	Answer Category
Credibility	Expertise or credibility	Credibility is proven by professional background, career history, expertise in a field, and the influencer's capacity to present knowledge, information, and skills	No = 0 Yes = 1
	Trustworthiness	Trust is found in feedback from the audience and written/oral communication between the influencer and the audience	No = 0 Yes = 1
	Quality of content	The appearance of content quality is shown through technical communication (written, oral, and non-verbal) and strategic communication (scientific, emotional, and persuasive) in product testing/ reviews and personal branding promotions	No = 0 Yes = 1
	Loyalty	Loyalty is shown by influencers who are loyal to a brand for a certain period.	No = 0 Yes = 1
		Influencers show that they create promotional content by utilizing features on social media.	No = 0 Yes = 1
Engagement	Interaction with the audience	Interaction with the audience is related to expertise and credibility in presenting and communicating content; for example, managing effective communication with the audience conveys quality information and facilitates audience engagement.	No = 0 Yes = 1
	Appearance	Appearance is closely related to personal branding because influencers build not only physical appearance but also a memorable personality.	No = 0 Yes = 1
	Communication quality	Quality communication is interacting with the audience by responding to the audience's participatory actions verbally, non-verbally, visually, and in writing.	No = 0 Yes = 1
Connectivity	Participatory activities	Participatory activities are an important and organized part of the influencer's special role to engage the audience.	No = 0 Yes = 1
	Respect the audience	Respecting the audience is demonstrated through quality communication and participatory activities with the audience.	No = 0 Yes = 1
		The integrated management of various platforms demonstrates connectedness; the same product is promoted on various platforms in various forms.	No = 0 Yes = 1

Source: Research Results, 2024

the momfluencer ethics dimension analysis unit.

The sample of this study was selected using purposive sampling (Krippendorrf, 2019). Purposive sampling was employed to select all textual units that contributed to answering the research question. We identified 12 momfluencers posts from January to July 2024 (N=569). This period was chosen to get

representative results. At this stage, we used Excel to facilitate the coding process. The coding process took one month. After all, the researchers calculated the percentage and converted it into a diagram.

To maintain objectivity, the researchers were assisted by three coders selected based on several criteria: understanding commercial and non-commercial content, understanding influencer content, having an Instagram account, and understanding how Instagram works.

During the data collection process, the three coders were given a measuring tool as a coding sheet and instructions for filling in the code. The researchers met with all coders beforehand to share perceptions and discuss the instructions and units of analysis in the coding sheet.

Data Analysis: After all the data was successfully coded at the content analysis level, we analyzed the data given a similar code and created one central category for each pattern (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this way, the researchers identified patterns of momfluencers in displaying commercial and non-commercial content and ethical fulfillment.

We tested the results of inter-coding reliability using Krippendorff's alpha calculator, with a confidence interval of 95% and 200 iterations. Krippendorff's Alpha results showed content format (0.97), visual codes (0.85), textual codes (0.83), credibility dimension (0.83), engagement dimension (0.81), and connectivity dimension (0.81).

Based on the inter-coding reliability result, the level of agreement between coders was above 0.80. This value means a satisfactory level of agreement (Marzi et al., 2024). Krippendorff's Alpha equal to or above 0.80 is acceptable for drawing triangulated conclusions based on the rated data (Marzi et al., 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research identified the content format of momfluencers' posts (Figure 1a). Out of 569 posts, 56% were in videos or reels, followed by photos and carousels (22%) (Figure 1a). An interesting finding is that momfluencers upload single photos only for the outfit-of-the-day (OOTD) concept or to complete the Instagram

feed to improve the aesthetical look of their Instagram feeds.

In the visual codes of their posts (Figure 1b), from 569 posts, 80% were influencer portraits, followed by material objects (73%) and place (66%). In other words, the content is dominated by influencer portrait content or content that features a person.

Featuring a person in visual content is more important for influencers with fewer followers than those with more followers (Pozharliev et al., 2022; van der Harst & Angelopoulos, 2024). In practice, momfluencers are required to provide feedback to followers, create content with personal messages, and easy-to-understand language, and post visual content to increase their reach and ensure effective communication with their audience.

In textual codes (Figure 1c), we identified that 569 posts of momfluencers were dominated by descriptions (84%), emojis (55%), and brand tags (53%). Followed by the use of hashtags (51%), feelings (47%), and personal tastes (43%).

Based on the analysis results, the content patterns displayed can be divided into two categories: (1) influencers who upload more personal life content than commercial content; and (2) influencers who upload more commercial content than personal life content.

This study also identified several content patterns in their feeds for non-commercial or daily life posts. Daily posts displayed include displaying their self-portraits. These self-portraits are uploaded as outfit of the day (OOTD) content to their hobbies. Then, posts that display portraits of children, husbands, and family. In addition, some posts display togetherness with friends and colleagues.

For commercial posts, momfluencers display brands in a single photo, carousel video, or reel content according to their respective creativity. They typically display products with a closeup style even with the way it is used. Meanwhile, they still pay attention to the aesthetic elements. From 569 momfluencers' posts, 49% were commercial. In terms of captions, from 569 posts, 48% were commercial captions.

The most dominant upload concept for commercial content is using brands with supporting backgrounds indoors and outdoors.
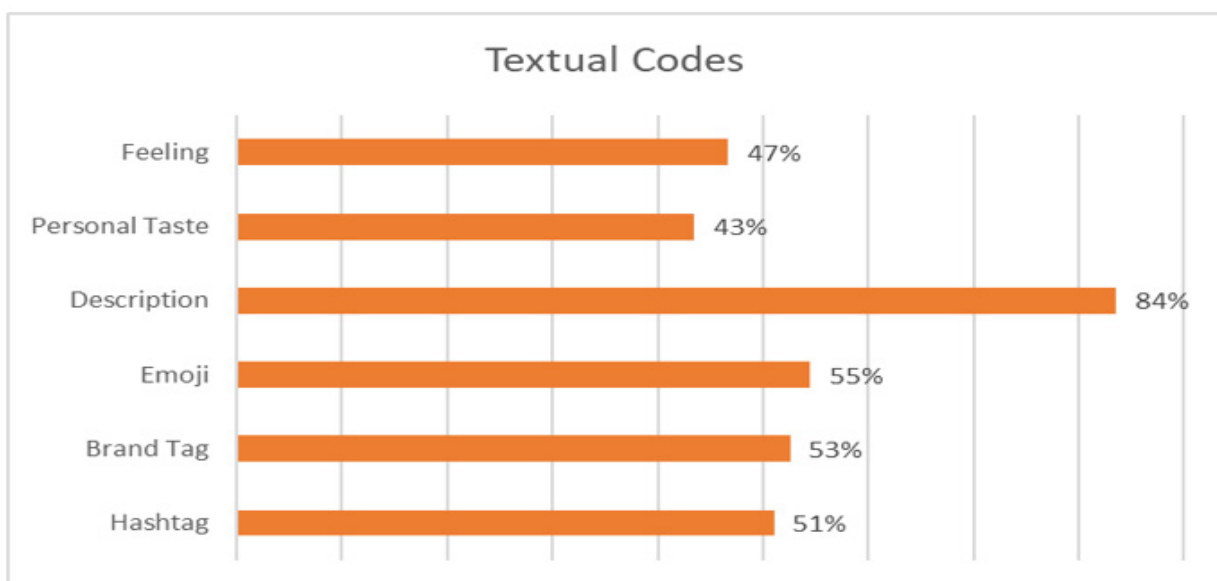
a

Content Format

b

Visual Codes

c
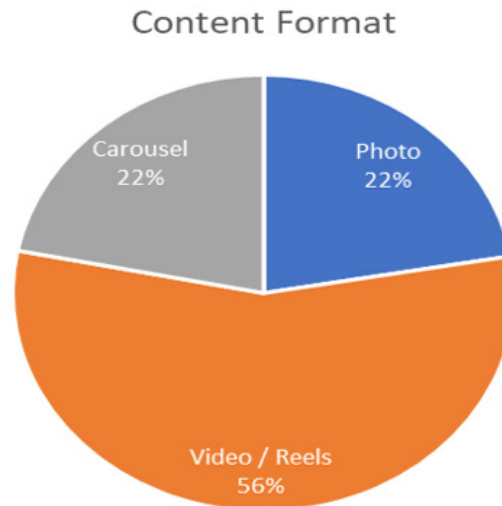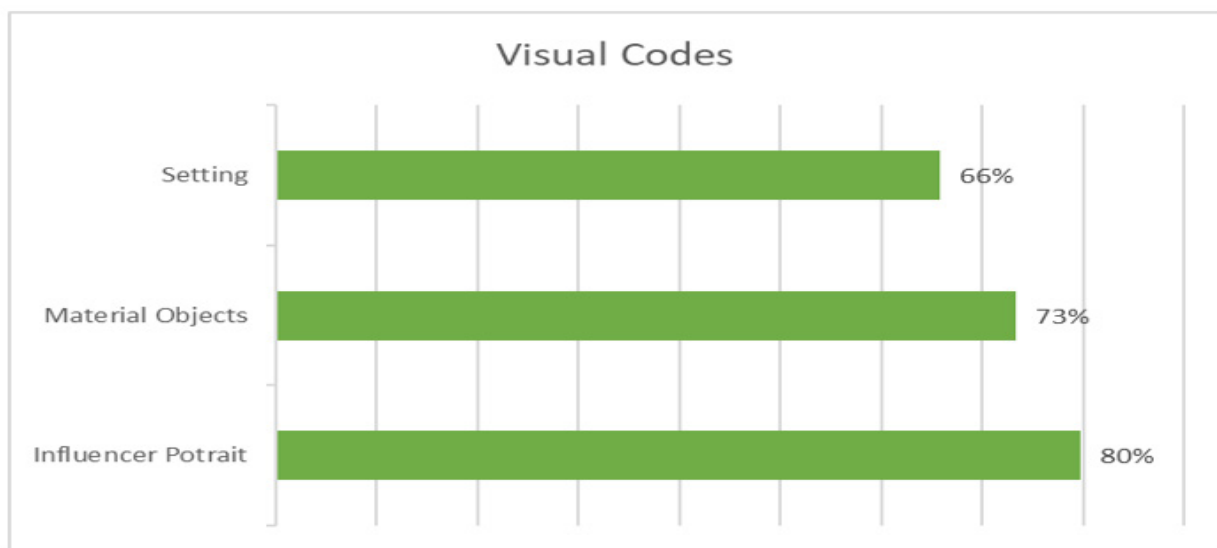
Textual Codes

Source: Research Result, 2024

Figure 1 Content Format (a), Visual Codes (b) and Textual Codes (c) of Momfluencer

Table 3 Analysis of Momfluencer Ethics

Dimension	Indicator	Yes	No	N
Credibility	Expertise/Credibility	84.3%	15.7%	569
	Trustworthiness	85.2%	14.8%	569
	Quality of Content	73.9%	26.1%	569
	Loyalty	8.7%	91.3%	569
	Social Responsibility	37.6%	62.4%	569
Engagement	Interaction with the Audience	48.0%	52.0%	569
	Appearance	76.3%	23.7%	569
	Quality of Communication	72.1%	27.9%	569
Connectivity	Participatory Activities	39.6%	60.4%	569
	Respect the Audience	47.6%	52.4%	569
	Connectedness	34.2%	65.8%	569

Source: Research Results, 2024

This commercial content is uploaded in everyday activities. Commercial elements can be easily identified because they utilize the brand tag feature in posts and captions. Some use collaboration features with brands who endorse them. Commercial content is visible in captions with descriptions, emojis, and hashtags. The momfluencers clearly state that the content is commercial, collaboration content with brands, or what is better known to the Indonesian public as endorsement content.

Regarding ethics, there are at least three dimensions they must meet such as credibility, engagement, and connectivity.

Based on the analysis's results (Table 3), the average micro-influencer had a value of 55.2, or only half of the 11 ethical indicators were successfully met. In detail, micro-influencers had above-average values for the indicators of trustworthiness (85.2%), expertise or credibility (84.3%), appearance (76.3%), quality of the content (73.9%), and quality of communication (72.1%).

From the 12 momfluencers, the content quality varied. Some looked professional, and some were very simple. For those who had other jobs, such as entrepreneurs, the content uploaded tends to be more professional.

The captions used by micro-influencers still follow the brief from influencer management. Influencer management also seems to brief personal opinions. Personal taste, touch, and opinion from momfluencers have not been found in their commercial posts. We found it by comparing how micro-influencers speak in verbal and written texts.

The fulfillment of trustworthy ethics is based on previous findings, which stated that micro-influencers are more trustworthy than other levels of micro-influencers (Borchers & Enke, 2022; Leung et al., 2022; Robinson, 2020; Sinkwitz, 2020). The quality of content and appearance has also met ethics because they display visuals dominated by influencer portraits. This is by previous findings that emotional expression in content can affect engagement (Mirowska & Arsenyan, 2023; van der Harst & Angelopoulos, 2024). Visuals will bring more engagement with social media content. It will be even more if some positive facial expressions are added (Araujo & Kollat, 2018).

Several ethical aspects are still below average (Table 3), including interaction with the audience (48%), respect for the audience (47.6%), participatory activities (39.6%), social responsibility (37.6%), connectedness (34.2%), and loyalty (8.7%).

Momfluencers still need more interaction with their audiences. The most obvious thing is the inquiry for more interaction in the comments section. Comments receive no attention. This lack of interaction also impacts the indicator of respecting the audience. The lack of interaction in the comments column indicates a lack of respect for the audience.

Even though the content is commercial with predetermined captions, momfluencers should interact with their followers, such as replying to comments or giving likes. The finding of a lack of interaction between micro-influencers and their followers is different from that of the previous research. Previous studies have found that micro-influencer content facilitates greater intimacy compared to other categories of influencers (Arnesson, 2024; Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Micro-influencers are effective in terms of engagement because they are close to their followers (Britt et al., 2020), which can be proven through likes and comments (Marques et al., 2021). Other studies also mention that micro-influencers benefit from relationships with their audiences (Casaló et al., 2020; Jun & Yi, 2020). Although micro-influencers have fewer followers and brand equity than other influencers, micro-influencers tend to be considered more trustworthy, relevant, and more engaged with their followers (Jun & Yi, 2020; Leung et al., 2022). Meanwhile, in this study, closeness to followers has yet to be seen. Momfluencers should reply to their followers in the comments column or, at least, give a like.

Another ethic that should be adhered to is the lack of participatory activities. Participatory activities are important for the influencers to engage the audience (Borchers & Enke, 2022). Participatory activities are not limited to only holding giveaways. They are also reflected in the invitations in the content and are visible in the caption.

Participatory activities should be one of the reasons for micro-influencers' high engagement. To create a good caption, there is a call-to-action formula so the audience does something after seeing the content. A call to action does not always invite followers to do something; asking for their opinions can also build the interaction micro-influencers need.

The next required ethical indicator is social responsibility. Social responsibility in this case is that momfluencers show that the content they create is promotional content by utilizing features on Instagram (Borchers & Enke, 2022).

The researchers can easily distinguish the clear and the hidden commercial content because there is a brand tag in the upload. Although there is a brand tag, it does not always mean commercial content; overall, posts from micro-influencers can be categorized as commercial content.

This study found that commercial content dominates the variety of micro-influencer posts. Various brands adorn the micro-influencer account posts. This differs from previous findings, which argued that micro-influencers content is less commercial (Cheung et al., 2022; Holiday et al., 2021; Jun & Yi, 2020; Khamis et al., 2017; Leite & Baptista, 2022; Ren et al., 2023).

Micro-influencers are considered close to their followers because they position themselves not as influencers but as ordinary people; thus, what they convey is more persuasive (Kay et al., 2020). Another finding states that their recommendations appear more authentic than those of macro-influencers (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

This study found that 49% of micro-influencers posts were commercial content. These micro-influencers promote various brands, ranging from beauty brands to brands related to children and traveling. They also use brand tags in their posts and utilize the collaboration post feature. Thus, micro-influencers in Indonesia have developed.

This study also found variations of commercial and non-commercial content. It found that micro-influencers have the freedom to create audiovisual and visual content but do not seem to have the freedom to be creative in captions. The researchers found this when comparing the style of speaking in commercial captions with non-commercial captions.

This differs from the previous studies, which stated that micro-influencers allow for more soft-selling commercial content to their followers (Hogsnes et al., 2024). This soft-selling is possible because it can be integrated with their lifestyle (Park et al., 2021). Unfortunately, this study found that micro-influencers are not yet aware of their positioning in front of the audience. Some micro-influencers do not show their daily lives, and their accounts are dominated by commercial posts. This finding contrasts with that of the previous research that micro-influencers commercial posts are similar to their followers' daily lives with short titles and limited information about brands or products.

Today's content of the momfluencers is

mostly commercial. It is promotional content, both from the audiovisual display and the caption. This finding agrees with research by Mahn et al. (2024) that hard selling has a positive impact on the audience (Mahn et al., 2024).

The brands promoted by momfluencers come from various industries. As micro-influencers and women, the brands promoted include fashion, hijab, beauty, tourism, food, beverages, fitness, health, and transportation. As a momfluencer, they promote household appliances and children's needs brands. Even they are also political buzzers for a political party regarding the 2024 General Election.

The promoted brands are relatively small brands such as MSMEs and start-ups that are well-known in the town. However, it does not rule out the possibility that micro-influencers are also effective in promoting luxury brands. Other studies have found that micro-influencers significantly influence the sales of luxury brands, such as technology products, cars, banking, and jewelry. This is due to the motive of affirming one's identity and values (Chen et al., 2024).

Some content falls into the ambiguous realm, such as momfluencers being in a cafe and then tagging the cafe. In addition, some like to exercise at the gym, they tag the gym account. However, the caption only contains emoticons. Some momfluencers upload outfit-of-the-day (OOTD) content and tag brands, but no captions exist.

The researchers understand this is a part of their efforts to do soft selling. However, this needs to be a concern for the brand and management to provide clear guidelines for the influencers. If the influencer does not clearly state that this content is promotional, this violates ethics because the influencer can be considered dishonest.

The findings in this study align with previous studies, that influencers' followers feel disadvantaged when the disclosure of promotional content is not explicit. Meanwhile, when the brand is promoted by momfluencers openly, both textually and visually, it responds more positively because it reduces manipulative intentions (Holiday et al., 2021). Honesty related to the authenticity of momfluencers goes hand in hand. This ethic must be met when producing sponsored content. This authenticity

ethic is based on the principle "be honest with yourself and your audience" (Kapitan et al., 2022; Taylor, 1992; Wang & Weng, 2024; Zniva et al., 2023).

The next ethic that failed to adhere to is connectedness. Connectedness, in this case, can be understood by managing various platforms in an integrated manner. This study found connectedness only with brand tags on the content and captions. Several influencers brand themselves as fashion influencers by directing them to their Instagram Stories. However, many of them have built an integrated link on their Instagram profile. Building an integrated link will make followers easier to learn more about the product (Borchers & Enke, 2022). Ultimately, it will increase interest in buying the product. An increase in sales will also have an impact on their credibility (Andonopoulos et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2023).

Finally, loyalty is the most violated influencer ethic. Loyalty is shown by influencers loyal to a brand for a certain period (Borchers & Enke, 2022). It is very low because micro-influencers have many variations related to brand collaboration. It is because micro-influencers are part of influencer management. Consequently, they do not have the right to sort and choose brands.

Loyalty has not been successfully displayed by momfluencers. It is because in one month, they can promote various brands but only the same type of product and the same industry. For example, the first week promoted children's playground X. The following week promoted children's playground Y with a similar content concept. Some influencers promote Beauty Clinic A in the first week, and two weeks later, promote Beauty Clinic B with almost similar content.

The researchers realize that the loyalty indicator is the most difficult to assess because they are members of influencer management. Assessing loyalty becomes difficult because they obey policies. They do not have the freedom to reject a brief if management has signed a contract with a brand. Unlike independent influencers, they have full authority to decide whether to work with a brand.

Loyalty is complex. When they are members of the management, the management should be the gatekeeper. The management must be

Source: Research Result, 2024

Figure 2 Examples of momfluencer commercial content which includes sharenting content (a); sharenting commercial content, which potentially violates the daughter's privacy for showing the daughter's face in close up (b)

more professional in determining positioning. In addition, it is also necessary to realize that the positioning also affects the credibility of the influencers under their auspices. By determining positioning, they should be able to select incoming collaboration offers firmly.

This study found another potential violation of influencer ethics that only occurs in influencers who join influencer management, which is engagement bias. Engagement bias happens when fellow influencers boost likes and comments in one management under the pretext that this practice is carried out to support fellow influencers. We concluded that this bias resulted in low engagement. Instagram-like is one of the key performance indicators brands use to measure audience engagement on Instagram (Susilawaty et al., 2023). This finding is in line with previous research that social media micro-influencers have less influence (Abidin, 2016).

The engagement bias caused by followers of micro-influencers who are also members of one management damages the credibility of micro-influencers and influencer management. What is considered good is that the influencers in one management support each other through likes and comments, which can be interpreted

as manipulation and lies when associated with ethics. This is because engagement is not obtained organically but rather with a boost from the management itself. Brands need to be careful about this engagement bias by not making engagement the only indicator of success in using influencers.

Another potential violation of influencer ethics is the phenomenon of sharenting, which shares childcare on social media (Figure 2a). Sharenting is complex in digital security because it is related to children's privacy (Figure 2b).

When parents become influencers, they inevitably have to create content about their children because it relates to authentic elements (Jorge et al., 2022). Although they are consciously concerned about the risks to children's digital security (Van den Abeele et al., 2024). The sharenting phenomenon has made academics and policymakers concerned because of the regulation and monetization and involves sharing children's personal information online (Beuckels et al., 2024). Even, some viewers argue that there is a lack of moral integrity from momfluencers if they do sharenting (Vizcaíno-Verdú et al., 2023).

The findings in this study that should be
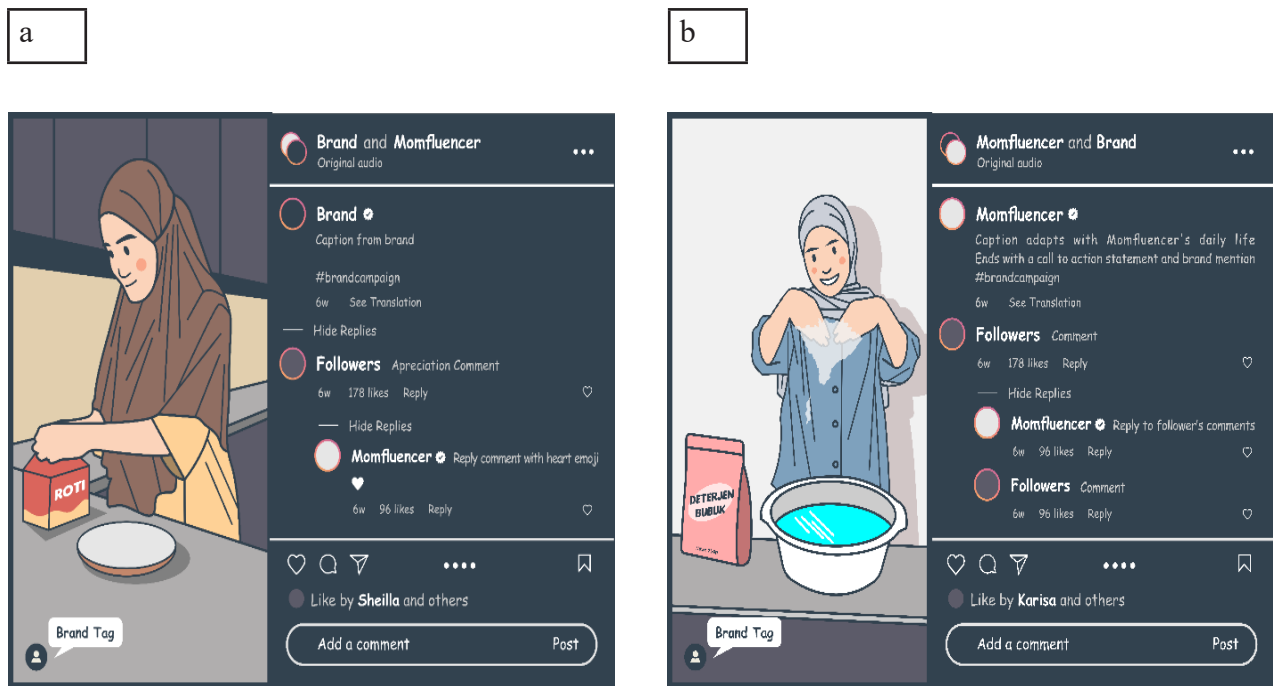
Source: Research Result, 2024

Figure 3 Examples of momfluencers' commercial content in reel format that comply overall influencer ethics: caption from the brand (a); caption adapt to momfluencer's daily life (b)

of concern are the presence of content from momfluencers who deliberately express sadness by showing accidents experienced by children. This disaster content is not created in one content but several, from the chronology of the accident to the wound care.

This content gets the highest engagement compared to other content. This type of content is in a gray area being debated among academics and practitioners. Research states that content that displays sadness, happiness, shock, or fear affects follower engagement (van der Harst & Angelopoulos, 2024). However, there is also research that does not recommend influencers express disgust in content (Araujo & Kollat, 2018).

Momfluencers will continue to be associated with content that intersects with health, like childcare, medicine, and food to beauty clinics. Other, stricter ethics must be met in creating content related to health. For example, momfluencer should use a trigger warning for wound care or blur something that makes the audience uncomfortable. Likewise, when promoting a beauty clinic, they should not display the moment when an injection is given.

Micro-influencers attract more targeted audience, so brands can choose more appropriate micro-influencers whose followers reflect the brand's target audience (Britt et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2024; Conde & Casais, 2023; Moffitt & Azarfar, 2021; Walter et al., 2024). In addition, working with micro-influencers is more affordable for new or small brands, making micro-influencers attractive to these brands. The advantage of micro-influencers is positioning themselves according to their unique selling points. Thus, brands can rely on micro-influencers to target specific audiences that suit the brand's desires (Khamis et al., 2017).

Collaborating with micro-influencers can be likened to brands choosing the right media. According to Daft and Lengel's Media Richness Theory (MRT) (1986), media richness explains media usage and effectiveness. Media richness is determined by the number of channels used simultaneously, feedback capabilities, personality, and use of natural language (Daft et al., 1986; Daft & Lengel, 1984, 1986).

Another characteristic of micro-influencers is that they can interact with their audiences more personally than influencers with more followers (Dessart, 2017; Dolan et al., 2019). The more followers an influencer has, the more

difficult it is for the influencer to interact with their audience personally (Arnesson, 2024; Jun & Yi, 2020; Leite & Baptista, 2022; Lou, 2022; Y. Zhang & Mac, 2023).

To end the discussion, we illustrate influencers' content as a true micro-influencer. Figure 2a depicts momfluencers' commercial content in a reel that meets all influencer ethics, starting from credibility, engagement, and connectivity. We illustrate that this confluence collaborates with a white-bread brand (Figure 3a).

Credibility ethics are adhered to by this momfluencer, who creates content that shows her daily life as a mother preparing breakfast for her family. The caption is the default in the caption section and must follow the brand's instructions. The caption is equipped with the hashtag of the brand campaign #brandcampaign.

Engagement ethics are adhered to by continuing to interact with followers through the comments column, either by replying to the comments column or giving likes to comments. Connectivity ethics are adhered to by using brand tags on content and collaboration features.

Figure 3b illustrates momfluencers' content that complies with all ethics starting from credibility, engagement, and connectivity. Figure 3b illustrates that the momfluencers are doing daily activities, washing clothes.

Credibility ethics are adhered to with content quality, the content adapted to the daily lives of momfluencers. Captions are adapted to their communication style. The captions adapt to their daily life. They end with a call to action statement, brand mention, and hashtag name of the campaign #brandcampaign.

Engagement ethics are followed by enlivening the comments column and actively responding to followers. In addition, they are giving likes to followers' comments. Connectivity ethics are adhered to by utilizing collaboration features with brands, doing brand tags, and making brand mentions in captions.

CONCLUSION

Ethically, momfluencers have not adhered to the ethics expected. The aspects they have failed to meet are interaction with the audience, respect, participatory activities, social responsibility, connectedness, and loyalty. Meanwhile, the aspects they have fulfilled are trustworthiness, expertise or credibility, appearance, content quality, and communication quality. This study also found two potential ethics violations by the momfluencers, which are engagement bias and sharenting.

This research has implications for brand practitioners, influencer management, and social media influencers. For brand practitioners, it is better to independently check followers, influencer content quality, management quality, and influencer quality. In some cases, fake influencers claim to be influential but fail to meet the expected results because they buy followers and likes. Even those affiliated with influencer management also boost the comments and likes column with fellow influencers of the same influencer management.

Besides, momfluencers may have their own rules, such as not accepting collaboration with brands they do not like or not being tied to the brief given by the brand. Also, they may not upload content too often. Brands need to conduct preliminary research on their content performance, so they can determine the relevant content for brand wants. Further, influencer management should inform and ensure that influencers under their management comply with certain ethics. The goal of mothers to become momfluencers is good; they want to remain financially empowered while being at home. Therefore, management needs to direct momfluencers to follow the ethics. In Indonesia, there are no regulations governing influencer practices and no code of ethics related to influencers. Management can find an intersection between the code of ethics of public relations, advertising, and journalism. At the very least, management provides training on social media, using credible media for content creation, creating good content, and processing material for social media.

This study can be used as an illustration of influencer practices in Indonesia so that policymakers can pay more attention to the influencer industry in Indonesia. This study is expected to strengthen policymakers' ability to formulate regulations for influencers in Indonesia because micro-influencer practice extends public relations and is directly related to the audience.

This study focuses only on Instagram posts on feeds and reels. It does not cover Instagram stories, which could be an idea for further research. Also, further research can study other social media, such as TikTok.

Besides, only momfluencers are included in the Indonesia micro-influencer category. Data is collected from an open-source influencer service provider. This study also has not involved momfluencers at other influencer levels. There is no definitive data on influencer management and influencers in Indonesia. Even influencers and influencer management data still have to be searched manually because the government does not yet have official data related to this service. Further research is expected to examine influencers at other levels, such as nano, macro, and mega.

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