

# Families Behind the Filter: How Social Media Influences Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of Parenthood

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## Abstract

Social media is an influential and informational tool that has gained immense prevalence, particularly among youth and adolescents. On many social media platforms, parenthood has become a popular topic and highlights the lived experience of parents. This study explores how social media impacts undergraduate students' perceptions and attitudes towards parenthood. We seek to uncover the dominant messaging and themes surrounding parenthood on social media and explore the extent to which undergraduate students conform to online opinions. Previous research has yet to examine the relationship between social media and attitudes towards parenthood. In addition, very few studies have looked at how undergraduate students conceptualize parenthood in this digital age. We conducted an online anonymous survey via the LimeSurvey platform using both open-ended and closed-ended questions. This research is qualitative in nature as it concerns undergraduate students' experiences on social media and their personal views and opinions. This is an ongoing research study, but has been reviewed and approved by the McMaster Research Ethics Board. We anticipate gaining significant insight into how undergraduate students view and prioritize parenthood in their lives. Using social comparison theory and social learning theory, we will analyze social media habits in relation to attitudes towards parenthood. Our findings will allow us to compare current perceptions of parenthood to traditional and conservative attitudes that are historically accurate. In addition, we predict that undergraduate students' attitudes towards parenthood will reflect the global trends of postponing parenthood and declining birth rates. Overall, our study may emphasize the role that social media plays in our everyday lives and the impact it can have on our life choices and personal attitudes.

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