

Pre-teens on Social Media.

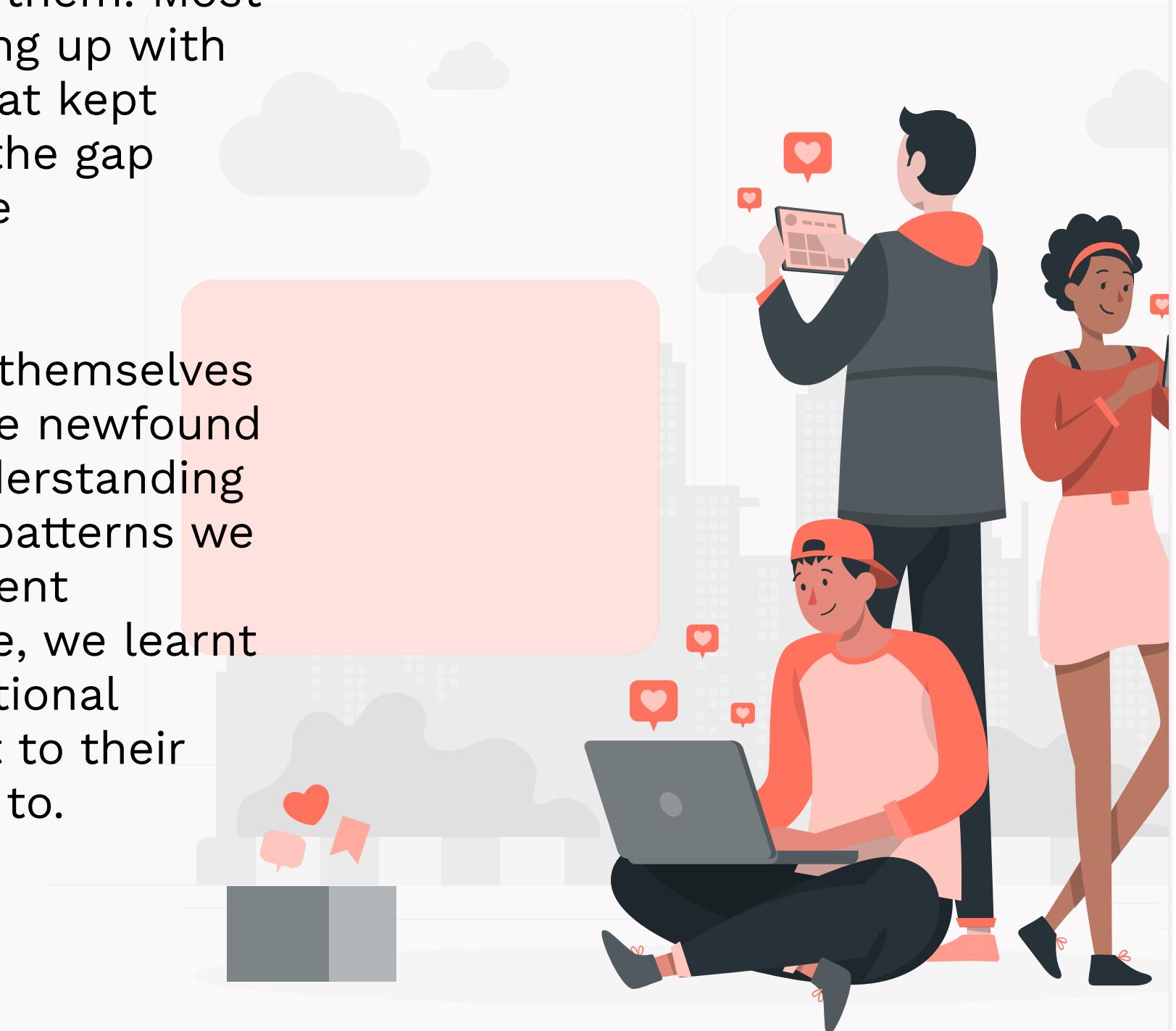
An Ethnographic study by : Harpreet Jaggi, Isha Mhatre, Kaashvi Garg, Tulsi Bhaiya, Vrushika Bhansali

Overview.

Social Media has become an important part of our daily lives. Every platform has thousands of people employed to make sure this online space is fun and safe for their users. Nearly all social networking sites only allow users aged 13 and above. But getting around these guidelines is not that difficult. According to a [report](#), 46% of 11-year-olds, 51% of 12-year-olds and 28% of 10-year-olds now have a social media handle. We interviewed 15 kids, under/at the age of 13 who had used any form of social media and 10 parents to get a better perspective. Most of the kids as well as their parents had given us consent for recording their interviews.

Instagram seemed to be the most popular platform among them. Most of the kids joined social media because of pressure of keeping up with the trend to stay relevant. We tried understanding as to what kept them hooked to these platforms that they couldn't realize the gap between how much they thought they interacted with these applications and how much they actually did.

This study intended to dig into the minds of what they call themselves 'Gen Alpha' and their parents, struggling to cope up with the newfound antics their kids present them with. Our tasks included understanding and perceiving things the way they do, and summarize the patterns we discovered along the way. From observing various child-parent relationships to the implication of social media on the same, we learnt that these platforms eventually gained more power than rational thinking and made both parties take decisions with respect to their immediate surroundings instead of doing what they wished to.



Participants

1. Kids

We collected primary data to understand how prominent the role of social media plays in lives of pre-teens. After reviewing the current literature available, we drafted one questionnaire for pre-teens and another for parents. We conducted remote interviews over video calls with the users. 15 pre-teens were interviewed and 10 parents. The calls were recorded with the consent of the participants.

Name	Age	Whatsapp	Snapchat	Instagram	Other
Harleen	13	●	●	●	-
Sana	11		●	●	Youtube
Risha	11		●	●	-
Divleen	10			●	-
Katha	12	●	●	●	-
Jheel	13		●	●	Youtube

Participants

1.Kids

Name	Age	Whatsapp	Snapchat	Instagram	Notes
Ajuni	9			●	-
Aanchal	12			●	Youtube
Disha	13		●	●	Youtube
Palash	10		●		-
Prisha	13	●	●	●	-
Vedant	9		●		Youtube
Jheeya	13		●	●	Youtube
Aashu	08		●		-
Diva	09		●		-

Participants

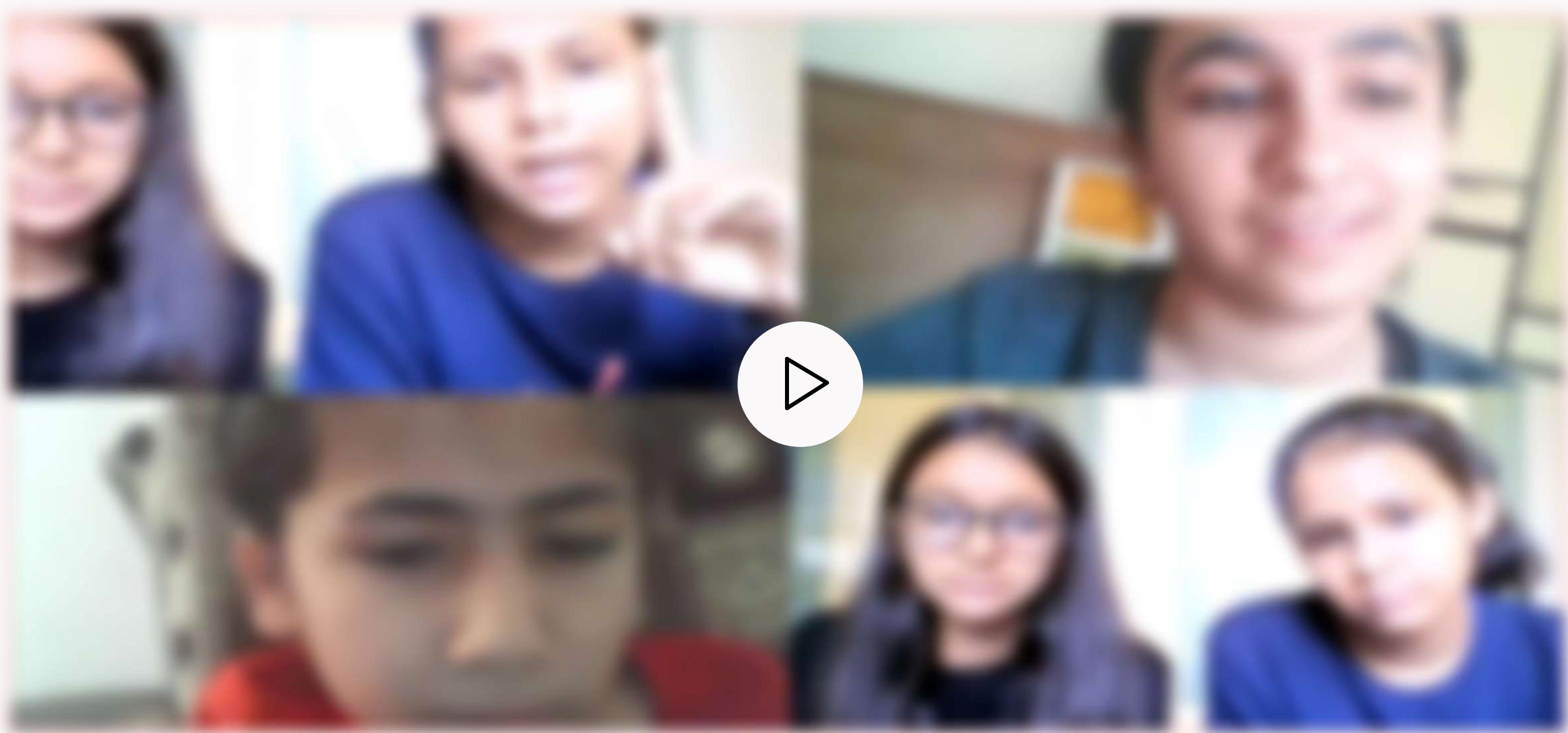
2. Parents

Name	Age	Whatsapp	Snapchat	Instagram	Other
Ramila	40	●	●	●	Facebook
Perminder	42	●		●	Facebook
Sona	36	●			-
Sandeep	48	●			Facebook
Yojna	49	●			-
Tejinder	47	●		●	Facebook, LinkedIN, Twitter
Sonali	42	●			-
Era	34	●	●	●	Facebook
Gagan	36	●		●	Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn
Vickram	32	●	●	●	Facebook

Video Compilation

User study

We spoke to kids under 13 and compiled our journey.
[Click here to view a short video.](#)



Underlying themes

1. Security

The kids were aware enough to have private or closed profiles as they didn't like strangers seeing their shared photographs and videos. But ironically accepted requests from strangers, every once in a while, as it increased their follower count though messages from these strangers weren't appreciated.

All social media platforms have pages and pages of Terms & Conditions that inform the users of their rights and protect them which doesn't necessarily mean protect the preteens on social media. 80% of the users believe that making their account private will ensure 100% privacy.

Parents are not aware of the privacy policies or user's right either but they are aware of how scary this digital platform can be so they want to protect their kids. But in this era, social media and internet is bread and butter. They cannot restrict their kids from joining these platforms. Some parents could see how social media has been truly useful especially in the pandemic to the kids while other just considered it a waste of time for the preteens.



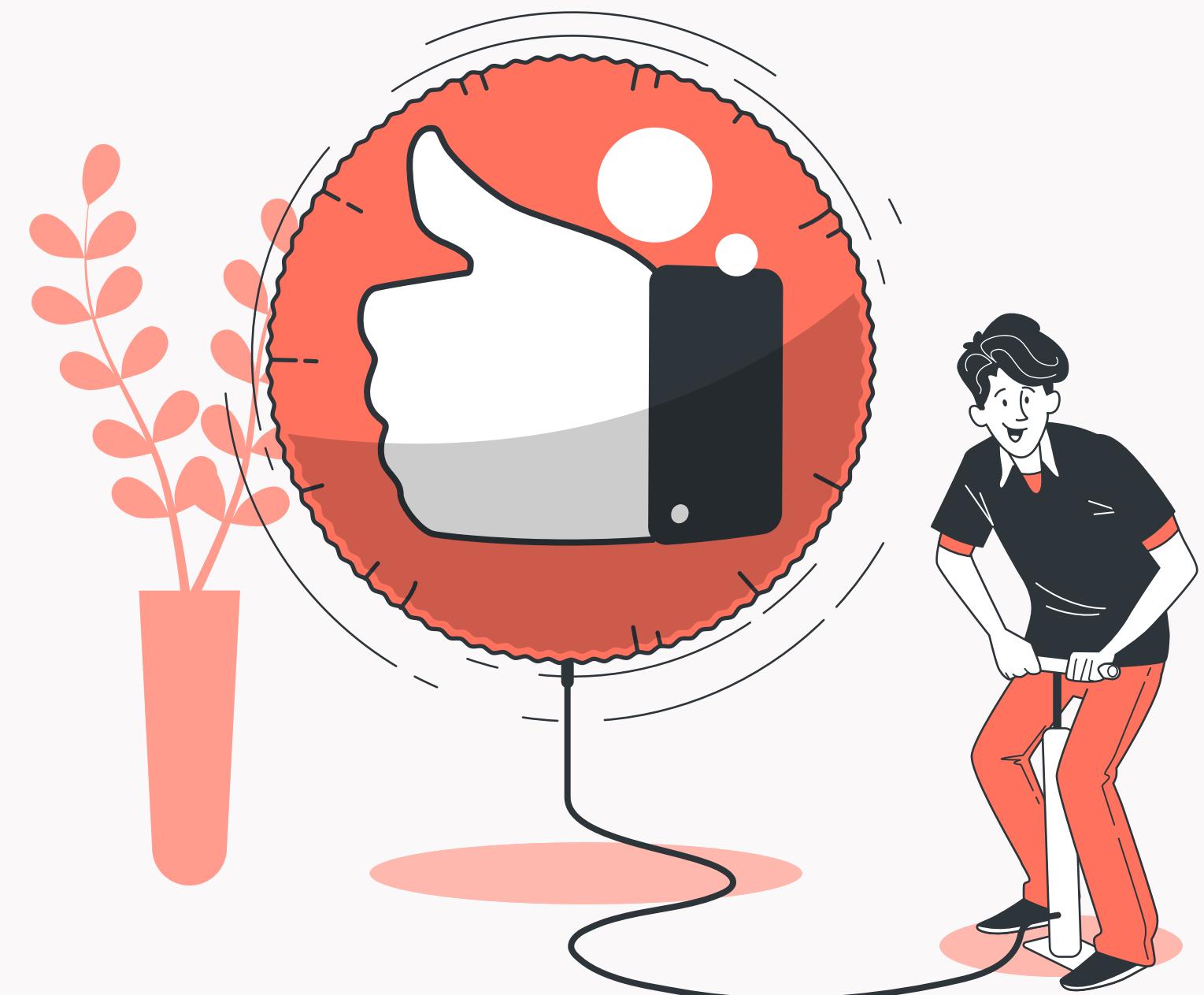
Underlying themes

2. Social Anxiety

60% of the kids posted once a month because that is “the cool”. You will be labelled as “desperate for attention” or “jobless” if you post too often. The post has to be “relevant” and they should look “beautiful”.

Augmented facial features by these filters are preferred over natural faces. It might not be a big deal for adults but when an 8-year-old says her cheeks are too chubby, you know this is a big deal. Social media is filled with campaigns of #feminism #stopracism #bodypositivity #alllivesmatter, but their brains are too young to understand these concepts. Needless to say, the number of likes, comments, followers effected them. 27.25% of them claimed that they would delete a post if it didn't get their expected number of likes and comments.

Since it is hard to pinpoint one single factor as the rootcause, it is difficult to eliminate the cause. Parents are concerned but they don't know how to help the situation.



Underlying themes

3.Exposure and Learning

The definition of learning ended at textbook explanations for the parents, but not the children. There were incidences where the kids accepted that they learned a lot about their ‘interests’ through these platforms, which went beyond their parents understanding. Only 7% of the parents agreed to these social media applications being a learning platform, as they assumed that their kids use it for the same reason as them: passing time.

The kids on the other hand were comfortable counting their time spent on these applications as productive. They mentioned, exploring more about their desired product or interest is them learning in a way. This was where the parent’s views clashed a lot with their children. There was this feeling of helplessness from both sides, trying to explain their perspective to each other.

Parents, the ones who used these platforms, even the ones who didn’t agree on social media being their kid’s step out of the bubble they created for them. As the parents who were aware about what takes place on these platforms disagreed exposing their child to the fake reality, the rest, who were unaware chose to keep their children away as they were scared as to what they might come across, even if their child is walking on his/her own path, they couldn’t bring themselves to trust other people who might influence their children into something disgracing their ethics.

Behavioral Archetypes

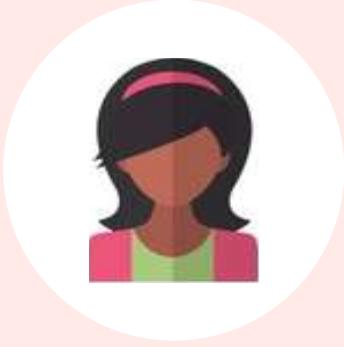
1. Kids

LEARNERS



Creative

We learn art, craft and dance through social media



Explorer

We like to explore & follow influencers, bloggers & other personalities

OVERTHINKERS



Hesitant

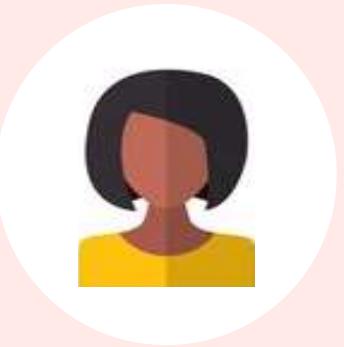
We prefer asking someone about their opinion on our post before we upload it



Judgemental

Likes & comments matter to us. We want to look beautiful on social media

NATURE



Ignorant

We usually ignore strangers & sometimes block them too



Naive

We have a private account thus, we are safe

INSTAGRAM LOVERS



Addict

Can't imagine life without social media



Social

A very convenient way to communicate & know about each other's lives

Underlying themes

2. Parents



Unaware

We are not active on social media platforms so we don't really know how it works.



Society kya bolegi

Society should not interpret our kids in a wrong way so we make sure our kids do not post anything inappropriate.



Confident

Our kids have a private account so we think its safe. They only chat within their friend circle so it's cool.



Observant

We keep ourselves on track when it comes to our kids' lives on such platforms.

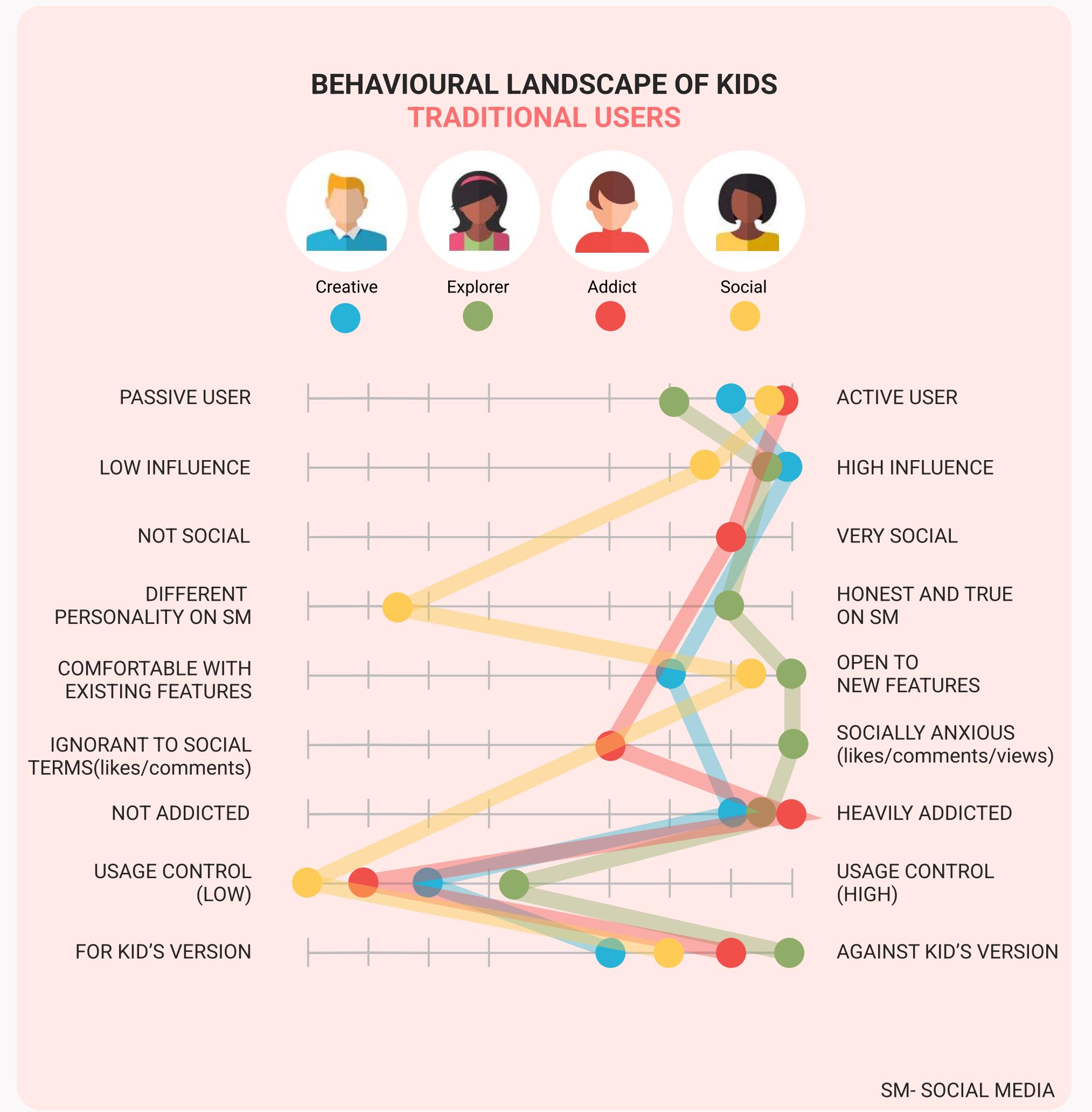


Realist

We understand that we cannot stop our kids because they do what they see. What we can do is brief them about the subject.

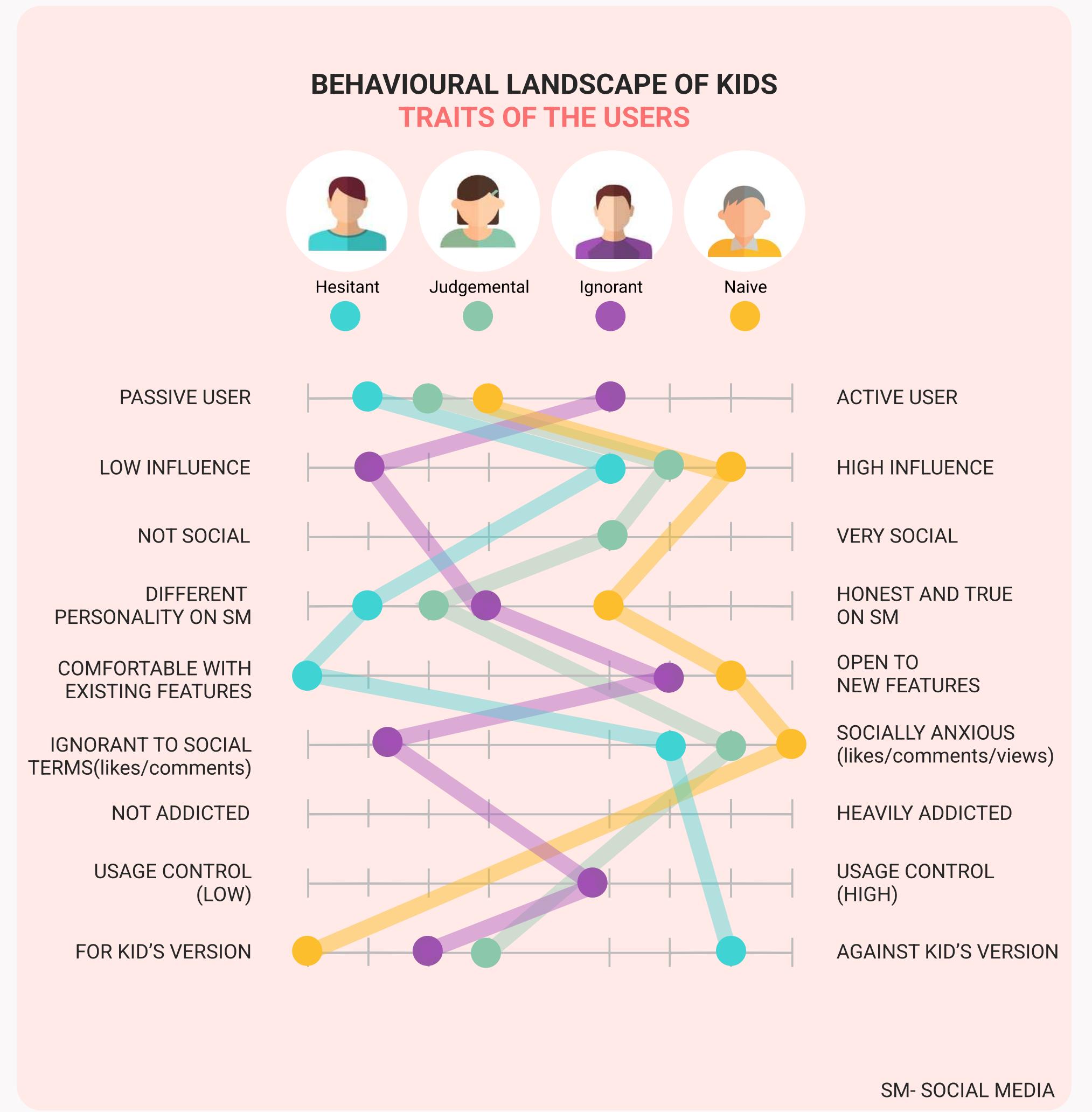
Behavioral Landscape

1. Kids



Behavioral Landscape

1. Kids

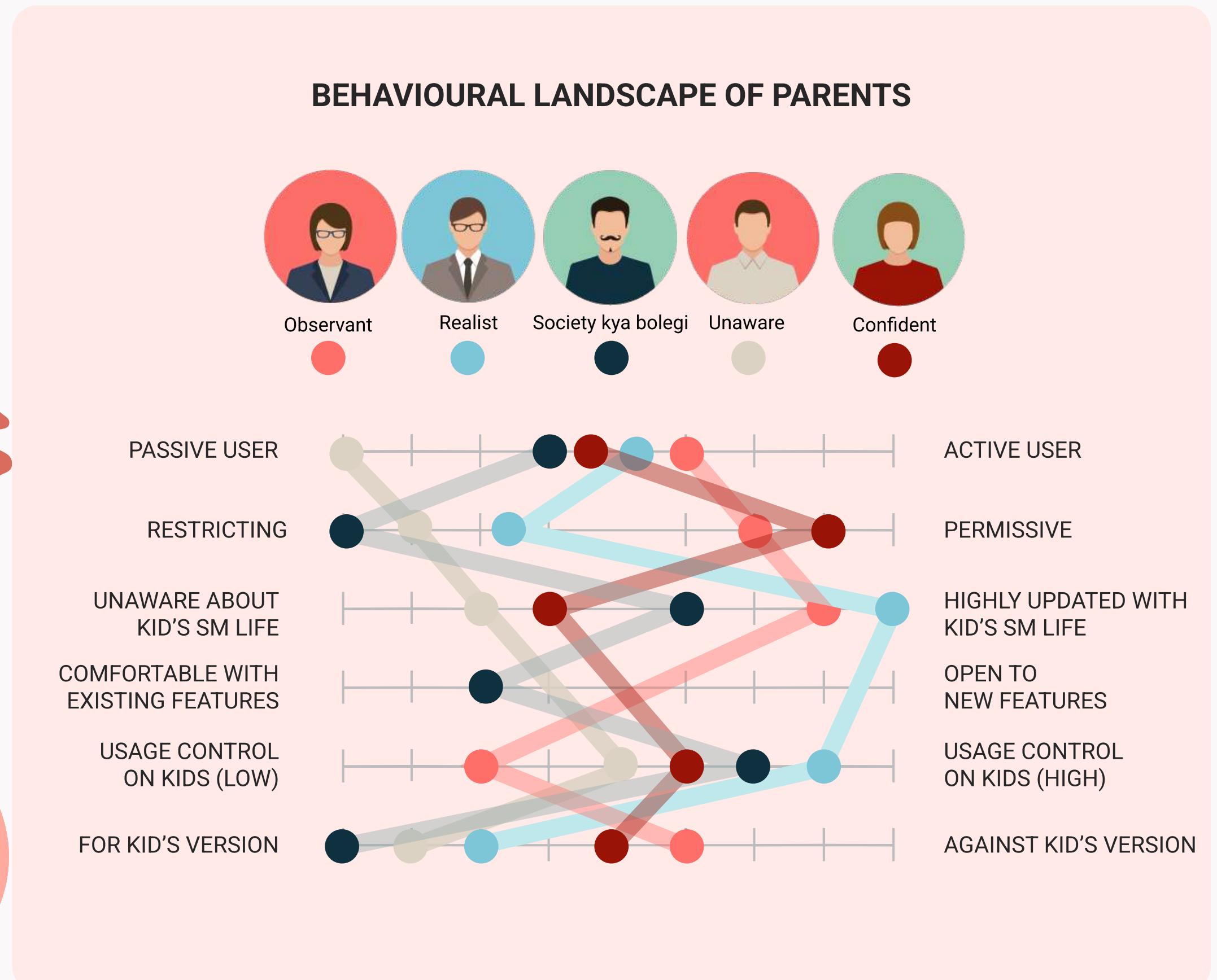


Behavioral Landscape

2. Parents



kaashvi ko puch na



Design Implications/ Potential Research topics

1. Awareness about social media policies and terms & conditions amongst parents and their kids

Social media, a fun and exciting platform provides an easy and convenient way to connect with each other, be updated about the latest trends and access educational content but seldom do we think about the privacy policies and terms & conditions we agree to when we create an account on these platforms. Very few people actually know about where and how our personal data like our name, email address, contact details is being used. This increasing number of actions in online services gives a rise to privacy concerns and risks about the safety and behaviour of pre-teens and teens online.

While behaviour, ethics and online time management of pre-teens and teens are subjective and vary with the beliefs, practices and opinions of the parents vis-à-vis kids, privacy and safety are more objective topics and should be focused on in today's world.

Design Implications/ Potential Research topics

2. Social media : a learning platform?

Social media platforms has been used for educational purposes. With its strong emphasis on visual content, it is gaining attraction as one of the most aesthetic platforms to look into for a daily dose of inspiration. Instagram is a bit distracting, and the scope of its features is limited. Unlike Tweets, IG posts cannot spread like a wildfire and get to the top search results. Students can use Instagram to exchange all types of multimedia content, can maintain a group of network that can share information on a variety of topics.

Useful knowledge that you can use in conversations and to help inspire your curiosity. Instagram is the ideal mobile app to combine visual inspiration and learning in a way that dramatically increases the amount of novelty, unpredictability and complexity in your daily information diet.

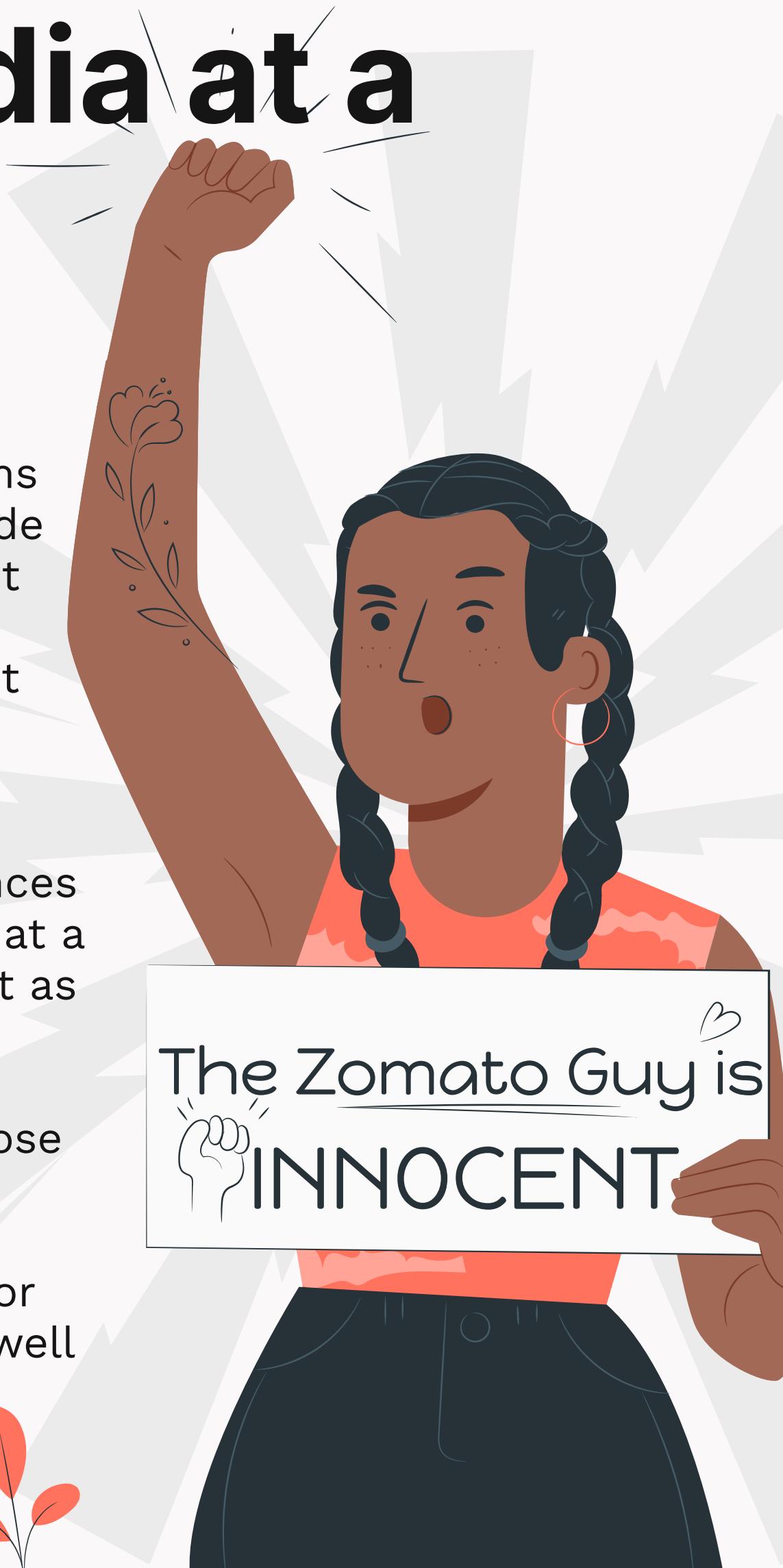
Design Implications/ Potential Research topics

3. Exposure to social media at a younger age

The legal age to join social media platforms is 13 years but many curious pre-teens manage to fake their age to create an account on these platforms illegally because they are “bored” or want to “fit in”. Social media can provide an excellent way to connect with your friends and family, be updated about the trends, learn new things and a lot more. At the same time, it may also make young people to get so comfortable talking online that they might get uncomfortable to interact organically, in real life. Children need to interact directly with the world around them.

Real interaction helps children develop a well-rounded worldview. It enhances real social skills and levels of confidence. Being a social media personality at a young age provides adolescents with a false sense of popularity. This is not as healthy as having a real social life.

Another very important point to be considered being social media can expose kids to various things they might not even be prepared or aware of like inappropriate content; lack of understanding of online privacy issues; and outside influences of third-party advertising groups. Thus, it is important for parents to be aware of such things and make their kids aware of them as well when they wish to join such platforms.



Design Implications/ Potential Research topics

4. Social Anxiety- Emotional and behavioral changes in kids due to social media

Social anxiety is one's state of avoiding social interactions and appearing inhibited in such interactions with other people. Susceptibility to peer pressure kids are at risk as they navigate and experiment with social media being unaware of the consequences. The more time children spent on social media, the less time they spent with their families.

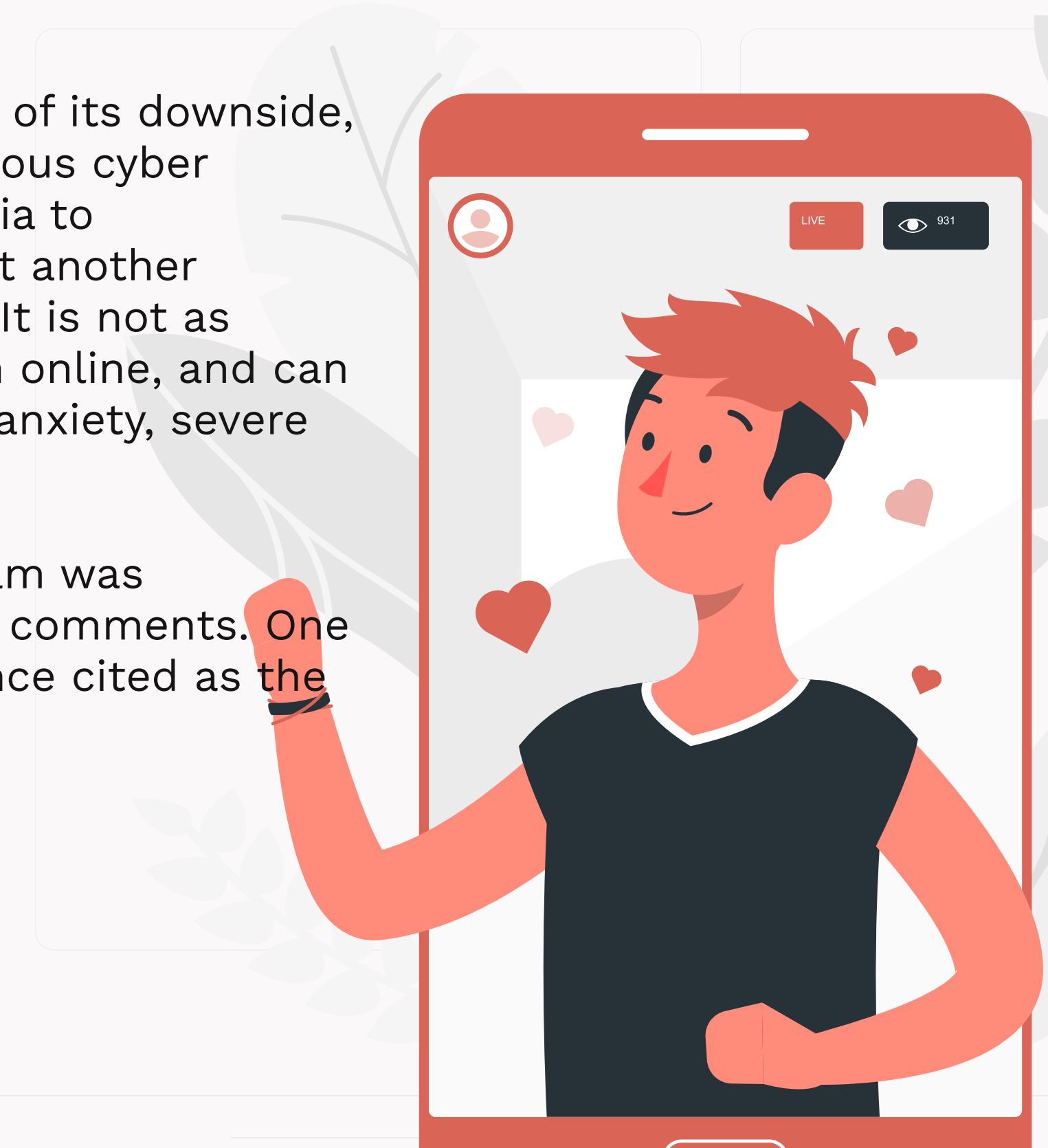
Online harassment and bullying system make them sad, nervous, afraid and unable to focus at school, and that it will expose them to social difficulties. They might also encouraged children to use drugs, alcohol, procure eating disorders, and misbehave in friends and family. Experiencing feelings of anxiety and depression can lead to more negative behavior. Problems include internet addiction and concurrent sleep deprivation, themselves not being able to find a way out of it. Internet can be a positive influence on children if parents and other adults get involved when children gain access, But it can be hard to pick the good from the bad when it comes to media. There are many negative messages about media and how viewing and interacting with it might harm the child as kids are vulnerable. Children can benefit from media depending how efficiently they use it.

Design Implications/ Potential Research topics

5. Protection against cyber crimes for young instagram users

With the increasing use of social media and lack of awareness of its downside, it is important for parents to make their children aware of various cyber crimes that may harm them. Cyberbullying is using social media to communicate false, embarrassing, or hostile information about another person. It is the most common online risk for all young users. It is not as common as offline bullying but can occur to any young person online, and can cause profound psychosocial outcomes including depression, anxiety, severe isolation, and, tragically, suicide.

A BBC study states that Instagram tops cyberbullying. Instagram was highlighted as having become the vehicle most used for mean comments. One in three said they lived in fear of cyber-bullying, with appearance cited as the most likely topic for abuse.



Thank you

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