



Instagram Reels and Ethical Muteness Among University Students

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between Instagram Reels and ethical muteness among university students in Lahore, Pakistan. Using a constructivist paradigm and drawing on the spiral of silence and uses and gratification theory, data was collected from 250 students via a structured questionnaire. The findings highlight a strong awareness of ethical issues on social media, with some students feeling pressured to remain silent about such concerns. Despite this, most students show a willingness to engage with ethically aligned content on Instagram Reels. The study also identifies negative impacts of Instagram Reels on academic performance and well-being, suggesting a need for interventions to promote responsible social media use among university students. These findings provide insights for educators and policymakers to encourage ethical engagement with social media platforms.

KEYWORDS Instagram Reels, ethical muteness, university students, social media, ethics

Introduction In the contemporary digital age, social media has emerged as an all-encompassing force, profoundly impacting various aspects of our lives (Smith, 2019). Amidst the vast array of available platforms, Instagram stands out as one of the most influential, serving as a global nexus for individuals to connect through visual content, stories, and, notably pertinent to this research, Instagram Reels a feature introduced in August 2020 (Instagram, 2020). Instagram Reels represents a dynamic evolution of the platform, providing users with a platform to craft and disseminate short-form video content, often harmonized with music or audio clips (Instagram, 2020). Its rapid ascent in popularity, particularly among young adults and university students, has metamorphosed the digital landscape, fundamentally reshaping how we communicate, express our identities, and engage with both our peers and the wider global community.

This study embarks on an intricate exploration of the multifaceted relationship between Instagram Reels and ethical muteness within the realm of university students. As social media platforms like Instagram progressively entwine with our daily lives, they wield substantial influence over our social interactions and ethical considerations (Jiang, 2021). Ethical muteness, a term coined to encapsulate the phenomenon wherein individuals choose to remain passive or refrain from speaking out when confronted with ethical quandaries or contentious content, represents a complex and intriguing area ripe for examination within this context.

Background

The Evolution of Instagram Reels:

Instagram, originally launched in 2010, was initially conceived as a platform for sharing photographs. However, it has continually evolved to cater to the evolving needs and preferences of its user base. A pivotal juncture in this evolution transpired in 2016 with the introduction of Instagram Stories—a feature that marked a significant shift

towards ephemeral content. It enabled users to share photos and videos that would vanish after a mere 24 hours. This innovation mirrored the success of Snapchat's model and proved instrumental in retaining and expanding Instagram's user base (Instagram, 2020).

Building upon the triumph of Instagram Stories, Instagram Reels made its debut in August 2020. It was a direct response to the meteoric rise of TikTok, the short-form video app that had captivated audiences worldwide (Instagram, 2020). Instagram Reels empowered users to conceive, edit, and disseminate 15-second videos, accentuated by music or audio clips. This format emerged as a potent tool for creative expression, empowering users to partake in diverse trends, challenges, and themes while showcasing their artistic and narrative prowess (Instagram, 2020). Consequently, Instagram Reels transformed into a digital stage where users could authentically express themselves, engage in content experimentation, and connect both with their followers and the expansive Instagram community.

The Popularity of Instagram Reels Among University Students:

University students, often heralded as digital natives, occupy the vanguard of social media adoption and innovation. Their innate digital acumen, combined with ubiquitous smartphone access and high-speed internet connectivity, positions them as early adopters of emerging digital trends (Smith, 2019). Instagram Reels is no exception to this rule, swiftly emerging as a favored channel for creative expression, entertainment, and social interaction within the university student demographic.

The allure of Instagram Reels among university students resides in its user-friendly interface, an extensive repository of musical selections, and the potential for content to go viral. Always on the lookout for innovative avenues of self-expression and peer connectivity, students have enthusiastically embraced this feature (Smith, 2019). They employ it to provide glimpses of their daily lives, partake in viral challenges, and explore newfound talents such as dance, music, and comedy. The seamless integration of Instagram Reels into existing Instagram profiles and stories has further amplified its appeal among university students, rendering it an integral component of their social media experience (Smith, 2019).

Ethical Muteness in the Digital Age:

Amidst the ongoing digital revolution, ethical concerns have moved to the forefront of societal discourse. The proliferation of social media has ushered in a plethora of ethical dilemmas and challenges, impacting individuals across all age groups, including university students. Ethical muteness, in particular, has emerged as a concept of profound significance. It delineates the inclination of individuals to maintain silence or passivity when confronted with ethical quandaries or morally ambiguous content within the digital sphere (Jiang, 2021).

Ethical muteness can manifest in diverse forms, encompassing refraining from adopting a stance on contentious issues, abstaining from condemning unethical conduct, or hesitating to report instances of online harassment or hate speech. A medley of factors, including the fear of repercussions, societal pressure, or the belief that one's voice would be inconsequential, can drive this phenomenon (Jiang, 2021). Consequently, ethical muteness can perpetuate the dissemination of misinformation, harmful behavior, and digital toxicity, potentially engendering severe consequences for both individuals and society at large.

The digital landscape, characterized by its swift pace and boundless reach, introduces distinctive challenges when addressing ethical muteness. The instantaneous nature of online communication can intensify the pressure to conform and exacerbate the apprehension of adverse consequences stemming from speaking out. Furthermore, social media platforms like Instagram, propelled by algorithms that prioritize engagement and virality, inadvertently incentivize users to prioritize popularity over ethical considerations (Jiang, 2021).

Given Instagram Reels' prominence among university students, it is imperative to scrutinize its role in influencing ethical muteness within this demographic. This study aspires to delve into the ethical dimensions of Instagram Reels' utilization among university students, endeavoring to elucidate how this platform may either contribute to or mitigate ethical muteness. Furthermore, it seeks to unearth strategies and approaches that can empower university students to navigate the intricate ethical terrain of the digital age while harnessing Instagram Reels' creative potential for responsible and constructive self-expression.

Literature Review

Menon et al. (2022) conducted a study on Instagram Reels usage among university students, finding that students primarily consume content rather than actively contribute, aligning with the concept of ethical muteness. Their study identified diverse motivations for consumption, such as self-promotion, entertainment, and news consumption, highlighting the platform's popularity and its relationship with ethical muteness. Significant age and gender differences were observed, with narcissistic tendencies linked to heightened consumption. Hobbyists tended to engage more actively with Reels. The study emphasizes the role of motivational and social psychological factors in influencing Instagram Reels consumption behavior among university students, with ethical muteness being significant.

Moreton and Greenfield (2022) explored the impact of Instagram on the mental health of postgraduate students, revealing a concerning increase in mental health issues. While previous studies showed a negative impact of Instagram on mental health, this qualitative investigation delved into the nuanced understanding of postgraduate students, underscoring the platform's role in mental health concerns. Understanding how and why Instagram affects psychological well-being is crucial, especially within the university student population.

Lub, Trub, and Rosenthal (2015) studied the relationship between Instagram use, following strangers, and symptoms of depression. They found that while frequent Instagram use itself was not necessarily associated with increased social comparison, negative psychological consequences were observed for those following a significant number of strangers. Conversely, a positive effect was noted for those primarily following people they knew.

Chou and Edge (2012) investigated the relationship between friend networks on Facebook and perception of others' lives. They found that including more strangers as 'friends' led to a greater perception that others had superior lives. In contrast, users who included more personal acquaintances had a less biased view.

Lee et al. (2015) identified several motivations for Instagram use, including interpersonal interaction, documenting life moments, escapism, and self-presentation. Their study sheds light on the diverse reasons behind users' engagement with the platform, contributing to understanding social media use.

Gonzales and Hancock (2011) studied selective self-presentation on Facebook, noting that users present idealized versions of themselves on their profiles, which positively impacts self-esteem. This finding underscores the role of social media in facilitating selective self-presentation and its effects on users' self-esteem.

Pounders, Kowalczyk, and Stowers (2016) explored the use of selfies for constructing an idealized image on social media, portraying oneself as leading a better life. This aligns with the broader trend of selective self-presentation on social media platforms like Facebook, where users showcase their most positive attributes.

Hypotheses

H1: University students will have diverse perceptions of ethical muteness in their Instagram Reels use.

H2: Factors and motivations will shape students' decisions to use Instagram Reels and relate to ethical muteness.

H3: Students' experiences with Instagram Reels will impact their academic performance and well-being.

H4: Students will employ various strategies to navigate ethical complexities in using Instagram Reels.

Theoretical Framework

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) explains how individuals actively choose media to meet specific needs. It suggests that people use media for purposes like entertainment, information, identity expression, and social integration. UGT emphasizes that media consumption is an active process where individuals select content that fulfills their needs. In the context of Instagram Reels and ethical muteness among university students, UGT helps understand why students engage with the platform and why they may avoid discussing ethical issues on it. This theory highlights the importance of studying how students use Instagram Reels and how the content they consume influences their ethical decision-making and behavior.

The Spiral of Silence theory suggests that individuals are more likely to voice popular opinions and remain silent on minority viewpoints. This theory is relevant to Instagram Reels, where users may be influenced by the perceived opinions of others. In the context of ethical muteness among university students on Instagram Reels, the theory implies that students may hesitate to express minority opinions on ethical issues, fearing social isolation or backlash. Understanding this dynamic can provide insights into how students engage with ethical discussions online and how norms around ethical behavior are formed in digital spaces.

Material and Methods

Research Approach:

This study operates within a constructivist paradigm, recognizing that participants actively construct their realities through engagements with Instagram Reels and ethical considerations. A constructivist approach is particularly suitable for exploring the subjective and contextual nature of ethical muteness in the digital age. By adopting this paradigm, the research acknowledges the dynamic and individualized ways in which participants interpret and navigate ethical dilemmas within the specific context of Instagram Reels. This framework aligns with the qualitative nature of the study,

emphasizing participants' active roles in shaping their realities and allowing for an in-depth exploration of their lived experiences. It also underscores the importance of considering the evolving digital landscape and the dynamic nature of social media platforms in understanding the complexities of ethical considerations. Through this approach, the study seeks to unveil diverse perspectives on ethical muteness, providing a nuanced understanding rooted in participants' subjective experiences within the realm of Instagram Reels.

Research Design:

This study adopts a quantitative research design to investigate the impact of Instagram Reels on ethical muteness among university students in Lahore, Pakistan. A structured questionnaire will be utilized to collect data from the participants, enabling a systematic analysis of their engagement with Instagram Reels and their perceptions of ethical issues on the platform.

Sampling:

The study will use a purposive sampling technique to select participants actively engaged with Instagram Reels. The sample will consist of university students in Lahore, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives. A sample size of 250 participants will be targeted to ensure adequate representation of the population and enhance the generalizability of the findings.

Data Collection:

Data will be collected through a structured questionnaire distributed electronically to the participants. The questionnaire will include items related to the frequency of Instagram Reels usage, motives for using the platform, awareness of ethical issues, and experiences with ethical dilemmas on social media. Participants will be asked to respond to each item based on a Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree."

Data Analysis:

Statistical analysis will be conducted using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, will be used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants and their responses to the questionnaire items. Inferential statistics, such as correlation and regression analysis, will be used to examine the relationships between Instagram Reels usage, ethical awareness, and ethical muteness among university students.

Ethical Considerations:

The study will adhere to ethical guidelines, ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants before they participate in the study. Any identifiable information will be kept confidential, and the data will be used for research purposes only.

Limitations:

It is crucial to acknowledge certain limitations inherent in this study. The relatively small sample size, while offering rich insights, may restrict the generalizability of findings to broader populations. Additionally, the contextual specificity of the research, focused on university students and their experiences with Instagram Reels and ethical muteness, may limit the extrapolation of results to diverse demographic groups or

different social contexts. These considerations should be taken into account when interpreting and applying the study's outcomes.

Variables

Within this research, two fundamental types of variables are identified:

Dependent Variable:

The dependent variable in this study is "**Ethical muteness among university students.**" This variable represents the level of silence or reluctance among students to speak up about ethical concerns related to Instagram Reels.

Independent Variable:

The independent variable considered in this study is "**Instagram Reels.**" This variable is the factor that is examined to determine its impact on the dependent variable, ethical muteness among university students.

Results and Discussion

The study investigated the impact of Instagram Reels on ethical muteness among university students in Lahore, Pakistan, focusing on demographic profiles. Data from questionnaires collected from male and female students across different age groups was analyzed. The study considered factors like gender, age, field of study, and frequency of Instagram use to understand how these groups are affected by Instagram Reels in terms of ethical muteness. This analysis aims to provide insights into how Instagram Reels shape ethical awareness and decision-making among university students in Pakistan.

Participant Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	124	49.6	49.6	49.6
	Female	126	50.4	50.4	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

The data consist of 250 participants, with 49.6% being male and 50.4% female. The gender distribution is nearly equal, with a slightly higher percentage of female participants.

Participant Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Under 18	9	3.6	3.6	3.6
	18-24	223	89.2	89.2	92.8
	25-34	16	6.4	6.4	99.2
	35-44	2	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

3.6% are under 18 years old, 89.2% are between 18-24 years old, 6.4% are between 25-34 years old, and 0.8% are between 35-44 years old. The majority of participants (92.8%) fall into the 18-24 age group.

Participant Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Intermediate	28	11.2	11.2	11.2
	Graduation	201	80.4	80.4	91.6
	Postgraduation	21	8.4	8.4	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Of the participants, 11.2% have an intermediate education, 80.4% have graduated, and 8.4% have postgraduate qualifications.

Participant economic class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Upper	24	9.6	9.6	9.6
	Middle	221	88.4	88.4	98.0
	Lower Middle	5	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

9.6% belong to the upper economic class (24 participants), 88.4% to the middle economic class (221 participants), and 2.0% to the lower middle economic class (5 participants).

I believe it is important to report unethical content I see on Instagram Reels.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	122	48.8	48.8	48.8
	Agree	84	33.6	33.6	82.4
	Neutral	27	10.8	10.8	93.2
	Disagree	7	2.8	2.8	96.0
	Strongly Disagree	10	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Regarding the importance of reporting unethical content seen on Instagram Reels, 48.8% of participants strongly agree, 33.6% agree, 10.8% are neutral, 2.8% disagree, and 4.0% strongly disagree.

I often notice unethical content on Instagram Reels.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	52	20.8	20.8	20.8

Agree	110	44.0	44.0	64.8
Neutral	60	24.0	24.0	88.8
Disagree	16	6.4	6.4	95.2
Strongly Disagree	12	4.8	4.8	100.0
Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Regarding the frequency of noticing unethical content on Instagram Reels, 20.8% of participants strongly agree, 44.0% agree, 24.0% are neutral, 6.4% disagree, and 4.8% strongly disagree.

I feel confident in my ability to identify unethical content on Instagram Reels.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	77	30.8	30.8	30.8
	Agree	101	40.4	40.4	71.2
	Neutral	47	18.8	18.8	90.0
	Disagree	20	8.0	8.0	98.0
	Strongly Disagree	5	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

In terms of feeling confident in their ability to identify unethical content on Instagram Reels, 30.8% of participants strongly agree, 40.4% agree, 18.8% are neutral, 8.0% disagree, and 2.0% strongly disagree.

I think people on Instagram Reels are generally aware of what constitutes ethical behavior.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	55	22.0	22.0	22.0
	Agree	101	40.4	40.4	62.4
	Neutral	58	23.2	23.2	85.6
	Disagree	22	8.8	8.8	94.4
	Strongly Disagree	14	5.6	5.6	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Perceptions of people on Instagram Reels being aware of what constitutes ethical behavior, 22.0% of participants strongly agree, 40.4% agree, 23.2% are neutral, 8.8% disagree, and 5.6% strongly disagree.

I am more likely to engage with content on Instagram Reels if it aligns with my ethical values.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	70	28.0	28.0	28.0

Agree	115	46.0	46.0	74.0
Neutral	48	19.2	19.2	93.2
Disagree	9	3.6	3.6	96.8
Strongly Disagree	8	3.2	3.2	100.0
Total	250	100.0	100.0	

In terms of likelihood to engage with content on Instagram Reels based on alignment with ethical values, 28.0% of participants strongly agree, 46.0% agree, 19.2% are neutral, 3.6% disagree, and 3.2% strongly disagree.

I feel pressured to stay silent about ethical concerns on Instagram Reels.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	54	21.6	21.6	21.6
	Agree	94	37.6	37.6	59.2
	Neutral	55	22.0	22.0	81.2
	Disagree	32	12.8	12.8	94.0
	Strongly Disagree	15	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Regarding feeling pressured to stay silent about ethical concerns on Instagram Reels, 21.6% of participants strongly agree, 37.6% agree, 22.0% are neutral, 12.8% disagree, and 6.0% strongly disagree.

I use Instagram Reels to keep up with current trends.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	86	34.4	34.4	34.4
	Agree	87	34.8	34.8	69.2
	Neutral	48	19.2	19.2	88.4
	Disagree	14	5.6	5.6	94.0
	Strongly Disagree	15	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

In terms of using Instagram Reels to keep up with current trends, 34.4% of participants strongly agree, 34.8% agree, 19.2% are neutral, 5.6% disagree, and 6.0% strongly disagree.

I often share content on Instagram Reels to gain likes or followers.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	52	20.8	20.8	20.8
	Agree	75	30.0	30.0	50.8
	Neutral	47	18.8	18.8	69.6
	Disagree	49	19.6	19.6	89.2

Strongly Disagree	27	10.8	10.8	100.0
Total	250	100.0	100.0	

In terms of sharing content on Instagram Reels to gain likes or followers, 20.8% of participants strongly agree, 30.0% agree, 18.8% are neutral, 19.6% disagree, and 10.8% strongly disagree.

I feel like I'm missing out if I don't use Instagram Reels.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	49	19.6	19.6	19.6
	Agree	75	30.0	30.0	49.6
	Neutral	66	26.4	26.4	76.0
	Disagree	35	14.0	14.0	90.0
	Strongly Disagree	25	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

In terms of feeling like they're missing out if they don't use Instagram Reels, 19.6% of participants strongly agree, 30.0% agree, 26.4% are neutral, 14.0% disagree, and 10.0% strongly disagree.

I am more likely to engage with content on Instagram Reels if it is shared by someone I know.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	68	27.2	27.2	27.2
	Agree	89	35.6	35.6	62.8
	Neutral	65	26.0	26.0	88.8
	Disagree	15	6.0	6.0	94.8
	Strongly Disagree	13	5.2	5.2	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

In terms of likelihood to engage with content on Instagram Reels if it is shared by someone they know, 27.2% of participants strongly agree, 35.6% agree, 26.0% are neutral, 6.0% disagree, and 5.2% strongly disagree.

I use Instagram Reels to express my creativity.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	65	26.0	26.0	26.0
	Agree	74	29.6	29.6	55.6

Neutral	66	26.4	26.4	82.0
Disagree	25	10.0	10.0	92.0
Strongly Disagree	20	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total	250	100.0	100.0	

In terms of using Instagram Reels to express creativity, 26.0% of participants strongly agree, 29.6% agree, 26.4% are neutral, 10.0% disagree, and 8.0% strongly disagree.

I am influenced by celebrities or influencers I follow on Instagram Reels.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	61	24.4	24.4	24.4
	Agree	84	33.6	33.6	58.0
	Neutral	58	23.2	23.2	81.2
	Disagree	25	10.0	10.0	91.2
	Strongly Disagree	22	8.8	8.8	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

In terms of being influenced by celebrities or influencers they follow on Instagram Reels, 24.4% of participants strongly agree, 33.6% agree, 23.2% are neutral, 10.0% disagree, and 8.8% strongly disagree.

Using Instagram Reels has caused me to procrastinate on academic tasks.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	65	26.0	26.0	26.0
	Agree	83	33.2	33.2	59.2
	Neutral	62	24.8	24.8	84.0
	Disagree	22	8.8	8.8	92.8
	Strongly Disagree	18	7.2	7.2	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

In terms of Instagram Reels causing procrastination on academic tasks, 26.0% of participants strongly agree, 33.2% agree, 24.8% are neutral, 8.8% disagree, and 7.2% strongly disagree.

I feel anxious or stressed when I can't check Instagram Reels regularly.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	35	14.0	14.0	14.0
	Agree	91	36.4	36.4	50.4
	Neutral	54	21.6	21.6	72.0

Disagree	36	14.4	14.4	86.4
Strongly Disagree	34	13.6	13.6	100.0
Total	250	100.0	100.0	

In terms of feeling anxious or stressed when unable to check Instagram Reels regularly, 14.0% of participants strongly agree, 36.4% agree, 21.6% are neutral, 14.4% disagree, and 13.6% strongly disagree.

I have missed deadlines or important events because of my use of Instagram Reels.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	47	18.8	18.8	18.8
	Agree	53	21.2	21.2	40.0
	Neutral	74	29.6	29.6	69.6
	Disagree	43	17.2	17.2	86.8
	Strongly Disagree	32	12.8	12.8	99.6
	12.00	1	.4	.4	100.0
Total		250	100.0	100.0	

In terms of missing deadlines or important events because of their use of Instagram Reels, 18.8% of participants strongly agree, 21.2% agree, 29.6% are neutral, 17.2% disagree, and 12.8% strongly disagree.

I find it difficult to concentrate on my studies after using Instagram Reels.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	48	19.2	19.2	19.2
	Agree	87	34.8	34.8	54.0
	Neutral	60	24.0	24.0	78.0
	Disagree	27	10.8	10.8	88.8
	Strongly Disagree	28	11.2	11.2	100.0
	Total		250	100.0	100.0

In terms of finding it difficult to concentrate on studies after using Instagram Reels, 19.2% of participants strongly agree, 34.8% agree, 24.0% are neutral, 10.8% disagree, and 11.2% strongly disagree.

I feel my academic performance has been negatively affected by my use of Instagram Reels.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	60	24.0	24.0	24.0
	Agree	76	30.4	30.4	54.4
	Neutral	56	22.4	22.4	76.8
	Disagree	32	12.8	12.8	89.6
	Strongly Disagree	26	10.4	10.4	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

In terms of feeling that their academic performance has been negatively affected by their use of Instagram Reels, 24.0% of participants strongly agree, 30.4% agree, 22.4% are neutral, 12.8% disagree, and 10.4% strongly disagree.

I feel my overall well-being has been negatively affected by my use of Instagram Reels.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	47	18.8	18.8	18.8
	Agree	66	26.4	26.4	45.2
	Neutral	67	26.8	26.8	72.0
	Disagree	35	14.0	14.0	86.0
	Strongly Disagree	35	14.0	14.0	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

In terms of feeling that their overall well-being has been negatively affected by their use of Instagram Reels, 18.8% of participants strongly agree, 26.4% agree, 26.8% are neutral, 14.0% disagree, and 14.0% strongly disagree.

I believe universities should include discussions about social media ethics in their curriculum.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	112	44.8	44.8	44.8
	Agree	76	30.4	30.4	75.2
	Neutral	39	15.6	15.6	90.8
	Disagree	13	5.2	5.2	96.0
	Strongly Disagree	9	3.6	3.6	99.6
	33.00	1	.4	.4	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

In terms of beliefs about universities including discussions about social media ethics in their curriculum, 44.8% of participants strongly agree, 30.4% agree, 15.6% are neutral, 5.2% disagree, and 3.6% strongly disagree.

I think social media platforms should do more to educate users about responsible use.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	78	31.2	31.2	31.2
	Agree	117	46.8	46.8	78.0
	Neutral	36	14.4	14.4	92.4
	Disagree	13	5.2	5.2	97.6
	Strongly Disagree	6	2.4	2.4	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

In terms of beliefs about social media platforms doing more to educate users about responsible use, 31.2% of participants strongly agree, 46.8% agree, 14.4% are neutral, 5.2% disagree, and 2.4% strongly disagree.

I would be interested in attending workshops or seminars on responsible social media use.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	63	25.2	25.2	25.2
	Agree	91	36.4	36.4	61.6
	Neutral	69	27.6	27.6	89.2
	Disagree	24	9.6	9.6	98.8
	Strongly Disagree	3	1.2	1.2	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

In terms of interest in attending workshops or seminars on responsible social media use, 25.2% of participants strongly agree, 36.4% agree, 27.6% are neutral, 9.6% disagree, and 1.2% strongly disagree.

I am aware of the potential consequences of sharing unethical content on social media.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	56	22.4	22.4	22.4
	Agree	103	41.2	41.2	63.6
	Neutral	56	22.4	22.4	86.0
	Disagree	21	8.4	8.4	94.4
	Strongly Disagree	13	5.2	5.2	99.6
	21.00	1	.4	.4	100.0
Total	250	100.0	100.0		

In terms of awareness of the potential consequences of sharing unethical content on social media, 22.4% of participants strongly agree, 41.2% agree, 22.4% are neutral, 8.4% disagree, and 5.2% strongly disagree.

I think it is important to consider the impact of my social media use on others.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	68	27.2	27.2	27.2
	Agree	102	40.8	40.8	68.0
	Neutral	58	23.2	23.2	91.2
	Disagree	16	6.4	6.4	97.6
	Strongly Disagree	6	2.4	2.4	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

In terms of considering the impact of social media use on others, 27.2% of participants strongly agree, 40.8% agree, 23.2% are neutral, 6.4% disagree, and 2.4% strongly disagree.

I feel a responsibility to set a good example for others on social media.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	78	31.2	31.2	31.2
	Agree	90	36.0	36.0	67.2
	Neutral	56	22.4	22.4	89.6
	Disagree	16	6.4	6.4	96.0
	Strongly Disagree	10	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

In terms of feeling a responsibility to set a good example for others on social media, 31.2% of participants strongly agree, 36.0% agree, 22.4% are neutral, 6.4% disagree, and 4.0% strongly disagree.

Discussion

The study aimed to explore the impact of Instagram Reels on ethical muteness among university students in Lahore, Pakistan, revealing insights into participant demographics and attitudes towards ethical issues on social media. The sample exhibited a nearly equal gender distribution (49.6% male, 50.4% female) and primarily consisted of young adults in the 18-24 age group (92.8%), reflecting the typical demographic of university students. A significant majority of participants were graduates (80.4%), indicating a relatively high level of education among the sample, and the majority belonged to the middle economic class (88.4%).

Regarding ethical awareness, a notable portion of participants believed in the importance of reporting unethical content on Instagram Reels (48.8% strongly agreed, 33.6% agreed), demonstrating a high level of concern for ethical issues in social media. Additionally, many participants reported frequently encountering unethical content on the platform (20.8% strongly agreed, 44.0% agreed), suggesting a prevalence of ethical dilemmas in social media content. Participants also expressed confidence in their ability to identify unethical content on Instagram Reels (30.8% strongly agreed, 40.4% agreed), indicating a degree of self-assuredness in recognizing ethical issues online.

Despite this awareness, a significant portion of participants felt pressured to remain silent about ethical concerns on Instagram Reels (21.6% strongly agreed, 37.6% agreed), highlighting a potential barrier to open discourse on ethical matters. Moreover, while many participants expressed a likelihood to engage with content aligned with their ethical values (28.0% strongly agreed, 46.0% agreed), indicating a preference for ethically sound content, a substantial portion also reported feeling pressured to stay silent about ethical concerns (21.6% strongly agreed, 37.6% agreed), suggesting a complex relationship between ethical awareness and social pressures on social media platforms.

In terms of impact, participants indicated that their academic performance (24.0% strongly agreed, 30.4% agreed) and overall well-being (18.8% strongly agreed, 26.4% agreed) had been negatively affected by their use of Instagram Reels, highlighting the need for interventions to promote responsible social media use among university students. Overall, the study provides valuable insights into the relationship between Instagram Reels and ethical muteness among university students, emphasizing the importance of further research and interventions to promote ethical discourse on social media platforms.

Conclusion

The study delves into the impact of Instagram Reels on ethical muteness among university students in Lahore, Pakistan, revealing a diverse sample with nearly equal gender distribution and a majority in the 18-24 age group, predominantly graduates from the middle economic class. Participants exhibit a strong awareness of ethical issues on social media, with a significant portion valuing the reporting of unethical content. However, some feel pressured to stay silent about ethical concerns, indicating potential barriers to open discourse. Despite confidence in identifying unethical content, this pressure suggests a complex relationship between ethical awareness and social pressures. The study also highlights negative impacts on academic performance and well-being, underscoring the need for interventions to promote responsible social media use and ethical discourse among university students in Lahore.

Recommendations

The study's findings suggest several key recommendations to address ethical muteness among university students on Instagram Reels:

- Incorporate discussions on social media ethics into educational curricula to raise awareness and provide students with the necessary skills to navigate ethical dilemmas online.
- Encourage open discussions about ethical concerns on social media platforms by implementing features that support reporting and discussing unethical content without fear of reprisal.
- Launch campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of reporting unethical content and the impact of ethical muteness on the online community.
- Provide users with tools and resources to effectively identify and report unethical content, such as tutorials, guidelines, and user-friendly reporting mechanisms.
- Encourage content creators to adhere to ethical guidelines in their content creation to promote a culture of ethical behavior on the platform.

- Collaborate with mental health professionals to provide support and resources to students struggling with social media-related issues, including the negative impact on academic performance and well-being.
- Conduct longitudinal studies to understand the long-term effects of Instagram Reels on ethical behavior and well-being among university students.
- Educate parents and educators about the risks of excessive social media use and provide guidance on supporting students in navigating ethical dilemmas online.

Implementing these recommendations can help promote a more ethical and responsible use of social media among university students in Lahore and beyond.

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