

Ethical Use of Social Networking Sites An Exploratory Study on a Sample of Media and Communication Students in Algeria

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Abstract:

This study aimed to identify the dimensions of ethical use of social networking sites among students at the Faculty of Media and Communication Sciences, University of Algiers 3. To achieve the study's objectives, a questionnaire was designed to collect data from a sample of 132 individuals, based on a descriptive methodology. The study concluded that the sample members exhibit a high level of awareness in most dimensions, such as respect for privacy, responsible communication, and digital reputation, with some challenges existing in the dimension of digital safety and security, where the results showed significant variation within the study sample in this regard.

Keywords: dimensions ,ethical use ,social networking sites, University students.

Introduction

In Recent decades, the use of social networking sites has increased significantly among various segments of society, particularly university students. This increased rate of use has led to the emergence of numerous challenges primarily related to the ethical use of these media. Although these sites have introduced advantages in enhancing communication, information exchange, and collaboration, they have raised many issues and problems, such as those concerning privacy, credibility, and digital security and safety.

Understanding how university students use social networking sites from an ethical perspective is importance for several reasons. This can help promote positive behaviors and identify the ethical challenges and problems students face, thereby contributing to the development of mechanisms to address them and raising students' awareness of the importance of ethical use of these platforms. Given the growing importance of social media in the lives of university students, this study aims to identify the level of ethical use dimensions among this group of users.

Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following main question:

- ✓ What is the level of the dimensions of ethical use of social networking sites among students of Information and Communication Sciences at the University of Algiers 3?

The main question includes the following sub-questions:

- ✓ What is the level of the dimension of respect for privacy on social networking sites among students of Information and Communication Sciences at the University of Algiers 3?
- ✓ What is the level of responsible communication on social networking sites among students of Information and Communication Sciences at the University of Algiers 3?
- ✓ What is the level of the dimension of digital security and safety on social networking sites among students of Information and Communication Sciences at the University of Algiers 3?

- ✓ What is the level of the dimension of credibility on social networking sites among students of Information and Communication Sciences at the University of Algiers 3?
- ✓ What is the level of the dimension of digital reputation on social networking sites among students of Information and Communication Sciences at the University of Algiers 3?

2. Objectives and Definition of Terms

2.1 Study Objectives

This study aims to identify the level of the dimensions of ethical use of social networking sites (respect for privacy, responsible communication, digital security, credibility, digital reputation) among students of the Faculty of Information and Communication Sciences at the University of Algiers 3.

2.2 Definition of Terms

University Student: "An individual whose academic competencies have allowed them to transition from the secondary stage to the university according to their specialization, by means of a certificate that qualifies them for it. (Boujmal, 2023, p. 269).

Operationally: in this study, "university students" refers to the students of the University of Algiers 3 with whom the field study was conducted.

Social Networking Sites: These are defined as a collection of websites that facilitate communication among users through the creation of special profiles and pages, which in turn allow friends, relatives, and family to access and interact with them. They also provide many services, most notably instant messaging and the exchange of various content such as photos, videos, and opinions, with the goal of staying in touch and fostering a sense of belonging to a community (Abdelhak & Graa, 2018, p. 463).

Operationally: a group of websites on the Internet that allow university student to participate by creating personal pages for communication,

interaction, and establishing virtual social relationships according to their interests. These platforms also enable them to express and discuss their opinions and issues.

Ethical Use: Luke and Sefton-Green defined ethical use as a set of principles and values that guide the behavior of individuals in digital environments. These principles include responsibility in the use of technology, respect for the rights of others, and integrity in online communication. (Luke, 2018, p. 91).

Operationally: The set of principles, attitudes, and behaviors that guide the student's path, regulate their conduct, and determine their level of awareness and perception of the ethics required when using social networking sites.

In this study, the level of normative commitment of the intentional sample, represented by media and communication students, is measured by a set of normative practices and behaviors during their interaction on these platforms, through their degree of agreement with the items comprising the five dimensions in the study tool (designed according to the Likert scale): respect for privacy, responsible communication, digital security, credibility, and digital reputation.

3.Literature Review andTheoretical Background

3.1 Previous Studies

Study by Amani Reda Abdel Maqsoud (2019)

This study aimed to assess media student's awareness of the ethics of using social communication platforms and the extent to which this awareness is reflected in their digital practices when engaging with social media. The study employed focus group discussions as research tools. The findings revealed varied perceptions among youth concerning the ethics of social media use; some view them as essential for preserving values and morals in digital society, while others perceive them as a restriction on freedom of expression.

Study by Putri et al. (2024)

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Putri et al. analyzed the impact of self-regulation, peer attachment, and emotional intelligence on internet etiquette among adolescents. The study adopted a survey method using an electronic questionnaire. The respondents were 237 adolescents aged 10 - 20 years. The study revealed a significant influence of emotional intelligence, self-regulation, and exposure to social networking sites on the application of etiquette on these platforms.

Study by Amălănței et al (2022)

This study aimed to investigate the ethical attitudes of Romanian university students towards the use of social networking sites. This study utilized a descriptive-analytical method and demonstrated a generally positive attitude among students, along with interest in various ethical issues.

Commentary on Previous Studies

The present study concurs with Abdel Maqsoud(2019) on the importance of awareness of digital ethics. However, it differs in that Abdel Maqsoud's study focused on self-monitoring and used focus groups, whereas the present study addresses broader dimensions and adopts a quantitative methodology.

The present study shares similarities with the study by Putri et al, however, the latter focused on adolescents and Internet etiquette and used structural equation modeling, while the present study addresses the category of university students and focuses on specific, broader dimensions. This study aligns with Amălănței(2022) in its assessment of students' ethical attitudes but differs in that the latter focused on demographic differences.

The present study contributes by providing a comprehensive analysis of ethical dimensions, focusing on a specific group of students specializing in information and communication sciences.

These studies highlight the importance of digital ethics in various contexts and shed light on the multiple factors that influence the ethical

behavior of social media platform users. They affirm the need for further research to understand this complex phenomenon and develop effective strategies for promoting ethical behavior in the digital space.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

An Overview of the Types of Social Networking Sites

The number and variety of social networking sites are growing quickly, and they can be categorized according to a framework from Al-Ahmari (2023, p. 58).

.a. Public Accessibility: Divided into two main categories: The first category includes platforms that bring together individuals or groups bound by specific professional or social frameworks. These platforms are considered closed and are not accessible to the general public. The second category comprises social networking sites that are available to everyone. Any individual with an account has the right to join and form private connections. Facebook is one of the most prominent social media platforms.

b. Medium of Participation and Interaction: Classified as follows: Text-sharing platforms: These emerged in the form of personal blogs where individuals write their own content, often supported by images, videos, and links to other websites. This category includes microblogs that allow the exchange of short messages with limited number of characters. Image-sharing sites: These include Flickr, which allows for the attachment, sharing, and storage of images.

Video-sharing sites: The most important of which is YouTube, which allows for the sharing and attachment of video files. Networks: Such as Facebook, which are the most powerful and widespread. They allow for the exchange of information, adding and following friends, and utilize all the preceding formats, enabling the sharing texts, images, and videos.

c. According to Objectives:

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Social networking sites are classified according to the objectives they seek to achieve as follows:

Socializing Networks: These are established for the purpose of entertainment and social communication among members, often used to find existing lists of friends on the network, such as Facebook and MySpace.

Utilitarian Social Networks: These networks help users find specific types of information or resources. Some are used to publish contact lists and provide access to specialized information.

Mechanisms for Fostering Ethical Use of Social Networking Sites

Ahmed(2022) proposed mechanisms for achieving and promoting ethical use among students in light of contemporary through the following aspects:

- Developing students' capacity for digital transformation and the use of digital technologies, understanding when and how they can be used, and training them to regulate their behavior in a digital environment.
- Raising students' awareness and training them on how to obtain information of various types through legitimate, ethical, and legal methods is essential.
- Developing students' awareness of the importance of critical thinking regarding what is published on social networking sites and its effects, and equipping them with mechanisms for verifying content published via these media.
- Training students to be familiar with the fundamental concepts of ethical communication and making them aware of the consequences of misusing these platforms to commit offenses such as criminal acts and cybercrimes is essential.
- Raising students' awareness of the risks arising from addiction to social networking sites and their serious consequences, which include social isolation and being content with the virtual world.
- Contributing to the creation of collaborative digital learning spaces where teachers and students can participate, both inside and outside the classroom, through various digital means (p. 1801).

The theory of social responsibility and its manifestations on social media

Our understanding and analysis of the ethical behavior of university students on social networking sites is based on a theoretical framework that links freedom of use with ethical responsibility. In this context, the study relied on social responsibility theory, as it is the most appropriate for studying ethics in the digital environment. This theory states that freedom in the use of social media platforms must be accompanied by responsibility towards society and individuals, and that users bear the consequences of their actions and behaviors. In the virtual space, this responsibility means the duty to adhere to ethical and legal standards that ensure public and private safety.

The theory of social responsibility frames the five dimensions of the study as ethical representations that students seek to adopt, with the degree of agreement of the respondents on these dimensions reflecting their awareness of their social responsibilities in the digital space. (Azubuike et al, 2024, p. 443).

Respect for privacy: This dimension represents a commitment to responsibility towards others and avoiding harming them through the violation or misuse of their data.

Responsible communication: This embodies the essence of the theory, requiring users to take responsibility for the content they publish and interact with, and to avoid offensive language.

Credibility: This is a moral commitment to providing accurate and reliable information, and is a fundamental pillar of social responsibility in limiting the spread of fake news and misleading content.

Digital Safety and Security :It is a responsibility (technical and ethical) aimed at protecting infrastructure and personal information, and ensuring data integrity from any digital damage.

Digital reputation represents the user's responsibility towards themselves and the impact of their digital behavior on their future image, both personal and professional.

Accordingly, this theory provides the necessary reference framework for assessing the target sample's awareness of these dimensions and monitoring their level of commitment to the principles of social responsibility in the digital environment.

4.Field Study

4.1Study Methodology

This study employed a descriptive method, which relies on interpreting, describing, and analyzing the problem from all aspects, utilizing a survey approach.

As for the sample of the study, it was a purposive sample of students specializing in media and communication sciences.

4.2Research Instrument

A questionnaire was developed to measure the dimensions of ethical use of social networking sites, following a review of the literature. and Based on the theoretical framework of social responsibility In its final form.

the questionnaire consisted of 35 items divided into five dimensions: respect for privacy, responsible communication, credibility, digital security and safety, and digital reputation.

Given the positive wording of the scale items, a five-point Likert scale with an ascending distribution (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree) was adopted, High scores are therefore a direct indicator of the strength of commitment to the positive practices being measured.

4.3Validity of the Research Instrument

The content validity of the research instrument was verified by submitting it to a panel of expert reviewers for their feedback. Their feedback was considered, and modifications were made, including merging

similar items, deleting some, and adding others to enhance clarity. The final version of the questionnaire comprised of 35 items.

4.4 Reliability of the Research Instrument

The internal consistency reliability coefficient for the scale was calculated using Cronbach's alpha. The Cronbach's alpha value was 0.75, which is generally considered acceptable.

Table illustrating the reliability coefficient results for the scale of dimensions of ethical use of social networking sites using *Cronbach's alpha* method:

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Instrument
0.75	35	Questionnaire on the Dimensions of Ethical Use of Social Networking Sites

The table shows that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.75, indicating that the questionnaire was appropriate for this study.

Table 01: Demographic Data

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	37	28%
	Female	95	72%
	Total	132	100%
Age	18–25	92	70%
	26–35	33	25%
	Over 36	7	5%
	Total	132	100%
Educational Level	First Year Bachelor's	23	17.4%
	Second Year Bachelor's	24	18.2%
	Third Year Bachelor's	23	17.4%
	First Year Master's	29	22%
	Second Year Master's	29	22%
	PhD Student	4	3%

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The table above shows that the majority of the study participants were female (72%), while males constituted only 28%. This may be attributed to the nature of the specialization at the Faculty of Media and Communication Sciences, which tends to attract more female students. A higher enrollment of female students is observed in this field compared to their male counterparts, who gravitate more towards technical and other specializations.

Furthermore, the predominant age group among the participants was 18–25 years, constituting 70% of the sample. This age group represents the largest segment of university student population. The 26–35 age group accounted for 25%, while the over-36 age group represented a small minority of only 5%. This distribution indicates that most respondents are in early adulthood, a stage characterized by significant activity on social networking sites, which renders the study of their ethical behavior in this context of paramount importance.

The table also illustrates the distribution of participants by educational level, where the percentages are relatively balanced between Bachelor and Master's students, with a smaller proportion of PhD students. First and third-year bachelor's students each constituted 17.4%, second-year bachelor's students 18.2%, and both first- and second-year master's students accounted for 22% each. However, PhD students, represented only 3% of the sample. This distribution reflects the study's focus on assessing the ethical use of social networking sites across different academic stages and understanding whether variations exist in this usage.

Dimensions of the Ethical Use of Social Networking Sites:

Table 02: Means and Standard Deviations for the Dimension of Privacy Respect

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Response Level	Rank
1. I do not save or use photos or personal information of others	4.02	1.05	High	4

from their accounts without their knowledge.				
2. If I receive a suspicious message, I delete and do not respond to it.	4.15	0.98	High	2
3. I report those who violate other's privacy.	3.70	1.10	High	6
4. I do not post private conversations without permission.	4.08	1.01	High	3
5. I ensure that I understand the privacy policies of the platforms I use.	3.20	1.20	Medium	7
6. I avoid sharing my activities with the public.	3.95	1.03	High	5
7. I do not share photos of friends without their consent.	4.25	0.95	High	1

Based on the analysis of this table concerning the dimension of respect for privacy, the mean for the items ranged between 3.20 and 4.25, indicating a variation in the level of agreement with behaviors related to this dimension. It was also observed that the items pertaining to direct behaviors for protecting the privacy of others received the highest means. Item 7 obtained the highest mean (4.25) with a standard deviation of (0.95), which signifies the students' awareness of the importance of this behavior. Similarly, Items 1 and 4 showed high means of 4.02 and 4.08, respectively, reinforcing this conclusion.

In contrast, Item 5, "I make sure to understand the privacy policies of the platforms I use," received the lowest mean (3.20) with a relatively high standard deviation (1.20). This suggests that students are less inclined to read privacy policies and that their opinions on this matter vary. This may be explained by a lack of awareness of the importance of understanding how platforms handle personal data.

It can be concluded that the sample members demonstrated good awareness of the importance of respecting the privacy of others in virtual

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spaces. Nevertheless, there is a need to enhance awareness of the less apparent aspects of digital privacy, such as understanding privacy policies.

The participants' awareness of the importance of not sharing and protecting the personal information of others is consistent with the principles of ethical conduct in the digital environment. In contrast, their lack of comprehension of privacy policies reveals a discrepancy between theoretical awareness and practical application of such policies. This aligns with young people's perceptions of digital ethics, as indicated by Amani Reda Abdel Maqsoud. This points to a limitation in the aspect of digital literacy related to the legal frameworks governing digital privacy.

Table 03: Means and Standard Deviations for the Dimension of Responsible Communication

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Response Level	Rank
8. I express my opinions respectfully when interacting with platforms.	3.90	1.08	High	3
9. I avoid using fake accounts to spread false news.	3.75	1.12	High	7
10. I do not use offensive language in comments.	4.10	1.00	High	1
11. I respect others' opinions even if I disagree with them.	3.85	1.09	High	5
12. I verify the accuracy of the news before sharing it and take responsibility for it.	3.80	1.11	High	6
13. I offer support to others through these platforms.	3.95	1.05	High	2
14. I encourage meaningful dialogue and avoid negative discussion.	3.88	1.07	High	4

The table above displays the results for the dimension of responsible communication, where the mean ranged from 3.75-4.10. Most items fall within the medium to high range, indicating that the sample members tend to adopt responsible communication behaviors on social networking sites. Items 10 and 13 received the highest means, at 4.10 and 3.95 respectively, with relatively low standard deviations of 1.00 and 1.05. This reflects that students have a strong awareness of the importance of avoiding offensive language and offering support to others, most students agreed on these behaviors. In contrast, Item 9 received a comparatively lower mean of 3.75 and a relatively higher standard deviation of 1.12, indicating a variation in student opinions regarding this behavior. This higher standard deviation suggests that the sample members' views on avoiding fake accounts were somewhat divergent. This may be attributed to some students not being fully aware of the risks of using fake accounts or being more permissive. The findings indicate that while students are cognizant of this dimension, certain aspects could be enhanced, such as awareness of the risks posed by fake accounts, where the results showed considerable variation in student opinions.

The sample members' awareness of the importance of avoiding offensive language and promoting constructive interaction demonstrates an understanding of behavior in virtual spaces. Conversely, the variance in addressing fake accounts that promote misinformation presents significant challenges. This indicates that limited knowledge does not necessarily reflect a sufficient understanding of the risks of false news, underscoring the need to enhance comprehension of social media platform etiquette. This view is supported by the study of Putriet al. especially in light of the substantial increase in the use of these social media platforms.

Table 04: Means and Standard Deviations for the Dimension of Digital Safety and Security

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Response Level	Rank
15. I verify the credibility of websites that request my information.	3.30	1.25	Medium	5
16. I use strong passwords (letters + numbers + symbols).	2.95	1.30	Medium	7

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17. I check links before clicking them.	3.25	1.28	Medium	6
18. I regularly review privacy settings.	3.50	1.20	Medium	4
19. I am careful not to share personal information in applications.	3.80	1.10	High	2
20. I avoid becoming victim of online fraud.	3.60	1.15	Medium	3
21. I am cautious about sharing my data with applications.	3.90	1.08	High	1

The table indicates the results for the dimension of digital safety and security, where the mean for the items ranged between 2.95 and 3.90. This demonstrates variation in the level of adoption of digital safety and security behaviors. Based on the data, it was observed that items 19 and 21 obtained the highest means, 3.80 and 3.90, respectively, indicating the students' diligence and awareness of the importance of protecting information in applications. In contrast, Item 16 received the lowest mean of 2.95, with the highest standard deviation of 1.30. This suggests that the use of strong passwords to protect accounts represents a significant challenge, as students' opinions on this matter were highly divergent. This reflects a lack of awareness of the importance of strong passwords or laxity in their use.

It can be concluded that the participants showed an acceptable level of awareness of some aspects of digital security. However, there is a pressing need to enhance awareness of practices related to strong passwords and other aspects of digital safety and security.

The results for this dimension were moderate, with significant variation, revealing a deficit in the students' general awareness of protection and their actual practices in maintaining digital safety, such as using strong passwords. This variation may be attributed to a lack of technical knowledge, which is consistent with the issue identified in Amalancei's study concerning "a lack of security and the fear of cyberattacks." This

underscores the importance of implementing awareness programs to enhance cybersecurity awareness.

Table 05: Means and Standard Deviations for the Dimension of Credibility

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Response Level	Rank
22. I verify the accuracy of news before sharing it.	3.85	1.07	High	4
23. I do not publish unconfirmed information.	4.00	1.03	High	1
24. I verify the source of any information before believing it.	3.80	1.10	High	5
25. I avoid sharing content intended to deceive others.	3.95	1.05	High	2
26. I search for other sources of controversial information.	3.20	1.22	Medium	7
27. I ensure that the links I share lead to reliable sources.	3.70	1.15	High	6
28. I avoid believing fake online offers.	3.88	1.08	High	3

As observed from the table above, the mean for the credibility dimension ranged between 3.20 and 4.00. This indicates that the sample members exhibited a medium- to high level credibility-related behaviors when using social networking sites. Items 23 and 25 received the highest means, at 4.00 and 3.95 respectively, which points to a strong awareness of the importance of avoiding the dissemination of misleading and false information. In contrast, Item 26 received the lowest mean of 3.20, with a high standard deviation of 1.22. This suggests that the sample members may be less inclined to seek multiple sources for controversial information and that their opinions on this behavior vary.

The results generally indicate that the sample members value the importance of credibility in information sharing, but there may be a need to

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improve their skills in evaluating reliable sources and seeking diverse information.

This dimension reveals the sample members' awareness and diligence in not publishing unreliable information, as well as their recognition of their role in enhancing the credibility of virtual spaces. However, their low inclination to verify sources of controversial information may indicate a deficiency in critical thinking skills. This aligns with the challenges of a lack of self-regulation and the necessity of developing a critical sense among youth, as concluded in Reda's study.

Table 06: Means and Standard Deviations for the Dimension of Digital Reputation

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Response Level	Rank
29. My behavior on platforms reflects my personal values.	4.20	0.97	High	2
30. I avoid posting photos/videos that create a negative impression.	4.10	1.00	High	4
31. I do not post content that harms the reputation of my university or group.	4.30	0.95	High	1
32. I am careful not to post comments that could harm my future reputation.	4.15	0.98	High	3
33. I set a good example for my peers through digital conduct.	4.05	1.02	High	6
34. I use logical arguments instead of emotional reactions in discussions.	3.95	1.05	High	7
35. I avoid heated discussions that can harm my image.	4.08	1.03	High	5

The table shows the results obtained for the dimensions of digital reputation, where the mean ranged between 3.95 and 4.30, indicating a high level of awareness of the importance of maintaining a good digital reputation. Items 31 and 29 received the highest means, at 4.30 and 4.20 respectively, with low standard deviations of 0.95 and 0.97. This confirms that students are aware of the impact of their behavior in virtualspaces on their image and the community to which they belong, as a majority of students agreed on this aspect. In contrast, Item 34, "I use logical arguments instead of emotional reactions in discussions," received a relatively lower mean of 3.95, with moderate standard deviation of 1.05. This may indicate that some students find it difficult to maintain composure and logic in discussions on these platforms, with a moderate variation in their opinions on this matter. The results generally show that the participants exhibit a high awareness of the importance of digital reputation and strive to maintain it, with the potential to enhance their skills in managing discussions on these platforms.

The high level of awareness in this dimension reveals a growing consciousness of the impact of digital behavior on personal identity, which is consistent with the positive trend among students towards adhering to digital principles, as found in the study by Amălănței et al. (2022). In contrast, the slight variation in the use of logical arguments instead of emotional reactions in discussions points to a deficit in emotion management. This highlights the importance of emotional intelligence as an influential factor in applying etiquette on these platforms, based on the findings of Putriet's study and its role in building a digital reputation.

Table 07: General Study Results

Ethical Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Respect for Privacy	3.95	1.08	High
Responsible Communication	3.88	1.05	High
Digital Security	3.50	1.15	Medium
Credibility	3.84	1.10	High
Digital Reputation	4.12	0.98	High

- ✓ **What is the level of respect for privacy dimensions in social networking sites among Media and Communication Sciences students at the University of Algiers 3? (First Research Question):**

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The analysis of the data above shows that the level of respect for privacy on social networking sites among the sample members was high, with a mean of 3.95 and a standard deviation of 1.08. The mean indicates that the sample members generally tended to agree with behaviors that promote privacy. However, the standard deviation also suggests a variation in students' opinions regarding these behaviors. This variation necessitates further studies to understand the factors that may influence differences in privacy practices among students. For instance, there may be differences in their understanding of privacy policies or awareness of the risks associated with privacy violations.

The high level of respect for privacy can be understood as an indicator of advanced awareness of the importance of controlling personal data in digital environments where the boundaries between private and public spaces are blurred. In line with the principle of social responsibility, which obliges users to protect their own data and that of others.

However, the noticeable variation in responses suggests that this awareness is not uniform among students and may be influenced by differences in digital experience or how they represent social platform settings and participation limits.

✓ **What is the level of responsible communication on social networking sites among Media and Communication Sciences students at the University of Algiers 3? (Second Research Question):**

It is evident that the level of responsible communication on social networking sites among the sample members is medium to high. The mean of 3.88 indicates that the respondents are inclined to practice responsible communication on social media platforms. The standard deviation of 1.05 suggests a slight variation in students' opinions on this matter. This variation can be explained by factors such as the differing cultural backgrounds of the students and to their different patterns of using these platforms.

The results indicate an advanced awareness of controlling communication behavior, consistent with the principles of social

responsibility that oblige users to protect the dignity of others. However, the variation in responses raises the hypothesis of multiple ethical standards depending on the publishing environment (public or closed). Hence, there is a need to develop guidelines for digital communication that go beyond theorizing to address real-life situations that contribute to promoting sustainable ethical commitment.

✓ **What is the level of the digital safety and security dimension of social networking sites among students of Media and Communication Sciences at the University of Algiers 3? (Third Research Question):**

The level of the sample members' application of digital security ethics was relatively the lowest among the ethical dimensions studied. The mean of 3.50 indicates that students showed a medium level of awareness of this dimension. In contrast, the standard deviation of 1.15 indicates a significant variation in students' opinions on this subject. This significant variation highlights the need for educational and awareness interventions to enhance digital security practices among students. The reason behind This variation could be due to the differing levels of technical knowledge among students or their varying exposure to cyber threats.

Social responsibility requires going beyond the stage of “good intentions” in publishing and adopting preventive behaviors that protect the digital system from breaches. Since statistical variation indicates disparities in technical skills among the sample, this calls for intensifying the practical aspects of digital security (such as authentication and privacy settings) within the students' educational tracks to ensure that ethical awareness is translated into safe behavioral practices.

✓ **What is the level of credibility of social networking sites among Media and Communication Sciences students at the University of Algiers 3? (Fourth Research Question):**

The data analysis shows that the level of the credibility dimension among the sample members is fairly high. The mean of 3.84 indicates that the sample members tend to prioritize credibility in their interactions on social networking sites. In contrast, the standard deviation of 1.10 suggests a variation in students' opinions on this matter. This can be explained by several factors, such as the students' varying abilities to evaluate the

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credibility of information or their different motivations for sharing information on social media platforms.

These results are consistent with the principles of social responsibility, which hold users accountable for the accuracy of what they publish. However, the variation in responses indicates a gap between the belief in the necessity of credibility and its actual application, which may be due to the desire for speed when posting on these sites.

The results emphasize the need to provide students with practical skills for verifying news, ensuring that this ethical principle is transformed into conscious daily practice. The result emphasizes the need to provide students with practical skills to verify news, to ensure that this ethical principle is transformed into conscious daily practice.

✓ **What is the level of the digital reputation dimension regarding social networking sites among students of Media and Communication Sciences at the University of Algiers 3? (Fifth Research Question):**

The level of this dimension is the highest among the ethical dimensions examined. The mean of 4.12 indicates that students demonstrate a strong awareness of the importance of maintaining a good digital reputation. More importantly, the relatively low standard deviation of 0.98 indicates a high degree of consensus among students on this topic. This consensus may reflect the growing awareness among students of the impact of their digital reputation on their personal and even professional lives.

From a social responsibility perspective, digital reputation represents an individual's self-imposed commitment to the impact of their digital behavior on their personal image and professional future. The results reveal that students' awareness of reputation focuses more on avoiding harm, which calls for directing this awareness towards 'creating a positive impact that transforms digital presence into an investment for the future.

5. Conclusion

This study sought to assess the level of the dimensions of ethical use of social networking sites among a sample of students from the Faculty of Media and Communication Sciences at the University of Algiers 3. The results showed that the sample members generally demonstrate a good level of awareness of ethical use in most of the dimensions examined, including respect for privacy, responsible communication, credibility, and digital reputation. However, the study also revealed some challenges, particularly in the area of digital security, where students showed greater variation in their responses. Additionally, a variation in students' opinions was observed regarding other aspects, such as reading privacy policies and seeking diverse sources of information.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Enhancing awareness of digital safety and security: Given the significant variation in the results related to digital security among the sample members, it is recommended to conduct awareness campaigns focusing on the necessity of using strong passwords, avoiding online fraud, and protecting personal information in applications.
- Encouraging and supporting universities to conduct further research aimed at exploring the factors that influence students' ethical practices in virtual spaces in order to enhance them.
- Conducting further research to explore the factors that influence students' ethical practices on social networking sites.
- Developing critical thinking skills among university students through the evaluation of information credibility, particularly on controversial topics.
- Conducting further studies that investigate the measurement of the ethical use of social networking sites among other societal segments.

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