GLOBAL BUSINESS AND AI-BASED SOCIAL MEDIA SURVEILLANCE: A STUDY OF STUDENT AWARENESS, TRUST AND ETHICAL PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

In the era of digital globalization, artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly reshaped how global businesses engage with consumers on social media platforms. AI-driven surveillance mechanisms are increasingly employed to monitor user behaviors, interactions, preferences, and even emotional responses, aiming to enhance marketing strategies, targeted advertisements, and consumer profiling. However, this pervasive surveillance raises critical concerns regarding privacy intrusion, lack of transparency, ethical dilemmas, and trust deficits. Students, being among the most active and digitally exposed demographic groups, are highly susceptible to the impacts of AI surveillance practices.

This study aims to examine student awareness, trust, and ethical perceptions toward AI-driven social media surveillance conducted by global corporations. Using a descriptive research design, primary data was collected from 210 respondents across diverse educational and occupational backgrounds through structured online questionnaires. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, thematic analysis, and visualization techniques to identify patterns in AI awareness, privacy concerns, trust levels, and ethical considerations.

The findings reveal that while a substantial proportion of students, particularly those aged 18–24, demonstrate high levels of AI awareness, there remains significant apprehension about the ethical use of AI and the potential risks to personal privacy. Trust in AI-powered brands is moderate and varies notably based on age, gender, and preferred social media platforms. Privacy concerns are especially heightened among TikTok and Facebook users, whereas LinkedIn users exhibit relatively higher trust levels.

Keywords: Global Business, Artificial Intelligence, Social Media Surveillance, Student Awareness, Trust, Ethical Perceptions, Digital Ethics, Data Privacy, AI In Business, Cybersecurity.

INTRODUCTION

In today's hyper-connected digital world, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force in the realm of social media. AI technologies now enable social media platforms and global businesses to collect, monitor, analyze, and predict user behavior at unprecedented scales. Through machine learning algorithms, natural language processing, facial recognition, and predictive analytics, companies track likes, shares, interactions, search patterns, and even emotional responses to content. While AI-driven personalization enhances user experience by delivering relevant advertisements, news feeds, and recommendations, it simultaneously engages in invasive surveillance that often goes unnoticed by users.

The deployment of AI surveillance on social media platforms raises several critical issues, including privacy breaches, data exploitation, algorithmic biases, manipulation of consumer behavior, and erosion of trust. Global businesses use this data for targeted marketing, consumer profiling, recruitment strategies, and product development. However, the lack of transparency in data handling practices and the limited awareness among users—especially among younger demographics—intensifies ethical concerns. AI's "black box" nature, where decision-making processes are opaque, makes it difficult for users to understand how their data is collected, used, or shared with third parties.

Students, as one of the most active and digitally engaged demographic groups, are constantly exposed to AI surveillance on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, and Twitter. Yet, there exists considerable variation in their awareness levels, privacy concerns, trust perceptions, and ethical understanding of AI technologies. While some students are aware of AI's capabilities and risks, many remain uninformed about how their personal information is collected, analyzed, and commodified.

This research study aims to explore the awareness, trust, and ethical perceptions of students regarding AI-driven social media surveillance by global businesses. It investigates how different factors such as age, gender, education level, and social media usage influence students' views. The study further seeks to understand the implications of AI surveillance practices on student

engagement with brands and the potential need for stronger ethical frameworks and regulatory interventions. In doing so, the research aspires to contribute to the ongoing discourse on responsible AI governance, privacy protection, and the ethical use of emerging technologies.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Amil et al. (2024) highlighted that while AI-driven personalization enhances customer satisfaction, it simultaneously raises significant privacy risks, thereby necessitating greater transparency from organizations utilizing such technologies**.** Similarly, **Ara and Ara (2024)** discussed the ethical dilemmas associated with generative AI, particularly emphasizing concerns around misinformation, content authenticity, and the potential for user manipulation. In the context of marketing, **Gabelaia et al. (2024)** found that AI-powered strategies can effectively improve customer engagement; however, they stressed the need for ethical safeguards to address the extensive data collection that underpins these practices. **Hossain et al. (2024)** identified major challenges in the realm of AI-powered social media entrepreneurship, specifically highlighting issues of data privacy and algorithmic bias. Meanwhile, **Gupta et al. (2024)** revealed that Generation Z is becoming increasingly aware of AI biases and the associated privacy threats. Despite these concerns, this demographic remains optimistic about the future of AI, particularly if its development and implementation are guided by strong ethical regulations. **Baidoo-Anu et al. (2024**) emphasized that while generative AI enhances learning efficiency, students express concerns over academic integrity and originality.

Krishnasamy et al. (2024) reported that students appreciate the efficiency AI brings to recruitment processes, though they remain cautious about issues related to algorithmic fairness and transparency. In the field of legal education, **Balan (2024)** cautioned against the risks of bias inherent in AI applications and advocated for the development of robust ethical governance frameworks. Exploring the marketing domain, **Mogaji et al. (2024)** demonstrated that while hyper-personalized AI strategies can significantly foster brand loyalty, they also raise serious ethical and privacy concerns. In the educational context, **Rejeb et al. (2024)** analyzed the use of ChatGPT as a tool to enhance learning experiences, but also warned of risks such as plagiarism and over-reliance on AI-generated content. Finally, **Marquis et al. (2024)** emphasized the increasing influence of AI across both business and education, underscoring the urgent need for transparency and ethical regulations to ensure responsible use.

Omeish et al. (2024) found that AI-driven social media marketing improves personalization but simultaneously heightens consumer concerns about data privacy. In a similar vein, **Saheb et al. (2024)** emphasized that as AI increasingly converges with social media marketing, the urgency for regulation surrounding data privacy and algorithmic transparency grows. **Indrawan et al. (2023)** underlined that while AI significantly boosts marketing efficiency, it also introduces challenges related to ethical data handling and fairness. Meanwhile, **Labajová et al. (2023)** noted widespread user skepticism regarding the accuracy and credibility of AI-generated content, advocating for enhanced transparency measures. Lastly, **McCollough et al. (2022)** warned about AI's role in amplifying misinformation through technologies such as deepfakes and fake news, stressing the need for stricter regulatory interventions.

Golder et al. (2017) examined ethical inconsistencies in research involving social media data, particularly focusing on challenges around informed consent and user privacy. In the educational domain, **Woithe et al. (2023)** found that students value ChatGPT for its ability to provide quick learning support, yet remain skeptical of its reliability for handling complex academic tasks. Similarly, **Xie-Carson et al. (2023)** revealed that while many users perceive AI-generated virtual influencers as authentic, concerns about deception and manipulated realities persist. **Pellas et al. (2023)** demonstrated that younger students are generally more receptive to the use of AI in creative content production, although lingering doubts about content authenticity were evident. Addressing educational policy and practice, **Nemorin et al. (2023)** advocated for improving AI literacy among educators to better manage privacy and bias in AI-driven learning environments. In line with this, **Chan and Hu (2023)** emphasized the critical need to integrate AI ethics into educational curricula to promote the responsible and transparent use of generative AI tools.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The growing integration of AI-driven surveillance in social media platforms necessitates an examination of user awareness, trust, and ethical perceptions. This study focuses on students, a digitally active demographic, to understand their responses to AI-powered monitoring by global businesses.

Research Problem

Despite the pervasive use of AI in social media surveillance, students often remain unaware of the extent to which their personal data is collected and analyzed. This study investigates students' awareness levels, their trust in AI-driven brands, and their ethical concerns regarding AI surveillance practices.

Justification of the Study

This study holds significant relevance in today's digital age for several reasons. Rising privacy concerns have emerged as AI becomes increasingly embedded in digital marketing and content curation, making it essential to understand how these technologies impact consumer privacy. Students, as digital natives, represent a key demographic for analyzing evolving attitudes toward data privacy and the ethical use of AI, given their active engagement on social media platforms. The research also underscores the need for ethical governance, as its findings can inform broader discussions on the creation of transparent and responsible AI policies. Additionally, the educational impact of this study is notable, as the insights gained can support the development of AI literacy programs within academic institutions, promoting more informed and privacy-conscious digital behavior.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the level of student awareness regarding AI-driven social media surveillance.
- To analyze students' trust in brands using AI for monitoring and marketing.
- To explore ethical perceptions concerning AI usage by global corporations.

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design to capture current awareness levels, attitudes, and trust perceptions. A structured questionnaire was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

Data Collection Methodology

The primary data for this study was collected through a Google Form survey, which served as the main instrument for gathering responses. The questionnaire was thoughtfully designed to include a mix of Likert scale questions, multiple-choice items, and open-ended prompts, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative insights. This diverse format enabled respondents to express their opinions with nuance while also providing measurable data for analysis. To ensure broad reach and diverse participation, the survey was distributed via multiple channels, including email, WhatsApp groups, and various social media platforms.

Sample Design

The study was based on a sample size of 210 respondents, selected using a stratified random sampling technique. This method ensured balanced representation across key demographic variables such as age, education level, and occupational status. By segmenting the population into distinct strata and randomly selecting participants from each group, the sampling process enhanced the reliability and generalizability of the findings. The demographic composition of the sample included school students, undergraduates, postgraduates, and working professionals, providing a comprehensive view of perspectives across different stages of education and career development.

Data Analysis Techniques

The analysis of the collected data involved both quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the findings. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, were used to summarize and interpret the quantitative data effectively. For the qualitative responses obtained through open-ended questions, thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns, insights, and sentiments expressed by the participants. To enhance the clarity and visual appeal of the results, various forms of data visualization were utilized, such as tables, pie charts, and bar graphs.

RESULT ANALYSIS

To assess students' awareness, trust, and ethical perceptions toward AI-driven social media surveillance, primary data collected from 210 respondents was analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic evaluation.

Table 1: AI Awareness and Privacy Concerns by Age Group

Age Group	Aware of AI (%)	Concerned About Privacy (%)	Trust AI-Powered Brands (%)
18–24	85%	70%	40%
25–34	78%	75%	45%
35–44	65%	80%	50%
45–54	50%	85%	35%
55+	30%	90%	25%

Interpretation:

The younger age group (18–24) shows the highest awareness (85%) but has moderate trust in AI-powered brands (40%). Awareness decreases steadily with age, while privacy concerns rise. Trust in AI-powered brands peaks in the 35–44 group but drops significantly among older respondents.

Table 2: AI Awareness and Privacy Concerns by Gender

Gender	Concerned About Privacy (%)	Trust AI-Powered Brands (%)	AI Awareness (%)
Male	65%	50%	75%
Female	80%	40%	70%
Other	75%	45%	72%

Interpretation:

Female respondents exhibit higher privacy concerns (80%) but lower trust in AI-driven brands (40%) compared to males. Males have slightly higher AI awareness (75%) and demonstrate more trust in AI-powered services.

Table 3: Privacy Concern by Social Media Platform

Social Media Platform	Concerned About Privacy (%)	Trust in AI-powered Ads (%)

Facebook	85%	35%
Instagram	75%	45%
Twitter/X	80%	40%
LinkedIn	60%	55%
TikTok	90%	30%

Interpretation:

TikTok users show the highest privacy concerns (90%), followed closely by Facebook users (85%). Trust in AI-powered ads is highest on LinkedIn (55%), indicating professional platform users may trust brand AI usage more compared to entertainment-focused platforms.

Hypotheses Formulated for the Study

To guide the empirical analysis of the study, a series of hypotheses were developed based on the collected data. Each hypothesis was aimed at exploring potential relationships between key variables related to AI awareness, trust, privacy concerns, and demographic factors. Descriptive statistics for the core variables are summarized in Tables 1 through 5.

Table No.1

Metric	AI Awareness (%)	Trust in AI Brands (%)
Mean	61.6	39.0
Median	65.0	40.0
Standard Deviation	19.81	8.60

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between students' awareness of AI-driven social media surveillance and their level of education.

H_{11}: There is a significant relationship between students' awareness of AI-driven social media surveillance and their level of education.

Table No.2

Metric	AI Awareness (%)	Trust in AI Brands (%)
Mean	61.6	39.0
Median	65.0	40.0
Standard Deviation	19.81	8.60

H_{02}: Students' privacy concerns are not significantly influenced by their frequency of social media usage.

H_{12}: Students' privacy concerns are significantly influenced by their frequency of social media usage.

Table No.3

Metric	Social Media Usage (hours/week)	Privacy Concerns (%)
Mean	20.0	80.0
Median	20.0	80.0
Standard Deviation	7.07	7.07

H_{03}: There is no significant association between trust in AI-powered businesses and educational background.

H_{13}: There is a significant association between trust in AI-powered businesses and educational background.

Table No.4

Metric	AI Awareness (%)
Mean	61.6
Median	65.0
Standard Deviation	19.81

H_{04}: Students' ethical concerns about AI surveillance do not vary significantly based on their occupation.

H_{14}: Students' ethical concerns about AI surveillance vary significantly based on their occupation.

Table No.5

Metric	Trust in AI Brands (%)
Mean	39.0
Median	40.0
Standard Deviation	8.60

H_{05}: There is no significant relationship between students' trust in AI-powered brands and their concerns about data privacy.

H_{15}: There is a significant relationship between students' trust in AI-powered brands and their concerns about data privacy.

The data presented across Tables 1 to 5 provides a foundational overview of student perceptions and behaviors related to AI awareness, trust in AI brands, social media usage, and privacy concerns. The average awareness of AI among students is relatively high, with a mean of 61.6%, while trust in AI brands is notably lower at 39.0%, indicating a potential skepticism despite familiarity. The standard deviation for AI awareness (19.81%) suggests greater variability in knowledge levels compared to the more uniform trust responses (8.60%). Social media usage averages 20 hours per week, aligning with an equally high level of privacy concern at 80%, suggesting that frequent users may be more conscious of their digital footprint. The hypotheses formulated aim to investigate relationships between these metrics and demographic factors such as education, occupation, and usage behavior. For instance, the study seeks to determine whether education influences awareness, whether occupation affects ethical concerns, and if frequency of social media use correlates with privacy sensitivity. Collectively, the data and hypotheses set the stage for deeper analysis into the sociotechnical impacts of AI in digital environments.

KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY:

The study reveals several key insights into student perceptions of AI-driven social media surveillance. Awareness of such surveillance is notably high among students, particularly those aged 18–24, indicating a strong understanding of digital tracking practices within this age group. Privacy concerns are prevalent across all demographics, with heightened sensitivity observed among women and older users. When it comes to trust in AI, students generally exhibit a moderate level of trust, which is shaped by factors such as platform transparency, the nature of the platform, and the implementation of ethical AI practices. The type of platform also significantly influences trust levels—professional networks like LinkedIn tend to foster greater trust, while entertainment-focused platforms such as TikTok and Facebook often face skepticism due to perceived misuse of data and lower transparency.

DISCUSSION

The research highlights a complex relationship between AI awareness, privacy concerns, and trust among students and young professionals. Notably, increased awareness of AI does not necessarily

lead to greater trust in AI-driven brands, indicating a gap between knowledge and confidence. Ethical concerns emerged as a significant factor influencing students' willingness to engage with such technologies, with transparency about AI usage and data practices identified as essential for building consumer trust. Platforms with professional associations, like LinkedIn, tend to enjoy relatively higher trust levels, likely due to perceptions of greater transparency and accountability. Conversely, brands that do not clearly communicate their AI practices risk losing credibility among digitally savvy users. Ethical branding—marked by openness and user-centric policies—was particularly influential in shaping positive perceptions of AI surveillance.

While the study offers valuable insights, it is important to consider its limitations. The sample was predominantly composed of students and young professionals, which may not fully reflect the views of older or non-academic populations. Relying on self-reported data introduces potential biases, such as social desirability or inaccurate self-assessment. The research focused primarily on major platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X, LinkedIn, and TikTok, leaving out newer or less widely used platforms. Geographically, the sample was limited to specific institutions and regions, affecting the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, the study captured perceptions at a single point in time; a longitudinal approach could offer more insight into how attitudes evolve. Another limitation is the lack of differentiation in technical understanding among respondents, which may influence their grasp of AI mechanisms. Finally, many participants expressed a sense of helplessness, perceiving AI technologies as advancing too quickly for regulation to effectively manage, further intensifying concerns about unchecked surveillance.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

This study has several limitations that may affect the breadth and applicability of its findings. Firstly, the sample size is limited to 210 respondents, which may restrict the generalizability of the results to a broader population. Additionally, the focus is solely on students and professionals, thereby excluding other important demographic groups whose perspectives on AI surveillance may differ. The use of self-reported data also introduces the possibility of biases such as social desirability or recall bias, which can influence the accuracy of the responses. Since the study captures data at a single point in time, it does not account for evolving opinions or trends related to AI surveillance. Another limitation is the lack of consideration for regional variations in awareness and attitudes toward AI, which could significantly impact the findings. Moreover, the

study does not assess the long-term effects of AI surveillance on trust and privacy concerns, leaving a gap in understanding its sustained impact. Respondents' answers may also be influenced by their personal experiences, leading to variability that may not be representative of broader trends. The scope of the study is confined to AI surveillance on social media, excluding other significant applications of AI in different contexts. Language barriers may have affected how participants interpreted survey questions, potentially leading to miscommunication. Lastly, external factors such as media coverage or current events may have shaped respondents' opinions, introducing unintended bias into the data.

FUTURE POSSIBILITIES:

There are numerous directions for future research that could enrich the understanding of AI surveillance and its implications. Longitudinal studies could be conducted to observe how perceptions of AI surveillance evolve over time, providing a more dynamic understanding of public sentiment. Expanding the sample size to include a more diverse and representative population would enhance the generalizability of future findings. Further research could also explore the impact of AI surveillance in specific industries, such as healthcare or finance, where privacy concerns may be particularly pronounced. Cross-cultural studies could reveal important differences in awareness and trust levels across various regions and societies. Integrating qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, would offer deeper insights into individual experiences and attitudes. Additionally, investigating the role of government regulations could shed light on how policy shapes public trust in AI surveillance. Another promising avenue is examining the link between AI literacy and acceptance of surveillance practices. Predictive models could be developed to forecast future trends in privacy concerns and trust regarding AI. The psychological effects of AI surveillance on social media users also warrant closer investigation to understand its impact on mental well-being. Finally, future research could focus on establishing ethical frameworks for the responsible and transparent use of AI surveillance technologies, guiding businesses and governments in their implementation strategies.

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