DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS SOCIO-CULTURAL EFFECTS ON PAKHTUN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT
The study explores the influence of social media on individuals' cultural and social views, focusing on its role in shaping cultural perceptions, promoting diversity, and contributing to cultural stereotypes. Through a survey-based analysis, the research examines how social media affects personal beliefs and values, with particular attention to engagement with cultural content and its impact on cultural diversity. The findings reveal diverse experiences: while a significant proportion of respondents report changes in their perspectives due to social media, a large portion remains unaffected, and some express uncertainty about its influence. Additionally, the study highlights a high level of engagement with cultural content, suggesting its cultural significance in the digital landscape. The research also addresses respondents' perceptions of social media's role in cultural diversity, with a majority viewing it positively, though concerns about the spread of negative cultural stereotypes, particularly in regions like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, remain prevalent. This paper contributes to the understanding of social media's complex role in shaping cultural discussions, promoting diversity, and reinforcing stereotypes, offering insights into the varying perceptions of digital platforms' impact on culture.
Keywords: Social Media, Society, Dimensions, Socio-Cultural.

INTRODUCTION

A paradigm shifts from traditional media; social media has a global impact on political systems and governmental structures. Social networking is becoming increasingly popular among young people worldwide and in Pakistan in particular. In Pakistan, social media is utilised for five different things: breaking news stories that news organisations neglect; mobilising the public for protests and campaigns; bringing attention to global issues affecting humanity; organising campaigns for social causes; and closing the communication gap between the public and the government. Additionally, it affects culture and society (Kugelman, 2012).

The development of social networks from their initial starting points to the cutting-edge digital age is a captivating excursion that has fundamentally impacted human connection, correspondence, and how we share data. However social networking sites such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook rule our computerized scene today, the foundations of informal communication can be followed back to the 1950s, well before the appearance of PCs and the web. During the 1950s, telephone phreaking arose as a subculture of people who investigated and controlled the phone organization. Telephone phreaks, as they were called, utilized hand-crafted electronic gadgets to acquireUnauthorized entry into the phone system, permitting them to settle on free decisions and investigate the organization's capacities. This was an early type of hacking, where people would take advantage of

weaknesses in the framework to accomplish their objectives (Butt, 2019).

One of the most striking accomplishments of telephone phreaks was the revelation of phone organization test lines and meeting circuits. These circuits were expected for the end goal of testing however were much of the time left unstable, permitting telephone phreaks to involve them for their own motivations. This disclosure permitted them to speak with one another, share data, and plan their exercises. One of the trailblazers in the telephone phreaking local area was Brett Boundaries, who is credited with facilitating the principal writes and digital broadcasts utilizing corporate unused voice letter drops. These voice letter drops were planned for organization use however were much of the time left unstable, permitting Boundaries and other telephone phreaks to involve them as a stage for sharing their considerations, thoughts, and encounters (Abbasi, 2020).

In the year 2000, social media encountered a huge flood with the presentation of various person to person communication destinations. These platforms changed the manner in which people and associations communicated, interfacing individuals with shared interests in music, schooling, motion pictures, and friendship. Among the spearheading person to person communication destinations sent off in 2000 were Lunar Tempest, Six Degrees, Cyworld, Ryze, and Wikipedia. These platforms furnished clients with the capacity to make profiles, interface with others, and offer data, photographs, and video (Abbasi & Huang, 2021).

Facebook is a social networks communication site sent off in February 2004, and it is secretly worked by Facebook, Inc. (Facebook, 2004). Facebook was established by Imprint Zuckerberg and others when he was an understudy at Harvard; howeverthe website was initially launched, it was sort of restricted to Harvard understudies. Afterwards, the honour was extended to understudies in secondary schools and, eventually, to all individuals who are 13 years of age or older. Facebook has more than 500 million active users as of July 2010. Facebook was ranked as the world's most popular unofficial community in January 2009. Furthermore, according to a May 2010 Google report, more people accessed Facebook than any other website worldwide. It

states that findings from 1,000 locations worldwide led to the discovery of this. India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are nations encountering huge developments in social media utilization, with a joined populace addressing 22.2% of the world's aggregate. India, specifically, stands firm on one of the main three footholds with regard to the quantity of Facebook clients, despite just 3.8% of India's complete populace being on Facebook. Pakistan and Bangladesh have comparable measurements, with Facebook entrance paces of 3.4% and 1.6%, respectively. These nations offer worthwhile likely business sectors for Facebook and other social networks communication locales because of their solid development rates (20.5%, 16.7%, and 14.2% over the most recent a half year) and the chance of arriving at an enormous portion of the excess populace. Additionally, a critical part of the populace in these nations approaches cells, with paces of 77.3%, 61.2%, and 54.6% in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, separately. (Boyd, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

In the contemporary era of digital communication, where access to political, social, and cultural information is only a click away, the influence of social media on public opinion and governance has grown significantly. With over 72 million active social media users in Pakistan (Hussain, 2021) , platforms with minimal regulatory restrictions compared to traditional media have emerged as powerful tools for shaping public discourse. Notably, even mainstream media anchors and columnists are transitioning to social media, where their content reaches wider audiences.

In this context, the rise of local Pashtun social media influencers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province is particularly significant. These influencers, with their so-called charismatic personalities and substantial followings, have become key players in shaping socio-political and cultural perceptions. However, their influence raises critical questions about the role of social media in promoting good governance in the digital age. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of social media on good governess in this digital age; specifically, the

study will take a case study of Pakistan`s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Objective of the Study
- The influence of social media on individuals' cultural and social views.
- The impact of social media on cultural diversity and perceptions, including cultural stereotypes.

Research Question
- **To what extent do individuals believe that social media has influenced their cultural and social perspectives?**
- How do respondents perceive the role of social media in shaping cultural diversity and contributing to cultural stereotypes?

Literature Review
In Pakistan, social media use is likewise high among youngsters, with a critical number of clients between the ages of 18 and 34. Numerous youngsters in Pakistan utilize social media to remain informed about news and recent developments, associate with loved ones, and offer their viewpoints and encounters. Additionally, the ubiquity of social media powerhouses and the utilization of social media for business and showcasing purposes have added to the development of these platforms. In Bangladesh, social media use is likewise high among youngsters, with countless clients between the ages of 18 and 34. Numerous youngsters in Bangladesh utilize social media to remain informed about news and recent developments, associate with loved ones, and offer their viewpoints and encounters. Moreover, the prevalence of social media powerhouses and the utilization of social media for business and advertising purposes have added to the development of these platforms (Mukhtar, et al 2023).

The quick development of social media in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh is driven by a few variables. First and foremost, the rising accessibility of reasonable cell phones and Internet network has made it simpler for individuals to get to social media platforms. Additionally, the rising notoriety of social media powerhouses and the utilization of social media for business and promoting purposes have added to the development of these platforms. Besides, the elevated degree of commitment and the capacity to associate with loved ones have made social media an essential piece of day to day existence for the overwhelming majority individuals in these nations (Diesner, 2012)

Internet utilization in Pakistan has been consistently expanding since its presentation in 1990. As per 2013 measurements, there were 31 million Internet clients in Pakistan, with 15 million of them perusing the Internet utilizing their cell phones. This shows a huge shift towards mobile Internet access, which is turning out to be progressively well known because of its comfort and accessibility. Despite the developing number of Internet clients, the typical meeting time for Pakistani clients is just 5 minutes. This proposes that numerous clients are getting to the Internet for speedy data or diversion instead of for expanded timeframes. Nonetheless, it is quite important that 80% of Internet clients in Pakistan spend over an hour online consistently, demonstrating an elevated degree of commitment with online content. In expansion to Internet utilization, Pakistan is likewise home to more than 3,000,000 bloggers, who add to the web-based discussion on a great many subjects. Contributing to a blog has turned into a famous way for people to share their considerations, sentiments, and encounters with a worldwide crowd, and the quantity of bloggers in Pakistan proceeds to grow. Facebook is perhaps of the most well-known social medium Network in Pakistan, with north of 4,000,000 clients. This makes it a significant instrument for correspondence and systems administration among Pakistani residents, as well as an important stage for organizations and associations to arrive at their objective audience. (Hanif, 2023)

It's critical to take note of that these 25 million clients address just a piece of Pakistan's all out grown-up populace, which is assessed to be around 116 million. This implies that roughly 21% of Pakistan's grown-up populace is dynamic on the web, a critical increment from earlier years. Conversely, Pakistan's paper entrance rate in 2004 was simply 50.3 per 1,000 individuals, or 5% of the all-out populace. While this rate might have expanded from that point forward, it is still a lot

of lower than the pace of Internet use. This recommends that the Internet has turned into a better known and far reaching wellspring of data and diversion for Pakistanis contrasted with customary print publications. One of the purposes behind the web's fame in Pakistan is its openness and comfort. Not at all like papers, which require actual conveyance and frequently have restricted accessibility in country regions, the Internet can be gotten to from anyplace with an Internet association. This has made it simpler for individuals in Pakistan to remain educated and associated, no matter what their area (Muhammad, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The **Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)** provides a robust framework for understanding the socio-cultural implications of social media in Pakhtun society. Developed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974), UGT shifts the focus from the effects of media on passive audiences to exploring how active users purposefully seek media content to satisfy specific needs and desires. This theory is particularly relevant for examining the dimensions of social media use in a culturally rich and traditional context like Pakhtun society (Katz et al., 1974). Media consumption is influenced by cultural values and societal norms, making it essential to consider how Pakhtun traditions shape and are shaped by social media use (Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2011).

Relevance to the Study
Pakhtun society, with its strong adherence to cultural norms like *Pakhtunwali* (a code of conduct encompassing hospitality, honor, and valor), provides a unique context for applying UGT. Social media use in such a society can have transformative effects on socio-cultural dynamics, including information seeking & dissemination, identity formation and social interaction.

Methodology

A quantitative approach utilizing both primary and secondary sources was used in the study. The objective is to evaluate the significance of social media and its cultural and societal impacts in both rural and urban areas. Data was gathered from the general population to explore how social media use influences their cultural practices. Data collection involved the development of a mixed-format questionnaire with both close-ended and open-ended questions, targeting various respondents to examine the role of social media in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, highlighting both its positive and negative effects. The study employed diverse analytical techniques to derive descriptive findings related to the region, assess the extent of the impacts, and identify potential contributions to effective governance. The data collection and analysis process consisted of three phases: an initial literature review to refine the questionnaire and guide focus group discussions, followed by interviews with the general public.

Data Analysis
Table 1 Changing Social and Cultural Views
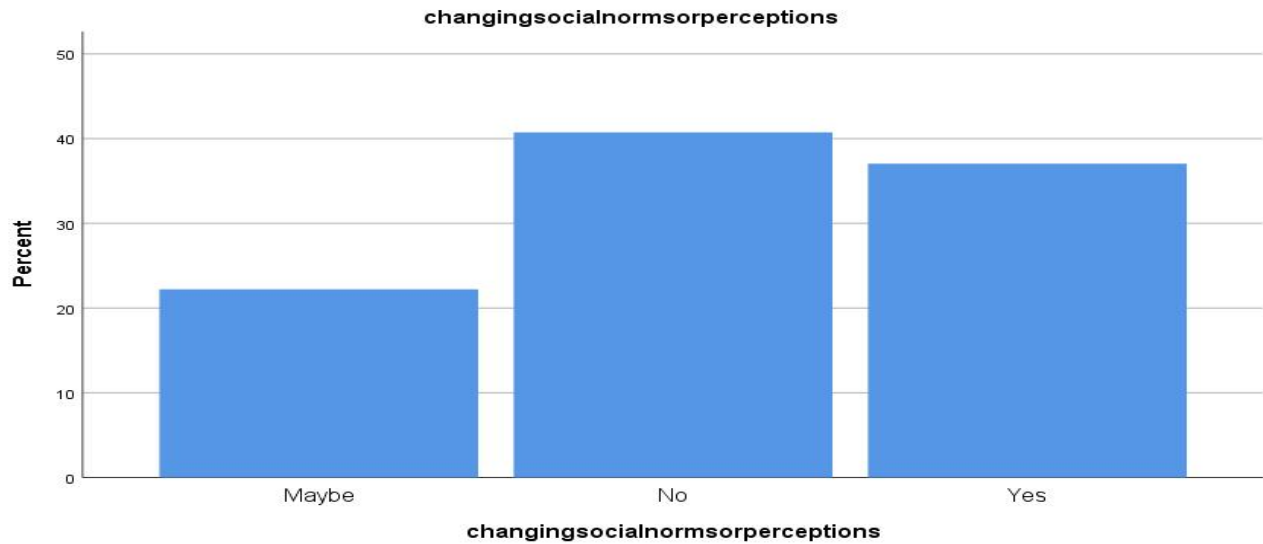
The table 1 shown in the figure a glimpse into the extent to which individuals are influenced by social media in terms of their cultural and social views. With 34.6% of respondents affirming that they have indeed changed their perspectives based on information encountered on social media, and 42.3% denying any such change, the responses indicate a diverse range of experiences and attitudes towards the impact of digital platforms on personal beliefs and values. Firstly, it's essential to acknowledge the transformative power of social media in contemporary society. While the remaining respondents 23.1% expressed uncertainty or ambivalence regarding whether social media has influenced their cultural or social views, indicating a degree of introspection and self-awareness about the complexities of digital influence.

Figure 2: Consuming Cultural Content

Consuming Cultural Content

Legend:
- Always
- Often
- Rarely
- Sometimes
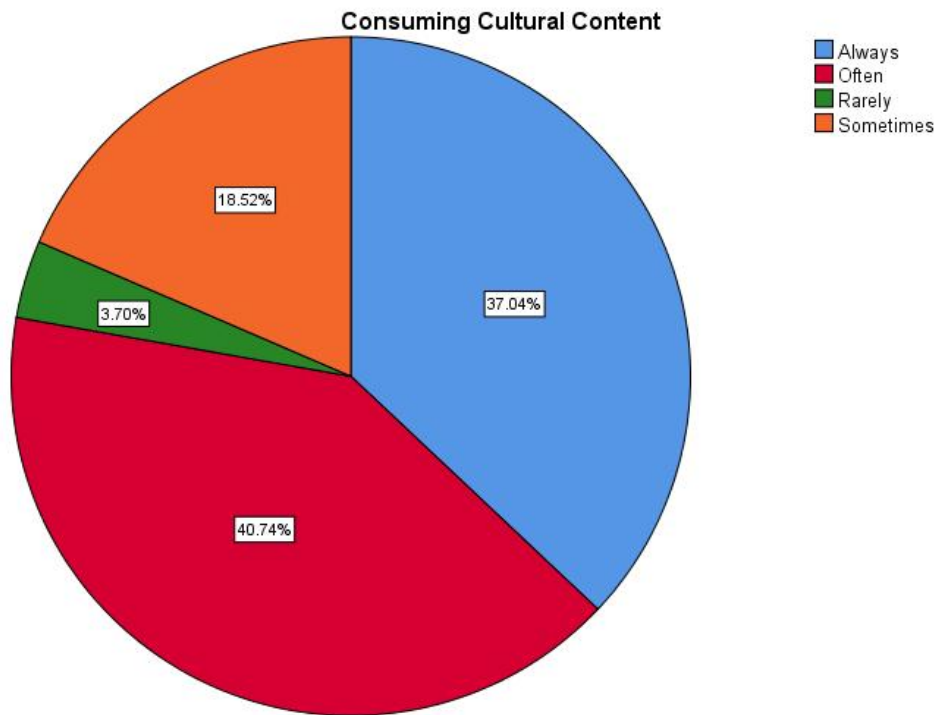
The chart 2 shows about Consuming Cultural Content. It illustrates the frequency with which respondents engage with cultural content. A majority of participants, 77.78%, fall into the always 37.04% and Often 40.74% categories, indicating a high level of consistent engagement. Meanwhile, 18.52% consume cultural content occasionally sometimes, and only a small fraction, 3.70%, report rare interaction rarely. These findings highlight a strong overall interest in cultural content, suggesting its cultural significance and accessibility within the context of the study.

Table 3: Social Media and Cultural Diversity
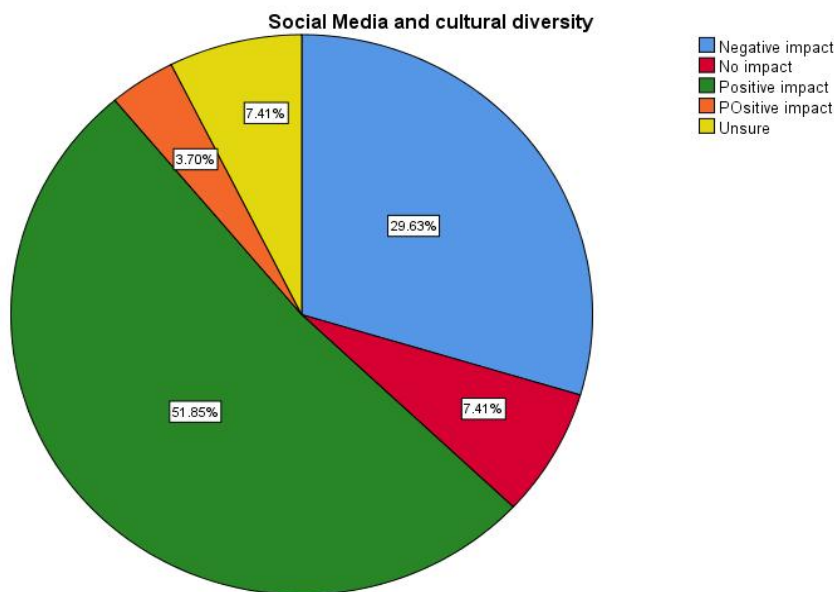
The table 3 explores about "Social Media and Cultural Diversity" reveals respondents' perceptions of the impact of social media on cultural diversity. A majority, 51.85 percent, believe that social media has a positive impact, while 29.63 percent view it as having a negative impact. A small portion of respondents, 7.41 percent, feel that social media has no impact, and an equal percentage, 7.41 percent, are unsure about its effects. Additionally, 3.70 percent of participants perceive the influence of social media on cultural diversity to be negligible.

Table 4: Debating Culture on Social Media
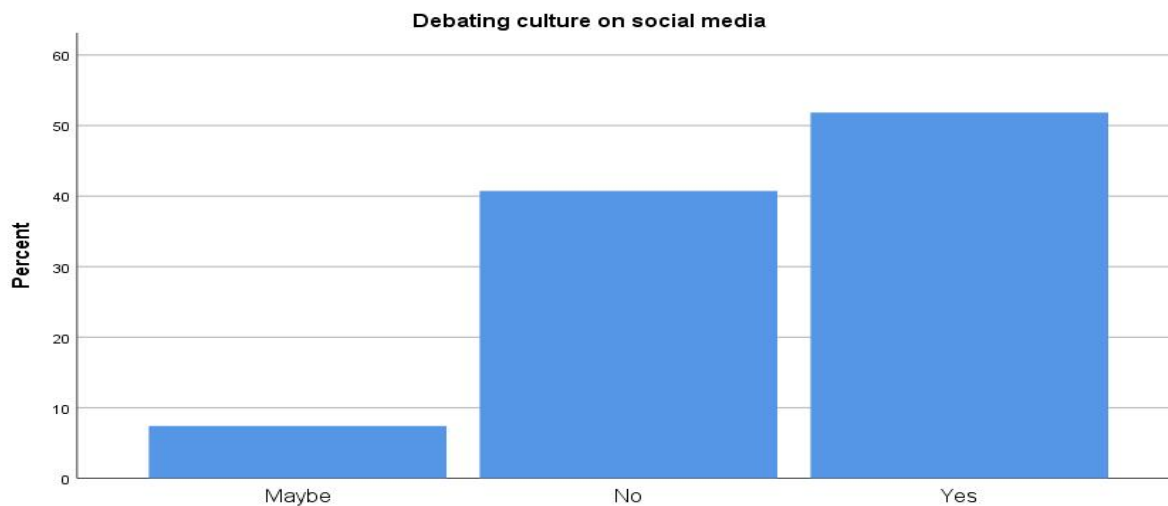
The table 4 shows respondents' views on whether culture is debated on social media. A significant majority, over 40 percent, affirm that culture is debated - Yes. Approximately 40 percent believe culture is not debated on social media - No, while a small proportion, around 10 percent, are unsure or Maybe. These results suggest that while most respondents acknowledge cultural debates occurring on social media, there is still a sizable group who believe it doesn't happen or are uncertain about it.

Table 5: Social Media and Cultural Stereotypes
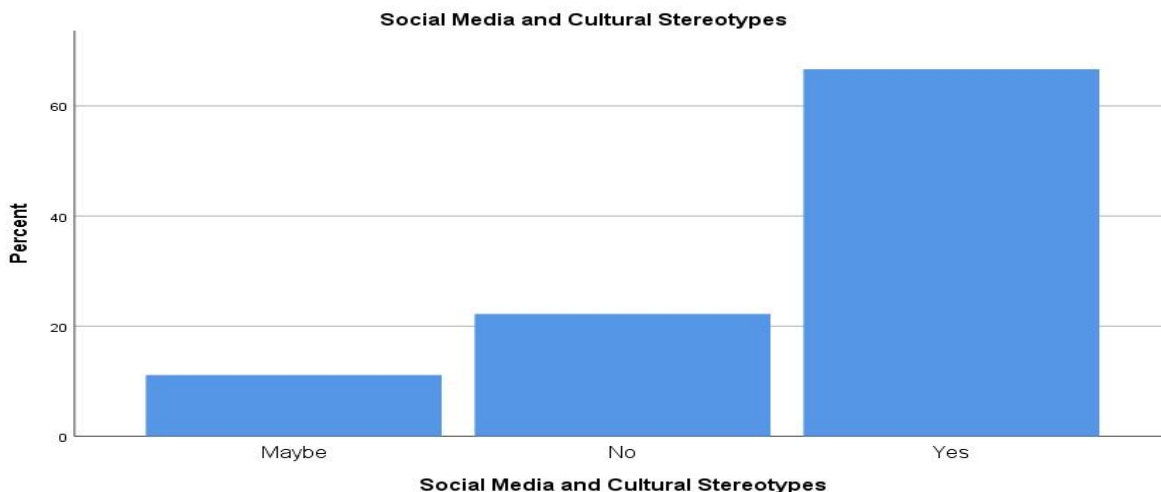
The table 5 explores the impact of social media on cultural perceptions and stereotypes in regions like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) is a topic of significant debate, as evidenced by the diverse opinions reflected in the survey results. With 65.4% of respondents believing that social media has contributed to the spread of negative cultural stereotypes, 23.1% disagreeing, and 11.5% uncertain, it's clear that there are differing perspectives on the matter.

Conclusion

This study offers valuable insights into the diverse ways in which social media influences cultural and social views. The primary objectives of the research were to examine the extent to which social media shapes individuals' cultural perspectives, to assess its role in promoting cultural diversity, and to explore its contribution to cultural perceptions and stereotypes. The research questions focused on understanding the degree to which social media impacts personal beliefs and values, as well as how it shapes cultural diversity and stereotypes in different regions.

The findings indicate a varied response to the influence of social media on cultural and social views. While 34.6% of respondents reported a shift in their perspectives due to information encountered on social media, 42.3% denied any such change, highlighting a significant diversity of experiences with digital platforms. The 23.1% who expressed uncertainty reflect a degree of introspection, acknowledging the complexities surrounding the influence of social media. This suggests that while social media has a transformative power in contemporary society, its impact on individual views is not uniform.

Another key finding is the high level of engagement with cultural content, with 77.78% of respondents consuming cultural content either always or often. This suggests that cultural content holds significant importance and is consistently accessible on digital platforms. Social media's role in shaping perceptions of cultural diversity is also noteworthy, with a majority (51.85%) viewing it positively, while 29.63% believe it has a negative impact. These results highlight social media's potential to promote cultural diversity, though some respondents remain skeptical about its overall effect.

Additionally, the study sheds light on the debate surrounding culture on social media. Over 40% of respondents affirm that culture is indeed debated on social media, while a similar proportion believes it is not. This division reflects differing opinions on the platform's role in facilitating meaningful discussions about culture. Finally, the study explored the impact of social media on cultural stereotypes, particularly in regions like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where a majority (65.4%) believe it contributes to the spread of negative stereotypes. These findings underscore the ongoing concern about the negative aspects of social media's influence, despite its potential to foster cultural understanding.

Overall, this research highlights the complex and multifaceted role of social media in shaping cultural perceptions. While it offers opportunities for cultural exchange and diversity, it also

presents challenges, especially concerning the reinforcement of stereotypes. The study's objectives and research questions have been met, providing a clearer understanding of how social media impacts cultural beliefs and values across different contexts.

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