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**Unveiling the social media surveillance research: themes, ethics and global implications**

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## **Unveiling the social media surveillance research: themes, ethics and global implications**

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**Abstract:** This systematic bibliometric analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the evolving landscape of social media surveillance. It explores key themes, methodologies and scholarly contributions in the field, highlighting its multidisciplinary nature. Notably, the study delves beyond technology, addressing ethical, privacy and civil liberties concerns associated with monitoring online activities and social networks. The themes identified in the literature encompass ethical considerations, political and social implications, algorithmic biases and the role of social media in public health and disease surveillance. The importance of international collaboration and shared ethical standards to tackle global challenges related to social media surveillance is emphasised. It informs future academic research by identifying knowledge gaps and emerging trends. Policymakers can use these insights to craft ethical guidelines and policies, while industry practices can adopt responsible data usage measures. Public awareness and education initiatives benefit from a deeper understanding of the implications of social media surveillance.

**Keywords:** ethical considerations; multidisciplinary; algorithmic biases; global collaboration; privacy concerns.

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**Biographical notes:** Md Nurul Islam is a PhD scholar and Teaching Assistant at Nanjing University's School of Information Management, and he is pursuing a PhD degree in Library, Information and Archives Management under the Chinese Government Scholarship. With over 15 years of teaching and research experience in Information Science and Library Management in Bangladesh, he is an Expert in areas like Digital Libraries and Records Management. He founded the Library and Information Science program at Patuakhali College of Library and Information Science. In 2022, he spoke at the World Health Summit in Berlin, Germany. He has received numerous awards and scholarships, including the VLIR-UOS Scholarship in Belgium and a PhD Scholarship in China.

## 1 Introduction

In the contemporary digital era, the pervasive nature of social media has revolutionised communication, information dissemination and societal interactions. While this transformation has brought about numerous benefits, it has also given rise to the ubiquitous practice of social media surveillance (Ahamad et al., 2023; Keum, 2024; Purnama and Asdlori, 2023; Ramadhani and Indradjati, 2023; Sahebi and Formosa, 2022; Traylor et al., 2023). This study, embarks on a comprehensive bibliometric analysis to unravel the multifaceted dimensions of this burgeoning field and encapsulates the essence of the research, signifying the intention to expose, scrutinise and comprehend the various facets of social media surveillance. The study underscores the need to unravel the layers surrounding social media surveillance. The term ‘unveiling’ suggests a deliberate effort to disclose and understand the intricacies of a subject that has become deeply interwoven with modern life. Social media surveillance, in its various forms (Arayankalam et al., 2024; Kikerpill and Siibak, 2023; McMillan et al., 2023; Pescott, 2024; Singh and Upreti, 2023), has become an intrinsic part of the digital landscape, impacting individuals, societies and nations worldwide (Mihelj and Jiménez-Martínez, 2021). This reflects the ambition to explore not only the surface-level manifestations but also the underlying themes, ethical considerations and the broader implications that resonate on a global scale.

Social media surveillance transcends geographical boundaries, affecting individuals across cultures, societies and political landscapes. The proliferation of social media platforms has facilitated an unprecedented level of connectivity, but it has also given rise to the widespread monitoring of users’ activities. Governments, corporations and other entities engage in surveillance practices for various purposes, including national security, marketing and social control. The global dimension of this issue is underscored by the fact that individuals from diverse backgrounds, irrespective of their geographical location, are subjected to surveillance mechanisms that impact their privacy, autonomy and freedom of expression (Gaeta, 2023; McMillan et al., 2022; Oguafor and Nevzat, 2023; Shafer et al., 2022). The global nature of social media surveillance is manifested in various ways, such as cross-border data flows, international collaborations in surveillance initiatives and the shared challenges faced by individuals navigating the digital landscape (Dwivedi et al., 2022; Spitzberg et al., 2021; Wilson and Hahn, 2021). Issues like data protection, privacy regulations and the ethical dilemmas surrounding surveillance are not confined to specific regions but resonate universally. Therefore, understanding the nuances of social media surveillance on a global scale is imperative for devising informed policies, ethical frameworks and strategies to navigate the challenges posed by this digital phenomenon.

Several factors contribute to the ubiquity and significance of social media surveillance as a research topic. Firstly, the rapid advancement of technology has enabled unprecedented access to vast amounts of user-generated data on social media platforms. This wealth of information becomes a valuable resource for surveillance purposes, ranging from targeted advertising to intelligence gathering. The evolving landscape of social media platforms, with their diverse functionalities and user bases, adds complexity to the surveillance ecosystem (Canevez et al., 2023; Holler and Bondorevsky-Heyman, 2024; Sánchez and Bennett, 2023; Tarlow, 2023). Secondly, the global rise in concerns related to security, terrorism and cyber threats has prompted governments and law enforcement agencies to resort to sophisticated surveillance measures, often involving the

monitoring of social media activities. The perceived need for pre-emptive action in the digital realm has led to the normalisation of surveillance practices, raising ethical questions about the balance between security imperatives and individual rights (Alnuaimi and Alawida, 2023; Chhtrapati et al., 2024; Rawat, 2023; Wang, 2024). Moreover, the commercialisation of social media platforms has introduced a new dimension to surveillance, with corporations employing sophisticated algorithms to track user behaviour for targeted advertising and market analysis. This commercial surveillance, driven by economic motives, raises ethical concerns about the commodification of personal data and the erosion of user privacy for profit (Aulawi et al., 2023; Fitriani et al., 2023a; Hariguna and Ruangkanjanases, 2023; Shamim et al., 2024).

In light of these contributing factors, it becomes evident that social media surveillance is not merely a technological or legal challenge but a complex socio-technical issue with profound implications for individuals and societies globally. Understanding the interplay of these factors is crucial for navigating the ethical, legal and societal dimensions of social media surveillance comprehensively. In the subsequent sections of this study, we delve into a bibliometric analysis to systematically examine the existing scholarly landscape surrounding social media surveillance. Through this exploration, we aim to uncover trends, identify gaps and provide insights that contribute to a nuanced understanding of the themes, ethical considerations and global implications associated with social media surveillance research.

The objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive examination of social media surveillance, focusing on identifying and analysing key themes, ethical considerations and global implications associated with this increasingly prevalent phenomenon. Through a thorough bibliometric analysis of scholarly literature, we aim to map the evolution of research trends over time, uncover patterns in ethical considerations and methodological approaches and assess the impact of global collaboration and interdisciplinary efforts on advancing the field. By gaining insights into the academic landscape of social media surveillance, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the subject, inform ethical discussions and provide valuable perspectives on the broader implications for privacy, human rights and societal norms. At the heart of our inquiry lies a central research question that propels our investigation:

*RQ:* What are the evolving key themes, ethical considerations and global implications in social media surveillance research, and how do interdisciplinary and international collaborations influence the development of ethical frameworks and policies within this field?

## 2 Literature review

The intersection of technology, communication, and surveillance has given rise to a dynamic and complex field of study known as social media surveillance. As the digital age has transformed how individuals connect and share information, monitoring online activities and social networks has become a subject of significant academic inquiry (Haleem et al., 2022). This literature review delves into the foundations, key themes and scholarly contributions that have shaped the landscape of social media surveillance research, setting the stage for a systematic and bibliometric analysis of this evolving field. The emergence of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram has redefined how people interact and communicate. These platforms have facilitated the

exchange of ideas and information on an unprecedented scale and have also become reservoirs of personal data. This shift in digital behaviour has prompted governments, corporations and researchers to explore the potential uses and implications of social media surveillance (Earl et al., 2022).

The evolution of social media surveillance research can be traced back to the early 2000s when early studies primarily focused on the technical aspects of data collection and analysis. Researchers were intrigued by the possibilities of harnessing user-generated content from marketing to public health monitoring. During this period, surveillance was often viewed through the lens of technological capabilities and data mining techniques (Aiello et al., 2020). Over time, the field of social media surveillance expanded beyond its technical foundations to encompass a wide range of themes and research directions (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Firstly, ethical and privacy concerns have taken centre stage as scholars grapple with the ethical implications of collecting and analysing user data without explicit consent, sparking inquiries into individual rights and the boundaries of surveillance (Allahrakha, 2023; Dhiman, 2023a; Dhirani et al., 2023). Secondly, political and social implications have garnered attention, with studies scrutinising how social media influences political discourse, shapes public opinion and catalyses social movements, including its role in propagating misinformation and mobilising grassroots activism (Goyanes and Skoric, 2023). Furthermore, the issue of algorithmic bias and discrimination has emerged, leading researchers to investigate how surveillance algorithms can perpetuate existing inequalities, particularly in law enforcement and predictive policing (Taherdoost, 2023). Additionally, the field has delved into counterterrorism and security applications, examining the efficacy of monitoring online activities in identifying potential threats and preventing violence (Balazard and Peace, 2023; Henshaw, 2023; Yesil, 2023). Lastly, social media data has found utility in public health, with researchers leveraging online conversations to track disease spread and monitor real-time public health trends. These intertwined themes collectively shape social media surveillance research's diverse and dynamic landscape (Kanchan and Gaidhane, 2023; Zhu et al., 2023).

Methodological advancements have played a pivotal role in shaping social media surveillance research. The field has evolved from basic data collection methods to more sophisticated techniques, including natural language processing, machine learning and network analysis. These methodologies have empowered researchers to extract valuable insights from vast unstructured social media data (Parry et al., 2022). Despite the advancements and contributions, social media surveillance research grapples with ongoing debates and challenges. Key areas of contention include striking a balance between security and civil liberties, addressing algorithmic biases and developing ethical frameworks for surveillance practices (Dhiman, 2023b, 2023b; Li et al., 2023; Stockmann, 2023). The landscape of social media surveillance research is vast and multifaceted, reflecting the rapid evolution of digital technologies and their impact on society (Barrett-Maitland and Lynch, 2020). This literature review provides a glimpse into the foundations, key themes and scholarly contributions shaping the field. As we embark on a systematic and bibliometric analysis of this landscape, it is crucial to recognise the complex interplay between technology, ethics and society that defines the realm of social media surveillance.

Despite significant advancements, gaps in social media surveillance research persist, which this study aims to address. Current literature extensively covers technical aspects and ethical implications of surveillance but often needs a comprehensive,

interdisciplinary approach. There is a need for more studies that integrate perspectives from sociology, law and computer science to understand the socio-technical dynamics involved fully. Moreover, existing research tends to focus on specific regions or platforms, overlooking social media surveillance's global and multifaceted nature. This study's bibliometric analysis will bridge these gaps by mapping out the evolution of research trends, highlighting ethical considerations and evaluating the impact of international collaborations on advancing the field.

### 3 Methodology

We leveraged bibliometric analysis techniques and the Biblioshiny package in RStudio to comprehensively examine academic publications on social media surveillance. Bibliometric analysis involves quantitatively assessing the characteristics and patterns within the selected literature, including citation analysis, co-citation analysis and co-authorship analysis (Donthu et al., 2021; Nicolaisen, 2010; Osareh, 1996). The use of Biblioshiny, an R package designed for bibliometric analysis, facilitated data management, visualisation and the extraction of meaningful insights from the extensive data set (Fitriani et al., 2023b; Thakuria et al., 2023; Thangavel and Chandra, 2023). This combination of bibliometric methods and Biblioshiny allowed us to unravel the intellectual structure of the field, identify influential studies and research networks and gain valuable insights into the evolution of research trends in social media surveillance.

This study employed a rigorous and systematic methodology to explore the social media surveillance research landscape. Our methodology encompassed several key steps, starting with the initial search in the Scopus database and concluding with selecting relevant academic publications for our analysis.

**Table 1** Methods for 'unveiling the social media surveillance research: themes, ethics and global implications'

<i>Step</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Tools used</i>	<i>Outputs</i>
(1) Database Search	Retrieve relevant documents using keywords related to social media surveillance.	Scopus Database	- Initial set of 996 documents
(2) Initial Data Retrieval	Filter documents by language and publication date.	Filtering Criteria	- 960 documents (English only) – 927 documents (2010–2023)
(3) Data Refinement	Further refine data by document types and final document count.	Biblioshiny (RStudio)	- Articles, conference papers, book chapters – 927 documents
(4) Bibliometric Analysis	Analyse publication patterns, trends, and collaboration metrics.	Citation analysis, Co-citation analysis, Co-authorship analysis	- Annual growth rate – Average citations per document – Document age – Number of authors – Collaboration patterns

**Table 1** Methods for ‘unveiling the social media surveillance research: themes, ethics and global implications’ (continued)

<i>Step</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Tools used</i>	<i>Outputs</i>
(5) Visualisation and Analysis	Create visual representations of bibliometric data.	Biblioshiny, VOSviewer	- Publication trends – Authorship patterns – Citation trends – Thematic content analysis
(6) Insights Generation	Identify key themes, gaps, and trends in the research.	Thematic analysis, Network graphs	- Ethical implications – Algorithmic biases – Global collaboration – Public health and disease surveillance
(7) Final Output	Provide comprehensive understanding and recommendations.	Synthesis of analysis and visualisations	- Overview of social media surveillance research – Identification of trends and gaps – Recommendations for future research and policy

Firstly, researcher initiated our search in the Scopus database on 31 August 2023, using a carefully designed set of keywords and search terms. The primary objective of our search was to identify scholarly works related to social media surveillance. To achieve this, we employed search queries that incorporated key phrases such as ‘Social media surveillance’, ‘Social media’, ‘social network’, ‘online platform’ and ‘digital communication’. Additionally, we included terms associated with surveillance activities, such as ‘surveillance’, ‘monitor’, ‘track’ and ‘spy’. This comprehensive search strategy yielded a total of 996 documents. Subsequently, we implemented language restriction criteria to focus exclusively on English-language publications, resulting in 960 documents.

To ensure the relevance and recency of the collected data, we further narrowed our data set by limiting the publication years to the period spanning from 2010 to 2023. This restriction aimed to capture the most contemporary and pertinent research in social media surveillance. After this limitation, the data set consisted of 927 academic publications. This meticulous search and selection process laid the foundation for our systematic and bibliometric analysis, allowing us to comprehensively examine the scholarly discourse surrounding social media surveillance, identify key themes and assess the intellectual structure of the field from 2010 to 2023.

## 4 Data analysis and result

### 4.1 Main information

Table 2 presents valuable insights into the social media surveillance research landscape from 2010 to 2023. Over this period, 927 documents were identified from various sources, including journals, books and conference papers, showcasing an impressive annual growth rate of 12.5%. This growth indicates the increasing scholarly interest in the subject matter. The average age of the documents is relatively low at 5.24 years, suggesting that social media surveillance is dynamic, with researchers actively producing

new knowledge. Furthermore, the average number of citations per document is substantial, with an average of 14.52 citations, underscoring the significance and impact of the research in this domain.

**Table 2** Snapshot of social media surveillance research (2010–2023)

<i>Description</i>	<i>Results</i>
<i>Main Information about Data</i>	
Timespan	2010:2023
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	652
Documents	927
Annual Growth Rate %	12.5
Document Average Age	5.24
Average citations per doc	14.52
References	30405
<i>DOCUMENT CONTENTS</i>	
Keywords Plus (ID)	4608
Author's Keywords (DE)	2239
<i>AUTHORS</i>	
Authors	2740
Authors of single-authored docs	95
<i>AUTHORS COLLABORATION</i>	
Single-authored docs	109
Co-Authors per Doc	3.5
International co-authorships %	21.9
<i>DOCUMENT TYPES</i>	
article	442
book	4
book chapter	52
conference paper	356
conference review	3
editorial	17
erratum	4
letter	10
note	10
review	24
short survey	5

Regarding authorship, 2740 authors contributed to the identified documents, with 95 single-authored. This demonstrates a collaborative nature of research in this field, as evidenced by an average of 3.5 co-authors per document, indicating extensive engagement. Internationally, international co-authorships accounted for 21.9% of the

collaborations, highlighting the global reach and diversity of perspectives in social media surveillance research. Document types varied, with the majority being articles (442), conference papers (356) and book chapters (52), underscoring the multidisciplinary nature of the field. The presence of editorial pieces, reviews and short surveys indicates ongoing critical discourse and reflection within the research community.

In summary, this bibliometric analysis sheds light on the evolving landscape of social media surveillance research, characterised by rapid growth, international collaboration and the publication of impactful documents. These findings serve as a foundation for understanding the state of knowledge in the field, identifying trends and informing future research directions, ultimately contributing to evidence-based decision-making and policy development in social media surveillance.

#### 4.2 Annual scientific production and citation trends

Table 3 provides a comprehensive overview of social media surveillance's annual scientific production patterns. The number of publications varied annually, with an initial gradual increase until 2017, peaking at 102 publications, followed by a subsequent decline. This noteworthy decline indicates a potential shift in research focus or interest. On closer examination of the mean total citations per article and year, it is apparent that the impact of research, in terms of citations, was relatively stable until 2017, with an average of around 2.5 citations per article and an increasing trend in citations per year. However, after 2017, both metrics began to decline sharply, possibly due to the reduced scientific production in the later years of the study period.

**Table 3** Annual scientific production and citation trends (2010–2023)

<i>Year</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>MeanTCperArt</i>	<i>MeanTCperYear</i>	<i>CitableYears</i>
2010	16	36.06	2.77	13
2011	29	26.76	2.23	12
2012	29	18.17	1.65	11
2013	61	17.20	1.72	10
2014	55	21.25	2.36	9
2015	63	22.33	2.79	8
2016	76	19.17	2.74	7
2017	102	22.48	3.75	6
2018	69	14.84	2.97	5
2019	89	13.19	3.30	4
2020	89	13.29	4.43	3
2021	87	6.37	3.18	2
2022	88	2.44	2.44	1
2023	74	0.72		0

Additionally, the table highlights the decreasing number of citable years for each publication, suggesting a shorter lifespan for research relevance in this field. This phenomenon might be attributed to the rapid evolution of social media platforms and

technologies. Overall, this analysis underscores the need for continued research to adapt to the dynamic nature of social media surveillance and maintain its scholarly impact.

### 4.3 Most relevant sources and the most locally cited sources

Table 4 shows the most relevant and most locally cited sources (from reference lists) in social media surveillance research. Among the most relevant sources, ‘*Lecture Notes in Computer Science* (including subseries *Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence* and *Lecture Notes in Bioinformatics*)’ stands out with 32 articles, emphasising its significance in the scholarly discourse. ‘*Proceedings of the Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*’ and ‘*ACM International Conference Proceeding Series*’ are prominent sources with 20 and 16 articles, respectively. On the other hand, the table also highlights key authors whose works are frequently cited within this field. Notably, Dr. Lyon, with 94 citations and Dr. Fuchs, with 81 citations, have made substantial contributions, indicating their influential roles in shaping the research landscape. Furthermore, the presence of prolific authors like Leskovec, Sakaki and Andrejevic underscores social media surveillance research’s collaborative and multidisciplinary nature. These sources and authors play a pivotal role in informing and advancing research in social media surveillance, providing valuable insights and foundations for further exploration in this dynamic and evolving field.

**Table 4** Key sources in social media surveillance research: most relevant journals and authors, along with most locally cited references

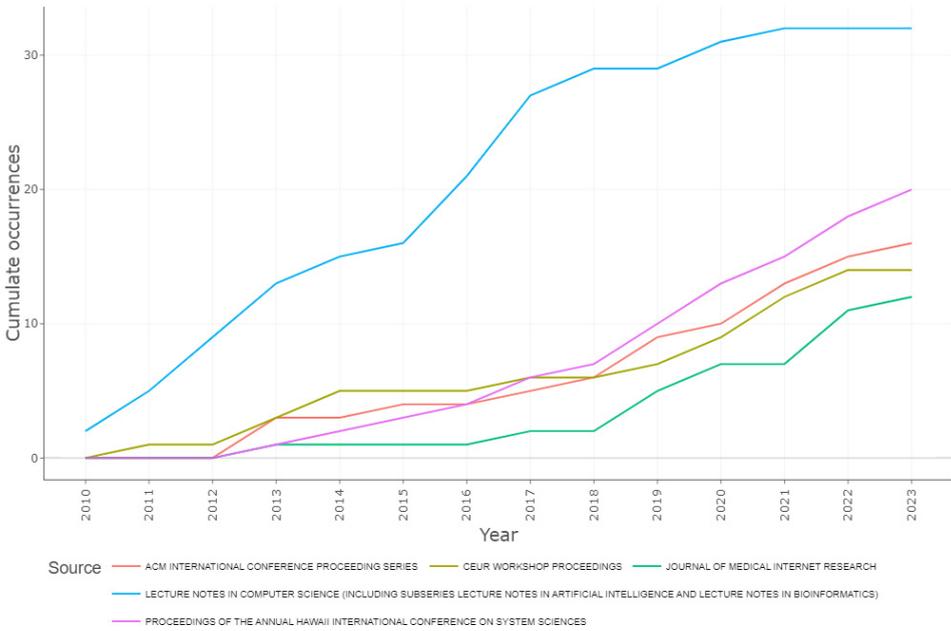
<i>Most relevant sources</i>	<i>Articles</i>	<i>Most local cited sources (from reference lists)</i>	<i>Articles</i>
<i>Lecture Notes in Computer Science (Including Subseries Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence and Lecture Notes in Bioinformatics)</i>	32	Lyon D	94
<i>Proceedings of The Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences</i>	20	Fuchs C	81
<i>ACM International Conference Proceeding Series</i>	16	Leskovec J	64
<i>CEUR Workshop Proceedings</i>	14	Sakaki T	59
<i>Journal of Medical Internet Research</i>	12	Andrejevic M	56
<i>Plos One</i>	10	Foucault M	47
<i>Communications in Computer and Information Science</i>	9	Blei D M	44
<i>JMIR Public Health and Surveillance</i>	9	Wang Y	44
<i>Proceedings of the ACM Symposium on Applied Computing</i>	9	Sarker A	42
<i>Studies in Computational Intelligence</i>	7	Wasserman S	41

### 4.4 Source dynamics

Figure 1 illustrates the dynamics of source contributions over the years across five prominent sources across the social media surveillance research field. ‘*Lecture Notes in Computer Science*’, a notable publication, demonstrated consistent growth, starting with

two articles in 2010 and steadily increasing to 32 by 2023. This highlights its sustained relevance in the field. In contrast, ‘*Proceedings of the Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*’ and ‘*ACM International Conference Proceeding Series*’ gradually grew, reaching 20 and 16 articles in 2023. ‘*CEUR Workshop Proceedings*’ showed steady growth, reflecting its importance as an outlet for research dissemination. Notably, ‘*The Journal of Medical Internet Research*’ saw a substantial increase, with 12 articles in 2013 and expanding to 56 articles by 2023, underlining its growing significance in this interdisciplinary field. The table underscores the evolving landscape of social media surveillance research sources, with specific sources demonstrating consistent, incremental growth. In contrast, others experienced substantial spikes in their contributions, indicative of their expanding influence in shaping the discourse in this dynamic domain.

**Figure 1** Evolving source dynamics in social media surveillance research: trends in contributions from prominent sources (2010–2023) (see online version for colours)



#### 4.5 Most relevant authors and most local cited authors

Table 5 comprehensively describes the most relevant authors and their respective contributions to social media surveillance research. Kim S-W, Trottier D, and Wang Y emerge as leading contributors, with each author having authored eight articles, underscoring their significant influence in the field. Kim S-W and Trottier D have fractionalised articles, indicating their active and sustained involvement in collaborative research endeavours. When examining the most locally cited authors, Kumar SM and Shafna V stand out with 12 local citations each, signifying the impact and recognition of their work within the scholarly community. Several authors have fractionalised citations, which may indicate their collaborative nature or the interdisciplinary appeal of their

research. Additionally, the table highlights a diverse group of authors representing a global research community engaged in social media surveillance research. Collectively, these authors have contributed to shaping the field, and their work continues to drive advancements and insights in this dynamic and rapidly evolving domain.

**Table 5** Significant authors in social media surveillance research: most relevant authors and their fractionalised contributions, alongside most locally cited authors and their local citations

<i>Most relevant authors</i>	<i>Articles</i>	<i>Articles fractionalised</i>	<i>Most local cited authors</i>	<i>Local citations</i>
Kim S-W	8	7.00	Kumar Sm	12
Trottier D	8	6.50	Shafna V	12
Wang Y	8	2.08	Bitter C	2
Amiri A	7	2.08	Bock G-W	2
Chen X	7	1.64	Kim H-M	2
Liu Y	7	1.31	Kim J-H	2
Sarker A	7	1.62	Liwicki M	2
Wang Z	7	1.24	Sabherwal R	2
Zhou X	7	1.39	Shankar P	2
Brownstein Js	6	1.08	Wong Sh-W	2

#### 4.6 Author impact

Table 6 provides an insightful analysis of the author's impact on social media surveillance research, as measured by h-index, g-index and m-index, along with crucial publication metrics. Notably, Brownstein JS and Trottier D have an h-index of 6, indicating that they have each authored at least six papers with six or more citations, underlining their substantial scholarly impact. Furthermore, Trottier D exhibits an impressive g-index of 8, showcasing his significant contributions. Authors like Liu Y, Sarker A and Wang Z demonstrate a potent combination of h-index and g-index, reflecting their sustained influence within the field. The m-index, which measures the collaborative nature of an author's work, highlights that Brownstein JS, Trotter D and Amiri A have a higher degree of individual authorship. Moreover, the table includes publication year (PY\_start) data, allowing for insights into the authors' research trajectories. Overall, this analysis elucidates these authors' varying degrees of impact and collaboration, providing valuable information on the key players in social media surveillance research.

#### 4.7 Top affiliations, productive countries and most cited countries

Table 7 offers a comprehensive overview of the top ten affiliations contributing to research in social media surveillance, along with their associated metrics. The University of Pennsylvania is the most prolific institution, with 25 articles, solidifying its position as a leading research hub in this domain. The University of California closely follows with 23 articles showcasing the solid academic contributions of US institutions. When

examining the most productive country, the United States stands out with a frequency of 888 articles, underscoring its dominance in the global landscape of social media surveillance research. Meanwhile, China is the most cited country, with 655 total citations, emphasising Chinese research's growing influence and impact in the field. The table also presents the average article citations, providing a glimpse into the quality and impact of research output. Notably, Wuhan University from Australia demonstrates a remarkable average article citation rate of 143.00, indicating their contributions' high impact and significance. Overall, this analysis highlights the global nature of social media surveillance research and the key players shaping its development.

**Table 6** Author impact metrics in social media surveillance research

<i>Authors name</i>	<i>h_index</i>	<i>g_index</i>	<i>m_index</i>	<i>TC</i>	<i>NP</i>	<i>PY_start</i>
Brownstein Js	6	6	0.667	618	6	2015
Trottier D	6	8	0.5	305	8	2012
Li J	5	6	0.455	42	6	2013
Liu Y	5	7	0.625	64	7	2016
Sarker A	5	7	0.625	326	7	2016
Wang Z	5	7	0.556	127	7	2015
Amiri A	4	6	0.667	41	7	2018
Chen J	4	5	0.571	52	5	2017
Chen X	4	7	0.333	112	7	2012
Li Y	4	6	0.364	78	6	2013

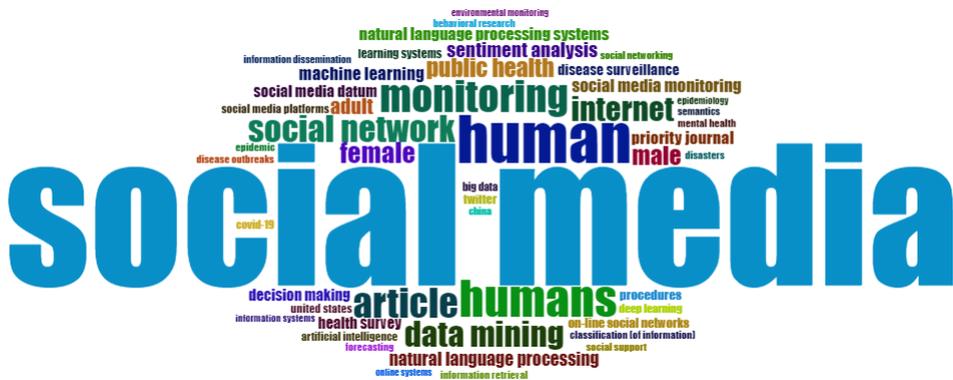
**Table 7** Top affiliations, productive countries and most cited countries in social media surveillance research: key statistics and global research influence

<i>Top ten affiliation</i>	<i>Articles</i>	<i>Most productive country</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Most cited country</i>	<i>TC</i>	<i>Average article citations</i>
University of Pennsylvania	25	USA	888	USA	3578	26.12
University of California	23	CHINA	331	China	655	10.92
Harvard Medical School	20	UK	172	Australia	466	14.56
Wuhan University	20	AUSTRALIA	166	Ireland	429	143.00
University of Helsinki	18	INDIA	144	Finland	421	52.63
Arizona State University	14	ITALY	105	Germany	421	20.05
Cornell University	13	GERMANY	100	India	419	14.45
Columbia University	12	BRAZIL	87	UK	394	12.31
Shahed University	12	SPAIN	72	Sweden	334	33.40
Southwest University	12	FRANCE	65	Netherlands	179	25.57

#### 4.8 Most frequent words

Figure 2 presents the most frequent words found within the corpus of research papers on social media surveillance. ‘Social media’ and ‘social networking (online)’ are the two most prevalent phrases, occurring 459 and 414 times, respectively, underscoring their central role in the subject matter. The term ‘human’ appears 277 times, reflecting the focus on human behaviour and interactions in the context of social media surveillance. ‘Monitoring’, with 105 occurrences, highlights the core surveillance activity. Additionally, ‘data mining’ (83 occurrences) and ‘internet’ (79 occurrences) indicate the significance of technology and data analysis in this field. The term ‘female,’ appearing 67 times, suggests a potential gender-related dimension within social media surveillance research. These frequent words collectively depict the key themes and concepts in the literature, providing valuable insights into the core areas of study in this dynamic research domain.

**Figure 2** Key phrases in social media surveillance research: insights from frequent word occurrences in the research corpus (see online version for colours)



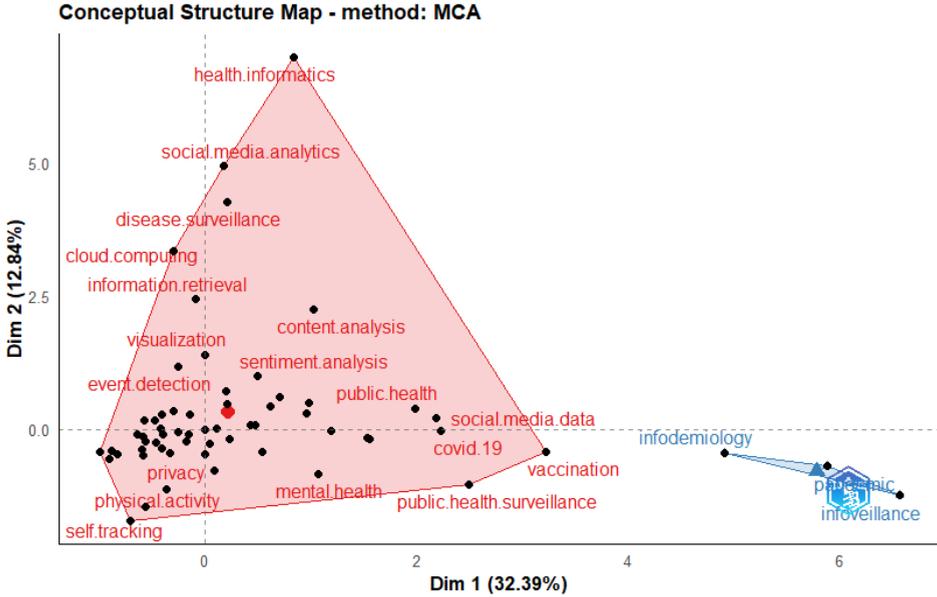
#### 4.9 Author keyword co-occurrence network

The co-occurrence network of author keywords represents a visual and analytical tool for identifying patterns and relationships between keywords within social media surveillance research in Figure 3. This network connects author-assigned keywords based on their co-appearance in scholarly publications. This network analysis enables researchers to uncover clusters of related keywords, thereby revealing thematic areas and trends within the field. By examining the strength and frequency of keyword co-occurrences, scholars can gain insights into the underlying research themes, the evolution of concepts and the interconnections between different aspects of social media surveillance. This network analysis aids in identifying emerging topics, guiding research directions and fostering a deeper understanding of the intellectual landscape in this rapidly evolving field.





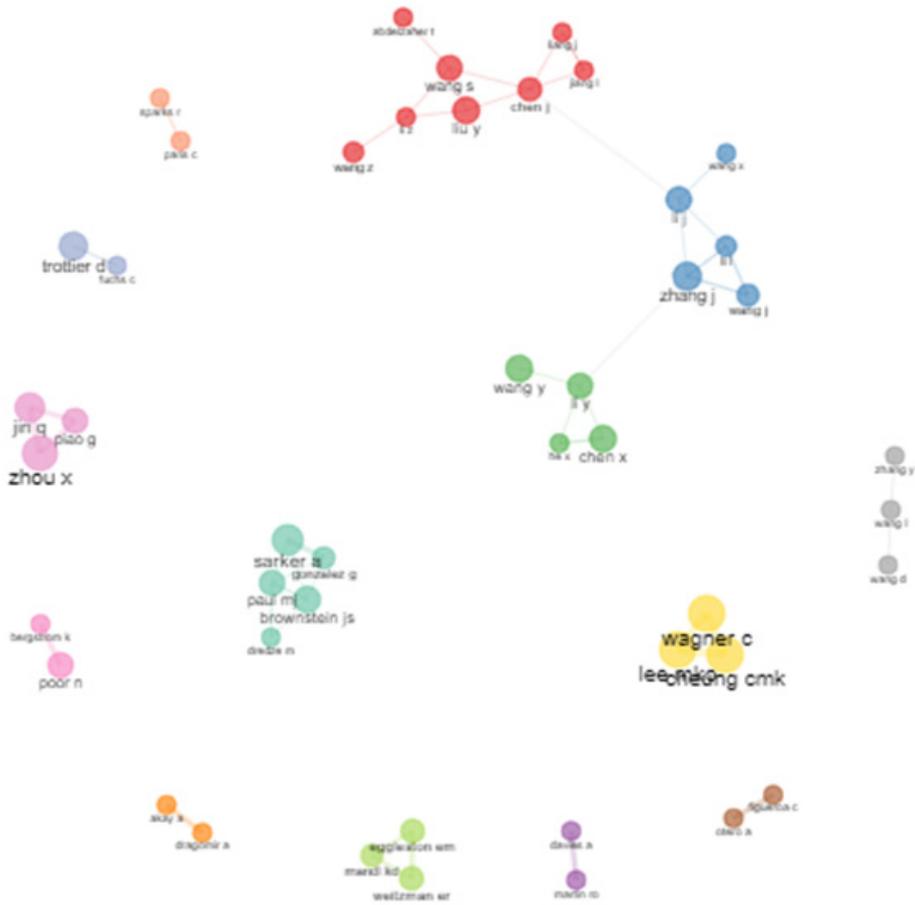
**Figure 5** Author keywords MCA analysis: revealing research patterns in social media surveillance for informed exploration (see online version for colours)



#### 4.12 Collaboration network

The collaboration network, constructed based on authorship information, visually represents the collaborative relationships among scholars in social media surveillance research in Figure 6. This network analysis brings to light the extensive collaborations within the academic community. This network visualisation has carefully adjusted parameters such as opacity, label and edge size to ensure clarity and readability. The network is displayed with dots representing individual authors, and their collaborative connections are depicted through edges, reflecting co-authored works. By examining this collaboration network, researchers can identify central nodes (highly collaborative authors) and subgroups of scholars who frequently collaborate on research projects. This information provides valuable insights into knowledge exchange and partnership-building dynamics within the field. Understanding these collaborative relationships not only enriches our understanding of the social fabric of the research community but also provides opportunities for fostering interdisciplinary research, promoting knowledge sharing and advancing the collective understanding of social media surveillance.

**Figure 6** Collaboration network in social media surveillance research: insights into scholarly partnerships and knowledge exchange (see online version for colours)

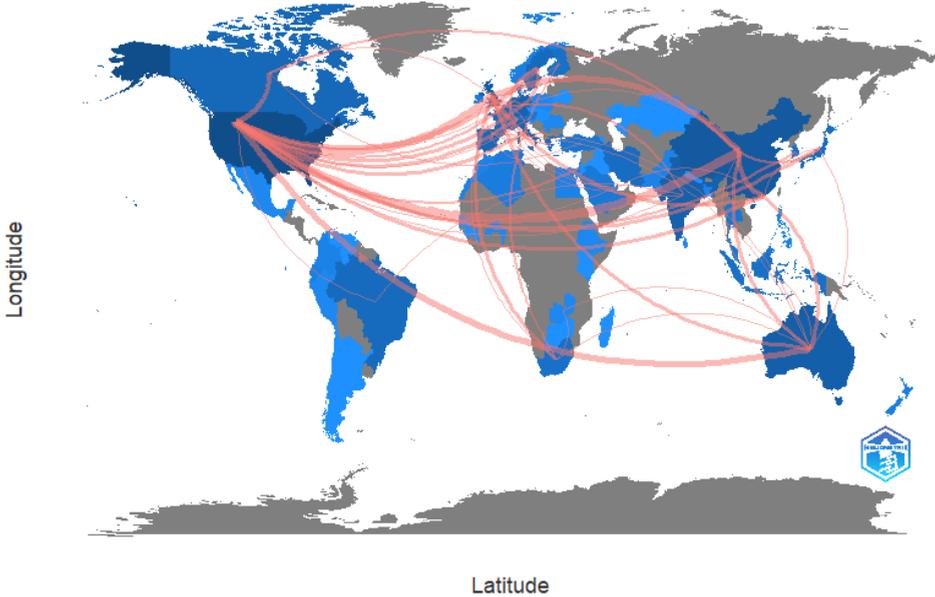


4.13 Global collaboration map

The Collaboration WorldMap, generated with at least two edges, offers an insightful representation of global research collaborations within social media surveillance in Figure 7. This visualisation provides a geospatial view of collaborative relationships among researchers from different regions worldwide. The map highlights the extent of international collaborations, emphasising the interconnectedness of scholars from diverse geographical locations. Each edge on the map signifies a research partnership or collaboration between authors from different countries, contributing to the global nature of social media surveillance research. By examining this Collaboration WorldMap, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the field’s global reach and collaborative dynamics. It serves as a valuable tool for identifying opportunities for cross-border cooperation, facilitating knowledge exchange, and promoting the dissemination of

research findings on a global scale. This visualisation underscores the importance of international collaboration in advancing the understanding of social media surveillance in today's interconnected world.

**Figure 7** Global collaboration WorldMap: mapping international research collaborations in social media surveillance (see online version for colours)



## 5 Discussion

The analysis presented in this study provides a comprehensive overview of the evolving landscape of social media surveillance research from 2010 to 2023. It encompasses various dimensions, including annual scientific production, influential sources and authors, thematic trends and collaborative networks. In this critical discussion, we delve into the implications of these findings, comparing them with existing literature and address the broader implications and future directions for research in this dynamic field. One of the most striking findings of this analysis is the trend in annual scientific production. The field of social media surveillance witnessed consistent growth from 2010 to 2017, with the number of publications peaking at 102 that year. However, this growth was followed by a notable decline in subsequent years. This decline raises several important questions and warrants a critical examination. Existing literature has highlighted the multifaceted nature of social media surveillance and its relevance in contexts ranging from national security to marketing and public health (Aiello et al., 2020; Barrett-Maitland and Lynch, 2020; Jeyaraman et al., 2023). Widespread adoption and privacy concerns drove the initial surge in social media surveillance research up to 2017. However, the subsequent decline may be due to saturated subtopics, field maturity or external factors. Further exploration is needed to understand this trend and adapt research priorities accordingly.

The analysis also identified influential sources and authors within social media surveillance research. Prominent sources included ‘*Lecture Notes in Computer Science*’, ‘*Proceedings of the Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*’ and ‘*ACM International Conference Proceeding Series*.’ Likewise, prolific authors such as Kim S-W and Trotter D emerged as significant contributors to the field. These findings align with existing literature that recognises the pivotal role of specific journals and scholars in shaping research areas. The influence of these sources and authors underscores the importance of certain platforms and thought leaders in guiding research directions. Journals like ‘*Lecture Notes in Computer Science*’ serve as valuable outlets for research dissemination, providing a platform for scholars to share their findings and engage in scholarly discourse.

Meanwhile, prolific authors like Kim S-W and Trotter D bring expertise and leadership to the field, setting the tone for research agendas and contributing significantly to knowledge accumulation. However, it is essential to note that while these sources and authors are influential, they represent only a segment of the broader research landscape. The field of social media surveillance is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing expertise from fields such as computer science, sociology, communication and ethics (Antoine-Moussiaux et al., 2019; Hoebanx, 2022; Narasimhamurthy, 2014; Riccio et al., 2022). As such, inclusivity is needed in recognising contributions from diverse sources. Future research should maintain a balance between acknowledging influential sources and authors while promoting diversity and inclusivity in research contributions.

The co-occurrence network of author keywords visually represented thematic trends and emerging topics within social media surveillance research. This analysis identified clusters of related keywords, offering insights into the dominant themes and the interconnections between different aspects of the field. Existing literature has highlighted the significance of network analysis in uncovering research trends and guiding future investigations. The co-occurrence network serves as a valuable tool for researchers seeking to identify emerging topics, understand the intellectual structure of the field and explore the relationships between concepts. Thunderscoring existing literature underscores the importance of staying abreast of emerging trends and adapting research agendas to address contemporary issues. The thematic map generated through network analysis showcases the dynamic nature of Identifyingnce research. Identifying thematic clusters and their evolution over time provides researchers with a roadmap for navigating the field’s complex landscape. It also helps understand how different topics within social media surveillance research are interconnected, fostering a holistic perspective crucial for addressing complex, multifaceted issues.

Moreover, this analysis prompts critical questions about the future direction of research. For instance, it raises the question of how emerging topics within social media surveillance align with contemporary societal challenges and technological developments. Muhammed and Mathew (2022) and Olan et al. (2022) considered the ethical implications of surveillance technologies, the impact of social media on political discourse and the role of misinformation in online environments, among other pressing concerns.

The Collaboration WorldMap, generated based on authorship information, offers a geospatial view of collaborative relationships among researchers in social media surveillance. It emphasises the global nature of research collaborations, highlighting the interconnectedness of scholars from diverse geographical locations. Kapoor et al. (2018) and Zachlod et al. (2022) emphasised the importance of international collaboration in

advancing knowledge in interdisciplinary fields like social media surveillance. The map underscores the significance of cross-border cooperation, facilitating knowledge exchange and promoting the dissemination of research findings on a global scale. This aligns with existing literature recognising the value of diverse perspectives and expertise in addressing complex research questions. The Collaboration WorldMap provides a visual representation of the social fabric of the research community, illustrating the interconnected web of knowledge exchange and partnership-building. It showcases the extensive collaborations within the academic community, fostering an environment where researchers can draw upon colleagues' strengths worldwide. However, while international collaboration is essential, it raises questions about power dynamics, resource distribution, and the equitable inclusion of scholars from diverse backgrounds. Future research should consider how to ensure that collaborative networks are inclusive and equitable, promoting the meaningful participation of researchers from traditionally underrepresented regions in the global research landscape.

In summary, this comprehensive analysis of the evolving landscape of social media surveillance research offers valuable insights into the field's development, trends and collaborative networks. While the decline in annual production after 2017 prompts critical questions, it also highlights the need for ongoing research to address emerging challenges and ethical considerations in this rapidly evolving field. The influence of specific sources and authors underscores their role in shaping research agendas. However, it is essential to balance acknowledging their contributions and promoting diversity in research contributions. The co-occurrence network of author keywords provides a roadmap for navigating the complex landscape of social media surveillance research, guiding researchers in identifying emerging topics and understanding their interconnections. The Collaboration WorldMap emphasises the global nature of research collaborations, underscoring the significance of international cooperation. However, it also prompts reflection on issues of equity and inclusion in collaborative networks. This analysis contributes to the existing literature by offering a comprehensive snapshot of the social media surveillance research landscape. It reaffirms the field's dynamism, highlights influential sources and authors, and underscores the importance of international collaboration. As social media evolves, ongoing research and interdisciplinary cooperation will remain pivotal in addressing emerging challenges and ethical considerations in this field. Researchers and policymakers should use these findings as a foundation for shaping the future of social media surveillance research.

### *5.1 Implication of this study*

The systematic and bibliometric analysis of the landscape of social media surveillance offers a wealth of insights and implications for various stakeholders. Academically, the study provides a roadmap for future research by identifying knowledge gaps and emerging trends. Researchers can leverage this knowledge to align their work with contemporary societal challenges and technological developments, ensuring their investigations remain relevant and impactful. Policymakers and regulatory bodies stand to benefit significantly from the study's findings. It informs the development of ethical guidelines and policies governing social media surveillance practices. By recognising the ethical considerations and potential pitfalls associated with surveillance, policymakers can strike a delicate balance between security needs and individual rights, fostering a more equitable and just digital environment.

In the corporate world, the study underscores the ethical dimensions of social media surveillance for businesses and corporations. It encourages the development of ethical data use practices, enhancing consumer trust and corporate responsibility. Additionally, by highlighting the importance of addressing biases in surveillance algorithms, tech companies can take steps to ensure fairness and equity in their decision-making processes. The study's contribution to public awareness and education cannot be overstated. It empowers individuals with knowledge about the implications of social media surveillance on information dissemination and public discourse. Media literacy programs can draw from these insights to equip people with the skills to critically evaluate online information and navigate the digital landscape more effectively. On the international stage, the study emphasises the importance of global cooperation in addressing social media surveillance challenges. Collaborative efforts among countries and institutions can facilitate the development of shared ethical standards and best practices, promoting a cohesive response to the complex issues posed by the digital age.

Finally, the study lays the foundation for future research initiatives by identifying emerging trends and knowledge gaps. Funding agencies and institutions can direct resources toward areas requiring further exploration, fostering innovation and progress in the field. In summary, the systematic and bibliometric analysis of social media surveillance has multifaceted implications, touching on academia, policymaking, industry practices, public awareness, international collaboration and the direction of future research. This comprehensive understanding empowers stakeholders to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by social media surveillance with ethical responsibility and informed decision-making.

## **6 Conclusions**

This study's systematic and bibliometric analysis offers a comprehensive exploration of the dynamic and multifaceted field of social media surveillance. From its inception to its current state, social media surveillance research has undergone a remarkable transformation, reflecting the rapid evolution of digital technologies and their profound impact on society (Collins et al., 2021). This study has illuminated critical aspects of the field, uncovering trends, identifying knowledge gaps and shedding light on the broader implications of social media surveillance for academia, policymaking, industry practices, public awareness, international cooperation and future research endeavours.

One of the central findings of this analysis is the recognition of social media surveillance as a domain that transcends technological capabilities. It encompasses ethical considerations, privacy concerns, and questions about the balance between security and civil liberties. The study highlights the importance of acknowledging these complex dimensions and underscores the need for responsible and ethical research and practices in this field. As digital technologies advance, it becomes imperative to develop adaptive ethical frameworks and policies that can keep pace with these advancements, ensuring a balance between innovation and the protection of individual rights.

The systematic examination of the scholarly discourse has revealed the interdisciplinary nature of social media surveillance research. Scholars from various backgrounds, including computer science, social sciences, ethics, law and communication studies, have contributed to the evolving dialogue. This interdisciplinary collaboration enriches the field by offering diverse perspectives and approaches to the

multifaceted challenges posed by social media surveillance. Promoting such interdisciplinary research is crucial for achieving a holistic understanding of the socio-technical dynamics involved in surveillance practices.

The insights generated through this study have practical implications for various stakeholders. Policymakers and regulatory bodies are equipped with valuable knowledge to develop ethical guidelines and policies that balance the imperatives of security and individual rights. The corporate world can enhance its ethical data use practices, ensuring responsible and accountable surveillance practices. Additionally, by addressing biases in surveillance algorithms, tech companies can take steps to ensure fairness and equity in their decision-making processes.

Educators can leverage these findings to empower individuals with media literacy skills, enabling them to navigate the digital landscape critically. There is a critical need to foster digital literacy among the public to empower individuals to understand and navigate the implications of social media surveillance. Public awareness and education initiatives will benefit from a deeper understanding of the implications of social media surveillance, helping individuals critically evaluate online information and their privacy rights.

International collaboration emerges as a critical theme, emphasising the global nature of social media surveillance challenges. This study highlights the potential for cooperation among countries and institutions to develop shared ethical standards and best practices, promoting a unified response to the complex issues presented by digital technologies. The global dimension of social media surveillance is manifested in various ways, such as cross-border data flows, international collaborations in surveillance initiatives and shared challenges faced by individuals navigating the digital landscape.

As this study draws to a close, it serves as a testament to the ever-evolving nature of social media surveillance. The digital age presents opportunities and challenges, and the field must adapt and respond to this evolving landscape. Researchers should explore the long-term societal impacts of surveillance technologies, including potential changes in social behaviour and public trust in digital platforms. These directions will contribute to the academic discourse and inform policymakers and industry stakeholders in creating a more equitable and transparent digital environment.

The insights and implications presented here aim to guide stakeholders in navigating the intricate terrain of social media surveillance with ethical responsibility and informed decision-making. In doing so, we hope to foster a digital environment that upholds individual rights, privacy and the values of a just and equitable society, even in the face of rapidly advancing technologies. Future research should focus on continuously developing adaptive ethical frameworks and policies, promoting interdisciplinary research and exploring the long-term societal impacts of surveillance technologies. These efforts will ensure the field remains dynamic and responsive to the ever-changing digital landscape.

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