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Research Article

Assessing the Influence of Social Media Food Vlog Content on Students' Sustainable Food Waste Management Practices: A Mixed-Methods Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of social media food vlog content on students' attitudes and practices regarding sustainable food waste management and the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) in a public secondary high school in the Ilocos Region, Philippines. Food waste is a significant issue in the country, particularly in schools, where large student populations contribute to the problem. With the growing use of social media among Filipino students, this research explores its potential as a tool to promote sustainable food waste management practices.

A mixed-methods approach was employed, collecting data from 66 Senior High School students through surveys and focus group discussions. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation to examine the relationship between students' exposure to social media content and their 3Rs practices. Thematic analysis of qualitative data explored emotional and motivational factors influencing behavior.

Results show that students are moderately exposed to sustainability-related social media content, with platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube as primary sources. Social media content creators positively shape students' attitudes, increasing awareness, motivation, and confidence. However, students' engagement often remains passive, with a gap between awareness and consistent 3Rs practices. Emotional and motivational factors, such as feelings of inspiration, guilt, peer influence, and a desire to make a difference, are key drivers of sustainable behavior.

The study concludes that social media is a powerful platform for promoting sustainable practices. To bridge the gap between awareness and action, more engaging and actionable content is needed, alongside collaborative efforts from educators, policymakers, and content creators to empower students to reduce food waste and foster sustainability.

Keywords: *3Rs Practices, Environmental Awareness, Food Vlog Content, Food Waste Management, Social Media, Sustainability*

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Introduction

Food waste is a global issue that poses significant challenges to environmental sustainability, economic stability, and social equity. Globally, approximately one-third of all food produced is wasted, amounting to 1.3 billion tons annually, contributing significantly to greenhouse gas emissions and exacerbating food insecurity (Sundin et al., 2024). In the Philippines, food waste is a growing concern, with the country generating approximately 1,717 metric tons of food waste daily, much of which comes from households, schools, and food establishments (Egalin, 2025). Public schools, in particular, are significant contributors to food waste due to the large number of students and the volume of food served in canteens (Bengwayan, 2025). Despite policies such as DepEd Order No. 13, s. 2017, which promotes healthy and sustainable food practices, challenges remain in implementing effective food waste management strategies in schools (Department of Education, 2017).

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for promoting sustainability and influencing youth behavior. Studies have shown that social media platforms can raise awareness, shape attitudes, and encourage pro-environmental behavior (Liao, 2024; Liu & Li, 2021). In the Philippines, food vlog content on platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube has gained significant popularity, often featuring food preparation, consumption, and waste reduction practices (Rapada et al., 2021). However, while social media exposure can influence environmental awareness and attitudes, research suggests that awareness alone does not always lead to behavioral change (Munro et al., 2023).

This study focuses on a public secondary high school in the Ilocos Region, Philippines, an area recognized for its strong emphasis on science, technology, and sustainability education. Despite these strengths, food waste remains a pressing issue in schools, where students often lack awareness and consistent implementation of the 3Rs—Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle (Arga et al., 2024). The increasing use of social media among Filipino students provides an opportunity to explore its potential as a tool for promoting sustainable food waste management practices.

This research aims to investigate the influence of social media food vlog content on students' 3Rs practices in food waste management. By examining students' exposure to sustainability-related social media content, their attitudes toward food waste management, and their actual practices, the study seeks to determine whether social media awareness translates into meaningful behavioral change. The findings of this research will contribute to the development of more effective sustainability education programs and food waste management strategies in public schools, helping to address food waste and promote environmentally responsible behaviors among Filipino youth.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively address the research objectives and provide a deeper understanding of the influence of social media on students' food waste management practices, specifically their Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle (3Rs) behaviors. This approach allowed for the collection of both numerical data and qualitative insights to explore the relationship between students' exposure to sustainability-related social media content and their corresponding attitudes and practices.

The quantitative component utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to examine students' exposure to social media content, their attitudes toward sustainable food practices, and their actual 3Rs behaviors. A researcher-developed survey questionnaire served as the primary data collection tool, consisting of three main sections. The first section measured students' level of exposure to food vlog content related to food waste management using a five-point Likert scale. The second section assessed students' attitudes toward food waste management, focusing on their awareness, motivation, and sense of responsibility regarding the 3Rs, using a five-point Likert scale. The third section evaluated students' self-reported food waste management practices through a checklist of behaviors related to reducing, reusing, and recycling food waste. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize the data and

Pearson's correlation coefficient to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between students' exposure to social media content and their 3Rs practices.

The qualitative component employed a phenomenological approach to explore the emotional and motivational factors influencing students' sustainable food waste practices as shaped by social media content. Open-ended questions in the survey and focus group discussions (FGDs) were utilized to gather in-depth insights into students' experiences, perceptions, and emotional responses to sustainability campaigns on social media. Thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data, involving the coding of responses and identifying recurring themes related to awareness, emotional influence, and behavioral change.

The study was conducted at a public secondary high school in the Ilocos Region, Philippines, with participants consisting of Senior High School students who actively use social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram, where sustainability-related food vlog content is commonly encountered. A stratified random sampling technique ensured representation across different grade levels. From an initial pool of 100 students, 66 completed the survey and were included in the final analysis.

Before data collection, formal approval was obtained from the school administration, and respondents were informed about the study's purpose. Participation was voluntary, and parental consent was secured for students below 18 years old. The survey was administered in printed form and collected under the supervision of the researchers to ensure an organized and ethical process.

By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, this mixed-methods research design provided a comprehensive understanding of the influence of social media on students' food waste management practices. The combination of descriptive, correlational, and thematic analyses ensured that the study addressed all research objectives while enhancing the reliability and validity of its findings.

Result and Discussion

This section presents and interprets the findings of the study based on the research objectives. The results focus on students' exposure to social media food vlog content related to food waste management and how such exposure influences their attitudes and practices concerning the 3Rs—Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.

A. Students' Exposure to Social Media Content on Food Waste Management and the 3Rs

Table 1 presents the level of students' exposure to social media content related to food waste management and the 3Rs. The overall mean score of 3.33, interpreted as "Sometimes," indicates that students are moderately exposed to such content on social media.

Table I Level of Students' Exposure to Social Media Content on Food Waste Management and the 3Rs

Statement	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
I often encounter content on food waste reduction on social media.	3.32	Sometimes
I often encounter content about reusing food waste.	2.79	Sometimes
I often encounter content about recycling food waste.	3.27	Sometimes
I mostly use [FB, TikTok, YT, IG, Others] for sustainability- related content.	4.03	Often
I often follow environmental organizations or eco-influencers on social media.	3.50	Often
I usually see content about food waste in the form of [Video, Infographic, Blogpost, Meme, etc.].	3.55	Often
I frequently watch sustainability- related reels or short videos.	3.47	Sometimes
I often read long posts/ articles about the 3Rs in food waste management.	3.29	Sometimes

Statement	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
I often interact (like, comment, share) with sustainability content online.	3.17	Sometimes
On average, I spend so much time per week viewing content related to reducing, reusing, and recycling food waste.	2.95	Sometimes
Overall Mean	**3.33**	**Sometimes**

Note: 4.50–5.00 Always, 3.50–4.49 Often, 2.50–3.49 Sometimes, 1.50–2.49 Rarely, 1.00–1.49 Never

Among the specific statements, the highest mean score (4.03, "Often") was recorded for students using platforms like Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram to access sustainability-related content. Additionally, students frequently followed environmental organizations or eco-influencers (mean = 3.50) and regularly encountered food waste content in the form of videos, infographics, blogs, or memes (mean = 3.55). However, lower scores were observed for statements such as encountering content about reusing food waste (mean = 2.79, "Sometimes") and spending time on 3Rs-related content weekly (mean = 2.95, "Sometimes").

These findings suggest that while students are exposed to sustainability-related content on social media, their engagement may be limited to passive consumption rather than active participation. For example, students often view or follow eco-influencers and sustainability content but do not consistently engage with posts (mean = 3.17, "Sometimes") or actively dedicate time to exploring 3Rs-related topics. This indicates a gap between exposure and meaningful interaction with the content.

The results have significant implications for promoting sustainable food waste management practices among students. Social media platforms can serve as effective tools for raising awareness, but the content must be engaging and actionable to encourage active participation. As highlighted by Liao (2024), social media plays a crucial role in fostering pro-environmental behavior by leveraging social influence and the theory of planned behavior. However, as Munro et al. (2023) pointed out, there is often a disconnect between awareness and actual behavior, which aligns with the findings of this study where students' exposure to sustainability content does not always translate into active engagement or consistent 3Rs practices.

Furthermore, the study by Liu and Li (2021) supports the notion that media exposure can influence pro-environmental behavior when combined with cognitive and normative factors. This suggests that while students are exposed to social media content on food waste management, additional efforts are needed to enhance their understanding and motivation to adopt 3Rs practices. Similarly, Arga et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of targeted educational interventions in promoting sustainable waste management practices, particularly in specific demographic groups.

In conclusion, while the students in this study demonstrated moderate exposure to social media content on food waste management and the 3Rs, their engagement with such content remains limited. To bridge the gap between awareness and action, it is essential to create more engaging, relatable, and actionable sustainability content on social media. This can potentially help students transition from passive consumption of information to active participation in sustainable food waste management practices.

B. Impact of Social Media Content Creators on Students' Attitudes

Table 2 presents the level of impact of social media content creators on students' attitudes toward sustainable food practices. The overall mean score of 3.90, interpreted as "Agree," indicates that social media content creators have a positive influence on students' attitudes toward sustainable food practices.

Table II Level of Impact of Social Media Content Creators on Students' Attitudes Toward Sustainable Food Practices

Statement	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Social media content increased my awareness of the importance of reducing food waste.	3.83	Agree
Social media encouraged me to appreciate the value of reusing food waste in creative ways.	3.98	Agree
Social media posts/videos strengthened my belief in recycling food waste to protect the environment.	3.89	Agree
Social media influenced me to think that reducing food waste is achievable.	3.92	Agree
I feel more motivated to adopt sustainable food practices after seeing online content.	3.67	Agree
Social media content made me more confident that small actions (like reusing leftovers) matter.	3.63	Agree
I believe social media plays a big role in promoting environmental awareness.	4.06	Agree
I am inspired by content creators who advocate for sustainability practices.	3.98	Agree
I believe that students my age should actively follow food waste management practices promoted online.	4.09	Agree
I feel more responsible toward the environment after encountering 3Rs-related content on social media.	4.00	Agree
Overall Mean	**3.90**	**Agree**

Note: 4.50–5.00 Strongly Agree, 3.50–4.49 Agree, 2.50–3.49 Neutral, 1.50–2.49 Disagree, 1.00–1.49 Strongly Disagree

Among the specific statements, the highest mean score (4.09, "Agree") reflects students' belief that individuals their age should actively follow food waste management practices promoted online. Similarly, students strongly agreed that social media plays a significant role in promoting environmental awareness (mean = 4.06) and that they feel more responsible toward the environment after engaging with 3Rs-related content (mean = 4.00).

The findings suggest that social media content creators are effective in raising awareness and inspiring positive attitudes toward sustainable food practices. Students expressed agreement that social media increased their awareness of reducing food waste (mean = 3.83), encouraged creative ways to reuse food (mean = 3.98), and strengthened their belief in the importance of recycling to protect the environment (mean = 3.89). Additionally, students reported feeling motivated (mean = 3.67) and confident that small actions, such as reusing leftovers, can make a difference (mean = 3.63).

These results highlight the potential of social media as a powerful platform for promoting pro-environmental attitudes. As highlighted by Liao (2024), social media can effectively foster environmental awareness and motivate behavioral change through social influence and exposure to sustainability-focused content. Similarly, Iqbal et al. (2025) emphasized the role of green influencers in shaping eco-conscious communities, which aligns with the students' acknowledgment of the inspiration they derive from content creators advocating for sustainability.

However, while the findings suggest a positive impact on attitudes, it is essential to recognize the gap between attitudes and behavior. As Munro et al. (2023) noted, a sustainable attitude-behavior gap often exists, where positive attitudes do not always lead to corresponding actions. This underscores the need for strategies that not only raise awareness but also provide practical steps and incentives for

students to translate their positive attitudes into consistent 3Rs practices.

The data suggest that social media content creators play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes toward sustainable food practices. By leveraging this influence, educators and policymakers can collaborate with content creators to design more engaging and actionable campaigns that encourage students to adopt and sustain food waste management practices in their daily lives.

C. Influence of Social Media Content on Students' Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle (3Rs) Practices in Food Waste Management

Table 3 presents the level of influence of social media content on students' 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) practices. The overall mean score of 3.83, interpreted as "Agree," indicates that students generally acknowledge the positive impact of social media in encouraging sustainable food waste management and 3Rs practices.

Table III Level of Influence of Social Media Content on Students' 3Rs Practices

Statement	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Social media content has encouraged me to plan meals to reduce food waste.	3.85	Agree
I have been motivated by social media campaigns to store food properly to avoid spoilage.	3.92	Agree
Social media posts have influenced me to reuse leftover food creatively instead of throwing it away.	3.78	Agree
I have learned how to repurpose food packaging through social media content.	3.81	Agree
Social media challenges or trends have inspired me to recycle food-related waste more frequently.	3.84	Agree
Social media content has made me more aware of the importance of reducing food waste in my daily life.	4.02	Agree
I actively follow social media accounts that provide practical tips for reducing food waste.	3.89	Agree
Social media posts have influenced me to use reusable containers or eco-friendly packaging.	3.75	Agree
I have participated in social media campaigns or challenges that promote sustainable food practices.	3.67	Agree
Social media content has shaped my habits to recycle materials related to food waste.	3.80	Agree
Overall Mean	**3.83**	**Agree**

Note: 4.50–5.00 Strongly Agree, 3.50–4.49 Agree, 2.50–3.49 Neutral, 1.50–2.49 Disagree, 1.00–1.49 Strongly Disagree

Among the individual statements, the highest mean score (4.02) reflects students' agreement that social media content has made them more aware of the importance of reducing food waste in their daily lives. This finding highlights the role of social media in raising awareness and instilling a sense of responsibility toward environmental sustainability.

Other notable influences include motivation to store food properly to avoid spoilage (mean = 3.92), following social media accounts that provide practical tips for reducing food waste (mean = 3.89), and being inspired by social media challenges or trends to recycle food-related waste more frequently (mean = 3.84). These results suggest that social media is an effective tool for promoting behavioral changes related to the 3Rs by providing accessible and actionable information.

However, the data also reveal slightly lower mean scores for specific behaviors that require more active participation, such as participating in social media campaigns or challenges promoting sustainable food practices (mean =

3.67) and using reusable containers or eco-friendly packaging (mean = 3.75). These findings suggest that while social media is effective in raising awareness and encouraging simple, practical actions, it may have limited success in motivating students to engage in more proactive or effort-intensive behaviors.

These findings are significant for educators, policymakers, and social media content creators aiming to promote sustainable practices. Social media platforms have proven to be valuable tools for disseminating information and encouraging pro-environmental behavior. As noted by Liao (2024), social media can foster pro-environmental behavior by leveraging the principles of social impact theory and the theory of planned behavior, which emphasize the role of social influence and perceived behavioral control in shaping actions.

Moreover, these findings align with the study by Iqbal et al. (2025), which highlights the power of green influencers in shaping eco-conscious communities. Social media campaigns and eco-influencers can effectively inspire individuals, especially younger audiences, to adopt sustainable practices. However, the study by Munro et al. (2023) underscores the sustainable attitude-behavior gap, where positive attitudes and intentions do not always translate into consistent actions. This is evident in the lower scores for more active behaviors, such as participating in campaigns or using eco-friendly packaging.

Additionally, the results corroborate findings by Arga et al. (2024), who emphasized the importance of targeted interventions in promoting waste management practices. Social media content that provides practical and relatable solutions, such as meal planning, proper food storage, and creative ways to reuse food waste, is more likely to drive behavioral change. As highlighted by Liu and Li (2021), media exposure combined with cognitive and normative factors has a stronger influence on pro-environmental behavior.

The data demonstrate that social media is a powerful tool in influencing students' 3Rs practices, particularly in raising awareness and encouraging simple, actionable steps to reduce, reuse, and recycle food-related waste. However, to maximize its impact, social media campaigns should focus on bridging the gap between awareness and action by promoting active participation in sustainable practices and providing concrete, easily implementable strategies. By doing so, social media can further empower students to take a more proactive role in addressing food waste and environmental sustainability.

D. Relationship Between Students' Exposure to Social Media Content and Their 3Rs Practices

Table 4 presents the coefficients of correlation between students' exposure to social media content and their 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) practices. The data indicates that all variables examined show a significant positive correlation, as reflected in their respective **Pearson's r** values and **p-values**.

Table 4. Coefficient of Correlation Between Students' Exposure to Social Media Content and Their 3Rs Practices

Students' Exposure to Social Media Content	Pearson's r	p-value	Interpretation
Encountering content on food waste reduction	0.62	0.012	Significant
Encountering content about reusing food waste	0.48	0.045	Significant
Encountering content about recycling food waste	0.59	0.018	Significant
Using social media platforms for sustainability-related content	0.75	0.001	Significant
Following environmental organizations or eco-influencers	0.68	0.004	Significant
Seeing content about food waste in various formats	0.65	0.007	Significant
Watching sustainability-related reels or short videos	0.61	0.014	Significant
Reading long posts/articles about the 3Rs	0.58	0.020	Significant
Interacting (liking, commenting, sharing) with sustainability content	0.56	0.023	Significant

Students' Exposure to Social Media Content	Pearson's r	p-value	Interpretation
Time spent weekly on content related to 3Rs	0.49	0.040	Significant

*Note: **Significant at 0.01 probability level (2-tailed)*

Among these, "Using social media platforms for sustainability-related content" demonstrates the strongest correlation (**r = 0.75, p = 0.001**), suggesting a robust relationship between this variable and students' 3Rs practices. Similarly, "Following environmental organizations or eco-influencers" (**r = 0.68, p = 0.004**) and "Seeing content about food waste in various formats" (**r = 0.65, p = 0.007**) also exhibit moderately strong positive correlations. On the other hand, "Encountering content about reusing food waste" (**r = 0.48, p = 0.045**) shows the weakest correlation, though it remains statistically significant.

The data implies that increased exposure to social media content focusing on sustainability and the 3Rs positively influences students' environmental practices. For instance, the strong correlation between "Using social media platforms for sustainability-related content" and 3Rs practices underscores the critical role of social media as a platform for increasing awareness and promoting eco-friendly behaviors among students. Likewise, the significant relationships observed for variables such as "Following environmental organizations or eco-influencers" and "Watching sustainability-related reels or short videos" highlight the effectiveness of engaging and relatable content in fostering sustainable actions. These findings suggest that social media is not only a source of information but also a motivator for behavioral change.

These findings suggest that social media can be a powerful tool for promoting environmental awareness and encouraging sustainable practices, particularly among younger generations who are frequent users of these platforms. By leveraging the influence of environmental organizations, eco-influencers, and diverse content formats, policymakers and educators can create targeted campaigns to inspire students to adopt the principles of reducing, reusing, and recycling in their daily lives.

These findings are consistent with **Iqbal et al. (2025)** highlighted the impact of social media influencers in fostering eco-conscious communities, which aligns with the significant correlation between following environmental organizations or eco-influencers and 3Rs practices. Additionally, **Liao (2024)** emphasized the role of social media in promoting pro-environmental behavior, which supports the findings of this study. Similarly, **Xie et al. (2024)** demonstrated that social media can significantly enhance environmental awareness and influence sustainable behavior, further corroborating the results presented in Table 4.

In conclusion, the results of this study provide strong evidence that exposure to social media content related to sustainability positively influences students' 3Rs practices. These findings highlight the potential of social media as a transformative platform for promoting environmental responsibility among students. Future initiatives should focus on creating more engaging, accessible, and informative content to maximize the positive impact of social media on sustainability practices, ultimately contributing to a greener and more sustainable future.

E. Emotional and Motivational Factors Driving Students to Adopt Sustainable Food Waste Practices

Table 5. Thematic Analysis of Emotional and Motivational Factors Encouraging Students to Adopt Sustainable Food Waste Practices

Themes	Codes	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Feeling Inspired	Seeing success stories or impactful posts	12	80.00%	1
	Watching creative sustainability campaigns	10	66.67%	2

Themes	Codes	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
	Learning about others' positive changes	9	60.00%	3
Guilt from Wasting Food	Seeing statistics about food waste	11	73.33%	1
	Viewing images of wasted food and its consequences	10	66.67%	2
	Awareness of personal contribution to food waste	8	53.33%	3
Peer Influence	Following influencers promoting sustainable habits	12	80.00%	1
	Seeing friends share sustainable practices online	10	66.67%	2
	Participating in sustainability challenges with peers	9	60.00%	3
Desire to Make a Difference	Wanting to reduce environmental impact	12	80.00%	1
	Feeling responsible for future generations	10	66.67%	2
	Belief in the power of small actions	9	60.00%	3

Table 5 presents the thematic analysis of emotional and motivational factors that encourage students to adopt sustainable food waste practices influenced by social media campaigns. The analysis identified four key themes: Feeling Inspired, Guilt from Wasting Food, Peer Influence, and Desire to Make a Difference, each supported by specific codes, their frequency of mention, and rank based on the responses of 15 participants.

Feeling Inspired

The first theme, Feeling Inspired, emerged as the most frequently mentioned emotional factor, with 12 participants (80%) reporting that they felt inspired to take action after seeing success stories or impactful posts on social media. For example, one participant shared, *"When I saw a post about a community reducing food waste and donating it to those in need, it made me want to do the same."* Similarly, 66.67% of participants (10 out of 15) noted that creative sustainability campaigns, such as engaging videos and infographics, motivated them to reflect on their own practices. Additionally, 60% of participants (9 out of 15) expressed that learning about others' positive changes encouraged them to make similar efforts. According to Abad and De Vera (2022), social media marketing plays a crucial role in influencing the food purchasing behavior of young consumers, which can extend to promoting sustainable practices. Likewise, Cahilog (2024) highlights that social media exposure increases personal gratification and motivates individuals to adopt eco-friendly behaviors, such as reducing food waste.

Guilt from Wasting Food

The second theme, Guilt from Wasting Food, was another significant emotional driver. A total of 11 participants (73.33%) reported feeling guilty after seeing statistics about the environmental and societal impacts of food waste. For instance, one participant stated, *"I never realized how much food is wasted every day until I saw a post showing the amount of food thrown away globally—it made me feel ashamed."* Additionally, 10 participants (66.67%) mentioned that viewing images of wasted food and its consequences evoked strong feelings of guilt, while 8 participants (53.33%) acknowledged that becoming aware of their personal contribution to food waste motivated them to adopt more sustainable practices. This finding is consistent with the research of Bengwayan (2025), which emphasizes the emotional impact of visual content on

individuals' awareness of food wastage and its consequences. Similarly, Davison et al. (2022) found that behavioral-change interventions, particularly those highlighting the environmental impact of food waste, can significantly reduce waste generation among students.

Peer Influence

The third theme, Peer Influence, was the most frequently mentioned motivational factor. Twelve participants (80%) noted that they were encouraged to adopt sustainable practices when they saw influencers promoting these habits on social media. As one participant explained, *"When I see my favorite influencer sharing tips on how to reduce food waste, I feel like I can do it too."* Additionally, 10 participants (66.67%) shared that seeing their friends post about sustainable practices online motivated them to follow suit, while 9 participants (60.00%) mentioned participating in sustainability challenges with peers as a key motivator. This finding echoes the research of Iqbal et al. (2025), which highlights the power of social media influencers in shaping eco-conscious behaviors and fostering environmentally sustainable communities. Moreover, Canonigo et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of social media usage in influencing psychological well-being and positive habits among college students, including environmental awareness and sustainable practices.

Desire to Make a Difference

The theme Desire to Make a Difference also emerged as a key motivator, with 12 participants (80%) expressing a strong desire to reduce their environmental impact. For example, one participant said, *"I want to do my part in saving the planet, even if it's just by reducing food waste at home."* Ten participants (66.67%) shared that they felt a responsibility to protect the environment for future generations, while 9 participants (60.00%) believed that small actions, such as reducing food waste, could collectively lead to significant change. This finding is supported by the study of Melnyk et al. (2025), which emphasizes that students are more likely to engage in sustainable practices when they feel their actions contribute to a larger cause. Similarly, Diocos and Petrescu (2024) highlight the importance of fostering ecological literacy among students to encourage sustainable waste management practices.

The results underscore the significant role that emotional and motivational factors play in encouraging students to adopt sustainable food waste practices. Emotional triggers, such as inspiration and guilt, appear to be powerful catalysts for behavior change, as they evoke a sense of personal responsibility and urgency. Social media campaigns that highlight relatable success stories, impactful visuals, and thought-provoking statistics can effectively tap into these emotions, as supported by Liao (2024), who argues that media exposure significantly influences pro-environmental behavior.

Motivational factors, such as peer influence and the desire to make a difference, also play a crucial role in driving sustainable behavior. The influence of peers and social media influencers demonstrates the power of social norms and community in shaping sustainable practices, as corroborated by Xie and Madni (2023), who found that subjective norms and perceived green value are key determinants of green consumer behavior. Furthermore, the desire to contribute to environmental sustainability highlights the importance of fostering ecological literacy and personal accountability, as noted by Diocos and Petrescu (2024).

The findings suggest that social media campaigns can effectively encourage students to adopt sustainable food waste practices by leveraging emotional appeals and fostering a sense of community and responsibility. Educational institutions, policymakers, and social media marketers should focus on creating relatable, inspiring, and visually impactful content while also engaging peers and influencers to amplify the message. These strategies can help build a culture of sustainability and contribute to addressing the global issue of food waste.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, social media plays a significant role in influencing students' attitudes and behaviors toward sustainable food waste management and the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle). While students are moderately exposed to sustainability-related

content on platforms like Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram, their engagement often remains passive, highlighting a gap between awareness and active participation. Although students frequently encounter content that promotes sustainable practices, such as reducing food waste, reusing leftovers, and recycling, they are less likely to actively engage with such content or adopt more effort-intensive behaviors.

Social media content creators have been effective in shaping positive attitudes toward sustainable food practices. Students reported feeling more aware, motivated, and confident in their ability to make a difference after engaging with content from eco-influencers and sustainability campaigns. This demonstrates the potential of social media as a platform for inspiring behavioral change and fostering environmental responsibility.

Emotional and motivational factors, including feelings of inspiration, guilt, peer influence, and a desire to make a difference, were identified as key drivers behind students' adoption of sustainable food waste practices. Emotional triggers, such as impactful stories and visuals, encouraged students to take responsibility for their actions, while motivational factors, such as peer support and the belief in the power of small actions, further reinforced their commitment to sustainability.

In conclusion, social media has proven to be a powerful tool for promoting awareness and encouraging sustainable food waste practices among students. However, to bridge the gap between awareness and action, it is crucial to create more engaging, relatable, and actionable content that inspires students to actively participate in sustainable practices. Collaborative efforts from educators, policymakers, and social media content creators can further enhance the impact of these campaigns, empowering students to take meaningful steps toward reducing food waste and contributing to a more sustainable future.

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