

Information Quality of Instagram Reels About Non-Carious Cervical Lesions: A Cross-Sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Non-carious cervical lesions (NCCLs) constitute a multifactorial clinical problem whose management depends heavily on accurate patient education and proper clinical information sharing. Given that Instagram has become a widely used platform for disseminating health-related content, the present study aimed to analyze the informational quality of Instagram Reels concerning NCCLs.

Methods: A systematic search of Instagram Reels was performed using four English-language hashtags associated with the etiological factors of NCCLs. Eligible Reels were examined with respect to their upload source, content characteristics, and viewer engagement metrics. The Global Quality Scale (GQS) and a modified DISCERN instrument were used to assess informational value and reliability. Statistical analyses included descriptive measures, the Kruskal-Wallis test, and Spearman's correlation.

Results: Among 304 screened Reels, 51 met the inclusion criteria. Most Reels originated from dentists or other healthcare professionals (49.0%) and institutional accounts (45.1%). Overall educational quality was low, with mean modified DISCERN and GQS scores of 2.66 ± 0.55 and 3.17 ± 0.97 , respectively. Longer Reels tended to exhibit higher GQS scores, and a strong positive association was identified between visibility metrics and engagement metrics. Conversely, GQS scores demonstrated a negative correlation with days since upload.

Conclusion: Instagram Reels addressing NCCLs are limited in number and generally fail to provide evidence-based and comprehensive educational information. Increasing the availability of well-designed content produced by dental professionals may help improve patient awareness and public understanding of NCCL etiology, treatment approaches, and preventive strategies.

Keywords: Health Education; Social Media; Tooth Abrasion; Tooth Erosion; Tooth Wear

ÖZET

Amaç: Çürüksüz servikal lezyonlar (ÇSL), yönetimi büyük ölçüde doğru hasta eğitimi ve uygun klinik bilgi paylaşımına bağlı olan multifaktöriyel bir klinik sorundur. Instagram'ın sağlıkla ilişkili içeriklerin yaygın şekilde paylaşıldığı bir platform hâline gelmesi dikkate alındığında, bu çalışma Instagram Reels'lerinde ÇSL ile ilgili bilgi kalitesinin analiz edilmesini amaçlamıştır.

Yöntemler: Instagram Reels'leri, ÇSL'nin etiyolojik faktörleriyle ilişkili dört İngilizce hashtag kullanılarak sistematik olarak taranmıştır. Uygun Reels'ler yükleyici kaynağı, içerik özellikleri ve izleyici etkileşim ölçütleri açısından incelenmiştir. Bilgisel değer ve güvenilirliğin değerlendirilmesinde Global Quality Scale (GQS) ve modifiye DISCERN aracı kullanılmıştır. İstatistiksel analizlerde tanımlayıcı ölçütler, Kruskal-Wallis testi ve Spearman korelasyonu uygulanmıştır.

Bulgular: Taranan 304 Reels arasında 51'i dahil edilme kriterlerini karşılamıştır. Reels'lerin çoğu diş hekimi veya diğer sağlık profesyonellerinden (%49,0) ve kurumsal hesaplardan (%45,1) kaynaklanmıştır. Genel eğitimsel kalite düşük olup, ortalama modifiye DISCERN ve GQS skorları sırasıyla $2,66 \pm 0,55$ ve $3,17 \pm 0,97$ olarak bulunmuştur. Daha uzun Reels'lerin daha yüksek GQS skorları sergilediği ve görünürlük ölçütleri ile etkileşim ölçütleri arasında güçlü bir pozitif ilişki olduğu belirlenmiştir. Buna karşın, GQS skorlarının paylaşım tarihinden bu yana geçen gün sayısı ile negatif korelasyon gösterdiği tespit edilmiştir.

Sonuç: ÇSL'yi konu alan Instagram Reels'leri sayıca sınırlıdır ve genellikle kanıta dayalı ve kapsamlı eğitim bilgisi sunmamaktadır. Diş hekimleri tarafından üretilen iyi tasarlanmış içeriklerin artırılması, hasta farkındalığını ve ÇSL'nin etiyolojisi, tedavi yaklaşımları ve koruyucu stratejilerine ilişkin kamu anlayışını geliştirmeye yardımcı olabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sağlık Eğitimi; Sosyal Medya; Diş Abrazyonu; Diş Erozyonu; Diş Aşınması

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In restorative dentistry, non-carious cervical lesions (NCCLs) have gained increasing clinical importance due to their multifactorial etiology, progressive course, and potential impact on long-term tooth integrity (1). NCCLs are defined as the pathological loss of dental hard tissue at the cemento-enamel junction in the absence of bacterial involvement and are attributed to the combined effects of mechanical and chemical factors, including abrasion related to oral hygiene practices, erosion from dietary or intrinsic acids, and biomechanical stresses associated with occlusal loading (2).

Epidemiological evidence indicates that NCCLs are prevalent in the general population and tend to increase with advancing age; however, recent studies report a growing detection of these lesions in younger individuals, likely associated with modern lifestyle habits and oral health behaviors (3-5). Clinically, NCCLs may remain asymptomatic in their early stages, delaying diagnosis, but lesion progression often results in dentin exposure, cervical dentin hypersensitivity, and structural or esthetic compromise (6).

Given their progressive and often irreversible nature, early diagnosis and comprehensive etiological assessment are essential. Effective management extends beyond restorative treatment and requires individualized risk evaluation, preventive strategies, and patient education aimed at modifying contributory behaviors. Inadequate diagnosis or management may increase restorative complexity and compromise clinical outcomes, highlighting the need for an evidence-based and preventive-oriented approach to NCCLs (7).

The expansion of digital communication technologies has altered the ways in which individuals acquire information and seek healthcare guidance (8). Within this digital environment, social media platforms have evolved from simple networking tools into influential gateways through which the general public encounters health-related content (9,10). Among these platforms, Instagram has become particularly prominent due to the widespread popularity of its short video format known as Reels. Although visually attractive content with high algorithmic reach may enhance public awareness of oral health topics and facilitate engagement with diverse audiences, the absence of content regulation and professional peer review creates concerns about the scientific accuracy and clinical dependability of the information presented (9,11).

The rapid expansion of dental content shared on Instagram has the potential to blur the boundary between evidence-based clinical information and anecdotal or commercially motivated material. Social media posts are often created for visibility or branding purposes, which may lead to oversimplification, lack of scientific context, or absence of consensus-based recommendations (9,12). Such content risks promoting misconceptions that may influence self-diagnosis, delay professional treatment, or encourage harmful oral hygiene practices. Furthermore, the educational value of dental videos shared on social media remains a topic of ongoing debate, while some creators provide accurate and informative material, others share misleading or unverified claims without clinical validation (11).

Consistent with this concern, several studies have reported that dental information shared on social media platforms is frequently of low scientific quality; however, the educational potential of short-form video platforms appears heterogeneous and topic-dependent (11,13-15). Certain oral health topics seem to attract higher-quality content when information is produced by healthcare professionals or institutional sources rather than lay users (11,16). Nevertheless, data specifically evaluating content related to NCCLs on Instagram Reels remain limited. Considering the increasing presence of dental professionals on social media and the growing use of digital platforms for patient education, it was considered scientifically relevant to investigate whether NCCL-related Reels could demonstrate acceptable informational quality within the framework of evidence-based dentistry, grounded in established knowledge on the etiology, diagnosis, and management of NCCLs.

Within this context, the present study aimed to evaluate the reliability, educational usefulness, and overall informational quality of Instagram Reels addressing non-carious cervical lesions. Two validated instruments, the modified DISCERN tool and the Global Quality Scale (GQS), were employed to assess the credibility and scientific content of the Reels (17). The central hypothesis of the study was that Instagram Reels related to NCCLs would demonstrate adequate informational quality aligned with contemporary evidence-based restorative dentistry principles and thereby contribute positively to oral health literacy in the digital setting.

Materials and Methods

This investigation employed a cross-sectional design with a descriptive framework. The analysis was restricted to publicly accessible online materials; thus, no ethical clearance was necessary because the study did not involve human subjects, identifiable personal information, or clinical records.

Reels selection was carried out on September 30, 2024, within a five-hour window (07:00-12:00). The search strategy consisted of querying Instagram Reels using four English hashtags representative of different etiological aspects of non-carious cervical lesions (NCCLs): #noncariouscervicallesions, #dentalerosion, #dentalabrasion, and #dentalabfraction. After retrieval, all Reels were screened manually. Content unrelated to the topic, commercial material, duplicated entries, and non-English uploads were excluded. To qualify for inclusion, Reels were required to be in English, specifically address NCCLs, and provide educational information such as etiology, management options, preventive strategies, or patient guidance. Silence-only or unsubtitled Reels, advertisement-focused posts, and irrelevant uploads were eliminated during the selection phase. A total of 304 Reels were identified initially, of which only 51 satisfied the eligibility criteria and constituted the final dataset.

All included Reels underwent quantitative and qualitative assessment. Quantitative parameters included Reel duration, number of likes, comments, reposts, total views, upload-to-analysis time (days), and viewing rates. The viewing rates were defined to normalize visibility over time and were computed as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Total views}}{\text{Days Since Upload}} \times 100$$

For accounts that uploaded qualified Reels, additional profile variables were extracted: follower count, following count, and total number of posts. Reels were further categorized into three uploader groups: (1) dentists or other healthcare professionals, (2) institutional accounts (universities, hospitals, or clinics), and (3) non-professional/other sources.

Information quality was evaluated using two validated scoring tools: the Modified DISCERN instrument and the Global Quality Scale (GQS) (Table 1). The GQS is a five-point Likert scale that measures comprehensiveness, clarity, and educational usefulness. The Modified DISCERN items assess reliability, impartiality, referencing, and the balance of treatment information. All ratings were independently conducted by three evaluators.

Table 1. Modified DISCERN and GQS Scoring Systems

Modified DISCERN	GQS
1. Are the aims clear and achieved?	1. Poor quality-Poor flow, most information missing, not useful for viewers.
2. Are reliable sources of information used?	2. Generally poor quality-Some information present but many important topics missing; limited usefulness.
3. Are additional sources of information listed for viewer reference?	3. Moderate quality-Some important information adequately discussed, others poorly addressed; somewhat useful.
4. Are areas of uncertainty mentioned?	4. Good quality-Generally good flow, though some topics not covered; useful for viewers.
5. Is the information presented in a balanced and unbiased manner?	5. Excellent quality-Excellent flow and comprehensiveness; very useful for viewers.
Scoring: 1 point for each "Yes"; 0 for "No".	Scoring: 1 to 5 Likert scale.
Total Score Range: 0-5 points (higher = greater reliability).	Total Score Range: 1-5 points (higher = better overall quality).
*GQS = Global Quality Scale	

Statistical Analysis

Statistical evaluations were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics software (version 25.0; IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA). Prior to inferential testing, data distributions were assessed with the Shapiro-Wilk normality test. Because the majority of the examined variables did not comply with parametric assumptions, nonparametric statistical methods were employed. Group-level differences were investigated using the Kruskal-Wallis procedure, while associations among continuous variables were quantified via Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (ρ). Inter-observer agreement was quantified using Fleiss' kappa coefficient to ensure scoring reliability. Agreement strength was interpreted as poor ($\kappa < 0.20$), fair ($\kappa = 0.21-0.40$), moderate ($\kappa = 0.41-0.60$), substantial ($\kappa = 0.61-0.80$), and almost perfect ($\kappa > 0.80$). A p-value below 0.05 was interpreted as statistically significant throughout the analysis.

Results

A total of 304 Instagram Reels were identified through the predefined hashtag search (#noncariouscervicallesions,

#dentalerosion, #dentalabrasion, #dentalabfraction). After applying the eligibility criteria, only 51 Reels qualified for inclusion and comprised the final analytical dataset. Content origin analysis revealed that nearly half of the material (49.01%; $n = 25$) was produced by dentists or other healthcare professionals. Institutional sources such as universities, clinics, or hospitals accounted for 45.09% ($n = 23$). The remaining 5.88% ($n = 3$) originated from non-professional or others.

Inter-observer agreement among the three evaluators who assessed the Reels was almost perfect (Fleiss' $\kappa = 0.865$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 2 presents the mean values for Reels duration, number of likes, comments, reposts, days since upload, views, viewing rates, Modified DISCERN, and GQS.

Information on user profile characteristics is detailed in Table 3.

The comparison of GQS and modified DISCERN scores according to uploader category can be found in Table 4.

Table 2. Descriptive characteristics of Instagram Reels

	Duration (sec)	Likes	Comments	Reposts	Days Since Upload	Views	Viewing Rates	Modified DISCERN	GQS
Mean \pm SD	53.94 \pm 27.00	39.26 \pm 27.00	2.58 \pm 8.22	4.01 \pm 17.18	401.39 \pm 281.30	6326.80 \pm 24,339.18	9844.64 \pm 38,009.34	2.66 \pm 0.55	3.17 \pm 0.97
Min-Max	11-116	0-462	0-58	0-118	5-975	49-150,265	20.103-63,136.55	1-3	1-5

*SD = Standard Deviation; Min-Max = Minimum-Maximum; GQS = Global Quality Scale

Table 3. Information of Instagram Accounts Sharing the Reels

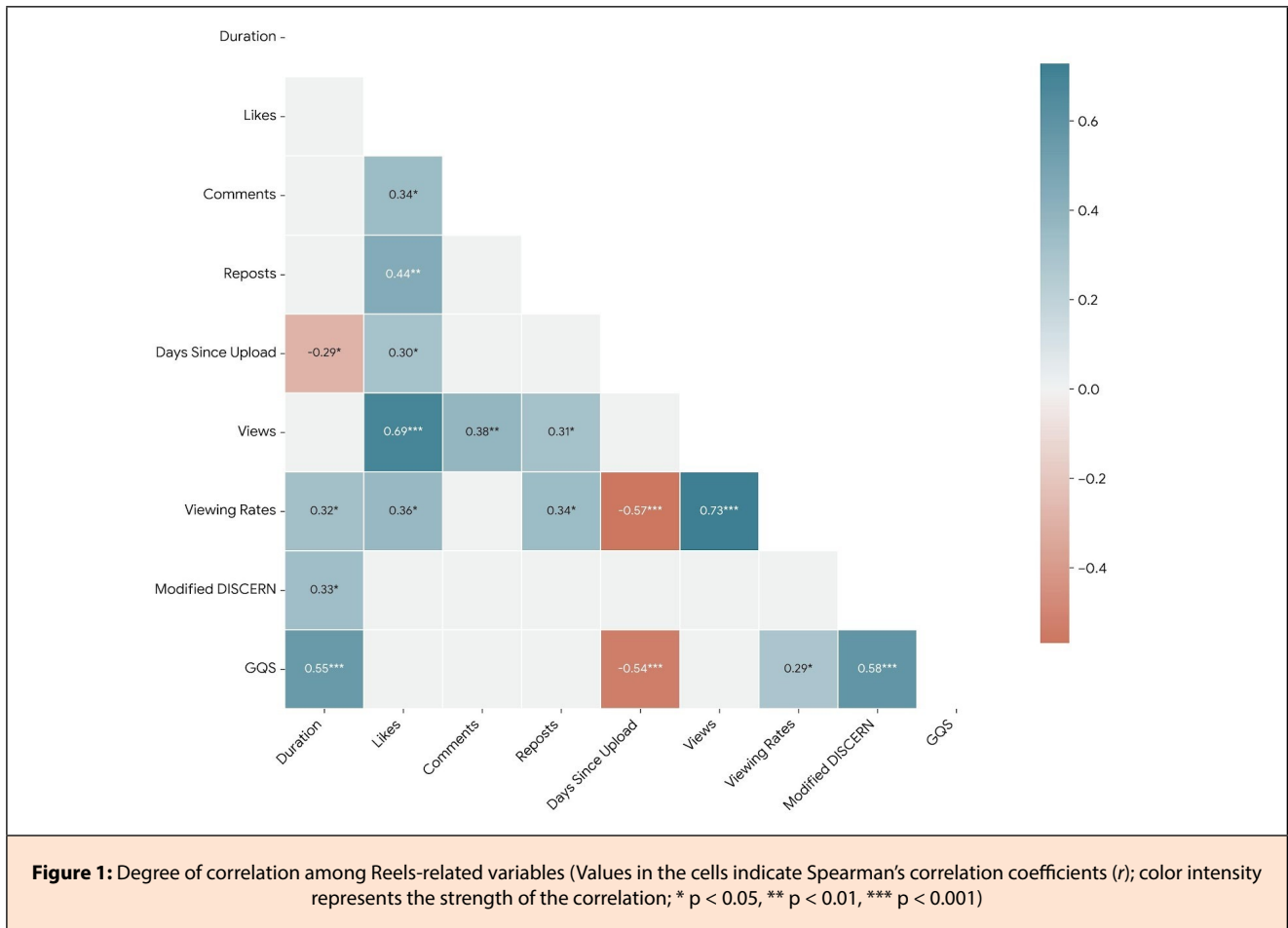
	Following	Followers	Total Posts
Mean \pm SD	629.35 \pm 804.36	5936.09 \pm 10,866.78	667.58 \pm 1218.64
Min-Max	0-3370	82-56,700	12-7960

*SD = Standard Deviation; Min-Max = Minimum-Maximum

Table 4. Modified DISCERN and GQS Scores by Upload Source

		Modified DISCERN	GQS
Dentists or Other Healthcare Professionals ($n = 25$)	Mean \pm SD	2.64 \pm 0.56	2.92 \pm 0.95
	Min-Max	1-3	2-5
Institutional Accounts (Hospitals/Universities/Clinics) ($n = 23$)	Mean \pm SD	2.69 \pm 0.55	3.34 \pm 0.93
	Min-Max	1-3	1-5
Non-professional/Other Sources ($n = 3$)	Mean \pm SD	2.66 \pm 0.57	4.00 \pm 1.00
	Min-Max	2-3	3-5

*SD = Standard Deviation; Min-Max = Minimum-Maximum; GQS = Global Quality Scale



Analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation between Reels duration and GQS scores ($r = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$), as well as between modified DISCERN scores and GQS scores ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, the number of likes was strongly and positively correlated with total views ($r = 0.69$, $p < 0.001$), and a similarly strong positive correlation was observed between viewing rates and total views ($r = 0.73$, $p < 0.001$). A weak negative correlation was observed between Reels duration and days since upload ($r = -0.29$, $p < 0.05$). In contrast, moderate negative correlations were identified between viewing rates and days since upload ($r = -0.57$, $p < 0.001$), as well as between GQS scores and days since upload ($r = -0.54$, $p < 0.001$) (Figure 1).

Discussion

The current study provides an evaluation of the informational quality and audience engagement patterns of Instagram Reels related to NCCLs. The findings suggest a potential imbalance between content popularity and scientific adequacy within the wider digital health landscape. However, this pattern did not support the

hypothesis that NCCL-related Reels would demonstrate adequate informational quality. Although Instagram effectively amplifies visibility and user engagement, the quality and educational credibility of dental content appear to be limited. This disparity suggests that oral health information shared on social media may not always be subject to professional review or evidence-based filtering mechanisms.

The findings of this analysis demonstrated that the short-form structure of Reels presents inherent constraints when conveying clinically detailed or context-dependent material, which was reflected in the overall low modified DISCERN and GQS scores. This aligns with prior work examining teeth whitening content on Instagram, where many posts were oriented toward commercial promotion rather than patient education, often lacking citation of scientific sources (18). Although numerically higher GQS scores were observed among non-professional sources compared to dentists in this dataset, this observation should be interpreted strictly as a descriptive finding rather than an indicator of superior informational quality.

The non-professional subgroup consisted of only three Reels, which precludes meaningful statistical comparison or generalizable inference. Therefore, this apparent difference likely reflects isolated instances of relatively well-structured content or curated reposted educational material rather than a systematic trend. Future studies including larger and more balanced subgroup distributions are required before any conclusions regarding uploader category differences can be considered.

The broader tendency to emphasize visual appeal and marketing value over clinically grounded communication appears to span multiple dental topics shared online. As highlighted by Yorgancioglu et al. (19), the absence of standardization and quality benchmarking on visually oriented platforms increases the likelihood that viewers may adopt inaccurate or misleading oral health information. Another significant outcome of this study concerns the role of brevity. The emphasis on short, rapidly consumable videos, designed to sustain attention rather than facilitate learning, limits their educational utility. Consistent with this notion, longer Reels were associated with higher GQS and modified DISCERN scores, implying that additional seconds enable a clearer transmission of clinical context. This suggests that while the Instagram algorithm favors brevity, providing comprehensive information about multifactorial conditions such as NCCLs necessitates a trade-off in video length.

Comparable observations were reported by Kuka et al. (20) regarding oral hygiene information on YouTube, where extended videos tended to be perceived as more reliable. Because NCCLs emerge from multifactorial interactions including mechanical abrasion, chemical erosion, and occlusal loading, oversimplification within a one-minute clip may generate misunderstandings. For example, if content fails to distinguish between abrasive brushing techniques and acidic erosion from diet, viewers may adjust their behavior inappropriately, potentially worsening lesion progression.

The relationship between content visibility and engagement metrics further underscores the influential role of platform algorithms. Strong associations between likes, views, and viewing rates indicate that Instagram appears to favor visually engaging content, which may not always align with informational accuracy. This algorithmic preference has been described elsewhere in relation to biological dentistry content, where misleading claims achieved substantial exposure (21). The findings of

the present study confirm this trend, as high-engagement metrics did not show a significant positive correlation with modified DISCERN or GQS scores, reinforcing the concern that popularity is a poor proxy for scientific quality in the digital dental landscape (22, 23). This finding suggests that engagement metrics primarily reflect content visibility rather than informational reliability.

Clinically, this phenomenon has noteworthy implications. Appropriate patient education is central to long-term restorative success and prevention of NCCLs progression (24). When patients rely on oversimplified or inaccurate online content, such as adopting aggressive brushing techniques or postponing dental consultation, the risk of dentin hypersensitivity, structural compromise, or restorative failure may increase. Nonetheless, the presence of a small subset of highly rated Reels in the dataset indicates that Instagram could serve as a constructive educational space if dental professionals produce content grounded in evidence-based practices.

To address the gap between visibility and validity, several interventions are worth considering. Professional dental societies may play a role in promoting strategies that help users distinguish authoritative sources from non-professional accounts. Additionally, clinicians may develop structured micro-learning content that retains scientific precision while fitting contemporary viewing patterns (25). Future research may explore whether artificial intelligence-based tools could support the identification and dissemination of verified educational content in digital health environments.

There are limitations to acknowledge. Instagram content discovery is modulated by dynamic algorithms, hashtag usage, user-specific browsing patterns, and cached data, which introduces potential selection bias. Moreover, the cross-sectional nature of the study provides only a temporal snapshot of an evolving media environment. The inclusion of only English-language Reels further limits the representativeness of the findings, as relevant content in other languages was not captured and cross-cultural comparisons could not be made. Future investigations would benefit from longitudinal designs and qualitative frameworks to evaluate how dental social media content affects patient decision-making, health literacy, and clinical outcomes. Research exploring algorithmic impacts on the reach of evidence-based content will be essential for promoting public health and digital dental education. Furthermore, the disproportionate distribution

of uploader categories, particularly the small sample size of non-professional accounts, limits the generalizability of comparisons between different source types.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the informational quality of Instagram Reels regarding non-carious cervical lesions is generally low and fails to provide comprehensive guidance for patients. Despite the high proportion of content shared by dental professionals, the educational value of these short-form videos remains limited, often prioritized by algorithmic trends rather than clinical depth. While engagement metrics such as views and likes are high, they do not correlate with informational reliability, potentially facilitating the dissemination of superficial or incomplete clinical advice. Increasing the production of evidence-based, high-quality content by dental professionals and academic institutions may contribute to improving information quality on social media platforms. The development of standardized digital health communication strategies may support the delivery of accurate information about the prevention and management of multifactorial conditions such as NCCLs.

Declarations

Ethics approval

Ethical approval was not required for this study, as it did not involve clinical data, human samples, or laboratory animals. All data were obtained solely from publicly accessible Instagram Reels without collecting any personal or identifiable information, and there was no direct interaction with users or any form of intervention.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no competing interests.

Availability of data

All data are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Authors' contributions

MH: Concept, Design, Supervision, Materials, Data Collection and Processing, Analysis and Interpretation, Literature Search, Writing, Critical Review

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) Statement

The author used artificial intelligence-assisted language tools to improve grammar, clarity, and overall readability during manuscript preparation. No AI tools were used for data analysis, data interpretation, statistical analysis, or generation of scientific conclusions.

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