



p-ISSN : 2520-0348 | e-ISSN : 2616-793X

DOI(Journal): 10.31703/gssr  
DOI(Volume): 10.31703/gssr/.2024(IX)  
DOI(Issue): 10.31703/gssr.2024(IX.I)

DOI(Issue): 10.31703/gssr.2024(IX.I)  
DOI(Volume): 10.31703/gssr/.2024(IX)  
DOI(Journal): 10.31703/gssr

# GSSR

**GLOBAL SOCIAL SCIENCES REVIEW**  
HEC-RECOGNIZED CATEGORY-Y

**VOL. IX, ISSUE I, WINTER (MARCH-2024)**

### Article Title

A Philosophical Analysis of Posting and Re-Posting Contents Regarding Pregnancy and Child Birth on Social Media

### Global Social Sciences Review

p-ISSN: 2520-0348 e-ISSN: 2616-793x

DOI (journal): 10.31703/gssr

Volume: IX (2024)

DOI (volume): 10.31703/gssr.2024(IX)

Issue: I-Winter (March-2024)

DOI(Issue): 10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-I)

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Volume: IX (2024)

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Issue: I-Winter (March-2024)

<https://www.gssrjournal.com/Current-issues/9/1/2024>

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### Abstract

The desire to become popular and earn money with the help of social media drives people to come up with something that is unique and interesting. Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram are the famous platforms to post and re-post desired data to get publicity, fame, and monetary benefits. The study focuses on the status of the fetus in this whole process of fame and gain. As the human fetus is considered sacred and a potential person in socio-religious and socio-ethical contexts, the act of sharing such data raises questions on the sanctity of the human fetus being used as a means to achieve some other ends which denies the worth and intrinsic value of human life. This article is an attempt to analyze these changing trends from a philosophical perspective and to determine their value and worth from the point of view of morality.

**Keywords:** Morality, Fetus, Intrinsic Value, Digital Influencers, Bloggers, Vloggers

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Pages: 223-231

DOI:10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-I).19

DOI link: [https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2024\(IX-I\).19](https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-I).19)

Article link: <http://www.gssrjournal.com/article/A-b-c>

Full-text Link: <https://gssrjournal.com/fulltext/>

Pdf link: <https://www.gssrjournal.com/jadmin/Author/31rv1oIA2.pdf>

Citing this Article

A Philosophical Analysis of Posting and Re-Posting Contents Regarding Pregnancy and Child Birth on Social Media							
19	Author	Sawaira Sehreen Far Bokhari Seemab Far Bukhari		DOI	10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-I).19		
	Pages	223-231	Year	2024	Volume	IX	Issue
Referencing & Citing Styles	APA 7 <sup>th</sup>	Sawaira, Bokhari, S. F., & Bukhari, S. F. (2024). A Philosophical Analysis of Posting and Re-Posting Contents Regarding Pregnancy and Child Birth on Social Media. <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> , IX(1), 223-231. <a href="https://doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-I).19">https://doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-I).19</a>					
	CHICAGO	Sawaira, Sehreen Far Bokhari, and Seemab Far Bukhari. 2024. "A Philosophical Analysis of Posting and Re-Posting Contents Regarding Pregnancy and Child Birth on Social Media." <i>Global Social Sciences Review IX (1)</i> : 223-231. doi: 10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-I).19.					
	HARVARD	SAWAIRA, BOKHARI, S. F. & BUKHARI, S. F. 2024. A Philosophical Analysis of Posting and Re-Posting Contents Regarding Pregnancy and Child Birth on Social Media. <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> , IX, 223-231.					
	MHRA	Sawaira, Sehreen Far Bokhari, and Seemab Far Bukhari. 2024. 'A Philosophical Analysis of Posting and Re-Posting Contents Regarding Pregnancy and Child Birth on Social Media', <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> , IX: 223-31.					
	MLA	Sawaira, Sehreen Far Bokhari, and Seemab Far Bukhari. "A Philosophical Analysis of Posting and Re-Posting Contents Regarding Pregnancy and Child Birth on Social Media." <i>Global Social Sciences Review IX.I</i> (2024): 223-31. Print.					
	OXFORD	Sawaira, Bokhari, Sehreen Far, and Bukhari, Seemab Far (2024), 'A Philosophical Analysis of Posting and Re-Posting Contents Regarding Pregnancy and Child Birth on Social Media', <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> , IX (1), 223-31.					
	TURABIAN	Sawaira, Sehreen Far Bokhari, and Seemab Far Bukhari. "A Philosophical Analysis of Posting and Re-Posting Contents Regarding Pregnancy and Child Birth on Social Media." <i>Global Social Sciences Review IX</i> , no. I (2024): 223-31. <a href="https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-I).19">https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-I).19</a> .					



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## Title

### A Philosophical Analysis of Posting and Re-Posting Contents Regarding Pregnancy and Child Birth on Social Media

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#### Abstract

*The desire to become popular and earn money with the help of social media drives people to come up with something that is unique and interesting. Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram are the famous platforms to post and re-post desired data to get publicity, fame, and monetary benefits. The study focuses on the status of the fetus in this whole process of fame and gain. As the human fetus is considered sacred and a potential person in socio-religious and socio-ethical contexts, the act of sharing such data raises questions on the sanctity of the human fetus being used as a means to achieve some other ends which denies the worth and intrinsic value of human life. This article is an attempt to analyze these changing trends from a philosophical perspective and to determine their value and worth from the point of view of morality.*

**Keywords:** [Morality](#), [Fetus](#), [Intrinsic Value](#), [Digital Influencers](#), [Bloggers](#), [Vloggers](#)

#### Introduction

Morality is the basic concern of human life in order to have a sustainable and well-mannered society. The moral code of human society suggests considering each human member as an individual with a unique set of traits that describe an individual's personality (Gert, 2020). This concept of personal identity is associated with fully conscious

and developed humans. Here the question arises... can a fetus be given equal moral status as a grownup adult? However, the concept of individuality can be found in the study of human DNA. Every single human being possesses different DNA from others, not even the parents and offspring share the exact same genetic code with each other. Therefore, the makeup of every individual begins from the very first stage of development inside the mother's womb



because of new DNA. The distinctive features of persona are evident in ways the unborn children respond in a special manner to various impulses even though the stimulus is similar, but the question regarding the equivalence of the moral status of the fetus fails to get a definite answer and seeks special moral attention (Miklavcic, 2017).

The meaning of anything can be determined with reference to its context because without any context the word is just a combination of letters with many meanings thus making it complex for the one to interpret the right meaning of that word. Similarly, a *fetus* gains its meaning according to the milieu in which it is being discussed. There are different questions ranging from different meanings of a fetus. If a person is interested in the epistemological understanding of the fetus then he will question the beginning of fetal life and argue about the process which is behind the development of fetal life. While questions concerning the actual meaning are philosophical if one is focusing on what is the meaning of fetal life he is discussing the meaning in a philosophical sense. Similarly, if a person is captivated by the behavior that others should follow and is responsible with respect to the fetus he is most probably arguing for the ethical status of the fetus and those interested in the protection and legal directions are dealing with the political meaning of the fetus.

The concerns related to the fetus are not the latest ones, rather they were discussed for ages as the questions related to the dawn of life and the mystery behind it are considered an affair of curiosity from the beginning. Either Aristotle considered *epigenesis* to be the procedure of reproduction (the idea that every embryo or organism is gradually generated from an undifferentiated or identical form by steps and stages during which new parts are added) or the Preformationist's stance regarding the development of organism (preformationists advocated that all organisms were produced concurrently, and that succeeding generations flourish from homunculi, or animalcules, that have existed since the beginning of creation), the purpose was solely to solve the thriller question of life and unborn child status (Dubow, 2003).

Modern scientific methods being used to examine the condition of the fetus indicate that the unborn child is an integral person equipped with sensorium capability, feelings, and learning skills as well.

According to different religions, there is also a debate regarding the status of a fetus. Christian theology is considered to be as old as Christ and the teachings are sacred as these are based on revelation although the Catholics are the followers of the rules of the Church and the teachings of the New Testament of the Bible while the ones who follow the sacred teachings and admire the life of Christ are Christians who follow the old testament. When it is the concern of fetus both the Christians and Catholics share the view that every individual has the right of freedom, and an unborn child is as free as fully developed humans. They consider it to be the responsibility of every rational and conscious being to respect the fetus even at the developmental stages of life. In *The Gospel of Life*, John Paul II acknowledged the need to understand that respect and duty towards life is not merely a concept of religious importance but crucial for everyone whether one is a believer or not if he has reason and conscience he can evaluate the future of humanity thus finds the truth. Faith is like a cherry on top as it provides guidance but the concern of life is not necessitated for one to be faithful it is the concern of everyone without any discrimination (Colombo, 2005). Human beings are the images of God that's why they should be treated superior to other species is a common belief in Christian theology. Life of human beings starting after conception is the view shared among Christians as they consider abortion to be the worst sin to commit. According to them, it is intrinsically wrong whether the fetus is ensouled or not as the teachings of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas were based on the earlier theory of reproduction by Aristotle so they believed the fetus to be without a soul during the primary weeks of gestation but whatever the case is they claimed fetus to be a 'gift' of God and it is against nature to reject the new life which is in process. In the opinion of the social doctrine of the Church, every human life has inherent worth so it should be treated that way and each life must be given esteem, that's why a fetus has a status of individual identity and must be respected according Catholic view (Colombo, 2005). So fetus is a contribution to society as later he/she will become a fully developed human being in the image of God therefore un-born human babies must be given the same value and respect as other grown human beings. Whereas the fetus is considered sacred and worthy of protection in Islamic scriptures. According to Islam, human beings have to spend

lives in three different worlds. The first and foremost period of development is inside the womb of the mother, which is the first world of a person, the second period comprises the time that is being spent in this viewable present world while the third period signifies the time when the person is reborn after death. This distinction indicates different rights, responsibilities, and rewards respectively to distinct periods of life. Islam has given a complete code of life to human beings in the form of Muslim's holy book 'the Quran'. It has mentioned all the do's and don'ts, how human beings should behave, what are their duties, and how they would be rewarded or punished according to their deeds. The creation of a fetus is also mentioned in the Quran in these words "We have created man from a mixed sperm-drop to put him to a test; then We made him able to hearable, to see" (The Quran, 76:2).

In the Quran, the stages of the development of a human fetus are described:

Man We did create from a quintessence (of clay); Then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed; Then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot, We made a (fetus) lump; then we made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then we developed out of it another creature. So blessed be Allah, the best to create (The Quran, 23:12-14).

The Quran strongly emphasizes the protection and well-being of the fetus as it is considered the beginning of human life. The fetus is also given inheritance rights in Islam which highlights the status of fetus in the Muslim doctrines. According to most religions, the status of the human fetus may vary but their teachings regarding its protection and reality are nearly much similar.

Likewise, the biological investigation also shows the evident distinction between the genome of human zygotes and other mammals. It explains that human beings are different from other species not just because of the presence of reasoning, cognitive abilities, and self-reflection but also because the preliminary developmental stages are distinct as well. It cannot be denied that the zygote has no brain but it is true that it has the potential will enable it to acquire the brain in the future. This phenomenon is similar to the case of an infant/baby who cannot speak when born but has the ability will make him a speaking person in the near future. It is proved that DNA carries all the details regarding the

color of skin to the sex of that individual, and the DNA is there from the time of conception indicating that individuality is present from the start. This is a strong argument that suggests that a human being acquires the status of personhood even when it is at a one-cell stage (Kingma, 2020)

The current research focuses on the moral status of the human fetus with reference to the notions of individuality and personal identity and then analyses the trends of posting and reposting images of pregnancy and childbirth on social media.

In the contemporary world, communication among humans can take place either by language, kinesics, or oculusics - a subcategory of kinesics, which is the study of eye movement, behavior, gaze, and eye-related nonverbal communication. The term's specific designation slightly varies apropos of the field of medicine or social science, visuals, and many other ways. The need to share feelings, achievements, failures, and information can be seen by observing the invention of internet services and various internet-based sites. Social media is one of the valuable creations of the human complex mind. Its base is laid upon the invention of the internet which has helped mankind to access information and connect with people living all over the world. It has innumerable applications for sharing, posting, and creating any content on the web. Certain sites like *wikis* (a website that allows users to collaborate in editing its content and structure), *blogs* (regularly updated websites or web pages, typically one run by an individual or small group of users, that is written in an unceremonious or informal style), *photo and video sharing*, *networking*, *podcasting* (the practice of utilizing internet resources for digital recordings of broadcasts which are accessible for downloading to a computer, mobile device or compatible devices), and *virtual micro-blogging* are some examples of internet's extensive and broad creations (Rouse, 2020).

Digital influencers, bloggers, vloggers, and content creators play a great role in online business through various applications as they are the retainers and employers of social media. They create unique digital content, influence their followers to like something, and help the business not only small-scale businesses but also larger ones to grow rapidly (Duggan et al., 2015). This has been practiced at *Ford Fiesta Movement (2009)* in the United States of America, the digital influencers were provided

with 100 European-specification Fiestas for a time span of six months. The influencers blogged, posted photos, and videos, tweeted, and shared their experience with others through this medium. Their content was followed through their website without any hindrance. The result proved to be very productive as it crossed 7 million views on *YouTube* channels regarding photos reached it got about 750,000 views, not only that there were more than ever reservations of about 11000 vehicles being made. All credit goes to social media and shows the power of influencers in modern times (Qualman, 2012). This shows the impact of social media influencers on the lives and views of people.

As people follow and copy the lifestyles, fashions, and activities of celebrities, mentors, or famous personalities, sharing videos and posts of private and personal matters has taught the masses that these activities of posting and reposting should not be considered immoral or against traditional morality. The given links can highlight the emerging trends of posting the pictures and videos of pregnant celebrities and influencers as well as the process of delivering babies:

- <https://www.instagram.com/p/CQdgoeBEUJ/?igsh=MWMzM21ycHE5bzZxYw>
- <https://www.instagram.com/p/CiAjGYesfFc/?igsh=bHBnMXZia29xbmRi>
- <https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cxiz4fMJxK/?igsh=MXI5cHJodXE1aGgyZg>
- <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2uQhqRo5gU/?igsh=MWwyY3BpOTI6anRzeA>
- [Pregnancy Transformation \(Week by Week\) | Kryz Uy \(youtube.com\)](#)
- [Pregnant Belly Growth from 4 Weeks to 40 Weeks with Baby #4! \(youtube.com\)](#)
- <https://www.facebook.com/share/38fkLtYK02W2YVij/?mibextid=D5vuiZ>
- <https://youtu.be/ZupaAxMGpX4?si=Qfcv1ocO8WoK8qg2>

The above-mentioned posted data/content can reveal how this type of content influences people as these few videos and posts are watched by millions of viewers and the producers of these kinds of videos earn huge amounts of money by posting and reposting these videos based on phases of pregnancy, bodily changes, gender reveal and delivery process.

Different questions arise when the conversation is viewed in a moral context. What should be said and what should not be said are the primary concerns of people conversating with each other in a human community. Similarly what should be posted and what should not be posted on social media sites are the basic concerns of internet users. Nowadays a new trend of posting and reposting photographs of pregnant women and child childbirth process is becoming common among the masses. To educate the masses, various organizations use these easily accessible platforms to spread information regarding health-related issues from conceiving, and different phases of pregnancy to childbirth. They also share the personal experiences of various individuals regarding pregnancy on apps that are specifically designed for the maternal health of pregnant women, especially the nulliparous ones. The authorities in this context claim that sharing such type of content has improved the physical and mental health of pregnant women. It is notable that this type of content sharing began with just textual explanations and later the popularity of social media motivated pregnant ladies to share pictures and videos as well (Chan & Chan, 2019).

It is notable that the approach towards the procedure of reproduction has been modified during the last five hundred years in the history of medical science. The credit goes to the obstetricians, educators of medicine, and anatomists who focused on the images of fetuses and developed new and unique ways to create the image. As the status of the fetus changed from the object or focus of divinity and became the entity of medical science, the study-related material was gathered and books were made for training the employees of this study area like midwives, physicians, and surgeons. Between the 14th and 17th centuries, images of fetuses before birth while developing in the uterus became more common due to the invention of the printing press. Moreover, the dissection of deceased females also helped the surgeons to gain more knowledge. In 1526 the first-ever image of the fetus was published that depicts his/her position in the female uterus, showing that the fetus is a playful one and waiting for his/her arrival, this concept is also represented by a French practitioner Joseph Raulin, who claimed that the fetus was diving in the mother's uterus due to its spacious nature. Later different cartoons,

drawings, and images realistic and non-realistic were also published on this topic (Carlyle, [2019](#)).

Apart from spreading awareness or gaining knowledge, people are using internet resources for fame, entertainment, and commercial purposes. Interestingly, sharing personal or private content regarding pregnancy and childbirth also serves people in achieving monetary benefits and popularity. Facebook and Instagram are the two most common applications used by pregnant women for sharing purposes. These applications allow sharing pictures and videos as well. It is also possible for any person, with his/her personal account on these respective platforms, to review and re-share the posts of other users. It is being revealed by the analysis that posts related to pregnancy and babies either born or un-born yield more attraction to the public. Moreover; those posts containing aesthetic factors are most likely to be the focus of people rather than simple and unfiltered pictures. Furthermore these are the hashtags being used in order to increase the reach on Instagram #pregnantbelly #pregnant #pregnancy #momtobe #weekspregnant #baby #pregnantlife #babybump #maternity #preggo #motherhood #momlife #maternityphotography #mumtobe #love #schwanger #pregnantstyle #babygirl #babyboy #mommytobe #babyontheway #family #pregnantandperfect #maternityshoot #mom #babybelly #pregnancyannouncement #newborn #babyshower #pregnancylife.

The question comes up about how showing the gradual development of the fetus in the mother's womb or posting videos regarding labor and childbirth is related to business. In fact, social media provides various opportunities to promote and spread businesses using different programs. Nowadays it has become a common practice among pregnant women to post their pregnancy-related content usually using the *hashtags of the first pic of the baby*. In particular, Facebook and Instagram have become sites of sharing not just for spreading information but the main purpose is diverting earnings from these posts. Naked pictures of women, usually to show the bumped belly due to pregnancy are most widely shared and liked by pregnant females. Relatedly, it has also proved to be one of the best ways for business growth. The companies use this platform to attract customer's attention as they are able to know the feedback of

customers through the networking sites, the clients can give reviews of a particular thing while the companies provide them with better services. With the increase in market reach, social media helped the business to grow so fast. There are a number of ways to generate money through social media. It has become a platform for various business entrepreneurs to establish an online market. Blogging, Vlogging, YouTube channels, and content creation are the most abundant and ample sources of income for many people. Therefore, posting these pictures and videos attracts other pregnant women due to their psychological adherence to that content. The more the algorithm would be the better the income it will generate. This way, though indirectly, the fetus has become the concern of generating monetary benefits.

Apart from monetary benefits and the spread of awareness, social media has its very own drawbacks both in social and ethical contexts. By using cellular phones or computers, even a single shared information (either true or false) on these media sites can defame or damage the image of anyone because of the posting and reposting of the material by multiple users. It is also stated that social media users especially pregnant ladies are prone to become patients of anxiety and depression. Pregnant women who are more likely to use social media on a daily basis and remain active on *Facebook* and *Instagram* are among those who were given anxiety supplements because social media provokes their hormones and the patients cannot sleep. This way social media became the source of anxiety and depression in pregnant women (Zeni, [2021](#)). Moreover, the posted and reposted contents relating to the gradual or monthly progress of the human fetus give rise to some other questions regarding the individuality, identity, willingness, or unwillingness of the fetus itself, who will soon become an individual with all basic human rights. The focus of all the debates on fetus's rights revolves around a single confusion, whether a fetus is actually an individual? (Wasserstorm, [1975](#)). Mainly this issue is raised by ethicists in answering the legitimacy or illegitimacy of abortion. As in religious contexts, abortion is not considered a desirable or recommended act and is only allowed to save a mother's life if no other option is available. However various ethical and legal thinkers give preference to the mother's will to carry or abort the child as she, being a fully grown adult, can choose between the

two options. The unborn child though can be taken as a potential person and cannot compete with his mother by all means. Therefore, the status and the significance of an unborn child are discussed with reference to the permissibility of abortion. The utilitarianist approach allows humans to seek for their own happiness, though it does not suggest to harm others. John Stuart Mill's stance is very clear in this regard when he supports individual freedom in the process of decision-making but he asks the state to use its powers if an individual is intentionally causing harm to others in order to get his personal benefits. Therefore, a moral agent must weigh the possible consequences before performing any act or set of actions to decide which act will bring more happiness in his/her life (Mill, 1968). In this context, religious exhortations regarding abortion are different from the utilitarianist views.

Immanuel Kant is considered the most influential philosopher and thinker who provided a concept that has been appreciated and admired by not only the thinkers of his times but many of the modern thinkers and philosophers. According to Kant's moral thought things have two kinds of values, one is their intrinsic value while the other is their extrinsic value. According to intrinsic value, a thing is good in itself while extrinsic value indicates that a thing is good because of its value or use. Kant considered that one should not use an individual as a means but should consider him as an end. While considering this and evaluating a fetus in this set of arguments it would be wrong to use a fetus for generating any kind of benefits because using a fetus as a means to attain a certain end is universally wrong for every individual (Holland, 2016).

Kant was not alone in making the claim that human beings are different and better than other species. He believed like ancient traditional thought that human beings have intrinsic value whereas other animals can be used instrumentally to serve humans. Unlike animals, humans can't be considered as means to ends. He was clear in his claim that human beings are above all prices because all individuals in the human community are irreplaceable so they must not be treated like replaceable worldly things. Kant states that a human individual is distinct from other species because of having desires, targets, and self-consciousness. Although this point of view can be challenged by saying that animals also have desires and targets to

achieve Kant insists that humans are more valuable than animals because of these characteristics. He supports his argument that human beings are better and irreplaceable by discussing the rational capabilities of humans. Rationality, according to Kant, bestows dignity to human life. A human can choose among various alternatives on the basis of reason-based inference. That is why humans are morally responsible for their actions. This is a distinct feature of humans as non-humans do not possess free will or rational abilities to choose better options for themselves. Moreover, Kant states that his categorical imperatives provide grounds to derive moral obligations. In Kantian words, '...so act that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means' (Wood, 2000). It clearly entails that Kant was not willing to use humans as means to achieve ends, therefore he would not allow the use of fetuses for any instrumental purposes. Rachels states that:

To treat people "as an end" means, on the most superficial level, treating them well. We must promote their welfare, respect their rights, avoid harming them, and generally "endeavor, so far as we can, to further the ends of others." But Kant's idea also has a deeper implication. Treating people as ends requires treating them with respect. Thus, we may not manipulate people, or "use" people to achieve our goals, no matter how good those goals may be (Rachels, 2010).

There are different ethical theories that commence the relationship of human beings with other living things. It advocates that treating all living things in such a way that the inherent worth of each of them is the only way that tells how to treat them. The four central beliefs or key terms that explain it are equality, interdependency, telos, and non-anthropocentricity. *Equality* indicates that all living things should be entertained equally, whether they are fully developed or have the potential to develop, not only that this principle also includes other living things and considers them as equal members of Earth as human beings. *Interdependency* points towards the life cycle of each living organism connected to the other as in the case of the preformationist view and telos indicates that every life chases various objectives and benefits of its own by following ways, in that regard as an embryo pursues the good of its own. The view of *non-*

*anthropocentricity* claims that human beings are not the superior ones so they cannot decide for the lives of other organisms and similarly cannot make decisions on behalf of the fetus as there is no hierarchy among the same species as well. There are certain duties which are associated with solving ethical dilemmas (Luce, 2009).

It declares that a human fetus has a moral status that makes it obligatory for others to fulfill all the rights that it owes. The present world's scenario where the fetus has become a highlight of social media has provoked thinkers to consider whether it is right to use pictures, videos, and other content to advance their business and earn money by making that content viral and roam all over internet defaming the status of the fetus and obscuring the right of privacy which fetus owes (Wasserstorm, 1975).

Referring to this it is compulsory to focus on the rights and responsibilities that a fetus owes. Although the lady who bears the fetus provides residence for the unborn child to grow inside her so, she is capable of making decisions based on her health condition but at the same time, she is accountable for the integrity and liberty of the fetus who has the status of a person. The article has shed light upon the personal identity of human fetuses while considering the present-day scenario where people are so busy in their personal lives and so addicted to social media that they ignore the fact that how fetuses are being used for creating unethical content. They are used to scrolling the feeds *Instagram* and watching pregnant ladies sometimes cuddling with their husbands and sometimes in the labor room giving birth to the child. These all have become so normal that even celebrities and actresses held a proper function for their baby showers with the allocation of big cameras and public figures so that they could go viral. Various brands and market owners collaborate in order to promote their business by posting related pictures and videos of the event and making it viral. This is not only confined to the baby shower pictures but starts from the pregnancy tests, ultrasound reports showing growing fetuses, babies in the womb, sometimes the moving fetus in the amniotic sac, and finally, the delivery process either from the vagina or through C-section and even does not stop here and leads to the pictures of breastfeeding and much more.

The purpose of ultrasonography and technological development was to provide medical assistance but this shows other motives which are not for the benefit of all mankind but flourishing and glamorizing the lives of people who share. The use of mobile phones has increased so much that people consider it their duty to post whatever they do in private whether it is eating, drinking, shopping, or reciprocating. *Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram* are an essential part of their lives, without internet service they are depressed. Furthermore, another cause of anxiety in people especially pregnant ladies is the overuse of social media as it encourages only smooth and healthy pregnancies neglecting the issues that are the concerns of some mothers, hence making them worry about their personal situation affecting the health of their unborn child.

Nowadays in search of new content people mostly *Bloggers* and *V-loggers* share their private lives as well as other individuals' life stories, videos, and pictures without their permission neglecting the right to freedom and autonomy. The main concern of everyone has become the material gain after the advent of industrialization and the supremacy of progress by any means. The shift of metanarrative from '*I exist therefore I am*' to the motto of '*I shop therefore I am*' (Wright, 1952) and in present times it has been altogether changed and the progression depends upon sharing, thus the motive became '*I share therefore I am*'. This kind of behavior should be restricted as according to Kant, it is categorical imperative to not use human beings as means. The concern of writing this research paper is to highlight the issue that a fetus is an individual and should not be used in any case to generate capital. There should be a censorship committee that evaluates all the posts regarding fetuses. One way or the other, with the growing world, the concerns are just becoming a matter of business. So there must be rules in business as well regarding the status of the fetus as it should not be used as a tool like raw materials in order to get material profit. Moreover, this point must be kept in mind that one day the potential person namely the 'fetus' will become a grown-up person and he/she may have objections over publishing something about him/her without seeking prior permission. Although a counterargument can be stated in response that the decision to publicize pregnancy or childbirth was the decision of his/her mother the issue that an

individual was used as a means to achieve some ends will remain unchanged. Conclusively the problems related to fetuses also cover the scope of business ethics in addition to bioethics. A fetus has the right to privacy, freedom, integrity, autonomy, and personal identity which should not be demolished or interfered with by anyone or any means. According to prima facie duties of beneficence and non-maleficence, all the provisions that can be beneficial for the fetus should be promoted while those that

can harm the fetus in any way should be demoted. So posting and re-posting pictures and videos related to pregnancy involving the unborn but soon-to-be conscious being in any way should be reviewed by some authority and then get the attention of the public in order to avoid issues that can be concerning the privacy and sovereignty of the fetus. This way there will be fewer identity crises regarding fetuses will be generated.

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