Information Disclosure and Control on Online Social Network Sites among Medical Undergraduates

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Abstract

Introduction: Internet usage has become a big part of many people's lives, and among the many uses Social Networking Sites (SNS) which became very prevalent. How privacy concerns, trust and control are affecting SNS usage and self-disclosure has become an important question for many people.

Aim: Aim of the study is to assess the information disclosure and control on online social network sites among medical undergraduates.

Methodology: The study was conducted at Saveetha medical college and hospital among medical undergraduates. A questionnaire on usage of online social networks and information disclosures was administered and analysed it for reliability, social network site usage, privacy concerns, and disclosure of autobiographical memories.

Result: Almost 81.1% of the people feel that their browsing history were tracked by social networking sites. Instagram is mainly used app by medical undergraduates (40%).

Conclusion: There is an excess usage of social networking sites and easy information disclosure is seen in the population.

Keywords: *Social networking sites, information disclosure, online*

Introduction

Internet usage has become an integral part of many people's daily lives. The uses are abundant: jobs, research, games, starting new relationships, maintaining old relationships, etc. Social networking sites are a prevalent use of the internet. According to a survey conducted by Pew Research Center, roughly 85% of American adults use the internet and of these users about 67% use social networking sites[1]. Social networking sites have many benefits including allowing individuals to maintain contact without having to meet face to face, which allows people to maintain old relationships and start new relationships without having to meet in person with these other people. On the other hand, there are also possible problems associated with social networking sites, such as breaches of privacy.

Privacy is an individual's right to maintain editorial control and distributional control over personal information. Privacy is the right to determine how personal information is conveyed and who gets to know that information. There are privacy risks associated

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with disclosing information that are affecting privacy concerns, even online. Privacy risks refer to one's personal information being accessed, used, or shared without any permission [3]. Identity theft and bullying are major online privacy risks. When it comes to sharing information on the internet, trust in others plays a central role. Online site trust is the expectation that one's vulnerabilities will not be taken advantage of in an online situation [2].

Control is another important aspect of internet usage. Control refers to one's perception that through one's own actions one is able to cause positive outcomes and avoid negative outcomes. Perception is very important for this variable. Although actual levels of control are not always increased, most social network sites are trying to increase the perception of control. An increased perception of control has been shown to correlate with decreased estimates of personal risk [3]. This evidence supports control having an effect on social network site usage and self-disclosure, because decreased levels of personal risk should correlate with increased social network site usage and self-disclosure.

Self-disclosure is an important topic of research in the area of computer-mediated communication. Self-disclosure is a broad category which includes any self-relevant information which one discloses about themselves, including autobiographical memories and future plans. Autobiographical memories are memories for personal life experiences. Autobiographical memories are especially important for research studies on relationships and the management of privacy online [4]. There are two main types of autobiographical memories [5]. The first type is general autobiographical memories and these are points of general self-knowledge [6]. The second type is specific autobiographical memories and these are specific episodes lasting for less than a day [6]. The study aims to understand the use of social networking sites by the under-graduate medical students.

Materials and Method

This study was conducted among a group (110) of medical undergraduate adolescents. Study participants were above 18 and below 23. The study was carried out after getting ethical committee approval (SMC/IEC/2018/11/337). In order to obtain the most accurate results, 50% (55) of the students have been selected through systematic random sampling method. Later, the survey method of research was applied to conduct the study and questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. The purpose of the research is to explain the information disclosure and usage of various social networking sites and to validate it more accurately; a questionnaire has been prepared and circulated among the adolescent medical students. Participants rated these self-report questions on a Likert-type scale from 1 to 5 (never to always or strongly disagree to strongly agree). The questionnaire also included self-report questions assessing general and specific autobiographical memory disclosures online (e.g. Will you share bank details through social media) also using a Likert-type scale from 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree). These questions were compiled into the self-disclosure scale.

Results

Demographic distribution of respondents (N = 110). Majority (66%) of the population are willing to share their bank details only very rarely while a small fraction of 11.3% are willing to share it more often. Almost 81.1% of the people felt that their browsing history was tracked by social networking sites. Instagram is mainly used app by medical undergraduates. The next preferred app is facebook (50%) followed by snapchat. Majority of the people are willing to share to information online (66%) while (34%) are not willing to share their information online. About 71.7%of the participants feel safe in downloading stuff from unauthorised websites. A small proportion of 28.3%are not interested in it. A large number of the participants(50.9%)are downloading from unauthorised websites rarely while about 18.9%are downloading very often. Majority of the participants (56.6%) maintain anonymity in social media sites and about 43.4% are not doing so. Around 54.7% have the security software installed and about 45.3%donot have the required security software installed. About 77.4%of the participants are a victim of online frauds.

Around 81% of students were willing to share their residential address in the social networking sites. Only 18% of students were not willing to share. Fortunately, 66% of students were not willing to share the bank details and they want to keep it confidential. As stated above, only 22.4% of students were the victims of online banking frauds. Most of the students felt (81%) that their browsing history was tracked by social networking sites.

Discussion

Numerous studies have been conducted on social networking sites all over the world due to the exponential

use of social networking sites globally in recent years. According to a researcher, social networking sites have become the most heavily used websites, and they are ranked as one of the top sites visited globally[6]. These sites have become an integral part of the daily personal, social and business lives of many people [7]. The students at large have started to widely make use of social networking sites; however, few students have shown reservations. Few don't show interest, few others don't have time, few have privacy concerns while few don't have the facility and others think that it isn't beneficial to use social networking sites. The privacy is one of the obstacles in social networking highlighted by many scholars all over the world [8]. Facebook was the first social network to surpass 1 billion registered accounts and currently sits at 1.59 billion monthly active users. Eighth-ranked photo-sharing app Instagram had over 400 million monthly active accounts [9]. The present study clearly states that around 40% of medical students are using instagram as most common social networking site.

Social networking is everywhere today and is being used by people of all ages and for the widest variety of purposes [10]. Social networking tools are commonly used by individuals of all ages, but are used especially by young people and college students [11]. The demographic profile of social networking sites users varies, with junior and younger researchers more likely to be frequent users of social networking sites [12]. A study to assess the use of online social networking sites among the college students of a large urban university in Los Angeles has revealed that the students often used social networking sites to connect and reconnect with their friends and family members[13].

Conclusion

The results of this study examine many aspects related to the usage of SNSs by students; however, there are several areas that need to be addressed in future research. Further studies are needed to examine additional issues of SNSs such as legal, ethical and intellectual aspects. The potential risks of the research are minimal. Additionally, future studies can be conducted on academic use of SNSs in educational institutions.

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