**Type of Contribution: PAPER**

**Measuring User Confidence in Social Media Security and Privacy**

**Keywords: information privacy, social media, students**

# Introduction

In today’s Information society it is an everyday scenario to be a part of an online community such as social media. Participation has become almost mandatory to the point of acting as a virtual extremity to one’s physical environment. This virtual extremity is the individual’s window to the outside world and vice versa. The process of being a part of social media has become very easy and user friendly where the user is only a few private information entries away from communicating and connecting with the rest of the world. From the user’s perspective it may be a small price considering what it is gained from joining an online community, but with the rise of social networking platforms, arise privacy concerns regarding social networking services. It is questionable how many social media users consider the information they upload or post online whether about their location, hobbies, employment places, age or any other private information. How many users actually read security and privacy terms when first registering for a social media account? What private information are individuals comfortable with entering and sharing on social networking sites (SNS)? More and more loops and holes are being found in social media frameworks that may compromise user’s privacy or that can be misused in way that was not intended by the user. In 2010, the Google CEO Eric Schmidt was even quoted “.*..If we look at enough of your messaging and your location, and use artificial intelligence, we can predict where you are going to go.*”[[1]](#footnote-1) That line alone raised a lot of concerns and questions about how exactly the information users put online is being used.

**Theoretical framework**

By reviewing the existing literature and papers in the field of social media privacy, the drawn conclusion is that the topic of privacy protection on social media by the student population is under-researched. There are numerous theoretical or empirical studies concerning children or adults and their behavior and safety concerns in the online environment in general.

Based on the idea that to exist online, people must type themselves into being[[2]](#footnote-2) and Floridi’s condition of 'onlife' as a seamless merging of analogue and digital[[3]](#footnote-3) (Floridi 2018), one can say that nowadays young adults have no other choice but use existing social media to contribute text, photos, and other content, and “like,” “favorite,” and comment on other people’s content to both recognize and engage with others[[4]](#footnote-4). Since privacy is highly contextual, controlling ones privacy while engaging in social media depends highly on ability to control the context of social media. Many teenagers conceptualize privacy as an ability to control their situation, including their environment, how they are perceived, and the information that they share[[5]](#footnote-5).

This research is trying to find out the degree of students’ awareness of the context that influence the ability for private information to stay private on social media. Given that social media is increasingly being used not only for entertainment, information but also education and shopping, it is interesting and crucial to investigate the literacy of the student population on social networks, since the assumption is that the student population has the highest level of media literacy considering their education levels and being constantly surrounded by social media.

Since the largest population active on social media is the younger demographics, ages from 16 - 24[[6]](#footnote-6), a questionnaire was being conducted amongst the student population on the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities in the city of Osijek. The fundamental aim of this research is to examine the awareness of the context that influences students' privacy, their knowledge of privacy policies on social networks, their attitude toward sharing private information on social networks, toward safety and privacy on social media. The goal of the research was to influence the awareness of the academic community on the need for information literacy at a national level and to initiate active organization and participation in projects, workshops and lectures that will cover the field of personal data protection in the digital environment with an emphasis on social media. Four research questions were formulated:

1. To what degree are users of social media aware of the amount of personal data they are providing the social networking sites?
2. To what degree are users of social media concerned with possible misuse of their personal data by the social networking sites?
3. To what degree are social media users aware of the way their private information is used by social networking sites?
4. To what degree are users of social media concerned with the personal data they are providing the social networking sites?

**Method**

The survey questionnaire is set up online, consisting of several Likert scales measuring respondents’ attitudes and awareness of proposed elements that influence privacy. Sample of students is gathered form the pool of students at the Osijek University. Questionnaire is prepared in a way that can be as easily used on a mobile phone as on a computer.

**Conclusions**

The results are expected to give a clearer picture of the attitude of the student population towards the protection and sharing of private information on social media. Furthermore, the results should answer research questions and be used to promote awareness of the need to protect personal information not only on social media, but in the online environment in general.

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