

Factors Influencing Awareness of Privacy Settings on Social Networks among Undergraduates: Evidence from Rajarata University of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Awareness of privacy settings on social networks has become a growing concern among university students due to their frequent online engagement and vulnerability to privacy risks. Although privacy tools are widely available, many undergraduates fail to utilise them effectively because of inadequate knowledge, unfavourable attitudes, limited peer encouragement, and a lack of prior experience with privacy-related issues. The objectives of this study were to examine the influence of knowledge, attitude, peer influence, and personal experience on privacy awareness among third- and fourth-year undergraduates at Rajarata University of Sri Lanka and to analyse the moderating role of gender. Quantitative research design was followed, and information was gathered by employing a self-administered questionnaire that was given to 380 students by employing quota sampling. The SPSS application was used to conduct statistical analysis, and descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis, and moderation analysis were used to explain the results. The findings revealed that knowledge, attitude, peer influence, and experience significantly contributed to students' awareness of privacy settings, with knowledge emerging as the strongest predictor. Moreover, gender moderated some of these relationships. These findings highlight the importance of integrating privacy education and digital literacy initiatives into higher education curricula. It is recommended to incorporate privacy awareness into academic programs, promote peer-led awareness campaigns, and design gender-sensitive digital learning interventions.

Keywords: awareness, gender differences, online privacy, privacy settings, social networks