

## Investigating the Social Media-Related Privacy Management Practices among Undergraduates at State Universities in Sri Lanka

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### Abstract

The increasing use of social media among university undergraduates in Sri Lanka has created new opportunities for communication, collaboration, and learning, while simultaneously raising serious concerns about digital privacy. This study investigates the factors influencing social media related privacy management practices among undergraduates at state universities in Sri Lanka. Guided by the Communication Privacy Management (CPM) Theory and Protection Motivation Theory (PMT), the research focuses on three key determinants: awareness of privacy settings, privacy risk awareness, and technical literacy. A quantitative research approach was adopted, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 384 undergraduates representing 17 state universities. Statistical analyses, including correlation and regression tests, revealed the existence of a “privacy paradox,” where students express strong privacy concerns but continue to engage in risky behaviours such as oversharing personal information and relying on default privacy settings. The results confirmed that awareness of privacy settings, privacy risk awareness, and technical literacy each have a significant positive relationship with effective privacy management. Despite this, many undergraduates lack the technical competence required to navigate complex privacy tools, leading to inconsistent privacy protection behaviours. These findings highlight the urgent need for targeted digital literacy programmes and university-led awareness campaigns to promote more responsible social media use. The study offers valuable implications for educators, policymakers, and social media developers in formulating strategies to enhance privacy protection and create a safer digital environment for undergraduates in Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** digital literacy, privacy management, privacy risk, privacy paradox, social media