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Think Privacy: The Awareness of UiTM Pahang Students as Facebook Users

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Abstract

The growth of the internet has made online social networking become a new form of collaboration and communication among teenagers besides contributing their knowledge and wisdom. This technology somehow had altered the media landscape from sending a piece of letter to communication using mobile. However, these people seem to forget that somehow they are revealing their personal information to people who are not in the circle of friends. Exposing real names, uploading pictures, revealing private information and updating their current status are some of the features provided by the SNS. Furthermore, there is no awareness among the Malaysians who use Facebook especially about their rights and protections by the law. A set of questionnaire has been distributed to a group of students randomly to measure their perceptions on the data visibility via Facebook and suggested the precaution should be taken to prevent any unintended issues such as cybercrime, suicide, sexual harassment, identity theft, copyright infringement involving videos and pictures. The analysis findings revealed that 68.6% of respondents were aware of the risks occurring once they disclose their private information in Facebook and 69% of them were aware that they have the rights on the personal information provided under a law. Unfortunately, there are only 31% of respondents who were aware of the Personal Data Protection Act 2010 which was gazetted in June 2010. Through education and awareness, users will more willingly and effectively utilize privacy and security settings available on SNS.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, social networking site (SNS) has become the most popular website surfed by people, especially youth. SNS also become a new Information Communication and Technology (ICT) tools for people to communicate with each other at different geographical areas. The present research will focus on Facebook as it has the most users recently, gaining rapid popularity [2] nowadays, yet we also have other famous SNS such as Twitter,

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LinkedIn, Foursquare, MySpace, Friendster and so forth. Statistic until December 2011 shows that Facebook have 800 million users among the worldwide [3], and only 12, 159, 260 among them are Malaysian users who have Facebook account [4].

Facebook is a social communication tool designed to allow users to contact and communicate with other Facebook users [3]. They are connected together to communicate, collaborate, sharing ideas and keep updating with the entire friend's matter without boundaries. Facebook allows their users to send messages, upload photos, update status and locations and describe the personal interests such as favourite movies, books, dramas and so forth. In addition, Facebook provide a "wall" where users can post any messages to user's profile and attach any linkages, photos and videos. Facebook also provide a function where users can create a group for any invited users based on their same schools, same interest, same class or anything. Many things can be utilized by using Facebook as a primary communication tools as Facebook have upgraded their services and facilities to ease users social life such as uploading photos, set to different languages, use the games or useful applications, use Facebook platform in other website, link users phone to Facebook and beneficial for other third party companies to link their website with Facebook.

2. Background and Motivation

As SNS are type of online communities that have grown tremendously in popularity over the past years [5], privacy issues has become the major concern for users, especially youth. The disclosed information may somehow exposed them to various of cybercrime an cyber-attacks, such as sexual harassment, unauthorized use of data, suicide, producing obscene material, and infringement of copyright [6]. People seem to forget that they are revealing their personal information to those who are not in their circle of friends as Facebook has become a part of daily life for many people because of the communication ease and convenient. They tend that by exposing and revealing personal information such as status and uploading inappropriate pictures might make them become famous among friends and a way to attract friends to view his or her profile.

Three fundamental parameters of self-disclosure have been promoted in the literature [17]:

- 1) Amount
- 2) Depth
- 3) Duration

Amount refers to the breadth of information disclosed, depth is associated with the intimacy of the information disclosed and duration refers to the amount of time spent disclosing. When crating Facebook profile, users are asked to disclose information such as their name, e-mail address, gender, date of birth and phone number. The amount and depth of the disclosed information may somehow generate and made the SNS become more realistic and reliable as a medium to be connected with the support of information and made the users feels like in a group of social connection. The more an individual discloses in the public space of SNS, the more social connections they will be able to create [18].

There are several legal provisions dealing with the using of SNS. In most cases, Facebook users will find that their identity or data might be stolen by others, cyber porn, sexual harassment, copyright infringement involving videos, pictures which lead to breach of the terms used. The Computer Crimes Act 1997, Communication and Multimedia Act 1998 and Penal Code are dealing with the issues involving cybercrime in Malaysia. Another crucial issue dealing with Facebook also involved the data protection especially how the user want to protect their privacy and deleting the personal data information. Currently, Malaysia has passed the Personal Data and Protection Act (PDPA) 2010 which was gazetted in June 2010 by Information Communication and Culture Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim. The act covers personal data used for commercial purpose under Section 4 of the act. Below are the seven (7) data protection principles that form the basis of PDPA 2010:

- **The General Principle:** Personal data can only be processed once the data subject has given his consent
- **The Notice and Choice Principle:** Data users must be inform a data subject the purpose of the personal data being collected and processed
- **The Disclosure Principle:** Subject to consent of the data subject, personal data shall not be disclosed for any other purposes other than the purpose for which it was disclosed

- **The Security Principle:** A data user must take practical steps to protect the personal data from loss, misuse, modification, unauthorized or accidental access or disclosure, alteration or destruction, or given to unauthorized parties
- **The Retention Principle:** The personal data processed shall not be kept longer than necessary for the fulfilment of the purpose
- **The Data Integrity Principle:** The data user must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the personal data is accurate, complete, not misleading and kept up-to-date, having regard to the purpose for which the personal data was collected and processed
- **The Access Principle:** A data subject must be provided access to his personal data held by the data user and be able to correct his personal data

A person will face a fine not exceeding RM30,000 and/or imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year if convicted. However, there has been argued that the act itself did not include data protection over non-commercial activity which includes use of SNS. It seems difficult to draw a line between the personal data that had been use for commercial and non-commercial purpose [7].

Thus, the present research will measure the awareness of UiTM Pahang students towards their legal rights and protection when surfing SNS. Through education and awareness, users will more willingly and effectively utilize privacy and security settings available on SNS [1].

3. Related Work

The present research focuses on youth, as the majority of Facebook users are, between the 18-24 years old [8]. Meanwhile other statistics (www.socialbakers.com) shows the same result as 34% of Facebook users in Malaysia are aged 18 to 24. Young adulthood is the time where individuals often learn new skills, often experience new things and often experiment with change [9]. Research on legal rights and data protection are still not fully defined in Malaysia and other countries, specifically in PDPA 2010 in Malaysia. A lot of previous studies done and engaged on privacy concerns and risks taking when disclosed personal information in SNS, especially Facebook [5,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15]. Mostly users are aware of the risks on disclosing too much information [11], but somehow they do not have much time to change the privacy settings [1,5,14] and feel comfortable to disclose the personal information [13]. General privacy concerns and identity information disclosure concerns are of greater concern to women than men [9]. The more the data exposed to the public, the less awareness of users towards the personal data and only less users change their privacy settings [8]. As a result, individuals with SNS account have greater risks taking than those who do not have an account and mostly women have the concerns on privacy and identity information than men [10]. Individuals who have self-disclosed intentions exposed themselves to a negative impact on their social life and personal life [15]. Age and relationship statuses in Facebook account were important to determine the disclosure of information. As age increased, the disclosures are also decreased [10]. But it is contradicted to the research finding [12] as most of university students are concerned about their privacy.

4. Research Methodology

The survey has been adapted from [5,8,9,11,12,13,14] researches and modified by the author to make it suitable with Malaysian students in UiTM Pahang and strengthen the information available in survey. The questionnaires consisted of five main parts: 1) background information, 2) information disclosure, 3) student awareness on risks occurred once information disclosed, 4) Facebook terms and use and privacy policy, and 5) students awareness on the legal rights and data protection. Participants were 274 students aged from 18 to 24 and from various field of study. Participants were approached and asked to complete a form of surveys.

5. Findings and Analysis

This study aims at finding the awareness of UiTM Pahang students towards the legal rights and data protection. Samples of 300 students were selected randomly from different fields of studies in UiTM Pahang. A net of 274 questionnaires were filled correctly and returned. 43.1% of the respondents were males and 56.9% of them were females. On the other hand, approximately 51.8% of the respondents were in the age of 20 years old. Regarding the field of study of the respondents, most of them were from Science and Technology field (66.8%), while from Social Science and Humanities field and Management and Business field were only 9.1% and 24.1% respectively.

Table 1 illustrates that the percentage of respondents who share their information in Facebook. 87.2% include the picture of themselves on profile. Furthermore, almost 57.7% include their e-mail address on their profile. Approximately 35.4% include their instant messaging address. 67.5% use their real name on their profile. Interestingly, there is a few percentage of the respondents include their phone number and home address with 5.8% and 8.4% respectively.

Table 1. The percentage of respondents who shares personal information in Facebook

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Picture of themselves	239	87.2
E-mail address	158	57.7
Instant messaging	97	35.4
Phone number	16	5.8
Home address	23	8.4
Real name	185	67.5

Overall, 68.6% of respondents were aware of the risks occurring once they disclose their private information in Facebook. See Table 2. Table 3 describes that female are more concern of the risks of exposing personal information by 110 respondents compared to the male. This study suggested that male respondents are comfortable with how much the information they revealed in online social networking site, supported by research conducted by Campbell et. Al (2001), concludes even though individuals express concerned and awareness about internet privacy, they are still willing to engage in risky online activities.

Table 2. Respondents were aware the risks occurred once information was disclosed

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	188	68.6
No	86	31.4

Table 3. Number of respondents who were aware of the risks occurred one information disclosed categorized by gender

Category	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Are you aware the risks occurring once you disclose your personal information in Facebook?			
Yes	78	110	188
No	40	46	86

Table 4 demonstrates the percentage of respondents who read the Facebook privacy policy and those who did not read before. To begin with, 44.9% of respondents read the Facebook privacy policy while 55.1% did not read it. There are several reasons identified why respondents did not read the Facebook privacy policy. See Table 5. 43.4% of respondents agreed that it takes too much effort to read the Facebook terms of use and privacy policy and 33.6% of them decided to choose that the Facebook privacy policy were difficult to understand. The other respondents stated that they are not aware with the policy and they trust Facebook so much so that they did not have to read the policy. About 0.4% of the respondents were missing. This finding was supported by the research done by Ofcom [16] whereby the lack of the awareness, trust the online social networking site so much and low level of confidence in manipulating the privacy settings are the factors why people are unconcerned about the risks occurred.

Table 4. The percentage of respondents who read the Facebook privacy policy and those who did not read

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	123	44.9
No	151	55.1

Table 5. Reasons why respondent did not read the Facebook privacy policy

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Take too much effort	119	43.4
Lack of awareness	54	19.7
Trust Facebook so much	8	2.9
Difficult to understand	92	33.6

Table 6 describes the possibility of risks where respondents are more concern on after they have published or exposed their personal information via SNS. 214 respondents agree that identity theft or personal information theft are the highest risk they may face once the personal information are disclosed in SNS, followed by unauthorized use of access with 67% and cyber-porn with 59% of 135 respondents. The lowest risk may faced by the respondents are suicide with 43 respondents respectively.

Table 6. Risks concerned once the personal information disclosed

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Identity theft/Personal information stolen	214	78
Defamation/Humiliation	120	44
Sexual	131	48
Unauthorized use of access	185	67
Infringement of copyright	83	30
Internet fraud/credit card stolen	77	28
Cyber-bullying	58	21
Suicide	43	16
Cyber-porn	135	49

Table 7 describes that 69% of respondents were aware that they have the rights of their personal information under a law from being manipulate and misuse by third party, especially in internet or social networking site. Unfortunately, only 31% of respondents were aware that Malaysia has PDPA 2010, the act that protect personal data processing by others in commercial transactions either stored or recorded or managed automatically or as a file system to avoid them from being misused.

Table 7. The percentage of respondents who were aware they have the rights of data under a law and awareness towards PDPA 2010 in Malaysia

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Aware have the rights of data under a law	189	69
Aware Malaysia has PDPA 2010	85	31

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked on changing the privacy settings in Facebook after done this survey. Fortunately, 83.2% agreed to change the privacy setting especially on the personal information in Facebook. This indicates that increasing awareness of privacy might result in more careful behavior in online social networking.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Online social networking offer new opportunities for interaction, collaboration, communication in an easy and inexpensive way to maintain the existing relationship. In this study, we have reviewed earlier research on privacy issues related to social networking sites and presented the results of our empirical study among UiTM Pahang students of Facebook. Therefore, this study found that majority of the UiTM Pahang students was aware of the issues on legal rights and concerned about their data protection. In addition, they continue to use Facebook by changing the setting of privacy setting in their profile after completing the survey. This might due to the publicity and education given on privacy concerns about online social networking though the previous cases happened in Malaysia and from the online and offline discussion by people in the surroundings.

Furthermore, the privacy policy of Facebook were largely took a lot of effort to understand by our respondents and the language used are difficult to understand. However, many of the respondents were awakened by the survey and decided to pay more attention to their privacy settings in the future.

Overall, this study was important because its provided the evidence on the awareness of users towards the PDPA 2010 in Malaysia, which is it is a new field to be explored as there are a few or research done in this act. Legal firm may see this as a new challenges to inspire people to learn more about the legal issues concerning on privacy and data protection in Malaysia, as the existing laws did not enforce well in educating people involving SNS. In future, a research can be done on the Section 114A of the Evidence (Amendment) (No.2) Act 2012, saying it goes against a fundamental principle of law that a person is considered innocent until proven guilty. This new law violated the human rights principle of freedom of expression and might have the potential and negative effect towards society.

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