

# Understanding Data Privacy Awareness in Educated Social Media Users

Vaishnavi Patil<sup>1</sup>, Namrata Agrawal<sup>2</sup>, Snigdha Shukla<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>*M.C.A. Student Institute of Industrial Computer Management and Research  
Pune, Maharashtra, India*

<sup>3</sup>*Assistant Professor, Institute of Industrial Computer Management and Research,  
Pune, Maharashtra, India*

**Abstract**—In this modern era, social media has become the most rapidly growing topic, in which it is becoming increasingly difficult for us to manage our personal data. Whether even a generally educated person is not fully aware of how and where their personal data can be used, in this study, we will analyse how much educated people, who are students and working professionals, know about data privacy. We conducted a structured questionnaire survey on 200 educated people of different backgrounds and education levels.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the era of digitalization and technology enthusiasm world every individual were engaged with technology [2]. People are increasingly dependent of technology for communication, finance and socialization. As result large amount of personal data is being collected and stored online.

Here, to avoid the data thrifting, cybercrime and unauthorize access a vital role played by data privacy to protect user information and data which saved on applications and websites we used. The lack of awareness can lead to data exposure of user unintentionally.

Although most of users are educated people who knows about data privacy. But still they underestimate the risk of data misuse and failed to adopt privacy protective behaviour.

Various studies have shown data privacy concerns all over global, but limited research focuses educated people whom not considering data privacy mindfully The main objective of this study is to know the level of data privacy awareness in educated people and to identify the key factors which are influencing their understanding and behaviour on data privacy concern.

By understanding the awareness level of educated people can help to design more effective data protection policies and awareness campaigns.

The following section of literature review, research methodology, data analysis and conclusions based on the findings.

### A. Problem Statement

Many educated young adults actively use social media platforms like Instagram, but they still have a vague understanding of privacy risks and data protection practices. Although they are familiar with digital technologies, they may not fully grasp how these platforms collect, store, or share their personal information. This difference between what they know and how they act creates risks of data misuse, privacy breaches, and loss of trust. The study aims to find out how aware educated users truly are and what factors affect their privacy choices on social media capabilities while ensuring controlled, ethical, and effective public involvement.

### B. Objective of study

The main goal of this study is to assess data privacy awareness among educated young adults who use social media. It seeks to understand how often these users read or ignore privacy policies, terms and conditions, and data-sharing permissions from social media apps. The study also looks at the connection between users' trust in social media platforms and their awareness of privacy risks. Additionally, it aims to identify key factors that affect privacy-related behaviour among educated users and determine if a higher education level leads to a better understanding of data collection, tracking practices, and potential

privacy threats. Finally, the study plans to offer recommendations to help improve data privacy awareness among educated social media users.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have looked at how people, especially young adults, understand privacy and security on social media. Although young adults are very active online, many still struggle to see how their personal information can be misused. A separate study in Malaysia and Indonesia showed a similar trend students use social media daily, but their awareness of privacy risks is not strong.[2]

Some research has examined why people ignore privacy policies. One paper, titled “Why Should I Read the Privacy Policy, I Just Need the Service,” [9] explained that most users do not read policies because they find them long, confusing, or unnecessary. This leads to a poor understanding of how platforms collect and share data.[9] Another study supported this finding and suggested that unclear policies reduce users' trust in the platform.

Other researchers compared privacy behaviours on platforms like Facebook and Instagram. These studies found that while users know there are risks, familiarity with the platform often makes them careless. For instance, one study on Instagram users reported that many students trusted the app so much that they did not pay attention to privacy settings or data-sharing features.

Studies focused on trust and security concerns also provided useful insights. Research in the e-retail sector showed that users are more willing to share information when they believe a platform is secure. Similar results appeared in studies on social media privacy, where awareness, trust, and perceived security all influenced how people behave online.

Some researchers studied digital skills and privacy literacy. Their work suggests that even educated users sometimes misunderstand privacy settings or fail to take basic protective steps, such as checking app permissions. A study on Instagram behaviour also found that convenience often outweighs caution people share personal details simply because the platform makes it easy.

Studies involving university students and postgraduate learners show consistent findings. Many students are aware of online threats, but this awareness does not

always lead to safe habits. Some papers highlight that improving privacy education can significantly reduce the chances of data breaches.

A few studies discussed the use of privacy dashboards and similar tools. They found that such tools can help users manage their data better, but many are not easy to use or understand.

Overall, existing research shows a clear trend: even educated users often know about privacy risks but do not always take action to protect themselves. Most past studies focused on general users or student groups, and only a few examined privacy awareness specifically among educated young adults who use platforms like Instagram. Additionally, many studies looked at awareness, trust, or behaviour separately, but not at how these factors relate to each other.

To address these gaps, the present study uses a survey to understand the level of privacy awareness, trust, security concern, and information-sharing behaviour among educated social media users.

## III. METHODOLOGY

In this study, a quantitative research approach was used to understand the level of data-privacy awareness among social media users. To collect primary data, a structured questionnaire was designed that included questions related to demographics, social media usage patterns, awareness of privacy settings, concerns about data misuse, and responsibility for protecting personal data. The survey was distributed online and responses were collected from 200 educated individuals, including university students and working professionals. This sampling method was chosen because these groups are active social media users and are expected to have a basic understanding of digital platforms.

The data collected from the survey was organized and analysed using simple statistical methods. Graphs and charts were prepared to identify patterns related to age, gender, frequency of use, purpose of using social media, awareness levels, and user behaviour toward privacy. The analysis helped in understanding how different groups perceive data privacy and whether they take protective measures such as using strong passwords, checking privacy settings, or reading policies.

The methodology also includes a comparative review of existing literature to connect the survey findings

with previous research. This helped in identifying the gaps and understanding how user awareness aligns with global trends in data privacy.

To address these gaps, the present study uses a survey to understand the level of privacy awareness, trust, security concern, and information-sharing behaviour among educated social media users.

5. Proposed Work Based on the findings of the study, a Data Privacy Awareness Tool is proposed to help users better understand and manage their personal information on social media. The tool is designed to be simple, interactive, and suitable for everyday users who may not be familiar with technical privacy concepts. The main features of the proposed tool include:

1. Dashboard - A clean and user-friendly dashboard that gives an overview of data privacy, common threats, and why awareness is important.
2. Survey Analysis Module - This section displays the results of the conducted survey through visual graphs such as bar charts and pie charts. It helps users clearly see how people of different age groups, genders, and backgrounds behave on social media and how aware they are of privacy risks.
3. Insights and Recommendation -Based on the survey interpretation, the tool provides useful recommendations to help users take better control of their data. This includes tips like enabling two-factor authentication, reviewing app permissions, and avoiding oversharing personal details.
4. Awareness Page - A dedicated section that explains key concepts such as data tracking, cookies, digital footprints, password hygiene, and phishing scams in simple language so users can understand them easily.
5. Policy and Legal Information - This part contains brief explanations of important privacy-related laws and policies such as the IT Act 2000, GDPR, and India’s DPDP Act 2023. It also explains how social media privacy policies work, helping users know their rights.
6. Case Studies - Real-life examples of data breaches and privacy incidents are included to show the consequences of negligence. These

case studies help users understand the seriousness of data privacy issues.

IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS:

Hypothesis Evaluation / Testing

Hypothesis: Educated social media users have awareness of data privacy but do not follow strong privacy practices.

Data Analysis Process

- Survey responses from educated young adults were analysed to measure:
- Awareness of data privacy
- Trust in social media platforms
- Actual privacy behaviour

Criteria	Expected behaviour	Actual Findings
Awareness level	High	High awareness but limited action
Reading privacy policies	Moderated	Very Low
Trust in the platform	Moderated	High
Privacy Behaviour	High	Weak (Low awareness of data privacy features)

The survey results show that most respondents fall within the 18–24 age group [Figure 1] and primarily use Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube. A majority of users spend 1–3 hours daily on social media, mainly for entertainment, communication, and accessing news [Figure 2] [figure3]. Many participants are aware that these platforms collect their data, but only a few read the privacy policies completely. Trust in data safety is generally low, with major concerns related to data misuse, hacking, and third-party sharing [Figure 4]. Most respondents believe that the responsibility for data protection should be shared equally among companies, the government, and users themselves [Figure 5]. Overall, the findings indicate that although users actively engage with social media, their awareness, trust, and involvement with privacy policies remain low, highlighting the need for stronger transparency, user education, and improved security measures [Figure 6] [Figure 7].

### Result of Hypothesis Testing

Most respondents understood that social media collects and uses their data.

However, only a small percentage regularly checked privacy settings or read terms & conditions.

Trust in social media existed, but concerns about data misuse were also common.

Privacy behaviour remained low despite high awareness.

### Tools to use:

ToS;DR - summarizes lengthy terms and conditions into simple, readable points and gives privacy grades (A–F) to websites. It shows both good and bad practices, such as data sharing and tracking. This helps users quickly spot key risks without reading entire documents.

### Guard (Browser Extension)

Guard analyses privacy policies of websites in real time and spots risks related to tracking, data sharing, cookies, and third-party access. It provides instant alerts to help users make informed choices while browsing.

### Privado.ai - Privacy Policy Analyzer

Privado.ai uses artificial intelligence to scan and interpret terms and conditions. It shows how user data is collected, processed, and shared. It also points out compliance issues and potential privacy risks.

### Polisis (Privacy Policy Analyzer)

Polisis automatically reads and interprets privacy policies, turning them into visual diagrams. It clearly details what data is collected, how it is used, and for what purposes. This makes complex policies easier to understand.

### DuckDuckGo Privacy Essentials

This tool blocks online trackers and gives privacy grades for websites. It helps users find potentially risky platforms and encourages safer browsing before signing up.

## V. DISCUSSION

The study found that educated social media users are very aware of data privacy. However, this awareness does not lead to responsible privacy practices. Most respondents know that platforms collect and use their personal data. Still, only a small number regularly

check their privacy settings or read policies. The results support the idea that awareness alone does not ensure safe online behaviour. High trust in social media platforms and the convenience of use also led users to overlook important privacy measures. These findings agree with previous research, which shows that users often prioritize ease of use over privacy protection.

## VI CONCLUSION

The survey results show that most respondents are in the 18 to 24 age group. They are very active on platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube for entertainment, communication, and information. While most are aware that social media collects their personal data, only a few actually read privacy policies or check privacy settings. Trust in the safety of personal data is low. Concerns about data misuse, hacking, and sharing with third parties are high. Users understand that protecting data is a joint effort among platforms, government, and individuals, but their actions do not reflect this understanding. Overall, the study finds that educated social media users are aware of risks but do not take practical steps to protect their privacy. This gap makes them more vulnerable to tracking, data misuse, and identity theft. The findings stress the need for better digital literacy, user-friendly privacy tools, and more transparency from social media companies to provide safer online experiences and prevent accidental data exposure.

## VII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to thank ms. Snigdha shukla for her ongoing guidance, support, and encouragement throughout this research study on data privacy awareness among educated social media users. Her insights, suggestions, and expertise were invaluable in shaping this project and ensuring its successful completion. The authors also thank all survey participants for their cooperation and contributions to the data collection process.

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APPENDIX

Figure 1: Age distribution of survey respondents

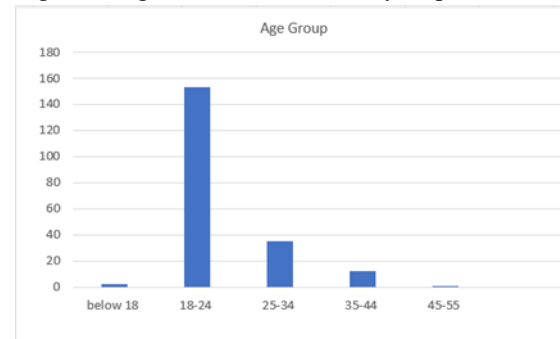


Figure 2: Social media platforms used by respondents

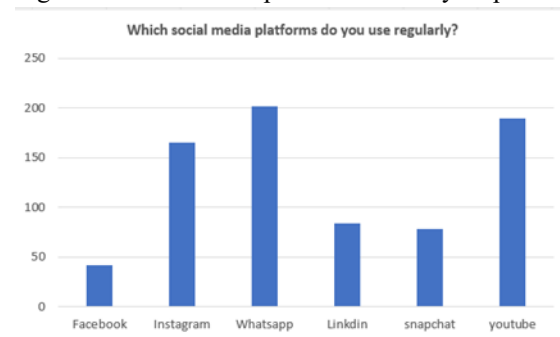


Figure 3: Frequency of social media usage.

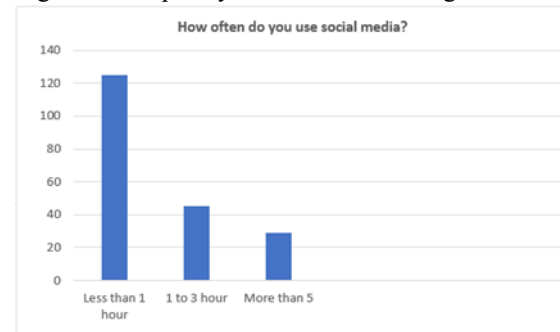


Figure 4: Awareness of social media data collection

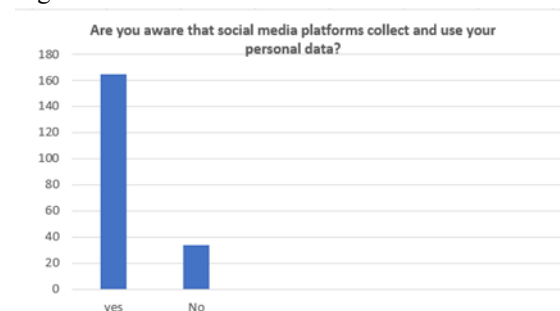


Figure 5: Social media privacy policies read by respondents

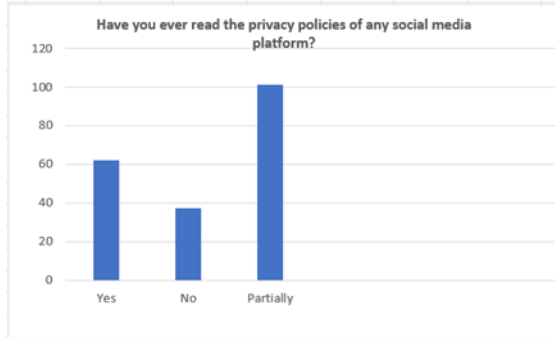


Figure 2: Responsible person according to respondents to protect user data.

