Perception of Online Privacy Protection among Youth in the UAE Social Media Users:

(A Case Study of Instagram and TikTok)

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Abstract:

The research problem addressed through the current study is to investigate the unclear or ambiguous relationship between the independent variables of perceived privacy risk, and perceived benefits against dependent variables of user privacy policy knowledge and privacy action, among youth in the UAE, who are social media users, with a focus on Instagram and TikTok platforms. The research highlights the importance for every user to protect their personal information and limit its visibility on social media platforms. The study focuses on two social media platforms, TikTok and Instagram. It adopts the privacy calculus theory established by Culnan and Armstrong (1999) and Dinev and Hart (2006), later revisited by Mayer and Kramer (2022). This theory hypothesizes that individuals weigh the risks and benefits before disclosing personal information and consider the future impact of such disclosures. The study used quantitative research methodology and collected data through a survey of 386 young people, both citizens and residents of the United Arab Emirates. The results indicated that young people in the UAE possess strong digital literacy and privacy management skills. Growing up in the age of technology has made them more knowledgeable about using technology and more capable of activating privacy protection measures on these platforms. The study found that many users tend to avoid reading the lengthy and complex privacy policies of TikTok and Instagram. However, most participants were aware of the strategies used to collect their personal data and information via social media

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platforms. This aligns with the Privacy Calculus theory. The study also revealed that many young users were comfortable sharing their personal information in exchange for using certain services and were unconcerned about these platforms sharing their data with third parties or storing it even after they closed their accounts. Additionally, the study highlighted a significant lack of privacy protection for young people on social media platforms, especially when it comes to accepting friend requests from strangers. The research specifically focused on digital privacy among youth in the United Arab Emirates, with an emphasis on platforms like TikTok and Instagram.

Keywords: UAE, youth, digital privacy, social media platforms, online privacy protection, TikTok, Instagram.

تصور حماية الخصوصية عبر الإنترنت بين الشباب في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة لمستخدمي وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي (دراسة حالة لإنستجرام و تيك توك)

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الملخص:

تتمثل مشكلة البحث التي تم تناولها من خلال الدراسة الحالية في التحقيق في العلاقة غير الواضحة أو الغامضة بين المتغيرات المستقلة لمخاطر الخصوصية المتوقعة، والفوائد المنتظرة مقابل المتغيرات التابعة لمعرفة المستخدم بسياسات الخصوصية وإجراءات الخصوصية وذلك بين الشباب من مستخدمي وسائل التواصل الإجتماعي في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة ، مع التركيز على منصات الإنستجرام والتيك توك.

يساعد هذا البحث في تسليط الضوء على هذا الموضوع و التأكيد على ضرورة تفعيل كل مستخدم "لإجراءات الخصوصية" لحماية معلوماته الشخصية والخاصة والحد من عرضها وتركها دون حماية على وسائل التواصل الإجتماعي وذلك من خلال دراسة حالة لإثنين من منصات التواصل الإجتماعي وهما التيكتوك والإنستجرام.

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وكإطار نظري، تم اعتماد نظرية حساب الخصوصية التي أنشأها كولنان وأرمسترونج (1999)، ودينيف وهارت (2006)، ثم أعاد ماير وكرامر النظر فيها لاحقًا (2022) وتفترض هذه النظرية الإدعاء بأن الكشف عن المعلومات الشخصية للفرد يتم تحديده من خلال تقييم المخاطر والفوائد و تفترض أن الأفراد والمجموعات والمؤسسات تأخذ في الإعتبار التأثير المستقبلي للكشف عن المعلومات الخاصة.

اعتمدت الدراسة على منهجية البحث الكمي وتم جمع البيانات الكمية من خلال دراسة إستقصائية شملت 386 من الشباب من مواطني دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة والمقيميين بالدولة .

اظهرت نتائج الدراسة مهارات ملحوظة في المعرفة الرقمية وإدارة الخصوصية بين الشباب في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة بنسبة مرتفعة، لقد نشأ هذا الجيل في عصر التكنولوجيا، مما جعلهم أكثر معرفة باستخدام التكنولوجيا وقادرين على تفعيل إجراءات حماية الخصوصية لبياناتهم على هذه المنصات.

على الرغم من أن العديد من المستخدمين يميلون إلى تجنب قراءة سياسات الخصوصية الخاصة بتيك توك وانستجرام بسبب طول محتواها واستخدامها لمصطلحات غير واضحة ومعقدة وهذا ماأكدته نتائج الدراسة.

ومن المثير للإهتمام أن الدراسة اوضحت أن معظم المشاركين كانوا على دراية باستراتيجيات جمع البيانات والمعلومات الشخصية الخاصة بهم عبرمنصات التواصل الإجتماعي ومع ذلك، ومن أجل الإستفادة من الخدمات التي تقدمها، كانوا على استعداد للكشف عن هذه المعلومات، بل انهم لا يعارضون مشاركت هذه المنصات لمعلوماتهم الشخصية مع أطراف أخرى وتخزين هذه البيانات حتى بعد غلق حساباتهم على هذه المنصات.

بالإضافة إلى ذلك، ابرزت نتائج الدراسة ثغرة كبيرة في حماية الخصوصية لدى الشباب على هذه المنصات، وهي قبول طلبات الصداقة من الغرباء الذين لا يعرفونهم شخصيًا. هذا و تتوافق هذه السلوكيات مع نظرية حساب الخصوصية.

الكلمات الدالة : الإمارات العربية المتحدة، الشباب، الخصوصية الرقمية، منصات التواصل الاجتماعي،حماية لخصوصية عبر الإنترنت، تيك توك، إنستجرام.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and aims.

Social media and privacy have been closely linked for the past two decades. With the rise of social media platforms, there has been a significant increase in the number of users who interact through various platforms and using different methods. Text, photos, videos and other forms of data are all stored on these platforms to represent the users as the individuals they are (Beigi & Liu, 2018). This is where the term privacy comes into play; as per the Cambridge International Dictionary (1995), the term privacy stands for "the right that someone has to keep their personal life or personal information secret or known only to a small group of people". However, with all the information that social media platforms acquire from users over the years, not just about their personal information but also about their habits, locations, and interests.

Terms such as big data, information security, and disinformation have all been put on the discussion table on a global scale. Governments have begun to question the integrity of some social media platforms, as they believe that the data stored on their servers is being sold to the highest bidder. This is in order to create tailor made advertisements and content that target a specific group of people (Isaak & Hanna, 2018; Kang & McAllister, 2011).

In digitized and interconnected societies, more people are willing to provide their private information on social media to enjoy the convenience that comes with using such media. Nonetheless, the increased interconnectedness through social media engagement has led to a rise in the risks of privacy violations. Jozani et al. (2020) argue that privacy is a dynamic, multidimensional, and context-dependent concept, and it evolves with the advancements in technology. The number of smartphone users across the world was projected to reach five billion people by the year 2020, up from 4.5 billion users in the previous year (Barth et.al, 2019). These users often use their smartphones to browse, store, gather, and even distribute large quantities of online information. Some users perceive smartphones as a vital daily companion. They also unknowingly

increase the risks relating to data theft, malware attacks, and design flaws by downloading and installing various apps on their smartphones (Barth et.al, 2019). Social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok collect a variety of implicitly and explicitly disclosed personal data of users. Compliance with rules and the need for online privacy are critical factors for people to participate in social networks (Becker & Pousttchi, 2012). Privacy-related online behaviors have been characterized by the privacy paradox, which, according to Barth et al. (2019), is the discrepancy between the attitude toward privacy and the actual behavior of users. While social media users are concerned about their online privacy, they take little precaution to protect their data on social media. This research aims to examine how valuable information privacy is to users of social media in the UAE, including locals and expats, as well as their awareness of the privacy policy of social media platforms, specifically among the younger generation, mainly in the age range of 15 to 35 who are known to be in a constant state of being online. It also gauges the extent of the privacy paradox that has come into play in the UAE while also looking at the privacy concerns as well as the privacy actions taken (if any) by the youth to protect their information or personal data. Social media platforms have revolutionized the way people communicate, socialize, and share information. With the increased use of social media, online privacy protection has become a significant concern for social media users. While social media platforms have implemented various measures to protect users' privacy, users' perception of privacy protection is vital in determining the level of privacy protection on these platforms. This literature review examines the perception of online privacy protection among social media users in the UAE, with a focus on Instagram and TikTok.

As of January 2023, the global population stands at 8.01 billion people, with an urbanization rate of 57.2%. Among this population, 5.44 billion individuals are unique mobile phone users, which accounts for 68.0% of the global population. Internet users total 5.16 billion, making up 64.4% of the population. Active social media users reach 4.76 billion, representing 59.4% of the global population. This data reflects the widespread adoption and use of connected devices

and services worldwide, highlighting significant penetration rates of mobile phones, internet, and social media usage. (Kemp, 2023)

In addition, as of January 2023, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has a total population of 9.48 million people, with a high urbanization rate of 87.6%. The country boasts 19.05 million cellular mobile connections, which is 200.9% of the population, indicating that many individuals possess more than one mobile connection. Internet users in the UAE number 9.38 million, representing 99.0% of the population, highlighting near-universal internet access. Active social media users in the UAE total 10.00 million, surpassing the total population and accounting for 105.5%, which suggests widespread engagement on multiple social media platforms by many individuals. This data underscores the UAE's significant adoption and usage of digital technologies, reflecting a highly connected society. (Kemp, 2023)

The Emirati society is considered traditionally conservative (BBC, 2022), which is noticeable in relations between males and females in face-to-face interactions; and in the necessity of preserving, one's individual reputation.

1.2 Statement of the problem

This study aims to investigate the unclear or ambiguous relationship between the independent variables of perceived privacy risk, and perceived benefits against dependent variables of user privacy policy knowledge and privacy action, among youth in the UAE, who are social media users, with a focus on Instagram and TikTok platforms. As we are constantly in a state of sharing information online, our data is steadily losing its privacy and we are giving away our entire intimate and personal life details to big corporations that intend to use this data for profit. Leaving users with little to no private lives, and everything is on display, whether it is photos, videos, instant chat messages, or even personal information such as our date of birth or personal mobile number. This research helps to shed light on this topic and create a sense of urgency for people to take "privacy actions" to protect their information and limit its exposure on social media. The importance of the research is to first off, fill the gap in research for this topic, focusing on updating practices among youth from an

academic perspective. Second, to inform the policymakers about the level of social media use policy awareness among youth in order to avoid any illegal online behavior, giving it a more practical view.
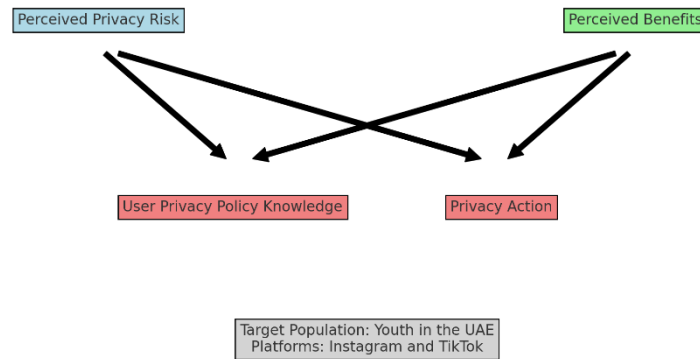

Figure 1. Illustrates the relationship between independent variables (Perceived privacy risk & Perceived Benefits) and dependent variables (User privacy policy knowledge and Privacy actions).

2. Literature review

This chapter provides a comprehensive literature review and summary of numerous sources in the relevant field.

This literature review examines existing studies on the perception of online privacy protection among social media users in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a country noted for its high social media penetration. Recent past research has been selected for their contributions to understanding the complex dynamics of online privacy, user behavior, and the efficacy of privacy policies on these platforms.

The selection of these researchers is based on their significant contributions to the field of social media privacy. Azzi and Dakhane (2022) provide a comprehensive legal and ethical perspective on privacy awareness in the UAE, highlighting the critical role of user attitudes towards information disclosure. Mohamed (2011) offers valuable insights into the negative correlation between online privacy concerns and the likelihood of users sharing personal information, an essential aspect of understanding user behavior. Van Schaik et al.

(2018) and Wang et al. (2011) focus on the perceptions and concerns of university students, a demographic that is particularly active on social media, providing a nuanced view of privacy issues in this context. Obar & Oeldorf-Hirsch's (2016) work on the impact of privacy policies on user trust underscores the importance of transparent and accessible privacy information.

By integrating these studies, this literature review aims to paint a comprehensive picture of online privacy perceptions among UAE social media users. The insights from these researchers illuminate various factors influencing privacy concerns, such as demographic variables, the role of trust, and the perceived risks associated with information disclosure. Furthermore, these studies highlight the challenges social media platforms face in implementing effective privacy measures amidst evolving cyber threats and regulatory landscapes.

The benefits of examining these past studies are manifold. They provide a foundation for understanding the current state of online privacy concerns, identify gaps in existing research, and suggest directions for future studies. Moreover, by focusing on the UAE, these studies offer a region-specific perspective that can inform local policymakers and platform developers about the unique privacy challenges and expectations of social media users in this context. This review ultimately aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on enhancing online privacy protection and fostering a more secure digital environment for social media users.

2.1. Privacy

In recent years, the use of social media has skyrocketed globally, with platforms like Instagram and TikTok becoming some of the most popular social media platforms. With the widespread use of these platforms come concerns about online privacy protection. Social media users often share personal information online, and this information can be accessed by third parties without the user's knowledge or consent. In the UAE, a country with a high percentage of social media users, the perception of online privacy protection among social media users is a critical issue that needs to be explored.

This literature review examines previous studies on the perception of online privacy protection among social media users in the UAE, with a focus on Instagram and TikTok (Azzi & Dakhane, 2022).

Information privacy refers to one's ability to control information regarding oneself while determining the purpose and period when others can access such information. It is the "right to prevent disclosure of personal information to others" (Paine et.al, 2007). Mohamed (2011), uncovered in her study "Online Privacy Concerns among Social Networks' Users" a negative correlation between online privacy concerns and respondents' likelihood of providing personal information.

Users have the right to be concerned about their privacy when registering for social media platforms, given the historical nature of such concerns. In 2019, Facebook experienced a significant data breach in which the private credentials of 533 million users, including Mark Zuckerberg, Meta CEO and company owner, were compromised and made public. The personally identifiable information of nearly 500,000 Facebook users was compromised online in 106 countries, according to a study by an industry insider. This comprises 11.5 million user records from the United Kingdom, 32 million user records from the United States, and 6 million user records from India. (Ghosh, 2021)

2.2. Perception of Online Privacy Protection among Social Media Users

According to a report by We Are Social and Hootsuite, the UAE has a social media penetration rate of 99%, with over 9.38 million active social media users in the country (Kemp, 2023). Social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok are among the most popular social media platforms used by UAE residents. Instagram, in particular, is one of the most widely used social media platforms in the UAE, with over 4.95 million active users (Kemp, 2023). However, despite the high usage of social media platforms in the UAE, there are concerns about online privacy protection among social media users.

Van Schaik et al. (2018) conducted a study on the perception of online privacy among UAE university students and found that most of the

participants were concerned about their online privacy. The study revealed that 83% of the participants were worried about their personal information being shared with third parties. Furthermore, the study found that 76% of the participants believed that social media platforms did not adequately protect their personal information. This is consistent with the findings of Wang et al. (2011), whose study on the use of social media among UAE university students found that 80% of the participants were concerned about their online privacy. Additionally, the study found that the participants believed that social media platforms did not provide sufficient information about privacy policies and did not adequately protect their personal information.

2.3. Privacy Awareness

A study conducted by Azzi & Dakhane (2022) investigated privacy in social media from a legal and ethical perspective in the UAE. They found that privacy awareness is a critical aspect influencing whether privacy is upheld in the use of social media platforms. The challenge of protecting users' privacy has been compounded by their attitude of disclosing their personal information without being aware of the secondary uses of such information by the advertising industry. Malandrino et.al (2013), found that many users were not fully aware of the possibility of their personal information being gathered, aggregated, and associated with ambient information for a wide range of purposes. This was despite extensive disclosure and widespread press reports of information leakages on social networks and the Web. Privacy awareness consists of the user's perception of the person or entity collecting receiving or tracking private information; the time period when such information is collected; the kind of information other entities use, store, and receive; and how information is aggregated, possessed and linked to build comprehensive users' profile. While Obar & Oeldorf-Hirsch's study in 2016 of users ignoring privacy policies and terms of service, suggests that users don't spend enough time on privacy policies and terms of service to read them, finding out of 543 participants 97% agreed while those who took only 30 seconds more to read on privacy policy and 90 seconds more when reading terms of services to decline them.

2.4. Instagram and TikTok

Instagram and TikTok are two of the most widely used social media platforms in the UAE, with millions of active users. According to Kemp (2023), as of January 2023 there are 10 million social media users in the UAE, with 4.95 million users of those having Instagram accounts, and 8.23 million users with Tik Tok accounts. This indicates that around 49% of the total users have an Instagram account, while around 63% of users are on Tik Tok. This popularity in hindsight is due to creative freedom these two platforms provide, as both platforms offer various means to display, browse, and edit the user's uploaded content.

Instagram, which is a platform owned by Meta, is a photo and video-sharing social networking service that was launched in 2010. The platform allows users to share photos and videos with their followers and includes features such as filters, stories, and direct messaging.

TikTok, on the other hand, is a platform owned by ByteDance Ltd., this platform has a video-sharing social networking service that allows users to create and share short videos with their followers. The platform has gained popularity in recent years, particularly among younger generations (Beigi, 2018; Montag et.al, 2021). TikTok's product design revolves around the creation and delivery of highly tailored and emotionally evocative video and audio content. Usage time is driven by the implementation of powerful visual and aural signals, together with advanced personalization algorithms. (Su et.al, 2021; Boeker & Urman, 2022).

2.5. Instagram and TikTok's Privacy Policies

To ensure users' privacy on social media platforms, companies have developed privacy policies that outline how users' data is collected, used, and shared. Instagram and TikTok have developed their privacy policies to comply with local and international privacy laws. Instagram's privacy policy states that the platform collects users' personal information, such as name, username, email address, phone number, and payment information. This information is collected when users create an account, use the platform, or communicate with other users. Instagram also collects users' content, such as photos, videos,

and comments, which are used to personalize users' experiences on the platform.

Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp all share data, meaning that when you create an account on one platform, your data is automatically shared across all platforms' databases, regardless of whether you have an account on the other platforms or not. All of them are owned by the parent business Meta. (Talwar et.al, 2022)

Instagram has implemented several features to protect the privacy of its users. For example, the platform allows users to make their accounts private, which means that only their followers can see their posts. Instagram also allows users to block other users, which prevents them from seeing the user's content or contacting them. The platform also allows users to report content that violates community guidelines, such as hate speech or nudity.

Despite these features, there have been concerns about Instagram's privacy policies. A study conducted by Wang et al. (2011) found that the majority of UAE university students believed that Instagram did not adequately protect their personal information. The study also found that the participants believed that the platform did not provide sufficient information about its privacy policies.

TikTok's privacy policy also states that the platform collects users' personal information, such as name, date of birth, and location, to provide users with personalized experiences on the platform. The platform also collects users' content, such as videos and comments, which are used to improve the platform's algorithms and provide users with relevant content.

Obar & Oeldorf-Hirsch (2020), concluded that social media users are more likely to trust platforms that provide clear and concise information about their privacy policies.

2.6. Features that utilize user data on Instagram and TikTok

Social media users' concerns about privacy on Instagram and TikTok are largely influenced by the platforms' features, such as location tagging, facial recognition, and targeted advertising. These features enable platforms to collect users' data, which is then used to

personalize users' experiences and provide them with relevant content. However, they also raise concerns about privacy protection, as users' data can be used for purposes that they did not intend. (Hetler, 2023)

A study conducted by Van Schaik et al. (2018) explored the relationship between online privacy concerns and information disclosure behavior among social media users in the UAE. The study used a quantitative approach and surveyed 330 participants, who were Instagram and Facebook users. The findings indicated that privacy concerns have a negative impact on information disclosure behavior, and users who are more concerned about online privacy are less likely to disclose personal information on social media platforms. Moreover, the study found that perceived privacy risk and trust have a significant impact on online privacy concerns and information disclosure behavior. This study emphasizes the importance of privacy protection for social media users in the UAE and highlights the need for social media platforms to enhance their privacy policies and implement effective privacy protection measures.

In conclusion, the perception of online privacy protection among social media users in the UAE is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires attention from researchers, policymakers, and social media platforms. Despite the increased awareness of online privacy issues, many users are still unaware of the risks associated with their personal data and the importance of protecting their privacy online. This literature review highlights some of the key factors that influence social media users' perception of online privacy protection in the UAE, including trust, perceived privacy risk, social influence, and demographic factors. The review also identifies some of the challenges faced by social media platforms in implementing effective privacy protection measures, such as the lack of regulation and the increasing sophistication of cyber threats (Obar & Oeldorf-Hirsch, 2020).

3. Theoretical framework

This section gives a brief explanation of our theory because the main goal of the paper is methodological. Privacy Calculus is a rational theory that aims to explain the attitudes, beliefs, intentions, and

behaviors of IT customers when the use of IT involves the cost of a perceived privacy risk. It is based on the theories of reasoned action and planned behavior. The theory substantiates the claim that an individual's disclosure of personal information is dictated by a risk-benefit assessment.

3.1 Privacy Calculus theory

The theory was established by Culnan and Armstrong (1999), Dinev and Hart (2006), and then later revisited by Meier & Krämer (2022). The privacy calculus theory provides the fundamental structure for this investigation. It is hypothesized that these individuals engage in a process of evaluating perceived risks and anticipated benefits. The result of this theory hypothesis determined that if gratifications are larger than benefits, information disclosure increases. Several domains, including e-commerce, Internet usage, and job hunting, have implemented the theory of privacy calculus to analyze the factors that simultaneously influence users' information disclosure and privacy protection. (Wang et.al, 2024)

As the present research examines the multitude of determinants that impact the registration choices of social media users, even when they are cognizant of the potential breach of their privacy, the privacy calculus theory hypothesis can be observed.

4. Gaps in the literature

I conducted a Google Scholar search and found only four papers related to privacy in the UAE since 2018. Despite an extensive literature review, I was unable to find any recent studies on the practices of young people in the UAE to protect their privacy when using social media platforms. This is particularly important given the increased use of social media during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, and the widespread use of the popular TikTok application.

5. The research questions

The proposed research seeks to answer the following four questions:

1. Are Youth in the UAE social media users aware of the terms and conditions that apply to their usage of social media platforms?

2. To what extent are the users aware that upon signing up to a social media platform, they permit these organizations to use their personal information?

3. How often do the youth perform privacy actions to protect their personal information on social media?

4. To what extent are the youth willing to sacrifice their privacy in order to gain the benefits that social media has to offer?

6. Methodology

This chapter illustrates the research method followed in this study, and it includes a detailed explanation of the method, coding tools, and sampling of the study.

6.1. Data collection method

The research adopted a quantitative research design. Which was in the form of a digital survey distributed through Google Forms. The reason for choosing a quantitative method is the nature of the study, which required an examination of a large number of participants and the type of data which are collectible through a questionnaire. The questionnaire aimed to provide insight into the current knowledge of survey takers on privacy, privacy awareness, the level of privacy practices among the sample, and their knowledge of the privacy policies set by these social media platforms. The findings, in turn, were analyzed based on the theoretical framework chosen for the research. Based on the results obtained, this study will give a brief insight into the perception of youth in the UAE on information privacy online.

6.2. Validity

To ensure the survey's accuracy, a preliminary version was sent to three faculty for review Dr. Ahmed Farouq, Associate Professor, College of Communication, University of Sharjah, Dr. Tarak Abdullah Associate Professor, College of Humanities and Social Sciences Zayed University, and Dr. Riham Khafagi Assistant Professor, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Zayed University. Their feedback was incorporated into the final version of the survey. The goal was to ensure the clarity of the survey questions

and to avoid any confusion or misunderstandings. After receiving the approval of the research committees from both the University of Sharjah and Zayed University, the survey was then distributed online via a web link through email and social media channels such as WhatsApp and Instagram. It was also distributed through Blackboard at Zayed University, both Dubai and Abu Dhabi campuses. Offline, it was distributed to participants from different parts of the country by answering the questions on a tablet; this was done in Malls.

Data was collected between June 2023 and September 2023 for the research study. The researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences IBM (SPSS) Version 29, which is a quantitative analysis program commonly used by researchers to analyze research data. The analysis of this research was based on actual numerical facts obtained from the collected data using SPSS, in order to obtain verified and applicable data.

6.3. Sampling design

Sample universe: The sample universe includes both Emirati and expat youth, who are users of social media platforms (Instagram and TikTok).

Sample size: To gauge the privacy awareness of social media users, especially among the youth, and to ensure accurate results the research will be focusing on a demographic age ranging from $15 - 35$ years old of the UAE population, both male and female. The survey was community distributed to different emirates in the UAE, to diversify the participants. Participants were reached via emails, social media messaging and in person.

Probability sampling is used, as we took a random sample from the Youth in the UAE population. According to the General Pension and Social Security website, the Youth in the UAE population (defined as ages 15 to 35) make up more than 50% of the total UAE population (Youth Council, 2023). The UAE population, according to the Statista, is 10,228,832 as of 2023 (O'Neill, 2023). 50% would equal 5,114,416 which is the approximate Youth in the UAE population.

According to the sample size calculation, with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%, for a total population of 10,228,832 and a population portion of 50%, the required sample size is 386.

7. Results

7.1. *Demographic Characteristics of the sample – 386 participants*

Table 1. Participants Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	99	25.6
Female	287	74.4
Total	386	100.0

As indicated in Table 1, 74.4% of the participants provided questionnaire answers were Female, while the remaining 25.6% were Male.

Table 2. Participants Age

Age	Frequency	Percent
15-20	92	23.8
20-25	226	58.5
25-30	37	9.7
30-35	31	8.0
Total	386	100.0

Table 2 displays the age ranges of the survey participants. The majority of participants (58.5%) were between 20 and 25 years old, followed by 23.8% in the 15-20 age range, 9.7% in the 25-30 range, and 8.0% in the 30-35 range. This indicates the precision of the research, as it focuses on the awareness and perspectives of youth in the UAE. As per the Youth in the UAE Council, youth are defined as individuals aged 15 to 35 (Youth Council, 2023).

Table 3. Participants Education level

Education	Frequency	Percent
High school	188	48.7
Diploma	49	12.7
Bachelors	131	34.0
Masters	18	4.6
Total	386	100.0

The educational levels of the participants are displayed in Table 3. The majority (48.7%) hold a high school diploma, followed by 34.0% who have a bachelor's degree. 12.7% of the participants hold a diploma, while 4.6% have a master's degree

Table 4. Participants Nationality

Nationality	Frequency	Percent
Emirati	332	86.0
Arab (Non-Emirati)	35	9.1
Foreigner	19	4.9
Total	386	100.0

Table 4 shows the nationalities of the participants: 86% are Emiratis, 9.1% are Non-Emirati Arabs, and 4.9% are Foreigners.

Table 5. Participants Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Student	294	76.2
Business Owner	16	4.1
Employee	51	13.2
Unemployed	25	6.5
Total	386	100.0

The occupations of participants are presented in table 5. The highest percentage of participants are students at 76.2%, followed by employees at 13.2%, unemployed individuals at 6.5%, and business owners at 4.1%.

7.2. Result of the study in terms of its Questions:

In this section, a one-sample T-test is applied. *Means* represents a scale of five degrees, ranging from (*strongly agree to disagree strongly*). The midden value is 3. When the value of the *mean* is 3 or more, it reflects a positive perception of the participant toward the statement, and if it is less than 3.0, it reflects a negative perception of the participant. All tables are presented in descending values to show the order of participants' perceptions of statements.

RQ1: Are Youth in the UAE social media users aware of the terms and conditions that apply to their usage of social media platforms?

Table 6 shows Youth in the UAE's awareness of the privacy policy terms, and conditions. The figures of table 6 indicated that both individual and aggregate levels of Youth in the UAE sampling awareness of the privacy policy terms and conditions that govern their usage of social media platforms. The present sample has moderate awareness about the privacy policy of social media platform usage. The Youth in the UAE respondents were aware of some items more than others. They are aware that the risks of violating the privacy of other users on social media are the most important item that governs their usage of social media platforms. The present item gains a high mean value of 3.82, with low values of standard deviation equaling 1.04.

Table 6. awareness of the privacy policy terms, and conditions

One-Sample Statistics_ No = 386

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am aware of the risks of violating the privacy of other users on social media	3.82	1.034
I avoid reading the privacy policy because it is long and full of complicated terms	3.77	1.228
Instagram/TikTok adequately informs me about changes to their privacy policy or terms of service	3.40	1.084
I read the privacy policy before using Instagram/TikTok	2.56	1.194
I avoid using Instagram/TikTok due to privacy concerns	2.26	1.173

Furthermore, the respondents agreed that the Instagram/TikTok privacy policy is long and full of complicated terms. This is shown with a high mean value of 3.77, with low values of standard deviation equaling 1.23. Youth in the UAE say that they do not read the privacy policy before using Instagram or TikTok. The above table also shows that the Youth in the UAE didn't avoid using the Instagram and TikTok platforms due to privacy concerns.

RQ2: To what extent are the users aware that upon signing up to a social media platform they permit these organizations to use their personal information?

Table 7 show awareness of Youth in the UAE regarding the use of their personal Information by social media organizations. From table 7, it can be noted that both individual and aggregate levels of Youth in the UAE sampling awareness of the reasons for permitting social media organizations to use their personal information.

The present sample has moderate awareness of the social media organizations that manipulate their personal information. The Youth in the UAE respondents are more aware of some items and reasons

than others. They are aware that if their account is public, users can share photos of them in a story, mention or tag them at a location in a post, or share information about them in their posts or messages. The present item gains a high mean value of 4.24, with low values of a standard deviation of 0.818. The Youth in the UAE state that they are aware that by signing up for the Instagram and TikTok platforms, they permit these organizations to collect their personal information. The present item gains a high mean value of 3.79, with low values of a standard deviation of 0.901.

Table 7. Awareness of allowing Social Media Organizations to use Personal Information

One-Sample Statistics_ No = 386

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am aware that if my account is public users can share photos of me in a story, mention or tag me at a location in a post, or share information about me in their posts or messages	4.24	0.818
I am aware that by signing up to the Instagram/TikTok platform I permit these organizations to collect my personal information	3.96	0.901
I am aware that by disabling information collection, I will lose some of the services the platform provides	3.76	1.045
I am aware that by signing up to Instagram/TikTok platform I permit these organizations to share my personal information with third-party service providers	3.57	1.138
I am aware that even after deleting my account on Instagram and TikTok, they have the right to keep my private information	3.32	1.302

Furthermore, the respondents are aware that by disabling information collection, they will lose some of the services the platform provides. The present item shows a high mean value of 3.76, with a low value of standard deviation of 1.05.

RQ3: To what extent are the youth willing to sacrifice their privacy in order to gain the benefits that social media has to offer?

Table 8. Youth willing to sacrifice private information on Instagram/TikTok

One-Sample Statistics_ No = 386

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
Disclosing private information is normal nowadays online	3.44	1.115
I disclose private information to create my account on Instagram/TikTok	3.32	1.077
I disclose private information to communicate with others through Instagram/TikTok	3.12	1.142
I disclose private information to gain the services that Instagram/TikTok has to offer	3.09	1.171
I believe that my private information is safe and secure on these platforms	3.04	1.137
I have the right to share other users' private information as long as it is on social media	2.58	1.265

Table 8 displays the levels of youth in the UAE who share their private information on Instagram and TikTok in order to benefit from these social media platforms. The survey indicates that the participants are moderately aware of the risks associated with sharing personal information on these platforms. The respondents are more aware of some actions than others, and they consider it normal to share personal information online. One particular action received a high mean value of 3.44 with a low standard deviation of 1.12, indicating that many youths disclose their private information to create their accounts on Instagram and TikTok, which received a high mean value of 3.32 with a low standard deviation of 1.08.

Furthermore, respondents from the UAE have reduced the importance they place on their right to share other users' private information on social media. They believe that social media organizations, particularly Instagram and TikTok, consider this right a normal reason to use their personal information. The current item has a low mean value of 2.58.

RQ4: How often do the youth perform privacy actions to protect their personal information on social media?

Table 9. show to what extent the Youth in the UAE tack a privacy actions to protect their personal information on social media platforms.

Table 9. privacy actions to protect personal information on social media platforms.

One-Sample Statistics_ No = 386

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
I limit the amount of personal information; I share on Instagram/TikTok	4.18	0.872
I perform privacy actions, such as setting my account to private	4.08	0.948
I review my Instagram/TikTok posts to make sure I haven't accidentally shared sensitive information	4.04	1.046
I use privacy-enhancing tools or apps	3.26	1.264
I use a pseudonym or fake name on Instagram/TikTok	3.18	1.273
I accepted a friend request or follow from people I don't know	3.04	1.283
I removed or deleted my Instagram/TikTok account due to concerns about privacy	2.84	1.323

Figures of table 9 shows the levels of awareness among youth in the UAE regarding privacy measures to safeguard their personal information on Instagram and TikTok. The current sample shows that there is moderate awareness of the necessary steps to protect personal data on these social media platforms. The respondents from the UAE demonstrate varying levels of awareness regarding different privacy measures and protective actions. They indicate that they limit the amount of personal information they share on Instagram and TikTok. These findings are supported by a high mean value of 4.18 and a low standard deviation of 0.872. The respondents disclosed that they perform privacy actions, such as setting their account to private status, with a high mean value of 4.08 and a low standard deviation of 0.948.

The participants emphasized the importance of reviewing their Instagram and TikTok posts to ensure they had not inadvertently

shared sensitive information. This specific item holds a weight of 80.8% based on the respondents' answers, with a high mean value of 4.04 and a low standard deviation of 1.05.

7.3 Result of the study in terms of the Privacy calculus theory hypothesis

As the theory hypothesizes, individuals engage in a process of evaluating perceived risks and anticipated benefits. The current study result supports the hypothesis claim that if gratifications are larger than benefits, information disclosure increases. This is shown particularly in the result of research question 2 and 3. Where the users were asked if they are aware that their private information upon signing up to a social media platform is used by these organizations, and if they are willing to sacrifice their privacy in order to gain the benefits that social media has to offer. The results have shown that users accept the perceived risks to gain the benefits of using these social media platforms and be able to unlock all the features it has to offer. This in turn aligns with the Privacy calculus theory's mentioned hypothesis.

8. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper explores how young people in the UAE perceive and manage their online privacy on social media platforms, specifically on Instagram and TikTok. The findings indicate a diverse environment influenced by active participation, varying levels of privacy awareness, and moderately conscious approaches to handling personal data. According to the Privacy Calculus Theory, users make decisions about social media use based on a rational assessment of the advantages and disadvantages involved. However, the limited steps taken to safeguard personal privacy, along with a sense of collective responsibility for protecting online privacy, suggest areas where additional support and engagement could improve privacy protection.

Recent research has shown that the use of social media among young people in the UAE is not just a leisure activity, but an integral part of their social structure. This is evident from the active engagement of youth in the UAE on social media platforms, with a significant number spending 3–7 hours per day on these platforms, which is

higher than the global average (Statista, 2023). Survey results also show that 31.9% of the respondents use social media platforms for 3-5 hours daily. This underscores the importance of social media platforms in their social circles, indicating a shift towards digital nativism, where social media plays a vital role in everyday interactions and self-identity formation (Chen, 2023; Smith & Duggan, 2013).

Privacy policies are sometimes complex and difficult to understand, leading to a lack of comprehension among users, especially young people, who may not fully grasp the consequences of their online actions (Korunovska et.al, 2020; Solove, 2013). This is reflected in the questionnaire results in Table 12, where 36.3% strongly agreed and 27.5% agreed that they avoid reading the privacy policy of Instagram and TikTok due to its complex terms and length. This, in turn, shows that any privacy action taken by the youth in the UAE comes from their digital literacy and experience using social media platforms, rather than knowing the exact rules and guidelines for each specific platform. Complex and extensive rules might deter users from comprehending them, leading to a lack of awareness about their privacy rights and the implications of their online behavior (Barth & De Jong, 2017; Buchanan et al., 2007). This lack of understanding may hinder users from performing necessary privacy actions, as engaging in such a practice is presented with issues due to the complexities of privacy policies, which in turn might disguise the whole scope of data utilization by platforms.

The Privacy calculus theory proposes that users engage in a decision-making process in which they assess the benefits of disclosing personal information in comparison to the possible privacy dangers (Meier & Krämer, 2022; Dinev & Hart, 2006). When using the Privacy Calculus Theory, sheds light on the notion that young people in the UAE consider the advantages of using social media compared to the possible risks to their privacy. The cost-benefit analysis is impacted by their preference for social connectedness, entertainment, and self-expression, which frequently surpass privacy worries (Kokolakis, 2017).

This is also shown by the survey results that indicate that even though they do not read the privacy policies, and they are somewhat aware of the privacy concerns, that does not stop them from avoiding the use of such platforms.

People's behavior in sharing information aligns with the Privacy Calculus Theory, as individuals decide what to reveal by considering the benefits and drawbacks. Based on the survey results, participants recognize that protecting online privacy is a shared responsibility, showing a high level of knowledge about the digital world. This perspective recognizes the involvement of several stakeholders, such as social media platforms, users, and governmental organizations, in safeguarding personal information (Lutz et al., 2019; Hoofnagle et al., 2010).

The questionnaire results have shown that the participants take action to protect their personal information on social media sites by implementing privacy actions and practices during the initial usage of these platforms. Although the participants showed an understanding of the importance of preserving their personal information, their behavior indicates a careful consideration of balancing privacy protection with taking advantage of the complete range of social media features. It is well recognized that the younger generation, often referred to as digital natives, has a deep understanding of privacy management and digital literacy due to being born into a technological era. They are more adept at using technology and can quickly comprehend how to take action regarding online information privacy (Mertala et al., 2024). This is supported by a study conducted by Acquisti et al. in 2015, which suggested that social media users are aware of the trade-offs of sharing information online and understand that they could forfeit access to specific services if they choose to limit data gathering by social media businesses.

The survey result shows that even with their digital literacy and implementation of privacy actions while using Instagram and TikTok. The youth in the UAE have a major flaw in their privacy protection, which is the acceptance of strange friend requests or follows, from users that they do not know personally. This, in turn, can lead to a breach in security and may expose their personal information.

Moreover, this discredits all the careful consideration and privacy practices they have implemented and could subject them to harassment or dire consequences.

I believe the main suggestion is to enhance digital literacy initiatives aimed at young social media users. Even though the youth in the UAE have shown some initiative when it comes to privacy protection, the importance of privacy policies has fallen short. These initiatives should strive to clarify privacy policies, explain the consequences of data sharing, and provide users with information and resources to properly manage their online presence. Enhancing comprehension enables individuals to make better-informed decisions that align with their privacy preferences. The privacy policies of social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok should be simplified to make them easier for the general public to understand. By using clear language and interactive tools to help users manage their privacy settings, these platforms can build trust and improve user satisfaction, leading to a more informed consent process.

In summary, the results indicate that young people in the UAE are active yet cautious users of social media platforms. They exhibit positive privacy practices by being mindful, selectively sharing information, and placing trust in collective responsibility for safeguarding privacy. However, the research result has shed light on an important vulnerability in the privacy security of their personal information on Instagram and TikTok, which is that they accept friend requests or follow complete strangers. As this is a conscious choice that they make, so with continued awareness of the dire consequences this may bring, this vulnerability can be avoided. Applying the Privacy Calculus Theory sheds light on the logical thought process guiding their actions. There is a need to emphasize and enhance the importance of clearer privacy policies, improved digital literacy initiatives, and robust regulatory frameworks to promote secure and informed use of social media platforms.

9. Limitations and recommendations
The research was conducted in the UAE, but it may not represent the entire population and other age groups in the country. The results might be relevant in the Gulf States, but not necessarily in other

countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Additionally, the research only focuses on Instagram and TikTok users, so the findings may not apply to the behavior, attitudes, and practices of users of other social networking sites (SNSs). Additional research could involve using qualitative methods to gain more detailed insights from users. As the digital landscape evolves, it is important to conduct further research to apply these findings to other demographic groups and regions.

Future research can explore various aspects to understand better and support the internet privacy needs of young people in the UAE.

- Longitudinal studies aim to track the development of beliefs and actions about online privacy over time, particularly in response to the emergence of new technology and social media platforms.
- Studying the impact of cultural values and norms on privacy perceptions and practices among young people in the UAE to guide culturally appropriate methods for privacy education and policy.
- Investigating the advancement and efficacy of technology tools and solutions aimed at improving privacy protection on social media, including sophisticated privacy settings and AI-powered privacy consultants.
- Conducting a policy impact assessment to evaluate the efficacy of current and potential privacy legislation and policies in safeguarding the privacy of young users on social media, with the goal of pinpointing deficiencies and opportunities for enhancement.

By implementing these suggestions and focusing on research areas, stakeholders can collaborate to provide a safer and more privacy-oriented online space for young people in the UAE.

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Relationship between Privacy Attributes and User Knowledge and Behaviors
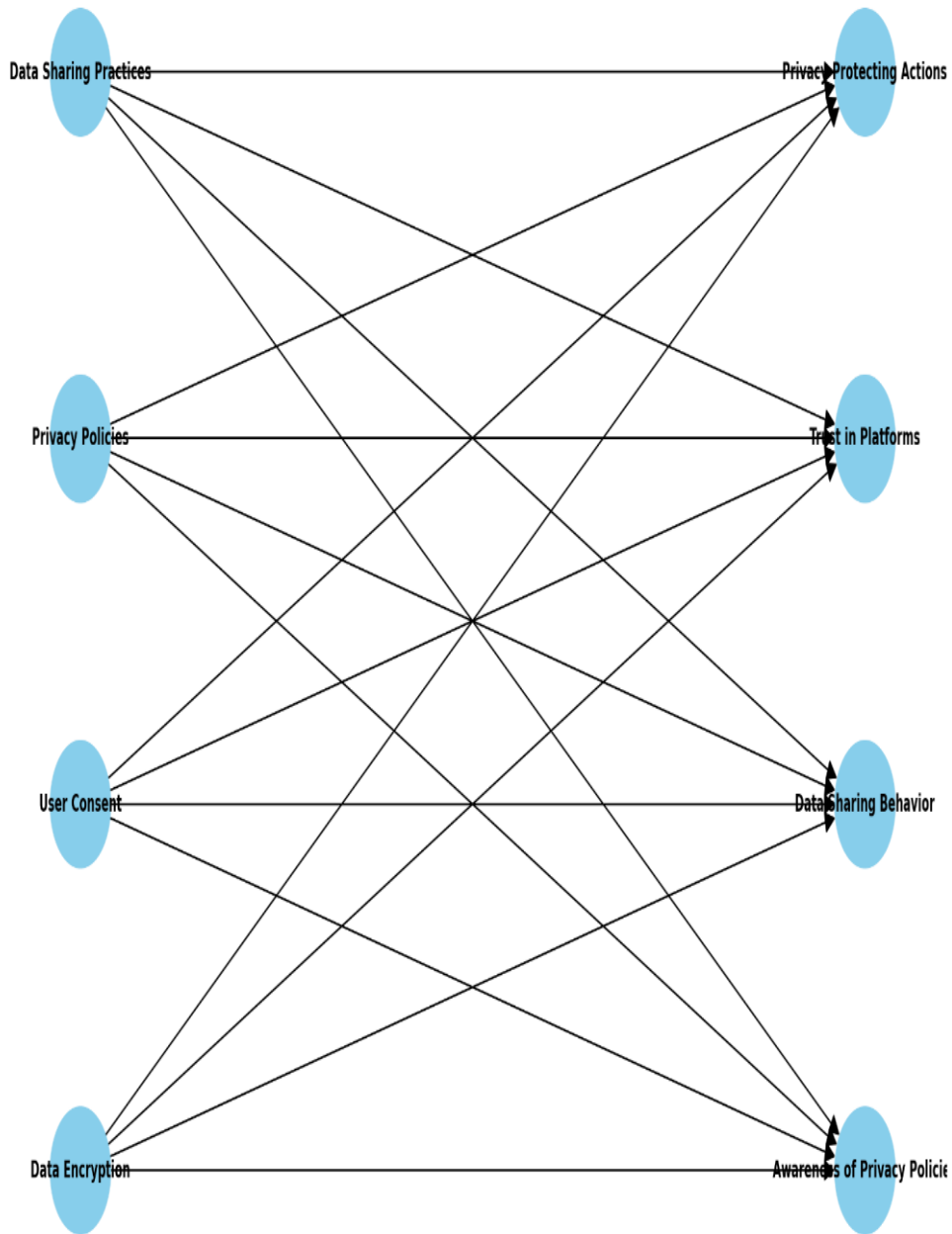
Methodological Procedures: Data Collection, Data Analysis, Interpretation, Discussion