

## Social Media and Ethical Issues: Addressing Privacy, Security, and Manipulation Concerns

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### Abstract

### Original Research Article

Social media became a useful tool that enlisted the participation of its users to create and share content, posing several ethical issues with IT professionals especially with most of them attributed to privacy, security, and rapid dissemination of information. This research aims to develop certain ethical principles to be followed by IT specialists in managing social media. The descriptive research method was employed to sample 18 individuals comprising IT professionals, social media managers, application developers and trainers. The study addresses certain ethical issues like data privacy, information security, content moderation and user monetization. Strong information security policies, legal mechanisms and consent from users were identified as protective measures of user data. Most respondents mentioned cyber-related threats and weak encryption to be some of the risks, and plans to eliminate these risks included vigorous encryption and observance of ethical principles. The recommendation in this study is that information technology professionals should be continuously exposed to ethical dilemmas while on duty and users should be more actively engaged in order to secure the benevolent use of social networking services. The results support the conclusion that social media technologies management involves not only adequate technical skills but also sufficient moral components.

**Keywords:** Content Moderation, Data Privacy, Ethical Issues, Information Security, Social Media Management.

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## INTRODUCTION

Social media can be defined as a collection of web-based services and applications that enable collaboration and creation of content among users and is therefore different from mass media such as television and print (Norman, 2012). It highlights user participation whereby consumers are able to make, reshuffle, and share content encouraging participatory culture (Alsubaie, 2016). Hence as a structure, social media meets the social basic needs of every human being, which is to connect people and forge relationships regardless of the distance (Widiarti et al, 2024). It changes the paradigm of communication from one person to many people to many people to many people which helps enhance the quickness and breadth of the messages (Ramalingam, 2013). Social media has a plethora of advantages that are helpful in communication and marketing, however, its drawbacks include the possibility of misinformation and worsening of character development especially in the young people (Izza, 2019).

The intersection of social media and ethical issues in

the IT profession presents significant challenges, particularly concerning data privacy, misinformation, and the impact on mental health. As social media continues to evolve, professionals must navigate these ethical dilemmas to maintain integrity and trust. Social media platforms collect vast amounts of personal data, raising concerns about how this information is stored and used (Boyle, 2023). Ethical business practices are crucial for fostering consumer trust, especially for businesses leveraging social media for marketing (Sangputra et al., 2024). The rapid spread of misinformation on social media can lead to harmful consequences, influencing public opinion and decision-making (Moin et al., 2024). The pervasive nature of social media can negatively impact mental health, necessitating ethical considerations in its use (Liu, 2023). Professionals must be aware of the potential for economic exploitation and the erosion of boundaries between public and private life (Othman et al., 2022).

This research seeks to comprehend the ethical challenges posed by social media to the IT professional, including privacy, disinformation, mental health, among others.

The investigations of these ethical concerns are therefore proposed to arm IT practitioners with acceptable ways of curtailing possible negative impacts as well as practicing sense in management of social media. This research can assist in constructing a platform for addressing sided issues and providing practical measures to safeguard the users' privacy, the content and the mental health of individuals who will use the social media applications. Furthermore, the research aims at ensuring that the IT profession practices its activities within acceptable ethical constraints and instils practiced trust and transparency in the digital era.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are:

1. To know the different profiles of IT Professionals that are vulnerable to Social Media ethical issues
2. To know their reasons of protecting data
3. To know their ethical and security practices
4. To know their mitigation strategies to security threats encountered in the workplace.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used the descriptive method of research to explore the ethical challenges in social media in the IT profession. The participants consisted of 18 individuals, including IT professionals, social media managers, software developers, and IT instructors from various organizations, colleges and universities. These participants were selected for their involvement in managing social media platforms, ensuring data privacy, and maintaining security in their respective fields.

## Data Collection Procedure

The researcher reached out to IT companies, social media management firms, and educational institutions to invite professionals to take part in the study. Using purposive sampling, 18 participants were selected based on their experience in handling ethical issues in social media and technology management. The study involved a self-made questionnaire, validated by three experts using the Good and

Scates validation tool, which was distributed to the participants. The questionnaire covered topics such as data privacy, security, misinformation, content moderation, and the ethical responsibilities of IT professionals.

In addition to the questionnaire, after finalizing the questionnaire, the participants also took part in structured interviews in order to acquire a more robust understanding of their everyday practices and how they deal with ethical issues. Surveys and interviews samples aimed at generating qualitative and quantitative facts, therefore, the analysis was robust.

## Data Analysis and Validation

The responses obtained were put to descriptive statistics aimed at understanding the ethical problems which the research participants encounter. The descriptive analysis was devoted primarily to the problems of privacy, security, and content integrity. The findings were analyzed further using quantitative approaches in order to ascertain if there were any patterns or trends amongst the responses.

In order to achieve reliability of the results 3 IT experts were engaged for the purpose of reviewing and validating the findings. Their comments assisted in verifying that the presented interpretations were consistent with existing practices in the industry.

## Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed about the purpose of this research and consent was given prior to their participation. Their name and other personal information were not revealed to anyone, and the information was utilized only for the research purposes only. The study followed and compiled ethical guidelines from Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) and IEE, for furthering equity in clients' contributions to the research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Current Position Breakdown

To understand the current roles of respondents, researchers collected data on their positions. The results are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1. Position Breakdown**

Position	No. of Respondents
System Developer	4
IT Professional	10
Technical Support	1
Management/Executive	1
IT Instructors	2

The majority of respondents 10 identified as IT professionals, followed by system developers 4, with a small percentage representing technical support 1, management 1 and instructors 2.

### Protecting User Information

In terms of protecting user information, respondents highlighted various security practices. These responses are outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2. Methods for Protecting User Information**

Reason for Protection	No. of Respondents
Because of legal guidelines (e.g., GDPR)	2
Concern for privacy with data	4
Obtain user consents	2
Implementing strong information security practices	10

The data indicates that implementing strong information security practices is the most commonly used method (55.6%) for protecting user information. This involves encryption, regular updates, and security monitoring. Concerns for privacy (22.2%) and legal guidelines (11.1%) also influence how users' data is handled.

### Ethical Concerns and Security Practices

In terms of ethical concerns in their work, respondents emphasized the importance of data privacy, security, and transparency. Table 3 shows the ethical issues they face and the security practices they follow.

**Table 3. Ethical Concerns and Security Practices**

Ethical Concern	Security Practice	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Data privacy and user consent	Strong inform action security practices	10	55.6%
Security vulnerabilities and data breaches	Concern for privacy with data	4	22.2%
Content moderation and misinformation	Strong security measures	2	11.1%
Economic exploitation of users	Obtaining user consent	2	11.1%

Over half of the respondents (55.6%) pointed to data privacy and user consent as a primary concern. They address this by implementing strong information security measures like encryption and regular monitoring. Additionally, security vulnerabilities and data breaches (22.2%) are also important issues, with respondents ensuring they handle user data carefully.

Concerns like content moderation (11.1%) and economic exploitation of users (11.1%) were mentioned by a smaller number of respondents, who stressed the need for transparency and fairness in how users are treated and how their

data is managed. These professionals are committed to making sure that their work respects privacy and protects user rights.

### Security Threats and Mitigation Strategies

In terms of security threats, respondents were most concerned about cyberattacks such as hacking and phishing, as well as weak encryption and insider threats. The details are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4. Security Threats and Mitigation Strategies**

Threat	Mitigation Strategy	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Cyberattacks (hacking, phishing)	Strong information security practices	10	55.6%
Weak encryption	Ensuring data privacy	4	22.2%
Insider threats	Following industry guidelines (e.g., ACM Code)	2	11.1%

The majority (55.6%) identified cyberattacks as the biggest threat. To counter these risks, professionals rely on robust security practices, which include encrypting sensitive data, securing access controls, and continuously monitoring for any suspicious activity.

Weak encryption was another notable concern (22.2%), with respondents implementing stronger encryption methods to safeguard user information. Additionally, insider threats were mentioned by some, and the response has been to adhere to professional guidelines such as the ACM Code of Ethics to ensure all employees understand the importance of data security.

## CONCLUSION

The widespread adoption of social media has created significant ethical concerns for IT professionals, particularly regarding privacy, security, and information dissemination. This study highlights the need for IT specialists to adhere to ethical principles in managing social media. Key findings emphasize the importance of robust information security policies, user consent, and vigorous encryption to protect user data. The research concludes that effective social media management requires a balance of technical expertise and moral considerations. To ensure the responsible use of social media, IT professionals must be continually exposed to ethical dilemmas, and users must be actively engaged in securing their online presence.

## RECOMMENDATION

This research highlights that the IT specialists realize concerns related to ethics and security within their profession. Respondents respect the values of data privacy, data security, and data transparency in their business and, thus, observe the established principles in the way they handle data.

Material-most cases common factors are computer network related crime and the use of weak encryption which due to elaborate measures employed by the professionals is a non-issue. However, it is still critical to adopt new ways of carrying out security and to also undertake regular ethical training of the IT personnel.

In this direction, it would be appropriate for companies to help reinforce ethical teaching in relation to their teams so that there is a balance between technical learning as well as ethical usage of the user data. There is greater potential for increasing user participation in governance to deepen trust in organizations and enhance adequate and sustainable behaviors in the digital environment.

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