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Navigating the Digital Frontier: The Intersection of Cybersecurity Challenges and Young Adult Life

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Keywords: cybersecurity and cybercrime awareness; cyberbullying; young adults

Abstract:
Papers from this issue advocate for empowering young adults with knowledge and tools to navigate cyberspace safely, emphasizing the necessity of heightened cybersecurity measures and proactive education. As we advance into the digital abyss, this call becomes imperative, ensuring that the young adults' experience remains a journey of growth and enlightenment, unaffected by the shadows of unseen online threats.

Introduction

In an era dominated by digital landscapes and interconnected networks, college-age young adults are deeply enmeshed with smartphones and social media. They confront the rigors of academia or the workforce while negotiating the complexities of the increasingly hazardous realm of cybercrime. The relevance of this issue cannot be overstated, as the consequences extend far beyond the virtual world, infiltrating the very fabric of their personal, academic, and work lives.

One of the pervasive cyber threats for young adults may be identity theft. With abundant personal information circulating online, from social security numbers to financial details, young adults may become prime targets for malicious actors seeking to exploit their digital footprint (Golladay & Holtfreter, 2017). The repercussions of identity theft are far-reaching, impacting credit scores, financial stability, and even future employment prospects.

Phishing attacks, where perpetrators manipulate individuals into divulging sensitive information, often masquerade as seemingly innocuous messages from trusted sources (Alsharnouby et al., 2015). Young adults, accustomed to constant digital communication, may be more susceptible to these tactics, making it crucial for them to be educated on recognizing and thwarting such attempts. Social engineering, another insidious facet of cybercrime, similarly preys on the trusting nature of young adults (Hadnagy, 2010). Such pervasive cybersecurity and cybercrime issues may demand proper education and awareness training.

To address the importance of cybercrime and cybersecurity education, Ngo and colleagues (2024) demonstrate these two fields while adding another crucial aspect of such education: the language barrier. They address the value of cybersecurity education and awareness at the user level as the key to combating cybercrime. The authors examined whether a similar impact would be observed for non-English speaking

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people when such information is shared in their native language. The findings reveal promising outcomes, and the authors’ five recommendations are noteworthy for anyone interested in promoting cybersecurity education and awareness training.

Another piece by Neuhaeusler (2024) discusses one of the critical segments of the current society: cyberbullying among young adults, especially during the pandemic. As indicated in the introduction, young adults in the current era heavily rely on digital communication and online platforms. Discussing cyberbullying among young adults during the pandemic is essential for promoting a healthy, respectful, and inclusive online environment. It contributes to the overall well-being of individuals, encourages responsible digital behavior, and ensures that the challenges posed by increased screen time and online interactions are met with proactive and preventative measures.

The experience of young adults in the digital age is inevitably tied to the prevalence of cybercrime. The relevance of this issue extends beyond the virtual realm, impacting personal, academic, and societal dimensions. Empowering young adults with the knowledge and tools to navigate cyberspace safely is not just necessary; it is an investment in the future of an informed and digitally resilient generation. As we continue to march into the digital abyss, the call for heightened cybersecurity measures and proactive education becomes ever more imperative, ensuring that the young adults’ experience remains a journey of growth and enlightenment, unhindered by the shadows cast by unseen online threats.

Reference