

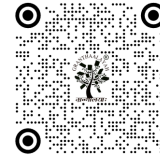
Original Article

MECHANISMS SHAPING THE DIGITAL RIGHTS AND DATA PRIVACY AMONG KERALA YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

Since social networking has become an essential part of everyone's life, people have been increasingly wondering if teenagers have fully understood their rights online and their private data. The study investigates the level of digital rights and data privacy awareness, observed behavior in the sharing of information online, and the social and structural determinants of their understanding among the Kerala Youth. For the study, a quantitative descriptive design was employed, and data were collected through a questionnaire distributed among 201 youth users spread across all 14 districts of Kerala through convenience and snowball sampling. Frequency and percentage analysis were used for data analysis. The Privacy Paradox, Surveillance Capitalism, Privacy Calculus Model, Communication Privacy Management Theory, and Contextual Integrity were considered. Results indicated an obvious difference between actual privacy knowledge and perceived privacy awareness. Respondents had general knowledge of digital rights but were aware only of rudimentary legal matters, such as the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act. Common unsafe behaviors observed were not reading the terms and conditions, granting unnecessary permissions to applications and continuing to use applications even when aware of potential risks. The influence of peers and the design of the social networking platform influenced the digital behaviors to a greater extent and education had very little impact. The study concluded that digital rights among the Kerala youth have a more theoretical knowledge rather than an application based knowledge and there is a greater need to inculcate advanced digital rights knowledge among them by means of, not only to raise public consciousness and encourage interaction on data protection rights but also the need to create user friendly consent mechanisms.

Keywords: Digital Rights, Data Privacy, Kerala Youth, Privacy Paradox, Surveillance Capitalism, Consent Fatigue, Digital Literacy, DPDP Act, Awareness Behavior Gap

INTRODUCTION

With the increased use of social networking sites in everyday lives, it has become a matter of concern how conscious are young users of their digital rights and data privacy, which has become an important research area in digital advanced parts of the world such as Kerala. The purpose of this study is to assess the level of awareness of digital rights and data privacy among youth in Kerala, examine their online data sharing behaviour, and study the social and structural determinants of their privacy awareness. This research study follows a quantitative descriptive research design using structured survey which was conducted on 201 participants across all the fourteen districts of Kerala selected by convenience and snowball sampling techniques. Frequency distribution and percentage analysis were done with SPSS, and it is based on the theory of Privacy Paradox, Surveillance Capitalism, Privacy Calculus

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Model, Communication Privacy Management theory and Contextual Integrity. The study has established that there is a gulf between perception and actual privacy awareness of youth in Kerala where respondents had vast awareness of digital rights but they did not know much of legal regulations such as Digital Personal Data Protection Act, while common unsafe practices like "accepting all terms and conditions without reading", "giving a lot of app permissions", and "using a platform even knowing its privacy risks" dominated their digital behaviors. Peer influence and design of digital platforms are significant determinants and formal education was insignificant in framing the digital privacy awareness and behavior. The study concludes that young people of Kerala are in theoretical stage awareness of digital rights, need effective digital literacy and consent mechanisms, and public discussion regarding the data protection policies.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is relevant particularly at a time when digital platforms are replacing the physical spaces for young people to learn, interact, and engage with the world around them. Youth today are no longer merely recipients of information online, but they are participants in a landscape that consistently extracts and commodifies their personal information. Learning about what they know about their digital rights and their behaviour around privacy can therefore not only be an academic exercise but a matter of social concern.

This study, unlike other national surveys on this issue, attempts to shed light on how the awareness is built, rather than solely measure the awareness levels. The interactive examination of how digital literacy, formal education and influence from social media shape the awareness will help provide a better insight to the nature of gap between awareness and behavior among youth in Kerala. This study is relevant to various aspects. For teachers, this study will lend support in raising a voice for the inclusion of digital rights in the curriculum. Policymakers may derive an insight from the research into building an awareness program which would actually cater to the behaviour of youth online. Platform designers are warned about their liability in constructing transparent and substantive data consent process, instead of it being just a tick-box activity. The foundation on which this study is built is the fact that active digital participation cannot be an option but a right, and protection of youth from online exploitation will necessitate intervention from institutions, platforms and community together.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 1) To assess the awareness level among youth about digital rights and data privacy.
- 2) To examine youth behaviour related to sharing personal information on Digital media.
- 3) To identify the sources through which youth learn about digital rights and privacy.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: What is the awareness level among youth of Kerala about digital rights and data privacy in the context of increasing digital media usage?

RQ2: To what extent do young users know about data collection practices, privacy policies, and legal protections related to their personal information on digital platforms?

RQ3: How does the awareness level about digital rights and data privacy influence the information sharing behaviour of youth on digital media?

HYPOTHESIS

H₁: Although the youth of Kerala use digital media platforms frequently, there is lack of awareness about data privacy and digital rights which results in uninformed sharing of personal information in the online environments.

H₂: Digital literacy, educational exposure, awareness initiatives, and experiences with digital platforms have a considerable impact on the level of awareness and privacy-related behaviour of Kerala youth concerning digital rights and data privacy.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The varied behavioural, social, institutional and structural mechanisms through which the digital rights of and the data privacy of young people in Kerala understand it, can be viewed through many aspects. Each of the papers that have been reviewed highlights one aspect of this larger problem

[Suresh \(2024a\)](#) demonstrates that young Indians continue to practice risky behaviour online like freely sharing data and using unsafe networks even with some level of awareness. This goes to prove that increased awareness does not necessarily translate to safer behaviour online, which is the major area of concern in the study. It applies to the youth in Kerala. According to [Soni \(2024\)](#), the reason teenagers persist with using social media in the ways that they do is because they are aware of being monitored, but are

driven to share and display content by social pressures and the sense of "FOMO" (fear of missing out) This is very similar to the kinds of social pressures faced by young people in Kerala on the platforms that matter and for which social visibility and sense of belonging trumps personal privacy. [George et al. \(2020\)](#) examine the awareness behaviour gap among young adults in Bengaluru. Even though they are concerned about misuse, they mostly continue accepting platform terms and conditions without reading it.

This same gap between awareness and behaviour is central to the problem this study addresses among Kerala youth. [Das \(2022\)](#) illustrates with the example of a survey on university students in Bangladesh that having a high level of internet access does not always build digital literacy, as students still are unaware of common threats such as phishing or identity theft.

This is clearly applicable to the context of Kerala where there is wide digital access but a possibility of shallow understanding of data privacy issues. [Knijnenburg et al. \(2022\)](#) highlight that while unsafe digital behaviour has been traditionally associated with ignorance it can be better explained by the influence of the design of online systems, social norms, and habit formation. In this perspective, the continuing unsafe practices of young people in Kerala can be understood as resulting from similar influencing factors in the socio-technical ecosystem of online platforms. [Sriharsha \(2025\)](#) finds that Indian youth are compelled to give consent through the implementation of dark design patterns in the design of the interfaces, particularly through confusing design which manipulates users into giving consent without understanding.

This suggests that the issue of consent in digital rights is not simply about the agency of youth but also about the systemic structures and designed interfaces, and this study is in line with examining such structural aspects shaping privacy behaviour among Kerala youth.

[Nguyen et al. \(2023\)](#) note that the vast majority of social media and technology platform users across major platforms do not comprehend what they are agreeing to in privacy policies since the language is technical and the documents too lengthy. For young people in Kerala, such consent fatigue is highly relevant as they daily use these platforms and consent to conditions which they do not understand. [Jain et al. \(2025\)](#) discover that youth in India continue to distrust platforms but are unable to reduce their use of social media, which indicates the strong social imperative to remain online, overpowering privacy concerns. This tension between mistrust and use is a key issue that this study investigates among youth users in Kerala. [Bhat \(2024\)](#) illustrates that though The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 can be seen as a forward movement, exemptions given to the government on several provisions and lack of digital literacy among youth make it less effective in the real world for citizens in India, including Kerala. [Narayana Swamy \(2025\)](#) demonstrates with empirical data from Kerala, that the large chunk of internet-active young adults still are ignorant about the provisions of cyber-crime laws, the ways it affects them, and even basic digital security practices and information security awareness.

This confirms the necessity of this study to focus on young people in Kerala with the same gap of access but limited awareness. [Verma and Mishra \(2024\)](#) propose that children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable because their knowledge of legal rights is limited, and they do not yet have the capacity to make informed decisions regarding the data that is being collected. This right-based perspective shapes this study as an attempt to uncover how young people in Kerala occupy a position as part of the data infrastructure they do not yet understand. [Gallego-Arrufat et al. \(2024\)](#) conclude in a review of 54 articles that there is a trend for schools to adapt to digital media without addressing privacy issues and rights in their pedagogy, pointing to the lack of institutional capacity building, which is a part of the structural framework that shapes young people's practices regarding digital rights in Kerala.

According to [Sarwatay et al. \(2021\)](#) family aspect can also be addressed where mothers tend to control children rather than educating them about safe internet use, which can be worse in the case of poorer economic backgrounds. So, the family environment and education also play role in deciding about use of internet by youngsters in Kerala and it can be seen as institutional structure. [Williams et al. \(2023\)](#) argue that having conversations with parents about online privacy strongly correlates with higher levels of awareness and protection, showing how dialogue can make a difference in the development of data privacy practices among young individuals, thus being relevant for young people in Kerala too. [Augustine and Yadav \(2021\)](#) study how youth in rural Kerala access information mainly through their mobile devices, with resulting inconsistent networks, a lack of access to supportive institutions, and increased risks. This indicates a strong disparity along geographical lines influencing data privacy awareness among Kerala youth. [Farthing et al. \(2024\)](#). reveal that young people in countries such as these often view privacy only in terms of what can be observed by peers and family, not by what corporations are invisibly collecting. This narrowed perception of privacy can be assumed to be equally applicable to youth in Kerala, and therefore becomes a focus area of this study. [Livingstone and Third \(2017\)](#) critique the present-day information environment, noting that the designs of digital platforms mostly cater to adult users and commercial interests, marginalizing the perspectives and privacy concerns of youth, underscoring the need for the kind of youth-oriented research that is proposed in this study. [Christakis and Hale \(2025\)](#) raise concerns over the vast amount of personal data being produced through day-to-day usage by adolescents without them having any understanding of how their data is being utilized and this phenomenon is occurring on an unprecedented scale in a state like Kerala where youth use and engagement with technology continues to grow at an accelerated rate and this study investigates how much of this datafication process is below the awareness radar of Kerala's young population. [Singh \(n.d.\)](#) demonstrates that though many Indian users have experienced financial losses and privacy infringements online they are still not satisfied with available legal remedies, suggesting an inadequacy of institutions. The disillusionment with institution building is also pertinent for this study with the same focus among Kerala's young users. [Choudhary and Patidar \(2025\)](#) reflect that Indian Digital Governance was primarily driven by goals of increasing access and delivery, with a

lapse in developing rights-based awareness among citizens. For young people participating actively in digital governance in India and more specifically in Kerala, this created an imbalance which will likely impact their digital rights awareness. [Sriharsha \(2025\)](#) and [Jana et al. \(2022\)](#) show how consent in India is ineffective and also a weak legal safeguard, where age verification procedures are often non-existent, or are easily bypassed, and boxes are unchecked and un-checked. This is also true for the youth in Kerala, whose engagement with digital technology is shaped by such a systemic breakdown of consent mechanisms.

RESEARCH GAP

From the reviewed literature on digital rights and data privacy, one area that has not been thoroughly explored is the gap between adolescent privacy awareness and their online behavior. While many works talk about how young people have concerns for their privacy, few attempts have been made to explore why they still continue to exhibit unsafe online behavior, such as data sharing practices. This aspect needs attention particularly in the Kerala context where high literacy and digital access coexist with unsafe online practices among adolescents. The influence of peers, social influence, and design of the platform on how youth make privacy choices have not been addressed adequately. Most privacy frameworks developed are centered on adult users, without considering the specific factors affecting adolescents such as, the impulse driven nature, need of peer approval and the role of digital identity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ROUTINE ACTIVITY THEORY

The analysis in this paper views how everyday digital routine activities of Kerala youth provide an opportunity for privacy risks, and utilizes Routine Activity theory from [Cohen and Felson \(1979\)](#), which states that a crime occurs when three conditions occur at the same time; a motivated offender, suitable victim, and a lack of capable guardians. The Indian youth has been taken advantage of by [Suresh \(2024b\)](#), who states that it is not awareness but a persistent digital culture and irresponsible supervision that can be hazardous to the youth, and lead to various problems, like data theft, phishing, breach of privacy etc. Due to its integration in almost all daily routines, from waking up to going back to sleep, 18–35 year old Kerala youth are constantly reachable targets in a realm that lacks any effective protection systems.

SOCIO-TECHNICAL PERSPECTIVE ON PRIVACY

This study also analyzes how individual level awareness is indirectly determined by factors external to it. By drawing from [Knijnenburg et al. \(2022\)](#) and other researchers, the Socio-Technical Perspective on Privacy suggests that individual privacy decisions are quietly guided by the design of platforms, by social norms, cultural context and institutional defaults that most users are unaware of. Research by [Farthing et al. \(2024\)](#) further found that younger individuals are only interested in the visibility of their personal lives to immediate social circles whereas corporate data collection happens outside of individual observation and awareness. This study, given the simultaneous interplay of closely knit familial circles, closely related peers, and behaviorally nudging platforms in Kerala, uses the socio-technical perspective to analyze whether these youth are actually practicing their privacy rights or just traversing the digital world unaware of the processes that happen with their personal data.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY RESEARCH DESIGN

This study will use a quantitative descriptive research design to investigate the level of digital rights and data privacy awareness among youth in Kerala. A descriptive quantitative research design has been used to find out about the behavior, awareness and the affecting factors based on quantified measures that are statistically quantifiable.

RESEARCH METHOD

A structured online survey was carried out using the Google Forms platform. This involved a structured questionnaire with multiple choice questions, Likert type scale statements ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree and behaviors and awareness assessment based items that assess digital rights awareness, data sharing practices and affecting variables such as peer cultures and design elements.

POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The target population is 18 to 35 years old young users of digital media across all fourteen districts of Kerala. This study used non-probability sampling method consisting of combined convenience and snowball sampling techniques. A total of 201 valid responses were gathered from students and young professionals who are networked in academia and through social networks.

DATA COLLECTION

Primary data has been gathered through the use of a structured questionnaire which was administered electronically through social media and personal networks. The questionnaire covered:

- Awareness about digital rights and legalities
- Data sharing and privacy practices
- Factors affecting digital rights and privacy awareness

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All participants in the study were informed before their participation and a voluntary consent was taken before the commencement of the survey. No identifying information of any kind was collected, and only basic demographic variables (age, sex, district) was taken to enable the statistical analysis. All information is kept secure, and is accessible only by the principal investigator, for the sole use of research.

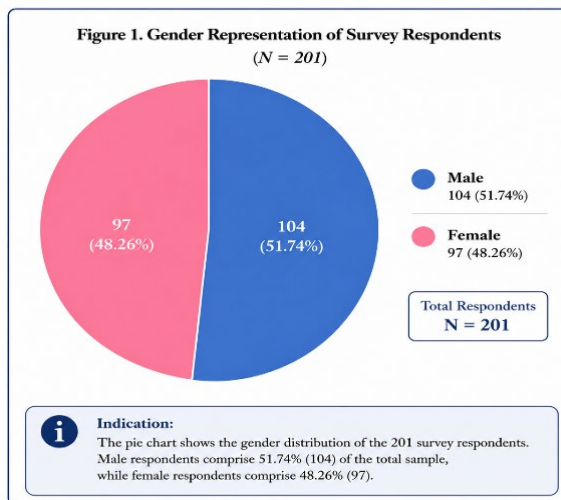
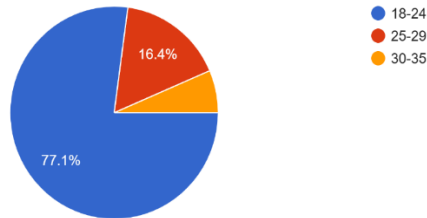
DATA ANALYSIS

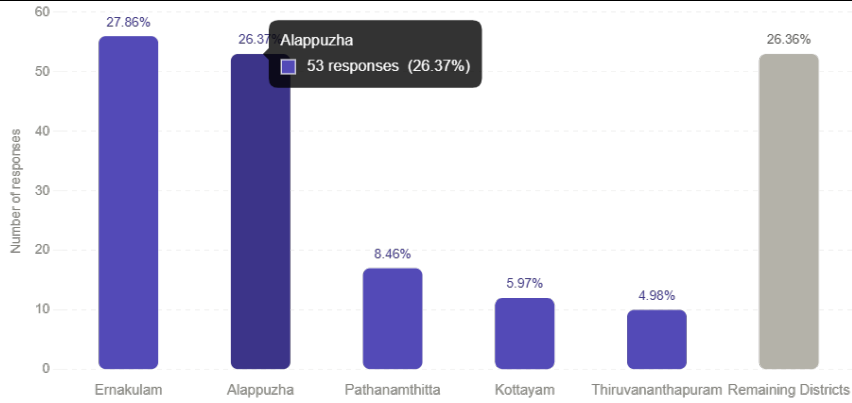
Data has been analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage analysis. The responses obtained through Likert scale has been collapsed so that Strong Agree and Agree are considered as Agreement and Strongly Disagree and Disagree considered as Disagreement in order to capture macro behavioral trends among the youth surveyed.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Demographics of respondents are critical for context, as a backdrop of how digital privacy awareness and behavior take shape. Aspects like, age, gender, geographic coverage, are all tied into issues of digital exposure, engagement with platforms, and the kinds of experiences one is having regarding privacy. As this research has a youth focus, using the demographics allows the data to be framed appropriately.

What is Your age ?
201 responses





Total response = 201

The sample comprised a young internet-savvy population that is relevant for the objectives of the study. As 77.11% of the respondents were in the age bracket of 18 to 24, it means a generation that heavily depends on technology for education, interaction and socialising. Of the rest of the respondents, 16.42% are between 25 to 29 years of age and 6.47% between 30 to 35 years of age; this provided them some level of past experience of internet use with growing responsibilities and understanding. The respondents were approximately equally divided by gender (51.74% males and 48.26% females). This helps ensure reliable results without any gender specific bias. Regarding districts, response came from all the fourteen districts of Kerala, with maximum contribution coming from Ernakulam (27.86%) and Alappuzha (26.37%), followed by Pathanamthitta (8.46%) and Kottayam (5.97%). More contribution from the more urbanised, internet-driven regions reflects the extent of platform usage, but wider range ensures regional representativeness.

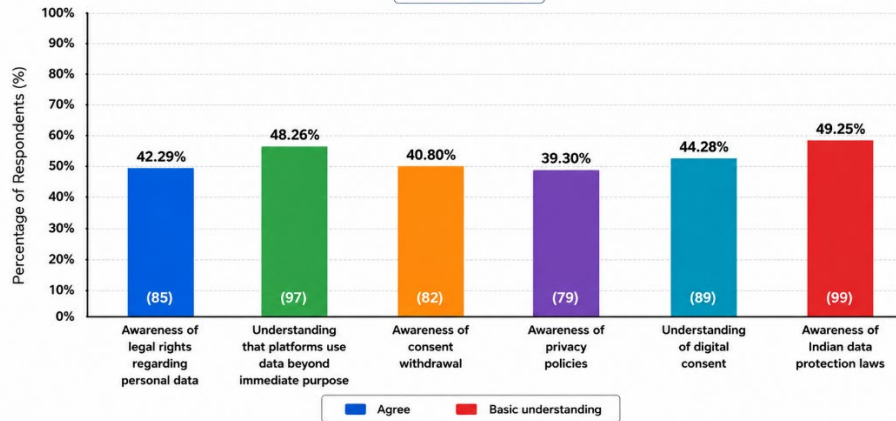
OBJECTIVE I: ASSESSING AWARENESS REGARDING DIGITAL RIGHTS AND DATA PRIVACY

The first objective of the study is to investigate the levels of awareness of Kerala youth on digital rights and data privacy. Awareness was defined meaningfully by not just asking specific survey questions but also collectively analyzing survey questions pertaining to legal rights, data collection, privacy policies, digital consent, platform surveillance and digital literacy statutes. Combined, these could throw light on whether Kerala youth possess a mere abstract awareness of privacy issues or have an understanding of the rights and privacy mechanisms in which they are entitled to.

Awareness and Understanding of Data Privacy Aspects

(Total Respondents = 201)

[Combined Table](#)



Total Respondents = 201
Note: This is a combined table.

AWARENESS OF DIGITAL RIGHTS AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

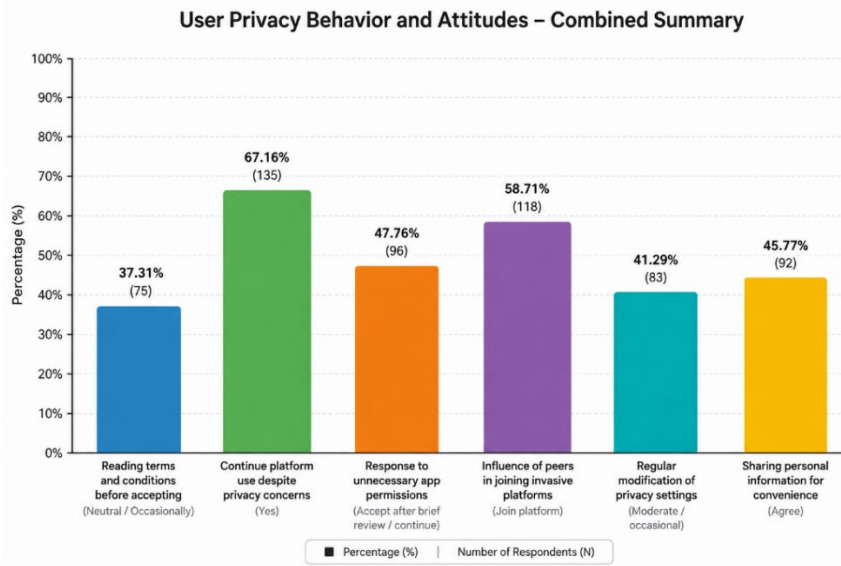
Overall, the respondents have an above average, yet uneven level of awareness about digital rights and data privacy issues. While almost 48.26% of the respondents seemed aware of data collection in the digital space exceeding required transactions and inferred that it involved things like algorithmic profiling and targeting ads, and 42.29% were aware of their legal rights in terms of data

collection and usage, along with digital consent, there seems to be a superficial level of awareness. There was more awareness about data collection practices rather than knowledge of the legal rights people were entitled to against data collection and usage practices. Hardly half (49.25%) seemed aware of Indian privacy laws and that to only vaguely, and a lot fewer knew about privacy laws beyond that. Especially, awareness about the digital personal data protection act, 2023 was almost zero. It seems evident that while technological advancements were rapid, digital literacy wasn't and there seems to be an awareness gap which implies that the otherwise lauded culture of education in Kerala may not have expanded to cover digital literacy and rights. People knew data was being collected and used but were largely ignorant about the laws that protected them against it.

OBJECTIVE II: BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS RELATED TO SHARING PERSONAL INFORMATION ON DIGITAL MEDIA

The second objective of the study seeks to examine the behavioural practices of Kerala youth regarding the sharing of personal information on digital platforms. While awareness is an important indicator of digital literacy, actual behaviour provides a more accurate understanding of how individuals manage privacy in everyday online environments. Therefore, this section examines respondents' practical engagement with terms and conditions, privacy settings, app permissions, platform dependency, peer influence, and willingness to continue platform use despite privacy concerns.

To avoid fragmented interpretation, behaviour-related questions were analysed collectively to identify dominant behavioural tendencies and contradictions in privacy practices.



BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS IN DATA PRIVACY PRACTICE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The behavioural indicators in this survey confirm a vast difference between respondents' knowledge about digital privacy and their actions online. With respect to terms and conditions, respondents stated they would read them only once in a while before clicking accept (37.31%). This is an indication of the tendency of users to give the agreement of consent under lack of any true awareness about how their personal data will be gathered, processed or shared. The phenomenon is identified by academics as consent fatigue where users skip terms and condition because of its sheer length and complexity and readily sign off with automatic consent, rather than the consensual acceptance of a complex issue. Even more alarmingly, respondents said that they would continue to use the platform even when they are uncomfortable with its privacy policies (67.16%), which indicates that the dependency on digital mediums for communication, education and social life always comes first even in the face of potential risks associated with privacy. This is a direct demonstration of the Privacy Paradox where users have been shown to understand the risk involved, but nevertheless choose the course of action in an attempt to gain certain advantages (which in this case relates to communication, education etc) rather than for security reasons. A similar response was also witnessed in relation to app permission: respondents (47.76%) continued using apps even when they are asked for overreach permissions like location, contacts and device access (even after glancing at it only briefly at best). Social influence is another factor that perpetuates these practices: when respondents are asked whether they would join a platform that has questionable privacy terms and conditions if most of their peers are already using it, the response is yes from 58.71% of respondents. This highlights that the decision about privacy does not arise in vacuum for the youth in Kerala; instead it depends significantly on peer group pressures, fear of isolation and perceived digital necessity. These points combined together provide solid support for the study's main argument, i.e., awareness about digital privacy risks does not correspond to protection of the same by the Kerala youth.

OBJECTIVE III: SOURCES THROUGH WHICH YOUTH LEARN ABOUT DIGITAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY

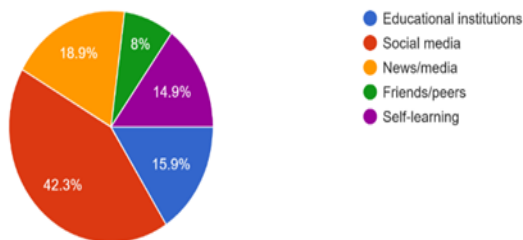
The third objective of the study focuses on identifying the major sources through which Kerala youth develop their understanding of digital rights and privacy. Since awareness is shaped by exposure to information, understanding the channels through which young people learn about digital safety becomes essential in identifying institutional strengths and weaknesses.

Table 1

Source of Awareness	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Social Media / Online Platforms	85	42.29%
News Media	38	18.91%
Educational Institutions	32	15.92%
Self-learning	30	14.93%
Friends / Peer Networks	16	7.96%

From which source did you primarily learn about digital rights and data privacy?

201 responses



SOURCES OF DIGITAL RIGHTS AWARENESS ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

A very interesting observation is that education plays only a minimal role in informing awareness regarding digital rights among the youth of Kerala. Only 15.92 per cent of respondents stated educational institutions to be the major sources of information regarding digital rights and privacy—a surprisingly low statistic in a state famous for its high literacy levels and academic reputation. 42.29 per cent learned about digital rights and privacy via the internet and social networking media – it seems that the very sites that capture and commercialize users' information are also the major providers of information regarding it. There is an obvious conflict of interest where information regarding rights is provided by the very entities that are involved in rights abuses, and so knowledge is received from trends, discussions on social media networks, highly publicized incidents of data breaches, and is largely without any proper legal, formal and rights based framework. This means that young people in Kerala possess a fragmented, specific and trend based idea of privacy and its importance; it is not a complete and formal awareness as one might expect. The finding confirms a wider trend seen throughout the survey: that Kerala's advanced literacy culture has not penetrated into the world of digital rights and the lack of digital rights based curriculum, within formal education, will result in the continuation of a passive and superficial form of digital rights awareness among the youth.

OVERALL ANALYSIS

The result highlights alarming digital rights consciousness of the youngsters in Kerala. While for privacy, formal information provider is school/educational institution, for digital rights, knowledge on privacy were derived from digital media /informal & unstructured manner. 42.29% of the respondents expressed that, "They came to know about digital rights & privacy as, they were familiar to social media/internet". Paradoxical to the fact that, same entity that uses users' data is also the major informant, this could further result in unstructured digital literacy and domain specific knowledge as against cross domain. It indicates that learners will come across digital rights and privacy either via trending, shorter forms of content, discussions amongst social media personalities or via data breach occurrences. In contrast, educational institution as authority on knowledge of digital rights was claimed by 15.92%

of the respondents, showing much ignorance of the subject. This has to be addressed carefully as otherwise, Kerala is noted for its highest literacy rate and better educational background and, here also for digital literacy the scenario isn't the same. This would imply knowledge of digital rights not proportionately correlated with other subjects and the information via self learning and news may impart only some aspect to be knowledgeable and the most part will carry the legal & rightful aspects on digital rights for no impact.

INTEGRATED DISCUSSIONS WITH RESEARCH PROBLEM

Collectively, the findings of this study describe the state of digital rights awareness among youth in Kerala with clarity. Respondents are not wholly unaware; they recognize data being collected by platforms other than that of the direct service provision, they have basic understandings of how consent works, they can comprehend what micro-targeted advertising means, and they acknowledge that their privacy is indeed under threat. However, as soon as legal and institutional dimensions of data rights are introduced, their awareness vanishes. The respondents' knowledge of relevant data protection legislations, the options and actions available under those legislations, and their specific rights under laws like the Digital Personal Data Protection Act was negligibly low. This shows the existing awareness of the concept, but without any practical depth to it.

This abstractness is highlighted when awareness failed to materialize into action. Despite expressing discomfort when it came to their online privacy policies, their online behaviors of sharing excessive personal data, agreeing to wide ranging app permissions, and sharing personal data remained predominantly determined by habits, convenience, and especially, peer influence. So strong was the pressure of conforming, that it entirely trumped even the respondents' conceptual idea of appropriate privacy decision-making. Being excluded from the services most of their peers used was too big an issue for most respondents to compromise.

The study also points out to a structural inadequacy in the origin of this awareness. Awareness was predominantly shaped on social media and not through school and other formal institutions. In a manner of speaking, the parties that profit the most from collection of personal data on online platforms were the only parties to deliver fragmented and need-based education on data privacy and data rights. For Kerala, an educationally advanced state, this gap between conventional literacy and digital rights literacy presents a concrete and policy relevant vacuum.

DISCUSSIONS

Two hypothesis that were posed at the beginning of this research, about digital rights awareness and privacy behavior among the youth in Kerala, were tested and confirmed through analysis. Hypothesis 1: Youth in Kerala are massive digital platform users, but are relatively unaware of their digital rights and the data privacy issues and therefore readily share personal information on digital platforms without full awareness.

This hypothesis is accepted. From the above data it is clearly seen that even though there are enormous interactions on various digital platforms, the level of understanding about legal regimes, institutional safeguards and rights based mechanisms is low, thereby enabling a routine sharing of personal information without due awareness.

Hypothesis 2: The knowledge about and behavior related to digital privacy among the youth in Kerala is influenced by their digital literacy, platform experience, educational background and social networks.

This hypothesis is also accepted. It is established that formal education gives little contribution to the level of digital rights literacy; by the mere usage of platforms over time a normal tendency for the users to compromise their privacy concerns will arise, while decisions to choose a platform will still be strongly dominated by friend's advice. Both hypotheses are confirmed and together explain the main research problem of this research, that is a significant and important gulf between engagement with the digital and knowledge about digital rights among Kerala youth.

CONCLUSION

This study is in which research on factors affecting young people's awareness on their digital rights and data privacy behavior in Kerala were explored using data collected from a sample of 201 respondents of 18-35 year age group, distributed across 14 districts. We discovered that, respondents mostly have an awareness on digital privacy to a moderate level of abstract concept that their privacy is prone to threat; however, they do not have a well-understood and knowledgeable framework of law concerning data protection, procedure for retraction of consent, and judicial recourse. A consistent and persistent awareness-behavior gap persisted with, a majority of the respondents accepting platform terms without even reading them, agreeing to grant an app any requested permission, rarely verifying their privacy settings, despite expressing disinterest in how platforms use their data. Furthermore, we established that this behavior occurs not necessarily as a choice of the individual, but due to the socio-technical nature of online activities like the nature of the platform architecture, social nudges provided by other users and algorithm recommendations, and a desire for convenience that makes it tedious to opt out of services, which eventually causes people to override their privacy interests. The impact of formal education on shaping digital rights awareness were negligible; social media were reported as being the primary

although inadequate source of information on digital rights. All these together indicated the imperative need for an educational, technical and institutional approach towards ensuring genuine rights-based digital literacy among the youth in Kerala.

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