



Report: The Challenge of Raising Privacy Culture across Children

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About the Document:

This document is an executive report prepared by the National Data Privacy Office of the State of Qatar, which is under the capacity of National Cyber Security Agency. It is based on a response of official correspondence received from the United Nations Office to participate in Resolution 48/4 about "The Right of Privacy in Digital Age".



Subject: The challenge of raising privacy culture across children

The rapid growth of the digital transformation in all aspects with massive sharing of personal data highlights the need to address the right to maintain privacy as a human right.

The rise of social media platforms in all aspects of life is notable. However, as more people share information about their lives over such media, addressing the risks of such massive sharing becomes crucial.

Notably, the advancement of laws and regulations related to data privacy has positively influenced the practices of social media platforms to put upfront privacy as a fundamental component of their services. Global communities' endeavors that have been taken in the past decade were significant. It helped to draw global attention to this right. It has also significantly impacted individuals' awareness to understand and know their rights of privacy on such platforms.

Children are the new users of social media. They are more connected online than ever, especially after the unique culture and habits that the pandemic helped create. Children did not experience using technology with less use of personal data. Such practice has been there since they started using it. Therefore, it might be challenging to draw lines and distinguish boundaries on which data to be shared online and should be kept private. Current trends are being observed:

- The frequent use of smart devices with less cyber safety awareness results in considerable threats. Sometimes, children have insufficient protection for their devices, which could result in being cyber-attack victims. The attackers who target children in their online games are often after their popular or credited accounts. Others could be after children's abuse. It is essential to mention that children will ask their parents for help, not all the time. The psychological impact of being attacked online also negatively impacts and could create other complicated problems.
 - Some parents also use their children as main actors in their social media content (e.g., digital sharenting, vlogs, etc.). In most cases, children are not mature enough to make online privacy decisions, and it is more dependent on the level of awareness of the parents. Some young generations like to be popular. There is a misconception and unpleasant understanding that success is linked with



popularity. Social media played a significant role in this understanding. This misunderstanding results in both parents and children sharing personal data online and creating a digital footprint more often. As a result, social media platforms use that digital footprint mainly for targeted advertisements or other purposes.

- There is a rise in using new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning to create targeted content. This practice results in normalizing target content for children. Eventually, this could be very normal and accepted. In contrast, it is a fundamental right to know how their data has been processed and why a specific content was suggested to them.

Therefore, it will be more challenging across the years to have this deep understanding of digital privacy rights across younger generations if not appropriately addressed. Both regulators and educators have a significant role in bringing innovative initiatives based on a psychological understanding of children's personalities, aspirations, and culture.

For example:

- Target content should be banned from children's accounts or based on explicit consent from parents.
- Embedding digital privacy rights into the children's education system
- Initiating privacy awareness campaigns that nurture the culture of privacy-literate generation.
- Empowering privacy regulators to have more investigations and audits on social media platform practices and enforce transparency on analytical personal data processing.

Children and their privacy over social media platforms can stimulate the industry and regulators to rethink the issue of protecting children's privacy online.



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