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From Likes to Leaks: Understanding Teenagers' Privacy Risks in the Digital Age

Nitin Soni, Ph. D. Research Scholar, Engineering College Bikaner, Bikaner

Abstract

The rapid expansion of social media, mobile applications, online gaming, and digital communication platforms has transformed the way teenagers interact, communicate, and express themselves. While these technologies provide opportunities for social connection, learning, entertainment, and self-expression, they also expose young users to significant privacy and security risks. Teenagers frequently share personal information, photographs, locations, preferences, and daily activities online, often without fully understanding how such data can be collected, analyzed, stored, and misused. The increasing use of personalized algorithms, targeted advertising, third-party applications, and data-tracking technologies further complicates the protection of adolescents' digital privacy. In addition, risks such as identity theft, cyberbullying, online harassment, phishing, unauthorized data sharing, account hacking, and social engineering can have serious personal and psychological consequences. This paper examines the major privacy risks faced by teenagers in the digital age and explores the behavioral, technological, and social factors that contribute to these vulnerabilities. It emphasizes the importance of digital literacy, responsible online behavior, strong privacy settings, parental and educational guidance, and effective data-protection policies. The study also highlights the need for collaboration among families, schools, technology companies, and policymakers to create safer digital environments for young users. Developing privacy awareness and critical digital skills among teenagers is essential for enabling them to participate confidently and responsibly in an increasingly connected society.

Keywords: Teenagers, Digital Privacy, Social Media, Data Protection, Cybersecurity, Online Safety, Digital Literacy, Cyberbullying, Personal Data.

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