Empirical Study of Cyber Harassment among Social Networks


ABSTRACT

The growth of Online Social Networking sites has brought new services and communication methods to consumers. However, along with benefits, serious problems such as online cyber harassment have recently come to the forefront of the electronic media. This behavior can have significant negative effect on individuals, businesses and the social networks. Some sites have begun to provide some levels of protection and create specific anti-harassment policies in their terms of service along with implementing protection technologies. However, these protective measures are not consistent among social media, leaving some consumers at greater risk. This study analyzed 60 worldwide social sites and determined the level of cyber-harassment protection. It reviewed statistical differences among geographical-based social networks. The results showed significant gaps among various social networks, but suggests methods for improving consumer safeguards to provide consistent levels of protection.

Keywords: Cyber Bullying, Cyber Harassment, Internet Abuse, Online Safety, Online Social Networks, Protection

INTRODUCTION

The rise of Online Social Networking (OSN) sites has brought a multitude of new services and abilities to establish relationships with a wide community of like-minded people throughout the world. Communication channels and tools on OSNs includes blogs, email, wikis and other methods consumers use to communicate on a global basis. However, benefits are countered by online harassment and bullying problems, and reports of victimization have been increasing each year. Gleicher (2008) claims new technology has made harassment more possible and powerful online and empowered bullies an anonymous method of reaching an ever-growing global audience.

Increasing online victimization has led organizations to create mitigation measures. Some national and local governmental entities have proposed and enacted levels of legal protection, although this has been a slow process. In response to negative publicity, some OSNs have enhanced their sites to provide greater safeguards among their users. Industry watch groups and businesses have also proposed methods and procedures that consumers and firms can use to mitigate harassment.
According to Geach and Haralambous (2009), cyber-harassment and online bullying are broad terms encompassing a range of activities. These include sending abusive, threatening or obscene emails through mediums such as OSN sites; stalking users on sites, impersonating another person online by creating a fake profile; or spamming a specific user repeatedly. Feinberg and Robey (2009) further add to this definition by including online activities such as stalking, threats, harassment, impersonation, humiliation, trickery and exclusion.

**Government and Industry Protection**

One cyber-harassment legal issue is how the consumers can determine the legal jurisdiction of their OSN service. Users may find themselves in a difficult situation where they are located in one country, but may find that their use of a specific OSN located in another geographical area may leave them vulnerable to weaker laws compared to OSNs based in the consumer’s own country.

Some countries have taken a stronger view on anti-harassment and have enacted robust frameworks for abuse protection. In 2003, Greece established an independent agency, SafeLine, to provide a safe online surfing environment (Christodoulaki & Fragopoulou, 2010). This organization is in direct collaboration with the Greek police in forwarding reports of online harassment, abuse and illegal content. A user who believes they have encountered illegal online content or harassment can report directly to SafeLine through a variety of methods (online, telephone or email), and SafeLine will review the report and forward it to the police if appropriate.

The U.S. has no overall cyber harassment law, but other non-harassment laws may be applied to online victimization in certain circumstances. The Communications Decency Act of 1996 prohibits ‘indecent’ or ‘patently offensive’ materials on public forums (Bartow, 2009). However, the problem is that under
11 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the product's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/article/empirical-study-cyber-harassment-among/77920?camid=4v1

Recommend this product to your librarian:
www.igi-global.com/e-resources/library-recommendation/?id=2

Related Content

Socio-Technical SIEM (ST-SIEM): Towards Bridging the Gap in Security Incident Response
www.igi-global.com/article/socio-technical-siem-st-siem/193639?camid=4v1a

Measuring Emotional Intelligence of University Students: A Comparison between China and Bahrain
www.igi-global.com/article/measuring-emotional-intelligence-of-university-students/114984?camid=4v1a
Life-Long Collections: Motivations and the Implications for Lifelogging with Mobile Devices
[www.igi-global.com/article/life-long-collections/107988?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/life-long-collections/107988?camid=4v1a)

Socioeconomic Reforms, Human Development, and the Millennium Development Goals with ICTs for Coordination
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/socioeconomic-reforms-human-development-millennium/74591?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/socioeconomic-reforms-human-development-millennium/74591?camid=4v1a)