Trust and Other Factors that Drive Students’ Self-Disclosure on Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine the factors that drive students’ self-disclosure on Social Networking Sites (SNSs). A total of 215 undergraduates from two public universities in East Malaysia were recruited as respondents. This study adapts self-disclosure model by Elmi, A.Iahad and Ahmed (2012), where the model proposed trust as one of the factors that complementing other existing factors in online self-disclosure. This study proved that privacy concerns (r = -.212, p < .01), perceived trust (r = .22, p < .01), perceived ease of use (r = .213, p < .01), and perceived enjoyment (r = .28, p < .01) are significantly related to students’ online self-disclosure on SNSs. In addition, as trust plays a vital role in moderating the users’ online self-disclosure behavior, this study formulated students’ trusts on SNSs based on three dimensions which are individual, institutional and online trust. Findings of study suggested that there is a significant difference between online trust based on male and female respondents.

Keywords: Formulation of trust, online self-disclosure, privacy concern, perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment, perceived trust

INTRODUCTION

Many young adults in the digital era nurture their relationships with others simultaneously by virtual and face-to-face interaction. In a virtual way, young adults use Social Networking Sites (SNSs) to communicate, interact and share information with others. SNS usage shows the fastest growing and highest popularity among students in higher learning institutions across the globe (Sampasa-Kanyinga & Lewis, 2015). Students are accustomed to share personal information such as name, picture, family members, interest, as well as personal opinion, feelings and values. Moreover, they also share everyday activities that record mundane details of daily life via SNSs. The platform allows young adult to reveal information about themselves, as well as seeking others’ information via SNSs although the degree of SNS usage are varied depending on the users. The availability of the online platform is one of the examples of factor that motivate students to reveal personal information.

Self-disclosure is defined as “an interaction between at least two individuals where at least one intends to deliberately divulge something personal to another” (Greene, Derlega, & Mathews, 2006, p. 411). Typically, self-disclosure is a reciprocal action where individuals are more prefer to reveal themselves to those who are more likely to disclose to them. Based on Liu and Brown (2014), participation on SNS enable users to initiate or maintain meaningful social capital bonding with others. Furthermore, the study mentioned the higher level of positive feedback received from friends on SNS predicted a closer bond and it able to enhance students’ level of confidence that there are people whom can count for deeper support.

However, online self-disclosure may bring negative implications to the individual who reveal an information since SNSs is open to wider public, associates and friends. Someone may use the information to backfire the revealer. In addition, in Malaysia, the increase cases of many types of scams that involve money such as love scam is alarming (Kumar, 2018). Therefore, Blanchard, Welbourne and Boughton (2011) stated that the practice of the online disclosure behavior is linked to trust. Trust motivates the continuous engagement of online community to the virtual world (Blanchard et al., 2011). Blanchard et al. (2011) pointed that users may not fully attend to the online world and withhold the disclosure of personal information and experiences to their online friends if there is lacking of trust.