

Mediterranean Issues, Book 2

Katica JURČEVIĆ
Ljiljana KALITERNA LIPOVČAN
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Tihana BABIĆ, Iva VUNARIĆ, Andrej LACKOVIĆ

INFORMATION ETHICS ON SOCIAL NETWORKS: STUDENTS PERSPECTIVE

MODERN SOCIETY AND MODERN VALUES

The development of modern technologies and their availability in our everyday lives have created preconditions for social changes with an outreach even in the world of academia. Social networks, together with classical communication channels, are becoming an important channel of communication themselves. Although the surrounding environment of humans is dramatically changing, questions that are concerned with right and wrong conduct remain relevant. Some of the most problematic areas are concerned with how students see principles of information ethics while networking, and this paper is based on the research of their view. Areas that have been identified as the most problematic areas of information ethics are intellectual freedoms, intellectual property, equal access to information, censorship and privacy.

In today's time freedom is one of the fundamental terms expressing a person's self-realization. But a question posing itself is whether this freedom could be seen as absolute and without limitations. Very often one thinks of freedom as the ability to do what one wants and desires. Therefore, freedom is seen as arbitrary, while setting oneself free means rejecting any form of structure and commitment. In such vision, moral becomes the opposite of freedom (Črpić, Mravunac, Tanjić, 2009). However, as Koprek (2009) states, the modern society suffers from many ailments: excessive consumerism, uncontrolled hedonism, violence, corruption, poverty, every kind of addiction... while an honorary place on this list could be given to a lack of responsibility. We live in the times of uncertainty, fragmented culture, a lack of interest, glorification of pleasures and crises, all of which is a reflection of the disillusion of a myth about unlimited mastery and exploitation of the world in which we live. We ask: who is responsible for all of the above? We are aware that today it is difficult to personalize responsibility, which is becoming more and more vague in both its definition and its content... So what is responsibility? If we take into account that it is derived from the Latin word "respondere" (*respond* in English), additional questions emerge: who has to offer a response, to whom and for what? There is no freedom without necessity and the necessity of freedom is morality (Coreth, 1998). Otherwise, in the absence of necessity and morality, we are condemned to the wrong use or a lack of use of our own freedom and responsibility.

PROBLEMATIC AREAS OF INFORMATION ETHICS

The development of modern technology is advancing so quickly it seems that a reflection on its social and ethical implications cannot keep up, while it is simultaneously the cause of reviewing many social and legislative norms. Information ethics covers broader categories such as ownership, access, privacy, security, community, so consequently one could state that some of the most prominent problematic areas of information ethics are areas of intellectual freedoms, equal access to information, censorship, privacy, intellectual property.

Non-material intellectual property, as defined by the State Intellectual Property Office (2018), which refers to the products of the human mind, has a value in copying, use and presentation to other people, and it is not purposeful, and sometimes not even possible, to protect it by hiding it, containing it or applying to it any other measure of physical protection. Because of its social value, a creative or artistic realization of an idea as the fruit of human intellect presents under certain conditions intellectual property of its creator. Intellectual property, although intangible in the physical sense, has all the property characteristics and in accordance with this it can be bought, sold, licensed, swapped, given or inherited like any other property. In the business sense it represents non-material property which is the foundation or the contribution to successful business operations. In order to protect this kind of property and in this way support human creativity, which contributes to the general development of society, a suitable system of legal protection of intellectual property has been developed, and it covers a number of instruments with which the way of acquiring and protecting intellectual property from unauthorized use is governed. In accordance with this, unauthorized use or copying of intellectual property objects presents an infringement of the owner's right, which is to manage, use and benefit from such property, and which is protected by instruments and institutions of the legal system (State Intellectual Property Office, 2018).

SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social networks sites (SNS) are used by hundreds of millions people today. For example, the number of active users of Facebook as the most widely used social network in the world was over one billion in 2012, while in 2018 the number of active users has grown to 2,27 billion (Statista 2018), making it the first social network to acquire such a large number of users. Facebook enables its users to select friends, use a wide range of tools such as posting infinite numbers of photos, searching through e-mail contact lists, determining availability of their private data, content and posts, communicating via private messages, by posting on feeds of other users or by means of chat, but very often Facebook is criticized for its privacy issues, for the issues of censorship, and because the information users reveal about themselves are used for market research and for other purposes as well, and these are unknown to the public. Therefore, the re-

search described in this paper was conducted using Facebook as the most popular social network. The focus is on two dominant principles which are present when Facebook is used: intellectual freedom in the context of free expression of opinions, attitudes and values, as well as intellectual properties in the context of citing.

GOALS AND METHODS

The research conducted among the Algebra University College students concerns the ethical approach of information usage on social networks, meaning an examination of opinions on intellectual freedoms in the context of free expression of opinions, attitudes and values, as well as intellectual properties in the context of citing, while, for example, posting a Facebook status.

The general research objective was to determine whether the Algebra University College students who use social networks do so in an ethical way regarding production, collection, dissemination and information usage on social networks. The specific objective was to examine whether the students considered relevant to respect intellectual freedom and intellectual property rights.

The research was conducted on 73 members of the Algebra University College student population in June and July of 2016 through a voluntary survey. The survey was anonymous and it consisted of 12 questions where the students had to decide on the level of agreement or importance for specific answers. The data was processed using the quantitative statistical analysis of isolating previously specified variables in order to obtain the description of the conditions. The structure of surveyed students is presented according to the study program, gender, and student status. Majority of the surveyed students were male and full-time students. Of the total number of students in the survey, 36 studied Applied Computing, 27 were students of Digital Marketing and 10 studied Multimedia Computing. According to the Gender Structure criteria, 88% of surveyed students were male and 22% female. According to the Student Status criteria, full-time students represented 87% and part-time students 23% of the total number of surveyed students.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Rules of conduct on social networks

One of the questions the students were asked was: *Are you familiar with rules of conduct on social networks (Facebook for instance)?* From the Chart 1, it is obvious that 43% of the survey respondents were familiar with the rules of conduct, while 8% of them were not familiar with them at all.

On the other hand, when answering the question: *Do you read the community regulations i.e. rules of conduct on social networks while creating your profile?*, 38% of the respondents state they mostly do not read the rules of conduct while 29% of them do not read the rules of conduct on social networks at all (Chart 2).

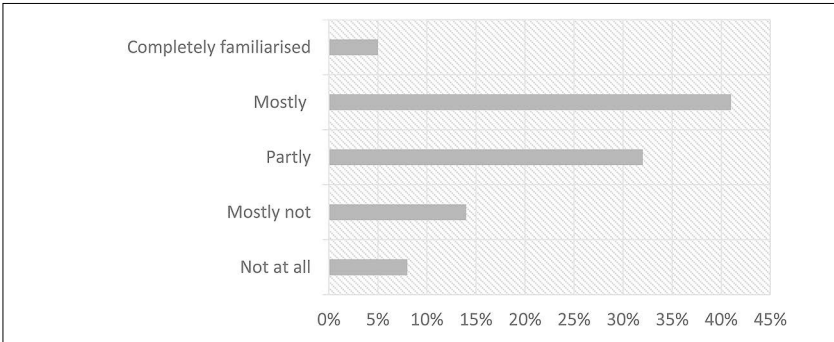


Chart 1 Distribution of the answer to the question:
*Are you familiar with rules of conduct on social networks
(Facebook for instance)?*

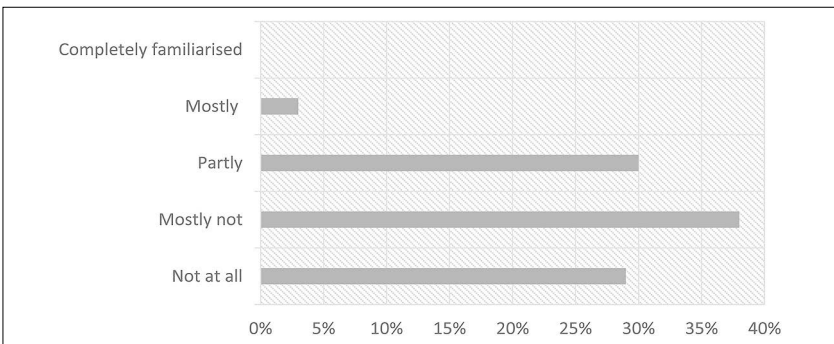


Chart 2 Distribution of the answers to the question:
*Do you read the community regulations i.e. rules of conduct
on social networks while creating your profile?*

What could be concluded from the students' answers to these two questions is that the respondents either think they are familiar with the rules of conduct on social networks or they are getting their information from other sources, but not from the rules of conduct, while creating their profiles.

Intellectual freedom on social networks

The students' answers to the question: *Do you consider intellectual freedom important, that is, do you believe every person has the right to say, think, learn and write about what they want?*, produced results which were not a big surprise. Those who believe that the right of every person to say, think, learn and write what they want, is either mostly important or very important, represent 81% of the total number of students in the survey as is shown on Chart 3.

However, when the following question was asked: *Do you consider intellectual freedom important, that is, do you believe every person has the right to say, think, learn and write what they want even when it affects the rights of other people?*, the

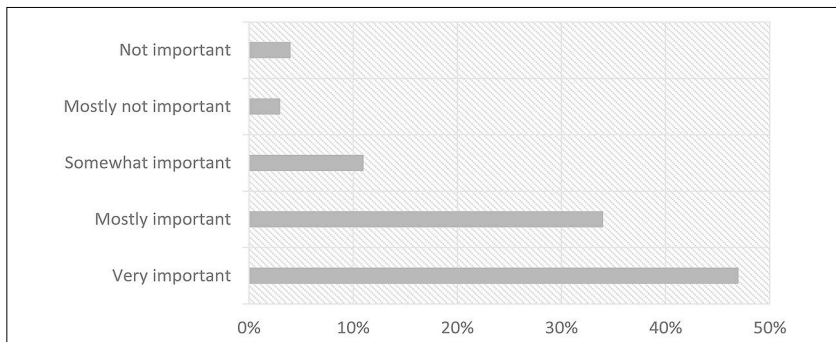


Chart 3 Distribution of the answers to the question: *Do you consider intellectual freedom important, that is, do you believe every person has the right to say, think, learn and write what they want?*

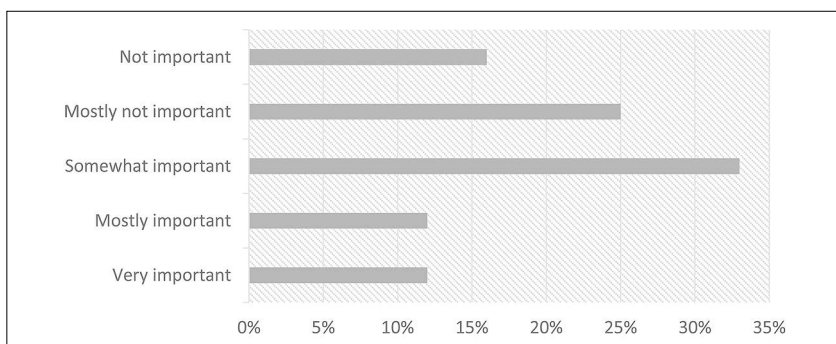


Chart 4 Distribution of the answers to the question: *Do you consider intellectual freedom important, that is, do you believe every person has the right to say, think, learn and write about what they want even when it affects the rights of other people?*

students' opinions were divided. Therefore, only 13% of students think that respecting intellectual freedom is very important and most of them are not sure whether respecting intellectual freedom is the right thing to do, or when it affects the rights of others, Chart 4.

The rules of citation on social networks

Regarding the rules of citation, 53% of students think that it is very important to follow citation rules if the information is used in the context of their study program and these results were not a big surprise. Distribution of the answer to the question: *Do you think it is important to follow citation rules (citing the right author, publisher and the year of publishing) while collecting and publishing information related to the study program?* is shown on Chart 5.

However, only 22% of them think it is very important to follow citation rules while publishing information on social networks, Chart 6. Through an analysis of the responses to the question: *Do you think it is important to follow citation rules (stating the right*

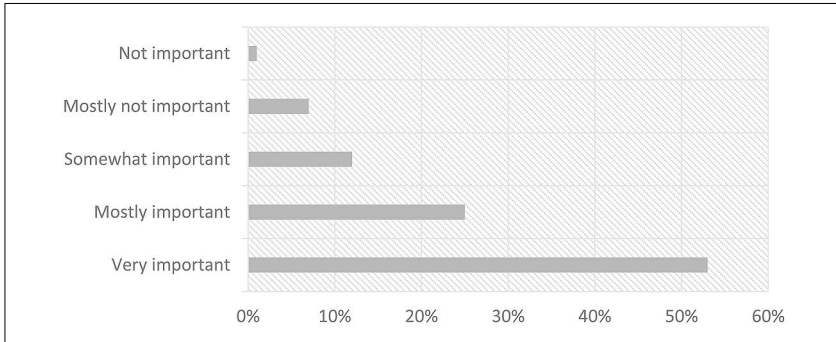


Chart 5 Distribution of the answers to the question: *Do you think it is important to follow citation rules (citing the right author, publisher and the year of publishing) while collecting and publishing information related to the study programme?*

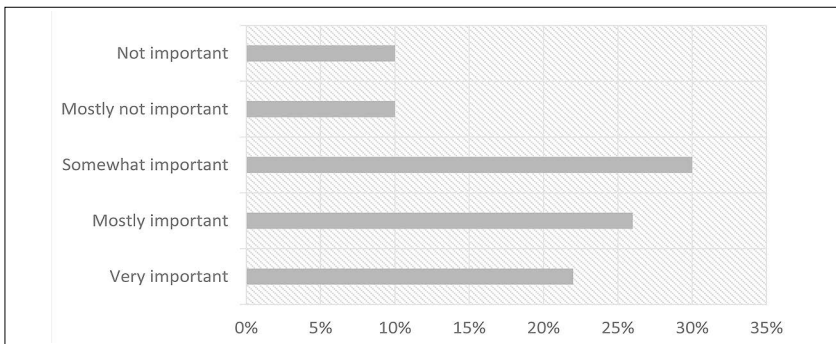


Chart 6 Distribution of the answers to the question: *Do you think it is important to follow citation rules (stating the right author, publisher and the year of publishing) while collecting and publishing information on social networks?*

author, publisher and the year of publishing) while collecting and publishing information on social networks?, a significant discrepancy is seen in relation to the previous answer when it comes to the question of citation of information related to the study program, where 53% of the respondents thought it was very important.

CONCLUSION

The results of the research did not show a discrepancy in relation to the study program, gender and the status of the students. However, a discrepancy was seen in the answers given to the selected questions. The students' answers regarding the rules of conduct on social networks did not correspond to the answers which showed that more than half of them did not read the rules of conduct while creating a social network profile.

Also, thanks to the research, it can be seen that almost half of the students considered the right of every person to say, think and write whatever they want very important. However, only one fifth of students believed they had this right even if it meant affecting the rights of other people.

In addition, more than half of the students considered very important to follow citation rules during collection and publishing of the information related to the study program, while every fifth student considered it irrelevant if the information was related to social networks. The inconsistency and the discrepancies in the students' answers confirm the need to educate students in a way of increasing the responsibility while using and sharing information on Facebook. It also sheds light on the possibilities of further research.

Considering that, the objective of further research can be to verify whether the students truly know the rules of conduct on social networks and to examine why they consider following citation rules on social networks less important. In addition, it would also be advisable to conduct a research on other aspects of information ethics, such as equal access to information, censorship and privacy, as well as to determine whether there is a difference between what the students consider right and how they actually behave.

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