

The issue of using personal information posted in social networks by third parties in the context of social security

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Abstract. The article contains a qualitative analysis of data from the All-Russian VCIOM survey on the use of personal information posted in social networks by third parties. Opinions of the Russians about the facts of use, goals, potential threats, and measures regulating this activity are analyzed in the paper. The research results clearly demonstrate the need for monitoring studies on this issue. Also, the authors focus on the need to create educational policies aimed at informing about the true aspects of using personal information posted in social networks by third parties.

Keywords: social networks, third parties, personal information, social security

1. Introduction

The issue of social security is widely covered in the research conducted by the representatives of various fields of scientific knowledge [1, 2, 3]. Sociologists, economists, lawyers, and others are engaged in the development of theoretical and methodological foundations of the study focused on this social phenomenon [4, 5, 6]. Ensuring social security is a key area of management at all levels of government [7, 8, 9]. One of the tasks of the scientific community is to comprehensively analyze the opinions and assessments of the population regarding the multidimensional problems of social security [10, 11].

Social security is a complex multi-level system, which is provided both at the national level and at the level of individual citizens [12, 13, 14]. The focus of this work is the “individual” aspect of social security, which is related to the use of personal information posted in social networks by third parties. The specificity of the modern information society determines the desire of individuals to publicity [15, 16, 17, 18]. At the same time, such publicity can be viewed as a challenge related to the security of personal information placed in social networks [19, 20].

2. Materials and Methods

The focus of the presented sociological research is how much the population thinks about the proliferation of cases of incorrect use of personal data, which may adversely affect the image and life activity of an individual. The research task was to characterize the population’s assessments regarding the problem of using personal information placed in social networks by third parties. To solve the problem, a number of questions were asked to the respondents. The questions were aimed at measuring the following indicators: facts about using information posted in social networks by third parties; the nature of the attitude to such use; opinions about the potential threat of using information

posted in social networks by third parties; respondents' opinion on the possible purposes of using information posted in social networks by third parties; assessing the effectiveness of measures that allows users of social networks to allow or prohibit third parties to use their personal information.

In September 2018, the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center carried out a survey using a telephone formalized interview. The stratified two-base random sampling is based on the list of landline and mobile phone numbers in the territory of the Russian Federation (the size of the error with a probability of 95% does not exceed 2.5%) [21].

3. Results

To evaluate the first indicator, respondents were asked the question "Do you think the information you post in social networks is used by third parties?". More than half of the respondents (55%) believe that their personal information placed in social networks is used to some extent by third parties. Moreover, the respondents' opinion on this issue is determined by the level of education and the frequency of using the Internet. The more educated and often using Internet informants tend to believe that information posted in social networks is used by third parties (see Figure 1).

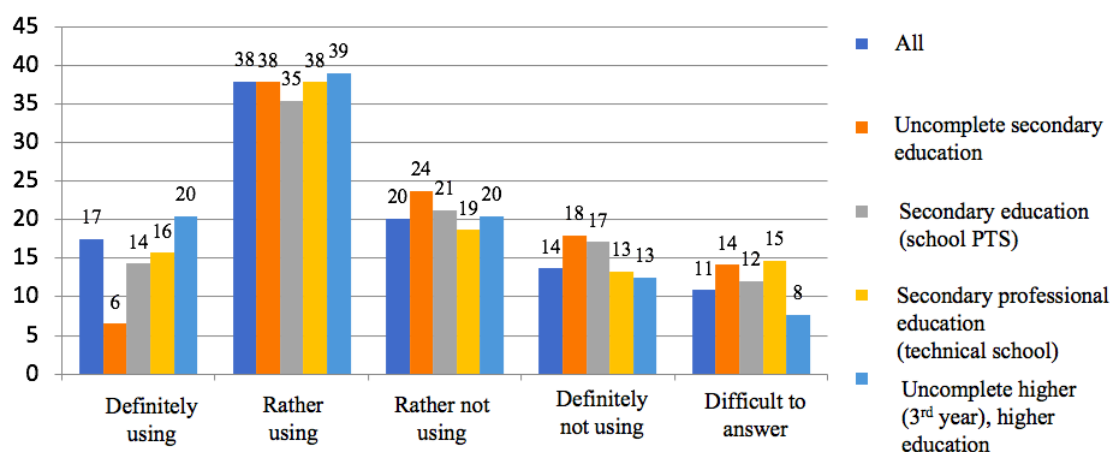


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question "Do you think the information you post in social networks is used by third parties?" depending on the level of education (%).

Of those who believe that information posted in social networks is used by third parties, 56% believe that negatively relate to this fact, only 7% of respondents express positive feeling. At the same time, the percentage of indifferent is very high (36%). It can be seen in the data in Table 1: women more negatively assess the use of information by third parties; the higher level of education of the respondent indicates a more indifferent attitude to the problem.

The frequency of using the Internet is not the main factor determining the nature of the respondents' attitude to the use of information posted on social networks by third parties. At the same time, among occasional users, the percentage of negative ratings (75%) is higher than in other groups (59% throughout the whole array). Perhaps their negative attitude to the use of information posted on social networks by third parties is a kind of limiting grounds for a wider use of Internet resources.

Analysis of the answers to the question "Do you think that the use of information about you by third parties may pose any threats to you, your family or not?" showed that 52% of the respondents indicate the absence of a real threat to themselves and their family. More than that, 43% feel the danger. The distribution of answers is almost identical in the groups of respondents differing by age, gender, and level of education. Considering other socio-economic parameters, there is also no sharp variation in the respondents' answers, which is a basis for assuming the influence of other factors on the opinion of the population (for example, psychological characteristics and personal experience of citizens).

Table 1. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question “How do you think the information you post in social networks is used by third parties or not?” depending on gender and education (%).

Options	Whole array	Gender		Education			
		Male	Female	Incomplete secondary education	Secondary education	Secondary special education	Incomplete higher education, higher education
Definitely used	17	20	15	6	14	16	20
Rather used	38	37	39	38	35	38	39
Rather not used	20	18	22	24	21	19	20
Definitely not used	14	14	13	18	17	13	13
Difficult to answer	11	11	11	14	12	15	8

Opinions of respondents about the possible purpose of using information posted in social networks, by third parties was measured with an open question. A significant part of the respondents (47%) found it difficult to name the possible goals of using information, which entails the formulation of the hypothesis of insufficient awareness of the population in this area. The proportion of those who found it difficult to answer the question raised increases with the age of respondents (the percentage of those who find it difficult to answer is 18-24 years old – 36%, 35-59 years old – 53%). This may indirectly indicate a greater involvement of young people in the problem under study.

If we analyze the substantive side of the answers of informants, then 29% of the respondents speak about the purpose of using information in a negative way, for example: “for the purposes of fraud / extortion of money”; “to get a loan / write off money from accounts”; “for criminal purposes / blackmail / scam.” Also, the answers offered by the respondents can be divided into four vectors: (1) illegal receipt of material benefits; (2) commercial activities; (3) monitoring and optimization of the social system; (4) personal goals.

At the same time, a high percentage does not speak about the indifferent attitude of the population towards the subject under research. The majority of respondents (59%) would like to know the true purpose in the use of personal information by third parties. Survey data indicate a higher proportion of curious women (62%) than men (56%). Also, the factor of involvement in the Internet determines the degree of interest in information about the true goals of third parties: the more often the respondent uses the Internet, the more he shows interest. Among active Internet users, 61% of respondents are interested in the true goals of using their personal information. Among occasional users, this figure is 39%.

Speaking about the respondents' evaluations of the effectiveness of a measure that permits users of social networks to allow or prohibit third parties to use their personal information, we should note the negative nature of these assessments. Thus, 77% of respondents consider this measure to be insufficiently effective to ensure the security of users' personal data. These results indicate the need to improve the policy on the protection of personal data on the Internet.

4. Discussion

The results of the study suggest that the agenda of the scientific community should take into account the following issues related to the need for development and implementation: (1) monitoring studies on this issue using quantitative and qualitative methods; (2) the educational policy of citizens, aimed at informing about the true positive and negative aspects of the use of personal information posted on social networks by third parties.

5. Conclusion

The following points are presented as the main conclusions.

First, the attitude towards the studied issues is determined by the education of the respondents and how frequently they use Internet resources. Active Internet users are in need of additional information about the true purposes of using their personal information posted on social networks by third parties.

Second, half of respondents who are confident in the use of their personal information by third parties, point out to the negative consequences of such use. Thus, informants feel a threat to the security of themselves and their families, as well as a number of other negative aspects.

Third, when clarifying the main goals of using information posted in social networks by third parties, respondents do not see the positive aspects of such use and point out only to negative sides. Although, a number of advantages of such use, which were indicated by a small part of the respondents, are obvious.

Fourth, on the basis of the data obtained, we can formulate recommendations related to the need for public education and additional research. The problem of low awareness of citizens in the use of personal information placed in social networks by third parties exists, and our research clearly points out to this. Although, the survey results record the need for such information. In the mass consciousness, the bias towards negative attitudes towards the facts of using personal information by third parties is fixed. The potential use of information for the benefit of society and individuals is not emphasized. It is important for us to convey to the Internet users the true positive and negative aspects of using their personal information posted in social networks by third parties.

6. Acknowledgments

The secondary analysis presented in the article is based on the materials of the VTSIOM publicly available (<https://wciom.ru/research/sputnik/>).

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