A Study on Implementation of Privacy Policy in Educational Sector Websites in Saudi Arabia

By Dr. Sami Alhomod & Mohd Mudasir Shafi

King Saud University

Abstract - In the past few year's privacy over websites have received significant amount of attention all around the world. Privacy policy in websites describes the collection of information and its use by the website. Users consult websites privacy policy to know what information is collected by the website and how this information can be used by the website. This paper is concerned with the implementation of privacy policy in the educational sector of Saudi Arabia. In the course this study, we looked at the privacy of all the educational sector websites in Saudi Arabia. The results of this study provide an insight about the application of privacy policy in Saudi Arabia. This study can help to inform governing bodies, Administration and IT managers of educational institutions about their application of privacy policy in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords : *websites, privacy policy, data privacy, web privacy, universities, educational collages, data privacy laws, internet laws, platform for privacy preferences project(P3P), Saudi Arabia.*

GJCST-E Classification : *D.4.6*

A STUDY ON IMPLEMENTATION OF PRIVACY POLICY IN EDUCATIONAL SECTOR WEBSITES IN SAUDI ARABIA

Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:

A Study on Implementation of Privacy Policy in Educational Sector Websites in Saudi Arabia

Dr. Sami Alhomod [α] & Mohd Mudasir Shafi [σ]

Abstract - In the past few year's privacy over websites have received significant amount of attention all around the world. Privacy policy in websites describes the collection of information and its use by the website. Users consult websites privacy policy to know what information is collected by the website and how this information can be used by the website. This paper is concerned with the implementation of privacy policy in the educational sector of Saudi Arabia. In the course this study, we looked at the privacy of all the educational sector websites in Saudi Arabia. The results of this study provide an insight about the application of privacy policy in Saudi Arabia. This study can help to inform governing bodies, Administration and IT managers of educational institutions about their application of privacy policy in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords : *websites, privacy policy, data privacy, web privacy, universities, educational collages, data privacy laws, internet laws, platform for privacy preferences project(P3P), Saudi Arabia.*

I. Introduction

Privacy is one of the most important issue concerning websites over the internet these days. Every website tries to implement an understandable privacy policy. Providing links to privacy policy is absolute necessary today because a lot of people try to disclose personal information over the websites. A privacy policy is a document which defines the rules and regulations governing the user's interaction with websites. There are no standards or requirements for a privacy policy statement but a privacy policy statement must be understandable to the users who visit the website. A privacy policy must also define the information it collects from user. If the privacy policy takes information from the user it must also define why it needs the information. Most users understand if they provide some information it must not be shared with anyone else without their consent. According to a survey conducted by Graphics, Visualization and Usability center of the Georgia Institute of Technology, 69.95% of the users were concerned about disclosing information to the websites to access the requested information [7]. Organizations that publish privacy policies online are considered trustworthy. A survey conducted by *TRUST* showed that 78% of users will provide information to website if they are provided with some kind of privacy assurance [8]. Thus having a privacy policy statement in a website is a straightforward approach of ensuring privacy in the website which boosts the users confidence on the website and reduces the chances of receiving false information from the user.

Considering the importance of the private information over the internet, we conducted a study on implementation of privacy policy in the Educational sector websites in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The aim of the study was to check how concerned are the educational sector organizations in Saudi Arabia regarding the use of information and the implementation of the privacy policy. The data privacy in Saudi Arabia is governed by "The Internet laws" passed in 2001. The "Internet laws" define the rules for publishing of data and ensuring privacy over the internet [9].

The Paper is organized as follows. First, we will describe the background to the study. Next, we will discuss the approach undertaken in the research. Further we will provide the results of the study. Finally, in the last section we will provide our conclusion to the study.

II. Background of the Study

The Information practices of any website are described by its privacy policy. The privacy policy of any website must be easily accessible and understandable [4].The presence of privacy policy page describing how organizations handle data can have a broad impact on how websites are used. From the organizations point of view, the way in which it will conduct business will depend upon the way it handles the privacy issues [11].

Implementing privacy policies is absolutely necessary in today's electronic world. There are a number of nations which are creating their own privacy laws. Saudi Arabia has its own data privacy law passed in 2001 called as "The Internet law"[9]. There are also international laws which are enforcing privacy in websites. The most obvious reason of implementing privacy policy is that it keeps the organization out of trouble and keeps them away from the claws of the domestic and foreign data privacy laws. In United States and some other nations the disclosure of the private information of the user may result in sanctions and fines of up to $1 million [12, 13].

There are some other privacy enforcing alternatives like cookie buster, website filters and popup killers. These methods can only protect some aspects of web privacy. These mechanisms are based on user preferences and may vary in different websites [5]. Some more solutions for enforcing privacy are Platform for Privacy Preferences Project (P3P) and various privacy seal programs. The P3P is a framework

23

established by The World Wide Web Consortium. The presence of P3P allows users to configure their browser to implement web privacy policy [4, 5]. There are also some companies like TRUSTe, BBBOnline and WebTrust that provide privacy seal to the websites [4,8]. The presence of TRUSTe seal ensures that TRUSTe has reviewed the privacy policy for the disclosure of user information[4, 10]. BBB Online also ensures privacy in the same way [4, 14].

Information is continuously collected by websites from users. Previous studies [15, 17] have shown that privacy concerns on websites are seriously taken by the users. The conclusions drawn by the studies can have very serious consequences. The main privacy concerns and the regulation of the internet are the areas that need to be thoroughly researched [16]. Our study is concerned with privacy policy implementation in educational sector websites in Saudi Arabia. The aim of the study is to measure the status of privacy policy implementation in educational sector websites in Saudi Arabia.

III. Research Methodology

a) Selecting E government Websites

In this step all the websites concerning the Saudi Arabian government and services were selected and a list was created. There were a total of 54 E government websites in Saudi Arabia.

b) Content Analysis

This step was concerned with the presence of privacy page in the website. The presence of the privacy page asked for the content analysis of the privacy statement to be done. Content analysis is a research tool to derive valid inferences and concepts from the text [12]. The privacy statement of each website was studied line by line to understand the level of privacy implemented by the websites. The evaluation of the privacy statement was done on the basis of the United States Federal Trade Commission's Fair Information Practice Principles (FIPs). The Fair Information Practice Principles (FIPs) are widely accepted guidelines for ensuring fair practices and is based on following core principles[2,13]:
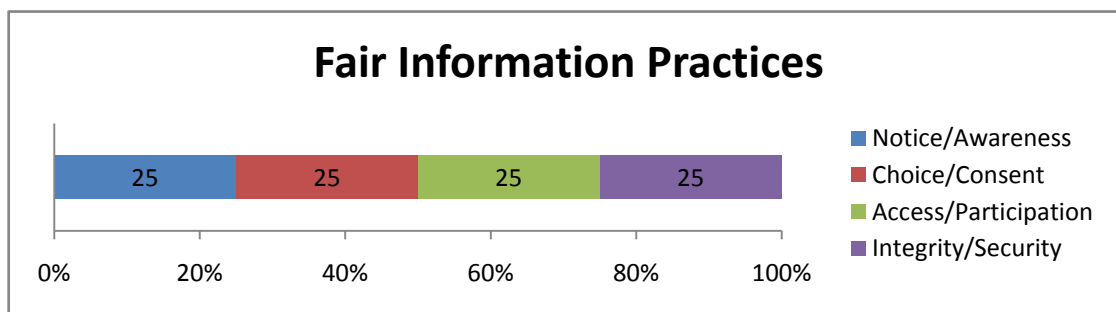
i. *Notice/Awareness:* It should be clearly stated to the user what information is collected from him and how this information is used [2, 13, and 14].

ii. *Choice/Consent:* Users should be clearly informed about the disclosure of the information by the website [2, 13, and 14].

iii. *Access/Participation:* Users must be able to access the information provided to the website [2, 13, and 14].

iv. *Integrity/Security:* Websites should prevent any unauthorised access to the user data. Websites must also ensure that data remains accurate all the time [2, 13, 14].

c) Classification

The last part of our research methodology was classifying the websites. Once the websites were checked for presence of privacy policy, each website was classified as:

i. *Privacy policy Present:* A link to a separate page stating the privacy policy of website is present i.e. privacy policy is present.

ii. *Privacy Policy Not Present:* No page or link dedicated to privacy policy of website present i.e. privacy policy not Present.

The second part of the study was to check whether the privacy policy comply to the Fair information practice principles of Notice/Awareness, choice/Consent, Access/Participation and Integrity/Security.

Fair Information Practices

25	25	25	25

- ■ Notice/Awareness
- ■ Choice/Consent
- ■ Access/Participation
- ■ Integrity/Security

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

The FIP principles were given an equal weight age and on the basis of the presence of these principles the websites privacy policy was rated as:

1) **Strong:** The privacy policy of website complying with any three FIP principles was classified as Strong.
2) **Weak:** The privacy policy of website complying with two or less than two of the four FIP principles was classified as Weak.
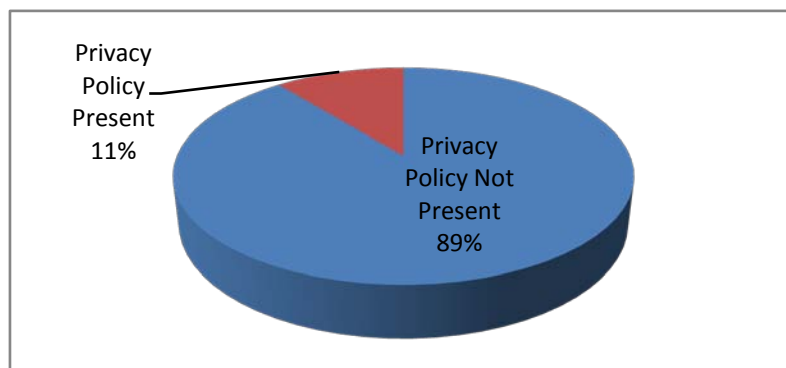
IV. Results

The results of our study were quite shocking considering the amount of attention that is given to data privacy these days. It was found that only 11% of the total educational sector websites in Saudi Arabia have some sort of privacy policy implemented. The rest of 89% of websites don't have any privacy policy implemented.

Privacy policy in overall Educational Sector

The private universities seemed to be more concerned about the implementation of privacy policy in Saudi Arabia. Out of the total 11% of the websites where privacy policy was present, 80% of this data belonged Private universities while as 20% of the privacy policy belonged to government universities. The higher education collages seemed to be less concerned about the privacy policy with 0% of websites having privacy policy implemented. None of the higher education collage websites have privacy policy implemented.
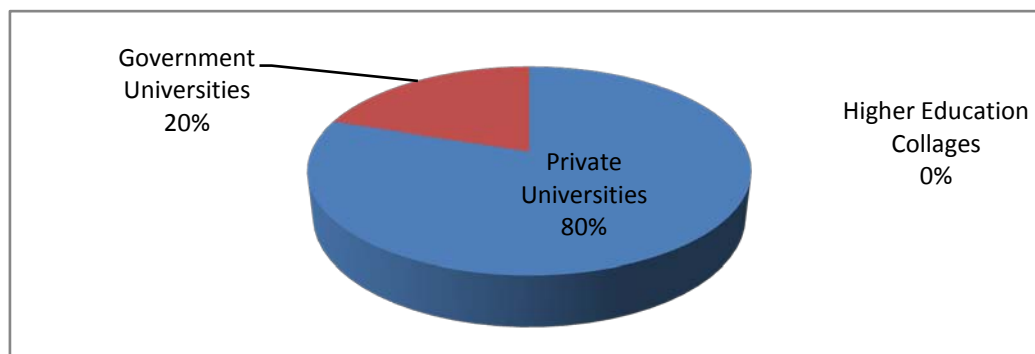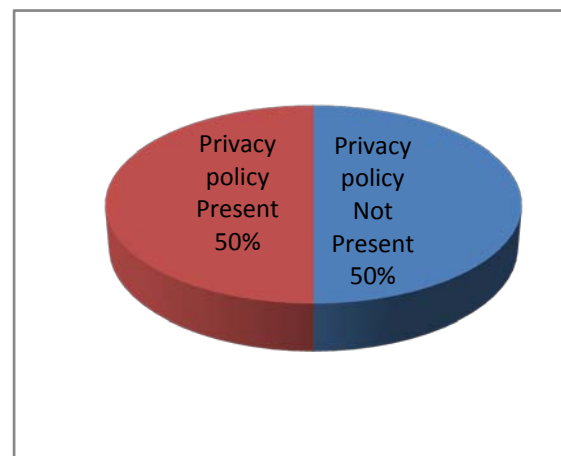

Percentage of total privacy policy implemented

Another interesting observation was that, Out of the 19 government universities in Saudi Arabia only 5% of the university websites have privacy policy present while as the ratio is slightly better with private universities with 50% of the websites having privacy policy present.

This observation shows that private universities are 10 times more concerned about the privacy policy as compared to the government universities in Saudi Arabia.
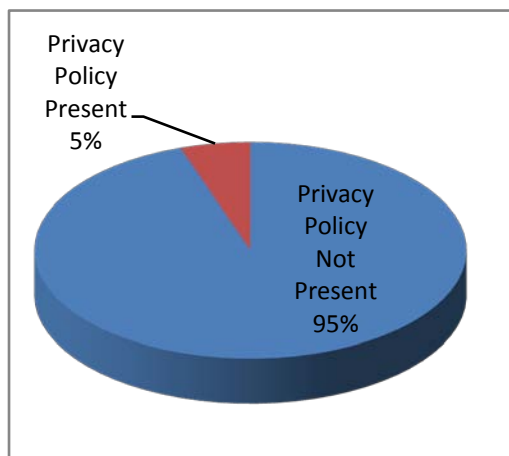

Privacy Policy in Government Universities

Privacy Policy in Private Universities

Another Part of our study was concerned with the status of the privacy policy statement based on the four information practices points discussed under content analysis part of our research. It was found that 60% of the websites where privacy policy was present have a strong privacy policy statement in place while as 40% of the websites have a weak privacy policy statement implemented.
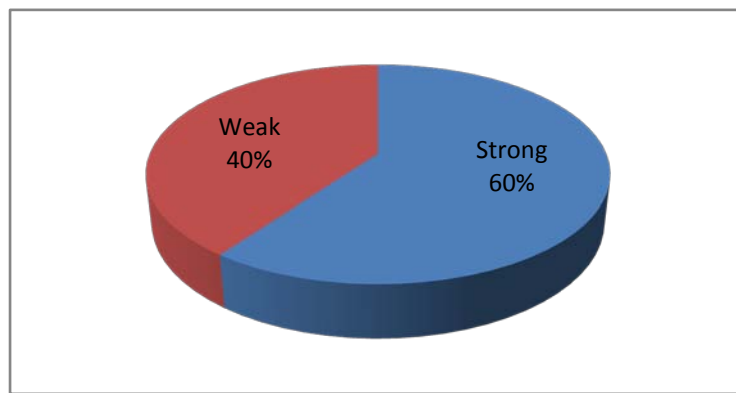
Status of Privacy Statement

There were also a couple of websites where a link to privacy statement was provided but there was nothing in the privacy policy page. The privacy policy page in these websites showed a message of "Page under Establishment" or "Page under Construction". We have categorised these websites as "Privacy Policy Not Present".

V. Conclusion and Future Work

The amount of attention that is given to information privacy and its use is tremendous these days. Keeping this fact in mind we conducted a study on implementation of privacy policy in educational sector of Saudi Arabia. The results of the study were very surprising as well as shocking. A large number of the educational sector websites don't have any privacy policy in place. It was found that a majority of educational sector organisations in Saudi Arabia are not aware about the importance of the privacy policy in websites.

Our study was concerned only to educational sector in Saudi Arabia. Further work can be extended to other fields and sectors in Saudi Arabia. We also recommend a comparative study between Saudi Arabia and some other country in the world.

References Références Referencias

1. Privacy policy infowww. Privacy policy info.com
2. Privacy Policies for Websites http://www. p3pprivacy.com/
3. Annie I. Antón, Julia B. Earp, Angela Reese "Analyzing Website privacy requirements using a privacy goal taxonomy"http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/xpl/ freeabs_all.jsp?arnumber=1048502
4. Pranam Kolari, Li Ding, Shashidhara G, Anupam Joshi, Tim Finin "Enhancing web privacy protection through dericative policies"http://portal.acm.org/citat ion.cfm?id=1069438
5. Julia B. Earp, Annie I. Antón, Lynda Aiman-Smith, and William H. Stuffle beam "Examining Internet Privacy Policies Within the Context of User Privacy Values"www.truststc.org/wise/articles2009/article3.p df
6. Federal Trade Commission Public Workshop on Consumer Information Privacy Consumer Privacy 1997http://smartech.gatech.edu/bitstream/handle/1 853/3535/9715a.pdf;jsessionid=5C931759AA5A161 2D4DE425607C152A1.smart1?sequence=1
7. Privacyhttp://searchdatamanagement.techtarget.co m/definition/privacy
8. Saudi internet rules, 2001http://www.al-bab.com/media/docs/saudi.htm
9. Truste http://www.truste.com/
10. KarelWouters,KoenSimoens,DannyLathouwers,Bart Preneel "Secure and Privacy-Friendly Logging for eGovernment Services"https://www.cosic.esat.kuleu ven.be/publications/article-1006.pdf
11. David Bender "11 Reasons Why Privacy Helps the Bottom Line" http://www.law.com/jsp/lawtechnology news/PubArticleLTN.jsp?id=1202435958805&slretu rn=1&hbxlogin=1
12. ELIZABETH PERKINS AND MIKE MARKEL "Multinational Data-Privacy Laws: An Introduction for IT Managers"http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/xpl/freeabs_a ll.jsp?arnumber=1303806
13. BBBOnlinehttp://www.bbb.org/online/
14. William F. Adkinson, Jr., Jeffrey A. Eisenach, Thomas M. Lenard A "Report on the Information Practices and Policies of Commercial Web Sites"http://www.pff.org/issues-pubs/books/020301 privacyonlinereport.pdf
15. James S. Wilson "THE USE OF SURVEY DATA IN PRIVACY RESEARCH" http://ils.unc.edu/MSpapers /2650.pdf
16. FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION "PRIVACY ONLINE:FAIR INFORMATION PRACTICES IN THE ELECTRONICMARKETPLACE" http://www.ftc.gov/ reports/privacy2000/privacy2000.pdf