

Impacts of Social Media on Privacy

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### Abstract

The main focus of this paper is to assess the impact social media has created for criminal activities due to the increased exposure of people's personal information. Privacy has been growing to become the main concern in every household. As mobile devices become more abundant in homes, the vulnerability of our personal information to hackers and criminals seems to increase exponentially. While conducting my research, I chose to narrow my focus towards the effects social media has on our judicial system and types of cyber crimes such as sex crimes and identity theft. These crimes tended to be the most common and proved to be a repercussion of social media. I also felt that the impact social media made towards our judicial system was very significant. Through the research, I found that cyber crimes have increased over the years as social media has expanded. This is due to the lack of security implemented on these platforms. In addition, this has led to the increased misuse of social media to impact court cases by releasing undisclosed information. These elements show how social platforms can affect the privacy of many individuals. Thus, is why my research is focused to prove that social media has led to the increased amount of sex and identity theft related crimes; at the same time, our judicial system is being corrupted by it as well.

Word Count: 230

## **Introduction**

A thirteen year old girl posts on her Facebook that she is going to the movies. She gives the exact theater and time to try and get all of her friends to come with her. Little does she know that a 45 year old male is stalking her profile and found his chance to strike. With the evolution of technology and social media, privacy is becoming a growing concern for families and children. People are providing personal information such as their locations, birthdays, and other personal information with the intent that their friends or followers will see it. While this is true, it also allows for criminals and hackers to access the released information and use it to their advantage. Recent studies have shown that about 1 in 5 adults are victims of a cyber related crime(Hendricks, 2014). Furthermore, the painless access to thousands of people can pose a threat to court systems around the world. The ease of posting personal information has become increasingly abundant in society and with that comes the illegal exposures within the judicial system. With that being said, social media has led to the increase of sex and identity theft related crimes; in addition to this, our judicial system is being corrupted as well.

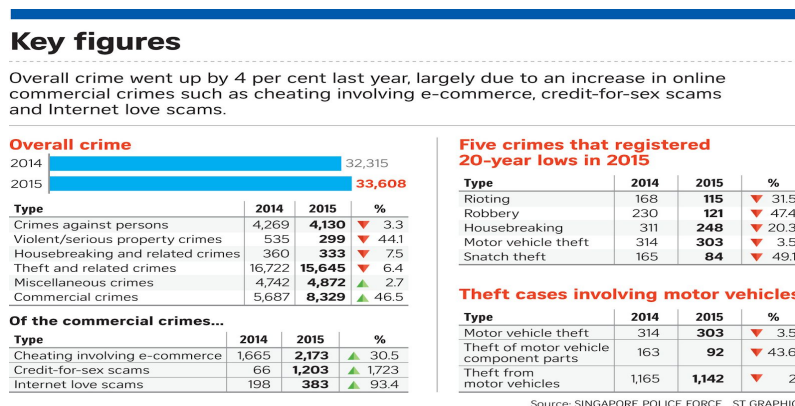
## **Sex Crimes**

One of the most common types of crime associated with the internet and social media is sex related crimes. While crimes such as these seem to only be prevalent in the real world, the internet has made it easier for criminals to concoct these crimes before acting on them. Researchers have found that, "33 percent of all internet initiated sex crimes are orchestrated through social networking sites(Hendricks, 2014, p.1)." This percentage shows just how significant of a factor social media plays in conducting these crimes. Furthermore, the term "sex crimes" doesn't necessarily mean only crimes such as pedophilia and sexual abuse. The phrase pertains to acts of adultery and prostitution scams. While adultery isn't considered a crime in

most states, the act still poses as a misdemeanor in the court system and can lead to prosecution.

To begin with, there are many ways criminals obtain information to commit these heinous acts. One of the main reasons it has become so easy for perpetrators is because of the fact that people are posting personal information carelessly on their social media profiles without realizing the potential consequences. According to Cohen, “They often disclose sensitive information like their real age, pictures, the city they live in or the school they attend...(2016, p.1)” This information allows criminals to narrow their search down to the targeted age group and allows them to, in a sense, choose their next victim. This method is so successful that perpetrators use this over 50 percent of the time when targeting victims(Cohen, 2016).

With regards to the adultery crimes, there are many websites and social media platforms that essentially promote these actions such as ashleymadison.com and Tinder. In fact, ashleymadison.com is a site specifically for married people to have affairs with other married people. While Tinder’s main objective wasn’t to promote adultery, many users have abused the



platform for this specific use.

The chart above depicts the increase in adultery over the course of just one year due to social media. The fact that this information is 2 years old makes it very frightening to believe the increase percentage this year due to the advancements and developments of new adultery social networking based platforms.

### **Identity Theft**

Another common type of crime committed through social media is identity theft or fraud. This act is especially easy to be committed because of the lack of security most people have. Many victims rely on the platforms to handle the security of their personal information; however, the networking sites can only do so much to protect it. According to Hendricks, only around 66% of Facebook users know about the privacy settings(2014). In fact, the most common way perpetrators obtain information to steal your identity is through simply logging into your email. According to Cohen, "Many identity thieves tend to hack their victims' email accounts by simply using the personal information available on social media profile(2016, p.1)." This shows just how important it is to obscure from posting too much personal information to the public eye. In addition, the complexity of figuring out someone's passwords have become exceptionally easier. According to Cohen, "One of the more common techniques used by identity thieves is clicking on the 'forgot password' and then trying to recover the password via email(2016, p.1)." In the eyes of the platform, the people could just think you forgot your password even though it is not the case. This dilemma further proves the dangers of identity thieves being able to access your email. In essence, a simple post about your dog could create a potential lead for perpetrators to obtain the password for your email and further lead to stealing your identity.

### **Court Systems**

While social media has posed a problem for criminal activities such as the ones stated above, the real threat emerges from the judicial system. The judicial system has become, in a sense, corrupt due to the increased use of social media. Social media is being misused to help with court cases. In many cases, jurors are befriending each other on these networking platforms and discussing the trials openly(Johnston, 2013). In fact, jurors are using social media

to help make their decisions for court cases. For example, “In one case a juror asked her friends on Facebook to help her make up her mind in a trial...(Johnston, 2013, p.1).”

The misuse of social media towards judicial systems extends beyond the people within the courtroom. According to Johnston, many bloggers are taking to the internet and social platforms to spread their opinions on court cases and influence others to believe the same(2013). This is much different than the traditional way of publicizing court cases because it is being published by normal everyday people in a process called citizen journalism. These people give off the idea that they are erudite and have an in depth knowledge of each case, when in reality they just want to influence people a certain way.

### **Conclusion**

Social media plays a large role in the everyday lives of people and society. People are engrossed in the idea of sharing their whereabouts and life with all their friends; however, they are not only sharing it with their friends. Posting personal information puts people at risk for sexual predators, identity thieves, and other nefarious perpetrators. Social media has created a gateway for these criminals to choose their victims and carefully plan out their attacks at ease. With that being said, social media has also posed a threat to the privacy of courtrooms and trials as well. Networking sites have allowed for unsanctioned discussions and misuse of court cases. Social media and the exposure of people’s personal information has caused a great increase in not only criminal activities, but the misconduct of judicial systems around the world.

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