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FACTORS INFLUENCING ONLINE IDENTITY FALSIFICATION AMONG ISRAELI STUDENTS IN THE WAKE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	The research examines the main factors that motivate users to provide falsified details upon website registration and identifies the types of personal details that are most prone to falsification. In addition, the tendency for identity falsification is predicted by examining various factors, such as, sense of online anonymity, privacy concern, and socio-demographic factors. To provide a contemporaneous dimension to the research, those issues are investigated in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic and examine its influence on privacy concerns and the willingness to expose personal details.
Background	Many users choose to deliberately falsify their details during online activities.
Methodology	To assess this claim, a user study was carried out among 245 students of the Israeli academia, comprising 52.2% men and 47.8% women, with ages ranging from 18 to 60 years. The research applied a quantitative method using online closed-ended questionnaires. The results were analyzed using conventional statistical methods, such as t-tests and ANOVA. To predict the tendency of identity falsification upon website registration, a logistic regression analysis was performed, taking into account various independent variables: sense of anonymity on websites; sense of exposure to other users online; privacy concern; Internet proficiency; various demographic factors: gender, age, and education.

The full paper has been published as the following and is being presented at this conference:

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Factors Influencing Online Identity Falsification

Findings	The research findings suggest that privacy-related issues are the most prevalent for identity falsification. In addition, logistic regression showed that the higher the privacy concerns rates, the higher the chance for identity falsification.
Recommendations for Practitioners	Website operators and online marketers should adapt the research findings and increase their transparency regarding the use of the information being collected, to increase the trust among users and eliminate privacy concerns. This will help them maintain good customer relations, which may benefit them and the consumers in the long run. In addition, local governments and internet regulators should formulate adequate laws and binding guidelines to force website operators and online marketers to take the necessary steps for reducing privacy concerns among internet consumers.
Impact on Society	The research may bear social implications for website operators and online marketers who, by recognizing the reasons behind identity falsification, may create more balanced personalization mechanisms for their own benefit and the benefit of their consumers.
Future Research	Due to the limitation of the findings, further investigation should apply the proposed methodology to additional population types, in various age groups, cultures, and countries of origin.
Keywords	identity falsification, privacy concern, self-disclosure, online anonymity, trust, COVID-19

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Dr. Maor Weinberger has a PhD in Information Science from Bar-Ilan University (BIU), Israel. His professional interests include online privacy and anonymity, and information security.



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