



**PERCEPTION THE IMPERSONATION ON FACEBOOK
IN THE EGYPTION CONTEXT**

BY

HANY MOHAMED HASSAN MOHAMED EL HOBY

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the degree of Master of Information and Technology**

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ABSTRACT

Social networking sites such as Facebook have mushroomed very rapidly. Anyone with an email address can make an account as long as he accepts the terms and conditions of the website regarding privacy. There are several pages of celebrities, public figures and famous personalities being tricked by hackers on the Web. The real problem arises when a subscriber follows the wrong page taking it as real. The question then is how can a common user know, for sure, about a page if it is real or not? This study has been done to share the opinions from Facebook account holders. It intends to impart awareness regarding the phenomenon “Impersonation” on Facebook, which means the imposter sending a bad message from another account which made as a real account. It implies that there are multiple accounts carrying the same name though the account holder is not the same. This study has been conducted to assess the impersonation on Facebook in the Egyptian context. It shows quantitative research based on interviews in order to achieve results which are more illuminating. The ordinal data is collected and the analyzed using SPSS. The study uses a non-parametric statistical method through which it is easy to assess the result which could be then generalized. The study has a sample of 210 respondents whose perception about impersonation on Facebook has been checked. The study found that the higher the education level of Facebook users, the greater is the awareness and perception regarding the existence of impersonation.

خلاصة البحث

انتشرت مواقع الشبكات الاجتماعية مثل الفيسبوك وتويتر وغيرها. مما لا شك فيه فقد أصبح هناك مميزات كبيرة وعيوب لهذه الشبكات. فقد لوحظ أنه يمكن لأي شخص لديه عنوان بريد إلكتروني أن يقوم بتسجيل حساب طالما انه يوافق على شروط وأحكام تتعلق باحترام الخصوصية على شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي. نظرا لطبيعة الفضاء الإلكتروني التي يتم فتحها للجميع والتي تتيح للمستخدم عدم الكشف عن هويته خلف كواليس الحساب، فنتج عن ذلك أحد المشاكل التي عرفت بـ"انتحال شخصية"، فتمكن البعض من انتحال شخصية الآخرين. وهذا يتم عندما يتمكن النصاب على التواصل مع المشتركين من دون الكشف عن الهوية الحقيقية التي يمتلك على الشبكة الاجتماعية. تنشأ المشكلة الحقيقية عندما مشترك يتبع الصفحة الخطأ - ويعتقد أنها هي الصفحة الصحيحة. وهناك تقارير عديدة من صفحات المشاهير والشخصيات العامة والشخصيات الشهيرة تعترض على انتحال شخصياتهم من قبل قراصنة على شبكة الانترنت. والسؤال هو: كيف لنا ان نعرف، على وجه اليقين، الصفحة الحقيقية؟. أجريت هذه الدراسة لتبادل الآراء من بين مشتركين الفيسبوك لتقييم هذه الظاهرة. يساهم هذا البحث في فهم كامل لظاهرة "الانتحال" التي ظهرت حديثاً في الفيسبوك على وجه الخصوص. وذلك يتم عن طريق إرسال النصاب رسالة سيئة من حساب آخر، يظهر كأنه هو الحساب الحقيقي. انها تعني، هناك المزيد من الحسابات تحمل نفس الاسم (للمشاهير) ولكن المسؤولية تكون لأشخاص آخرين. أجريت هذه الدراسة لتقييم الانتحال من حيث رأي المجتمع المصري على الفيسبوك.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Information and Technology.

.....
Akram M. Zeki
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Information and Technology.

.....
Murni Mahmud
Examiner

This dissertation was submitted to the Department of Information System and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Information and Technology.

.....
Mior Nasir Mior Nazri
Head, Department of Information
System

This dissertation was submitted to the Kulliyah of ICT and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Information and Technology.

.....
Abdul Wahab Bin Abdul Rahman
Dean, Kulliyah of Information and
Communication Technology

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Hany M. H. M. El Hoby

Signature.....

Date

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

Social networking is one of the key factors in the growth of web 2.0. This is especially true regarding the use of combined intelligence. It represents the set of programs that allow interaction among subscribers through the web. This type of social platform contains services and tools that enable sharing of information and digital objects such as videos on YouTube or Flickr photographs. Facebook is one such platform having of the ingredients that have a decisive influence on the web 2.0 (Anderson, 2007).

When one looks at the mechanism of creating an account on social networking sites, we will find that it is not complicated. Nevertheless, it does not only require owning an email account and agreeing to the general conditions in respect of privacy, but it also requires an extra step or two of adding some friends to the new account using saved information in the user's email contact list or searching for old friends from the same school or university while filling out the profile page. People from the same school or university will also be shown automatically as 'people you may know' and this is the easiest way to provide credibility to a new user; showing their connection to 'real' people in support of their identity to connect with others through the social network.

Globally, there are no official statistics that specify phantom identities on the Internet, Eng. Hosam Saleh who is responsible of institution of the Internet in Egypt, expects, around 1 million fake accounts (Saleh, 2013). And so, there have been many victims of fake users, as well as fake groups that are involved in fraudulent activities

such as identity theft crimes (Levi, 2008). Facebook reported that 1.11 billion fake users at March 2013. It has become an arena for settling personal accounts, in addition to identity theft, and problems between friends.

Starting from expert knowledge, there are many types of social security fraud. Showed a Belgian study to detect fraud. A study was conducted in Belgium for detecting fraud in social networks by the Social Security Corporation of the Belgian government. This also aimed to improve the performance of the tasks while predicting fraud traditional relational. This study concentrates on electronic fraud in social networks (Van Vlasselaer et al., 2013).

Scams speculation variances based on a fraud measurement associated with the said location identifier, evaluating said fraud speculation varying to a first pre-specified limit, and when said fraud speculation varying surpasses said first pre-specified limit, creating fraud sign that is related to say email network (Zang & Dawson, 2013).

The researcher will assess a new fraudulent structure known “Impersonate”. This arises easily in social network sites. The significance of this study is to face the skewed class orientation. The approach is applied to evaluate its impact on Islamic society, in the case of Egypt.

1.2 BACKGROUND

It would be almost impossible to identify the true identity of Facebook account. For example, identify a celebrity account in a social network site. The problem lies with the fact that if anyone wants to delete a user account, there exists only one way which relies on the support of many other users. For this, there has to be submitted a request to delete a specific user or group from the social network administration.

There are no specific controls to prevent users from registering more than one account. And there is no control on similar IDs or multiple personal accounts. This in fact becomes the principle cause of harming others at a social, economic or political level.

On the other hand, the lack of control is likely to create endless social problems. For example, immoral communication between young people on social networks. This is usually done through the theft of accounts and images, which poses clear threat to others.

Although, the aim of the social network sites is to create connections among people with same interests, dating a person, making new friends and finding the lost friends and so on. Facebook is certainly one of the best interactive platforms. Nowadays, it's used to express the opinions with a freedom which furthermore enables communication between the common public and authorities. This is how interaction reduces the gap between social classes.

In case of Egypt, a random search on Facebook found more than ten accounts named "Dr. Mohamed Morsi", the former Egyptian President. One can see can find that five of them are close groups while eight are open groups. The accounts differ slightly in names (i.e. President Mohamed Morsi, Dr. Mohamed Morsi, Mohamed Morsi president of Egypt, Dr. Mohamed Morsi President of Egypt – the Main Account, President Mohamed Morsi). It was also found that "President Adli Mansour" has four accounts; one of them as a public figure, two of them as a government official, and the last one as incharge of the Egyptian President as shown in Figure 1.1. In the meantime, "Egypt's Ministry of Interior" has about 13 accounts, "the Department of Defense" has more than one account, one of them with the title "Egyptian Armed Forces" on the main

page. The spokesman of the Egyptian army has more than one account. As the research figures out, the public figures such as Dr. Mohamed El Baradei, has more than seven, Dr. Mohamed El Beltagi more than eight, Dr. Mohamed Ghoniem more than four, and Dr. Magdi Yacoub has more than eight accounts.



Figure 1.1: example of more accounts to President

Hence this clearly shows that under the current mechanism of opening an account on social networking sites such as Facebook and by simply owning multiple emails, one can have multiple account, a fact which stays uncontrolled and unchecked.

Another important issue on Facebook and other websites is the exploitation of the public figures and celebrities. People impersonify them and use their pictures to form accounts on their names. Thus, they exploit the fans of these personalities and sometimes they create trouble for them as well. These types of issues creates certain problems and end up in disputes, social disgrace and scandals.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem arises with using Facebook when a subscriber follows the wrong page mistaking as the right one. There have been numerous reports of pages of celebrities, public figures and famous personalities being spoofed by hackers on the web. As mentioned earlier, there are many problems and challenges facing the Internet users. These problems include the following:

Electronic impersonation in Facebook plays a very important role in misrepresenting public figures, especially on social network sites. Therefore, we have to keep the Internet "impenetrable", otherwise nobody would trust it. Collaboration at an international level should be launched to maintain Internet safety and security.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions are proposed:

- 1 What are the factors or related causes which lead to impersonation?

- 2 How can this phenomenon be corrected and how may one identify it?
- 3 Impersonation is a security problem. How do we implicate it as a crime?

1.5 OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of this study is to obtain a comprehensive picture of users' appraisals of Facebook. Therefore, the objectives of the study are:

1. To assess the new phenomenon of "Impersonation".
2. To identify the impact and related causes of impersonation.
3. To understand the causes that lead users to invade the life of others.

1.6 HYPOTHESES

In achieving the research questions and objectives, this study aims to test the following hypotheses:

H 0a: Impersonation has no negative effect on misleading users towards a particular opinion.

Impersonation is used as a means to recruit other users into money-making schemes of illegal and immoral activities. Therefore, we propose the following

H 0b: Impersonation has a positive correlation with Facebook impact and state.

So money-making schemes are illegal and so are immoral activities if these are distorting the image of public figures. For example, those who are genuinely seeking jobs are misled by advertisement of working from home and other money making opportunities.

H 1a: Impersonation has no effect on Islamic societies.

In case if the user with a fake identity has no intention to do anything immoral, we propose the following:

H 1b: Impersonation has a positive correlation with Facebook and people behavior.

Immoral activities are against the principles of Islam.

H 2a: Impersonation has no effect on policy.

Users misrepresent other people to influence others in their favour or for gaining support in their case. Therefore, we propose the following:

H 2b: Impersonation has a positive correlation with Facebook and policy

1.7 SCOPE

The study is an attempt to represent a comprehensive picture of users' opinion of Facebook. Therefore, the researcher will try to collect primary data from users regarding the impersonation phenomenon in social network specifically Facebook. The researcher will gather as much data as possible as to investigate if users are aware of this phenomenon or not. Moreover, the study will probe into how the phenomenon has negatively impacted the society especially in terms of politics, socioeconomics and culture after the Egyptian revolution.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will be a significant endeavor in promoting a good work environment in the workplace, highlighting and defining the problem of impersonation as a new phenomenon in Facebook, which it be bad messages about others. This study will also

be helpful in perceiving the social problems which emanate from the impersonation thus causing disputes among people. This occurs as a result of differences in opinions something elevated by fake accounts. Moreover, this study will be beneficial in establishing an analytical study with an end to locate and overcome the side effects of impersonation and its impact on the behavioral and social problems.

1.9 JUSTIFICATION

This thesis tries to increase awareness on the importance of eliminating the bad phenomena within the community and reducing misrepresentation of others. This helps reduce the gap between various social classes, and enables others to express the opinions with freedom through an interactive platform without a breakthrough. This study will also be confirmed the ability to communicate with others without impersonation. Moreover, this study is needed to eliminate the phenomenon of impersonation thus maintaining Internet safety and security.

1.10 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

A survey will be conducted to gather data from users' perception on Facebook. The sample group needs to review this new phenomenon of "Impersonation" on Facebook in order to reveal its impact on the Egyptian community and related issues which have surfaced. This will be a descriptive as well as simple analytical study. The study is limited only to Facebook user appraisals in Egypt between the periods of 7 Feb, 2014 to 7 Mar, 2014.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The social network sites being studied in this research are Facebook which has enabled its users, who are friends and may be part of any community, to post things and comment on each other's' posts while also responding to the posts.

According to Jones and Soltren (2005), the passwords of the users are not secured and so it is quite easy for the intruders to access them.

Debatin et al. (2009) are of the view that there exists a certain level of awareness about the security flaws in Facebook, but there exists little research available in the field regarding the concerns of the users.

Lachello and Hong (2007) are of the view that the upcoming and novel innovations in the field of social networking yield strange results sometimes. For example, the threats related to privacy settings in relation to private and public domains.

A study conducted by Higgins (2008) concluded that the real and original threats are directly related to the online victimization.

2.2 IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT AND FRIENDSHIP PERFORMANCE

People are more enthusiastic to construct their online profiles by giving their personal and original information on the social network sites. This phenomenon has led the research scholars to investigate the issues like process of "impression management",

“self-presentation and friendship performance” on these social network sites (Ellison, 2007).

Friendster was examined in the earliest academic research in the field of social network sites by Boyd. His study focused and examined the "Friendster" as a focus on public social networks that would allow the users to share presentations of self and connect with others (Boyd, 2006).

Most of the people on the social network sites are prompted to build their original profiles, though they do this with a varying degree. It was studied that the users on social network site were having different strategies to build personal profiles on the online social networking websites (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). However, Boyd was of the view that profiles on these social network sites, are likely not to be “real” as he studied the phenomenon of “Fakesters”. Skog has studied the features of "LunarStorm" in 2005, that's influenced how people behaved in present their personal photos, and original information on the SNSs (Stutzman & Kramer-Duffield, 2010).

Zinman and Donath (2007) studied that spammers on MySpace find it easy to persuade the users and then victimize them.

2.3 A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

Different social network sites have attracted the attention of the people in different parts of the world. For example, when "MySpace" was being used in the USA, the other social networking sites were getting popularity in different regions of the world. "Orkut" has become the first and the largest social network site in Brazil and it grew rapidly in India lately, "Orkut" is an online community that connects people through a network of trusted friends. "Friendster" has got fame in the Pacific Islands, "Friendster" is an online

community that connects people through a network of friends for dating or making new friends. "Mixi" was adopted largely by the Japanese population, Dutch people accepted "Hyves" as a popular social network site, "Lunar Storm" attained approval by the Swedish. "LunarStorm" is the most popular online community among young people in Sweden. "Grono" became the choice of Polish people, "Hi5" became widespread in the small countries of the American Continent and in Europe, and "Bebo" was extremely popular in the UK, New Zealand and Australia (Donath & Boyed, 2004).

Some of the popular communication and community messaging services added social network site features and thus got popularity and wide acceptance. For example, the Chinese QQ became the world's largest social network site globally when it added the tabs like profiles and making the friends visible (Ellison, 2007). "Sky rock" gained the wide acceptance of French people and "Live Space" ruled the markets of Mexico, Italy and Spain. "Cy world" acquired the Korean market by adding the features like homepages and buddies (Ellison, 2007). Even blogging services became famous when they added features of social network sites in the USA like "Xanag", Live Journal and Vox and these attracted a huge audience. Although "QQ", "Orkut", and "Live Spaces" are very large yet they have little space in the USA and other English speaking countries.

Zuckerberg (2012) announced that there were 83 million fake Facebook accounts out of 1 billion active profiles.

2.4 ONLINE PRIVACY RISKS

Gao et al. (2011) described the typical privacy attacks on social networking sites. The violations are occurring due to the spammers. These can get the access the profiles and their private details and by impersonating their friends, they get the personal