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Assessing Students' Knowledge of Cybersecurity at a Public South African University

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The increasing reliance on the Internet has exposed the triad of cybersecurity, namely, people, processes, and technology, to various cyberattacks. Moreover, factors such as the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic have contributed to the rise in these attacks. Students, who are heavy Internet users, are not immune to these cyberattacks. Several studies have identified students as primary targets of cyberattacks at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), largely due to their limited knowledge of how to protect themselves online. As a result, this study investigated the Cybersecurity Awareness (CSA) of students at a South African public HEI. The objective was to gauge students' knowledge of cybersecurity. The study employed a quantitative research design, using a structured questionnaire administered through QuestionPro. The sample consisted of students from seven faculties. The instrument assessed students' awareness across several cybersecurity topics: phishing, antivirus, identity theft, cyberbullying, piracy, password security, and malware. A total of 381 responses were collected and subjected to statistical analysis. The findings indicated that while students demonstrated strong awareness in identity theft and cyberbullying, significant deficiencies were observed in phishing, password management, and antivirus usage.

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