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The Reliability Analysis for Information Security Metrics in Academic Environment

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Abstract— Today, academic institution involves digital data to support the educational process. It has advantages, especially related to ease of access and process. However, security problems appear related to digital data. There were several information security incidents in the academic environment. In order to mitigate the problem, metrics identification is required to determine the risk of incidents. There are many risks model and metrics to estimate the risk, such as DREAD, OWASP, CVSS, etc. However, specific metrics are required to obtain appropriate risk values. Therefore, this study aims to define metrics for an academic institution. The proposed metrics are obtained from The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulation. It consists of directory information, educational information, personally identifiable information, and risk of information leakage. In order to achieve the objective, this study involves survey and reliability analysis to result in output. The survey is conducted by involving 90 respondents with various levels of education and jobs. The Cronbach's alpha and Test-retest are methods to determine this study's reliability. According to reliability analysis, the Cronbach's alpha method results in coefficients for the metrics between 0.730 - 0.911, while the Test-retest method results in coefficients between 0.630 - 0.797. These coefficients have a reliable category, so the proposed metrics are adequate for determining risk of information security incidents in academic environments. The reliable metrics will be developed as variables of the risk assessment model for the academic environment in the future study.

Keywords—Information security; risk metrics; reliability analysis; Cronbach's alpha; test-retest.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, academic institutions such as universities and schools involve digital data to support their business. Generally, the data are applied in information systems to ease the business process in academic institutions. However, information security incidents related to these data can occur, and this incident affects a serious impact on the institution. In 2020, the University of California spent 1.14 million USD to overcome ransomware attacks. At Northumbria University, cyber-attacks disrupt the academic operation. Moreover, some universities also face potential legal actions related to information security incidents [1].

A cyber security attack commonly causes information security incidents. Types of cyber security attacks used in academic institutions are SQL injection, phishing, and social engineering [2], [3]. SQL injection is an attack to interfere with the database on a website. The attacker uses malicious

SQL commands to manipulate authentication so the information in the database can be exploited illegally [4]. The Open Web Application Security Project (OWASP) puts SQL injection as the top 10 vulnerabilities [5]. The list order of the top 10 vulnerabilities is SQL Injection, broken authentication, sensitive data exposure, XML external entities (XXE), broken access control, security misconfiguration, cross-site scripting (XSS), insecure deserialization, using components with known vulnerabilities, and insufficient logging and monitoring [6], [7]. Furthermore, phishing typically uses fake emails to trick targets into visiting malicious links [8]. The fake email is made as if it is from a trusted source. The malicious links contain malware that can infect the victim's system to gain access or information.

Meanwhile, social engineering is a social approach to gaining unauthorized access to the system. This method generally exploits intimacy with the victim to gain system access or sensitive information [9]. There are many types of social engineering attacks, such as impersonation, shoulder

surfing, dumpster diving, being a third party, baiting attacks, pretexting attacks, tailgating attacks, and phone/email scam attacks [10].

The impact of an information security incident is able to be minimized by identifying the data asset so the procedure of asset protection can be optimized. The data asset can be classified into two types of data, namely sensitive data, and insensitive data. The sensitive data contain confidential information and restricted information. The restricted data have a limited impact when the data experience security incidents. Confidential data have a wider impact than restricted data when an information security incident happens and can affect the whole institution. The insensitive data contain public information such as institution profile, address, organizational structure, etc.

Sensitive data in academics are various, so it needs to be categorized. The categories can be metrics to measure the risk value of information security incidents. However, the consideration related to these categories must be performed to determine appropriate metrics. Furthermore, the reliability factor must be analyzed to ensure metrics performance. This condition becomes a problem for this study. Therefore, this study aims to solve the problem by analyzing the reliability factor for the metrics. The metrics have adequate consistency and stability if the metrics have adequate reliability factors [11].

According to the objective of this study, we contribute to defining metrics for measuring the risk of an information security incident in the academic environment. However, this study only uses a reliability perspective in defining metrics. In order to achieve the objective, this study is organized as follows: section 2 is materials and method, which consists of a literature review and method for resulting output. Section 3 reveals the result and evaluation of the output from this study, and section 4 contains the study's conclusion.

II. MATERIALS AND METHOD

A. Literature Review

Information security incidents in academic institutions can reveal information about staff, students, alumni, institution strategy, and institution transactions. In 2018, the incident revealed the address and social security numbers (SSN) of 119,000 staff and students from University of Yale in U.S. [1]. In Information Security Risk Assessment (ISRA) procedures, identifying asset and measuring the risk of the threat level is the early steps before determining mitigation procedures priority [12]. However, identifying assets and measuring the threat level risk for intangible assets is not simple. The previous studies commonly use specific perspectives to perform those steps. From a business perspective, the risk of the threat level is estimated by several metrics such as financial view, reputation, organization size, organization type, and critical level of information [13].

Several cyber security organizations also build risk models to measure the risk level of threats. The models use a general perspective to accommodate broad cyber security incident cases. Common Vulnerability Scoring System (CVSS), the risk model issued by the Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams (FIRST), uses three group metrics to determine threat level, namely base metrics group, temporal

metrics group, and environmental metrics group [14], [15]. The characteristics of vulnerability are represented in the base metrics group. The temporal metrics group estimates the exploit technique specification in describing a vulnerability, while the environmental metrics group describes the condition enterprise or institution that might increase or decrease the severity level of vulnerability. The metrics of CVSS can customize and accommodate technical and business perspectives, but it is complex for the beginner user. The metrics of each group in CVSS are shown in figure 1.

Base metrics group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploitability metrics • Attack vector • Attack complexity • Privileges required • User interaction • Scope • Impact metrics • Confidentiality impact • Integrity impact • Availability impact • Scope
Temporal metrics group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploit code maturity • Remediation level • Report confidence
Environmental metrics group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidentiality requirement • Integrity requirement • Availability requirement • Colateral damage potential • Target distribution

Fig. 1 The metrics of CVSS

The Open Web Application Security Project (OWASP) also uses technical and perspective to determine the level of threat [16], [17]. That perspective is represented by metrics such as financial loss, reputation damage, number of affected users, loss of CIA (Confidentiality, Integrity, Availability) factors, etc. Moreover, Microsoft also issues a risk model using five metrics called DREAD [18], [19]. The metrics of DREAD are defined below:

- **Damage:** It represents the damage level on the system.
- **Reproducibility:** It provides the ease level for reproducing the attack.
- **Exploitability:** It represents the level of resources needed by the attacker to launch the attack.
- **Affected users:** The number of users will be affected when the attack is launched.
- **Discoverability:** It provides the ease level to discover the vulnerability.

The study on metrics identification in cyber security has been performed from various perspectives. In travel and tourism, information security incident impacts reputation, financial, regulatory, and business disruption. The impact level is affected by factors such as threat actors, motivation,

mode of operation, and attack vectors [20]. In another study, the risk of an information security incident is also affected by assets, domain, potential threats to the assets, and potential vulnerabilities [16]. The defined metrics in cyber security from the previous model can be shown in figure 2.

The new metrics for identifying the risk of an information security incident can be developed according to the characteristic of the institution or enterprise. There are several methods for identifying the new metrics, such as validity analysis [21] and reliability analysis [22], [23]. This study proposes a different environment from the previous study in identifying the metrics. We propose an academic environment as a case involving academic data as the basis for determining the metrics. In order to define the characteristics of data sensitivity, this study refers to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulation. The studies of FERPA generally are related to the privacy of students and staff in educational institutions [24]. Moreover, FERPA is also involved in developing a model for quantifying data sensitivity [25], [26].

B. Method

In order to achieve the objective, this study requires several steps, as shown in figure 3.

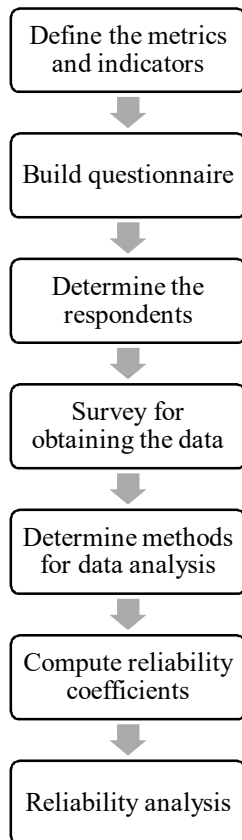


Fig. 3 The research steps.

The metrics and indicators are based on the standard Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) [27]. FERPA is a law to protect the privacy of student's educational records, and the U.S. Department of Education issues it. FERPA defines sensitive information in an educational environment such as a school or university. The structure of

metrics and indicators adopted from FERPA are shown in Table 1.

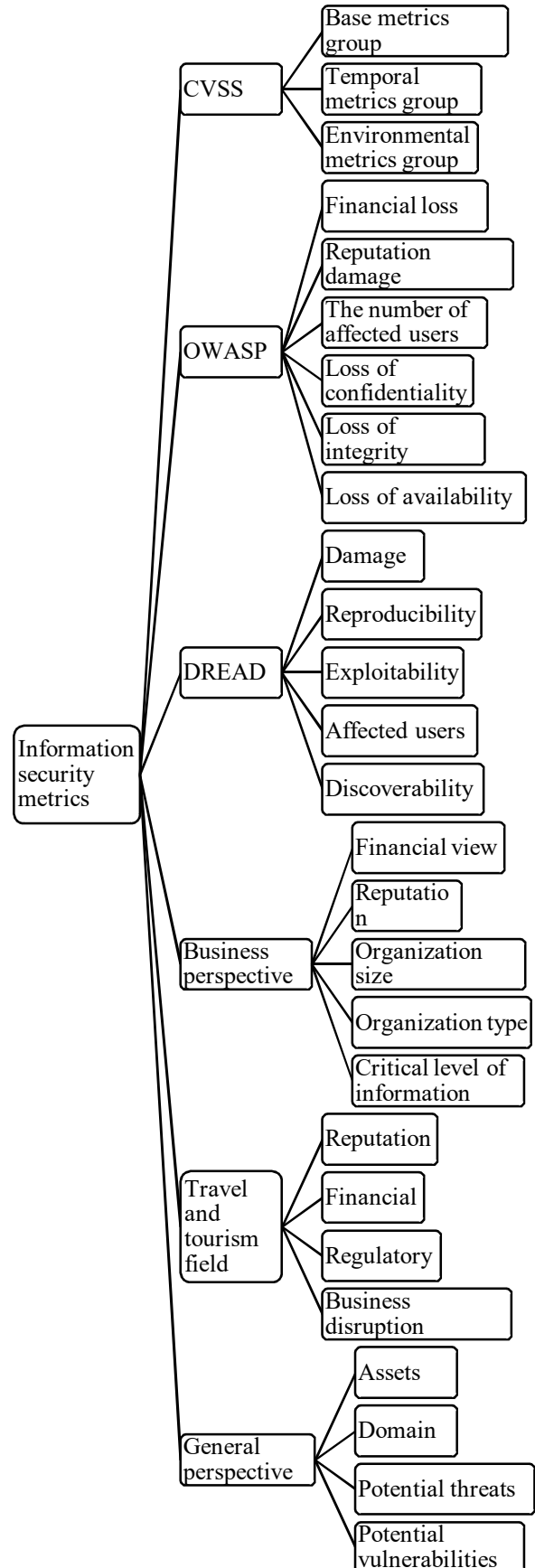


Fig. 2 The metrics from the previous models and studies

TABLE I
THE STRUCTURE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Metrics	Item number	Indicators
Directory information	1	Institution name
	2	Accreditation of academic institution
	3	Address of institution
	4	Telp number of institution
Educational information	5	Student identification number
	6	Financial transaction in academic institution
	7	Education history
	8	Medical record data
	9	Grades
	10	Parent job
Personally identifiable information	11	Complete name
	12	Telp number of students
	13	Address of students
	14	Birth date and place
	15	Student email
	16	Religion
	17	Gender
	18	Parent's name
	19	Student picture
Risk of information leakage	20	Loss of reputation
	21	Loss of integrity
	22	Loss of confidentiality

Directory information is information on student educational records where it would not be considered harmful or violate privacy if it is disclosed in public. Furthermore, educational information or educational record is information maintained by educational institutions or third parties where it is prohibited to be disclosed without permission from the owner. Personally, identifiable information is the information used to characterize an individual's identity and is only disclosed if the educational institution obtains permission from the owner. Information leakage in the educational environment has risks such as reputation loss, integrity, and confidentiality [14], [16]. The trust of the students and staff in educational institutions decreases if data privacy is violated. The decrease in trust causes the loss of reputation for the institution. The information leakage also causes the possibility of data modification, which affects the integrity of data. The information leakage also causes the information sensitivity to be exposed, so it impacts data confidentiality. The relation between the metrics is described in Figure 4.

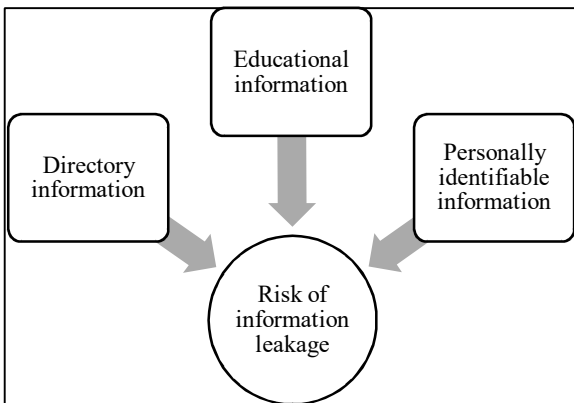


Fig. 4 The relation of metrics.

The questionnaire is built to obtain data from the respondents. In order to represent the response and preferences of the respondents, this study uses the Likert scale with a score as follows:

- (1) strongly disagree,
- (2) disagree,
- (3) undecided/neutral,
- (4) agree,
- (5) strongly agree.

Likert scale is a bipolar scale in statistics to obtain a response in quantitative type. This scale is commonly applied in questionnaires and is often used for research surveys [28]. In order to result in output, this study uses two methods of reliability analysis, namely Cronbach's alpha and Test-Retest. These methods are explained detailed below.

1) *Cronbach's alpha*: Cronbach's alpha method measures internal consistency [22], [29]. It uses a set of items as a group, so this method only requires once survey or a single test. The reliability is determined using a coefficient ranging from 0 to 1. In order to compute the coefficient of Cronbach's, we use the formula as shown in equation 1.

$$\alpha = \frac{Nc}{v+(N-1)c} \quad (1)$$

where

α is coefficient of Cronbach's alpha

v is average variance of each item

N is total number of items

c is average of all covariances between items.

2) *Test-retest*: Test-retest measures the reliability by repeating the test in a certain interval period for the same group of respondents. This study performs tests twice with an interval of about 8 weeks. Each testing result is compared to determine the level of stability. In order to compute the reliability coefficient, this method can use the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) approach [30]. The formula is shown in equation 2 [31].

$$r = \frac{N\sum XY - (\sum X)(\sum Y)}{\sqrt{[N\sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2][N\sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2]}} \quad (2)$$

where

r is coefficient reliability test-retest

N is number of subjects

X is result of test

Y is result of retest.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data for computing the reliability coefficient are obtained from 90 respondents. This study classifies the respondents based on the job position, length of job experience, managerial position experience, and educational background. In the length of job experience, we determine five years as the minimum time for expert respondents [21]. The background of the respondents is shown in Figure 5.

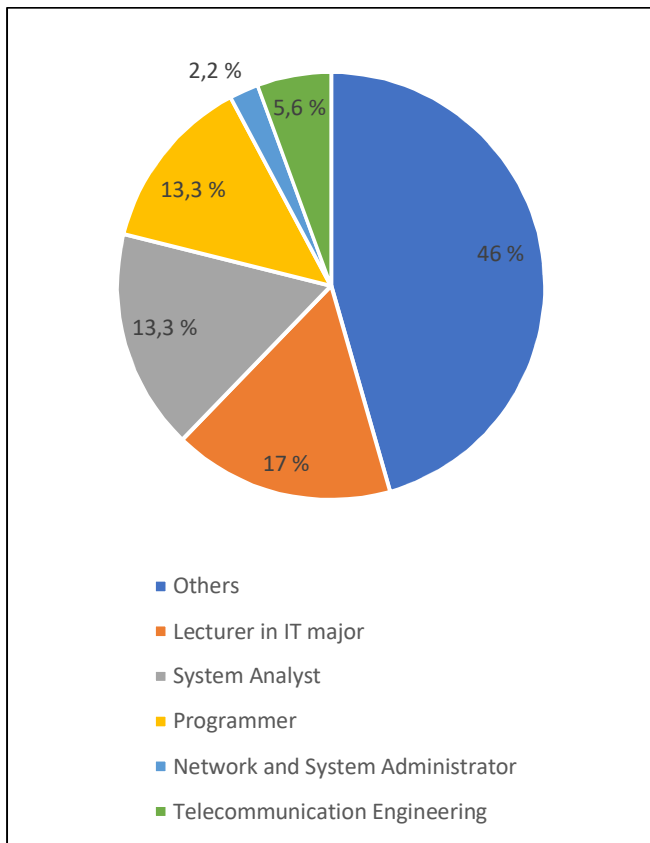


Fig. 5 Jobs of respondents

In Figure 5, the respondents have a current job as a lecturer in I.T. major, system analysts, programmers, network and system administrators, telecommunication engineers, and others of job. According to the length of job experiences, 84.4% of respondents have work experience in the information technology field of more than five years, while 15.6% of respondents are less than five years. 74.4% of respondents also have managerial positions in their jobs, while 25.6% are in staff positions. The respondents also have an education background in university, where 92.20% graduated from university and 7.80% students at university (figure 6). It indicates that respondents ever used academic data in university.

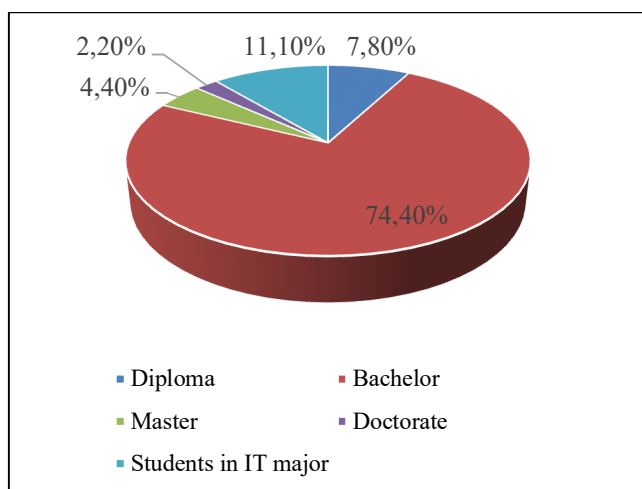


Fig. 6 Educational background of respondents

The demographics of respondents indicate that the respondents have basic knowledge of information technology and information security. It is useful to avoid misperceptions and biases related to survey material. The data from the respondents are computed to result in a coefficient of Cronbach's alpha (α) and Test-retest reliability coefficient (r) in table 2.

TABLE II
THE COEFFICIENT OF RELIABILITY

Metrics	α	r
Directory information	0.748	0.630
Educational information	0.730	0.663
Personally identifiable information	0.904	0.715
Risk of information leakage	0.911	0.797

In the previous study, the reliability coefficient is defined in the level of strength. In Test-retest reliability, the coefficient is categorized as follows: none or very weak (0.0 to 0.1), weak (0.1 to 0.3), moderate (0.3 to 0.5), and strong (0.5 to 1.0) [32]. Furthermore, the coefficient of Cronbach's alpha is reliable if its value is greater than 0.60 [22]. According to Table 2, the coefficients of Cronbach's alpha are between 0.730-0.911, so it is adequate to be defined as reliable. The reliability coefficients of the Test-retest are between 0.630-0.797, categorized as strong reliability. These conditions can be described in Table 3.

TABLE III
THE RELIABILITY OF METRICS

Metrics	Reliability
Directory information	Reliable
Educational information	Reliable
Personally identifiable information	Reliable
Risk of information leakage	Reliable

According to Table 3, the proposed metrics and indicators provide stable parameters to determine the risk of an information security incident in an academic environment. These metrics can combine in the risk model for performing risk analysis.

IV. CONCLUSION

Information security incidents have an impact on the academic institution. However, these incidents have different risks to the academic institution. It depends on the data type. The incidents in sensitive data seriously impact the institution, while the insensitive data do not affect the institution. However, determining the sensitive data requires analysis, so it has reason to classify information in an educational environment. This study refers to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) standard for defining the categories of sensitive data, consisting of categories such as directory information, educational information, personally identifiable information, and risk of information leakage. These categories can estimate the risk of information security incidents, so they can be called metrics. The metrics must be reliable so it has similar results when measuring the risk. Therefore, a reliability analysis is required to measure the

stability of metrics. This study provides two methods for analyzing the reliability: Cronbach's alpha and Test-retest. The Cronbach's alpha analysis from the metrics generates a reliability coefficient between 0.730-0.911, while the Test-retest results are between 0.630-0.797. These coefficients have values greater than the accepted standard for a coefficient of reliability, so the proposed metrics are adequate and reliable for risk estimation in an academic environment. In future work, we will develop a risk model for the educational institution based on the metrics, namely directory information, educational information, personally identifiable information, and risk of information leakage.

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