

Responsible Disclosure Report – Public Exposure of PII

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Severity: Critical – Exposure of Personal Data

1. Executive Summary

A critical lapse in access configuration allowed **public exposure of sensitive personal information** belonging to faculty and students.

Multiple documents were discoverable through publicly indexed pages associated with the institution's .edu domain.

The exposure consisted of identifiable information that should never be publicly accessible.

2. Details of the Exposure (Redacted)

The publicly reachable documents contained:

- Full names
- Contact numbers
- Residential addresses
- Dates of birth
- Parental/guardian information
- Academic identifiers

Records involved approximately:

- **65+ staff members**
- **30+ students**

No file paths, document names, or direct URLs are included here.

3. Risk Assessment

Privacy Risks

- Potential misuse of personal data
- Increased risk of targeted phishing/social engineering
- Exposure to identity theft scenarios

Institutional Risks

- Violation of data protection norms (DPDP Act 2023, IT regulations)
- Damage to institutional credibility
- Possible regulatory scrutiny

Operational Risks

- Need for manual cleanup and audit
- Stakeholder trust degradation

4. How the Issue Was Identified

The exposure was discovered through:

- Public search indexing patterns
- Misconfigured access control on stored documents
- Unrestricted discovery of file directories
- Absence of proper robots.txt and directory-level protections

No data was downloaded, stored, or misused.

5. Recommendations

- Immediately remove exposed documents from public indexing
- Apply strict access control (authentication-required portals)
- Disable directory browsing and file listing
- Implement institutional data classification policies
- Enforce periodic PII audits for all .edu assets

6. Author Statement

The findings were reported privately in accordance with ethical disclosure principles.
No unauthorized access, data alteration, or exploitation occurred.

– Aathithya Shanmuga Sundaram
Responsible Disclosure Contributor