# Thesis Proposal

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**RESEARCH QUESTION: Is it ethical for apps to track users' personal information?**

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**INTRODUCTION**

In the internet-age the world is currently in using apps in our daily life is unavoidable. Experts state that mobile apps and devices continue to impact our daily lives (Gan 1). These apps obviously might need information from the users for various reasons. Sometimes it can be due to how the specific app work, for example, a weather app might need to know users' location for precise results, or a photography app might need access to the camera of the device and the gallery. Or the app might need the information for development purposes, the app might want to look into the preferences of the users about the features of the app to update it for the better. Or the app might use the information for better advertising experiences for its users.

Even though the need for information seems innocent some may consider this dishonest and extremely unethical due to not enough information being given to the user while using the apps, about what exactly apps are using personal information for this means that the app is free to do anything with the information, for example, the app might sell the information to other apps who are also in need of the user information that was stated before. While this interaction might be seen as innocent to some people it actually can easily cause the personal information of the user to fall into wrong hands. Still, some might think that this is an ignorable risk, a small price to pay to access the perfect app or personalized ads that have been developed or selected while considering users' information, or they might think that privacy restrictions are quite enough to minimalize these issues.

Apps tracking users' personal information to use it for users' benefit is actually a great way to get to know the user profile of the app for developing and progressing and choosing the ads appropriate to them is a very beneficial thing for both parties. As an example; apps tracking information about us for

advertising purposes can actually be positive by providing us ads about things we actually might be interested in, rather than just showing us random products irrelevant to us. But some issues regarding privacy have not been solved yet. There are two main reasons for these privacy concerns like limited information on how the apps will use the data and what exactly apps might want to know. According to experts privacy is a common issue, especially across 5 app categories, namely in communication, parenting, photography, tools, and games (Anthonysamy 121).

**BODY**

**COUNTER ARGUMENTS**

As stated before there are some people might think that privacy restrictions are quite enough due to some recent privacy policies of the apps and companies. Studies and experiments show that some participants have a good idea of how applications work and why they collect personal data such as location, contacts, and phone numbers (Han 11). This might be due to the privacy policies of applications regarding the consent of the user, according to Abbas Razaghpanah any data that may be used to directly or indirectly identify an individual must explicitly request user consent like data harvesting requires users to opt-in (11). so it is natural that people might feel some level of trust towards the apps they gave their consent.

**PRO ARGUMENTS**

**But people with opposite opinions about this issue might also have a valid opinion according to experts because information regarding how much exactly apps might want to know about their users is still a big question. As stated before people can guess and speculate about the general topics of information according to the need of the apps like locations and contacts but knowing every single detail apps want to know about their users is almost impossible. But even the topics that are known can be unsettling and sensitive for people. According to Mary Madden, one in four teen apps users have uninstalled an app because they found out it was collecting personal information that they did not want to share (6). This shows that people might be uncomfortable with suspicious situations like these and apps might lose their users this way.**

**Another important privacy concern is how the apps might use the data. For example, the user might know what specific information the app uses but the user might also not know how, why, and**

**where exactly the app uses that information. For example, the user might know that the app wants to access the camera but that does not mean the user knows when exactly the app is going to use the camera. According to Seungyeop Han in some experiments, quite a few participants were unsettled when they found out that some applications further shared information with third parties such as advertising and analytics companies, especially when these are not primary applications that they interact with regularly (11). This shows that many people are unaware of how apps might use their information and it might be considered a huge invasion of privacy.**

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it is heavily argued how ethical apps to track users' personal information. But it can be seen that even if the reasons behind the need for information are innocent the process of actually accessing the information from users or other apps might include not very ethical ways so it is natural for some people to have suspicions about this issue, but in our world right now it is very hard to stay completely out of touch with apps and the internet. In my personal opinion, due to the unsafe nature of the internet, it is important to have a private online presence without sharing too much with the apps and to be overall careful with what apps might track about us by avoiding giving unnecessary access to apps. These options might not completely get rid of the risks of apps tracking users but they can still help users to be safer.

**WORKS CITED**

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