

# **Field Study on Awareness of Data Privacy Among College Students**

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(INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY)

Under the Guidance of

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R.K. TALREJA COLLEGE

(Affiliated to University of Mumbai)

ULHASNAGAR- 421003

MAHARASHTRA

Academic Year — 2025-2026

**Established-1961**

**SEVA SADAN'S**

**R. K. TALREJA COLLEGE**

**OF**

**ARTS, SCIENCE & COMMERCE**

**ULHASNAGAR – 421003**



**CERTIFICATE**

I hereby Certify that Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ Student of **R. K. TELREJA COLLEGE**, Studying in SYBsc. Information Technology, has completed a project titled **Field Study on Awareness of Data Privacy Among College Students** in the area of Ulhasnagar, Ambernath Specialization for the academic year 2025-2026. To the best of my knowledge the work of the student is original and the information included in the project is correct.

**Internal Guide**

**Head of Department**

**Principal**

## DECLARATION

I, Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ Student of **R. K. TELREJA COLLEGE,**  
Studying in SYBsc. Information Technology, hereby declare that I have completed the field  
project entitled **Field Study on Awareness of Data Privacy Among College Students**  
during the academic year 2024-2025.

The report work is original and the information/data included in the report is true emerging  
from the primary and/ secondary data gathered and analysed as part of this project.

Due credit is extended on the work of Literature/Secondary Survey by endorsing it in the  
Bibliography as per prescribed format.

Signature of the Student with Date

Name of Student

Harshada Santosh Kene

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

### Abstract :

This field study aimed to assess the level of awareness regarding data privacy among college students in Mumbai, Maharashtra. In an increasingly digital world, where personal information is routinely shared across online platforms, understanding how young adults perceive and protect their data is crucial. The study involved structured surveys and informal interviews with students across various disciplines, focusing on their knowledge of privacy policies, data-sharing habits, and responses to digital threats such as data breaches and identity theft.

Key observations revealed that while students are highly active on social media and digital platforms, their understanding of data privacy is limited. A majority admitted to accepting app permissions and privacy terms without review, and few were aware of how their personal data is collected, stored, or monetized. Notably, students from technical backgrounds showed slightly higher awareness levels compared to those from non-technical streams. Despite these gaps, there was a strong willingness among students to learn more about data protection, especially when the risks were clearly explained.

The study concludes that there is an urgent need for targeted educational initiatives to bridge the knowledge gap. Integrating data privacy modules into college curricula, organizing awareness campaigns, and promoting responsible digital behaviour can empower students to safeguard their personal information. This research highlights the importance of proactive engagement in fostering a privacy-conscious student community.

## TABLE OF CONTENT

Sr.No	Content	Page No.
1	INTRODUCTION	6
2	1.1 PURPOSE OF VISIT	6
3	1.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION	6
4	1.3 SCOPE OF THE REPORT	7
5	LITERATURE REVIEW	8
6	METHODOLOGY	9
7	3.1 APPROACH TOOLS USED	9
8	3.2 RATIONALE BEHIND OF METHODS	9
9	FIELD WORK DESCRIPTIONS, OBSERVATION & ANALYSIS	10
10	4.1 FIELD WORK DISCRIPTION	10
11	4.2 OBSERVATION & RELEVANCE TO THE TOPIC	10
12	4.3 GEO-TAG PHOTOS FROM FIELD VISIT	10
13	4.4 ANALYSING DATA COLLECTION IN FIELD VISIT	13
14	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	17
15	5.1 CONTRIBUTION TO UNDERSTANDING OF DATA PRIVACY AWARENESS	17
16	5.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS	17
17	5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS	17
18	REFERENCES	18
19	APPENDICES	19
20	STUDENT FEEDBACK FORM	20

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose of the Visit

In today's connected world, students depend on digital platforms for learning, socializing, and managing their personal lives. As a result, data privacy is more important than ever. The goal of this field visit was to understand how college students perceive data privacy, what they know, how they behave online, and whether they feel ready to protect their personal information.

We aimed not only to collect data but to engage with students directly. We observed their digital habits and sparked conversations about privacy. We wanted to find gaps in awareness, common misconceptions, and the emotional reactions students have when they realize how much of their data is exposed. We hoped to gather genuine insights to inform future awareness initiatives, educational programs, or even policy recommendations aimed at young people. This visit also connected theory with practice. It allowed us to apply classroom concepts in a real-world setting and see firsthand how digital literacy intersects with human behaviour.

### 1.2 Background Information

Our field study was conducted across five diverse colleges, each offering a unique academic and cultural environment. These institutions varied in size, student demographics, and digital exposure, giving us a well-rounded perspective on how college students engage with data privacy.

Across campuses, we observed a mix of awareness levels—some students were well-informed about online safety, while others showed limited understanding of how their personal data is collected and used. Peer influence, access to digital resources, and institutional emphasis on tech literacy played key roles in shaping these attitudes.

The variety in student responses highlighted the importance of context in digital behaviour. Whether through structured academic settings or informal conversations, each college contributed valuable insights that enriched the depth and authenticity of our study.

### 1.3 Scope of the Report

This report focuses on the awareness and attitudes of college students regarding data privacy. It does not delve deeply into the technical aspects of cybersecurity or legal frameworks. Instead, it highlights the human side of the issue—how students think, feel, and act when it comes to protecting their personal data.

The scope includes:

**Survey Design & Execution:** How we created our questions to be relatable and insightful, and how we conducted the field visits.

**Student Responses & Observations:** An overview of what students shared, both through formal surveys and informal conversations.

**Behavioural Patterns & Trends:** Analysis of recurring themes, such as oversharing on social media, lack of awareness about app permissions, or blind trust in platforms.

**Emotional Reactions:** How students reacted when faced with facts about data breaches or surveillance, ranging from surprise to concern to apathy.

**Recommendations:** Suggestions for improving digital literacy, including workshops, curriculum changes, and peer-led initiatives.

The report is intended for educators, policymakers, and anyone interested in youth digital behaviour. It aims to be both informative and sensitive—capturing not just numbers, but the voices and stories behind them.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Understanding data privacy among college students requires a multidisciplinary approach, drawing from studies in digital literacy, behavioural psychology, and educational sociology. Previous research consistently shows that while young adults are among the most active digital users, their awareness of data privacy risks often lags behind their online engagement.

Several academic papers highlight a paradox: students express concern about privacy but continue to share personal information freely on social media and third-party apps. Studies by scholars such as Westin (2003) and Livingstone (2014) emphasize that privacy attitudes are shaped more by peer norms and platform design than by formal education. This insight is particularly relevant in college environments, where digital behaviour is often influenced by social circles and convenience.

Historical accounts of digital education in Indian colleges reveal a gradual shift from basic computer literacy to more in-depth discussions about cybersecurity and ethical tech use. However, many institutions still lack structured modules on data privacy, leaving students to navigate complex digital landscapes with limited guidance.

Critical analyses also point to the role of institutional culture. Colleges that promote open dialogue, peer-led workshops, and tech-enabled learning tend to foster better awareness. In contrast, campuses with limited digital infrastructure or passive teaching methods may unintentionally reinforce ignorance or apathy toward privacy issues.

This literature review sets the foundation for our field study by highlighting the gap between digital usage and privacy understanding. It underscores the need for context-sensitive interventions that resonate with students' lived experiences and empower them to take control of their digital identities.



## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1 Approach and Tools Used

To understand how college students think about data privacy, we used three main methods during our field visits: survey forms, informal interviews, and direct observation.

- The survey forms had multiple-choice and short questions. These helped us collect clear and structured answers about students' habits, awareness, and opinions on data privacy.
- We also had informal interviews with some students. These were friendly conversations where students shared their personal thoughts, experiences, and concerns about online safety.
- Through observation, we watched how students used their phones, apps, and internet in daily life. This helped us understand their behaviour without asking questions.

All these tools were used across five different colleges to get a wide range of responses.

### 3.2 Rationale Behind the Methods

We chose these methods to get both numbers and real stories. Surveys gave us data we could count and compare. Interviews helped us understand feelings and opinions in detail. Observation showed us how students behave in real situations, not just what they say.

By using all three methods, we got a complete view of the topic. This helped us learn not only what students know about data privacy, but also how they act and feel about it in their everyday life.

## Chapter 4: Field Work Descriptions, Observations and Analysis

### 4.1 Field Work Description

During our field visits to five different colleges, we collected data using a **Google Form survey** shared with students. The form included questions about their awareness, habits, and opinions related to data privacy. This digital method allowed us to reach a wide number of students quickly and efficiently.

To support our fieldwork, we also took **GPS-tagged photographs** at each college. These photos helped document the visit and confirmed the location of each site. They also captured the environment—such as student activity, use of mobile phones, and tech facilities—which added visual context to our study.

### 4.2 Observations and Relevance to the Topic

While visiting the colleges, we observed that most students were active on digital platforms like social media and mobile apps. However, many were unaware of how their personal data is collected or shared online. Some students showed interest in learning more, while others were unsure about basic privacy settings.

These observations directly relate to our topic—**awareness of data privacy among college students**. The fieldwork helped us understand not just what students know, but how they behave in real life. It confirmed that there is a gap between digital usage and privacy awareness, which supports the need for better education and awareness programs in colleges.

### 4.3 GEO-TAG Photos from field visit

College 1: SST College of arts & commerce



## College 2: SMT. Chandibai Himathmal Mansukhani College



## College 3: R.C.T P.M.M Inner Wheel School & Jr. College





College 4: Vedanta College of Management



College 5: Mahatma Gandhi Vidyalaya (Jr. College)



#### 4.4 Analysing data collected in field visit

##### Interview Questions:

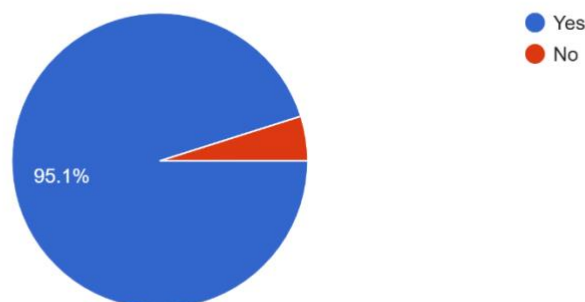
The interview was taken by group of three students during their field visit to five different colleges. Students leaving from college were approached and asked to give interview. The interview was taken anonymously.

Following questions were asked:

1. Do you know what the term data privacy means ?
2. Have you ever read the privacy policy of an app or website before using it ?
3. How comfortable are you sharing personal details (phone no. or email id) online platforms ?
4. Do you use different passwords for different accounts, or the same one everywhere ?
5. Have you ever experienced a privacy breach (like account hacking, identity theft ,or misuse of personal info) ?
6. Do you regularly check or change your social media privacy settings ?
7. Do you think colleges should provide awareness program on data privacy and online safety ?
8. How confident are you that your academic data (grades, records, ID info) is kept secure by your college ?
9. Do you trust third party apps/websites that require access to your personal or academic information ?
10. In your opinion, what steps can students personally take to protect their data privacy online ?

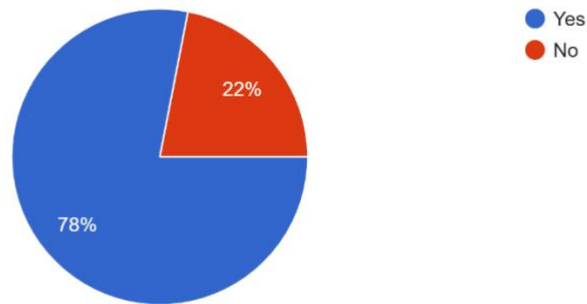
Do you know what the term data privacy means ?

41 responses



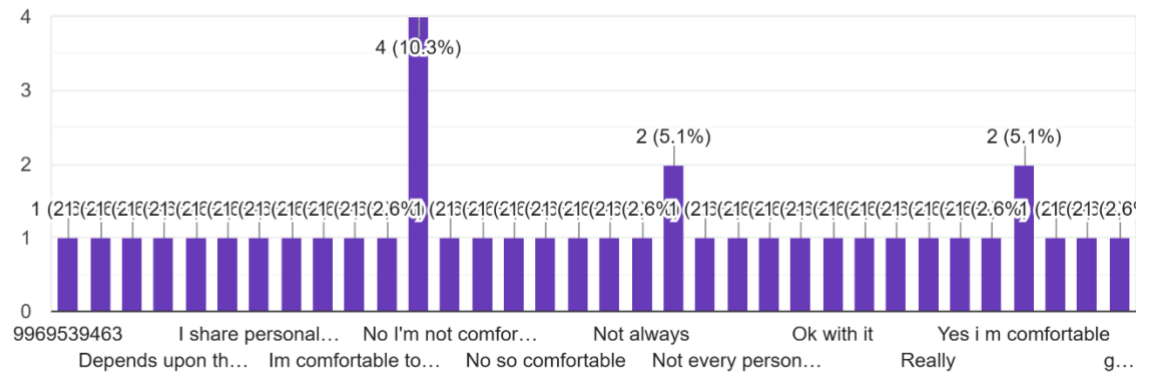
Have you ever read the privacy policy of an app or website before using it ?

41 responses



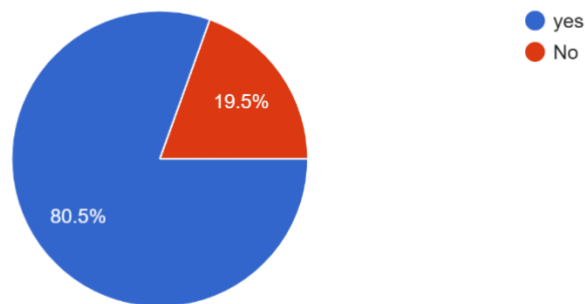
How comfortable are you sharing personal details (phone no. or email id) online platforms ?

39 responses



Do you use different passwords for different accounts, or the same one everywhere ?

41 responses



Have you ever experienced a privacy breach (like account hacking, identity theft ,or misuse of personal info) ?

-No

-Yes

-Nope

-No

-No, I haven't personally experienced a major privacy breach like hacking or identity theft. However, I am very cautious online I avoid sharing sensitive information on untrusted sites, use strong passwords, and enable two-factor authentication to keep my accounts safe.

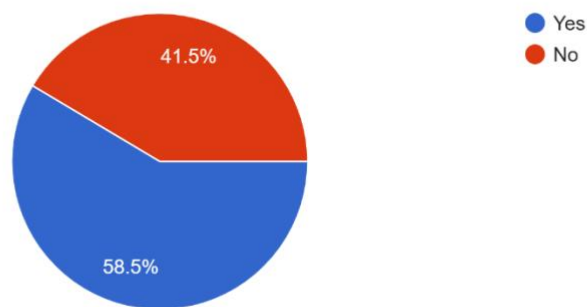
-Yes I have experienced, one of my social media account was hacked.

-Not yet

-Nahhh

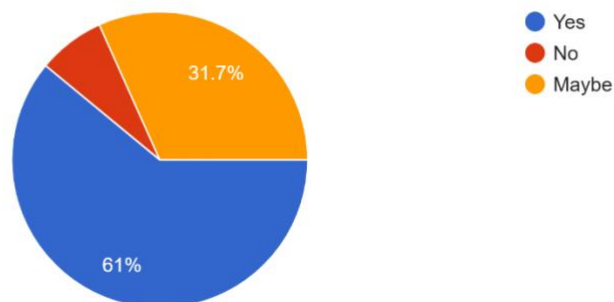
Do you regularly check or change your social media privacy settings ?

41 responses



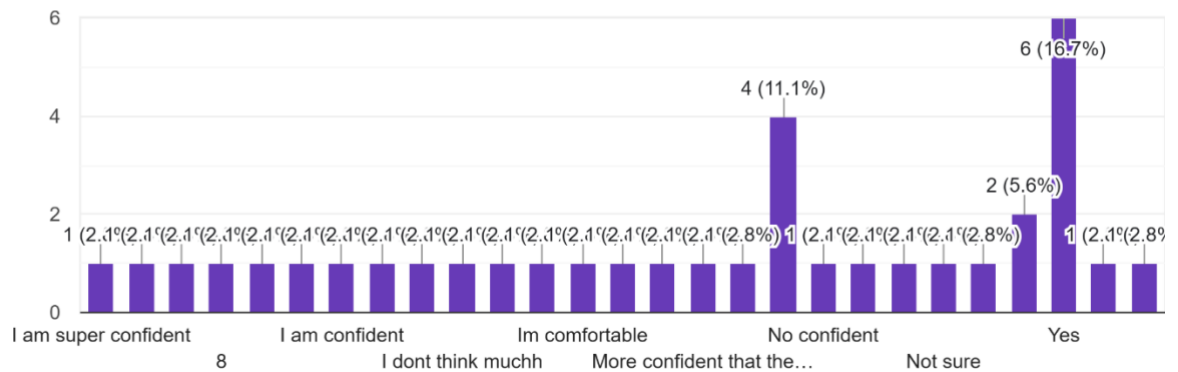
Do you think colleges should provide awareness program on data privacy and online safety ?

41 responses



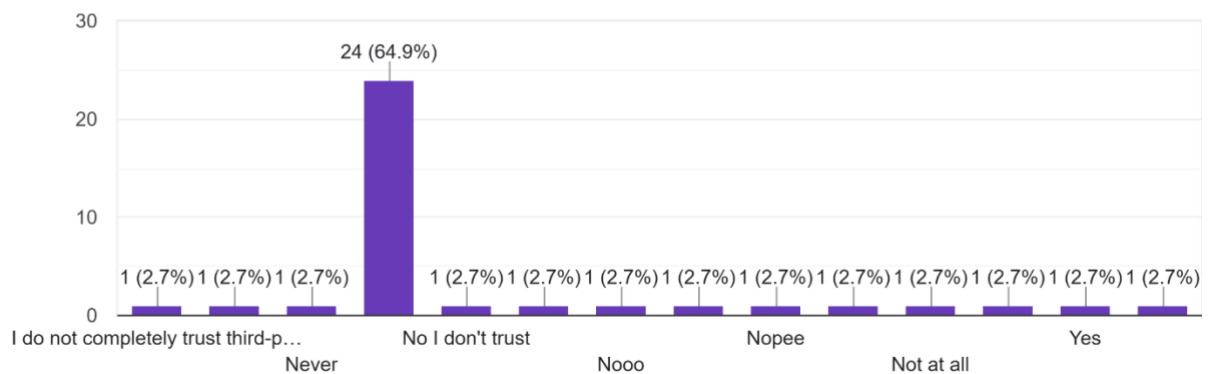
How confident are you that your academic data (grades, records, ID info) is kept secure by your college ?

36 responses



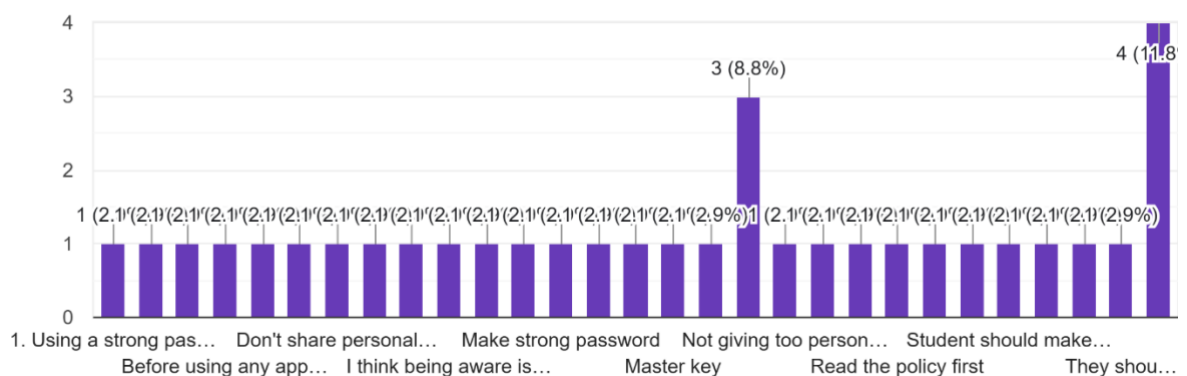
Do you trust third party apps/websites that require access to your personal or academic information ?

37 responses



In your opinion, what steps can students personally take to protect their data privacy online ?

34 responses





## Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Contribution to Understanding of Data Privacy Awareness

This field study has provided valuable insights into the current state of data privacy awareness among college students. By engaging directly with students through surveys and interviews, we were able to assess their understanding of digital rights, personal data protection, and online safety practices. The findings reveal a concerning gap between students' digital engagement and their awareness of how their data is collected, used, and potentially misused.

The study contributes to the broader understanding of digital literacy by:

- Highlighting the need for integrating data privacy education into academic curricula.
- Revealing behavioural patterns that expose students to privacy risks.
- Identifying key sources of information and misinformation about data privacy.

### 5.2 Summary of Key Findings

- **Low Awareness of Privacy Policies:** A majority of students admitted to rarely reading privacy policies before accepting terms on apps and websites.
- **High Usage of Social Media:** Despite frequent use of platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp, students were unaware of how much personal data these apps collect.
- **Limited Understanding of Data Breaches:** Many students lacked knowledge about what constitutes a data breach and how to respond to one.
- **Positive Attitude Toward Learning:** Students expressed interest in learning more about data privacy and showed openness to institutional initiatives.

These findings underscore the urgency of equipping students with the knowledge and tools to protect their digital identities in an increasingly data-driven world.

### 5.3 Recommendations

#### **For Further Study:**

- Conduct comparative studies across different colleges and regions to identify broader trends.
- Explore the impact of digital literacy programs on student behavior over time.
- Investigate the role of parental guidance and early education in shaping privacy awareness.

#### **For Educational Institutions:**

- Integrate data privacy modules into IT and general education courses.

- Host workshops and seminars with cybersecurity experts to raise awareness.
- Encourage student-led campaigns and clubs focused on digital safety.

**For Students:**

- Practice cautious sharing of personal information online.
- Regularly update privacy settings on social media and apps.
- Stay informed about digital rights and emerging privacy threats.

**References :**

chatGPT : <https://chatgpt.com/>

To fetch the data in detail and for information purpose.

Google Forms : [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1LmEA0t8SScFrGQz-rgCe\\_87dQTmAo-8g-oBpuG\\_esdI/edit#responses](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1LmEA0t8SScFrGQz-rgCe_87dQTmAo-8g-oBpuG_esdI/edit#responses)

To make the interview questions and to store the student's responses.

GIO-TAG App : GPS APP CAMERA

## Appendices :

What is your Name ?

41 responses

Rutuja Nagaonkar

Gayatri Tandel

Ayush saji

Navnath raut

Pranali thokal

Divya

Zeenat Khan

Ayush Shinde

Sahil ghadigaonkar

Om Kholam

Aditya jayaram patil

Riddhi Udekar

Sushant Shekhar Poojari

Pratik kholam

Neha gupta

Piyush Bhoir

Moksh Nakhawa

Mohit patil

Divya chavan

Yash lokhande

## STUDENT FEEDBACK ON FIELD PROJECT

Student Name: Harshada Santosh Kene

Seat No. /Roll No.: 2542015

Email: keneharshada6@gmail.com

Department: SYBsc Information Technology

Name of the Mentor: Kumodh Kukreja

Title of Field Project: Field study on awareness of data privacy among college students.

Brief description of FP carried out: In this project we first study the knowledge, understanding and action on data privacy of undergraduate students. The research seeks to understand how students conceptualize digital privacy, what they do to safeguard personal information, and how familiar they are with threats related to online platforms, apps, or data sharing. the study was conducted using a standardized survey held in several colleges. It contained a combination of quantitative and qualitative questions related to the use of password, social network.

Dates of FP: 16/09/25, 17/09/25, 18/09/25, 19/09/25, 20/09/25

Was your internship experience related to your major area of study?

- Yes, to a large degree
- Yes, to a slight degree
- No, not related at all

Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

<b>This experience has:</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>No Option</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
Give me the opportunity to explore a career field.					
Allowed me to apply classroom theory to practice.					
Helped me develop my decision-making and problem-solving skills.					
Expanded my knowledge about the work world before permanent employment.					
Helped me develop my written and oral communication skills.					
Provided a chance to use leadership skills (influence others, develop ideas with others, stimulate decision-making and action).					
Expanded my sensitivity to the ethical implications of the work involved.					

Made it possible for me to be more confident in new situations.					
Given me a chance to improve my interpersonal skills.					
Helped me learn to handle responsibility and use my time wisely.					
Helped me discover new aspects of myself that I didn't know existed before.					
Helped me clarify my career goals.					
Allowed me to acquire information and/or use equipment not available at my institute.					
Allowed me to realize socio-economic issues in the society.					

- In the Institute FP program, faculty members are expected to be mentors for students. Do you feel that your faculty mentor served such a function? Why or why not?

Ans: Yes, my faculty mentor truly guided me like a mentor should—offering clarity, encouragement, and helping us shape our ideas with purpose. Their support made the field study feel more meaningful and focused.

- How well were you able to accomplish the initial goals, tasks and new skills that were set down in your learning contract? In what ways were you able to take a new direction or expand beyond your contract? Why were some goals not accomplished adequately?

Ans: I achieved most goals from my learning contract, especially in survey design and data collection. I even explored emotional responses to privacy, which went beyond the plan. A few goals weren't met due to time limits and limited student access.

- In what areas did you most develop and improve?

Ans: I developed the most during my time at SST College, Ulhasnagar—especially in organizing fieldwork, communicating with students, and understanding how to design effective surveys. The hands-on experience really boosted my confidence and clarity.

- What has been the most significant accomplishment or satisfying moment of your FP?

Ans: The most satisfying moment was when our FP project was finally completed—it felt like all our hard work, planning, and teamwork had paid off. Seeing everything come together was truly rewarding.

- What did you dislike about the FP?

Ans: What I disliked about the FP was having only three partners in the group—it felt a bit limiting. A bigger team could've brought in more diverse ideas and made the workload easier to manage.

- Considering your overall experience, how would you rate this FP? (Circle one). –  
Satisfactory/ Good/ Excellent

Ans: Excellent.

- Give suggestions as to how your FP experience could have been improved. (Could you have handled added responsibility? Would you have liked more discussions with your professor concerning your FP? Was closer supervision needed? Was more of an orientation required?)

Ans: My FP experience could've been improved with a bigger team and more frequent discussions with our professor—it would've helped us refine our approach and stay on track. I could've handled added responsibility, and a better orientation at the start would've made things clearer.

Signature of Student

Name: Harshada Santosh Kene

Date:



## Under the Guidance of

Hon'ble Vice Chancellor

**Prof. Dr. Ravindra Kulkarni**

Hon'ble Pro-Vice Chancellor

**(Prin.) Dr. Ajay Bhamare**

---

### FP Guidelines Draft Committee

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