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Data Hoarding in Organizations: An Exploration of Elevated Risks

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It is estimated that stored global data will grow from 33 zettabytes in 2018 to 175 zettabytes by the year 2025 [5]. The capturing and storage of data is a byproduct of the 'big data phenomenon' and has propelled organizations into the next era of technological advances. Organizations that have strong big data analytics capabilities are able to build a competitive advantage [3]. On the other hand, storing data unnecessarily can put organizations at greater risk in the event of a data breach.

Research related to hoarding of physical objects and the distress associated with discarding said items has moved towards the concept of digital hoarding. Digital hoarding can be defined as "the accumulation of digital files to the point of loss of perspective, which eventually results in stress and disorganization" [7, p. 1]. There has been association related to hoarding disorder and digital hoarding [2],[6]. Personal information management can be used to define how people collect, store, organize and retrieve digital artifacts [1]. Research was conducted by [4] at the individual level to predict digital hoarding in the workplace.

Research related to data hoarding at the organization level is relatively unexplored. This research seeks to determine the increased organizational risk associated with keeping data. The balance between retaining data for business needs and expunging sensitive data can be difficult to achieve. Data stakeholders must collaborate to determine the most prudent data retention and availability policy. Risks can be very costly to an organization with considerations such as illegally stored data (GDPR or California Consumer Privacy Act) or a data breach. Exploring the increased risk related to data hoarding in organizations can bring new insights to light to make mitigation strategies more manageable.

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