Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Viliam Kaliňák

Title: Psychology of Phishing Attacks During Crises: The Case of Covid-19 Pandemic

Programme/year: BS, 20/21

Author of Evaluation (~~supervisor~~/external assessor): Dr. Petr Spelda

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	**10**	10
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	**30**	30
	Methodology, analysis, argument	**40**	30
Total		*80*	70
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	**10**	10
	Style	**5**	5
	Formal requirements	**5**	5
Total		*20*	20
TOTAL		*100*	90

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Evaluation

Major criteria:

The thesis investigates the methods and factors of persuasion used in phishing campaigns during the COVID-19 pandemic. A sample of exemplar spam emails was used to show that a theoretical framework, originating in psychology, fits the empirical practices of malicious actors. Undeniably, the conceptual approach is valuable and to a degree innovative as are the general comments on the psychology of phishing attacks during a health crisis.

That being said, from the empirical point view, a crucial link is missing that would connect the identified general practices with a particular campaign, showing that the theoretical insights truly apply in the given empirical context. Simply put, to establish a causal link between the vehicles of persuasion and the realization of their effect in the target of an attack would require a different methodological approach. Needless to say, a more demanding one. Hence, it is understandable that the thesis stays mostly at the conceptual level. However, it needs to be emphasized that this is still a laudable effort in an interesting domain with large-scale security implications.

Minor criteria:

The formal requirements are satisfied, and the thesis does not show any major lapses in formatting or style.

Based on the anti-plagiarism software checks, it is formally confirmed that the submitted thesis is original and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, does not, in an ethically unacceptable manner, draw from the works of other authors.

Overall evaluation:

In sum, this is a highly unusual research effort, investigating an important cyber security area, while providing interesting conceptual insights.

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Suggested grade: B

Signature

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