Exploring Gender Differences in Attitudes Toward Software Piracy Among Undergraduate Students in a Developing Country

Ali Acılar, Bilecik Şeyh Edebali University, Bilecik, Turkey
Muzaffer Aydemir, Yildiz Technical University, Istanbul, Turkey

ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between gender of undergraduate students and their attitudes towards software piracy. Research data was obtained by surveying the undergraduate students of a business administration department at a public university in Turkey. Independent samples t-test was used for comparisons between male and female students’ attitudes toward software piracy. It was found that female students find software piracy less acceptable than male students do. The study finding is consistent with previous studies that reported female student participants are significantly more ethical than male student participants in terms of software piracy.

Keywords: Gender, Gender Differences, Gender Ethics, Software Piracy, Undergraduate Students

INTRODUCTION

Computers are one of the most important technological developments affecting our daily lives, from communication to education, from business to entertainment. There is no doubt that computers and the Internet have become essential parts of the modern societies, but these technologies have also raised some ethical issues such as piracy, privacy invasion, unauthorized access and use of computer systems etc. In today’s technology-driven world, piracy is one of the major ethical and legal issues. Software piracy is widespread and costs software manufacturers billions of dollars. According to the research 41% of software installed on computers worldwide was pirated in 2008, with estimated losses at $53 billion (BSA & IDC, 2009).

We have constantly been confronted with important technological changes and the need to create new attitudes towards new situations arose from the computer technology (Masrom
Technological developments create new opportunities for action and new sets of choices that are ultimately of a moral nature (Mullen & Horner, 2004). From concerns over pornography on the Internet to piracy, and from worker surveillance to the security of banking transactions, technological advances have stirred public controversy (Marshall, 1999). However, there is an inherent gap between technological advances and the development of ethical guidelines to guide their use; ethical systems that govern their use lag behind technological advances (Marshall, 1999). As the use of computers and Internet has become widespread, misuses of these technologies have also increased dramatically (Banerjee, Cronan, & Jones, 1998). The easy of reaching, storing, changing and transmitting information provided by computers and Internet has made unethical behaviors much easier, particularly among students in the academic environments (Abdul Karim, Zamzuri, & Nor, 2009).

Academic institutions as well as corporations face the problems of illegal and unethical use of information technologies. Many students are unaware of ethical issues of computer usage such as software piracy (Cohen & Cornwell, 1989; Calluzzo & Cante, 2004). It is possible that if university students are uncertain about what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behavior then this uncertainty will be carried forward into their workplaces after graduation (Calluzzo & Cante, 2004; King & Case, 2007).

Nowadays, many companies depend on people who are computer literate. Therefore, the teaching of computer ethics to future employees and managers is becoming increasingly important (Pierce & Henry, 1996; Calluzzo & Cante, 2004; Simon & Chaney, 2006). Otherwise, unethical behaviors of these employees might cause legal (Harris, 2000), financial and image problems.

Given these issues, the main purpose of the present study is to examine whether students’ attitudes towards software piracy differ in terms of their gender. The paper will first give an overview about the relevant literature and then test the hypothesis of the study through a survey on a sample of students in a public university in Turkey.

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER AND SOFTWARE PIRACY**

Gender is one of the most heavily researched variables in the literature of ethics. The relationship between gender and ethical judgments has been a highly investigated topic (Zopiatis & Krambia-Kapardis, 2008). There are considerable amount of studies that have investigated the role of gender in the ethical decision making. The results of the previous studies investigating the relationship between gender and information technology ethics generally show that females are more ethical than males. Females are better able to recognize unethical actions than males do (Khazanchi, 1995). Males view unethical behavior in computer usage as more acceptable than female participants do (Kreie & Cronan, 1998; Leonard & Cronan, 2005; Simon & Chaney, 2006; Dorantes, Hewitt, & Goles, 2006; Akbulut et al., 2008; Zopiatis & Krambia-Kapardis, 2008). Females have stronger opposition to unethical behaviors in information technology than males have (Peslak, 2008; Beycioğlu, 2009). Females behave more ethically than males regarding information technology usage (Krisanda & Peslak, 2009).

Even though majority of the research found that females are more ethical than males in terms of information technology usage, some studies found no significant differences between ethical attitudes or perceptions of males and females (Hay et al., 2001; Calluzzo & Cante, 2004; Young & Case, 2009). Therefore, additional researches are needed to clarify the role of gender on information technology ethics (Adam, 2008).

Studies that examine the relationship between gender and software piracy show two different results: 1) Participants’ behaviors...
Related Content

Constantly Connected: Managing Stress in Today's Technological Times
www.igi-global.com/chapter/constantly-connected/186226?camid=4v1a

E-Governance for Socio Economic Welfare: A Case Study of Gyandoot Intranet Project in Madhya Pradesh, India
www.igi-global.com/chapter/e-governance-for-socio-economic-welfare/135861?camid=4v1a

Searching for Alternatives: Does Your Disposition Matter?
www.igi-global.com/article/searching-alternatives-does-your-disposition/76364?camid=4v1a
“Be Excellent and Do More with Less”: A Paradox behind Job Burnout Threatening Organizational Sustainability
www.igi-global.com/article/be-excellent-and-do-more-with-less/133489?camid=4v1a