

# Voice of Academia

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*The Effects of Recruitment and Promotion Practices on Employees' Job Satisfaction in the Local Governments*

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# A Study of Ethics and Information Technology Usage Among UUM International Students

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## ABSTRACT

*Basically, ethics is a universal entity on guiding beliefs, standards, or ideas that pervades an individual, a group or community of people who are accountable for their actions and behaviors. In the emerging of world of ICT, one is required to behave ethically rights. Ethics of IT users varies according to religions, cultures, and societies; and based on literature review, it depends on beliefs and perceptions. Currently, IT drastically changes the way how ethics is conducted and practised within organizations. Therefore, the main objective of this research is to identify what is perceived as ethical behavior in IT usage. Secondly, this research is to observe the ethics among international students in relation to IT. In order to conduct this research, questionnaire will be used to collect the primary data from respondents, as well as international students of Universiti Utara Malaysia. The data collected will then be analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. This research reveals that, ethics in IT users of different countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, China, Iraq, and Pakistan vary. Mostly, the ethics is based on attitudes and perceptions and to what extent it is said to be ethical in dealing with IT.*

## INTRODUCTION

In general, ethics is a set of beliefs, standards or ideals that pervades individual or a group, or community of people. Because of domination of information technology (IT) in every department and human activities, ethics and IT actually established a unique collaboration where both become important in today's globalization. Abdul Manaf Bohari (2006) argued that IT helps human to perform their work using IT devices, system and software technology with final aimed to upgrading their effectiveness and efficiency of work and day life. On the one hand, Joyner and Payne (2002) they believed that advancement in technologies such as the Internet create new spins on old issues such as the code of conduct, privacy, intellectual property, cyber crime and many kinds of problems fall under ethical matters. On the other hand, Laudon and Laudon (2009) and Stir and Raymond (2009) noted that one issue raised on the basis of ethics and IT is rapidly evolving into a broader and even more important field, which might reasonably be called global information ethics. Beside that, Velasquez (2006) and Moor (1985) synthesised computer ethics is the analysis of the social impact of computer technology as well as the corresponding formulation and justification of policies for the ethical use of such technology. In addition, Parker and Baker (1990) mentioned that global networks such as the Internet, including the world-wide-web are connecting people all over the world that potentially caused global ethical problems of IT. This is supported by Gorniak-Kocikowska (1996) which noted that the computer revolution continuously stimulates problem regarding ethics in the global landscapes.

With regard to IT ethics issues, the issues involving computer crime and cyber crime are the worst, as stated by Laudon and Laudon (2009), Stir and Raymond (2009), O'Brian and Marakas (2008), Velasquez (2006), Koen and Im (1997) and Laudon (1995). In academic perspectives, Velasquez (2006) stated ethics and IT are seen in a narrow prospect, where education are complying with IT and on the other side, students' ethics towards the application of IT will become an attractive issue. Most of the time, the unethical code of conduct in using IT and accessing the source of IT will raise the issue of technological exploitation in academic field. Thus, it is interestingly to understand what caused the students to be unethical when using the IT sophistication? How do they perceive the unethical used of IT in their routine day of student life? What are the activities and behavioral problems that students, as well as unethical IT users have?

In the perspective of society, IT ethics is an important issue because society has certain perceptions on IT adoption. The features of IT use that concern society are the ability to program the computer to do practically anything, the fact is that the computer can so change our daily lives and this are supported

by social based factors, as human value and computer design factor by Friedman (1997), situational determinants factors (Glass & Wood, 1996), attitudes (Oz, 1990), individual characteristics or situational factors (Harrington, 1989), morale obligation and attitudes (Gorsuch & Ortberg, 1983), and many more and all of these are identified as main factor that contributes to the issues of IT ethics. Meanwhile, professional responsibilities as well as identified by Gotterbarn (2001) is also related to these issues. In educational research, as well as conducted by Banerjee, Cronan and Jones (1998), Berdichevsky and Neunschwander (1999), Christensen and Eining (1991), Gotterbarn (2001), Business Software Alliance (2004), Payne and Landry (2005), Deborah (2006), and James (2007) there are many students who misuse the advance in IT that lead them to behave unethically during completing their academic tasks. This is related to demographic factors which have effects on attitudes toward software piracy which has been identified by Solomon and O'Brien (1990). Some model are introduced likewise by Ajzen (1985), Bommer, Gratto, Gravander and Tuttle (1987), Carroll (1991) and Chang (1998) are discussed on how unethical behavior happen in the real organization, which include students in school and university. This study will help to identify the unethical issues regarding IT usage in one of university in Malaysia, as well as Universiti Utara Malaysia.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENTS**

In the world where information spreads every via IT world, there are very few people struggling in performing computer act and following the ethical code of conduct for accessing the information. Nevertheless, there are more issues being raised regarding the misuse of IT especially IT unethical behavior in organization that include learning based organization. For example, one study conducted by Glass and Wood (1996) describes the situational factors related to unethical behaviors among students. This factor accordingly to Laudon and Laudon (2009) will open an opportunities for cheating afforded by digital technology have not attempted to specify the full range of unethical activities among students. Other research are concerned academics have challenged the notion that technological remedies can address new modes of cheating. However, it is questionable whether they are informed about what is considered to be right and wrong while dealing with IT. Therefore, by conducting this study, it will help to identify what is perceived as ethical behavior in IT usage as there is an argument that students' perception will influence the ethical behavior on IT usage in their daily activities.

From literature review, a research on situational factors on specific topics on unethical issues over the ten years frame time has been narrowly focused on the efficacy of instituting codes or act, which aimed to reduce academic dishonesty, as well as discussed by Laudon and Laudon (2009), Stir and

Raymond (2009) and O'Brian and Marakas (2008). Besides that, there are many reasons why the ethics of computer users diverse among countries, likewise social acceptability factors, tendency of being caught and cross-cultural differences factors. In fact, the unethical behavior on IT usage that is stemmed from cross-cultural differences can't be said to be same for all countries. So far, there is lack of evidence to what extent does students' behavior towards IT can be claimed as vary among countries. Therefore this study will observe the ethics among international students towards IT, particularly Universiti Utara Malaysia international students from Indonesia, Thailand, China, Iraq, and Pakistan.

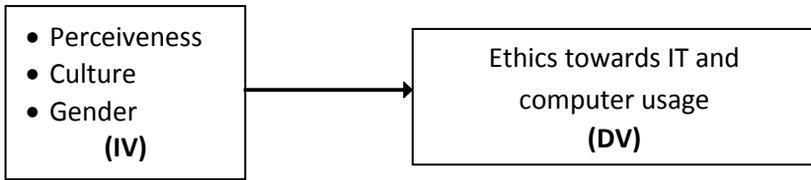
Finally, another factor in consideration to IT ethics is gender difference, as well as discussed by Stir and Raymond (2009). Similarly, researchers such as Solomon and O'Brien (1990) has identified gender as important factors, whereas women rely on prevailing social norms. Meanwhile, O'Brian and Marakas (2009) also found women to reach ethical judgments based on relationship rather than rights or rules. However, this is not supported by Abdul Manaf Bohari (2006) who found male students demonstrated significantly more negative attitudes towards cheating than female students even though reported frequencies of cheating behavior for both sexes were nearly the same. Thus, the study will examine the effects of gender in IT usage as a contributor to the ethicality matter of IT research areas. In addition, by using international students as case study it's possible to find the latest trend on what actually occurs on IT ethics.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

- (i) To identify what is perceived as ethical behavior in IT usage.
- (ii) To observe the ethics practiced among international students towards IT usage.
- (iii) To examine the effects of gender in computer and IT usage.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

For this study, descriptive research is designed to meet the characteristic of research questions that emphasize the relative amounts of some variables or the extent to which some variables are related. This descriptive research design was chosen to meet the objectives of the research and Figure 1 below shows visually the diagram of research conceptual model that connects variables involved.



**Figure 1:** Research Conceptual Model

Survey is done using a questionnaire adapted from Etter, Cramer, and Finn (2006) and some rearrangements were done due to the purpose of study, as well as appear in Table 1. Distribution of the questionnaires was held in class on March 9, 2008 and 120 sets of questionnaires had been given away for each respondent to be completed and 100 sets of questionnaire were re-collected on the spot right after the respondents had completed answering them. It took only twenty-minute duration to complete the survey.

This questionnaire is divided into two parts, Part A, for demographic background (respondent profile) and Part B. Specifically, Part B is divided into three sections, such as Section 1 Ethics concerning the use of software program; Section 2 Ethics concerning the code of conduct in academic field; and Section 3 Ethics concerning one’s doing over the Internet and computer use. Overall, Part B contains 24 ethical items that require respondents to select from a 5-Likert scale points.

**Table 1:** Items Used in Questionnaire based on Specific Category

Sections	Items
Section 1 (C1): Ethics concerning the use of software program	Q1: Install non-genuine software Q4: Use website/software to create bibliography Q19: Use free software in the Internet to complete assignment such as translating text Q23: Use software program that select important points and organize them into summary Q24: Use character spacing, line spacing, and margin size option in software to increase the length of paper/assignment
Section 2 (C2): Ethics concerning the code of conduct in academic field	Q7: Copy and paste essay from the Internet and admit it as yours Q8: Copy file on disk contain friends’ assignment and admit it as yours Q9: Buy paper online and admit it as yours Q10: Carrying instant message conversation during computerized exam Q13: List websites that you don’t use for assignment in bibliography Q14: Copy two lines of text directly from reference source without acknowledge them Q15: Copy and paste one sentence from online sources without acknowledge them

	<p>Q16: Change few words in paragraph copied and pasted from the Internet so it need not to be cited</p> <p>Q17: Use series of paragraph copied and pasted from the Internet without acknowledge them</p> <p>Q18: Write summary based on online abstract of journal</p> <p>Q20: Your friends e-mail you their complete assignment that give you framework to base your work on</p> <p>Q21: Read online summary/review rather than read the full-length version</p> <p>Q22: Change few lines of paper you have written for one class and submit it for another class</p>
<p>Section 3 (C3): Ethics concerning one's doing over Internet and computer use</p>	<p>Q2: Explore friends' PC without their knowledge</p> <p>Q3: Create virus and its antivirus to gain profit</p> <p>Q5: Surf the Internet with no purpose</p> <p>Q6: Access websites contains nudity/pornography for fun</p> <p>Q11: Receive and use e-mail from friends to get their exam questions they just completed</p> <p>Q12: Send e-mail to friends to pass the exam questions you just completed</p>

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

### *Respondents Background*

Table 2 below shows the demographic background of the respondents. Out of 100, 44% respondents are male and females are 56% aged between 19 and 24 years old. Majority of respondents are from China (26%), followed by Thailand (20%), Pakistan (20%), Indonesia (18%), and Libya/Arab Countries (16%).

**Table 2:** Demographic Background

Items	Attributes	Results	
		Count	%
Gender	Male	44	44
	Female	56	56
Country	Indonesia	18	18
	Thailand	20	20
	China	26	26
	Libya/Arab Countries	16	16
	Pakistan	20	20
	Age	Below 20 years old	14
	20 to 25 years old	86	86

### *Perceive Ethical Behavior in IT Use*

For section 1, most frequent scores rated for item number (1), (4), (19), (23), and (24) under this category is 2, 4, 2, 2, and 4 with means 2.56, 3.18, 1.98, 2.92, and 4 each. Score rated number 2 represents 'agree', while score 4 represents 'disagree'. The three items scores "2" is items (1), (19), and (23) which showed that the respondents agreed on and perceived those items to be said as ethical behaviors with mean scored between 1 to 2. Possibly they viewed the act of installing non-genuine software to be ethical since they assumed that their financial concern as students unable them to purchase the original one. In addition, they view the act of using software to help them doing translation and selecting important points and organize them into summary as an advantage instrument of the advanced of the new technology which are very beneficial. Finally, score for item number (4) and (24) however were rated as 'disagree' with means 3.18 and 4 each. Meaning that respondents did not agree on the act of using a website or software to create bibliography, as well as use the software in character spacing, line spacing and margin sizes options to increase length of their paper or assignment as unethical behavior.

For section 2, items (17), (18), and (20) were scored "2" with means 1.82, 2.84, and 2.62 each. This shows that respondents agreed on and perceived the act of copying and pasting series of paragraph without acknowledging them, and this also includes activities such as write summary based on online abstract of a journal and rely on their friends' complete assignment to base their work on to be as ethical behavior. The rest were scored '4' and '5' which representing the degree of disagree and strongly disagree for that particular items. Specifically, the act of copying and pasting series of paragraph without any acknowledgement should be avoided. Moreover, the respondent claims that act of taking the abstract of a journal or any articles and rely on friends' complete assignment as a base for their own work were also did not seem ethical.

Lastly, in section C, items (3), and (6) scored "5" with means 4.36 and 4.56 each. This shows that the respondent perceived the act of creating virus and its antivirus for profit purpose and accessing website contains nudity/pornography as not being ethical behavior. While the rest, for items (2), (5), (11) and (12), were scored "2" with means 3.14, 2.14, 2.62, and 1.78 each and meaning that the respondents perception regarding the act of exploring friends PC, surfing the Internet without any purposes, receiving and using e-mail from friends to get their exam questions, and sending e-mail to friends to distributes the exam questions were perceived as ethical behavior. However, all of score are in middle range.

### *The Ethics among International Students towards IT*

The result shows items agreed on what is perceived as ethical behavior on IT usage consists of items (1), (2), (5), (11), (12), (17), (19), and (23), as well as shown in Table 3 (rated as strongly agree and agree). Students from Pakistan shared their beliefs with students from Thailand to agree with the act of surfing the Internet with no purpose, sending e-mail to friends to share the exam question they just completed and use series of paragraph copied and pasted from the Internet without acknowledging them to be as the ethical behaviors. Overall 90% of Thailand's students also accept the act of using free software in the Internet to complete their assignment such as translating text into desired language. Meanwhile, students from Indonesia believe in installing the non-genuine software to be ethical (66.7%) while students from Libya/Arab Countries believe in the behavior of receiving and using e-mail from friends to get their exam questions they just completed to be ethical (75%).

### *The Effects of Gender in ethics and IT*

Shortly, all categories of items C1, C2, and C3 were used. However, after using cross-tabulation; it is evident that more females agreed with items categorized (under section 1). Table 4 shows that 34 female respondents agreed on installing non-genuine software as being ethical compare to male with totally 26 respondents. Female respondents also agreed with the act of using website/software to create bibliography, use free software in the Internet to complete assignment, and use software program that select important points and organize them into summary, with total score is 20, 40 and 28 respondents, compared to only 14, 34 and 18 male respondents. However number of female respondents for item 24 is lesser than male respondents.

**Table 3:** Frequencies Table for Items Rated as 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree'

Items	Countries (Percentages)				
	Indonesia	Thailand	China	Iraq	Pakistan
Install non-genuine software (Q1)	67	50	61	62	60
Explore friends PC without their knowledge (Q2)	44	30	46	25	50
Surf the Internet with no purpose (Q5)	67	70	69	50	70
Receive and use e-mail from friends to get their exam questions they just completed (Q11)	44	50	46	75	40
Send e-mail to friends to pass the exam question you just completed (Q12)	89	90	69	87	90
Use series of paragraphs copied and pasted from the Internet without acknowledge them (Q17)	67	90	85	75	90

Use free software in the Internet to complete your assignment such as translating text (Q19)	55	90	69	75	80
Use software program that select important points and organize them into summary (Q23)	33	50	46	38	60

**Table 4:** Cross Tabulation for Ethics Concerning the Use of Software Program

Items	Scale	Gender	
		Male	Female
Install non-genuine software (Q1)	Strongly Agree	2	0
	Agree	24	34
Use website/software to create bibliography (Q4)	Strongly Agree	0	2
	Agree	14	18
Use free software in the Internet to complete your assignment such as translating text (19)	Strongly Agree	14	20
	Agree	20	20
Use software program that select important points and organize them into summary (Q23)	Strongly Agree	2	0
	Agree	16	28
Use character spacing, line spacing and margin sizes options in software to increase length of your paper (Q24)	Strongly Agree	2	0
	Agree	4	4

For section 2, items that stated females as the highest scorer of the total sum of 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' showed that female respondents were more ethical in concerning the code of conduct in academic field as compared to male respondents. Overall, all of results are shows in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Cross Tabulation for Ethics Concerning the Code of Conduct in Academic Field

Items	Scales	Gender	
		Male	Female
Copy and paste essay from the Internet and admit it as yours (Q7)	Disagree	20	38
	Strongly Disagree	0	2
Copy file on disk contain friends' assignment and admit it as yours (Q8)	Disagree	18	24
	Strongly Disagree	22	32
Buy paper online and admit it as yours (Q9)	Disagree	16	22
	Strongly Disagree	18	18
Carrying instant message conversation during computerized exam (Q10)	Disagree	12	20
	Strongly Disagree	16	20
List websites that you don't use for assignment in bibliography (Q13)	Disagree	26	38
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
Copy two lines of text directly from reference source without acknowledge them (Q14)	Disagree	6	22
	Strongly Disagree	30	24
Copy and paste one sentence from online sources without acknowledge them (Q15)	Disagree	12	34
	Strongly Disagree	22	18

Change few words in paragraph copied and pasted from the Internet so it need not to be cited (Q16)	Disagree	22	22
	Strongly Disagree	0	2
Use series of paragraphs copied and pasted from the Internet without acknowledge them (Q17)	Disagree	2	0
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
Write summary based on online abstract of a journal (Q18)	Disagree	12	12
	Strongly Disagree	2	0
Your friends e-mail you their complete assignment that give you framework to base your work on (Q20)	Disagree	6	8
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
Read online summary/review rather than read the full-length version (Q21)	Disagree	16	28
	Strongly Disagree	8	2
Change few lines of paper you have written for one class and submit it for another class (Q22)	Disagree	22	24
	Strongly Disagree	12	20

For section 3, ethics concerning one’s doing over the Internet and computers has shows result hat there are significant difference between male and female. Table 6 shows that the number of female respondents who had ‘agree’ on the act of exploring friends’ PC without their knowledge to be an ethical is greater than male respondents. However, female respondents are tending to explore friends’ PC without their friends’ knowledge with no such unethical feeling or feel guilty. On the one hand, both male and female respondents ‘disagree’ with the act of creating virus and its antivirus to gain profit, and accessing website contains nudity/pornography for fun where females lead the males. On the other hand, both males and females were ‘agree’ with the act of surfing the Internet, and receiving and using e-mail from friends to get their exam questions they just completed as an ethical.

**Table 6:** Cross Tabulation for Ethics Concerning the Act Over the Internet and Computer

Items	Scales	Gender	
		Male	Female
Explore friends PC without their knowledge (Q2)	Agree	7	13
	Disagree	11	10
Create virus and its antivirus to gain profit (Q3)	Agree	1	0
	Disagree	18	24
Surf the Internet with no purpose (Q5)	Agree	14	19
	Disagree	20	28
Access website contains nudity/pornography for fun (Q6)	Agree	0	0
	Disagree	20	28
Receive and use e-mail from friends to get their exam questions they just completed (Q11)	Agree	10	15
	Disagree	5	3

## **DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION**

For the first objective, there is a little haziness in identifying what is perceived as ethical behavior in IT usage. Even though the questionnaire is divided into three categories, but it is quite difficult to state the items into definite perception whether it is ethical or non-ethical when it comes to the matter of IT usage. Based on the data analyzed, almost respondents answered the questionnaire proportionate to the nature of the items were built in as in original version. For example, under section 1, items such as item 1, item 19 and item 23 to be said as ethical behaviors. They have seen the items as the advantage a part from the advanced in information technology. For items under section 2, almost all respondents did not practice the right code of conduct where they perceived the act of copying and pasting series of paragraph without acknowledging them, writing summary based on online abstract of a journal, and rely on their friends' completed assignment to base their work on to be as ethical behavior. Though, the fact is that those items are supposed to be rated as non-ethical behavior in order to respect the academic integrity itself and also to gratitude the academic scholars for their contributions.

For the second objective, the analysis was done by ratings each item based on results for items in section 1 and section 2. For example, 90% of respondents from Thailand agreed on the act of sending e-mail to friends to share the exam question that they just completed, use series of paragraphs copied and pasted from the Internet without acknowledge them, and use free software in the Internet to complete their assignment such as translating text; as ethical. While 100% respondents from Indonesia, Iraq, and Pakistan believe the act of accessing website contains nudity/pornography for fun was non-ethical. In reviewing the empirical literature on college cheating over the last 10 years, Elm and Nichols (1993) for examples research on situational factors has been narrowly focused on the efficacy of instituting honor codes to reduce academic dishonesty stemmed from cross-cultural differences. Therefore it is true that the ethics among international students towards IT varied among countries and are influenced by cross-cultural differences.

Lastly, the third objective is to examine the effect of gender in computer and IT ethics. On the one hand, Davis (1993) and Deborah (2004) found regarding gender as an indicator of ethical or unethical behavioral intention. In fact, Davis (1993) noted that men rely on their attitudes toward an action when deciding to perform a computing act, whereas women rely on prevailing social norms. On the other hand, Deborah (2004) believed about women to reach ethical judgments based on relationship rather than rights or rules. In fact this study focus more on the third objective, which was to examine the gender whether males or females had dominant influence in the ethicality matter regarding IT usage. Here, almost all categories rated with ethical and

non-ethical behavior were dominated by females. This possibly because the proportions for female respondents were greater than male respondents, where 44 were males and the rest of 52 were females of total respondents. Therefore the analysis done found that female were more ethical in concerning the use of software program, where females agreed on installing non-genuine software, using website/software to create bibliography, using free software in the Internet to complete assignment, using software program to select important points and transform into summary and also using character spacing, line spacing, and margin sizes options in software to increase the length of the paper to be as the ethical behavior.

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