

**AN INVESTIGATION OF ETHICAL PREDISPOSITIONS
TOWARDS I.T.- RELATED PIRACY AND PRIVACY
INTRUSION USING THE INTENTION BASED MODEL: A
STUDY OF SOFTWARE PROFESSIONALS IN INDIA**

by

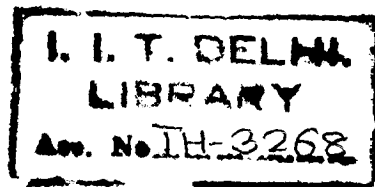
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Submitted
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to the



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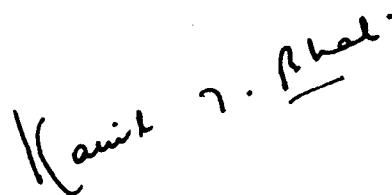
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CERTIFICATE

The thesis entitled “*An Investigation of Ethical Predispositions Towards IT related Piracy and Privacy Intrusion Using the Intention Based Model: A Study of Software Professionals in India*”, being submitted by Ms Nivedita Debnath to the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), is a record of *bona fide* research work carried out by her. She has worked under my supervision, and has fulfilled the requirements for the submission of this thesis, which has attained the standard required for Ph.D. degree of the Institute. The results presented in this thesis have not been submitted elsewhere for the award of any degree or diploma.



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Abstract

Society is getting increasingly dependent on IT. Though IT has given tremendous power of speed and increased availability of data on one hand, on other hand, it has also raised many ethical issues such as piracy, privacy, accuracy and security (Mason, 1986). Piracy and intrusion of privacy are two major ethical issues that have arisen in the context of IT usage. As some economists point out, soon we will be required to pay for our privacy, similarly ease of copying has made the issues of piracy very prominent in the current society. In this study we first explore whether people perceive software piracy and privacy intrusion (in terms of employee monitoring and e- mail monitoring) as ethical or unethical. Since the personal norms and cognitive logics are important, we next explore the logics that people use for their perceptions. Thus, in this study first we report the findings of in-depth interviews conducted to find out whether people perceive these various situations (of piracy and intrusion of privacy) as ethical or not, and the logics they give for their perceptions. Interviews have been analyzed using grounded theory. Grounded theory “is a qualitative method that is inductively discovered by careful collection and analysis of qualitative empirical data. This method does not begin with theory, and then seek to prove it. Instead, it begins with an area of study and allows theory to emerge from that area of study” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990 p 23). Since the interviews are open-ended, they are likely to give insights into people’s mental models/personal norms as they are; instead of imposing the assumed models. Our exploration of the cognitive moral philosophies reveals that for privacy intrusion, respondents give principled arguments both in favour of and against perceiving it as ethical. Thus, it seems that privacy intrusion may not by itself be unethical, however its

application might make it so. For piracy, though, the results were more clear cut, those who consider it unethical, give principled reasons (lack of justice) however those who do not consider it unethical provide ego- defensive logics. The second focus of the study was to understand the likelihood of a behaviour occurring in a real life situation and the factors influencing it. For this purpose we used Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as the framework to assess the intention of behaviour related to piracy and privacy intrusion. For this purpose data was collected through a questionnaire from 379 software professionals working in 16 different IT organizations based in north, south and west regions of India. Main study variables were: attitude towards specific situations of piracy and privacy intrusion, intention to act, perceived behavioural controls like ease of use, opportunity, organizational code of conduct and law; and subjective norms like peer perception, managerial perception and organizational values. Apart from these we used personality as an external factor as suggested by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). We took Indian personality construct called *Guna*, which has been identified in traditional Indian religious literature called *Gita*, as a description of ethical behaviour. The Indian scripture *Gita* identifies three related personality constructs, collectively referred as *Gunas*. The three *Gunas* are *Sattwa* (Illumination), *Rajas* (Passion) and *Tamas* (Dullness). Since there is no measure available, a scale was developed to measure the *Gunas*. Relationships between personality, attitude and intention were tested after establishing the psychometric properties of the scale used.

The questionnaire survey reveals a close link between attitude and intention providing strong support for intention-based explanation. Further, behavioral controls like opportunity significantly impact the intention, whereas peer pressure and managerial pressure are significant determinants of subjective norms that predict intention to act. Finally the results are discussed for their implications.

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