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Investigation of Elementary School Students' Opinions Related to Unethical Behavior in the use of Information and Communication Technologies

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Abstract

This study is a descriptive study carried out to determine the opinions of elementary school students related to unethical behavior and the causes of these behaviors in the use of information and communication technologies (ICT). For this aim, opinions of students' in regard to unethical behavior and the causes of unethical behavior in the use of information and communication technologies were collected. The working group of the study consisted of 358 students who attend to elementary school during the school year of 2011-2012. Findings indicated that the participants' awareness level was high on the unethical behavior of ICT. According to the results, the causes of unethical behaviors of the elementary school students in the use of ICT were listed as "not having enough knowledge about legal responsibilities, friends' roles, social responsibilities, not having sufficient knowledge about ethics, moral values, family, believing that no one will be impaired, financial status, and religious beliefs".

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1. Introduction

Primary school students' are in intense interaction with information and communication technologies (ICT) during their school and social life. If students' intensive interactions with ICT are developed in the ethical and legal framework, possible future problems may be prevented. Since primary school age children are in a constant process of socialization through the family, school, social environment and the mass media, they are one of the most affected groups by the popular culture, computers, and popular culture products such as the Internet (Kaya & Tuna, 2010). Technology has become an integral part of everyday life. Individuals in this new era have become self-sufficient with the help of technology and were alienated against society (Kocacık, 2003). For this reason ethical dilemmas in the use of ICT may lead to unwanted behavior patterns. Ethical dilemma arises when argued righteous

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are contrary to each other on either side. It is the conflict of two or more values and the difficulty of the selection among those values (Kutlu, 2008; Şen, 2009; Toraman & Akcan, 2003).

1.1. Purpose of the study

In today's society, radical changes have emerged in economic, cultural and social structures with the rapid developments in information and communication technologies. This situation has brought along with issues about unethical behavior in the use of ICT and ethical dilemmas (Yüksel, 2002). It has been widely observed that today's students' use ICT at every stage in their education and social lives. During their usage of ICT negative behavior forms occur. For this reason, taking necessary measures about unethical behavior in the use of ICT by determining students' levels of awareness about the potential negative behavior and by recognizing the causes of unethical behavior may be considered very important. In this context, this research aimed to determine the opinions of elementary school students related to unethical behavior and the causes of these behaviors in the use of ICT.

2. Methodology

This study is a descriptive study. The purpose of the study was to investigate students' opinions about unethical behavior and the causes of unethical behavior in the use of information and communication technologies. Thus, answering the question which was formed as "What are students' views about unethical behavior in the use of information and communication technologies?" was the main aim of this study. Data used in this study was originally collected for a thesis written by the first author under the advisement of the second author. Only a small portion of the data collected for that research was used in this study.

2.1. Study Group

The working group of the study consisted of 358 students from various schools who attend to elementary school during the school year of 2011-2012. In terms of gender, 51.1% of the participants were female and 48.9% of them were male. In terms of class attended, 33,2% of the participants was in 6th grade, 33,8% of the participants was in 7th grade, and 33,0% of the participants was in 8th grade.

2.2. Data Collection and Data Analysis

In collecting data two instruments, developed by the researchers, were used. The first instrument, "Personal Information Form" was used to gather information about participants' demographic characteristics. The second instrument, "Unethical Behavior in the use of Information and Communication Technologies Survey" was used to find out students' opinions about unethical behavior and the cause of these behaviors in the use of information and communication technologies. In analyzing the data frequencies and percentages were reported.

3. Findings and Discussion

According to the distribution of students' opinions about unethical behavior in the use of information and communication technologies as displayed in Table 1, it is seen that participants' awareness level was high on unethical behavior of ICT.

Students' opinions about unethical behavior in the items of the questionnaire examined and it seen that unethical behaviors in social networking environments, knowledge, documents and studies gained over the internet without reference such as plagiarism have often been found like an unethical behavior by the participants as displayed in Table 1. For all that; findings about sharing and copying of unlicensed software were examined, it seen that students have revealed more ethical dilemmas about these behaviors in the use of ICT more than other substances. In

addition, students' opinions about sharing and duplicating of unlicensed software were determined and it was found that perception of students' opinions of "ethical behavior" was more than other substances with (18,72 + 5,86=24,58) 24.58% and perception of students' opinions of "undecided" was more than other substances with 14.25% as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. The Distribution of Students' Opinions about Unethical Behavior in the use of ICT

<i>Unethical behavior in the use of ICT</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Using software without making any payment	f	209	108	25	8	8	358
	%	58,38	30,17	6,98	2,23	2,24	100
2. Using programs with fake serial numbers	f	217	104	13	10	14	358
	%	60,61	29,05	3,63	2,79	3,92	100
3. Using illegal/unlicensed software.	f	220	110	7	5	16	358
	%	61,45	30,73	1,96	1,40	4,46	100
4. Copying programs without getting permission	f	210	111	14	7	16	358
	%	58,66	31,01	3,91	1,96	4,46	100
5. Using licensed items such as photographs, pictures, and animations without permission from the owner	f	196	121	21	8	12	358
	%	54,75	33,80	5,87	2,23	3,35	100
6. Distributing serial numbers (license information) of programs through the Internet	f	185	103	44	13	13	358
	%	51,68	28,77	12,29	3,63	3,63	100
7. Distributing license breaking programs through the Internet	f	190	103	39	12	14	358
	%	53,07	28,77	10,90	3,35	3,91	100
8. Selling copies of CDs of licensed programs without permission	f	209	110	15	11	13	358
	%	58,38	30,73	4,19	3,07	3,63	100
9. Sharing the copies of licensed software with friends	f	131	88	51	67	21	358
	%	36,59	24,58	14,25	18,72	5,86	100
10. Connecting the Internet through neighbors' wireless network connection without permission or simply by breaking their password.	f	199	108	25	13	13	358
	%	55,59	30,17	6,98	3,63	3,63	100
11. Downloading mp3, movie or game from illegal web sites.	f	176	103	41	17	21	358
	%	49,16	28,77	11,45	4,75	5,87	100
12. Distributing and/or sharing mp3, movies or games which obtained from illegal web sites on the Internet.	f	175	104	43	20	16	358
	%	48,88	29,05	12,01	5,59	4,47	100
13. Attempting to communicate with others using fake credentials on social networking sites (facebook, twitter, etc.).	f	186	118	23	13	18	358
	%	51,96	32,96	6,42	3,63	5,03	100
14. Giving false information by hiding the identity information on forum sites.	f	185	119	26	10	18	358
	%	51,68	33,24	7,26	2,79	5,03	100
15. Making comments with fake account on forum sites.	f	190	128	13	11	16	358
	%	53,07	35,75	3,63	3,07	4,48	100
16. Using a picture or video file belong to someone else without the consent and approval of the owner.	f	197	118	23	7	13	358
	%	55,03	32,96	6,42	1,96	3,63	100
17. Sending anonymous e-mail messages with disturbing content to others.	f	210	104	21	9	14	358
	%	58,66	29,05	5,87	2,51	3,91	100
18. Intentionally, sending infected e-mail message to others.	f	215	103	15	6	19	358
	%	60,06	28,76	4,19	1,68	5,31	100
19. Using personal information and ideas belonging to others without getting permission	f	198	111	21	10	18	358
	%	55,31	31,01	5,87	2,79	5,02	100
20. Disturbing people with hiding personal identification information which possible in the cyber world	f	208	109	18	7	16	358
	%	58,10	30,45	5,03	1,96	4,46	100
21. Using ready-made homework assignments prepared by others by downloading form the Internet.	f	146	114	41	39	18	358
	%	40,78	31,84	11,45	10,89	5,04	100
22. Getting ready-made homework assignments form homework sites.	f	177	92	38	34	17	358
	%	49,44	25,70	10,61	9,50	4,75	100
23. Submitting others' projects or assignments found on the Internet as mine	f	195	107	24	14	18	358
	%	54,47	29,89	6,70	3,91	5,03	100

24. Using information that found on the Internet which doesn't belong to us on project without citing.	f	189	101	33	19	16	358
	%	52,79	28,21	9,22	5,31	4,47	100

- Definitely Not Ethical Behavior, 2- Not Ethical Behavior, 3- Undecided, 4- Ethical Behavior, 5- Definitely Ethical Behavior

As related to this item of survey; concept of distance created by virtual environment could be argued that distance was caused for students tend to thinking of sharing with friends was an "ethical behavior" and students rather than considering the interests of them and his/her close colleagues to overseeing the owner of software's rights. It can be difficult for individuals to empathize with other people about the consequences of unethical behavior in the use of ICT because of the distance and communication problems created by virtual environment. For this reason individuals may prefer to consider their own interests (Torun, 2007).

Distribution of students' opinions about the causes of unethical behavior in the use of information and communication technologies displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. The Distribution of Students' Opinions about the Causes of Unethical Behavior in the use of ICT

<i>The causes of unethical behavior in the use of ICT</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. A person's circle of friends' effect on unethical behavior in the use of ICT.	f	13	22	69	128	126	358
	%	3,63	6,15	19,2	35,7	35,2	100
2. A person's family effect on unethical behavior in the use of ICT.	f	21	54	87	104	92	358
	%	5,87	15,0	24,3	29,0	25,7	100
3. A person's financial situation effect on unethical behavior in the use of ICT.	f	29	60	95	96	78	358
	%	8,10	16,7	26,5	26,8	21,7	100
4. When a person uses ICT in an unethical manner, that person believes in that nobody will be impaired in this situation.	f	19	53	91	105	90	358
	%	5,31	14,8	25,4	29,3	25,1	100
5. When a person uses ICT in an unethical manner, that person believes in that anyone can't notice him or her.	f	28	48	71	122	89	358
	%	7,82	13,4	19,8	34,0	24,8	100
6. When a person uses ICT in an unethical manner, that person doesn't have enough knowledge about ethic.	f	8	30	73	135	112	358
	%	2,23	8,38	20,3	37,7	31,2	100
7. A person's moral values effect on unethical behavior in the use of ICT.	f	17	47	75	111	108	358
	%	4,75	13,1	20,9	31,0	30,1	100
8. A person's religion beliefs effect on unethical behavior in the use of ICT.	f	35	58	102	78	85	358
	%	23,7	21,7	28,4	16,2	9,78	100
9. When a person uses ICT in an unethical manner, that person doesn't have enough knowledge about legal responsibilities.	f	9	32	58	120	139	358
	%	2,51	8,94	16,2	33,5	38,8	100
10. When a person uses ICT in an unethical manner, that person doesn't pay attention to social responsibilities.	f	11	30	68	108	141	358
	%	3,07	8,38	18,9	30,1	39,3	100

1- Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Undecided, 4- Agree, 5- Strongly Agree

According to the distribution of students' opinions about the cause of unethical behavior in the use of information and communication technologies as displayed in Table 2, it is seen that the causes of unethical behaviors of the elementary school students in the use of ICT were listed as “not having enough knowledge about legal responsibilities, friends' roles, social responsibilities, not having sufficient knowledge about ethics, moral values, family, believing that no one will be impaired, financial status, and religious beliefs”.

4. The Results and Suggestions

Findings indicated that the participants' awareness level was high on unethical behavior of ICT. It can be said that the scope of ICT course offered in schools, being taken up issues such as cyber crimes, types of software according to usage rights could be contributed the formation of general awareness about ethical behavior. In this

context, it can be said that ICT course can be an important router to ensure elementary school students' effective, efficient and ethical usage in ICT.

It was found that “not having sufficient knowledge about ethics and not having enough knowledge about legal responsibilities” were the main issues/factors causing the unethical behaviors in using ICT. Thus, it could be suggested that starting from the elementary school, every individual should be provided with training on ethical issues. In this way, disadvantages that individuals may face such as potential security threats and ethical dilemmas can be minimized in the use of computer and internet technologies.

In addition, since ICT teachers are role model for their students, especially in the use of ICT, those teachers at schools could be provided with training on how computer and Internet technologies can be used effectively, efficiently, and ethically. It would also be advisable that ethics and issues related to ethics could be included in the content of ICT related courses of the programs in higher education institutions where prospective computer teachers are trained.

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