Students’ Ethical Decision-Making in an Information Technology Context: A Theory of Planned Behavior Approach

Cynthia K. Riemenschneider
Baylor University
Management Information Systems Department
Hankamer School of Business
Waco, TX 76798, USA
c_riemenschneider@baylor.edu

Lori N. K. Leonard
University of Tulsa
Management Information Systems Department
Collins College of Business
Tulsa, OK 74104, USA
lori-leonard@utulsa.edu

Tracy S. Manly
University of Tulsa
School of Accounting
Collins College of Business
Tulsa, OK 74104, USA
tracy-manly@utulsa.edu

ABSTRACT

Business educators have increased the focus on ethics in the classroom. In order for students to become ethical professionals, they must first be held to an ethical standard as students. As information technology continues to permeate every aspect of students’ lives, it becomes increasingly important to understand student decision-making in this context. This study seeks to apply a modified form of the Theory of Planned Behavior to assess influences on behavioral intention when IT is involved in an academic setting. Attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, moral judgment, and perceived importance are investigated. After pilot testing four scenarios and the instrument, 90 survey responses are gathered from undergraduate business students from two southwestern universities in the United States. Using SmartPLS, results are assessed by scenario. The results indicate that attitude, subjective norm, moral judgment and perceived importance are significant in some of the scenarios, whereas perceived behavioral control is not significant in any scenarios. A discussion of the contributions of this study, as well as limitations, is provided.

Keywords: Ethics, Information and communication technologies, Student attitudes