

Ethical and Social Issues of Information Systems

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Information System and Society

The information system has transformed the way information is transmitted and communicated from one place or person to another. This use of computer technology has allowed business and social communities to interrupt, interconnect, and manage data among themselves. Therefore, this system has helped organizations by providing them with efficiency, innovation, ease, speed, quality, security, accuracy, and reliability of information transferability. However, the innovation brought by the information system in data collection, processing, and storage practices has also introduced many social and ethical concerns that require attention and adequate solutions.

There are many challenges faced by common people, businesses, and national and international institutions. The millions of computers are linked with millions of miles of optical fibre, wires, and airwaves connecting people around the globe (Mason, 1986). We are living in the age of technology, where information is being handled and employed by people who want to retain, control and distribute information as per their desire for various purposes (Mason, 1986). The information systems can only be successful when they are reliable, accurate, and efficient so that data can be in an appropriate area when required.

As we humans live together in an information society rather than in isolation, enforcement of laws is essential, but it also requires some unwritten etiquettes, collective norms and ethics to continue social harmony. Ethics is an important concern in information systems because businesses that adopt ethical practices will sustain, grow, and earn consumer acceptance in the market. The unethical practices adopted by organizations have caused social turmoil and interference from authorities, creating problems for them and disturbing the whole information system. Besides ethics, social and political issues are very important to consider because all these concerns are closely related (Beauchamp, Bowie, & Arnold, 2004).

The social issues about information systems dwell on the privacy of individuals and organizations. It is important to note that all data is not meant to be publicly accessed and discussed by the general public. So in the case where sensitive data about an individual, business, or institution is illegally accessed, it counts as cybercrime and regulation procedure is followed for accountability and penalization (Beauchamp, Bowie, & Arnold, 2004). The ethical dilemma encountered by the manager is usually reflected in the social and political debate. Therefore, it is very important to manage the ethical, social, and political issues on strategic levels, but before proceeding to the solutions, it is important to highlight the main issues.

Non-material values become highly significant when society becomes affluent. Informed consumers will prefer those corporations that function in a feasibly ethical environment, thereby alarming those organizations that altogether ignore the practice and scope of the moral environment. Therefore, those with ethical aspects grab the opportunity.

Managing Ethics

Ethical responsibility is implied in everyone when performing a particular function in a particular environment. Webster's dictionary defines ethics as the doctrine which distinguishes good from bad. In this respect, when business is conducted with justice and truth, it will be a business with ethics. Other ethical aspects include robust and fair competition, corporate behavior, consumer autonomy, social responsibility, public relations, and satisfying the requirements of society (Simmons, 1994). There are three theories that click the mind when we talk about the management ethics of a corporation (Beauchamp, Bowie, & Arnold, 2004):

- Theory of justice
- Theory based on rights
- Utilitarian theory

Action and plan, according to utilitarian theory, can be assessed based on their results or outcomes. This assertion is backed by the fact that the actions are supposed to yield well to the great majority of people.

People have fundamental rights in an organization as the theory based on rights suggests. It implies an organization should value and consider people's rights and must avoid exploiting what they deserve in a humanitarian sense. In an organization, the managers are responsible for initiating ethics to prolong their survival, meaning that our daily actions need to be oriented to ethical concepts (Simmons, 1994). Appropriate company policy can be established to set up an ethical business atmosphere; a committee can be set up to train and educate managers as regards organizational ethics so that they can demonstrate a code of conduct in a corporation (Beauchamp, Bowie, & Arnold, 2004).

Factors that raise ethical standards

The enhanced concern of an informed public and public disclosure are the important factors raised in this respect. These elements, together with highly educated professionals and government regulations, cause organizations to exercise ethics. In this regard, necessary provisions have been established. Unethical managers should be terminated from the corporation. We should, as being another significant point, use a code of conduct to resolve our issues. This is because people try to use any means when they encounter an issue. But in the presence of a code of conduct, we do not tend to be unethical in our resolutions. On the other hand, the key responsibility is to educate ethics

to people when they are in schools and universities. He/she also has to develop these ethics or codes of conduct by family, knowing the family values and their scope. In an organization, Whistle Blowing is an effective way to encourage ethical discipline in a corporation which will make people aware of unethical practices. Making necessary changes is the responsibility of the managers in the appropriate organizational environment according to the need to know, customer expectations, and global warming to respond quickly to environmental changes. The key motive is to bar and protect people from practising unethical behaviour. In the olden days, there was caring, loyalty, integrity, trust, and the habit of keeping promises in a corporation which helped the organizational culture to develop, but people will do anything nowadays because their sole motive is to profit from the organization. Whistle Blowing, therefore, works for the accountability of business and enforces environmental laws in that case (Simmons, 1994).

Technological aspects of ethics

There are many advantages and disadvantages of technology. Manager operations are in a complex environment who, other management inclusive, takes necessary decisions based on the environment. Therefore, it is the main focus of the organizations to establish an environment favourable to society as well as to the business; every corporation has some responsibility towards society and individuals. Therefore, nowadays, corporations are operating to set up social responsiveness to incorporate policies and operations to the social environment in such ways as will benefit both the society and the company. Ethics, therefore, deals with moral obligations and duties, what is good or what is bad. Technology has helped to establish a value for the product manufactured, achieve economies of scale, and simplify the operation, helping to minimize production costs and giving more revenue to the organizations for products manufactured (Beauchamp, Bowie, & Arnold, 2004). What a corporation can do in case of increased revenues is to work in the best interests of society, providing those items that satisfy customer needs, providing more employment opportunities, and keeping nature away from the emission of wastage, thereby reducing the chances of environmental issues.

Legal Issues in Information Systems

In Information Technology, the Legal Issues is devised for managers and technologists responsible for implementing and creating policies for the protection of IT resources within government agencies or private corporations. Surveys are established for understanding regulatory laws, [intellectual property](#), crimes, and privacy that establish boundaries and liability related to an organization's information systems; practical aspects and issues of these legal implications are focused on in this (Beauchamp, Bowie, & Arnold, 2004). In an organization, working people are made to suggest standard practices as well as spot issues to minimize risk. It activates cyber defences by ensuring a preliminary look at the surrounding and legal issues.

Individuals use the original methods to protect themselves from trouble in the future while operating

information systems. If we make use of pirated versions or unauthorized versions of software, we tend to face this serious trouble (Beauchamp, Bowie, & Arnold, 2004). The security system or the firewall is not inclined to provide any assistance for such systems because these systems can be seriously impacted by spammers, hackers, etc. Therefore, we should try only originals to get maximum safety and protection from damages in case anything happens in the future.

Ethical Issues of the Information Age

According to Richard O. Mason, there are four main ethical issues being faced in this age of information which are discussed in this section (Mason, 1986). The information develops the intellectual capital that shapes human life and enables them to secure their self-esteem. This social contract among people is threatened by four ethical issues in this information age, named privacy, accuracy, property, and accessibility- PAPA (Mason, 1986).

Privacy: This concern relates to the questions about what information should be shared. With whom? What information should be forced to keep to ones' self only? The privacy concern has increased the importance of information sensitivity and its value on a strategic level, so it is required to be private and not shared.

The privacy of an individual is very important to his/her information. Personal information is required legally by many organizations for different functions, e.g., banks require personal information for the safety of funds and security to ensure anti-money laundering, theft, and security. The individuals must have to know about the intended purpose of the organization, which is asking for it, and also the privacy protection laws.

Accuracy: This concern is related to the question that who is going to be responsible for the authenticity of the information. If the authenticity hurts, who is going to be set up for the inaccurate information being conveyed and loss occurring in the result?

In an information system, inaccurate data will bring the same results, so it is essential to ensure data integrity while using, referring to, and citing it. The validity and correctness of the information involve the data verification checks and reliability of sources from where it is collected. For instance, the data collection procedure in research requires data integrity to generalize the results in a related context.

Property: The third ethical issue is the property of the information. Who is conveying the information, and at what price? Who owns the ways and channels through which information is being transferred?

The complex issue of privacy relates to the intellectual property of the information, and it is important to disseminate the information with the replication and preserve the original version (Kizza, 2007). The institutions try to maintain their intellectual property through patents, copyrights, confidentiality laws, and encryption. For instance, the official documents, products, and services have copyrights owned by the specific organization, and other organizations are not allowed to use their formulas,

products, and documents without their permission.

Accessibility: This concern relates to the questions of what is right for an individual or organization to access information and what are the conditions under which this access is obtained.

The last main ethical issue is accessibility to the information data. In general, information systems should be designed in such a way that individuals must have access to educational information through databases, the Internet, libraries, and other sources (Kizza, 2007). However, sensitive information, e.g., personal information on individuals, examination papers, and research articles not intended to be shared publicly, and sensitive information about national and international institutions is not meant to be shared on public sources without legitimate approval (Kizza, 2007).

Social Issues in Information Systems

The information system has many social issues that are triggered by unethical behaviours. These social problems have a great impact on culture and society. Due to the advancement of technology, various moral and political issues are the main cause of social unrest and unethical practices (Laudon & Laudon, 2015). The information system has made the social structure very complex as it is very tough to avoid privacy invasion and protect traditional norms and values from being violated through the impact of globalization. Cultural issues are the most linked with technology because of the conceptualization of social issues and their related underpinnings (Beauchamp, Bowie, & Arnold, 2004). The social issues mainly include the topics of culture, relationships, law and order, behaviour patterns & importance of cultural identity, use of information, health & safety, and accountability.

Culture: The issues of education, uneven distribution of wealth, and multiethnic and multigenerational workforce are commonly discussed in society. The information systems have made it difficult to learn the latest knowledge for all as this latest education can be possessed by privileged social classes only, which is increasing disparity in society. Therefore, a specific educated class is getting benefit from the technology in a true sense. Furthermore, information technology has realized the generation gap as senior citizens lack knowledge about information systems and new technology.

Relationships Issues: Unlike the past, the development of partnerships is more diverse, with distant teams working together. The relationship between buyers, sellers, and suppliers has become easy, but it has also created social issues like lack of trust and low moral values. Many cases have been reported where people have used personal and business information for their stake or fraud purposes.

Law and Order Issues: The national and international databases have information about millions and billions of people for identity purposes. However, the cybercrime practices and hacking of these sensitive websites have laid the foundation for many law and order situations. Nowadays, it is very easy to access someone's information through social networking sites, but the cases of ATM scamming and using fake SIM cards and national identity cards have made it very difficult for law enforcement agencies to maintain peace.

Cultural Behavior and Identity Issues: The pace of globalization has become possible due to the introduction of the information system. This system has enabled the business to grow on a global level due to online inventory systems and information transfer. This aspect has caused a great impact on human interaction, organizational recruitment systems, networking, and societal presence which are also transforming the cultural behaviors of people. Furthermore, people being part of the social world are more inclined towards global identity which is dangerous for traditional norms and cultural identity reservation (Jensen, Arnett, & McKenzie, 2011).

Information Usage Issues: The information is created or collected for a purpose, but inappropriate use of information can cause serious problems. For example, in the recent controversial scandal of the “Blue Whale” game in many countries (“Blue Whale Game Blamed,” 2017), the convicts had an e-mail address and information about the teenagers and children who installed the game, and it caused them to kill themselves as it was a trap from the game designers. Therefore, using technology and social websites or engines has various risks attached to it.

Health and Safety: The people-oriented organizations have health and safety concerns faced by the workers in their workplace which require responsible regulations and acts to provide them legal cover. Most participants in information systems work on various computer stations at their work, and it is important to outline the rights and responsibilities of both employers and employees to maintain occupational health and safety.

Accountability and Control: The moral obligation related to information systems demands accountability and control over the information transfer from one point to the other. This is important to comply with the rules and regulations. For example, information gathered by the bank about clients requires complete secrecy, and the Central Bank of any country has accountability and monitoring standards for commercial banks for their evaluation and regulation purposes to avoid fraud and secure consumer rights (Beauchamp, Bowie, & Arnold, 2004).

Managing Issues and Theoretical Support

It is the responsibility of all people to be ethical in all spheres of life, no matter it is business, personal or any relations and activities. For centuries, humans have been judged on their actions, decisions, and their approach towards human interaction (Kizza, 2007). Ethics are concerned with being just and true in personal and professional relations because ethics is the main element in developing public relationships, performing corporate social responsibility, and organizational behavior. The code of ethics has drawn up various ethical theories that have generated the process of reasoning, explaining, and justifications (Kizza, 2007). But when we think about managing ethics, there are three theories that are mostly referred to; Utilitarian Theory, Theory of Justice, and Theory Based on Rights

The utilitarian theory of ethics, while planning for a project, it should be strategically analyzed, and it must have to yield long-term benefits for a large number of people in the society. This theory

suggests that an action should be examined while keeping in mind its results so that maximum good for people can be extracted from that action or plan (Beauchamp, Bowie, & Arnold, 2004). Secondly, the theory of justice focuses on the solution of problems related to distributive justice in society so that each member can enjoy the possibility of liberty by agreeing on the social contract (Rawls, 2009). Lastly, the theory based on rights considers that an organization should realize the basic human rights and value them, and they have no right to thwart the basic rights of people in society (Simmons, 1994).

All these theories have laid the foundation for managers to manage ethics in their organizations and social forums so that setup, which can be a family, business, or a state, survives longer by initializing ethics (Simmons, 1994).

Conclusion

Information technology has had a greater impact on human life in all aspects, so it is very necessary to highlight the issues associated with it. The information systems have created many ethical, social, political, and moral issues related to data privacy, integrity, accessibility, ownership, accountability or control, cultural values, behaviours and identity, and health and safety. In this paper, the main issues have been highlighted in a broader sense which is disturbing the social order on a global level (Beauchamp, Bowie, & Arnold, 2004). These ethical and social issues about individuals, groups, businesses, and institutions have a serious dramatic impact that needs to be catered to with long-term strategic approaches, research-based possible solutions, and theoretical support available in all fields.

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