



Digital Theft and Copyright Laws in Karachi Pakistan: A Case in Point

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Abstract

Background: The rapid expansion of digital technologies has intensified digital piracy and copyright infringement in Pakistan, where weak enforcement and limited public awareness continue to challenge copyright protection. Previous studies have largely focused on copyright legislation and institutional enforcement, while empirical evidence regarding users' legal, ethical, and social perceptions of digital piracy remains limited.

Objective: This study aims to examine the relationship between users' legal, ethical, and social perceptions and their attitudes toward digital piracy, unauthorized use of digital materials, and plagiarism among digital technology users in Karachi.

Methods: A quantitative descriptive-analytical design was employed involving 59 respondents selected from a population of 70 through non-probability convenience sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis.

Results: The first regression model showed that perceiving unauthorized software or data transfer as a legal violation significantly predicted attitudes toward purchasing pirated music ($\beta = 0.321$, $p = 0.025$; $R^2 = 0.263$). The second model demonstrated that perceiving pirated music purchases for others as ethically and legally problematic significantly predicted social disapproval of plagiarism ($\beta = 0.276$, $p = 0.035$; $R^2 = 0.323$).

Conclusion: The findings support Social Learning Theory and indicate that legal, ethical, and social perceptions influence attitudes toward digital piracy and plagiarism. Therefore, copyright enforcement should be complemented by digital ethics education and public awareness initiatives to strengthen responsible digital behavior.

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INTRODUCTION

The term digital theft is used when there is unauthorized access to, copying, and stealing of someone's digital work without prior permission. It is closely related to digital piracy, which involves the unauthorized copying, distribution, and reproduction of copyrighted digital content and has become a significant legal and ethical concern in the online world. The fast progress of digital technology has changed the way creative, academic, and commercial content is made, accessed, and shared. Music, movies, books, academic work, computer software, photographs, and other intellectual properties can now be copied and shared easily through websites, social media, file-sharing platforms, streaming services, and other digital tools. While digital technology has brought many benefits for both creators and users, it has also made it easier to copy and share copyrighted material without permission.

Digital piracy refers to the unauthorized copying, distribution, and reproduction of copyrighted works. Unlike older forms of copyright infringement, digital piracy can be done on a large scale, across national borders, and at a low cost. The OECD has identified several economic effects of digital piracy, one key factor being the low cost of reproducing and distributing digital content. This global nature of digital piracy has shifted the issue of copyright violations from being mainly a domestic legal concern to a technological one. Copyright enforcement is no longer just about stopping people from making unauthorized copies for personal use; it now includes the use of online piracy systems that share copyrighted content through the internet, websites, peer-to-peer networks, social media, messaging apps, and other technologies. Recent economic reviews reach a similar conclusion, showing that the near-zero marginal cost of digital reproduction combined with cross-border distribution has made copyright enforcement structurally more difficult than it was in the analogue era (Peukert & Windisch, 2025).

Recent research presented at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) shows that online copyright infringement remains a major concern in international enforcement and that new technologies require new enforcement methods. According to WIPO, there were over 219 billion visits to piracy websites worldwide in 2022. Current issues related to copyright infringement involve technologies like website blocking, monitoring, digital fingerprinting, watermarking, and notice-and-takedown procedures. This clearly shows that the issue of piracy is not just about the existence or absence of copyright laws; it is a combination of technology, availability, user behavior, understanding, ability to enforce laws, and the legitimacy of copyright protection. Comparative evidence from four Southeast Asian jurisdictions further indicates that the effectiveness of such technical measures depends less on the measures themselves than on how quickly and how consistently the underlying legal procedures permit them to be applied (Herps et al., 2025).

This issue is particularly relevant in Pakistani society, where the rapid growth of the digital sector has greatly improved people's access to the Internet and digital resources. Internet penetration in Pakistan was 57.3%, and mobile broadband subscriptions were 55.1 per 100 people. Improved connectivity has offered significant opportunities for education, communication, entertainment, and economic development, but it has also enabled the copying and distribution of copyrighted material. This research highlights the increased use of the Internet, social media, online courses, and digital applications as key contexts for the emergence of digital piracy in Pakistan.

The issue is not limited to software but includes films, music, educational materials, literary works, photographs, and other digital resources. Another example in Pakistan illustrates the gap between the presence of copyright laws and their effective enforcement. Previous studies have noted that weak enforcement, low public awareness, and inadequate regulations are serious problems in Pakistan. There have also been historical cases showing that digital piracy is an ongoing issue; according to the Business Software Alliance, 84% of personal computers in Pakistan had unlicensed software in 2010, worth around US\$217 million. Although this pertains to software piracy, it highlights the long-standing nature of the problem in Pakistan.

Indeed, in Pakistan digital theft is increasing rapidly. Most authors are largely unaware of the possibilities and procedures to protect their rights, which indicates the need for legal literacy and for providing relevant information among the people (Eshonqulov, J., & Sultonova, 2025). There are several limitations in Pakistan, such as weak enforcement, lack of awareness, and outdated legal provisions. Legislation lags behind the digital world, and as a result the dispute-resolution process for copyright infringement becomes complex and lengthy, so that most creators and copyright holders do not use the opportunity to protect their rights (Eshonqulov, J., & Sultonova, 2025).

Certain schemes can also present a risk for the theft of digital data because a noisy proportion is inserted into the cipher text (Rangel-Lugo et al., 2025). As more people use streaming platforms and share content online, cyber piracy has become increasingly advanced, and large networks of illegal websites now distribute copyrighted materials such as movies, music, and other media without permission. Peer-to-peer (P2P) technology allows people around the world to share files and data easily; however, it has faced criticism from copyright holders because some of the shared content is protected by intellectual property laws. Studies also point out the significant risks of data privacy and cyber security, particularly within the banking sector, emphasizing the urgent need for regulatory reform to address these vulnerabilities (Wang et al., 2024).

The fast-paced digital transformation in many countries has changed the way governments operate, how people communicate, and how business is conducted; at the same time, it has brought new challenges, such as ensuring cyber security, safeguarding personal data, and protecting digital rights (Hafiz, et al., 2025). Pakistan has experienced tremendous digital growth over the last few years, with internet penetration reaching over 54% in 2024, resulting in greater connectivity but also new risks (Hussain et al., 2024). National-level assessments further identify rising incidents of information security breaches, identity theft, and social-engineering attacks, driven in part by inadequate user practices and outdated regulatory frameworks (Shabbir & Adnan, 2025).

Earlier research in Pakistan has examined copyright law and digital rights from various angles. For instance, Fatima & Shah, (2023) address copyright violations and their challenges, and Rana, (2018) explores copyright awareness and practices. Muhib et al., (2025) examine Pakistan's cyber laws and digital rights, while Eshonqulov, J., & Sultonova, (2025) study legal challenges related to digital media and copyright. However, all these studies focus on legislation and institutions without conducting empirical research. Building on this body of work, the present study focuses on digital theft, online copyright violations, and the enforcement of copyright laws in Pakistan. Empirical work conducted outside Pakistan, by contrast, has tested competing behavioural models of piracy and found that the factors explaining users' intentions vary substantially depending on the theoretical lens applied, which underlines the value of examining perceptions directly rather than inferring them from legislation (Koay et al., 2024).

Theoretically, the study is grounded in Social Learning Theory (SLT), which explains learning and development by describing the ways in which people learn and develop through observing and imitating others. In the context of the digital world, when people observe others in the community pirating content freely and without any consequences, they tend to perceive online copyright infringement as the norm. Social Learning Theory has been applied in criminology to understand the causes and solutions for the prevalence of digital piracy and the ways in which social perception can be changed to prevent people from illegally downloading and pirating content (Hinduja & Ingram, 2009).

Within this framework, the study examines four interrelated constructs. Digital theft refers to stealing, copying, downloading, or using digital material such as music, videos, images, documents, or software without permission from the owner; because digital content is easily accessible in Pakistan, many users are unaware of copyright rules or ignore them, making digital theft the main variable affecting the misuse of online content. Copyright law enforcement means how effectively Pakistan implements and protects copyright rights, including government actions, legal penalties, monitoring, awareness programs, and enforcement agencies; when enforcement is weak, digital theft increases, and when it is strong, online misuse decreases (Uriel, 2025).

Unauthorized use of digital content occurs when people use someone else's digital work, such as photos, videos, research, designs, or writings, without permission, license, or credit, a practice that is common in Pakistan due to free access to digital platforms and lack of awareness (Eshonqulov, J., & Sultonova, 2025). Plagiarism of digital content refers to copying or using someone's digital material and presenting it as one's own work, which is highly common among students, content creators, and social media users because digital content can be copied easily, with digital theft playing a major role in increasing plagiarism.

The difference in perception forms the basis of this study. While previous studies have focused on legal measures and copyright infringement in terms of legislation, little has been done to investigate the impact of users' perceptions of the consequences and ethics of piracy on their attitudes towards it. The unique aspect of this study is that, whereas many studies on digital piracy have focused on legal or legislative aspects, this study examines users' perceptions of the issue using a quantitative approach based on user perception. Studies in other developing economies report a comparable pattern, in which users' attitudes and prior experience predict piracy intention more strongly than the formal legal framework on its own (Koay et al., 2022).

Specifically, based on questionnaire surveys of digital technology users in Karachi, this study analyzes the relationship between digital piracy and three key dimensions: copyright law enforcement, unauthorized use of copyrighted digital materials, and plagiarism. In this regard, the study attempts to establish the relationship between digital piracy and copyright law enforcement in Pakistan, more specifically among digital users in Karachi. It contributes to the existing literature by adding empirical findings related to the Pakistani context in terms of digital piracy, and the findings may be helpful for

policymakers, educational institutions, and other copyright holders.

Building on these constructs, the study proposes that digital theft is the initiating factor that influences copyright law enforcement and also contributes to the unauthorized use and plagiarism of digital content. Accordingly, it hypothesizes that digital theft has a significant impact on copyright law enforcement, unauthorized use, and plagiarism of digital content in Pakistan (H1); that is, when people steal online content, it directly affects how the law works and increases both unauthorized use and plagiarism. This overarching hypothesis is examined through three specific relationships.

First, because enforcement of copyright law is the act of enforcing and implementing copyright laws that serve to protect digital materials from any unauthorized use, and as digital theft increases the pressure on authorities to enforce copyright laws also increases and pushes the government to take stronger legal action, digital theft is expected to have a significant impact on copyright law enforcement (H1a). Second, higher digital theft is expected to lead to more cases of people using online content without permission (H1b). Third, an increase in digital theft is expected to lead to higher chances of plagiarism in Pakistan (H1c). The relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variables is presented in Figure 1.

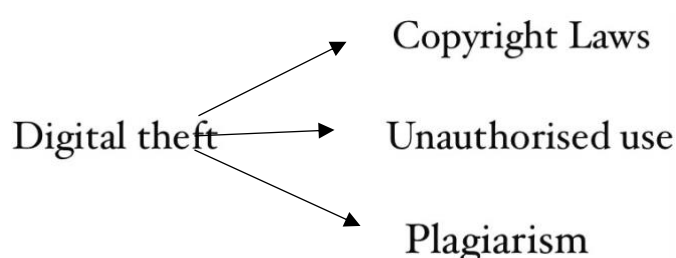


Figure 1. Theoretical framework: the effect of digital theft (independent variable) on copyright law enforcement, unauthorized use, and plagiarism of digital content (dependent variables).

This research is important because it shows how a strong copyright system is needed to protect against digital theft in Pakistan. A strong copyright system builds trust, supports the economy, and encourages innovation in Pakistan (Eshonqulov, J., & Sultonova, 2025). It highlights how implementing strong cryptographic tools is significant for preventing digital theft and protecting copyright materials in Pakistan's online system (Rangel-Lugo et al., 2025). The study focuses on understanding how digital theft happens in Pakistan and how copyright laws deal with it, exploring the main causes of digital theft and the weaknesses of Pakistan's copyright system (Eshonqulov, J., & Sultonova, 2025). It also looks at how the lack of technological advancement and skilled personnel makes institutions more vulnerable to digital theft Rangel Lugo et al., (2025), and at how digital theft affects local creators, software houses, and media companies.

By highlighting these issues and suggesting ways to make the copyright system stronger, the study also guides students and researchers on how digital law works in real life and helps create awareness and steps to make the digital space safer and more secure. In light of the above, this study is guided by three questions: what digital theft is and how it is defined under Pakistan's copyright law; why digital theft is considered a major issue in Pakistan's digital economy; and why many people in Pakistan still rely on pirated or stolen digital content despite existing laws. Accordingly, the study pursues three objectives, namely to examine the effects of digital theft on Pakistan's digital economy, to check whether existing copyright laws are working effectively, and to understand why people still use stolen or pirated digital content in Pakistan.

METHOD

The method focuses on research design, location of the study, population, sample size, sampling method, instrument for collecting data, validity of the questionnaire, process of data collection, and analysis of data.

Research Design

In the current research, the quantitative research design has been used to examine the issues of digital theft and copyright law and practice in Pakistan. The reason for choosing a quantitative research

design is that it makes possible to collect data in numeric format and facilitates in finding out patterns and relationships among variables. This research is essentially descriptive and analytical in nature because it is describing the perception of respondents and analyzing the relationship between digital theft and enforcement of copyright laws, usage of digital materials without permission, and plagiarism.

Delimitation of the study

The present research work is restricted to the participants from Karachi, so the results will not be representative for the whole population of Pakistan. The research has dealt with digital theft and copyright laws, but there is no elaboration on the topic of other cybercrimes. The results have been drawn from the opinions and answers given by the participants in the questionnaire. Analysis of cases and interviews with the representatives of the law enforcement agencies could not be considered because of time limitation.

Population of the study

The research was carried out in Karachi, Pakistan. The population targeted was 70 people that use the computer and internet. The population had people of different ages and educational backgrounds in order to have different opinions regarding digital theft and copyright laws. This population was chosen since these people are frequently dealing with digital information and internet material.

Sample of the Population

The final sample consisted of 59 respondents selected from a population of 70 people. The sampling method used to select this sample was the non-probability convenience sampling method. The respondents were chosen because of their availability and willingness to take part in the research. It will provide a more accurate insight into the issues under the issue under consideration.

Table 1. for Determining Sample Size of a Known Population

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	346
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	354
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	191	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	170	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	180	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	190	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	200	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	370
65	56	210	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	220	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	230	144	550	226	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	240	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	250	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	260	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	254	2600	335	100000	384

Note. N = population size; S = sample size. Source: Krejcie & Morgan (1970).

Sampling Techniques

The sampling method used in the research was convenience sampling, which is a non-probability sampling approach. The above sampling method was chosen because participants could be accessed easily to answer the questions in the questionnaire.

Instrument for Data Collection

For this research, the researcher constructed a structured questionnaire as the main data collection instrument that will be administered to people using digital gadgets and online services in Pakistan. This instrument was designed based on the research questions, research problem, and relevant literature with the intention of measuring the variables under investigation, which include the awareness, attitudes, and practices related to digital theft and the existing copyright laws.

These variables include unauthorized use, copyright awareness, and plagiarism among other factors. The instrument is divided into six parts, namely Section A, Section B, Section C, Section D, Section E, and Section F. In Section A, the demographics of the respondents are collected, including their gender, age, educational qualification, monthly salary, and working experience. In Section B, the researcher seeks to identify the behavior of the respondents with regards to the issue of digital theft, for example, the use of pirated software and downloading of copyrighted materials illegally.

Section C focuses on awareness of copyright laws and ethical use of digital materials; Section D examines the frequency of unauthorized use of others' work without permission or proper acknowledgment; Section E explores plagiarism, particularly copying digital content without giving credit; and Section F assesses respondents' attitudes and perceptions toward digital theft and the effectiveness of copyright laws in Pakistan. Prior to the final survey, a pilot test was conducted to determine how clear, relevant, and appropriate the questions were in order to avoid possible inconsistencies in the response of the respondents. Modifications were made from the pilot test before conducting the final survey, which helped in establishing the validity and consistency of the instrument.

Method of data collection

Following the pilot testing and validation, the final questionnaire was distributed among the selected respondents in Karachi. Questionnaires were distributed among the respondents using paper and pencil method with the help of face-to-face interviews and assistance was offered wherever needed. The respondents were apprised of the objectives of the study, and it was made clear that their participation was on a voluntary basis. They were assured that whatever information they shared would remain confidential.

Method of data analysis

The collected data with respect to the 59 sample size was analyzed statistically based on the research method applied in this quantitative study. The numerical values of the responses were rated using the Likert Scale from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). The weighted mean values were calculated for both the independent variable and the dependent variables in order to test the developed research questions to establish the response pattern in relation to digital theft and copyright law enforcement in Karachi City with a decision point of 3.00; therefore, means that are greater than 3.00 were considered significant and accepted while means below 3.00 were considered non-significant and rejected.

In order to test the following hypotheses: H1: there is a statistically significant relationship between digital theft and copyright law enforcement in Karachi, H2: there is a statistically significant relationship between digital theft and the unauthorized use of digital content, and H3: there is a statistically significant relationship between digital theft and plagiarism of digital content, a statistical analysis of the data was carried out using t-test where the independent and dependent variables were compared. The hypotheses were tested at the level of significance of 0.05 (5%) meaning that there is a very minimal probability of making errors. As it can be seen from the analysis of the data above, this statistical technique made the results of the study credible.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study is based on responses from 70 regarding digital theft in Karachi Pakistan. All responses were recorded through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, where participants indicated their level of agreement with different statements. The data was later processed and analyzed using SPSS.

Demographic Information of Respondents

This pie diagram showing gender composition of the participants in the research conducted. Of the total 65 participants involved in this research, 55.4% were men and 44.6% were women. The 'Others' category received no response. It can be seen that participation in this research was quite active among both male and female participants. However, it must be stated that there were slightly more men than women participating in this research. Such balanced participation would allow getting varied views about digital theft and copyright laws in Pakistan

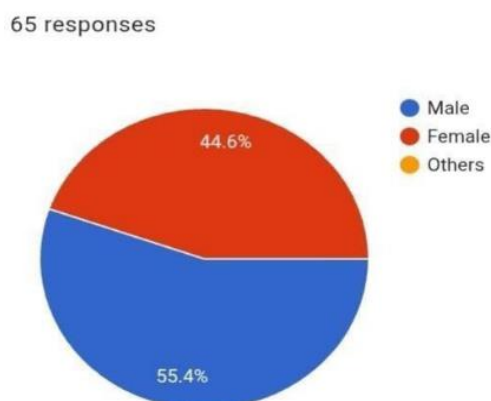


Figure 2. Gender Distribution of Respondents

The pie chart above shows the age distribution of the respondents who participated in this study. The majority of respondents, 49.2%, belonged to the age group of 21–30 years, followed by 38.5% who were less than 20 years old. Respondents aged 31–40 represented 7.7% of the total responses, while very few participants belonged to the age groups of 41–50 and 50 years and above. The findings indicate that most participants were young individuals, particularly students and young adults, who are more active users of digital platforms and online content. Their participation is important because younger generations are more exposed to digital piracy, online sharing, and copyright-related issues in daily life.

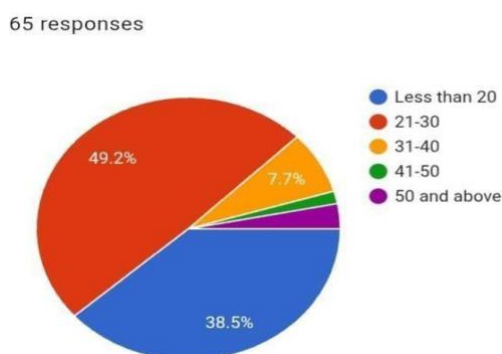


Figure 3. Age Distribution of Respondents

The pie chart shows the household income levels of 65 respondents. The highest percentage of respondents (24.6%) belong to the Rs. 85,000 – 105,000 income group, followed by 23.1% earning Rs. 105,000 and above. Moreover, 16.9% respondents fall in the Rs. 65,000 – 85,000 category, while 15.4% belong to Rs.45,000 – 65,000. In addition, 13.8% respondents reported an income of less than Rs.25,000, whereas the lowest percentage belongs to the Rs. 25,000 – 45,000 categories. Overall, most respondents belong to middle and upper middle income households.

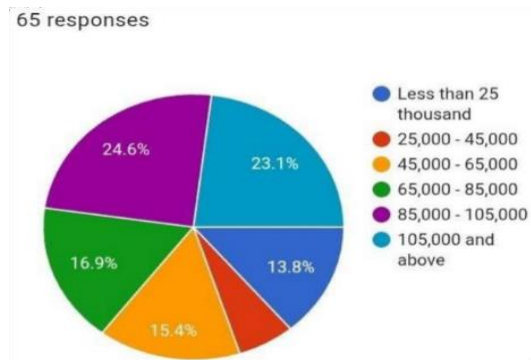


Figure 4. Household Income Distribution of Respondents

The pie chart represents the educational qualification of 65 respondents. The majority of respondents (52.3%) have a Bachelor's degree. This is followed by 24.6% respondents with A-levels or intermediate qualification, while 13.8% have O-levels, matric, or lower education.

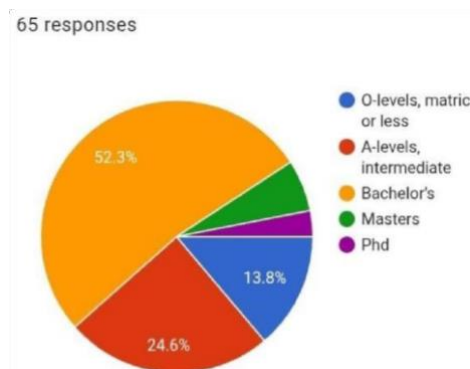
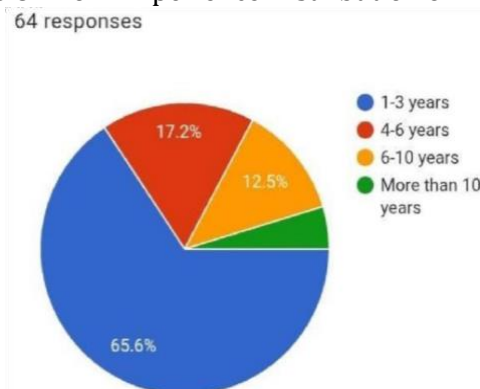


Figure 5. Educational Qualification of Respondents

A smaller percentage of respondents hold Master's and PhD qualifications. Overall, the chart shows that most participants are educated at the undergraduate level, making their responses relevant for understanding awareness regarding digital theft and copyright laws in Pakistan.

The pie chart shows the work experience of 64 respondents. The majority of respondents (65.6%) have 1–3 years of work experience. Meanwhile, 17.2% respondents have 4–6 years of experience, and 12.5% have 6–10 years of experience. Only a small percentage The pie chart shows the household income levels of 65 respondents. The highest percentage of respondents (24.6%) belong to the Rs. 85,000 – 105,000 income group, followed by 23.1% earning Rs. 105,000 and above. Moreover, 16.9% respondents fall in the Rs. 65,000 – 85,000 category, while 15.4% belong to Rs. 45,000 – 65,000. In addition, 13.8% respondents reported.

Figure 6. Work Experience Distribution of Respondents



Research Question**Table 2.** Regression Model Summary for Copyright-Rule Attitudes

1. Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.513 ^a	.263	.197	.969

Interpretation**Table 3.** Regression Coefficients for Copyright-Rule Attitudes

Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.677	.411		1.649	.105
1. Buying pirated software from the internet is a legal violation.	.331	.190	.269	1.737	.088
2. Purchasing pirated music for friends or family members raises ethical and legal issues.	-.023	.152	-.020	-.149	.882
3. Providing pirated music to others online without concern is a form of misconduct.	-.064	.167	-.056	-.380	.705
4. Transferring unauthorized software or data over the internet is a violation of the law.	.349	.152	.321	2.298	.025
5. Purchasing pirated music without any hesitation is an unethical act.	.107	.148	.106	.724	.472

Interpretation

The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.263$) indicates that 26.3% of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables included in the regression model. This suggests that the predictors related to ethical and legal perceptions of piracy have a meaningful explanatory effect on the dependent variable. However, 73.7% of the variance remains unexplained by the model and may be influenced by other factors not included in the study. Therefore, the model demonstrates a moderate level of explanatory power.

a. Dependent Variable: 6 purchasing pirated music without hesitation shows disregard for copyright rules.

Interpretation

The regression coefficients were examined to determine the individual contribution of each predictor to the dependent variable, namely "Purchasing pirated music without hesitation shows disregard for copyright rules." The results indicate that only one predictor significantly influenced the dependent variable. Specifically, the variable "Transferring unauthorized software or data over the internet is a violation of the law" showed a significant positive effect on the dependent variable ($\beta = 0.321$, $t = 2.298$, $p = 0.025$). This finding suggests that respondents who strongly perceive unauthorized

transfer of software or data as a legal violation are more likely to view purchasing pirated music without hesitation as an act that disregards copyright rules.

The remaining predictors were not statistically significant. "Buying pirated software from the internet is a legal violation" ($\beta = 0.269$, $t = 1.737$, $p = 0.088$), "Purchasing pirated music for friends or family members raises ethical and legal issues" ($\beta = -0.020$, $t = -0.149$, $p = 0.882$), "Providing pirated music to others online without concern is a form of misconduct" ($\beta = -0.056$, $t = -0.380$, $p = 0.705$), and "Purchasing pirated music without any hesitation is an unethical act" ($\beta = 0.106$, $t = 0.724$, $p = 0.472$) did not significantly predict the dependent variable, as their p-values exceeded the 0.05 significance level. Overall, the results suggest that among the ethical and legal perception variables included in the model, only the belief that transferring unauthorized software or data over the internet constitutes a legal violation significantly predicts attitudes toward purchasing pirated music and copyright infringement.

Table 4. Regression Model Summary for Social Disapproval of Plagiarism

1. Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.568a	.323	.262	.938

Interpretation

The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.323$) indicates that 32.3% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables included in the regression model. This suggests that respondents' ethical and legal perceptions regarding piracy make a meaningful contribution to explaining attitudes toward copyright-related behavior. However, 67.7% of the variance remains unexplained by the model and may be influenced by other factors not included in the study. Therefore, the model demonstrates moderate explanatory power and indicates that the selected predictors have a substantial role in explaining the dependent variables.

Coefficient

Table 5. Regression Coefficients for Social Disapproval of Plagiarism

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1(Constant)	.416	.397		1.046	.300
1. Buying pirated software from the internet is a legal violation.	.002	.184	.002	.010	.992
2. Purchasing pirated music for friends or family members raises ethical and legal issues.	.319	.147	.276	2.165	.035
3. Providing pirated music to others online without concern is a form of misconduct.	.221	.162	.192	1.362	.179
4. Transferring unauthorized software or data over the internet is a violation of the law.	.097	.147	.088	.660	.512

5. Purchasing pirated music without any hesitation is an unethical act.	.226	.143	.221	1.576	.121
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- a. Dependent Variable: 15 Most people who are important to me would look down on me if I copied others' work from a digital source and used it in my assignments without acknowledgment.

Interpretation

The regression coefficients were examined to determine the individual contribution of each predictor to the dependent variable, namely "Most people who are important to me would look down on me if I copied others' work from a digital source and used it in my assignments without acknowledgment." The findings indicate that only one predictor significantly influenced the dependent variable. Specifically, the variable "Purchasing pirated music for friends or family members raises ethical and legal issues" showed a significant positive effect on the dependent variable ($\beta = 0.276$, $t = 2.165$, $p = 0.035$). This result suggests that respondents who strongly believe that purchasing pirated music for others is ethically and legally wrong are more likely to feel that important people around them would disapprove of plagiarism or copying digital work without proper acknowledgment.

The remaining predictors were not statistically significant. "Buying pirated software from the internet is a legal violation" ($\beta = 0.002$, $t = 0.010$, $p = 0.992$), "Providing pirated music to others online without concern is a form of misconduct" ($\beta = 0.192$, $t = 1.362$, $p = 0.179$), "Transferring unauthorized software or data over the internet is a violation of the law" ($\beta = 0.088$, $t = 0.660$, $p = 0.512$), and "Purchasing pirated music without hesitation is an unethical act" ($\beta = 0.221$, $t = 1.576$, $p = 0.121$) did not significantly predict the dependent variable, as their p-values exceeded the 0.05 significance level. Overall, the results suggest that among the ethical and legal perception variables included in the model, only the belief that purchasing pirated music for friends or family members raises ethical and legal issues significantly predicts respondents' perceptions regarding social disapproval of plagiarism and unauthorized academic copying.

Hypothesis Testing

The analysis of hypothesis testing reveals that respondents' ethical and legal perceptions with regards to piracy affect the attitude towards copyright infringement and plagiarism. According to the regression output, those respondents who perceive the legal and ethical implications of piracy have more negative perceptions of copyright infringement and plagiarism. The first regression model was built to analyze if respondents' ethical and legal perceptions of piracy affect respondents' perceptions that buying music piracy without hesitation means that respondent does not care about the copyright law. The results show the presence of a moderate relationship between independent and dependent variables ($R = 0.513$). The coefficient of determination equals 0.263. This figure means that 26.3 percent of the variance in dependent variable is explained by independent variables used in the model. Analogously, the Adjusted R^2 equal 0.197.

These results reveal that there exists a notable impact of ethical and legal considerations of piracy on the perception of piracy-related issues by the respondents. Out of all the predictors, only one variable had a statistically significant influence on the dependent variable. The predictor "The unauthorized transfer of software or data via the internet constitutes violation of law" correlated positively with the dependent variable "Purchasing pirated music without any reservations is disrespectful towards copyright laws" ($\beta = 0.321$, $t = 2.298$, $p = 0.025$). Thus, the respondents who view the unauthorized transmission of software or data via the internet as being illegal tend to regard buying of pirated music as copyright infringement. The rest of the predictors were insignificant, given that their respective p-values exceeded the critical threshold of 0.05.

The second regression analysis examined the relationship between respondents' perceptions of plagiarism and social consequences of plagiarism in academia. The second model demonstrated a notable positive correlation between the predictors and the dependent variable ($R = 0.568$). The R^2 value equals 0.323, meaning that 32.3% of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained through its relationship with the independent variables. The Adjusted R^2 equals 0.262. In summary, these results confirm that perception of ethical and legal aspects of piracy plays an important role in

forming views of the surveyed respondents about plagiarism and improper use of digital content. Based on the coefficient analysis, the statement "Buying pirated music for friends or relatives poses ethical and legal challenges" has made a positive contribution to the dependent variable ($\beta = 0.276$, $t = 2.165$, $p = 0.035$).

In other words, respondents who perceived buying pirated music for relatives and friends as an unethical and illegal activity believed that people close to them viewed unauthorized use of digital work negatively. At the same time, variables used in the model failed to predict the dependent variable due to high values of their significance (greater than 0.05). It can be concluded that legal and ethical perception of digital piracy contributes to views of survey participants towards plagiarism, copyright violation, and misuse of digital materials. Despite the low explanatory power of the models, legal and ethical perception remains an important factor in this respect.

Discussion of findings

The results indicate that the perception of legal and moral issues of piracy influences attitudes towards piracy and plagiarism. In accordance with the first regression model, individuals who perceived unauthorized transfer of software or data over the Internet as a violation of law viewed purchasing of pirated music as disregard of copyright laws. It means that legal awareness can impact attitudes to piracy by making people recognize unauthorized digital actions as copyright violations instead of routine actions on the Web. The finding agrees with the previous studies in Pakistan, where lack of awareness of copyright laws is recognized as one of the challenges in copyright protection. It is also consistent with recent evidence indicating that perceptions of legality and ethical judgement, rather than enforcement activity alone, are central to explaining why users engage in or refrain from digital piracy (Belchior-Rocha et al., 2024).

In accordance with the second regression model, individuals who thought of purchasing pirated music for family or friends as morally and legally incorrect had stronger perceptions of social disapprobation of plagiarism and unauthorized academic copying. It means that piracy attitudes can be influenced not only by legal but also by moral and social aspects. The findings supports Social Learning Theory, because individuals can form attitudes to piracy based on legal, moral and social standards observed in their environments. Comparable findings show that piracy diffuses through peer influence in a manner resembling social contagion, so that the behaviour observed within a user's network shapes individual decisions (Mallick et al., 2024). Perceived social risk and perceived social norms have likewise been found to deter piracy more effectively than messages that emphasise legal threat (Whitman & Cox, 2025).

However, R^2 values of 0.263 and 0.323 show that a considerable part of the variance remains unexplained, which means that other variables can influence piracy attitudes too. Thus, the findings suggest that copyright protection should be implemented in conjunction with public awareness. Educational institutions need to pay more attention to digital ethics, copyright and plagiarism teaching. Also, policymakers and copyright institutions need to implement awareness programs along with enforcement. This need is particularly pressing in higher education, where reviews of academic integrity report that digital and AI-assisted tools have widened the opportunities for plagiarism faster than institutional policies have been able to adapt (Balalle & Pannilage, 2025).

Summary of Findings

This research has explored digital theft and copyright law practices in Pakistan and their effect on the perceptions of respondents concerning the ethicality and legality of digital piracy and the occurrence of academic misconduct. The results demonstrate that the majority of participants belong to the young educated demographic group and actively utilize digital technologies. The regression analysis indicates a moderate connection between the level of ethical/legal awareness and attitudes toward digital theft. Specifically, in Model 1, the awareness that the transfer of software or data without authorization is considered illegal was found to be significantly influential on the respondent's perception of buying pirated music as an indication of disrespect toward copyright rules. In Model 2, the perception of purchasing pirated music for other people as an unethical and illegal act had a significant impact on the perception of the social rejection of plagiarism and unauthorized academic activities.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that digital piracy is closely associated with legal and ethical perceptions of copyright protection in Pakistan. The findings indicate that unauthorized use of digital materials undermines copyright protection, while the effectiveness of copyright law depends not only on the existence of legal provisions but also on public awareness and consistent enforcement. The regression analysis demonstrates that respondents who perceive unauthorized transfer of software or data as illegal are more likely to regard the purchase of pirated music as a violation of copyright. Likewise, respondents who consider purchasing pirated music for others to be ethically and legally wrong show stronger negative attitudes toward plagiarism and unauthorized academic copying.

These findings support Social Learning Theory by confirming that legal, ethical, and social perceptions shape attitudes toward digital piracy. Practically, the study highlights the importance of integrating copyright awareness, digital ethics education, and stronger enforcement initiatives. Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted cautiously due to the relatively small sample size, reliance on self-reported data, and the limited number of explanatory variables examined.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Syed Shabahat Hussain Rizvi contributed to the conceptualization, research design, data collection, analysis, and preparation of the manuscript. Qanita Imtiaz contributed to the literature review, data interpretation, manuscript writing, and critical revision. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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