Study in neutralization affects guilt and shame resulting in continuing piracy in movies

or TV series

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Abstract

Although there are various legal measures that are being taken in order to prevent piracy which is also known as illegal streaming or illegal downloading. However, those measures do not seem to have an impact on reducing the number of pirates. Furthermore, people do not seem to be feeling guilty or ashamed about the behavior even though it is against the law. Hence, this study asks why being illegal does not affect feelings of guilt or shame. This will be studied by taking a look at three important terms: neutralization, guilt, and shame. Neutralization is a defense where people justify their actions in order to stop feeling guilt and shame. 18 participants who have experience in digital piracy and are under 30 years of age has been asked questions related to neutralization, guilt, and shame through qualitative interview. The data were collected and analyzed by thematic analysis meaning coding the transcripts from the interview. The findings of this research confirm existing theories, but some findings of this research were also unique. These findings will help to gain insight into the psychological reasons people pirate and how it reduces moral emotions such as guilt or shame. In addition, it could also be used to consult that would make preventive measures more effective.

1. Introduction

Online streaming has been dominating the entertainment business these recent years. For example, in 2019, Disney Plus recorded that it owns the right to seven of the top ten highest-grossing movies. As streaming platform like Netflix, Disney Plus, etc. continues to monopoly in the entertainment business, it does not seem to fix the problem of entertainment piracy. Entertainment piracy involves downloading or streaming content without paying its creators or IP – holders. In other words, it is also known as illegal streaming or downloading. In the article by AFPRelaxnews (2023), according to an American study, content piracy increased by 18% in 2020. In addition, content piracy sites were visited around 215 billion times in 2022 worldwide proving that there are numerous amounts of digital pirates. Furthermore, technological advances have helped consumers access digital material easier and at a lower cost, thus aiding in illicit digital piracy (Reardon et al., 2019). Moreover, most of these digital pirates do not seem to feel guilty or shame about it. This raises the question of 'Why does being illegal not affect feeling guilt or shame in piracy?' To answer this research question, we ask three sub-questions, relating to neutralization and the individual and social aspects of piracy.

The first sub-question is: How do people neutralize their own piracy behavior? The neutralization technique is a defense mechanism in criminology where people who committed a crime neutralizes their actions to justify their actions (Urbonavicius et al, 2019). As a result, they tend to feel less guilty and shame towards their behavior. In terms of piracy behavior, people do not experience guilt or shame as they perform a neutralization technique when pirating videos. Hence, this sub-question was needed as people neutralize their behavior to lower their moral emotions (guilt or shame). The second and third sub-questions are 'What would make people feel guilty about when pirating?', 'What would make people feel ashamed

when pirating?' Guilt and shame are defined by Haidt (2003). It states that guilt is caused by the violation of moral rules and imperatives, while shame is triggered by violating a norm and knowing that someone else is aware of the violation. Thus, the second sub-question aims to answer not if but when people feel guilty about piracy in a social aspect as much research has shown that people do not feel guilty about pirating, but not many studies were found about 'what would make people feel more guilty about piracy. It will also answer piracy in relation to individual behavior as guilt is triggered when there is a conflict between the behavior and personal norms or beliefs. With the third sub-question, we aim to answer – how people evaluate moral emotions. It also looks at the social aspect as shame is usually not triggered when alone but triggered when there is a third party involved. Thus, by answering these questions it will give more insight in piracy behavior.

Overall, this research will focus on neutralization, guilt, and shame. Along with neutralization, guilt, and shame were defined. To analyze neutralization, guilt, and shame, a qualitative interview will be conducted with participants who have illegally streamed or downloaded films or TV series before. The analysis will be done by coding the transcripts. As a result, it will be more understanding of some of the reasons why people pirate movies or TV series.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study focuses on three terms neutralization, guilt, and shame. Researching these terms will help to understand 'why does being illegal not affect in feeling guilt or shame in piracy?'. First, it is known that digital pirates do not feel guilt or shame in piracy as they neutralize their behavior. Digital pirates use neutralization techniques to justify their actions. Therefore, it will look at different ways people neutralize their behavior. Secondly, it will also look at guilt specifically in reasons why people do not feel guilt when doing piracy. Lastly, it will look at

shame. It will further explain the difference between guilt and shame and why it needs to be researched.

2.1 Neutralization

Previous literature has shown proof that people do not see illegal streaming or illegal downloading as unethical and wrongdoing (Phau, Teah, & Liang, 2016). One of the theories that can explain this phenomenon is neutralization. Neutralization is a term in criminology where people who committed a crime neutralizes their actions to justify their actions and postulates that individuals can neutralize their actions by justifying their illegal actions as "normal" acts (Urbonavicius et al, 2019; Phau, Teah & Liang, 2016). In addition, the use of neutralization techniques are intended to reduce the intensity of these moral emotions (Urbonavicius et al, 2019). In the case of movie piracy, pirates neutralize their behavior by saying: "All my friends are doing it," "The movie industry will not lose too much," or "Film-makers still make revenue from cinema and other sources" (Phau, Teah, & Liang, 2016).

Furthermore, it is important to study neutralization as it makes it possible to understand the processes used in contradictory yet frequent cases in which infringements of the norm do not rely on adherence to an alternative normative system or low resonance of the norm (Odou & Bonnin, 2014). Thus, this research will investigate the relationship between neutralization techniques and how it reduces negative emotions such as guilt or shame when pirating movies or TV series.

2.2 Guilt

Guilt is triggered normally triggered by a self-regulatory mechanism when one's behavior violates personal norms or morals (De Corte & Van Kenhove. 2017). Therefore, most people

experience feelings of guilt when they have done unethical behavior. This does not seem to be the case in piracy. People who pirate content frequently do not seem to not feel that much guilt when illegally streaming or downloading the video (De Corte & Van Kenhove. 2017). In addition, individuals seek to minimize the gap that separates their moral standards from their actual actions in various ways which is why they continue in doing bad behavior even though they know it is wrong (Bonner & O'Higgins, 2010).

There are several possible reasons why digital pirates do not feel guilty. One of them is that they do not directly face the impact they cause. Thus, as they do not see the harm they cause to the industry, they tend to feel less guilty about their behavior. For instance, in the case of software, consumers are dealing with large corporations (e.g. Microsoft, Adobe, and the likes), thus reducing personal connection with the   product being pirated. Therefore, consumers are feeling less guilty (Arli et al., 2015). In relation to the production industries, pirates do not feel guilty about their behavior as they do not directly see the negative impact that they cause on the industries' revenue (Phau, Teah, & Liang, 2016). Along with that, they do not believe that pirating content will impact the industry making them feel less guilty about their behavior. As a result, pirating has become more of a habitual concept.

Overall, a simple explanation that might explain why people do not feel guilty is that they do not see this as unethical behavior (De Corte & Van Kenhove. 2017). Hence, the behavior itself does not violate their personal norms or morals. On the other hand, many societies treat piracy behavior as unethical and try to prevent it by making them illegal and developing controlling techniques (Herjanto et al., 2021). However, social norms (legal measures, campaigns) do not seem to have an impact on triggering guilt in digital pirates. This means that piracy does not conflict with their personal norms as guilt is the result of conflict between behavior and

personal norms (De Corte & Van Kenhove, 2017)). Thus, social norms do not seem to trigger an individual's personal norms when pirating films or TV series in digital piracy, unlike most situations where negative emotions signal that one's behaviors should be changed, and positive emotions validate the existing behaviors (Wang & McClung, 2012). This raises the question of what would make people feel guilty about when pirating. Studying this would help further understand piracy in relation to individual behavior as guilt is triggered when there is a conflict between the behavior and personal norms or beliefs. Thus, it will answer the individual aspect of piracy compared to shame where it focuses on the social aspect.

2.3 Shame

Compared to the neutralization and guilt, shame in digital piracy in films and TV series is understudied. In some studies, it is sometimes considered the same concept as guilt (Urbonavicius et al, 2019). Nonetheless, this study will recognize guilt and shame as different concepts as guilt is caused by the violation of moral rules and imperatives, while shame is triggered by violating a norm and knowing that someone else is aware of the violation (Haidt, 2003). For instance, people tend to not be ashamed of doing unethical behavior when doing it alone, but they might feel guilty as in order to feel guilt it does not need a third party. However, they will be ashamed when a third party notices the behavior. Thus, it will be more focused on the social context. Furthermore, shame is typically a painful emotion accompanied by self-focused feelings of worthlessness, personal degradation, and exposure or vulnerability (Herjanto et al., 2021). However, due to neutralization, people do not feel shame when they pirate films or TV series.

Similar to guilt, shame is related to the self-regulatory mechanism that they performed an action that violated the moral code and ethics (De Corte & Van Kenhove. 2017). In terms of illegal

streaming and downloading, people tend to not perceive it as an action that violates moral codes and actions due to neutralization (Urbonavicius et al, 2019). Hence, people do not feel shame of their actions since they do not project this as wrongdoing. Therefore, even though society considers piracy behavior in movies or TV series unethical, it does not seem to affect the digital pirates' individual projection of the behavior. Thus, the research will look for insights into why social norms did not affect their personal norms in order to feel shame during piracy. In addition, what social norms need to be experienced for people to feel shame about piracy will be investigated in this research. Investigating these factors would help in how people deal with moral emotions in social settings.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

This research will focus on how neutralization affects decreasing feelings of guilt and shame by conducting a 30-minute interview. The semi-interview method was chosen so that it will give a deeper understanding of the process of neutralization in relation to guilt and shame so that the following question can be asked according to the answers the participants give. Around 18 participants, who have experience in illegal streaming and downloading films or TV series, will be interviewed. Participants will be below the age of 30 as they are more likely to be involved in piracy. Sampling will be done by asking people in the surroundings that have experience in pirating movies or TV series.

Piracy for this research means that participants have done illegal downloading by using sources like torrents or streaming through websites such as 123movies, uTorrent, etc. without logging in to regularly paid streaming platforms (Netflix, Disney Plus, Amazon Prime and etc.). To further specify piracy, piracy does not include sharing accounts for this study considering that

defining that as piracy is controversial. The personal information of the participant will be anonymized as participants might not answer truthfully since pirating films or TV series is illegal. They will be differentiated by numbers so that their personal information will not be known to the public.

3.2 Procedure

Before the interview begins participants will be asked about their age to make sure they are under 30. In addition, they will be asked if they have experience in pirating movies or TV series. If they have not, they will not be able to do the interview. After those two questions were asked, participants will be explained about the research. It will explain what the research aims to look for and some terms that participants might be familiar with. After that is done, it will ask for participants' consent for audio recording to transcribe it for analysis. They will be informed that the recording will be deleted after the research.

There are four sections in the semi-structured interview. The first set of questions will be about demographic information about participants such as age, nationality, and last time they pirated. The second set of questions will be about neutralization. The third set of questions will be about guilt. The fourth set of questions will be about shame. Around four to seven questions were asked in each sections. However, depending on the participant's answers, the number of questions that will be asked might change. Once the interview is done it will give participants the researcher's contact information so that they can contact the researcher if they have question related to it.

3.3 Instrument

As previously said, the interview consists of four parts: demographic, neutralization, guilt, and shame. In demographic, the question related to participants' age, nationality, and the last time they pirated. The neutralization section asks questions related to how participants neutralize their behavior. These were asked in order to check if previous findings were true and also new findings related to the topic. The guilt section asks about participants' attitudes (whether they believe piracy is unethical) and sees if they feel guilty about piracy. In addition, it asks questions related to why they do not feel guilty in pirating and in what cases do they feel guilty about piracy. The questions were based on the literature by () and some new questions were created solely by the research to investigate what would make people feel more guilty about piracy. Lastly, in shame, it asks about the involvement of the third party and how that influence in the feeling of shame. The interview questions are available in Appendix A. The question of the interview will be the same for all 18 participants except for minor changes made due to the participant's answers.

3.4 Participant

In total 18 participants were collected. All participants were under 30 and have experience in piracy. The samples were collected by asking people in the surroundings that have experience in pirated movies or TV series.

Participant Number	Gender	Age	Nationality	Last time they pirated
1	Female	21	China	Yesterday
2	Female	22	Brazil	Yesterday
3	Female	22	Korea	Two days a go
4	Male	25	China	Yesterday
5	Female	23	Korea	Yesterday
6	Female	22	Korea	Yesterday
7	Female	21	Turkey	Last week

8	Male	22	Zimbabwe	Today
9	Female	22	Korea	Yesterday
10	Female	22	Germany	Last week
11	Female	22	Korea	Last week
12	Male	20	Sri Lanka	Last week
13	Male	25	Korea	Two days to three days
14	Male	22	France	Two weeks a go
15	Male	25	Korea	Today
16	Female	22	Korea	three days
17	Female	22	Korea	Yesterday
18	Female	23	Romania	Yesterday

This is the demographic overview of the participant. The age ranged from age 20 to 25. Six participants were male and twelve participants were female. nine participants were from Korea, two participants were from China, and seven participants were from other countries. Lastly, most participants have pirated movies or TV series within the last two weeks meaning the experience is recent. Eight participants answered the last time they pirated was yesterday. Four participants answered last week. Two people answered today. Rest participants either answer two days, three days, or two weeks ago.

3.5 Analysis

The data analysis will be done by using thematic analysis by coding interview transcripts using the tool, Atlas.ti. The analysis will be partly deductive out of theory thus using existing information or knowledge. Not only that, but it will also be partly inductive. It is also looking for any new findings that would come along during the study. The thematic analysis was specifically chosen to make it easier to find similarities between participants' answers and also differences. The analysis will be also done by negative case analysis in order to increase its credibility. In total 23 codes were found. 8 codes in neutralization, 9 codes in guilt, 6 codes in

shame. Through these codes, the researcher aims to look at similarities and unique findings that would help in answering the formulated research question.

4. Results

Questions were asked about neutralization, guilt, and shame through a qualitative interview. There were some findings in the study that aligned with the findings from the previous study. However, there were some new findings from the interviews. The findings are listed in order of neutralization, guilt, and shame. Three main key research questions that it aims to answer are 'How do people neutralize their behavior in piracy?',' When would people feel guilt in piracy (individual aspect)', 'When would people feel shame in piracy (social aspect)'. Overall, it confirms some aspects of existing theories, but also new findings were found.

4.1 Neutralization

Different questions were asked to analyze 'how people neutralize their behavior in piracy.' Around four questions were asked about neutralization. The result that confirms the argument that people neutralize their behavior by saying 'Everyone else is doing it' will be explained first. Then, the result that contradicts the statement will be explained as it is analyzed by using negative case analysis. The statement 'I don't think I put that much impact on the industries' will also be explained in the same way. Finally, new findings will be explained.

Participants were asked if they believe people tend to use illegal platforms because others are also doing it to confirm the theory (people pirate movies or TV series because everyone is doing it) from an existing study. Here is a quote from Participant 2 that agrees with the statement.

Yeah, I think pretty sure. Like I think maybe feel safer doing it since it is such a regular thing that you talk about and there are still many sites you can still go on.

Overall, the participant is saying that they believe people tend to feel-safer when others are doing the same action. Also, they have seen that others are also doing it and noticed that no legal actions were taken by it. This makes them believe that pirating movies or TV series is not to be considered a serious action. However, there were findings that contradict this statement. According to Participant 3, the main reason they pirate movies or TV series is because it is more convenient for them not because others are doing it. This is what Participant 3 answered when asked if they believe people pirate movies or TV series because many others are also doing it.

But in my opinion, I usually like don't care about whether they watch it through the website or not because it doesn't matter to me whether or not they use that site because I'm still going to use it anyways because it is convenient to me. (Participant 3)

Thus, for Participant 3, convenience is the main factor that made them decide on pirating content. Hence, it does not matter to them if other people are also doing it or not. When asked 'how and why it is convenient for them, the first reason was financial ('I don't have to pay for it'). Also, the freedom of watching it whenever wherever they want.

Uhmm as I said, like first I don't have to pay for it. Second, I can watch it whenever I want to even when I missed the broadcast time. Other than that, uhmm nothing really pops up in my mind right now.

Furthermore, pirating websites can be convenient as they can be accessed easily. By searching through search engines, it is easy to find different pirating websites. Hence, people are able to consume content without having to pay any money for it with a few clicks. Here is a quote from Participant 7 that supports it.

I am not a member of any streaming platform and the cheapest way to get those movies is to pirate. So it's convenient because I don't have to pay for it. I guess part of it is also it's a quick media right? I usually just watch anime which is a 20-minute little episode and you can easily and very available on the internet why would I pay money when I can find it for free in 25 seconds?

Another thing that was confirmed in this study is that people use illegal streaming sites because they do not think their actions impact the industries that much. For instance, one of the participants said that they think people are not aware of the influence piracy cause on the production industry.

I don't think they consider the impacts on the production industry because the I mean the value of the product decreases when you don't pay for it and you watch it. I guess nobody looks at it that way because usually a big production that makes a lot of money and you are it single. I think it mostly just not paying attention to it and not thinking about it. (Participant 7)

Furthermore, this statement explains how people view the production industries. Thus, people neutralize their behavior by feeling 'Why should I have to pay money for it, if they are earning a lot of money?'. In addition, they do not see this as a behavior that is going to put a huge impact as production industries are already making tremendous amounts of money. But there was also an opinion from Participant 9 that were against it. For instance, Participant 9 was asked if they believe people pirate movies or TV shows because they believe it does not impact the production industries that much. Participant 9 said

> No, I don't agree with that because there are many advertisements saying that you shouldn't do it. Like movie industries, they are really serious about this, so I do think people will know that their actions will impact the industries. However, I think people will still do it because it doesn't harm them.

Hence, they believe most people are aware of the impacts that digital piracy can cause on the production industries from warnings or campaigns. This is the opposite of the statement that was made previously by Participant 7 as Participant 9 believes that the majority of people are acknowledged through various advertisements. However, people proceed to do this because it affects the industries, not them. Thus, they argue that people are aware of the impacts piracy can put on the production industries, but they continue doing it as no damage is done to themselves.

Along with that, it was also found that some people do not have any other option but to use pirating websites. For instance, if is a dated movie, it might not be available on any of the legal platforms such as Netflix and etc. Moreover, participants tend to not subscribe to another platform just to watch a few shows. Here is a quote from Participant 5 for further explanation.

> I mean not all platforms have all the content, so subscribing to multiple channels just to watch a few things in each channel feels like a waste of money to pay for all of them. Even I don't really have time to use all of that platforms so it feels unnecessary to subscribe to them. Especially there's one show that I want to watch and it is not on the platform that I use, it feels like a waste of money to pay for a subscription to another channel just to watch that. Also, I don't intend to and I don't have time to watch other programs besides that. (Participant 5)

In addition, if one wants to watch a show from a foreign country, one will have to use VPN to watch it legally. However, here is a quote from Participant 5 about why they do not use VPN and decide in using pirating sites.

> I mean the only way to watch that program was through purchasing VPN. I tried to use VPN but it didn't work well since I'm in a foreign country. So, I decided to use illegal sites because it was more convenient.

Thus, even though there is a legal option to consume content from foreign countries, people tend to not use it as it is difficult to use which makes piracy more intriguing as they can watch content for free.

In conclusion, it agrees with the theory from past literature that people pirate because many others are also doing it. Furthermore, they do not think that they put that much impact on the production industries. Not only it proved the existing theory, but it also found new findings as well. New findings from this research suggest that people pirate movies because it does not

affect them. People also pirate movies because it is the only option they have. Lastly, people pirate movies because it is convenient and cheap.

4.2 Guilt

Guilt was also researched in this study. Similar to results in neutralization, it has some results that advocate existing literature, but also new findings that are compared with existing statements. There was a literature that claimed that people do not feel guilty about piracy as most pirates do not believe the act itself is unethical. Moreover, people also do not feel guilty as they do not have direct connections with the production industries and lack consequences. However, there were some answers from participants that goes against the statement. In addition, it also looked for what would make people feel more guilty about piracy.

Previous studies have already discovered that people generally do not feel guilty about piracy. Moreover, even though they feel guilty, the degree of guilt was low as they do not believe that this is serious behavior that needs to be changed. Furthermore, previous research also said that people do not feel guilty about piracy as it has become habitual. A lot of people in this study have said that when they first started doing it, they felt guilty about it. However, now they have become numb about it since they have been using it frequently (Participant 1). As a result, it has become more of a habit that will make them used to doing it and decrease the feeling of guilt. This proves the fact that piracy has been normalized which decreases the feeling of guilt. Participant 13 further explains why they started not feeling guilty as time goes on.

> I think I did when I was young when I first started illegal streaming. But after
>
> I repeatedly do it, I don't feel guilty about it. I even feel thankful about it to

whoever uploading. Also, I feel like if it's caught it would be more be the
responsibility of the owner of the website. So, I don't think feel that much of
a responsibility for this action. (Participant 13)

Quote from Participant 13 explains how they started to not feel guilty about piracy. This proves the fact that the act of digital piracy is habitual and normalized resulting in a reduction in the feeling of guilt. However, there were also findings that it does not mean that they do not feel guilty every time they pirate content. There are some situations where they do feel guilty about piracy. The question 'What would make you feel guilty about piracy' was asked. Participant 4 answered that they do feel guilty when watching a newly premiered movie.

It depends. As I said, there's a new movie you can watch in the cinema but I
don't go. I just watch it at home then I will feel guilty. But if it's an old movie
and I don't have any other options. (Participant 4)

Participant 4 also explains they feel guilty about new movies because for newly premiered films the option of watching them in the theatres is available. Also, they are aware of the impact of pirating movies at home instead of watching them in theaters for profit, especially for movies that have just been released. Usually in new movies, the profit is determined by the number of box tickets that have been sold. However, for dated movies, accessibility is low meaning difficult in reaching them. Furthermore, it also found that people do not feel guilty when they have tried legal options in watching the movie or platform. A quote from Participant 1 explains why they do not feel guilty after they have tried legal ways to reach the content but could not find them which forces them to use illegal websites.

Yeah I think I feel guilty for the actor the producer for the whole team that made the movie or a TV show and I think it's not nice. And it is quite against their benefits but it's like stealing their money. But like later I stop feeling that if I tried different ways to reach the movie then I think it was their marketing problem. If I can't reach your movie or your TV show from any popular platform then that's your problem you have to fix it. Do you want people to watch that or you don't? it's a question and it's not user-friendly and I would stop feeling guilty. (Participant 1)

Hence, the quote from Participant 1 explains that they feel frustrated when they tried on different legal platforms but could not find the specific movie they want to watch. This quote also explains that people do not feel guilty about piracy when they tried legal options and could not find them as they do not perceive this as their fault. Even more, they even put the blame on others and do not feel guilty about it. Also, a lot of people also said that people do not feel guilty because they do not have a direct connection to the production industries. Thus, having a direct connection will make them more guilty about the behavior. Participant 15 explains why they would feel more guilty when there is a direct connection with the production industries.

Since we don't really know how these people earn money. So, I don't think I really feel guilty because I don't have empathy towards it. But like in reverse, I will feel guilty because I know it is affecting the profit like for those who have or are in the production field. (Participant 15)

Thus, people will feel more guilty when there is a direct connection because they would feel more empathy toward them since they know how these people earn money. However, there was also another opinion saying that direct connection would not have that much effect on piracy as it feels similar to free samples. So even when they have a direct connection to it, they are not going to feel that much guilty.

> I feel it really depends on how people like to spend money on things. A lot of people like to take free samples from the markets and things like that and I feel like those kinds of people are the ones that pirate movies because they are used to doing it. If it's their first time they will be more skeptical. I think it's also because you see a lot of content on YouTube and those content creators do it for free and there's so much content out there it has become somewhat of a norm. So everyone feels like it's okay to watch content for free to kind of justify it in a sense. And YouTube creators don't really complain about it so I feel like they would assume the same for movie directors or any other pirated content (Participant 9).

Thus, this participant is saying that they do not think they would feel guilt even though there is a direct connection as it feels like taking free samples. The participant uses the example of free samples as there is a direct connection between the customers and the brand when free samples are handed out. Moreover, many people are already used to taking them and not feel guilty about it. In addition, on YouTube, the content there can be consumed for free. As so much content is available for free, it has become a common norm 'it is okay to watch content for free'. Along with that, YouTubers do not seem to be complaining about having their content shared freely.

Lastly, multiple studies have said people do not feel guilty due to lack of consequence this study researched in having heavier consequences would make people feel more guilty. Participants were asked if think people pirate movies or TV series because there is no consequence. Most people also said they would feel guilty because when there is a strict regulations people tend to be more afraid to use it.

> Yes, I think so. I don't know if it's guilty maybe more aware and get scared. My family, actually there was a case we got caught and we got a fine. Since then, we kind of stopped. (Participant 10)

Thus, after experiencing the consequence ('getting a fine'), Participant 10 became more hesitant. However, a few participants also said that even though it said a strict regulation, people are still going to do it. For instance, Participant 15 said they believe that people will continue doing it because they have a basic idea that 'as long as you do not get caught, then it's fine.' So for a moment, they will feel guilty but that feeling will be gone after a period of fine.

> But I think I will still use it though because once I experience the convenience of it, also I don't have to spend money on it, it is difficult to stop, I think. Also, I think people will think like 'As long as I don't get caught'. I think this will be the same in not only this but also in other gray areas. So even if I get caught, I think like oh 'I wasn't so lucky'. (Participant 15)

Hence, consequences will not make them feel guilty as using pirated sites to stream or download movies became a habit for them. In addition, people will not feel guilty as they put the blame on something else such as luck.

Participants also said they will feel more guilty about their actions when they know about the damage they cause. When asked 'What would make you feel more guilty about piracy?' to participant 1, this is how they answered.

> Uhmmm I mean there isn't any announcement from the movie team or TV team that if they announce anything that please stop watching the illegal movie? It's really hurting us because it took us a long time and so much money to invest in it and we feel really like that when you guys use the fake one and I would stop watching that because I don't want to damage anyone. (Participant 1)

Hence, people will feel more guilty when they realize the impact piracy can make. Once acknowledge how unethical their action is, Participant 1 believes it will make people feel guilty as they do not want to harm anyone.

Lastly, there were also new findings that people will feel more guilty when their personal information is out people are more careful with their actions. Here is a quote from Participant 13 when asked 'what would make you feel more guilty about piracy' for an explanation.

I think first when people must make an account to those illegal websites by

using their actual identity by doing that people will feel more pressure to it.

Also, if it is not anonymous, people will be careful in putting their information

which will cause a decrease in using it. Also, since it's anonymous, people

will easily share content and stuff so if it's not anonymized it would prevent

them from sharing content and feel more guilty about it.

Thus, Participant 13 argues that when personal information is involved people will be more hesitant is doing it. Therefore, it will reduce people uploading content illegally which will naturally decrease piracy.

In conclusion, some result of this study advocates the fact from previous literature that people do not feel guilty about piracy as they do not view this act as unethical, absence of direct connection, and a lack of consequence. However, there was also a case where some participants view this as unethical as they know they are taking away the profit of the production company. Along with that, some participants do not believe they would feel guilty even though there was a direct connection as many free contents are available which makes them believe it is okay to take for granted free movies or TV shows. Lastly, there were also new findings that people feel guilty when the impact of piracy can put in the production industry is known. Furthermore, there was also another new finding that people will feel more guilty when their identity is not anonymized

4.3 Shame

Questions related to shame were also asked in order to find answers to the research question 'When would people feel ashamed about piracy?'. Shame is first defined as shame when a

norm is violated and knowing that someone else is aware of the violation (Haidt, 2003). Shame is triggered by the existence of a third party. Thus, participants were asked if they feel shame when someone notices that they pirate movies or TV shows. It also looked at whether they feel shame when somebody reminds them that they should not do it as it is an illegal behavior. Finally, it looked at what would make people feel more ashamed about the behavior.

First, participants were asked if they would feel ashamed if someone else notices that they use pirating. Several participants state that they do not feel ashamed of using illegal sites. A quote from an interview with Participant 12 explains why. The quote is the answer from the participant when asked if they feel ashamed when someone notice that they pirate movies or TV series.

> No, because maybe there should be better production on content creation sites
> for allowing content like this to go out. For example, Netflix. They really put
> the good stuff in there to fully prevent pirating and such. (Participant 12)

Hence, participant 12 does not feel ashamed as it is the content creation sites such as Netflix and such to blame for not having the content on the platform. However, some participants also said they feel shame when someone notices it because it is illegal behavior. This is the answer from Participant 17 when asked the same question was asked.

> A little bit. Because it is illegal, and I know it's illegal and everyone else
> knows that it's illegal. So, I would not feel comfortable talking about it
> especially if it is someone that I'm not close to. (Participant 17)

The quote explains that they do feel shame as they know that piracy is against the law which is why they do not feel comfortable talking about it especially if they do not know well about that person. In addition, Participant 17, commented they would also feel more ashamed if that third party was working in the production industry as when pirating they are affecting the profit of that person.

Another question of if they feel bad when someone said that 'You shouldn't do this, this is bad' was asked to analyze deeper into when would people feel ashamed. In fact, some people said they are going to feel more shame when there is someone saying 'You shouldn't do this, this is bad.

> I would feel really ashamed because I know that it's wrong and that person pinpoint that so I would feel a lot ashamed since someone just revealed something that I wanted to hide. (Participant 5)

Participant 5 believes they would feel ashamed as they feel like the other person is exposing them as it is something that want to hide as it is illegal. Thus, people feel more ashamed when someone pinpoints it. However, there were also some people that also said they would not feel guilty even when there was somebody telling them it is unethical behavior.

> Because I feel like it's none of their business first of all. Secondly, it's not my invention. It's just like a grey area that everyone did it, but I don't really think people didn't know it's not good to do that. It's like smoking yeahh drinking alcohol (Participant 18).

Thus, Participant 18 said that the majority of people do know that smoking and drinking alcohol have a negative effect on one's health. However, people continue on doing it as many people in around them are already doing it. They further mention that they believe it will be the same with digital piracy as they think the majority of people are aware that the act is illegal, but continue on doing it as it has been so normalized.

There was also new finding in research. The new finding was that people feel ashamed when they are in a situation where they have to set an example and require high responsibility. The interview from Participant 17 said that people also feel ashamed when they are in a situation where they have to set an example. This was the answer from Participant 17 when asked 'what situation would make you feel ashamed about piracy?'.

> Maybe when I am with kids or when I'm in a position where I have to be responsible and be a good role model and doing illegal streaming or downloading wouldn't look that way. (Participant 17)

Thus, Participant 17 mentions that they would feel ashamed about piracy in front of children. The reason for that is they want to be presented as a good role model and responsible adults and piracy would not make them look that way.

The conclusion that can be drawn from these findings is that people generally do not feel ashamed about piracy even when someone notices the behavior. However, if the third party was a person who works in the production field or a person they do not know well, people tend

to feel more shame. In addition, people will also feel ashamed when somebody calls out their behavior stating that it is bad and they should not do it as it is illegal. However, there were also comments that said that would not affect them as they do know it is bad behavior similar to smoking and drinking but will continue to do it as they do not believe it is serious behavior as it has been normalized. Another thing that was also interesting is that people tend to feel ashamed when they are in a position where they have to be responsible.

5. Discussion

Overall, this research aims to answer the 'why being illegal does not affect feeling guilty or shame?' as many people are currently using illegal streaming or downloading meaning the current prevention in piracy does not have an effect. As it is already found by previous studies when doing illegal behavior people neutralize their behavior to reduce moral emotions such as guilt or shame. To further analyze the research question, it also asked, 'How do people neutralize piracy'. In addition, it also asks 'what would make people feel guilty about piracy?' and 'What would make people feel ashamed about piracy?' multiple findings were found that proved the results from previous research but also there are new findings as well from each term neutralization, guilt, and shame. In addition, there were also some limitations and implications made in this research. Lastly, it ends with the recommendation for the future research.

5.1 Neutralization

How people neutralize their piracy behavior was researched in this study. Overall, people neutralize their behavior by saying they are not the only ones that are pirates, and several other people are also doing it. However, that is not always the case as some participants pirate because of convenience. People also neutralize their behavior by saying 'What I do would not

have that much impact on the production industries'. Hence, this implies that most people are not aware of the impact piracy can cause. On the other hand, some participants have answered that they believe people do know the impact of piracy through several campaigns and warnings. Moreover, the reason they continue doing it is that they believe it does not affect them. Lastly, people also pirate due lack of access to the legal platform and financial advantage.

Again, people neutralize their behavior by saying there are many others who are also doing it. Hence, people tend to feel safer in doing unethical behavior when there are others who are also doing it. This can be explained by the claim of normalcy defined by Phau, Teah & Liang (2016) where people neutralize their behavior by saying "Everyone in society is downloading movies for free from the internet". In this case, people view illegal activity (illegally downloading pirated movies) as a normal activity because it has become a common practice in society and is considered to be the norm (Phau, Teah & Liang, 2016). Furthermore, Moore and McMullan (2009) imply that the law becomes unnecessary or unimportant for a particular individual since the majority of people in society disregard the function of the law. However, some people state that it does not matter if others are doing it or not because they use illegal streaming platforms because it is more convenient for them as they can watch it whenever wherever they want for free.

Additionally, another thing is that people also justify their behavior by saying 'What I do does not affect the production industry'. Thus, they believe that their actions will not affect the production industry as most of them seem to have plenty amount of money as they create big productions that are costly. On the other hand, there was also a participant who said they think a lot of people are already aware of the impact that they cause due to the warning and campaign

that is being done. However, they continue pirating movies or TV shows because there is no harm done to them. Thus, people tend to continue doing illegal behavior because by doing it does not impact their daily life.

Lastly, people also neutralize their behavior due to a lack of accessibility and financial advantage. For instance, people do not have any other options but to use illegal sites as they are not available on legal streaming platforms. In addition, all platforms have different content that is available. Furthermore, even on the same platform, depending on the location the contents that are offered are different. Thus, to watch it legally, they would have to subscribe to multiple platforms just to watch only a few shows that they are interested in which feels like a waste of money when it is available for free on illegal websites. Moreover, VPN can also be used. However, people tend to not use it as they are having difficulties with it. Hence, it is convenient to use illegal websites as with just a few clicks the content that they want to watch is available.

5.2 Guilt

The research question of what would make people guilty of piracy in films and TV series is also analyzed. People tend to not feel guilty about piracy because digital piracy has become a sort of habit. However, some findings contradict this as there were some cases where participants felt guilty about piracy. On the other hand, participants also did not feel guilty when they tried different legal options and failed. There were also literatures that said people do not feel guilty about piracy as there is no direct connection with the production industries meaning that people will feel guilty when there is a direct connection. However, some participants said that they would not feel guilty even though there is a direct connection. This

study also confirmed that people will also feel more guilty when there is a harsh consequence made. However, a few participants said that they do not think the harsh consequence will change their behavior. It also confirms that people will feel more guilty when they are more aware of the negative impact piracy can put. Lastly, there was also a new finding which is that people will feel more guilty when their identity is revealed.

Many participants have said that when they first started pirating movies, they felt guilty. However, since they have become frequent users, they have become numb to it. This means that as piracy became habitual the act itself become normalized. For instance, in a study by De Corte & Van Kenhove (2017) said that frequent pirates do not feel guilty about pirating as it has become habitual. As a result, they started not to think of piracy as unethical behavior.

In addition, people tend to not feel guilty about piracy because they do not have a direct connection with the production industries. When there is no direct connection with the victim people do not feel empathy towards them. Thus, people will feel more guilty when there is a direct connection with the production industries. A lot of people have commented that they feel more guilty about their actions because they tend to feel more empathy when there is a direct connection.

However, there were also some comments saying they will continue using it as it has become common to them to watch free content similar to taking as free samples. Many people are already used to taking free samples and even though they are taking them away without having to pay for them. In terms of piracy, the widespread adoption of the internet has opened up a whole new opportunity for information sharing, including file sharing, which encourages individuals to indulge in digital piracy (Phau & Liang, 2012). Along with that, due to YouTube,

many contents can be watched freely these days which makes people feel it will be the same for movie productions as well.

Another thing that would make people more guilty is when there is more consequence to their actions. When facing a behavioral choice in the future, individuals would be influenced by the memory of the previous behavior (Wang & McClung, 2012). Thus, if harsh consequences are put into it, people will remember the incident and stop doing it and feel guilty about it. However, there might be a case when if do not feel guilty about it because they have been using it for a long time. Thus, even when they are caught, instead of feeling guilty, they would put the blame on others by saying 'Oh I wasn't so lucky, that is why I got caught'.

Moreover, people will feel more guilty when they know more about the negative impact their actions can cause on the production industries. If they know about the impacts they cause, they will realize how unethical it is and stop doing it. Once one realizes how unethical it signals negative emotions such as guilt to change the behavior. (Wang & McClung, 2012)

Lastly, people also feel guilty when they are being called out. For instance, on most pirating websites, people can upload content without revealing their identity. Also, people who are using the websites, also do not have to make any accounts or anything which makes them feel safer in doing it as it decreases their chance of getting caught.

5.3 Shame

In previous studies, it states that people do not feel ashamed about illegal streaming or downloading (Urbonavicius et al, 2019). To further look at the reasons, it looked at what would trigger shame in digital piracy in movies and TV series. This study found that in a situation

where they must watch it through illegal websites because it is not available on any streaming platform, people tend to not feel ashamed and put the responsibility on those platforms for not having those content even when another person is noticing that they are pirating. On the other hand, people also tend to feel more ashamed about piracy when they were caught by another person as it is an illegal behavior. Hence, they know it is illegal and they know that the other person knows that it is illegal. Thus, social prohibition is created making them feel more cautious in talking about or doing piracy in front of another person. Furthermore, they will be more ashamed if that person was either working in the production or someone they are not close to. Hence, as the behavior is against social norms, people tend to be more careful when talking to others about the behavior. Making them feel more ashamed when it is noticed.

In addition, people also feel more ashamed if someone calls out unethical behavior that they do not want to be shown to others. However, some also believe that they do not feel ashamed since they do not think it is a big deal and a lot of others are also doing it. Hence, they do not feel ashamed and even someone pinpoints it.

However, there was also an opinion that said they might feel ashamed about pirating movies or TV series when they are in a situation where they need to show responsibility. For instance, when they must be a good role model to children.

5.4 Limitation

There were also some limitations in this research. One of the limitations is that all the participants were foreigners meaning they do not currently live in their home country. Therefore, results might differ when interviewing people who are in their home county,

especially in reasons why they decide in using illegal websites since most foreigners use the illegal website to watch content from their home country that is not accessible in the country they live. Another limitation would be some participants had a longer interview and some participants had a shorter interview (Appendix B). For instance, the interview of Participant 1 took 30 minutes and the interview of Participant 1 took 30 minutes. The reason for that is Participant 1 gave too much unnecessary information that was not related to the research. On the other hand, participant 14 took an interview that was 8 minutes. It gave some information but not in-depth which made it difficult to use in the analysis. In addition, it was difficult to find specific resource about shame that is relevant to the research. Moreover, some participants were not sure if a certain website was pirated website. For example, Participant 10 was not sure if the site she used 'Dailymotion' was a pirating website as the site is similar to watching content on YouTube.

5 Implication

Two implications can be made through this research: theoretical implications and practical implications. The theoretical implication that can be made in this research is that people neutralize their behavior by saying 'other people are doing it', 'What I do would not have that much impact on the production industries'. In addition, people also neutralize their piracy behavior as it is cheap, convenient, and lacks consequence as well. People also do not feel guilty unless they have a direct connection with the victims, harsh consequences, know about the negative impact it can cause, and also exposure of their identity. Shame is also implied that in piracy it is usually triggered when someone in the production industry or someone they are not close to. This can be implied as for employees in production industries are ashamed as they

know that their actions impact them. For someone whom they are not close to, they are ashamed as they do not know if this person has a negative or positive attitude towards piracy.

Practical implications that can be made are that with this information the government can work on creating new legal measures to prevent people from pirating. As current measures do not seem to have an effect in reducing piracy, these results can make them more effective as to how people neutralize their behavior and what situations in would people feel guilt and shame are known. For instance, as different situations to make pirates in feeling more guilt and shame are discussed, it can be used to create an environment that would rouse up their moral emotions and would take part in preventing people from doing certain actions. Eventually, it would result in making the measures more effective by making people feel guilt and shame about piracy as most do not view this as a serious issue which is why they continue using pirated websites.

5.6 Recommendations

One of the recommendations for future research is the possible solution. This research did not search for possible solutions to prevent people from pirating movies or TV series. With the result of this study in mind, it would help in coming up with new effective measures in copyright. In addition, it would also be advised to look for samples with diverse nationalities as it seems to have participants mostly from particular nationalities. Along with that, this study focused on age groups below 30 years of age. Therefore, it might be interesting to look up findings from the age group that is older than the set age group for this study. In addition, lack of study was done on shame. Therefore, more research about shame should be done.

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7. Appendix

Appendix A) Interview questions

Consent

Interviewer: Hi thank you for participating in the interview. Before we begin, let me explain to you what the research is about. This research is about how people neutralize their behavior and it results in decreasing the feeling of guilt and shame. In addition, it also looks for what would make people feel guilty or shame about piracy in movies or TV shows. Your information will be anonymous and will be deleted after the research. Would it be okay if we record the interview for research purposes? The recording will be deleted after the research.

Interviewer: So recording has started for participant x.

1) Can you tell me your age?

2) Your nationality?

3) Okay, could you tell me when was the last time you pirated movies or tv series?

4) Can you describe the situation that you were in when you last watch pirated movies?

5) Is there also other situations that are different than the previous one that made you decide to pirate movies or TV series? If there is, could you describe that situation?

Neutralization

1) What are some of the reasons that made you decide in pirating movies or TV series?

2) Do you think people pirate movies or TV series because they believe many others are also doing it?

3) Why is that?

4) Do you think that people also pirate movies or TV series because they think their actions don't impact the production industries that much?

5) Why is that?

6) Is there also other possible reasons you think that people pirate movies or TV series? If there are, what are they?

Guilt

1) Do you believe that pirating movies or TV series is unethical or wrongdoing?

2) Do you feel guilty when you pirate movies or TV series?

3) Why or why not do you feel guilty when you pirate movies or TV series?

4) What would make you feel guilty about pirating movies or TV series?

5) Would people not feel guilty about pirating movies or TV series because they don't have a direct connection to production industries?

6) Why or why not?

7) Would people feel more guilty when they are faced with more consequences?

Shame

1) When you pirate movies or TV series, is it usually done when you are alone or when you are with a group of people?

2) If they answer alone → Why not do you do it with others?

3) If the interviewee answer with a group of people → what are some of the reactions of the people you were with when you were pirating movies or TV series?

4) When do you think you won't tell or keep that fact you pirated movies or TV series a secret?

5) What are your thought or feeling when someone mentions illegal streaming or downloading?

Interviewer: okay thank you for participating in the interview! If you have any questions you can always let me know through my email.

Appendix B)

Table of Participnat and recorded interview time

Participant Number	Time
1	28:45:00
2	13:18
3	11:15
4	18:10
5	14:13
6	10:04
7	15:16
8	13:48
9	12:43
10	15:42
11	19:21
12	17:28
13	11:19
14	8:26
15	12:09
16	16:12
17	18:37
18	11:50

Appendix C) Search Log

Search log

Date	Where you search	Search terms	Relevant hits
May 12, 2023	UT Library	("entertainment piracy" OR "movie piracy" OR "film piracy" OR "video piracy" OR "illegal downloading" OR "illegal streaming") AND (justifiacation* OR guilt*	4 Very specific able to find the one that I need. However, too little resources
May 12, 2023	UT Library	(guilt OR guilty) AND ("film piracy" OR "movie piracy") OR "video piracy" OR "content piracy"	34 managed to find some relevant resources
May 12, 2023	UT Library	("illegal streaming" OR "illegal downloading") AND (shame*)	2 found some resources. However, too little. They were relevant to the research however.
May 15, 2023	UT Library	(shame* OR embarrassment)	2 same resources popped up

		AND ("movie piracy" OR "film piracy" OR "video piracy" OR "content piracy" OR "illegal streaming" OR "illegal downloading")	
May 16, 2023	UT Library	(shame) AND ("digital piracy")	3 managed to find some relevant resources. However, too little.
May 16, 2023	UT Library	("entertainment piracy" OR "movie piracy" OR "film piracy" OR "video piracy" OR "illegal downloading" OR "illegal streaming")	229 Some good resources
May 16, 2023	UT Library	(neutralization OR neutralisation) AND ("movie piracy" OR "film piracy" OR "video piracy" OR	9 Some good resources were found. However, it overlapped with previous searches.

		"content piracy" OR "illegal streaming" OR "illegal downloading")	
May 20, 2023	UT Library	(guilt* OR guilty) AND ('film piracy' OR 'movie piracy' OR 'video piracy')	34 Fair amount of resources were discovered. However, there were some resources that did not match with the research
May 20	Google	Statistics piracy in movies and TV series	29,300,00 it was searched to look for some statistics. Lot of web pages but able to find the ones I need with only a couple of tries.
June 10	UT Library	("illegal streaming" OR "illegal downloading") AND (guilt*)	12 Able to find relevant resources. However some of them overlapped with resources that were found in

			previous searches.