Research Article

The Privacy Consciousness of Undergraduate Students: Comparison Between Turkey and Japan

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Abstract

AIM: This study was designed to compare the privacy consciousness of undergraduate students in Turkey and Japan.

METHOD: A comparative cross-sectional study was carried out. First-year undergraduate students at a university in Turkey (n = 235) and a university in Japan (n = 242) voluntarily participated in the study. Data were collected via a web-based structured questionnaire, using the Descriptive Characteristics Form and the Privacy Consciousness Scale, between November and December 2020. Written approval was obtained from the universities and the ethics board. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

RESULTS: The privacy consciousness of the Turkish students was significantly higher than that of the Japanese students (p < .05).

CONCLUSION: Privacy consciousness can be affected by individual, social, and cultural value differences, beliefs, and perceptions. It is suggested that similar studies be conducted with a greater number of samples and between different countries.

Keywords: Japan, privacy consciousness, Turkey, undergraduate students

Introduction

Japan and Turkey have had the longest and most-established relations in Asia (Pehlivan, 2012). Although the intercultural interaction from past to present has been limited due to the distance between the two countries, it is seen that there have been similarities between them on some issues related to privacy. Protecting individual privacy, not interfering with someone else’s private life, not intervening in homes and private areas without permission—even as a family member—and a conservative family structure are some of these similarities (Bahar, 2019).

The concept of privacy is culture-specific (Altman, 1977). Cultural differences affect privacy limits and behaviors to protect privacy (Altman, 1977; Krasnova et al., 2012; Westin, 1976). Several studies have compared the concept of privacy among different cultures. Kaya and Weber (2003) found that American undergraduate students desired more privacy in their residence halls than Turkish students. Kumaraguru et al. (2005) stated that Indian and American adults had different views on privacy, and Americans were more aware of privacy issues caused by developing technology. Tabata et al. (2018) found that Taiwanese high school students had higher privacy consciousness than Japanese students. Zabihzadeh et al. (2019) stated that privacy in Iran was “family-centered,” whereas in the United States privacy was based on “government-oriented” factors. When Iranian adults were asked to list privacy-related words, they mostly used family-centered components, while American adults rarely mentioned these components.

Although Japan and Turkey are societies that represent different cultures, some characteristics of people are similar (Bahar, 2019; Boiger et al., 2014; Özkarak et al., 2020). However, there is no study in the literature comparing the issue of privacy consciousness between Japan and Turkey.

Privacy is defined as being away from the interference of others in terms of physical space, individual information, decisions, preferences, and relationships of the person (Beauchamp & Childress, 2019; Westin, 1967). Besides the issue of who is accessing the privacy limits set by the person, how this access is provided is also important (Beauchamp & Childress, 2019). For this reason, the individual must be aware of the privacy limits of self and others to protect privacy. (Tabata et al., 2018, Tabata et al., 2021).

Five forms of privacy are identified: physical privacy, informational privacy, proprietary privacy, decisional privacy, and relational or associational privacy. Identifying the different forms of privacy is important for a broader consideration (Allen, 2021;
The concept of privacy has recently become more talked about, with respect to issues raised in the the digital age. It is emphasized that young people should be more conscious than the elderly about protecting their privacy and the privacy of others, especially since the younger generation is more exposed to technology (Tabata et al., 2018). Undoubtedly, the ability of undergraduate students, who are still in the transition to adulthood, to protect their privacy and the privacy of others should be discussed. Because these students actively use social media channels; most of this time is spent with digital games, social media, and applications on smartphones (Takahashi, 2014). In the study of Sığın (2019), 44% of Turkish high school and undergraduate students said “I do not see my family as private, and I share their photos on social media.” The privacy consciousness of the younger and less educated was found to be lower. In addition, although 81% of the participants in the same study thought that they were watched on social media, all of them answered “Yes” to the question “Do you carry out your private correspondence in these networks?” In Avşar’s study (2019), Turkish parents and their children were asked whether they would share photos of their family wearing swimsuits on social media. While most of the parents stated that such photos contained private elements and it was not very appropriate to share them on social media, their children stated that they had shared their swimsuit photos taken on the beach on their social media accounts before and could share them again. It is argued that this finding stems from the difference in the concept of intergenerational privacy. Nevertheless, because the internet usage rate of young people in Turkey has increased to 93% in 2020 (TUIK, 2020) and 99% in Japan (aged 20 to 29) (Statista Research Department, 2021), it becomes very important for young people to be conscious of protecting their privacy in digital environments.

In this context, the purpose of this study was to compare the privacy consciousness held by undergraduate students in Turkey and Japan.

Research Questions

1. Is there a difference between the Privacy Consciousness Scale scores of Japanese and Turkish undergraduate students?

2. Is there a difference between the Privacy Consciousness Scale items scores of Japanese and Turkish undergraduate students?

Method

Study Design

A cross-sectional and comparative design was used for this study.

Sample

The total participants were 477 first-year undergraduate students who were newly enrolled in the university in Turkey (n = 235, 135 male, 114 female), and the university, in Japan (n = 242, 138 male, 104 female). In this study, the convenience sampling method was used. In this method, a group of people who are easy to contact or reach form the sample and there are no criteria other than their availability and willingness to participate (Saunders et al., 2012). So, the students who were native to their respective countries voluntarily participated in the study. The Turkish students who graduated from a health-related high school or a university were not included in the sample because of the possibility that their background might affect privacy consciousness. The study was completed in November–December of 2020.

Of the total Japanese students, 39.3% (n = 193) were enrolled in policy studies and 10.0% (n = 49) in literature; of the Turkish students, 12.0% (n = 58) were enrolled in nursing, 9.8% (n = 48) physical therapy and rehabilitation, 7.1% (n = 35) nutrition and dietetics and 18.9% (n = 93) engineering.

Data Collection

Data were collected via a web-based structured questionnaire, using the Descriptive Characteristics Form (three questions on students’ age, gender, and the department being enrolled in) and the Privacy Consciousness Scale (PCS). Both countries used their own scales for undergraduate students.

The Privacy Consciousness Scale (PCS): It was originally developed by Tabata and Sato (2014) in Japanese and was adapted to Turkish by Öztürk et al. (2019). The English version of the PCS is available in Tabata et al.’s study (Tabata et al., 2021). The PCS consists of three subscales: (a) Consciousness and Behaviors Regarding Privacy of Self (seven items in the original, four items in the Turkish version); (b) Consciousness Regarding Privacy of Others (four items in the original and Turkish versions), and (c) Behaviors Regarding Privacy of Others (four items in the original, three items in the Turkish version). The PCS consisted of a total of 15 items in Japanese and 11 items in Turkish (the four scale items that have low factor loads were subtracted), 5-point Likert-type questions ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of each subscale were .75, .72, and .70 for the Japanese data, and .73, .74, and .70 for the Turkish data. Both the Turkish and Japanese versions of the PCS were found to be reliable and valid data collection tools for undergraduate students.
Statistical Analysis
Statistical analysis was performed using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Corp., Armonk, NY, USA) software (version 26). The number, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used in descriptive statistical evaluations. The Shapiro–Wilk test was used to evaluate data with a normal or non-normal distribution. Nonparametric tests were used to indicate a non-normal distribution (df = 477, p < .05). Statistical comparisons of data between the two groups were measured by a Mann–Whitney U-test. The data were evaluated at a 95% confidence interval and a p < .05 significance level.

Ethical Considerations
Written approval was obtained from Gazi University Ethics Committee in Turkey (October 01, 2019, No. E.136768) and from the universities in Turkey (November 15, 2020, No. E.110414) and Japan (from the Policy Studies Association in Aichi Gakuin University on October 1, 2020). Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Results
The mean age of the Turkish students (n = 235) was 18.75 ± .95 (min = 17, max = 21); the mean age of the Japanese students (n = 242) was 18.53 ± .53 (min = 18, max = 20); 51.5% (n = 121) of the Turkish students and 43.0% (n = 104) of the Japanese students were female. The Turkish and Japanese students were similar in terms of age (p = .063) and gender distribution (p = .137, p > .05, Table 1).

Table 1.
Summary of Demographic Data (n = 477).

|                | Turkey    | Japan    |
|----------------|-----------|----------|
| Mean Age       | 18.75 ± .95 | 18.53 ± .53 |
| Gender         | n (%)     | n (%)    |
| Male           | 114 (48.5) | 138 (57.0)    |
| Female         | 121 (51.5) | 104 (43.0)    |
| Total          | 235 (100.0) | 242 (100.0)    |

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations of the total PCS scale scores and the three factors. The total and all subscales of the PCS average scores were significantly higher for the Turkish students than for the Japanese students (p < .05). The score of the “Consciousness and Behaviors Regarding Privacy of the Self” subscale was the highest mean score which the Turkish students obtained. The score of the “Behaviors Regarding Privacy of Others” subscale was the highest mean score which the Japanese students obtained (Table 2).

A summary of the PCS items and mean scores is presented in Table 3 and shows that 10 of the PCS items were significantly different between the two groups. These items included the following: item 1 (I habitually behave in a way that safeguards the privacy of strangers) (p < .05); item 2 (I absolutely want to protect my privacy) (p < .05); item 4 (I don’t want others to listen to my conversations with my friends) (p < .05); item 5 (I don’t habitually think about the privacy of strangers) (p < .05); item 6 (My personal information shouldn’t be known to everyone) (p < .05); item 7 (I consciously listen when a stranger in front of me makes a call) (p < .05); item 8 (I don’t habitually think about the privacy of my friends) (p < .05); item 9 (I consciously listen to conversations between strangers) (p < .05); item 10 (I behave in a way that safeguards my privacy) (p < .05); item 11 (I habitually behave in a way that safeguards the privacy of my friends) (p < .05).

Discussion
In the present study, we investigated to compare the privacy consciousness of the newly enrolled undergraduate university

Table 2.
Comparison of the PCS Total and Subscale Mean Scores Between the Undergraduate Students in Turkey and Japan (n = 477).

| PCS and Subscales                  | Turkish Students (n = 208) | Japanese Students (n = 242) | χ²       | p       |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|---------|
| PCS Total Score                   | 4.46 ± .44                | 3.40 ± .55                  | 4166.00  | .000    |
| PCS Subscales                     |                           |                             |          |         |
| Consciousness and Behaviors       | 4.60 ± .50                | 3.37 ± .74                  | 4650.00  | .000    |
| Regarding Privacy of the Self     |                           |                             |          |         |
| Consciousness Regarding Privacy   | 4.38 ± .59                | 3.28 ± .84                  | 8413.50  | .000    |
| of Others                         |                           |                             |          |         |
| Behaviors Regarding Privacy of    | 4.36 ± .44                | 3.59 ± .79                  | 12565.50 | .000    |
| Others                            |                           |                             |          |         |

Note: PCS = The Privacy Consciousness Scale; M = mean; SD = standard deviation.
students, in Turkey and Japan. The total and all subscales of the PCS mean scores of the Turkish students were significantly higher than those of the Japanese students (p < .05; Table 2). Since privacy is a broad concept that is affected by quite different factors, the privacy consciousness of individuals may differ between cultures due to many reasons. One of these reasons is that privacy consciousness is a more important need in some cultures.

Hall (1966) divided cultures into contact and non-contact. According to Hall, Turkey, which is connected to the Mediterranean cultures, is in the contact culture. Asian populations are in the non-contact cultures. Contact cultures use closer interpersonal distances and engage more in touch, while people in non-contact cultures display contrasting preferences and behaviors (Hall, 1966). Cultural values and beliefs are among the main factors that guide thoughts and actions (Burkhardt & Nathaniel, 2013). Close interaction, which is a characteristic of Turkish culture, can affect the awareness of privacy limits drawn to protect one’s privacy. For this reason, it is thought that Turkish students have a higher privacy consciousness, both for themselves and for others.

A study found that Turkish students between the ages of 15 and 25 mostly preferred to be close with their friends or peers, and “being alone” was the most preferred form of privacy. However, while the exchange of information on sexual matters, which are considered private in Turkish culture, was almost taboo among Turkish family members, it was common among younger peers (Rüstemli & Kökdemir, 1993). In the study of Celikoglu (2007) with 37 Turkish undergraduate students aged between 17 and 25, the majority of the students defined “privacy” as “private space that is not wished to be shared with others,” “things that are individual and should be avoided,” and “everything that should be kept confidential.” However, in Sato and Tabata’s study (2011), when Japanese participants aged 16 to 60 were asked how they identified privacy, they mainly identified privacy as referring to “personal information” or “secret.” Those who answered that privacy refers to “individual right” or “personal domain” were relatively low. As a result of the research, it is thought that people with low privacy consciousness are less aware of the boundaries of privacy between themselves and others and they have little knowledge about privacy, therefore they see privacy as a secret that no one wants to know (Sato & Tabata, 2011). The results of the study show that Japanese and Turkish people define the concept of privacy differently. While the concept of privacy connotes physical and proprietary privacy more in Turkish people, Japanese people usually consider the informational aspect of privacy. Defining privacy in different ways may cause privacy consciousness to be shaped differently.

Values and moral education also differ in Japan and Turkey. Values and moral education in Turkey have become a part of the education curriculum. So, it is thought that the Turkish education curriculum is an important factor in the high privacy consciousness of Turkish undergraduate students. Cultural values are passed down from generation to generation through educational environments or role models. The concept of right and wrong can change between cultures and educational life can reinforce these concepts (Burkhardt & Nathaniel, 2013). So many lessons in primary and secondary education programs in Turkey aim to teach and infuse various values into students. Regarding the acquisition of cultural values in the general purposes of The Turkish Basic Law of National Education, these expressions “to raise all individuals as citizens who adopt, protect and develop the national, moral, humanitarian, spiritual and cultural values of the Turkish Nation” and “to raise them as individuals who respect human rights and value personality and enterprise” draw attention. (The Republic of Turkey, The Ministry of National Education, 1973). In Turkey, informing children about privacy and ensuring their privacy consciousness begins in preschool and even goes as far back as the toilet-training

### Table 3.
Comparison of the PCS Between Undergraduate Students in Turkey and Japan

| Item                                                                 | Turkey       | Japan       | p     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| 1. I habitually behave in a way that safeguards the privacy of strangers. | 4.43 (.70)   | 3.37 (1.20) | .000  |
| 2. I absolutely want to protect my privacy.                          | 4.63 (.61)   | 3.97 (1.02) | .000  |
| 3. I have made it a habit not to peep into the screen of another person’s mobile phone when using public transport. | 4.21 (.90)   | 4.16 (.98)  | .985  |
| 4. I don’t want others to listen to my conversations with my friends. | 4.53 (.90)   | 3.25 (1.19) | .000  |
| 5. I don’t habitually think about the privacy of strangers.          | 4.23 (1.09)  | 3.07 (1.21) | .000  |
| 6. My personal information shouldn’t be known to everyone.          | 4.71 (.61)   | 3.65 (1.08) | .000  |
| 7. I consciously listen when a stranger in front of me makes a call.  | 4.41 (83)    | 3.49 (1.14) | .000  |
| 8. I don’t habitually think about the privacy of my friends.         | 4.47 (88)    | 3.33 (1.07) | .000  |
| 9. I consciously listen to conversations between strangers.           | 4.46 (69)    | 3.35 (1.15) | .000  |
| 10. I behave in a way that safeguards my privacy.                    | 4.54 (.62)   | 3.33 (1.00) | .000  |
| 11. I habitually behave in a way that safeguards the privacy of my friends. | 4.39 (.74)   | 3.36 (1.02) | .000  |

Note: M = mean; SD = standard deviation; PCS = The Privacy Consciousness Scale (Scoring: Likert-type scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).
period. Children are educated by their family and during the first years of their education process on subjects such as “Defining Private Space,” “My Body Belongs to Me,” “Privacy in Toilet and Bathroom,” “Separation of Bed and Rooms,” and “Sexuality” (Keçiören Counseling and Research Center, 2018). In 2017, the Ministry of Family and Social Policies in Turkey organized a workshop aimed to raise the privacy consciousness of the children, to identify the existing situation, and to determine solutions and suggestions. Many suggestions had been made to families, institutions, and the personnel working in the institutions (The Republic of Turkey, The Ministry of Family and Social Policies, 2017). Especially in the pre-school period, many kindergarten schools have activity plans for privacy training. (The Republic of Turkey, The Ministry of Family and Social Policies, 2019). In Turkey, the perception of privacy holds an important place in education and policies relating to education. On the other hand, Nishino (2017) states that although moral education has been one of the most important and debated issues in the history of educational reform in Japan, some people, including teachers and parents, were concerned that moral education would impose certain values on children. Therefore, the protection of privacy is a value that should be taught and emphasized in educational environments. Educators should teach this value to young people, away from their evaluation of what “good,” “bad,” “right,” “wrong” is, but in the presence of cultural values.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

Privacy consciousness of the Turkish students was found to be significantly higher than the Japanese students. Privacy consciousness is a broad concept that is affected by different factors, and it may differ depending on many reasons such as the culture and family education and the state policies that individuals are exposed to. It is recommended to conduct more comprehensive studies with the participation of more young people from different cultures, in future studies.

**Study Limitations**

Several limitations of this study must be acknowledged. The study was conducted with only first-year undergraduate students who were newly enrolled in the universities, and in only one university in each of the two countries. The Turkish students in the sample group were mainly in the field of health. The sample was not representative of the entire population because convenience sampling was used.

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