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A SURVEY OF FACTORS INFLUENCING SPREADSHEET RISK AWARENESS

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Abstract

Motivated both by reports on devastating financial and reputation-related consequences of spreadsheet errors and the results of previous studies suggesting a significant lack of users' awareness of spreadsheet risks, this paper provides insight into factors that influence users' perception of risks associated with creating and using spreadsheets. The survey was conducted on a sample of 161 spreadsheet users, whose attitudes were analysed in accordance with 17 attributes. Statistically significant differences were detected among groups with different levels of self-estimated proficiency in spreadsheets, groups of users that spend different amount of time working with spreadsheets during a typical workday, groups of users who attribute greater subjective significance to spreadsheets in the tasks they perform, as well as groups of users from different management levels. Results of the statistical analysis also suggest that the perception of risks associated with spreadsheets is influenced by existence of standards and rules for spreadsheet development and uses within an organisation. Results of the research presented in this paper, which point to an alarmingly low rate of use of spreadsheet features useful for risk mitigation, as well as to a prevalent lack of standards and rules for development and use of spreadsheets among the surveyed organisations, may stimulate managers to introduce such initiatives.

Key words: spreadsheet features, spreadsheet risk, spreadsheet user

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