Chapter 9
The Influence of Organizational Communication Openness on the Post-Adoption of Computers: An Empirical Study in Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

This study adopts social identity theory (SIT) to examine the post-adoption of computers using a research model that extends the theory of planned behavior (TPB) with two organizational cultural factors. Individual attitudes toward using computers and perceived behavioral control are TPB personal factors, while subjective norms can be viewed as the social factor. Empirical findings from 400 Arab end-users show that openness to superior-subordinate relationships (reducing organizational boundaries) significantly influences current computer usage only through personal factors. In contrast, openness to superior-subordinate relationships significantly influences continued use of computers through personal and social factors. However, openness to work communication (reducing communicative boundaries) does not significantly influence either current computer usage or continued use of computers through TPB beliefs. The implications for research and practice, and the limitations of this study, are discussed accordingly.

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INTRODUCTION

An important issue in innovation diffusion is whether the usage behavior of information technologies (IT) in less developed countries is similar to that in industrialized countries (Berkhart, Goodman, Mehta, & Press, 1998; Brown, Hoppe, Mugera, Newman, & Stander, 2004; Goodman & Green, 1992; Loch, Straub, & Kamel, 2003; Zhao, Kim, Suh, & Du, 2007). The diffusion (adoption and use) of IT in Arab society is a good example for addressing this question. According to Rogers (1995), the diffusion of IT generally starts from industrialized countries such as those of North America or Western Europe, and then expands across less developed countries such as Arab nations. Therefore, this study addresses whether a well-developed theory based on Western contexts can explain the adoption and use of IT in Arab society. Cultural differences or cultural boundaries might cause inconsistent findings of IT diffusion between industrialized and less developed countries. Rose and Straub (1998) applied rationalization processes to explain the adoption and use of IT in the Arabic context. However, Elbeltagi, McBride, and Hardaker (2005), in a survey of Arab senior managers, found that although some organizational factors (e.g., top management support and organizational characteristics) may facilitate IT adoption, others (e.g., task and environmental characteristics) may inhibit user acceptance of IT, even where the IT was considered user-friendly in the adoption process. Rationalization processes cannot completely explain these findings. In contrast, an emerging cultural influence school adopts social processes and social influence to explain IT diffusion and transfer in the Arabic context (Loch, Straub, & Kamel, 2003; Straub, Loch, & Hill, 2001). Although the cultural influence on IT diffusion in Arab nations is now being increasingly addressed, no generalized theory yet exists to explain user behavior in organizational contexts.

The impact of cultural factors, such as social-political control, on the common bond of computer use in Arab society cannot be ignored (Goodman & Green, 1992). A cultural boundary (bias) is likely to create cultural and social obstacles for less developed countries in transferring IT into practice. As the cultural boundary between Western and non-Western countries affects the success of IT transfer, the perceived boundary within groups or among users may drive personal computer usage for coordination and communication at work. Socio-cultural factors, such as social class and degree, create cultural boundaries that may support or impede the transfer of IT from non-Arab to Arab cultures (Hill, Loch, Straub, & El-Sheshai, 1998). In particular, the hierarchical structure of Arab society is likely to strengthen the strong “identification” perception among Arab people. Cultural influence implies that people often perceive social identification in terms of their interaction with others. The social identity theory (SIT) is a well-developed theory of the influence of culture on IT usage (Straub, Loch, Evaristo, Karahanna, & Strite, 2002), employed in both Western (Gefen & Ridings, 2003) and non-Western (Gefen, Rose, Warkentin, & Pavlou, 2005) contexts.

Kluckhohn and Strodbeck (1961) defined culture as the shared beliefs and values that simultaneously drive desirable and undesirable behaviors in a society. Hofstede (1980) defined culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another” (p. 21). Tichy (1983) argued that culture is often implicit, implying that individuals are not aware of its influences as they are of political and technical dynamics. In summary, culture is a multi-faceted concept connecting nations, societies, and organizations (Gallivan & Srite, 2005). Whereas Hasan and Ditsa (1999) addressed the influence of cultural identity and values on IT adoption, this study finds that organizational culture is more likely than national or social cultures to influence computer adoption and use by office workers in the workplace. Organizational culture refers to the common norms
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