Continuous Intention of Entry-Level MIS Professionals to Stay Working in the MIS Field: 
The Effect of Wasta and Skill-Job Fit

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ABSTRACT

While many studies focused on what is management information system (MIS) major, how it attracts potential students, and describes needed skills, the perceptions of fresh MIS graduates’ continuous intention to stay working in the field, especially in developing countries has not yet been studied empirically. In addition, there seems to be minimal effort investigating the issue from the Arab perspective. This article is the first that develops a continuous model and is built upon the expectation confirmation model and other subsequent efforts. This model links three external variables, among them two new ones: skill-job fit, Wasta, and computer self-efficacy. This model was validated using a sample of 105 graduates in Kuwait. Results reveal that the new cultural variable “Wasta” has impact on continuous intention through the mediation of satisfaction, while skill job and computer self-efficacy affect continuous intention through the mediation of expectation and confirmation, and the skill-job fit exert the strongest impact on intention. This research is expected to advance both theory and practice.

KEYWORDS

Dissatisfaction, Employment, Expectation Confirmation Theory, Gaps, Graduate Satisfaction, Information System, Job Market Skills, MIS Curriculum, MIS Graduates, MIS Major, MIS Skills, Wasta

INTRODUCTION

Recent research suggests that programs dedicated to information systems (e.g. IS/CIS/IT) need to be aligned with market needs in order to prepare students (seen as future employees) for the jobs they will be filling upon their graduation (Joshi et al., 2010a, 2010b; Litecky et al., 2012). The need for well-educated professionals in the field is the basis for a strong link between educational programs and the professional community of information system (IS) practitioners (Abraham et al., 2006). The management information system (MIS) field is undergoing radical changes. In the past, its main role consisted of developing information systems and then changed to delivering IT support. However,
nowadays these roles have shifted toward a service role and supporting organizational business processes through outsourcing and buying ready-made software packages.

In the past IS employees’ satisfaction was a prominent topic in IS research, focusing on different issues including turnover of IS professionals (Moore, 2000; Joseph et al., 2007; McKnight et al., 2009; Chang 2010) and skills of MIS jobs (Cheney et al., 1990; Trauth et al., 1993; Lee et al., 1995; Todd et al., 1995; Gallivan et al., 2004; Yen et al., 2003; Wu et al., 2007). However, and to our knowledge, fewer studies focus on fresh MIS graduates’ continuous intention as opposed to their turnover. This raises the issue of whether MIS graduates are ready to fill in these new roles and therefore motivate this study toward understanding the factors that affect graduates’ continuous stay in the MIS field since their retention is a key concern within IT organizations today (McMurtrey et al., 2008).

Focus of This Study

Despite the promising future of the MIS field in terms of future employment growth and salary increase, the field suffers from several problems: decline in student enrollment in business schools (Benamati and Rajkumar, 2013; Rouibah, 2016), MIS identity crisis (Rouibah, 2016), and dissatisfaction of graduates and willingness to leave and change the field - IT turnover (Moore, 2000; Joseph et al., 2007; McKnight et al., 2009). Accordingly, some MIS programs were dismantled, frustrating managers’ attempts in attracting qualified IS/IT employees (Rouibah, 2016). These problems have led many researchers to call for additional studies to understand factors that have contributed to satisfaction vs. dissatisfaction, and thereby resulted in the selection of MIS or alternative programs (Heinze and Hu, 2009; Benamati and Rajkumar, 2013).

Researchers investigated many factors that affect both students (see recent literature in Rouibah, 2016) and graduates. Studies that focused on students highlight several factors, including soft and technical skills (Lewis et al., 2008), attitude (Heinzle and Hu, 2009; Rouibah, 2016), subjective norms (Croasdell et al., 2011; Rouibah, 2016), perceived behavioral control (Heinzle and Hu, 2009), job availability (Croasdell et al., 2011; Rouibah, 2016), self-efficacy (Heinzle and Hu, 2009) and outcome expectation (Heinzle and Hu, 2009). Studies that focused on employees in the workplace also include career orientation and task automation (McMurtrey et al., 2002), important skills for entry-level IS professionals (McMurtrey et al., 2008), gender effect on job performance evaluation, job performance attributes and career advancement prospect (Igbaria and Baroudi, 1995), effect of job characteristics and workplace characteristics (structural fairness, trust in senior management, employee information sharing, and job security) on turnover intention (McKnight et al., 2009), importance of job skills roles and non-salary incentives on satisfaction of system analyst (Green, 1989), relationships between IS Webmaster skills and company’s performance (Wade and Parent, 2002), and paradoxical need of soft skills versus technical skills in hiring MIS graduates (Litecky et al., 2004).

While these studies contributed to enrich our understanding of issues surrounding IS employees, we note here three limitations that our study aims to address and contribute to the field. First, studies focusing on the perception of fresh MIS graduates are few compared to those that focused on students or IS employees, leaving little knowledge available on how MIS graduates feel after their graduation. Second, while the skill-job fit (skills taught to students compared to those needed by the market/workplace) was well recognized and several studies investigated these skills (Gallivan et al., 2004; Downey et al., 2008; Huang et al., 2009; Joshi and Kuhn, 2007; Joshi et al., 2010b; Litecky et al., 2004; Litecky et al., 2012; McMurtrey et al., 2008; Radermacher et al., 2014), it is surprising to note that it did not receive the due attention in theory-based models. In addition, to our knowledge no empirical study has examined the influences of skill-job fit on intention to continue to stay working in the field, even though IS skills (soft and hard skills) have been proven to affect IS success (Byrd and Turner, 2001). Third, most studies focused on participants from developed countries and little is known about the behavior of those graduates in developing countries. Moreover, it is well known in the IS field that culture plays an important role in shaping the behavior of individuals (Rouibah and Hamdy, 2009) and therefore more studies are needed to include unique factors related to specific cultures.
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