Chapter 7
Identifying what Constitutes the Quality of Individual Time Management and How Individuals Process Temporal Structure Information: A Survey Study Design

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is to provide useful user requirements for capturing and designing more extensive temporal structures within the current electronic calendar systems through a series of in-depth user studies. Chapter 5 presents the study results of two in-depth interviews with twenty professionals for identifying what types of temporal structures are being used in personal time management practices and possible design implications to further design the current electronic calendar tools. In order to deepen our understanding of how individual time management quality is related to the various temporal structures, it is necessary to conduct a much larger scale user study to further support the findings reported in Chapter 5. If we could possibly obtain solid support from a larger user study, we would be more confident to state that we need to enhance the design of the current electronic calendar systems through incorporating more extensive temporal structure features.

This chapter describes a theoretical base for conducting a large user survey on whether the quality of individual time management is being impacted by individual temporal structure usage. In other words, this study aims to find out whether temporal structure is an important component of individual time management practices. In this chapter, we attempt to answer four questions: (1) what constitutes the...
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quality of individual time management? (2) how do individuals process and utilize their external and internal temporal structures? (3) what types of temporal structures have been created and used in the researched site? (4) what exact temporal structures constrain the three main groups of people consisting of faculty, staff, and student at the researched university? A large survey study is therefore proposed to investigate: (1) how effective vs. ineffective individual time managers could be distinguished based upon their perceptions of time management quality components and temporal structure usage, and (2) what are the overall construct relationships between the quality of individual time management and different levels of temporal structure knowledge and its usage? This chapter serves as a theoretical basis and precursor for the next three chapters (8, 9 and 10), which primarily report the results of the proposed large survey study on different perspectives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Quality of Individual Time Management

Many variables impact how people perceive and manage time because of the complex interplay among cultural, environmental, and individual factors. It seems still a myth what constitutes the quality of individual time management. As Blount & Janicik (2001) describe, “While it seems that the value of time is rising, researchers have only begun to understand the complex psychological processes by which individuals value their time. The task is challenging, because time is an unusual resource; it is a perishable, nonreplenishable, person-specific asset that can’t be borrowed, lent, or saved…Beyond being non-fungible, time is also difficult to track.” Much prior time management research primarily focuses on specific perspectives on time management practices and issues, such as procrastination behavior, time management problems etc. (Note: to avoid redundant information in this section, please check more detailed literature reviews presented in Chapter 3), so very limited research has been conducted to identify a holistic view of what components should be included to measure the quality of individual time management. In this section, we try to identify and synthesize four most significant factors that affect the quality of individual time management through the existing studies: planning, meeting deadlines, sensing a lack of time control and engaging in procrastination behavior.

Planning

In popular time management handbooks, planning means that individuals choose goals, generate tasks and subtasks from the goals and plan a “to-do” list, and thus, the individuals would accomplish their work and achieve goals more efficiently. Britton and Tesser (1991) found that students with well-developed time-management planning skills have higher college grades, and can influence college achievement. In particular, we adopted and modified five questions from Britton and Tesser’s study to build our own construct – planning (see table 1). In this research, individual time planning behavior involves capturing, learning and utilizing a variety of temporal requirements restricting personal lives.
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