Chapter 13

Conclusion, Contribution and Implications to Future Electronic Calendar Tool Design

INTRODUCTION

The key findings for this research are summarized in Chapter 13. Overall, this research shows there is a strong relationship between the quality of individual time management and the use and understanding of various temporal structures based upon three different population samples (student, faculty and staff). Based on these results, it is argued that current time management tools (e.g., calendars) do not provide sufficient support for people to easily capture and use the wide range of temporal structures that constrain their lives. This chapter also demonstrates how this work is closely related to the fields of information systems, computer science and human-computer interaction. It discusses the limitations of this research and then describes future research directions that arise from the results of this research.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

This research is aimed to understand the relationship between the quality of individual time management and various temporal structures, and whether we can give implications for new electronic calendar design by integrating extensive temporal structure features.

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This research consists of two stages of studies. The first stage was to conduct two semi-structured interviews with 20 professionals in a U.S. public university. This stage served as an exploratory study to further design a large survey for the second stage. Based upon the findings from the first stage, we then collected numerous explicit and implicit temporal structures (see the details in the appendix C). It took us about two months to design and validate the initial survey questions. We validated our survey through iterative development with a representative subject population of 10 representatives for each of three types of people. Eventually, the revised and finalized survey was delivered to the students, faculty and staff in the same research site. In the end, we collected 560 valid responses from students, 60 valid answers from faculty, and 83 valid responses from staff members. Totally, we collected 703 valid responses.

We hypothesized that there are various time management differences between effective time managers and ineffective time managers, and proposed a research model to investigate the overall variable relationships in order to answer the proposed research questions. Chapter 10 in this book presents the summarized hypotheses results for the students, faculty, and staff members. Basically we characterized time managers based upon their planning, meeting deadlines, sensing a lack of time control and engaging in procrastination behaviors. Effective time managers conduct more time planning, meet more deadlines, perceive more time control, and exhibit less procrastination in comparison to ineffective time managers. The regular confirmatory factor analysis, parametric and non-parametric data analysis were conducted to examine the proposed hypotheses.

We designed three sets of questions on temporal structure knowledge for students, faculty, and staff in the researched university respectively. Not much difference is found between effective time managers and ineffective time managers in terms of their temporal structure knowledge, except that in the staff sample, a difference is found between time managers who exhibit less procrastination and those who always procrastinate. This result indicates that we perhaps did not design good temporal structure knowledge questions for testing these people, since the actual relevance of the temporal structure knowledge to their individual lives is difficult to identify and capture. In addition, the results indicate that not having enough temporal structure knowledge might result in procrastination, although it only works for the staff members. Because of the nature of staff profession, the result matches how staff members understand their temporal environment.

Significant differences are found between effective time managers and ineffective time managers in terms of their use of explicit temporal structures for students and staff members. This means that the use of explicit temporal structures is positively related to individual time management quality. Effective time managers, who do more time planning, meet more deadlines and exhibit less procrastination, utilize much more explicit temporal structures to support their personal time management, in comparison to those who are ineffective time managers. In addition, we do not find any significant results for sensing a lack of time control and the use of explicit temporal structures. It seems that sense of time control might be associated with various complicated factors, for example, individual time motivations to avoid various distractions, the ability and experience to assess task completion time and so on. Therefore, the use of explicit temporal structures is insignificant to compare the differences between effective and ineffective time managers. We are also concerned whether there is a difference on understanding of implicit temporal structures between effective time managers and ineffective time managers. However, nothing is found in this perspective. Mostly because we did not really design good implicit temporal structure questions for these three groups of people. Although the construct is barely valid for faculty members, there is no difference found between effective time managers and ineffective time managers.
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