ABSTRACT

This study uses data collected by a survey of computer-based medical information system end-users in a large hospital in the southeastern United States. The theoretical model examined using this data links several antecedents to the end-users' organizational commitment, mediated by computer self-efficacy and outcome expectancy. These antecedents are past computer experience of the end-user, computer staff support for the computer system, ease of system use, and the degree of system use (i.e., percentage of time the system is used by the end-user). The empirical results indicate that past computer experience and the degree of system use positively influence the end-user's organizational commitment through both computer self-efficacy and outcome expectancy. These also show that computer staff support and ease of system use positively impact the end-user's organizational commitment through outcome expectancy. From these results, conclusions and implications for practicing managers are discussed.

Keywords: Organizational commitment, computer self-efficacy, outcome expectancy.

INTRODUCTION

Information technology is present in almost every area of the organization. However, during the last 30 years, there has been an emphasis on the technological attributes of computer systems, often with little concern for human factors. In a job market with high demand for competent computer end-users, recruiting and retaining individuals with these skills is crucial to organizational success. One factor influencing the retention of such information technology end-users is their commitment to the organization. The research presented below empirically tests a theoretical model regarding the development of organizational commitment among information technology end-users. The model links past computer experience, computer staff support, system ease of use, and the degree of system use to the end-user's sense of computer self-efficacy, outcome expectancy, and ultimately organizational commitment.

Before proceeding, the definitions of organizational commitment, computer self-
efficacy, and outcome expectancy that are used in this research are presented. The first is organizational commitment and it “...(1) includes something of the notion of membership; (2) it reflects the current position of the individual; (3) it has a special predictive potential concerning certain aspects of performance, motivation to work, spontaneous contribution, and other related outcomes; and (4) it suggests the differential relevance of motivation factors” (Brown, 1969, p. 47). Self-efficacy refers to an individual’s belief that they have the skills and abilities to successfully complete a specific task (Bandura, 1982, 1986). Outcome expectancy refers to the belief by the individual that completing a specific task leads to a desirable outcome (Bandura, 1986).

The causal mechanisms determining an information technology end-user’s organizational commitment have not been fully addressed in previous information technology research (Bluestone, 1983; Kiesler, 1983; Cousins, 1981; Walton, 1982; Nelson, 1990; Nelson and Kletke, 1990). Several studies have examined influences such as task complexity, education level, and attitudes of job satisfaction on organizational commitment. In addition, many studies have examined organizational commitment and its antecedents in social science and organizational behavior contexts, but virtually no attention has been given to the organizational commitment of the information technology end-user. The purpose of this research is to examine the organizational commitment of the information technology end-user based on a model theoretically linking organizational commitment, computer self-efficacy, and outcome expectancy and the antecedents of these expectancies (Bandura, 1986). This is done to allow a clearer understanding of the interrelationships expressed in this model.

The impacts of information technology and its successful acceptance are important to organizations. Typically, however, an information technology implementation places significant emphasis on evaluating the technical implications (e.g., costs, speed, and data handling capacity) of the system with much less attention directed toward individual outcomes (Nelson, 1990; Nelson and Kletke, 1990). Moreover, in many organizational environments, the technology can receive a favorable technical evaluation but be rejected by dissatisfied end-users because it may be difficult to use or the interface may be confusing.

Numerous studies in the information technology literature have attempted to describe the variables influencing end-users’ use and perceptions of information technology (Blackler and Brown, 1985; Blegen, 1993; Counte, Kjerulff, and Salloway, 1985; Glass and Knight, 1988; Pan, Shell, and Schleifer, 1994). However, the isolation of individual controllable antecedents directly associated with the end-user’s organizational commitment is more meaningful. This is because research in the social sciences and organizational behavior has shown that highly committed employees are desirous of remaining in their job with the organization, working toward its goals, and contributing to higher performance levels (Carey, 1992; Eyob, 1995; Mowday, Porter, and Steers, 1982; Rafaeli and Sutton, 1986; Tomer, 1998). Other research has shown that gaining organizational commitment early in an employee’s tenure greatly increases the probability of the desired outcomes mentioned above (Salancik, 1977). Identifying such antecedents facilitates the development of user involvement programs specifically designed to eliminate user resistance to the target system and, in this way, increase the end-user’s organizational commitment. For
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