The Influences of Employees’ Emotions and Cognition on IT Adoption: Some Perspectives from Iran

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an extended model of individuals’ reactions to IT implementation initiatives. The aim is to explore the relationship between an employee’s cognitive appraisal of an IT initiative, their emotional response, and the processes they undergo when faced with difficulties in accepting IT adoption and change in an organizational setting. The paper presents the results of an interpretive case study based in Iran. According to the findings of the study, employees’ evaluations of a new IT initiative can become an obstacle to change. The paper’s first contribution is to provide a deeper understanding of the effects of an IT implementation on individuals’ emotions and cognition. The second contribution is the use of the extended model in a real organizational setting in Iran, a country in which the importance of employee’s reactions to technology change has never been considered as crucial.

Keywords: Change Dynamic Model, Cognition, Cognitive Appraisal, Employees’ Emotions, Employees’ Perception, Information Technology (IT) Adoption, Information Technology (IT) Implementation, Stress Theory

INTRODUCTION

Information Technology and Systems (IT/IS) have now become ubiquitous in the developed world. Information Systems encompass such diverse areas as agriculture, manufacturing, services, education, medicine, defense and government (Myers & Avison, 2002; Walsham, 1993). Over the past two decades of IS research the focus has steadily shifted to encompass the relationship between IS and organizations as a whole. Moreover, research on organizational change has shown that change programs frequently face a series of problems (Eriksson, 2004). Relevant issues include communication and collaboration between people and organizations, inter organizational systems, and the effect of IT related change in organizational settings.

DOI: 10.4018/ijsodit.2012070101
(Myers & Avison, 2002). Related research in IS, has consequently highlighted the importance of social issues related to computer-based IS (Walsham, 1993). This has led some IS researchers to adopt empirical approaches which focus particularly on human interpretations and meanings (Walsham, 1993).

Inevitably, the introduction of a new IT system generates a multitude of expected and unexpected consequences in the users’ environment (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005). These consequences are interpreted and understood in a variety of ways by users, triggering complex user responses. Different theoretical perspectives have identified diverse obstacles to change in such situations. For instance, the tendency to hold onto old ways of doing things has been perceived to be a major problem by top management (Eriksson, 2004). To date, however, little attention has been given to understanding how emotions can influence employees’ IT adoption and use. Emotions influence our beliefs and attitudes and they help guide our thinking, decision-making and actions (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Additionally, cognitive-based models such as TAM (Davis, 1989; Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1992), UTAUT (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003) and so on are thought not to be able to capture the full range of emotional reactions of users in order to account for their relationship to IT adoption (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2010). This has left scope for integrating psychological perspectives into the domain of IS to explore the relationship between employees’ perceptions and interpretations of technology, their emotional response and their consequent adoption of technology.

This paper focuses on employees’ responses to IT implementation (instead of organizational change in general) in a government organization in Iran, and the emphasis will be exclusively on the adoption of technology by employees. As to Iran, it is believed the influences of employees’ feelings and appraisal on their receptivity and actions towards embracing a new computer-based technology are significant. Consistent with Bass’s (1990) notion about different leadership’s characteristics that are associated with higher performance, managers in Iran are (to high degree) production-centered leaders and see employees more as a tool or resource to achieve a particular organizational goal or outcome. This consequently is the origin of different stimuli that negatively affect employees’ receptiveness to accept and use the new system. The purpose, here, is to examine the individuals’ reactions to change by exploring the relationship between employees’ emotions and cognition that contribute to their IT adoption and use. Thus, the paper will address the following question: “How do different stimuli during an IT implementation influence employees’ emotions and cognition toward their technology adoption?” The paper has a twofold contribution to the field of IS associated with psychology. The first contribution is that it allows a better understanding of individuals’ IT adoption by going beyond cognitive-based models and focusing on employees’ psychological perspectives. In doing so the intention is to fill in the current gap in this area to some extent and explore the consequences of employees’ cognitive and emotional experiences in a larger framework (i.e., the paper’s theoretical framework that is not limited to cognitive-based models and take psychological perspectives into account).

The second contribution is the use of the extended model in a real organizational setting. In other words, to date, only a few articles have partially referred to these theories and models (Eriksson, 2004; Huy, 1999; Lazarus, 1990, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) combined them with psychological perspectives and used them in practice in a qualitative and interpretive way in the field of IS. Most studies conducted to date have been quantitative with the aim of measuring or predicting behavior. Furthermore, this investigation has been carried out in Iran, where little research of this nature has been conducted due to a variety of reasons. Additionally, much of the work done up to now about this country has focused primarily on technical aspects of IT implementation and development with little emphasis placed on the importance of employees’ perspectives and interpretations of these implementations. Furthermore, an un-
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