The Effects of Individual Characteristics and Mastery Goal Orientation on IT Project Continuation Intentions

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Abstract

The failure rate of information technology (IT) projects is alarming, significantly costing organizations who find it hard even to justify the return on their investment. While Forbes suggests that the only way to reduce the likelihood of such failure is by looking closely at the project definition, scope, and management problems, we take a different lens, a human capital one. We propose that having certain individual characteristics for those involved in IT projects may lead to outcomes that will determine the success of a project. This study investigates the impact of locus of control, preference for consistency, and personal investment on mastery goal orientation. We postulate that learning and mastering skills during the IT project life cycle are a key precursor to the intention to continue working on the IT project. We surveyed 232 professionals working on IT projects from Fortune 500 companies in the southern United States. We found that these individual characteristics influence mastery goal orientation. Also, mastery goal orientation and locus of control are determinants of intention to continue. Interestingly, mastery goal orientation fully mediates the impact of personal investment on the intention to continue. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: mastery goal orientation, intention to continue, individual characteristics, IT project management.

A full and updated manuscript of this Abstract appears at https://jisar.org