

# **THE IMPACTS OF GOAL ORIENTATION ON ISD MEMBERS' BEHAVIORS - A CONTEXTUAL MODEL**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Information technology professionals work in a dynamic environment that requires continuous improvement of skills. Compare with other occupations, information technology professionals are different because in general, they have a stronger need for growth and achievements compared to those employees in other professions [2] [3] [4]. Information technology professionals form a distinct occupational group. They have a high need for learning and self-development, and a stronger desire to be challenged. Drawing from goal orientation theory, individual goal orientation is defined as “a mental framework for how individuals interpret and respond to achievement situations” [1]. Goal orientation theory argues that individuals own one of two types of superordinate goals during task performance: learning goal, a goal focused on improving competencies and acquiring new skills, and performance goal, a goal focused on demonstrating competencies and comparing one’s own abilities to those of others. From the viewpoint of ISD development, a performance goal orientation is likely to lead to short term pay off, such as programming finished or no bugs occurred where as a learning goal orientation is likely to enhance skills and abilities that lead to better team performance. There is, however, little research that sheds light on the effects of a greater learning goal orientation or performance goal orientation on the part of the information technology professionals. Particularly, research aimed at understanding the influence of goal orientation on ISD members’ behaviors is very much limited. Therefore, our first focus is to investigate the influence of learning goal orientation and performance goal orientation on ISD members’ in-role and extra-role behavior.

Most past control research focused on studying the effects of control modes on process or project performance but neglect the traitlike motivational characteristics of information technology professionals. It is possible that the effects of goal orientation on ISD members’ behaviors will depend on the control mechanisms that information technology professionals faced during system development. Drawing on the above issues, a conceptual model was developed to study the influence of learning goal

orientation and performance goal orientation on ISD members' in-role and extra-role behavior as well as the moderating effects of control mechanisms. The model was tested using data collected from 220 information system developers. The results support the hypotheses we proposed. Firstly, the impact of learning goal orientation and performance goal orientation on in-role and extra-role behavior of IT professionals is confirmed. Secondly, the impact of learning goal orientation is enlarged when utilizing behavior control or self control while the effect of performance goal orientation is magnified under outcome control or clan control. Implications toward academic and practitioner are also provided. One important implication of these results is that ISD project manager should be cognizant of the joint effects of control mechanism and goal orientation during information system development and perform adequate control methods in order to further improve members' in-role and extra-role behaviors.

*Keywords: Goal orientation, control theory, in-role behaviour, extra-role behaviour.*

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