EXPECTANCY-VALENCE THEORIES OF MOTIVATION IN INFORMATION SYSTEMS RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Motivation has been employed to explore how and why information technology is used in information systems (IS) research. However, it also seems to be a confusing construct in IS research. We want to review and discuss how the concept has evolved in motivational psychology and human behavioral research and how it has been applied to IS research. This review and discussion will help clarify the construct conceptually and correctly operationalize the concept in empirical IS studies.

Keywords: Expectancy-valence theories, Motivation, information systems research

Motivation is an essential component of any credible model of human behavior. Motivation theories have long been used in information systems research from IT strategy design to IS development and technology use. The family of expectancy-valence theories of motivation is a dominant family of theories concerning the strength of motivation in contemporary motivation research (Heckhausen 2018). However, there seems a disconnection between the advancement of the family of expectancy-valence theories and the application of the theories in information systems research. We found in information systems research there are confusions regarding motivation as a reason (concerning the type of motivation) and motivation as a force (concerning the strength of motivation) that drives one to act. This confusion is reflected in how motivation is theorized in research models of information systems studies and how motivation is measured in empirical studies of information systems. Specifically, we found that some information systems research may not correctly apply the expectancy-valence theories of motivation in their research models where the motivational force, not the type of motivation, should be concerned. Therefore, the research models may be flawed theoretically. As a result, the empirical test results of the research models may be invalid. We will present some discrepancies between the applications of the expectancy-valence theories of motivation in information systems research and the current status of the expectancy-valence theories in the motivation field. We hope that discussions at the conference will help clarify the role of motivation in information systems research and ensure the latest advancement of the motivation theories, especially the expectancy-valence theories, to be applied in empirical studies of information systems.

Reference:

[1] Heckhausen, H. "Historical trends in motivation research," In Heckhausen, J. & Heckhausen, H. (Eds), *Motivation and Action, 3rd edition.* (pp. 15-66), Springer, 2018.