MISQ Archivist

Responding—or Not—to Information Technology Project Risks: An Integrative Model

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Abstract

This study proposes and tests a model that explains and predicts risk response decisions of IT project managers (ITPMs), blending the domains of the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and behavioral decision theories, and leveraging IT project risk management behavioral research. The model posits that a risk response decision is indirectly influenced by perceived risk exposure via overall risk response attitude. The model conceptualizes perceived risk exposure and overall risk response attitude as second-order constructs and examines the dimension-level relationships within each. The model hypothesizes that a risk response decision is also influenced by pressures ITPMs perceive for or against enacting a specific risk response, by a negative synergy effect between overall risk response attitude and perceived pressures, and by their perception of control—or lack thereof—over enacting the risk response.

The model was instantiated for three specific risk responses: having user representatives as team members, appreciating team members' work in a tangible way during the project, and dedicating much effort to planning. Each model instance was tested in a separate survey (N > 111 per survey, total N = 349). The results support the hypotheses, except for the influence of perceived control, which varied across instantiations of risk responses. Among other antecedents, overall risk response attitude is found to have the strongest effect on risk response decisions. The findings stress the effect of ITPMs' salient beliefs about specific risk responses on their decision to enact a given response and thus pave the way for designing behavior change interventions.

Keywords: Behavioral research, IT project risk management, risk response decision, risk response attitude, perceived risk exposure, theory of planned behavior, MIMIC