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Technophobia without borders: The influence of technophobia and emotional intelligence on technology acceptance and the moderating influence of organizational climate[☆]

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ABSTRACT

The link between technology-induced phobia and technology avoidance is well established in the literature. But a major limitation of previous studies is that they examine technophobia within the narrow context of computers and the body of literature lacks studies that examine the impact of technophobia, in general, on technology acceptance. The current study examines two independent variables, technophobia and emotional intelligence influence on technology acceptance. To measure technophobia, a novel approach was used that examine technology, in general, using five sub-dimensions. Finally, the moderating influence of organizational climate on the correlation was examined. The results of the data analysis support the suggested framework and provide a much-needed insight on how understanding and assessing factors like technophobia and emotional intelligence can help companies to adopt new technologies. Finally, the current study encourages future researchers to examine technophobia outside of computers using a couple of scales that are mentioned in the study.

1. Introduction

Technophobia extends beyond the boundaries of one country as it is a behavior toward technology issue, in other words, technophobia co-exists with technology regardless of physical location. Many studies have examined technophobia in countries like Iran (e.g. Salamzadeh, Mirakhoori, Mobaraki, & Targhi, 2013), Israel (e.g. Nimrod, 2018), Ireland (e.g. Hogan, 2006), United Kingdom (e.g. Bozionelos, 1996), Netherland and Turkey (e.g. Tekinarslan, 2008). In addition, Rosen and Weil (1995) did a cross-cultural comparison in ten countries: Australia, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Japan, Spain, Yugoslavia, and the USA. Then Weil and Rosen (1995) examined technophobia in 23 countries: USA, Yugoslavia, Thailand, Spain, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Poland, Northern Ireland, Mexico, Kenya, Japan, Italy, Israel, Indonesia, India, Hungary, Greece, Germany, Egypt, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Australia, and Argentina. But there is a major limitation in the existing body of literature since the vast majority of studies examine technophobia in the context of one technology; mainly computers. The body of literature lacks measuring tools for technophobia that are independent of a specific technology (Celaya, 1996; Sinkovics, Stottinger, Schlegelmilch, & Ram, 2002). Khasawneh (2018) developed a technophobia scale that measures it in a broader context that incorporates technology in general, without tying it just to computers.

Within this new context, there is a lack of literature in studies that examine technophobia's impact or influence on other variables.

Companies constantly introduce new technologies into their work environments to retain competitive advantages and stay in business. The spending on technology in the U.S. alone was \$236.6 billion and expected to grow to \$330.7 in 2017 (IDC, 2014) but in the research report by CompTIA, they argue that the U.S. spending was \$1.5 trillion (IT Industry Outlook, 2018). But technologies cannot improve organizations if employees choose not to adopt them. Markus and Keil (1994) state that "If the desired improvement conflicts with what people are motivated to do, a system alone will not solve the problem" (p.24). Organizations, more specifically decision makers, are faced with the daunting task of assessing their organizations' technical competence. This task is especially hard when implementing a new technology since the new technology will present a new technical challenge to employees and managers alike. Continuous technological proliferation pressures individuals to accept new technologies within a very short period of time. And the introduction of technological changes can provoke emotional and cognitive reactions (Cambre & Cook, 1985). This fear and anxiety may manifest itself in the form of a phobia-induced by technology; technophobia. This shows that technophobia can be a daunting impediment to companies that constantly change technologies or experience technological changes. But the use of new technology

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puts a great deal of pressure on employees and might cause poor performance (Show-Hui & Wen-Kai, 2010). And this pressure might impact employees' emotions which in turns may influence their psychological orientations toward technology. All of these factors can influence employees' emotions, which affect their attitudes toward technology. This suggests that variables such as employees' technophobia and emotional intelligence are major factors that need to be examined. The current study argues that technophobia and emotional intelligence might be good predictor variables that influence employees' technology acceptance.

In addition, the workplace is a fertile ground for research on personal behavior as it might affect employees' behavior (Drexler, 1977). Employees operate in the context of what is referred to as organizational climate and it is one of the many variables that influence employees' attitudes within a workplace. Organizational climate is one of many variables that influence employees' attitudes within a work environment. Previous researchers have argued that organizational climates affect employees' behavior (Pena-Suarez, Muniz, Campillo-Alvarez, Fonseca-Pedrero, & Garcia-Cueto, 2013). Organizational climates influence employees' performance by providing an antecedent for employee behavior. The concept of organizational climate helps us understand how organizations can provide meaningful environments to their members (Payne & Pugh, 1976). Because of its impact on many aspects of the workplace, Drexler (1977) encouraged researchers to measure organizational climate. The current study chose organizational climate as a moderating variable because of its impact on employees' behavior and the lack of prior research on its moderating impact on the correlation between technophobia and technology acceptance.

Finally, Sinkovics et al. (2002) also point out a lack of research on the role of technophobia and technology adoption. The aforementioned studies point to the importance of studying technophobia as well as variables like emotional intelligence as predictor variables in an organizational setting. This study will expand our knowledge of factors that might influence employees' adoption of new technologies. More specifically, this study will examine employees' technophobia, in a novel approach, as well as emotional intelligence influence on technology acceptance to identify whether one or both, might influence employees' technology acceptance. Furthermore, the study will inspect the moderating influence of organizational climate. The suggested framework of this study is presented in Fig. 1. There are many intrinsic and extrinsic variables that might influence the relationship between technophobia and technology acceptance, including all or most of them would lead to a lengthy survey with would limit the sample size; for many reasons such as participation fatigue. The current study limited its focus to emotional intelligence and organizational climate and future researchers are encouraged to explore other variables such as locus of control, personality type, or leadership style.

This study compliment Joo and Sang (2013) study in which they argue that users' intrinsic motivation in the form of uses and gratifications theory might influence users' acceptance of the technology. In the same notion, the current study argues that users intrinsic feeling manifested in technophobia and emotional intelligence might influence their technology acceptance behavior in an organizational setting.

2. Background

2.1. Technophobia

The automation of the workplace has continued to increase ever since the introduction of computers in the 1970s. From the 1970s to the 1990s, computers were the pinnacle of workplace technology. In the narrow context of computers, technophobia is a barrier to company's development; it is a major factor in hindering employees' adaption to new technologies (Rosen & Weil, 1995) since 20%–33% of Americans could be classified as technophobes (Celaya, 1996). Research on technophobia is dominated by studies on fear or anxiety toward computers. However, companies incorporate many new technologies (not just computers) in the workplace on an almost daily basis. Outside of computer-related studies, previous researchers in this field have provided very limited assessments of technophobia.

Luquire (1983) argues that whenever a technology change takes place in the workplace, employees' reactions should be considered from attitudinal or psychological viewpoints. Because the introduction of a new technology in the workplace creates a new situation in which employees have no experience. The unpredictability of some situations causes anxiety (Seligman, 1975), and this anxiety may be connected to the new technology. Acknowledging the improvement that technology brings to our life, Rosen and Weil (1995) argue that this improvement creates fear in some people who use that technology and this fear, technophobia, will causes employees to avoid technology.

In the past, researchers have defined technophobia and developed scales to measure it by using computers as a representative of technology. However, computers are no longer the greatest or most complicated technologies in the modern workplace. Fine (1982) and Sheridan (1980) argue that individuals' responses are targeted mostly toward the attributes of technology, not the technology itself (Sievert, Albritton, Roper, and Clayton, 1988). The body of knowledge is full of research on technophobia (e.g., Rosen, Sears, & Weil, 1993; Weil & Rosen, 1997; McIlroy, Sadler, & Boojawon, 2007; Brosnan, 1998), but researchers have focused solely on computer phobia, using it as representative of technophobia (Korukonda, 2005; Korukonda & Finn, 2003). Several researchers have pointed to this gap in the literature but continued to use computer-anxiety scales in their research. Although extant research on technophobia is valuable, previous studies suffer from limitations in both the technologies they analyze and in their attitudes towards these technologies. Previous researchers have focused on one technology at a time (i.e., ATMs, computers, email services, and fax machines). Another limitation is that the scales these researchers have developed may not be suitable for today's environment (Bozionelos, 1996).

Furthermore, in the field of technology-related research, there is no clear definition of technophobia in its truest sense. Korukonda and Finn (2003) and Korukonda (2005) point out that the literature lacks a distinction between computer anxiety and technophobia. And it is misleading to use the term technophobia when talking about computer phobia or computer anxiety (Anthony, Clarke, & Anderson, 2000). This study will adopt Khasawneh (2018) definition and technophobia scale. He defines technophobia as:

an irrational fear and/or anxiety that individuals form as a response to a new stimulus that comes in the form of a technology that modifies and/or changes the individual's normal or previous routine in performing a certain job/task. Individuals may display active, physical reactions

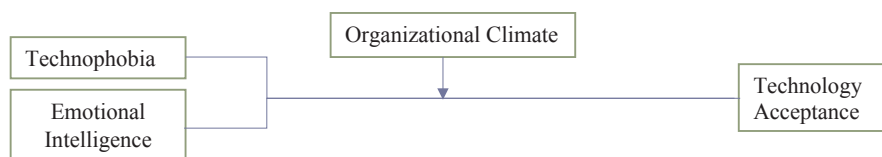


Fig. 1. Technophobia and technology acceptance impact on employees' technology acceptance and the moderating influence of organizational climate.

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