

Inside the “Black Box”: Investigating the Link between Organizational Readiness and IT Implementation Success

Research-in-Progress

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Abstract

The complexity of today's organizational IT-driven transformations, such as implementing ERPs and CRMs, urges companies to conduct upfront preparations to ensure implementation success. Organizational readiness is therefore regarded as a critical precondition that increases the chances of IT implementation success. To deepen the theoretical understanding of the link between organizational readiness and IT implementation success, we present preliminary results of a qualitative survey among a group of seasoned IT project/change management experts and derive a theoretical framework explaining the link between the two constructs.

Keywords: Organizational readiness, IT implementation success, IT-driven transformation, implementation process, qualitative survey, grounded theory.

Introduction

Organizations have been investing in IT projects at an ever-increasing rate (Gartner 2014; Wurster et al. 2008). While the numerous potential benefits of these projects have made them a top organizational investment priority (Gartner 2014), the technological complexities of IT implementation projects, which are often attended by low organizational buy-in and engagement, have made them a top organizational concern and challenge (Ambler 2013; The Standish Group 2013). To maximize the chances of IT implementation success and expedite the benefits of investments, organizations often commit to doing upfront preparation—usually referred to as establishing “organizational readiness”—before investing a great deal of time, money, and effort in these complex projects (Iacovou et al. 1995; Paré et al. 2011). Organizational readiness has its roots in the change management literature and is often regarded as the unfreezing stage of Lewin’s organizational change model (Lewin and Cartwright 1951; Lewin 1947). Since it was first introduced by change management scholars, organizational readiness has been investigated in different disciplines, including healthcare (e.g., Weiner et al. 2008), human resources (e.g., Eby et al. 2000), marketing (e.g., Weeks et al. 2004), and information systems (e.g., Iacovou et al. 1995). Although this construct is relatively new to the IS discipline, over the past two decades it has yielded valuable insights on core IS phenomena such as organizational IT adoption (Iacovou et al. 1995), organizational IT use and institutionalization (Hadaya and Pellerin 2008), IT implementation success (Zhu et al. 2010), knowledge management (Rusly et al. 2012), and post-acquisition IT integration (Yetton et al. 2013).

Organizational readiness is regarded as a critical precondition that increases the chances of change implementation success in organizations (Armenakis et al. 1993; Kotter 1996; Cohen and Kotter 2005). In the field of IS, previous empirical findings on the link between organizational readiness and IT implementation success are inconclusive and raise questions on the association between the two constructs. Indeed, although some empirical studies suggest a positive and direct relationship between organizational readiness and IT implementation success (e.g., Gargeya and Brady 2005; Zhu et al. 2010), others have failed to observe similar results (e.g., Croteau and Li 2003; Jun and Cai 2003). One possible explanation for these ambivalent results may be associated with the “temporal distance” that separate the two constructs in previous research models. Organizational readiness is usually assessed during the pre-implementation stage, whereas success is indeed a post-implementation construct. As of today, there is no solid theoretically-grounded work that explains how and why pre-implementation organizational readiness may influence IT post-implementation success and expedite the benefits of IT investments in organizations. A second explanation for the equivocal results may be that the relationship between readiness and success has been typically regarded as a “black box”. Indeed, the “factor” approach that characterize this bulk of research has yielded limited insights on the dynamics of the implementation process, and more precisely how and why readiness influence IT implementation success. We believe that opening the “black box” and identifying the mechanisms and processes that mediate the link between these two constructs (at the implementation stage) will most likely improve our understanding of the relationship between the two constructs. In line with Venkatraman (1989), we believe that mediating mechanisms shall account for a significant proportion of the relation between the predictor and the criterion. Opening the “black box” can also help providing a finer-grained portrait of IT implementation as a complex organizational phenomenon (Swanson 1988). A third and final explanation may be related to the conceptualization and measurement of organizational readiness. Organizational readiness has mainly been conceptualized in terms of its structural attributes, including financial resources, IT infrastructure, and human skills, while its psychological attributes have been overlooked. According to Shahrasbi and Paré (2014), such conceptualization is too simplistic for investigating all IS phenomena including IT implementation success and is not aligned with recent recommendations proposed by change management specialists (e.g., Holt et al. 2010; Weiner 2009). Hence, they suggest that future IS research should also consider psychological readiness because employees’ perceptions and beliefs in the early stages of an IT project shape their overall reactions to the proposed change (i.e., resist, cope with, or support) which, in turn, can significantly influence project success (Abdinnour-Helm et al. 2003; Herold et al. 1995).

Keeping the aforementioned limitations in mind, we believe that further progress will require more complex, realistic models and the development of alternative perspectives for investigating the link between organizational readiness and IT implementation success. Therefore, our objective is to develop a solid theoretically-grounded framework that identifies the key intermediary mechanisms and processes

that link the two constructs. To achieve our goal, we have adopted a grounded theory approach and, as a preliminary step, conducted a series of 18 in-depth interviews with IT project/change management experts. The remainder of the article is structured as follows. Next we introduce the construct of organizational readiness and briefly review its relationship with IT implementation success as it has been previously investigated in our field. A presentation of the research approach and methods follows. Then, the preliminary insights are presented and discussed. Lastly, expected contributions and suggestions for future research are briefly discussed.

Literature Review

Definition of the Core Constructs

Organizational readiness has been recently conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct that encompasses structural and psychological attributes of organizations (Holt and Vardaman 2013; Shahrabi and Paré 2014). The structural dimension, often referred to as an organization's "structural readiness," has to do with an organization's internal capacity for change and the conditions that provide a context for a successful change. It mainly refers to the essential resources, infrastructure, knowledge, and competencies that are required to undertake the change successfully. In an IT context, structural readiness refers to the extent to which the required conditions to ensure a successful IT implementation are available and in place or the organization has the capacity to put them in place timely. Any organizational transformation is above all a collective process that entails organization-wide active participation and collaboration among all members (Myers 1994; Real and Poole 2005). To be successful, an IT-driven organizational transformation requires appropriate resources and implementation conditions, but to reap the benefits of the new system or technology, it also requires high-morale employees throughout the organization who are psychologically ready to mobilize these resources and conditions before, during, and after the implementation. This is why psychological readiness has been proposed as another overarching dimension of organizational readiness (Holt et al. 2010; Paré et al. 2011). Put simply, psychological readiness refers to the extent to which the employees of an organization are confident that they have the collective ability and commitment to successfully implement and adopt the proposed organizational transformation. It is the widely-shared mindset of the members of an organization who feel collectively committed to executing an organizational transformation (collective commitment) and who are confident in their collective ability to succeed (collective efficacy) (Holt et al. 2010; Weiner et al. 2008; Shahrabi and Paré 2014). Drawing on Shahrabi and Paré (2014), we maintain that a multi-dimensional conceptualization of organizational readiness, i.e. one that considers both its structural and psychological components, is likely to broaden and deepen our understanding of the focal construct and its role in the advancement of IS knowledge.

Following DeLone and McLean (1992; 2003), Paré (2002) and Nelson (2005), we conceptualize IT implementation success as a multi-dimensional construct that includes both the efficiency of implementation operations—i.e., process success—and the effectiveness of the implementation outcomes—i.e., outcome success. On the one hand, process success refers to the extent to which the project is completed on time, on budget, and based on the pre-defined scope and quality. On the other hand, outcome success includes criteria that are related to the extent to which the new system is being used and/or it impacts the individual, group, and organizational performance. We concur with the extant literature that taking together the two dimensions yields a more comprehensive view of IT implementation success (Petter et al. 2008; Nelson 2005; Bartis and Mitev 2008).

Relationship between Organizational Readiness and IT Implementation Success

Leading organizational scholars and change management experts have long recognized that organizational readiness is one of the main precursors of successful organizational transformations (Armenakis et al. 1993; Kotter 1996; Cohen and Kotter 2005). For instance, Kotter (1995) argues that half of all large and complex organizational changes fail because of a lack of sufficient organizational readiness. Others have suggested that lack of sufficient readiness can result in negative outcomes, such as resistance, project abandonment, delays, and unmet benefits (Cohen and Kotter 2005; Eby et al. 2000). We surveyed the extant IS literature and found only 10 studies that empirically examined the relationship between organizational readiness and IT implementation success. As synthesized in Table 1, the empirical

findings of these studies are inconclusive and equivocal. Although some studies suggest a positive and direct link between organizational readiness and IT implementation success (e.g., Gargeya and Brady 2005; Zhu et al. 2010), others did not find significant results. For example, Jun and Cai (2003) hypothesized a direct link between organizational readiness and seven measures of IT implementation success, but only one was found to be significant. For their part, Croteau and Li (2003) failed to find a significant link between readiness and implementation success in the context of CRM projects. They suggest that this relationship may be mediated by other factors such as the organization's level of knowledge management capabilities. Pai and Yei (2008) also suggest that the positive relationship between organizational readiness and success may be mediated by the quality of implementation process. In short, based on these equivocal findings and the atheoretical nature of prior research on this topic, it appears both important and relevant to open the "black box" and investigate the "missing links" or key mediators between organizational readiness and IT project success.

Authors (year)	Research Method	Type of IT	Conceptualization		Key Findings
			Readiness	Success	
Stratman and Roth (2002)	Questionnaire survey	ERP	Structural readiness	Outcome	Results of a survey conducted in 79 North American manufacturing firms suggest a positive and significant link between change readiness and ERP success (i.e. business performance).
Motwani et al. (2002)	Case study	ERP	Structural readiness	Outcome	The in-depth case study suggests that organizational readiness is a major predictor of ERP project success.
Jun and Cai (2003)	Questionnaire survey	EDI	Structural readiness	Outcome	Results of a survey conducted in 85 US manufacturing firms fail to show a significant link between organizational readiness and EDI success. Also, out of seven hypothesized links between organizational readiness and success measures only one is found to be significant.
Croteau and Li (2003)	Questionnaire survey	CRM	Structural readiness	Outcome	Results of a questionnaire survey in 57 firms do not indicate the presence of a direct link between readiness and CRM implementation success. The authors suggest that the link between the two constructs may be mediated by factors such as the organization's level of knowledge management capabilities.
Motwani et al. (2005)	Case study	ERP	Structural readiness	Outcome	A multiple case study conducted in four organizations reveals that firms may increase chances for ERP success by committing upfront readiness.
Gargeya and Brady (2005)	Case survey	ERP	No definition provided	Process and outcome	Based on a content analysis of published cases, the authors observed that organizational readiness is the most commonly reported predictor of SAP implementation success, both from a process and outcome perspective.
Pai and Yei (2008)	Questionnaire survey	E-Biz systems	No definition provided	Outcome	Results of a survey conducted in 106 manufacturing firms suggest that the link between organizational readiness and e-business system success is mediated by the quality of the implementation process.
Zheng et al. (2009)	Case study	EHR	Structural readiness	Process and outcome	Based on a case study of information systems adoption and implementation in healthcare sector, the authors suggest that upfront readiness may help hospitals adopt EHR systems more mindfully. They also argue that readiness may facilitate the implementation and increase the chances of employees' buy-in and organization-wide system use.
Mouzakitis and Askounis (2010)	Questionnaire survey	B2B systems	Structural readiness	Outcome	Results of a survey in a single consulting firm using B2B integration systems suggest a significant and positive link between organizational readiness and implementation success.
Zhu et al. (2010)	Questionnaire survey	ERP	Structural readiness	Outcome	Results of a survey in 65 retail firms reveal a significant and positive link between organizational readiness and ERP implementation success.

Table 1. Prior IS Studies Investigating the Link between Readiness and Success

Methodology

Research Approach

To achieve our research objective, we adopted grounded theory not as a simple way of coding data, but as a method to develop theory (Elliott and Lazenbatt 2005; Bryant and Charmaz 2012; Charmaz 2011). Grounded theory has been acknowledged as “a qualitative research method that seeks to develop theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed” (Urquhart et al. 2010, p.357). A key characteristic of grounded theory research is the absence of pre-formulated hypotheses since theory building, not theory testing, is the main and only aim being pursued. This does not necessarily mean that researchers should not look at the extant literature before embarking on the empirical work, only that they should not impose ideas from the literature on the coding of data. While preconceived theoretical ideas could hinder the emergence of ideas that should be firmly rooted in the data (Urquhart et al. 2010), Glaser and Strauss (1967), the founders of the approach, state that “the researcher does not approach reality as a *tabula rasa* but must have a perspective that will help him or her abstract significant categories from the data” (p.3). Grounded theory is increasingly common in the IS field because the method is extremely useful in developing context-based, process-oriented descriptions and explanations of various phenomenon. More details are provided in the Data Analysis sub-section.

Data Collection

We conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with IT project/change management experts. All the respondents had several years of experience in managing change in large IT implementation projects (see Table 2). They were selected on the basis of their expertise, experience, and reputation in the field. We deem this group of respondents appropriate for our initial data collection because they are most often involved in multiple stages of an IT implementation project and are probably the most knowledgeable about change management issues in the context of these projects. In addition, they are usually working closely with all groups of stakeholders in organizations, including high-level executives, project managers, IT specialists, and end-users, which give them a unique and inclusive perspective on this topic. We developed an interview guide and validated it through three pilot interviews (Bogner et al. 2009). Face-to-face interviews with the respondents were conducted by the principal researcher and recorded and transcribed. The interviews began by a generic question inviting respondents to share their personal opinions and professional experience related to organizational readiness and its main benefits for a project in the context of IT projects. The respondents were then asked more specific questions, such as, “How do you see these benefits as contributing to the overall success of the project and acceptance of the system or realization of its benefits in the organization?” We also asked the respondents to tell us stories about real IT projects in which they had been involved where organizational readiness had either a positive or a negative influence on the project and, ultimately, on its success. The average length of the interviews was approximately 60 minutes. A total of 18 interviews were conducted during the first round of the data collection. The results from this initial round are presented in this article. Since we have not reached theoretical saturation yet, more interviews will be conducted in the coming months.

Expert ID	Expert's current position	Organization	Years of relevant experience
Expert #1	IT change manager	International management consulting firm	>25
Expert #2	IT change manager	Local management consulting firm	<10
Expert #3	IT change manager	Local management consulting firm	15-20
Expert #4	IT change manager	Local management consulting firm	10-15
Expert #5	IT change manager	Local management consulting firm	>25
Expert #6	IT change manager	Manufacturing organization	15-20
Expert #7	IT change manager	International management consulting firm	10-15
Expert #8	IT change manager	International management consulting firm	20-25
Expert #9	IT project manager	Education institution	20-25

Expert ID	Expert's current position	Organization	Years of relevant experience
Expert #10	IT project manager	Local management consulting firm	10-15
Expert #11	IT change manager	International management consulting firm	<10
Expert #12	IT project manager	Software development company	15-20
Expert #13	IT change manager	International management consulting firm	>25
Expert #14	IT change manager	International management consulting firm	15-20
Expert #15	IT change manager	Local management consulting firm	10-15
Expert #16	IT change manager	Local management consulting firm	>25
Expert #17	IT project manager	Software development company	>25
Expert #18	IT project manager	International telecommunication firm	15-20

Table 2. Profile of the Panel of Experts

Data Analysis

All the interview transcripts were entered into the NVivo 10 software and coded following a multiple-round iterative procedure, using both open and axial codes (Charmaz and Belgrave 2002). In the first round, open codes were generated as they emerged from reviewing the verbatim texts of the transcripts. Next, emergent codes were reviewed, refined, and re-organized using axial coding. As the coding process evolved, the emergent codes were constantly compared to one another and some codes were grouped into broader categories (Charmaz and Belgrave 2002). An essential feature of theory building research is comparison of the emergent concepts, hypotheses or theory with the extant literature (Paré and Elam 1997). We therefore embarked on our analysis with an “open mind,” not an “empty head,” as suggested by Dey (1999). Accordingly, to “make sense” of our initial observations, we surveyed relevant theoretical lenses from reference disciplines, including innovation implementation, social psychology, and organizational behavior. More precisely, we used relevant key concepts and theoretical underpinnings of innovation implementation theory (Klein et al. 2001; Klein and Sorra 1996) and social cognitive theory (Bandura 1986, 1988) to interpret our preliminary empirical findings.

Preliminary Findings

Conceptual Framework and Research Propositions

Figure-1 shows the conceptual framework which emerged from our preliminary analyses. It proposes two distinct, yet complementary theoretically-grounded paths between organizational readiness and IT implementation success, with four mediating constructs. In line with this framework, two overarching research propositions are offered.

Theoretical Path 1: Link between Structural Readiness and IT Implementation Success

Previous research in line with the innovation implementation theory suggests that change leaders should employ various strategies such as effective user communication and participation, educational training and workshops, one-on-one staff coaching, as well as rewards, promotions, and praise to maximize the chances of success in complex change initiatives (e.g., Frahm and Brown 2005; Klein et al. 2001; Klein and Ralls 1997; Rousseau 1988). The experts whom we interviewed pointed to an incredible opportunity and capacity that structural readiness can create for managers to offer such change-supportive strategies during the implementation phase. They maintained that having necessary human and financial resources upfront allows managers to adopt and implement effective implementation strategies and that this can greatly facilitate the implementation process and expedite employee buy-in with respect to the new system. For example, one expert stated, “*If you have structural readiness upfront, it will help you to have those practices and execute [the implementation] better. Having money will give you leeway to do more activities. Having staff, not even necessarily the ready one, but available there, [is important because] availability will give you people you can work with*” (Expert #16). In the same line of thought, another

expert provided the following example: “We did lots of communication. We organized several organization-wide workshops and road shows . . . all this was possible because we simply [could] afford it. I was very fortunate to have a decent budget to do the right and the proper activities. That’s the other thing! Sometimes, when you have no money, or when no resources [are] available; you can’t execute all the good activities that you have planned” (Expert #2). Our experts also indicated that lacking structural readiness can put a lot of pressure on project manager and other team members; it can escalate the deployment by increasing the need for recovery and remedial actions and also this can jeopardize project success. For example, expert #8 stated, “[Lack of readiness] is really a pressure! It puts a lot of pressure on your shoulders and on the others as well, because you are cutting everything. If you are just presenting your project plan [as a change manager] and you think the cost of it will be X dollars, and the company said, ‘I’m allowing you only 75% of this request.’ I’m sorry! But, I’m going to cut my scope!” In the same vein, expert #16 mentioned, “I always say, ‘It’s pay now or pay later!’ and you are usually going to pay less now, because later you are going to be in crisis mode and everything is going to escalate and everybody is going to be involved, whereas you can keep it at the project level. So you would need less resource, probably.”

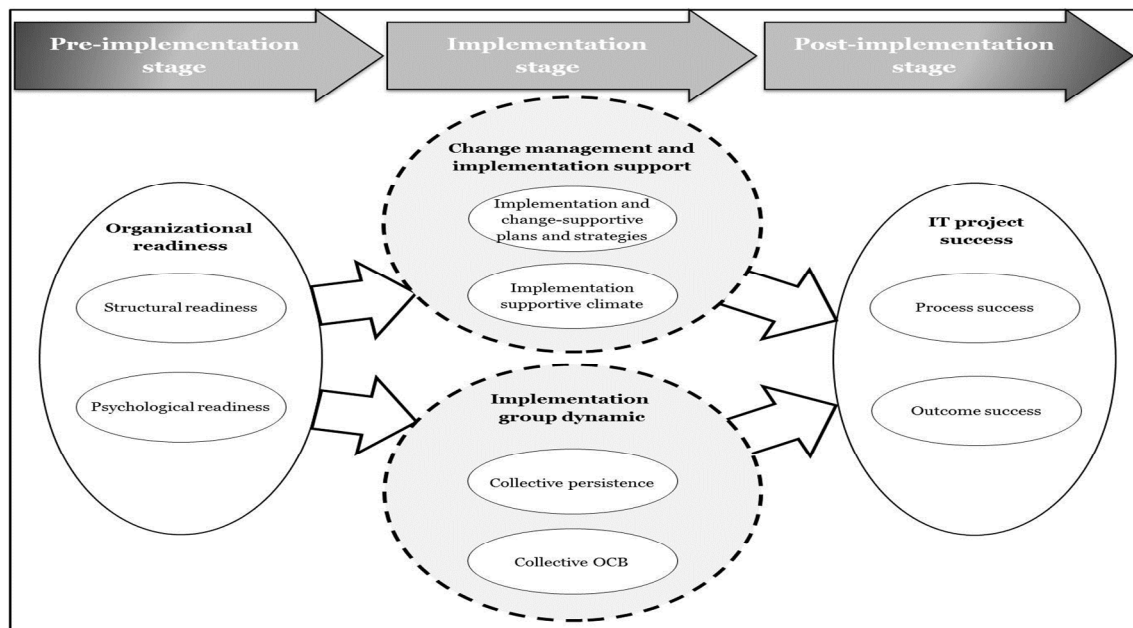


Figure 1. Emerging Conceptual Framework

The panel of experts also indicated that structural readiness not only helps to advance implementation process and plans, but also sends a clear message to employees about the importance and priority of the project and the new system for the organization. In other words, top management commitment and sponsorship to the creation of a ready context for the change sends a clear message regarding the priority of the project, and this can increase the engagement of employees and expedite the use of the new system throughout the organization. In line with this, expert #5 stated, “If you are walking the talk, as they say, and you are not just saying ‘Oh this is important!’—No, you have to show that this is so important that you are on it! So it will surely simplify and help that to be a success. To me alignment on priority is a huge determinant of success, because everybody knows this [project] is important!” Another expert made the same point while he was talking about signs of readiness at a client organization: “I’m also thinking [about] sponsorship. If you have very strong sponsorship at the client-side, CEO level; that will make it very clear that they will not accept silliness! [That] the project is important for the company and we need to do this! If the sponsorship is strong in that way, then people will align. They have a reason to collaborate, because their boss has been very clear” (Expert# 18).

To organize the above-mentioned insights and situate them with respect to prior literature, we borrowed two constructs related to innovation implementation theory: “implementation and change-supportive plans, strategies, and practices” and “implementation-supportive climate” (Klein et al. 2001; Klein and Sorra 1996). More specifically, we draw on the findings of Klein et al. (2001) regarding the determinants

of innovation implementation success. Through a survey of 39 organizations that deployed Manufacturing Resource Planning (MRP) systems, these authors found that implementation success is dependent on organizational change-supportive strategies and implementation plans. They observed that organizations can increase their chances for MRP implementation success by employing high-quality and sufficient change-supportive plans and implementation-related promotional strategies, such as providing educational training sessions and workshops, readily accessible user supports, and valued rewards and incentives. Building on their findings and on the preliminary observations from our own interviews, we propose that structural readiness can positively influence IT implementation success by increasing project managers' opportunities for employing sufficient implementation and change-supportive plans and strategies, and by minimizing an organization's need for further remedial actions and recovery plans during the implementation phase. Importantly, Klein et al. (2001) posit a positive link between implementation success and an organization's implementation-supportive climate. They argue that the chances of implementation success will increase if the employees consider the project to be an organizational priority. Consequently, we also propose that structural readiness can positively influence IT implementation success by creating an organization-wide supportive climate that highlights the importance of the implementation and the use of the new system for the organization. To summarize, we posit that: *The positive effects of structural readiness on IT implementation success are mediated by change-supportive plans, strategies, and practices as well as by the presence of an implementation-supportive climate (P1).*

Theoretical Path 2: Link between Psychological Readiness and IT Implementation Success

Our group of experts indicated that having a collaborative "group dynamic" is an important advantage with respect to psychological readiness for IT implementations. In organizational studies, the term "group dynamic" refers to a system of behaviors and psychological processes occurring within or between social groups (Hogg and Williams 2000). The experts maintained that IT implementation is a socially interactive process in which people from different units have to interactively work together. They suggested that in such contexts, success is dependent on people working closely and collaboratively as a team. They indicated that organization-wide psychological readiness, i.e., having people who are collectively confident in their shared capacity to execute and live the envisioned change and who are collectively committed to accomplishing it successfully, contributes to a positive and collaborative group dynamic within and between the working units, eventually paving the way for success. For example, expert #2 supported her arguments for this stance by giving an example of a successful ERP implementation project in which the shared resolve and commitment among employees led to an organization-wide collaboration and eventual success of the project. She said, *"There was one region that was really struggling because their stuff was so complex. So other regions said, 'Why don't you send your data and we'll help you out? We'll get on board!' I was so surprised, [because] most of the time regions compete against each other, but this one, because they wanted to get to go-live, they went outside the norms of the group, which is like 'they're usually our competitor, but let's help them out, so that we can all get to that same starting point and go from there... So yeah, you do see a little bit more of the Good Samaritan that comes out when they're all vying for the same goal."* Expert #18 stated, *"A [psychologically] ready organization is collaborative, [whereas] an unready organization is not collaborative. [Don't get me wrong], the same issues are going to surface, whether you are ready or not. You are still going to face the issues; it's how you overcome them. Upfront, putting measures in place to make a collaborative organization will be well worth the investment. So it would be good to assess that upfront and then see how much you can invest in it."* The experts also pointed to employees' high engagement and collective persistence in achieving implementation objectives as another important benefit of psychological readiness. For example, expert #8 explained this by discussing a project in which she had sensed a high level of collective commitment and confidence among employees: *"I remember we were working really tight, elbow-to-elbow! If somebody was getting desperate a bit, we were just pushing him again and giving him a pep talk . . . We were working really hard and were not counting the hours. We were working more as a team. We were more structured based on our analysis because we knew that there was no way we could just fail."* In the same line of thought, another expert mentioned: *"I think part of our success is because we didn't impose [the system or change] on our employees. Let's put it this way, we got [an organization-wide] commitment on their part that made them willing to have this change. And this commitment engaged them into the change process, which is not the same as us forcing them into a change"* (Expert #9).

These preliminary observations are in line with the main theoretical underpinnings associated with social cognitive theory (SCT). SCT posits that people's perception of their team's collective efficacy will affect their effort expenditure and their persistence in performing a particular group task or team activity (Bandura 1986, 1988). Previous empirical findings that rely on this theory suggest that team members with high collective efficacy will exert more effort and show more collective persistence in performing team activities, and that this affects their team's performance and success (e.g., Bandura and Cervone 1986; Kahn and Nauta 2001; Nel 2007; Savard and Rogers 1992). For example, in the field of sports, Hodges and Carron (1992) found a positive relationship between a team's collective efficacy and its level of persistence and performance. By giving random bogus performance feedback to the participants in their study, Greenlees et al. (2010) also found that teams with higher initial collective efficacy exert more effort and show more persistence in their tasks and activities compared to those with relatively lower initial collective efficacy. Lichacz and Partington (1996) observed that social loafing, i.e., reduced individual effort in team activities, was lower on teams with high collective efficacy than on those with relatively lower collective efficacy. Interestingly, organizational behavior research also suggests that organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is higher in teams and organizations with a relatively higher collective commitment to others (Podsakoff et al. 2000). OCB is defined as pro-social and extra-role discretionary behavior, which is not specified by role prescriptions in the organization, but which facilitates the accomplishment of organizational or team objectives (Katz and Kahn 1966). It includes an array of different behaviors such as cooperating with others and helping them when faced with heavy workloads in a project, volunteering to solve a problem in order to allow a project to progress faster, and sharing important information with other team members (Chun et al. 2013; Podsakoff et al. 2000).

We posit that the abovementioned concepts and the underlying theoretical lenses can be adapted to the context of IT implementation projects because they are team-based initiatives that involve organization-wide collaboration between different groups of people (May 2013; Real and Poole 2005). We maintain that psychological readiness affects IT implementation success by creating a more positive group dynamic in which employees exert more collective persistence and show more collaborative and citizenship behavior during the implementation. Therefore, we formulate our second research proposition as follows: *The positive effects of psychological readiness on IT implementation success are mediated by employees' collective persistence and citizenship behaviors during the implementation stage (P2).*

Concluding Remarks

This research-in-progress will contribute to IS research by extracting tacit knowledge from the practical realm and relating it to the relevant theoretical lenses discussed in the reference disciplines (Weiss 1995). The preliminary findings presented herein are derived from 18 in-depth interviews with seasoned IT project/change managers. While these findings provided interesting insights to the phenomenon being investigated, we acknowledge that our preliminary findings may be biased towards the views of external consultants rather than those of internal employees. Therefore, we plan for further data collection, including more interviews with other groups of stakeholders involved in IT implementation projects such as project team members and targeted end-users, to obtain a balanced view from the organizational employees and external consultants. This next step will allow us also to respect another key characteristic of grounded theory, namely, the joint interaction between data collection and comparison (Urquhart et al. 2010). We anticipate that the next round of interviews and data analysis along with a deeper treatment of the relevant literature will help us refine and expand our conceptual framework and its propositions.

Once the present research is completed, we expect that the resulting framework will significantly improve our collective understanding of the intermediary mechanisms and processes that link organizational readiness and IT implementation success. The value of this framework will also stem from its potential to bridge the two relatively distant phases of the IT implementation process (pre-implementation and post-implementation) and present a finer-grained portrait of this complex phenomenon (Swanson 1988). Importantly, our preliminary findings confirm that organizational readiness is better conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct. Indeed, by juxtaposing the two essential dimensions of organizational readiness, our framework highlights the importance of such conceptualization as well as the value of presenting a more realistic and comprehensive view of it in future research models and theories (Rusly et al. 2012; Shahrabi and Paré 2014).

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