Avoiding Type III Errors: Formulating IS Research Problems that Matter

By

Prof. Arun RAI
Georgia State University

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Abstract

Type III errors occur when a researcher answers the wrong question using the right methods (Mitroff and Silvers 2009; Raiffa 1968). A lot of effort may be expended, a great deal of rigor may be applied, but coming up with the right answer to the wrong question does not create value. Understandably, this can be frustrating for authors of such work when their peers do not judge the work favorably. It is also a missed opportunity for the field when scare resources of scholars in the community are directed at the wrong research questions.

In this seminar, I discuss a key aspect of the research process—problem formulation—that dramatically influences the research question that is addressed, the value that is created by a research study, and the suitability of the research for MISQ. I focus on this aspect of the research process, as it is where less attention tends to be placed by scholars even though it is a process riddled with misconceptions, risks, and common errors that can lead to Type III errors.

Prof. Arun Rai is Regents’ Professor of the University System of Georgia at the Robinson College of Business at Georgia State University. He holds the Robinson Chair of IT-enabled Supply Chains and Process Innovation and the Harkins Chair of Information Systems. He is currently serving as the Editor-in-Chief of MIS Quarterly, widely regarded as the premier Information Systems journal. He is a Fellow of the Association for Information Systems and a Distinguished Fellow of the INFORMS Information Systems Society.

His research has examined how organizations can leverage information technologies in strategies, relationships, processes, and business models, and how systems can be designed, developed and deployed to effectively address business and societal problems. He has chaired 30 doctoral dissertations and several of his former Ph.D. students hold leadership positions at leading scholarly journals, professional organizations, and their universities.

He co-founded the Robinson College of Business’ Center for Process Innovation, an interdisciplinary research center on digital innovation that promotes industry-university partnerships. He has partnered with leading organizations including Apollo Hospitals, China Mobile, Daimler-Chrysler, Deutsche Bank, Emory Healthcare, Gartner, Georgia-Pacific, Grady Hospital, IBM, Intel, Laureate Inc., SAP, SunTrust, and United Parcel Service on research projects related to creating value through digital innovation. He has served as Senior Editor and Associate Editor for Information Systems Research, MIS Quarterly, and Management Science, and as a panelist for the National Science Foundation. He serves on the Board of Directors of Apollo Indraprastha Hospital (one of the largest hospitals in India) and Apollo Health and Lifestyle Limited (one of the largest healthcare retailers in India).

All interested are welcome.