Distressed and Failing IS Projects: A Critical Review of the Literature

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Distressed and Failing IS Projects: 
A Critical Review of the Literature

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ABSTRACT

This research-in-progress paper evaluates the literature regarding "distress" in information systems (IS) development projects. An IS project is seen as distressed when experiencing critical problems that may ultimately result in project failure. This paper first discusses the notion of IS project distress in contrast to IS project failure and briefly examines corresponding literature. A more detailed review of existing research on IS project distress shows that two different interpretative perspectives—process and narrative—have identified several problems that cause distressed states in IS development projects and ways of responding and coping with such problems. While little attention has been devoted to research on IS project distress, the results of this research stream are highly relevant and valuable for real life project situations. Based on our literature review, we propose shifting research focus towards IS project distress and problematic situations experienced during IS development projects.

Keywords

IS project distress, IS project success and failure, IS success and failure, failure signals.