Evaluating and Improving E-Government in Jordan

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Abstract

The development of the world web increases the online users and consequently forces many governments around the world to take advantage of the facilities offered by the internet. One of these facilities is the E-Government.

Electronic government or E-government represents a major change in the culture and the practices of government works. It is considered as a source of services for companies and citizens. In order to make e-government effective, it is necessary to make some changes in the governmental operational aspects along with constructing potential technology.

The e-government includes multiple types of technology. Thus, governments should exploit the benefits by investing heavily and setting deadlines on e-government projects.

The aims of this paper are to examine the people's satisfaction of the e-government services and measure the degree of public confidence in the services provided by the government. The study has shown that there is a satisfaction in general about the services provided by the government and the confidence in the service provided was to the expected limit for the reasons that we will see below.

Key Words: E-government; Confidence; E-Services; Internet; Jordan.

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1. Introduction

The goal of e-government is to improve the performance of government process, enhance the competitiveness, ensure transparency and reduce cost. Moreover, its main goal is to deliver high quality of services to consumers that promotes e-commerce activities [8].

The major philosophy for e-government, thus, is its vision to the government as a source of services and to citizens and companies as customers or clients want to take advantage of these services. This represents a radical change in the culture of implementing the operations of the government and the in the vision of citizens and companies. The current vision is skeptic, so that it requires intensive steps in order to develop and construct the bridges of confidence and trust between the two parties to change this perception. The government alone can lead this change and make it successful. But this requires changing the way is carrying out its works with implementing the new technologies and new work methods and to be open on the citizens [9].

Yet the internet penetration in Jordan is relatively few even with the expected increase in the coming years. The e-services should not be limited with internet but we should take into account other alternative methods and means. Other successful e-government services were made in various places in the world by using new types of technology other than the internet and the result was improving the performance of the government services.

Implementing e-government can be in stages where the beginning is to use fax, telephone and other communication technologies and the usage of the internet to provide information about the services of e-government before introducing the customer services through the internet [4]. The key factors for the success of spreading the information are through the usage of portals that can identify the users and distinguish them and provide unified services for the network users. We believe that building e-government requires at the beginning using rules and methods that have been tried before with taking into consideration the comprehensive future vision.

The e-government program achieves the national goals and directs the desired change towards reform and development. Thus, it was necessary to have a reference point for coordinating the efforts of various government agencies and support it with the modern methodologies and human expertise in various fields to enable the government to integrate the efforts and reach the highest degree of success in the desired application in the transformation process and thus achieve the objectives of each of them on one hand, and the national goals on the other hand [5]. The government gave this role of coordinating the e-government programs to the Ministry of Information Communications Technology (ICT). A steering committee was established to run the e-government programs and a skilled staff in various fields was hired in projects management, change management, technology management, support services, risk management, content management and so on in order to be able to perform its duties and succeed in implementing the e-government programs and initiatives.

2. Pillars of a Successful E-Government

1. Appropriate and fixed infrastructure.

2. Necessary appropriate technology channels in order to access the e-government services such as PCs and switches.

3. Adequate level of education for users.

4. Adequate level of training

5. Specialized ministers should have the leadership spirit and vision.

6. Appropriate level of funding for the government.

7. Confidentiality and security of personal information, i.e., the privacy of information.

3. Statement of the problem

The research problem is represented in the ability to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent citizens are aware of the e-government?

2. To what extent people use e-government services?

3. Does the use of e-government services depends on the people's educational qualification?

4. What are the major concerns from using e-government services?

5. What are the expected services from e-government?

6. To what extent people are satisfied with the services provided by e-government?

4. Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no effect for the services provided by e-government on people's lives.

2. There are no statistical significant differences in the extent of the use of e-government that can be due to scientific qualifications.

5. Objectives of the Study

The study aims at reviewing the potential technologies needed to establish e-government and measure the extent of acceptability of people to e-government. Furthermore, the study intends to measure people's satisfaction with the services provided by e-government and know if people trust electronic transactions and make payments electronically. The study also aims at identifying the challenges facing e-government implementation.

6. Methods and Procedures

1. Gathering data and information about the e-government

2. Choosing questions of the questionnaire and consulting human expertise in this issue.

3. Distributing the questionnaire to the sample of the study.

4. Analyzing data and information and concluding the results.

7. Theoretical Background

The great development in the field of information technology made the Jordanian e-government exploit the benefits of this revolution in favor of the businesses in Jordan. The real challenge that the e-government faced was how to integrate the new technology in modern information system to provide untraditional developed business environment, using the basics of this technology [11].

E-government can be defined as "the use of information and communication technologies as a tool to achieve better government" [6]. Thus, E-government is the government use of Web-based Internet applications and other information technologies, combined with processes that implement these technologies. The main goal of implementing e-government is to enhance access to and delivery of government information and services to the public, agencies, and government entities; and to bring about improvements in government operations that may include effectiveness, efficiency, service quality, or transformation The idea behind using this technology is to provide an environment that allows the workers, employees, managers and the management to access the sources of knowledge and interact with them at any time and from any place without any temporal or spatial constraints. And this is what the e- government offered by establishing a complete electronic project that allows the administration, employees to access the required and accurate information as soon as possible.

The electronic administration is considered as one of the concepts of digital revolution that leads us to the era of knowledge [12]. The transformational strong nature of this technology affects deeply the way of people's working and shopping. It also affects the way people share their social relationships and the way they communicate with others in various parts of the earth. The common element is to make the information available at the lowest possible cost and as soon as possible. For example, the rapid communication through e-mails which is almost without cost with the enormous amount of information that flow has become a phenomenon in itself.

The true concept for electronic administrative that most countries are trying to achieve is using the products of technology revolution in improving the levels of performance of government agencies and increase efficiency in order to accomplish the desired objectives [1]. Although the internet is an affective tool and a problem for the concept of electronic management, but it includes various integrated aspects such as methods of work, technology, human beings, administrative organization and the development of legislations and so on [3].

Al Iteebi (2005) conducted a study aimed to reveal the importance of training the employees and motivate them to use the modern technology means. The study conducted by distributing questionnaires. It was conducted on a number of government institutions that apply the electronic system. The study mentioned some of the difficulties that may hinder the application of electronic system such as not providing information centers with computers, printers, speakers, frequent breakdown of computers and the internet, not linking the computers with internet, no internet at home or slow internet and lack of time to surf the internet sites that have a relationship with work. But in case of equipping the establishments with the suitable electronics, the application of the electronic system can contribute significantly in qualifying people to apply the e-government.

On his part, Pedroni (1996) conducted a study aimed to reveal the importance of applying technology in the institutions in the South of Aolniz. The study showed that modern technology reduces the role of the employer. Moreover, modern technology enhanced the cooperation between the employees to perform a perfect work. One of the advantages that study demonstrated was that modern technology helps employees to evaluate and save their work. Furthermore, it facilitates the work and consequently improves the production.

Clay (2000) conducted a study aimed at identifying the training and technological skills of the employees in the states institutions and how the technological skills distinguish the employees in improving the production. The researcher used a questionnaire consists of 33 technological training items based on the standards developed by the International Association for Technology. The sample of the study consists of 146 employees in the USA institutions, in addition to 76 managers in information centers. The results of the study indicated that employees have technological information less than the expectations of managers in the information centers. And the managers' responses were less than the international standards. The study recommended of employing information technology in IT institutions, understanding the information communication process and appreciates the importance of information technology in preparing, developing, performing and assessing the strategies of work.

8. Population of the Study and the Sample

8.1 Population of the Study

Everyone who is working or using computer in Jordan, but we tried to use people who have educational qualifications.

8.2 Sample of the Study

Questionnaires were distributed to a random sample of computer users for the purposes of scientific research at home and work in the cities of Irbed and Amman. The sample consists of employees in the private and public sectors. The questionnaires were distributed to a random sample consists of 150 individuals (male and female) and filled appropriately.

8.3 Items of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire includes 20 questions as follows:

1-8: General information questions include gender, scientific qualification, age, marital status, monthly income and the nature of work.

9-14: Questions to measure the first hypothesis to test if there is a statistically significant relationship that refers to impact of e-government services on the lives of people.

15-20: Questions to measure the second hypothesis to test if there is a statistically significant relationship in the extent of using e-government due to scientific qualification.

8.4 Testing the Hypotheses

8.4.1 The first Hypothesis

Ho: There is no relationship between the applications of e-government services and its impact on the people's lives.

Ha: There is a relationship between the applications of e-government services and its impact on the people's lives.

8.4.1.1 Responses According to the First Hypothesis

The study demonstrated that 44% of the sample knew about the e-government initiative, while 56% did not know about this initiative. The study also showed that 12% of sample is thinking greatly to take advantage from the services provided by e-government, while 59% of the sample is sometimes thinking to take advantage from the services, while 14% is thinking to use it for only one service, while 13% does not think of using the services at all.

The study revealed that 28% is expecting to have excellent services from the e-government, 36% is expecting to have very good services, 24% is expecting to have good services and 14% is expecting to have acceptable services and no more.

The study showed that 27% trust the results they will gain fro using the e-government services, 35% thinks the results will be very good, 24% thinks the results will be good and 20% does not trust the results.

8.4.2 The Second Hypothesis

Ho: There are no statistically significant differences in the extent of using e-government services due to scientific qualification.

Ha: There are statistically significant differences in the extent of using e-government services due to scientific qualification.

8.4.2.1 Responses According to the Second Hypothesis

The study showed that 7% is expecting high private information provided by the e-government, 37% is expecting the secrecy to be medium, 53% is expecting the secrecy to be acceptable and 14% thinks there will be no confidentiality.

The study revealed that 16% does not want to use the e-government services because they do not trust the quality of services provided, while 17% does not have confidence in the accuracy of the results that will be obtained, 11% does not have confidence in the frequent usage of the e-government services and the consequences after that, 21% expresses their concerns that they have to pay for the services, 23% expresses their concerns about the privacy and the secrecy of the information they entered and 32% mentioned other causes such as they do not need these services.

The study showed that 27% is expecting to pay through visa cards for services, 15% thinks they will pay through increasing a certain percentage on the income tax, 11% thinks that they will pay through adding a certain percentage on the transactions cost, 47% thinks that these services are free of charge.

The study demonstrated that the implementation of e-government saves money, effort and time. Furthermore, 60% of high certificates holders agree that the implementation of e-government improves the quality of services provided by e-government and increases confident and the secrecy of information provided about the government.

9. Statistical Methods

- Using Frequencies and standard deviations to describe the sample and the study variables.

- Using (t-test) to test the main study hypotheses.

- Using (f-test) to see if there are statistically significant differences in the variables due to the variable of level of education.

10. Conclusions and Recommendations

- The study proved that there is a relationship between the implementation of e-government and its impact on the lives of people and the extent to which people accept the e-government.
- The study proved that there are statistically significant differences in the extent of using e-government due to the scientific qualifications since there was a greater positive acceptance from high certificates holders.

10.1 Recommendations

- Establishing additional communication channels between citizens and companies on one hand and the government on the other hand.
- Showing transparency in the work of government by allowing great access to information and IT services.
- Providing information to citizens.
- Providing updating information in the appropriate time.
- Simplifying the works of government and make them more efficient, thus reducing the cost of the government procedures.
- Increasing the number of computers and consequently increase the citizen's awareness of the online services.
- Increasing the level of education and training in the private and public sectors.

Finally, we believe that Jordan should have developing strategies in order to bridge the gap between the design and reality in order to take advantage from the opportunities and services provided by the e-government. Furthermore, in order to have a successful e-government program in Jordan, we must focus on the customer-centric method i.e. treating citizens like customers by tailoring services to their needs.

Future work is encouraged to explore and to reveal other e-government measures and future research is needed to review the best practices that helped countries to deliver high-quality customer centric in the field of e-government.

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