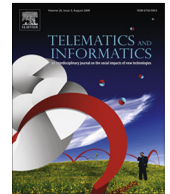




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E-government familiarity influence on Jordanians' perceptions



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ABSTRACT

E-government is becoming an important topic and is attracting more and more research. Its adoption is determined by many factors among which user's familiarity is not a well researched one. Without a real longitudinal research, familiarity cannot be investigated. To explore the influence of e-government familiarity, we utilized two samples with two different objectives. The first sample utilized 241 responses to understand the relative awareness of 20 concepts that are known to belong to e-government topic. The second sample included a two stage method, with an extended survey. A survey including the 20 concepts and an additional 14 items measured four constructs: perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, privacy and security assurance, and trust in e-government. The second survey was distributed to a class of 50 students at the start of an e-government course and at the end of it.

Results of the first survey indicated high levels of awareness in regard to service provision, time and location, and necessity of information needed. Dimensions like digital divide (gender and accessibility) and social change were among the highly recognized topics. On the other hand, e-participation and political concepts of e-government were moderately perceived by the sample. Results of the second sample indicated a significant influence of familiarity with e-government (gained from the course content) on 14 items out of the 20 used. Also, perceived usefulness and privacy and security assurance were significant predictors of trust in e-government. Finally, all item means increased in the second stage except for one item only. Governments need to raise awareness regarding e-government initiatives and improve citizens' familiarity with the topic.

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1. Introduction

E-government applications started since the advent of the Internet and evolved into a phenomenon influencing all aspects of citizens' lives. It started as another channel for public service provision and became a phenomenon that influences the political and social development in any country. The applications related to e-government started as a substitute channel of traditional offices that provide public services to citizens and businesses and evolved into a democratic and participation channel, e-voting tool, and social change force.

Raising awareness of e-government initiatives is an important step toward the adoption of citizens, which is the ultimate goal of this project. Such goal is achieved through the improved familiarity with the phenomenon and the level of trust in e-government projects. This step is important to improve the chances of successful e-government projects. E-government familiarity can be defined as the level of citizens' awareness of the advantages, disadvantages, requirements and value of e-government projects.

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To investigate the influence of familiarity with e-government projects, a longitudinal research must be adopted. The influence of familiarity is tested utilizing two instruments with two different samples. One of the instruments was applied at the start of the semester and once again at the end of it. This two-stage measurement process captured the influence of familiarity. Based on that, we adopted a research model including three predictors and trust as the dependent variable. Research in e-government focused on how citizens trust their governments or how they trust e-government application. Trust proved to be a significant predictor of e-government success. Research on trust supported its influence on the intention to use e-government websites or its use behavior. Based on that, it is important to understand this construct and how researchers understand its influence on citizens' behavior.

This study will focus on the previous knowledge of e-government and how it can influence citizen's perceptions of such initiatives. Trust in e-government revolves around two major dimensions: trust in government itself and trust in the technology involved in the transactions (Internet, mobile, or wireless networks). Still, with the long relationship with governments, citizens can define their trusting relationship based on their previous experience. Such issue is not always the same when trusting technology or both combined. Citizens' existing beliefs of e-government initiatives are important determinants of their adoption attitudes or intentions. E-government familiarity is an important factor that influences how citizens perceive e-government projects.

This study explored the influence of e-government familiarity on citizens' perceptions of e-government aspects. The study involves two directions: the first is to understand the relative awareness of different e-government concepts. The second direction is to explore how citizens perceive e-government aspects in a longitudinal spectrum when influenced by familiarity. Finally, a proposed model was tested for the prediction of trust in e-government. The following section will review the related research and try to better understand constructs related to trust. Section three will describe the research methods and model. Section four will depict the data analysis and discussion followed by conclusions and references.

2. Research background

E-government is a complex phenomenon as it evolved from a service provision channel utilizing available information and communication technology (Evans and Yen, 2006; Papadopoulou et al., 2010; Sharma and Qian, 2012; Alshehri et al., 2012), to a venue for public participation, e-voting and democratic and social development driver (Abu-Shanab and Al-Jamal, 2015). The importance of e-government does not stem from the importance of technology in our lives, but it touches on almost all aspects of citizens' relationship with his government. Still, research concluded that e-government implementation lacks the required efficiency gains (Weerakkody and Dhillon, 2008) without a radical change and a significant transformation of services (Weerakkody et al., 2011).

E-government is defined as the utilization of ICT, mobile technology and the Internet to provide citizens with needed services, improve public agencies performance, facilitate a successful public participation, and include citizens within a total social development process (Abu-Shanab, 2013). The success of e-government projects will depend on the best utilization of such investment in these projects. It is important to see citizens and businesses use such applications and reduce their costs.

E-government projects success is measured by more than one direction. The first is the holistic perspective of ICT use within government's operations. The second is the financial and economic side of the investment. Finally, citizens' adoption of e-service is a critical factor that determines the use behavior of citizens. The following section will explore trust dimension and how it facilitates the use behavior.

2.1. Trust in E-government

Trust is a well research construct that yielded significant results when associated with the intention to use e-government services. Research defined trust as the willingness to be vulnerable to others and expecting positive intentions towards ones Interest (Abu-Shanab, 2014; Mcaskill and Brown, 2009). The work done by Abu-Shanab (2014) utilized a sample of 759 Jordanians who filled a survey related to trust antecedents. The aim of the study was to structurally understand the trust construct with respect to its relation to the intention to use (ITU) e-government services. The author tried to breakdown trust into its two major components: trust in technology (the Internet) and trust in government. The first level predicting variables were perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, social influence and trust in e-government. All variables were significant in predicting ITU. On the other hand, the second level predicting variables (predicting trust in e-government) were trust in government itself, trust in the Internet, Internet familiarity, privacy and security concerns, and information quality. All second level predictors were significant in predicting trust in e-government except Internet familiarity.

Another study related to trust analyzed responses from 787 users of US federal services (Morgeson et al., 2011). The authors used a structural model for estimating the influence of trust on users' expectations, then satisfaction, and finally confidence in the agency. The authors started with trust as the ultimate dependent variable, and then data supported the previously mentioned structural model. Trust was a significant predictor of expectations and then confidence in agency. Their work relied on the statistical results to propose the alternative model, and utilized two similar construct (confidence in agency and trust in government). Horst et al. (2007) conducted a study that probed the responses of 238 persons who answered a questionnaire and analyzed it using SEM technique. Results indicated that trust in government agencies

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