Challenges to the Successful Implementation of Online Voting for E-Democracy in Developing Countries’ Initiatives: Jordan as a Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The ability to vote is an essential part of Democracy. The election process should be reliable, secure and organized to motivate voters to participate in the election process. The process itself requires a great amount of resources allocation. This paper argues that online voting may play important role on enhancing efficiency, convenience, participation and reducing human/financial resources needed for the election process in developing countries. In this paper, we consider Kingdom of Jordan as a case study. This paper examines Jordan’s initiatives (ICTs and e-Government) to study the challenges and difficulties to have ability to adopt online voting in the Kingdom.

Keywords: Developing Countries, E-Democracy, E-Government, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Online Voting

1. INTRODUCTION

Democracy can be defined as a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives. This elected representation in democracy is implemented by general elections to facilitate the transfer of power. The general election itself consists of several activities such as the process of registering citizens to vote,

DOI: 10.4018/ijskd.2014070103
preparing ballots, conducting elections and tabulating results. With the spread of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) around the world, this traditional paper-based election is converted to be an electronic voting which is also known as online voting. In general, online voting has become one of the newest systems that use technology to make voting more convenient. Online voting is expected to increase citizen participation in general elections compared to traditional election system, as it is considered more reliable way to replace the older election systems. However, this type of systems has been referred to as a more challenging than other electronic commerce or electronic government application with regard to network security and data encryption.

Further, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) diffusion plays an essential role in economic development, especially in the developing nations of the world such as the Middle East. Several studies have examined the global diffusion of the Internet from a broad perspective such as econometric global Internet diffusion model which proposed by (Stafford et al., 2006; Khasawneh 2008; Khasawneh & Stafford, 2008), and CAIS special issue on globalization and eCommerce (Kraemer, Dedrick& Gibbs, 2003).

Hence, little research has been made to review the ICT diffusion in emerging economies, particularly those of the Middle East (Ali, 2004). Kraemer, Dedrick& Gibbs’ (2003) CAIS special issue on globalization and e-Commerce, appear to have largely overlooked the Middle Eastern nations. Therefore, it is important to highlight that technological innovation and diffusion has been spreading in the Middle East. Though, many Middle Eastern nations are generally thought to lag the rest of the world in ICT diffusion (Stafford et al., 2006) in addition to the major challenges to motivate the population to adopt technology.

As for Jordan, the government has identified ICT as means of development leading to national economic advantages (Al-Jaghoub and Westrup, 2003). Initiatives of the Jordanian government have encouraged the population of Jordan to understand the priority that has been placed on ICT diffusion. (Alawneh et al, 2013) studied the factors (i.e., security and privacy, trust, accessibility, awareness of public services, and quality of public services) affecting citizens satisfaction toward e-government initiatives. This paper is intended to provide a research focus to determine if the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has the ability to perform online elections. We explore the population-readiness toward this technology as well as the availability of appropriate technology required for the process.

This paper is structured as follows: section 2 is an overview of online voting system process. A comparison between the traditional voting system and online voting is introduced in section 3. An overview of Jordan’s initiatives of both ICTs and e-Government are introduced in section 4. Research methodology is in section 5. Findings and discussions are discussed in section 6, and finally
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