Jordanians Perceptions Regarding E-Government Ethical Issues

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ABSTRACT

Despite the benefits of e-government and the achieved progress, e-government concepts need some support based on its ethical perspective. The purpose of this paper is to present some important ethical issues that must be considered by e-government stakeholders when adopting such initiative. The objectives of this research aimed at exploring how ethical issues influence citizens’ adoption, and the challenges for such issues. An empirical test was conducted utilizing 293 surveys to probe Jordanians perceptions regarding major ethical dimensions of e-government projects. It’s concluded that e-government has potential to ensure its progress and success by being ethical. Results indicated also that three dimensions significantly predicted the intention to use e-government services: people with disabilities issues, privacy and security issues, and unemployment issues. The only predictor that failed to predict ITU was the environmental aspect of e-government projects. Conclusions and future work are stated at the end of this work.

Keywords: Disabilities, E-Government, Empirical Test, Ethics, Green Government, Jordan, Privacy and Security, Trust, Unemployment

1. INTRODUCTION

Companies and institutions have recently witnessed a great progress in utilizing information and communication technology (ICT), which led to creating a competitive environment among companies that provide their services electronically or traditionally. Such paradigm influenced public sector institutions, where they switched part or most of their services to web applications to provide easy to access services to citizens. E-government is extending its services to citizens, businesses and even other bodies of governments.

E-services opened doors for controversial discussions in favor of scarcity and ubiquity of IT to provide services and realize competitive advantage. On the other hand, disputes were raised in regard to companies’ concerns about the code of ethics and social liability in providing their services on/off the web. E-government is a real example of which recent studies highlight the

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government’s role in providing extra care to maintaining the code of ethics while providing services to its citizens. This would certainly increase citizens’ satisfaction while governments will be able to achieve the requested objectives in saving time, cost and efforts. E-government is mostly explored from three major perspectives: infrastructural, governmental and social (Abu-Shanab, 2012a). Ethical issues are always overlooked or explored under social perspectives (based on the social responsibility of governments).

This paper explored the ethical issues that e-government should take into consideration when providing its services on the web (or utilizing any type of ICT). Issues like green government and the impact of using ICT for e-government services on the environment. Then we discussed how e-government projects influence unemployment rate, and how it provides new jobs and help search for new ones. The third issue is how to include disabled people into e-government services (e-inclusion). Finally, we discussed issues related to security and privacy, where tracking is a major aspect of new technology. The paper also proposed and tested a model for predicting intention to use e-government through an empirical test utilizing data collected using a survey. Our conclusions and implications are stated at the end.

2. ETHICAL CONCEPTS AND E-GOVERNMENT

Recent initiatives by most organizations in different sectors indicate their concerns in relation to ethical and social responsibility. The main focus of businesses is always related to enhancing organizational image and reputation or increases their market share (Milošević, Barac & Andjelković, 2009).

Ethics provide means that would lead humans to what to do and how to behave (Salman, Saad & Ali, 2013). Ethics guide us to what is considered good or bad behavior, and deal with behaviors and actions rather than thoughts or feelings. Also, what is considered as an acceptable behavior in one culture might not be ethical in another.

Kolthoff (2007) defines ethics as:

Ethics (Greek ethika, from ethos, ‘character’ or ‘custom’) can be described as principles or standards of human conduct, sometimes referred to as morals (Latin mores, ‘customs’) and, by extension, the study of such principles, sometimes termed moral philosophy.

He adds that social sciences frequently attempt to determine the relationship of particular ethical principle to social behavior and to investigate the cultural conditions that contribute to the formation of such principles. Peterson (1999) said that ethics are the proper principles; depend on social values, which define a code of good and bad or right and wrong. Most of ethics are simply unwritten rules; some of them are set in laws. The code of ethics may be set by society at large or by any certain sub-group of society.

Recently, the ICT sector supported ethical issues in e-commerce tax systems such as privacy of customer’s information and the copyright laws (Muñoz, Joyanes, Cid & Farias, 2012). Other researchers defined three types of applied ethics in computer science: computer ethics, information ethics, and cyber ethics (Ramadhan, Sensus & Arymurthy, 2011). This applies to all ICT applications, and even e-government.

E-government is not far from our arguments, it is now concerned about ethics and started to focus more on social responsibility. One of the important public terms that is connected to e-government, is e-governance, which deals with issues of e-government in addition to legitimacy
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