ABSTRACT

This research investigated the possible ownership type effect on the information systems (IS) success factors and IS impact on organizational performance in Kuwaiti organizations. Four IS success factors—IS strategy and resources, end user support, IS sophistication and IS organizational level & user involvement—and three IS organizational impact factors—improving work efficiency, improving decision making, and improving work effectiveness—were identified. Ownership type was found to affect the profiles of the IS success factors and IS organizational impact. Public organizations tend to commit less IS resources; their managers get less involved in IS strategy formulation, and their users get less involved in systems development. Yet, they tend to rate their IS organizational impact higher. This “IS expectation-performance gap” is further explained in the article, along with research implications, limitations, and future research.

Keywords: IS success factors; IS organizational impact; public organizations; private organizations; ownership type; Kuwait

INTRODUCTION

Information systems (IS) success has long generated much interest and consequent research (Almutairi & Subramanian, 2005; Kim & Kim, 1999; Palvia, Palvia, & Zigli, 1992). However, consistent results on the determinants of IS success have yet to emerge (Seliem, Ashour, Khalil, & Miller, 2003). A plausible reason for such inconsistent findings is that IS management issues are perhaps context-sensitive and are related to the particular country’s unique political, legal, economic, cultural and technological characteristics. Consequently, findings from Western-based investigations are not necessarily generalizable to other settings or countries (Aharoni & Burton, 1994; Rosenzweig, 1994; Seliem & Turunen, 2003).

A significant part of the research on IS success and its determinant factors is based on findings drawn from investigations of private organizations in developed countries (Jain, 1997; Seneviratne, 1999; Seliem et al., 2003). Therefore, the value of such findings in guiding IS decisions and policies in public organizations...
in the developing countries is inadequate until their external and international generalizability is verified. In addition, IS management practices and IS effects on performance may vary in the public and private organizations because of possible environmental and organizational differences between them (Bretschneider, 1990; Bretschneider & Wittmer, 1993; Jayasuriya, 1999; Margetts & Willcocks, 1994).

Identifying issues that may be distinctive to certain cultures (Khalil & Elkordy, 1997) and certain organizational types are essential for effective IS management practices. The few studies that investigated IS practices, characteristics and effectiveness in a Kuwaiti context (e.g., Aladwani, 2001, 2002; Almutairi & Subramanian, 2005; Alshawaf, Ali, & Hasan, 2005) did not address in their research designs the possible differences in IS management practices and IS organizational impacts across private and public organizations. IS policy makers in the Kuwaiti public and private organizations need to be aware of the IS success factors that may be specific to their organizations in order to make decisions that deem necessary to the enhancement of IS contributions to organizational performance.

This research explores whether IS success factors and IS impact on organizational performance are common across the public and private organizations in Kuwait. The article is organized accordingly. It starts with a background on the research variables and context, research method, results, discussion of the research findings, implications, limitations and future research, and the article ends with conclusions.

BACKGROUND

IS Success Factors

Managers in public and private organizations are well aware that investments in a successful deployment of information technology (IT) for information acquisition, processing, and communication can influence decisions and, in turn, affect the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational performance. The literature on IS success offers a number of research frameworks and models describing the potential impact of organizational and technical factors on IS success, measured by user satisfaction, system use, impact on user’s performance, and/or impact on organizational performance.

Delone and McLean’s (1992) model may be considered to be one of the most comprehensive and popular IS success models. The model identifies six interrelated dimensions of success, including information quality, system quality, system use, user satisfaction, individual impact and organizational impact. The model has generated a great deal of research that aimed at validating the applicability of the model in different contexts and for different information systems types. Ten years later, Delone and McLean (2003) revisited and revised their model to include a new service quality dimension, the modification of the use dimension into intent to use, and the combination of the individual and organizational impact into an overall net benefits dimension.

Nevertheless, IS research has explored a broad range of factors that are considered to be critical to the success of information systems. In spite of its lack of a robust theoretical basis and the absence of consistent procedures for identifying the factors that are considered relevant to IS success, the critical success factors (CSFs) methodology has been long used as a methodology in IS research (Boynton & Zmud, 1994). Lam (2005) adds that CSF studies continue to be valuable for making sense out of problems where there are many potential factors that may affect the outcome, and where the researcher hopes to make a set of practical recommendations based on the most influential factors.

Based on a review and synthesis of the literature on IS effectiveness/success, an initial set of IS situational factors that are believed to affect IS success has been identified. These factors include the age of the IS organizational unit, the organizational level of the IS unit, clarity of the IS strategy, top management involvement in the formulation of IS strategy, locus of the IS financial decisions, IS resources, user involvement in systems development, end-user training,