

Chapter 1

E–Government Contribution to Better Performance by Public Sector

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ABSTRACT

E-government is a new phenomenon that improves public services provision to citizens, improves public sector performance, and enriches the political arena. Such ambitious objectives are not fully investigated in the literature, where most research focused on the service provision area. Improving public sector's performance is a vital dimension of e-government benefits and addresses the demands for cutting budgets and the financial situations facing many governments across the world. This study explored the e-government literature to summarize the reported contributions of e-government in relation to improving government performance. The second objective is to conduct an empirical test for our propositions based on public employees' perceptions regarding the set of benefits and contributions alleged by research. A sample of 107 public employees filled a survey summarizing the contributions of e-government based on 6 major dimensions. Conclusions and future work are stated at the end.

INTRODUCTION

The new applications developed in the last few years, and the social wave overtaking the Internet moved many governments towards improving their performance. It is important to utilize all ICT offerings towards reducing costs, improving operations, and reaching out for citizens in an effective and efficient manner. The financial situations and the search for new venues to reform the public sector are pushing governments to take all initiatives that might help improve public sector's performance. Such direction is not fully explored in the literature, where the majority of research focused on the service provision and reflecting citizens' perspectives.

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E-government is perceived as the bond that links all government institutions (Fan & Yang, 2015). Abu-Shanab (2015) claimed, in an attempt to re-engineer the concept of open government, that e-government activities are essential for the solid establishment of accountability, and good governance. E-government revolves around four major dimensions: improving public service provided for citizens and businesses, improving public sector's performance, supporting the political activities like democracy and participation, and including all categories of society through digital divide and social inclusion activities. Such phenomenon is not equally covered in the literature, where the service provision dimension attracts more attention from researchers than other areas. We cannot neglect the size of research focusing on e-participation and e-voting areas. Finally, research related to the digital divide is the major dimension driven by e-government projects in the social change arena.

This study will focus on the literature related to public sector's performance from an ICT utilization perspective. Previous studies acknowledged the contribution of ICT and the Internet in improving public performance. The implementation of e-government is one of two directions. ICT applications can be a strategic resource that aids governments in their operations. In addition, when implementing e-government projects, it is integrated with public operations and thus boosting its performance.

Research showed significant correlations between e-government and reducing corruption (Abu-Shanab et al., 2013), better transparency (Abu-Shanab, 2013), and reducing costs of operations (West, 2004; Welch et al. 2005). Based on such fragmented perception, it is important to explore how public officers perceive such benefits of e-government and how it contributes into better performance. The missing segments of government's performance revolve around how e-government websites can improve public image and market public work.

This study explored the literature related to e-government initiatives and its major dimensions. Second, a distinction between improving service provision and performance improvement is investigated and established. Third, the study reviewed the related research and built an instrument to measure the contributions of e-government in relation to public sector's performance. Fourth, an empirical test that explores public officers' perceptions regarding this topic is conducted utilizing a sample of 107 public employees. Finally, the last section will summarize the results, conclusions, implications, and future work.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research in the area of e-government focused more on providing service to citizens and businesses in a convenient fashion, where new ICT channels like mobile technology and social media improved the effectiveness of open channels between governments and their citizens. On the other hand, it is important to realize the contribution of ICT tools (Web 2.0, 3.0 ad 4.0) in improving public performance through many facets like: reducing costs, improving government responsiveness to citizens' needs, utilizing the available effort of public employees, and improving the quality and quantity of activity output.

Governments are keen on improving their performance to gain more satisfied citizens and more supportive societies. Based on that, it is important to explore such contribution by e-government into a better performance of governments. It is important also to investigate the performance indicators that could be used to measure governments' performance, and then try to see where e-government has returned more improvements.

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