Chapter 18
E-Government and Public Service Delivery:
A Survey of Egypt Citizens

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to better understand what citizens think regarding the currently available e-government public services in Egypt. This is done through an analysis of a public opinion survey of Egyptian citizens, examining citizens' use and associated issues with usage of e-government portals. This chapter is different from existing research in that most of the studies that examine e-government and citizens focus on developed countries. This study focuses on a developing country, Egypt, as an emerging democracy, which has very unique and important challenges in the delivery of public services to its citizens. The results revealed that only gender, daily use of the internet, and the desire to convert all of the services to electronic ones were important factors that affected the use of the Egyptian e-government portal. On the other hand, age, education, trust in information confidentiality on the internet, and believing in e-government did not play any role in using e-government.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Governments worldwide are integrating Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) in their public administrative reform programs to digitize their delivery of public services (Electronic Government for Developing Countries, 2008). Electronic government, or e-government, is used as a way of integrating ICT into public service delivery. One of the most important motivations behind such transformation stems from the potential of e-government to enhance the delivery of public services to promote greater transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to citizens (Bwalya, 2009).

Egypt is an interesting case since, being a developing country, in that it would benefit greatly from e-government to improve public service delivery (Heeks, 2002; Chen, Chen, Ching, & Huang, 2007; Hamner & Qazi, 2009). Applying e-government in a developing country is challenging to a noticeable degree, as face-to-face communication is the most preferable and dominant way to contact government entities, since only 29% of the Egyptians using the internet; according to the last estimates of the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics in Egypt. In addition, the Egyptian illiteracy rate is 29.7% of the total population in age 10 years and older, according to the Egyptian census in 2006.

This study aims to better understand what citizens think regarding the currently available e-government services using a public opinion survey of Egyptian citizens. Most of the existing research has focused on the United States (Thomas & Streib, 2003; Reddick, 2005; Streib & Navarro, 2006), and there is much less research that focuses on citizens' use of e-government in the context of developing countries.

There are two research questions examined in this study:

1. What is the current use of e-government in Egypt by its citizens?
2. What factors affect using e-government for Egyptian citizens?

The answers to these two questions will be addressed through several sections. Following the introduction section, the rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides background information on the context of the Egyptian e-government program. Research hypotheses derived from the e-government literature are presented in Section 3. Section 4 details the research methodology of this chapter. Detailed results and hypotheses testing are presented in Section 5. Section 6 presents the conclusion, research limitations, and future research possibilities are suggested.

2. CONTEXT

Egypt is a unitary country that comprises 27 administrative sections, called governorates (or municipalities), of various sizes, populations, and resources. Governorates are administratively further divided into cities and districts, which are, in turn, divided into smaller entities called neighborhoods (in cities) and villages (in the districts).

Egypt has established its ICT strategy in 2001 in what has been known as the Egyptian Information Society Initiative (EISI). EISI was built on seven pillars; one of which was e-government. EISI initiative was put into action and, hence, the e-government program in Egypt started in 2001. In 2004, program ownership was transferred to the Ministry of State for Administrative Development (MSAD), where the former e-government Program Director was appointed as the minister. This reflects the Egyptian understanding of e-government as a natural component of administrative development and reform. Thus, the e-government program in Egypt became one of the two mandates of MSAD, the other one being public administration institutional reform. In 2010 Egypt was ranked 86th out of 195 countries in e-government development, it ranked 23rd in the on-