

Chapter 48

Investigating Factors Inhibiting e–Government Adoption in Developing Countries: The Context of Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Researchers in the discipline of electronic government (e-Government) have historically presented several factors impeding the adoption and implementation of these systems. This paper is uniquely aimed at investigating the factors inhibiting e-Government adoption in a developing country – Pakistan. The literature indicates that the move towards integrated service provision and transactional e-Government is considered as an immense challenge for developing countries as compared to developed regions. Moreover, the progress towards realising the full potential of e-Government using digital technologies to improve public services and government-citizen engagements has been slower and less effective in the developing countries. Pakistan, over many years, has experienced similar lethargic e-Government growth due to economic and political instability, poor governance and deteriorating government institutions. Thus, the ever increasingly weakening state of government structures in Pakistan calls for the need to deliver end-to-end ‘joined-up’ public services to key stakeholders (i.e. citizens, businesses, government employees and other government agencies). The contribution of this research is twofold – firstly, identifying factors inhibiting e-Government adoption in Pakistan – here the focus is to identify the significant problems of meeting demands which are attributed to several issues within organisational, strategic, technological, political, operational, stakeholders and social structures. Secondly, the authors propose an achievable approach to enacting e-Government enabled delivery of services. The conceptual findings, as noted, are validated through qualitative based research in the context of Pakistan government organisations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, there has been a paradigm shift where governments (both developed and developing) and other independent policy/law makers have realised the significance of e-Government as a strong tool for receptive governance (Grant & Chau, 2005; Chen *et al.*, 2006). It is widely recognised that the emergence of e-Government resulted in developing local and national government operational and process efficiencies, as well as providing accessibility to key stakeholders e.g. citizens, businesses, government employees and other government agencies (Weerakkody *et al.*, 2007; Janssen *et al.*, 2012). Conventionally, many governments have been using paper-and-file approaches in managing their businesses and this has proved unfavourable to the extent that accountability is concerned (Mehrtens *et al.*, 2001). With the ever transforming landscape where the majority of government's transactions with stakeholders take place at the local level, it is vital that much effort be devoted towards putting in place mechanisms that facilitates maximum collaboration and participatory governance (Chen *et al.*, 2009). The latter argument is supported by Bwalya (2009), who asserts that this paradigm shift in way of governance is also partially brought about by rapid growth in Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) that have the potential to transform the delivery of public services to stakeholders. Despite the paradigm shift, government organisations across the globe have been marked of with bureaucratic and imposing operational style, not only in the developing but in the developed regions too, with issues such as dismal service levels, soaring costs and red tape (i.e. it is the collection or sequence of forms and procedures required to gain bureaucratic consent) continually deteriorating the overall reputation of government organisations (Kamal *et al.*, 2010; Bigdeli *et al.*, 2011; Janssen *et al.*, 2012). Governments' history with autonomous agencies and at

times their overlapping functions and objectives has resulted in a sluggish progress (Janssen & Wagenaar, 2003).

The latter views are further endorsed by Kamal *et al.*, (2009), who state that government organisations often operate as self-governing and autonomous bodies without understanding other organisations within the public domain. In recent years, however, government organisations have been vigorously encouraged to reform their murky outlook and operations thereby displacing away from conventional form of government to electronic government – also termed as e-Government (Irani *et al.*, 2008; Kamal *et al.*, 2009). In doing so, several governments around the globe are aggressively striving with a vision to achieve a government-wide transformation, in which both local and federal government entities area endeavouring to work with each other to deliver better services to citizens via a one-stop-shop environment for all services under the guise of e-Government (Weerakkody & Dhillon, 2008; Reddick, 2009). Government organisations are vigorously persuaded to collaborate with other government bodies in distributed and loosely coupled networks by making use of each service, i.e. the sharing of services (Janssen *et al.*, 2012). This form of collaboration for service provision is an illustration that e-Government implementation efforts are and to a greater have shifted towards the shared service concept that inevitably supports in acquiring efficiency gains. Academics and practitioners have conceptualised e-Government as the rigorous and generalised use of ICT in government for the provision of public services, the improvement of managerial effectiveness, and the promotion of democratic values and mechanisms (Gil-García & Luna-Reyes, 2003; Beynon-Davies & Williams, 2003; Gil-García & Pardo, 2005).

Over the past few years, in developed countries e-Government implementation efforts have significantly transformed from cataloguing basic government information to providing integrated

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