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E-government Application in Kuwait

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Abstract

Kuwait is witnessing a shift towards efficiently delivering government services through the adoption of Information and Communication Technology within the framework of the E-Government initiative. The implementation of E-Government in Kuwait aims to enhance the experience of citizens and residents in interacting with government services. This application facilitates easy access to a wide range of services, including job applications, government requests, and personal data inquiries. Electronic verification and digital signature technologies reduce paperwork and enhance the efficiency of administrative processes. The application offers diverse services such as appointment scheduling, direct communication with government entities, and tracking application statuses. Its user-friendly design makes it easy for users to understand and utilize various functions. By improving communication and encouraging electronic participation, the application promotes transparency and builds citizens' trust in government work. This shift towards E-Government reflects a commitment to enhancing user experience and achieving greater efficiency in delivering government services. The E-Government initiative in Kuwait is part of the state's efforts to achieve digital transformation, and continuous development and improvement are expected to meet the needs and expectations of citizens in the era of modern technology.

Keywords. Kuwait government, E-Government, Information and Communication Technology, electronic government services, improving government experience, paperless procedures.

Introduction

First: Introduction To the Study Topic

The application of E-Government in Kuwait represents a significant advancement towards improving the delivery of government services, relying on digital technology and electronic communication methods to facilitate and enhance interaction between citizens and the government. The application provides an easy and intuitive user interface, enabling users to access services and information quickly and effectively. Additionally, the application aims to reduce reliance on paper and simplify processes through the shift towards digital technologies, allowing users to submit various government requests, track their status, and access personal information. Direct communication features enable users to interact with government entities through electronic messages or inquiries, further promoting transparency by providing clear information about the services offered and government decisions. Moreover, the application seeks to build citizens' trust in the government by providing efficient and easily accessible services, working to improve the efficiency of government operations, contributing to the more effective and efficient delivery of services.

Overall, the E-Government application in Kuwait demonstrates a clear commitment to

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enhancing user experience and leveraging technology for greater efficiency in delivering government services.

Second: Study Objective

The primary objective of the aforementioned study is to examine and explain the impact of the E-Government application in Kuwait. The goal is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the development and implementation of this application, exploring its effects on user experience and the effectiveness of government service delivery. The study highlights several aspects of the application, including ease of access, reduction of paperwork, provision of diverse services, user interaction, increased transparency, and service efficiency improvement. Specifically, the study aims to understand how the E-Government application contributes to improving communication between the government and citizens, enhances transparency and administrative efficiency. Additionally, the study reviews aspects of user-friendliness and the shift towards digital technologies as a foundation for improving government services. The overall aim is to present a comprehensive insight into the effectiveness and impact of the E-Government application in enhancing the quality of government services in the Kuwaiti context.

Third: Study Problem

The problem of the study becomes apparent by addressing the following questions:

1. What challenges did the traditional government service system in Kuwait face that the electronic application seeks to overcome?
2. Is there a noticeable improvement in citizens' interaction with the government after adopting the electronic application?
3. Does the E-Government in Kuwait adequately meet user expectations?
4. Have electronic verification and digital signature technologies effectively contributed to reducing paper procedures?
5. How can the effectiveness of the application be measured through improving government transparency and building citizens' trust?

By clarifying the study problem, it becomes possible to understand the main objective of the study and the expected contribution in the field of E-Government in Kuwait.

Fourth: Study Plan

According to the presented content, this topic has been divided based on a methodological plan that includes two sections as follows:

- Section One: An overview of the state of Kuwait.
- Section Two: Indicators of E-Government in Kuwait and its challenges.

In conclusion, we will review the most important conclusions and recommendations according to our comprehensive vision of the topic.

1. Overview of Kuwait

The discussion about Kuwait's experience in government application cannot be addressed without referring to its geography, demographic composition, history, and the formation of the state as a political entity, as follows:

1.1. Pillars of Kuwait's Formation between Strategic Location and Demographic

Diversity

Kuwait is one of the unique destinations in the northeastern part of the Arabian Peninsula, where its historical past blends with its advanced present through its three main pillars. Therefore, this first aspect details the basics of Kuwait's formation as a state, through its fundamental pillars, namely the strategic location that grants it international importance and demographic diversity that gives its society a unique character, as follows:

1.1.1. Geographic Location

Kuwait is a country located in the northeastern part of the Arabian Peninsula, bordered by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the south and west, the Republic of Iraq to the north and northwest, while the Arabian Gulf borders it to the northeast. Kuwait is characterized by its desert terrain, dominated by sandy lands and vast deserts, located along the coast of the Arabian Gulf. Additionally, Kuwait is one of the smallest countries in the region in terms of area, covering approximately 17,818 square kilometers (Abdah, 2013: 3172).

1.1.2. Demographic Diversity in Kuwaiti Society

Kuwait is renowned for its cultural diversity and varied demographics. It is a diverse society of races and nationalities, where original Kuwaitis live alongside migrants from various parts of the world. According to United Nations reports, the population of Kuwait is estimated at around three and a half million people. Kuwaiti citizens represent a small percentage compared to the expatriate population, accounting for only about 30% of the total population. The high proportion of expatriate population is linked to employment and job opportunities available in Kuwait, which attract a lot of migrant labor. Kuwaiti Arabic is the official language in Kuwait, and Islam is the official religion in Kuwait (Al-Rashidi, 1993: 7112).

1.1.3. Analysis of the Governance System

Kuwait is a constitutional and monarchical state, where the Amir of Kuwait holds the highest authority in the country. The Prime Minister is appointed by the Amir of Kuwait, and the government is formed by ministers. Kuwait enjoys a democratic system, and members of the National Assembly, the Kuwaiti Parliament, are directly elected, as the National Assembly in Kuwait is the legislative authority, consisting of 50 members elected directly for their four-year presidential term. The National Assembly has legislative, opinion polling, and government oversight powers. Regarding political parties, Kuwait allows the formation of political parties and other political organizations, and citizens enjoy constitutionally guaranteed political and civil rights, including freedom of expression, assembly, and press. Kuwait is one of the leading countries in the region in terms of democracy and human rights in recent history (Abdah, 2013: 50).

The Kuwaiti political system has witnessed many developments since the establishment of Kuwait until the establishment of the modern Kuwaiti state in 1961. The historical roots of this experience date back to the early stages of Kuwait's establishment, where governance was based on the principle of consultation. The formation of the Kuwaiti state resulted from the mixing of migrant tribes, forming a new community in Kuwait. The first ruler, Sheikh Sabah I, was chosen in 1716 through a consultative consensus method. The Kuwaiti state was established based on a social contract between the Al-Sabah family and the Kuwaiti people, and this contract continued even after Kuwait's independence. The ruling elite developed a conviction that a national constitution and a legislative council elected by the people are the best guarantee for establishing a modern democratic constitutional state that balances the legitimacy of the ruling family with

the political participation of the people in managing the country. Kuwait's constitution combines parliamentary and presidential systems. It takes from the parliamentary system the hereditary rule system, where the ruler is not accountable and is preserved and his authority is exercised through his ministers. It also takes from the presidential system the selection of the government by the ruler regardless of the results of parliamentary elections, and the National Assembly does not have the power to dissolve the government. In case of a dispute between the legislative and executive branches, the ruler resolves it. Despite the fact that scholars see the political system in Kuwait approaching the parliamentary form to determine the principle of separation of powers with cooperation between them, Article 50 of the Constitution stipulates that the system of government is based on the separation of powers with their cooperation according to the constitutional provisions. No authority is allowed to exceed some or all of its powers stipulated in this Constitution, but in actual application, the executive authority outweighs the legislative authority, as Article 51 of the Constitution stipulates that "the Amir of the State shares legislative authority with the National Assembly, as mentioned above." Article 106 of the Constitution gives the Amir of the State the right to postpone the meeting of the National Assembly by decree for a period not exceeding one month, provided that the postponement is not repeated in the same session without the approval of the Council and for one term only. Article 107 stipulates that the Amir has the right to dissolve the National Assembly by decree, specifying the reasons for the dissolution, provided that the Council cannot be dissolved for the same reasons again (Ahmed Al-Din, 2008: 3111).

The relationship between the authorities, although jurists see the political system in the State of Kuwait approaching the parliamentary form to determine the principle of separation of powers with cooperation between them, as Article 50 of the Constitution stipulates that the system of government is based on the separation of powers with their cooperation according to the constitutional provisions and no authority is allowed to exceed some or all of its powers stipulated in this Constitution, in actual application, the executive authority outweighs the legislative authority, as Article 51 of the Constitution stipulates that "the Amir of the State shares legislative authority with the National Assembly, as mentioned above." Article 106 of the Constitution gives the Amir of the State the right to postpone the meeting of the National Assembly by decree for a period not exceeding one month, provided that the postponement is not repeated in the same session without the approval of the Council and for one term only. Article 107 stipulates that the Amir has the right to dissolve the National Assembly by decree, specifying the reasons for the dissolution, provided that the Council cannot be dissolved for the same reasons again (Dashti, 2018: 13).

1.2. Implementation of E-Government in Kuwait

The State of Kuwait represents an interesting case regarding the implementation of e-government. Kuwait plays a vital role in the economy, politics, and wealth in the Middle East. As a rich oil-producing country located in the Arabian Gulf, Kuwait is one of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which include Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Kuwait has a population of approximately three and a half million, with a literacy rate of around 99%, according to UNICEF.

The official website for the Electronic Government Services Portal of Kuwait was launched in 2005, providing services to all citizens, residents, and visitors in Kuwait. By 2006, more than 50 government services were available through the official e-government website (Dwivedi, Y.K., Weerakkody, V., and Janssen, M., 2011:11-22).

In 2006, with the approval of the National Assembly, Sheikh Sabah Ahmad Al-Sabah became the Amir of Kuwait. He had a visionary approach to Kuwait's development, strongly supporting the application of technology. This was evident through the launch of the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) in 2006. The primary goal of CAIT is to manage information technology strategies in Kuwait, coordinating with all government sectors, essential for the development of information technology. One of the main tasks of the Central Agency for Information Technology is to increase societal awareness of information technology. Additionally, the Amir urged officials to enhance services to the community and raise awareness of information and communication technology, positioning Kuwait in the world of technology. To ensure the continuity of information and communication technology, the Amir launched an award supporting participation in the field of information technology (Al-Soud, A., and Nakata, K., 2022: 761-765).

Despite its small size and high gross national income, Kuwait can be classified as a high-income country, with a gross national income reaching \$47,639 in 2022, according to the World Bank (World Bank Report 2022: 77).

In recent years, Kuwait has taken additional steps to improve healthcare, education, and the workforce, including promoting the private sector. Kuwait has maintained a budget surplus for the past fifteen years, averaging 21% of the gross domestic product. In recent times, Kuwait has seen a significant increase in internet users, reaching 3,022,010 in 2021.

The United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN) was established in 1999 to assist developing countries in creating an online network connecting regional and national institutions dedicated to public administration. UNPAN provides benefits such as information exchange, training, and sharing diverse experiences. UNPAN aims to build and distribute well-organized information and communication technology to the public (Al-adaileh, R.M, 2021, 226-239).

These reports have been used in this paper to evaluate Kuwait's performance in developing its e-government program when using UN reports on e-government readiness. It should always be considered that the e-government readiness index consists of three components: web measure, human capital, and telecommunication infrastructure. The telecommunication infrastructure and human capital components, representing two-thirds of the total weight in the e-government development index, contributed to achieving higher rankings in the survey for advanced countries. The top 25 positions in the ranking belong to high-income countries capable of investing in the development of their e-government programs. This is not the case for developing countries, even if some of them have the financial capacity, they may face challenges due to lack of human capital or telecommunication infrastructure (Colesca, S., and Dobrica, 2008, 210).

In 2012, the e-government development index in Kuwait reached 0.5960, dropping 13 places compared to the United Nations survey in 2010, which ranked Kuwait 63rd globally in the e-government development index. Despite its financial strength, Kuwait lagged behind neighboring Gulf Cooperation Council countries, with the United Arab Emirates recording the highest rates at 0.7344 in 2012, ranking 28th globally. This indicates significant progress in information and communication technology. In comparison, Saudi Arabia recorded 0.6658 in the e-government development index in 2012, improving its position in global rankings. The recent improvements in Gulf Cooperation Council countries resulted from their expansion in information and communication technology, increasing productivity, efficiency, and electronic

government services. However, Kuwait's ranking was lower compared to 2010 (Al-adaileh, R.M, 2021, 226-239).

In 2012, Kuwait occupied the 63rd position in the global e-government readiness index with a total index of 0.5960 out of 1.0. This included 0.5817 for online services, 0.4179 for telecommunication infrastructure, and 0.7885 for human capital. These results demonstrate Kuwait's commitment through the services provided and their effectiveness. Despite its low ranking in 2012, Kuwait was listed among the countries using all channels, meaning it utilizes all available means to deliver its e-government services. Kuwait employs digital channels such as websites, public access points, and mobile phone services to reach its audience and provide diverse services. The comprehensive development of e-government readiness in Kuwait was evident in 2014 when Kuwait jumped to the 49th position globally, a 14-place improvement compared to the 2012 report. It was also ranked among high-rate countries in the e-governance index, including neighboring Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar, which also showed some improvement in recent years. However, Kuwait's improvement was much higher compared to its neighbors since the 2010 report (Al-adaileh, R.M, 2021, 244).

2. Indicators of E-Government in Kuwait and its Challenges

E-Government is considered one of the fundamental pillars for progress and improving the quality of government services in many countries. In the context of Kuwait, efforts in the field of E-Government are continuously evolving to meet the citizens' aspirations for efficient and innovative government services. Analyzing the indicators of E-Government in Kuwait and its current challenges reflects the government's readiness to fully utilize technology to enhance transparency, facilitate access to information, and achieve effective interaction between the government and citizens. This comes within the framework of digital transformation, demonstrating Kuwait's commitment to advancing government services and enhancing electronic communication for greater efficiency in meeting citizens' needs. In this context, we will analyze some key indicators of E-Government in Kuwait and the challenges it faces to understand the current context of technological development in government services as follows:

2.1. Indicators of E-Government in Kuwait

The overall E-Government readiness index in Kuwait, which was 0.6286 out of 1.0 in 2014, has been divided into three categories: 0.5748 for the online service component, 0.5862 for the telecommunications infrastructure component, and 0.7194 for the human capital component. Despite a significant improvement since 2012, Kuwait's ranking in 2014 is almost the same as in 2010, where it ranked 50th in the global E-Government Development Index. In the 2014 report, Kuwait's score for the online services index was 0.5748 out of 1.0, with percentages of 84%, 52%, 37%, and 41% for stages 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively. In the Telecommunications Infrastructure index and its components, Kuwait scored 0.5862 in 2014, compared to 0.4179 in 2012 (Alghamdi, I.A., Goodwin, R., and Rampersad, 2019, 3-17). One interesting result from the 2014 report is the significant increase in broadband subscribers per 100 people, reaching 71.73, surpassing the 2012 score by a large margin. While the percentage of individuals using the Internet in 2012 was 38.25%, the Internet user ratio increased significantly to 79.18% in 2014. Despite these improvements, high literacy rates, a small population, and an increase in EDGI in 2014, Kuwait still recorded the lowest level among the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. There are several reasons that may have led to these low rankings, including

unsatisfactory use of government services, lack of general awareness, and concerns about the proper implementation of online security. It is also essential to enhance online E-Government services and provide more services to the public (Alghamdi, I.A., Goodwin, R., and Rampersad, 2019, 21). According to a survey conducted by a leading Kuwaiti newspaper, 56% of Kuwait's residents use the Internet for entertainment purposes, and in addition, 38% are dissatisfied with Internet services (Al-Qabas Newspaper, 3177).

2.2. Challenges Facing E-Government in Kuwait

Among the most important challenges facing the implementation of the E-Government program in Kuwait are the following:

2.2.1. Political Challenges

The process of designing the national institutional frameworks for E-Government in Kuwait requires the establishment of steering committees responsible for defining the responsibilities and tasks related to the development of E-Government across various government entities. However, the development of E-Government in Kuwait has lacked a centralized government entity with the necessary authority to identify and enforce responsibilities. The transition to E-Government requires numerous changes in government offices and information systems across government departments. The absence of standards and specifications for this process is one of the most significant obstacles hindering communication between government entities in Kuwait. Additionally, the concept of E-Government application requires a solid trust in the minds of both citizens and institutional individuals. The absence of this trust will pose an inevitable obstacle to the application. The rapid progress of technology also presents a barrier to legal entities in Kuwait, as it is challenging to keep pace with the rapid technological advancements in developing laws and regulations (Ghazal, Adel, 2007, 75).

The importance and size of any project, along with the multitude of beneficiaries, determine the obstacles. Small projects have small obstacles, while large projects, such as the E-Government project, face significant obstacles. One of the most crucial obstacles facing the implementation of this project in Kuwait is resistance to change. Establishing this project requires organizational changes, redistributing powers, changing administrative leadership, and appointing qualified individuals to study and keep up with the latest technological developments. However, this change faces significant resistance from those opposed to anything new, as people naturally reject and fear change. People perceive change as an indicator of ignorance, adding new information that is not immediately understood, making our knowledge appear less during organizational change. Changes in high government positions related to E-Government initiatives in Kuwait often significantly impede the development process. Additionally, trade and technological embargo measures imposed for political reasons or security threats related to wars or terrorist activities in other countries are other factors diverting the Kuwaiti government's attention from E-Government (Ghazal, Adel, 2007, 93).

2.2.2. Digital Security Challenges

Information security is one of the most critical challenges facing the implementation of E-Government in Kuwait. There are various methods of infiltrating information systems, and a robust data protection system must be in place to counter any attacks and safeguard information security. Additionally, credit cards play a crucial role in electronic payment processes, presenting a challenge for some citizens who are not familiar with this technological

advancement, especially those residing in remote areas where the majority may lack full knowledge of credit card usage (Sumaya Bou Marwan, 2014, 109). Despite the advantages of E-Government services, such as easily accessible online service portfolios, cost-effective efficiency, increased participation, enhanced services, improved transparency, and high engagement with users, one of the significant challenges facing the implementation of E-Government in Kuwait is the existence of a digital divide. Furthermore, the scarcity of knowledge and expertise in information and communication technology among civil service employees and citizens hinders the acceptance and adoption of innovative technology. Lack of adequate IT infrastructure and related technological issues, especially in rural areas, poses a major obstacle to the implementation of E-Government in Kuwait (Salma Muftah Mohammed, 2019: 128).

2.2.3. Social Challenges

Social factors present obstacles to the application of E-Government, as the government must focus on educating and preparing citizens, especially those lacking computer skills, for dealing with modern technologies to access services. Access to services becomes a barrier for certain segments of Kuwaiti citizens, particularly those unfamiliar with computer usage. Challenges in utilizing the new electronic government model in Kuwait include limited computer availability in some regions and restricted internet access, especially in remote areas. Lack of awareness about E-Government concepts remains a challenge, and there is a need for clarification and intellectual groundwork. Difficulty in convincing citizens and businesses to adopt E-Government services is a major obstacle to the widespread dissemination of these services and the generalization of the desired positive effects of E-Government initiatives in Kuwait. Challenges in this area include increasing public awareness of E-Government, building trust in its services, and correcting the community's perception of the value expected from E-Government projects. In most cases, Kuwaiti citizens and businesses receive limited information about electronically available services. However, any E-Government project in Kuwait cannot be deemed successful unless it achieves a certain level indicating that the investment has yielded the expected returns. Consequently, E-Government programs in Kuwait face significant political, legal, economic, and social obstacles (Sawsan Zuhair Al-Muhtadi, 2011: 48).

2.2.4. Ineffectiveness of Civil Society Institutions

Civil society is the aggregate of independent forces separate from authority, exercising comprehensive participation and oversight functions on state institutions with the involvement of all stakeholders. However, in Kuwait, most civil society organizations lack independence from authority due to the prevailing lack of trust in the relationship between the state and civil society. This often leads these organizations to seek to subordinate civil society to state control, undermining and weakening their organizations, making them merely symbolic entities limited in their movement, surrounded by legal, administrative, and financial constraints. This limitation reduces their effectiveness and weakens the enthusiasm for participation and joining them (Mahmoud Hussein Al-Wadi, Bilal Mahmoud, 2011, 63).

3. Conclusion

Upon completing our discussion of this topic, we have reached several conclusions and recommendations, the most important of which are as follows:

3.1. Conclusions

1. It is evident that understanding citizens' intentions to rely on e-government services is vital. Since the success of e-government initiatives depends on citizens' acceptance and adoption of these services, government entities must focus on analyzing the factors influencing citizens' intentions.
2. The impact of perceived benefits and ease of use of e-government services emerges as key factors in citizens' decisions to rely on these services. The government must provide services that meet citizens' needs and are user-friendly to ensure broader adoption.
3. The influence of computer self-efficacy and perceived credibility on citizens' understanding of benefits and ease of use is apparent. Enhancing citizens' technology usage skills and building trust in government e-sources are crucial.

3.2. Recommendations

1. The Kuwaiti government should enhance awareness campaigns about the benefits of e-government and offer training courses to boost citizens' technology usage skills and increase their self-efficacy.
2. The government should work on improving the user experience on e-government websites and applications, with a focus on making services easy to use and offering clear benefits.
3. Enhancing the credibility and security levels of e-government services contributes to building citizens' trust and encourages the adoption of these services.
4. The government should regularly collect user feedback and engage with it to improve services based on actual user experiences and needs.

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