

Investigating the Role of E-Government in Efficiency and Public Participation in Decision Making (Case Study: Ministry of Interior (MoI) of Afghanistan)

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Abstract

E-government is one of the most important tools for the technical transformation of an organization's activities and performances and can play an important role in improving the quality of public services (e-services). Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate the role of e-government in the efficiency and participation of people in decision-making (Case Study: Ministry of Internal Affairs) of Afghanistan. This research is applied and a survey in terms of method. The statistical population of this research includes all administrative staff of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Kabul who contribute to the consolidation and implementation of e-government. The number of statistical samples is calculated based on the Cochran formula for the infinite population. Based on the calculation, 171 people were considered as a sample population. We used a Questionnaire for data collection. To calculate the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha method was used for 30 samples in the form of a pre-test. The results showed that e-government increases the level of public participation in decision-making in enhancing the quality of public services in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. E-government has improved government efficiency and better access to government services in enhancing public service quality at the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Keywords: E-Government, Efficiency, Public Participation, Afghan Ministry of Internal Affairs

INTRODUCTION

E-government is the use of technology to facilitate government affairs by providing efficient and effective services and information to citizens and businesses. E-government is the easy use of information technology to distribute government services directly to clients, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is a way for governments to use new technology that empowers individuals with the necessary access to government information and services, to improve the quality of services, and to provide greater opportunities for participation in democratic processes and symbols.

Increasingly, people's expectations of services and products, as well as the mode and quality of service delivery, are changing, and the government must respond to those needs and expectations. They want to increase the working hours of government institutions so that they can do their works whenever they want, get cheaper services, get cheaper services and products. The responsible form of government for these expectations is now e-government. Governments are also competing for capital, jobs and employment, skilled workers, tourists, and others, and need new facilities the e-government provide. Therefore, e-government not only causes a social consolidation, but it also emphasizes the resources that are most needed. E-government expands the culture of self-service and enables citizens to help themselves as much as possible and reduce costs and waste of time.

Since bureaucracy is one of the major challenges for governments, that has encouraged the policymakers to use traditional ICT capabilities to re-engineer the government and dominate bureaucracy. Thus, it seeks to maximize transparency and reduce administrative corruption in government processes and mechanisms. In other words, the development of e-government in different countries has aimed at increasing transparency and reducing corruption.

E-government is a model defined in the developed world that has attracted the attention of many countries. There is continued interest and motivation in Afghanistan, where

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governmental organizations and other economic and service organizations have practically institutionalized e-government for economizing time and their financial resources. The process of recruiting and identifying individuals and public consciousness are carried out in offices through the Internet. Since it is not possible to investigate the role of e-government in the quality of public service delivery in all government departments of the country, this research put the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the spatial domain of this research.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF RESEARCH

E-Government effects

The Information Society compels many organizations to adopt e-government initiatives to achieve the following goals and achievements; they have the following effects:

1. Providing integrated and electronic government services

Government organizations can provide value-added and coherent services beyond continued services. They will be able to allow people to do their jobs from a single point of access rather than wandering among multiple offices or internet sites to gain government approval.

2. Digital declassification

Governments can provide access to new technology to ordinary people and provide computer training for young people and the elderly through a variety of programs.

3. Possibility of lifelong education

The idea of not finishing education has come to the end by finishing school period through distance education. A society with an educated workforce that is a characteristic of e-government needs continuously advanced and individual education.

4. Reconstruction of relationships between governments and the people

Rather than providing the same services to everyone, governments can use new technology to serve individuals as individuals and provide them with personalized services. In this case, the citizens will feel more responsible in their relations with the government and regain their trust and confidence in the public sector.

5. Economic Development

Governments can help traders by providing continuous business services. Connecting to the network and using network tools help them in getting advice and financial incentives. In addition, they will be able to benefit from being up-to-date, connecting more closely with customers, and locally and globally developing their markets.

6. Creating a kind of participatory government

E-government can lead to direct democracy. At present, some governments at the local level also support free debates, and online voting to improve their decision-making processes.

Benefits of E-Government

Like any other phenomenon, e-government has its advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, these advantages and disadvantages need to be examined; e-government should be used with being fully aware of the cost-benefit analysis if the benefits outweigh the disadvantages. The most important benefits of e-government that affect cross-sectoral and other domains in a development plan are ^[1]:

1. Information-based decisions: 90% of a good decision is based on the information and 10% of it is based on one's cognitive skills. In the traditional policymaking process, accurate and timely information gathering is costly and time-consuming, while in e-government, information is always available to policymakers and decision-makers, and much of the information produced over a period of several months are accessible in minutes ^[2].

2. Increasing economic efficiency and productivity: The most important advantage of creating e-government is to increase productivity and its impact on economic efficiency. Governments can reduce their costs by providing companies with the information they need in government bids; on the other hand, by reducing labor costs, they can help minimize government, reduce paper information costs and paper archives, which are a major part of government costs.

3. Speeding up business, speeding up information and service delivery is another benefit of e-government. Government apparatus has a specific work hour and, given the official holidays, the importance of e-government services that are available 24 hours a day and in all days of the year is more perceptible. This time span will enhance the level of accountability within the government while enhancing the relationship between the government and citizens and building trust in the people.

4. Positive environmental impact: e-government will protect the environment in at least two ways. First by converting paper copies, files, documents, books, manuals, newsletters, etc. into electronic versions that reduce paper consumption. As a result, forests and natural resources are less damaged. On the other hand, less fuel will be consumed by reducing inter-city transport to access government information and services. This will have a positive impact on the environment while increasing economic productivity by maintaining high reserves and reducing air pollution.

5. Entrepreneurship: to create e-government, we need some telecommunication and technological infrastructures. Therefore, the government is committed to expanding information technology, improving information, and creating opportunities for professionals. Countries can also contribute to electronic commerce. It is one of the most important challenges facing the Fourth Development Plan.

Ghanizadeh (2018) has studied the role of e-government in public trust of citizens (Case Study: Ministry of Technology

and Telecommunications) [3]. The research results show that the quality of electronic services and its four dimensions at a 99% confidence level causes public trust. Shirzad (2017) has examined the role of e-government in improving public service delivery [4]. The findings of this research indicate that e-governance is one of the key, least costly, and rapidly influencing variables in the performance of manufacturing, service and business activities. Nowadays, the world of electronics and technology has dominance; the creation of electronic governance gives dynamism to the institutions and organizations, and government.

In research, Hayati *et al.* (2014) "examined the role of e-government in reducing bureaucracy and promoting administrative health in Shiraz Business Organization" [5]. The findings of this research show that there is a significant relationship between e-government and bureaucracy.

E-Government functions

E-government is a vision in which the government, the private sector, and citizens can work together to achieve financial goals and benefits. To achieve this prospect, multimedia information and technology must be used for efficiency in the civil service. Creating a collaborative environment with high levels of collaborative effort and creating smart partnerships between different sectors will accelerate the development of the multimedia industry and help countries achieve sustainable development in the information age. Implementing e-government is an unmatched opportunity to improve the quality of public service delivery. Governments' goals should be based on e-government implementation, government reengineering, and an intermediary and accelerating role in multimedia highway projects. As a result, the following benefits can be taken into account in view of the objectives pursued:

1. Improvement of the service level

As a result, the performance of public service delivery will be improved, citizens will have better access to higher-quality government services at any time and place, and consequently, longer access times.

2. Increasing efficiency and effectiveness

E-government increases the level of communication between different sectors. Hence, the processes and working systems can be improved in such a collection. In addition, the speed and quality of decision-making increase significantly. This is because it facilitates the flow of information and quick and easy access to up-to-date databases. E-government also uses decision support tools that can help solve complex and difficult issues.

On the other hand, e-government will make it possible to audit financial assets, thereby reducing corruption in government departments and systems, and with the above facilities, the volume of government will be minimized. It moves toward balance. Governments, on the other hand, should look for partners to invest in the overall effort to build

the best work environment and multimedia development, so they must provide the following incentives to attract companies.

E-Government goals

E-government developers around the world have identified five major goals pursued in e-government, and e-government is a means of achieving these goals.

1. Creating a better business environment

Technology is clearly a driver of increased productivity and economic growth. Using ICT in government and building the e-government infrastructure helps create a prosperous and modern business environment (especially for small and medium-sized enterprises) through simplifying and making effective the government-to-business exchanges; removing redundancies in processes and giving importance to providing fast and effective e-government services, it will attract investment opportunities.

2. Online customers

This is achieved through the effective provision of public services to the citizens; it must be done by the government's fast response with the least interference of public officials.

3. Strengthening Governance and Developing Public Participation

Promoting transparency and accountability in government through increased ICT in management and practices, effectively improves citizens' chances of more active participation in political processes and government decisions.

4. Improving the efficiency and productivity of government organizations

Re-designing the processes and procedures of government organizations (which is a requirement of e-government) will simplify the provision of services, increase the usefulness of administrative organizations and save costs.

5. It increases the efficiency of government employees

Due to the diminished availability of existing paperwork and less direct access to government offices and agencies, employees can more effectively handle their activities. Earnings achieved through providing services (e.g. licensing) to citizens and companies are increased. It simplifies service delivery processes, which attracts those who have previously had less access to these services (due to the hassle of getting them).

6. Reduced costs in the medium to long term

However, given the costs involved in setting up e-government and the need to provide two-level services (both traditionally and e-government-based), until users become familiar with the new system, the government will have some problems in the short term, but in the long run, costs will be drastically reduced due to the cheaper provision of government services.

7. Simplifying the performance of government and government organizations

Most government processes have evolved over the years and usually involve many steps, tasks, and activities. Simplifying government performance through ICT will eliminate redundant steps and simplify processes.

8. Growth of cooperative companies

Information technology and government communication with marginalized groups and co-operatives will be made possible and it will help their growth as their on-demand services are much faster and they can participate more actively in the political process, so they are developing rapidly. Ultimately, the goal of e-government is to enhance the interplay between the three major actors in society - government, citizens, and businesses - to accelerate the growth of the country's political, social and economic processes (Shirzad, Musharraf, 2016, 20).

METHOD

This research is applied one and a survey in terms of method. The statistical population of this research includes all administrative staff of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Kabul who contribute to the consolidation and implementation of e-government. The number of a statistical sample is calculated based on the Cochran formula for the infinite population. Based on the calculation, 171 people were considered as a sample population. We used a Questionnaire for data collection. The current research strategy in the quantitative method is surveying. According to the aims and type of research, surveying is methodologically the most appropriate method.

In this research, we used two methods of library and field research for data collection. Experts' views and perspectives, including those in the field of economics and management, were involved in the development of the questionnaires. In terms of validation, we benefited from the scientific experiences of professors, experts and those who had taken the right steps in the research. In the quantitative section of research and expert opinion gathering, considering the reliability of the research instrument (questionnaire), we can claim that the reliability of the quantitative part is high. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess the reliability of the questionnaire.

To calculate the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha method was used for 30 samples in the form of a pre-test. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of confidence usually ranges from zero, which means instability to positive one, and one meaning complete reliability, and the closer the value obtained to the positive one, the greater the reliability of the

questionnaire. Since the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and combined reliability (CR) were higher than 70%, it indicates that the questionnaire has good reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was measured using SPSS and Smart PLS software.

RESULTS

As can be seen in Table (1), the relationship between the reliability variable and e-government is 1.014, the relationship between the variable of citizen participation and the e-government is 0.735. The relationship between government efficiency and reliability is 0.044 and its relation with citizens' participation in decision-making is 0.095.

Table 1: Results of correlation between variables

Indices	E-government	Citizens' participation	Efficiency
e-government	1.000	0.735	0.301
Citizens' participation	0.735	1.000	0.095
Efficiency	0.301	0.095	1.000

The above table shows that there is a direct positive relationship between the variables and indicators of public services quality and e-government implementation.

Based on the validity and reliability of the model and, in other words, the measurement model, we can evaluate the structural model and research hypotheses. The software provides path coefficients and the significance number for each coefficient. It confirms or rejects the hypotheses in the significance level higher than 1.96 and a 95% confidence interval. The output of the PLS software shows that the e-government variable path coefficient with citizens' participation in decision-making is 0.557 and with the efficiency variable 0.428. As can be seen, all the coefficients are positive, so it suggests a direct relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables.

Table 2: Path coefficients between variables

Factor variable → common variable	Path coefficients
E-government → citizens' participation	0.577
E-Government → Efficiency (Government Efficiency)	0.428

Based on the results of the above table, we can see that the variable path coefficient of e-government with e-services quality components is more than 30%.

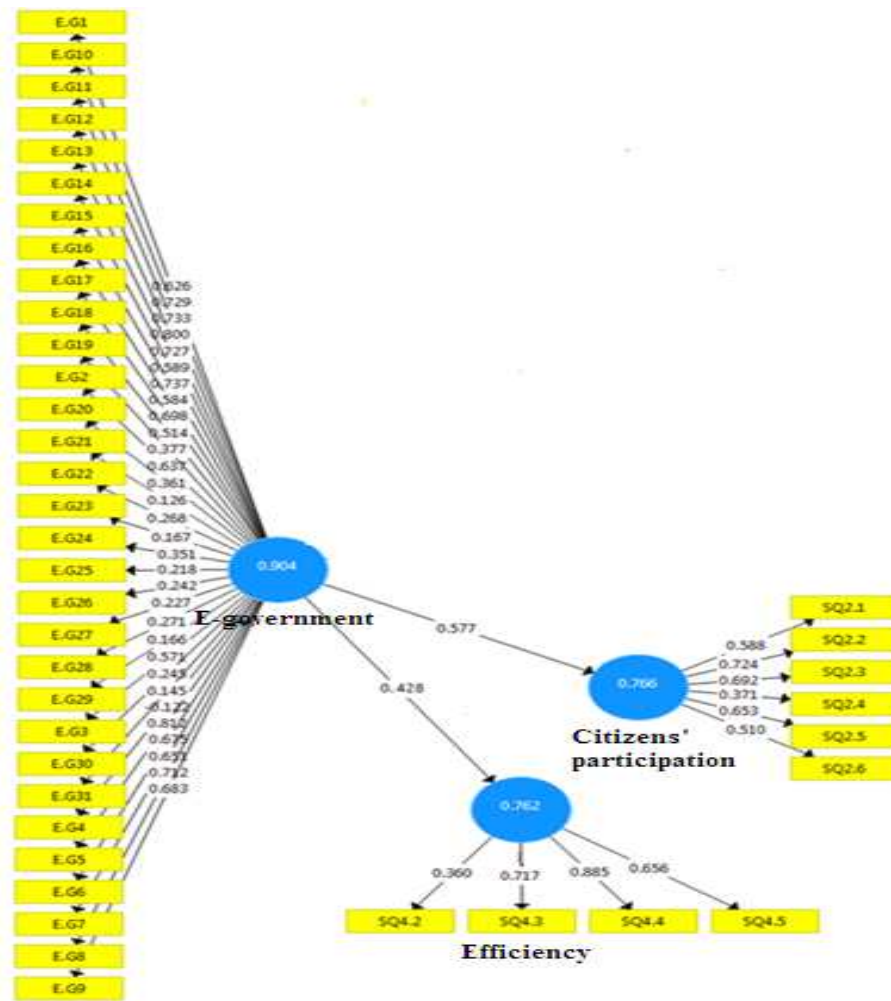


Diagram 1: Structural Model of Analysis with Factor Coefficients (Path)

The significance level between the variables has been also measured using this software, as can be seen in Table (3).

Table 3: Value of t-statistic between variables

Factor variable → common variable	t-statistic or significance level
E-government → citizens' participation	9.712
E-Government → Efficiency (Government Efficiency)	3.428

According to the results of the above table, all the coefficients of significance (T-statistic) are higher than 1.96 so that the significance coefficient of e-government with the participation of citizens is 9.712 and with the efficiency and effectiveness of government is 3.760.

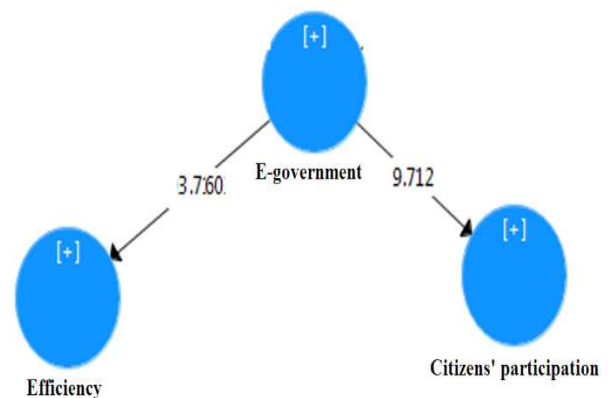


Diagram 2: Research Structural model with significance coefficients of Z and t-value

Table 4 presents the research hypotheses along with their correlation coefficients and significance numbers.

Table 4: Correlation coefficients between variables

Factor variable → common variable	Correlation coefficient	t-statistic or significance level	Result
E-government → citizens' participation	0.577	9.712	Confirmed
E-Government → Efficiency (Government Efficiency)	0.428	3.760	Confirmed

As can be seen in Table (4), the subsidiary hypotheses are confirmable, so that in the first hypothesis there is a significant relationship between e-government and citizens' participation, since the coefficient of correlation is 0.577 and above 30% and the level of significance is also higher than 1.96. In the second hypothesis also, there is a significant relationship between e-government and government efficiency, as the correlation coefficient is 0.428 and above 30% and the significance level is above 1.96.

Hypothesis 1: E-government increases the level of public participation in decision-making by enhancing the quality of public services in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. According to the table above, there is a significant relationship between e-government and citizens' participation in decision-making; because the path coefficient is 0.577 and the coefficient of significance is equal to 9.712 above 1.96. Since the hypothesis zero is contrary to the research hypothesis.

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} H_0 = 0 \rightarrow \text{Absence of Relationship between People's Participation in Decision Making and e - Government} \\ H_1 \neq 1 \rightarrow \text{Relationship between People's Participation in Decision Making and e - Government} \end{array} \right\}$$

Therefore, the null hypothesis, indicating the absence of significant relationship and hypothesis H_1 indicating a relationship between variables, the H_0 hypothesis is rejected. There is a significant relationship between variables.

Hypothesis 2: E-government has improved government efficiency and better access to government services by enhancing the quality of public services at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. According to the table above, there is a significant relationship between e-government and efficiency, since the path coefficient is 0.428, the significance coefficient is equal to 3.760 higher than 1.796; so the hypothesis zero is rejected and the research hypothesis is confirmed.

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} H_0 = 0 \rightarrow \text{Absence of Relationship between People's Participation in Decision Making and e - Government} \\ H_1 \neq 1 \rightarrow \text{Relationship between People's Participation in Decision Making and e - Government} \end{array} \right\}$$

Therefore, the hypothesis H_0 which indicates the absence of a significant relationship and the hypothesis H_1 indicating the

existence of a relationship between variables, the hypothesis H_0 is rejected.

CONCLUSION

E-government has many potential benefits. To be successful in establishing e-government, it is imperative that citizens accept and apply it. In order to increase the likelihood of using e-government services by citizens, it is necessary to consider effective factors and to formulate and implement appropriate policies by governments.

The public sector should particularly strive to provide the necessary infrastructures so that it is easily accessible to all; it should provide the necessary mechanisms so that citizens can easily benefit from these systems. On the other hand, the public sector can take an effective step in informing and promoting public awareness by developing appropriate training programs; thereby it can familiarize citizens with the types of services available, its use and its potential benefits.

Also, the component of corresponding e-government has a significant relationship with citizens' participation, government efficiency, and effectiveness, as the path coefficient and correlation coefficient are higher than 30% and the t-statistic is higher than 1.96, so the null hypothesis of this research is rejected. In general, e-government has a significant relationship with the quality of services (e-services) because the path coefficient is on average 0.58 and the significance level is higher than 1.96 ie 10.692, so the null hypothesis of this research is rejected.

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