

Measuring Citizens Satisfaction of E-Government and Transparency in the State of Qatar

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Abstract:- E-Government has become a global phenomenon. Governments, both in developed and developing world, are making significant investments in order to gain more efficient, open and interactive government. In this study, the citizen's satisfaction on the E-governmental services in Qatar was measured. In addition, the transparency of this system was assessed. A quantitative approach was conducted whereby developing a questionnaire. The questionnaire was directed to Qatari residents (both citizens and expatriates in general) and data were collected. SPSS Software was used to verify and analyze data. The results show that Qatari citizens are satisfied on the performance of the E-government system. Moreover, they point that E-government system can be considered as tool for increasing the governmental transparency.

Keywords:- E-government, Citizen Satisfaction, Transparency.

I. INTRODUCTION

E-government has been employed in order to deliver electronic public services whereby a single access point to these services 24 hours a day through the whole week (Reffat, 2003). E-G offers the same kind of services and information for citizens (Thomas & Streib, 2003; Huang, 2007). It rebuild the relation with citizens through facilitating their access to policy information using ICT (Fuchs, 2006). E-government also fosters this relation by providing personalized and value-added services to them (Weerakkody & Dhillon, 2008). In addition, it promotes online debating, information exchange and voting. At the country-level, E-government assists local businesses to extend and supports the development of economy (Davison, Wagner, & Ma, 2005).

E-government are adopted by several countries as a tool for verifying transparency (Relly & Sabharwal, 2009). Transparency is counted as a vital factor of the approaches, which are adopted by governments in order to encourage openness and mitigate corruption (Cullier & Piotrowski, 2009; Dawes, 2010). The lake of transparency can provide informational benefits for wealthy groups; embed and keep control over resources, prevent deteriorated utilization of public incentives, stimulate undermine cooperation, mitigate

the capability to identify efficient and honest people for contract partners and public sector positions and restrain social trust (Bertot, Jaeger, & Grimes, 2011).

E-government was established in Qatar in 2000. The main objective of Qatari e-government is to accomplish the optimal performance in operating electronic governmental transaction (Qatar e-Government, 2007). It was ranked as number 53 from 189 countries according to UN e-government readiness report for UN, (2008). E-government of Qatar offers various services like, student registration, paying violations of traffic, online applying for permits and visas (Al-Shafi, 2008)

Many researchers have addressed E-Government notion. Various researches have investigated challenges that influence implementation and diffusion of E-government in different countries in various way such as Carter & Bélanger, (2005), Choudrie, Weerakkody, & Jones, (2005) and AlAwadhi & Morris, (2008). While others have provided an architecture framework (Ebrahim & Irani, 2005). Some researchers have addressed the technologies that can be used such as Pokharel & Sou Park, (2009). However, most researches have explored the impact of E-government on many aspects, for example a research conducted by Ionescu, (2013). In the context of satisfaction of citizens, there is rareness of researches in this area (Irani, et al., 2012). In this study, the satisfaction of citizens and the transparency of Qatari e-government will be measured.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

➤ Satisfaction with E-Government

In this part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to assess their satisfaction regarding the Qatari E-Government system (Hukoomi) and its accomplishments since its inception in 2000 in order to become a fully integrated and paperless government.

1. Satisfaction on the performance of Qatari E-government system

The results show a high rate of satisfaction level among the respondents of the survey, with almost 96% of their views falling between being very satisfied and somewhat satisfied. The results are shown in Figure 1.

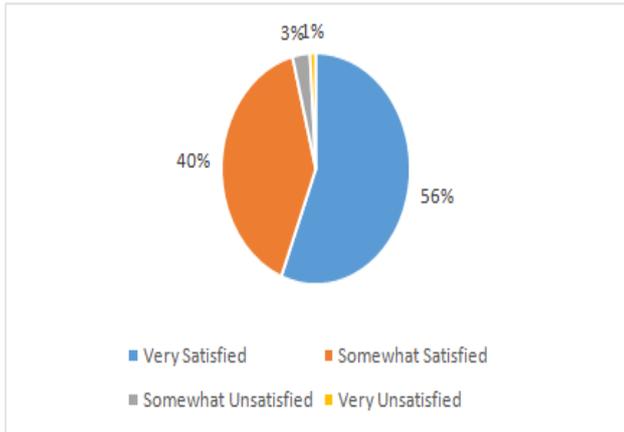


Fig (1):- Extent of Satisfaction with Qatari E-government System.

2. The Efficiency of Qatari E-government System

To assess the efficiency of the e-government system, respondents were asked how much they relied on it on their daily life. The results indicate that users utilize online services offered by the system moderately with a percentage equal to 67%. Thirty-six percent of these users utilize the services whenever it is possible and 31% of them utilize it sometimes. The results are shown in figure 2.

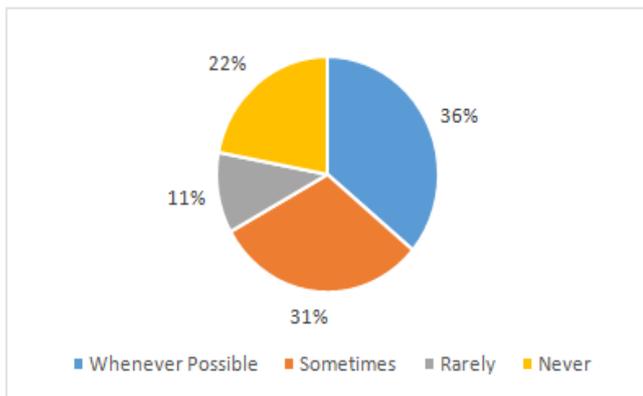


Fig (2):- The Efficiency and the User Adoption of the E-Government System.

3. Identifying the Most Used Service of E-government Services

Hukoomi provides 1580 services (Qatari E-government, 2019). These services are categorized according to their beneficiaries to individuals, visitors, business, and government entities. Respondents were asked to name the main government online services from the Hukoomi portal that they mostly use. The answers came in different versions but the majority of respondents indicate that the most used government online services are Metrash and all other services related and delivered by the Ministry of Interior (MOI). Add up, respondents mentioned residency permits, visa services, traffic violations, visa tracking, and exit permit services. They also mentioned Municipality services, health care services and even Kahramaa services such as water bills and paying electricity.

➤ The Role of Social Media and Mobile Applications

In this part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked four questions to assess the role of social media and mobile application as tools for E-government.

1. Using Modern Means of Communication to Request Government Services

For the purpose of facilitating and reaching out, many government agencies have recently begun to interact with their audience through some platforms and social media (such as Twitter, Facebook, and others) and have begun to provide their services through smart phone applications (such as Metrash and Baladiya). Respondents were asked about their use of smart phones to interact with the government entity or to request a government service. Thirty-six percent of them use new ways of communication whenever, whereas nine percent of them use new ways of communication rarely. Figure 3 shows the percentages for respondents' answers.

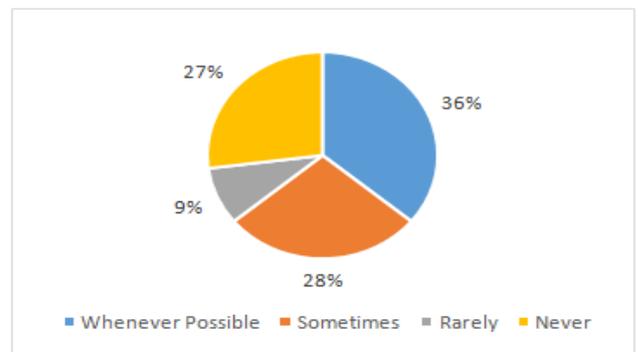


Fig (3):- Percentage for Using New Ways of Communication.

2. The Best Medium of Communication With the Government

Respondents were asked to identify their best medium of communication with the government between smart phone applications or regular websites. The results show that using smart phone applications is more preferred than using regular websites. Fifty-five percent of respondents found that apps are much easier than websites. While 20% of respondents found that there was no difference between using websites and phone apps.

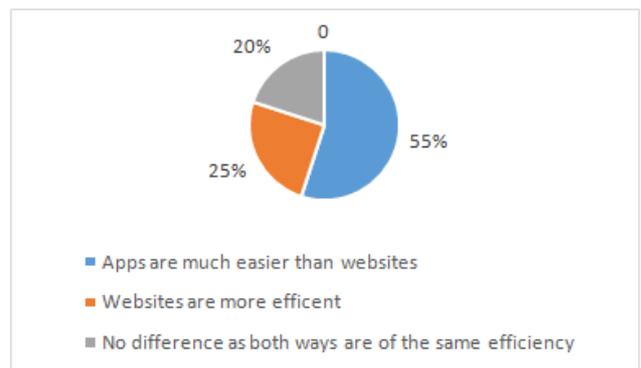


Fig (4):- The extent of using Mobile applications over the regular websites.

3. Identifying the Most Used Smart-Phone Application

Regarding the most usable and efficient government mobile applications, participants were asked to identify the most important governmental mobile applications used by them in their interactions with government entities in general. The participants' responses were extracted and analysed for naming the main government mobile applications that they most often use. The majority of responses indicated that the mostly used government mobile application by far is Metrash application offered by the MOI. While the second one is Baladiya applications with moderate frequency.

4. Identifying the Most Commonly Used Social Networking Programs

Participants were also asked about the main social networking platform that they mostly use and prefer to communicate and interact with government agency. Participants' responses were extracted and analysed for naming the main social media platform that they prefer to use in their interactions with the government, and the majority of responses indicated that the mostly used platforms by far were Facebook and Twitter applications. Instagram came next in preference. The results also showed that WhatsApp and Snapchat applications were moderately used.

➤ Government Transparency and the Way Forward

In the last part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to assess the Qatari E-government system as a tool of increasing transparency. Respondents also were asked to identify information and laws that can contribute to increase governmental transparency in Qatar.

1. Considering E-government as a Tool to Increase Government Transparency

Previous researches indicate that the rate of usage for Qatari E-government system is very low. Accordingly, participants were asked whether they agreed that it would be better to provide more government information and increase government transparency rather than providing electronic services that may not be used. Results showed that respondents preferred by far the provision of government information and the disclosure of internal government knowledge rather than merely providing online services that may or may not be utilized that often. Respondents were asked whether they agree that Qatar has to shift its e-Government system towards providing more government information and increasing the transparency rather than offering government services. Forty three percent of respondents were strongly agreed regarding that. Figure 5 shows all results.

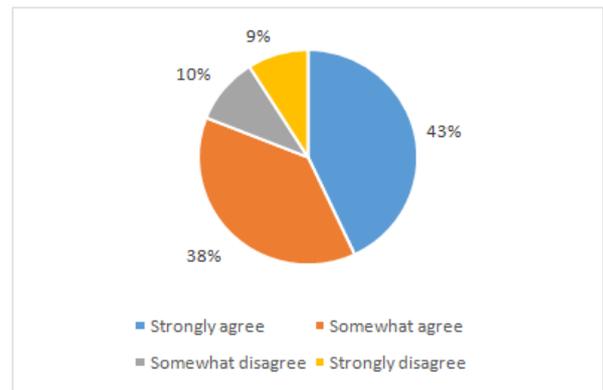


Fig (5):- Preference towards provision of government information over services in e-Government portal.

2. The Impact of Disclosing More Government Information on the Government-Citizen Relationship

To gain a better understanding of government transparency, E-Government system was considered as a tool for increasing the transparency of government. Respondents were asked about their agreement if disclosing more government information will have a positive impact on the government-citizen relationship by enhancing the trust in the government. The results showed that respondents reemphasized that their relationship with government will be impacted much more positively if more government information is being disclosed to the public. Figure 6 shows the results.

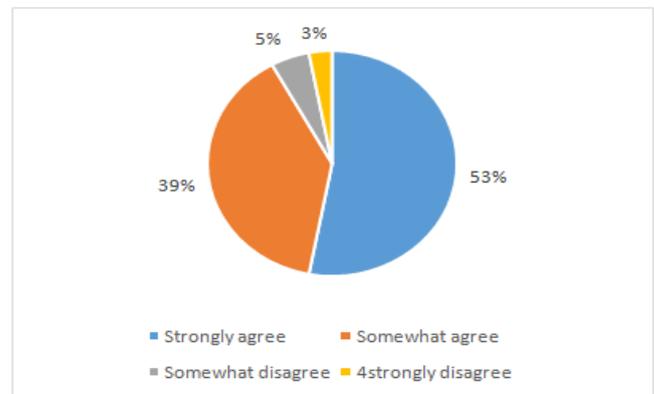


Fig (6):- Government's information disclosure impact on government-public's relationship.

3. Identifying the Main Information That Would Like to Know Whereby E-Government System

Respondents were asked to name the main government information that they would like it to be disclosed and made available by the government; the majority of responses indicates that the mostly needed government information is that related to traffic accidents and their locations. Medical information such as success rates of medical surgeries/operations conducted in public health institutions came as a second priority. Other participants, in more moderate rates, requested information such as tendering process to be disclosed. Some respondents were demanding further openness by the government as they affirm that the government is required to disclose all its information to the public.

4. *The Need For More Laws to Foster Transparency in Qatar*

Most countries of the world signed the United Nation’s Convention against Corruption, including Qatar and all GCC countries (140 out of 181 UN state members). Qatar has signed and ratified that convention in 2007; however, Qatar does not implement some of the Transparency Laws up until now such as the Freedom of Information, and the Financial Disclosure laws. Respondents were asked if they agree that implementing such laws would increase the level of transparency and the openness in the country. The results showed that there was a high tendency and agreement on the need for more laws to foster transparency in Qatar. Forty eight percent of respondents agreed on that and forty percent were somewhat agreed. All results are shown in figure 7.

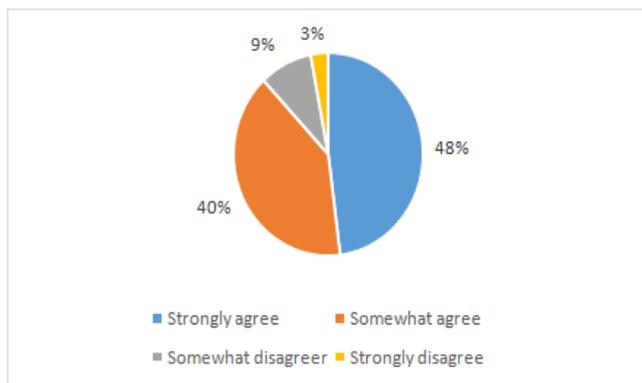


Fig (7):- Preference of implementing laws related to the UN’s Convention against Corruption

5. *The Need of Implementing the Law of Financial Disclosure on Transparency*

To assess people’s perceptions of the impact of enacting transparency laws in Qatar that are similar to other countries in the region such as Kuwait, participants were asked whether they agreed that the implementation of such laws would increase the level of transparency and openness in the country. Respondents were asked if they agreed that implementing financial disclosure would increase the level of transparency and the openness in Qatar. Forty three percent of respondents agreed on this suggestion. Figure 8 shows all results.

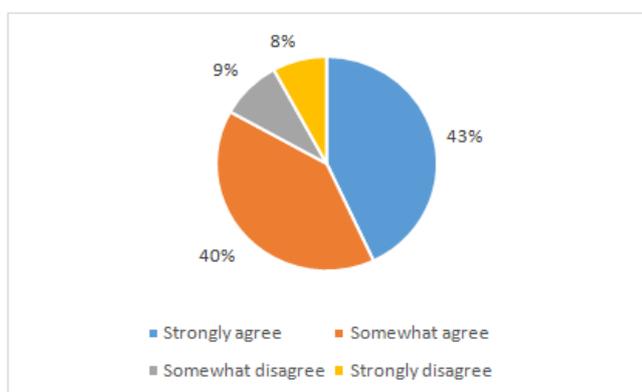


Fig (8):- Preference of implementing the Law of Financial Disclosure on Transparency.

III. CONCLUSION

E-government systems have been counted as widespread strategy worldwide. Citizens have been more internet savvy and get many useful electronic services supplied from the private sector with high level of satisfaction. Hence, they expect the same level of satisfaction related to the governmental electronic services. In this study, the satisfaction of Qatari citizens on the E-Governmental system (Hukommi) was investigated. In addition, the transparency of this system was assessed. The results shows that the majority of Qatari citizens prefer modern means of communication and rely on E-governmental system. The results also indicates that Qataripeople (citizens and expats)are satisfied in general on the level of E-governmental services and that Metrash service was the most used one.

The results show that high rate of citizens indicates that E-government system has a positive role in increasing the governmental transparency in Qatar. It also show that disclose more governmental information will enhance the government-public’s relationship. In addition, the results explored that the adoption of more laws such as financial disclosure will foster this transparency.

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