# The Adoption of E-government Services in the Iraqi Higher Education Context: An application of the UTAUT Model in the University of Kufa

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#### Abstract

E-government services are in their infancy in many developing countries, particularly in Iraq. The achievement of e-government services is dependent on government support as well as the users of these services. This study adopted the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model to explore factors that determine the adoption of e-government services in the Iraqi higher-education context. In the University of Kufa, 430 academic staffs' were surveyed using a modified version of the UTAUT model. The results reveal that performance expectancy and effort expectancy determine academic staffs' behavioural intention. Moreover, facilitating conditions and behavioural intentions determine academic staffs' use of e-government services' implications for decision-makers and suggestions for further research are also considered throughout this study.

#### 1. Introduction

Nowadays, the applications of e-government services are undertaken worldwide. E-government has been defined as "the application of information and communications technology (ICT) to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of informational and transactional exchanges within government, between governments and government agencies at federal, municipal and local levels, citizens and businesses; and to empower citizens through access and use of information" (Tambouris, Gorilas, & Boukis, 2001).

According to Carter and Belanger (2005), the success of e-government services' adoption is dependent on government support and the users of these services as well. Thus far, there has been diminutive research exploring factors that determine the adoption of e-government services among the Arab countries (AlAwadhi & Morris, 2009), particularly in the education environment. The present research intended to address this gap. The study adapted the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model to investigate factors that establish the adoption of e-government services in the University of Kufa as a paradigm of a public university where e-government services are still being developed. The results of this study will help decision-makers to achieve a better understanding about the factors that determine the university staffs' adoption of e-government services.

The e-governance services in the higher education and its establishments have technologically advanced in stages, but the acceptance and adoption of these e-governance initiatives by the facilitators (the university staffs) have been considered. In the current study, an attempt has been made to investigate empirically the factors impacting the acceptance and adoption of e-governance services, which is the government-to-government (G2G) application system in the Unversity of Kufa.

#### 2. Literature review

Several information systems studies have published on various theories and models that examined the adoption of information technology innovations, especially the adoption of e-government services. These theories include; the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989), the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) (Rogers, 1995), Model of the IT Implementation Process (Cooper & Zmud, 1990), Information Systems Success Model (DeLone & Mclean, 1992) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003). Each model attempts to predict and explain user behaviour using a variety of independent variables. These studies are the most widely used and empirically tested adoption and acceptance models, and provide useful comprehensions and implications for understanding an individual's intention of using e-government services (Korpelainen, 2011; Rana et al., 2011).

The previous studies also have identified a number of factors that determine the adoption of e-government services, such as usefulness, ease of use, perceived risk, trustworthiness, compatibility, external influence, internet safety, interpersonal influence, relative advantage, image, hedonic motivation, price value, habit facilitating conditions, and website quality (see, for instance, Alshehri et al., 2012; Carter & Belanger, 2005; Huang, D'Ambra, & Bhalla, 2002; Hung, Chang, & Yu, 2006; Venkatesh, Thong, & Xu, 2012).

In the education environment, the use of technology acceptance models in educational technology acceptance

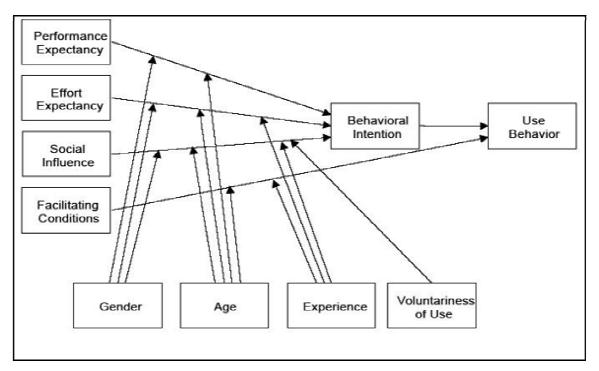
conditions would be a valuable tool. This study evaluates the adoption of e-government services in a higher educational setting and examines the UTAUT model as a useful analytical tool in this context.

#### 3. Research model and hypotheses development

In this study, the research model was based on the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) that was originally proposed by Venkatesh et al. (2003). The UTAUT aims to explain user intentions to use an information system and subsequent usage behavior. According to AlAwadhi and Morris (2009), UTAUT model provides a complete picture of the acceptance and use of technology than any previous individual models were able to do. Based on a relevant literature of the user acceptance, Venkatesh et al. (2003) reviewed and analyzed empirically eight significant models named: Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Motivational Model, Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), a model combining TAM and TPB, Model of PC Utilization (MPCU), Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT), and the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). Further, Venkatesh et al (2003) integrated the above eight models into a new model named UTAUT.

The UTAUT model consists of five key constructs, including performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions and behavioural intention that play a significant role as direct determinants of usage behaviour and user acceptance. These constructs are influenced by gender, age, experience and voluntariness of use, which act as moderator variables (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Venkatesh et al., 2012).

The UTUAT model has been widely used for the study of adoption of e-governance in different countries around the world. An insight into the established studies shows that the model has been empirically tested through the study of e-government adoption in the domains of Government-to-Citizens (G2C) and Government-to-Business (G2B) mainly. Most of the literature and the publications on e-governance are focused on G2C or G2B (Realini, 2004). There are very few studies in the government-to-government (G2G) adoption and acceptance of e-governance (Realini, 2004; Barua, 2012). According to Realini (2004), G2G e-governance can be considered as the implementation of IT solutions between and inside public administration. The UTUAT model was used as the conceptualized model and the results identified the factors which influence e-government adoption by employees. Figure 1 demonstrates the model used in the study.



#### Figure 1: UTAUT model (Venkatesh et al., 2003)

In the UTAUT model, performance expectance is driven from perceived usefulness (from TAM/TAM2), relative advantage (from IDT), extrinsic motivates (from MM), job-fit (from MPCU), and outcome expectations (from SCT). In the context of this study, performance expectancy is defined as the degree to which staff believes that use of the technology will help improve his or her job performance (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

Regarding effort expectancy, Venkatesh et al. (2003) captured the concept of perceived ease-of-use (from TAM/TAM2), complexity (from MPCU), and easy-of-use (from IDT) to define effort expectation as the degree

of ease related with technology use. Venkatesh et al. (2003) employed social influence to symbolize subjective norm in (TRA, TAM2, TPB/DTPB), and (C-TAM-TPB), social factors in (MPCU), and image in (IDT). They defined social influence as the degree to which staff perceives that important others believe she/he would use the technology.

Throughout capturing the concepts of perceived behavioural control (TPB/DTPB, C-TAM-TPB), facilitating conditions (MPCU), and compatibility, for instance, work style (IDT), Venkatesh et al. (2003) defined facilitating conditions as the degree to which staff believes that an organizational and technical infrastructure exists to support technology use (Venkatesh et al., 2003). There are four factors: gender, age, experience and voluntariness of use, recognized as moderating variables in the original UTAUT model. However, in the interests of briefness for this study, only the main hypotheses will be investigated, while the effect of the moderators (gender, age, experience & voluntariness of use) will not be the focus of this study.

Consistent with models drawing from psychological theories, which clearly mentioned that individual behaviour was predictable and influenced by individual intention, UTAUT argued and confirmed behavioural intention to have significant influence on technology use (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Venkatesh & Zhang, 2010). Taken the above together, grounded in UTAUT model, this study posits the following hypotheses:

H<sub>1</sub>: Performance expectance significantly affects academic staff intention to use e-government services.

H<sub>2</sub>: Effort expectancy significantly affects academic staff intention to use e-government services.

H<sub>3</sub>: Social influence significantly affects academic staff intention to use e-government services.

H<sub>4</sub>: Facilitating conditions significantly affect academic staff behaviour of using e-government services.

H<sub>5</sub>: Behavioural intention significantly affects affect academic staff behaviour of using e-government services.

#### 4. Methodology

Quantitative research in the form of a survey questionnaire was undertaken to meet the aim of the research. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section represents the demographic information about each participant. In the second section, the perception of each variable within the model was captured. The study was limited to academic staffs at University of Kufa. The sample was chosen not only for convenient reasons but because university staffs are mature population for whom the Internet has become part of their daily duties, thus, knowing their attitudes and perceptions will help to improve e-government services.

The survey instrument is one of the most common tools of technology adoption as it uses a set of detailed questions to cover the study topic and to target a large number of participants in a practical and efficient way (Carter & Belanger 2005; Reddick 2005; Venkatesh et al., 2003). The instrument is based on the constructs defined in the UTAUT model (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Venkatesh & Zhang 2010), which included performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions and behavioural intention to use e-government services. All constructs elicited by using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "strongly agree". As the requirements for validating the contents of a quantitative research instrument, the items were selected based on an extensive review from the literature and evaluated by several academicians to eliminate fatigue from adversely affecting survey results.

The questionnaire was administered to 600 academic staffs working at University of Kufa. Between February and April 2013, the researchers distributed the questionnaire to the sample randomly within the university. A total of 430 complete questionnaires were obtained, yielding a response rate of 71.6%. The returned questionnaires considered usable to analyse and fulfil the aim of this study. More details about the instrument used are provided in Appendix A.

#### 5. Data analysis

In this study, the researchers used Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) approach to examine the data via (AMOS 18 software). SEM technique enables the researchers to evaluate the model constructs and to estimate the structural relationships among the latent variables simultaneously (Hair et al., 2010). Gefen et al. (2000) highly recommend the use of SEM in both behavioural sciences and information system research. Using SEM technique, the researchers first examined the measurement model to assess reliability and validity before testing the structural model (Hair et al., 2010).

#### **Overview** of respondents

Table 1 provides a general demographic overview of the respondents who participated in this study in terms of gender, age and educational level.

Variable		Frequency	Percentage	
Condor	Male	240	55.8%	
Gender	Female	190	44.2%	
	Less than 30	65	15.1%	
Age	31 - 40	199	46.2%	
	41 -50	140	32.5%	
	51 -60	21	4.8%	
	More than 60	5	1.1%	
Education level	Diploma	69	16%	
	Bachelor	288	66.9%	
	Master	53	12.3%	
	PhD	20	4.6%	

#### Measurement Model Estimation

The measurement model identifies the relationships that suggest how measured variables represent a construct that is not measured directly (Hair et al. 2010). It was assessed with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the AMOS software to examine convergent and discriminate validity. In the confirmatory factor analysis, the convergent validity relied on three indicators: factor loading, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). Constructs have convergent validity when the factor loadings of indicators on their constructs are above 0.6, the CR exceeds 0.70, and the AVE is above 0.50 (Gefen et al. 2000; Hair et al., 2010).

Table 2: Factor Loadings.	Loadings Squared, AVE and CR

Constructs	Items	Factor loading	Loadings squared	AVE*	CR**
Performance Expectance (PE)	PE1	0.797	0.635		
	PE2	0.648	0.419		
	PE3	0.661	0.436	0.528	0.870
	PE4	0.746	0.556		
(1 L)	PE5	0.756	0.571		
	PE6	0.739	0.546		
	EE1	0.676	0.456		
Effort Europtoneo	EE2	0.743	0.552		0.868
Effort Expectance (EE)	EE3	0.758	0.574	0.570	
(EE)	EE4	0.783	0.613		
	EE5	0.808	0.652		
	SI1	0.638	0.407		0.874
Social Influence	SI2	0.861	0.741	0.583	
(SI)	SI3	0.746	0.556		
	SI4	0.811	0.657		
	FC1	0.686	0.470		
Facilitating	FC 2	0.743	0.552		
Conditions (FC)	FC 3	0.758	0.574	0.528	0.848
	FC 4	0.683	0.466		
	FC 5	0.758	0.574		
Deberiourel	BI1	0.876	0.767		
Behavioural Intention (BI)	BI2	0.643	0.413	0.633	0.872
	BI3	0.858	0.736		
	BI4	0.783	0.613		
Use Behaviour (UB)	UB1	0.686	0.470		
	UB2	0.743	0.552	0.570 0.8	0.840
	UB3	0.858	0.736		0.040
	UB4	0.721	0.519		

Note.

\* (AVE) Average variance extracted

\*\* (CR) Composite reliability

Based on Table 2, the factor loadings of indicators on their constructs exceeded the recommended value of 0.6, and all loadings were significant at 0.001. The AVE, which reflects the overall amount of variance in the

indicators accounted for by the latent construct, which exceeded the recommended value of 0.5. CR values, which depict the degree to which the construct indicators indicate as the latent. All CR values exceeded the recommended value of 0.7. Thus, the results support the convergent validity of the instrument.

In order to assess for discriminate validity, the square root of the AVE for each construct was compared with the inter-factor correlations between that construct and all other constructs. If the AVE is higher than the squared inter-scale correlations of the construct, then it shows good discriminate validity (Gefen et al., 2000; Hair et al., 2010). As shown in Table 3, for each construct, the square root of AVE is above the correlation coefficients with other constructs, and that substantiates satisfactory discriminate validity. Table 3: Discriminate Validity of Constructs

Constructs SI FC UB PE EE BI Performance Expectance (PE) 0.726 Effort Expectance 0.401 0.754 (EE)Social Influence 0.245 0.564 0.763 (SI) Facilitating Conditions (FC) 0.349 0.342 0.321 0.726 Behavioural 0.456 0.065 0.343 0.562 .795 Intention (BI) 0.498 Use Behaviour (UB) 0.603 0.524 0.535 0.446 0.754

#### Structural Model Estimation

As mentioned earlier, the second step is to assess the structural model, which includes the testing of the theoretical hypothesis and the relationships between latent constructs provided through the employed SEM technique and the use of AMOS software. Table 4 lists the path coefficients and their significance. The results of testing hypotheses presents also in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of Structural Model Results

(Hypothesis): Path	Standardised regression coefficients	t-value	Hypothesis testing results		
Behavioural Intention (Loadings squared = 0.529)					
(H1): $PE \rightarrow BI$	0.397	5.12***	Supported		
(H2): $EE \rightarrow BI$	0.304	4.20***	Supported		
(H3): SI $\rightarrow$ BI	0.158	1.45 <sup>n.s.</sup>	Not supported		
Use Behaviour (Loadings squared = 0.620)					
(H4): $FC \rightarrow UB$	0.451	3.97***	Supported		
(H5): BI $\rightarrow$ UB	0.373	4.03***	Supported		

In general, four out of five hypotheses were supported. All hypotheses ( $H_1$ ,  $H_2$ ,  $H_4$  and  $H_5$ ) representing the relationship among the main constructs (PE, EE, FC, and BI) to UB were supported in this study. The hypothesis that was not supported was  $H_3$ : SI to BI. Social influence (SI) did not significantly predict behaviour intention of e-government services; therefore,  $H_3$  was not supported.

#### 6. Discussion of the findings

The proposed research UTAUT model was empirically tested through a series of procedures and measures to effectively carry out the research result and finding for quantitative data. This section will discuss the results and findings with respect to the variables in the proposed UTAUT model: effort expectancy (EE), performance expectancy (PE), social influences (SI), behaviour intention (BI) and their relationship with the dependent variable use behaviour (UB). The results of this study provide support for a majority of the study hypotheses proposed at the beginning of this study.

In this obligatory adoption scenario the UTAUT model was found to successfully predict the acceptance and use of e-government services. Performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and social influence explained 52.9% of the variance of behavioural intention. In this regard, with the exception of the social influences, the constructs of performance expectancy and effort expectancy were found to contribute to behaviour intention. More detail, performance expectancy had the strongest effect with a path coefficient of 0.397, followed by effort expectancy with a path coefficient of 0.304. Meanwhile, social influence was found to not contribute to the construct with a path coefficient of 0.158.

Equally important, behaviour intention and facilitating conditions explained 62% of the variance of use behaviour with facilitation conditions having a path coefficient of 0.452 and behaviour intention having a path coefficient of 0.373.

#### 7. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors influencing the acceptance and use of e-government services, specifically, to explore the important factor on the adoption of e-government services in Iraqi higher education context by using UTAUT model.

The researchers believe this study has both theoretical and practical contributions. The finding of this study has explored a number of interesting findings. First, with respect to the key constructs of the UTAUT model, the finding showed that effort expectancy (EE), performance expectancy (PE), and facilitating conditions (FC) contribute significantly to adoption of e-government services and directly affect the use behaviour (UB) of e-government services. Second, the influence of the social influence (SI) on the use behaviour (UB) of e-government services was insignificant. However, the current study was conducted in the Iraqi HEIs, thus the analysis is based on the perception of the Iraqi academic staffs.

Furthermore, this study is an important step to recognize and understand the difficulties of e-government services in Iraqi HEIs, and then to provide and enhance practical resolutions to boost the adoption level. Moreover, the findings of this study provide an empirical result for other developing counties that have the same context and face the same issues for the adoption of e-government services (G2G) in their own country.

#### 8. Limitations and future research

However, the study had some limitations. First, it only determined on the key constructs of the UTAUT model and does not include the moderator's effect on the main relationships (such as age, gender, and experience). If the moderator's relationships had been included, the analysis would have become complex and hard to maintain in a paper like this, given the space limitation. Second, the researchers have studied only one type of egovernment services (G2G). Thus, future research can build on our study model of the UTAUT in different countries as well as different types of e-government applications, especially (G2C). Third, this study is based on quantitative data, hence this work could be extended using qualitative data to examine more in-depth perceptions about other factors that influence the e-government services adoption.

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# Appendix A:

Measurement Scale and Items (adapted from Venkatesh et al., 2003)

	Performance Expectancy (PE)	<b>C</b> 1
	Scale	
PE1	I would find the e-government services system useful in my work job.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
PE2	Using e-government services enables me to accomplish tasks more quickly.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
PE3	Using e-government services enables me to accomplish tasks more efficiently.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
PE4	If I use e-government services, I will spend less time on routine job tasks	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
PE5	Using e-government services would make it easier to do my job tasks.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
PE6	Using e-government services increases the quality of academic services.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
	Effort Expectancy (EE)	Scale
EE1	Learning to operate e-government system is easy.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
EE2	Using e-government services system is easy for me.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
EE3	I find the e-government system flexible to interact with.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
EE4	It would be easy for me to become skill full at using e-government system,	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
EE5	Overall, I believe that the e-government system is easy to use.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
,	Social Influence (SI)	Scale
SI1	People who are imperative to me think that I should use e-government services.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
SI2	I would use e-government services if my colleagues used them.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
SI3	People who influence my behaviour think I should use e-government services.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
SI5	The government encourages using the e-government services system.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
	Facilitating Conditions (FC)	Scale
FC1	I have the resources necessary to use e-government services.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
FC2	Using e-government system fits into my work style.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
FC3	I have the knowledge necessary to use e-government services.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
FC4	Using the e-government system will fit well with the way I work,	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
FC5	Resources required to use the e-government system is available to me.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Behavioural Intention (BI)		Scale
BI1	I intend to use the e-government services system.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
BI2	I expect to use the e-government services system in the future.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
BI3	I plan to use the e-government services system.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
BI4	I encourage my colleagues to use e-government services system.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Use Behaviour (UB)		Scale
UB1	I frequently use e-government services system.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
UB2	I really want to use e-government services system.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
UB3	Most of my governmental requests are done via e-government services.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
UB4	I use e-government services on a regular basis.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

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