You Can’t Bribe a Computer: Dealing with the Societal Challenge for Corruption Through Information and Communication Technologies

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Abstract

Despite the influence of information and communication technologies (ICTs) on enhancing transparency and fairness, there is limited theoretical understanding of how ICT affects corruption. Adopting an institutional perspective, we conceptualize the mechanisms through which e-government influences corruption in a nation. Specifically, we theorize the relationship between e-government and corruption at two levels: (1) base corruption observed in national institutions (political, legal, and media institutions), and (2) permeated corruption in the national stakeholder service systems (business and citizen systems). Using panel data from 63 countries over a 4-year period, we test the direct and mediated effects of e-government on corruption in national institutions and stakeholder service systems, respectively. This exploratory study provides preliminary insights into the mechanisms through which corruption manifests in a nation and demonstrates how e-government can be helpful in alleviating it. In addition, the study offers important implications that we believe will be instrumental in stimulating future research on the subject.

Keywords: Corruption, e-government, institutions, ICT impact, base corruption, permeated corruption, stakeholder service systems