Influences of Information Systems Applications on Human Rights Standards

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ABSTRACT - Human Right being the greatest realization of the mankind in the 20th century is still an evolving aspect in terms of both research and in realities. While the legal perspectives of Human Right is an individual's statutory right to equal treatment and free from discrimination, the basic human rights framework addresses protection of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in terms of Basic Human Right principles. The basic principles that are always part of human rights standards and implementation include actions ensuring; Universality, Indivisibility, Participation, Accountability, Transparency and Non-Discrimination. While Information systems are the integrated user machine system for Information management tasks, the growing visibility for Information System applications in recent times could be generated due to expanding IT and mobile apps supported through 4G technologies. Under the pretext of these Information Technology developments, the present research focuses on the significance of various Information Systems applications towards impacting Human Rights standards on Universality, Indivisibility, Participation, Accountability, Transparency and Non-Discrimination. Based on the review of existing Human Rights and Information systems Literature, the finding made through the present work points to the significant mediating role of IT applications in ensuring Human Rights standards with certain exceptions such as Digital Divide factors. The corresponding implications and policy recommendations are discussed in the present research work carried out on qualitative research framework.

Keywords: Human Rights Framework, Human Rights Principles, Information Systems, IT applications, Digital Divide factors.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Human Right being the greatest realization of the mankind in the 20th century is still an evolving aspect in terms of both research and in realities. While the legal perspectives of Human Right is an individual's statutory right to equal treatment and free from discrimination, the basic human rights framework addresses protection of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in terms of Basic Human Right principles. The human rights framework protects civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. But no matter what kind of right is at issue, there are basic principles that are always part of human rights standards and implementation [7]. Accordingly, these principles include factors such as Universality, Indivisibility, Participation, Accountability, Transparency and Non-Discrimination

Universality: The principle of Universality in human rights framework necessitates that Human rights must be afforded to everyone, without exception. The entire premise of this factor is that the people are entitled to these rights simply by virtue of being a human.

Indivisibility: The principle of Indivisibility in human rights framework views Human rights as indivisible and interdependent, which means that in order to guarantee civil and political rights, a government must also ensure economic, social and cultural rights.

Participation: The principle of Participation in human rights framework views that People have a right to participate in how decisions are made regarding protection of their rights. This includes but is not limited to having input on government decisions about rights.

Accountability: The principle of Accountability in human rights framework necessitates the creation of mechanisms of accountability for the enforcement of rights. It is not enough that rights are recognized in domestic law or in policy rhetoric, there must actually be effective measures put in place so that social systems are held accountable if those rights standards are not met.

Transparency: The principle of Accountability in human rights framework necessitates openness about all information and decision-making processes related to rights. Accordingly People must be able to know and understand how major decisions affecting rights are made and how public institutions, are managed and run.

Non-Discrimination: The principle of Non-Discrimination in human rights framework views that Human rights must

be guaranteed without discrimination of any kind. This includes not only purposeful discrimination, but also protection from policies and practices which may have a discriminatory effect.

1.1 Information Systems Definition and Evolution

Management Information System (MIS) is an integrated user-machine system for providing information to support the operations, analysis, and decision-making functions in an organization [2]. Accordingly the system (MIS) could utilize computer hardware and software, manual procedures, models and a database. The evolution of Information systems applications is continuous and it takes different forms of forward integration ever since the inception of IT in human life. While the early adoption of IT into social systems were more in terms of Business and Industrial requirements, the inception of Personal Computers have transformed the way the Information are collected, processed and disseminated among the people throughout the world. Further levels of sophistications in Information management are posited with the advent of Internet as the global Information superhighway. With ever increasing bandwidth and end user Internet access metrics, mobile computing and mobile information applications are visibly transforming the role of Information Systems from a mere technical systems to an indispensable social necessities.

II.   INFORMATION SYSTEMS ON HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

In an effort to identify the influence of Information Systems applications delivering the human rights standards, the following section are compiled drawing specific references on the role of Information Systems applications delivering the human rights standards such as Universality, Indivisibility, Participation, Accountability, Transparency and Non-Discrimination.

2.1 Information Systems applications delivering the Human Rights standard: Universality

Most of the current Information Systems applications delivered through the channel of Internet is by default adhering to the standards of Universality. The potential end-users of this kind of system are unrestricted in terms of the locations and are found across the globe. This kind of situations ensures the deliverance of human rights standards universally and thus can be seen as the potential contributions of Information Systems applications ensuring the deliverance of human rights standards. In this regard, the research works on human right to adequate food in an European context examines the way in which the development of Information Technology has enhanced the protection of human rights on adequacy of Food [6]. The discussions noted through the above work explores the convergence of rights development; the European and global move towards a 'precautionary' entitlement to safe food and the exploitation of technology as an effective means of disseminating crucial information as a way of guaranteeing such a right.

2.2 Information Systems applications delivering the Human Rights standard: Indivisibility

The potential characteristics of Information System applications is that they are customized to needs and wants of the individual or group users and thus, naturally ensures the laws of indivisibility. Most of the current IT applications are customized and hence, the outcomes generated out of such customized applications are naturally directed domain ownership towards the specific end user of the systems irrespective of the contributions made by the intermediary in generating such outcomes. In this regard, a notable research work observes that the role of IT designers as regulators still needs to be situated [5]. By drawing on a specific domain of technology design, human–computer interaction (HCI), the above work unpack what an HCI-led approach can offer IT law. Specifically, novel regulatory strategies could be observed through a better understanding of the relationships and interactions between designers, end users and technology in the suggestive remarks made through the above work. Accordingly, it is felt that future alignment of IT law and HCI approaches is necessary for effective regulation of emerging technologies towards delivering the human rights standards.

2.3 Information Systems applications delivering the Human Rights standard: Participation

The developments in Information Systems applications in terms of Social Media technologies is viewed as the potential tools for public participations on macro developments specific to economic, political and social imperatives. In specific terms, the role of social media in the Arab Spring, a revolutionary wave of demonstration and protest in Middle East and North Africa between 2010 and 2012 remains clear example of the deliverance of the human rights standards participation through Information Systems. In this regard, a notable research work report that the Arab Spring was characterized by Online revolutionary Conversation preceded by mass protection on the ground [9]. However, the above work also reports some specific cases of certain Arab Governments positively deploying Social Media ensuring engagements and participations of citizens in government processes specific to the period of Arab Spring. Thus, significant mediating role of Information Systems applications in the deliverance of Human rights standards- Participation could be observed through the above work.

2.4 Information Systems applications delivering the Human Rights standard: Accountability

Many of the existing IT and Information Systems applications have the potential to support accountability by increasing and improving the flow of information after a

decision is made. Increased accountability can help put an end to waste, inefficient use of resources and corruption and can also improve the delivery of services. While accountability is an important component of public sector reform, the potentials of Information System applications ensuring the deliverance of Human Right Standard-Accountability is viewed important. In many cases of Computerized Administrative systems innate link with accountability could be established as a matter of will. Some of the potential advantages of such systems in human rights context could be seen in a study, specifically on the exploits of IT in Judicial Systems towards enhanced quality of the Judicial Process resulting speeding up of case handlings [3]. The above work on Judicial Information Systems of Netherland describes how usage of various types of Information technology can enhance compliance with the requirements of fair hearing and reasonable delay in the human rights conventions ensuring the deliverance of the human right standard accountability.

2.5 Information Systems applications delivering the Human Rights standard: Transparency

Many of the e-Governance initiatives are the appropriate cases of augmenting transparency through Information Systems applications. While lack of transparency is attributed to violation of fundamental rights, many of the operating e-Governance systems achieves optimum levels of transparency in many of the public Administrative domains. In this context, a notable research study has reported the successful adoption of Information systems applications towards ensuring the transparency of governance in local administration with a special reference pointing South Korea [4]. According to the findings made through the above research work deployed through case study approach; Information Systems contributes significantly towards efficiency and transparency in many of the administrative procedures specific to civil, local and central governance systems. However, the above study also observers that the success of such systems largely depends on the attitude of the citizens towards exploiting the potentials of IT and Information System as a whole. Hence, it becomes imperative on the part of the general public to ensure the capacities required to exploit the actual potentials of Information Systems or the e-Governance systems at Large.

2.6 Information Systems applications delivering the Human Rights standard: Non-Discrimination:

The major developments in terms of Right to information are viewed as ascertainment on the deliverance of human rights standard 'Non-Discrimination' eliminating discriminatory practices taking advantage of lack of information. While Information given as a matter of Right is viewed as an outcome generated out of Information system that could be either manual or computerized, the role of online systems tracking the status of RTI applications is viewed with importance in this regard. Further, many of the Information systems applications more specific to Internet based system are designed in a way that the appropriate information reaches appropriate information needs creating equal opportunity for all. In this context, the role of Online Complain Registration systems ensuring non discriminatory practices could be noted through the works on IT support delivering non discriminatory practices [1].Specifically, the above work reports the significant reduction in discriminatory municipal practices specific to the deliverance of basic municipal services such as Health, Sanitation and Water Supply due to the deployment of mobile based online complaint registration systems.

III.   INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS

The Information system applications are prudent and precise in delivering the human right standards in terms of factors such as Universality, Indivisibility, Participation, Accountability, Transparency and Non-Discrimination with the major bottlenecks identified in terms of Digital divide factors, Fluctuations in the Speeds of Connectivity, High Cost of Access and Violation of Privacy.

3.1 Digital Divide: The digital divide is a social/political issue referring to the socio-economic gap between communities that have access to computers and the Internet and those who do not. The term also refers to the gaps that exist between groups regarding their ability to use Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) effectively, due to differing levels of literacy and technical skills, as well as the gap between those groups that have access to quality, useful digital content and those that do not [10].

3.2 Fluctuations in the Connectivity Speed: Although the Internet connectivity speeds have shown dramatic improvements in recent times augments well into the spread of Internet access among the potential public, the fluctuations in the connectivity speed is viewed as the menace in ensuring seamless connectivity. This kind of situation causes serious shortcomings in exploiting the potentials of Information Systems in delivering the human rights standards even among the potential users who have the potentials to overcome challenges posed due to digital divide factors.

3.3 High cost of access and computers: The cost of Internet access in the initial period of Internet service operations very high that it hampered the possibility of larger section of public to access Internet. However, the consistent growths in the technology have brought down the cost of Internet access and the cost of Devices showing remarkable levels of public participation in digital world in recent times. While this kind of situation is seen as positive development towards delivering human rights standards through Information Systems applications, the existing cost

levels on Internet access and the potential devices are still out of reach of the larger public and hence viewed with inhibitions in delivering the human rights standards through Information systems applications.

3.4 Violation of Privacy

While information systems applications mediate the deliverance of Human Right Standards such as Universality, Participation, Accountability, Transparency and Non-Discrimination, the possibility of misuse of the systems resulting in the exploitation of the rights is still a major area of concern in Human Rights perspective. In this Context, a notable study has reported the hacking practices of employee personal information for ensuring organizational strategic imperatives by the Institute of Higher learning in UAE [8]. Further, the developments like e-Commerce and other online transaction based systems always opens up the possibility of violation of security breach and information privacy Norms.

IV.   FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE WORK

The discussions and the qualitative analyses carried out in the previous sections of the present works synergies into the following three major outcomes such as; Information System Applications mediating the deliverance of Human Rights standards, Information System Applications discriminating the deliverance of Human Rights standards, and Information Systems Applications as tool of Violation of Rights.

4.1 Information System Applications mediating the deliverance of Human Rights standards

Majority of the IT and Information Systems applications actually acts as the effective source of mediation in delivering the Human Rights standards such as Universality, Indivisibility,Participation, Accountability, Transparency and Non-Discrimination. Hence, more levels of adoption of IT systems into the governance mechanism are suggested towards ensuring development and human rights at large.

4.2 Information System Applications discriminating the deliverance of Human Rights standards

While it is proven beyond doubt that IT and Information Systems applications actually acts as the effective source of mediation in delivering the Human Rights standards, the possibility of non deliverance of such standards among those who are not Fluent in exploiting the potentials of IT is a major concern that needs to be redressed. In specific sense, the IT based systems at times has effective capacity to discriminate users and non users of IT products towards realization of the outcome specific to human rights standards. Hence, it's suggested to draw road map into the possibilities of IT capacity building among different sections of the society.

4.3Information Systems Applications as tool of Violation of Rights

This kind of situations in IT and Information Systems applications can be compared with every systems having inheriting disadvantages encompassed with the potential advantages that the system can deliver. While the vulnerability factor of many online systems act as the weaker link in this kind of situations, misuse of IT systems at large can be prevented with appropriate capacity building among the potential end users of the system. Hence, it's suggested to draw road map into the possibilities of IT capacity building among different sections of the society.

V.   CONCLUSIONS

The growing visibility for Information System applications in recent times could be generated due to expanding IT and mobile apps supported through 4G technologies. Also, the user friendliness of the technology is showing a positive trend causing more adoption of IT apps among the general public at large. While the findings made through the present work points to the influencing effects of IT systems on human rights standards, more levels of adoption of IT systems into the governance mechanism are of paramount importance towards ensuring development and human rights at large. Under these conditions it becomes extremely important to draw road map into the possibilities of IT capacity building among different sections of the society. Furthermore it's important to make IT Literacy a basic human right as it is now the case with actual Literacy.

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