



Citizens' awareness and usage of e-governance services in Municipalities- A Study of Guntur District

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Abstract: Governance in the public context is closely related to government and democracy, but has a different focus. Democracy is the legitimacy view. It is concerned with grounding the authority of public institutions in the citizenry or body politic, assuring that actions taken by public authorities are sincere efforts to achieve the common good and to vest ultimate control and ownership of public institutions in the citizenry. Finally, governance is the regulatory view. It is about how to best guide, steer or lead the society so as to identify and realize common interests. The main aim of the research work is to derive a set of parameters to ensure to analyze the concept and issues of e-governance and e-government, Study the citizens' perception on awareness and usage of e-governance services of Chilakaluripet and Narsaraopet Municipalities and to give policy implications towards better implementation of e-services in the study area. It is found that most of the 87.04 per cent of the respondents/citizens have aware of e-governance services; but 23.36 per cent not aware of e-governance services. This is due to either being unaware of the implementation of e-governance services or computer and internet illiteracy.

Key words: e-governance, unique initiative, cross-agency communication

Introduction

The term E-government and E-governance are often loosely used, but they are different in finer sense. E-government is a technology driven administration, where the citizen can avail government services like getting copies of land records, filing of tax returns etc. It basically involves the formulation of laws and regulations such as domain names etc. to govern cyber space (Gupta M.P, 2004)¹. Moon, M.J. (2002)² distinguished between public sector usage of information technology and E-government initiatives. He opined that although there is a distinction between public sector information

technology and E-government, often inters dependent and difficult to quantifiably separate, but E-government is that subset of public information technology that involves the delivery of govt. services and information to citizens. This delivery of services and information also involves the integration of networks and data basis to allow for cross-agency communication and interaction, which is an internal technology application. Governance is an issue not only for cities, nations, federations and other political entities, but also for private organizations. In the political context, the interests to be



promoted by "good governance" are the public interests of the society as a whole, including future generations with respect to the interests of future generations; governance is entwined with another current topic, sustainability. Governance in the public context is closely related to government and democracy, but has a different focus. Democracy is the legitimacy view. It is concerned with grounding the authority of public institutions in the citizenry or body politic, assuring that actions taken by public authorities are sincere efforts to achieve the common good and to vest ultimate control and ownership of public institutions in the citizenry. Finally, governance is the regulatory view. It is about how to best guide, steer or lead the society so as to identify and realize common interests.

E-Governance in Municipalities

Andhra Pradesh is one of the few states in India that have taken up e-Governance Initiatives in a very serious manner. Three ULBs, viz. Municipal Corporations of Hyderabad, Vizag and Vijayawada, were the front-runners, based on which e-Governance initiatives were triggered off at the state level. In, Andhra Pradesh, the initiatives taken by these ULBs (which are discussed in chapter 3 of this section) have been self-driven and not part of any statewide plan. The state level initiative 'SUVIDHA' is proposed to be implemented in 118 Urban Local Bodies in the state excluding these three ULBs, as these ULBs have their own application modules already implemented. Even in the case of infrastructure provision, these ULBs already have their own set-up established, ahead of the state level initiatives.

Local government is the lowest level of formal state institutions, such as district-level officials or local, publicly accountable decision-making and service-delivery organizations constituted in accordance with national laws (such as in local elections). Local government structures take different forms in different countries and vary in their levels of accountability to local people or to immediate upper-tier of governments. Governance, in the public context, is about how to manage, direct or guide society in order to best serve public interests, i.e. to achieve the common good. Governance is a hot topic for many reasons, including the changing role of knowledge and information, a trend towards networks as an organizational form, globalization issues and, last but not least, advances in information and communications technology. It is a unique initiative of the Government of India conceptualized under the umbrella of the overall National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) and the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (Jnnurm) aimed at improving operational efficiencies within Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). Innumerable ICT Initiatives are driving the quality & access of governance, healthcare and education across the country. eINDIA³ awards have been set up to acknowledge these innovations to promote the most innovative initiatives in the domain of ICTs for development and to spread awareness about the role of ICTs in addressing social concerns. The eINDIA awards have been given to innovative endeavors made in integrating technology in developmental concerns. The Awards have been instituted with the primary aim of felicitating and acknowledging unique and innovative initiatives in the use of ICT for



development. The Municipal IT India 2010 Award for ICT- enabled Municipal Initiative of the Year aims to felicitate those municipal initiatives that have used ICT tools to provide and improve services, transactions and interactions with citizens and businesses. The award in the category is open to all national municipalities that use or endorse the use of ICT tools to increase efficiency of the municipalities, and benefit end users. The evaluation criteria are based on quality of vision of the projects, services, past work and implementation of technologies for the empowerment of livelihoods. Besides the soundness of technology being used, scalability and sustainability and finally impact made on the citizen's life are the primary criteria for evaluation. It also includes evaluation criteria like whether implementation of e-governance services has improved motivation and performance of staff members/employees and citizens.

Significance of the Study

The potential and scope for application of information & communication technologies in governance are enormous. E-government has the ability to transform traditional administrative systems through effective utilization of ICTs. Governments all over the world are still experimenting with methods and procedures that are convenient and comfortable and which improve all their transactions with the citizens. In order to communicate effectively with citizens, government follows e-governance techniques. In turn citizens can also communicate with municipal officials effectively and economically. Research can be done primarily on applications and impacts of information and communication

technologies (ICTs) in the government arena, spanning across diverse functions such as rationalization of administration, service innovation, democratic renewal and efficient governance in multi-level political systems. Thrust should be on introduction of e-government in the area of public administration (e-administration), especially regarding the interface between technology and organization. With the expansion of online service delivery new challenges are gaining importance, such as reorganizing service processes, co-operating across different tiers of government, guaranteeing access and secure communication for all as well as analyzing economic and social impacts of e-governance. With effective implementation of administrative modernization modules, the research focus can also be expanded towards the largely neglected role of ICTs in policy-making and governance. It is found from the earlier studies that studies on the implementation of e-governance at the grass root level are very modest. Meanwhile, so far study has been conducted in the Chilakaluripet and Narsaraopet Municipalities. Thus, the current research intends to carry out the pattern of implementation of e-governance in different dimensions of services like assessment and payment of property tax, birth and death registration, grievance redressal, bidding of tenders, building sanction etc. It also helps to increase service quality, clarity of process and to maintain transparency. These are carrying out by the following objectives.

Objectives of the study



The main aim of the research work is to derive a set of parameters to ensure that:

- To analyze the concept and issues of e-governance and e-government,
- Study the citizens' perception on awareness and usage of e-governance services of Chilakaluripet and Narsaraopet Municipalities and
- To give policy implications towards better implementation of e-services in the study area

Research methodology

The discussion on the methodology, indicate sampling method used, how the data is ascertained, the statistical tools are used in the analysis and sort out the limitations of the study. Convenience sampling method is used in the present study. Sampling process is carried out in three stages. The first stage is selection of municipality; the second stage consists of selection of wards. The third stage consist the selection of respondents'. A sample is a small proportion of a

Results

Respondents according to their age

Table 1 shows the distribution of citizens according to their gender. It is observed that about 66.40 percent citizens are male and 33.60 percent citizens are female in the sample. Thus, it is clear that the ratio of male respondents is higher than female respondents and most of the transactions are still done by the males.

Table 1: Distribution of citizens according to their gender

S. No.	Gender	No. of Respondents	Per cent
1	Male	370	66.40
2	Female	210	33.60
	Total	625	100.0

population selected for observation and analysis. Much care has been taken while selecting the sample for the study. The sampling technique for the survey is Snowball Sampling Technique (reference based method) and Convenience-sampling method. This method is selected by considering time factor for the survey and population size of 500 citizens were selected from the 25 wards i.e., 25 respondents from each ward. Further, about 50 members of operational staff are also randomly selected. While selecting the sample, services offered by the municipal corporation are taken.

Statistical tools used: Statistical techniques such as Percentages, Averages are used for interpretation of the data. Tables, bar charts, pie charts are used at appropriate places of the study. After completing the field edit, tabulation of the data was done by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The derived tables have been redesigned towards simplification of the study.



Table 2 represents the distribution of respondents according to their education. A total of 82.56 of the respondents are educated and 17.44 percent are illiterates. It is seen that a majority of 25.92percent respondents have primary education followed by 28.80 percent respondents who have completed higher secondary education,

20.48 per cent and 7.36 per cent are completed graduate & post-graduation.

It is said that the proportion of graduate respondents is higher compared to post graduate respondents and the proportion of higher secondary & above educated respondents is lower than the primary level educated respondents.

Table 2: Distribution of citizens according to their education

S.No.	Educational status	Number	Frequency
1	Illiterates	109	17.44
2	Primary	162	25.92
3	Higher Secondary	180	28.80
4	Graduate	128	20.48
5	Post Graduate	46	7.36
	Total	625	100.0

Source: Field Survey

Citizens’ awareness on e-governance services

To study the awareness of citizens about the e-governance system, parameters such as citizens’ age, gender, education and occupation were considered. If citizens have an adequate knowledge of computers and are aware about the internet they can easily use e-governance services for their regular transactions within a short period of time by saving costs and effort.

Table 3 gives details regarding citizens’ awareness on e-governance services implemented by the selected municipalities. According to the table most of the 87.04 per cent of the respondents/citizens have aware of e-governance services; but 23.36 per cent not aware of e-governance services. This is due to either being unaware of the implementation of e-governance services or computer and internet illiteracy.

Table 3: Citizens’ awareness on e-governance services implemented by the Municipalities

S.No.	Aware of e-governance services	Number	Frequency
1	Yes	544	87.04
2	No	146	23.36
	Total	625	100.0



Source: Field Survey

Uses of e-governance services

To find the levels of usage of e-governance service provided by the municipalities, the researcher asked the citizens *as* have you ever used e-governance services. While asking the sample citizens regarding, about 79 per cent are using e-governance services of

municipalities and the remaining are 21 per cent not used the services (table 4). Thus it can be said that 87.04 per cent of the citizens said that e-governance is useful and 23.36 per cent viewed as not used the eservices due to various reasons as presented in coming table.

Table- 4: Citizens' perceptions on uses of e-governance services

S.No.	ever used e-governance services	Number	Frequency
1	Yes	395	63.20
2	No	230	36.80
	Total	625	100.0

Source: Field Survey

Assessment of delivery channel of e-governance services

An attempt has been made to assess the delivery channel of e-governance services. Table 5 shows the various parameters of delivery channels for assessment of users. It is observed that for each parameter the average scale is in between 1 to 5 that is in between strongly agreed, agree, neutral, strongly disagree and disagree. This five category scale has been collapsed into three category one like favorable, neutral and unfavorable perception. The reason for having mixture of favorable and unfavorable statements in this scale is that the responses by the respondents should not become monotonous while answering the questions. Hence researcher has also applied 5-point scale and calculates weighted value.

It is seen that highest of the citizens are delivered that e-services are

simple to use as recorded first rank followed by *easy to find required information* to interact with which is ranked *second* with a weightage of 256 marks. The other parameters are followed that most citizens are satisfied when they avail e-governance services due to the simple language and comfort level of the system, high confidentiality of data and attractive color scheme. Overall satisfied with this system as per the citizens is ranked sixth.

It is further, observed that citizens believed that e services has also taking time as manual operation. It shows with 10th rank (Fast completion of work) and the displays error messages have also not shown clearly.

Reasons for not utilizing the services

Table 6 gives the details on why the citizens are not utilizing the e-services in the study area. It is found in the study that about 38.10 percent are low income



people. Many of the women and illiterates are computer and internet illiteracy. Some citizens feel that manual services are convenient and more secure. Some of them not know how to use the services. Due to their busy schedule they prefer to avail e-governance services thereby saving travel time, cost and

effort. Not being used due to the age factor or computer & internet illiteracy and they feel more comfortable with the manual system instead of e-governance system. Also they are not interested in understanding the functionality of the e-governance system.

Table- 5: Assessment of delivery channel of e-governance services

code	Assessment on the service	Strongly agree	agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Score & rank
1	Simple to use	119 [238]	163 [163]	24 [0]	39 [-78]	50 [-50]	273 (1)
2	Easy to find & understand	88 [176]	194 [194]	33 [0]	34 [-68]	46 [-46]	256 (2)
	Simple Language	69 [138]	210 [210]	45 [0]	51 [-102]	20 [-20]	226 (3)
4	Confidentiality of data is high	99 [198]	134 [134]	74 [0]	52 [-104]	36 [36]	192 (4)
5	Attractive Color Scheme	63 [126]	174 [174]	64 [0]	20 [-40]	74 [74]	186 (5)
6	Overall, satisfied with this system	194 [388]	86 [86]	35 [0]	34 [-68]	46 [-46]	166 (6)
7	Information is clear & more effective	74 [148]	179 [179]	53 [0]	50 [-100]	39 [-78]	149 (7)
8	Efficient completion of work	94 [188]	117 [117]	53 [0]	74 [-148]	57 [-57]	100 (8)
9	Fast completion of work	94 [188]	116 [116]	54 [0]	74 [-148]	57 [-57]	99 (9)
10	Quick recovery of mistakes	58 [116]	153 [153]	61 [0]	84 [-168]	39 [-39]	62 (10)
11	Displays error messages clearly	56 [112]	154 [154]	63 [0]	95 [-190]	27 [-27]	49 (11)

Source: Field Survey

The table shows that 3.14 per cent of the citizens are not using e services due to Illiteracy, and 7.34 per cent are felt that the located centres are at very long distance. Most of them are preferred near by the manual zonal office and Paying through internet. Somebody said that there is no difference between manual and e-



service. Meager transactions are clearing at nearest centers due to the facility is provided by the municipalities.

Interestingly, somebody is unwilling to utilize the e –services due to delay at counters and carelessness of the employees.

Table- 6: Respondents’ perceptions on unwilling to utilize the e-services

S.NO	Reasons to not utilized e-governance services	Number	Per cent
1	Low income/ zero property tax	40	38.10
2	Illiteracy	76	33.04
3	Long distance	64	27.83
4	Near by the manual Zone office	87	37.83
5	Small transaction	57	24.78
7	Delay at counters	94	40.87
8	Careless of employees	128	55.65
9	No difference between manual and e-service (diff not known)	137	59.56

Source: Field Survey

Citizens’ acceptance level on implementation of e-governance services

Finally, the researcher asked the respondents’ perception on implementation of e-governance services is useful to the citizens or not. It is observed that the parameter is assessed in between 1 to 5 scale points in between strongly agree to strongly disagree. In a 5-point scale, having categories like strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. Two marks have given to the perception

of strongly agreed, one mark to agree, zero marks to neutral perception, two negative marks to strongly disagree and one negative mark to disagree. It is found that many of the nonusers of e-services have also agreed that that implementation of e-governance services is useful to the citizens. The table 6.26 and figure 7 reveals that e-governance is accepted by the public and has to include the excluded once that is unaware of the e-governance by proper propaganda as scored by 764 points according to the study.



Table- 7: Citizens acceptance on e-governance services is useful to the public

Statement : Do you agree that implementation of e-governance services is useful to the citizens		
Scale	Number of citizens	Score
Strongly agreed	244	488
Agreed	276	276
Neutral	74	0
Strongly disagree	19	-38
Disagree	12	-12
Total	625	714

Source: Field Survey

Performance in implementation of the e-governance programme can be assessed by the satisfactory levels of the beneficiaries. In this context, in this chapter, an attempt is made to find out the citizens' perception. For the study, about 66.40 percent of male and 33.60 percent of female are selected by convenient sampling method. Majority of the respondents' are recorded under the age group of 41-50 years and followed by 31-40 years of age group. Female respondents' are less than the male in all the age groups in the study. A total of 82.56 of the Citizens are educated. Majority of the respondents by 27.04% were belonging to the income group of Rs. 70001-90000.

Most of the 87.04 per cent of the respondents/citizens have aware of e-governance services implemented by the municipalities. About 63.20 per cent are using e-governance services of municipalities and the remaining are 36.80 per cent not used the services and 23.36 per cent of the citizens do not have awareness. Among the respondents who have utilized the e-services, about 83.29

percent male and 16.71 percent female respondents. The ratio of usage of e-governance services in male citizens is very high as compared to female citizens. All educate have using the e-governance services. Usage of e-governance services is directly proportionate to the number but also the education of the citizens. Thus it can be said that all the educational categories have using the e-governance services. Usage of e-governance services is directly proportionate to the number but also the education of the citizens. It is observed from the field survey that many of the citizens who have lower education and women category not have an idea about the services providing by the municipalities. It is concluded that majority of the citizens viewed that implementation of e-governance services is useful to the citizens. Thus, it can be said that e-governance is accepted by the public and have to include once that are unaware of the e-governance by proper propaganda.

Suggestions



Comparatively, municipalities have insufficient citizen service centres. If citizen service centres increase, it leads to accessibility of e-services; tax collections will also be very high. Consequently the purpose of implementing e-governance would be served.

Citizen charter is another powerful invention in e-governance processing delivery of certificate of each service is handy and anyone can file a complaint if his said service is delayed, the respective officer is penalized for delay.

Unfortunately, municipalities being a self-governed body, they did not forward any kind of reports to the appellate authority like state government or central government periodically; due to the reason they are unable to produce varieties of documents. Therefore, they should prepare all types of reports and annual reports, should open to the public.

Audit is not periodic. How can they put files years together under cold storage? So, audit should be completed in every year. It can avoid misuse of finances and they can get good financial administrative guidelines from the audit department.

References

¹ Gupta M.P (2004): Promise of E-Governance: operational challenges, Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited, New Delhi, India , P.31

² Moon, M Jae. (2002): 'The evolution of E-government among municipalities: Rhetoric or reality?' Public Administration Review. Washington: Jul/Aug 2002.Vol.62, Iss. 4, Pp. 10, 424.

³ <http://www.eindia.net.in/2010/awards/details/eGov-G2C.asp> (25/4/2010)

The researcher found that there is no coordinating channel between municipalities- District Collector, municipalities- state government and central government. The cordial administrative relations are essential to adopt new public service activities by control of wastage of resources.

Conclusion

It is concluded that success of the e-governance applications depends on four important pillars which are technology, service providers, users and their satisfaction. The term e-governance represents the implementation of various government services to citizens by giving them the convenience to avail services 'Anytime, Anywhere'. The central dimensions of e-governance application and citizens are user friendliness of delivery channels, presentations, content, interactions, satisfaction about services and security about data and technology. Thus, inclusion of more services and extensions of e services is needed to success of e-governance of municipalities. Smart municipality will be possible if quality of data network available and people adopt to use vast internet.