



A STUDY ON SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COMMON CITIZENS INVOLVEMENT TOWARDS BETTER E-GOVERNANCE

KEYWORDS

E-governance, India, Citizens' perceptions

Dr. P. Devaraju

Asst. Professor, Dept. of Computer Science & Technology, Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Anantapuramu

ABSTRACT

E-governance is an emerging and challenging initiative in developing countries. It is not only concerning the provision of services through the use ICT but rather entails building external interactions with citizen and businesses, enhancing democracy and trust of the political institutions of government. It embraces among other principles, openness, accountability and citizen engagement in public policy process in India. This study aims at finding users' satisfaction with three chosen dimensions of e-governance, namely: Transparency, collaborative governance, and Involvement. However, the overall level of satisfaction with the three attributes was less favorable. Knowing the differences of citizen's perceptions towards e-governance services would help policymakers in the design of effective e-governance strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

E-GOVERNMENT is an institutional approach focuses on carrying out decision related to services' provisions. It uses information and communications technologies (ICT) to transform the traditional public sector by making it accessible, transparent, effective and accountable. The end result of the adoption of e-government is to create a more satisfied picture of government business processes. E-government is not only putting a computer on the desk of bureaucrats, rather, it aims to change the mentality of bureaucrats to treats citizens whether they are receipts or providers of government services as a valued customer of government or an important participant in decision-making. E-governance is wider concept which reflects the relationships between government employees, elected or appointed, and the wider society. As interpreted by Heeks, e-governance goes beyond the provision of simple service and builds an external interaction with the diverse stakeholders of government [1]. E-governance means building positive relationship between the governing and the governed through the integration of people, processes, information and technology to achieve governance objectives. E-governance can provide diverse and long lasting benefits to all stakeholders in the society. Such benefits are numerous such as, among others, less corruption, greater convenience to business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, efficient and more effective public sector management. However, the achievement of these efforts, depends, largely; on how well the citizens who are the target users make use of them [2]. In developing countries and more specifically in Indian environment, e-governance presents unprecedented challenges due to the passive role of the citizen in the political process and the traditional nature of government-citizen relations. The purpose of this paper is to further understanding of citizens' perceptions towards e-governance. The study utilized the subjective indicators to measure citizens' satisfaction with e-governance. The citizen's subjective evaluation is adopted in this study due the lack of objective official data on the quality of e-governance system by the public sector is either not collected or not available to the public. To the best of our knowledge, this research is the first study that addresses the issues of citizens' perception towards e-governance. Therefore, this study adds to the limited pool of researches which have examined the citizens attitudes towards several dimensions of e-governance in India.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

A. Meaning of E-Governance

E-governance nowadays becomes the mantra and the key success factor for governments in the presence of increased citizen's expectations, evolving societies, fiscal demands and fierce competitive era. E-government is the use of internet by public sector organizations with aims of better access and

delivery of services to its clients. It marks the most revolutionary shift in governance and the fundamental institutional change of the way government operates and transforms its relationship with citizens, businesses and other governments. Government bureaucracies are typically described as rules, processes, and input oriented. E-Government has been perceived as a reply to such ills. Accenture, a leading consulting, technology, and outsourcing, viewed e-governance as using new technologies to strengthen relationships with citizens. E-governance defines and assesses the impacts of ICT on the practices, attitudes and behaviors on the different spectrum of the society. E-governance, according to some researchers, e-governance is not only concerning the provision of services through the use of electronic mean but rather entails building external interactions [1], enhancing democracy and trust of the political institutions of government [3], [4]. The UNESCO definition [5] is: "E-governance is the public sector's use of information and communication technologies with the aims of improving information and service delivery, encouraging citizen participation in the decision making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective. E-governance is the use of electronic tool to facilitate efficient, speedy and transparent process of disseminating information to the public, and other agencies for carrying out its administrative duties. E-governance involves new styles of leadership, new ways of debating and deciding policy and investment, new ways of accessing education, new ways of listening to citizens and new ways of organizing and delivering information and services. E-governance is generally considered as a wider concept than e-government, since it can bring about a change in the way citizens relate to governments and to each other. E-governance can bring forth new concepts of citizenship, both in terms of citizen needs and responsibilities. Its objective is to engage, enable and empower the citizen. It is assumed that the adoption of information and communication technology by government organizations can enhance the practice of e-governance. E-Governance integrates the human and the human side of technology. It integrates people, processes, information, cultural, and environment in achieving the governance objectives. Through this integration e-governance can contribute towards enhancing the democracy, transparency, accountability and respect of the rights of the citizens [6]. The aims of e-governance is the continuous improvements of government performance, increasing citizens access to information and knowledge about the political process and thus achieving greater involvement of the citizens in political choices.

B. Theoretical Background

Earlier studies on e-governance have identified several issues such as users' acceptance; awareness of e-government; usage of

ICT in governments; functionality, trust, access, quality and interoperability of the government Website [7], [8], [9], [10], [11]. Most of these studies have either examined the applicability of existing model such as SERVQUAL, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) or developing a modified model and linking different issues such trust, awareness, functionality, quality with e-governance acceptance or usage and few studies have investigated the impact of demographic variables on the citizens' attitudes towards e-governance [12]. The majority of these studies were conducted in developed countries and in industrialized world. Few studies related to electronic government were carried out in developing countries [9]. Research conducted on the acceptance information systems (IS) are numerous. Researchers such as [7], [9], [13], [14], [15] have examined several concepts related to the users' acceptance of the IS. The study of Al Shibly and Tadros [9], examined empirically several issues related to employee's acceptance of electronic government such as system quality, information quality, perceived ease of use and perceived and the findings showed that all these issues effect on electronic government acceptance. In studying the extent to which an IS used and adapted by potential users, Venkatesh et al. [7] found that the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use affect users' attitudes for IS acceptance. In studying which factors are determining the adoption of e-government and e-governance. The dimensions of Website quality such as content, appearance, accessibility, ease of use, and design as well as effort expectancy, performance expectancy and facilitating conditions directly affect citizen adoption of e-government services. Other study on assessing citizen adoption of e-government initiatives in Gambia, Lin et. al., [16] found that information quality, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitude toward using, and behavioral intention have a significant and strong influence on Gambia's e-government usage intention. In a study of how Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) explain and predict users' acceptance of information technology in Gambia, Lin et. At., found that the core constructs of the TAMs (information quality, perceived usefulness, perceived use and behavioral intention significantly affects Gambian citizen' attitudes to use e-government services. Al-adawi et al., [14] investigated how citizens perceived e-government as a primary government interaction channel and the factors that affect their level of usage. The study found that the nature of trust in e-government is the main reason which influence citizens' usage of e-government. In studying users' assessment of e-governance online services, Agrawal et al., [13] found that reliability, resourcefulness and utility are that most influential dimensions of e-governance online-service quality. An exploratory study by Gilmore and Souze of assessing the quality of e-governance services in India using face-to-face interview of 30 consumers in the state of Hyderabad, the researchers found that most of the respondents ranked user requirement design category, reliability of services, knowledge of service provider and ease of access as the most essential factors in determining the quality of e-governance services. Previous studies show that demographic and other individual characteristics play an important role in the citizens' attitudes toward technology. It was found that these factors have significantly affect citizens' adoption of e-government services (Mwangakal [2]. The findings of these studies gave evidence that the usage government website by citizens is not only determined by the interoperability, functionality, trust, reliability and resourcefulness of the websites, but also the perceptions of citizens have toward the e-government services which might be influenced by the demographic characteristics such as gender, education, nature of employment...etc. In the adoption and usage pattern of a system, the topic of e-governance is a new and emerging one, especially if one examine this pattern within the context of Arab countries. Researchers have given greater attention to the supply side of e-government related issues such as strategies and policy technical issues, Functionality, trust, quality, and interoperability (Venkatesh et al., [7]; Al Shibly and Tadros, [9]; Agrawal [13]; Al-adawi et al., [14]; al-Shafi and Weerakkody, [15]), however, little attention has been given to

the citizens perspective. This research is a step forward in measuring citizens' perceptions of some selected aspects in e-governance and thus adding to the few researches done in this area, especially within the context of India. Choudrie and Dwivedi [12] examined the citizens awareness and adoption of e-government initiatives in the United Kingdom (UK), employing data collected from the households. Findings of this suggest that demographic characteristics of citizens such as age, gender, education and social class have an imperative role in explaining the citizen's awareness and adoption of e-government services in the household. Rhee and Kim [23] examined the influence of socio-demographic factors towards the adoption and use of the Internet in South Korea using data extracted through face-to-face interview with more than 1000 respondents and they found that the social support from family members has as much effect on the internet users' perceptions. Other characteristics, such as age, educational and the perception of the benefits from internet use proved to be significant factors in the internet adoption as well. But income level has no effect on internet adoption. Singh et al., [11] examined the potential of e-governance initiatives in reducing the corruption of different countries, namely, India, Ethiopia and Fiji. The study surveyed citizens perception of how e-governance could fight corruption in those three countries. The study found that e-governance initiatives, in the perceptions of respondents, positively related to improved government-citizen relationships and corruption reduction. To further understand, citizens attitudes towards e-government and e-governance within a UK context, Kolsaker and Lee-Kelley [8] collected data from 3000 citizens of a relatively prosperous town in South-East England. Findings indicate that users and nonusers perceive moderate value in e-government for knowledge acquisition and communication, but little as a vehicle of democratic engagement. Furthermore, those using e-government frequently are more positive than those using e-governance. In examining the factors that are associated with the level of citizen satisfaction with government transparency, Different studies found that younger generation are the most active users of e-government website and free in expressing their opinions related to issues of service delivery compared to older generation. Furthermore, the results indicate that older generation tends to be more satisfied with the transparency of the local government in service delivery.

3. METHODOLOGY:

Researches on users' satisfaction of e-government have been extensively performed in developed countries and to a lesser extent in developing countries. The present study is an attempt to measure of users' satisfaction with some aspects of e-governance in India. Specifically, the paper examines empirically, the users opinions and perceptions as indicators in judging whether there is (or not) a good practices of e-governance in India. The study is an attempt to measure the level of users' satisfaction with three dimensions of e-governance namely: Transparency; Collaborative governance and Involvement.

The objective of this study is to measure the extent by which government institutions transfer the relationship with citizens from a passive to active participation. The transition from passive information access to active citizen participation will support and simplify governance for all parties (government, citizens and businesses) in India.

Based on published literatures on e-governance [8], [11], the Author selects three dimensions of e-governance, namely, Openness; Collaborative governance; and Participation. A structured questionnaire was utilized in collecting the data about users' satisfaction with e-governance practices. In spite of the well known limitations of this approach to data collection, the structured approach was, on the balance, deemed reasonable in producing satisfactory data. The questionnaire consists of two parts. Part (1) contains questions on the respondents' nationality, the type of employment; sex; and educational level.

Part (2) of the questionnaire contains twenty items which measure the three dimensions of e-governance. Each of the three dimensions is measured using a Likert scale (ranging from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree). A pilot test was conducted using thirty users internet technology to ascertain the clarity of the instrument and accordingly, revisions were made to eliminate ambiguities, inadequate wording, and hidden biases. A Cronbach's coefficient alpha was computed to assess the reliability of the items used in measuring respondents' perception of three e-governance dimensions. A satisfactory coefficient of 0.89 was attained. The study focuses on citizens who use e-government and have internet access to file applications or using e-government in their work. The researcher preferred to distribute the questionnaires on a face-to-face basis to eliminate any misunderstanding. Only Citizens who were willing to participate and fill the questionnaire were approached using simple random sampling. The means, reliability assessment, and T-test were carried out using the SPSS statistical package. The level of significance was set at the conventional 0.05. The Scheffe method of multiple comparisons was used to determine the significantly differing categories for each independent variable (sex, age, nationality, type of employment, and educational level) for post hoc analysis. The integration of information and services from various government agencies to help citizens and other stakeholders get seamless services; and participation which reflects the extent by which citizens feel part of an active participants in democracy and whether being consulted and their opinions are matters in decision making process..

4. CONCLUSIONS:

The aim of this study is to increase understanding of citizens perceptions of e-governance. The study investigated the demographic differences in terms of (gender, level of education, nationality, and type of employment) as social indicators by employing the means, reliability assessment. It is bring into being that there are differences in level of satisfaction towards the three dimensions of e-governance. Hence at this point the equality of e-governance services may have to give way to customization of government website to meet the unique needs of different groups (i.e) Gender, age, education and nature of employment affect clients' perceptions of the e-governance services provided. Therefore, the design and delivery services of government website must address the issue of the varied nature of the clients and how best the front-office and back-office management staff can coordinate efforts for flexibly serve their needs. The less favorable satisfaction of the respondents with three dimensions of e-governance suggests that either there is a lack of awareness among them or there is low trust in government website. The e-governance literature has emphasized that citizens who use ICTs will benefit from services and consequently be encouraged to access the information and knowledge about the political process and be prepared to express opinions in order to bring clarity to the decision making process. The citizens needs of participation in the political process to be explored within the context of power relations between the government and its citizens. To conclude, that there is a need for government to understand the citizens attitudes and their willingness to adopt e-government portals for better services.

REFERENCES:

1. Heeks, R., *Understanding eGovernance for Development*, Institute for Development Policy and Management, Manchester, 2001
2. Mwangakala, Hilda. A., "The Effect of Demographic Characteristics on Citizens' Usage of Government Websites", Social Science Research Network, September 14, 2012 <http://dx.doi.org/102139/ssm>.
3. Lenihan, D. "Realigning governance: from e-government to edemocracy" OECD Centre for Collaborative Government, 2002: www.collaborativeeegovernment.com (accessed 3 December 2007)
4. Gartner Group: *Web Services: An e-Government Perspective*, 2nd FIG Regional Conference, Marrakech, Morocco, December 2 – 5, 2003
5. http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=3038&URL_DO=DO_PRINTPAGE&URL_SECTION=201.html
6. Murad, Mohammad Hasan. , "Improving Transparency Through Right to Information and E-governance: A Bangladesh Perspective", *Open Government: A Journal on Freedom of Information*, Vol. 6, Issue 1, 2010, pp. 1-18
7. Venkatesh, V., Morris, M., Davis, G., and Davis, F. , "User Acceptance of Information Technology: Toward a Unified View", *MIS Quarterly*, 27: 3., 2003 pp. 425-478
8. Kolsaker, Ailsa. And Lee-Kelley, Liz., "Citizens' Attitudes Towards E-government and E-governance: A UK Study", *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 21. No.7, 2008, pp.723-38
9. Al Shibly, Halitham Hmoud. & Tadors, Ibrahim H., "Employee's Perceptions towards Electronic Government in Jordan", *European Journal of Scientific Research*, Vol. 48, No.2, 2010 pp. 169-176
10. Christensen, Tom. & Laegreid, Per. (2010), "Civil Servants' Perceptions Regarding ICT Use in Norwegian Central Government", *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, Vol. 7, Issue 1, 2010, pp. 3-2
11. Singh, Gurmeet., Pathak, R.D., & Naz, Rafia., "E-governance for improved public sector service delivery in India, Ethiopia and Fiji", *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 2010, pp. 254-275
12. Choudrie, Jyoti & Dwivedi, Yogesh. , A Survey of Citizens' Awareness and Adoption of E-Government Initiatives. The 'Government Gateway': A united Kingdom Perspective, eGovernment Workshop' 05 (eGOV05), 2005 Brunel University, West Landon, UK
13. Agrawal, Anand., Shah, Pragya., & Wadhwa, Varun. , EGOSQ – Users' Assessment of E-Governance Online-Service: A quality Measurement Instrumentation, Presented at International Conference on E-governance, 28th – 30th December, Hyderabad, India, 2007, pp. 231-244
14. Al-adawi, Z., Yousafzai, S., & Pallister, J. Paper Presented at the Second International Conference on Innovations in Information Technology (IIT'05), Dubai, UAE, September 26-28, 2005
15. Alshehri, Mohammed., Drew, Steve., Thamer, Alhussain., and Alghamdi, Rayed., The Effects of Website Quality on Adoption of EGovernment Services: An Empirical Study Applying UTAUT Model Using SEM, 23rd Australasian Conference on Information Systems, 3-5 Dec 2012, Geelong, Australia
16. Lin, Fenayi., Fofanah, Seedy S., & Liang, Deron, Assessing Citizens Adoption of e-government Initiatives in Gambia: A Validation of the Technology Acceptance Model in Information Systems Success, *Government Information Quarterly*, Vo. 28, Issue 2, 2011, pp. 271-279