AWARENESS ABOUT E-GOVERNANCE SERVICES: A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THOOTHUKUDI DISTRICT OF TAMILNADU

Dr. M. NEELA DEVI

Assistant Professor of Economics, V.O.Chidambaram College, Thoothukudi– 628 008
Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli – 627012, Tamil Nadu, India.

Abstract

Better information means more power in the hands of the people. Rural development has benefited greatly from the use of ICT in recent years. Advances in information and communication technology (ICT) can be used to empower rural residents by providing them with relevant information and services. Many rural e-governance programmes have had significant positive results, highlighting the potential of such initiatives in advancing rural development. On the other hand, rural areas face several challenges when it comes to providing services via electronic means. The goal of Digital India is to transform India into a knowledge-based economy and a technologically advanced society. Public awareness of e-government services and problems with public use of e-government websites are being examined in Thoothukudi, a Tamilnadu district. The primary data was collected from 175 respondents in a random sampling procedure. It was possible to obtain secondary data from a variety of sources, such as research reports and journals and libraries and magazines. Analyses were conducted using percentages, mean, correlations and chi-squares. According to the study, there is a significant association between knowledge of e-governance services and socio-economic characteristics like gender, family income, family size, and marital status at the 5% level with a P-value of less than 0.05. Sample respondents were found to have a strong connection between their internet access and their understanding of e-governance. E-governance can be promoted through various means, such as public service announcements television and newspaper ads, to raise the general public's awareness of the concept. On the other hand, promotional materials should be clear about the services offered to the public.

Keywords: e-governance, well-being, Digital India, public policy information, employment and business opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, implementing such e-Government programmes will make it difficult to improve the social and economic well-being of rural residents. With the help of E-Government, citizens can play a more active role in government, which improves democracy. e-Government includes the Prime Minister's Portal, Aadhar, online tax filing and payment, digital land management systems, and the popular entrance exam.

Information and services such as government forms and services, public policy, employment and business opportunities, voting, tax filing, registration or renewal of a business licence, fine payment and submission of public comments are available on most Indian government departments (Chander & Kush 2011).

Government information and services must be fully accessible for all citizens, including those with disabilities (Sharma et al., 2008). According to the guidelines, all Indian E-Government websites must be accessible to all citizens (NIC 2009).

E-Government projects can only be successful if they are accessible and user-friendly, and this should be reflected in the E-Government websites (Huang 2010). One of the most important components of accessibility is the website's objects, which serve as a conduit for communication between the system and its users (Jeng 2005).

Website designers should put accessibility for people with disabilities at the top of their list of priorities (Wu et al. 2009). As a result, if EGovernment's websites are not accessible, it will continue to have problems connecting with users. According to Mukherjee and Sahoo, it is widely believed that democrats will be more engaged if they have better internet access to government information (2010).

This infrastructure is being built by the Indian government through various initiatives and policies, such as state data centres, statewide area networks, common service centres, the national e-governance service delivery gateway, state e-governance service delivery gateway, and the mobile e-governance service delivery gateway (MSDG) (Ministry of Information Technology, 2017).

As a result, e-Government initiatives must be put in place to ensure that citizens have easy and transparent access to the services provided by the government. The government-citizen relationship is jeopardised if appropriate levels of accessibility for E-Government services cannot be achieved (Mukherjee & Sahoo 2010). Consequently, this article focuses on public awareness

of e-government services in the Thoothukudi district of Tamilnadu and issues with public use of e-government websites.

Role of e-Governance in Rural Development

Sixty-eight percent of India's population lives in rural areas, with poverty rates of 21.9%, according to the 2011 census (Census data, 2011). (BPL, 2017). Poor transportation, inadequate communication and limited energy supplies, health and hygiene, and cultural differences continue to stifle rural development. Rural development has long relied on eGovernment as a critical tool.

A wide range of issues, including corruption, bureaucracy, and poverty in rural areas, are addressed. In other words, e-Government is of a wide range of applications. In addition to government-to-government services, various other options include government-to-citizen, government-to-business, and government-to-consumer (G2N). e-Government results will be more widely known and appreciated by citizens only if the many standalone systems that have been developed are properly networked and integrated (Margaret Rouse, 2010).

Electronic government (e-government) that focuses on transactions between the government and citizens is known as G2C (Government-to-Citizen). Government-to-citizen (G2C) aims to connect citizens to their governments by keeping them informed, providing details about government actions, conversing with citizens and encouraging accountability, listening to citizens and encouraging democracy, and improving public services. Improved services will be provided to the public through a single delivery method (Sameer Sachdeva, 2002).

Land records must be computerised as soon as possible due to flaws in current manual systems. Land records data updating is cumbersome and time-consuming in every district and circle office because of the manual land record system's large blocks of land records data, inconsistency in record maintenance and time- and cost-consuming mutation workflow process processes.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To get a better idea of the participants' socio-economic status in the study.
2. To ascertain the public's familiarity with e-governance services.
3. Knowledge of e-governance needs to be correlated with information about internet connectivity.
4. This study aims to determine where rural residents first learned about e-government services and examine the issues associated with the use of e-governance portals.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi district was the focus of the study. A simple random sampling method was used to gather data from 175 participants as a representative sample. A pre-planned interview schedule was used for the personal interview method. The most important information was gathered in December 2021. This information comes from various sources such as academic research reports and publications such as books and journals. Percentage analysis, mean, correlation, and chi-square were among the research methods employed.

TABLE 1
AGE-WISE CLASSIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sl.No	Age	Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 20	11	6.29
2	21 – 30	23	13.14
3	31 – 40	36	20.57
4	41 – 50	68	38.86
5	51 and above	37	21.14
	Total	175	100

Source: Primary data

Table 1 estimated that 6.29 percent of respondents were under the age of 20, and 13.14 percent were between 21 and 30. 20.57 percent of respondents are between the ages of 31 and 40, while 38.86 percent are between 41 and 50. A whopping 21.14 percent of those who took the survey are over 51. According to the study, most respondents are between the ages of 41 and 50. The average age of participants was 41.04.

TABLE 2
GENDER WISE CLASSIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sl.No	Sex	Respondents	Percentage
1	Male	132	75.43
2	Female	43	24.57
	Total	175	100

Source: Primary data

Table 2 shows that out of the 175 respondents, 75.43 percent are male, and 24.57 percent are female.

TABLE 3
EDUCATION QUALIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sl.No	Education qualification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	School Level	24	13.71
2	College Level	57	32.57
3	Professional / Technical Level	81	46.29

4	Illiterate	13	7.43
	Total	175	100

Source: Primary data

Out of 175 people surveyed, 46.29 percent have a professional or technical level of education, followed by 32.57 percent who have a college education (see Table 3). Only 13.71 percent of those polled had completed high school, and 7.43 percent were illiterate.

TABLE 4
MARITAL STATUS

Sl. No.	Marital Status	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Married	138	78.86
2.	Unmarried	31	17.71
3.	Widow/ Widower	6	3.43
	Total	175	100

Source: Primary data.

One hundred and eighty-eight (78.86%) of the 175 respondents are married, as shown in Table 4. There are 31 singles (17.71 percent) and 6 widows/widowers (3.43 percent).

TABLE 5
FAMILY SIZE OF RESPONDENTS

Sl. No.	Family Size	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Below 3	52	29.71
2.	3 – 5	94	53.72
3.	Five and above	29	16.57
	Total	175	100

Source: Primary data.

Table 5 shows that 53.72 percent of those polled have a family of three to five members, followed by 29.71 percent of those polled who have a family of two or fewer, and 16.57 percent of those polled have a family of five or more. It displays that most of them have a family of three to five members. The average number of people in a family was 3.74.

TABLE 6

FAMILY INCOME PER MONTH OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sl.No	Family Income	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Less than Rs.5,000	16	9.14
2	Rs.5,001 – Rs.10,000	19	10.86
3	Rs.10,001 – Rs.15,000	31	17.71
4	Rs.15,001 – Rs.20,000	71	40.57

| 5. | Above Rs.20,001 | 38 | 21.72 |
| | Total | 175 | 100 |

Source: Primary data

Among the 175 respondents in the Thoothukudi region, 71 (40.57 percent) have a family income of Rs.15,001-Rs.20, 000; 38 (21.72 percent) have a family income of more than Rs. 20,001; and 31 (17.71 percent) have a family income of Rs.10,001-15,000. More than half of them earn between Rs.5,000 and $10,000 per month as a family, while less than 10% earn less than Rs.5,000 a month. The gross monthly income of the family is Rs. 15243.36.

TABLE 7
AWARENESS OF E-GOVERNANCE SERVICES

Sl.No	Awareness	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	121	69.14
2	No	54	30.86
	Total	175	100

Source: Primary data

Table 7 shows that while 69.14% of those polled are aware of the issue, 30.86% are not.

TABLE 8

LEVEL OF AWARENESS OF PUBLIC ABOUT E-GOVERNANCE SERVICES (n= 175)

Sl.No	Level of awareness	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Pan card	65	37.14
2	E-Filing	32	18.29
3	Insurance	55	31.43
4	Aadhaar printing and Enrolment	81	46.29
5.	Passport	98	56.00
6.	Health Department Services	63	36.00
7.	Agricultural Services	43	24.57
8.	Transport Services	98	56.00
9.	Revenue Department Services	54	30.86
10.	Public Distribution System	82	46.86
11.	Social Welfare Services	38	21.71
12.	Citizen Registration	26	14.86

Source: Primary data

Table 8 displays that 46.29 percent of respondents are aware of the government's Aadhar printing and enrolment services provided via e-services. The government offers passport services, and 56.00 percent of respondents know the e-services available. According to the government's e-service portal, 37.14 percent and 31.43 percent of respondents are aware of the government's Pan

card and insurance services. 18.29% and 36.00% of those polled knew or had heard of the e-services offered by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). 30.86% of respondents are aware of e-government services related to the revenue department services provided by the government. For e-services based on public distribution and agriculture, 46.86 percent and 24.57 percent of those polled are aware of the issue. The e-service portal was also used by 14.86 percent of respondents to find information on Citizen Registration (Birth, Death, Marriage, name change etc.). Finally, 21.71% and 56-00% are aware of e-services based on social welfare and transportation services, respectively.

TABLE 9

THE EFFECT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS ON AWARENESS OF E-GOVERNANCE SERVICES USING CHI-SQUARE TEST

Socio-Economic variables	Chi-Square values	P Values	Significance
Age	28.63	0.32	Not Significant
Sex	32.81	0.001*	Significant
Family Income	10.22	0.001*	Significant
Educational Qualification	6.04	0.18	Not Significant
Marital Status	18.57	0.001*	Significant
Family Size	21.38	0.001*	Significant

* Significant level of 5 per cent.

The above table shows that at the 5 percent level, the correlation between awareness of e-governance services and socio-economic variables, namely sex, family income, family size and marital status, is important as the P-value is less than 0.05. For these variables thus, the null hypothesis has been dismissed. The remaining socio-economic factors, namely age and educational qualifications, are not significantly correlated with awareness of e-governance services at a 5 percent level. For these variables thus, the null hypothesis has been accepted.

TABLE 10
CORRELATION BETWEEN INFORMATION TOWARDS INTERNET CONNECTIVITY AND AWARENESS OF E-GOVERNANCE

Variables	"r"	Significance
Rural Development	1.364	Significant at 0.01 level
E-governance		

Table 10 shows that the correlation coefficient of information towards internet connectivity and awareness of E-governance among sample respondents is 1.364 at the degrees of freedom 49, which is more than the theoretical value "r" of 0.330 at 0.01 level. Hence it is clear that the difference between the two variables is highly significant. Therefore, in the light of the above result, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between information towards internet connectivity and awareness of E-governance among sample respondents.

TABLE 11
SOURCE OF AWARENESS

Sl.No	Source of Awareness	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	T.V	14	8.00
2	Friends	29	16.57
3	Relatives	26	14.86
4	Government Programmes	24	13.71
5.	Spouse	28	16.00
6.	Colleague	21	12.00
7.	Newspapers	33	18.86
	Total	175	100

Source: Primary data

Table 11 shows that 16.57 percent of respondents are aware of the government's e-Governance services through friends, 14.86 percent are aware through relatives, 18.86 percent are aware through newspapers, while 8.00 percent respondents are aware through TV media, 16.00 percent are aware through their spouse, 12.00 percent are aware through colleagues, and the remaining 13.71 percent are aware through programmes conducted by the government.

TABLE 12
PROBLEMS OF USE OF E-GOVERNANCE WEBSITES

Sl.No	Problems	No. of	Percentage
1	Information is out-of-date and no exactness	53	30.29
2	No safety or confidentiality through internet	31	17.71
3	Poor connectivity and infrastructure	38	21.71
4	Mostly server not working	29	16.57
5.	Difficulties of using the government websites and boring nature	24	13.72
	Total	175	100

Source: Primary data

Table 12 illustrates the issues and reasons why e-governance websites are not used. According to 30.29 percent of the respondents, the information provided is outdated and unreliable. 17.71 percent of those surveyed showed no regard for online security or privacy. There was a 21.71% share of the population with poor connectivity and infrastructure. According to 16.57 percent of those polled, most servers were unavailable. Finally, 13.71 percent of those polled expressed dissatisfaction with the government's websites due to their difficulty in navigation and general dullness.

CONCLUSION

Most respondents are aware of the government's e-services through word of mouth from close friends and family, which is a subjective form of influence, resulting in a greater proclamation of the government's e-services. E-governance can be promoted through various means, such as public service announcements television and newspaper ads, to raise the general public's awareness of the concept. On the other hand, promotional materials should be clear about the services offered to the public.

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