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Citizen Centric E-Governance - Challenges and Issues: A Study in Rayagada District

¹Mr. Amiya Kumar Sahoo, ²Dr. Anita Patra, ³Dr. Dasarathi Sahu

¹Associate Professor at GIET University, Gunupur, Odisha,

²Dean at CUTM and Dean at Jagannath Institute of Technology and management

³Head of the Department (HoD), in the department of Business Administration, Utkal University, Odisha

¹amiyasahoo@giet.edu.in, ²anita@cutm.ac.in, ³d_sahu2000@yahoo.com

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Abstract

In India, e-governance has come to effect since 2006 after the National e-governance projects (NeGP) established by Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY). Under NeGP many Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) had started out of which, the Common Service Centers(CSC) Scheme is one of the important MMPS, for rural village level entrepreneurs(VLEs) and citizens at large. For an improved delivery system for public services in an efficient way, e-Governance is the useful tool and which helps in reducing the digital divide too. Different government sector & public sector agencies have taken lot of steps to popularize the CSC scheme in rural India for the benefits of citizens, who can get the services delivered at door step. The objectives behind such scheme are to make the government more accessible, effective, accountable and efficient to its citizens. To achieve optimum benefits out of various e-governance services, some citizen oriented approaches has to be adopted for better delivery of services is highly essential. Despite all initiatives by various agencies to make the CSC project popular for government service delivery there are many challenges exists to satisfy the needs of the citizens. The objective of this research paper is, to find out and focus on the challenges in developing citizen centric e-governance centers through CSCs at Rayagada district of Odisha.

Keywords: e-governance, Common Service Centers, VLEs.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Rayagada district of Odisha is a tribal dominating district with a male literacy rate of 61.04% and female literacy rate of 39.19% (www.censusindia.co.in) and average of 49.76% (Census 2011, www.rayagada.nic.in). As per the NeGP the district should have 445 rolled out CSCs (as total sanctioned) but till the end of 2018 only 195 CSCs are rolled out in the district which is only 43% of the total sanctioned CSCs. This information and communication technology (ICT) enabled centers are operated in citizen's accessible zone by VLEs in a public private partnership (PPP) mode to provide various government services. The objectives behind this CSC scheme are to make the

government more accessible, effective, accountable and efficient to its citizens. The various governments like union government , different state governments, PSUs and other agencies are putting continues effort to make the program successful , so that the citizens at large must get all benefits , but despite that there are many challenges in developing citizen centric e-governance. So the researcher's objective here is to focus more on the issues or challenges faced by the citizens.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Through this study the researcher is trying to test two of the research objectives and they are as follows 1.To find out the influence of CSCs in rural area for e-governance services and 2. To understand

the acceptance of technology (ICT) by citizens of Rayagada to avail e-Governance services.

III. THE FUNCTIONAL DETAILS OF CSCS AT RAYAGADA AND THE SURVEY

Table 1. Functional CSCs and number of citizen on survey block wise

| Slno | Block name | Total no. of functional CSCs as on 2018 | No's of CSCs on survey | No's of Citizens on survey |
|------|-----------------|---|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | Gunupur | 28 | 6 | 60 |
| 2 | Bisamcuttack | 22 | 6 | 60 |
| 3 | Rayagada | 21 | 6 | 60 |
| 4 | Muniguda | 28 | 5 | 50 |
| 5 | Kolnara | 14 | 5 | 50 |
| 6 | Kalayansinghpur | 13 | 5 | 50 |
| 7 | Padampur | 22 | 5 | 50 |
| 8 | Ramnaguda | 18 | 5 | 50 |
| 9 | Kashipur | 17 | 5 | 50 |
| 10 | Chandrapur | 2 | 2 | 20 |
| 11 | Gudari | 10 | 5 | 50 |
| | Total | 195 | 55 | 550 |

(SOURCE: PRIMARY DATA)

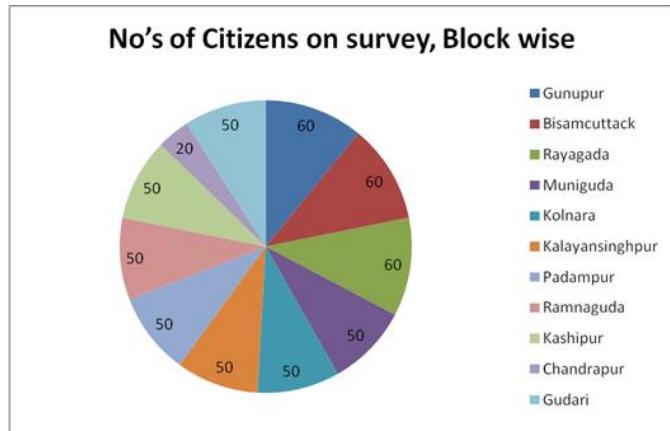


Figure – 1 Block wise citizens under survey

As per the data available in Table-1 and Figure -1 , Rayagada district has 195 operational CSCs and the researcher has considered 55 CSCs selected for survey purpose 5 CSCs per block. Similarly from each CSC users the researchers has considered 10 citizens for survey purpose so a total of 550 citizens are covered under the survey.

IV. IMPORTANT OUTCOMES OF THE CITIZEN'S SURVEY

The researches have reached out to many citizens to collect the primary data about the services provided to them by VLEs at CSCs. A questionnaire was designed and distributed to the users of CSCs personally and the data collected and analyzed which is available in Table-2. The 55 CSCs were in survey (Table-1) and from each CSC the researchers have contacted 10 citizens randomly for the survey purpose. The collected data then analyzed and some major findings have come out which is present in Table-2.

Table – 2 Important Outcomes Of The Citizen's Survey

| SLNO | THE PARAMETERS | OUTCOME (In %) |
|------|---|----------------|
| 1 | Gender (male) | 78.73 |
| 2 | Marital status (married) | 59.27 |
| 3 | Qualification (graduation) | 41.82 |
| | Age group (18 to 30) | 24.00 |
| 4 | Age group (31 to 40) | 44.73 |
| | Age group (41 to 50) | 21.27 |
| | Profession (student) | 16.55 |
| 5 | Profession (farmer) | 48.00 |
| | Profession (businessman) | 24.73 |
| 6 | Computer literate (yes) | 21.09 |
| 7 | If yes used computer at CSC (yes) | 5.09 |
| 8 | Family members used CSC services (yes) | 16.00 |
| 9 | Aware about CSC but not using (yes) | 54.18 |
| 10 | CSC providing better e-gov. services (yes) | 59.27 |
| 11 | How often you visit CSC (Very often) | 38.36 |
| 12 | Getting services as and when required (always) | 61.82 |
| 13 | CSC provides all govt. services needed by you (agree) | 58.36 |
| 14 | Do you expect more services (agree) | 61.45 |
| 15 | Getting services as per govt. rate (always) | 25.09 |
| 16 | Are you satisfied with the services (always) | 61.64 |
| 17 | CSC owner greets you properly (always) | 78.36 |

| | | |
|----|--|-------|
| 18 | Do you get assistance from VLE (Very often) | 85.27 |
| 19 | Whenever you visit CSC do you find it open (always) | 68.36 |
| 20 | Normal waiting time (between 30 to 45 minutes) | 61.64 |
| 21 | Reasons behind waiting time (Rush at counter) | 54.91 |
| | Reasons behind waiting time (Link failed) | 18.73 |
| 22 | Do you pay all your utility bills at CSC (sometimes) | 87.45 |
| 23 | Do you use your smart phone for e-gov. activities(sometimes) | 37.27 |

(SOURCE: PRIMARY DATA)

V. ANALYSIS OF SURVEY DATA

A. Gender of Citizen: The data available in Table-2 serial no -1 shows that, most of the male citizens are the users of the CSCs. The exact percentage is around 79%. So the real challenges are that how to attract more numbers of female citizens to make use of the CSC services.

B. Marital Status: Out of the total no's of citizens under survey 59.27% are married and this gives the idea that more and more services to be added which can attract more married persons to use the CSCs.

C. Qualification: As per the survey result around 42% of citizens are graduates and remaining 58% are mixture of post graduation and under graduates and illiterate too. The challenge here is to create more awareness amongst the educated citizens to make more and best use of the government services electronically provided at various CSCs.

D. Age Group: The survey says more number of users is from the age group of 31 to 40 ages and the percentage of users is 42%. Further the survey result says 24% of users are from the age group of 18 to 30 ages. The real challenge here is to attract senior citizens to use the services at CSCs. When asked the senior citizens, the reply is they still have the traditional mind set of getting the things done in traditional way.

E. Profession: When we analyzed the result in Table-2 serial no 5 regarding the profession of the

people we find that most of the users are farmers i.e. 48% . Then 25% are business class people. The reason is most of the young group users basically students are using smart phones so they don't like to go to CSCs to get their work done at CSCs as waiting time is more, which is a real challenge and matter of concern.

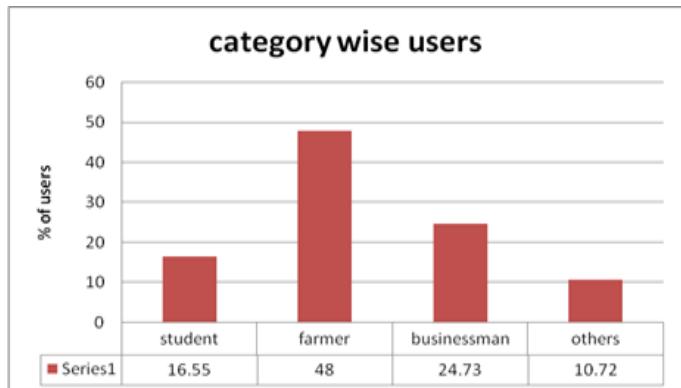


Figure-2 Category wise users of CSCs.

F. Computer literate: The data in Table-2, serial 6 shows the computer literacy percentage amongst the CSC users. The data is really shocking, that only 21% of users are computer literate.

G. If computer literate, are they using computers at CSC? : As per the point no F only 21% of CSC users are computer literate and amongst which only 5% used computers at CSCs. Many of the CSCs also are not allowing the users to use the computers either from security points of view or they have only one computer for the users. So the real challenge here is to increase the numbers of computer literates.

H. Family members used CSC services: When the question asked to the citizens about family members using CSCs only 16% said yes. So this answer clearly shows that there is very low level of awareness regarding CSCs. The challenge here is to promote and popularize the CSCs so that more and more people can be benefited.

I. Aware about CSC but not using : As per the data 54% of the users said that they are aware about the services provided by CSCs but still they are not using the reason being insecurity. So the challenge is

to ensure the citizens about the security of personal data.

J. CSC providing better e-government services:

Out of the total users 59% of the users said that CSCs are providing better services; still the challenge is to improve the percentage of users.

K. How often you visit CSC (Very often): As per the data available in Table-2 serial no 11 only 38.36% of users visit the CSCs very frequently to get their work done. So the government, VLE and other stakeholders needs to make the public awareness to the public at large.

L. Getting services as and when required: The data in table-2 shows 62% of the users said they use to get the required services as and when required, but the challenge is to improve the percentage of users so that the objective of e-government services can be fulfilled.

M. CSC provides all govt. services needed by you: Out of the total users under survey 58% users agreed that all government services are available at CSC, which are needed by the citizens from time to time. But still the 58% is not at all one encouraging figure, so the challenge is to increase this percentage too.

N. Do you expect more services: To this question, 61.45% of users agreed that they need more services to be provided to them through CSCs. So it's the job of VLEs to suggest the various services required by the users from time to time.

O. Getting services as per govt. rate: When this crucial question was asked to the users only 25% users said that they get it in government rate always. Others when asked said they even do not know what exactly the government rate for the services is. So it's a serious concern that some steps must be taken by government authorities to see to it that the rate chart in local language must be fixed at the CSC and some complain box has to be kept for customers complains.

P. Are you satisfied with the services: A total of 62% of the users said yes to this question, but this number must increase to 100% so that the objective can be fulfilled.

Q. CSC owner greets you properly: As per the data 78% of the users said that the CSC owner greets the users properly, which is a good sign but still the number needs to be improved.

R. Do you get assistance from VLE: The VLEs are supposed to extend all assistance to the customers or citizens and more than 85% said yes they get the assistance always but still there are some scopes of improving the service quality.

S. Whenever you visit CSC do you find it open : The data in Table -2 shows that more than 68% of users said the CSC is open always whenever they visit the CSC , still this percentage is not satisfactory and hence work has to be done in this regard.

T. Normal waiting time: The data available in Table-2 and the graph in figure -3 shows it clearly the waiting time is between 30 to 45 minutes for most of the customers, which is the large patch in the graph 62%. This is the major challenge in the part of all stakeholders to work hard to reduce the waiting time

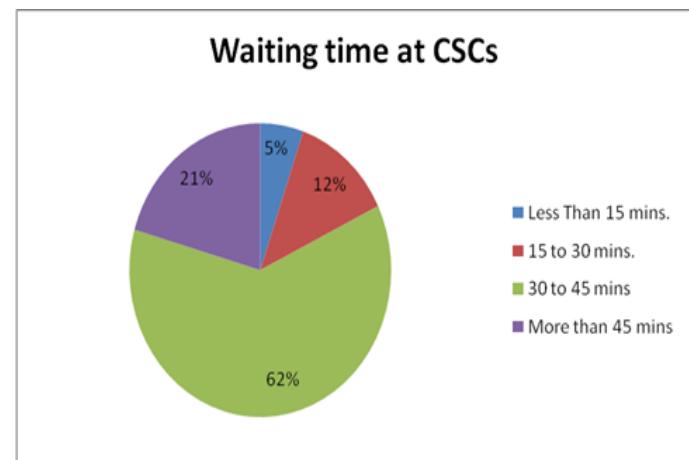


Figure – 3 Waiting time at CSCs

U. Reasons for waiting time: There are various reasons for waiting time to get the work done by the citizens. The Figure -4 shows the various reasons for

delay in providing the services. Around 55% of users said there is rush in counters and the next reason is no internet or link failed which is around 19%. No power supply at CSC is the reason for waiting time for 17.34% of users. So by seeing the figures it's the high time the government agencies need to think over it seriously.

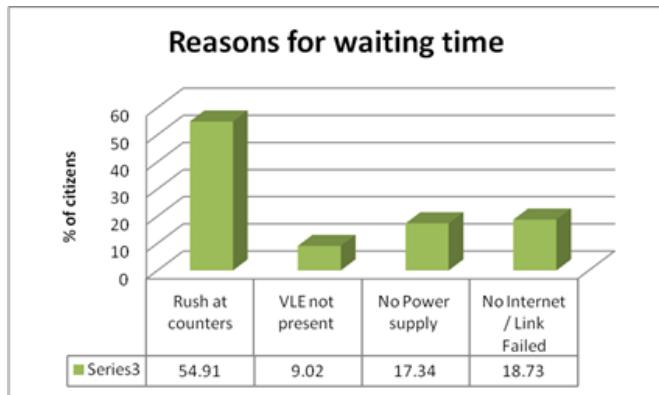


Figure – 4 Reasons for waiting time

V. Do you pay all your utility bills at CSC: The answer to this question is that more than 87% of users say sometimes they pay the utility bills at CSCs. So the matter of concern here is to create awareness amongst the users so that more and more people can pay their utility bills at the CSCs.

W. Do you use your smart phone for e-gov. activities: As per the data in Table-2 , which shows more than 37% of users are using their smart phones for e-governance service deliveries. And mostly it is by students and youths.

VI. CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING CITIZEN-CENTRIC GOVERNANCE

The Common Service Center is the single point solution for delivery of governance in electronic form to the citizen at large. These days the citizen's expectations are very high from the governments to deliver the services in an efficient, affordable and effective way. In this study the researchers have collected primary data from citizens of Rayagada through questionnaire which is analyzed in the previous section of this paper and based on the outcomes this study further focuses on various

challenges to develop citizen centric e-governance centers which can cater the need of the citizens. Some of the challenges as observed by the researchers based on the survey findings are as follows.

A. Attitude and mind set of government functionaries

It is always the executives who executes any project is the cause of any failure or success of that project. The CSC's, e-Governance is one such highly ambitious project of government of India by which delivery of government services and other services to the individual citizens, can be offered in an efficient and effective way. E-Governance cannot be possible with the change in mind set and attitude of government officials or key functionaries. The focus must be shifted from closely controlled or regimented mind set to citizen centric, so that the public at large can be benefitted. The traditional power center, from "officer centric", has to be changed as "citizen centric". So "changing the mind set" of government official is very important challenge to bring the change in the entire process of e-governance.

B. Mind set of old official systems and practices

Through CSCs a lot of efforts and technological changes have been introduced to bring service and citizen together. Yet, after decades even the net result is hardly visible in ground. As this study was very extensive, the researchers found the fact that, the old and traditional way of doing official work is the obstacle. So the old official system of doing work and the old practices need to be change quickly for an effective implementation and result oriented e-Governance.

C. Radical change has to be implemented in the thinking process of the government towards citizens problems.

Change is the only truth in the earth, which the various government agencies must admit. People in

government, used to think that public will resist any change, but with the advent of technological changes the public now is ready to accept any radical change even, for the betterment of the citizen at large. As the citizen is ready to accept any change in the process or function, the government also has to accept and address the problems of the citizen accordingly.

D. Citizen's exact needs to be analyzed and understand

The way any corporate governance, start with understanding and analyzing the requirements of the customer and accordingly the product and service is designed, in the same fashion the government agencies must analyze and understand the basic and advance need of the citizens. This can be done by using some technical tools and accordingly the service providers must be instructed to provide the services.

E. Single window service delivery system

Single window concept must be implemented by various governments for providing multiple e-governance services. One best way of achieving this is, citizens are to be encouraged to avail services through government's web portals. Opening CSCs is one of the right steps to use the ICT infrastructure by the citizens and hence saving time, money and efforts too and which really leads the productivity of the country as a whole.

F. Developing common objective and vision

The concept of "integrated service delivery" has to be intensified in various government departments, so that the common man should not visit from post to pillar for getting any service. Now-a-days time is very precious for any one, so the citizen is interested in getting everything under one umbrella. Hence there is a need of developing a common objective and vision as well , which can provide a common framework to implement various e-governance services.

G. Service excellence must be the goal

Usually in private sectors and some public sectors "service excellence" (APJ Abdul Kalam) is the mantra for success, which makes some one accountable for the service or product to be provided. Gradually the same culture has started inculcating in various government organizations too. With the introduction of technology various services are made available online to the public and which leads some amount of service excellence and that must be the primary goal of any organization.

H. Measurement of e-Governance quality

Only implementing the e-governance services is not enough, it also has to be measured from time to time regarding the quality of services provided. To measure the quality our government must adopt the followings

- Impact assessment processes for e-Governance measures
- Adoption of global best practices
- Capacity building initiatives to start

I. Adoption of scalable and extensible architecture for the changing needs

Any successful system must have a long term vision and the overall architecture must be designed in such a way, so that any change or extension in service requirement can be accommodated at any future time. The overall design of e-Governance architecture must ensure the extensibility and scalability to adapt any changing needs.

J. Citizen's privacy and security must be guaranteed

Most of the time, the citizens are worried about privacy of the information provided by them and security of the personal or banking data for which they avoid using the e-Governance services and that too in a public system at CSCs. So the government and the CSCs including the technology adopted for

public services delivery system needs to ensure sufficiently to the public at large regarding the privacy and security.

VII. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE STUDY

Rayagada district is a tribal dominating district of Odisha and the district is enabled with common service centers in all its 11 blocks to provide various government services at the door step through online portals. This study has many important outcomes regarding how to develop a citizen centric e-governance system for the public. The survey conducted amongst 550 different citizens have given many insights and based on the analysis many conclusions have come out starting from quality of services to guarantee of data privacy and security.

This study cannot be said as a complete study on developing a citizen centric e-governance system, but the researchers wish to analyze all the findings further and suggest some solutions for the challenges to develop citizen centric e-governance system.

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AUTHORS PROFILE



First Author: Mr. Amiya Kumar Sahoo is a research scholar at Centurion University of Technology & Management (CUTM), Bhubaneswar, Odisha and currently working as Associate Professor at GIET University, Gunupur, Odisha, in School of Engineering (Computer Science & Engineering Department.). Seven research papers were published on e-Governance, during the PhD work in various journal of repute in international journals of repute. Attended and presented many papers in International conferences. Is a life member of Computer Society of India (CSI) , Indian Society of Technical Education (ISTE) and life member of All India Oracle Users Group(AIOUG). Can be contacted through mail amiyasahoo@giel.edu .



Second Author: Dr. Anita Patra, working as Registrar of Centurion University of Technology and Management (CUTM). Prior to this she was working as Dean at CUTM and Dean at Jagannath Institute of Technology and management. She has completed her Post Graduation and Doctorate from Berhampur University, Odisha. She has published many research papers in various international reputed journals. Guided many Post Graduate students to submit their thesis and she also produced many doctorates under her guidance. She can be connected through anita@cutm.ac.in



Third Author: Dr. Dasarathi Sahu, currently working as Head of the Department (HoD), in the department of Business Administration, Utkal University, Odisha. He has completed his Master degree in Computer Application and also in Business Administration. He has completed his PhD from Berhampur University. He has guided many PG, MPhil and PhD students to complete their degrees. He has presented many research papers in various conferences. He also published more than 30 research papers in various international journals. He can be connected through d_sahu2000@yahoo.com