Electronic Governance Readiness Of The Municipal Local Government Units In Biliran, Philippines

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Abstract:-The study generally aimed to ascertain the readiness to electronic governance of the Municipal Local Government Units in Biliran Province, Philippines. It utilized the descriptive survey research design involving 65 respondents. Mostof the respondents were computer literates whose nature of work was categorized as "clerical". They "moderatelyagree" with respect to effectiveness of e-governance to their jobs. On the other hand, their level of readiness to implementelectronicgovernance in their respective jobs was "moderately high".Municipal Local Government Units in Biliran may intensify efforts to undertake relevant, timely and high quality research and development programs that will generate technologies to meet the needs of the office.

Keywords: electronic governance; readiness; employees; local government units

I.   INTRODUCTION

Electronic governance (e-governance) is indispensable within the context of a country's development. Its aim is to enhance access to and delivery of government services to benefit citizens, business partners and employees. It also aims to help strengthen government's drive toward effective governance and increased transparency to better manage a country's social and economic resources for development.

However, Local Government Units in the Philippines are struggling to keep with computerization. They were faced with quite a number of challenges that hinder them from jumping into the information communication technology (ICT) bandwagon. Foremost of these are the absence of a good telecommunications infrastructure in some areas, the skyrocketing cost of information technology (IT) solutions packages available in the market and the lack of funds to finance ICT projects.

The problem is not new in the province of Biliran. The lack of ICT resources in the Municipal Local Government Units (MLGUs) in the said province confined them to transact business at a snail's pace because some of the offices still resorted to manual operations.

It is along this context that the readiness to e-governance of the MLGUs in Biliran, Philippines would be looked into and propose possible solutions to address the ICT needs of the locality.

II.   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following literature is reviewed to provide support and substance to the study.

An e-governance readiness survey revealed that computerization in the Philippine government dates back to 1971 when the National Computer Center (NCC) was established by Executive Order No. 322. NCC was designated the primary agency in the government with the responsibility of directing IT use for national development and rationalizing computerization in the country.

Kling (2000) stated that ICT is considered one of the cornerstone industries of the country's development strategy. Like many other countries in the world, the Philippines recognizes the strategic value of ICT as a tool for economic development and also as a way to improve the governance of public organization. Over the last few years, the Philippine government has initiated the services of policies and plans to prepare the country for competitive position in the global marketplace.

In July 2000, a Government Information Systems Plan (GISP) was approved and adopted as a framework and guide for all computerization efforts in government (EO 265). The GISP aims to create a system of governance that will lead to: faster and better delivery of public goods and services; greater transparency in government operations; increased capacities of public sector organizations; and proactive participation of citizens in governance.

Bhatnagar (2004) disclosed that e-governance will mean less governance. It reduces paper work to bare minimum leading to downsizing the government set-up. The citizens benefit because there is transparency, efficiency and integrity in the dealings with the state. O'Looney (2002) stressed that in the government, the transition to electronic delivery of services will not only involve the changes to the systems, procedures and processes of the relevant services but will also affect the way in which the public and business community deals

with the government. Customers will no longer need to interface directly with government officials in order to secure a particular service.

Gronlund (2005) pointed out that the implementation of e-government involves not only a profound transformation in the way government interacts with the governed but also the reinvention of its internal processes and organization.

With respect to e-governance readiness, the establishment of telecommunications and internet infrastructure requires investment either by government or private sector organizations. The absence of strategic plans and budgets might well be one of the most significant factors inhibiting the growth of internet infrastructure (Layne, et al., 2001).

The study of Eve (2000) provided information about how personnel in the public agency responded to the office automation. It also explored that for readiness to e-governance, personnel needed more computer skills training.

Lyke (2000) also emphasized the role of training as an intervention tool in the planned change as reported by staff, department managers and trainers. He pointed out the importance of training of personnel for the effective implementation of the computer-based office automation project.

The foregoing review of literature is significantly related and served as foundation in conceptualizing this study.

III.   OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study generally aimed to ascertain the readiness to e-governance of the employees in the MLGUs in Biliran, Philippines.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:
1.   What is the profile of the MLGU employees in terms of:
1.1   computer literacy and
1.2   1.2 nature of work?
2.   What are the perceptions of the MLGU employees about e-governance? and
3.   What is the level of readiness of the MLGU employees to implement e-governance?

Framework of the Study

This study valued the following theoretical and conceptual framework as its strong foundation of its proceedings.

Theoretical framework.This study is anchored on the theory of Grant (1991) where resources are inputs into the production process.

The individual resources of the organization include items of equipment, skills of individual employees, money, and so on. For the resources to contribute into the production process, cooperation and coordination are required among employees.

With respect to the present study, the computer literacy skills of the employees of the MLGUs in the province of Biliran, their readiness to implement e-governance and the ICT equipment served as inputs in order to provide basic public services to the clientele.

Conceptual framework. This study anchored on the e-governance readiness of the MLGUs in Biliran, Philippines. To deeply appraise the intention of the study, it looked into the profile of the employees in terms of computer literacy and nature of work. It also looked into the employees' perceptions about e-governance and their level of readiness to implement said governance.

Figure 1 presents theconceptual framework of the study.
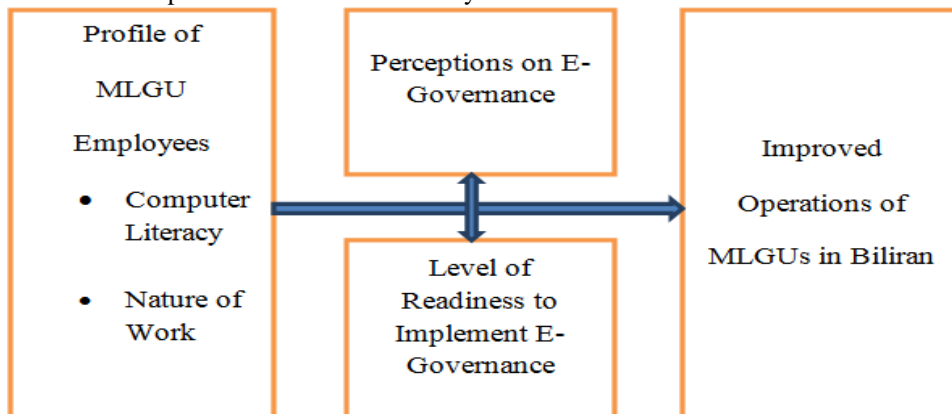
Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study was a descriptive research focusing on the readiness in e-governance of the MLGUs in Biliran, Philippines. The readiness in e-governance presented was limited to narrative analysis which was derived through survey and personal interviews conducted by the researcher to the respondents.

The study involved 65 employee-respondents from the 3 out of the 8 MLGUs in Biliranthus limiting the generalizability of the results of this study to a certain employee group.

III. METHODOLOGY

This segment of the study discusses the methods used. It describes and discusses the research design, research locale, research subjects, research instrument, data gathering procedure, data scoring and statistical treatment of data.

Research Design

This study used the descriptive method of research where it described the data obtained from the survey. The standard survey was the exact method used in this study because it permitted looking into the personal profile of the MLGU employees in Biliran in terms of computer literacy and nature of work; their perceptions on e-governance and their level of readiness to implement e-governance.

Research Locale

There were 8 municipalities in the province of Biliran, namely: Almeria, Biliran, Cabucgayan, Caibiran, Culaba, Kawayan, Maripipi and Naval (the capital town). However, considering that these municipalities had the same computerization status, only Biliran, Cabucgayan and Naval were chosen as the locale of the study since these areas were deemed representative of all the MLGUs in the province.

Research Subjects

The respondents involved in this study were the department heads and rank-and-file employees of the MLGUs in Biliran Province categorized as key informants and main respondents, respectively.

Table 1 presents the distribution of the respondents.

Table 1Distribution of the Respondents

Respondents	f	%
Department Heads (Key Informants)	24	36.92
Rank-and-File Employees (Main Respondents)	41	63.08
Total	**65**	**100.00**

Research Instrument

A semi-structured questionnaire was used in this study. It was composed of three parts. Part I included the personal profile of the respondents in terms of computer literacy and nature of work; Part II covered the perceptions of the employees on e-governance and Part III elicited information on the level of readiness of the respondents to implement e-governance.

Data Gathering Procedure

A dry-run of the questionnaires was conducted at the Provincial Government of Biliran in Naval before said questionnaires were distributed to the respondents.

Permission was earnestly asked from the municipal mayors of the MLGUs involved in the study to distribute the questionnaires to the department heads and rank-and-file employees of their respective units.

After the retrieval of the questionnaires, data gathered were collated, computed and analysed using statistical measures to come up with the findings of the study.

Data Scoring

Data were coded using the prescribed mode for coding quantitative outputs. From the open coding system, categories were identified as inputs for the discussion of results.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The data gathered were coded, analysed and interpreted using descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency and per cent. Results were presented in tabular and narrative forms.

IV.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This portion of the study presents the results of the data gathered by the researcher. Said results are organized and presented with respect to the research objectives covering the respondents' personal profile in terms of computer literacy and nature of work, perceptions on e-governance and level of readiness to implement e-governance.

Personal Profile of the Respondents

This section discusses the personal profile of the MLGU employees in Biliran, Philippines in terms of computer literacy and nature of work.

Computer Literacy. Table 2 presents the computer literacy profile of the respondents.

Table 2Computer Literacy Profile of the Respondents

Profile	f	%
Computer Literate	49	75.36
Non-computer Literate	16	24.62
Total	65	100.00

Data showed that 49 or 75.36% of the respondents were computer literates while only 16 or 24.62% of them were non-computer literates. Data further showed that most of the employees in the MLGUs in Biliran were computer literates. This would imply that more efforts are still needed by the MLGUs in Biliran in order to come up with a one hundred per cent computer literacy status of its employees.

*Nature of Work.*The nature of work of the employees in the MLGUs in Biliran was categorized into: *managerial, technical* and *clerical.* Table 3 presents the profile of the respondents in terms of nature of work.

Table 3Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Nature of Work

Nature of Work	f	%
Managerial	15	23.07
Technical	22	33.85
Clerical	28	43.08
Total	65	100.00

Data showed that the biggest percentage (43.08%) of employees in the MLGUs in Biliran belonged to the "clerical" nature of work. This was followed by employees categorized as "technical", then "managerial", 33.85% and 23.07% respectively. Data would imply that the biggest bulk of work in the MLGUs in Biliran was confined more on paper works.

Perceptions of the Employees in MLGUs in BiliranAbout E-Governance

Table 4 presents the perceptions of the employees in MLGUs in Biliran about e-governance.

Table 4Perceptions of the Employees in MLGUs in Biliran on E-Governance

Perceptions	Weighted Mean	Description
e-governance reduces number of staff	3.29	Moderately Agree
e-governance changes role of staff	3.29	Moderately Agree
e-governance reduces time demands on staff	3.62	Agree
e-governance increases time demands on staff	3.02	Moderately Agree
e-governance increases non-tax-based revenues from fees	3.09	Moderately Agree
e-governance increases citizen contact with elected and appointed officials	3.25	Moderately Agree
e-governance allows business processes to be re-engineered	3.55	Agree
e-governance makes business processes more efficient	3.86	Agree
e-governance reduces administrative costs	3.37	Moderately Agree
e-governance responds easier requests for information from other agencies	3.91	Agree
e-governance increases availability of information for managerial decisions	3.80	Agree
Average Weighted Mean	**3.45**	**Moderately Agree**

Data showed that six items on perceptions were rated "moderately agree" while five were rated "agree" by the respondents. The highest weighted mean of 3.86 was on item "e-governance makes business processes more efficient", rated "agree" while the lowest mean of 3.02 was on item "e-governance increases time demands on staff", rated "moderately agree". The average weighted mean of 3.45 revealed that employees "moderately agree" on the effectiveness of e-governance on their respective works. This would imply that ICT is not the vital factor to be considered when it comes to effective delivery of basic public services to the clientele.

Level of Readiness of the MLGU Employees to Implement E-Governance
Table 5 presents the level of readiness of the MLGU employees to implement e-governance.
Table 5Level of Readiness of the MLGU Employees in Biliran to Implement E-Governance

	Weighted Mean	Description
Level of Readiness of the MLGU Employees in Biliran to Implement E-Governance	**3.09**	**Moderately High**

The weighted mean of 3.09 revealed that the level of readiness of the MLGU employees in Biliran to implement e-governance was "moderately high". This would imply that the employees in the MLGUs in Biliran are not yet totally ready to apply ICT in their respective jobs.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Most of the employees in the MLGUs in Biliran were computer literates whose nature of work was categorized as "clerical".
They "moderately agree" as to the effectiveness of e-governance on their respective jobs.
Their level of readiness to implement e-governance in their respective works was "moderately high".

RECOMMENDATIONS

MLGUs in Biliranmay send its employees who are non-computer literates to various skills trainings and workshops related to ICT.
Efforts may be intensified to undertake relevant, timely and high quality research and development programs that will generate technologies to meet the needs of the office.

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