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THE INTERACTIVE GOVERNMENT-CITIZEN COMMUNICATION THROUGH E-GOVERNANCE: INTRODUCTION OF THE ACACAE MODEL

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Abstract

The e-governance transformation of governance has reshaped state-citizen relations, shifting from one-way delivery of services to participatory democracy. Introducing and testing the ACACAE Model—six stages: Awareness, Communication/Consultation, Adoption, Collaboration involvement, Advocacy, and Empowerment is proposed as a model for interactive e-governance. Based on participatory communication and networked governance theories, this research examines the role of each stage in deepening citizen engagement, particularly in rural India.

Primary data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with rural citizens from Purvanchal, Uttar Pradesh, while secondary data included scholarly literature and policy documents. Thematic and discourse analysis revealed that awareness is often informal and unsystematic, consultation mechanisms are weak or absent, and collaboration remains minimal. Digital service adoption occurs mainly out of necessity, not empowerment. Advocacy is limited to informal, youth-driven initiatives, while full empowerment remains an exception due to systemic barriers like digital illiteracy, language gaps, and infrastructural inadequacies.

While the ACACAE model provides a potential theoretical roadmap, its empirical operationalization is bound by institutional and socio-cultural limits. The research suggests special digital literacy programs, local-language interfaces, official feedback systems, inclusive advocacy structures, and gender-based policies to close the participation gap. Institutionalizing every phase of the model, governance can move from centralized dispensation to co-designed democratic processes, transforming citizens from being mere recipients to being active authors of digital governance.

Key words - E-Governance, Citizen Engagement, ACACAE Model, Rural India, Participatory Communication

Introduction

The 21st century is experiencing a radical shift in governance systems, driven by the widespread and vast developments in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). E-governance is one of the most radical innovations within ICTs and refers to the application of ICT tools for better distribution of government information, better delivery of public services, more openness, participation, and responsive interaction between government and citizens (Heeks, 2006). E-governance holds relevance for emerging democracies like India, as it helps in reducing service delivery gaps, enhancing digital inclusion, and developing participatory governance (Bhatnagar, 2004; Singh & Sahu, 2008).

In the early days of e-governance, the arguments were centered on efficient administrative procedures and the technology needed to establish digital infrastructure. At this point in time, the arguments from both theoretical and policy standpoints have begun to include a focus on the need for active citizen engagement, moving citizens from passive consumers of services to collaborative participants in democracy. This reflects a movement away from the provision of one-way information to two-way processes of communication through which citizens can converse, develop trust in government, and make joint decisions (Misuraca, 2007; Chadwick, 2011). In this article, I will examine the transformative communicative process and introduce the Interactive Government-Citizen Communication Model (ACACAE) in a series of six subsequent stages in the citizen-government engagement process: Awareness, Consultation/communication,adaptation,collaborative involvement, Advocacy, and Empowerment.


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Each phase in the ACACAE model signifies a distinct level of civic engagement:

- **Awareness** represents one-way communication where governments inform citizens about public schemes, digital services, and access channels using platforms such as radio, television, mobile applications, websites, and social media. The objective is to build public familiarity and digital literacy.
- **Consultation/communication** marks the transition to two-way communication. Governments actively seek public opinion through feedback mechanisms like online surveys, public hearings, and community meetings. It introduces inclusivity and responsiveness into the governance ecosystem.
- **Adoption** involves behavioral change, wherein citizens actively use and trust e-governance services over traditional channels. It reflects increased digital confidence, reduced dependency on manual processes, and the narrowing of the digital divide.
- **Collaborative involvement** denotes deeper engagement where citizens and governments jointly design policies, plan projects, prioritize budgets, and monitor implementations. Platforms like MyGov, participatory GIS, and civic tech tools enable shared responsibilities and trust-building.
- **Advocacy** is defined by active citizenship. A digitally literate citizen engages in advocacy through digital governance, activating communities, raising issues, and advocating for improved governance results.
- **Empowerment** is the last and most powerful stage. Citizens are aware of and able not only to access but also to influence policies, hold institutions accountable, and influence governance results. Empowerment is a pathway to sustainable, inclusive, and democratic governance.
- **Participation** reflects mature democratic involvement, allowing citizens to directly influence local governance through instruments like panchayat meetings, RTI filings, and digital grievance redress portals. This stage strengthens institutional accountability. Participation plays a vital role at every stage following awareness and is essential for the transition from awareness to empowerment.

The study specifically seeks to identify the impediments to the path from awareness to empowerment, including digital illiteracy, structural inequalities, aversion to political change, and socio-economic inequalities (World Bank, 2016). Today, governance is not just ruling, or the conduct of public administration, it is a much broader and more inclusive connotation, which is outlined as the process through which power is utilized in administering the economic, social, and political business of a country (Mehraj & Shamim, n.d., p. 1). The UNDP (2008) states that governance is the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels and the process by which citizens organize to realize their common goals and aspirations; mediate their differences; and exercise their legal rights. In the words of the World Bank (1994), governance is how a country manages its public resources, is responsible and accountable for its conduct, and maintains legally just decision making, and access to information.

Academics such as Fukuyama (2013) affirm that governance quality should be assessed not in terms of institutional framework alone but also through the state's capacity to implement just and sound policies. Delivery of access to information is not enough; citizens must have institutionalized opportunities to engage, influence, and resolve concerns and grievances. Citizen-sensitive models of governance are a condition sine qua non for sustainability and an inclusive democracy in complex and populous democracies like India, with its socio-economical diversity.

The UNDP report (2002, 2011) make the same repetition that governance comes to be accountable and responsive when citizens are aware, empowered, and engaged in public systems. The introduction of digital tools -mobile apps, social media and web platforms- has more rigorously animated this process. Since 2010, ICT platforms have transformed civic engagement by generating real-time feedback loops, participatory policy-making, and decentralized decision-making (UNDESA et al., 2012, p. 5). The cultural and philosophical lineage is grounded in participatory governance has its origins

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also in ancient Indian Political Thought. Kautilya (Chanakya) observes in Arthashastra, "In the happiness of the subjects lies the happiness of the ruler" (Shamasastry, 1929), exemplifying reasoning rooted in the primordial objective of governance that must centre on the welfare of the public.

The theoretical basis of this model is grounded in participatory communication, deliberative democracy, and networked governance. This model embodies the shift from top-down governance to interactive and inclusive structures that allow citizens to become co-creators of public policy (Fung, 2006; OECD, 2001). This study critically examines the ACACAE framework from a real-world lens to determine its applicability in Indian e-governance projects to facilitate participatory governance and trust-based state-citizen relationships.

Ultimately, e-governance in this context is much more than just a technical fix - it is a democratic instrument for interactive, accountable, and transformative governance. Through an exploratory analysis of the ACACAE model, this study aims to uncover how digital platforms can facilitate the transformation of citizens from passive observers to active agents of democratic change, as well as highlight the element of communication not just as the transference of information, but as the basis for democratic dialogue, co-governance, and citizen empowerment. The ACACAE framework, therefore, holds much promise for academic and policy discussion around e-governance and participatory development.

Literature review

The digitization of governance processes has launched a new era of citizen-state relations. While early conceptualizations of e-governance revolved around administrative efficiencies and ICT-enabled service delivery, the field has now matured into a multi-level structure of governance that emphasizes transparency, inclusivity, and participatory governance. Heeks (2001) argues that e-governance is more than a tool; it is an information system that accomplishes the core functions of governance. Heeks provides a citizen engagement model that progresses from awareness through to empowerment; he calls for a convergence of institutional readiness, technology and citizens' needs.

At the awareness stage, governments share information with citizens via ICTs in a single direction. The best example of this is Seoul's OPEN system, offering citizens more transparency and fewer opportunities for corruption. Two-way communication where governments hear from citizens at the Consultation/communication stage is also present. South Africa's electronic election management system exemplifies this model. Collaboration is when citizens co-produce or shape services via digital platforms, as in the case of India's Gyandoot kiosks. During the advocacy level, civil society forces like in Honduras utilize ICT platforms to pressure governments into being accountable. Lastly, empowerment is achieved when decision-making involves inclusivity and power is shared, as evident in Johannesburg's intranet-local governance system. Heeks emphasizes that effective participation calls for "joined-up" efforts connecting digital technology with frontline policy implementation.

Drawing on this, McNutt (2007) contends that e-governance has great prospects to empower marginalized communities. Adopting the Canadian Government Online (GOL) project as an example, she delineates six stages of citizen participation: awareness, Consultation/communication, collaboration, adoption, advocacy, and empowerment. Without the digital leaps, McNutt blames the GOL for its shallow nature and ignoring women and minorities. She promotes participatory institutions in which citizens do not just receive but also give back. Internet activism and cyberfeminism are regarded as platforms for advocacy, but empowerment, it argues, cannot be had without policies of digital inclusion like universal access to the internet, gender-sensitive ICT policies, and powerful digital literacy initiatives.

Pourezzat et al. (2009) second this opinion, pointing out that e-governance has the potential to overcome socio-economic cleavages if equally applied. Access to information and ICT literacy become instruments of empowerment, particularly in curbing poverty. Without checks, however, e-governance has the potential to entrench inequalities and advance elite interests (Morgan, 2006). The authors call for equal access, localized language interfaces, and inclusive digital platforms to guarantee participatory justice, openness, and sustainable development.

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Radu (2009), in analyzing European national education ministry websites, assesses e-governance on two dimensions: interactivity and public reach. Although the majority of websites are excellent information providers (awareness), few are effective in facilitating two-way interaction. Mechanisms for enhanced citizen participation, including advocacy or empowerment options like e-petitioning or multilinguality, were only provided on 32% of the sites. Radu contends that effective citizen influence requires systemic trust, open communications, and infrastructural capability—something that is commonly lacking even among advanced democracies.

In the Indian context, Panda and Swain (2009) define e-governance as a means which has reshaped the interface of the citizen and the state. Ranging from the round-the-clock availability of government services to online deliberation and e-referenda, these sites overcome the boundaries of passive service delivery to active democratic engagement. Their three-pronged strategy—e-administration, e-citizen services, and e-society—is indicative of the necessity for an interactive governance mechanism that involves citizens as active stakeholders in public policy-making.

Linders (2012) describes this change as the development toward "we-government" in which citizens are co-creators of public services. His typology consists of "Citizen Sourcing," "Government as Platform," and "Do-It-Yourself Government." These models give participation frameworks beyond Consultation/communication, active monitoring, service co-production, and independent civic problem-solving. Linders emphasizes that although these methods bring innovation and efficiency, concerns such as digital inequality and disengagement must also be treated.

Lee and Kim (2014) examine Seoul's "Oasis" platform and determine the drivers of e-participation. They find that social capital—trust in government, civic volunteering, weak ties—predicts higher participation. Crucially, responsiveness from the government and recognition personalized to the individual were better at maintaining engagement than access to information alone or perceived justice. Their research emphasizes the value of developing participatory systems to facilitate mutual interaction between governments and citizens.

In Bihar, Siddharth (2015) outlines a multi-step model of e-governance engagement. Awareness is created at first through department websites and ICT networks such as BSWAN. Consultation/communication is made through RTPS portals and grievance redressal systems. e-Counseling and CSCs allow interaction and advocacy, whereas empowerment is brought about through mobile applications and digital literacy campaigns. These steps represent a complete range of engagement customized for rural people.

Likewise, Linders et al. (2015) in Taiwan offer a "Proactive e-Governance" model that moves away from passive delivery of services ("pull") to active citizen participation ("push"). Services like the "1999 Citizen Hotline" and "e-Housekeeper" anticipate the needs of citizens and provide timely assistance. Mobile civil servants expand digital reach to the excluded, demonstrating how ICTs can make governance more personalized, reduce bureaucracy, and ensure trust.

Smith (2015) employs the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) and Diffusion of Innovations to adopt into citizen e-participation. He concludes that adoption is determined by perceived usefulness, social influence, and trust, and that digital literacy bridges the gap between awareness and advocacy. He concludes that actual empowerment relies on bridging the digital divide with focused education and infrastructural equality.

Kumar and Venugopal (2015) analyze the rural e-governance context of Tamil Nadu and recognize that rural citizens' unawareness, lack of access, and digital competence significantly shortens the involvement. They advocate interactive communication methods, local language material, and grassroots capacity development to bridge this deficiency. They see in their study that top-down ICT availability as well as bottom-up people participation approaches are required for citizen-centered governance in rural India.

In Madhya Pradesh, Kumar (2017) outlines the contours of state transformation from e-governance to smart governance by way of the Public Service Guarantee Act, 2010. The Act puts in place timely service delivery with default penalty and hence assures accountability. Provisions of law, information and communication technology, and participatory devices such as

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Citizens' Charters and online grievance redressal mechanisms come under the rubric of smart governance here and hence drive citizens towards active citizenship.

Glybovets and Alhawawsha (2017) compare the U.S. and Jordan's smart governance paths. The U.S. path is characterized by open data portals and citizen feedback systems and is more developed in its integration of citizen engagement. The path of Jordan, on the other hand, is still in transition, limited by infrastructure and resources. Pilot projects, however, project promise, as long as there is political will and investment in digital infrastructure.

In India, Bala and Verma (2018) track e-governance projects like e-Seva, Lokvani, and Gyandoot. These websites are a move away from one-way information provision towards discussion, citizen feedback, and real-time grievance resolution. However, they also alert against dysfunctions like digital illiteracy, inadequate trust in technology, and resistance to change. They recommend scalable digital infrastructure and a multilayered model of communication in order to allow genuine two-way communication.

Adiyarta et al. (2018) use the Technology Readiness Acceptance Model (TRAM), and findings indicate that citizens with a high level of innovativeness and optimism are likely to use e-governance tools, while insecurity and unease hinder willingness to participate. The model emphasizes psychological factors in facilitating citizen movement from passive awareness towards active advocacy and suggests the importance of building trust.

Jain et al. (2019) juxtapose five prominent e-governance communication models—Broadcasting, Comparative Analysis, Critical Flow, E-Advocacy, and Interactive-Service—illustrating the movement from information spread to empowerment of citizens. Though the Broadcasting Model disseminates awareness, the Comparative Analysis Model allows assessment of governance. The Critical Flow Model reveals sensitive information; E-Advocacy mobilizes online collective action, and the Interactive-Service Model allows two-way communication, which enables citizens to co-determine. Data protection and access control are essential to building trust in all the models.

Maulana (2020) adds that open government needs cooperative governance. Public Information Openness Law and PPID platform ensured awareness and Consultation/communication in Indonesia's Jambi Province. However, infrastructure, silos, and leadership deficiencies restrict collaboration. E-planning and e-budgeting are mired at early stages of implementation because of low digital literacy and mistrust. Resonating with Emerson et al. (2012), complete empowerment requires citizen involvement in decision-making.

Mustafa et al. (2020) emphasize that awareness is not enough. Trust in the government and ICTs is critical for the Consultation/communication, collaboration, and adoption phases. Based on TAM and UTAUT, they demonstrate that performance of the service, usability, and accessibility motivate adoption. Advocacy arises when the public sees public value and inclusivity; empowerment results when they develop from users to co-creators and make institutions accountable.

Malodia et al. (2021) offer an integrated model of e-governance on the principles of empowered citizenship, hyper-integrated networks, and transformative architecture. In rural areas, third parties such as village-level entrepreneurs fill digital divides. Cultural compatibility, collaborative norms, and citizen preparedness drive advocacy. Programs like eGram demonstrate trust-building using localized digital services.

Gacitúa et al. (2021) note that citizen participation in e-governance has progressed from awareness to adoption and constrained advocacy. Tools such as e-Consultation/communications and collaborative design facilitate co-creation but full empowerment is a rarity. Transition to citizen-focused models is an evolution beyond technical fixes to participatory governance.

Nahak (2023) deals with Digital India's rural transformation. Digital platforms such as CSCs, e-NAM, DBT, and UPI enhance access and transparency and minimize dependence on mediators. Rural citizens exhibit increasing civic

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participation, albeit with the presence of issues such as digital illiteracy, language, and ICT deficiencies. Greater empowerment can be achieved through localized digital education, integration of platforms, and infrastructural support.

Omweri (2024) examines rural Kenya and Uganda, where participatory governance legislation is in place but hampered by infrastructure deficits, political tampering, and digital illiteracy. Projects such as Kenya's eCitizen and Uganda's GCIC are promising but useless in the absence of grassroots digital penetration and civic education. Omweri demands structural changes and localized outreach modalities to achieve genuine participatory governance.

Nsama et al. (2024) investigate Lusaka, Zambia, and identify a vast gap between awareness (70%) and usage of e-governance portals (30%). They believe that availability is not enough to benefit and promote inclusive policies that address digital literacy gaps and infrastructural deficits. Based on theories such as Pateman's participatory democracy and Arnstein's ladder, the research contends that more citizens' involvement is inevitable in ensuring democratic governance.

Singh et al. (2024), in their ICT and rural development chapter, promote participative governance through e-platforms such as CSCs and e-Panchayats. They have enhanced service delivery and citizen participation in rural India. Challenge remains in the form of sparse infrastructure and absence of citizen ownership, however. Initiatives such as Digital Locker and MyGov are presented as high points of digital democracy when accompanied by robust policy structures and user training.

Munir et al. (2024) outline how ICT tools have transformed from static information gateways to dynamic arenas for policy impact. They emphasize that genuine engagement needs to extend beyond awareness to the space of active advocacy and policy formation. Nonetheless, digital disparity, weak laws, and trust gaps continue to pose significant impediments. The research asks for interdisciplinarity models that integrate inclusion, openness, and responsiveness.

Mphahlele et al. (2025) discover that citizen engagement, trust, and community participation, rather than mere government backing, motivate long-term use and promotion. Their study contradicts conventional top-down e-governance approaches, which focus on user-driven participation and intrinsic motivation. This model also condemns popular measures such as the EGDI for overlooking the qualitative nature of participation.

Asimakopoulos et al. (2025) synthesize 46 studies across the globe and conclude that ICTs can contribute to citizen engagement through e-voting, participatory budgeting, and social media. They facilitate citizens' awareness of their democratic rights and obligations as well as their demand for them. But there are impediments in the form of misinformation, technological attacks on cybersecurity, and surveillance of technology by the public awareness. The research concluded the institutionalization of ICTs and digital equity concerns will empower authentic democratic participation.

Research Objectives:

1. To analyze the role of each stage in the ACACAE model (Awareness, Consultation/communication, Collaboration, Adoption, Advocacy, and Empowerment) in enhancing interactive communication between government and citizens through e-governance platforms.
2. To assess the effectiveness of the proposed ACACAE model in transforming citizens from passive recipients of information to active participants and advocates in the digital governance process.

Research methodology

This study uses a qualitative research design to investigate how interaction between governments and citizens is facilitated through e-governance and how e-governance platforms use the ACACAE (Awareness, Communication/Consultation, Adoption, Collaboration involvement, Advocacy, and Empowerment) model to promote interactivity. This study uses both primary data, in the form of semi-structured interviews, and secondary data from critical theoretical frameworks.

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Primary data was collected using qualitative, Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 individuals, aged between 20 and 45 years, from the Purvanchal region of Uttar Pradesh, who were selected through purposive sampling. The participants were from a variety of socio-economic statuses, and all had different levels of experience with e-governance platforms. The interviews were conducted to understand the citizen experience moving through the e-governance platform from initial awareness and Consultation/communication to advocacy and finally personal empowerment. The use of semi-structured, open-ended questions also allowed for flexibility and depth in this project. The data collected was analyzed using thematic analysis, which allowed for the identification of themes, patterns, attitudes, and meanings that reflected the citizen experience when interacting with government platforms.

The secondary data sources were government reports, media content, and peer-reviewed academic literature. They were analyzed using discourse content analysis, which helps uncover the ideological formations embedded in the language and imagery constructed in the e-governance narrative.

This study adopts Guy Debord's (1967) theory of the spectacle, which critiques how mediated images shape social relations within capitalist societies, rendering real-life relations to something secondary to being passive in a capitalist spectacle. While Debord interprets how e-governance may visually mark social relations through citizen engagement, it will be noted if participation displaces engagement, and that participation is meant to imply power towards governing in place of engagement. The study will further employ a postcolonial critique of digital representations of citizen and government relations and how representations maintain hierarchal legacies which produce "Otherness," for example in the historical representations of underrepresented communities (Bhabha, 1994; Spivak, 1988).

This methodology integrates the narratives of participant experiences and critical textual analyses, where aspects of how lived experiences are shaped and legitimized can be scrutinized, as well as the symbolic and structural formation of citizen participation and representation, or even reversal, in the digital governance field.

Result and Discussion

This research focuses on evaluating the stages of the ACACAE framework (Awareness, Consultation/communication, Collaboration, Adoption, Advocacy, and Empowerment) as a model for enhancing participatory and interactive communication between governments and citizens. Based on primary data collected through semi-structured interviews with rural citizens in the Purvanchal region of Uttar Pradesh, along with extensive secondary literature, the study investigates how each stage functions in real-world contexts and assesses the model's effectiveness in transforming citizens from passive information recipients to active participants in digital governance.

In the stage of awareness, it was found from the study that more than half of the respondents were aware of general G2C services such as Aadhaar enrollment, renewal of ration cards, PM Ayushman bharat yogna, PM Awas Gramin, Bhulekh, and IGRS. But this awareness was mostly based on ad hoc sources like word-of-mouth, social media, or local political leaders instead of organized government campaign activities. Advanced services such as DigiLocker, RTI portals and E-Banking were known to selected digitally educated individuals. This is in consonance with Heeks (2001) and Radu (2009), who contend that spreading information alone is inadequate without access to digital media and literacy. The poor penetration of systematic awareness campaigns among women and economically weaker sections is a pointer to systemic digital exclusion.

During the Consultation/communication stage, citizen participation is limited. Fewer than a quarter of the participants could remember having been asked for comments or having received any kind of two-way interaction with government representatives. There were no organized mechanisms such as online forums, public hotlines, or village assemblies where citizens could inquire or raise issues. Most questions on eligibility, procedures, or technical matters were settled informally by friends or neighborhood Common Service Center (CSC) operators, usually resulting in misinformation. The absence of formal feedback loops attests to Lee and Kim's (2014) conclusion that citizen engagement is suppressed when there is no institutional responsiveness.

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On the topic of adoption, the study found digital means were adopted mostly out of need—e.g., for Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT), subsidies, or compulsory applications. Mobile phones, WhatsApp, and CSCs were widely utilized, but poor connectivity, lack of electricity, and user-unfriendly interfaces (particularly for the non-English-speaking community) still hindered mass adoption. Even with growing digital exposure, offline services continued to be the choice, especially for older users and women. These results correspond to Smith (2015) and Mustafa et al. (2020), who stress that digital adoption in the absence of user empowerment and trust is not equivalent to active participation.

The collaborative involvement phase was practically non-existent. The respondents had little or no experience in co-designing services or working together in problem-solving with government representatives. Jan Seva Kendras were understood primarily as transactional centers and not civic collaborative spaces. Some people played the role of peer facilitators to other people in their locale, but this was not on the basis of any formal program but rather on initiative. This captures McNutt's (2007) criticism that e-governance models tend to overlook participatory structure, particularly in rural areas where support systems are absent.

As for advocacy, there were no officially sanctioned government programs to train or reward citizen advocates, although some digitally literate citizens, largely youth, spontaneously encouraged peers and family to go online for government services like Ayushman Bharat, scholarships, or grievance redress websites. Women's roles in advocacy were few because of social constraints and denial of access. This phase was promising but narrowly ranging, reflecting Adiyarta et al.'s (2018) assertion that advocacy needs to be institutionalized by community capacity-building.

The empowerment stage was only partly evident. Some respondents described instances of successful access to land records or filing grievances without the help of intermediaries, which provided them with a sense of independence. Yet, most still relied on CSC operators or local agents, largely out of procedural complexity, fear of fault, and digital illiteracy. Structural barriers—language gaps, absence of grievance redressal, and fear of authority—still prevented empowerment. Women, Dalits, and residents of remote locations were the worst affected in this sense. As the UNDP (2008) and Pourezzat et al. (2009) indicate, empowerment needs to be complemented by inclusive infrastructure, digital literacy, and institutional trust.

The ACACAE (Awareness, Consultation/Communication, Adaptation, Collaborative Involvement, Advocacy, Empowerment) model, as depicted in the "Government-Citizen Communication Model with Participatory Approach" flowchart, offers a theoretical framework for interactive governance. However, its operationalization in rural India is significantly constrained by infrastructural, socio-cultural, and institutional factors. While the model achieves partial awareness and simple e-service adoption, critical phases like consultation, collaboration, and advocacy remain weakly institutionalized, leading to empowerment being an isolated, rather than universal, condition.

To address these limitations, integrating key dimensions media effect, trust, inclusiveness, feedback, barriers, and citizen satisfaction is crucial, as explicitly linked to the ACACAE phases in the visual model. The "Media Effect" in the Awareness phase (Phase 1) is often skewed by the digital divide, leading to partial awareness. "Trust" is paramount for Consultation/Communication (Phase 2), but its weak institutionalization stems from a lack of perceived government responsiveness. "Inclusiveness" in Adaptation (Phase 3) is compromised if feedback is unrepresentative due to socio-cultural and institutional barriers. Robust "Feedback" mechanisms are essential for Collaborative Involvement (Phase 4), yet their absence prevents genuine co-design and shared responsibility. Various "Barriers" impede Advocacy (Phase 5), stemming from cumulative challenges across preceding phases. Ultimately, "Citizen Satisfaction" serves as an indicator of Empowerment (Phase 6) its low levels reflect citizens remaining passive recipients rather than active contributors.

Transforming the ACACAE model requires strategic investments. Governments must enhance local digital literacy to overcome barriers and improve media effects. Designing feedback mechanisms that are genuinely attentive to the people is vital for building trust and fostering two-way communication. Furthermore, developing platforms that support co-creation and community-led advocacy will enable active citizenship. These interventions are essential to empower citizens from passive recipients to active digital contributors, ensuring sustainable and democratic governance.

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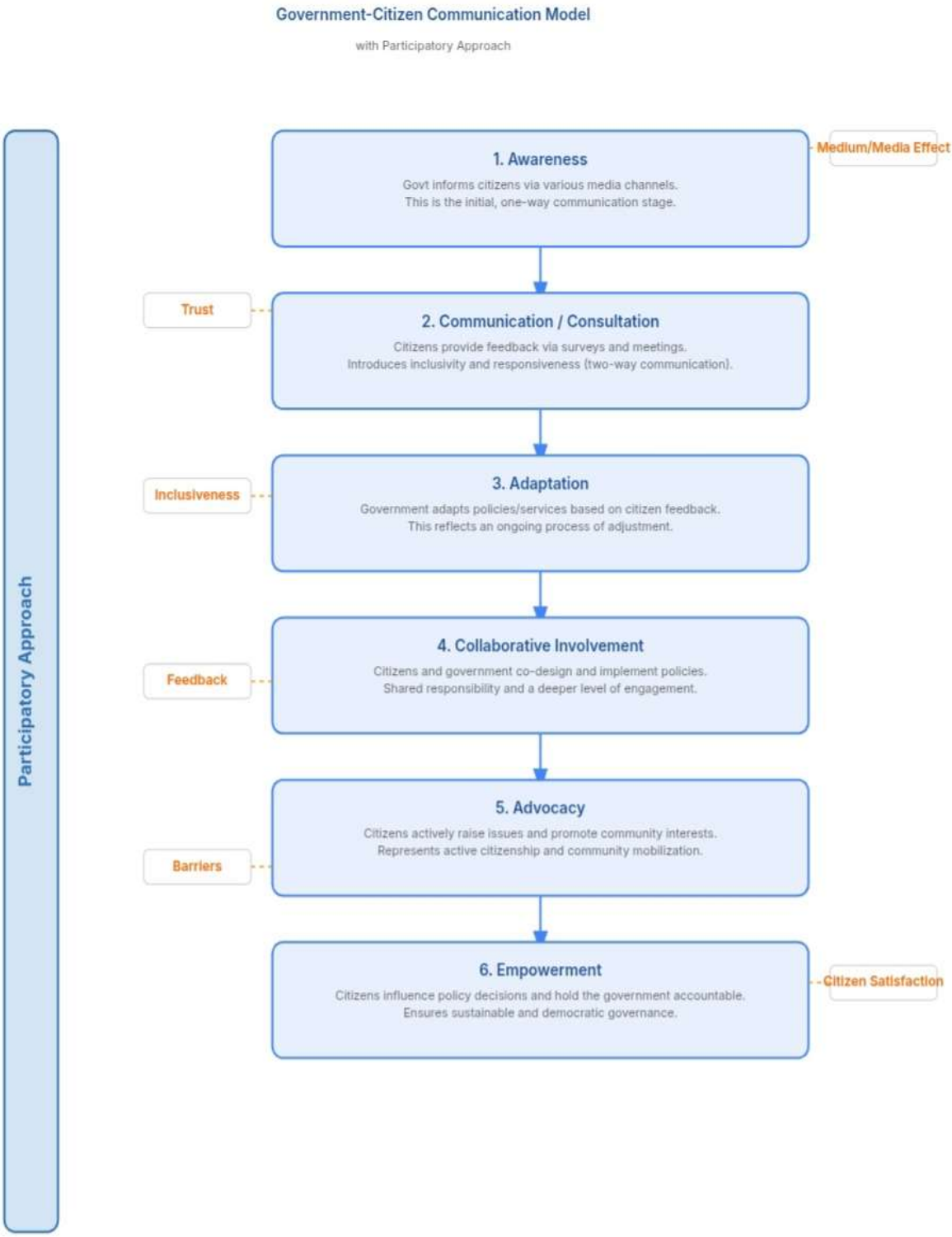

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Conclusion and Recommendations

The current research offers a thorough analysis of how every stage of the ACACAE model—Awareness, Consultation/communication,adaptation,collaborative involvement, Advocacy, and Empowerment—operates in reality, especially within the rural setting of Purvanchal, Uttar Pradesh. Drawing from primary data gathered through semi-structured interviews and substantiated by academic literature, it is found that although the model is strong in theory, its real-world application is uneven and affected by a number of systemic issues.

The awareness phase has yielded moderate success, with citizens in general being aware of simple government-to-citizen (G2C) initiatives such as Aadhaar, ration cards, and welfare schemes. Yet this awareness is born mainly of informal networks and not formal government campaigns, particularly among disadvantaged groups like women and economically weaker sections. The Consultation/communication stage is not yet fully developed, with little two-way dialogue and official commentary mechanisms available, creating a situation of predominantly informal and unreliable information circulation. The collaboration phase is close to zero in substance terms; citizens are not yet involved in co-designing public services or involvement in governance except for passive service use.

During the adoption stage, digital services are employed, but only because it is necessary, not because of digital confidence or empowerment. Limitations such as poor connectivity, low digital literacy, and unhelpful interfaces remain, so offline channels remain more popular—especially among women and senior citizens. The advocacy stage demonstrates little spontaneous action on the part of tech-savvy youth, yet no organized support from the government. Finally, empowerment, though witnessed in scattered moments where citizens successfully availed services without go-betweens, is out of reach for the majority due to structural, linguistic, and socio-cultural barriers.

Together, these results suggest that although the ACACAE model outlines a useful conceptual guide for participatory e-governance, far from it being fully implemented in rural India. The Consultation/communication, collaboration, and advocacy stages particularly need systemic support, and empowerment is still a dream for marginalized communities.

Recommendations

- **Local Digital Literacy Programmes:** Special digital training programme is the requirement, and therefore for women, senior citizens, Dalits, and economically weaker sections. The programme must be developed in the local language and locally customized content to make it accessible.
- **Institute Formal Feedback Mechanisms:** Government websites should institutionalize e-forums at the village level, digital hotlines, and people-participatory grievance redressal portals to formalize the Consultation/communication stage and create confidence.
- **Build Community Cooperation:** Invest in strategically planned collaborative initiatives such as e-governance camps, participatory planning workshops, and co-design pilots to create collective ownership of services.
- **Step Up Infrastructure and Accessibility:** Funding in internet connectivity, power infrastructure, and multilingual interfaces provided on mobiles is essential for driving digital take-up, especially in remote and rural areas.
- **Institutionalize Digital Advocacy:** Organize and mobilize digital champions and citizen volunteers as people's champions. It will institutionalize the process of advocacy and create a multiplier effect in digital awareness and the creation and dissemination of services.
- **Adopt an Inclusive Empowerment policy:** Simplify processes, eliminate bureaucratic barriers, and offer digital handholding services through CSCs to facilitate self-service and confidence-building among digitally disadvantaged groups.
- **Gender-Inclusive E-Governance:** Women-focused digital kiosks, ICT training initiatives, and cellular phone-based services are some unique activities that can guarantee narrowing the gender gap in digital empowerment.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish indicators to monitor each stage of the ACACAE model regularly, enabling adaptive governance responses based on citizens' inputs and grassroots realities.

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