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## **Application Of Ict In Kerala Legislative Assembly – An Empirical Study**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Better and transparent delivery of government services to the public, efficient and fruitful interaction between government and the people, better dissemination of information, curbing corruption through increased transparency and accountability, savings through reduction in costs, increased revenue collection and faster service delivery are major and apparent advantages of e-Governance. One such attempt is made by Kerala Legislative Assembly Secretariat (KLAS) to promote inclusive governance through e-governance. It would be achieved if the very objectives of e-governance is realised by all the stakeholders of it. Hence, it is a felt need to conduct an empirical study to understand the level of awareness and attitude among the stakeholders-electoral and elected-on the process of e-governance. Therefore, a study was conducted among the Members of Kerala Legislative Assembly (MLA), Staff of Legislature Secretariat, and general public and the present article discusses the significant findings achieved through the study.

### **INTRODUCTION**

SMART Governance, also known as e-Governance enables government both to improve its administrative mechanism and facilitates unification of services to its citizens, and indeed, motivates people to participate in the domain of decision-making process through transparency and dissemination of varied information. It also involves collaborating with business patterns of the government by conducting electronic transactions with them and further entails enabling the general public to interact with the government through electronic means for getting the desired services. The aim, ultimately, is to simplify and improve governance and enable people's participation in governance through e-means such as electronic mail and internet. It ranges from the use of internet for the dissemination of plain web-based information at its simplest level to services

and online transactions on the one hand and utilizing ICT in the democratic process itself.

E-governance implies e-democracy wherein all forms of interaction between the *electorate*-general public, and the *elected*-the government, are performed electronically thereby achieving e-government which comprises of pragmatic applications and usage of the most innovative technologies in computer and communication technologies, including internet technology, for delivering efficient and cost effective services, and information and knowledge to the citizens being governed, thereby realizing the vast potential of the government to serve its citizens. In other words, e-governance means application of electronic means in the interaction between various stakeholders of governance.

### **E-GOVERNANCE**

As defined by the UNESCO e-governance is “the public sector's use of ICT with the aim of improving information and service delivery, encouraging citizen participation in the decision-making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective”. Hence, e-Governance is, thus, a wider concept which is the use of ICTs in the dissemination and services of government, and indeed, emphasises the utilization of e-medium for new governance.

As conceptualized by Richard Heeks, “e-governance encompasses all use of digital information, technology-computers and networks-in the public sector”. This definition gives a simplified definition of e-governance as the incorporation of digital information technology in governance, and services to public, as well. According to the Report of the Working Group Convergence of E-Governance for the X Five Year Plan (2002-07) “electronic governance is the application of information technology to the processes of Government functioning in order to bring about Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent (SMART) Governance” and hence the acronym SMART has become synonymous for e-governance in India.

The advent of these other components and of ICT as a highly leveraged enabling tool for delivery of services in the public and private sector has now been universally recognized. To state that better and transparent delivery of government services to the public, efficient and fruitful interaction between government and the people, better dissemination of information, curbing corruption through increased transparency and accountability, savings through reduction in costs, increased revenue collection and faster service delivery are major and apparent advantages of e-Governance.

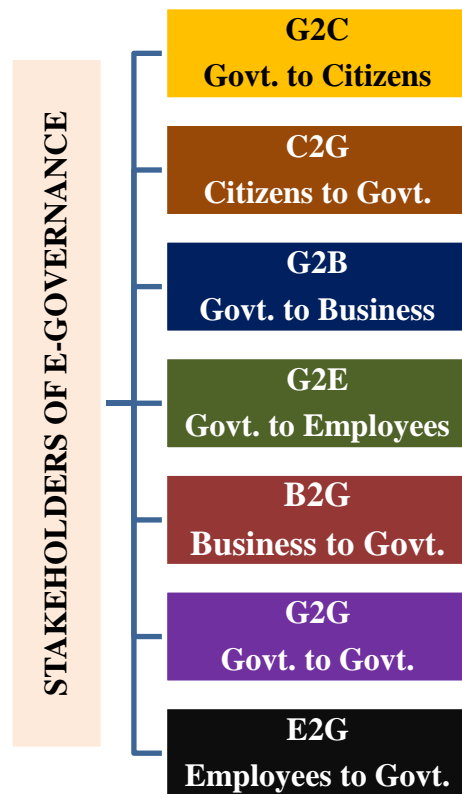
### **STAKEHOLDERS OF E-GOVERNANCE**

Generally, the e-governance applications have been more mundane, simple and straightforward. As the winds of e-governance and e-government blow widely through public organizations across the world, more and more governments in

different countries have been harnessing the internet and the powers of ICT to provide services of varied nature viz., government, public, employees, and business (Fig. 1) that is between

- G-to-G: Govt. to Govt. – within and across the Govt. sectors;
- G-to-C: Government’s services to its Citizens;
- C-to-G: Citizens’ interaction with respective Govt.;
- G-to-B: Government’s services to Business organizations;
- B-to-G: Business organizations to Govt.;
- G-to-E: Government’s services to Employees;

- E-to-G:



Employees to Govt.

## **Figure 1: Stakeholders of E-Governance**

### **E-GOVERNANCE IN KERALA**

The Government of Kerala has acknowledged the importance of ICT as an instrument for the State's overall development and hence, is committed to its use for the transparency in governance and improved quality of life for common man. Through the major initiatives in e-governance such as FRIENDS (Fast Reliable Instant Efficient Network for Disbursement Services), E-pay, Citizens Call Centre, IKM (Information Kerala Mission), Sec. WAN (Secretariat Wide Area Network), K-BASE (Knowledge Archive System for Secretariat), AKSHAYA, FAST (Fully Automated Services of Transport Department), the Kerala State has promised prompt delivery of services in a more simple, efficient, accountable, responsive and transparent manner which enabled the State as the second among the Indian states in the matter of progress achieved.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Kerala is a pioneer among the Indian states in implementation of e-Governance and has many advantages in implementation of e-Governance. The State remains a success in retaining essential features of good governance - rule of law, participation of people, transparency, efficiency, equity, accountability, responsiveness, consensus, people friendliness and accessibility, even when it switched over to e-Governance. E-Governance in Kerala has journeyed and evolved through many phases and has reached the threshold of m-Governance. In February 2020 Kerala Legislative Assembly implemented Information and Communication system and made all legislature-related activities as digitally availed to all through <http://www.niyamasabha.org> to enable broader and enhanced access to a wider community.

The digital version of Legislative Documents which are exact replica of their pages can be provided for unrestricted use. All daily browsing and references can be met electronically from digital archive. A digitally stored document will never deteriorate even if thousands of people use it for any length of time. Selective and speedy access to information is assured. Research scholars, lawyers and public at large will be in need of legislative documents to meet their research, legal and administrative

requirements. To meet such requirements they can be supplied with printouts or digital copies of concerned portion of the document on payment basis. Members can consult the full text of the Legislative Documents from their home or at any place during their travel, where internet connection is available. Hence, it became felt need to evaluate empirically that whether benefits such digitization to achieve e-Governance has reached all. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to understand the attitude and awareness on the SMART Governance of Kerala Legislative Assembly Secretariat (KLAS).

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The present study was carried out with the objective to understand the role of ICT in enhancing the SMART governance of Kerala Legislative Assembly. The specific objectives of the study include

- To elicit the socio-demographic profile of the MLA, KLAS Staff, and Public-respondents included in the present study;
- To know the awareness and attitude about e-governance among MLA, KLAS Staff, and Public; and
- To bring out the differences in respondents' awareness and attitude towards e-governance of KLAS;

### **METHOD OF THE STUDY**

To achieve the general and specific objectives, as well, of the present study exploratory research design was used. Of the total 140 elected Members (MLA) of Kerala Legislative Assembly twenty per cent (28) from each Front – LDF and UDF – were selected. By applying the same procedure a total of 180 out of 900 KLAS Staff were included; and a total of 450 public-respondents – 150 each from North, South, and Central regions - were randomly selected and hence a total of 658 (MLA-28; KLAS Staff-180; and Public-450) respondents have constituted the universe for the present study. To collect the data required for the present study, a structured questionnaire was used. While the required primary data were collected directly from the selected MLAs, KLAS Staff, and Public-respondents secondary data were collated from both published sources like books, research articles, reports and recommendations of various organizations functioning at different levels, websites and unpublished sources like reports of various committees, research projects, etc. The collected data were processed properly and analyzed by using both descriptive methods like Percentage, Proportion, and Measures of Central Tendency and inferential statistics like Correlation, Chi-Square test etc.

### **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

**Profile of the Respondents:** The selected respondents' profile viz., gender, age, domicile, educational status, religion, community group, marital status, family

type, household size, occupation, family monthly income, house type, and house ownership pattern were discussed in this section.

- More than three-fifth (61.9%) of the total respondents was constituted by males while the females' in the total was 38.1. The grouping of the respondents according to their type indicated a similar pattern 89.3% of MLAs, 79.4% of KLAS Staff, and 53.1% of public were males. Nearly one-third (32.4%) of the total respondents were in the age-group of 41-50 years followed by 31-40 (28.9%), < - 30 (28.0%), 51-60 (7.3%) and 60 - > (3.4%) age-group respondents. The Mean age for the total respondents included in the present study was 38.4 years. The Mean age for the MLA, KLAS Staff, and Public was 40.5, 40.8, and 36.6, respectively. The grouping of the respondents based on their place of residence depict that of the total three-fifth (59.9%) of them were hailed from rural areas whereas the remaining were from Semi-urban and Urban areas and their percentage in the total was 28.7, and 11.4, respectively.
- Of the total 44.8% of the respondents were Degree/Diploma/Certificate-holders whereas another 23.7% in the total was constituted by the respondents pursued Post-Graduation and above (15.2%) and Professional education and the respondents pursued school education have constituted the remaining 31.5% in the total. About two-fifth (39.1%) of the respondents Hindus followed by Islam (35.2%), and Christians (25.7%). About 51.0% of them belong to OBC followed by General, SC, and ST respondents and their respective percentage in the total was 40.1, 7.7, and 1.1. Of the total two-third (67.3%) of them were married followed by an equal proportion of Unmarried (16.7%) and Single (16.6%) respondents and altogether have constituted the remaining 32.3% in the total.
- About 56% of them were hailed from Joint family whereas the remaining 44.2% were from Nuclear family. While 46.2% of the total respondents' household size was 5-8 another 34.8% of the total belongs to < - 4 members family whereas the remaining 19.0% in the total respondents' household size was 9 and above. The average household size of the total respondents was Six (6). While Eight (8) was the average to MLAs' household Six (6) was to KLAS Staff, and Public-respondents, each respectively, which was similar to the Average of the Total.
- Two-third (40.1%) of the respondents' family income was upto Rs. 30,000/-, per month followed by Rs. 30,000 - 60,000/-, Rs. 60,000 - 90,000/-, and Rs. 90,000/- & Above income categories respondents and their percentage in the total was 36.0, 17.6, and 6.3. An average of Rs. 41,804/-, per month was earned by the respondents included in the present study. A large majority (79.9%) of the respondents' house type was Concrete followed by Tiled (9.3%), Asbestos (4.6%) and Other (6.2%) types. While a large majority (80.9%) of them was living in their

own house the remaining 19.1% were in rental house. One-third (34.2%) in the total Public-respondents were employees in Private sectors followed by Agriculturalist (14.9%), Sundry workers-Persons involved in various kinds of activities (10.7%), Politicians (9.3%), Pensioner/Senior citizens (8.2%), Employees working in government sectors (5.6%), and Professional (3.6%). Besides, 10.9% in the total were students. Table 1 presents an overview about profile of the respondents included in the present study.

**TABLE 1: Profile of the Respondents included in the Study**

Variable	Proportion
Male	61.9
Age	38.1
Married	67.3
Rural	59.9
Graduates	44.8
Joint Family	56.1
Hindus	39.1
OBC	51.0
Average Household size	6
Average Monthly Income (in Rs.)	41,804/-

**Findings on Awareness and Attitude Toward E-Governance:** The respondents' awareness and attitude towards e-governance in terms of providing better citizen services, staff's responsibility to promote e-governance initiatives, in facilitating citizen-oriented services, intra/inter-departmental services, organization's performance and delivery of e-services, officials' initiatives to solve the problems in e-services, staff's service for inclusive and participatory governance, staff's thought in delivering service to the public, and their effort to update knowledge, encouragement of individual initiatives in e-governance, staff's approach towards women and senior citizen, staff's response in providing e-services to intra and inter-section/departments, transparency while providing e-services, availed means to deliver e-services, features facilitating e-governance, awareness on IT Act, 2000, awareness on NeVA were discussed in this Section.

- The respondents' attitude towards providing better citizen services through e-governance evidenced a pattern that while 96.4% of total MLA, and 78.3% of KLAS Staff have stated that e-governance can provide better citizen services it was expressed by 64.2% of the total Public-respondents. Table 2 evidences this.

**TABLE 2: Attitude on E-Governance on Providing Better Citizen Services**

Perception	No. of Respondents			Total
	MLA	KLAS Staff	Public	
Used to give better citizen services	27 (96.4)	141 (78.3)	289 (64.2)	<b>457</b> <b>(69.5)</b>
Not used to give better citizen services	1 (3.6)	39 (21.7)	161 (35.8)	<b>201</b> <b>(30.5)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b> <b>(4.3)</b>	<b>180</b> <b>(27.4)</b>	<b>450</b> <b>(68.3)</b>	<b>658</b> <b>(100.0)</b>

- While eliciting the respondents' attitude towards staff's responsibility to promote e-governance initiatives it was found that while large majority of the MLAs (82.1%) and more than three-fifth (62.2%) of the KLAS Staff have perceived that the staff concerned took the responsibility to promote e-governance initiatives whereas the same was expressed by 47.8% of the total Public-respondents.
- The study has revealed a fact that while huge majority of KLAS Staff (92.8%) and more than two-third (67.9%) of total MLAs have perceived that the citizen-oriented services are facilitated by the staff concerned in e-governance it was voiced by only 46.9% of the total Public-respondents. Three-fourth of KLAS Staff (76.1%), and 71.4% of MLA-respondents have said that the intra/inter-departmental services in e-governance is facilitated by the staff concerned it was voiced by only 44.0% of the total Public-respondents.
- A huge majority (89.3%) in the total of MLAs, and KLAS Staff (83.9%) have expressed their strong belief that the KLAS is equipped with modern equipment both to perform and deliver e-services the same was expressed by about 49 percent of the total Public-respondents. The respondents opined as such that the organization is not equipped with modern instruments to deliver e-services have constituted 51.1% in Public, 16.1% in KLAS Staff, and 10.7% in MLA categories.
- Their awareness on National eVidhan Application (NeVA) indicated a fact that while huge majority of the KLAS Staff (90.6%), and nearly two-third (64.3%) of the MLA-respondents are aware of NeVA 78.2%, in the total Public-respondents were not aware of it.
- While huge majority in the total of MLAs (82.1%), and KLAS Staff (81.7%) hold the opinion that officials took initiatives and road blocks as well to solve the problems in e-services with the officials concerned three-fifth (60.7%) in the total of Public-respondents have perceived as such that no initiatives and road blocks were taken by officials concerned to solve the problems in e-services. About 81% of the KLAS Staff have perceived as

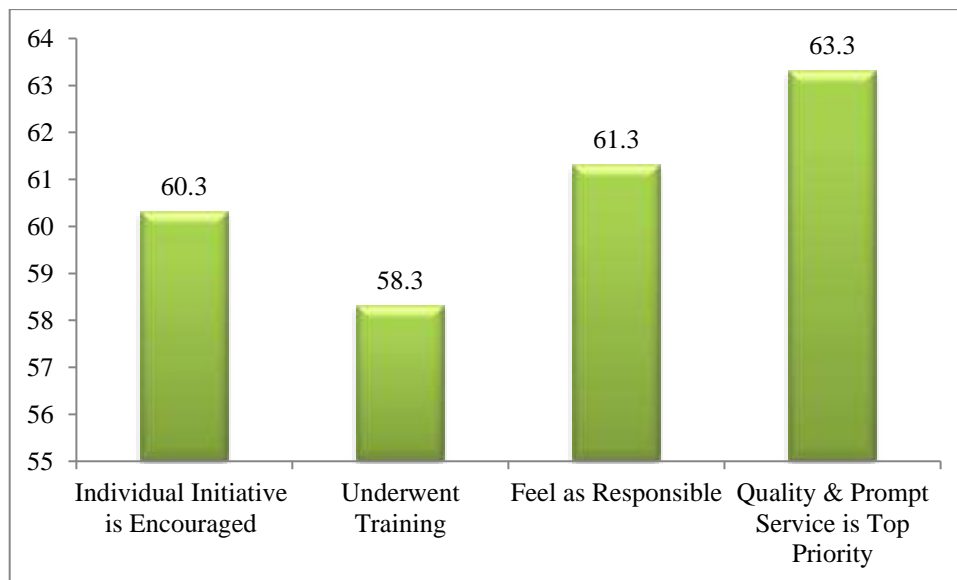


such that both quality and prompt service are given of top priority to achieve inclusive and participatory governance by the staff concerned it was revealed by only 56.2% of the Public-respondents.

- A vast majority (87.2%) of KLAS Staff have expressed that staff feel as responsible in delivering services to the public the same was expressed by half (50.9%) of the Public-respondents; and the rest 49.1% in the total of Public have expressed that the staff did not feel as responsible in delivering services to the public.
- About 90% in the total of KLAS Staff have stated that the staff has underwent training of new techniques in ICT to update their knowledge it was stated by only 45.8% of the total Public-respondents; majority (54.2%) in the total of Public, have no idea on the ICT knowledge update of person involved in e-governance. While about two-third (66.0%) of the Public have perceived as that individual initiatives are encouraged the remaining 34.0% have denied it, similarly more than half (53.9%) of the KLAS Staff have denied this and stated that no individual initiative is encouraged and the rest 46.1% in the respective total have agreed it.

Figure 2 illustrates the respondents' attitude on individual initiative, underwent training for upgrade of ICT knowledge, staff's responsibility while delivering e-services, and their concern of priority in e-governance.

**Figure 2: Respondents' Attitude on Staff's Role in E-Governance**



- While about 71.0% and 29.4% in the total of KLAS Staff has stated as the staff are 'Courteous', and 'Extra courteous', respectively, towards women and senior citizen while delivering e-services the same was stated by 43.6% and 29.8% of the total Public-respondents; however, it has to be

noted that one-fourth (26.6%) in the total of Public opined as 'Not courteous'.

- A large majority(78.9%) of the KLAS Staff-respondents' attitude was 'the staff concerned adhere time limit' it was stated by only two-fifth (42.0%) of the Public-respondents; meanwhile nearly three-fifth (58.0%) of the Public-respondents' opinion revealed as such that 'staff do not adhere time limit in providing e-services to intra/inter departments'.
- While more than three-fourth (77.2%) in the total of KLAS Staff has perceived as such that 'the staff observes transparency while providing e-services' the same was expressed by only 45.8% of the total Public-respondents and the remaining 54.2% in Public have opined as that 'the staff do not observe transparency'.
- While they were asked to express their attitude on availed means to deliver e-services, a vast majority (83.9%) in the total of KLAS Staff-respondents have stated that 'the staffs are availed of adequate manpower & logistics support to deliver e-services', whereas it was three-fifth (60.2%) in the total of Public-respondents.
- Further, it was found from the study that both Television and Smartphone are the most accessible means of communication to majority of the respondents of the study. While large majority (82.2%) of the total respondents has access to Television 57.4% of the respondents have access to Smartphone. The respondents having access to Telephone connection, Computer Laptop, Fiber network, and Telephone connection with internet have constituted 26.3%, 22.5%, 15.9%, and 15.0% in the respective total.
- The Public-respondents were asked to suggest the feature/means to facilitate e-governance. While more than three-fifth (62.7%) of them has felt strongly that the e-governance can be facilitated by e-services and hence the needs of the citizens could be satisfied whereas 'observing time limit while delivering online services', 'establishment of e-Kiosks', 'building awareness on e-services', and 'more common service centers to fulfill the public's needs' were preferred to facilitate e-governance by 54.2%, 53.8%, 52.8%, and 51.8% of the Public-respondents, respectively. Hence, it is understood that 'e-services' would play a pivotal role than other features in achieving e-governance, as perceived by majority of the Public-respondents.
- More than half (52.0%)of the Public have stated that they are aware of IT Act 2000 in contrast to this the remaining 42.0% in the total have stated no. The analysis of awareness of IT Act 2000 according to their gender indicated a pattern that while 55.2% of the total males have stated that they are aware of IT Act 2000 it was stated by 48.3% of the total females and the respondents not aware of IT Act 2000 have constituted 44.8%, and 51.7% in the total of males, and females, respectively.

- The gender-wise awareness about NeVA evidences that of the total males about 56 percent of them have stated that they are aware of NeVA while the remaining 44.5% in the total males were not whereas in the case of the females the respondents aware of NeVA have constituted only one-fifth (21.1%) in the total and the remaining large majority (78.9%) in the total females are not aware of it.
- The respondents' awareness on the '*Gems of Digital India Award*' by their gender indicated a pattern that while the respondents aware of the award have constituted 37.2% of the total males it was 17.1% in the case of total females. While the Public-respondents did not aware of the award have constituted more than four-fifth (82.8) in the total of females it was 62.8% in the total males.

**Differences in Respondents' Awareness and Attitude Towards e-Governance of KLAS:** It is understood from the forgoing discussion which is presented in Table 3 that there is a significant difference between MLA, KLAS Staff, and Public-respondents in term of their perception on the means of e-governance at KLAS. While majority of both MLA, KLAS Staff have perceived positively and aware of e-governance means made availed at KLAS majority of Public-respondents were not.

**Table 3: Test of Significance on MLA, KLAS Staff and Public's Attitude towards E-Governance**

Attitude	MLA	KLAS Staff	Public	$\chi^2$ level	df	CV	TV	Remark
Used to give better citizen services	96.4	78.3	64.2	--	-	--	--	Sig.
Took the responsibility	82.1	62.2	47.8	0.05	2	20.62	5.99	Sig.
Facilitating Citizen-Oriented Services	67.9	92.8	46.9	0.05	2	113.79	5.99	Sig.
Facilitate Intra/Inter-Departmental Services	71.4	76.1	44.0	0.05	2	56.98	5.99	Sig.
Equipped with modern instruments	89.3	83.9	48.9	0.05	2	75.95	5.99	Sig.

Take up the road blocks with officials concerned	82.1	81.7	39.3	0.05	2	102.53	5.99	Sig.
Aware of NeVA	64.3	90.6	21.8	0.05	2	144.39	5.99	Sig.

It is obvious from the preceding discussion that there is a significant difference in the perception and attitude between KLAS Staff and Public and hence it would be stated both KLAS Staff and Public-respondents differ in their attitude and perception on the means of e-governance made available (Table 4).

**Table 4: Test of Significance on KLAS Staff and Public's Attitude towards E-Governance**

Attitude	KLAS Staff	Public	$\chi^2$ level	df	CV	TV	Remark
Quality and service is a top priority	81.1	56.2	0.05	1	43.92	3.84	Sig.
Feel as responsible	87.2	50.9	0.05	1	71.47	3.84	Sig.
Underwent training of new techniques in ICT	89.4	45.8	0.05	1	100.64	3.84	Sig.
Individual initiative is encouraged	46.1	66.0	0.05	1	21.27	3.84	Sig.
Adhere time limit	78.9	42.0	0.05	1	70.06	3.84	Sig.
Observe Transparency	77.2	45.8	0.05	1	51.23	3.84	Sig.
Availed of adequate manpower & logistics support	83.9	60.2	0.05	1	32.48	3.84	Sig.

It is clear from the forgoing analysis that while the respondents' awareness on IT Act 200 was not influenced by their gender their awareness on NeVA, and 'Gems of Digital India Award' were significantly influenced by their gender since majority of the males than females were aware of it (Table 5).

**Table 6: Test of Significance on Gender-wise Attitude towards E-Governance**

Attitude	Male	Female	$\chi^2$ level	df	CV	TV	Remark
Aware of IT Act 2000	55.2	48.3	0.05	1	1.67	3.84	Not-Sig.
Aware of NeVA	55.5	21.1	0.05	1	75.20	3.84	Sig.
Aware of 'Gems of Digital India Award'	37.2	17.1	0.05	1	22.70	3.84	Sig.

## CONCLUSION

It would be highlighted while concluding the present study on the stakeholders' awareness and attitude on the process of e-governance with special reference to Kerala Legislative Assembly Secretariat (KLAS) that while majority of the MLA, and KLAS staff have hold their strong believe on the process of e-governance and hence expressed their optimistic view in achieving inclusiveness through e-governance whereas majority of the Public-respondents were not since they are not aware of the process of and the means of e-governance. The attempt to understand whether any significant difference existed in their perception has also confirmed the same. Besides the respondents' category, their gender has also played a pivotal role in making difference in their perception on e-governance that while the respondents' perception on IT Act 2000 was not influenced by their gender their awareness on NeVa, and 'Gems of Digital India' was influenced. Based on the findings of the present study it would be suggested that measures like awareness campaign, organizing training programme will bring the civics into the mainstream of e-governance thereby achieving *inclusive governance*.

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