

EFFICACY OF ONLINE TRAINING OF THE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL RURAL GOVERNMENT: A FOCUS GROUP STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Aim. Before COVID-19, training institutions rarely used eLearning to improve Elected Representatives' (ERs) skills in rural development who come from vernacular social and academic backgrounds. Online education has numerous upsides, but there is always some controversy about whether or not every learner will benefit from the same approach. The study was conducted in Tripura, a North-Eastern state of India, examine the efficacy of online training among the ERs responsible for extending the rural local government services to the common people.

Methods. This study utilised the qualitative technique of focus group discussion to acquire a comprehensive grasp of the positive and negative opinions of ERs regarding their experiences with online training. Samples were collected from all the districts and all three tiers of rural government.

Results. The study is a pioneering work to evaluate views of ERs on e-learning. Lack of technical support, boredom in training sessions, and lack of allowances for internet use, transportation to headquarters for training, and refreshments contributed the trainees' negative experiences. Further, training materials were poorly presented and failed to convey the intended message.

Conclusions. This study will enable trainers, administrators, and policymakers to reengineer their andragogic structures of future grassroots online training programmes for higher efficacy. ERs dislike e-learning, and government regulations that favour classroom instruction worsen this issue. Policy initiatives to reconcile demand and supply, such as high-quality capacity building for Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) ERs with vernacular academics, are needed to achieve practical results.

Keyword: Elected Members, Rural Local Government, Perception, Online Training, Focus Group Discussion

INTRODUCTION

The Panchayati Raj Ministry of the Government of India has been emphasising the necessity of equipping Elected Representatives (ERs) of rural local governments with high-quality capacity building to improve administration and better serve the common people. This capacity building is conducted mainly through training and exposure trips (Narayana, 2005).

During pre-COVID-19, the training programmes were fully offline, and the Government of India had allocated substantial funds to make the training programs more vibrant and effective. The ERs of RLBs, which also include the traditional bodies in the Sixth Schedule Areas and Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) regions, are responsible for implementing all Central and State Government schemes at the local level, similar to the

Union Government at the national level and the State Government at the regional level. Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) are also known as *Gram Panchayats* (GPs) or village administrations, which are constitutional bodies of local self-governance.

RATIONALE

It is beneficial for the participants to attend national or international training programmes right from their place of convenience, but at the same time it becomes troublesome for the ERs from rural India to participate in such programmes because of their limited acceptance, readiness, and adoption of eLearning. While discussing the limitations of online training of Rural Local Bodies, it is observed that there is a lack of Face to Face (F2F) interactions, connectivity issues and use of technology, and lack of control on the external as well as internal conditions while giving training, problems faced while getting feedback, difficulties in ascertaining whether people have understood what was discussed. Their comfort level with the adoption of technology has been felt as some of the major barriers (Khambete, 2020). Following the general trend of the education and training sector during the COVID-19 pandemic, eLearning has been introduced for the Elected Representatives of Rural Local Bodies as a method of *Emergency Learning* and the shift from the traditional approach to the online method was very rapid as “extraordinary time call for extraordinary measure” (Murphy, 2020; Khalil et al., 2020). It is also pertinent to mention that the introduction of emergency learning is not very new in the world and has been applied multiple times as a crisis response measure (Allen & Seaman, 2010). But the case is different in the special context of the Elected Representatives of the Rural Local Bodies due to their diversified educational and technological exposure which will never correlate with the students, professionals, or administrators.

As per Government records, there are 276718 Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs), 269347 Gram Panchayats (including Traditional Local Bodies), 6717 Block Panchayats, 654 District Panchayats, and 3045000 ERs of Panchayat Raj Institutions in India (Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, 2019-20). The Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India (2019-20) released Rs. 1376.58 Crore (Cr.) (USD 167 million approx), during the year 2015-16 to 2017-18 to the States/ UTs. The Government of India launched a new scheme in the year 2018 and named it Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) for the capacity building of ERs and functionaries of Rural Local Bodies and approved a total budget of Rs. 7255.50 Cr. for the period starting from 01.04.2018 to 31.03.2022. As per the 73rd constitutional amendment, the elected local bodies are directly responsible for implementing schemes or programs spanning 29 sectors including primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors.

During the discussion with the faculty members and officers of different training institutes and Rural Development Blocks in India, a common issue identified is the ER staff's attendance of the ERs in the training programs. There is a general perspective among the ERs that they are not required to take any training, most specifically any electronic form of training. The attitude seems more vigilant among the ERs who have been elected multiple times than the new incumbents. The facts can be established by looking at Table 1 given below, where it can be seen that the participation rate is higher in the functionaries compared to the ERs (Panchayat Raj Training Institutes, RD (Panchayat) Department, 2021-22).

Table 1

The target and achievements of Panchayat Raj Training Institutes of Tripura for the financial years 2019-20 & 2020-21

Category of trainees	2019-20		2020-2021	
	Target	Achievement	Target	Achievement
Elected Representatives	8268	6237 (75%)	12956	2812 (22%)
Functionaries	3280	2998 (91%)	3491	3447 (99%)

Source. Training Calendar of Panchayat Raj Training Institutes, Tripura

During and post-COVID-19 pandemic; the Government issued instructions for online training to the ERs. Accordingly, institutions like NIRDPR (National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj), SIRDPR (State Institute for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj), PRTIs (Panchayat Raj Training Institutes), etc. have started e-trainings but reaching out to the ERs of remote rural areas has become more challenging due to different issues. Forty-four of the 1176 GP/VCs (Village Committees) don't have power service. Even though most GPs are provided with power service, Computers & Peripherals and Panchayat Bhawans, 39.28% are only equipped with internet access, as mentioned in Table 2. Most commonly, ERs have very little access to the computer in their household and even most of them are not comfortable using smartphones. Awareness about using a smartphone for online training is also very low among them, as they mostly use the device for communication, entertainment, or social networking. The topic can be investigated further using Daft (1984) Media Richness Theory, which posits that the efficiency of a communication medium can be decided by aligning the channel's richness with the task's ambiguity (Ishii et al., 2019). In short, media richness is the capacity to deliver knowledge and helps end-users to interact and exchange thoughts (Thaneshan et al., 2020). But if we consider the approach of (Newberry, 2001), we will find that there are different media types, from the "Richest" to the "Leaneast," and it is solely dependent on the targets to which one to be applied. He argued that Face to Face (F2F) is the richest medium among all the available mediums.

Thus, theories supporting the effectiveness of online training fail when got compared to the perceptives of Rural Elected Representatives as they are not previously trained in handling those issues and lack technological mandate (Yang & Cornelius, 2020).

Table 2

Status of Computer with Peripherals & Internet Connectivity etc. In GPs/VCs Office as on 05.05.2022

Name of District	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
North Tripura	8	129	123	129	61	90	119	6
Unakoti	4	91	91	77	81	38	80	0
Dhalai	8	151	124	99	101	74	145	27
Khowai	6	124	119	108	109	1	109	5
West Tripura	9	170	168	170	118	128	158	2
Sepahijala	7	169	169	178	143	27	167	0
Gomati	8	173	170	133	128	62	164	3
South Tripura	8	169	168	151	97	42	169	1
Grand Total		1176	1132	1045	838	462	1111	44

Notes: A - Number of Blocks, B - Number of GPs/ VCs, C - Status of power service availability in the GP/VC office, D - No. of computers available, E - Status of functional BBNL machine, F - Status of availability of the Internet, G - Status of the existence of Panchayat Bhawan & H - Number of GPs/ VCs without power connectivity.

Source. RD (Panchayat), Government of Tripura

RESEARCH GAP AND LIMITATIONS

The study addresses several glaring research gaps drawn from the extant literature review and is worth investigating. Very few systematic research has been conducted on the e-trainings of rural ERs; hence, the availability of literature is less. The use of smart devices during training and technical handling issues in this regard is uncommon for them, unlike students or professionals. The sample selected in this study is a mixed-gender focus group with a diversified political portfolio which allows the creation of greater heterogeneous focus group discussions. The individual relationship between the political persons may be a limitation in the study which may result in getting some biased opinions. But the focus group discussion helps generate a healthy and lively discussion which is very difficult to attain in the case of a random collection of samples (Morgan, 1998b).

Last but not least, no quantification of data was done as the issue raised by most of the Elected Representatives during the focus group discussion was not necessarily the most important factor responsible for creating the perception of the Elected Representatives towards online training (Morgan & Krueger, 1998a). Hence, each idea and thinking got equal weightage while doing the analysis and was equally appreciated. However, the gaps created a strong base for conducting more research studies to disseminate knowledge logically and scientifically. The study has also given a platform for future quantitative studies with greater representative samples so that the determinants can be verified and generalized as far as possible.

The paper tries to analyze the reasons behind the unenthusiastic attitude of the ERs towards the online training sessions while considering the stakeholders' perspectives and offering a plausible training intervention to overcome the disgruntlement arising from the present training modes. Consequently, the following research question might be formulated for this study:

- RQ: What is the efficacy of online training for ERs?

METHOD

The Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted to collect data from the ERs of Rural Local Bodies. As a qualitative method, FGDs provide a more in-depth knowledge of social issues through four steps: developing a research objective, collecting data, analysing data, and reporting results (Deliens et al., 2015). The method uses a carefully selected group of people to discuss a topic to get insight into the participants' nuanced experiences, beliefs, opinions, and attitudes rather than data from a statistically representative sample of the broader population (Hayward et al., 2004; Israel et al., 1998; Kitzinger, 1994). The emergence of participatory research, especially focus groups, in the academic and social sciences throughout the 1980s is often cited as a major reason for the method's success (Morgan, 2002). It was designed as a means of bridging the gap between scientific inquiry and local knowledge, and as a technique for collecting qualitative data (Boateng et al., 2016). The use of focus groups in participatory research is perceived by many as a "cost-effective" and "promising alternative" (Deliens et al., 2014) that allows for a variety of paradigms and world views (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Orr, 1992). Understanding how and why people respond to social issues in certain ways is essential to understand their perceptions. The purpose of up to 23% of the studies was to understand perspectives (Nyumba et al., 2018). Generally, focus groups are used to examine how people perceive, interpret, and legitimize rural development initiatives and the levels of support for such initiatives (Akyıldız & Ahmed, 2021). During the qualitative study, FGD was deliberately adopted. Newly Elected Representatives from District Level, Intermediate Level, and Gram Panchayat

Level have been selected, and four FGDs have been organized. The selected participants include males and females in a ratio of 2:3, having experience participating in online as well as offline training programs. Six to ten participants per Focus Group have been selected per standard protocol (Morgan et al., 1998c). Moreover, in a few cases where there is no involvement of participants in the group, two to three additional participants have been engaged. The medium of communication was vernacular language so the participants could express their views conveniently. The political identity of most of the participants was the same.

The NVivo 12 plus tool was used to identify the major aspects contributing to ER's online training assessment. Data from text, audio, video, photos, news articles, spreadsheets, online surveys, websites, and social media are analyzed using NVivo software into a simple, intuitive interface (di Gregorio, 2020; McNiff, 2016). This study used NVivo to extract potential terms from junk data and is routinely used to analyze focus group discussions. This study used a word cloud to demonstrate the code hierarchy, with longer words signifying more coding references.

At the onset of each focus group discussion, the elected representatives were motivated to interact and comment on each other's experiences and viewpoints. It was emphasized that there are no 'correct' answers.

QUESTION GUIDE

The moderator developed a semi-structured question guide to satisfy the needs of the focus group discussion and the aims of the study to determine the elements that influenced the growth of ER's perceptions toward e-learning through online courses (Morgan, 1998b). While developing the question guide for the FGD, opinion from the experts having ample field-level experience was taken, and relevant literature was also consulted so that all the required points could be covered. After development, the question guide was pilot tested among 10 ERs in a conducive environment. The result was beyond expectation, and no major changes had to be made in the question guide; thus, the result of the pilot study was later included in the main study.

The first few questions in the guide were designed to introduce participants to the issue at hand and make them comfortable with the conversation. ERs perception of s e-learning through online programmes was the focus of the debate, and the group was skilfully guided there by a series of transitions and important questions. The key questions carry the major part of the group discussion for obvious reasons. Last but not the least, the respected ERs were asked to share views concerning the qualitative capacity building of the ERs of the Rural Local Bodies and intervention strategies to be adopted for conducting meaningful online training programs so that the gaps could be mitigated.

FOCUS GROUP QUESTION GUIDE

The Focus Group Study is widely regarded as the gold standard for crowd-sourcing creative solutions to a problem. The focus group discussion conducted in this study aimed to gather insights from elected representatives with varying academic backgrounds. Consequently, the development of the interview guide was executed with great attention to detail. The guide for questioning comprised five distinct segments, with the inclusion of open-ended questions to facilitate an extended discussion and enable elected representatives to share their observations. Table 3, presented herein, provides a comprehensive overview of the questionnaire framework.

Table 3
Table representing FGD Guide

Question Type	Question
Opening	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where are you from and what is your name? 2. From which tier of Panchayat did you get elected?
Introductory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What type of training program do you prefer to join, Online or offline?
Transition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thinking about Online training programs what first comes to your mind? 2. What was your first experience attending such an online training program?
Key	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the key factors which you believe are responsible for creating the perception of ERs towards online training programs? 2. Which of the previously mentioned factors has had the greatest influence on the ERs of Rural Local Bodies?
Concluding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you have any remarks or suggestions for mitigating the existing gaps? 2. Soon we will try to provide better and more realistic online training modules for the ERs. Can you give us some advice in this regard?

Source. Own research.

DATA ANALYSIS

According to (Rabiee, 2004; Burrows & Kendall., 1997), data analysis begins during the focus group session as issues emerge during group discussion. During the investigation, the moderators made an impromptu summary of issues that brought feedback to the surface for validation or further clarification. The quotes received during FGDs were encoded using NVivo qualitative software. The sample ($n = 36$) consists of 14 male and 22 female participants covering all three tiers of PRIs with age range 28 to 61 years ($M = 44.39$; $SD = 9.47$). Word cloud is a simple tool for bringing out the potential words from junk data and is widely used in data analysis of focus group

discussions (Horner, 2000). It deals with data mining and textual analysis in a simplified way and is extensively used in eLearning (Huisman et al., 2011).

RESULT

For the study, samples were taken from all eight districts of Tripura, covering all the tiers of PRIs. Participants who have attended at least one online and one offline (i.e., Face to Face) training in their tenure were selected for the FGD. The educational qualification of the 36 participants varies from Class 10 to Master's Degree, and for many of them, this is the first tenure they are spending as an Elected Representative.

- ***RQ1: What Type of Training Program Do You Prefer to Join, Online or Offline?***

All four groups have unanimously accepted that Offline training programs are preferable to Online training programs. According to the Focus Group Discussion participants:

Offline training programs are full of practical and live classes where Elected Representatives can interact with the faculties whereas the online training programs are more technical where the faculties are talking, and we are listening (Mostly One-Way in nature). The live demonstrations are quite less, and thus Offline training programs are better than the Online training programs.

However, during the discussion, many participants agreed that the quality of the Resource Person, the training program's content, and how the faculty handles the online session are crucial for selecting the option. Moreover, face-to-face interactions are more fruitful as they can even go for peer learning in case of difficulties.

- ***RQ2: Thinking About Online Training Programs What First Comes to Your Mind?***

The question has been asked for creating a platform for the Elected Representatives to share the factors leading to their negative perception towards attending online training sessions. According to a group of participants, what first comes to mind when thinking about online training programs is:

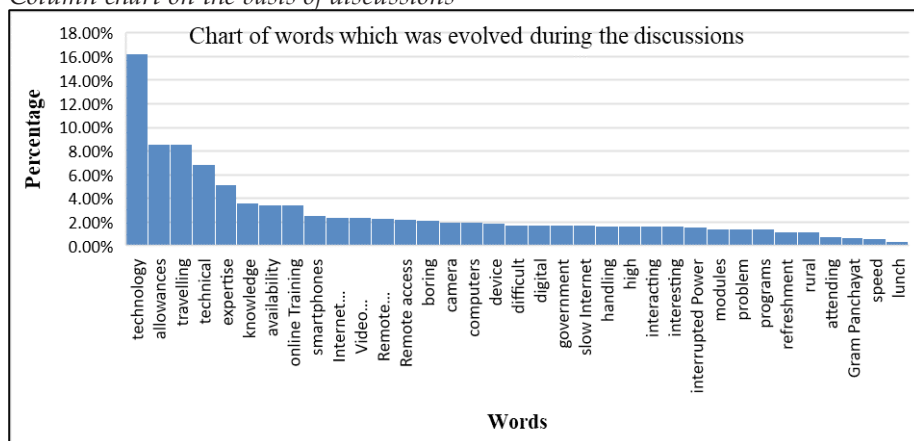
People sitting in front of computers and smartphones and trying to grab knowledge. Technical issues are prevalent in those online training programs, and managing the situation at times becomes challenging. There are different platforms for attending online training programs, and the interface of all the applications is different, which again creates a problem for those with less knowledge about technology (The aforementioned fact was observed and analyzed through the Nvivo software, as depicted in Figure 1, Figure 2, and Table 4).

Words	Length	Count	Percentage (%)
Remote Connectivity	19	33	2.35%
Remote access	13	31	2.21%
boring	6	30	2.14%
camera	6	28	1.99%
computers	9	28	1.99%
device	6	27	1.92%
difficult	9	25	1.78%
digital	7	25	1.78%
government	10	24	1.71%
slow Internet	13	24	1.71%
handling	8	23	1.64%
high	4	23	1.64%
interacting	11	23	1.64%
interesting	11	23	1.64%
interrupted Power	17	22	1.57%
modules	7	20	1.42%
problem	7	20	1.42%
programs	8	20	1.42%
refreshment	11	17	1.21%
rural	5	17	1.21%
attending	9	11	0.78%
Gram Panchayat	14	10	0.71%
speed	5	9	0.64%
lunch	5	5	0.36%
Total		1405	100.00%

Source. Own research

Figure 2

Column chart on the basis of discussions



Source. Own research.

- ***RQ3: What Was Your First Experience of Attending Such an Online Training Program?***

While discussing the first experience of the ERs on attending the online training program it was explored that none of them had attended any online training program before the COVID pandemic, and from April to June 2020, they attended their first-ever online training program. In most cases, respective blocks or districts have arranged online training programs in their conference hall, maintaining social distancing norms, and the maximum number of Elected Representatives attended those training programs. Very few of them had attended the online training program from home. Some of them said:

It was very difficult to address the technical issues as we were unaware of what to do and how to access the application. The officials of blocks and districts arranged online training programs in the office itself, and we gathered in the conference hall to attend the program. In the initial phase, the program started nicely, but suddenly we could not hear anything as the internet connectivity was down. Later on, after 25-30 mins, the connection got established again, but by this time the session was over. The officials have not granted any travelling allowance for attending the program and have just provided lite refreshments. Overall, the experience was not satisfactory.

It was explored that Elected Representatives who had attended training programs either from respective headquarters or from their homes had very little understanding of the content discussed during that training program. Some ERs during the Focus Group Discussion advocated the experience of the offline training program over the online training program because their family members give little importance to the online training programs and keep disturbing them during the sessions for performing their day-to-day household work by keeping the Smartphones on.

- ***RQ4: What Are the Key Factors You Believe Are Responsible for Creating The Perception of ERs Towards Online Training Programs?***

While putting the question during the FGD, the ERs were expected to point out the determining factors based on their perception of online training programs. Many vital points cropped up during the discussion, and the points in almost all the FGD sessions are similar. Some of the critical points have been listed below:

- ERs lack technical expertise in handling issues related to video conferencing tools.
- Lack of Smartphones or computers for attending online classes.
- Lack of high-speed internet connectivity in rural areas, particularly in the remote hilly regions.
- De-motivated towards not getting training allowance, traveling allowance or internet allowance, etc., for attending the online training program.

- The boring course content is not suitable for online programs, etc.

According to the opinion of a few participants in the FGD, many were also apathetic as the organizers were not providing quality lunch in case they were attending online training programs at the block or district headquarters. In contrast, for offline training programs, such issues are sporadic. The age and educational qualification of the Elected Representatives are also determining points that directly affect the perception of ERs towards online training and have also been pointed out during the Focus Group Discussions.

- ***RQ5: Which of The Previously Mentioned Factors Had the Greatest Influence on the ERs of Rural Local Bodies?***

The question has been asked to narrow down the discussions of the ERs towards the most critical factors which drive the ERs towards forming their perspective towards the online training programs or e-Learning. It has been identified that handling technological challenges during an online training program seems to be the most challenging factor for creating a negative perspective of ERs towards online training programs. Moreover, some of the greatest influencing factors are the lack of expertise in dealing with different web applications, unavailability of training allowances (travelling, food, etc.), and unavailability of smartphones or computers.

SUGGESTIONS AND INTERVENTION

It is opined by most of the Elected Representatives that the medium of communication should be face-to-face, and online training can be used as a medium of training but only in exceptional cases. Some hands-on sessions, preferably in small batches, may be conducted at the level of training institutes so that the Elected Representatives can learn the nitty-gritty of handling the technical issues related to the online training programs. While asking the Elected Representatives for suggestions regarding Government intervention, they replied, *“there should be one common application through which all the online training programs may be conducted so that it becomes easy for the ERs to learn the same.”* Some ERs have also requested that budget smartphones be provided to the ERs for attending online programs as the economic condition of many of them are not sound, and it is difficult for them to bear the cost. Besides, the ERs have requested to explore *“Some provisions to provide refreshment or sitting fees or internet charges while attending online training, which may help to mitigate the gaps between online and offline training and will also motivate the ERs to attend Online training without fail.”*

While discussing the changes in the training module, the ERs voiced their opinions in favour of shorter sessions while having online classes, and the batches must be very small so that the trainer may give individual attention to the queries of the trainees. Meanwhile, being sceptical while selec-

ting topics for online training programs is also crucial. In reality, most of the issues faced by the ERs while attending training programs result from poor "Training Needs Analysis" or TNA. This function is recognized as an integral part of any well-designed training program determining the location, scope, and magnitude of training needs (Denby, 2010). In most cases, while deciding the Training Needs of the Elected Representatives mainly through online mode in the post-COVID period, the top-down approach has been adopted by most agencies instead of the bottom-up approach. The participants confirmed this fact during the Focus Group Discussions. According to (McGehee, 1961), a basic TNA must comprise three steps to get optimal output. The first one is *organization analysis*, i.e., examining the need for an organization's training through identifying efficiency indices, resource needs, and objectives. The second one is *operation analysis*, i.e., establishing some performance standards and identifying the ways and means to achieve it considering the existing knowledge and skill component. The last one is *person analysis*, through which the organization or agency identifies the right person for the training to achieve the organizational objective (Moore & Dutton, 1978). Combining the three factors of Organisation, Task, and Person under consideration, the model is popularly known as the OTP model (Taylor et al., 1998).

While discussing the perception of Elected Representatives towards eLearning, there is another critical factor that needs immediate attention in addition to accurate Training Needs Analysis of the participants: the change in the participants' attitude towards adopting technology. To increase productivity at a different level, it is not sufficient to invest in upcoming technology by procuring computers, video conferencing software, etc.; There is also an urgent need from the stakeholders to adopt and use the same. The concept of user acceptance of new technology has been termed one of the most advanced research areas in the contemporary information system literature (Hu et al., 1999). The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Task Technology Fit (TTF), The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) are some of those well-known theories/ models which are widely used to analyze the user's adoption to technology, but for examining the variance in behavioural intention to use technology, UTAUT suits the most (Al-Saedi et al., 2020). The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) is one such model which suggests responsible determinants in this regard. (Venkatesh et al., 2003) It is proposed that performance expectancy (believing that using technology will help the individual in job performance), effort expectancy (ease of using technology), social influence (the extent to which an individual perceives that others believe that the individual should use the technology) and facilitating conditions (the extent to which an individual believes that an organizational and technical infrastructure exists to support the use of the system) are the direct determinants. In contrast, attitude towards using

technology, self-efficacy, and anxiety towards using technology is termed as the indirect determinants. Gender, age, experience, and voluntariness of use have been identified as the key moderators and play a crucial role in user acceptance of technology. Thus, a holistic approach by targeting all the direct and indirect determinants will help transform the perspective of Elected Representatives from positive to negative. Accordingly, the challenges can be out-performed.

CONCLUSION

Considering the vast role of ERs in the rural economy, the Government has emphasized the Capacity Building of Elected Representatives of Rural Local Bodies as a “Major Activity”, but true success can only be achieved if appropriate policies can be framed taking into consideration the perspective of the ERs too. The COVID pandemic has forced the training institutes to start online sessions with Elected Representatives, but it is also a harsh reality that the factors like age, educational qualification, economic status, technological infrastructures, outdated training modules, etc. are creating enormous obstacles for participants to accept the changing form of learning (Mukherjee & Hasan, 2020) The factors identified during the research study need to get addressed while planning for setting up a robust infrastructure for imparting online training at the grassroots level (Mukherjee, 2014). It is evident that in most of the cases, the financial condition of Elected Representatives of Rural Local Bodies cannot be compared with those of Elected Representatives in other layers like the Central Government or State Government. Thus, some changes in the existing policies to provide suitable allowances to the Elected Representatives while attending the online training program will motivate them. They will feel encouraged to join those sessions without worrying about their livelihood. Meanwhile, parallel offline sessions with micro-groups may be conducted at different levels to technically equip the Elected Representatives to handle the technological challenges so that they feel confident enough to join the online sessions by gaining a technical mandate (Mukherjee, 2012). The results should be considered an initial step towards developing a customised, effective, efficient, and engaging online training mechanism for the Elected Representatives of Rural Local Bodies.

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