



Reimagining Citizen-Government Interactions: Digital Grievance Redressals in Local Governments

An RCT Proposal from Odisha, India

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Motivation

The digital era offers a unique opportunity to revolutionize how citizens interact with government bodies, particularly at the grassroots level (Gram Panchayats) in India where access is a challenge - **Empowering both stakeholders with credible information and accountability**





Problems Landscape

- + Besides few state level attempts, the only national level grievance redressal is the **Right to Information Act**
- + Current system requires payment to process requests and responds only by physical mail with no public access; **high-opportunity cost of filing**



Digitisation can enable **accessible, centralized and pressure free ways** to bring in accountability for governments and provide data for citizens to vote strategically in elections.

Conversely, if local governments have **insights into what areas of a citizen's welfare** require greater attention, they will be able to address these issues more efficiently.



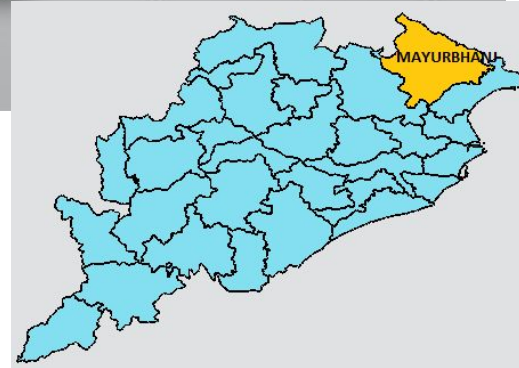
RESEARCH QUESTION

Does the provision of **digital grievance redressal** reduce information asymmetry through a shift in welfare spending and strategic voting?

Location

Mayurbhanj District, Odisha

- Located in the eastern India, Mayurbhanj is one of the largest districts in the state of Odisha (4,022 mi²)
- Consists of 26 blocks, 404 Gram Panchayats, and 3966 villages
- Literacy Rate: 63.4%
- Sex Ratio: 1.006 (more females)



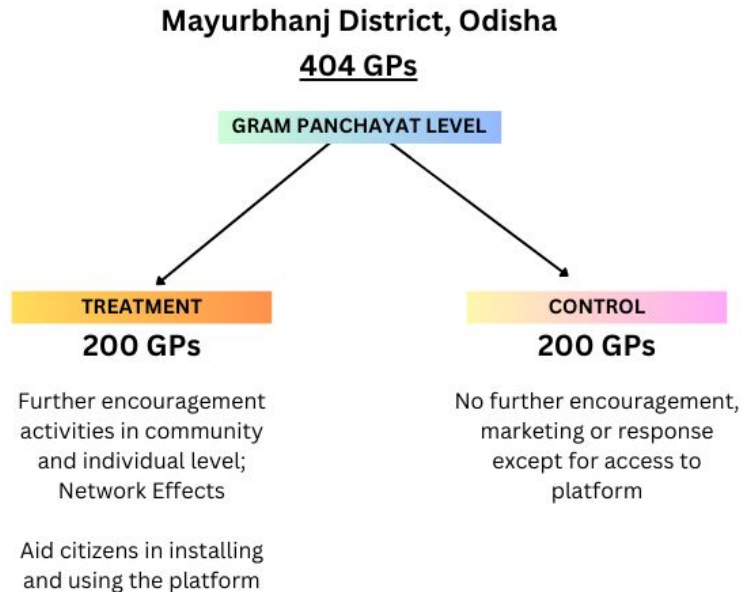


Intervention

Provide access to a **new digital platform** for grievance redressal where citizens can anonymously raise issues/tickets to the local government body and offer ratings on their responses.

Enable citizens to react/comment to complaints, view govt responses and ratings given by primary citizens. **Local Government has access to trends on complaints.**

Random assignment of Gram Panchayats to 50% Treatment (200 GPs) vs. 50% Control (200 GPs)





Strategic Voting

If citizens better understand the day-to-day progress of their local government, they will be empowered to make more informed voting decisions

Outcome 1: Strategic Voting

Determine the **motivations for voting** for a particular candidate in elections, can be influenced by bribes, self-identity, party politics.

Methodology: Survey on the decision-making process of voting for their Sarpanch (Head of Local Government)

Outcome 2: Trust of Local Government

Methodology: Measuring the **endorsement effect** between the two groups by posing similar questions with different endorsements



Welfare Spending

if local governments have insights into what areas of a citizen's welfare require greater attention, they will be able to address these issues more efficiently.

Outcome 3: GP Local Knowledge

Gram Panchayat understanding of citizens' concerns in correlation with the grievance data collected.

Methodology: The data will be collected through a GP survey and compared with the data collected on the platform from both control and treatment groups.

Outcome 4: Quality of Service Delivery

Methodology: Improvement in the **delivery of five prime state-level** government schemes in the domains of employment, health, and education. Data collected by the state government for each GP and is also reflected in the budget allocation.

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NEXT STEPS

The beta version of the application is under development and should be ready by July 2024.

We will be conducting **power calculations** for given outcomes through self-reported pilot data to determine the minimum detectable effect.

Actively **seeking funding** to implement the RCT and develop the platform

Thank you.

