

EXPLORING THE DIMENSIONS OF E-GOVERNANCE PRACTICES IN PUNJAB

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ABSTRACT

With the national objective of making India a global empowered nation, the Government of Punjab has also been progressing towards creating a knowledge society, by using the power of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Punjab has started many initiatives in the ICT sector, which aims to deliver huge benefits to the citizens and businesses and also improve the efficiency of government functioning. With the focus on good governance govt of Punjab aims at the betterment of the lives of its citizens. It is possible only with the advancement in the technology, adequate & timely services. It would ensure promptness, openness and accessibility to the citizens.

Considering the above this paper examines the different e-initiatives by Government of Punjab focussing transparency and improved governance in the state by the adoption of e-governance practices. It also attempts to highlight the proficiency of government of Punjab to implement as par with National e-governance plan. The paper further discusses the key areas which need more consideration and responsiveness. A self-designed questionnaire based on five point likert scale was constructed and data from total 100 respondents was collected and analyzed. Descriptive analysis & correlation were used as the tools for the research analysis. The paper suggests that

government should make people more aware about e-governance initiatives for the successful implementation of its projects.

Key words: *E-Governance, Good Governance, Information Technology, Punjab*

INTRODUCTION:

The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) played an important role in rapid transformation of the society and the mode of governance in the 21st century. E-governance acts as driving force to achieve good governance, efficiency and transparency. Let's discuss what e-governance actually is? E-Governance is the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) like the Internet, local area networks and mobiles by the government to improve effectiveness and efficiency in delivering services, guarantee quick dissemination of information. It helps in improved interaction between Government and citizens, government and businesses and government and other governments.

Today e-Governance is not an option, but an important tool which enables citizen's participation in decision making and brings transparency by eliminating middlemen or agents between government and citizens. In the last decade, we have witnessed flood of e-government projects and initiatives in the country which played very important role in shaping the progressive e-governance strategy of the country. National e-Governance plan (NeGP) is one of e-Government initiatives across the country. The major object of NeGP is to bring public services closer home to citizens. Acc. to DIT (Department of Information Technology) of India, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab, Delhi, Chandigarh and Tamil Nadu are the leading states in the use of ICT. Punjab has been one of them to implement e-Governance initiatives.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

The concept of governance has been studied from different perspectives and in different disciplines. The numerous researches have already been done by different researchers analyzing the effectiveness of e-governance services and adoption of these services has transformed our economy into a web based economy. Few of them are as follows:

1. **Chee-Wee, Tan et al. (2008)** tries to examine in this paper “Building Citizen Trust towards e-Government Services: Do High Quality Websites Matter?” the role of e-government service quality as a salient driver of citizens’ trustworthiness beliefs towards e-government websites, which in turn promotes the corresponding adoption of public e-services. The data was collected from a sample of 647 e-government service participants and results thereby suggested that high quality e-government websites do matter in building citizen trust towards public e-services. This study accomplishes several theoretical objectives and concluded that e-government websites should not only be designed as pure technological artifacts with functional properties but they must also incorporate sociological elements that cater to customers’ social needs.
2. **Mahajan (2009)** highlighted in “E-governance initiatives in India with special reference to Punjab” the significance of information technology in implementation of smart Government in the state of Punjab. Acc. To NASSCOM analysis he concluded that Punjab remains far behind in terms of e-governance if compared with the other southern states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu of India. The author discussed various initiatives taken up by Punjab government and suggested compulsory Computer education from 6th to 12th standard for effective implementation of e-governance. She also advocated that regional language should be used in the IT implementation processes. Awareness among the citizens of the state

is must. They should know that e-governance can reduce time, cost and effort of the people.

3. **Malhotra, Chariar, Das (2011)** in paper titled “Citizen-centricity for e-Governance initiatives in Rural Areas” focuses and discusses that E-Governance is expected to maximize citizen satisfaction by not just improving responsiveness of public service delivery mechanisms but also by increasing citizens’ participation in governance mechanisms. There is a need for a design approach that is broader in perspective and not merely based on understanding of technological diffusion or acceptance parameters. It should explore the social, technical, administrative factors influencing an e-governance implementation with an objective of e- governance approach suitable to the rural citizens.
4. **Kaur and Rathor, (2012)** in article “Importance of ICT and e-governance security in Punjab” discussed every aspect of E-governance in Punjab with security point of view. The Department of Information Technology (DoIT) prepares & executes IT policy framework in the state of Punjab for improved governance and service delivery. Author advocates that most of the people are not aware of the limitation of the technology and believe machine reliable more than men. But certain incidents like cyber crime and credit card frauds make the whole system corrupt. Therefore author suggests that e-government projects must have highest standards of security and privacy to succeed. So an effective approach to e-governance should be designed and implemented as the governmental information is usually so sensitive.
5. **Singla, S.K., and Aggarwal, H., (2012)** in their paper, “E-Governance framework for effective implementation of SUWIDHA in the state of Punjab” explored earlier studies and collection of citizen’s view regarding SUWIDHA and its functioning in the state of

Punjab. Author found software used in these SUWIDHA Centre are not effective as it should be and suggested to improve it by making it sharable and connected to other SUWIDHA centers. Software and database should be secured. Infrastructure should be equipped with basic facilities and proper training should be imparted to the staff for proper and timely functioning of the system.

6. **Mittal, Kaur (2013)** in the paper “e-Governance initiatives in the State of Punjab” tries to highlights the different initiatives taken by the Government of Punjab. They concluded that Department of Information Technology (DOIT) of Punjab has taken a number of effective initiatives for providing e-Governance services to its citizens but rural people have to suffer from the lack of e-Governance services as these services are mainly available in the urban areas. They suggested that government should concentrate on promoting e-Governance in rural areas as well so that every citizen either urban or rural can take the benefits from these services.
7. **Singh (2015)** in the paper “E-Government: Challenges for Acceptance and Adoption in State of Punjab” highlights the economic overview of the Punjab state and discussed the challenges faced in the acceptance and adoption of e-government services. The author identified some barriers like low literacy rate in IT education, low standard of living, large population below poverty line, and unawareness regarding the usage and benefits of e-governance services. Lastly, they concluded that these restrict the successful execution of e-government services.
8. **Kaur et. al (2016)** in the paper entitled “E-Governance: A study of challenges faced by the employees of Suwidha centres of Punjab discusses the study conducted to identify the challenges and problems faced by the employees in providing the e- services to the people. Their study tries to understand the how much the state government

have succeeded in implementing e-governance in the state and how much more is needed to make e-governance a successful endeavor.

The above mentioned studies by various researchers' focus on building customer trust on e-governance initiatives so as to develop it further. These approaches spelled the importance & use of Internet and Communication Technology (ICT). Many tried to explain the benefits and pitfalls of these initiatives.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the research study are as follows:

1. To examine the kinds of services being availed by the respondents.
2. To study the performance indicators of the services provided by e-governance.
3. To study the difficulties faced by the respondents while availing services.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher has used exploratory research methodology to carry out this research. The study is related to the use of e-governance services implemented by Punjab Government in Kapurthala district of Punjab. The researcher has considered the Kapurthala district as it was chosen as first district to implement the pilot project of e-governance initiatives. The literature review provided the basis for developing a questionnaire. The survey was constructed to determine the extent of awareness level of inhabitants regarding e-governance practices and determine the reasons for in-efficiencies, if any existed. This study is primarily focused on the services provided and awareness and usage of e-governance services implemented by Government of Punjab. A self-designed questionnaire based on five point likert scale was filled from 70 respondents, out of a total of 100 questionnaires, 30 respondents turned to be non-respondents and so the

number was deleted from the survey. The Descriptive Statistics is used to analyze the view point of respondents' i.e. mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The Framework for ICT e-Governance in Punjab was laid out in 2002. Since then, with continuous improvements in various phases ranging from informative, interactive, transactional and transformational, we have now reached in the phase of convergence which shows ICT growth in the entire country. Various e-governance Programmes like Integrated Financial Management System, Integrated Workflow & Document Management System, Computerization of offices of Divisional & Deputy Commissioners etc in Punjab has improved the government's internal efficiency which further resulted in quick response by the Government to the citizens. Also, Variety of services are being provided to people in rural and urban areas through Citizen Service Delivery channels like SUWIDHA centres, Fard Kendra's, Gram SUWIDHA Kendra's, Saanjh Kendra's etc. The e-governance is not just about providing computers, it is about changing people's mind-sets, procedures and the way in which the government functions. This shift is taking place in Punjab (Sh. C Roul, Principal Secretary Government reforms, Punjab). The government of Punjab has specifically allocated the budget for the said purpose:

E-Governance budget

S. No.	Scheme	Outlay for AP 2012-13 (Rs. in Lakhs)
1	Introduction of Computerization in Punjab Govt. Offices, Semi Govt. Bodies & Offices including Maintenance & Up-gradation of the Systems	1200.00
2	SUWIDHA Project	150.00

3	ICT Infrastructure and construction of building e-Governance Projects	500.00
4	Capacity Building for e-Governance Projects	90.00
5	Common Service Centres under National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) (Special ACA)	420.00
6	Provision for Bandwidth Charges with SWAN Components (Special ACA)	190.00
7	Additional Central Assistance under National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) (Special ACA)	920.00
	Total	3470.00

(Source: <http://punjab.gov.in/budget>)

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The analysis reveals that majority of respondents are of age group 31-50 years, followed by the age group of 18-30 (24%) and 50 and above(10%). The male composition (46%) of respondents is more than the females (24%).The researcher also attempted to examine the literacy by determining the qualification possessed by the respondents. It revealed that 2% of the respondents were illiterate, 11% has attained the primary education, 44% possessed secondary school certification; while, 18% were undergraduate and 22% were post graduate. Similarly, the monthly income was expedited, which showed 21% of respondents fall in the category of Rs. 5000-9999,58% fall in the range of 10000- 29999 and 20% belong to the category of Rs. 30000 and above. This depicts that majority of literate section of society in the age group of 31-50 years ,having moderate income are more inclined towards the e-governance practices.

Table: 1 – AGE

AGE (in years)	Frequency	Percent
18-30	24	34.29
31-50	36	51.42
50 and above	10	14.29
Total	70	100

Table: 2 – GENDER

GENDER	Frequency	Percent
Male	46	65.71
Female	24	34.29
Total	70	100

Table: 3 - QUALIFICATION

QUALIFICATION LEVEL	Frequency	Percent
Illiterate	2	2.86
Primary Education	8	11.44
Secondary Education	31	44.28
Under Graduate	13	18.57
Post Graduate	16	22.85
Total	70	100

Table: 4 - MONTHLY INCOME OF RESPONDENT

INCOME LEVEL	Frequency	Percent
5000-99990	15	21.43
10000-29999	41	58.57
30000 and above	14	20.00
Total	70	100

Table: 5 – OCCUPATION

OCCUPATION	Frequency	Percent
Agriculturalist	7	10.02
Govt. Employee	29	41.43

Self Employed	10	14.28
Student	10	14.28
Pensioner	4	5.71
Other	10	14.28
Total	70	100

A total of 27 different services provided by Suwidha centers have been examined as depicted in table 6. It has been tried to explore that whether the respondents are aware about the different services and facilitation provided by the state. It has been found that the majority of respondents have availed services like Passport, bus pass, registration of marriage etc. The mean in majority of services is more than 1.5 which signifies that the respondents are aware and are availing the services. However, there are certain services for which the awareness level is comparatively lesser like taking arms license, countersign, seeking permission for loud speaker, shagun scheme and non-encumbrance certificate as depicted in table 6.

Table: 6 Details of Services Availed

	N		Mean	Std. Dev.	Frequency	
	Valid	Missing			Yes	No
SERVICES AVAILED	Valid	Missing			Yes	No
Registration of Marriage	70	0	1.71	0.45	50	20
Identity Card	70	0	1.71	0.45	50	20
Ration Card	69	1	1.85	0.35	59	10
NOC for Building Plan	70	0	1.76	0.43	53	10
Marriage Certificate	70	0	1.60	0.49	53	17
Counter Sign	70	0	1.40	0.49	28	42
Passport	70	0	1.61	0.49	43	27
Caste Certificate	70	0	1.57	0.50	40	30
Demarcation / Evaluation of Land	70	0	1.46	0.50	32	38
Arms License	70	0	1.29	0.45	20	50
Permission of Loud	70	0	1.51	0.50	36	34

Speaker						
Non Encumbrance Certificate	70	0	1.33	0.47	23	47
Shagun Scheme	70	0	1.19	0.39	13	57
Pension	70	0	1.54	0.50	38	32
Attestation of Affidavit	70	0	1.57	0.50	40	30
Attestation of Document	70	0	1.56	0.50	39	31
Form Filling	70	0	1.50	0.50	35	35
Copying	70	0	1.36	0.48	25	45
Dependent Certificate	70	0	1.36	0.48	25	45
Bus Pass	70	0	1.47	0.50	33	37
New Water Supply Connection	70	0	1.49	0.50	34	36
Driving License	70	0	1.81	0.39	57	13
Registration of Vehicles	70	0	1.60	0.49	42	28
Electricity Bills	70	0	1.51	0.50	36	34
Birth & Death Certificate	70	0	1.62	0.49	44	26
Late Entry	70	0	1.64	0.64	33	31
RTI Application	70	0	1.51	0.53	34	36

(Source: Data Complied through questionnaire)

Further, it has also been attempted to explore that whether e-services provided by the state government meet the public / customers' expectations in terms of awareness, time taken, reliability efficiency, promptness and accuracy. The six indicators studied showed that the mean value is greater than 2 (Table 7), signifying that the opinion of respondent is significant. It means that the efforts of Government is reaching to the public and public is being sensitized towards e-governance practices.

Table 7: Analysis of Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators	N		Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness		Kurtosis	Std. Error of Kurtosis
					Yes	No		
VARIABLES	Valid	Missing						
Awareness of E-Governance	70	0	2.81	0.57	0.01	0.29	3.40	0.57
Time taken to avail services	70	0	2.87	0.50	0.46	0.29	4.26	0.57
Efficiency of delivery of services	70	0	2.50	0.58	0.68	0.29	0.49	0.57
Promptness in Delivery of services	70	0	2.91	0.53	0.09	0.29	0.59	0.57
Accuracy in Delivery of services	70	0	3.08	0.63	0.29	0.29	0.56	0.57
Reliability of Delivery of services	70	0	2.94	0.61	0.03	0.29	0.23	0.57
Cost of Delivery of Services	70	0	3.14	0.77	0.15	0.29	0.46	0.57
Quickness of Delivery of Service	70	0	3.07	0.77	0.67	0.29	0.60	0.57
Easiness of services	70	0	2.87	0.74	0.01	0.29	0.66	0.57

Flexibility of time in delivery of service	70	0	2.86	0.60	0.80	0.29	1.92	0.57
Monitoring of delivery of service	70	0	2.99	0.67	0.02	0.29	0.71	0.57

(Source: Data Complied through questionnaire)

It was also tried to explore that if the respondents found any impediments while availing services. The views of respondents were adjudged on the four parameters namely complex government regulations, complicated procedures, corruption and procedural delays. It is found the mean values of all the four parameters are significant. It means that the public faces the difficulties owing to these problems. The government should ascertain certain steps to remove these hurdles for betterment of society.

Table: 7 Reasons for Inefficiencies in Delivery Mechanism

VARIABLES	N		Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness		Kurtosis	Std. Error of Kurtosis
	Valid	Missing			Yes	No		
Complex Government Regulations	70	0	1.50	0.50	0	0.29	2.06	0.57
Complicated Procedures	70	0	1.67	0.47	0.75	0.29	1.49	0.57
Corruption	70	0	1.59	0.50	0.36	0.29	1.93	0.57
Procedural Delays	70	0	1.56	0.50	0.24	0.29	2.00	0.57

(Source: Data Complied through questionnaire)

CONCLUSION:

Traditionally people perceive the government services as frustrating and time consuming. The first thought that comes in anybody's mind thinking about government services is long queues; lengthy processes and procedures. But now—a-days the introduction of internet technology has made it possible for the government services to develop into an e-enabled and transform themselves into simple, accountable, quick, responsive and transparent services. As the usage of Information Technology is growing very fast, Indian Government is making many efforts to provide services to its citizens through E-Governance.

From the above study, it is concluded that majority of the respondents are aware about the different services provided by SUWIDHA centers. Few services for which the awareness level is comparatively lesser were arms license, countersign, seeking permission for loud speaker, shagun scheme and non-encumbrance certificate. It was seen that the efforts of Government is reaching to the public and public is being responsive towards e-governance practices. only few respondents disagreed on meeting the public/customers' expectations in terms of awareness, time taken, reliability efficiency, promptness and accuracy. This study further shows a disparity in efficiency of the services based on four major parameters studied which includes complex government regulations, complicated procedures, corruption and procedural delays. Only few respondents were able to understand completely the procedures of the services provided and most of the people found it difficult to understand them.

SUGGESTIONS

Although Indian Government is spending a lot of money on E-Governance projects but still these projects are not successful in some parts of the country. Unawareness in people, illiteracy, local language problems of the people of some particular areas, privacy for the personal data of the people etc. are main challenges which are responsible for the unsuccessful

implementation of E-Governance. Government must take some actions to make E-Governance projects implementation successful as listed below:

- **Awareness Camps:** The citizens' participation can play an important role in implementation of E-Governance. Government must hold awareness camps in rural as well as urban areas to create the awareness among people regarding the usage and benefits of these services. It can also be done by collaborating with some NGOs which may take some actions in creating awareness among citizens.
- **IT Literacy:** Literacy rate in Punjab is very low. We are moving towards a digitally empowered society, but India still lacks in the IT literacy. The people need to be educated and made e-literate for e-governance to flourish. For this Government needs to organize campaign for e-governance, increase citizens' awareness towards e-governance.
- **Technological infrastructure:** For the successful implementation of the e-governance services the technological infrastructure should be strong enough to support at the digital demands. It includes building technical Hardware and Software infrastructure which means better and faster connectivity options.
- **Simplified procedures:** The need of hour is to simplify the procedures for the common mass making them user friendly.
- **Providing information Online:** An increased use of online services improves the citizens' awareness regarding their rights and powers. Further Disseminating information through ICT increases transparency hence helps curbing corruption.

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