

Reality of Electronic Governance with Special Reference to 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 aim to deliver huge benefits to the citizens and businesses and also improve the efficiency of government functioning. With the focus on good governance, the Govt. of Punjab aims at the betterment of the lives of its citizens. It is possible only with the advancement in technology with adequate and timely services. It would ensure promptness, openness, and accessibility to the citizens. Considering the above, this paper examined the different e-initiatives by Government of Punjab focusing upon transparency and improved governance in the state by the adoption of e-governance practices. It also attempted to highlight the proficiency of the Government of Punjab to implement as par with the National e-governance plans. The paper further discussed the key areas which need more consideration and responsiveness. A self-designed questionnaire based on a 5- point Likert scale was constructed, and data from a total of 100 respondents was collected and analyzed. Descriptive analysis and correlation were used as the tools for the research analysis. The paper suggested that the government should make people more aware about e-governance initiatives for the successful implementation of its projects.

Keywords : e-governance, good governance, information technology

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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 a 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 and 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 a very important role in shaping the progressive e-governance strategy of the country. National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) is one of the e-Government initiatives across the country. The major object of NeGP is to bring public services closer home to citizens. According 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.

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Literature Review

The concept of governance has been studied from different perspectives and in different disciplines. Numerous research studies 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:

Kaur, Sharma, and Kaur (2016) conducted a study to identify the challenges and problems faced by the employees in providing the e- services to the people. Their study tried to understand how much the state government has succeeded in implementing e-governance in the state and how much more is needed to make e-governance a successful endeavor.

Singh and Kaur (2015) highlighted 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.

Mittal (2013) tried to highlight the different initiatives taken by the Government of Punjab. He 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. The author suggested that the government should concentrate on promoting e- Governance in rural areas as well so that every citizen - either urban or rural - can avail the benefits from these services.

Singla and Aggarwal (2012) explored earlier studies and collection of citizen's views regarding SUWIDHA and its functioning in the state of Punjab. The authors found software used in these SUWIDHA Centres to be not as effective as it should be and suggested to improve it by making it sharable and connected to other SUWIDHA centers. Software and databases 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 systems.

Kaur and Rathor (2012) discussed every aspect of E-governance in Punjab with the 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. The authors advocated that most of the people are not aware of the limitations of the technology and believe machines to be reliable more than men. However, certain incidents like cyber crime and credit card frauds make the whole system corrupt. Therefore, the authors suggested 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.

Malhotra and Das (2011) discussed 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, and administrative factors influencing an e-governance implementation with an objective of e- governance approach suitable to the rural citizens.

Mahajan (2009) highlighted the significance of information technology in implementation of smart Government in the state of Punjab. According 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. 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 for availing various services.

Chee Wee, Benbasat, and Cenfetelli (2008) tried to examine 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 accomplished 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.

The above mentioned studies by various researchers focused on building customer trust on e-governance initiatives so as to develop it further. These approaches spelled the importance and 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 e-governance services.

Research Methodology

The study was conducted in the year of 2016. I 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. I considered the Kapurthala district as it was chosen as the 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 to determine the reasons for inefficiencies, if any existed. This study is primarily focused on the services provided and awareness and usage of e-governance services implemented by the Government of Punjab. A self-designed questionnaire based on a 5- point Likert scale was filled by 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. Descriptive statistics - that is, mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis - is used to analyze the view point of the respondents.

Analysis and Results

(1) E-Governance : The Framework for ICT e-Governance in Punjab was laid out in 2002 (Table 1). 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, a variety of services are being provided to people in rural and urban areas through Citizen Service Delivery channels like SUWIDHA Centres, Fard Kendras, Gram SUWIDHA Kendras,

Table 1. E-Governance Budget

S. No.	Scheme	Outlay for AP 2012-13 (₹ 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>)

Saanjh Kendras, 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.

(2) Demographic Profile of the Respondents : The analysis reveals that majority of the respondents were of the age group (Table 2) of 31 - 50 years, followed by the age group of 18-30 years (24%), and 50 years and above (10%). The Table 3 reveals that the composition of men (46%) respondents was more than that of women respondents (24%). The Table 4 reveals the literacy profile of the respondents by determining the qualifications possessed by them. It reveals that 2% of the respondents were illiterate, 11% had attained the primary education, 44% possessed secondary school certification; while, 18% were undergraduate and 22% were post graduates. Similarly, an examination of the monthly income shows that 21% of the respondents fell in the income category of ₹ 5000- ₹ 9999 (Table 5), 58% fell in the range of ₹ 10000 - ₹ 29999, and 20% belonged to the income category of earning a monthly income of ₹ 30000 and above.

The Table 6 depicts that majority of the literate section of the society was in the age group of 31-50 years, having moderate income, and was more inclined towards the e-governance practices.

A total of 27 different services provided by Suwidha Centers (Table 7) have been examined as depicted. I tried

Table 2. Age of the Respondents

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

Table 3. Gender of the Respondents

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

Table 4. Qualification of the Respondents

QUALIFICATION LEVEL	Frequency	%
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 5. Income Level of the Respondents

INCOME LEVEL (in ₹)	Frequency	%
5000-99990	15	21.43
10000-29999	41	58.57
30000 and above	14	20.00
Total	70	100

Table 6. Occupation of the Respondents

OCCUPATION	Frequency	%
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

to explore that whether the respondents were aware about the different services and facilitations provided by the state. It has been found that the majority of the respondents had availed services like getting a Passport, bus pass, registration of marriage, etc. The mean in majority of the services is more than 1.5, which signifies that the respondents were aware and were 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 the Table 7.

Further, it has also been attempted to explore that whether e-services provided by the state government met the public / customers' expectations in terms of awareness, time taken, reliability, efficiency, promptness, and accuracy (Table 8). The six indicators studied show that the mean value is greater than 2, signifying that the opinion of the respondents is significant. It means that the effort of the Government is reaching to the public and public is being sensitized towards e-governance practices.

I also tried to explore that if the respondents found any impediments while availing services (Table 9). The views of respondents were adjudged on the four parameters namely complex government regulations, complicated procedures, corruption, and procedural delays. It is found that 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 the betterment of the society.

Table 7. Details of Services Availed

SERVICES AVAILED	N		Mean	Std. Dev.	Frequency	
	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 Speaker	70	0	1.51	0.50	36	34
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 Compiled through questionnaire

Discussion

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. However, nowadays, 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, the Indian government is making many efforts to provide services to its citizens through E-governance. From the above discussion, it is concluded that majority of the respondents were 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 the Government is

Table 8. Analysis of Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators	N		Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Std. Error of Skewness	Kurtosis	Std. Error of Kurtosis
VARIABLES	Valid	Missing			Yes	No		
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 Compiled through questionnaire

Table 9. Reasons for Inefficiencies in Delivery Mechanism

	N		Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Std. Error of Skewness	Kurtosis	Std. Error of Kurtosis
VARIABLES	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 Compiled through questionnaire

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 and Conclusion

Although the 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 :

(1) Awareness Camps : The citizens' participation can play an important role in implementation of E-Governance. Government must held 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.

(2) 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, the Government needs to organize campaigns for e-governance and increase citizens' awareness towards e-governance.

(3) Technological Infrastructure : For the successful implementation of the e-governance services, the technological infrastructure should be strong enough to support the digital demands. It includes building technical hardware and software infrastructure which means better and faster connectivity options.

(4) Simplified Procedures : The need of hour is to simplify the procedures for the common mass making them user friendly.

(5) 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.

The present study will be a guide for implementation and improvement of e - governance practices in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, or any other state in India, which is helpful for simplifying the procedural aspects, securing the database, and strong building of technical infrastructure in our country.

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