
ROLE OF E-GOVERNANCE IN PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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CHAPTER: 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

As supported by e-governance, the study focuses on public administration's commitment to accountability and openness. Given that most governments worldwide have shifted to digital service delivery in one form or another, it is important to comprehend how e-governance projects may result in a transparent and constructive transformation of the public sector. By using information and communication technology (ICT), e-governance facilitates communication between the government and its constituents, increasing the amount of information available and decreasing the need for human intervention in the decision-making process.

Making the public aware of the government's choices, activities, and information is known as transparency in governance. By making information about government spending, activities, and policies easily accessible to individuals, e-governance encourages openness¹. Real-time updates and the delivery of government services are made possible by digital technologies such as public service websites, online tenders, and Right to Information (RTI) portals. This lessens corruption and promotes open governance.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

1. The effectiveness of these digital platforms in guaranteeing actual accountability and openness in governmental administration is yet unknown, though. However, with certain restrictions, the use of e-governance solutions in India is growing in popularity. Digital system

¹ Philip Alston, "The Role of Digital Technologies in Promoting Good Governance," 23 Harv. Hum. Rts. J. 73 (2010).

illiteracy and anticipated change are some of the obstacles that prevent these systems from functioning to their full potential.

2. Although e-governance efforts have made government services more accessible to the general public, a more thorough assessment is required to determine how these platforms affect the accountability of public servants and whether these governance reforms actually improve things, especially in corrupt and inefficient areas.

1.3 HYPOTHESIS

According to the research's premise, e-governance technology adoption improves public administration's accountability and openness. Digital technologies, including online complaint redressal procedures, e-procurement platforms, and information portals, are thought to reduce corruption, enhance service delivery, and boost public involvement in government operations. Additionally, it is maintained that the presence of e-governance programs aids in the enforcement of civil servant discipline as they eliminate administrative obstacles and facilitate easy access to state resources, restoring public confidence in the government. However, the degree of official support for these programs, the degree of individuals' preparedness, and the degree of developed digital infrastructure may all have different effects.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Analysing how e-governance affects public administration's levels of accountability and transparency is the primary goal of the current study. In this regard, the study aims to comprehend the function of different digital platforms, including online complaint registration systems, right-to-information (RTI) websites, and e-procurement systems, in raising the degree of openness and accessibility of government to the public. Additionally, by offering instruments like digital tracking and performance monitoring that aid in holding public officials accountable for their activities, the research aims to quantify the degree to which e-governance practices enhance the real practice of accountability.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION

1. How does the use of e-governance technologies improve the accessibility and transparency of governmental operations and services?

2. In what ways do e-governance projects support and strengthen the need for citizen responsibility as well as individual accountability in public service?

1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THIS PAPER

1.6.1 SCOPE

The focus of this research study is how e-government functions in connection to accountability and transparency in public governance, while also examining the Indian environment. To increase transparency and accessibility in government operations, the study will highlight a variety of e-governance initiatives, including the Digital India campaign, RTI portals, e-procurement portals, online complaint redress systems like CPGRAMS, and other government interventions. Additionally, it will look into how e-governance technology, including real-time tracking, performance monitoring, and citizen involvement, helps hold public officials accountable.

1.6.2 LIMITATIONS

Not all the limitations are due to the research's cross-cutting nature. First, most of the analysis is situated in the Indian context, and hence the results may not be applicable in other countries with different extremes of digital systems and political regimes. Second, although the article discusses several e-governance initiatives, it may not be possible to include all electronic channels of governance or all administrative services because e-governance systems are vast and complex. Moreover, even if some cases are examined, trying to find or measure the effectiveness of e-governance practice may pose challenges as some of the programs are still very young. Finally, the study could also suffer because of the limited availability of some government documents or self-evaluation reports that could have given a clearer picture of how efficient, or not, the e-governance approach works in practice.

CHAPTER: 2 E-GOVERNANCE AND TRANSPARENCY

2.1 CONCEPT AND DEFINITION OF E-GOVERNANCE

Using technology for communication and information (ICT) to deliver government services, information sharing, transactions, and integration of pre-existing services, along with data portals, is known as e-government. The letter "e" stands for "electronic" in e-government. Data

inclusion, data-driven choice-making, cost savings, openness, and accountability are the main reasons why e-government is significant².

The application of digital technology and technology for communication and information (TIC) in government processes and operations is known as "e-government," or "electronic governance."

Enhancing the effectiveness, accountability, openness, and accessibility of government services and citizen interactions is the goal of e-government. It entails the use of databases, digital technologies, and online platforms to improve public service delivery, expedite government procedures, and encourage citizen engagement. Online portals, digital identification systems, electronic voting, e-taxation, virtual document submission, and other digital solutions for government affairs are examples of e-government efforts³.

Stated differently, it is the application of technology to carry out governmental tasks and accomplish governance goals. Services offered by the government are made easily, effectively, and transparently available to individuals and companies through e-governance. Aadhaar, the Digital India program, the National Website of India, the Prime Minister government portal, online tax filing and making a payment, digital land administration systems, the Common Entrance Test, and others are examples of e-governance.

2.2 ROLE OF E-GOVERNANCE IN PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY

Active e-governance is a crucial facilitator in improving the openness of public administration if funding is implemented to give citizens assured, rapid, and simple access to all the information on the government's activities, policies, and decisions. The use of information technology to make government documents available to the public is one of the verticals of e-governance that aims to increase the transparency and accessibility of government processes. When considering online resources like Right to Information (RTI) websites, which enable individuals to seek and acquire information on the government's finances, policies, and activities, the topic of e-transparency in government seems to make even more sense. Additionally, the likelihood of participating in corrupt activities and partiality is decreased

² National Cyber Security Policy, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India (2013), <https://www.meit.gov.in>.

³ Jonathan Fox, "The Uncertain Relationship Between Transparency and Accountability," 17 Dev. Pol. Rev. 291 (2007).

because contract conclusion and bidding procedures are conducted transparently using e-procurement platforms.

Another method that e-governance promotes transparency is through the removal of service delivery, which means minimizing human interaction and, consequently, the possibility of bias. Automating operations like distributing welfare funds, filing tax returns, or issuing permits reduces illegitimate and unwanted human inputs to almost nothing. This guarantees timely service delivery without unwanted fragmentation. People's perceptions of corruption in this instance, however, are based on the application of rather distinct strategies and practices, the most well-known of which is perhaps India's Aadhaar initiative. Welfare payments that are linked to various digital identities therefore function to greatly reduce social security and subsidy leakage while also enhancing accountability in the distribution process.

CHAPTER: 3 E-GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

3.1 E-GOVERNANCE IN INDIAN CONTEXT

In India, e-government is a relatively new idea. The necessary impetus for e-governance was provided by the establishment of the National Satellite-Based Computer Network (NICENET) in 1987 and the District Information System of the National Informatics Centre (DISNIC) program, which aimed to computerize all district offices nationwide and provided free hardware and software to state governments.

Later, as technology advanced, e-government emerged. Both at the federal and state levels, there are several e-government projects underway today. The Department of Technology and Electronics and the Department of Administrative Changes and Grievance Management developed the National e-Government Plan (NeGP) in 2006 with the goal of ensuring that all government services are affordable, accessible, and reliable while also meeting the basic needs of the public.

In India, e-government has gradually progressed beyond the computerization of government agencies to projects that capture the subtleties of governance, such as transparency,

commitment to service, and people-centricity. The nation's progressive e-government approach has been significantly shaped by the lessons learned from earlier e-government programs. Due consideration has been given to the idea that a program approach, driven by a shared vision and strategy, is required to expedite the adoption of e-government throughout the various branches of government at the national, state, and local levels. This strategy has the potential to provide individuals with a seamless vision of government, provide portability through criteria, and enable significant cost savings through the pooling of core supporting infrastructure.⁴

3.2 GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE IN E-GOVERNANCE

- **Digital India-** was introduced in 2015 with the goal of digitally empowering the nation. Creating a safe and reliable digital infrastructure, providing government services online, and achieving universal digital literacy are its key pillars.
- **AADHAAR-** is a special identification number that UIDAI issues and uses biometric information to verify identity and address. It is being used to give the people in the community a lot of advantages. Aadhar may be used to e-sign papers.
- **myGov.in-** is a forum for national citizen participation where individuals may participate in policy and governance issues and exchange views.
- **UMANG-** is a unified mobile program that gives users access to state and federal government products and services, including as Employee Provident Fund services, PANs, Digital Lockers, and Aadhar.
- **Digital Locker-** aids residents in storing critical papers online, such as degree certificates, PANs, Aadhar, and mark sheets. This makes it easier to share papers and lessens the need for physical copies.
- **PayGov-** enables all public and private banks to accept online payments.
- **Mobile Seva-** intends to use tablets and smartphones to deliver government services. More than 200 active applications are available in the m-App store that provide access

⁴ Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, National E-Governance Plan: Framework for Implementation (2006), <https://www.meity.gov.in>.

to a range of government services.

- **Digital Land Records-** Landowners are guaranteed to get digital and current copies of all relevant documents thanks to the Computerisation of land records.

CHAPTER: 4 CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING E-GOVERNANCE

4.1 MAJOR CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

Although e-governance can improve accountability and transparency by boundaries, there are some challenges that hinder it from being fully appreciated.

One of the major problems is the digital divide. The availability of the Internet and digital devices is limited in many countries, especially in rural and remote areas. Due to a lack of such facilities, a conspicuous section of the populace is unable to embrace e-governance services, which aggravates discrimination and shuts out those individuals who are likely to benefit the most from digital governance strategies and tools.

Another significant problem facing younger people and government officials is digital illiteracy. E-governance relies heavily on digital spaces and thus it is unfortunate many users are adept at using them, particularly the young and urban dwellers. This may complicate the usage of web services which is the contrary objective of e-governance, which aims at improving the accessibility of government services and information to citizens. Moreover, even civil servants may lack the appropriate skills required to manage and implement e-governance operations which may lead to distorted service delivery⁵.

The intricacies of data security and cybersecurity pose great obstacles as well. As more and more encroaches on government cyberspace, the climate for cyberattacks alongside data breaches also increases, threatening to expose even the most protected of citizens' private information. Security of these systems from infiltration, hacking or any kind of illegitimate exploitation is a problem that demands comprehensive strategies on cyber security. In addition, fears depending on privacy invasions and loss of control over one's information may no doubt extend to citizens and policymakers, hence hampering the implementation of e-governance

⁵ The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 (India), <https://www.mea.gov.in>.

systems.

Lastly, the reluctance to embrace e-governance within state agencies may hinder effective change within the stated institutions. Several government agencies have been accustomed to using hardcopies for most if not all of their operations, making a switch to the electronic mode, which is e-governance, a potential cause for internal conflict. Additionally, bureaucratic inertia, lack of political will, and the issue of modernization causing job losses for state functionaries could undermine e-governance projects⁶. Also, making sure that different government systems can work with each other and are consistent with one overall digital system can be a lengthy and difficult exercise.

Effective solutions to these challenges can only be achieved through appropriate policy frameworks, capacity enhancement, and infrastructure development to ensure successful adoption and sustenance of e-governance initiatives.

CHAPTER: 5 CONCLUSION

To sum up, e-governance has demonstrated efficacy in advancing public administration's openness and accountability. Once more, positioning makes it simpler for citizens to access government through contemporary information technology. For example, systems that follow decision-making processes and provide users with pertinent information would not have been feasible before such deployments. However, even if the focus is on enhancing the government's ability to communicate with their constituents, the extent of corruption and inefficiency has also been significantly diminished using technologies like electronic purchasing platforms, RTI websites, and grievance redressal systems. The introduction of information technology into governance has improved the fundamental goal of democracy by motivating citizens to become more informed.

The deployment of e-governance is still hampered by several difficulties, including the digital divide, cybersecurity concerns, and change resistance within government organizations. To overcome these obstacles, more funding for digital infrastructure, higher levels of digital literacy, and the creation of mechanisms that safeguard citizens' data are needed. Notwithstanding these obstacles, e-governance has a bright future ahead of it, one that will guarantee accountability to the public and enhance the operations of democratic institutions.

⁶ Report of the Committee on E-Governance in India (2017), <https://www.gov.in>.

E-governance may help create more transparent, responsible, and effective systems of governance, provided that the appropriate legislative frameworks and regulations are put in place.

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