

PENETRATION OF E-GOVERNANCE IN J&K: A CASE STUDY OF NATIONAL INFORMATICS CENTRE, AWAAZ-E-AWAM AND ONLINE EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE

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1. Abstract: *Governance is an exercise of power for steering social systems, as well as a method by which different institutions are directed, controlled, and held to account to their society. Now the government is more concerned in ensuring its overall direction, control, effectiveness, supervision and accountability. Therefore the government is now using more of ICT and other means to improve its performance. Ministry of Information Technology (MIT) plays a crucial role in facilitating e-governance by reinforcing knowledge based enterprises, encouraging coordination among users, adopting procedures based on international standards, promoting the internet and introducing IT education [1]. The policy-makers tend to justify the adoption and expansion of e-governance on the grounds that it costs less, reduces waste, promotes transparency, eliminates corruption, generates possibilities to resolve rural poverty and inequality, and guarantees a better future for citizens [2]. In the current study the four issues related to e-governance are studied in the J&K state and these are good governance, participation of citizens in decision making, grievance redressal*

and employment information. The current study reveals that 31.15%, 47.54%, 27.86% and 59.02% of the respondents believe that e-governance has contributed for the issues under consideration respectively.

2. Introduction

The word governance derives from the Greek word “kebernon” which means to steer and was used for the first time in a metaphorical sense by Plato. It then passed on to Latin and then on to many languages [3]. In current usage, to govern means to steer, to control, and to influence from a position of authority. An alternate definition sees governance as: the use of institutions, structures of authority and even collaboration to allocate resources and coordinate or control activity in society or the economy [4]. Therefore, governance is an exercise of power for steering social systems, as well as a method by which different institutions are directed, controlled, and held to account to their society. It is a set of the systems, tools and techniques concerned with ensuring the overall direction, control, effectiveness, supervision and accountability of an institution. It relates to decisions that define expectations, grant power and authority, or verify performance. E-governance is the application of electronic means in the interaction between government and citizens and government and businesses, as well as in internal government operations, to simplify and improve democratic, government and business aspects of Governance [5]. E-governance has been defined as an application of I.T to the processes of government functioning to bring out responsible, responsive, efficient and transparent governance [6]. E-governance is the effective use of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) to improve the system of governance that is in place, and thus provide better services to the Citizens [7]. E-governance makes the various services and schemes of the government readily available to the citizens in a convenient, efficient and transparent manner. It helps in implementing and delivering various government initiatives to the remotest of the parts of the country. E-governance provides better interface between the general public and the government ; reduces digital divide and rural-urban divide ; ensures timely grievance redressal ; provides

SMART(Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive & Transparent) governance ; speeds up process of employment, health care , education, and so on. Blake Harris summarizes the e-governance as the following: E-governance is not just about government web site and e-mail. It is not just about service delivery over the Internet. It is not just about digital access to government information or electronic payments. It will change how citizens relate to governments as much as it changes how citizens relate to each other. It will bring forth new concepts of citizenship, both in terms of needs and responsibilities. E-governance will allow citizens to communicate with government, participate in the governments' policy-making and citizens to communicate each other and to participate in the democratic political process [8].

3. E-Governance Initiatives in J&K

J&K is the northernmost state of the country. Due to so called 'Kashmir Issue', it has remained isolated for some years from rest of the country. Now again it has started on the path of development and reconstruction. The use of ICT is not enough as compared to other parts of the country but it is gaining momentum day by day. Over the years a lot of E-governance initiatives have been taken by Union and State government in J&K. The Union government has launched National E-governance Plan for providing E-governance. The state government has launched short term and long term plans for E-governance and development of IT in the state. Of all these initiatives, our paper focuses on given below initiatives:

a) National Informatics Centre (NIC)

National Informatics Centre (NIC) is a premiere Science & Technology Institution of the Government of India, established in 1976, came into existence in J&K State in 1988 and is providing network backbone and e-Governance support to State Government, Central Governments, District Administrations and other Government bodies [9]. It offers a wide range of ICT services:-

- Consultancy
- Software Design & Development

- Networking
- Internet Services
- WWW Services
- Video Conferencing
- Electronic Commerce
- Office Automation

b) Online Employment Exchange Information

Employment as a subject is included in the concurrent list of the Constitution of India. National Employment Service is joint concern of the Government of India and the State Governments. Compulsory Notification of Vacancies Act 1959 was passed by the Parliament to make it compulsory for the establishments under Public and Private Sectors to notify vacancies to the nearest Employment Exchanges and also to render prescribed returns. This Act though extended to the J&K was applied by the state to the Private Sector only. The Employment Exchanges in J&K State have, therefore, been catering to the recruitment needs of various Central Government Departments and Organizations only [10]. The various services available are:-

- Registration of applicants seeking job
- Employment Market Information data
- Vocational Guidance and Employment counseling
- Sponsoring candidates to different private sector
- Special Recruitment Drives in Defence forces
- Information on Self-Employment Scheme
- Coaching/ guidance for competitive examinations
- Registration with employment Exchange

c) Awaz – E – Awam

Awaz-e-Awam “the voice of common people” is an online public grievance monitoring system. This system provides facility to lodge complaint/grievance online of any kind including relief, law & order, land compensation, roads connectivity, electricity problem, education facilities, agriculture, health facility, natural calamities, SRO-43 and others. Status of applicant can be public or political party or any government servant. In this portal system applicant

gives the details of grievance and the complaint is booked over web/fax/letter/phone/mobile/video/cd-clip. Applicant can also upload an electronic copy of evidence if available. Each complaint is assigned unique complaint number using which applicant can monitor his/her complaint/grievance status i.e., progress history or last progress [11].

4. Research Work

The objective of the research paper is to examine the following:

- i. Has the e-governance contributed for good governance?
- ii. Has the e-governance reduced the wide gap between Govt. and citizens?
- iii. Has the e-governance helped in grievance redressal?
- iv. Has the e-governance helped the unemployed youth in obtaining employment information?

According to the 2011 census (provisional figures) the population of the J&K state is 12548926. 350 people surveyed for the study of e-governance in the state. Out of the 350 questionnaires distributed for the survey of e-governance 260 questionnaires found valid for the analysis. The questionnaires include various columns related to issues of good governance, participation of citizens, grievance redressal & online employment exchange information.

4.1 E-governance & Good Governance

Good governance has eight major characteristics i.e. Participation, Transparency, Effectiveness and efficiency, Responsiveness, Accountability, Equity and inclusiveness, Rule of Law, as in [12] for the effective and efficient governance. From the responses, it is clear that only 31.15% of the respondents believe that e-governance has contributed for good governance. Thus, e-governance has contributed to some extent for good governance but still lots need to be done. The responses of various categories of people who believe e-governance has helped in establishing good governance are shown in fig. 1.

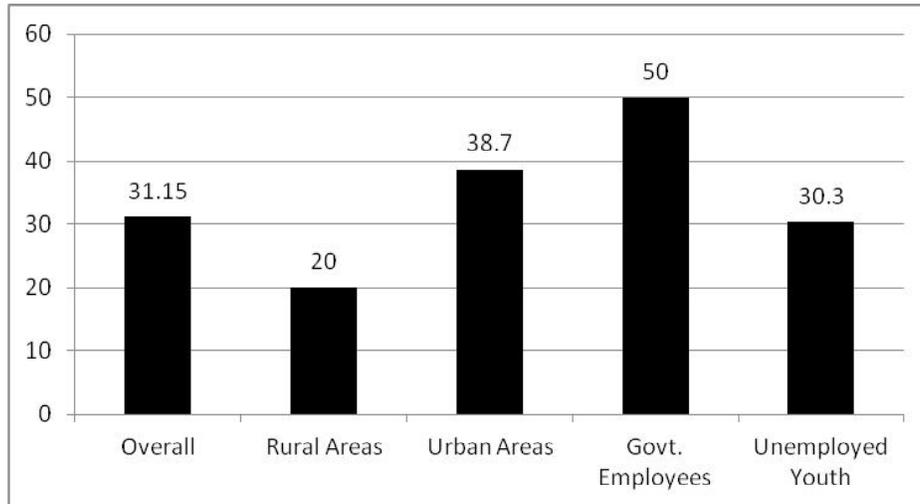


Fig. 1 E-governance & Good Governance.

4.2 E-governance & Participation of Citizens

We have a parliamentary form of government in place where parliamentarians are the legislatives and the ministers are the executives. There are two types of executives viz. permanent and the temporary. The ministers are the temporary executives whereas bureaucrats are permanent executives. The citizens do not participate directly in administration. When e-governance was launched it was believed that it will bring citizens closer to administration. Our research shows that e-governance has contributed for participation of citizens as 47.54% of the people believe that e-governance has brought people closer to government. The responses of various categories of people in respect to participation of citizens are shown in fig. 2.

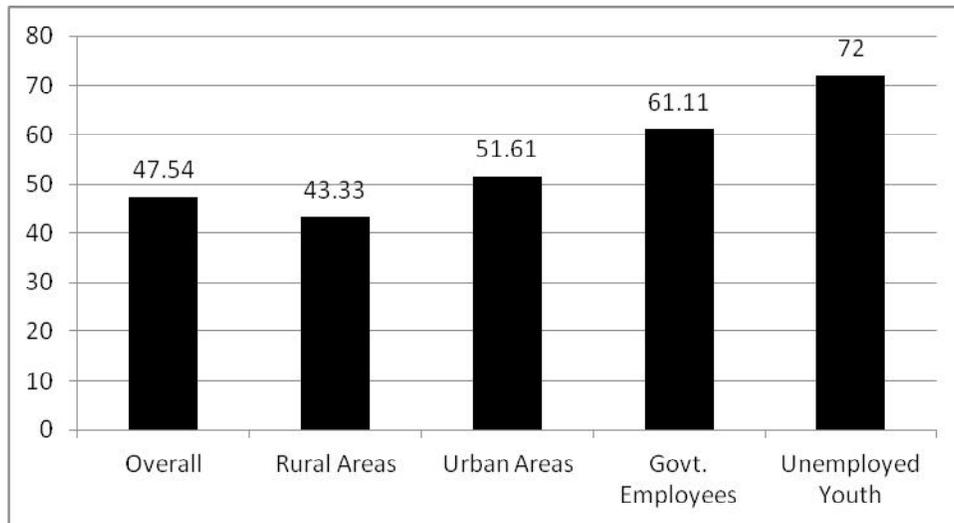


Fig. 2 E-governance & Citizen's Participation.

4.3 E-governance & Grievance Redressal

Grievance redressal is considered as the most important virtue of e-governance. People can register their complaints online rather than being on the mercy of time-consuming bureaucracy. They can monitor the progress of their complaints and the necessary action taken. Our research shows that performance of e-governance in this area is very meager as only 27.86% of the respondents believe that public grievance system has improved by the introduction of e-governance. The responses of various categories of people in respect to grievance redressal mechanism are shown in fig. 3.

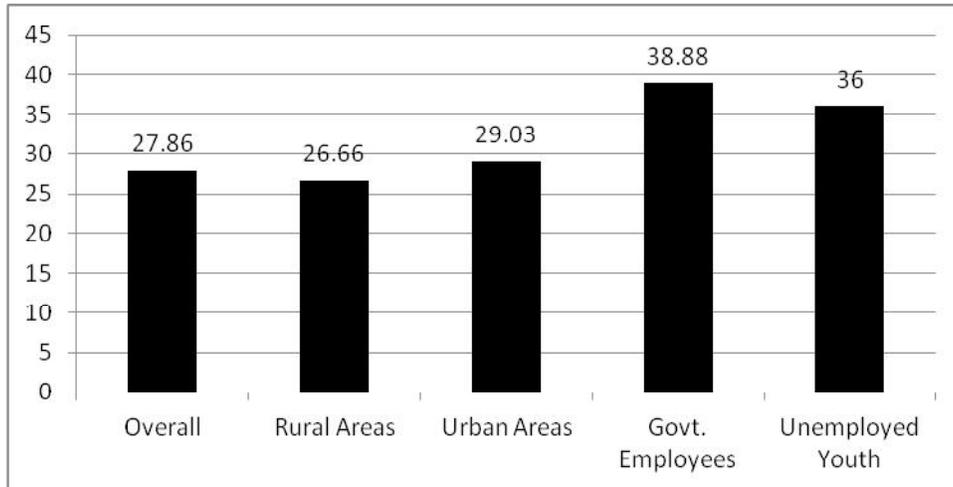


Fig. 3 E-governance & Grievance Redressal.

4.4 E-governance & Employment Information

Current study suggests that the information provided by online employment exchange has proved beneficial to respondents in getting government and private jobs as 59.02% of the respondents has availed the benefit of that. The responses of various categories of people in respect to online employment information are shown in fig. 4.

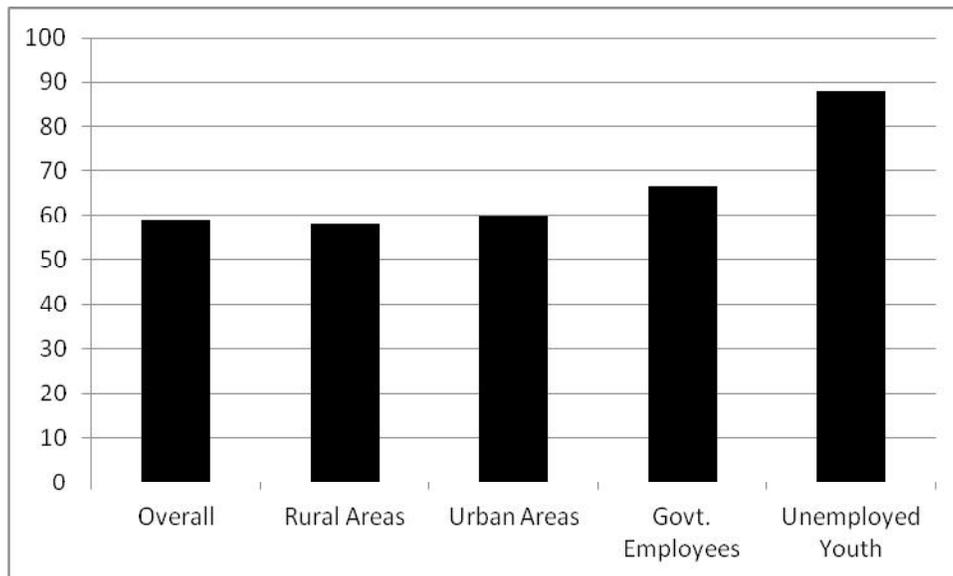


Fig. 4 E-governance & Employment Information

5. Conclusion

The issues related to e-governance considered in the current study are good governance, participation of citizens in decision making, grievance redressal and employment information. It is observed that only 31.15% of the respondents believe that e-governance has contributed for good governance. 47.54% of the people believe that e-governance has brought people closer to government. Further our research shows that performance of e-governance in grievance redressal area is only 27.86% and at last the performance of the e-governance in providing employment information by online employment exchange is better as compared to other factors in the current study and 59.02% of the respondents has availed the benefit of online employment exchange.

6. Future Scope

This research work can be extended for larger samples. Other e-governance initiatives like Community Information Centers, Online Motor

Vehicle Information and SmartGov Project can be considered in further research. Demographic trends can also be studied in the research. This study can be extended to analyze the penetration of e-governance in all the districts of the state.

7. References

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