E-Panchayat in Kashmir: The Smart way forward

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Abstract: Jammu and Kashmir's government is promoting e-governance "Using information and communication technology (ICT) to bring simple, moral, accountable, responsive, and transparent (SMART) governance to the doorsteps of regular people at a reasonable cost." The e-panchayat programme has a lot of potential in rural India since it aims to modernise, transparent, and efficient panchayati raj organisations. Panchayat representatives can communicate with the rest of the world through this platform, allowing local communities to share their social, cultural, and economic activities, as well as their achievements and failures, with a larger audience. The e-Panchayat mission intends to improve e-Governance in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) across India by making extensive use of information and communication technology (ICT). E- Panchayat has built a user-friendly web-based tool to promote transparency in decentralised planning and reporting. The National Informatics Centre developed the e-panchayat software package as part of its e-governance efforts. When designing E-Panchayat, the information and knowledge management needs of Gram Panchayats were considered. The use of present day data and correspondence innovation fundamentally affects country advancement. In the on-going environment, an e-panchayat is consequently required. The objective of this exploration is to find out about the capacity of e-panchayats in the rural improvement process in Kashmir. *In addition to that, the activities that the government does are outlined in the study.* Also it shed a light on Lucanas associated with e-panchayat in Kashmir.

Keywords: E- Panchayat, Transparency, Initiative's, Technology and Lucanas

Introduction

After the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 was signed, democratic decentralisation began. It cleared the way for panchayat-based decentralised and participatory rural governance. It changed panchayats from development executors to policymakers on local community concerns (Ghosh, J. (2014) Panchayats needed technology to rule them independently. In recent years, ICTs have helped spread information. India's National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) was created in 2006 to improve local self-governance.

This concept automates administrative tasks and improves PRIs (Kumar, P., Kumar, D., & Kumar, N. 2014) NeGP aims to improve government service delivery to citizens and businesses. Its objective is to "make all

government services accessible to the ordinary man in his locality, via common service delivery outlets, and to ensure the efficiency, transparency, and dependability of such services at inexpensive prices" (Make public services accessible through conventional means.) The NeGP mandates IT services from e-panchayats. These services included decentralised database, planning, budgeting, accounting, and central and state sector scheme implementation and monitoring. Mission Mode Projects (MMP) is executed at the focal and state levels (NeGP). Plan calls Panchayats MMPs. A huge number of rustic Indians depend on panchayats (Dr. Shubhangi Rathi 2015).

The Seventh Round Table Conference of Panchayati Raj State Ministers, held in Jaipur in December 2004, supported the National Informatics Centre (NIC) and other arrangement suppliers to make e-PRI a mission mode. MMP should fix common worries. There are delays in delivering services to residents (licences and certificates), and Halqa Panchayat activities are not supervised. Electronic Panchayat automates (Rashid, A., & Bansal, K. 2017) countrywide Panchayats. Using technology to send Gram Sabhas to Halqa Panchayats ensures their success. A marketplace, temple, or mosque's PA system is standard. Promote the event through newspapers, a mobile truck, and/or posters.

Mobile phones are a communication alternative. Gram Sabha members can receive SMS meeting updates (SMS). Mobile communication can bridge the public-administration gap, preserving openness and accountability. To improve PR, E-Panchayat improves PRI and PRF accountability. E-Panchayat animates country networks' positive thinking since it plans to modernize, straightforwardly, and productively run PRIs. It will utilize ICT to further develop the PR framework (Rashid, A., & Bansal, K. 2017). Considering current government drives and the accentuation on e-Panchayats, it was judged attractive to concentrate on how they might be utilized to reinforce PRFs, which will help the nearby people. Jammu and Kashmir's administration utilizes radio, cell phones, PCs, and the web to make, save, and oversee information. During a time of developing innovation, administering without it is like breathing without lungs. E-panchayat works on organization.

Literature Review

Literature reviews are essential to research. It helps gather information about the field of study, local research, and the exam subject. Literature gaps are unexplored subjects. Journal articles, books, and other major documents are analysed for outcomes.

This paper explored an E-Gram Panchayat Management System (EGPMS). Web-based EGPMS. Gram panchayats are monitored. Admin and members can log in to search gram panchayat data. Only the administrator will keep secure data (Shelar, S. R. et al. 2020). EGPMS keeps data accessible. None necessary, only admin can choose login members or provide access. EGPMS stores birth, death, residence, and 7/12 certificates online. Only

members can upload data.

Using ICT to connect urban and rural areas and reduce distance improves G2C and G2G interactions (ICT). Rural Indian states have local self-government (Singh, Mansotra, & Sharma 2010). Panchayati Raj is rural self-government (local self-government). Village, block, and district are Panchayati Raj levels. In this competition, writers analysed ICT's role in promoting Panchayati Raj in Jammu (Singh, Mansotra& Sharma 2017) and Kashmir. Halqa Panchayat and Block Development Council are district-level entities. After 23 years, the state's Panchayati Raj period ended in 2006. J&K lacks Panchayats. ICT penetration improves democratic governance and boosts rural prosperity. Authors discussed an electronic Panchayati Raj model.

Villagers elect a Panchayat. Panchayat meaning "five-person assembly" (raj). Individual and village disputes were resolved. E-Panchayats improve the governance of PRIs. E-panchayat is each Panchayats digital (Jindal, S., & Ojha, V. 2017) platform and workstation. E-panchayat provides citizens with bottom-up and top-down information. Ramchandrapuram, near Hyderabad, has India's first e-panchayat for online dispute resolution. ICTs promote rural growth. We need e-panchayat. The study highlighted rural e-panchayat.

E-Panchayat means to change PRIs into images of advancement, straightforwardness, and productivity for the rustic populace. The project's (Rashid, A., & Bansal, K. 2017) goal was to discover if e-Panchayat might improve Panchayati Raj (PR).

Information handling reveals a democracy's quality. Misinformation causes system issues. E-government draws democracies, but integrating information for greater governance without fundamental infrastructure and human skills is difficult. India, a vast democracy, must enhance e-Government. Central and (Dixit, M., Belwal, R., & Ababa–Ethiopia, A. 2015) state governments seek to expand access to IT, but user groups are a barrier, always conservative. The study showed India's micro level problems. A review-based strategy followed by multidimensional analysis helps decision makers and other interest groups design better e-Government solutions.

Scope of study

E-Panchayats inform communities about government services. All panchayat work and information is online. E-panchayat Service reduces government officials' workload. This e-panchayat offers digital services. The public can read a list of government services on their cell phone, acquire call registration documents, and apply for online services. This may increase government-public communication and information flow. E-panchayat modernises, transparently, and efficiently runs rural Indian PRIs. Rural administration lets PRIs conduct village-level development programmes. Despite low literacy, ICTs and GIS assist PRI decision-makers obtain, integrate, and analyse data. E-Panchayat is an interesting study area due to mobile devices, Internet availability, and ease of use.

Targeted efforts can empower populations. E-Panchayat promotes local democracy. The study examines how E-Panchayat can strengthen PRIs in Kashmir.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to describe and analyse the function that e-panchayat plays in the process of rural development, as well as to detail what the government does in this regard. In addition to this, it shed light on the Lucanas that are connected with the e-panchayat in Kashmir.

Methodology

This research was conducted utilising non-empirical or doctrinal research methodologies. This study will explore the current e panchayat environment in Kashmir through reasoning and analysis. Using primary and secondary materials such as textbooks, comments, books and websites on the internet, newspaper stories, and other international journals and publications, this paper intended to validate all assumptions through reasoning and analysis. Ex post facto research (research done, developed, or formulated after the fact) and analytical research are also relevant to the current study.

Discussion and Result

E-Panchayat:- Initially, one lead agency will be required to develop an electronic web-based Panchayat Information Management System (PIMS) to computerise all Panchayat functions, including birth and death registrations, house tax assessment and collection, levy taxes, duties, toll tax, trade licences, old age pensions, land record, works monitoring, financial accounting, and general administration. Other services provided by the E-Panchayat include market pricing information and agricultural extension assistance. Panchayat Sarpanches, MLAs, MPs, and Department of (Bhagat, P., & Pornima, B. N. 2013) Rural Development bureaucrats can all keep a watch on Panchayat-centric projects and programmes. The E-Panchayat Portal assists in the monitoring, oversight, and execution of a variety of Panchayat programmes. This initiative is being phased out across the state's Panchayats. All Panchayats received computers and nominated workers. The PIMS facilitates Panchayat decision-making, improves internal administration, enhances transparency, boosts revenue, improves Panchayat efficiency, and improves citizen service delivery (Gumber, D., Gautam 2014)

E-panchayat endeavours to modernize, straightforwardly, and proficiently run panchayati raj foundations (PRIs) in rural India. MoPR has embraced a cross country IT venture to guarantee individuals' commitment to direction, program execution, and conveyance. The program intends to mechanize the workplaces of 2.5 lakh (chose) panchayat individuals, including arranging, observing, execution, planning, bookkeeping, social evaluating, and declaration and permit issuance. The MoPR needs (Gumber, D., and Gautam 2014) to upset country organization close by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) and the states in spite of a shortage of ICT

framework and web network at the grassroots level. E-Panchayat meets Gram Panchayats data and information the board requests. The NIC and Ministry of Panchayati Raj have planned 253163 panchayats on their site.

For the E-Panchayat initiative in India. On the other hand, finding information about a particular Panchayat is tough. As a result, the Digital Panchayat Program was formed and spread across India by the National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) and the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF). E-Panchayat is a (Singh, J., Mansotra 2010) dynamic web-based digital interface that delivers information on each panchayat in India in a two-way content flow. The goal is to make day-to-day Panchayat operations easier and more efficient through a two-way exchange of information and material.

Several state governments have established e-Panchayats in order to accelerate growth and improve information availability. Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir are a few instances. Panchayat portals give information about development schemes like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, organizational/departmental structure, development (Singh, J., Mansotra 2010) policies, annual reports, notifications, evaluation reports of development programmes, and the status of development schemes, revenues, and other things in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, and Haryana. The parts of the E-Panchayat portal are:

1. Gram Panchayat Management Information System (GPMIS)

2. Mandal Parishad Management Information System (MPMIS)

3. District Panchayat Management Information System (DPMIS)

4. State Panchayat Management Information System (SPMIS) The development of E-Panchayat Portal would need to be coordinated by NIC J&K. (Singh, J., and Mansotra 2010)

The government of Jammu and Kashmir has been working tirelessly to advance e-governance in the state. "Delivery of services at the doorsteps of the common man at a reasonable cost by leveraging ICT in the process government functioning to bring about simple, moral, accountable, responsive, transparent (SMART) Governance" is the vision statement of e-governance in Jammu and Kashmir. The implementation of e-panchayat initiatives in various districts of J&K is still in its infancy. It is the government's goal to make Jammu and Kashmir a smart state and (www.jk.gov.in) ensure that inhabitants in both rural and urban areas have access to efficient, time-bound, transparent, and responsive service delivery mechanisms that meet their needs. To build a state a "REAL KHUSHHAL STATE," the state has left no stone unturned. According to a Wipro poll, the state of Jammu & Kashmir has made significant strides in the implementation of e-panchayats. E-Government Agency (JAKEGA) was founded by the Jammu and Kashmir government and overseen by the administrative secretary of information and technology. Transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness will be promoted for the delivery of

citizen services to the general public using electronic devices such as smartphones, laptops, and so on. In 2004, the Jammu and Kashmir government established an IT policy. E-governance and other IT initiatives were mandated by the policy. Also, this policy set out the specific rules for all aspects of electronic governance. In the year 2020, the government of J&K amended its IT policy, which is worth mentioning. A national centre for information technology (ICT) has been set up in J&K with the goal of promoting ICT in various areas of government and of offering specialised services geared toward citizens. The NIC is enthusiastically participating in a variety of E-governance projects in a variety of Sectors. (www.jk.gov.in)

The government made the e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project (MMP) so that all Panchayats can use the internet (Mathur, D., Gupta, P. 2009) to work more efficiently and openly. The goal of the e-Panchayat MMP, which is part of the National e-Government Plan, is to bring e-Governance to Panchayats (NeGP). Under the e-Panchayat MMP, there are plans for eleven Core Common Software applications. In order to improve efficiency, accountability, transparency, collaboration, and decentralised decision-making at the panchayat level, a broadband infrastructure based on optical fibre cables will be built for all of them. The Indian government's Department of Telecom planned to connect all 253,163 (2019 Data) panchayats to the Internet (Rao, K. P. 2018) using fibre optic cables with speeds of at least 100 Mbps. Through the network, all panchayats would be able to use e-government services and the internet. Bharat Broadband Network Limited was set up as part of the NOFN and network ownership. RailTel has been chosen as one of the partners for the incremental optical fibre cable network that will connect the (Rao, K. P. 2018) panchayats to their block headquarters at 100 Mbps broadband speed. RailTel is in charge of a number of states that have a total of 36,000 panchayats.

Main reasons for emergence of e-panchayat in J&K are as under:

➢ Fast and better delivery of services to the rural people.

➢ Transparency and accountability.

➢ Responsiveness.

➢ Rural People's participation.

➢ Digitalisation.

➢ To bring efficiency and effectiveness in the administration.

➢ Improved public administration.

➢ Policy outcomes.

➢ Enables unified government.

➢ Simplifies administrative process.

➢ Expand reach of governance in rural areas.

➢   Enabling environment for promoting economic development.

➢   For removal of red tapism and work congestion. (DAR, S. A., & Sakthivel, P. (2021)

Implementation of the Technology in Panchayat

As part of a mission to digitise and empower villages, Jammu & Kashmir is connecting every gram panchayat with an optical fibre network. This initiative connected practically every state gram panchayat. Gram Panchayats got 4 Mbps Wi-Fi hotspots. This institution provided G2C e-education, e-health, and e-agriculture services. The e-PRI programme aims to help all State Governments and Panchayats in the country use technology to improve internal administration and decision making. This will be done by offering aid nationwide. Panchayats use technology for transparency, service disclosure, and social audits. E-Panchayat helps local governments carry (Bhagat, P., & Pornima, B. N. 2013) out civic tasks entrusted by their constituents. Panchayats use technology to electronically tag and track government funds. This includes rapid bank transactions and tracking Panchayats' spending. Panchayats use technology to electronically tag and track government funds.

Key Challenges in E-Panchayat

Before computerization can be adopted, the Panchayat must first address the electrical issue. It is not the only obstacle you will face. More than half of rural homes lack access to electricity, and this number continues to climb (Jindal, S., & Ojha, V. (2017) Most Gram Panchayat delegates and villagers lack computer skills, making it difficult for them to utilise even the most elementary software. There is also the difficulty of (Mittal, P., & Kaur, A. 2013) creating content in the original language. Several elements, in our opinion, would make it challenging to implement digital India programmes like as e-panchayats. There are numerous startling contrasts in India. In 29 states and 10 territories, 22 distinct languages are spoken. Applications for e-panchayats are only available in English. English is the second least commonly spoken language in India, with only 12.56 percent of the population speaking it well. Due to this issue, E-Panchayat applications must now be designed in various languages. To be termed illiterate, a person must be incapable of reading and writing. The concept has been expanded to include a comprehension of a culture's core sign system through language, mathematics, images, and other ways.

There is no back-end support accessible at any level of the PRIs or PR departments. There is no centralised decision support system for keeping track of the programmes (MIS). India's rural panchayats face significant infrastructure and other issues. Information and communication technology is considered a political (Mittal, P., & Kaur, A. 2013) concern since it has the potential to affect both national and local political processes. The 2011 census revealed that India's literacy rate is 74.04 percent, which is low and hinders the implementation of e-panchayats. Over ninety-one percent of Indians are unfamiliar with computers and the internet.

The Indian panchayats have more than 3.5 million members, including more than one million women. Around

forty percent of Indians live in poverty, illiteracy rates ranging from twenty-eight to thirty-three percent, and nearly ninety-two percent of the country's population lacks computer skills, which is a serious (Jindal, S., & Ojha, V. 2017) problem. Over forty percent of India's population is poor, the illiteracy rate is between twenty-five and thirty percent, and roughly ninety percent of the population has no knowledge of digital technology.

The country has the second-fastest expanding mobile market in the world, but Internet connection is limited. Educating the public about the e panchayat service, which is not generally known, is a significant challenge. Per capita income is the share of a country's annual income that each individual receives. E-panchayat implementation is troublesome due to the inability of the populace to afford government internet services. (Jindal, S., & Ojha, V. (2017).

Conclusion

E-Panchayat is a fairly new idea that aims to use ICT tools at the local level to improve governance, participation, development, and people's ability to make decisions. The Kashmir valley is the focus of the study, and a study was done to find out what its role and value are as a tool for giving PRFs more power and helping them do their work to make the system more effective, transparent, and accountable. PRFs and villagers would find it hard to use even a simple computer programme. In this situation, they could get help from trained VLWs, GRSs, or other support workers. They could learn how to use computers in a basic way to help PRFs. To do e-Panchayat right, data connections must be made available at Panchayat Ghars, and employees must be trained at the Halqa Panchayat level. This would help people learn about e-panchayats and give PRFs more power. PRFs who are interested could go on group trips outside of their village and state to learn more about how e-Panchayat works and how other people see it. The research area had a lot of people with mobile phones and easy access to them. Because of this, the e-Panchayat system needs to be made easier to use by adding SMS, toll-free helplines, and apps with automated alternatives. This will help users get used to it quickly. PRFs liked Toll Free Helpline because it was a cheap way to raise awareness and make their work easier.

E-Panchayat is an interesting idea that has a lot of importance in today's culture. It can give people at ground zero more power if the right initiatives with clear goals are made and carried out well. E-Panchayat can help build democracy at the local level. To make the state and lower-level decentralisation more democratic, we need a toolkit. E-Government can help improve collaboration. The success of e-panchayats depends on how well the community is involved and how well it gets information, so both of these things must be done well. It is hard to reach the majority of people in a large, diverse democracy like India, but it is possible thanks to its ICT skills and international reputation. To make decentralisation more democratic, e-panchayat needs a grass-roots approach, and its use depends more on internal will than on technology. E-Panchayats are the answer to the problem of

people in rural areas not being able to get basic services. They need the right technological tools to play a key role in development.

Disclosure Conflicts of Interest

To the best of their knowledge, there are no conflicts of interest or personal ties that could have influenced their work.

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