E-Governance and Women Empowerment in India

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Abstract

E-governance refers to the use of information and communications technology (ICT) by government agencies to improve the delivery of services, enhance transparency, enhance efficiency and facilitate citizen participation. In other words, e-governance covers a wide range of services, including online portals for service delivery, e-voting, e-taxation, digital platforms for legal and health services and various initiatives that improve governance through technology. It involves digital interactions between government bodies and citizens, businesses or other government entities with the aim of making administrative processes more accessible, accountable and responsive. E-governance in India has emerged as a transformative tool to promote women empowerment, especially by improving access to essential services, enhancing financial inclusion and promoting gender equality. Through the use of information and communications technology (ICT), various government initiatives aim to reduce gender disparities, providing women easier access to health care, education, legal rights and employment opportunities. Programs like Digital India and Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao have leveraged digital platforms to increase women's participation in social, economic and political spheres. E-governance has facilitated women's access to vital services like MNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) applications, financial assistance through schemes like Jan Dhan Yojana and educational resources through digital learning platforms like SWAYAM. Additionally, digital tools have improved women's awareness of their rights and safety, with apps and online portals offering legal support and resources on gender-based violence. However, challenges such as digital illiteracy, limited internet access in rural areas and concerns about online privacy and security remain, limiting some of the impact of these initiatives. Despite these obstacles, The Administration's ability to empower women remains critical and continued efforts to bridge the digital divide, increase digital literacy, and ensure a safe online environment. In this context, my article analyzes the nature and scope of e-governance in India and also discusses how it is useful for women empowerment. The article also explores the intersection of governance and women's empowerment. India, is analyzing how digital initiatives have contributed to improving the lives of women.

Keywords: Privacy, security, aspiration, transparency, equality.

Introduction

This is a topic of discussion in the world. E-governance has become popular around the world since the mid-1990s. During this period, India has made significant progress in leveraging technology to enhance governance through e-governance initiatives. E-governance refers to the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to improve government services, transparency and citizen engagement. E-governance has been defined differently by different scholars such as:

Use of ICT to support (inter alia) public services, democracy, private sector etc.;

- Technology-intermediate services;
- Something that involves-government;
- A model of government;
- Commitment to technology;
- Functions that empower citizens;
- Internally focused use of ICT by government;
- About networks and relationships;
- Use of ICT to improve quality services and governance;
- Something that then sense-democracy;

Technology-mediated relations between citizen and state.

The World Bank refers to e-governance as the use of information technologies (such as wide area networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) by government agencies. In other words, e-governance can be defined as the delivery of government services and information to the public using electronic means. E-governance is alternative government. E-Government is 'anytime, anywhere' government. The objective will be to offer all government related services and utilities. E-governance is actually e-enabled government, e-effective

In India, e-governance has also played an important role in empowering women by providing them access to vital resources, services and information, thus promoting gender equality and social inclusion.

Demand for 'good governance'; Slogan of 'paperless office'; The call for transparency and end to secrecy and emphasis on right to information can give everything for good governance and in fact e-governance is another name for good governance. Therefore, it is important to know what good governance is. Good in the context of good governance means those decisions, policies and actions which are taken with the objective of welfare of the people. Generally, the 'good', 'welfare' or 'interest' of the people, defined by those in favor of democracy as a government of the people by the people, for the people, is considered an essential condition of good governance. The World Bank first highlighted the concept of good governance in 1989. By good governance it was meant

sound public management, and in this context, four dimensions were defined:
i). Public sector management;
ii). Accountability;
iii). Legal framework for development; and
iv). Information and transparency.

E-Governance and Its Role in Empowering Women:
The role of e-governance in women empowerment can be understood through various dimensions:
Access to Information and Services: E-governance initiatives such as online portals and mobile applications have made it easier for women to access important information about health services, legal rights, education and financial assistance. For example, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) portal allows rural women to apply directly for jobs under the scheme, thereby ensuring better access to employment opportunities. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign aims to promote the welfare of girls. Child, the digital platform store has been expanded through each wide audience segment.
Financial Inclusion: Digital platforms have played an important role in promoting financial literacy and inclusion among women. Government programs like Jan Dhan Yojana, which aims to provide banking access to the unbanked, have disproportionately benefited
Women, especially in rural areas. These digital banking initiatives provide women access to savings accounts, insurance and loans, empowering them financially and reducing their dependence on traditional intermediaries.
Education and Skill Development: E-learning platforms and online education initiatives have empowered women by providing flexible, accessible and affordable learning opportunities. Programs like SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) provide women with the opportunity to gain skills in various fields ranging from technology to entrepreneurship. These platforms have helped bridge the educational gender gap, especially in rural and deprived areas.
Legal Awareness and Security: E-governance initiatives have also played an important role in spreading awareness about the legal rights of women. Websites such as the National Commission for Women (NCW) portal and the Mahila Suraksha App developed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development have enabled women to report cases of violence, harassment and discrimination more efficiently. These initiatives promote women's access to justice, helping to reduce gender-based violence.

Challenges and Obstacles:
The scholar noted that although a lot of efforts have been made by government bodies as well as public services in building infrastructure and managing intimate information, the diffusion of technologies has been slow in moving towards e-governance. These reasons are: lack of IT literacy and awareness regarding the benefits of governance; Underutilization of existing ICT infrastructure; attitude of government departments; Lack of coordination between government department and solution developers; Protest against breakdowns in departmental procedures; Lack of infrastructure to maintain e-governance.
Again, while e-governance has made substantial progress in empowering women in India, several challenges still remain:
Digital Literacy: One of the major barriers to the success of governance initiatives for women is the digital literacy gap.

According to National Sample Survey (NSS) data, women in rural areas are less likely to have access to digital devices or the internet. This digital divide limits their ability to benefit from government services provided online.
Cultural and Social Barriers: In many parts of India, traditional gender roles still restrict women's mobility and access to technology. In conservative communities, women may not be allowed to use mobile phones or computers freely, which hinders their participation in digital initiatives.
Privacy and Security Concerns: Women, especially in rural and deprived areas, may face concerns about privacy and security of their personal data when connecting to online platforms. Cybersecurity risks such as identity theft, cyberbullying and online harassment may discourage women from fully participating in e-governance initiatives.

Former Indian President Abul Kalam Azad:
"No country has yet implemented an e-governance system for one billion people. The need for governance is a big challenge for us."
Government Initiatives to Promote E-Governance and Women Empowerment:
The Government of India has taken several steps to address these challenges and promote e-governance as a tool for women empowerment:
DigitalIndia Programme: The Digital India program, launched in 2015, aims to transform India into a digitally empowered society. Under this initiative, the government has worked to increase internet access, build digital infrastructure and provide digital literacy training, with a focus on empowering women and marginalized communities.
Beti BachaoBeti Padhao Scheme: This initiative promotes gender equality and empowerment of girls. The campaign has a significant digital presence, with efforts to raise awareness, challenge social norms and provide information on health, education and safety through online platforms.
Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Digital Platforms: The government has also worked to connect women self-help groups to digital platforms. Through these platforms, women can access financial services, training programs, and marketing opportunities for their local products while boosting their economic participation.

Conclusion
E-governance has become a powerful tool for women's empowerment in India by improving access to information, enhancing financial inclusion, promoting education, and ensuring legal protection. While challenges such as digital literacy gaps and cultural barriers remain, the Indian government's efforts to bridge these divides through targeted initiatives such as Digital India and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao are making significant progress. However, the focus on improving digital literacy, ensuring equitable access to technology, and addressing security concerns is essential to the future success of these initiatives. Empowering women through governance will not only promote gender equality but also contribute to India's overall growth and prosperity.

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