# E – GOVERNANCE THROUGH AKSHAYA

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*Abstract:* This study has been conducted to evaluate the e-governance activities through Akshays e- kendra. E-governance is an application of ICTs to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and accountability of informational & transactional exchanges within government to government, government to citizen & government to businesses and to common citizens. AKSHAYA has been trying to make government services more accessible to villagers, which attempts to reduce the time and money people spend, trying to communicate with public officials and to provide immediate, transparent access to local government data and documentation.

Keywords  Akshaya, E-Governance, Information Technology

## INTRODUCTION

Information technology (IT) is the application of computers to store, retrieve, transmit and manipulate data, often in the context of a business or other enterprise.  IT is considered a subset of information and communications technology (ICT). In 2012, Zuppo proposed an ICT hierarchy where each hierarchy level "contain some degree of commonality in that they are related to technologies that facilitate the transfer of information and various types of electronically mediated communications." Business/IT was one level of the ICT hierarchy. The term is commonly used as a synonym for computers and computer networks, but it also encompasses other information distribution technologies such as television and telephones.  Several industries are associated with information technology, including computer hardware, software, electronics, semiconductors, internet, telecom equipment, engineering, healthcare e-commerce and computer services.

E-Government is "the use of ICTs, and particularly the Internet, as a tool to achieve better government". According to the European Union "e-Government is the use of Information and Communication Technologies in public administrations combined with organizational change and new skills in order to improve public services and democratic processes" (European Union, 2004). India is one of many developing countries currently launching major e-governance projects aiming to improve government processes, connect government to citizens and build interactions within civil society. However, in a developing country like India, it remains uncertain as to what contribution, if any, e-governance initiatives can make to overall development priorities. Taking note of the potential of e-governance to improve the quality of life of the vast population of the country, the Government of India has formulated a national program – the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP). This plan attempts to cover all the important areas relating to e-Governance – Policy, Infrastructure, Finances, Project Management, Government Process reengineering, Capacity Building, Training, Assessment and Awareness etc. across the Central and State Governments. Today, wide ranges of e-governance projects are being implemented in different parts of the country including projects aimed at reaching areas and people that had traditionally not been connected to the outside world. Kerala is not an exception to this. Government of Kerala has implemented several programmes with the ultimate aim of serving citizens in a speedy and transparent manner. The Akshaya Kendram is one of the most important and widely spread e-governance projects under government of Kerala.

The Akshaya initiative was introduced to make at least one person from each family in the e- literate. In addition, the development of entrepreneurship is also coming under the domain of Akshaya project. This project is implemented in Public-Private Partnership model. The Akshaya project had its pilot implementation in Malappuram District in 2002. In 2004, Akshaya e- pay project was introduced as an online system, for the collection of various utility bills and fees. Through Akshaya e- pay, the citizens can remit their bills and dues to the government. Even though the Akshaya e- literacy programme was unique in nature; it raised many criticisms due to its failure in the commercial sustainability.

Akshaya is acting as an instrument in rural empowerment and economic development. The project is a catalyst in creating massive economic growth and creation of direct and indirect employment in the State by focusing on the various facts of e-learning, e-transaction, e-governance, etc. The project is having a long-standing impact on the social, economic, and political scenario of the State.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The government of Kerala set up Akshaya Centres in 2002 to combat the 'digital divide' in the sate-way before the central government came up with the concept of the common service centers (CSCs). The decision to set up Akshaya centres a one-stop-shop shop for all the e-governance and technology-related services was taken after the government noticed that the e-governance schemes were not being very successful in Kerala because of the low technology awareness in the state. It was decided to go for effective computer education in Kerala to increase digital literacy in the state.

Delivery of Internet services to rural communities was one of the biggest challenges in bringing IT to the masses. By creating the single window Akshaya E-pay centres, the Government of Kerala has taken a step towards bridging the urban-rural divide. The single window facility is creating new patterns of service delivery and promises to change the Government/citizen relationship. It strives to improve the way citizens conduct business with the Government, thereby enhancing efficiency of Government functioning. Finally, the creation of local employment and the additional revenues that this project brings to rural entrepreneurs helps to achieve equitable development.

E-governance is an application of ICTs to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of informational & transactional exchanges within government to government, government to citizen & government to businesses and to common citizens. AKSHAYA has been trying to make government services more accessible to villagers, which attempts to reduce the time and money people spend, trying to communicate with public officials and to provide immediate, transparent access to local government data and documentation. In a nutshell, the problem under study is aimed for assessing the e-governance service of Akshaya Kendra in Digital Empowerment and G2C Services.

## SCOPE OF THE STUDY

E-Governance today seems to have reached fascinating crossroads. New technologies improve E-Governance service rapidly. Employment opportunities are plenty in this sector. This form of business generates remarkable revenue to the operators of the E-kendram. At the same time the E-kendram faces numerous challenges. Customer service expectations are high at a time when more computer centers offer different services. This study is mainly focused in the view of the beneficiary of Akshaya Kendram and their satisfaction level. The study also evaluates the role of Akshaya Kendra in digital empowerment and G2C Service.

With the present scenario of the growing importance of Information Technology, the scope of the study could be summarized as follows.

➢ It will help the owners of Akshaya Kendram, especially in a rural areas to understand the modern methods of customer service and the imperative of their adoption in their activities and digital empowerment.
➢ As Akshaya Kendram is an amalgam of service, the study will help the service providers understand the service requirements and service quality to satisfy their target groups and G2C Service.
➢ This study has the scope of encouraging the Akshaya Kendram to resort to consumer surveys to identify the major problems they face.
➢ It identifies the area and scope of strengthening the competitive ability of Akshaya Kendram in customer servicing.

Though Akshaya Kendram in Thiruvananthapuram Districts are only studied by the researcher. There are 263 Akshaya centers are in the Districts out of which only 9 are selected for the study.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand awareness of E-governance services provided through Akshaya Centre.
2. To identify the role of Akshaya Kendra in Digital Empowerment and G2C Service.
3. To Analyse usage of E-governance services provided through Akshaya Centre.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

This is a descriptive and analytical study based on primary and secondary data. Akshaya Kendra spread throughout the state.

A multi-stage random sampling technique was implemented to arrive at the respondents. Primary data is collected by using a questionnaire from a sample of 90 respondents of the beneficiaries of Akshaya Kendra. The sample was collected in Thiruvananthapuram District only. In the first stage, the researcher divides the district into three clusters. Corporation (urban), Municipality (Semi-urban), Panchayath (rural). Then from each cluster, three Akshaya Kendra were selected on random basis. In the last stage ten respondents were selected on a convenience basis from the nine Akshaya Kendra, and the total sample was 90.

Secondary data were collected from published sources like annual report and statement of Akshaya Kendra, publications. Relevant Articles- international and National, Working papers, Theses and Reports. The scope of World Wide Web for collecting data has been exploited well from different web sites

**Details of samples collected for the study**

| Sl.NO | Place from samples collected | Area | Number of Samples |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Kudapanakunnu | Urban | 10 |
| 2 | Kazakuttom | Urban | 10 |
| 3 | Sreekaryam | Urban | 10 |
| 4 | Vengavila | Semi-Urban | 10 |
| 5 | Attigal | Semi-Urban | 10 |
| 6 | Varkala | Semi-Urban | 10 |
| 7 | Thempamoodu | Rural | 10 |
| 8 | Pirappancode | Rural | 10 |
| 9 | Pothancode | Rural | 10 |

E-Governance activity in the Government enterprises are most widely used activity in the today world. Most of the countries are developed the activity on B 2 C in the benefit of the customers. In Kerala Government step forward the activities of E-Governance services in 2002. Akshaya E-Kendram is one of the most important E-Governance activities initiated by the Government of Kerala. In this chapter the researcher trying to develop a clear idea about the services rendered by Akshaya and the customer's view point and there awareness about the E-Governance. It also develops the idea about the role of Akshaya Kendram in economic development and employability. There is a general belief that the area of residence of customers may have an impact on their behavior. To reach conclusions on the extent of residence influence of the general character, It tried an in depth analysis by dividing respondents' residence in to three categories, ie.Panchayath (rural), Municipality (semi-urban), Corporation (urban). It is already stated that each area is given equal weight. There is no loss of generality as there is little difference among urban, semi-urban and rural area in Thiruvananthapuram. 30 respondents each have been taken from urban, semi-urban and rural area totaling 90 samples from all the three regions considered for the study.

## Knowledge about Akshaya Kendram

In the below table seems that the source of knowledge about Akshaya. For this seven identical sores are mentioned in the table.

**Knowledge about Akshaya Kendram**

| Know about Akshaya | Panchayath | Municipality | Corporation | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Friends | 2(2.22%) | 2(2.22%) | 3(3.33%) | 7(7.78%) |
| Media | 2(2.22%) | 3(3.33%) | 2(2.22%) | 7(7.78%) |
| LSG | 5(5.56%) | 7(7.78%) | 8(8.89%) | 20(22.22%) |
| Government Employee | 3(3.33%) | 2(2.22%) | 9(10%) | 14(15.6%) |
| Local Advertisement | 3(3.33%) | 4(4.44%) | 2(2.22%) | 9(10%) |
| Kudumbasree | 13(14.44%) | 10(11.11%) | 5(5.56%) | 28(31.11%) |
| Survey | 2(2.22%) | 2(2.22%) | 1(1.11%) | 5(5.56%) |
| Total | 30(33.33%) | 30(33.33%) | 30(33.33%) | 90(100%) |

Source: Primary Data

Table depicts that out of the total respondents 31.11% of respondents opened that they get the information about Akshaya centre from Kudumbasree and 22.2% of respondent get the knowledge through LSG. It seems that 7.78 per cent respondents get the knowledge through media. It reveals that the Kudumbasree and LSG are the main role players in this connection.

**Purpose of Visiting Akshaya Kendram**

The question of purpose of visiting Akshaya Kendram is studied to identify possible variations among regions. The table below shows the distribution. This is to be seen as purpose of visiting Akshaya Kendram.

**Purpose of Visiting Akshaya Kendram**

| Purpose | Panchayath | Municipality | Corporation | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Bill payment** | 9(10%) | 2(2.22%) | 6(6.67%) | **17(18.89%)** |
| **Internet Surfing** | 6(6.67%) | 8(8.89%) | 7(7.78%) | **21(23.33%)** |
| **Computer Education** | 1(1.11%) | 2(2.22%) | 2(2.22%) | **5(5.56%)** |
| **Courses& Job** | 2(2.22%) | 5(5.56%) | 3(3.33%) | **10(11.11%)** |
| **Application Submission** | 11(12.22%) | 13(14.44%) | 11(12.22%) | **35(38.89%)** |
| **Internet Banking Facility** | 1(1.11%) | 0(0%) | 1(1.11%) | **2(2.22%)** |
| **Total** | **30(33.33%)** | **30(33.33%)** | **30(33.33%)** | **90(100%)** |

Source: Primary data

Table shows that both the three region application submission is the most preferred purpose of visiting Akshaya centre. It is seen that 38.89% of respondents are using Akshaya centre for application submission and 23.33% of respondents are using internet surfing and only 2.22 per cent of respondents are using Akshaya centre for internet banking facility.

**Satisfaction of Services provided by Akshaya Kendram**

Here, it is attempted to study the opinion of customers towards satisfaction of service provided by Akshaya Kendram

**Satisfaction of Services Provided by Akshaya Kendram**

| Satisfaction | Panchayath | Municipality | Corporation | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Yes** | 19(21.11%) | 13(14.44%) | 19(21.11%) | **51(56.67%)** |
| **No** | 8(8.89%) | 10(11.11%) | 11(12.22%) | **29(32.22%)** |
| **Some Extent** | 3(3.33%) | 7(7.78%) | 0(0%) | **10(11.11%)** |
| **Total** | **30(33.33%)** | **30(33.33%)** | **30(33.33%)** | **90(100%)** |

Source: Primary data

The table shows that 56.67% of respondents satisfy the services provided by Akshaya Kendram, 32.2% of respondents not satisfy the services of Akshaya Kendram and 11.11 per cent of respondents satisfied to an extent on the services provided Akshaya Kendram.

**Utilization of E-literacy from Akshaya Kendram**

One of the main objectives of Akshaya Kendram is the E-literacy service. The below table give information that the utilization of that E-literacy service in daily life. For getting information five options are provided to the respondents.

**Utilization of E-literacy from Akshaya Kendram**

| Utilization of Akshaya | Panchayath | Municipality | Corporation | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chatting | 4(4.44%) | 2(2.22%) | 2(2.22%) | **8(8.89%)** |
| E-mail | 4(4.44%) | 3(3.33%) | 2(2.22%) | **9(10%)** |
| Surfing Web | 1(1.11%) | 1(1.1%) | 1(1.11%) | **3(3.33%)** |
| Only Use of Computer | 3(3.33%) | 9(10%) | 13(14.44%) | **25(27.78%)** |
| Can't Utilize | 18(20%) | 15(16.67%) | 12(13.33%) | **45(50%)** |
| Total | **30(33.33%)** | **30(33.33%)** | **30(33.33%)** | **90(100%)** |

Source: Primary data

The above table shows that region wise utilization of e-literacy from Akshaya centre. It indicates that 50 per cent of respondents are can't utilize e-literacy from Akshaya centre, 27.78 per cent of respondents opened that they utilize the E-literacy service for use of computer only. 10 per cent opened that they utilize the e-literacy for e-mailing.

**Akshaya kendram Facilitate Women Empowerment**

The below table seems that the opinion of the respondents towards the role of Akshaya Kendram for women empowerment.

**Akshaya Kendram Facilitate Women Empowerment**

| Women Empowerment | Panchayath | Municipality | Corporation | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 24(26.67%) | 22(24.44%) | 18(20%) | **64(71.11%)** |
| No | 6(6.67%) | 8(8.89%) | 12(13.33%) | **26(28.89%)** |
| Total | **30 (33.33%)** | **30 (33.33%)** | **30 (33.33%)** | **90 (100%)** |

Source: Primary data

Table shows that the role of Akshaya kendram in women empowerment. As per the table 71.11% of respondents are agreeing with Akshaya facilitate women empowerment and 28.89% of respondents are not agreeing with Akshaya facilitate women empowerment.

**E-Learning programme available in Akshaya Kendram**

The below table shows the rank of E-learning services provided by the Akshay Kendram. In arriving conclusion the weighted ranking method was used i. e. in rank 1 give a weight of 7, and rank 2- weight 6, rank 3-weight 5, rank 4-weight 4, rank 5-weight 3, rank 6 weight 2, rank 7 weight 1.

**E-Learning programme available in Akshaya Kendram**

| E-learning Programme | Panchayath Rank | Municipality Rank | Corporation Rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| E-learning | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| Internet | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| E-vidya | 4 | 2 | 4 |
| Keltron Courses | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| IGNOU | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| C-Dit | 6 | 7 | 6 |
| Intel Learn | 7 | 6 | 7 |
| | | | |

Source: Primary data

Table reveals that both in panchayath and municipality area most using E-learning activity is Internet. In it's the respondents give maximum weighted rank to this E-learning activity. In corporation area E-learning is the most preferred E-learning activity.

**E-Governance programme available in Akshaya Centre**

The below table shows the rank of E-Governance activity given by the Akshay Kendram. 17 options are given to the respondents. In arriving conclusion the weighted ranking method was used i. e. in rank 1 give a weight of 17, and rank 2- weight16, rank 3- weight 15, rank 4-weight 14, rank 5-weight 13, rank 6 weight 12, rank 7 weight 11, etc.,

**E-Governance programme available in Akshaya Centre**

| E-Governance Programme | Panchayath Rank | Municipality Rank | Corporation Rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| E-Payment | 2 | 5 | 1 |
| Help Desk | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| Entegramam | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| E-Ticketing | 3 | 3 | 5 |
| E-Filing | 9 | 2 | 4 |
| Macro Insurance | 13 | 9 | 8 |
| Survey | 14 | 12 | 11 |
| Jana Mythri Police | 16 | 13 | 13 |
| E-Consignment | 15 | 14 | 14 |
| E-Mail | 6 | 1 | 2 |
| Malayalam Computing | 12 | 15 | 17 |
| E-Grantz | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| Spark | 8 | 8 | 9 |
| Ration Card | 4 | 10 | 10 |
| E-Krishi | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| UIDAI | 17 | 16 | 15 |
| Chis Registration | 11 | 17 | 16 |
| | | | |

Source: Primary data

The above table reveals that in panchayath area most using E-Governance activity is E-Grants. In it's the respondents give maximum weighted rank to this E-Grants activity. In municipality area E-Mail is the most preferred E-Governance activity but in Corporation are E-Payment is the most preferred activity. It reveals that the respondents of three different regions prefer different E-Governance activity.

**FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The following findings have emerged from the evaluation of the role of Akshaya Kendram in rural empowerment and economic development.

❖ Most of respondents get knowledge about Akshaya through kudumbasree.
❖ Majority of the respondents visiting Akshaya for the purpose of application submission.
❖ Majority of the respondents satisfy the services provided by Akshaya.
❖ Majority of respondents can't utilize e-literacy provided by Akshaya Centre.
❖ Majority of the respondents were agreed with Akshaya Centre facilitate women empowerment.
❖ It is revels that the preference of both E-learning and E-Governance activity are different in different region.

**CONCLUSION**

Akshaya Kendram plays an important role in Kerala for better implementation of E-governance. They focused on providing services from different departments are brought under one umbrella at any Common Service Centre. The Akshay project is an ambitious e-literacy programme of the Kerala state. The involvement of private entrepreneurs, besides promoting entrepreneurship development, has contributed to the sustainability of the project's implementation. For citizens the opening of Akshaya centres has brought an opportunity to become part of the current knowledge revolution, besides bringing about a great technological transformation to the district. The Kerala State has set an example for moving from a manual to electronic process with broadband technology as an enabler for bridging the digital divide. Making each and every citizen a creative participants and contributors of the knowledge society. Akshaya took a normal transition, necessitated by the needs of the society and sustainability of the Akshaya entrepreneurs by tying up with renowned educational institutions to impart various courses and to deliver government to customer services. It is just a single window that provides wide range of utility services and it takes care of everything under e governance. In future Akshaya will offer Tele-medicine, Business Correspondent, E-business and offer expertise to other states also. The content developed in the regional language would include education, health care, law, career development and training, agriculture, taxation, housing and other revenues to empower people to better help themselves.

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