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Awareness Level Of Citizens Regarding The Functioning Of Akshaya Centers In Thiruvananthapuram District

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Abstract: ICT is essential for India's success in e-governance, infrastructure and economic development. E-governance is the delivery of government services with the help of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The Government of Kerala has taken initiatives to digitalize its services and is spending a lot of tax money to implement and maintain e-governance. People can easily access government services from their homes or through common service centers. Akshaya is one of the important projects of the Government of Kerala. It is one of the main common service centers of the state government. The objective of this research work is to understand the level of awareness of people about the functioning of the Akshaya centers operating in the Thiruvananthapuram District, Kerala state.
Key words: e-governance, information and communication technology, common service center, Akshaya

1. Introduction

The rapid advancements in information and communication technology have had a huge effect on all industries. Governments are a major part of these technological advancements. In today's world, governments are providing their services through ICT, which is known as e Governance. Kerala is one of the states where almost all government services are being digitized. This includes services for citizens, businesses, and employees, as well as for government agencies, departments, and other state governments. The Kerala Government is offering these services through the Akshaya Center, which is an efficient Common Service Center, designed to provide government services to the general public under one platform. This transformation is aimed at reducing corruption and red-tapism, as well as ensuring transparency in the services. The Kerala State Information Technology Mission (KSITM) launched the Akshaya Project, a model ICT initiative, with the goal of closing the digital gap and ensuring that every person in the state may benefit from information technology. Since e-literacy was the project's primary focus throughout its initial phase. In Kerala, Akshaya centers serve as both B2C and Common Service Center (CSC) interfaces for citizens receiving a range of government services through e-governance. The present study focused on the awareness level of functioning of Akshaya common service centres in Thiruvananthapuram District.

2. Statement Of The Problem

Today is the era of digital revolution. As the world becomes more computerized and more connected to the internet, computers are used for everything. The Akshaya Center offers a wide range of online services and has the power to impact many different developments, depending on how crucial communication and information are to specific users. This study was conducted to ascertain consumer satisfaction with Akshaya Center in this particular situation.

3. Significance Of The Study

Akshaya is a major project implemented with lots of expectations by the Government of Kerala. The objectives behind the formation of Akshaya projects are; to bridge the gap between the 'Information Rich and

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the Information Poor', transformation of Governance to provide efficient, transparent and convenient services to the Citizens through Information & Communication Technologies, improving public service delivery by making services accessible to the common man in their locality, to improve e-literacy in underserved areas and to provide a platform for Government to citizen services through a public-private partnership. For the accomplishment of these objectives, it is essential that to check whether the people are aware about the functions and services of Akshaya Centers. At this sense, this study is relevant in all dimensions.

4. Objectives Of The Study

1. To identify the awareness of people regarding the functioning of Akshaya centers.
2. To check whether the demographic variables have any role in determining awareness level of people.

5. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

H_0: There is no significant difference in the awareness level on Akshaya centers between personal factors like gender & marital status respondents.

H_0: There is no significant difference in the awareness level on Akshaya centers between personal factors like age & education level of the respondents.

6. Research Methodology

Research design of the study is a descriptive one based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data has been collected with the help of structured questionnaire from Akshaya customers in Thiruvananthapuram district. Secondary data were collected from various published sources like seminar proceedings, books, websites, journals, doctoral theses, etc. Convenient sampling technique was applied for choosing the sample respondent. The total sample of the study consists of 90 Akshaya customers in Thiruvananthapuram district. The data is analysed with the help of Microsoft excel and SPSS.

7. Review Of Literature

The contribution of Akshaya e-centers to closing the digital gap was examined by **Nissar (2017).** The study was carried out in Kerala, India, in the Thrissur district. It also included an evaluation of how often different Akshaya center services were used. The study employed the case study method, which is predicated on both qualitative and quantitative data. It was found that business owners play a significant part in keeping Akshaya centers sustainable. However, Akshaya centers are finding it difficult to strike a balance between the project's social and commercial goals.

Kumar et.al. (2015) looked at the political and social issues surrounding Kerala's Akshaya projects. The twin objectives of Akshaya initiatives are financial sustainability and social development. One of the methods employed is interviewing and the method of participant monitoring. Urban Akshaya centers discovered more financial success, although they only make a small profit in rural areas.

Rao (2010) evaluated Kerala's e-governance initiatives. For the study, secondary materials and literature were used in the grounded theory methodology. Initiatives aimed at e-governance in the state have several advantages, such as increased openness, less corruption, and improved service delivery. The state's e-governance projects are hampered by a lack of resources and poor connectivity.

Minimol (2007) conducted research on Kerala's Akshaya centers. The percentages of the main services that contributed to the centers' revenue were found as: 40% came from computer training programs, 30% came from e-pay services, and the remaining 30% came from other services like internet surfing.

In their project, **Shukla et al. (2007)** investigated the design and operation of Akshaya e-kiosks in Kozhikode. Using qualitative research methods, they also looked at the viewpoints of both users and kiosk owners in addition to the project's finance, financing, and financial feasibility. The study was primarily qualitative in character. Participant observation was combined with in-depth interviews to start the conversation with the community. A questionnaire was used to conduct the interviews.

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8. Data Analysis And Interpretation

It deals with the analysis of primary data collected from customers of Akshaya centers. Primary data are collected from 90 peoples from Thiruvananthapuram District. Data analysed with the help of SPSS. The statistical techniques used for analysis includes; percentage analysis, t test, and ANOVA.

Demographic Profile

Demographic variables selected for this study are Gender, Age, and educational qualifications. The demographic variables are important part of the analysis and must be studied in detail.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of the respondents on the basis of their personal profile

Demographic Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	51	56.67
	Female	39	43.33
	Total	**90**	**100**
Age	Below 25	44	48.88
	25-40	23	25.56
	Above 40	23	25.56
	Total	**90**	**100**
Educational Qualification	SSLC & Below	8	8.89
	Plus Two	35	38.89
	Graduation	21	23.33
	Post-Graduation & Above	14	15.56
	Others	12	13.33
	Total	**90**	**100**
Marital Status	Married	30	33.33
	Unmarried	60	66.67
	Total	**90**	**100**

It is clear from the above table that 56.67% of the respondents are male and 43.33% of the respondents are female. Among the total respondents, 48.88% are aged below 25, 25.56% of the respondents are aged in between 25-40, and same percentage of respondents are aged above 40. 38.89% of the respondents have plus two qualifications and only 8.89% of the respondents have educational qualification SSLC & Below.

Awareness level of People

T test:

H_0: There is no significant difference in the awareness level on Akshaya centers between personal factors like gender & marital status respondents.

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Table 2: Personal Factor and Awareness level of e-banking services

Personal Factor	Dimension	Group	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig.	Accept / Reject
Gender	Service charges	Male	51	34.6274	12.3951	2.169	0.03	Reject
		Female	39	29.3333	10.1419			
	e-literacy programmes	Male	51	28.1764	9.61604	0.013	0.99	Accept
		Female	39	28.2051	12.0244			
	Services Provided	Male	51	26.6862	10.8673	1.551	0.12	Accept
		Female	39	23.3846	8.73473			
	Role in e-governance	Male	51	24.0784	11.8149	3.036	0.003	Reject
		Female	39	17.3333	8.29817			
Marital Status	Service charges	Married	30	24.7666	8.43508	4.851	5.259	Accept
		Unmarried	60	36.1166	11.3273			
	e-literacy programmes	Married	30	25.6	10.3610	1.644	0.1037	Accept
		Unmarried	60	29.4833	10.6587			
	Services Provided	Married	30	20.2	8.92265	3.580	0.0005	Reject
		Unmarried	60	27.7833	9.73042			
	Role in e-governance	Married	30	14.4666	7.25749	4.541	0.000	Reject
		Unmarried	60	24.5	10.9397			

It is understood from the above table that the table significance (0.03), (0.003), (0.0005) & (0.000)) is less than 0.05, the level of significance, the null hypothesis rejected. It is concluded that Male respondents have higher level of awareness regarding service charges of Akshaya, role of Akshaya in e-governance and Services provided through Akshaya centers. Under personal factor marital status, unmarried respondents have higher level of awareness regarding Services provided through Akshaya centers and service charges fixed for various services.

ANOVA

H₀: There is no significant difference in the awareness level on Akshaya centers between personal factors like age education level of the respondents.

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Table 3: Personal Factor and Awareness level of e-banking services

Personal Factor	Dimension	Group	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Accept /Reject
Age	Service charges	Between Groups	654.5336	2	327.2668	2.4639	0.09	Accept
		Within Groups	11555.47	87	132.8215			
		Total	12210	89				
	e-literacy programmes	Between Groups	77.47664	2	38.73832	0.3356	0.71	Accept
		Within Groups	10040.31	87	115.4059			
		Total	10117.79	89				
	Services Provided	Between Groups	168.8643	2	84.43216	0.8275	0.44	Accept
		Within Groups	8876.258	87	102.026			
		Total	9045.122	89				
	Role in e-governance	Between Groups	768.4072	2	384.2036	3.3991	0.03	Reject
		Within Groups	9833.415	87	113.0278			
		Total	10601.82	89				
Educational Level	Service charges	Between Groups	555.8202	4	138.9551	1.0134	0.405	Accept
		Within Groups	11654.18	85	137.108			
		Total	12210	89				
	e-literacy programmes	Between Groups	1517.351	4	379.3377	3.7490	0.007	Reject
		Within Groups	8600.438	85	101.1816			
		Total	10117.79	89				
	Services Provided	Between Groups	843.1413	4	210.7853	2.1844	0.07	Accept
		Within Groups	8201.981	85	96.49389			
		Total	9045.122	89				
	Role in e-governance	Between Groups	1405.675	4	351.4187	3.2481	0.01	Reject
		Within Groups	9196.148	85	108.19			
		Total	10601.82	89				

It is understood from the above table that the table significance (0.09), (0.71) (0.44) (0.405) & (0.07) is greater than 0.05, the level of significance, the null hypothesis in the case of Service charges, e-literacy programmes, and Services Provided under personal factor Age & service charges and service provided under personal factor educational level is accepted.

9. Result Discussion

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The study shows that 56.67% of the respondents are male and 43.33% of the respondents are female. Among the total respondents, 48.88% are aged below 25, 25.56% of the respondents are aged in between 25-40, and 25.56% of the respondents are aged above 40. 38.89% of the respondents have plus two qualifications and only 8.89% of the respondents have educational qualification SSLC & Below. Male respondents have higher level of awareness regarding service charges of Akshaya, role of Akshaya in e-governance and Services provided through Akshaya centers. Under personal factor marital status, unmarried respondents have higher level of awareness regarding Services provided through Akshaya centers and service charges fixed for various services.

As observed from this study, all the respondents are not aware of all the dimensions of Akshaya centers. The government should make the public aware of and educate them regarding the various dimensions and services of Akshaya centers and the role of Akshaya centers in e-governance.

10. Conclusion

Web based services of Kerala state Government can be considered as a wonderful bridge to the future. It is sure that such an outstanding implementation will have positive impact in the life of every people. The living standard of people in the state will be increased and become familiar with the technological innovations. The introduction of Akshaya Centers helps the people to receive Government services easily. E Governance awareness programs should be conducted to the people through various Government Departments, and the people should be educated about the new E Governance initiatives introduced for the public. The Akshaya centers can't alone educate the people; there must be alternatives for that. The Akshaya centers needed more Government support and interventions to improve their performance.

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