CHANGING DIMENSION OF E-GOVERNANCE
DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

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Abstract

The outbreak of COVID-19 made a huge impact on various countries since December, 2019. Due to Corona Virus as like around 190 countries in the world, India also have been affected since March, 2020. People of the India, irrespective of their Profession, Business, Administration, Government Employees, Private Sectors, Industrial Labor, Migrant Labors etc., have been facing a lot of problem in carrying out their day to day work. To control the spread of Corona Virus on 22 March 2020, India observed a 14-hour voluntary public curfew. On 24 March, Indian Government ordered a nationwide lockdown for 21 days, affecting the entire 1.3 billion population of India. On 14 April, this lockdown extended till 3 May. Now, Third National lockdown period was extended for a further two weeks with effect from 04.05.2020. This is unprecedented in the 100 years history of India. As this lockdown will make an impact on socio, economic, political, cultural and health aspects of people at large, it need a integrated approach to analyze this issues. In this context the present paper makes an attempt to analyze the impact of E-Governance or during COVID-19 Lockdown.

Key Words: E.Governance, COVID-19 , Lockdown, Corona Virus, Digital Governance and Online teaching.

Introduction

The outbreak of COVID-19 made a huge impact on various countries since December 2019. How far this Corona Virus has been affected the various aspects of a nation and its people are not yet to be identified at his juncture. Due to the Corona Virus as like around 190 countries in the world, India also has been affected since March, 2020. People of India, irrespective of their Profession, Business, Administration, Government Employees, Private Sectors, Industrial Labour, Migrant Labours etc., have been facing a lot of problem in carrying out their day to day work. To control the spread of Corona Virus on 22 March 2020, India observed a 14-hour voluntary public curfew. On 24 March, Indian Government ordered a nationwide lockdown for 21 days, affecting the entire 1.3 billion population of India. On 14 April, this lockdown extended the two till 3 May\(^1\). Now, Third National lockdown period was extended for a further two weeks with effect from 04.05.2020\(^2\). This is unprecedented in the 100 years history of India. As this lockdown will make an impact on socio, economic, political, and cultural and health aspects of people at large, it needs an integrated approach to analyze these issues. In this context, the present paper makes an attempt to analyze the impact of E-Governance or during COVID-19 Lockdown.

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Meaning of E.Governance

E-Governance means the process in which Information and Communication Technology (ICT) used in the all levels of the Government in order to provide services to the citizens, interaction with business community and exchange of information between different agencies of the Government in a speedy, convenient efficient and transparent manner. E-Governance is a process of interaction between different stakeholders in governance. The broad objectives of the E-Governance are:

- Better service delivery to the citizens
- Provides transparency and accountability in the process.
- To empower the people through information and Technology
- To enhance the efficiency in Government as well as private
- To help the business and industrial community

Work from Home

Work from home is not a new concept. It has been suggested by Sujatha Rangarajan, a popular writer who wrote over 100 novels, 250 short stories, ten books on science, has predicted about Work from Home situation 30 years ago in one of his book named as “Karpanaikku Appal” (Beyond the imagination), Sujatha depicted the benefits of “Work from home” “Today if you spend $2,500, you can buy navigator from cannon. Navigator is a small table computer. A telephone, a box machine, A printer, A television screen of 10 inches are enough to bring an office to your home. The thrift you are going to make through this is limitless. Petrol will be saved, there will be no crowd in busses, and we can reduce the traffic in cities. Pollution will be reduced. In future, you don’t have to go to offices; the office will come to your home.” the words in his book read."In the recent past, this concept of WFH widely used in the software services sectors. As of now, IT employees are forced to work from home due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In order to strictly follow the social distancing to curtail the spread of this deadly virus, in India half of technology workers – estimated at 3 million – have already started to work from home. Today aftermath of COVID-19, to control the spread of COVID-19 guidelines was given by Government both at centre and State regarding work at home. It became mandatory to all Government employees, Private Sector during COVID-19 lockdown. It has made a
transformation in the nature of Job among the human community. COVID-19 created a lot of problems; at the same time, it promoted many positive changes in the working habits of the individual and functioning of the Government and private sector. It changed the traditional model of physical presence and paper-based work to new way of Digital mode with paperless work and virtual mode. So, E-Governance or Digital Governance or Mobile Governance are now dominant features of the entire nation which affected by Corona virus.

First case of the Corona Virus

The first case of the corona virus pandemic in India was reported on 30 January 2020, originating from China. As of 12 May 2020, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has confirmed a total of 46,008 cases, 24545 cases cured and discharged (including 1 migration) and 2293 deaths in the country. The outbreak has been declared as an epidemic in many states and union territories, where provisions of the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 have been invoked, and educational institutions and many commercial shops have been shut down. India has suspended all tourist visas, due to majority of the confirmed cases were linked to other countries.6

Objectives

- To trace the impact of COVID-19 Lockdown on E.Governance
- To analyze the changing nature of uses of E-Services as alternative to traditional mode
- To find out the pros and cons of usage of E-Governance by Mobile, Computer, Internet etc.,

Methodology: In the present paper, both descriptive and explanatory research methods applied to study about the changing dimensions of COVID-19 Lockdown on E.Governance.

Data Collection

In the present paper, secondary data have been collected from Books, Journals and News papers and website sources articles, Government official websites are used as data for the purpose of knowing the impact of Covid-19 Lockdown on E.Governance.

Changing Dimension of E-Governance during COVID-19 Lockdown:-

The purpose of COVID-19 Lockdown is to keep social distance among the of people for the containment of Corona virus from spreading one person to another and one place to another place and arrest the movement of the public from their home. The Government of India has declared lockdown for 54 days in three phases since 25th March. To fight against this COVID-19
pandemic, the Central Government and State Governments have taken a number of measures for the containment of Corona virus. These measures have been changed the nature of the job of employees in all sectors and work at home is become mandatory. In the lockdown period, E-Governance, Internet and Social Media are playing a vital role in changing the dimension of E.governance. Especially, to keep social distance and restriction on the movement of the public to control of COVID-19, it became mandatory to work from Home. The following areas are now engaging duties through E.Governance:-

- Governmental Leaders are conducting their official meeting with the help of Video Conference. Every time before declaring the lockdown, Prime Minister of India had a discussion with his cabinet colleagues and Chief Ministers of all the state to take measures to control the spread of COVID-19. Particularly Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for a videoconference summit of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) In the virtual meeting convened by India, leadership of SAARC nations insisted to chalk out a strong strategy to fight against COVID-19.
- Political Leaders who are not able to meet or organize public meeting due to social distance are conducting Video conference meeting with their party office bearers and cadres.

**Changing dimension of Higher Educational Institutions and Digital governance initiatives**

Educational Institutions have been conducting On Line Teaching, On Line Lecture, On Line Quiz, On Line Certificate course on COVID-19 awareness etc., there are opportunities given to Student community, Researcher, Faculty members to update their knowledge through the online mode by using various online resources.

- Educational Institutions from Primary Level to Higher Secondary level classes are offered in online teaching using various Information and Technology and as far as College and University are concerned the University Grants Commission has given guidelines to carry out their academic responsibilities and teaching duties both via On-Line Mode and Offline Mode.
- **Google Class Room:** It is a free web service developed by Google in the year 2014. The primary purpose of Google Classroom is to easily exchange files notes etc., between teachers and students. By using this option a teacher can upload his Notes,
Pdf Files, PPT, and Videos in the Google classroom. With regard to Google forms, throughout world number of quiz programmer, online certificate course assignment creation and survey activities are carried out by this app.

"Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds" (SWAYAM)

SWAYAM is an Indian Massive open online course (MOOC) platform. It is an initiative launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India under Digital India scheme to give a coordinated opportunity and allow free entry to various web courses, covering all advanced education; it was launched on 9th July 2017 by Honorable President of India. SWAYAM has been developed cooperatively by MHRD (Ministry of Human Resource Development) and AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education) with the help of Microsoft and is equipped for facilitating 2,000 courses. The Forum offers free access to everyone and conducts courses from class 9 till post-graduation. It enables professors and faculty of centrally funded institutes like IITs, IIMs, IISERs, etc. to teach students. According to SWAYAM there are 203 partnering institutes, 2,748 completed courses, 12,541,992 student enrollment, 915,538 exam registrations, and 654,664 successful certificates.

Likewise University Grants Commission (UGC) also sent circular to all Universities and its affiliated colleges. This letter says that during lockdown while we are practicing social Distancing and work from home in an effort to keep everyone safe from COVID-19, prayed that this situation not make an impact on our Morale and Productivity. The UGC in its endeavor to address the major challenges faced by higher educational institutions during lockdown in India, has adopted “UGC Quality Mandate“ for improving higher educational institutions. These initiatives are available in the form of guidelines and frameworks as e-book in downloadable format on the UGC website http://www.ugc.ac.in/ebook.aspx.

Changing Dimension of Family Behavior during Lockdown

Children are using mobiles, tabs, laptops, Computer and Television for playing their games, watching online classes and sparing their time in watching movies in TV etc., though online teaching from schools especially from private schools occupied them for 3 to 5 hours a day, the remaining hours they would be busy with Mobile to chat or play a game or use social media for entertainment. Children mostly had a habit of using mobiles to spare their time in watching YouTube, or WhatsApp or Instagram etc., those elders who are having android mobile with
Internet facilities are mostly sparing time with various entertainment purpose. In the Lockdown period food is a major problem for everyone. To purchase various Groceries in major cities are very difficult task for the people. In general, People are not able to purchase essential items for Home. Food delivery platform Swingy has expanded delivery of groceries and household essential services to over 125 cities in the country. Available on the Swingy app under the ‘Grocery' tab, the company is enabling on-demand procurement and delivery of essentials to the customer's doorstep and the service is being fulfilled through nearest stores and distribution centers of large brands. This Swingy Company extended its local delivery offer which unlocks a new dimension of convenience and safety for its consumers as well as earnings for Delivery Partners during these extraordinary times. Their goal is to provide the necessary support in terms of access to essentials services and encourage citizens to stay at home and safe at a home during the lockdown period.12

**Yoga and online course**

As like other fields, this Yoga Centers also have taken this lockdown period as a more productive way. The people, in general, have been facing a lot of stress and tension due to this lockdown period. So, people are ready to spare their time for some sort of time for the betterment of a good physical and Mental Health. Moreover, to maintain good family relations at home, it is necessary to undergo training like Yoga. To fulfill this, Isha Yoga Centre has offered Inner Engineering Online course that provides tools and solutions to empower the individual to create their life the way they want it. The course gives the opportunity to intellectually explore the basics of life using yoga methods.13

**E-Pass during the Lockdown**

The state government has created an online portal to streamline issuing e-passes to the public for intra-district, inter-district and inter-State movement. District Collectors/Chennai Corporation Commissioner/Industries Department are requested to follow the E.pass system for the benefits of Citizen Movement, business transactions etc., individual passes can be issued for reasons like marriage, funeral and medical emergencies. An organization can apply for movement of their employees. All passes will have a QR Code, and personnel checking it can use any QR code scanner to verify its authenticity. Individuals coming into TN from other States would need to be put under home quarantine, for 14 days. District collectors have been asked to establish a mechanism to facilitate the same.14
Aarogya Setu, is a mobile app developed by the ministry of electronics and Information and Technology to help citizens identify their risk of contracting Covid-19 (corona virus). So far more than 10 million downloaded this app since its inception. The app is available in both Google Play (for Android phones) and Apple App Store (for is). It is available in 10 regional languages and English. Aarogya Setu app will help the user to know about the cases if anyone has crossed paths with someone who has tested positive. The Government through this app would get data on COVID-19 cases. This data will help the government take various measures in order to curtail the spread of corona virus and initiate the isolation procedure, if necessary. Besides, individuals, those who have downloaded this Aarogya Setu app will be alerted if someone crosses him proximity with, unknowingly, tests positive. The app alerts are accompanied by instructions on how to self-isolate and what to do in case any person develop symptoms.

Rise in TV Viewership

The work from home guidelines given by Government and private sector after the outbreak of COVID-19 has increased viewership of television across the country. As per the latest report by BARC- Nelsen India, the consumption of television content has increased by over 72 billion viewing minutes, leading 8% jump in the period from March- 14-20 compared to lst three weeks of January. March 24 address on ‘Complete lockdown’ was the most viewed event, with the number of viewers surpassing the IPL Finals(133million), at 197 Million. The last few years through the world information technology is playing a vital role. E-Governance becomes not only a necessity but an integral part of every nation. E-Governance initiatives in India have also influenced a lot in major departments in order to provide government services to its citizen. Online services became very popular among the common people. According to a recent report of McKinsey, an average Indian mobile data user currently consumes about the 8 GB of data per month, which exceeds the average in more digitally advanced countries like China and South Korea. It observes that India will witness an increase in the number of internet users to 800 million by 2023. There are also chances for the increase in availability and decreasing in cost of high-speed connectivity and smart phones. To establish good governance, trust between governments and citizens must be improved. E.governance becoming an essential tool for promoting accountability, convenience and transparent governance. ICT widely used in elections, census, computerizing all the government offices, to digital lockers, e-Transportation,
e-Health, e-Education and e-Taxation, the Digital India has paved its way to the transformation of Government in the realm of e-Governance. Driven through technology, e-Governance is transforming citizen services by providing access to information, integrating various systems and services between government and citizens, thereby empowering citizen’s social, environmental and economic values. E.governance during Covid-19 Lockdown has created lot of changes in the functioning of Government as well as Private organizations. In future, the activities which are carried out during lockdown in online mode is going to dominate in all the departments. At the same time we can’t avoid traditional way of administration. One best example for success of Work from Home is policy followed by Tata Consultancy Service. It is a global leader in IT services. The Corona virus pandemic has forced organizations to get their employees to work from home. While some companies had it easier to switch to the work from home model, others are still adapting. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), which earlier had only 20 per cent its workforce work from home, has now moved 90 per cent of the teams to work from home due to the lockdown. The company has now planned to move 75 per cent or 4.48 lakh of global its workforce (including 3.5 lakh in India) to work from home permanently by 2025. TCS briskly moved 90% of its workforce to work from home through its operating model called Secure Borderless Work Spaces (SBWS). In a letter to employees, TCS CEO and MD Rajesh Gopinathan said, "We have come out stronger and our model is more proven than ever before." Gopinathan further told employees that SBWS had seen 35,000 meetings, 406,000 calls, and 340 lakh messages across the platform. However, same model may not applicable to Government sector or all other private sector, it may be the best model followed by TCS, but for others it may be difficult in practice due to various factors like infrastructure, financial status and Internet facilities etc., Generally, E-governance has both advantages and disadvantages, but in long run one can’t totally avoid the influences of digital governance in every aspects of human life. Digital governance will empower citizen to improve their interaction between Government as well as other sectors to receive various essential services. To conclude the following measures to be taken to empower the Government and Citizen for digital transformation

- Uninterrupted internet services to be provided and affordable cost to be fixed for internet services.
- Easy accessibility of information is necessary for the empowerment of citizen
• Internet has become an indispensable tool in both rural and urban areas and it should be equally available to all without any restrictions.

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