E-Governance: Enhancing Nepal's Digital Public Service through National ID

Conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology
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INTRODUCTION

Nepal recognizes Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) potential to boost competitiveness, economic diversification, and productivity. The Government of Nepal (GoN) is leveraging ICT to enhance government efficiency and citizen engagement through initiatives like the Nagarik App. And for a couple years the push towards National ID (Rashritya Parichaya Patra) has led to the idea of using a single card with a chip that holds both biometric and demographic information is appealing because it eliminates the need to carry multiple identification cards. National ID can be issued and utilized as one stop governmental citizen centric service. To enhance citizen-centric services, it's crucial to streamline government services through a unified online portal system. This system would allow users to log in with their National ID and access various government services through a single profile. The research "**E-Governance: Enhancing Nepal's Digital Public Service through National ID**" explores the importance of citizen-focused administration and e-governance using the National ID. It examines how this approach can improve public service delivery across federal institutions and highlights the need to increase citizens' perception and utilization of online services. This understanding is crucial for promoting citizens' awareness of the National ID and encouraging them to benefit from the convenience and efficiency of online services.

METHODOLOGY

Research method employs qualitative analysis with instrumental case study. Interviews were conducted with numerous stakeholders who have direct experience with governmental portal websites, especially government agencies and officials involved in e-government services and project management related to National ID. To ensure comprehensive data collection, random data was gathered from the districts of Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur. The sample population was stratified into citizens, institutions, and government officials across these three districts, with a total of 59 respondents: Kathmandu (17), Lalitpur (17), Bhaktapur (17), and the Nepal Government Ministries (8). Research questions were categorized by themes such as reliability, facilitation, efficiency, and security. The qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically and quantified into graphs to identify recurring themes and narratives. This approach aims to provide a deeper understanding of how e-government interoperability can be improved. Additionally, case studies of Estonia and India's Aadhaar card were examined to offer a blueprint and a degree of course of understanding and action.

The government had officially launched the national ID distribution campaign in 2018 by presenting a card to a 101-year-old woman in Panchthar district at Singha Durbar, the central secretariat.

Source: The Kathmandu Post

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

There is a gap in understanding the factors that shape citizens' perceptions, adoption, and use of online public services. In other words, the expectations and experiences of citizens regarding e-government services have not been thoroughly explored and explained. This lack of attention has led to limited consensus on what motivates citizens to use existing electronic public services. Thus, an empirical evaluation of the factors influencing Nepali citizens' intentions to use these services is necessary. Gaining such understanding is essential for raising awareness of the National ID and encouraging citizens to take advantage of the convenience and efficiency of online services.

The success of e-governance largely depends on internet availability, ICT infrastructure, access to internet devices, and digital literacy. Although Nepal has made progress in increasing internet penetration over the years, rural areas still face challenges due to insufficient ICT infrastructure. In addition to improving internet availability and access, it's crucial to incorporate local languages and for the government to actively collaborate with local institutions (including training for government officials) to enhance people's digital skills needed to use these services effectively.

Source Thimi Times

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Another important aspect of e-governance is the relationship between the government and the private sector. A collaborative partnership with the private sector leads the government to work towards policy advice and support in implementing new systems, technology-driven programs, and services. This model should be reinforced by an accountability system. The focus on delivering quality service to the public shifts civil servants' attention from primarily supporting their political leaders to prioritizing public satisfaction.

2. Data security breaches are a major concern for citizens using digital services. Without robust data security measures, relying on digital methods for public services can be risky. Digitizing the Rastriya Parichaya Patra through interoperability could potentially enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of public services. To achieve this, the concept of interoperability must be thoroughly explored. In simple terms, interoperability involves creating an internet module and ecosystem that connects different government departments under a single online portal. This system should also extend to include both the private and public sectors.

3. A data center is a physical space, such as a room, building, or facility, that contains IT infrastructure used to create, operate, and deliver applications and services, as well as to store and manage the data related to those applications and services. According to the National Information Technology Center (NITC), currently there are only two data centers in Singha Durbar and Hetauda, respectively. If the government is committed to expanding ICT and its usage, it should allocate more funds to establish data centers at the provincial level. Each province would have its own data center to address its specific needs, expectations and expansion.

CONCLUSION

TThere has been a noticeable shift toward integrating technology and new management philosophies. However, it also requires addressing the incentives for using complex concepts and tools and overcoming barriers to effective ICT utilization. This poses a significant challenge for public administration. The main difficulties include leadership within the public administration sector, fostering ICT as a collaborative discipline, and reevaluating public policy discourse in response to a rapidly changing environment. Furthermore, issues related to digital literacy, accountability models, internet penetration, and public-private partnerships need to be addressed through policies that assess the measurement, performance, and effectiveness of e-governance.