

Research Article**Digital Governance and Citizen Trust: Evaluating the Impact of e-Service Delivery on Public Satisfaction in Bangladesh's Upazila Administration**Md. Ruhul Amin, *PhD*¹¹Professor, Dept. of Public Administration, Comilla University, Cumilla, Bangladesh***Corresponding author:** Md. Ruhul Amin

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Abstract: Digitization of governance at the level of Upazila (sub-district) in Bangladesh has brought significant changes, which have changed the way individuals access the services of the government. These developments have not benefited all people equally especially in areas that are remote and rural. This research paper identifies some achievements and ongoing challenges since it explores the relationship between e-service delivery and its impact on the level of trust and satisfaction among the people in Upazila administrations. The study is a synthesis of the findings of government reports, official publications, and 202025 research papers relying on the mixed-method approach and secondary research. Although qualitative data can shed some light on the experiences, attitudes, and trust in the local government, quantitative analyses assess trends in the satisfaction of the population and service provision. The research reports that the digital services such as online registering of births, property records, and processing of business licenses have significantly enhanced convenience, accountability and transparency as well as public trust. Government services are perceived by people as more reliable save money and time and less bureaucratic hurdles. Barriers still exist, but poor internet connectivity, the lack of digital literacy, inconsistent service quality, and data security concerns. The report recommends the increased connection, promotion of digital literacy, ensuring the safety of datas managed, standardization of the quality of services everywhere within Upazila, and integration of the citizen feedback into the resolution of these issues. As such, this research reveals that whereas technology helps in the promotion of efficiency, inclusive access, comprehension trust are required to bring some real transformation in the provision of public services. It is to say that Digital Bangladesh still needs to be a person-centered journey but not entirely a system-based one.

Keywords: Digital Governance; Citizen Trust; e-Service Delivery; Public Satisfaction; Upazila Administration, Bangladesh.

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Background of the study

The application of technology in administrative work is not new in Bangladesh. Due to the intervention made by the government in developing a Digital Bangladesh, the government is slowly transitioning towards online or e-governance instead of paper-based system. The main goal of this transition is to deliver timely, accountable and transparent services to the populace. The most effective local government body, the Upazila administration, has introduced services online, and it has also transformed the nature of the interaction between citizens and the government [1]. Successful digital governance depends on the mistrust of the citizens. The confidence of people on the government increases when they have confidence that the internet services are reliable, easily accessible and free of corruption. Nonetheless, this trust is spoiled in case there are problems with the process of service delivery,

there are problems with technologies, or guilty officials show signs of apathy. These online services prove useful and confusing at times, particularly during the period when the average villager is completely dependent on the services of Upazila level [2]. But no one can deny the fact that e-services have provided the government with a new appearance. Citizens can do trade license application, land management application, birth registration, and other social benefit applications through their homes. These time and money savings are gradually increasing the public satisfaction of government services. Nevertheless, the question of whether these digital services actually increase the level of public trust or are simply affecting the administrative performance remains open [3]. This research will help to enhance the transparency, efficiency, and citizen-focused governance in Bangladesh because the research evaluates the consequences of e-service provision on



publicly listed satisfaction and trust in local government. Simultaneously, it will also provide the policymakers with valuable information to enhance their digital governance approaches at the level of Upazila [4].

The paper aims at assessing the impact of e-service delivery on both the level of satisfaction and confidence of people in the Bangladesh Upazila administrations and the key factors that ensure successful digital governance at the local level. It explores the relationship between citizen satisfaction and quality of e-services and also evaluates the impacts of using such services on confidence of local government institutions besides examining the major issues and obstacles to the implementation of e-governance that influence both satisfaction and trust. This is a secondary research paper, which is premised on a review and analysis of the past research findings, reports and literature on e-service delivery and digital governance in Bangladeshi Upazila administrations. The paper is an evaluation of the impact of e-service delivery on citizen trust and public satisfaction by synthesizing previous research as opposed to collecting primary data. It determines the key trends, challenges, and gaps that should be developed.

Objective of the Study

General objective

To derive the key factors that affect effective digital governance on the local level and to determine the effect of e-service delivery on citizen satisfaction and trust of Bangladesh Upazila administrations.

Specific objective

- ❖ To confirm the correlation between the quality of e-service delivery and citizen satisfaction on upazila administrations of Bangladesh.
- ❖ To shape the influence of e-service delivery among the citizens in the trust of upazila local government institutions.
- ❖ To define the key issues and barriers to the application of e-governance in the upazila level that influences the level of citizen satisfaction and trust.

Significance of the study

The overall aim of this study is to critically understand how the e-service delivery and digital governance implementation at the Upazila level essentially influence the level of trust of the people and the happiness of citizens. This inquiry is very crucial in the current growth of local governments, particularly in advancing their overall effectiveness, transparency and administrative effectiveness. The main contribution that this research will have is that it will offer valuable guidelines to the government authorities and the local administration. The Upazila administration will be able to focus its resources and efforts strategically by identifying which parts of the digital service delivery such as speed, accessibility and ease of use bring about

the greatest satisfaction to the citizens. Second, considering the perspective of the citizens, the study is going to provide invaluable information regarding the functionality and quality of e-services. The concept of creating a user-centric model of governance implies that one should have a clear picture of the actual experiences, needs, and expectations of people receiving the services. With the help of this feedback-based approach, the administration will also be capable of ensuring that the offered services are user-friendly, culturally-appropriate, and directly connected to the needs of the local community [5]. Another important objective is to identify and list the special problems and challenges that do not allow the complete implementation of e-governance in the Upazila level. All these barriers can take different types, including socio-administrative (e.g., the non-digital nature of citizens, political restrictions, or governmental apathy) or technical (e.g., inappropriate infrastructure, or internet connectivity). These specific issues need to be considered to enable the administration to develop focused reform initiatives and strategic developmental initiatives [6]. In terms of academic contribution, the study will make a noteworthy contribution to the research on the topic of local government, digital governance, and other determinants that shape the citizen happiness and trust in the framework of decentralization. It will provide a strong foundation since this study will provide empirical evidence and contextual analysis of the Upazila scale that will be a crucial reference point in further academic research and policy analysis in the region [7].

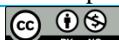
This study has been successfully completed, which is basically a crucial move towards encouraging a fair, efficient and transparent local government. The research will assist in increasing public confidence and engaging more citizens in the local government activities through the exploration of strategies that will drastically increase the level of citizen satisfaction and trust. This outcome is needed to create a strong and flexible democratic local governing system [8].

Literature Review

Satisfaction and local government trust are discussed. It highlighted the union of these notions the setting of Bangladesh Upazila government. The conceptual and theoretical frameworks developed in the study are based on the review.

Conceptual framework

Conceptual framework is a logical and graphical demonstration of the relation of the key variables in the study to each other. This study of digital governance and citizen trust in the upazila administration of Bangladesh is built on the conceptual framework that supports the influences of e-services delivery on citizen satisfaction and trust with consideration of the contextual factors and barrier(s) that may moderate or mediate such relationships [8-10].



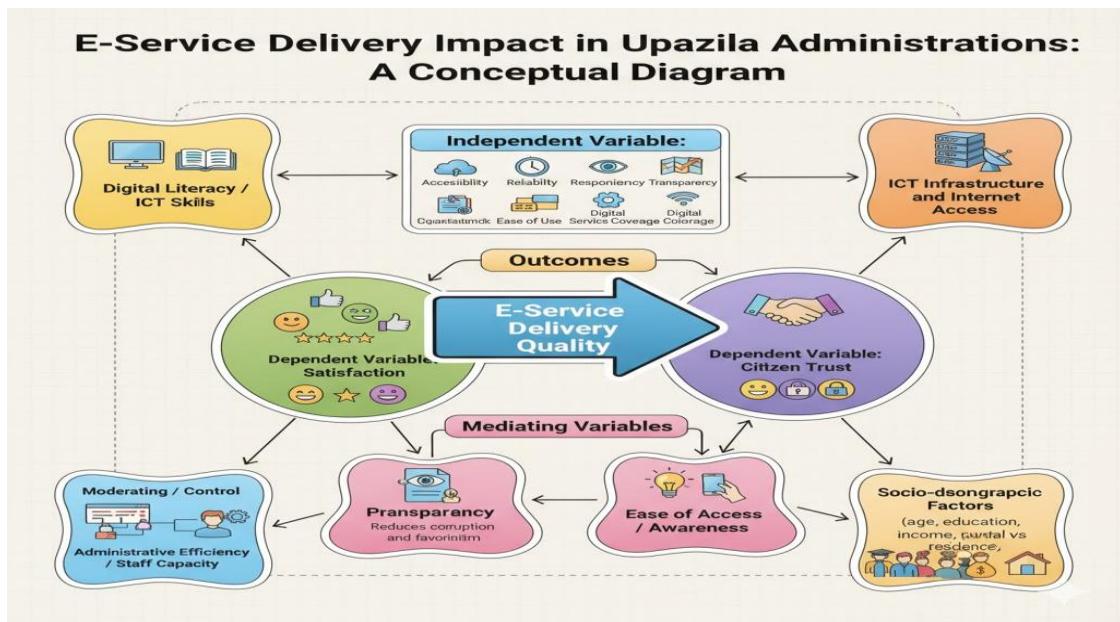


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

The theoretical framework used to test the relationship between the quality of delivering e-services and customer satisfaction and confidence with the upazila administrations is illustrated in the figure. The core assumption is that improved E-Service Quality (IV), which encompasses such aspects as openness and accessibility, leads to positive Outcomes (DVs) [8,10] such as a high level of citizen satisfaction and trust.

This relationship is a complex one since it might be mediated by perceived transparency and simple access to awareness that are two aspects that e-services employ to achieve their objectives [8,10]. These correlations are influenced by the number of moderating/control variables, one of which is ICT infrastructure also digital literacy, making it important to note that context and personal ability are key to effective e-governance.

Theoretical framework

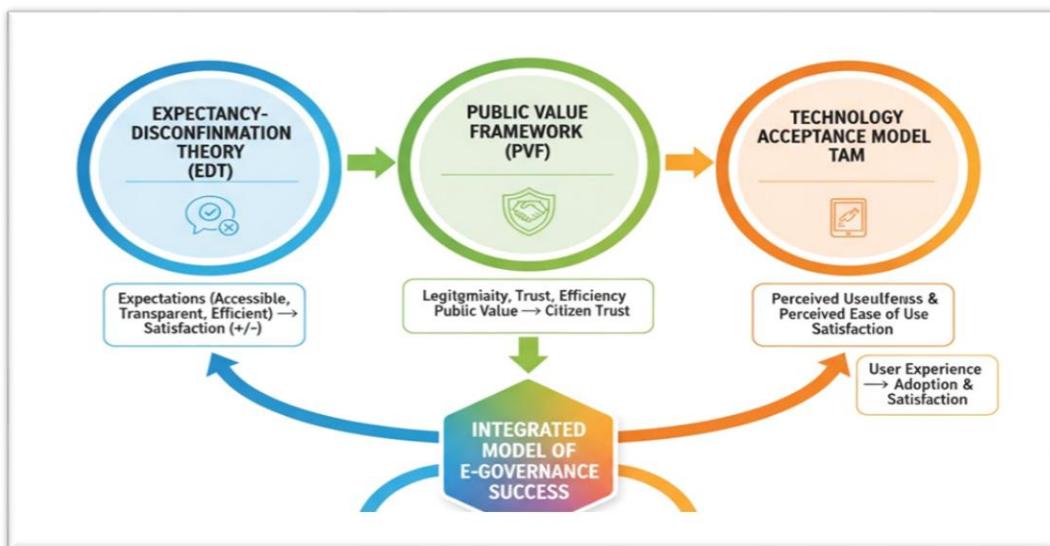
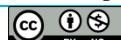


Figure 2 Theoretical Framework

Through the aid of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the paper is founded on the Public Value Framework (PVF) and the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) [9]. According to EDT, an e-service delivery can be satisfied as long as the quality-of-service delivery meets the expectations of the citizens, which explains the importance of responsiveness,

accessibility and dependability. The PVF states that effective public services will contribute value to citizens and enhance legitimacy, accountability, and trust in the local government institutions [6,11]. TAM goes offer explanations of the way in which citizens will embrace e-services, depending on their perceived utility and usability, particularly, where the levels of



ICT infrastructure and digital literacy are low [8,12]. considering the barriers and facilitators of digital governance, these theories all help substantiate the fact that the study has focused on the effects of e-service delivery on the levels of confidence and satisfaction of the citizens in Upazila administrations [8,12].

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research investigating the impact of e-service delivery on citizen satisfaction and trust in the Bangladesh Upazila administration is set. Beginning by briefly explaining the sources of data, which will comprise secondary data of previous studies and government publications, it is a systematic explanation of the study structure. The design of the given study that defines the overall methodology of the investigation that the central part of the chapter takes. It primarily makes an accent on using the analytical techniques fitting into a mixed-methods strategy that involves qualitative data (to provide a broad context and the how and why of the numbers) and quantitative data (to quantify the extent and relationship, i.e., the level of happiness and the percentage of trust).

Research design

The method of analysis used in this study is a mixed method and secondary research strategy. The study synthesizes and analyses existing research literature, official reports, and government publications in order to establish the relationship that exists between e-service delivery, citizen happiness and faith in the Upazila administration of Bangladesh, as opposed to using primary data to collect data. The mixed method approach combines both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the results that have been reported before. Quantitative data is examined to establish trends and patterns and includes the results of a survey, statistics, and digital service performance metrics of previous studies. Meanwhile, the perceptions, experiences, and degrees of trust of people are explained with qualitative data obtained after investigations, governmental analyses, and narrative evaluations.

Sources of data

14 major sources used to conduct this secondary research are enumerated in this paper they were all selected based on their reliability and authenticity to ensure an equitable evaluation of the theory and its application in real life in digital governance. To provide a concrete foundation of evaluating the provision of e-services within the local government in Bangladesh, focus of the data collection process was made to consider a broad range of materials. It particularly based on highly reviewed academic literature, such as research theses at publicly-based universities, books and edited volumes on public administration, and scholarly journal articles (Q1-Q4 indexed 2020-2025). The information was obtained on the credible websites like Scopus, SpringerLink, Elsevier, and Google Scholar. The official government documents used as the

foundation of the research include the Ministry of Public Administration and a2i government reports, publications of BBS, the Cabinet Division circulars on digital transformation, and the Vision 2041 plan by ICT Division. The data contains reports on e-governance by international organizations, like the World Bank and the UNDP, country reports by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and reports on citizen involvement by the NGOs and civil society to give a wider picture. International publications on e-governance like World Bank and UNDP, country reports by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on their evaluations, and reports by the NGOs and the civil society on citizen participation are also included in the data to offer a bigger picture. Finally, local and current background was gathered through internet policy publications that reported local digital projects, newspaper articles and conference papers on citizen trust. This comprehensive sourcing will guarantee an extensive and multidimensional data set to be used in the evaluation.

Methods

A mixed method data analysis was applied where both quantitative and qualitative research methodology were used to ensure that the research topic was well understood.

Quantitative Analysis: On the basis of previous studies, statistical data were obtained including level of satisfaction, indices of trust, and rank of service delivery performance. These data were arranged and analyzed using the descriptive analysis. We compared all the ways where various e-services influence the public satisfaction and trust by comparing trends and correlations among reports.

Qualitative Analysis: Qualitative information in policy papers, case studies and journal articles was analyzed using thematic analysis. This necessitated the identification and discussion of key matters in digital government such as accountability, efficiency, openness, access and citizen participation. Such an analysis mixture leads to a more detailed understanding of the correlation between digital governance and public satisfaction and trust. The combination helps to determine weakness and possible aspects of improvement in the e-service system of the Upazila administration besides ensuring the validity of previous results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

It is in this chapter that findings and discussions of the study are presented and based on information gathered through secondary means such as government reports, academic journals and institutional publication. It looks at the ways in which digital governance has transformed service delivery, satisfaction amongst citizens, and trust in the Bangladesh Bureaucracy in the Upazila Government. In years, introduction of e-service has increased the level of transparency and efficiency in



the local governance yet a few challenges are still plaguing the experiences of the citizens. Throughout the integration of data-based understanding, as well as explanatory explanations, the chapter presents a balanced image of the actual implementation of the vision of Digital Bangladesh on the grass root level and what remains to be desirable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I have collected everything that has been learned, observed understood in this very part. As the information includes references to government papers, publications, research and work of many agencies, this gives a real picture that the Digital Bangladesh is not merely a catchphrase but rather an initiative that is making the life of people better. Besides saving the citizens time, the digital services offered by the Upazila

administration are reiterating the idea that citizens can actually enjoy the government services.

❖ Expansion of Digital Services

To obtain a simple birth certificate just a few years ago, a villager was required to travel a lot to the office of Upazila. It would put the officials in a time crunch, misplace files and finally, a go-between will have to be brought to the task. Now, that image is evolving. The point of influence of the concept of Digital Bangladesh has been most evident at the Upazila (sub-district) level. Most Upazilas nowadays have adopted the use of Union Digital Centers (UDCs) or internet-based systems to deliver services such as land taxes, trade licenses, birth and death registration, and social welfare allowances [8,12].

Table 1 Frequency of Receiving UDC Services

| Variable | Response | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|-----------|---------------|----------------|
| Regularly take the services of UDC | Yes | 222 | 74 |
| | No | 78 | 26 |
| Receive necessary ICT-related services from this center | Yes | 190 | 63.33 |
| | No | 110 | 36.67 |
| Ease of getting services from this center | Easy | 165 | 55 |
| | Difficult | 135 | 45 |

The table indicates that, 26 percent of respondents never use UDC services and 74 percent use it routinely, 55 percent responded that it was easy to access services at the center and almost 63.33 percent said they received the ICT-related services they needed. The statistics indicate that online services are now active in the country above 2,000 and 90 percent of the Upazilas currently have one or more operational digital service centers. Individuals do not need to scurry with papers; this saves time and it also minimizes harassment. According to a2i (2023), 2,000 internet services are currently offered in the country and 90 percent of Upazilas have at least one operational digital service

center. People do not need to spend time on scampering about with papers, and it reduces harassment and wastage of time. Service delivery has not, however, done so fairly to all. There are several places with poor internet connections and short supply of skilled workers. It is a fact that development of online services is enhancing the living standards. As an example, the online tax system in Rangpur has enhanced revenue collection, and the digitalized land record in Cumilla and Gazipur has allowed citizens to verify land records of their own [10,13].

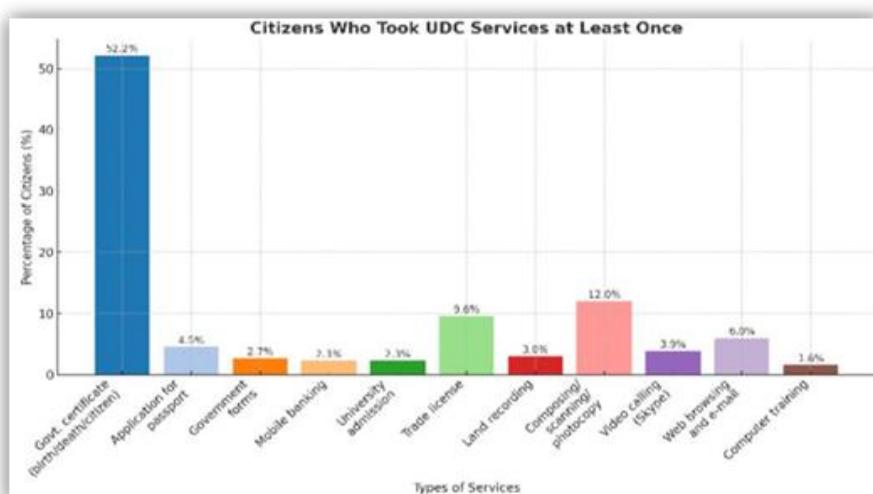


Figure 3 UDC services by citizen



The graph indicates that the majority of certificates of the government were obtained by the citizens with the help of UDCs (52.2%), then the services of composing, scanning, and photocopy (12%) and trade licenses (9.6%). Only a small number of them utilized them in the provision of services such as computer training, mobile banking, or university admissions, meaning that the majority of people rely on UDCs to provide the necessary documentation and not the digital or highly specialized services.

❖ *Improvement in Citizen Satisfaction*

Previously, whenever people required seeking, they were annoyed by the fact that they had to visit it several times, misplacing of files, and sometimes a simple task would require one day. That place is now readily taken

possession of. As the studies by Rahman and Sultana [9] suggest, approximately 70 percent of people are satisfied with the digital services. There are no long queues, time is saved, and most people say that what we do is a matter of the computer; we do not need to bribe anyone [9,10]. The fact that applications can be tracked and updated through SMS is very comforting. However, not all people are equally happy. Those who have never used phone or the internet fear are still living in fear. Accordingly, the ability to consume the services is as significant to delight as access. An example can be seen in the case of submitting an envelope or file that can now be done in few days rather than weeks following the introduction of E-Nothi (e-file) system. The rate at which the administration is taking is being believed.

Satisfaction Levels

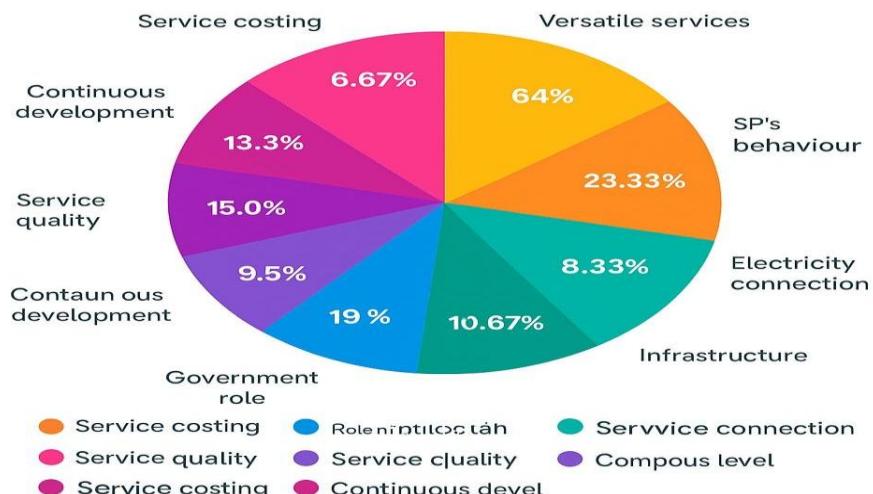


Figure 4 Citizen's satisfaction level

As indicated in the pie chart, most of the respondents are contented with issues such as government role, SP behavior, electricity connection and infrastructure. Nonetheless, the satisfaction level is low in such aspects as the speed of the internet, the cost of services, and the availability of the IT devices. The trends on satisfaction are inclined towards the positive aspect but demonstrate that there are severe gaps related to digital and operational efficiency.

❖ *Openness and Responsibility*

The necessity of a tip to under-age to get things done has been substituted by transparency. The authorities know that all payments are logged in the course of utilizing internet services. This leads to transgression being more challenging than it was before. Transparency International Bangladesh [14] states that the claims of wrongdoing regarding the land and certificate services have reduced more than 40% since the implementation of digital processes. Now any citizen can now see where their application is faltering. Nobody can escape accountability since all things can

be found online. Case: To illustrate this, the online system of birth records that was introduced in Narail Upazila made it hard to modify the data. Once the truth is recorded digitally, it will always stay that way [8,10,13].

It takes a long time to build trust and just a second to break. Digital services are slowly building this trust. Nowadays, the citizens are starting believing that working in government is not only possible but also efficient. When all the people are subjected to the same standards and they can access their own data, people think that people are acting unfairly. Based on a survey by Ahmed and Islam [4], individuals using digital services are more likely to trust their local government by 25-30% compared to individuals who do not use them [14]. However, this trust may be ruined by random failures in the system or the interestedness of a law official. Hence, both human nature and technology have a great role in saving faith. An example is that many Upazilas have launched an Online Grievance System and in that system, people can



monitor the progress of their complaints. This seems to be having an impact on the administration [8,10,13].

❖ *Conserving Money and Time*

The most significant change is saving time and money. Previously, a service was a big financial liability in the form of food, bus fares and the daily wages lost. It is now possible to fill in forms, pay fees and receive receipts at the comfort of the home. According to the 2023 A2I report, the customers save approximately USD 500 million annually through online-based services. Also, offices minimize workload, decisions are made faster and less paper is used [8,10,13]. As an example, one could require seven to ten days to complete the trade license application process online but it now requires less than 48 hours to do so. It is a sort of relaxation and a blessing.

❖ *Effect on Service Provision*

E-governance has provided a total transformation in the mode of operation of the Upazila administration. Since no one has to wait at the entrance of the office to get service, a lot of work is being done remotely. Online interdepartmental contacts have enhanced cooperation and reduction in errors. However, this has not been equally benefiting to all the Upazillas. There are some regions that lack train and on the other hand there are areas that have a weak network. The online services are slow in the remote villages of Sunamgonj, as a result of low internet speed. Savar Upazila on the other hand is much more advanced and all services familiar to the residents are availed via the internet.

❖ *Influence on Public Trust*

Besides service delivery, digital governance is also meant to bring more trust to the people. When people can see that the application is being handled in the proper manner, no information is getting lost and they do not think anyone is accepting bribes they gain confidence. However, a humanitarian spirit is needed to maintain this trust besides technology. Such small things as responding quickly and listening to citizens have a great influence. Indicatively, citizens feel that this government is quite justifiable to some extent when it opens property documentation online. It is this thinking that plants the germ of faith [5].

❖ *Issues and Suggestions*

The following chapter is focused on discussing the main problems facing Bangladeshi citizens using digital services and gives some recommendations. Although, "Digital Bangladesh" has achieved significant progress in service delivery, a lot of issues still exist on the local front. The poor internet connections, the absence of any digital literacy, and the poor skills of the officers, the unequal access to the internet, and the concerns related to the security of the data are the results of the dissatisfied residents.

❖ *Issues encountered by citizens*

Based on the above respondents indicate that they must encounter numerous issues when they visit to take services; 13 percent of the respondents indicated the poor policy and regulatory environment, 48 percent of the respondents indicated the lack of proper internet quality, 24 percent indicate poor technical competency of the officials, 7 percent indicated political influence and 8 percent have their expectations of the service providers.

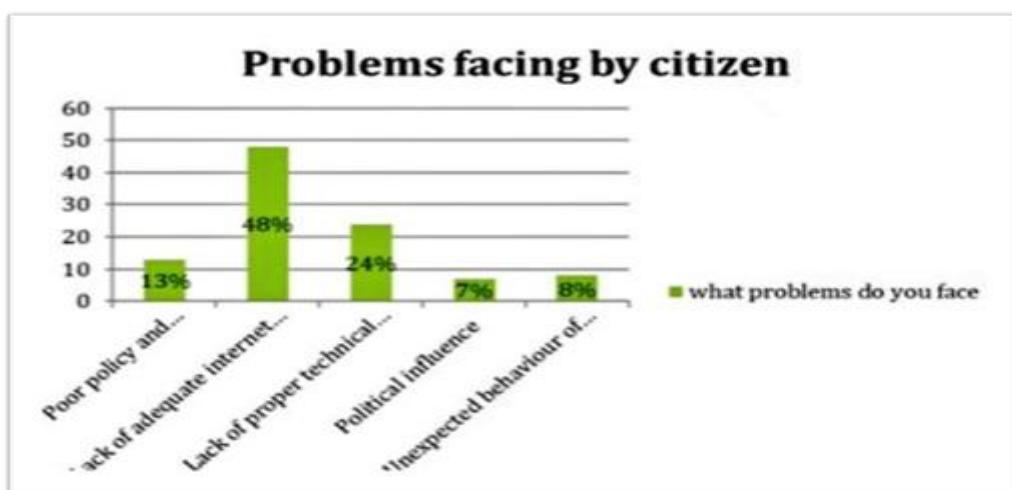


Figure 5 Problems facing by citizens

❖ *Digital illiteracy: the knowledge-understanding gap*

Although the technology is accessible to many people, a large number of people still do not have the basic skills especially the elderly members as well as poor rural women. Similar to my grandma, many other individuals continue to think that smartphones can only

be used to communicate [8]. As you know, technology has not made them free but rather made them more dependent as they come to one of the Union Digital Centers and are completely at the mercy of another person to do their job. They are as much unfamiliar with digital literacy and e-documents hence they cannot enjoy the pleasure of self-service.



Recommendation

The digital transformation in Bangladesh is really impressive. But as not all have yet taken that journey this tale is yet one half-finished. When the people in the hamlet were trying to drop their cellphones in disappointment over lack of network,

those in the city are filling in an online application within a few minutes. Such a difference makes us ask ourselves that Digital Bangladesh is a story of not only technology, but of people. So the things that come next are not merely suggestions; it is how to make this ideal a possibility to all.

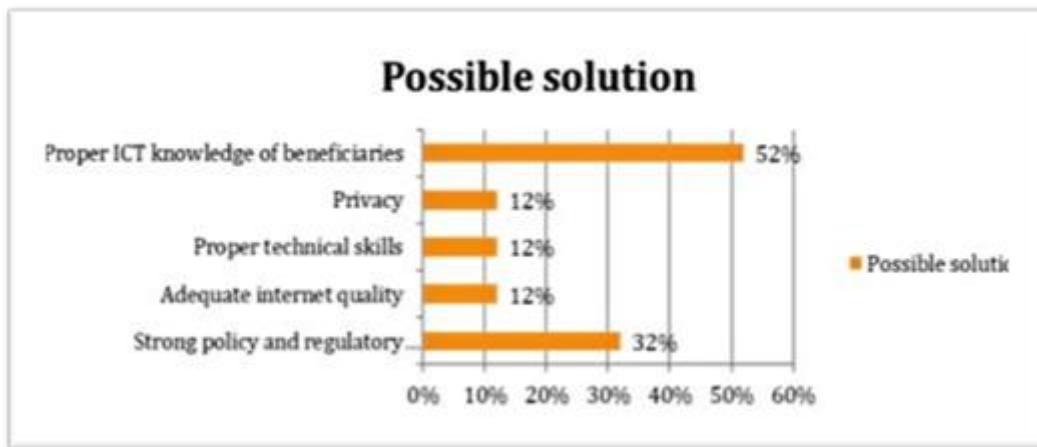


Figure 6 Solution against problems

Based on the above figure, the UDC officials express their views on eliminating the issues they deal with. Nearly all the respondents concur with the fact that there must be good policy and regulatory framework, good internet quality, good technical expertise, privacy of officials and good ICT education of beneficiaries.

- a) ***The internet should not be one of the things that are costly.*** People in villages continue to climb up hills or roofs in the hope of receiving a network signal. This is something depressing to think. The process of shaping a Digital Bangladesh is to extend connection [7]. All the people, students, farmers and domestic workers of the villages will be able to use the Internet services in case the government creates free Wi-Fi field in schools and Union Parishad offices and provides good connection on the low level.
- b) ***Teach Men and Fly their Fears.*** Many people still believe that this mobile is used to make calls only. They are not aware of how much work can be done in a single click. Therefore, the main demand is the education of the population [10,13]. Such fear will be eliminated once Union Digital Centers become places of learning where an individual can pose to oneself the questions, How do I do this? and without being ashamed. Having that, they will not have to rely on any one to do their job.
- c) ***The personal data of people should be safe.*** Nowadays, individuals are concerned about the following: Am I safe with my data? This is a problem that should be addressed. Individuals will not be afraid of working

online [10,13] when the government comes up with stringent laws and guides each person on how to protect their personal information. No technology can succeed without a sense of trust.

- d) ***Equal Opportunities in the Rich and the Poor.*** Should the citizen of a city be just because he has a clicking gadget, but a construction worker has to fork out some dollars at the Union Center, to accomplish the same thing? In the case of low-income households, the government can offer cheap smartphones or internet packages. This will ensure that all persons [8,10,13] are not only the few, but everyone, will use technology.
- e) ***The Voices of People Have to Be heard.*** The direction to move will be identified in case the experiences of the many people, who experience hardships when utilizing online services, are periodically listened to.

CONCLUSION

The story of Bangladesh of digital governance is a very human one and not about technology. Waiting in queues, waiting times, and constant pleading to accomplish a small action used to be the norm at the government offices. That is slowly becoming the case. One of the main facts has come out of the whole process off this study, and this is that; people are becoming freer due to technology, the concept of e-Service delivery. The adoption off e-services at the level of the Upazila has allowed the residents to handle a variety of governmental affairs without leaving their homes. It is now possible to access birth registration, fee charges, and land records (Khatian) with a single



click. In this manner, time and money are saved. Above all, nowadays, governmental offices do not frighten people as they did in the past. Accountability has been established and transparency has increased and the perceptions of citizens that the government cares about them have slowly come back. At the moment, the picture is not perfect, though. There are still lots of rural people who do not understand how to use the internet, network troubles still prevail in various locations and some of the views of officials are also out-dated. All these are actual roadblocks to the realization of the dream of Digital Bangladesh. But this adventure is not at a conclusion. These little, slow steps are today lighting a great light of hope. To explore the influences of e-governance on service delivery and trustworthiness of the people in the Upazila administration, the study examined secondary data in government publications, academic literature, and institutional documents. The key objectives included the evaluation of service access, citizen satisfaction and an understanding of the impacts of the digital initiatives on the perception of people towards their governance. Findings indicate that e-governance has brought out more accountability, transparency, and efficiency and thus citizens find it much easier to complete tasks such as checking property records, paying fees and registering the birth of an individual. Problems, such as poor network infrastructure, digital illiteracy, and outdated administrative systems continue to pose a challenge in delivering the most suitable services. The report, however, does give some optimistic cautions: digital governance is increasingly humanizing bureaucracy, creating trust with the people, and, given further efforts, can reach the desired objective of Digital Bangladesh.

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