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E-GOVERNANCE AND CITIZEN SATISFACTION IN HARYANA: A PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract
E-governance is intended to make public services more accessible, transparent and timely. In Haryana, Antyodaya SARAL, service-delivery centres and the Haryana Right to Service framework form an important part of this effort. Yet the existence of a portal does not, by itself, demonstrate that citizens can use it easily or are satisfied with the service received. This paper examines the relationship between Haryana's e-governance arrangements and citizen experience through a qualitative review of official documents and published studies. Khasnabis et al. (2021) studied user experience across Gurugram, Hisar and Karnal through interviews, centre feedback forms and an online questionnaire; their findings show that ease and speed, clear instructions, document requirements and in-person guidance influence users' choice of service channel. Narwal and Dahiya (2023) examined 90 respondents at three Saral Kendras in Sonipat, considering cost, availability, employee attitude, transparency, procedural simplicity and queues. Kundu (2024) analysed Haryana's institutional model and highlighted the importance of awareness, help desks and citizen-oriented implementation. The paper concludes that public value should be assessed through service completion, time and cost, repeat visits, accessibility, grievance outcomes and user feedback—not merely the number of digital services. Recommendations include clearer service information, strengthened assisted-digital support and transparent service-level monitoring. The study is secondary-source based and does not claim to estimate current statewide satisfaction.

Keywords: e-governance, citizen satisfaction, Haryana, Antyodaya SARAL, Right to Service, digital inclusion, public service delivery

1. Introduction

The quality of public administration is experienced by citizens through everyday interactions: locating the correct service, understanding eligibility, submitting documents, receiving a decision, and obtaining a remedy when a service is delayed or denied. Information and communication technology can make these processes more traceable and reduce unnecessary visits. However, technology creates public value only when citizens can access, understand and use it, and when administrative institutions act on the information it produces.

Haryana's Antyodaya SARAL is described by the state government as a unified platform for government-to-citizen services and schemes. Its listed functions include online applications, web and SMS status tracking, integration with the Rapid Assessment System and departmental performance monitoring through a Service Delivery Index (Government of Haryana, n.d.). The Haryana Right to Service Act, 2014 provides a legal framework for time-bound delivery of notified services and related appeal mechanisms. These arrangements establish an important foundation for transparent service delivery, but system features are not the same as independently demonstrated citizen outcomes.

A citizen may still face difficulty identifying the right service, understanding a form, arranging documents, navigating a portal or challenging an unexplained delay. People with limited digital skills, unreliable connectivity, disabilities or limited access to devices may need assistance. The public-administration question is therefore not only whether a service has been digitised, but whether the complete process saves time, money and effort while improving fairness, accountability and satisfaction.

2. Problem, Objectives and Research Questions

The research problem is the possible gap between formal availability of e-services and the experience of citizens who attempt to use them. Official sources explain system design and legal responsibilities, while user studies provide narrower evidence about how people experience particular service channels. These sources must be interpreted according to their scope.

The objectives are to examine Haryana's digital and legal service-delivery framework; review published evidence on user experience at Antyodaya SARAL centres and online channels; identify implementation issues that may affect satisfaction; and recommend measurable improvements in citizen-centred delivery.

The study addresses four questions:

(1) How do SARAL and the Right to Service framework seek to improve access, timeliness and accountability?

(2) What do published studies report about users' service-channel choices and satisfaction-related needs?

(3) Which access, information and grievance-handling barriers remain relevant to evaluation?

(4) What practical steps could improve the experience of common citizens?

3. Research Methodology

This paper uses a qualitative, document-based analytical method. It reviews official Haryana information on SARAL and the Right to Service framework, together with published empirical and analytical studies. Selected source characteristics and reported findings are presented in tables to make the evidence concise and transparent.

The sources were reviewed thematically under five dimensions:

(a) Access and service-channel choice

(b) Information clarity and procedural simplicity

(c) Time, cost and effort

(d) Grievance redressal and accountability

(e) Citizen feedback and satisfaction.

The analysis distinguishes official descriptions of intended functions, findings from specific study samples, and the author's interpretation. The cited empirical studies are geographically limited and are not treated as representative of all Haryana residents. No new survey or interviews were conducted for this paper.

4. Review of Literature and Institutional Context

4.1 SARAL and the Right to Service framework

SARAL is Haryana's unified service-delivery platform. Its main stated functions relevant to citizen experience are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Key features of the SARAL service-delivery platform

Platform feature	Intended citizen / administrative value
Online application facility	Enables citizens to apply without depending exclusively on physical visits
Web and SMS status tracking	Helps applicants follow application progress
Rapid Assessment System integration	Provides a channel for citizen feedback after service interaction
Service Delivery Index / dashboards	Supports departmental monitoring of service-delivery performance

The Haryana Right to Service Act, 2014 provides a framework for delivering notified services within specified time limits and for handling appeals. An automatic escalation mechanism can strengthen accountability when eligible applications exceed their prescribed timelines. Nevertheless, a formal remedy is useful only if citizens know it exists, can access it and receive a meaningful resolution. Each service has its own applicable requirements and timeline; a single universal deadline should not be assumed.

4.2 Evidence on citizen experience

Khasnabis et al. (2021) examined Antyodaya SARAL user experience in Gurugram, Hisar and Karnal. The study used interviews, centre feedback forms and an online questionnaire. Its sample and selected findings are summarised below.

Table 2. Citizen-experience evidence reported by Khasnabis et al. (2021)

The figures represent reasons reported by respondents within the study's respective channel groups; they are not statewide satisfaction rates. The study also found that users valued clear instructions, document requirements, simple forms and helpful in-person guidance.

Study element	Reported information
Geographical coverage	Gurugram, Hisar and Karnal
Methods / responses	20 interview responses; 220 centre feedback forms; 376 online questionnaire responses
Online channel preference	73.9% of respondents choosing online services cited it as the easiest and fastest option
Physical touchpoint preference	44.8% of respondents choosing a physical government touchpoint cited in-person interaction
Features valued at centres	Friendly operators, step-by-step guidance and shorter waiting time
Features valued online	Clear instructions, clear document requirements, short forms and user-friendly design
Interpretive note	Study-specific findings; not a representative estimate for all Haryana residents

Narwal and Dahiya (2023) conducted a questionnaire- and observation-based case study at three Antyodaya Saral Kendras in Sonipat district. The sample and assessment dimensions are presented in Table 2.

Table 3. Sample and satisfaction dimensions in the Sonipat case study

Study element	Reported information
Sample	90 respondents; 30 each at Kharkhoda, Gohana and Ganaur centres
Method	Questionnaire and observation; analysis using SPSS
Assessment dimensions	Service facilities; cost and availability; corruption; employee attitude; transparency; procedural simplicity; queuing system
Scope limitation	Single-district case study; findings should not be generalized to all Haryana residents

Kundu (2024), using archival research and content analysis, examines Haryana's e-public-service model and its institutional arrangements. The article discusses SARAL, service centres and grievance mechanisms, and emphasizes practical improvements such as public awareness, visible service information, help desks, hands-on support and staff soft-skills. This analysis reinforces the point that digital transformation requires administrative and human support alongside technology.

5. Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Availability is not the same as effective access

The state's service portal demonstrates that a common digital interface and tracking functions exist. Yet the citizen's journey starts before logging in: a person must know which service applies, understand eligibility, gather correct documents and identify the fee and deadline. If these steps are unclear, a technically available service may remain difficult to use. Effective access should therefore include online self-service, assisted access at service centres and clear routes for people who cannot complete an application digitally.

5.2 Time, money and effort

The evidence suggests that service-channel choice is shaped by convenience and the availability of help. Online access may reduce travel and waiting for users who can navigate the platform, while an in-person centre may provide reassurance and step-by-step assistance. Neither channel should automatically be treated as superior for every citizen. Evaluation should measure total user effort: travel and waiting time, number of visits, time spent completing forms, repeated submissions, service charges and any avoidable intermediary expense.

Administrative records should be paired with citizen feedback to determine whether these costs actually fall. Application volumes and transaction totals do not reveal how many unique people benefited, how often an applicant had to return, or whether a person abandoned the process. These distinctions matter when judging whether digital service delivery has become simpler.

5.3 Transparency, timelines and grievance redressal

Status tracking and time-bound service rules can make government processes more visible. However, a status message is useful only when it explains what stage the application has reached, whether action is required from the applicant and what happens next. Each service should display its applicable timeline, fee, document checklist, rejection reasons and appeal route in clear language.

Grievance mechanisms should be assessed by accessibility and outcomes, not merely by the existence of a portal or the number of cases closed. Relevant indicators include overdue applications, appeal rates, median time to resolution, repeat complaints and compliance with directions. Complaint volume alone is ambiguous: more complaints may indicate poor service, but may also reflect improved awareness or easier registration. Counts should be interpreted alongside application volumes, service type and resolution quality.

5.4 Citizen satisfaction as a multidimensional outcome

The reviewed studies show why satisfaction cannot be represented by one indicator. Users may value speed but still face unclear forms; they may appreciate staff assistance but experience long queues; or they may receive a service while incurring avoidable travel costs. A balanced assessment should combine administrative performance with user-reported experience and should distinguish online self-service users from those assisted at centres.

A practical scorecard could include:

(1) share of applications completed within the notified timeline;
(2) pending applications beyond deadline;
(3) rejection and resubmission rates with reasons;
(4) number of visits or contacts needed;
(5) user-reported time and out-of-pocket cost;
(6) clarity of instructions and status messages;
(7) grievance resolution time and repeat complaints; and
(8) satisfaction by service, district and access needs. Data should be disaggregated only where reliable and privacy-protective.

6. Recommendations

- Strengthen assisted-digital support. Review the capacity and service quality of existing SARAL Kendras, e-Disha centres and CSCs before creating new facilities. Where evidence identifies gaps, provide trained help desks for eligibility checks, document preparation, form completion and status tracking. Assistance should be transparent, affordable and designed to build citizens' confidence rather than permanent dependence.
- Make service information plain and complete. For each service, display eligibility, required documents, fees, the applicable deadline, application steps, common rejection reasons, status definitions and appeal options. Use simple Hindi and English where appropriate, mobile-friendly pages and accessible formats. Test the instructions with actual users.
- Publish service-wise performance data. Report applications received, completed within the notified timeline, pending beyond deadline, rejected with reasons, appealed and resolved. Clearly state the reporting period and definitions. Do not treat transaction totals as unique citizens served or as proof of satisfaction.
- Use feedback to improve processes. Combine structured user feedback with helpline and grievance data. Review recurring issues and publish corrective actions. Assess complaint outcomes and resolution quality, not only the number of complaints marked closed.
- Pilot inclusion measures before scaling. Where local evidence shows access barriers, test digital-literacy support or public/community partnerships. Set service standards, disclose any charges, protect personal data and provide a clear complaint route. Continue only if measured improvements justify the cost.
- Measure user costs and satisfaction. Establish a baseline and repeat measurement after process changes. Compare time to completion, repeat visits, incomplete applications, out-of-pocket cost, user understanding and satisfaction across similar services. Keep service deadlines consistent with the applicable legal framework; any proposed revision should follow a process review and legal check.

7. Limitations and Future Research

This study relies on secondary documents and published research; it does not collect new citizen data. The empirical studies reviewed have limited sample sizes and geographical coverage, while official portal descriptions primarily explain intended functions rather than independently measured outcomes. The paper therefore does not claim a current statewide satisfaction percentage, a statewide digital-literacy rate or a percentage of unique citizens benefiting from CSCs. Transaction totals cannot establish unique-user coverage without suitable underlying data.

Future research could compare selected districts and service categories using administrative records and a structured survey that includes online self-service users, centre-assisted users and non-users. It should examine rural and urban access, age, disability, digital skills, service complexity and reasons for abandonment. Such a design could test whether specific interventions reduce time, cost and repeat visits and improve satisfaction.

8. Conclusion

Haryana's SARAL platform and Right to Service framework provide an institutional foundation for more traceable, time-bound and accountable public services. Published research indicates that citizens value ease and speed, but also need clear instructions, simple forms, friendly operators and accessible guidance. The available evidence supports a nuanced conclusion: digitalisation can improve convenience for some users, while others may continue to need assistance or face procedural barriers.

The effectiveness of e-governance should therefore be judged by citizens' actual experience—not only by the number of services placed online. Service-specific timelines, understandable information, responsive grievance handling, assisted-digital access and transparent performance data are practical priorities. A continuous evaluation cycle combining administrative records and user feedback would allow Haryana to determine whether services are genuinely saving citizens' time, money and effort and improving satisfaction.

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Note on evidence: Percentages reported from Khasnabis et al. (2021) describe reasons given by respondents in that study's service-channel groups; they are not statewide satisfaction estimates.