

Akshaya Centre Services: A Study of Customer Usage, Problems and Satisfaction

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Abstract—Akshaya centres play an important role in providing e-governance, digital and other essential services to the public, particularly by improving access to government and online services. The present study examines the services provided by Akshaya centres, the factors influencing customers to avail these services, the problems faced by customers, and their level of satisfaction. The study is based on primary data collected from 200 respondents using a structured questionnaire. The findings reveal that quality of service, transparency, security, reliability and quick delivery are important factors influencing customers to use Akshaya services. The study also shows that respondents were highly satisfied with the quality of services and technical knowledge of staff, while comparatively lower satisfaction was observed with timely delivery, service charges and staff behaviour. The study suggests that improving service delivery time, staff interaction and affordability can further enhance customer satisfaction. Overall, Akshaya centres have a significant role in facilitating convenient access to digital and government services and supporting the delivery of e-governance services to the public.

Keywords: Akshaya Centres, E-Governance, Customer Satisfaction, Digital Services, Service Quality, Kerala.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Government of Kerala has placed considerable emphasis on the digitalisation of public services, resulting in significant changes in the design, delivery, and accessibility of government services. The transformation of conventional service delivery mechanisms through digital technologies has created new opportunities for improving the efficiency, accessibility, and responsiveness of public services. The emergence of digital service delivery institutions has also contributed to greater social inclusion by enabling citizens, particularly those with limited access to information and communication technologies (ICT), to access essential government and other digital services. In this context, Akshaya represents a significant initiative of the Government of Kerala aimed at bridging the digital divide. The project focuses on improving access to ICT, developing basic digital skills, and facilitating access to relevant digital content and services among the population. Kerala initiated the Akshaya project as a district-wide e-literacy programme in 2002, with the broader objective of empowering citizens through digital literacy and access to technology. The initiative subsequently contributed to Kerala's progress towards becoming a digitally empowered and e-literate state. Akshaya was formally inaugurated by Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam on 18 November 2002. Since its inception, Akshaya centres have functioned as important points of access to a range of digital and citizen-oriented services, particularly for individuals who may face difficulties in accessing online services independently. Against this background, the present study examines customer satisfaction with Akshaya centres and the services provided through them. The study analyses customers' perceptions and opinions regarding the quality and accessibility of Akshaya services. It also identifies the major factors influencing customers' decisions to avail themselves of services through Akshaya centres. In addition, the study examines the challenges and problems encountered by customers while accessing these services. The findings are expected to provide insights

into the effectiveness of Akshaya centres as instruments of digital inclusion and public service delivery and may contribute to identifying areas for improving service quality and customer satisfaction.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Sundararajan (2007) pointed out that the distinctive feature of the Akshaya programme, compared with other Information and Communication Technology (ICT) initiatives, is its integrated approach to addressing three key dimensions—access, skills, and content. The programme represents an extensive ICT-based development initiative aimed at empowering communities throughout Kerala, including people living in rural and economically disadvantaged areas. Nissar and Yakkob C. (2014) studied the role of Akshaya Centres in improving access to government services, particularly among rural communities. The study highlighted the contribution of Akshaya Centres in reducing the time and expenditure involved in communicating with public officials and accessing government-related information and documentation. Sreejith et al. (2015) developed a factorial model to examine the propagation of Akshaya Telecentres across Grama Panchayats in Kerala. The findings indicated that the number of Akshaya Centres sanctioned was not significantly influenced by the geographical or administrative size of the panchayats and districts. The study also identified considerable variation between the average number of centres and the size of the respective panchayats. Ramzeena Azeez (2016) examined the services provided by Akshaya Centres and the level of customer satisfaction associated with these services. The study found that Akshaya Centres provide a wide range of services that meet the requirements of most customers. The ability of these centres to meet the urgent requirements of customers, along with the growing importance of computer literacy, was identified as an important factor contributing to their popularity.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify the various services provided by Akshaya centres.
- To examine the factors influencing customers to avail themselves of Akshaya services.
- To identify the problems faced by customers while availing themselves of Akshaya services.
- To assess the level of customer satisfaction with the services provided by Akshaya centres.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in Vazhoor Grama Panchayat, Kottayam District, Kerala. A sample of 200 Akshaya customers was selected randomly from the study area. Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. Primary data were collected from the selected Akshaya customers using a structured interview schedule. Secondary data were collected from various published sources, including journals, research studies, newspapers, books, magazines, official records, and relevant internet sources. The collected data were analysed using percentage analysis, Likert scale, and rank-order scaling techniques.

IV. ANALYSIS

Table 1: Age wise classification of the Respondents

Age	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 30	12	6
30-40	12	6
40-50	68	34
50-60	64	32

60-70	32	16
70-80	12	6
Total	200	100

Source: Primary Data

The age-wise classification shows that the highest proportion of respondents (34%) belongs to the 40–50 age group, followed by 32% in the 50–60 age group. Respondents aged 60–70 years constitute 16%, while those below 30, 30–40, and 70–80 years each account for 6% of the sample.

Table 2: Occupational status of the Respondents

Occupation	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Government	24	12
Private	44	22
Business	16	8
Agriculture	12	6
Wage earners	60	30
House wife	44	22
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

The occupational status of the respondents indicates that wage earners constitute the largest group (30%), followed by private-sector employees and housewives, each accounting for 22%. Government employees represent 12% of the respondents, while business and agriculture account for 8% and 6%, respectively. Thus, the majority of the respondents are wage earners, private-sector employees, and housewives, together constituting 74% of the total sample.

Table 3: Educational qualifications of the respondents

Education	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Blow SSLC	20	10
SSLC	108	54
Plus two\pre-degree	28	14

Degree	20	10
Post graduation	12	6
Professional education	8	4
Technical education	4	2
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

The educational profile of the respondents shows that 54% have completed SSLC, making it the largest educational group. Respondents with Plus Two/Pre-Degree constitute 14%, while those below SSLC and graduates account for 10% each. Overall, the findings indicate that the majority of respondents have secondary-level education or below, with comparatively fewer respondents having postgraduate, professional, or technical qualifications.

Table 4: Economic category wise classification of the respondents

Category	Number of the respondents	Percentage%
APL	76	38
BPL	124	62
Total	200	100

Source: primary data

The economic category-wise classification shows that 62% of the respondents belong to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category, while 38% belong to the Above Poverty Line (APL) category. This indicates that BPL respondents constitute the larger share of the sample.

Table 5: Distance to Akshaya centre

Distance (in kms.)	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
0-2	48	24
2-4	84	42
4-6	52	26
6-8	16	8
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

Most respondents (66%) are located within 4 km of an Akshaya Centre, suggesting that the centres are relatively accessible to a majority of the respondents. However, 34% of respondents travel more than 4 km, indicating that a considerable section of the respondents has to travel a relatively longer distance to access Akshaya services.

Table 6: Type of services

Services	Number of respondents
Rational card service	180(90)
Revenue department service	180(90)
Passport service	128(64)
Birth/death/marriage certificate	124(62)
Motor vehicle department service	104(52)
Kerala police e- payments	96(48)
Dairy development service	60(30)
e-grants	64(32)
Farmer registration	18(36)
e-filing	24(12)

Source: Primary data

The data indicates that ration card services and revenue department services are the most widely availed services, with 90% of respondents using each. Passport services (64%) and birth/death/marriage certificate services (62%) are also commonly accessed, followed by motor vehicle department services (52%) and Kerala Police e-payment services (48%). In comparison, dairy development services, e-grants, farmer registration, and e-filing are relatively less utilised by the respondents.

Table 7: Problems faced by Akshaya customers

Problems	Number of respondents
Unfriendly behavior of the staff	136(68)
Long queue in centers	24(12)
Lack of infrastructure facilities	92(46)
Power failure problems	180(90)

Low speed of internet	41(82)
Inadequate knowledge of the staff in using computer	164(12)

Source: Primary data

*Figures in bracket shows percentage to total

The data shows that power failure is the most commonly reported problem, experienced by 90% of the respondents, followed by low internet speed at 82%. Unfriendly staff behaviour (68%) and lack of adequate infrastructure facilities (46%) were also reported by a considerable proportion of customers, while 12% experienced long queues. The figures indicate that technical and infrastructure-related issues are the major problems faced by Akshaya customers.

Table 8: factors influenced for availing Akshaya services

Factor	Total Score	Rank
Quality	1255	I
Less service charge	965	VIII
Transparency	1225	II
Convenience	1070	VI
Reliability	1160	IV
Quick delivery	1135	V
Security	1180	III
Customer friendly service	1065	VII

Source: Primary data

The analysis based on the factors that influence respondents in availing Akshaya services, show that quality of service emerged as the most important factor, securing the first rank with a total score of 1255. This indicates that respondents give the greatest importance to the quality of services provided by Akshaya centres. Transparency was ranked second, with a score of 1225, showing that clear and transparent procedures are also highly valued by users. Security occupied the third rank (1180), followed by reliability (1160) and quick delivery (1135), indicating that users also consider safe, dependable and prompt service to be important. Convenience received the sixth rank with a score of 1070, while customer-friendly service ranked seventh (1065). Less service charge obtained the lowest score of 965 and was ranked eighth, suggesting that, compared with the other factors, respondents placed relatively less importance on the cost of services. Overall, the findings indicate that service quality, transparency, security, reliability and prompt delivery are the major factors influencing respondents' use of Akshaya services, whereas lower service charges appear to be comparatively less influential.

Table 9: Level of satisfaction towards Akshaya centres

Particular	Weight	5	4	3	2	1	Total weight	Mean weight
Quality of service delivered	F	132	32	20	12	4	200	4.38
	FX	660	128	60	24	4	876	
Convenient location of the centre	F	44	100	32	20	4	200	3.8
	FX	220	400	96	40	4	760	
Convenient working hours of the centre	F	28	64	76	28	4	200	3.42
	FX	140	256	228	56	4	684	
Behavior of staff	F	24	32	40	64	40	200	2.68
	FX	120	128	120	128	40	536	
Service charge	F	4	20	52	68	56	200	2.24
	FX	20	80	156	136	56	448	
Timely delivery services	F	4	36	80	60	20	200	2.22
	FX	20	144	240	120	20	444	
Reliable services	F	4	52	108	28	8	200	3.08
	FX	20	208	324	56	8	616	
Infrastructure	F	20	92	52	28	8	200	3.44
	FX	100	368	156	56	8	688	
Transparency	F	32	60	68	32	8	200	3.54
	FX	160	240	204	96	8	708	

Technical knowledge of the staff	F	100	52	20	20	8	200	4.08
	FX	500	208	60	40	8	816	

Source: Primary data

The satisfaction of respondents towards Akshaya centres was measured on a five-point scale. Quality of service delivered recorded the highest mean score (4.38), followed by technical knowledge of staff (4.08) and convenient location (3.80). Transparency (3.54), infrastructure (3.44), and working hours (3.42) indicated moderate to high satisfaction. Reliable services (3.08) showed moderate satisfaction, while staff behaviour (2.68), service charge (2.24), and timely delivery (2.22) recorded comparatively lower satisfaction levels. Overall, respondents were most satisfied with service quality and staff technical knowledge, while timely delivery and service charges were areas of relatively lower satisfaction. Overall, the findings indicate that respondents were highly satisfied with the quality of services and technical knowledge of the staff, while satisfaction was relatively lower regarding timely delivery of services and service charges. The results also suggest that improvements in timeliness, staff behaviour and service charges could enhance the overall satisfaction of users of Akshaya centres.

V. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Akshaya centres play an important role in providing a wide range of e-governance and other digital services to the public, thereby making essential services more accessible and convenient. The findings show that quality of service, transparency, security, reliability and quick delivery are important factors influencing customers to avail Akshaya services. The study also indicates that customers face certain difficulties, particularly in relation to timely delivery, service charges and staff behaviour. Despite these issues, respondents expressed comparatively higher satisfaction with the quality of services, technical knowledge of staff and convenient location of the centres. Overall, Akshaya centres have contributed significantly to facilitating access to digital and government services, but improvements in service delivery time, staff interaction and affordability are necessary to enhance customer satisfaction and strengthen the effectiveness of Akshaya centres.

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