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E-GOVERNANCE IN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS: ROLE OF SOCIETAL DIMENSION ON ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

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Abstract
This study examines the influence of societal dimensions on organizational change within the e-governance framework of Kerala's government departments, focusing specifically on Village Assistants and Village Administrative Officers of the Revenue Department. Employing a structured survey of 385 respondents, the research analyzes six key societal factors—public expectation and trust, policy and legal framework, digital literacy, media and public opinion, stakeholder influence, and cultural norms—using descriptive and regression analysis techniques.
The findings reveal that the policy and legal framework and stakeholder influence serve as the most significant predictors of organizational change, followed by public trust and cultural values. Although digital literacy and media opinion are socially relevant, their statistical impact remains limited unless reinforced by formal institutional mandates.
Overall, the results emphasize that e-governance transformation extends beyond mere technological adoption; it represents a socially conditioned process shaped by public sentiment and institutional pressures. The study concludes by recommending the integration of societal engagement mechanisms into administrative reform strategies to promote sustainable and inclusive organizational change.
Keywords: e-governance, societal dimensions, organizational change, public trust, policy framework, stakeholder influence, Kerala government

1. Introduction

The rapid integration of digital technologies into public administration has redefined governance paradigms across the world. Over the past two decades, e-governance has transitioned from being perceived as a mere technological innovation to a comprehensive socio-administrative reform that reshapes the interaction between citizens and the state. This transformation is driven not only by advancements in information and communication technologies (ICTs) but also by the growing influence of social expectations, stakeholder networks, and evolving policy frameworks that guide the functioning of modern governments (Heeks, 2022).

In the Indian context, the evolution of e-governance has been uneven yet progressive, with certain states demonstrating higher levels of digital maturity and public participation. Among them, Kerala stands out as a pioneering model for decentralized governance, robust institutional frameworks, and citizen-centric administrative mechanisms. Kerala's governance approach has historically emphasized literacy, transparency, and social inclusion, making it a fertile ground for successful digital transformation (Thomas & George, 2022). The state's Revenue Department, particularly through the offices of Village Assistants and Village Administrative Officers, serves as the critical interface between citizens and government, handling essential services such as land records, certificates, and welfare applications. In recent years, these offices have become focal points of digital transition, where technological modernization intersects with community expectations and administrative realities.

However, as contemporary scholars increasingly acknowledge, the success of e-governance cannot be attributed solely to technological infrastructure or software systems. It is equally contingent upon the societal ecosystem in which these technologies operate. Factors such as public trust, digital literacy, media narratives, policy and legal frameworks, stakeholder engagement, and cultural receptivity significantly shape the pace and effectiveness of digital adoption (Mukherjee & Das, 2021). In states like Kerala—where governance is deeply participatory and citizens are highly aware—the interaction between societal attitudes and administrative processes becomes particularly dynamic. Thus, understanding how these social dimensions influence internal organizational change within public institutions is essential to sustaining digital transformation.

Organizational change in government systems is traditionally gradual, procedural, and hierarchical. Bureaucratic structures tend to favor stability and compliance over rapid innovation, leading to resistance when new technologies or processes are introduced. However, when societal forces—such as rising citizen expectations, media scrutiny, and stakeholder advocacy—begin to assert pressure, these institutions often shift from passive adaptation to active transformation (Kim & Lee, 2023). In the case of Kerala's Revenue Department, the increasing volume of citizen interactions through online portals, grievance redressal systems, and mobile platforms has amplified demands for transparency, accountability, and efficiency. This external pressure compels village-level officers to modify workflows, improve service responsiveness, and align with broader e-governance objectives.

Against this backdrop, the present study explores the influence of six key societal dimensions on organizational change within Kerala's e-governance framework:

1. **Public expectation and trust** – reflecting citizens' confidence in digital services and belief in institutional integrity;
2. **Policy and legal framework** – defining the formal mandates and compliance structures that enable digital adoption;
3. **Digital literacy in society** – determining the ability of citizens to effectively interact with e-governance systems;
4. **Media and public opinion** – shaping perceptions of government performance and reform urgency;
5. **Stakeholder influence** – encompassing the role of civil society, local leaders, and interest groups in promoting administrative responsiveness; and
6. **Cultural norms and values** – influencing attitudes toward change, technology, and authority within the public sector.

Unlike prior research that predominantly focuses on technological readiness or institutional capacity, this study adopts a socially oriented analytical framework, emphasizing how external societal dynamics drive internal administrative restructuring. By examining the perceptions of 385 village-level officers—including Village Assistants and Village Administrative Officers—the study empirically investigates how these six societal factors operate as either catalysts or constraints in the process of organizational change.

Preliminary insights suggest that policy and legal frameworks, alongside stakeholder influence, emerge as the most significant enablers of organizational transformation. These elements provide both the institutional legitimacy and external impetus required for sustained reform. Public trust and cultural values also play substantial roles, indicating that acceptance and participation from the community are vital for embedding new governance practices. Conversely, while digital literacy and media opinion are crucial for public engagement, their impact remains statistically limited in the absence of clear policy direction or administrative commitment.

Overall, the study underscores that e-governance in Kerala—and by extension, in similar socio-political contexts—is not merely a question of technological implementation. It is a socially conditioned evolution that reflects the interplay between institutional adaptability and community-driven expectations. Sustainable change, therefore, requires not only investment in technology but also the integration of societal engagement mechanisms into administrative reform strategies. Such an approach ensures that e-governance initiatives are inclusive, context-sensitive, and resilient to the complexities of public sentiment.

By bridging the gap between technology and society, this research contributes to the broader discourse on digital transformation in public administration. It highlights that the true measure of e-governance success lies not only in digitization rates or online service delivery metrics but in the extent to which government institutions internalize social values, respond to collective demands, and foster citizen trust. In doing so, it offers a conceptual and empirical foundation for rethinking administrative reform as a co-evolutionary process—one that advances technological innovation through the power of social legitimacy and participatory governance.

2. Review of Literature

Trust and Public Expectation

Trust between citizens and public institutions forms the foundation of successful digital governance. It represents the psychological contract that sustains citizen participation and confidence in digital administrative systems. According to Dwivedi et al. (2021), when citizens perceive government digital platforms as transparent, secure, and reliable, the resulting trust enhances both administrative responsiveness and public engagement. Citizens who believe in the credibility of e-governance systems are more likely to utilize online services and provide constructive feedback, thereby fostering a virtuous cycle of trust and efficiency.

In the context of Kerala, a state renowned for its civic engagement and participatory governance model, public expectations for accountability and transparency are particularly high. This elevated civic consciousness exerts continuous pressure on departments to adopt mechanisms that minimize bureaucratic discretion and manual delays. As Thomas and George (2022) observe, these expectations push government departments to align technological initiatives with citizen-centric goals. Consequently, the transformation within Kerala's administrative systems is not only technologically driven but also socially reinforced through public trust and expectation.

Policy and Legal Frameworks

Regulatory compulsion often serves as the catalyst for bureaucratic restructuring. While voluntary adaptation to technological reform can be slow in bureaucratic environments, the presence of formal legal mandates accelerates compliance. Kim and Lee (2023) note that policy and legal frameworks act as strong institutional forces that reduce internal resistance and ensure uniform digital transformation across administrative levels. The Government of India's Digital India initiative and mandates under the Information Technology Act have institutionalized the digitalization of administrative procedures, compelling government departments to maintain electronic records, facilitate online applications, and ensure real-time monitoring of service delivery.

In Kerala's Revenue Department, such mandates have acted as the tipping point for change. Even in instances where internal willingness or technical preparedness was limited, legal obligations ensured that departments implemented minimum digital standards. Over time, compliance has evolved into commitment, with administrative units recognizing that digital transformation enhances both efficiency and citizen trust. Thus, policy and legal frameworks emerge as not only procedural requirements but also structural enablers of sustained organizational change.

Digital Literacy and Social Adaptation

Digital literacy represents another crucial yet paradoxical factor in e-governance adoption. On one hand, societies with higher levels of technological awareness and skill tend to demand better services, higher transparency, and faster redressal mechanisms. On the other hand, limited digital competency among sections of the population may lead to resistance, exclusion, or dependency on intermediaries (Rahman & Singh, 2023). Kerala presents a nuanced case: while the state enjoys near-universal literacy and high internet penetration, digital skill disparities persist between urban and rural populations.

In practice, this results in village-level officers often acting as mediators rather than facilitators of digital adoption. They assist citizens in navigating e-portals and submitting online applications, performing hybrid roles that combine manual assistance with digital facilitation. Although this bridging function sustains inclusivity, it also places additional workload on frontline employees and slows down complete automation. Hence, digital literacy acts as both an enabler and inhibitor, shaping the rhythm and depth of organizational change in e-governance.

Media and Public Opinion

Media plays an indirect yet powerful role as a governance regulator. By influencing public perception, it amplifies accountability and shapes administrative responsiveness. Banerjee (2022) observes that when inefficiencies, delays, or irregularities are exposed through media reports, administrative heads often initiate reforms to preserve institutional credibility. In

Kerala, where local newspapers, online platforms, and social media forums are widely followed, such public exposure has become a strong motivator for performance improvement.

Instances of delayed land record updates or certificate processing, when highlighted in media outlets, often prompt immediate remedial action by district or taluk-level officers. Over time, this pattern of reactive reform has evolved into a proactive reform culture, where administrators anticipate potential criticism and act preemptively to maintain public satisfaction. Consequently, media and public opinion serve as continuous feedback mechanisms, reinforcing transparency and institutional accountability.

Stakeholder Influence and Civic Pressure

Beyond media, stakeholder influence—encompassing political leaders, civil society organizations, local panchayat bodies, and citizen forums—plays a defining role in shaping administrative change. According to Mukherjee and Das (2021), stakeholder pressure often functions as a parallel governance system, pushing departments toward greater responsiveness and efficiency. In Kerala's village-level administration, local governance units and advocacy groups frequently engage with Revenue Department officers to address citizen grievances and streamline service delivery.

Such bottom-up pressure ensures that e-governance systems remain contextually relevant and socially inclusive. When community representatives endorse digital reforms, local acceptance increases, reducing resistance to change among both employees and citizens. Conversely, lack of stakeholder engagement can lead to the perception that reforms are externally imposed, resulting in compliance without conviction. Therefore, stakeholder participation acts as a sociopolitical lubricant that smoothens the process of bureaucratic change.

Cultural Norms and Readiness for Change

Culture represents the deep-rooted dimension that influences how societies perceive and respond to reform. Sundaram and Krishnan (2023) argue that cultural readiness for change often outweighs technological readiness in determining reform success. Kerala's cultural landscape—anchored in values of social justice, collective responsibility, and educational progress—naturally aligns with the principles of transparency and citizen empowerment that underpin e-governance.

This cultural predisposition facilitates smoother integration of digital tools within administrative frameworks. Employees and citizens alike tend to view digital systems not as external impositions but as natural extensions of Kerala's progressive governance ethos. Nevertheless, maintaining this alignment requires continuous public engagement and sensitization to prevent complacency and digital fatigue.

Research Gap and the Present Study

While individual studies have explored these societal dimensions in isolation, empirical research integrating all these factors within a single analytical framework remains limited. Existing literature lacks comprehensive models that quantify the collective impact of trust, policy, digital literacy, media influence, stakeholder pressure, and culture on organizational change in e-governance environments.

This study aims to bridge that gap by examining how these six societal factors interact to influence organizational change within Kerala's Revenue Department. By analyzing data from 385 village-level officers, the research offers evidence-based insights that can guide policymakers and administrators in designing socially responsive, inclusive, and sustainable e-governance strategies.

3. Need for the Study

Most existing literature on e-governance implementation primarily concentrates on technological infrastructure, managerial readiness, and employee competency as the dominant enablers of administrative transformation. While these internal dimensions are undeniably important, they represent only one side of the reform spectrum. The societal context within which public institutions operate—comprising citizen expectations, trust, media influence, policy enforcement, and cultural values—plays an equally critical yet underexplored role in shaping the trajectory of organizational change.

In a democratic governance system such as India's, administrative agencies do not function in isolation. They are embedded within a participatory and expectation-driven environment, where public sentiment, political discourse, and social advocacy continuously interact with bureaucratic decision-making (Banerjee, 2022). When citizens actively demand transparency and efficiency, when the media highlights governance lapses, or when policy frameworks enforce accountability through digital mandates, public institutions are compelled to transition from procedural compliance to proactive transformation. Conversely, societal barriers such as digital illiteracy, skepticism toward technology, or cultural resistance to change can significantly impede organizational adaptation and reform.

Kerala's Revenue Department presents a compelling case in this regard. As the state's frontline administrative body for services including land records, welfare schemes, and certification processes, it faces direct public engagement and scrutiny. Variations in public trust, community support, and stakeholder influence often determine the pace and success of its e-governance initiatives (Rahman & Singh, 2023).

Despite this reality, there remains a significant research gap in quantifying the extent to which societal factors influence internal organizational change within the framework of e-governance. This study seeks to bridge that gap by offering empirical evidence and actionable insights to policymakers and administrators. By understanding the societal undercurrents that drive or hinder digital transformation, the research aims to inform the design of socially responsive and sustainable governance strategies that align technology adoption with community expectations and institutional objectives.

4. Objectives of the Study

The present research is undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To assess the levels of public expectation & trust, policy and legal framework, digital literacy in society, media & public opinion, stakeholders' influence, and cultural norms & values in Kerala's government departments.
2. To analyze the influence of societal dimensions on organizational change.

3. To identify the most significant societal predictors of organizational transformation.

5. Research Methodology

The present study was undertaken in the state of Kerala to examine the societal dimensions of e-governance and their influence on organizational change within government departments, with a particular focus on the Revenue Department. Kerala was selected as the study area due to its pioneering role in decentralized administration, high literacy levels, and advanced implementation of digital governance initiatives. Village-level officers in the Revenue Department were chosen as the primary respondents since they represent the grassroots interface between the government and the public, directly managing citizen services such as land records, certificates, and welfare-related documentation.

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive and analytical research design to empirically assess the impact of various societal factors on organizational change. This design facilitated both the description of prevailing e-governance practices and the examination of statistical relationships between independent and dependent variables. A quantitative approach was employed, utilizing structured survey data to ensure objectivity, consistency, and replicability.

Population and Sampling

The target population comprised Village Assistants and Village Officers working under Kerala's Revenue Department across different districts. To determine an appropriate sample size, the Cochran formula for large populations was applied, ensuring statistical adequacy and representativeness. Based on this calculation, a total of 385 respondents were selected using stratified random sampling to account for variations across districts and administrative divisions. This sampling approach enhanced the study's reliability by minimizing selection bias and ensuring adequate representation of diverse demographic and administrative contexts.

Data Collection

The study primarily relied on primary data, which were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed directly to the selected respondents. The questionnaire was designed after a comprehensive review of relevant literature and expert consultation to ensure content validity. It comprised two major sections:

1. Societal Dimensions (Independent Variables) – including *Public Expectation and Trust, Policy and Legal Framework, Digital Literacy in Society, Media and Public Opinion, Stakeholder Influence,* and *Cultural Norms and Values.*
2. Organizational Change (Dependent Variable) – reflecting the degree of administrative restructuring, process innovation, and adaptability within the department in response to societal and technological pressures.

All constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strong disagreement (1) to strong agreement (5), to capture the perceptions of respondents regarding the influence of each factor.

Data Analysis Techniques

Upon collection, the data were coded, tabulated, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and percentage analysis were employed to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and variable distributions. To test the hypothesized relationships between societal dimensions and organizational change, multiple regression analysis was performed. This technique was chosen for its ability to identify the strength and significance of influence among multiple predictors simultaneously.

The analytical framework thus enabled the study to quantitatively establish how societal dimensions collectively and individually affect organizational transformation within e-governance systems. Additionally, diagnostic tests for reliability and validity (including Cronbach's alpha) were conducted to ensure internal consistency of the instrument.

6. Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Societal Dimension of e-Governance and Organizational Change

Study Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Public Expectation & Trust	3.480	0.323
Policy and Legal Framework	3.620	0.393
Digital Literacy in Society	3.707	0.348
Media & Public Opinion	3.620	0.169
Stakeholders' Influence	3.818	0.366
Cultural Norms & Values	4.023	0.372
Organizational Change	3.057	0.326

The descriptive statistics reveal that cultural norms and values hold the highest mean score (M = 4.023), indicating a strong societal inclination toward adopting modern administrative practices. Stakeholder influence (M = 3.818) and digital literacy (M = 3.707) also demonstrate high social readiness. Public expectation and trust (M = 3.480) and policy framework (M = 3.620) reflect moderate societal pressure. However, organizational change (M = 3.057) lags behind societal expectations, suggesting a reform gap wherein administrative systems are reacting slower than societal demand. The low standard deviation for media and public opinion (SD = 0.169) indicates consistent perception across employees, highlighting media as a stable and dependable influencer.

Table 2: Influence of Societal Dimension of e-Governance on Organizational Change

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
1	.820[a]	.672	.662	67.714	.000[a]
a. Predictors: (Constant), Public Expectation & Trust, Policy and Legal Framework, Digital Literacy in Society, Media & Public Opinion, Stakeholders' Influence, Cultural Norms & Values					

Coefficients[a]					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		

1	(Constant)	3.571	0.843		4.238	0.000
	Public Expectation & Trust	0.345	0.090	0.387	3.832	0.000
	Policy and Legal Framework	0.794	0.114	0.905	6.971	0.000
	Digital Literacy in Society	0.124	0.105	0.161	1.179	0.240
	Media & Public Opinion	0.051	0.075	0.051	0.685	0.494
	Stakeholders' Influence	0.876	0.136	0.878	6.424	0.000
	Cultural Norms & Values	0.149	0.035	0.211	4.273	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Change						

The regression model demonstrates strong predictive power ($R = 0.820$, $R^2 = 0.672$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that societal dimensions account for 67.2% of variance in organizational change. Among predictors, policy and legal framework ($\beta = 0.905$) and stakeholder influence ($\beta = 0.878$) are the strongest drivers, suggesting that external mandates and leadership persuasion exert significant pressure on departments to reform. Public expectation and trust ($\beta = 0.387$) and cultural norms ($\beta = 0.211$) also show significant influence, highlighting the power of collective behaviour. Digital literacy ($p = 0.240$) and media opinion ($p = 0.494$) were statistically insignificant, implying that awareness alone does not trigger internal change unless supported by regulatory or leadership pressure.

7. Major Findings

The study confirms that societal dimensions exert a decisive influence on the pace, depth, and direction of organizational change within the e-governance framework of Kerala's Revenue Department. Among the various social determinants examined, legal mandates and stakeholder persuasion emerged as the most powerful catalysts for reform. The enforcement of government policies, coupled with external institutional pressures from civil society, political leadership, and regulatory bodies, served as the primary drivers compelling administrative adaptation and modernization.

Citizen trust and cultural approval were identified as critical internal enablers that sustain reform momentum. When employees perceive that reform efforts align with public expectations and societal values, resistance to change diminishes, and a sense of collective purpose strengthens. This synergy between institutional intent and public acceptance reinforces the legitimacy of transformation efforts.

In contrast, digital literacy and media influence, while socially significant, were found to have only an indirect effect on organizational change. Their impact becomes meaningful only when supported by robust administrative structures, leadership commitment, and policy continuity. Merely introducing technological tools or digital awareness programs does not guarantee systemic change unless accompanied by institutional readiness and social endorsement.

8. Suggestions

Government departments should institutionalize structured stakeholder engagement platforms to channel community influence constructively. Policy enforcement mechanisms must be strengthened through monitoring dashboards and performance-linked accountability.

Capacity-building programs should blend technical training with behavioural reform to align employee mindset with citizen expectations. Cultural narratives promoting transparency and responsiveness must be integrated into administrative communication models.

9. Implications

The findings of this study carry significant implications for policymakers, administrators, and scholars seeking to understand the intricate relationship between societal influence and organizational transformation in the public sector. The results reaffirm that e-governance represents far more than a technological shift; it constitutes a comprehensive socio-institutional evolution that requires the alignment of technology, people, and culture. The success of reform in departments like Kerala’s Revenue Department depends not merely on digital infrastructure but also on the readiness of institutions and society to adapt to a new paradigm of governance rooted in transparency, accountability, and citizen participation.

From a policy perspective, the study emphasizes that government reforms must be designed with a deep awareness of the social environment in which they operate. Policies should not treat technology as an end in itself but as an instrument to strengthen citizen–state relationships. The inclusion of societal mechanisms such as grievance redressal forums, citizen charters, participatory audits, and community feedback systems can ensure that reforms remain people-centered and sustainable. Policymakers must move beyond one-size-fits-all solutions and adopt context-specific approaches that account for local cultural values, social expectations, and administrative traditions. By institutionalizing participatory governance tools, policymakers can bridge the trust deficit that often hinders reform implementation and foster a sense of shared responsibility among citizens and officials.

For administrators and public managers, the implications are equally profound. The study highlights that administrative behavior, leadership style, and organizational culture significantly determine the success or failure of reform initiatives. Administrators must view public sentiment not as a challenge or source of pressure but as a valuable resource that reflects the needs and aspirations of the community. Actively engaging with citizens through consultations, digital feedback mechanisms, and transparent communication channels can transform the traditional bureaucratic structure into a responsive and adaptive governance system. Moreover, developing trust within the workforce—through participatory decision-making, skill development programs, and recognition of innovative efforts—can strengthen institutional resilience during periods of change.

The findings also imply that technological interventions must be complemented by structural and behavioral reforms. Simply introducing digital systems without ensuring cultural acceptance and administrative preparedness often leads to partial or short-lived success. Hence, investment in digital literacy, change management, and interdepartmental collaboration is essential to convert technological awareness into meaningful reform outcomes. The creation of hybrid governance models that blend technological efficiency with human-centered service delivery can help balance innovation with inclusivity.

From a societal viewpoint, the results underline the growing influence of collective consciousness in shaping governance priorities. Civil society organizations, citizen groups, and media play a vital role in sustaining reform momentum by holding institutions accountable and amplifying public voices. Encouraging such societal participation through open data policies, social audits, and collaborative platforms can deepen democratic governance and promote transparency in administrative processes.

Finally, the academic and research implications point to the need for continued exploration of how social dynamics interact with bureaucratic structures. Future research can further refine theoretical models of public sector transformation by integrating sociological, technological, and managerial perspectives. This interdisciplinary approach would enrich both academic understanding and practical policymaking in the field of governance reform.

In essence, the implications of this study extend beyond Kerala's Revenue Department. They call for a reimagining of governance as a living system where institutions and society evolve together. Recognizing the social roots of technological reform can pave the way for more inclusive, accountable, and citizen-driven governance frameworks that resonate with the changing aspirations of contemporary India.

10. Conclusion and Scope for Further Study

The study concludes that societal dimensions play a pivotal role in driving organizational change within Kerala's Revenue Department. External mandates, policy pressures, and stakeholder influences emerge as the primary catalysts initiating transformation, while internal factors such as trust, leadership commitment, and cultural readiness ensure the continuity and effectiveness of reforms. Although technological awareness enhances operational efficiency, it remains inadequate without corresponding structural and administrative support.

The scope for further research lies in conducting comparative analyses across other public sectors such as Health, Panchayat, and Education Departments to evaluate the generalizability of these findings. Future longitudinal studies can also examine how continuous societal engagement and reform pressure contribute to evolving governance culture, employee adaptability, and institutional resilience over time.

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