



History of Saanjh Kendra and Dealing with Public Policy: The Case of Indian Punjab

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Abstract

E-Governance is the modern paradigm using information & communication technology (ICT) in all over the world. The main strength of E-governance depends on ICT and use of more and more electronic system in government activities. It is a “stepping stone” for good governance and Common citizens are able to participate in decision-making process of government courtesy to e-governance. The *NeGP (National e-Governance Plan)* initiated by the Government of India, which executes the projects to implement e-Governance in the Indian nation. E-Governance has been one of the top priorities of both central (Indian) and state (Punjab) governments in recent times. In Punjab *Saanjh Kendras*, which were established in 2010, are one of these projects implemented to provide time bound 41 services aiming that Punjab Police can be made citizen friendly. *Saanjh Kendras* (Co-operation between Punjab police and people of Punjab) are aimed at building a bridge between public and police and to uproot traditional and dreadful image of Punjab police in the eyes of the public. In the present study, an attempt has been made to study *Saanjh Kendras* in Patiala district of Punjab. In recent times, the government focused on such type of reforms that could be used to achieve a wide range of objectives and lead to faster, sustainable, reduced corruption levels and more equitable with a wider reach. It can be said that it is an important tool to enhance the quality of government services for citizens and provide more transparency and accountability.

Keywords: *E-governance, Information & Communication Technology, National e-Governance Plan, Police, Saanjh Kendra.*

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary period, Indian states act as facilitators and this facilitation can be result oriented and successful only when effective governance is ensured. In the era of globalization, greater emphasis is being laid today on good governance because of the critical link between the state and the global community. The nation states need to reinvent themselves and reframe their development strategy, which requires a thorough revision of their existing approach to international relations and internal governance. As a part of the ongoing administrative reform process, e-Governance envisages a structural change in the bureaucracy and is perceived as a key to a more flexible and proactive governance in tune with the concerns of citizen-friendly administration (Dhal, 2020).

The “e” in e-Governance stands for 'electronic', 'efficient' and 'effective' in terms of outcome of implementation (GoP, 2014). As a result of 21st century, revolution of governance through ICT, E-governance provides a roadmap for door step service delivery to citizens. The aim of e-Governance is to provide 'SMART' (Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent) government through ICT (GOI, 2008).

In developing countries, such technologies and systems became available with a perceptible time lag as compared to developed nations.

E-GOVERNANCE IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

In the context of developed countries, initiatives July 2001 through e-governance for eliminating wasteful federal spending, reduce government paperwork, to be more citizen



centric etc. were made. The initial efforts also led to the realization to implement federal enterprises architecture. These reforms bring the benefits like better access to information and quality services to citizens, simplicity, efficiency and accountability in the government and expanded reach of governance etc. United Kingdom in 2000, the cabinet office came out with the document *E-government; A strategic framework for public services in the information age*. It provided a strategic direction to the public sector for transforming itself by exploiting the possibilities of new technology. This strategy target accessible delivery to citizens through electronic services. In November 2005, the Cabinet office came out with another document. The Transformational Government followed by technology document published in November 2015 by Cabinet office. This document aimed at reducing paper work, bringing efficiency and initiating standardization in government & delivery of private services.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF e-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

Every phase of history is an improvement upon the previous one in terms of human progress based on knowledge, information and innovation. The globalized world is swiftly getting integrated through shared ideas, values, principles and vision of common destiny jointly achieved by nation states (Dhal, 2020). India is a developing transitional country. Historically the country is associated with corruption and red-tapism. Indian citizen used to wait in long lines for hours and hours for getting their work done, but with the advent of new technology, governments are changing their structure regarding public dealing. The Indian Statistical Institute in Calcutta used the first computer in 1950. Later, establishment of the National Information Centre (NIC) in 1977, under Department of Electronics, was the first leading step towards e-governance in India. The role of NIC was to provide information services to various agencies and to train their employees in computer techniques. The real push towards ICT deployment in India came in 1984, when this time the India emerged as a global software player began to take off. During this period, huge number of government departments & educational institutes started to use computers to take advantage of leading technology.

However the main thrust for e-governance was provided by the launching of national satellite based computer network (NICNET) in 1987 under Planning Commission. Shortly after launch of NICNET, State and district level information system was launched to computerize all national district offices. For the purpose of sharing information and database, different branches were set up by NIC at national, state and district levels.

In 1997 Citizen Charter was enacted to improve government citizen interface. After this, Parliament of India passed Information Technology Act 2000 (there was an amendment in 2008 including terms of cyber laws). Government of India established the National Institute of Smart Governance to develop e-governance applications on central and state level for provision of service delivery to citizens (Singh, 2015). The Union Ministry of Information & Technology was formed in 1999. Later in 2000, the 12-point e-governance agenda was identified for execution in all the union government ministries / departments. The Department of Tax Administration, on both union and state levels, were among the first department to use Information & Communication Technology to develop their internal working. Since the 1970s, however, and especially with the introduction of the 2005 RTI Act, India has taken initiative towards the freedom of information through ICT support (Singh and Karan, 2012).

The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), initiated in 2006, attempts to make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through CSCs being set up across India. As on April 2011, about 94,786 CSCs were operational with different brand names and delivering services to the people (Baruah, 2022). On January 25, 2009, the second ARC Administration Reform Commission's eleventh report on e-governance titled "Promoting E-Governance: THE SMART Way Forward" was released. In this report the Commission recommended taking steps towards higher level of e-governance in implementation of good strategies, public private partnership (PPP), government websites development and e-



Governance initiatives sustainability (GOI, 2009). Digital India, a flagship programme lunched by Government of India in 1st July, 2015 aims to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. This programme centers on three key vision areas of Infrastructure as a Unity to Every Citizen, Governance & Services on Demand and Digital Empowerment of Citizens.

In the endeavor to bridge the digital divide between the government and the citizens, numerous innovative ideas have been conceptualized and initiated under the Digital India programme including Digital Locker, eSign, Jivan Praman, MyGov, eVisitor, MeghRaj and Biometric Attendance System that have caused seminal improvement in the transparency and accountability in service delivery process across the country (Chandra, 2017).

The main purpose of conducting this study is to collect reliable data with regard to functioning of SAANJH Kendra.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore organizational set-up of the SAANJH Kendra in Patiala District.
2. To find out the study public response towards delivery of services provided by the Saanjh Kendra in Patiala Zone and to measure the level of interaction between Saanjh Kendra & the common people.

This paper is divided into five broad sections. **The first section** deals with the introduction and historical development of e-governance. The **second section** includes the relative review of literature. The **third section** is put light on the study area and methodology. The **fourth section** regarding the Empirical Considerations and launched development programs center (Indian) and state government for related public policy. The **last section** deals with the conclusion.

Review of Literature

Sudan (2004) discussed the 8-point approach prescribed by John P. Kotter for gainful utilization of IT in e-governance. The state government had launched number of applications and programmes like, State-wide optic fiber and digital network, IT education TWINS, etc. but the successful initiation of IT in government requires a change of mindset.

Yadav (2009) compared India with developed countries and its economic and social environment and found that per capita income, number of phones, and number of personal computers to be low in comparison with electricity supply and low literacy rate was still a major problem in the way of e-governance in India.

Kaur (2013) explained about the Saanjh Kendra and its service delivery under e-governance. In this paper author showed that 22 percent reduction in the crime rate with the unique system of Saanjh Kendra. Author suggested that less awareness in citizens for these kendras was the obstacle in the way of success of this project.

Aggarwal and Kaur (2014) conducted a systematic literature review of the point out that Seva Kendras provided 67 services under RTS act with the minimizing public interaction with various offices. However, in a survey they found out that persons were unaware about online services and fewer people were satisfied with the overall working of Seva Kendras. Authors suggested that there was need to create awareness among the peoples about Seva Kendra.

Batra and Kapoor (2014) explored the broad issues surrounding the readiness for e-governance in India. Some of the biggest barriers of e-governance in India had been geographical, social, economic and illiteracy. They concluded that despite barriers India had number of award winning e-governance projects after establishment of various institutions under the MOIT.

Mishra (2014) in his article highlighted the effective relationship between citizens and government through the way of e-governance, and the way Punjab state e-governance society implemented various projects such as PAWAN, SWAN, Sukhmani, Suwidha, e-district etc, achieving aims to target effective and low cost services to citizens.



Singh (2015) discussed the delivery of services through Fard Kendras in Punjab. Researcher found out computerization of services had increased transparency, accuracy, reduced the cost of services and corruption.

Renu (2015) discussed about the police reforms in India. She felt that the image of police was not good in the eyes of public. Thus, there had been urgent need for police reforms. The author discussed about Supreme Court judgment about Soli Sorabjee Committee of National Police Commission. But state governments said that police being a state related department, 16 states had not yet implemented the Supreme Court guidelines.

Kaur and Kaur (2017) focused on exploring the e-governance service delivery dimensions as perceived by the employees of register company (ROC) North Region. In this study, researchers found that the initiative taken by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs had revolutionized the working of the ROCs. They suggested that there was need to understand the attitude of all stake holders and periodic review of the progress of this initiative.

Scope of the Study

This study focused on the performance of delivery of Police services by sub-division SAANJH Kendra through e-governance in Patiala District and its impact on the common citizens. The researcher had considered the area of Patiala district for study.

Study Area and Research Methodology

Punjab is a state in northern India, the state is bordered by the Indian states of Himachal Pradesh to the North and Northeast, Haryana to the south and Southeast, and Rajasthan to the Southwest, Chandigarh to the East and Jammu & Kashmir to the North. It shares an international border with Punjab, a province of Pakistan to the West. The state covers an area of 50,362 square kilometers, which is 1.53% of India's total geographical area. Three tributaries of the Indus, viz., Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi flow through Punjab. The present study had used both the primary and secondary source of information. The primary data is collected from respondents and employees of Saanjh Kendra and the secondary data had been collected from Books, Journals, Newspapers, Articles, official websites and various magazines. Researcher had used purposive sampling for research design. In Patiala district, there are five sub-divisions Saanjh Kendra. Researcher had selected the sub-division Saanjh Kendra in Patiala district on the basis of population. Population wise it falls in the middle range (277236 persons according to Census of India, 2011). For the survey, 150 respondents were selected according to convenient sampling. The interview schedule method was used for collecting information from the respondents. Separate questionnaire was prepared and administered to employees; sub-inspector (SI) and assistant sub-inspector (ASI).

Empirical Consideration

The dynamics of public administration in India have changed drastically with the introduction of e-governance as a guiding concept in the early 1990. Quick decision-making, data-based planning and effective implementation have been the hallmarks of good governance. E-Governance has the ability to transform traditional administration through effective utilization of ICTs. The bottom-up demand for delivery of E-Services was bleak initially, but the change in public perception was for the better with the government roping in private industry and service-oriented organization gradually. This trend can be established successfully with review of the success of Path-breaking e-governance models. In the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala, time and costs for availing public services have come down drastically bringing in a positive change in people perception of e-governance (Pardha saradhi, 2009).

In the era of modernization and globalization, the electronic dependency and utilization has been emerging as one of the driving forces towards development. Therefore, today governments are using tools of ICT to provide various services efficiently. Small towns and rural areas were left behind for availing such services due to long distance from service providers. E-governance provides transparency and minimizes the cost of availing the services

and helps in improving the social and economic development. Initially it was forcing on computerization and automation, but extended towards networking and establishing a system. For this, every state of India launched the e-governance projects and Punjab is one of the pioneer states of India in ICT advancement. Department of Information Technology has been established in the state of Punjab which takes initiatives for the successful implementation of e-government projects in the state. The projects initiated by the state government & DoIT are SUWIDHA, CSCs, e-Districts, VAHAN, SAARTHI, Saanjh Kendra, Seva Kendra etc. E-government is one of the best ways to solve the social and economical problems that exists in the State. The prime aim of Punjab government is to improve the decision making process of citizens and to enhance the communication between government and citizens of the state (Kaur and Singh, 2014). Various states e-Governance Projects (Dogra and Singh, 2015)

Table 1: Level of Education Attainment in Patiala District, Punjab

Classification of Educational Categories	Number	Percentage Share
Illiterate	21	14.00
Primary	8	5.30
Middle	23	15.40
Secondary & Senior secondary level	53	35.30
Graduation & above	45	30.00
Total	150	100.00

Source: Field Work

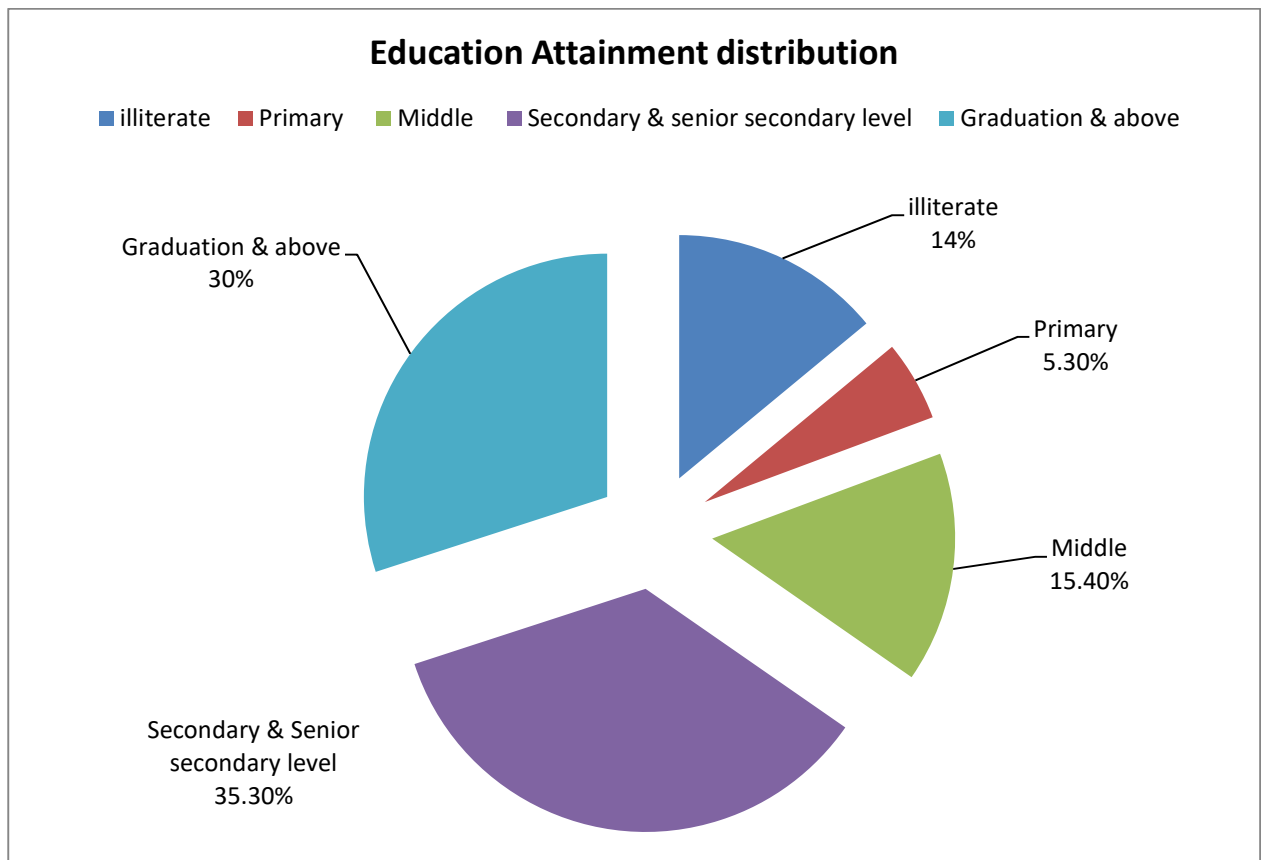


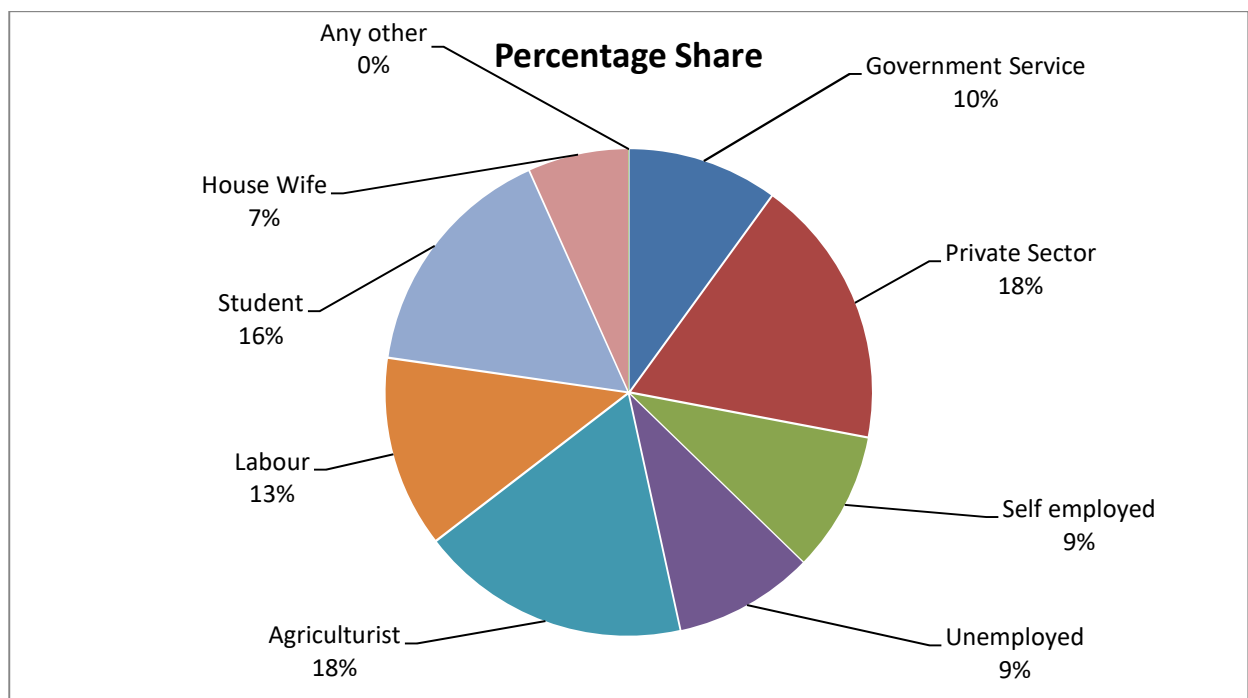
Table no. 1 shows that the pattern of Education attainment of respondents and it depicts that 35.3% of the respondents were secondary & senior secondary literate, 30% were graduate or post graduate, 5.3% primary, 15.3% Matric and 14% respondents were illiterate. Data shows

that 86% respondents were literate and out of this, 65% were well educated and 14% respondents were illiterate.

Table 2: Classification of Occupational Structure in Patiala District, Punjab

Classification of Occupational Structure	Number	Percentage Share
Government Service	15	10.00
Private Sector	27	18.00
Self employed	14	9.30
Unemployed	14	9.31
Agriculturist	27	18.01
Labour	19	12.71
Student	24	16.04
House Wife	10	6.70
Any other	0	0.00
Total	150	100.00

Source: Field Work

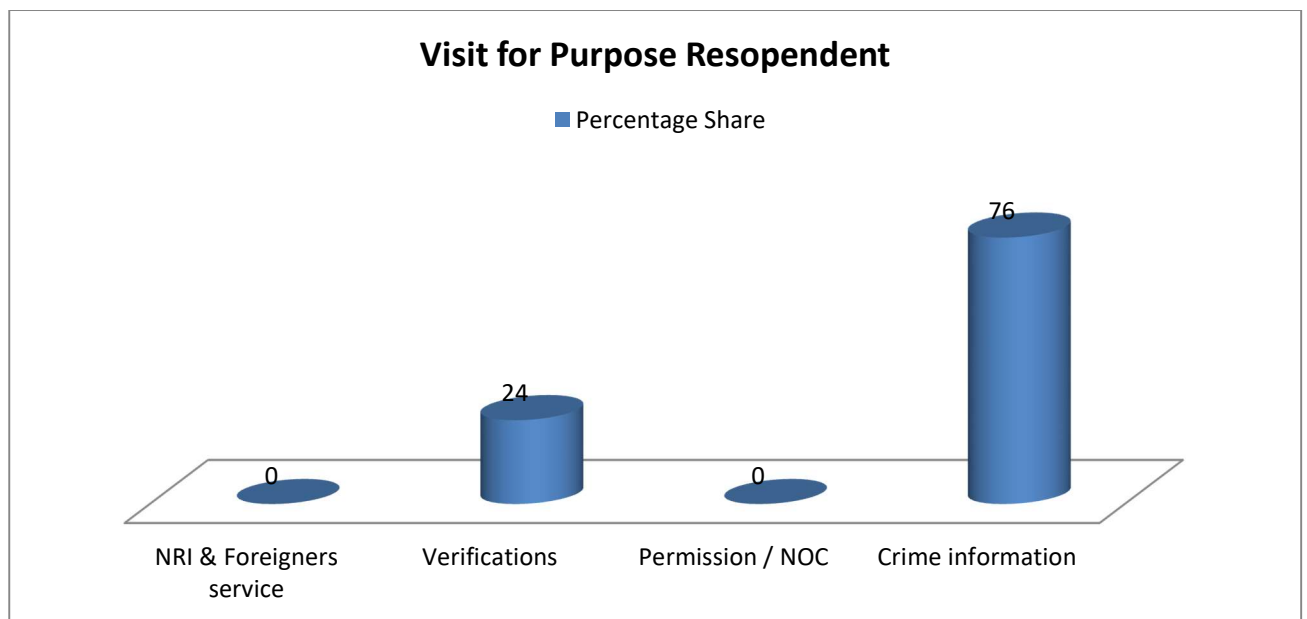


Occupation-wise distribution of respondents shows that there were 10% government service employees, 18% were doing private job, 9.3% were self-employed & same percentage were unemployed, 18% were agriculturist, 12.7% laborers, 16% students and the rest 6.7 % respondents were house wives. This data shows that people of all fields used Saanjh Kendra for their work.

Table 3: Purpose of Visit in Saanjh Kendra

Visit For Purpose	Number	Percentage Share
NRI & Foreigners service	0	0.00
Verifications	36	24.00
Permission / NOC	0	0.00
Crime information	114	76.00
Total	150	100.00

Source: Field Work



This table depicts that 114 (76%) of respondents came to Saanjh Kendra for crime information reporting like FIR, Missing article, etc. Another 36 (26%) respondents came for verification. During this research not even a single person came for NOC and foreign related service at Saanjh Kendra of Patiala district.

Table 4: Source of Information about Saanjh Kendra

Response	Number	Percentage Share
TV, Radio, News paper	0	0.00
Through, friends, Neighbors or relatives	79	52.70
After seeing its building	9	6.00
Through awareness camps	0	0.00
Any other	62	41.30
Total	150	100.00

Source: Field Work

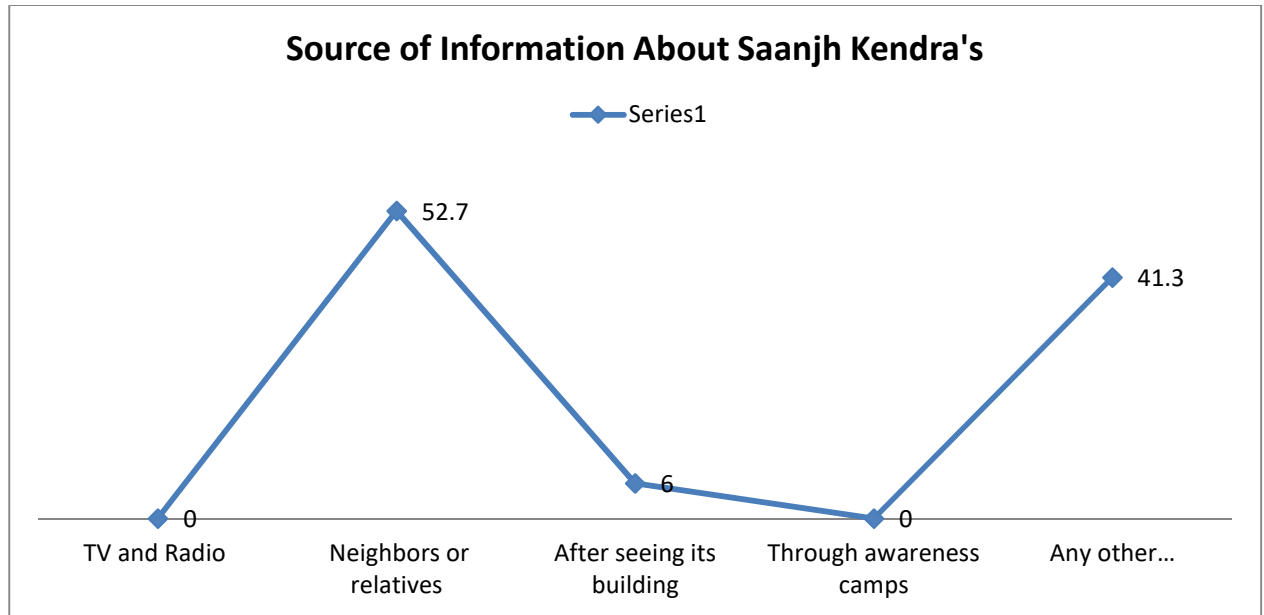


Diagram 4 gives information regarding awareness of Saanjh Kendra scheme through different Variable/ indicator like TV and Radio, Neighbors or Relatives, after seeing its Building, through awareness camps, and other. The majority of people come to know about this scheme through Neighbors or relatives as well as any other. The percentage shares of these indicators are 52.70 and 41.30 per cent respectively. But no one came to know about these facilities through TV and Radio or through awareness camps.

Table 5: Launched Development Programme Center (Indian) and state Government for Related Public Policy

Name of Development Programme	Launch Year
AGMARKNET(Agriculture Marketing Network)	2000
ITISP (Integrated Treasuries Information System Of Punjab)	2001
SUWIDHA(Single User Window Disposal Help Line for Applicants)	2002
FARAD KENDRAS	2008
SAANJH KENDRAS	2010
VAHAN and SARATHI	2011
SEVA KENDRAS	2016

Source: Government of Punjab, 2016.

Table 5 gives detail of the various public policies launched by Government of India and Government of Punjab. These policies have been very significant for the local or rural participant.

Conclusion

Saanjh Kendra's has been started by Punjab Government to decrease the gap between Police and community and to protect lenient, polite, and friendly image and to show transparency in the services of Policing. It can be said that transparency, efficiency and relation between Police and Public have enhanced with the emergence of Saanjh Kendras to some extent. Saanjh Kendra is giving its best on-counter, but majority of the respondents came to Saanjh Kendra only for crime information reporting like FIR, Missing mobile phone/another article, etc. However, people are still unaware and they do not know much about the services of Saanjh Kendra. The main cause of people's unawareness was that Punjab Government had not been successful in trickling down information on Saanjh Kendra's services among people. Therefore, Punjab Government should take radical steps to make Saanjh Kendra plan a total success and establish a type of system, which could help each person of the community.

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