Evaluating People's Satisfaction on E-passport Service in Bangladesh: Potentials and Challenges

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Abstract

The E-passport is a significant achievement in developing a digital Bangladesh. Bangladesh has brought dynamic changes in the service delivery process of the e-passport system. The study primarily focused on evaluating people's satisfaction with E-passport Services in Bangladesh, exploring the existing scenario of E-passport Services, and analyzing to what extent the government is effectively delivering e-passport services. The study used a mixed method to collect data from 250 participants following purposive sampling. It then analyzed the data using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). The study revealed that most of the participants (90.21%) have the necessary knowledge of the e-passport service, and the majority (67.6%) are aware of the application process of the e-passport service. People accessed their essential information about e-passport services from social media (39.8%), family members (18.9%), and government websites (8.0%). Most of the participants (79.34%) received their passports timely, and the majority of the participants visited the passport office once (33.8%) or twice (40.8%). The study found an association between the satisfaction level and participants' age, gender, educational qualification, and location based on the Chi-square test results. Participants reported challenges

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regarding the lengthy process, long queues, inadequate manpower in the passport office, and management inefficiency. Participants highlighted the difficulty of citizens with low to no literacy, which caused a significant information gap.

Keywords: E-passport, Satisfaction, Service, Bangladesh

Introduction

Bangladesh's government adopted various e-services to accelerate one-stop public service functions at the national and sub-national levels (Islam & Rahman, 2020; Islam & Rahman, 2022; Rahman et al., 2022). E-passports are a key government service at the national level, among many electronic services in Bangladesh. Passports that serve as the government's jurisdiction for aid and protection to its citizens are also equipped to identify its citizens and regulate their mobility (Torpey, 2018). According to the Passport Offences Act (1954), a passport includes any permit, visa, or other travel document authorizing the holder to travel from Bangladesh to any other country or from any other country to Bangladesh. Bangladesh is one of the first countries in South Asia to introduce an e-passport and the 119th country globally. Bangladesh officially inaugurated the distribution of electronic passports, widely known as e-passports, in 2020 (Kawser, 2020). The initiative is a crucial step forward for Bangladesh towards its digital transformation. Digital transformations in Bangladesh have improved service delivery by enhancing efficiency and reducing cost and time service delivery (Siddiquee, 2023). The E-passport is a significant achievement towards developing digital Bangladesh. Bangladesh's government brought dynamic changes in the service delivery process of e-passport system. The study primarily focused on evaluating people's satisfaction with E-passport Services in Bangladesh, exploring the existing scenario of E-passport Services, and analyzing to what extent the government delivers e-passport services effectively. The study used a mixed method to collect data from 250 participants following purposive sampling. It analyzed the data using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25. A quantitative study was utilized to evaluate service recipients' satisfaction with e-passport services in Bangladesh and analyze to what extent the government is delivering e-passport services effectively. The qualitative research has been incorporated to identify the challenges and prospects associated with E-passport Services in Bangladesh and present recommendations for the existing scenario.

Literature Review

Before the ICT-enabled transformation, Alam & Rahman (2006) studied the conventional process of passport service that required the applicant's in-person presence in each phase, from handing over their application to receiving the passport. The study remarked on the nature of passport service

delivery as a breach of public service, which functioned more as a "privilege for the citizens" than a right for them. It further lacked services to deliver the necessary information on the passport application process and requirements. Applicants who lacked literacy and belonged to lower income groups, unskilled laborers groups, and rural areas suffered the most, creating a dependency on brokers.

Haque (2011) evaluated the governance reform project of the Regional Passport Office, focusing on the One Stop Service Centre for urgent endorsement of passports. Service recipients of the One-stop Service Center were found to be content with comparatively speedy services. However, the brokers established a parallel network, which resulted in poor service delivery and bad governance. Besides, the study finds that the complexities of the police verification process, service providers' lack of motivation, and charges affect the experience of service takers. The study recommended necessary outlets, motivational training and incentives to service providers, investigative and hassle-free police verification, and conducting client satisfaction surveys.

Kundra et al, (2014) analyzed the technologies used in the e-passport based on its specifications and standards proposed by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Being the most secure globally recognized identification document, the e-passport is based on cryptographic tools that guarantee authenticity, information integrity, and confidentiality. Siddiquee (2016) noted the decrease in several issues with passport service due to ICT-enabled reforms in service delivery. The successful implementation of e-service delivery can potentially ensure enhanced service quality, more public participation, and administrative efficiencies. However, Bangladesh still has to go a long way to achieve a breakthrough in electronic service delivery and governance (Siddiquee, 2016).

Despite the positive changes, service delivery efficiency and quality could not be achieved. TIB (2017) remarked on a few improvements and slightly decreased corrupt practices. However, the study finds limitations and challenges, from collecting forms to passport distribution. The institutional limitation stems from workload and shortage of manpower, incapability in infrastructural and logistical supports, lack of effective monitoring, lack of skills and training of employees and officials, and inefficiency in enforcing policies. TIB further advocated for remedial initiatives to combat public harassment, irregularity, and corrupt practices. The main suggestions for the initiatives include public hearings to address the service recipients' feedback and complaints. It further suggested including private banks to receive passport fees online and enhance service delivery, overseeing the passport service delivery every week and introducing a citizen satisfaction register, and establishing a help desk for the service recipients and applicants. However, Iftekharuzzaman (2022) finds the prevalence of corruption in passport service delivery is indifferent regardless of the gender and

socioeconomic identities of service receivers, reflecting the adverse and widespread corrupt practices. The study finds that rural, marginalized, and weaker communities are more impacted and victimized by corruption.

Though electronic public service and digitization have been made, Bangladesh faces major challenges due to the complexity of sociocultural and political environments, power dynamics, and multiple stakeholder involvement. Imran & Okai-Ugbaje (2022) find that the innovation regarding information and communications technology, their implementation, and organizational capacity is deeply embedded in the sociocultural dynamics of developing countries along with organizational norms, interests, and power politics. Despite the improvement and shifts toward e-passport service delivery in Bangladesh, there is a notable knowledge gap regarding the analysis of the public perception of e-passport services. Limited research has been conducted to comprehensively assess the satisfaction of the service recipients and the challenges associated with e-passport services in the country. This knowledge gap creates a barrier to understanding the factors influencing the acceptance and implementation of e-passport services among the service holders. To address this gap, this study aims to evaluate the people's perception of e-passport services in Bangladesh, focusing on the satisfaction levels, prospects, and challenges individuals face. The findings will provide a comprehensive understanding of the public perception and shed light on the effectiveness of e-passport service delivery, satisfaction levels, and challenges individuals face. This information will be valuable for policymakers and stakeholders in designing strategies to improve the acceptance, effectiveness, and accessibility of e-passport services in Bangladesh. Considering this, the study's key objective is to evaluate people's satisfaction and discover the potentialities and challenges of e-passports from the service holders.

Methodology

Research Design

The mixed-method research follows a cross-sectional study to evaluate people's satisfaction with the e-passport service in Bangladesh. The quantitative research has been accompanied by an evaluation and exploration of people's satisfaction with E-passport Services in Bangladesh, focusing on exploring the existing scenario of E-passport Services and analyzing to what extent the government is delivering e-passport services effectively. The qualitative study has been incorporated to identify the challenges and prospects associated with E-passport Services in Bangladesh and present recommendations for the existing scenario.

Research Method

This mixed-method study used a survey questionnaire that included closed-and open-ended questionnaires. It has utilized non-probability purposive sampling by targeting a specific group of individuals who received e-passport

services. This sampling approach allowed for data collection from individuals with one particular experience, ensuring relevance to the study's objectives. The random selection of 250 individuals demonstrated the feasibility of obtaining a sufficient sample size. The study also includes 12 semi-structured interviews from the service recipients.

Table 1: Research Methodology of the Study

Research Design	Qualitative and Quantitative
Research Method	Survey Questionnaire - 250 (Who received e-passport service),
	Interview – 12 (Service recipient)
Sampling Method	Non-probability (Purposive Sampling)

Data Analysis Techniques

The study applied SPSS (Statistical Software for Social Sciences), version 25, to analyze the data. Based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests ($p < 0.05$), the data was not normally distributed, and non-parametric statistical tests have been applied. To explore relationships among the variables in the data, the study employed the Chi-square and Mann-Whitney U tests as the non-parametric statistical tests. The reliability of the internal consistency of the constructs has been tested using Cronbach's Alpha. The study also includes Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using principal component analysis and varimax rotation. Data were calculated with a 95% confidence level, implying that the estimated results are expected to fall within the calculated confidence intervals. The study also considered a 5% level of error (0.05) to minimize the probability of making an error.

Table 2: Data Analysis Techniques

Data Analysis	Analysis Techniques
Uni-variate analysis	Frequency distribution, percentage, central tendency, standard deviation.
Bi-variate analysis	Chi-square test
Data Validity	Data Normality test, Cronbach alpha

Findings and Analysis

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Participants

Table 1 represents the socio-demographic profile of the participants of the respondents (n = 250). The age group distribution shows that the age range of (20-30) includes the majority (57%) of the respondents, followed by (30-40) of age range with 17.3%, (50-70) of age range with 8.8%, (40-50), and (10-20) of age groups with 8.0% and 0.8% of the respondents belonged to the age group of (70-80). Regarding gender, 66.4% of the respondents were male, and 33.6% were female. Among the respondents, the majority (54%) had an

education quality of honors and above, 28.4% had a higher secondary certificate (HSC), 8.4% had a secondary school certificate (SSC), and 3.2% of the respondents had a primary level education. Most respondents were found to have resided in urban areas (76%), while 24% belonged to rural areas.

Table 3: Socio-Demographic Profile of the Participants

Demographic Characteristics	(%)
Age	
- 10-20	8.0
- 20-30	57.0
- 30-40	17.3
- 40-50	8.0
- 50-70	8.8
- 70-80	0.8
Gender	
- Male	66.4
- Female	33.6
Educational Qualification	
- No literacy	1.6
- Primary	3.2
- JSC	4.4
- SSC	8.4
- HSC	28.4
- Honors and Above	54.0
Location	
- Urban	76.0
- Rural	24.0

Background Information of the Participants about e-Passport Service

Table 2 presents the knowledge and access to the e-passport services. The study revealed that most participants (90.21%) have the necessary knowledge of the e-passport service, and the majority (67.6%) are aware of the application process for the e-passport service. Among the respondents, 44% used social media as the source of information about e-passport services. Others have mostly used family members (17.6%), friends/colleagues (11.6%), government websites (11.2%) and print media (5.6%). Besides, 66.8% of the respondents used the government's e-passport website. However, while 51% have used e-passport websites by themselves, 32.9% went to computer shops to use websites for e-passport websites. Besides, The majority of the participants visited the passport office once (31.7%) or twice (47.8%), while the rest of the respondents required visits more than twice to receive a passport.

Table 4: Existing Scenario in Accessing E-passport Services

Knowledge and Access to E-passport Websites	(%)
Possess knowledge about e-passport service	90.21
Knowledge about application processes for e-passport	67.60
Uses the e-passport website of the government	66.80
Medium Used for Application by the Participants	
Self	51.0
From computer shop	32.9
By friend	4.0
Others	12.0
Sources of Information about e-passport service	
Social media	44.0
Print media	5.6
Electronic media	3.2
Radio	5.6
Family members	17.6
Government website	11.2
Friends/colleagues	11.6
Others	1.2
Number of Visits	
Once	31.7
Twice	47.8
Three times	14.5
Four times	4.0
Five times	1.2
More than five visits	0.8

Access and Use of e-Passport Service among Service Recipients

The Kruskal Wallis T-test has been used to evaluate the differences in the sources for acquiring information regarding e-passport service across different levels of education. The test revealed an insignificant difference (p = .211) in the preference of sources of information on e-passport based on the education levels. However, the study also evaluates if differences exist in

performing online application procedures across different levels of education using the Kruskal Wallis T-test. The test reveals a significant difference (p = .002) in the preference of medium used for the application procedure of e-passports based on education levels.

Satisfaction of e-passport service

Ch-square statistics have been used to examine the association between the demographic variables and the satisfaction level of the e-passport service (Table 3). Based on the Chi-Square test, the study finds a significant association in the level of satisfaction in terms of access to the application, receiving service within the definite time, number of visits to the passport office, and additional cost associated with receiving service with the service recipients' location and age. However, there is no association between gender and the level of satisfaction regarding access to the application, receiving service, and perception of service efficiency. There is no association between the level of satisfaction of the service recipients who have made an application very easily and demographics such as age, gender, and education quality.

Table 5: Chi-Square Test Regarding the Satisfaction Level of the E-passport Service

	Significance (P-value)			
Level of Satisfaction	**Age**	**Gender**	**Educational Qualification**	**Location**
Service recipients have made an application very easily	.131	.240	.813	.022*
Service recipients received the service within a definite time	.020*	.982	.283	.000*
Service recipients did not visit the passport office too many times	.363	.305	.472	.004*
Service recipients received adequate support from the passport officials	.400	.793	.644	.720
Service recipients did not pay an additional amount to get the service	.305	.978	.314	.030*

*p<0.05

However, as Table 3 shows, the location of the respondents has a significant association with the location of the respondents. Similar results have been

found with the level of satisfaction of the service recipient's number of visits to get the e-passport service. The level of satisfaction regarding paying the additional payment for e-passport services has a significant association with the location of the service recipients (p = 0.03), and the other variables are not statistically significant (p>0.05). Satisfaction regarding receiving adequate support from passport officials has not been statistically significant regarding age, gender, educational qualification, and location. However, satisfaction regarding the receiving e-passport service within a definite time shows a significant association with the respondent's age (p = .020) and location of the service recipients (p = .000). To identify if there exists a difference in the number of visits by the service recipient based on their locations, the study used the Mann-Whitney U Test. The test revealed significant differences in the number of visits to avail passport service, U = 3616.500, z = 4.544, p = .000, r = 0.287. Therefore, it can be said that there exists a difference in the number of visits by the service recipient based on their locations.

Factors Affecting the e-passport service

Reliability Test

Reliability is the measure of internal consistency of the constructs in the study, a construct is reliable if the Alpha (α) value is more significant than .70 (Hair et al., 2009). Construct reliability has been assessed in this study using Cronbach's Alpha. The result revealed that the e-passport service with five items (α = .784) was reliable.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

An EFA has been performed using principal component analysis and varimax rotation. The minimization factor loading criteria have been set to 0.50. The scale's commonality, which indicates the amount of variance in each dimension, has also been assessed to ensure acceptable levels of explanation. The results show that all communalities are over 0.50.

Table 6: EFA Results

Item	Component	
	1	**2**
Accessibility to Application Process	.863	
Time (service within time)	.829	
Number of visits	.809	
Support from Administrative Official		.754
Additional Payment		.932

The study included six items relating to the effectiveness of the service and administrative support for e-passport service for factor analysis using

Principal Component Analysis (OCA) with Varimax Rotation. The value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of adequacy is 0.743, which is above the recommended value of .60. Barlette's test Sphericity was significant, x^2 (n = 400) = 486.396, as the p-value is determined (.000 < .05). The Eigenvalue > 1, determines that the analysis is fit for two factors explaining a total of 77.379% of the variance of the data. Factor 1 is labeled service efficiency due to high loadings in the following items: ease of application process, service within time, and number of visits associated with the passport service. Factor 1 explains 45.033% of the variation after rotation. Factor 2 is labeled administrative support due to high loadings in the following item: Support from Administrative Official, Additional Payment. Factor 2 explains 32.346% of the variation after rotation.

The qualitative analysis of the study further finds that satisfaction with e-passport service depends on the simplicity of the application form, selection of appointment dates, faster access to services, and reduced time taken to receive the passport. Additionally, reduced physical hassle and improved accuracy and security have influenced the satisfaction of e-passport service among the respondents. Regarding the online application process the education level of the service recipient is associated with the preference of medium used for the application procedure of e-passport service. The qualitative findings of the study triangulate that the respondents with little to no education face difficulty in navigating the activities to be performed through websites. Respondents revealed that lack of administrative support from the passport officials made the process more complex, and ultimately, broker dependency persisted. Besides, the prolonged queues, slow administrative process, and processing delays have severely affected service recipients' satisfaction regarding e-passport services. The study also finds a substantial lack of sources of information dissemination in the passport office, which created complexity for the service recipients.

Discussion

The study reveals that most of the participants have the necessary knowledge of the e-passport service, and the majority are aware of the application process for the e-passport service. The sources that service recipients mostly use social media as their source of information about e-passport services. In contrast, others have mostly used family members, friends/colleagues, government websites, and print media. The study finds that most respondents have used the government's e-passport website. However, while most of the respondents have used e-passport websites by themselves, others went to computer shops to use websites for e-passport websites. Besides, most of the service recipients are required to visit the passport office more than twice to receive a passport, despite the digitization of the service. The education level of the service recipient is associated with the preference of the medium used for the application procedure of e-passports. The study findings reveal that the respondents with little to no education face difficulty in navigating the

activities to be performed through websites. Besides, the lack of administrative support from the passport officials made the process more difficult and resulted in broker dependency.

In terms of the satisfaction level of the service recipients regarding the e-passport service, the study finds a statistically significant association in the level of satisfaction in terms of access to the application, receiving service within the definite time, number of visits to the passport office, and additional cost associated with obtaining service with the service recipients' location and age. However, there is no association between gender and the level of satisfaction regarding access to the application, receiving service within a certain time, number of visits to the passport office, and additional costs associated with obtaining service. There is no association between the level of satisfaction of the service recipients' perceived simplification of the service and the demographics of the respondents, such as age, gender, and education quality. Satisfaction with the service has been influenced by factors such as service efficiency and administrative support. In terms of efficiency of service, simplification of application process, service within time, and number of visits associated with the service played the most vital role. Factors such as administrative officials' support and payment requirements influenced satisfaction with the e-passport service.

The e-Passport service has brought a massive change in the service delivery process and has stepped towards service process simplification. However, the service recipients faced challenges regarding long queues and prolonged wait times, inadequate administrative officers, inefficient management, the prevalence of brokers, and lack of facilitation for citizens with low to no literacy. The lack of proper dissemination of information and inadequate administrative support has made it more difficult for the respondents to understand the process. Broker dependency remains one of the issues as many service recipients, especially the older generation, citizens with low to no education, and citizens with limited access to the internet, intend to avoid the administrative complexities of receiving the e-passport service.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Electronic public service delivery in any country depends significantly on the relationship between citizens and government, state capacity, and socio-economic conditions (Haque & Ferdous, 2024). The study reveals that the effectiveness of the e-passport service has been impacted by factors such as application process, taken for the service delivery, and number of visits associated with the service. Additionally, support from administrative officials and additional payment for the service. The mixed method study reveals progress and many challenges regarding Bangladesh's e-passport service. The transition to online application has created a way forward for service process simplification. However, the system's lack of integration with the citizens' needs has further fuelled the corrupt practices and broker

reliance. The study recommends creating a platform for knowledge dissemination in the passport office to facilitate every citizen regardless of their demographics. A hotline number and helpdesk must be established to assist citizens with additional support. The study also recommends increasing administrative staff, counter, and overall administrative capacity to speed up the service processing time and make the system more efficient. Bangladesh has to adopt a rigorous anti-corruption strategy to eliminate broker dependency. Regular oversight and monitoring must be established to eradicate corrupt practices and ensure system efficiency. Besides, mass public awareness could be created by focusing on disseminating knowledge and information regarding the e-passport service so that citizens could be empowered enough to eliminate broker dependency.

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