



# Journal of Frontiers in Multidisciplinary Research

## Artificial Intelligence in Public Administration: Opportunities, Challenges, and Policy Implications for India

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### Article Info

**E-ISSN:** 3050-9726

**P-ISSN:** 3050-9718

**Volume:** 07

**Issue:** 02

**Received:** 06-05-2026

**Accepted:** 05-06-2026

**Published:** 04-07-2026

**Page No:** 35-40

### Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly transforming the functioning of governments by enabling data-driven decision-making, improving public service delivery, and enhancing administrative efficiency. In India, where governance involves managing a vast population, diverse socio-economic conditions, and complex administrative challenges, AI presents significant opportunities for improving the quality and accessibility of public services. The integration of AI into public administration can support predictive governance, automate routine administrative processes, strengthen policy implementation, and enable more responsive governance systems.

However, the adoption of AI in public administration also raises important concerns related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, transparency, accountability, and digital inequality. The effectiveness of AI-driven governance depends not only on technological advancement but also on ethical frameworks, institutional capacity, and inclusive policy approaches. Developing countries like India face additional challenges due to differences in digital infrastructure, administrative readiness, and public awareness.

This paper examines the role of Artificial Intelligence in Indian public administration by analysing its potential benefits, emerging challenges, and policy implications. It argues that AI should be viewed as a supportive tool that enhances human administrative capabilities rather than replacing human decision-making. The paper highlights the need for responsible AI governance, capacity building among public officials, stronger regulatory mechanisms, and citizen-centric approaches to ensure that AI contributes to transparent, efficient, and inclusive governance.

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.54660/JFMR.2026.7.2.35-40>

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence, Public Administration, Digital Governance, E-Governance, AI Policy, India, Good Governance

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### 1. Introduction

Public administration has continuously evolved in response to technological, social, and economic changes. From traditional paper-based administrative systems to digital governance platforms, governments across the world have adopted new technologies to improve efficiency, transparency, and citizen engagement. In recent years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as one of the most influential technologies shaping the future of governance. Unlike earlier information technologies that primarily focused on digitising existing processes, AI enables governments to analyse large volumes of data, identify patterns, predict outcomes, and support complex decision-making processes.

India, as one of the world's largest democracies with a population exceeding 1.4 billion people, faces unique administrative challenges. Delivering public services effectively across diverse geographical regions, social groups, and economic conditions requires innovative approaches. Traditional administrative mechanisms often face limitations such as delays, resource

constraints, information gaps, and difficulties in reaching vulnerable populations. In this context, AI offers new possibilities for improving governance outcomes by making administrative systems more responsive, efficient, and evidence-based.

The Indian government has increasingly emphasised digital transformation through initiatives such as Digital India, digital public infrastructure development, and technology-enabled governance reforms. These developments have created a foundation for integrating AI into various areas of public administration, including healthcare, agriculture, education, taxation, law enforcement, disaster management, and welfare delivery. AI-based systems can assist administrators by processing complex information, identifying beneficiaries, detecting irregularities, and improving the monitoring of government programmes.

Despite these opportunities, the application of AI in public administration is not without challenges. Public sector decisions directly affect citizens' rights, opportunities, and access to essential services; therefore, the use of AI requires greater accountability and ethical consideration compared to many private-sector applications. Issues such as biased algorithms, misuse of personal data, lack of transparency in automated decisions, and exclusion of digitally disadvantaged groups raise important questions about responsible AI adoption.

The success of AI-driven governance depends on balancing technological innovation with democratic values. Governments must ensure that AI systems remain transparent, accountable, inclusive, and aligned with public interest. For India, this requires developing appropriate policy frameworks, strengthening institutional capacity, training civil servants, and ensuring meaningful human oversight of AI-based decisions.

This paper explores the role of Artificial Intelligence in public administration in the Indian context. It examines the opportunities created by AI adoption, analyses the challenges associated with its implementation, and discusses policy measures required to promote responsible and effective use of AI in governance. The central argument of this paper is that AI can significantly strengthen Indian public administration, but its benefits can only be realised through a human-centred and ethically governed approach.

Traditionally requires human intelligence, including learning, reasoning, problem-solving, decision-making, and pattern recognition. Unlike conventional computer programmes that operate according to fixed instructions, AI systems can analyse large datasets, identify relationships, and improve their performance through machine learning techniques. In the context of public administration, AI represents a shift from traditional rule-based administration towards data-driven and predictive governance.

Public administration has historically relied on established procedures, hierarchical structures, and human expertise for decision-making. While these systems provide stability and accountability, they may also face limitations when dealing with complex social problems involving large amounts of information. AI technologies can assist administrators by processing vast quantities of data more quickly and accurately, enabling evidence-based policy formulation and improved implementation of government programmes.

The application of AI in governance includes several areas such as automated service delivery, predictive analytics, natural language processing, intelligent decision-support

systems, and fraud detection mechanisms. For example, AI-based analytical tools can help governments identify patterns in healthcare data to predict disease outbreaks, analyse agricultural conditions to support farmers, or improve the targeting of welfare schemes by identifying eligible beneficiaries.

However, AI in public administration should not be understood merely as automation of government functions. The objective is not to replace public officials but to enhance their capacity to make informed decisions. Human judgment remains essential because administrative decisions often involve ethical considerations, social contexts, and public accountability that cannot be fully addressed through algorithms alone.

The integration of AI into public administration also reflects the broader transition from e-governance to intelligent governance. While e-governance primarily focuses on delivering services through digital platforms, intelligent governance uses advanced technologies to anticipate citizens' needs, personalise services, and improve policy outcomes. This transition has significant implications for countries like India, where the scale and complexity of governance require innovative solutions.

## **2. Opportunities of Artificial Intelligence in Indian Public Administration**

### **2.1. Improving Public Service Delivery**

One of the most significant opportunities presented by AI is the improvement of public service delivery. Governments manage numerous citizen-facing services, including healthcare, education, social security, taxation, and public grievance systems. Traditional service delivery mechanisms often experience delays due to administrative workload, limited human resources, and difficulties in monitoring implementation. AI can help overcome these challenges by automating routine tasks and improving response mechanisms.

AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants can provide citizens with quick access to information regarding government schemes, application procedures, and administrative services. Such systems can operate continuously and reduce pressure on government offices. In a country like India, where millions of citizens interact with public institutions daily, AI-enabled communication tools can improve accessibility and efficiency.

Similarly, AI can support grievance redressal systems by analysing citizen complaints, categorising issues, identifying recurring problems, and directing cases to appropriate departments. This can help governments respond more effectively to citizen concerns and improve administrative accountability.

### **2.2. Enhancing Policy Formulation and Decision-Making**

Effective public policy requires accurate information and timely analysis. Governments often collect large amounts of data through surveys, administrative records, digital platforms, and public programmes. However, converting this information into meaningful insights remains a major challenge. AI can assist policymakers by analysing complex datasets and identifying trends that may not be immediately visible through conventional methods.

For example, AI-based analytical models can help policymakers understand patterns related to poverty, employment, public health, education outcomes, and

environmental changes. Such insights can support more targeted and evidence-based policies. Instead of relying only on historical data and periodic assessments, governments can use predictive analysis to anticipate future challenges and prepare appropriate responses.

In India, where policy decisions often need to address diverse regional conditions, AI-based decision-support systems can help administrators design more context-specific interventions. By analysing local-level data, governments can better understand variations between regions and allocate resources more effectively.

### **2.3. Strengthening Welfare Delivery and Inclusive Governance**

India operates numerous welfare programmes aimed at supporting vulnerable sections of society. However, challenges such as identification errors, delays, duplication, and inefficient resource allocation can reduce the effectiveness of these programmes. AI provides opportunities to improve beneficiary identification, monitor programme outcomes, and reduce administrative inefficiencies.

Machine learning algorithms can analyse available datasets to identify patterns and support better targeting of welfare schemes. AI-based monitoring systems can also help detect irregularities, improve transparency, and ensure that public resources reach intended beneficiaries.

However, the use of AI in welfare administration must be implemented carefully. Technology-driven systems should not exclude individuals who lack digital access or create unfair classifications. Therefore, AI applications in welfare governance must be combined with human oversight and inclusive administrative practices.

### **2.4. Increasing Administrative Efficiency**

Government departments handle large volumes of documentation, applications, records, and routine processes. Many administrative activities involve repetitive tasks that consume significant time and resources. AI-based automation can improve efficiency by assisting with document processing, information management, scheduling, and workflow optimization.

For civil servants, AI tools can function as decision-support systems by providing relevant information, identifying priorities, and reducing time spent on repetitive administrative work. This can allow public officials to focus more on strategic planning, public engagement, and complex problem-solving.

### **2.5. Improving Transparency and Accountability**

Transparency and accountability are fundamental principles of good governance. AI can contribute to these goals by improving monitoring systems, detecting anomalies, and analysing administrative performance. For instance, AI-based systems can identify unusual patterns in financial transactions, procurement processes, or programme implementation, helping authorities detect potential misuse of public resources.

Furthermore, AI can support real-time monitoring of government projects by analysing progress reports, geographic data, and performance indicators. Such applications can strengthen oversight mechanisms and improve the ability of governments to evaluate whether policies are achieving their intended objectives. Nevertheless, transparency in AI itself is equally important.

Citizens and administrators must understand how AI-based systems generate recommendations or decisions. Therefore, explainability and accountability should remain central principles in the adoption of AI for public administration.

## **3. Challenges and Risks of Artificial Intelligence Adoption in Indian Public Administration**

Although Artificial Intelligence offers significant opportunities for improving public administration, its adoption also creates complex challenges that require careful consideration. Unlike private-sector applications, government use of AI directly influences citizens' rights, access to services, and relationship with the state. Therefore, technological advancement must be accompanied by ethical safeguards, institutional preparedness, and effective regulatory mechanisms.

### **3.1. Data Privacy and Security Concerns**

AI systems depend heavily on large volumes of data for training, analysis, and decision-making. Public institutions collect extensive information related to citizens, including demographic details, health records, financial information, education records, and welfare-related data. While such data can improve governance outcomes, its misuse or inadequate protection can create serious risks to individual privacy.

In India, the increasing digitisation of public services has resulted in greater collection and exchange of citizen data across government platforms. Ensuring that this information is collected, stored, and processed responsibly is essential for maintaining public trust. Weak data protection mechanisms may lead to unauthorised access, surveillance concerns, or misuse of sensitive information.

AI-based governance systems must therefore operate within strong data protection frameworks. Governments need clear rules regarding data ownership, consent, sharing mechanisms, and security standards. Privacy protection should not be considered an obstacle to innovation but rather a foundation for responsible AI adoption.

### **3.2. Algorithmic Bias and Discrimination**

One of the major concerns associated with AI systems is the possibility of algorithmic bias. AI models learn from existing datasets, and if the data contains social, economic, or institutional biases, the resulting decisions may reproduce or even amplify those inequalities.

In public administration, biased AI systems can have serious consequences because government decisions affect access to welfare schemes, employment opportunities, healthcare services, and legal protections. For example, an AI-based system used for identifying beneficiaries or allocating resources may unintentionally disadvantage certain communities if the underlying data does not adequately represent diverse social conditions.

The challenge for India is particularly significant due to its social diversity, regional differences, and variations in digital access. AI systems designed without considering these realities may produce inaccurate or unfair outcomes. Therefore, governments must ensure regular auditing of algorithms, diverse datasets, and continuous human review of AI-generated recommendations.

### **3.3. Digital Divide and Risk of Exclusion**

The effectiveness of AI-driven governance depends on digital infrastructure, internet availability, technological literacy,

and citizen accessibility. While India has made significant progress in digital connectivity, differences continue to exist between urban and rural areas, economically advantaged and disadvantaged groups, and digitally skilled and less-skilled citizens.

The expansion of AI-based public services may unintentionally exclude citizens who lack access to digital technologies or cannot effectively interact with automated systems. For example, individuals with limited digital literacy may face difficulties using AI-enabled platforms for accessing government services.

Public administration must therefore adopt an inclusive approach where AI complements existing service mechanisms rather than replacing human interaction completely. Physical service centres, assistance mechanisms, and alternative access channels remain important to ensure that technology benefits all sections of society.

### 3.4 Lack of Institutional Capacity and Skilled Personnel

Successful AI adoption requires more than technological infrastructure. Government institutions need trained personnel who understand AI technologies, their limitations, and their administrative applications. A major challenge for public organisations is the shortage of professionals with expertise in both technology and governance.

Civil servants play a crucial role in implementing government policies and managing public institutions. However, many administrative officials may not have sufficient exposure to artificial intelligence, data analytics, or algorithmic decision-making processes. Without adequate training, there is a risk that AI systems may be adopted without proper understanding or evaluation.

Building institutional capacity through training programmes, partnerships with academic institutions, and specialised AI governance units is essential. Public officials should develop the ability to critically evaluate AI tools rather than depend on technological systems without questioning their outcomes.

### 3.5. Transparency and Accountability Issues

A fundamental challenge with AI systems is the difficulty of understanding how certain decisions are generated. Many advanced AI models operate as complex systems where the relationship between input data and final recommendations may not always be easily explainable. This creates concerns regarding accountability, especially when AI-supported decisions negatively affect citizens.

In public administration, accountability cannot be transferred entirely to technology. Government institutions remain responsible for decisions made using AI systems. Citizens must have the ability to question, challenge, or appeal decisions influenced by automated processes.

Therefore, explainable AI and human oversight are critical requirements for government applications. AI should provide recommendations and analytical support, while final authority should remain with accountable public officials.

### 3.6 Ethical Challenges in AI-Based Governance

The use of AI in public administration raises broader ethical questions regarding the relationship between technology and democratic governance. Governments must ensure that efficiency does not come at the cost of fairness, transparency, and citizens' rights.

For example, the use of AI in law enforcement, surveillance, or predictive systems requires careful consideration because excessive dependence on automated predictions may affect individual freedoms. Similarly, automated classification systems in welfare administration must avoid reducing citizens to statistical categories without considering their social circumstances.

Ethical AI governance requires principles such as fairness, accountability, transparency, privacy protection, and human-centred design. India needs a balanced approach where technological innovation supports democratic values rather than weakening them.

### 3.7. Dependence on Technology and System Reliability

Another challenge is the possibility of excessive dependence on AI systems. Government institutions may become vulnerable if critical administrative functions rely heavily on automated technologies without adequate backup mechanisms. Technical failures, cyberattacks, or inaccurate data inputs could negatively affect public services.

AI systems must therefore be designed with reliability, security, and human supervision in mind. Regular evaluation, risk assessment, and improvement mechanisms are necessary to ensure that AI applications remain effective and trustworthy.

Overall, while AI has the potential to transform Indian public administration, its adoption requires careful management of technological, ethical, and institutional challenges. The future of AI-driven governance depends not only on developing advanced systems but also on creating frameworks that ensure fairness, accountability, and public confidence.

## 4. Policy Implications and Future Directions for India

The successful integration of Artificial Intelligence into Indian public administration requires a comprehensive policy approach that balances technological innovation with democratic accountability. AI has the potential to improve governance outcomes significantly, but its effectiveness depends on appropriate institutional frameworks, ethical standards, and administrative preparedness. India must move beyond technology adoption and focus on developing a responsible AI ecosystem that places citizens at the centre of governance.

### 4.1. Developing a Comprehensive AI Governance Framework

A major priority for India is the development of a clear AI governance framework for public sector applications. Such a framework should establish principles regarding transparency, accountability, fairness, privacy protection, and responsible use of AI systems.

Government agencies using AI should follow clear guidelines regarding data collection, algorithm development, system evaluation, and public accountability. AI applications that directly influence citizens' access to public services should receive greater scrutiny and periodic assessment.

A governance framework should also define the responsibilities of different stakeholders, including government departments, technology providers, researchers, and civil society organisations. This will help create clarity regarding accountability and prevent misuse of AI technologies.

## 4.2 Strengthening Data Governance and Protection Mechanisms

Since AI systems depend on high-quality data, effective data governance is essential for successful implementation. Government institutions need reliable systems for collecting, managing, sharing, and protecting public data.

India must ensure that data used for AI applications is accurate, representative, and ethically obtained. Poor-quality or incomplete data can lead to incorrect outcomes and reduce public confidence in AI systems. Similarly, strong cybersecurity measures are necessary to protect government databases from unauthorised access and misuse.

A balanced approach is required where data can support innovation while maintaining citizens' privacy rights. Responsible data governance should become a fundamental component of AI-based public administration.

## 4.3 Capacity Building and Training of Civil Servants

The success of AI in governance largely depends on the ability of public officials to effectively use and evaluate these technologies. Civil servants must be equipped with basic understanding of AI concepts, data analysis, ethical considerations, and technological limitations.

Training programmes should be incorporated into administrative institutions to develop AI awareness among government employees. Officers should learn how AI tools can support policy analysis, service delivery, and administrative decision-making.

Capacity building should not focus only on technical skills but also on critical thinking about the social and ethical implications of AI. Public officials must be able to identify potential risks and ensure that AI applications align with constitutional values and public interest.

## 4.4 Promoting Human-Centred Artificial Intelligence

AI should be developed as a tool to enhance human capabilities rather than replace human decision-making completely. Public administration involves complex social issues where empathy, ethical judgment, and contextual understanding remain essential.

A human-centred AI approach ensures that technology supports administrators while keeping human oversight at critical stages. Automated systems may provide recommendations, predictions, and analysis, but final decisions affecting citizens should remain accountable to responsible authorities.

This approach is particularly important in areas such as welfare administration, healthcare, education, and law enforcement, where decisions can have significant social consequences.

## 4.5 Encouraging Collaboration Between Government, Academia, and Industry

AI innovation requires cooperation among multiple stakeholders. Government institutions alone may not possess all the technological expertise needed for developing and implementing advanced AI systems. Collaboration with universities, research organisations, and technology companies can strengthen India's AI capabilities.

Academic institutions can contribute through research, ethical analysis, and development of innovative solutions. Industry partnerships can provide technical expertise and scalable technologies. However, such collaborations must operate within transparent frameworks to ensure that public

interest remains the primary objective.

Public-private partnerships should focus on developing solutions that address administrative challenges rather than simply promoting technological adoption.

## 4.6 Ensuring Inclusive and Accessible AI Governance

For AI to contribute to good governance, its benefits must reach all sections of society. India must ensure that AI-based services do not increase existing inequalities or exclude digitally disadvantaged groups.

Government agencies should continue providing multiple channels for accessing public services, including offline support mechanisms where necessary. AI systems should be designed considering linguistic diversity, regional variations, and different levels of digital literacy.

India's multilingual environment provides both a challenge and an opportunity. Advances in natural language processing can help citizens interact with government systems in local languages, making public services more accessible.

## 4.7 Establishing Ethical Evaluation and Monitoring Mechanisms

AI systems used in public administration should undergo continuous monitoring and evaluation. Before implementation, government agencies should assess potential risks, including privacy concerns, bias, and social impact.

Independent review mechanisms can help evaluate whether AI applications are functioning fairly and effectively. Regular audits of algorithms and decision-making processes can improve transparency and build citizen trust.

Ethical evaluation should become a continuous process rather than a one-time requirement. As AI technologies evolve, governance frameworks must also adapt to emerging challenges.

## 5. Future Directions for AI in Indian Public Administration

The future of AI in Indian public administration will depend on the ability to combine technological innovation with responsible governance. Emerging technologies such as machine learning, natural language processing, and predictive analytics can significantly improve administrative capabilities when implemented carefully.

In the coming years, AI may contribute to more personalized public services, faster grievance resolution, improved disaster management, and better resource allocation. However, technological progress must remain aligned with democratic principles, constitutional values, and citizens' expectations of fairness and accountability.

India has the opportunity to become a global example of responsible AI governance by developing systems that combine innovation with inclusion. Instead of viewing AI as a replacement for administrative institutions, policymakers should consider it a strategic tool for strengthening governance capacity.

The objective should be to create an AI-enabled public administration that is efficient, transparent, ethical, and citizen-oriented. Achieving this goal requires continuous learning, policy adaptation, and collaboration among government institutions, technology experts, and society.

## 6. Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence represents a significant opportunity to transform public administration in India by improving

efficiency, strengthening decision-making, and enabling more responsive governance. As governments worldwide increasingly adopt advanced technologies, AI has emerged as an important tool for addressing complex administrative challenges. For India, where public administration operates at an exceptionally large scale and involves diverse social and economic conditions, AI can provide valuable support in improving service delivery, policy implementation, and institutional performance.

The integration of AI into Indian public administration has the potential to enhance several areas of governance. AI-based systems can assist in analysing large volumes of information, predicting emerging challenges, improving welfare delivery, reducing administrative burdens, and strengthening transparency mechanisms. By enabling evidence-based policymaking and efficient resource allocation, AI can contribute significantly to the objectives of good governance.

However, technological adoption alone cannot guarantee better governance outcomes. The use of AI in the public sector involves important ethical, social, and administrative challenges. Concerns related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, digital exclusion, lack of institutional capacity, and accountability must be addressed carefully. Since government decisions directly affect citizens' rights and opportunities, AI applications in public administration require higher standards of transparency and responsibility. The future of AI-driven governance in India depends on developing a balanced approach that combines technological innovation with human judgment. AI should function as an assisting mechanism that enhances the capabilities of public officials rather than replacing the human elements of administration. Issues involving ethics, social justice, and public welfare require human understanding and accountability, which cannot be completely delegated to automated systems.

For successful AI adoption, India needs a comprehensive policy framework based on responsible innovation. Strengthening data governance, improving cybersecurity, training civil servants, promoting interdisciplinary research, and ensuring citizen participation will be essential steps. Government institutions must also focus on creating inclusive AI systems that address India's linguistic, social, and regional diversity.

AI has the potential to become a powerful instrument for building more efficient and citizen-centric governance systems. However, its success will depend on how effectively India manages the relationship between technology and democratic values. A responsible AI approach that prioritises fairness, transparency, inclusion, and accountability can enable India to use artificial intelligence not only as a technological advancement but also as a pathway towards improved public administration and sustainable governance.

### Author Biography

Laxmi completed her M.A in politics (specialization in international relations) from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, in 2018 and qualified the UGC-NET in Political Science in 2020. She served as a Guest Faculty in the Department of Political Science at the Non-Collegiate Women's Education Board (NCWEB), University of Delhi, during the academic sessions 2023–24, 2024–25, and 2025–26. Following the completion of her teaching tenure, she is currently an Independent Researcher based in Greater Noida

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### How to Cite This Article

Laxmi. Artificial Intelligence in Public Administration: Opportunities, Challenges, and Policy Implications for India. *J Front Multidiscip Res*. 2026;7(2):35-40. doi:10.54660/JFMR.2026.7.2.35-40.

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