

Solution towards effective complaint registration system in Indian scenario

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores the usage of complaint registration system in India. In many cases, people want to file a complaint or be whistleblower but fear consequences from disclosure of identity. On the other hand, authorities though focused on authenticity of the complaint and not identity of complainant yet it is difficult to establish authenticity of the complaint registered in case of anonymous or pseudonymous complaints.

Hence, solution for complaint registration should be such that it protects complainant's identity and at the same time allows authority to verify authenticity of the complaint. The paper tries an initial design towards the envisaged solution and discusses on making people register their complaints fearlessly. Complaint redressal is however out of scope of this paper.

General Terms

Complaint registration system

Keywords

Complaint registration system; Whistleblower; Disclosure of identity; Anonymous; Pseudonymous; Authenticity of the complaint; Design; Solution

1. INTRODUCTION

Today filing complaint is easy like never before. Most of the public and private agencies have online system to file complaints either, in the name of complaint register or grievance redressal system. However, the nature and complexity of complaints hugely vary. From domestic violence, dowry, torture to gender discrimination, misconduct at workplace, waste of funds, abuse of authority and many more. Hence, design of the complaint registration system differs based on the purpose.

2. CURRENT PRACTICE OF COMPLAINT REGISTRATION

Once a person intends to complain, s/he provides the matter in comprehensive details. However, s/he also needs to provide details of her/his traceable identity. For example, Maharashtra State Police e-Compliant Registration System [1] made mandatory name, email address and mobile number of the complainant even though the registered complaints are not treated as FIR or NC. Similarly, Reserve Bank of India clearly states under their protected disclosure scheme that "Anonymous / pseudonymous complaints will not be covered under the Scheme and such complaints will not be entertained." However, at the same time the same document states that "The identity of the complainant will not be revealed unless the complainant himself/herself has made the details of the complaint either public or disclosed his/her

identity to any other authority." Adding to this, in order to protect the identity of the complainant, RBI does not issue any acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint and the complainants are advised not to enter into any further correspondence with the RBI in their own interest. [2]

The system of asking personal details during filing complaints is prevalent in other countries as well. The United States Postal Service states that they realize that during complaint registration, one may wish to remain anonymous in submitting an allegation. However, the information is most useful if they can contact the complainant for additional information or, in some cases, if s/he can be interviewed. Therefore, personal information should be shared during registration.

Even with the advent of "Public Interest Disclosure and Protection to Persons Making the Disclosure Bill, 2010" in India, one need to furnish the personal information during complaint filing though it guarantees concealing the identity of the complainant and fine and imprisonment to the offender who reveals the identity.[3]

Hence, the fact is complainant must declare his/her traceable personal information. Though it has been declared that confidentiality of complainant will be maintained yet people generally lacks confidence on the system of protection and maintenance of confidentiality. In fact, many people may not turn to be whistleblower or launch a formal complaint because of feeling of insecurity.

3. SOLUTION DESIGN

The solution envisages masking complainant's identity but at the same time assuring authority about the complaint's authenticity.

Most of the people have one or more government provided identity number. For example, EPIC, PAN card or Passport. Going forward all Indian citizens will be covered under UID and NPR. These numbers have potential to make system verify whereabouts of the cardholder. The envisaged solution can resolve the issue pertaining to identity disclosure through following three steps approach

1. Take detailed inputs on the context of the complaint.
2. Take the identity number and other parameters like location, date & time period that the complainant wish to get verified by the system for being eligible with respect to the context of the complaint. For example, in case of complains with workplace harassment, from the identity number provided by the complainant, the system could verify whether S/he works in the same office (location) or not. Further, it can also be verified whether S/he was

present at location (Date & Time period) when incident happened. Similarly, for a community level complaint, from the identity number provided by the complainant, the system could verify whether complainant is from the same locality or not. This way the complaint can be treated as authentic and complainant eligible.

3. Post validating the eligibility of the complainant with the context of the submitted complaint, the system certifies the complaint with message like the complainant verified successfully against the location & date mentioned in the context. Also, against the registered complaint, the system will generate a unique reference number which is non-reversible. i.e., the system cannot be reversed engineered to find out the submitted identification

number. This will help the complainant to review the status of complaint redressal without disclosing the identity

Thus, the solution helps protecting one's identity during filing and at the same time validates the authenticity of the complaint. The authenticity of the complaint will even improve if there is an increase in number of identical complaints registered.

4. FIGURES/CAPTIONS

The below diagram explains the process of complaint registration in the envisaged scenario. (Fig1: Complaint Registration Process)

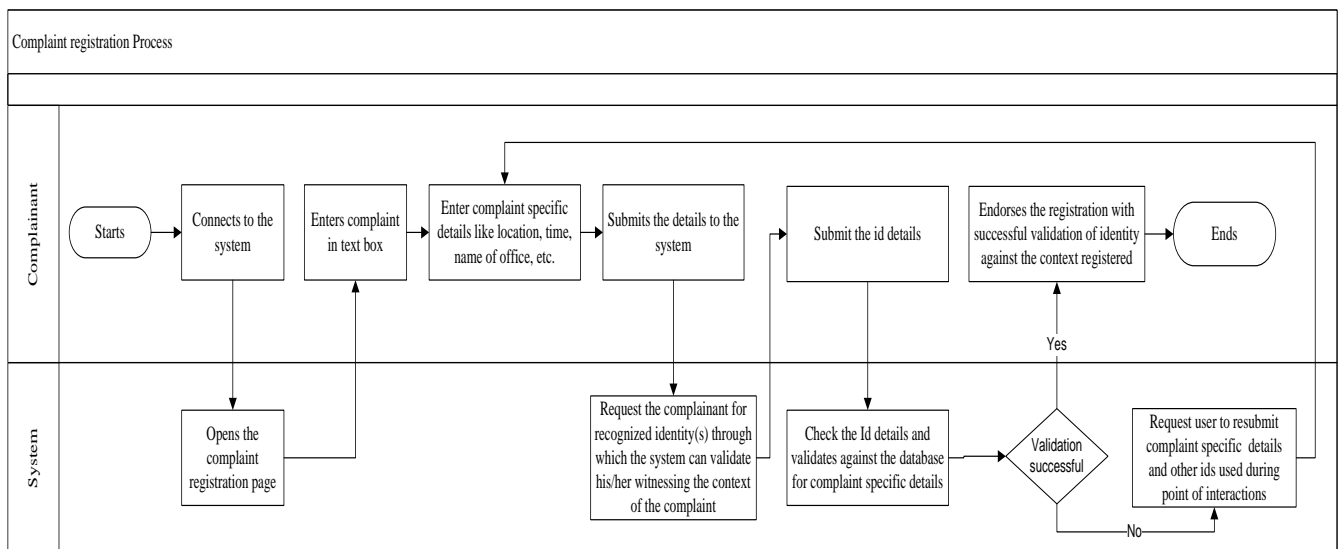


Fig 1: Complaint Registration Process

5. LIMITATIONS

The solution requires certain reference information to validate the relation of the complainant with the context based on the data available with reference to identity number(s). Though the identity numbers are used now a day for multiple purposes, yet the coverage is limited when it comes to validate against any particular case. It therefore necessitates record entry against identity number(s) for all practical purposes and at all process levels. Further, the record availability needs to be ensured centrally so that the solution can validate against a given case. For example, if the identity number was entered for submission of a given application at an office on a given day and the complainant had experienced misconduct, S/he may lodge a complaint anonymously. On receiving the identity number, the solution will look into the database whether any transaction made against the submitted identity number

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The views expressed in this paper are that of mine and Wipro Limited does not subscribe to the substance, veracity or truthfulness of the said opinion

7. CONCLUSION

The solution opens a new dimension for usage of the identity numbers and if implemented with a proper communication strategy it can bring into light many matters that require prevention and correction through people's active participation.

8. REFERENCES

- [1] Maharashtra State Police e-Compliant Registration System (<http://gms.maharashtra.gov.in/CMS/>)
- [2] Reserve Bank of India "Protected Disclosure Scheme" (<http://www.csbi.co.in/uploadedfiles/customimages/PROTECTED.pdf>)
- [3] Bill No. 97 of 2010, Introduced in Lok Sabha on 26th August, 2010 chapter II, 3(6)