

Adoption of E-Governance Services: Exploring Citizens' Perceptions of Online G2C Services in Himachal Pradesh

Sapna K. Sharma* and Babita Sharma**

At the global level, digital technologies have made a remarkable improvement in government services and political processes. Collection of data by mobile apps, easy-to-access web, cloud storage, and common service centres at the local level leads to changes in governance and easier for the public and government as well. The help of digital technology in governance gives rise to the concept of e-governance which results in good governance. Citizen adoption of e-services is proving an excellent booming tool for good governance in any area. The present study is an attempt to explore citizens' adoption of e-governance services in Himachal Pradesh. Through this paper, an attempt has been made to highlight the

*** Assistant Professor, Department of Public Administration, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla. Himachal Pradesh (India) E-mail: <sapna.gc@gmail.com>**

**** Research Scholar, Department of Public Administration, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla. Himachal Pradesh (India) E-mail: <babitasharma870@gmail.com>**

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citizens' Perceptions of online Government to Citizens Services in Himachal Pradesh. Based on the survey of Common Service Centres, the paper attempts to explore how e-governance is useful for achieving e-governance services.

[**Keywords:** Common service centres, Digital technology, E-Services, Governance]

1. Introduction

Governments across the globe have harnessed information technology to deliver a wide range of services under the term e-Governance. Many countries have taken up e-Governance projects on a priority basis due to the importance of e-Governance. E-Governance has declined in India over the last few years. The use of information technology (IT) makes it possible for government services to be delivered to a wide range of people across various segments and geographic locations. Through the effective use of IT services in government administration, existing efficiencies can be greatly enhanced, communication costs can be reduced, and transparency can be improved.

In developing countries like India, governments are beginning to use e-governance applications to improve their interactions with citizens. The success of electronic governance depends on the use of digital technology, the mobilization of government resources, and the utilization of these resources to provide better services to citizens.

2. Review of Literature

A review of the literature throws light on the previous research work and studies conducted by different researchers on e-Governance. In this way, it presents a holistic view of all the research done earlier. A review of literature relating to the study helps the researcher to have a proper perspective of the subject and avoid the risk and difficulties faced by earlier researchers. This exercise helps to familiarize with the research work already done in that area and eliminate the chances of duplication.

Garg (2011), this study deals with the goals and progress in the development of e-governance, the empowerment of citizens, and the contributions to their human development. ICT facilitates e-governance by using examples of Argentina, Washington, the women's services portal in Canada, and the land titles of Karnataka. It discussed the concept of digital democracy and the ways

e-government can enhance it through political participation and strengthen women's empowerment by giving some successive examples to improve performance and provide channels for participation in policy-making.

Singh (2012) has described that e-governance should be used at all levels of the government about providing services to citizens speedily and conveniently. In his case study of Chandigarh, researcher also discussed different projects from all over India. It was found that with the introduction of Sampark Center and e-jansampark Center, the quality and efficiency of services were improved. He concluded that the use of the internet changed the way of working and administration became more responsive and transparent to the citizens.

Sapru and Sapru (2014), in their study have shown that all governments of the world are now moving from the traditional way of handling administrative tasks to e-governance applications to meet the expectations of the growing population. It was found that e-governance has been accepted as an important force for transformational improvement in the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of governance. Successful using of e-governance opportunities, therefore, involves building institutional capabilities, adopting and implementing a sound e-governance policy.

Kaur (2016) has explained that the government of India has focussed to transform India into a digitally empowered society and a knowledge-based economy. E-Governance played a significant role in transparency, accountability, efficiency, and maintaining a well-organized process. The research work focussed on Sampark Centre Chandigarh which provides a hassle-free one-stop solution to citizens bringing transparency in services and providing services at the best nearby locations. With the help of questionnaires, it found that a majority of respondents were satisfied with the services but employees were not satisfied with their salary & contract basis job. The study suggested that Sampark centres should be made more efficient.

The informative article of The Hindu Businessline (2020) throws light on e-services in India and focusses on ICT. The government also takes various initiatives to 250000-gram panchayats or self-governing villages, so that internet access makes their life easier, and speedy. The government of India takes various projects to

create \$1 trillion in economic value from a digital economy in 2025 from around \$200 billion currently. Various services to common citizens, thereby digitally empowering the citizens' social, environmental, and economic values.

3. E-Governance in India

For the first time in India, a single computer was deployed in 1950 at the Indian Statistical Institute of Calcutta. After the war with China in 1962, India felt a strong urge to consider research and development in electronics, and in subsequent years, the Department of Electronics was established. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, computers were being used in defense services, in the economic planning department, for the national census, for elections, for tax collection, in Research and Development institutes, etc. with the government mainly doing the spending and the information systems development was entirely done by internal Information Technology sections. In 1970, the Government of India established the Electronics Department. The government of India has taken its first step toward the implementation of e-governance by setting up of National Informatics Centre in 1977 and it brought information and communication to the country. With the coming of NICNET in 1987- The national satellite-based computer network in India was the main focus of e-governance. After this, the district information system was followed to computerize the entire district offices in the country, for which free hardware and software were offered to the state governments. Until 1990, NICNET was extended to all district headquarters through the state capital. In 2000, GOI established the Ministry of Information Technology. The main objectives of the IT Act, of 2000 were to provide legal validity to electronic transactions in government and commercial functioning.

Finally, in the year 2006, the Government of India approved NeGP with various 27 Mission Mode projects and 8 components. A national e-Governance plan has been put in place with three core elements—data centres, state-wide area networks, and common service centres. The objective of the scheme is to provide all government services to the common people in their area through general service delivery centres and ensure transparency and efficiency and realize its basic need to ensure credibility at such an affordable cost of services. The emphasis is on e-governance recently

through the unstructured supplementary services data (USSD) service. Yet another milestone in the history of e-governance in India is the Right to Information Act, of 2005. The government of India has been trying to provide services in a better manner. There have been several initiatives and successful projects undertaken in various states of India to improve the quality of life of citizens.

With the advancement of information technology, the Government of Himachal Pradesh felt the need of providing easy access to government services as IT can prove an important tool to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of governance. Hence, in the starting years of the 21st century, the Government has implemented e-governance projects in the state.

4. E-government Delivery Models

The four e-government delivery models are : (1) Government to Citizens (G2C), (2) Government to Government (G2G), (3) Government to Business (G2B), and (4) Government to Employees (G2E).

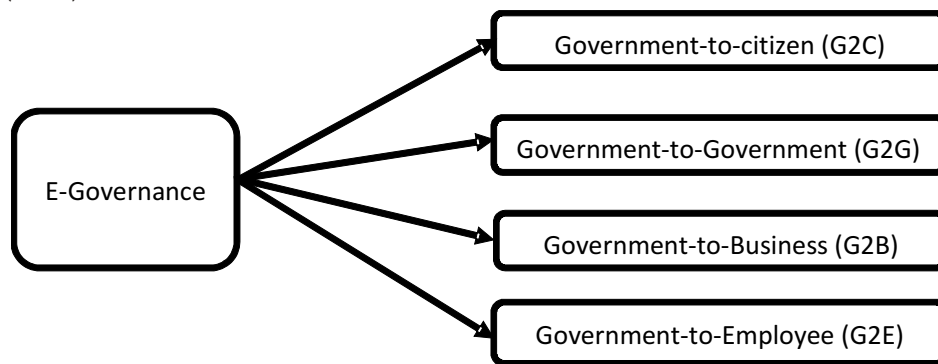


Figure-1 : Types of E-Government Applications

4.1 Government to Citizens (G2C)

This model of e-governance strong the bond between the government and its citizen and provides real rights for citizens to freely search, receive, transmit, produce, and disseminate information. The type of services which are provided by this model includes :

- Payment of online bills such as electricity, water, garbage, telephone bills, etc.
- Online registration of applications.
- Copies of land records.

- Online filing of complaints.
- Availability of any kind of online information.

4.2 Government to Government (G2G)

This model refers to the services which are shared between the governments. This model involves an improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of public authorities and local governments leading to cost reduction, better coordination of public entities, and the creation of a fundamentally new capacity for monitoring processes from an economic and social point of view. The Services or information included in this model are :

- Sharing of information between the police department of various states.
- Government document exchange which includes preparation, approval, distribution, and storage of all governmental documents.
- Finance and Budget.

4.3 Government to Business (G2B)

This model focuses on interactions between the government and the private sector in the field of taxation, customs clearance documentation, registration and liquidation of legal entities, issuing licenses and certificates, and the preparation and submission of reporting documentation. The introduction of information technologies in this type of interaction is capable to improve supply chain management and increase the country's business competitiveness. They share information through this model like :

- Collection of taxes.
- Rejection and approval of patents.
- Payment of all kinds of bills and penalties.
- Sharing of all kinds of information, rules, and data.
- Complaints or any kind of dissatisfaction.

4.4 Government to Employee (G2E)

This model increases the transparency between the government and its employee. Here, the employee can keep a check on the functioning and working of the government and the government can keep on its employees. This model improves the

development of the labor market, the level of satisfaction of employees, and support transactions such as payroll and pension plans, which overall indirect impact improves labor productivity at the national level. Information that can be shared by this model :

- All kinds of data submissions from various government offices.
- Employees can file all kinds of complaints and dissatisfaction.
- All kinds of rules- regulations and information for employees.
- Payment and working records of Employees.
- Online Register of all kinds of working forms.

Common Service Centres (CSCs), as digital kiosks, are providing more than 350 types of services to citizens. CSCs are the unique PPP model (Public Private Partnership) where micro-entrepreneurs are creating sustainable livelihoods and bringing about the digital revolution in the villages of India.

5. Objectives of the Study

Objectives of this study are two-fold :

1. To investigate the awareness of citizens regarding e-services provided by Common Service Centres in Himachal Pradesh.
2. To find the shortcoming of common service centres and suggest Policy recommendations related to service delivery in Himachal Pradesh.

6. Research Methodology

The present study is based on primary data collected from the sample respondents. The primary data was collected from the users at common service centres of Himachal Pradesh. There are three divisions in Himachal Pradesh. From each division three districts viz. Kangra, Mandi, and Shimla were selected. A sample of 300 users (100 from each district) who were using the services of common service centres was drawn using random sampling. Informal discussion was also conducted with the village level entrepreneurs and other officials for the study.

7. Results and Discussion

The results of this study are presented in the table numbers 1-4.

Table-1 : Opinion about the Awareness among the Citizens about E-Services

Response	District			Total %age
	Kangra	Mandi	Shimla	
Yes	93 (93.00)	97 (97.00)	96 (96.00)	286 (95.33)
No	7 (7.00)	3 (3.00)	4 (4.00)	14 (4.67)
Total	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	300 (100.00)

Source : Computed from Field Survey

The above table shows that the majority of respondents felt that there was adequate awareness among the people about the services of Common Service Centres whereas only 4.67 percent opined no. 93 percent of respondents in Kangra, 97 percent in Mandi, and 96 percent in Shimla were aware of the e-services given by the Government. Overall, it was concluded that citizens were aware of the e-district services.

Table-2 : Opinion about the Source of Information

Response	District			Total %age
	Kangra	Mandi	Shimla	
Electronic media	3 (3.00)	2 (2.00)	3 (3.00)	8 (2.67)
Newspaper	15 (15.00)	22 (22.00)	18 (18.00)	55 (18.33)
Government employees	32 (32.00)	33 (33.00)	40 (40.00)	105 (35.00)
Friends/relatives/ neighbours	32 (32.00)	25 (25.00)	23 (23.00)	80 (26.67)
After seeing its centres	17 (17.00)	17 (17.00)	13 (13.00)	47 (15.67)
Others	1 (1.00)	1 (1.00)	3 (3.00)	5 (1.67)
Total	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	300 (100.00)

Source : Computed from Field Survey

The present study focusses on e-government services in Himachal Pradesh. Data contained in table-2 reveal that 35 percent of respondents got information regarding e-services from government employees. Followed by friends/relatives/neighbours with 26.67 percent, 18.33 percent by a newspaper, 15.67 percent after seeing its centres, and the rest of the respondents got information from other sources. The government employees were the main source of information in overall data. It shows that Government employees, social circle of friends, relatives and neighbours, and newspapers conveyed the information about CSC effectively while it was surprising to find that electronic media had less role in the supply of information regarding e-government services.

Table-3 : Opinion about the Internet Problem

Response	District			Total %age
	Kangra	Mandi	Shimla	
Never	7 (7.00)	12 (12.00)	10 (10.00)	29 (9.67)
Rarely	21 (21.00)	25 (25.00)	23 (23.00)	69 (23.00)
Sometimes	45 (45.00)	39 (39.00)	42 (42.00)	126 (42.00)
Very often	27 (27.00)	24 (24.00)	25 (25.00)	76 (25.33)
Always	—	—	—	—
Total	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	300 (100.00)

Source : Computed from Field Survey

The above table clearly shows that 42.00 percent of respondents faced internet problems sometimes followed by 25.33 percent faced very often and 23.00 percent replies rarely. It was observed that internet connectivity is one of the biggest obstacles that stop all works of the officials midway due to geographical conditions or hilly areas, the internet is still a problem. On the whole, there is a need to take steps towards this problem.

The respondents (users of Common Service Centres) were asked about their satisfaction with the quality of services provided by the e-district. Their responses are shown in table-4 on next page.

Table-4 : Satisfaction with the Quality of E-Services

Response	District			Total %age
	Kangra	Mandi	Shimla	
Very satisfied	5 (5.00)	7 (7.00)	5 (5.00)	17 (5.67)
Satisfied	86 (86.00)	89 (89.00)	84 (84.00)	259 (86.33)
Neutral	7 (7.00)	3 (3.00)	10 (10.00)	20 (6.67)
Dissatisfied	2 (2.00)	1 (1.00)	1 (1.00)	4(1.33)
Very dissatisfied	–	–	–	–
Total	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	300 (100.00)

Source : Computed from Field Survey

The above table reveals that 86.33 percent of users were satisfied with the quality of services, 6.67 percent were neutral; only 5.67 percent were very satisfied with the e- services. District-wise data reveals that the maximum number of respondents were satisfied with the quality of e-services. It indicates that the quality of services in Himachal Pradesh is very good.

8. Conclusion and Suggestions

Citizens' perceptions of online Government to citizens' services in Himachal Pradesh reveal that most respondents were familiar with and aware of the e-district services. Himachal Pradesh Government has taken astonishing steps in the implementation of e-services. It was found that most of the users were satisfied with the quality of services, and behaviour of the service providers or officials. To make e-governance more effective, e-district portals should be made more simple and user-friendly. There should be a proper time framework for the delivery of services. Government websites should be properly updated regularly. Initiatives taken by Himachal Pradesh Government are praiseworthy yet much more is required to strengthen the state. E-governance is the future of governance in India and to make the future secure for future generations attention of policy maker is needed.

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