

Are we moving towards a managerial model of e-governance? building a case for citizen centric e-participation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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Abstract

Exploring the various information and communication technology measures adopted by the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to ensure ‘good and effective governance’ of the province, this paper aims to understand how far such e-governance initiatives endorse citizen’s participation in governance and what limitations are problematizing the quest for citizen engagement through such measures. The paper primarily explores and examines the service provider’s perspective through in-depth interviews with officials from KP Government’s IT focused departments. Applying the theoretical framework developed by Chadwick and May (2003), the paper argues that the KP government’s more than 140 plus IT based applications are mostly electronic versions of paper-based information posted on the websites, which makes it an information dissemination system rather than a fully interactive technology. There is little comprehension about ‘citizen engagement’ through e-government initiatives among bureaucrats and e-governance is largely seen as a one-sided provision of official information; citizen access to government services; or their access to the online complaint mechanisms. Officials also recognize that shortfall of essential infrastructure; public awareness deficits; accessibility issues; a lack of public trust in online service delivery mechanisms, and doubts over timely official response; all confound meaningful citizen participation in governance through the ICTs.

Keywords: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, information and communication technology, governance, e-governance, citizen participation, managerialism.

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1. Introduction

Citizen's participation in broader political processes is possible in the modern era through communications and Information Technology (IT) growth. The state today is relying heavily on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to undertake its multifarious responsibilities. Such governance tools that use the ICTs or electronic communication devices, computers and the internet to render services to its people and engage with them in the realm of politics is known as 'e-governance.' The initial use of ICT techniques in governance originated in technologically advanced countries; it spread out to reach developing countries, including Pakistan; the government agencies, executive bodies, pressure groups and political parties are using ICTs to restructure and reshape the concept of governance.

The use of technology to improve governance has become a major objective of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, which has launched several initiatives for incorporating ICTs in service provision. As in the case of Pakistan in general, the use of these tools by the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan is in its early stages and therefore, is mostly an electronic version of paper-based information; the government information largely posted on its websites-information dissemination websites, which reduces its ability to become an interactive technology.

This paper extols the theoretical framework developed by Chadwick and May (2003) for analysing the various ways in which the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is undertaking e-interactions with the citizens. This has been explored through the provincial bureaucracy's perspective as service providers to the people. From the service provider's angle, it tries to explore how far ICT tools are participatory of citizens in terms of opinion provision and consultations and what issues compound citizen's access, and their participation in e-governance practices.

The paper is divided into seven sections. After an introduction, section 2 explores the analytical framework of e-governance through Chadwick and May's division of this model into the three categories of managerial, consultative, and participatory categories. Section 3 highlights the various e-governance steps taken by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and sections 4-6 address the various challenges for engaging citizens in e-governance of the province as highlighted by the service providers. The last section provides conclusions.

2. Review of citizen participation and E-Government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Democratization and the sustenance of democracy demands the representation of the interests and opinion of the public in policy-making process. Public participation in policymaking, empower citizens "to speak, analyse and act for solutions" (Wagle, 2000, p. 216). The engagement of citizens in decision-making processes helps them understand the tough decisions that are sometimes taken by policymakers; in the process, the government also gains the legitimacy of their actions (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). Citizen participation in governance is made possible using ICTs; it is also called e-participation. E-participation aims at improving citizen's access to information and public services (open government) and encourages civic engagement/participation in policymaking (participatory government) culminating at empowering individual citizens on one hand and benefiting society on the other (UN DESA, n.d.).

The access that ICTs provide to the wider audiences to participate and be part of democratic debate is very innovative. The broad political participation of citizens through the ICTs enables them to connect with each other and their political representatives (Macintosh, 2004). The e-government is considered as a major transformational force and as such is also applied by the legislature, judiciary, and administration to improve internal efficiency, delivery of services, and processes of the democratic government. The e-government's use of internet technology to convey the information, deliver services and interact with the citizens/businesses and inside the government departments makes it transformational in nature (Kamal & Themistocleous, 2009).

The OECD 'Citizens as Partners' 2001 report defines information as a one-way relation between the government and citizens with the government providing information to the citizens to use. Consultation is a two-way relationship, where the citizens provide feedback after receiving the information from the government. Active participation is a relationship of partnership between the government and the citizens under which even the citizens can set the agenda, with the final decision-making power resting with the government (OECD, 2001). Using these principles, Professor Ann Macintosh has developed a three-level of participation for e-democracy initiatives: first-level "e-enabling" means to encourage the use of technology to enable participation – technology should provide information that is both accessible and understandable; second level "e-engaging" means the use of technology to by the government and the parliament in a top-down consultation method to engage citizens—consulting a larger audience for deliberative debate/ consultation on policy issues; and the third level "e-empowering," meaning the use of technology to empower citizens for active participation and facilitating down-up ideas (Macintosh, 2004). While in the top-down approach, end-users access information and react to government-led initiatives, in the bottom-up perspective, the citizens emerge not just as consumers but also as producers of policy. In this bottom-up approach, the citizens are actively involved in policy formulation.

Though these ICT measures have been introduced however, the fact remains that such processes are hardly participatory and include mostly a one-sided information flow to people. This seems to prevail even in the developed world as E-consultation, the case of is Westminster Parliament shows is not very common; they undertook only ten e-consultations between 1998 and 2002 (Gibson *et al.*, 2004, pp. 8-9). The indifference is also visible as the members of parliament hardly reply to address the issues of concerns faced by the citizens. This runs counter to the belief of Neo-futurists who contend that democracy should be made transparent through provision of e-mails to all. However, there is a counter argument that insists that politics, which is made up of clashing values, ideas, preferences, and desires of a good life can hardly be made transparent with the use of technology as this process involves humans and these human ideals may change with time (Wilhelm. 2000, p. 153). Cyber security of data and information is another issue that needs to be confronted. Here, government information at times leaks on the internet, which makes 'information leakage control critical in government network design' (Hassan & Khalifa, 2016). Such challenges are extensively elaborated by Anthony G. Wilhelm (2000) in his book 'Democracy in the digital world: Challenges to political life in cyberspace.'

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa uses technology for improved service delivery and tackling of socio-administrative problems of governance. The

government is claiming to take a wider view of e-government to include not only automation of government departments but provision of 'a central point of access to government services,' thereby placing communities and individuals in 'responsive networks of knowledge, service, trust and accountability' (Govt. of KP DoIT 'e-Governance Initiatives', n.d.). Their motto 'technology is our new ideology' is extended to the working of different provincial government departments including health, education, police and security and for hiring and appointments of government officials (Ibrahim, 2015). Inside the government, the Directorate of Information Technology (DoIT), established in 2004 was given the mandate to promote and facilitate e-governance steps in different government departments, IT projects initiation, the related technical support and human resource training in this sector (Gov. of KP, Science and Technology and Information Technology website, n.d.).¹ The vision is providing efficient, honest, diligent and transparent service delivery, which is supposed to contribute to 'citizen empowerment' (Govt. of KP Directorate of Information Technology, n.d.) along with enhancing interactions between government and public.

The broad categorization of projects initiated by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government include creation of a 'Data Centre' to ease inter and intra transfer of data through common software applications, identification and application of online service delivery mechanisms, automation of all major service delivery functions, and networking of all government departments and districts (Govt. of KP DoIT 'E-Governance Initiatives', n.d.). The DoIT website explains e-government as the public-sector's capacity to base service delivery on knowledge and information using communication technology tools- the ICT (Wide Area Networks, internet, mobile computing). This is done with the objective of improving service delivery, interaction with business and industry and access to information, which in-turn is supposedly to contribute to 'citizen empowerment' (Govt. of KP DoIT 'Ongoing Projects', n.d.).

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial government has given four major initiatives in this regard: e-showcasing (e-market for free online buying and selling of KP industrial product), e-Right to Information Act e-RTI, e-Recruitment (digitally created repository for unemployed youth), and e-Complaint (registering of grievances online) (Gov. of KP 'e-RTI/ Right to Information'; Gov. of KP 'e-showcasing; Gov. of KP 'e-Complaint/ Grievance Redressal System'; Gov. of KP 'e-Recruitment', n.d.). The list of completed projects are provided in its official website. A list of around 29 projects is mentioned on the website (Gov. of KP DoIT 'Completed Projects', n.d.; and G of KP DoIT 'Ongoing Projects', n.d.). These projects are focusing on either undertaking IT infrastructure and provision of IT training; others are focused on improving e-services in health and education sectors (Government of KP DoIT 'Completed Projects', n.d.).

The official interviews confirmed more than 140 plus IT based applications being run by the provincial government. Most frequently highlighted were the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Citizen Portal, which inspired the Pakistan Citizen Portal as innovative portal for grievance redressal. Other important projects included e-Office, File Tracking System, Inventory Management System, Performance Management System, Services Delivery Systems, Public-Interaction Portal websites, Complaint Management Systems, District Administration Systems, Land Record Computerization and several initiatives in health and education sectors. Education, health, Local Government and Revenue and Finance departments were reportedly making the most effective use of e-government tools.

Table-1: Some of the e-governance projects implemented

Project	Cost (PKR)	Approval Date /End Date	Objectives and Impact
Automation of Taxation in Excise and Taxation Department (all districts)	129.896 million (revised)	Approval date 23/11/2005 and 18/11/2011 (revised)	Automation of excise and taxation services for ensuring efficient and transparent services; automation of property tax reward in districts for additional revenue generation and improved staff efficiency; improving coordination among government's sub-departments, including Finance, Treasury, NAB, Judicial courts, etc.
The Traffic Control and Monitoring System	110 million	Approval Date: December 2012; End Date: June 2016	Traffic monitoring through IP cameras, Tracking System for Traffic Vehicles, Security Systems, availability of challans and tickets online.
Automation of Food Department	48.1046 million	Start date: January 2012; End date: June 2015	Connectivity of Food Departments with sub-offices at district levels electronically for better management and efficient decision making as well as planning for food security, computer-based automation of stocks in Food storage depots, transparency in the vertical and horizontal movement of data.
E-Enablement of Special Branch Peshawar	Not given	Start date: June 1, 2012; End date March 31, 2016	Record keeping, securing the records safely and retrieval of data with lesser propensity of losing data; easier access to data by officials and lesser physical data space occupation (G of KP DoIT 'Ongoing Projects', n.d.).

Source: Government of KP DoIT 'Ongoing Projects' (n. d.)

3. Theoretical framework

Based on the notion that the use of internet in governments department has led to a new kind of public management, Chadwick and May divide the nature of e-government interactions between government and citizens into three heuristic models-the managerial, the consultative, and the participative ones. These models are based on the roles played by principal actors and interests, mechanisms for interaction between government and citizens focusing on citizen's ability to interact electronically, and the defining logic behind them (Chadwick & May, 2003, pp. 275-76).

3.1. Managerial model

The key feature of managerial model includes efficient delivery of government information to the public and the use of ICT techniques to increase the flow of information in and around the government. It works on the principal that greater provision of information to the public means greater opening up of government itself. However, the information provided to the public is often sugar-coated to make it more desirable to them (Chadwick & May, 2003, p. 272). It is also assumed that efficient and quick delivery of services while keeping the costs (one of the biggest challenges faced by the modern-day bureaucracy) can be effectively managed under the managerial model of interaction. Don Tapscott uses the term, 'internetworked governments' in his book, 'The Digital Economy: Promise and Peril in the age of Networked Intelligence' to describe governments that have overcome the barriers of time and place for

providing services to the people at any time and space. The benefits covered include integrated access to government information, a databank of social information available to the government, ease of inter-governmental tax filing, reporting and payments processing as well as national and global law enforcement and public safety networks. Here, Tapscott seems to narrow down the government function to just “service delivery” and that also to some targeted citizens (Chadwick & May, 2003, p. 278).

Under this model, the state’s role in economy remains unchanged following the neoliberal ideology of non-intervention and facilitator of private economic life; economy becomes an ‘information economy’. The limitations of managerial model include flow of information in a unilineal manner to the public with the state being regarded as the only source of authoritative and legitimate information and therefore all other alternative sources are marginalized and considered secondary. It has therefore been called the ‘push model of information dissemination’, where the audience citizens are just passive recipient rather than interlocutors (dialogue or conversation). Since the state controls and manages the entire activity, therefore this information which might be following some agenda. State-produced information is transmitted and transferred between and among nodes of information network. In this e-government network, role of state takes precedence over the citizens.

3.2. Consultative model

Termed as a ‘pull’ model based on communicating citizen’s opinion to the government, this model is credited with helping people to access the government directly without the interference of interest groups and intermediaries to distort opinion and information. This greater democratic participation can help government make better policies and improve its administration. This model for operation requires resources, including, computers, internet, feedback booths, etc. The propensity of biased data is also a possibility due to access to these opinion polls being limited to ICT literate population only and therefore other significant groups being left out. It is also criticized for replacing established participatory practices of focus group consultation, and opinion polls with instant referenda and electronic voting. On the part of the government, this model may be utilized to target some people (one group over others), or seek consultation on the specific policy matters, and hiding the real policy intent. Since this model is based on communication through questions being asked and answers received, therefore any attempt to evaluate, criticize or question the government’s policy is considered inappropriate, ill-informed and ideologically driven (Chadwick & May, 2003, pp. 278-79).

3.3. Participatory model

In participatory model, besides state being the principal actor of organized political action, other associations also facilitate political discussions and interaction. The existence of several sites of political discussion and interaction make it a multi-directional interactivity model. According to Masuda, the father of computerization in Japan, “the production of information values and not material values will be the driving force behind the information and development of society” (Masuda, 1981, p. 29). The politics of participation will be the politics of autonomous management by the citizens relying on agreement, participation and synergy that takes in the opinion of minorities as well. He suggests that countries embracing the ICT could move towards participatory democracy and emphasizes that system should be based on

spirit of synergy (sacrificing one's interest for the common good) and mutual assistance (Masuda, 1981).

The state needs to provide all relevant information to the public and the benefits received and sacrifices made by the citizens should be distributed equitably among them. At the same time the citizens are expected voluntarily to provide information for the solution of a problem. Solutions based on persuasion needs to be actively cooperated in by all citizens. This model believes in the existence of a super active interconnected civil society that brings order to a diffusive knowledge. The motivation, mobilization, organization and education of the citizens is being done through the internet interaction of the virtual groups of citizens. The most important aspect is the type of messages being exchanged and their interpretation by different groups. This leads to the establishment of new voluntary virtual communities of interests. State on the other hand has the role of a facilitator and protector of the democratic values of freedom of expression and provision of infrastructure and required relevant regulations.

Some scholars praise the model for its attempt to establish an online cyber virtual civil society with access to all information coming from different sources (other than the government as well) to exert pressure on the government. ICT mediated model of democracy by giving access to a large number of citizens has helped accelerate political pluralism in societies. However, the system may also be open to manipulation by those having more resources. It is also believed that transparency or availability of all information publicly will discourage the manipulators. It will be difficult for the political actors to pressurize online digitally conscious citizens. Further, due to a quick formation and mobilization of online public opinion, the political system will deliver policies efficiently. At the same time, the pluralistic nature of this model ensures that increasingly large number of diverse unheard groups will be facilitated as well (Chadwick & May, 2003, p. 272).

4. Research methodology

The methodology of the paper is qualitative and uses both primary and secondary data to reach conclusions. Secondary data sources have been explored to understand the various IT based initiatives of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government in the province. Primary data, collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews from 10 official respondents from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's IT focused departments, primarily addressing the understanding of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's IT vision, the participatory versus non-participatory nature of ICT initiatives, issues faced by the officials and the public in using ICT tools and the prospects of electronic governance in the province. To get information and analysis related to policymaking and execution on ICTs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, a list of staff officers was identified in relevant IT departments through purposive sampling. The relevant provincial government IT departments include: the Science and Technology & Information Technology department (ST&IT); the Directorate of Information Technology (DoIT); and the Performance Management and Reforms Unit (PMRU).

The respondents in these government departments included all executive level officers (BPS 17 and above) mandate. All these executive officers are involved in policymaking and execution at staff level of the concerned departments and directorates. Interview was also undertaken with the then Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government cabinet members, Mr. Kamran Khan Bangash, who served as the Special Assistant to CM on IT & ST. Since he represented

the highest political office in IT management in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, therefore, his expert analysis and views on the different facets of ICT governance in the province and citizen participation were indispensable.

5. Moving towards a managerial, or a citizen centric E-Governance model?

One of the five pillars of the present Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's "Good Governance Strategy" is "Citizen Participation." As the official account emphasizes that governance has a "public-centric" approach focused on facilitating the public; this policy is supposedly inserted to keep a vigilant eye on public officials' performance, by rewarding the performing officials and penalizing the non-performing officials. This pillar implies public contribution to influence the decision-making of the government. It necessitates the redressal of citizens grievances on the one hand and the consideration of their feedback in the government policy on the other. The objective of this pillar is to bridge the gap by engaging citizens in policymaking, thereby empowering the citizens. Besides the citizen's say in policymaking, it is also outlined that they will be engaged in budget making and developmental schemes (PMRU, KP Good Governance Strategy, March 2019, pp. 28-29). All these good governance strategies seem to pay significant importance to citizen's engagement in public policymaking and ICTs are a right step for engaging citizens in meaningful participation in government affairs. For this to happen, it is absolutely essential that the government portals should not be used as an information dissemination website, but rather as a fully interactive technology. However, the ability of the citizens to file their tax returns online, access to government information or submission of electronic forms seems to be the basis of e-government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Citizens remain most of the time the passive recipient of online information being fed by the state and government; service delivery and information provision takes priority over consultation and feedback. To many, the vision of e-governance is regarded yet another sign of increasing state intervention in citizen's affairs.

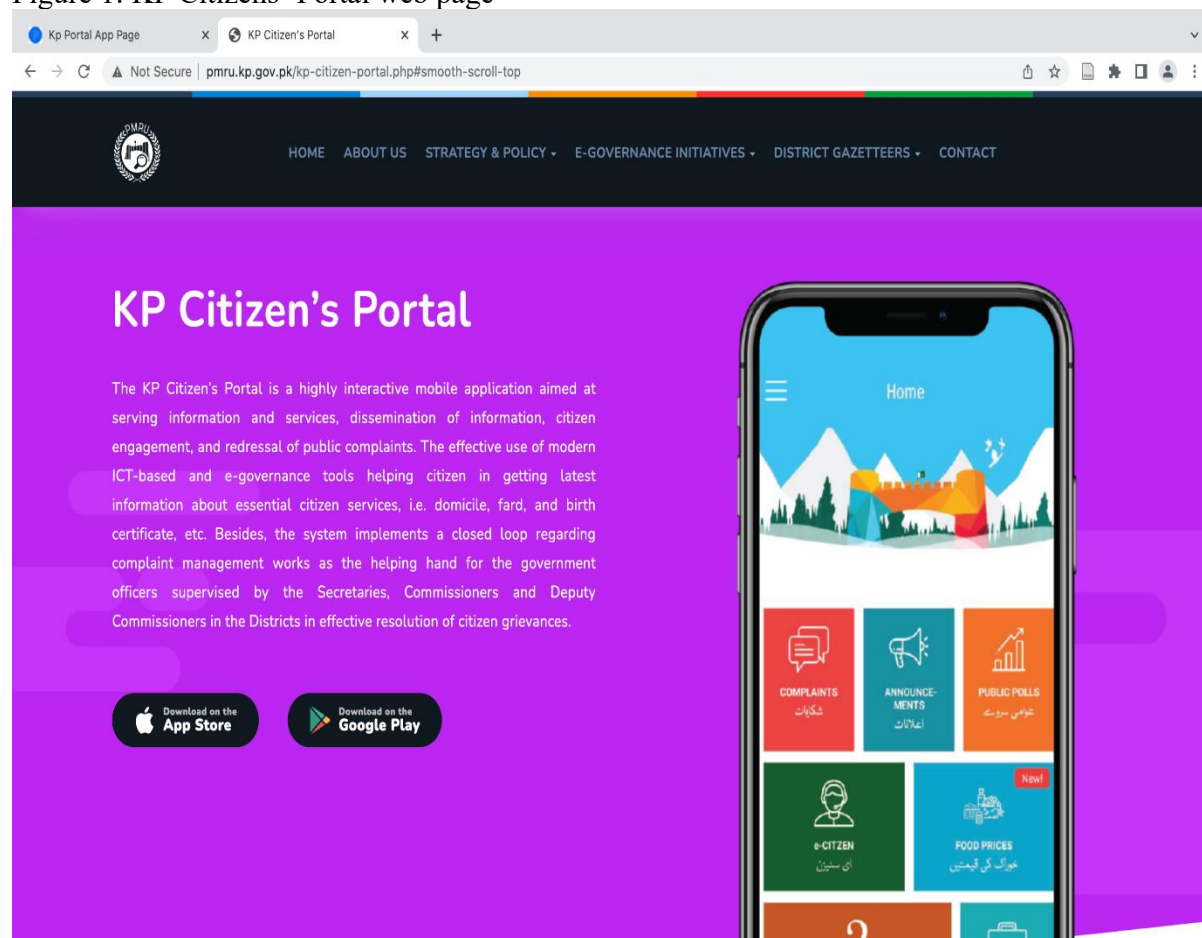
From the official interviews it came to light that the state functionaries have a varying interpretation about citizen's engagement in policy-making through ICTs and their level of utilization of the IT tools; for example, the officials in ST & IT reported around 50% of citizens making use of IT tools (Interview Basit, April 2019; Interview Ahmed, April 2019). Whereas others noted 10 to 15% of the people having an awareness of these tools and therefore using them (Interview Rehman, April 2019). When enquired about the source of these figures, the officials gave indirect references to the greater usage of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Citizen Portal application (Interview Basit, April 2019; Interview Ahmed, April 2019). For example, Deputy Director PMRU, Dr. Akif Khan quoted 6 lakhs 46 thousand complaints received by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Citizen Portal between October 2018 to April 2019, out of which 4 lakh 88 thousand complaints were reportedly resolved. The total number of citizens registered on this portal were above 9 lakhs (Interview Akif Khan, April 2019). He also gave a figure of 6 lakhs complaints registered with Pakistan Citizen Portal (Interview Akif Khan, April 2019).

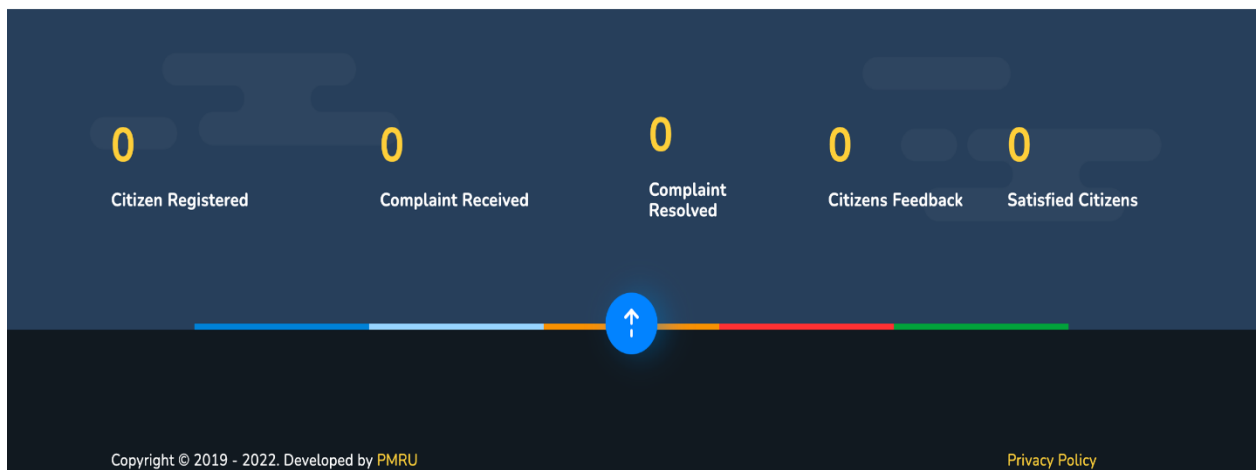
A look online at the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Good Governance Strategy Document issued by PMRU from the office of the Chief Secretary (2018, p. 28), shows somewhat different results. The document shows the total number of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa citizens registered on Citizen's portal to be 2,77,751 and a total of 62,205 complaints registered on the portal with 53,270 complaints successfully resolved (PMRU, Good Governance Strategy, GoKP, March 2019). This report claims to have resolved 53,270 complaints with 855 average resolution and 57%

citizens satisfaction level with the portal (PMRU, KP Good Governance Strategy, GoKP, March 2019, p. 28). Though the Citizen Portal intervention is an innovative platform for citizen's engagement, but its efficacy is not uniform, and its performance varies from district to district. Most of the concentration has been on the metropolitan city of Peshawar and the other districts in its periphery. The mere introduction of ICT tools is in no way going to make the system a participatory democracy unless people are given real and meaningful chance to affect the decision/policy-making process.

On the contrary, figures published by OPSI (Observatory of Public Sector Innovation) Case Study Library gives a different story about a total of 178K complaints received, 168K complaints resolved with 65% positive feedback about KP Citizen Portal (OECD, OPSI, 2021). It also tells us that around 28,000 officers in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are given the task of responding to the complaints received on KP Citizen Portal (OECD, OPSI, 2021). This information relates to citizens' complaints against different departments and their resolution along with citizen's feedback on their satisfaction level. Here too, citizens voice in policy-making and development is linked to public complaints and suggestions given on the Citizen Portal. The website of the Performance Management and Reforms Unit of the provincial government, which is responsible for initiating and monitoring reforms is also deficient of any information on the KP Citizen's Portal, the number of citizens registered, the number of complaints received and resolved, the number of feedbacks provided on the app and how many citizens indicated their satisfaction with the usage of the app (see figure 1).

Figure 1: KP Citizens' Portal web page

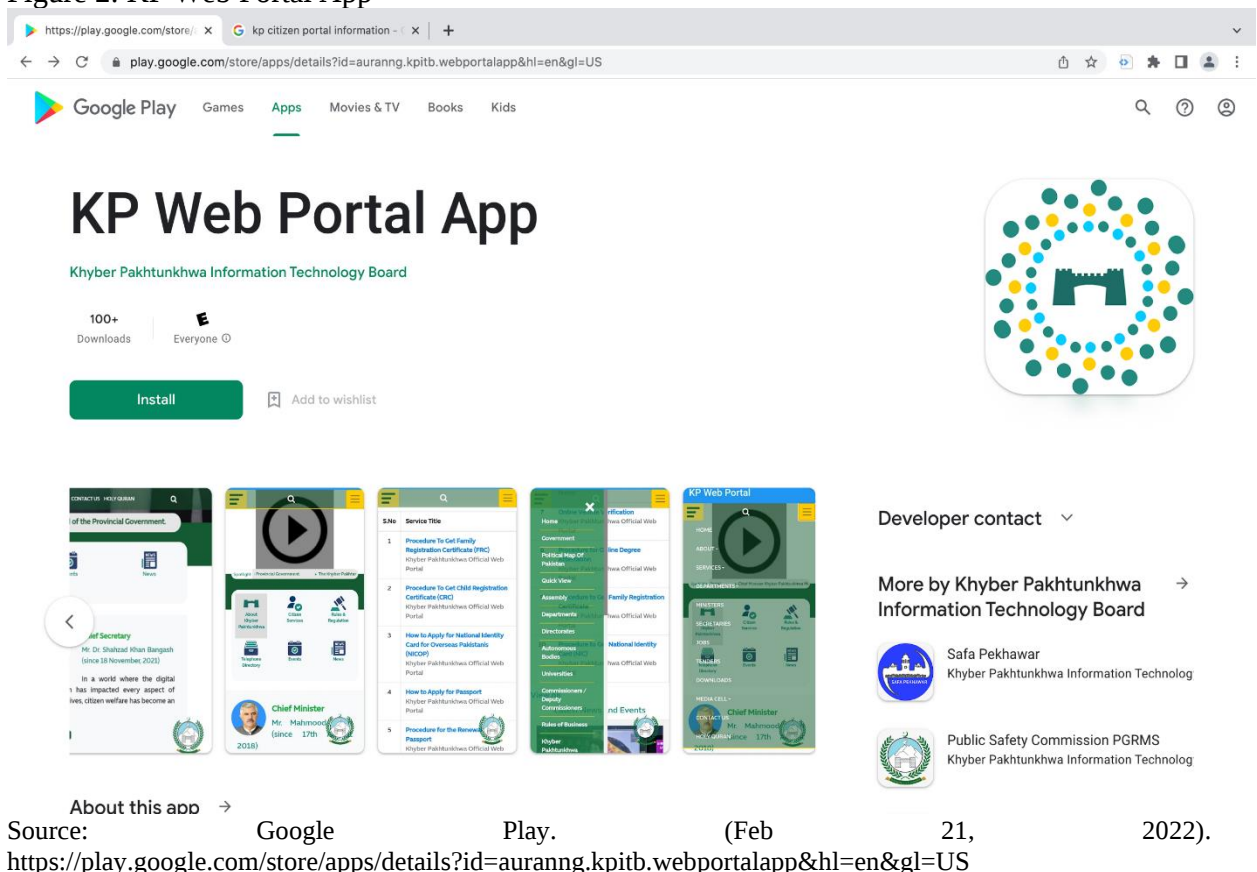




Source: PMRU. (2019-2022). <http://pmru.kp.gov.pk/kp-citizen-portal.php>

From the official side, interviews suggest that the provincial government was contemplating to increase citizens engagement with IT tools, through the development of a new Services Portal for all provincial departments by the PMRU, which will supposedly ensure the provision of all government services online (Interview, Mehmood, April 2019). The following KP Web Portal App, has been launched by the provincial government to apply for NICOP, registration of family/ children, apply or renewal of passports etc. which signifies that most of the e-services are information giving rather than participatory of citizens.

Figure 2: KP Web Portal App



Source: Google Play. (Feb 21, 2022). <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=aurang.kpitb.webportalapp&hl=en&gl=US>

Some of the official respondents claimed that in comparison with the Punjab province, whose population was huge, the percentage of public usage of IT tools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was much greater. The greater population of Punjab meant that the number of complaints was much bigger as compared to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, “I think we are better, because since Punjab’s population is huge, therefore, their complaints are definitely more as well. Our population very low in comparison to Punjab. If they have about 2 lakh complaints, their complaints are about 5 times more than us. Similarly, their population is 5 times more than us” (Interview Raza, April 2019). However, the officials could not provide a reliable source for accrediting the number of people using the ICT tools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The reasons cited by the officials for lesser usage of IT tools by the people were multifarious. For some, lack of usage stemmed from the traditional social attitudes of the people. To quote Assistant Director ST&IT, Mr. Waqar Ahmed, “although the government is automating the procedures, but the people mindset is to go to offices and request the officers to do their job. Social attitudes of the people are very traditional” (Interview, Ahmed, April 2019). He gave the example of the Right to Information Portal (eRTI) and quoting commissioner eRTI informed that very few people were using this application and those who were using this application primarily belonged to government departments (Interview, Ahmed, April 2019). The people have been seeking government services through the longer process of moving from one government office to another and therefore, in order to avoid such manual processes were used to taking short cuts like asking someone from “inside” to help them (Interview, Basit, April 2019). This traditional mindset avoided seeking government services online. To the people, the issue of trust on ICT tools is also highlighted since they have been used a system where traditionally they complaint in person to the high officials and by moving around from one office to another therefore, they doubt that their issue will be resolved fully when using the IT tools for complaint redressal (Interview, Raza, April 2019). The respondents also noted that such traditional approach was wider among the older generation who were trained in a system when ICTs were not yet in vogue (Interview Mehmood, April 2019).

Another important problem is lack of timely response from the side of the government or slow redressal of complaints under such initiatives of online registration of complaints by citizens. Although KP Citizen’s Portal is propagated on the PTI Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Facebook page as an app that could help solve citizens issues within 2 weeks of the complaint registered (PTI Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, December 9, 2016) however, there have been complaints of government officials involved in fudging the figures regarding complaints besides citizens also complaining of their problems not being solved (The Express Tribune, 2021). The complaints lodged online on ‘Citizen’s Portal’, for example are said to take several months before any response is given to the complainant. The question whether the public were dissuaded from using IT tools because of lack of timely response by the officials was brushed aside by the respondents, including Special Assistant to the CM on IT. He insisted that since all the files under ICT system were automatically flagged therefore, if a complaint left un-redressed it became part of the statistical data record. This was then used to evaluate the performance of the concerned department (Interview, Bangash, April 2019).

Some of the respondents also highlighted the lack of digital literacy among the people for under-utilization of IT tools ... “People don’t possess the understanding about the utilization of basic tools of ICT. This is the biggest hurdle. We are working on [digital] literacy. We are educating people through basic digital skills trainings” (Interview, Bangash, April 2019). To

quote another official, “in the rural areas even if the people have technology, they use it for purely entertainment purposes. They do not use it for educational purposes or good cause. The awareness is slowly coming” (Interview, Ahmed, April 2019). On the question of how to improve digital literacy of the people, the Minister outlined three categories of training being imparted to the general public. One part dealt with training people in the basic digital skills of opening their emails, using their mobile phones, checking their social media accounts and basic skills in using a computer. The second part of the training related to digital skills courses for the work force in different industries at the public and private sector, which he termed as Human Resource management. The third part of the training was focused on advance digital skills, or the “high-end skills,” specially designed for IT professionals. He related the basic digital skills with the important aspect of creating awareness among the people (Interview, Bangash, April 2019).

Other official respondents also emphasized the public’s need for not only having smart phone and internet but also essential knowledge on downloading and using the IT applications, “many people have smart phones but they don’t have the knowledge to download the applications ... how will I register myself, my complaint falls in which category, which category should I select ... these are some of the things which hinder the use of these tools” (Interview, Raza, April 2109). A look online on digital access of the people reveals interestingly high figures. The population accessing the internet via smartphone was recorded at 71 percent, accessing the internet most often via a computer or tablet 8 percent and access equally via a smartphone, computer or tablet was 8 percent as well (Farooq, 2018). With the widespread ownership and use of mobile phones, it became somewhat easy to reach the people and the people can also have their say. It is therefore that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is moving from e-Governance to m-Governance (mobile governance).

The above facts aside, some of the official respondents did not consider even the lack of literacy hindering the use of the IT tools. To them the revolution in smart phones has made possible its use even for those who were not English literate. Even the knowledge of Urdu language for registering their complaints (Interview, Mehmood, April 2019). However, the fact remains that since many people though knowing their vernacular languages are least educated in Urdu and English languages, therefore, IT tools designed in vernacular languages is yet a far cry. Some of the respondents associated lack of digital literacy with the general levels of illiteracy in the society which made them avoid the use of software applications on their mobile phones ... “Yes, the reason is their literacy level is low. The public poor things, they forget the use of ICT, they cannot even read ... they are not realizing the utilization of mobiles. It is not only to receive a call, but there are also many software applications on it” (Interview, Abid Sohail, April 2109).

The response of the people to the tools introduced by the government is related by the respondents to the level of satisfaction towards the different IT applications; for example, the Minister quoted a citizen’s satisfaction level of more than 60% to Pakistan Citizen Portal. He also gave examples of other public utility departments such as the Water and Sanitation Services Program (WSSP) where the complaint management system was supposedly working to the greater satisfaction of the public (Interview, Bangash, April 2019). Others gave a figure of 50% or more satisfaction levels among the citizens (Interview, Mehmood, April 2019). However, they added the caveat that such satisfaction levels were associated more with the working of the government, rather than over the use of ICT tools ... “if you say that they are

satisfied with the ICT tools that won't be right because they show their satisfaction towards the services of the government (Interview Mehmood, April 2019).

6. ICTs and citizen's opinion and consultation

There is a general agreement among the officials that the need of ICT tools in governance is the demand of 21st Century growth in science and technology. Therefore, the officials additionally highlighted insights on population growth and the problematic keeping of huge manually kept data. The need for ICT in governance was also linked by them to strengthening of democratic values of service delivery, transparency, accountability, rule of law and quick service delivery for the ease of the public. None of the respondents however, mentioned consultations or participation of the public as necessitating the need for the introduction of ICT based tools of governance. On the other hand, there is also a general understanding that citizen focused IT initiatives cannot be undertaken without their involvement and engagement. "Well, it cannot be a one-way traffic ... our focal point in digital governance is the citizen. We cannot do anything without the citizens involvement and engagement because you cannot make anything for the citizens unless it has their feedback. I will give you a small example ... we are working on a Citizen Facilitation Centre. Even yesterday we had a detailed meeting ... when we were conducting a feasibility study for that, we had a detailed survey from around 387 citizens. We had focus-group discussions with them to understand the citizens perspective and to provide a citizen platform so that they have ease. It should not be the ease of the government only because our focus is citizen-centric...without citizen involvement no government activity can be successful" (Interview Bangash, April 2019).

The understanding among the officials in-charge of IT initiatives on undertaking citizen's input is through getting their feedback on different IT projects. For example, the feedback mechanism provided in the Pakistan Citizen Portal is cited as an important mechanism for not only understanding citizen's input and knowing about their level and number of grievances against government departments (Interview Raza, April 2019). The response of each government department for complaints redressal on Pakistan Citizen Portal is also quantitatively monitored to understand how many complaints have been resolved and how many of them are pending (Interview Raza, April 2019).

The Chief Planning Officer, ST&IT, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, stressed that the different developmental plans are being made through IT tools. All the government departments made an entry of the different projects on their website with all the relevant information on forecasting, budgeting, costs of the projects. He insisted that this information was for the citizens to consult. He also stressed the point that since the approval for the different projects was given by the provincial assembly which contains the representatives of the people therefor, citizens are involved indirectly if not indirectly. To quote him, "We have consultations with the peoples' representatives who give their inputs. In the "District Development Portfolio", the MPAs come with their own projects that we need this thing in our district. So that's the indirect participation of citizens" (Interview, Basit, April 2019).

In the context of citizens opinion provision and consultation, the official respondents gave the example of citizens portal software which included a feedback option to help citizens give their feedback as well as suggestions. The respondents also noted that the citizens were engaged to give their opinion at the initial stages of planning for IT tools through different feedback forums

(Interview Basit, April 2019). However, there was an admission that a majority of citizens who use the Citizens Portal did not bother to give their feedback once their grievance was redressed (Interview Basit, April 2019). This Citizens Portal is supposedly providing link of interaction between the citizens and the government (Interview Raza, April). The Citizen Portal is also mentioned as the only tool of citizens engagement where the government after receiving thousands of suggestions from the citizens can supposedly make policies based on the suggestions and changes (Interview, Akif Khan, April 2019). The Citizen Portal is highlighted as a participatory and consultative software by other respondents too, who see it as a mechanism for incorporating peoples' voices (Interview Mehmood, April 2019). There is though also the admission that usually there is lack of awareness among the citizens about the choices available to them for participation in consultative forums with the government (Interview, Rehman, April 2019).

The respondents also highlighted the use of survey polls by the government for knowing the opinion of the people for example, in 2018, a survey poll was conducted among the people through a question send to them on which level of the government (provincial, district or Tehsil) address their needs more properly. This exercise was conducted in order to get suggestions from the public for revamping the current local government set up. The answer to this survey poll conducted was Tehsil level. Therefore, the government is delegating more powers to the lowest tier to help resolve the peoples' problems at the grass root level (Interview Raza, April 2019). It was also noted that for specific policy initiatives, for example science and technology innovation policy the government conducted various workshops and took opinions through a questionnaire from different stake holders in different sectors, including the media, industry, civil society, academia, students, and others (Interview Iqbal, April 2019).

Similarly, other respondents from DoIT also asserted that they were reaching out to the concerned stake holders and taking their consultation/ opinion before launching different IT projects. However, there was also an admission that it was impossible "to reach all the people in policy-making (consultations)" (Interview, Bilal Jabbar, April 2019). Information was also provided about the KP government finance department conducting pre-budget consultations (Interview Mehmood, April 2019) by involving citizens through a two-way SMS service. This SMS service focuses on asking the citizens about which sector should receive more budget for example health or education. When their answer is received, they are sent another SMS to give further feedback on which sub-sector of the educational and other sectors (Interview Akif Khan, April 2019). However, the respondents could not mention any pilot study undertaken by the government before the different IT tools were introduced.

On the question of how the citizen's suggestions were incorporated in policymaking, Akif Khan, Deputy Coordinator PMRU gave the example of federal government disability policy, the governments decisions not to impose any taxes on imported items for the disabled people was based on citizens suggestion (Interview, Akif Khan, April 2019). For the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, he mentioned the policy of naming and renaming of the streets made after frequent change in streets name was reported to the government by the citizens (Interview, Akif Khan, April 2019). There is also the perception that citizens voices are already incorporated in the policymaking through their representatives sitting in the parliament and provincial assemblies whose opinion is reflected in governments policymaking (Interview, Mehmood, April 2019).

Pakistan's ICT model of e-governance feedback mechanism, which is considered to be repository of citizen's opinion, could result in a biased data due to the access to these feedback systems limited to the digital literate people. Secondly, this access is again limited to areas where 3G and 4G network is available. Evaluation of government policy cannot be done through a feedback system which asks for a 'Yes' or 'No' option to gauge their satisfaction level with service delivery. Similarly, why a participatory model cannot take ground in Pakistan because a super-active interconnected civil society is its pre-requisite and its missing in Pakistan. The civil society maybe active in the major cities but the bulk of the population's involvement seems like a far cry. Again, the disposition of the dispersed knowledge is relevant to the ability of Pakistan's political and social environment to accommodate diverse groups and opinions across the country. Another thing worth mentioning here is that even the participatory model needs the backing of the government regulations. Some of the Pakistani officials complained of the absence of a legal framework for the proper working of the ICT initiatives such as many of the government officials would refuse to solve public problems online because they point out that it's not in their job description.

7. ICTs and awareness and utilization limitations among the citizens

The effective application of ICT initiatives is impaired by the lack of public awareness about such IT initiatives introduced by the government. Awareness workshops about ICT tools and their proper usage is therefore a must for improving chances of these tools to be properly accessed to by the public. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has been publicizing its digital governance through the social media. The common place use of social media has helped to make citizens aware of such electronic tools for complaint registration. The digitization of governance practices in Pakistan has led to the interest of private entrepreneurs in developing apps for monitoring elected representatives' performance. One such app has been developed to monitor the performance of KP's MPAs. The app 'TrackReps' will help the voters make the informed decision of voting for representatives based on their performance as profiled and on the basis of bills, laws and projects initiated (Ibrahim, 2017).

Some of the official respondents also talked about lack of awareness hindering the effective use of ICT tools by the public (Interview Raza, April 2019). This factor was also highlighted by Deputy Director DoIT, Abid Sohail who argued, "Even the general public are not aware of the services provided by the government, for example [though] the government has initiated some ICT related services and facilities in health department or any other department, the general public is unaware of these initiatives... very few people know about it" (Interview Sohail, April 2019). However, some of the officials belonging to DoIT directorate brushed away lack of awareness issue of the general public towards ICT tools by arguing that their specific department mandate was primarily concerned with working with the different government departments for introducing modern IT tools and help build capacity building of concerned officials, therefore, they were not directly concerned with the awareness issues (Interview Naveed Iqbal, April 2019).

As far as public awareness issues were concerned, the Director DoIT however argued that all information on ICT tools were displayed on social media and this information was available in Urdu as well as the Pushto language for the convenience of the people. He also mentioned the now redundant Chief Minister Complaint System, where the public could register their complaints through their cell phones in any language including audio recording and sending of

their complaints (Interview Jabbar, April 2019). Other respondents also acknowledged that publicity campaigns were undertaken by the government whenever, new IT tools were introduced. Example was given of the launching of Citizens Portal, with a lot of publicity campaign in schools and colleges (Interview Mehmood, April 2019).

However, the consensus that awareness levels on the part of the public was low prevails among these official respondents. "I think the awareness level is very low," an argument stressed by Chief Planning Officer in ST&IT, with the reasoning that despite government's marketing of ICT tools through advertisements, people were reluctant to use fearing a lack of feedback from the government as they wanted (Interview Abdul Basit, April 2019). This lack of awareness was equated with low knowledge on the utility of such tools and the proposed benefits these could get their potential users (Interview Akif Khan, April 2019). A similar issue of people's reluctance to use ICT tools, despite government's advertisements on websites, newspapers, etc., was also reported by another ST&IT official, who gave the example of computerization of arms license issuance service. "Banners were set up at the district level to make the people aware of this service, however, people failed to realize that a plain sailing had been provided to the citizens...in the beginning their approach is that of suspicion. Once these tools are tried and tested...and trust developed based on experience, then they start using these tools" (Interview Ahmed, April 2019).

Training the public for utilization of ICT tools was acknowledgement by many respondents as difficult because of space issues as well as manageability. Therefore, the government finds it convenient to reach the masses through the banners and panna flex (Interview Basit, April 2019; Interview Ahmed, April 2019). Another concern shown by the ST&IT officers was that while their job was planning and providing technical support to departments for implementation of IT tools, it was up to the department concerned to inform the masses and make them aware of the tool concerned (Interview Basit, April 2019). Despite these issues, Officials at the ST & IT were optimistic about reaching out to the public for increasing awareness using intermediaries, such as local government officials or teaching staff at the educational institutions, who could be trained to pass on the information about ICT tools and its usage to the locals in their areas (Interview Ijaz-ur-Rehman, April 2019).

Lesser utilization of IT tools is also attributed to the continuation of manual systems, despite the introduction of computerized services (Interview Basit, April 2019). This parallel continuation of both the system creates incentives for using the manual system (tried and tested), rather than the IT one. To quote Abdul Basit, ST & IT official (Interview April, 2019), "Previously the Federal Public Service Commission form was bought and filled up with pen by the candidate, but now they ended the [manual] system, as a result everyone applies online...whether they know how to fill it or not...they have computers or not...they have internet or not. They can do it on mobiles, in internet cafes...once it (online form filling) was enforced, everyone had to follow". He further expressed that electronic filling of forms opened up small business opportunities for those who were filling up the forms on behalf of the candidates who did not know how to electronically submit the form (Interview Basit, April 2019). Another reason highlighted for the lesser penetration of digital tools among the public was lack of literacy among them (Interview Akif Khan, April 2019).

The dissemination of information to raise awareness by the government takes the shape of not only propagation through print and social media, and billboard advertisements, but also

seminars in educational institutions and at the district administration level. However, there is the admission that such seminars are often sparse, lesser in number, and tend to be discarded as the government focuses its attention to new ICT tools (Interview, Raza, April 2019). Here, the sharing of stories on social media, especially in the case studies of grievances redressed was thought of as an effective tool to spread the awareness about such tools (Interview Raza, April 2019). But the situation where widespread awareness leading to very high levels of complaint registration was also regarded not as a boon, but as a bane. In the words of Adil Raza, Deputy Coordinator at the PMRU, “You (government) do not have the capacity to handle this (large number of complaints). You are making it difficult for yourself. This is a trade-off. The more publicity you do, the more complaints you will get. If you do not have the capacity or readiness to handle those complaints, automatically your credibility will go down” (Interview, Raza, April 2019).

There is also the understanding among officials that awareness campaigns launched on social media and other platforms had a very positive impact on increasing public response manifested in greater registration on IT tools. As argued by Akif Khan, Deputy Coordinator at PMRU, “When we do one campaign, the registration increases in thousands. These campaigns are carried out every 15 days or on a weekly basis. Especially if there is an event ... If Imran Khan sahib (Prime Minister) tweets [related to IT tool], we have noticed that on that day, 20 to 30,000 registrations are made” (Interview, Akif Khan, April 2019). The role of the political leadership at the national and provincial level was therefore highlighted for increasing awareness levels among the public on the use of ICT governance tools. “Even now we have launched an application by the name of Clean Green App ... for encouraging tree plantation ... the Chief Minister sahib started this campaign of planting a tree ... after that people followed the lead ... So, we increased awareness through political leadership” (Interview, Akif Khan, April 2019). The considerable outreach of the political leadership is attributed to the fact that they are elected representatives of the people. And even the unlettered people can relate to technology when political leadership is seen using the same (Interview, Akif Khan, April 2019).

The role of intermediaries in popularizing and spreading awareness among the general public in far flung areas of the importance of using ICT tools for complaint registration and other government services is an additional finding generated from the interviews. In an interesting case study of district Karak in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where the teachers had been given access to Independent Monitoring Unit (IMU) for registering complaints of the people on their behalf on the Citizens Portal; a case was registered by one of the teachers on behalf of a resident whose daughter’s hand had been paralyzed due to wrong injection. This led to an immediate action by the district administration against the culprits. Resultantly, the child was provided with compensation and a free medical help (Interview, Akif Khan, April 2019). Other cases in which swift action was taken under ICT tools was seeking school headmasters’ help in issuing domicile certificates to school children in rural areas and urban cities of KP province (Interview, Akif Khan, April 2019).

On the question of how far the citizens were satisfied with grievance redressal through IT tools, the official from PMRU gave a figure of 55-56 percent satisfaction level on the basis of complaints registered on KP Citizens Portal (Interview, Raza, April 2019; and Interview, Akif Khan, April 2019) and claimed it to be the highest satisfaction level as compared to the other provinces of Pakistan, including the Punjab (Interview, Raza, April 2019). The 45 percent complaints that had not been addressed primarily related to such demands that either could not

be met because of being unreasonable, or because of being flimsy in nature. To quote PMRU official, “Well they consist of such complaints ... as people making demands for road in front of my house to be converted in to two lane road...Or I want a university instead of a school in this place. So, people sometimes register strange complaints. Like even yesterday, when Asad Umar was ousted from the cabinet, people complained about his ouster. So that [complaint] was also registered on the Citizens Portal” (Interview, Akif Khan, April 2019).

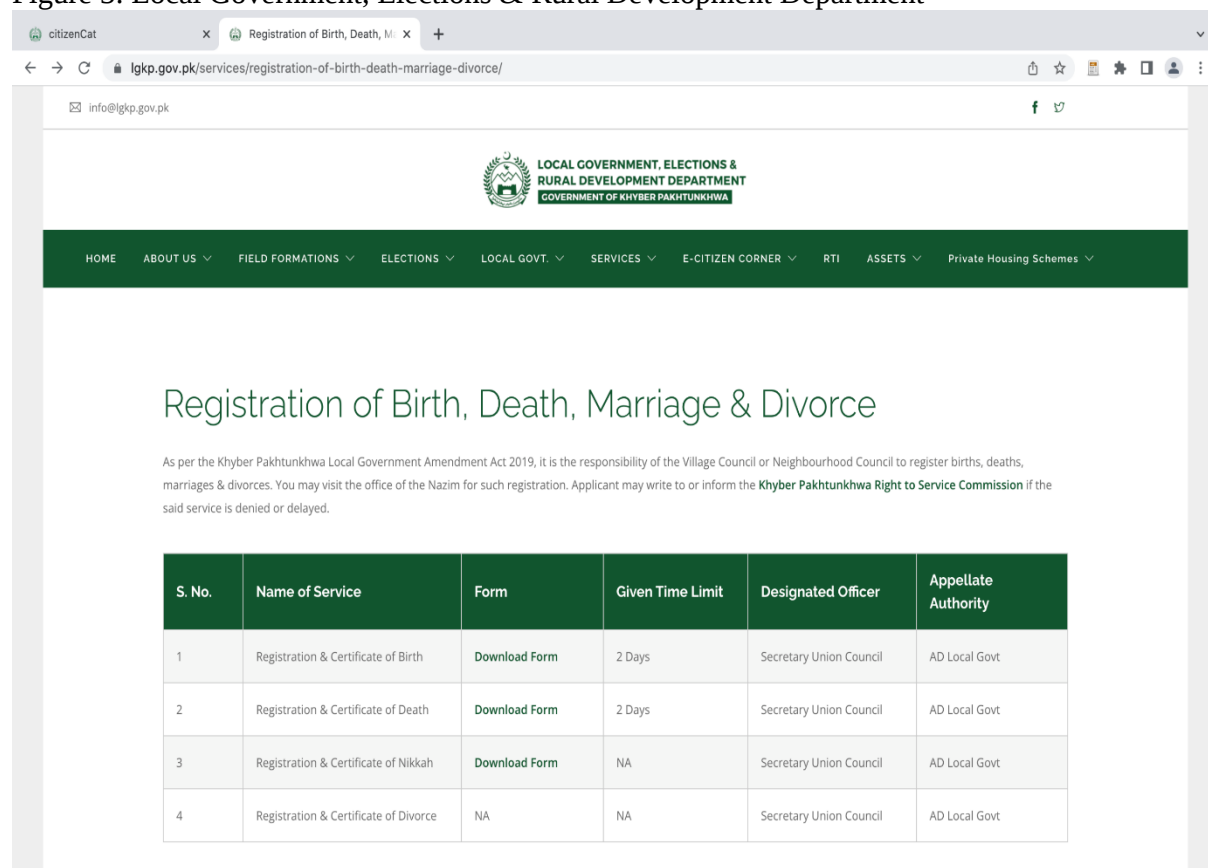
The use of ICT tools was further helping to bridge the gap between elected representatives and their constituency residents. For example, an application, *Mera Halqa* (My Constituency) piloted by ST & IT Minister Kamran Bangash for his constituency digitally records the complaints of the people from his constituency, with their CNIC numbers and also details on the nature of complaints and its redressal. This is supposedly helping bridge the gap between the elected representatives and his constituents and also providing the elected leader with essential data on the number and nature of complaints redressed (Interview Raza, April 2019). However, there was an admission that unlike in developed countries, where the signing of a petition by a certain number of people led to the government’s action on the same, no such citizen’s participation was acknowledged in Pakistan (Interview Akif Khan, April 2019). However, despite these issues, the PMRU officials noted that the government did hold public awareness sessions at the Deputy Commissioner’s office in the districts and some workshops were conducted in universities for popularizing the Citizen’s Portal (Interview, Akif Khan, April 2019).

One important thing to mention here is that the structural setup of bureaucracy and the power relations operating within these structures also has a profound effect on the implementation of the legislative statute or executive policy relating to the use of ICT to achieve good governance. As pointed out by several respondents that the reluctance of a considerable number of officials on the usage of ICT tools hinders the efficiency of these initiatives. In some contexts, the conclusion being sharing of decision-making powers with the public may seem intolerable to the bureaucracy. The power relationship between the legislature and bureaucracy on one hand and between the bureaucracy and the public on the other is going to determine the quality of governance. Hence, there are three dimensions to this relationship—the legislature, the bureaucracy, and the public. The legislature and the bureaucratic dimension are driven by laws and rules, but the citizen’s dimension is not supported by any hard and fast rules or laws. Citizen’s support requires a literate and cognizant population, ready to offer their opinion when required. Without a literate populace, citizen participation is difficult to achieve as they lack not the rational but the skills to use the medium and tools to transmit the citizen’s ideas and perspectives to the system to be incorporated in policymaking. Again, education is important for reasonable, intelligent, and sound opinion, but what makes the system work is in the first instance, how much of these opinions are incorporated in policymaking and secondly, how much of an effect it creates. This requires the willingness on the part of the political and bureaucratic authorities, as without their commitment, citizen participation through ICT will not be tenable. Till now, it seems ICT tools are being used to increase the level of information of the public and speedy delivery of some government services; so far as the aspect of citizen participation is concerned, limited efforts seem to be underway.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government also lags behind the Macintosh three levels of citizen participation, namely e-enabling, e-engaging and e-empowering. Its websites give information on how to access different government services providing detail procedure of the step-by-step

processes of the services. Most of the online services are restricted to downloading forms. The forms are not interactive. Citizens are to fill in the details with pen and then take it physically to the office as is seen in the above case (see below). Although the information on the website can be a key enabler for the citizens as far as information about the services is concerned but the capacity of e-engagement and e-empowerment is missing as pointed out by Macintosh (2004) that a democratic citizen-centric e-participation should not only provide a top-down consultation mechanism but also a mechanism for bottom-up consultation where citizens are actively involved in policy making. This will facilitate active participation of citizens.

Figure 3: Local Government, Elections & Rural Development Department



The screenshot shows the website of the Local Government, Elections & Rural Development Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The page is titled 'Registration of Birth, Death, Marriage & Divorce'. Below the title, there is a paragraph explaining the service: 'As per the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Amendment Act 2019, it is the responsibility of the Village Council or Neighbourhood Council to register births, deaths, marriages & divorces. You may visit the office of the Nazim for such registration. Applicant may write to or inform the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Service Commission if the said service is denied or delayed.'

S. No.	Name of Service	Form	Given Time Limit	Designated Officer	Appellate Authority
1	Registration & Certificate of Birth	Download Form	2 Days	Secretary Union Council	AD Local Govt
2	Registration & Certificate of Death	Download Form	2 Days	Secretary Union Council	AD Local Govt
3	Registration & Certificate of Nikkah	Download Form	NA	Secretary Union Council	AD Local Govt
4	Registration & Certificate of Divorce	NA	NA	Secretary Union Council	AD Local Govt

Source: Govt. of KPK (2021). <https://www.lgkp.gov.pk/services/registration-of-birth-death-marriage-divorce/>

As for the development of e-government policy in Pakistan and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, we can argue that the use of ICTs in governance is steered towards greater government control and less public participation in policymaking. Therefore, we come to Chadwick and May's argument that democratic interaction is being side-lined by managerialism. An analysis of e-governance practices in the service delivery domain of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government reveals that these are also centred around the 'managerial' practice of opening of government through provision of greater information to the citizens. Restricting e-government practices to applying online, registering online complaints or print online forms undermines it to a managerial type of government. The facility of citizens' online complaints can hardly be termed 'consultative', as the public can communicate their grievances to the police department directly and give feedback on police response to grievance redressal, however, the aspect of citizen's consultation in making and running the different applications remain limited.

8. Conclusions

This Paper extols the theoretical framework developed by Chadwick and May (2003) for analysing the various ways in which the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is undertaking e-interactions with the citizens. Primarily through an official angle, it tries to explore how far ICT tools are participatory of citizens in terms of opinion provision and consultations and what issues compound citizen's access, and their participation in e-governance practices. The paper findings suggest that there is no reliable source to confirm the percentage of prevalence of IT tools usage by the citizens. Therefore, the account from the side of officials on the percentage of citizens using IT tools differs. Most of the claims tried to integrate the figures with the number of citizens using the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Citizen Portal and the Pakistan Citizen Portal. There is also the admission about lesser usage of ICT tools, which are attributed to social attitudes and mindset of people, who have long been used to getting their work done through traditional method of manual visits to offices. The lack of trust on whether online application will get the work done also creates hesitation.

Besides these trust issues, the lack of timely response acting as a hurdle were however, brushed aside by officials, who insisted on lack of digital literacy among the people and their hesitation of using phones, tablets etc., for seeking government services as more significant reasons. Lack of awareness among the public of such tools of e-governance are also reflected upon. There is also the admission that prior to the introduction of new IT tools, the government makes extensive campaign on social media and through print media as well as panna flex, etc., for advertising the usage of the said tool. The argument that despite extensive advertisements, the ratio of number of people using IT tools was low, which is seen as a reflection of trust issues on the new IT tools is defied by the counter argument that such tools were introduced after being tested and tried to be satisfactory. The continuation of dual system of manual and electronic service generation also discourages the extensive usage of IT services; the bottom-line being manual needed to be discarded once IT services were introduced for helping to make it prevail. There is the understanding that though awareness seminars and workshops were conducted by the government on IT tools, however, these were few and far between. The officials recognized the positive impact of proper campaigning and advertisements about IT tools as increasing their usage among the people.

A very interesting finding has been the role of intermediaries for popularizing the usage of IT tools among the people. The case of teachers in primary and secondary schools helping the people in their localities for using and lodging complaints online helped in popularizing these tools. The aspect of citizen's participation and consultation in e-governance is generally understood to mean their access of different government services online, especially for grievance redressal. Therefore, a repeated reference to Pakistan Citizens Portal providing a feedback mechanism to the public. There were also instance of government conducting survey polls in some instances before introducing reforms in the local government system of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. However, such opinion polls are scarce. Citizen's consultation is equated with their representatives in national and provincial assemblies devising policies and hence, representing the interests of the people directly. Some of such policy interventions, for example the 'disability policy' had been made with citizen's feedback.

The findings suggest that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's IT vision of promotion of digital skills in public and private sectors, digital economy, digital infrastructure, and digital

governance aims at the oft-repeated concept of ‘good governance’, respectable provision of services, democratic values promotion and accountable governance promotion. ‘Citizen’s engagement’ is predisposed on their utilization of online complaints portals and the feedback they may provide to the government. There is least understanding towards citizen’s ‘participation’ or ‘consultations’ forming the basis of e-governance. The problems identified on the official side included that compounded citizen participation in governance through ICTs are multifarious. Traditional and outmoded social attitudes, lack of trust, lack of timely official response, and lack of awareness all hindered citizen’s access to IT services. The role of intermediaries, such as teachers was therefore stressed as a way of popularizing IT based initiatives among the public.

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Note:

¹ This Directorate works under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's Science and Technology and Information Technology Department (ST & IT), which was established on October 2, 2017 for promoting and regulating e-government activities in all departments and for promoting National Policy on Science and Technology (G of KP, Science and Technology and Information Technology website, n.d.).
