

Study of Perceived Transparency in Public Procurement after the Implementation of GeM.

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Introduction:

Governments across the world have increasingly adopted digital technologies to modernize public procurement processes, replacing conventional paperwork with efficient electronic interfaces. This transformation has contributed significantly to improving transparency, fairness, accountability, and operational efficiency in public purchasing. An understanding of the fundamental technologies underlying this transition—including online bidding platforms, electronic tendering systems, and other digital procurement tools—provides valuable insight into how these innovations have collectively reshaped the public procurement environment. The transformation has been inherently collaborative, involving governments, technology providers, legal professionals, procurement specialists, and business leaders. The collective contribution of these stakeholders has helped establish a procurement framework that seeks to balance efficiency and competitiveness with accessibility, accountability, and transparency.

The significance of electronic public procurement extends far beyond the simplification of administrative procedures. It has broader implications for the functioning of public institutions and markets by encouraging healthy competition among suppliers, supporting economic development, improving value for public expenditure, and reducing opportunities for favoritism, malpractice, and corruption. By making procurement activities more transparent and traceable, electronic systems can strengthen institutional accountability and promote greater confidence among citizens, suppliers, and other stakeholders.

Effective governance and systematic management of public procurement can make a substantial contribution to improving public-sector productivity and strengthening public trust. A well-designed procurement system enables organizations to identify important investment opportunities and make informed and financially appropriate decisions. Furthermore, economic evaluation techniques, such as cost-benefit analysis and cost-utility analysis, can assist organizations in periodically assessing and upgrading their procurement practices. The fundamental principle of sound public procurement governance is the responsible utilization of public funds to acquire goods and services of the required quality and quantity, at an appropriate price, from a suitable source, and at the right time and place. Consequently, public procurement represents an important instrument through which governments can ensure the efficient utilization of public resources while maintaining integrity and minimizing the risks of corruption (OECD, 2007).

The conventional public procurement system is undergoing a profound transformation as technological advancement and digitalization continue to reshape administrative and organizational practices. The emergence of electronic public procurement, commonly referred to as e-procurement, represents an important dimension of this transformation. It enables government organizations to purchase goods and services through digital platforms while enhancing efficiency, accountability, transparency, and procedural consistency. India's transition towards e-procurement provides a significant example of technology-driven transformation in public administration. At a time when digital innovation is redefining governance mechanisms, India stands at the intersection of established procurement practices and emerging technological possibilities. Through the adoption of e-procurement platforms, government agencies are increasingly able to streamline procurement activities, strengthen transparency, enhance accountability, and improve the overall efficiency of public purchasing.

India, with its vast geographical, economic, and institutional diversity, has progressively embraced digitalization to transform its public procurement ecosystem. The transition from traditional paper-based procurement to technology-enabled platforms has involved extensive institutional and procedural changes. This transformation has included the development of digital infrastructure, adaptation to new procurement practices, resolution of implementation challenges, and gradual realization of the benefits associated with electronic procurement. The Indian experience demonstrates that e-procurement is not

merely a technological replacement for conventional procedures; rather, it represents a broader process of digital transformation affecting government institutions, businesses, suppliers, and public participation. At the same time, the implementation of such a comprehensive transformation is accompanied by several technological, organizational, regulatory, and operational challenges that require continuous attention and improvement.

Conceptual Understanding of Procurement

The terms *purchasing* and *procurement* are often used interchangeably; however, procurement has a substantially broader scope than purchasing. Purchasing primarily refers to the actual acquisition or buying of goods and services, whereas procurement encompasses a comprehensive range of activities associated with acquiring and managing resources. Monczka et al. (2010) explain that procurement includes various forms of acquisition, such as purchasing, leasing, renting, and contracting, along with activities related to identifying and selecting suppliers, negotiating and establishing contractual terms, expediting orders, monitoring supplier performance, analysing purchasing requirements, managing materials, and developing procurement systems. Similarly, Leenders and Fearon (1997) describe procurement as a broader function that incorporates purchasing as well as activities such as stores management, transportation, receiving, inspection of incoming materials, and salvage operations.

These definitions clearly demonstrate that purchasing constitutes only one component of the broader procurement function. Procurement therefore involves a more comprehensive, systematic, and strategically structured set of activities. Its responsibilities extend beyond the simple acquisition of goods and services to include supplier management, contract administration, logistics, performance monitoring, and continuous improvement of procurement systems. Consequently, procurement has become an increasingly important organizational function with significant implications for efficiency, cost management, quality, accountability, and institutional performance.

Strategic Importance of Procurement

The strategic significance of procurement has been repeatedly emphasized in the academic and professional literature and continues to remain an important area of organizational research (Rink & Fox,

1999). Contemporary organizations increasingly recognize procurement as a strategic function rather than merely an administrative or transactional activity. Research has emphasized the importance of providing procurement with a strategic role within organizations, particularly because world-class procurement performance requires effective leadership, appropriate organizational capabilities, and strong alignment between procurement objectives and the broader organizational strategy.

Although relatively limited research has examined the comprehensive impact of procurement on different organizational, functional, and supply-chain performance objectives, existing literature provides important insights into the strategic and operational dimensions of procurement. These contributions provide a foundation for understanding the development of modern e-procurement models and demonstrate how procurement can contribute to improved organizational performance, cost efficiency, supplier relationships, competitiveness, and supply-chain effectiveness.

Concept and Scope of E-Procurement

E-procurement, or electronic procurement, refers to the use of digital technologies and electronic platforms for the acquisition of goods and services, replacing or substantially reducing dependence on traditional paper-based procurement procedures. It utilizes the internet and other information and communication technologies (ICTs) to integrate and streamline various stages of the procurement cycle. These activities may include identifying requirements, raising purchase requisitions, inviting and evaluating bids, selecting suppliers, placing orders, processing invoices, making payments, and monitoring supplier performance.

The primary purpose of e-procurement is to create a more integrated, transparent, efficient, and accountable procurement environment. By digitizing procurement activities, organizations can reduce administrative delays, minimize paperwork, improve access to procurement information, strengthen audit trails, facilitate supplier participation, and reduce transaction costs. For both buyers and suppliers, e-procurement platforms provide a structured and standardized mechanism for conducting procurement-related activities. Thus, e-procurement represents not simply a technological alternative to conventional purchasing methods but a comprehensive transformation of procurement practices that can enhance

efficiency, transparency, competitiveness, accountability, and value for money in public-sector procurement.

Review Literature:-

Davila, A. et al., (2003) stated that Public E-Procurement is the usage of data and communication technology by governments in their interaction with bidders to undertake procurement for the procurement of products, works, services, and other consulting services required by the public sectors. This modern approach transforms the traditional methods of procurement by incorporating digital platforms and tools to facilitate interactions between government agencies and potential suppliers or bidders.

Burton, R., (2005) showed that the primary tool used to aid in the efficient management of public resources is public e-procurement. The government sector units may purchase everything they need, from little office supplies to large aircrafts, with the use of an e- procurement system. They emphasized that Public e procurement serves as the primary tool for governments to effectively manage public resources and conduct procurement activities in a streamlined and efficient manner. By leveraging digital platforms and technologies, government sector units can efficiently procure a wide range of goods and services, ranging from everyday office supplies to large-scale infrastructure projects such as aircrafts. Through the use of e-procurement systems, government entities can establish unified procurement policies, procedures, and guidelines, ensuring consistency and compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.

Public Procurement Practice Manual, (2012) specified that due to the complexity of the role, there has to be a thorough procurement policy handbook that instructs stakeholders, agency staff, and procurement professionals on how to follow the correct processes and laws. By giving a clear and consistent grasp of the necessary requirements, a procurement policy aids concerned personnel. Without such procurement guidelines, there is a deteriorating lack of uniformity in how the procurement activity is done. Business will become irritated if there is inconsistency, which

again leads to arbitrary and unfair purchasing decisions. A thorough procurement policy handbook is consequently essential for public procurement.

World Bank (1995) has described —public procurement as the use of public funds by a contracting authority to acquire products, services, and works. Whereas, according to the Ethiopian Federal Government Procurement and Property Administration Proclamation No. 649/2009 —Procurement means obtaining goods, works, consultancy or other services through purchasing, hiring or obtaining by any other contractual means^l. Kabaj, O., (2008) mentioned that a system of effective public procurement is crucial to the growth of African nations' economy and may be a strong indicator of their national commitment to making appropriate use of resources. It is important to note that a system of effective public procurement is not only essential for propelling economic growth, but it also provides a strong indication of a nation's commitment to prudently utilizing public resources. These perspectives on the importance of efficient public procurement are applicable beyond African nations and can be used as guiding principles in countries around the world. Regardless of geographical location or level of economic development, the fundamental principles of transparency, accountability, value for money, and sustainable development are universally relevant to effective public procurement practices.

Tonkin, C., (2003) asserted that the employment of electronic means in every phase of the acquisition process, starting with methods for identifying needs and ending with payments, is what is meant by an e-procurement system in any firm. There are three different types of electronic procurement systems: electronic systems for customers, electronic systems for online intermediaries, and electronic systems for sellers. Njogu & Gichinga (2016), the advantage of procurement policy is that it aids the company in controlling expenses and outlining exactly how acquisitions will be done. The good news is that when the needs are changed, the procurement policy should be altered as well. However, in the most of situations, procurement policy does not address the needs of the units in public institutions. This aids institutions in streamlining and organizing the procurement process, and the policy also seeks to work well.

M. wanjumw & Simba (2015), According to their research on the "identifying of factors influencing the procurement performance of humanitarian relief organizations in Kenya," procurement regulations seriously impede how well the institutions offer services. In addition, it was discovered that the organization's current procurement procedures cannot adequately address its procurement issues. The conclusion did not, however, make a determination about how tiresome and useless the current procurement policy was.

Karanja & Kiarie (2015) The success of a business as a whole is directly and positively impacted by well-implemented procurement policies because they give organizations an effective, rapid, and precise management tool that shortens cycle times and improves dependability. Furthermore, as procurement serves as the hub for all other organizational operations, properly implementing it is essential for both greater organizational performance and survival.

Research Gap:-

There is no study found to use empirical evidence on the holistic impact of GeM on the overall betterment of the procurement system in India, indicating a research gap in understanding the broader implications of GEM adoption based on quantitative data. Existing studies have primarily focused on the adoption and implementation of e-procurement but have not thoroughly assessed the contribution of key digital innovations within GeM, such as going cashless, paperless, and contactless, to achieve perceived efficiency and transparency in procurement operations.

Statement of the Problem:-

There is no study found to use empirical evidence on the holistic impact of GeM on the overall betterment of the procurement system in India, indicating a research gap in understanding the broader implications of GEM adoption based on quantitative data. Existing studies have primarily focused on the adoption and implementation of E- procurement but have not thoroughly assessed the contribution of key digital innovations within GEM, such as going cashless, paperless, and contactless, to achieve perceived efficiency and transparency in

While conducting a research study, a researcher needs to devise a plan regarding how objectives have to be achieved. Because of this, it is essential to link the objectives to the sections in which they will be realized. It makes it easy for the audience to know about the sections and areas where results for each objective could be found and analyzed. In this section, an attempt is made to link all the objectives with the sections or hypotheses through which the objectives will be achieved.

Research Methodology:-

Area of the Study:-

This study was carried out in various parts of the Delhi-NCR region, encompassing various organizational contexts and geographical locations. With a number of national organizations, collaboration was established. The heads of the departments and other management personnel were approached to explain the purpose of the research and get their feedback on the working of the GeM portal. Some of the organizations are listed below along with their locations and higher authorities who were approached in the first place. To ensure a wider geographic representation and gather responses from diverse areas, additional Google Forms were distributed across the employees of these organizations. This facilitated the collection of data from various places, including remote locations and branches, thereby enriching the study with perspectives from different parts of the country. It was possible to obtain a comprehensive view of GeM implementation and effectiveness across Delhi NCR by combining in-person interactions with online surveys.

Research Design:-

Starting a research project necessitates a planned and methodical approach, with the research design serving as a guide for determining the next steps. The entire research, from conception to conclusion, is constructed using the research design as a framework. A research design is a plan or conceptual framework that outlines the steps that must be taken one after the other to conduct a research project. It serves as a guide for collecting the required data, its measurement, and analysis

which results in the formation of the report. For the study, a descriptive research design was found to be the most suitable type of research design. A descriptive research design was used to study the perception of the government employees towards the main objective of the GeM portal which was to achieve efficiency and transparency in the public procurement system in India. Collected data helped in testing the framed hypotheses. It also enabled assessing the impact of the GeM initiatives on employees' perception of the new system.

Sampling Design:-

Sampling design is a definite layout prepared before data collection that defines the target population, and sampling frame, as well as includes techniques of sample selection that guide in drawing samples from the sampling frame. The sampling design section outlines the specific details of how participants or subjects were selected for the study. This section provides transparency and allows readers to assess the representativeness and generalizability of the findings.

Sampling Technique:-

Generally, there are two sampling methods: probability and non-probability sampling methods. Probability sampling refers to the case where each element (person or case etc.) in a population has an equal or a non-zero chance of being included in the sample. Meanwhile, a non-probability sample refers to a sample that relies on personal judgment in the sample selection process and, therefore, prohibits an estimation of the probability that any population element will be included in the sample (Churchill and Iacobucci, 2002). For the purpose of this study, a non-random (convenience) sampling technique was used, and the survey was conducted with all the GeM users who were approachable by the researcher.

The methods are discussed below:

Primary Data: For this study, a survey method was selected and a structured questionnaire was made and then respondents were approached to participate in the research. The data for this study was collected One Year. Based on the population, random organizations were selected from

different cities in India, and employees working in purchase departments were approached to participate. Secondary Data: In this study, analysing the performance of the GeM portal after it was implemented was crucial to know its functioning, therefore, government databases were used to assess the extent of success of the portal as reported by the Indian Government.

Observation and Result:

Perceived Transparency in Public Procurement after the Implementation of GeM

the study was to assess the perceived transparency of public procurement following the implementation of the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal. The objective specifically examined how employees and other stakeholders perceived transparency within the GeM-based procurement system after its adoption. To evaluate perceived transparency, the results indicated that Hypothesis, relating to the impact of contactless procurement, and Hypothesis, relating to the impact of paperless procurement, were supported. These findings demonstrate a positive association between contactless and paperless procurement practices and the perceived transparency of the procurement process. In contrast, concerning the impact of cashless procurement was not supported, indicating that the cashless component did not demonstrate a statistically significant impact on perceived transparency.

The further revealed that the digitization of procurement documentation, real-time monitoring of transactions, standardized reporting mechanisms, and improved auditing procedures have contributed substantially to enhancing transparency within procurement operations. The adoption of paperless and contactless systems has improved the accessibility of procurement-related information while strengthening accountability, integrity, and procedural clarity. These digital mechanisms have also encouraged greater information sharing among various stakeholders, thereby supporting fair competition and strengthening confidence in the procurement process.

Furthermore, transparent procurement procedures enabled through paperless and contactless mechanisms have helped create a more equitable competitive environment for suppliers. By providing stakeholders with relatively equal access to procurement opportunities and establishing transparent evaluation criteria, the GeM system helps reduce the possibilities of favouritism, bias, and discriminatory

practices. Consequently, suppliers are provided with a more level playing field in participating in government procurement activities.

Overall, the demonstrate that the adoption of paperless and contactless procurement mechanisms has contributed significantly to improving the perceived transparency of e-procurement. These mechanisms have strengthened accessibility, accountability, integrity, information availability, and fairness in procurement operations. Therefore, it may be concluded that the Government e-Marketplace has contributed to enhancing perceived transparency among stakeholders. However, the empirical evidence provides only partial support for the overall transparency-related propositions, as the cashless dimension did not demonstrate a significant relationship with perceived transparency.

Improving the GeM Portal

The present study examined important dimensions of public procurement, e-procurement, and the introduction of the Government e-Marketplace in the Indian public procurement system. Efficient procurement is essential for modern economies because it can reduce unnecessary expenditure, minimize operational inefficiencies, and improve the utilization of public resources. However, achieving procurement efficiency remains challenging because procurement systems operate within complex market structures, regulatory frameworks, administrative procedures, and institutional environments.

In response to these challenges and the limitations associated with conventional public procurement practices, the Government e-Marketplace was introduced as an end-to-end digital platform for public procurement. The present research provides empirical insights into the functioning of GeM and identifies several areas in which the platform can be further strengthened. Interactions with employees, managers, procurement officers, and other users of the GeM platform highlighted several practical difficulties experienced during procurement activities. Based on these observations and the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the usability, transparency, effectiveness, and efficiency of the GeM portal.

Although the GeM portal provides reviews and ratings for suppliers, a similar facility should be introduced for individual products and services. Buyer organizations should be provided with an opportunity to rate

products and services and share their experiences after completion of procurement. Such a mechanism would enable prospective buyers to assess product quality and supplier performance more effectively. It could also help reduce instances of non-delivery, delayed delivery, and the supply of substandard or inferior-quality products and services.

Improvement of the Search Function

The existing keyword-based search facility on the GeM portal may occasionally display irrelevant or unrelated products. Therefore, the search engine should be further improved through more accurate and intelligent search mechanisms so that products displayed in response to specific keywords closely correspond to the requirements of buyers. In addition, product categories and technical specifications should be systematically monitored because products with particular specifications may sometimes appear under inappropriate or unrelated categories. A more refined categorization and search system would significantly improve the user experience and reduce the time required to identify suitable products.

An Advance Sample Facility

In cases where organizations require products belonging to a specific class or having highly precise technical specifications, it may be difficult for buyers to assess product quality solely on the basis of information available on the portal. This issue becomes particularly important for technically complex and high-value products.

Therefore, an advance sample facility should be incorporated into the GeM procurement process. Under such a facility, buyers could request a sample from the seller before placing the final order, particularly for high-value or technically specialized products. This would allow purchasing organizations to verify the quality, technical specifications, functionality, and other required parameters before making a procurement decision. Such a mechanism could increase buyer confidence, reduce the possibility of receiving unsuitable products, and minimize order cancellations and disputes.

Contribution of the Study

The present research examined three closely related areas: public procurement, electronic procurement, and the introduction and functioning of the Government e-Marketplace within India's public procurement system. Effective procurement practices are essential for improving resource utilization and reducing operational inefficiencies in both public and private sectors. Nevertheless, achieving procurement efficiency is a complex task because procurement activities are influenced by market conditions, regulatory requirements, institutional structures, and administrative practices.

The introduction of GeM represents an important step towards addressing several inefficiencies associated with conventional public procurement by providing an end-to-end online procurement platform. Against this background, the present study was undertaken to address specific research gaps in the Indian public procurement context. The major objectives were to: (a) comprehensively evaluate the perceived efficiency of GeM; (b) provide empirical evidence to develop a better understanding of the functioning of the platform; and (c) examine the relationship between innovative GeM-enabled procurement practices and the perceived efficiency and transparency of the public procurement system.

On the basis of these research objectives and identified gaps, the major contributions of the study can be summarized as follows:

Contribution to Knowledge on GeM-Based Public Procurement

The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by examining public e-procurement within the specific context of the Government e-Marketplace in India. It provides useful insights for academic researchers, government agencies, policymakers, procurement professionals, and other stakeholders by enhancing their understanding of perceived efficiency and perceived transparency within the GeM-based procurement system.

The study addresses an important gap in the existing literature by providing empirical evidence concerning the effects of GeM adoption on public procurement practices in India. By examining specific digital mechanisms, particularly paperless, cashless, and contactless procurement, the research provides a more

detailed understanding of how individual components of digital procurement may influence perceived efficiency and transparency.

The research also contributes to an emerging area of scholarship because GeM represents a relatively recent development in India's public procurement environment. Although research on e-procurement has increased, comparatively limited empirical work has focused specifically on the functioning and outcomes of GeM in the Indian context. Consequently, the findings of this study may provide a useful foundation for future researchers interested in investigating digital procurement, public-sector transformation, procurement efficiency, transparency, accountability, and related areas.

Scope for Future Research

The present study opens several avenues for further investigation. Since GeM is a relatively evolving component of India's public procurement framework, future researchers can examine its functioning from different institutional, technological, managerial, and stakeholder perspectives. Further studies may also investigate additional dimensions of procurement performance and evaluate the long-term implications of digital procurement adoption.

Future research can extend the present study by examining a broader range of stakeholders, organizations, geographical regions, procurement categories, and institutional settings. Comparative studies may also be undertaken to examine differences between GeM-based procurement and conventional procurement systems. Such research would further strengthen the empirical understanding of digital transformation in public procurement and provide additional evidence for improving the effectiveness and transparency of the GeM ecosystem.

Conclusion

The present study examined the implementation, functioning, and perceived outcomes of the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) in India using a quantitative research approach. The research primarily focused on the challenges and transformations associated with public procurement through the GeM platform. The findings were derived from questionnaire responses obtained from employees working in purchasing and procurement-related departments of government organizations in India. The responses

provided important insights into how the adoption of a digital public procurement system has influenced procurement practices and stakeholder perceptions.

The study primarily examined the relationships between three major digital procurement dimensions—paperless, cashless, and contactless procurement—and the two principal outcome variables, namely perceived efficiency and perceived transparency. In the research framework, paperless, cashless, and contactless procurement were considered independent variables, whereas perceived efficiency and perceived transparency were treated as dependent variables. Seven testable relationships were consequently formulated and empirically examined.

The results demonstrated that five of the seven proposed hypotheses were supported by the empirical evidence, indicating statistically significant relationships between the identified digital procurement dimensions and the dependent variables. These findings suggest that the transition towards digital procurement through GeM has produced meaningful improvements in several aspects of the public procurement process.

A substantial proportion of respondents, including government officials and bidders, perceived that the implementation of GeM had reduced direct human intervention in various stages of the tendering and procurement process. The reduction in manual intervention was associated with more standardized and digitally managed procurement procedures. As a result, respondents expressed generally positive perceptions regarding the adoption and use of GeM as an e-procurement platform.

Overall, the study indicates that GeM has emerged as an important digital mechanism for transforming public procurement in India. The platform has contributed to improving procurement practices through greater digitization, standardization, accessibility, and reduced dependence on manual processes. The findings particularly highlight the importance of paperless and contactless mechanisms in strengthening perceived transparency, while the overall empirical results demonstrate that digital innovation can play a significant role in improving the effectiveness of public procurement.

Nevertheless, the findings also indicate that the impact of individual digital components is not uniform. While paperless and contactless procurement demonstrated positive relationships with perceived

transparency, the cashless dimension did not show a statistically significant relationship with this outcome. Therefore, the effectiveness of GeM should be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon in which different technological and procedural components may contribute differently to procurement efficiency and transparency. In conclusion, the implementation of GeM represents a significant development in India's public procurement system. Its continued improvement, supported by user-oriented technological enhancements, effective monitoring mechanisms, stakeholder training, and responsive administrative practices, can further strengthen the efficiency, transparency, accountability, and fairness of public procurement in the country.

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