

Samgr e-Samadhan in Himachal Pradesh; Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

This paper explores the implementation of the Samgr e-Samadhan (Single Window Online Grievance Redressal System) in Himachal Pradesh, focusing on its operational dynamics, challenges, and issues in achieving efficient governance and citizen satisfaction. The system, introduced to streamline public grievance redressal processes, offers a unified platform for citizens to report issues related to various government departments. However, several obstacles hinder its success, such as technological barriers, awareness issues, and administrative inefficiencies. This paper analyzes these aspects and provides suggestions for enhancing the effectiveness of Samgr e-Samadhan in Himachal Pradesh.

Keywords: Samgr e-Samadhan, Himachal Pradesh, Public Grievance Redressal, Digital Governance, Technology Integration, Administrative Challenges, Citizen Engagement, E-Governance.

Himachal Pradesh has made remarkable strides in enhancing governance through citizen-centric services. The government has recognized the importance of public engagement and accessibility to improve the quality of life for its citizens, especially in remote and rural areas. By leveraging technology and fostering transparency, Himachal Pradesh has been able to address various challenges in service delivery, contributing to better governance and increased citizen satisfaction. Citizen-centric services refer to public services that are designed, delivered, and managed in a way that puts the needs and preferences of citizens at the core of governance. The aim of such services is to enhance accessibility, efficiency, transparency, and accountability in the delivery of public services. These services empower citizens, increase their participation in governance, and ensure they receive timely, effective, and equitable services from the government.

In a citizen-centric approach, the government shifts its focus from merely providing services to actively engaging with citizens to understand their needs, concerns, and aspirations. By doing so, it ensures that public administration is more responsive, efficient, and aligned with the needs of society.

Towards Citizen Centric Services approach government of Himachal Pradesh has started different programmes and policies like samgr e- samadhan, Jan Manch, e – Districts, e- Vikas, Mukhya Mantri Seva Sankalp helpline, samgr e- Samadhan Grievance redressal system is selected for study.

“Samgr e-Samadhan”

The Himachal Pradesh government established the online public complaints monitoring system known as Samgr e-Samadhan. Users can submit applications for grievances or demands and view the status of ongoing applications. Additionally, users can examine information such as committees and grievance cells, as well as the status of their applications by SMS. The government should reassess its commitment to provide residents with hassle-free public services by concentrating on the systemic adjustments needed to reduce the number of complaints in the government domain. The government of Himachal Pradesh has taken the following steps to accomplish the goal of providing citizens with hassle-free public services in order to accomplish this goal in a targeted manner.

24/7 availability is the greatest benefit of the "Samgr e-Samadhan". It is accessible from any location in the world, seven days a week. All employees and members of the public, whether they are in various places, traveling, or even abroad, have direct access to up-to-date information. Streamlining and standardizing the public complaints registration procedure

User-Friendly Interface the Samgr e-Samadhan platform is designed with a simple and intuitive user interface, allowing citizens to easily submit complaints and track their resolution status. This accessibility is essential for all types of citizens, even those with limited technological literacy, ensuring inclusivity in governance.

Online Grievance Submission citizens can file grievances online through the samgr e-Samadhan portal or mobile application, eliminating the need for physical visits to government offices. This convenience improves access to the system, especially for citizens in remote or rural areas where government offices may not be easily accessible.

Real-Time Tracking and Updates one of the standout features of samgr e-Samadhan is the ability for citizens to track the status of their grievances in real-time. This transparency keeps citizens informed about the progress of their complaints and ensures that government departments are held accountable for timely resolution.

Categorization of Complaints complaints on samgr e-Samadhan are categorized based on the nature of the grievance, such as public services, health, education, infrastructure, and more. This helps the respective government departments to address the issue effectively and ensures that complaints are routed to the appropriate authority for resolution.

Automated Acknowledgment once a grievance is lodged, samgr e-Samadhan automatically acknowledges the complaint and issues a reference number. This provides the citizen with proof of submission and guarantees that the complaint has been received by the relevant authorities.

Timely Redressal The system is designed to ensure that complaints are addressed within a specified timeline. If the grievance remains unresolved within the defined time frame, the system escalates the issue to higher authorities, preventing delays in response and promoting accountability.

Feedback Mechanism After the resolution of a complaint, samgr e-Samadhan invites citizens to provide feedback on the service provided and the resolution process. This feedback helps government agencies improve their services and address any shortcomings in the grievance redressal process.

Integration with Multiple Government Departments samgr e-Samadhan often integrates with various government departments and agencies to ensure that complaints are directed to the correct authority. This cross-departmental coordination enhances the overall efficiency of the system.

Status of samgr e-Samadhan in Himachal Pradesh.

e-Samadhan is a key initiative launched by the Government of Himachal Pradesh to streamline the process of grievance redressal. e-Samadhan has made substantial progress in ensuring a more transparent and efficient grievance redressal system in Himachal Pradesh. The system has evolved significantly since its aiming to provide citizens with an efficient, transparent, and accessible way to lodge and track complaints online.

The platform is actively used by citizens across the state to submit grievances regarding various government departments. With a growing number of complaints being filed each year, e-Samadhan has become an essential tool for improving governance. Citizens can track the status of their complaints online in real-time, which enhances transparency and accountability in the system. Government departments are expected to resolve complaints within a stipulated timeframe, and pending issues are escalated to higher authorities.

The mobile application of e-Samadhan has made it more accessible, particularly for rural residents who may not have easy access to computers. The app allows users to file complaints, track progress, and receive updates on their issues. The government has been making continuous improvements to the system, including integrating it with other platforms for better coordination among departments. Efforts are also underway to address technical glitches, improve system infrastructure, and conduct awareness campaigns.

Despite its successes, e-Samadhan still faces challenges related to digital literacy and internet access in remote areas. Additionally, some complaints remain pending due to systemic delays or resource constraints.

Table No. 1

No. of complaints received from the year of 2019 - 2024

SR. NO.	NAME OF DEPARTMENT	RECIEVED	DISPOSAL	PENDING
1	JAL SHAKTI VIBHAG	23478	23256	222
2	PUBLIC WORKS	12168	11465	703
3	POLICE DEPARTMENT	10065	9857	208
4	HPSEB LIMITED	6484	6234	250
5	PANCHAYATI RAJ	3995	3564	431
6	RURAL DEVELOPMENT	6049	5735	314

7	HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE	3401	3347	54
8	FOREST	2829	2760	69
9	ELEMENTRY EDUCATION	2664	2277	387
10	FOOD CIVIL SUPPLIES AND CONSUMER AFFAIR	2788	2776	12

Source: Samgr e-samadhan.nic.in/newsummary report.aspx.

From the analysis of table, 86.44percent of the complaints have been successfully resolved, which indicates that the majority of complaints are being addressed and closed within a reasonable timeframe. 3.73% of complaints remain pending, showing that a small percentage of issues are still awaiting resolution. However, some departments, like *Public Works* and *Panchayati Raj*, have a higher number of pending complaints compared to others, which might require further attention or process improvements.

Challenges

Digital Literacy: A significant portion of the population, particularly in rural and remote areas, lacks the digital literacy required to use the platform effectively. Many citizens still rely on intermediaries to lodge complaints. Lack of support for regional languages can exclude a large section of the population.

Technological Access: While internet penetration has improved, there are still areas with limited connectivity, making it difficult for citizens to access the platform.

System Integration Issues: Coordination between various government departments remains an issue, leading to delays in resolving complaints that require input from multiple agencies.

Data Security Concerns: Citizens are concerned about the security of their personal data when using online platforms, and ensuring robust cybersecurity is essential for trust.

Complex navigation: A complicated interface can deter citizens from using the portal, especially those with limited digital literacy.

Technical glitches: Occasional server downtime, slow loading times, or compatibility issues with different browsers can disrupt user experience.

Poor mobile optimization: Not being accessible on mobile devices limits reach, particularly in rural areas.

Poor communication: Lack of timely updates on the status of a complaint, inadequate feedback mechanisms, and absence of clear communication from concerned authorities can lead to confusion and dissatisfaction.

Inadequate training for officials: Insufficient training for government staff on using the portal effectively can lead to delays and errors in grievance handling.

Lack of awareness about features: Citizens are not aware of all the functionalities available on the portal.

Slow response times: Delays in processing grievances due to bureaucratic procedures and lack of accountability.

Poor escalation mechanisms: Inefficient systems for escalating unresolved grievances to higher authorities.

Lack of transparency: Not providing updates on grievance status to citizens.

Bureaucratic inertia: Resistance from government departments to adopt new technology and processes.

Access limitations: Potential problems with user logins, forgotten passwords, or limited access to certain features based on user type can hinder smooth usage.

Lack of follow-up:

In some cases, complaints might not be actively pursued by the relevant departments, leading to unaddressed issues.

Suggestions

Improve internet connectivity in rural areas, establish offline complaint centers, and collaborate with telecom providers to enhance infrastructure. Introduce a dedicated helpline or online chat support to provide real-time assistance for users struggling with technical aspects.

Simplifying the Complaint Lodging Process, Reduce complexity in complaint registration, provide a guided process with simple instructions, and introduce auto-fill or step-by-step navigation.

Reduce Use of Technical Terminology, Use clear language, create a glossary of technical terms, provide tooltips, and introduce regional language support

Regular Feedback Collection and Addressing Issues Implement systematic methods to gather feedback, such as surveys and suggestion boxes. Act on feedback insights to enhance user satisfaction and experience.

Training Staff for Digital Communication: Enhance digital proficiency among employees to streamline processes.

Monitoring and Accountability of Officials, Introduce a system for tracking government officials' responsiveness through post-grievance surveys and performance reviews.

Digital Literacy Programs: The government should launch awareness and training programs aimed at improving digital literacy, particularly in rural and remote areas, to ensure more citizens can access the platform effectively.

Enhanced Infrastructure: Efforts to improve internet connectivity in underserved areas should be prioritized to ensure equitable access to the platform for all citizens.

Integration Across Departments: To ensure a seamless grievance redressal process, better integration and collaboration between government departments are required. This can be achieved by creating a unified dashboard for tracking inter-departmental progress.

Improved Data Security Measures: The government must strengthen its cybersecurity infrastructure and ensure that citizens' personal data is secure, building trust in the system.

Public Awareness Campaigns: Increasing awareness about the benefits of *Samgr e-Samadhan* through media and community outreach programs can enhance participation and trust in the platform.

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