

Government e-Marketplace (GeM) as a Catalyst for Digital Governance and Employment Generation: An Experience-Based Case Study of Government Colleges in Chhattisgarh

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ABSTRACT

The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) has transformed public procurement in India by introducing a transparent, technology-driven, and paperless procurement ecosystem. Since its launch in 2016, GeM has played a significant role in promoting digital governance, enhancing procurement efficiency, encouraging participation of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and generating employment opportunities. Government educational institutions are among the major beneficiaries of this digital procurement platform, particularly in the procurement of laboratory equipment, computers, office equipment, furniture, ICT devices, and other academic resources.

This study examines the role of GeM in strengthening digital governance and employment generation through an experience-based case study of Government Colleges in Chhattisgarh. Unlike conventional review studies, the present research integrates the author's professional experience in handling GeM procurement with secondary information obtained from Government reports, policy documents, and published literature. The study highlights the operational benefits of GeM, including transparency, competitive pricing, reduced procurement time, digital documentation, improved accountability, and wider participation of vendors.

The findings indicate that GeM has simplified procurement procedures in Government Colleges by replacing conventional manual purchasing with an efficient online procurement system. The platform has also created employment opportunities for procurement professionals, digital service providers, logistics companies, MSMEs, and technology-based enterprises. Furthermore, the study identifies practical challenges such as digital literacy gaps, internet connectivity issues, vendor awareness, technical support limitations, and logistics in remote areas of Chhattisgarh.

Based on the findings, the study suggests several policy recommendations. These include setting up GeM support centres at the district level, providing training programmes to improve skills, offering digital procurement training, and strengthening the connection between educational institutions and digital governance initiatives. The study concludes that GeM is not merely a procurement portal but an important instrument for promoting transparency, institutional efficiency, employment generation, and sustainable digital governance in higher education institutions.

Keywords: Government e-Marketplace, GeM, Digital Governance, Public Procurement, Employment Generation, Government Colleges, Chhattisgarh, E-Governance, MSMEs.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has transformed governance systems across the world. Governments are increasingly adopting digital platforms to improve transparency, accountability, efficiency, and citizen-centric service delivery. Digital governance has become an integral component of public administration, enabling institutions to deliver services more effectively while minimizing administrative delays and procedural complexities.

Public procurement is one of the most important functions of government administration because a significant proportion of public expenditure is utilized for purchasing goods and services. Traditionally, procurement in government institutions involved extensive paperwork, multiple approval stages, limited competition, delayed payments, and reduced transparency. These challenges often resulted in inefficiency and increased procurement costs.

To address these issues, the Government of India launched the **Government e-Marketplace (GeM)** in August 2016 as a unified online procurement platform. GeM provides an integrated digital marketplace through which government departments, educational institutions, autonomous organizations, public sector undertakings, and local bodies can procure goods and services in a transparent and competitive manner. The platform incorporates electronic bidding, reverse auctions, digital payment mechanisms, vendor ratings, and real-time procurement monitoring, thereby improving the overall efficiency of public procurement.

Higher education institutions, particularly Government Colleges, require regular procurement of laboratory equipment, computers, furniture, office equipment, ICT infrastructure, library resources, and scientific instruments. The adoption of GeM has significantly transformed procurement practices in these institutions by reducing paperwork, enhancing transparency, and enabling direct interaction between government buyers and registered vendors.

The State of Chhattisgarh has increasingly embraced digital governance initiatives, including the implementation of GeM across various government departments and educational institutions. Government Colleges in the state have utilized the platform for procuring academic and administrative resources in accordance with the General Financial Rules (GFR) and Government procurement guidelines. This transition has strengthened institutional accountability while promoting fair competition among suppliers.

Unlike many existing studies that focus primarily on procurement policies or the technical features of GeM, the present study adopts an **experience-based case study approach**. It is informed by professional experience in GeM procurement within Government Colleges of Chhattisgarh, particularly in the procurement of laboratory equipment, office equipment, computers, furniture, and ICT resources. By combining practical observations with secondary literature, the study seeks to provide a realistic understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with digital public procurement.

The findings of this study are expected to be useful for policymakers, higher education administrators, procurement officers, researchers, and institutions seeking to strengthen digital governance practices through effective utilization of the Government e-Marketplace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public procurement plays a vital role in ensuring transparency, accountability, and efficient utilization of public resources. **Thai (2001)** described public procurement as a strategic governmental function that directly influences public expenditure, governance quality, and institutional performance. The study emphasized that an effective procurement system should promote transparency, competition, and value for money while strengthening public trust in government institutions.

The adoption of electronic procurement systems has significantly transformed procurement practices worldwide. **Croom and Brandon-Jones (2007)** reported that e-procurement improves organizational efficiency

by reducing transaction costs, minimizing procurement cycle time, and enhancing supplier participation. Similarly, **Bof and Previtali (2007)** observed that digital procurement platforms increase transparency and competition while reducing procedural delays and administrative complexities.

International organizations have also recognized the importance of digital procurement in strengthening governance. The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2015)** recommended that public procurement systems should integrate digital technologies to ensure transparency, accountability, integrity, and efficient public expenditure. Likewise, the **World Bank (2016)** highlighted that e-procurement systems improve public financial management, reduce corruption risks, and enhance service delivery through standardized digital processes.

In India, the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) has emerged as a major digital governance initiative. According to **NITI Aayog (2021)**, GeM has strengthened transparency and competition in government procurement while supporting the objectives of Digital India and Atmanirbhar Bharat. The **Government e-Marketplace Annual Report (2023–24)** further reported that GeM has expanded procurement opportunities for MSMEs, startups, women entrepreneurs, and educational institutions by providing a unified digital platform for public procurement.

Several studies have highlighted the contribution of GeM to MSME development and employment generation. **Glas and Eßig (2018)** found that digital procurement systems improve market access for small suppliers by reducing entry barriers and increasing procurement opportunities. Similarly, **Hoekman and Tas (2022)** argued that transparent procurement policies encourage greater participation of MSMEs, thereby promoting entrepreneurship, innovation, and employment.

Despite these significant contributions, the existing literature provides limited evidence regarding the implementation of GeM in Government Colleges, particularly in Chhattisgarh. Most studies have focused on procurement efficiency at the national level, whereas practical experience-based analyses from higher education institutions remain scarce. Therefore, the present study attempts to bridge this gap by examining GeM implementation in Government Colleges of Chhattisgarh based on professional experience and secondary evidence.

Research Gap

Although the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) has emerged as one of the most significant digital governance initiatives in India, the available literature reveals several important research gaps. Most existing studies have focused on the technical

architecture of GeM, transparency in public procurement, or the participation of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). **Thai (2001)** and **Croom and Brandon-Jones (2007)** primarily discussed procurement efficiency and governance reforms, whereas **OECD (2015)** and the **World Bank (2016)** emphasized digital procurement as a tool for transparency and accountability. However, very limited attention has been given to the operational experiences of procurement practitioners working in Government educational institutions.

Similarly, **NITI Aayog (2021)** and the **Government e-Marketplace Annual Report (2023–24)** highlighted the national achievements of GeM but did not provide institution-level evidence from Government Colleges in states such as Chhattisgarh.

Existing studies also rarely examine how GeM contributes to employment generation through procurement activities involving laboratory equipment, office infrastructure, ICT resources, and furniture in higher educational institutions. Furthermore, there is a lack of experience-based case studies integrating digital governance, institutional procurement, employment generation, and administrative efficiency within a single analytical framework. The present research attempts to bridge these gaps by combining professional procurement experience with evidence from published literature and official government documents.

Research Objectives

The present study has been designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the role of the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) in promoting digital governance in Government Colleges of Chhattisgarh.
2. To analyse the effectiveness of GeM in improving transparency, accountability, and procurement efficiency.
3. To evaluate the contribution of GeM towards employment generation through MSMEs, startups, logistics providers, and digital service enterprises.
4. To assess the practical advantages and operational challenges experienced during GeM procurement in Government Colleges.
5. To examine the role of GeM in the procurement of laboratory equipment, office equipment, computers, furniture, and ICT resources.
6. To propose policy recommendations for strengthening digital procurement practices in Government educational institutions of Chhattisgarh.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is confined to the implementation of the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) in Government Colleges of Chhattisgarh. The research primarily focuses on procurement activities related to laboratory equipment, computers, office equipment, furniture, and information and communication technology (ICT) resources. The study also examines the broader implications of GeM in promoting digital governance, administrative transparency, employment generation, and institutional efficiency. Although the findings may have relevance for other government departments, the analysis is specifically based on the experiences and observations associated with higher educational institutions in Chhattisgarh.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a **descriptive and experience-based case study approach**. The research combines qualitative analysis of professional procurement experiences with secondary information collected from Government reports, policy documents, research articles, and official publications. This mixed evidence approach enables a comprehensive understanding of GeM implementation within Government Colleges.

The study is primarily based on the author's professional observations while participating in procurement activities through the Government e-Marketplace. These experiences include procurement planning, preparation of technical specifications, vendor selection, online comparison of products, bid evaluation, order placement, digital documentation, inspection, and successful completion of procurement processes for laboratory equipment, office equipment, computers, furniture, and ICT infrastructure.

Secondary information has been collected from the Government e-Marketplace (GeM), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, NITI Aayog, Government of Chhattisgarh, Directorate of Higher Education, OECD publications, World Bank reports, and peer-reviewed research articles. The collected information has been analysed using descriptive research techniques supported by comparative interpretation and policy analysis.

Study Area

The geographical focus of the study is the **State of Chhattisgarh**, where Government Colleges have increasingly adopted digital procurement through the Government eMarketplace. The study particularly considers procurement activities related to academic infrastructure, scientific laboratories, administrative offices,

computer laboratories, classrooms, and institutional development. Chhattisgarh provides an appropriate setting because of the growing implementation of digital governance initiatives and the increasing adoption of GeM across higher educational institutions.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

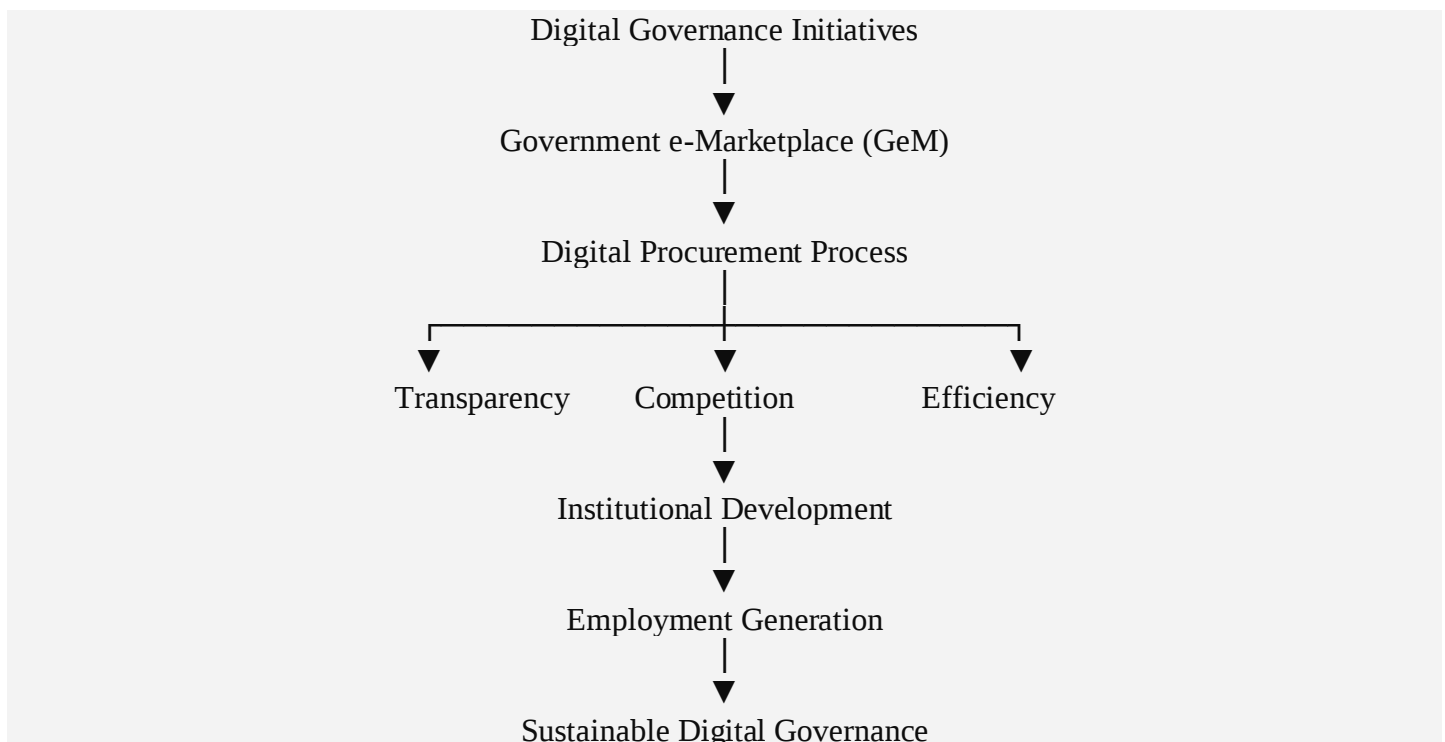


Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework adopted in the present study. It demonstrates how the implementation of GeM contributes to transparent procurement practices, institutional efficiency, employment generation, and sustainable digital governance within Government Colleges.

Government e-Marketplace in Government Colleges: An Experience-Based Case Study of Chhattisgarh

The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) has emerged as one of the most influential digital governance initiatives in India's public procurement system. Since its inception in 2016, the platform has fundamentally transformed procurement practices by replacing manual and paper-based purchasing procedures with a transparent, technology-enabled, and standardized online procurement system. According to the **Government e-Marketplace Annual Report (2023–24)**, the platform has significantly expanded procurement opportunities for government departments, autonomous institutions, public sector undertakings, and educational institutions. Government Colleges in Chhattisgarh have increasingly adopted GeM to procure laboratory equipment, office equipment, computers, furniture, ICT devices, and other academic resources in accordance with the General Financial Rules (Government of India, 2017).

The present study is based on professional experience in handling procurement through the GeM portal in Government Colleges of Chhattisgarh. The experience demonstrates that the digital procurement process has substantially improved institutional transparency, reduced administrative delays, and enhanced competition among suppliers. Unlike the conventional procurement system, where multiple manual approvals and physical documentation often prolonged purchasing activities, GeM enables institutions to complete procurement through a structured digital workflow. Every stage, including product search, preparation of technical specifications, comparison of products, vendor evaluation, order placement, inspection, and payment, is recorded electronically, thereby improving accountability and reducing procedural ambiguity. During the procurement of laboratory equipment, GeM proved particularly beneficial in facilitating the comparison of technical specifications, product quality, warranty conditions, and supplier ratings before finalizing purchases. Laboratory instruments required by departments such as Botany, Zoology, Chemistry, Physics, Geography, and Computer Science were procured through transparent online procedures, ensuring compliance with institutional requirements and procurement

regulations. The availability of multiple registered vendors enhanced competitive pricing and improved value for public expenditure, which is consistent with the observations reported by **Croom and Brandon-Jones (2007)** regarding the efficiency of electronic procurement systems.

The procurement of computers and information technology equipment further demonstrated the effectiveness of GeM in supporting digital governance. Desktop computers, laptops, printers, scanners, networking devices, UPS systems, projectors, and related ICT resources were procured through standardized online procedures. Digital comparison of technical configurations enabled procurement committees to select products that satisfied institutional requirements while maintaining financial prudence. Similar observations have been reported by the **World Bank (2016)**, which recognized digital procurement as an important mechanism for improving transparency and reducing procurement risks.

Office administration has also benefited substantially from GeM implementation. Procurement of office furniture, storage cabinets, office chairs, steel almirahs, biometric attendance systems, printers, photocopiers, air conditioners, and administrative equipment became considerably more efficient due to the availability of standardized product catalogues and transparent vendor evaluation mechanisms. Digital documentation eliminated many of the administrative complexities associated with traditional procurement systems and improved record management. The **OECD (2015)** similarly emphasized that electronic procurement strengthens institutional integrity by minimizing discretionary decision-making and ensuring standardized procurement procedures.

One of the most significant observations arising from professional experience is the improvement in institutional accountability. Every procurement transaction conducted through GeM generates digital records, including purchase orders, invoices, inspection reports, payment status, and vendor performance records. Such documentation facilitates internal audit, financial verification, and regulatory compliance while reducing the possibility of procedural irregularities. This observation supports the recommendations of **NITI Aayog (2021)**, which identified digital procurement as a critical component of transparent governance and institutional modernization.

The implementation of GeM has also encouraged wider participation of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), startups, and local manufacturers. Registered vendors from different regions of India are able to participate in procurement processes conducted by Government Colleges in Chhattisgarh without geographical restrictions. This broader competition not only improves product quality and pricing but also creates new economic opportunities for businesses, logistics providers, technology service companies, and support agencies. The **Ministry of MSME (2024)** has similarly highlighted that digital procurement platforms contribute significantly to enterprise development and employment generation.

Although GeM has substantially strengthened procurement efficiency, practical experience also indicates certain operational challenges. Procurement committees occasionally encounter difficulties related to internet connectivity, delayed product delivery in remote districts, limited vendor participation for highly specialized laboratory equipment, and the need for continuous training of procurement officials. Technical support and digital literacy remain important determinants of successful GeM implementation, particularly in rural educational institutions. Similar implementation challenges have been discussed by **Glas and Eßig (2018)**, who observed that supplier capability and institutional readiness significantly influence the effectiveness of digital procurement systems.

Overall, the experience of Government Colleges in Chhattisgarh demonstrates that GeM has transformed public procurement from a conventional administrative process into an integrated digital governance mechanism. The platform has improved transparency, procurement efficiency, institutional accountability, vendor competition, and documentation quality while supporting broader national initiatives such as Digital India, Startup India, and Atmanirbhar Bharat. These practical observations indicate that GeM is not merely an electronic marketplace but a strategic digital governance platform capable of strengthening higher education administration and contributing to sustainable public sector modernization.

Table 1. Major Group of Procurement through GeM in Government Colleges of Chhattisgarh

Procurement Group	Examples of Item	Primary Benefits
Laboratory Equipment	Microscopes, Incubators, Centrifuges, Glassware	Transparent procurement, better quality
Computer & ICT Equipment	Desktop Computers, Laptops, Printers, UPS, Projectors	Standard specifications, competitive pricing
Office Equipment	Biometric Devices, Photocopiers, Air Conditioners	Faster procurement and digital records
Furniture	Office Chairs, Tables, Steel Almirahs, Laboratory Furniture	Multiple vendor options and price comparison
Academic Resources	Books, Smart Classroom Equipment, Display Systems	Improved educational infrastructure

Figure 2. Experience-Based GeM Procurement Workflow

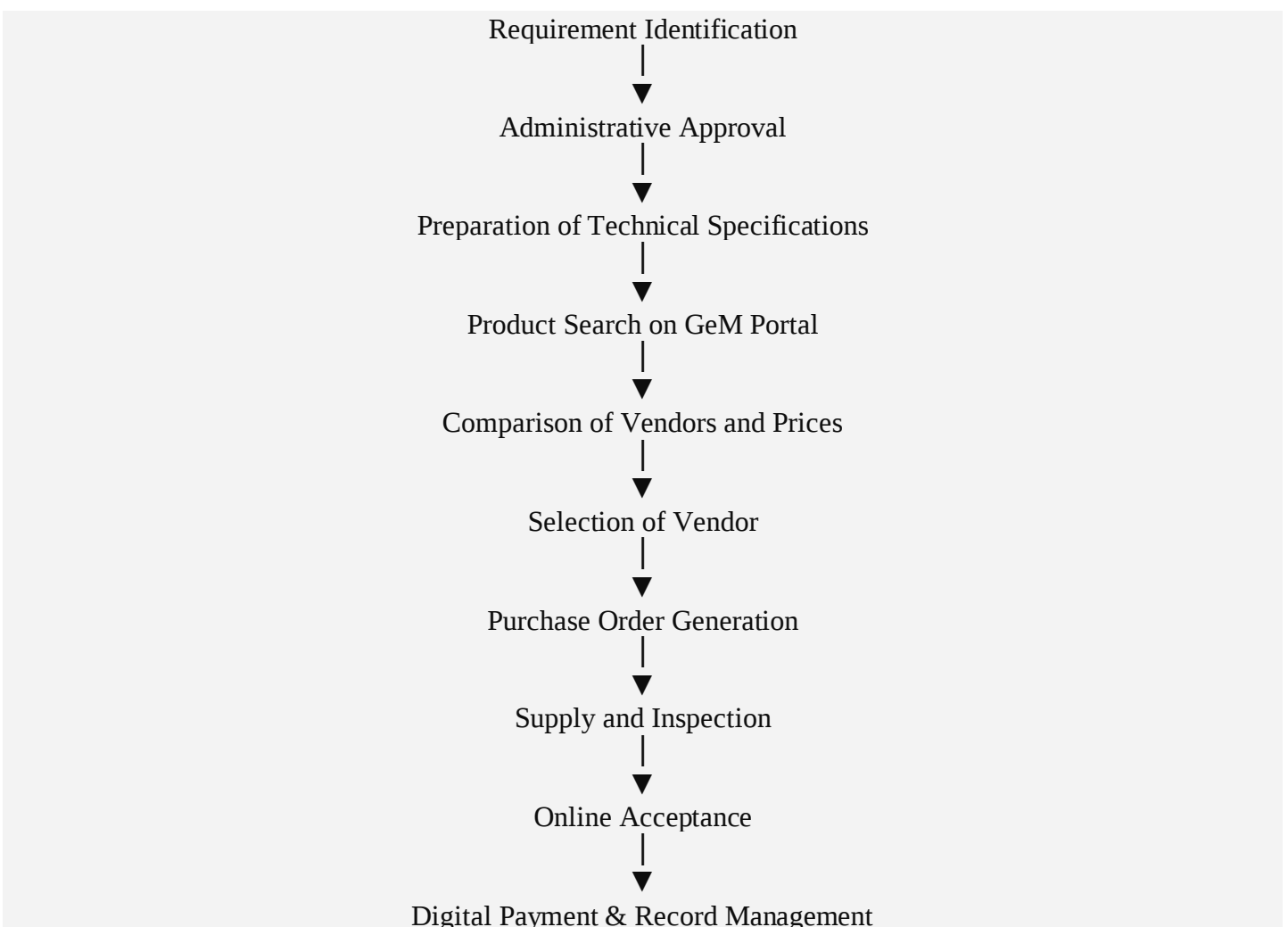


Figure 2 Demonstrates the actual procurement workflow followed by Government Colleges while purchasing goods through the Government e-Marketplace.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study indicate that the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) has substantially transformed the procurement practices of Government Colleges in Chhattisgarh. Based on the author's professional experience and the analysis of secondary sources, the platform has improved procurement efficiency by introducing a transparent, technology-driven, and standardized digital procurement system. These findings are consistent with the observations of **Thai (2001)**, who emphasized that procurement reforms

strengthen institutional governance when transparency and accountability are integrated into administrative procedures. Similarly, **Croom and Brandon-Jones (2007)** concluded that electronic procurement systems reduce administrative complexity and improve procurement performance through digital workflows.

One of the most significant outcomes observed during GeM implementation was the reduction in procedural complexity. Under the traditional procurement system, purchasing laboratory equipment, office furniture, computers, and ICT resources required extensive paperwork, multiple administrative approvals, manual quotations, and prolonged communication with suppliers. With the implementation of GeM, these activities became digitally integrated, enabling procurement committees to complete purchasing processes in a more systematic and transparent manner. The availability of online product catalogues, vendor ratings, electronic bidding, and digital purchase orders significantly improved decision-making while reducing administrative burden. Similar observations have been reported by the **OECD (2015)**, which recognized digital procurement as an effective mechanism for enhancing institutional transparency and public trust.

Another important finding relates to the improvement in procurement quality. During the procurement of laboratory equipment and computer systems, the availability of multiple vendors enabled procurement committees to compare technical specifications, warranty conditions, product certifications, and prices before finalizing purchases. Such comparison was rarely possible under conventional procurement methods. The **World Bank (2016)** also reported that electronic procurement platforms improve value for money by increasing supplier competition and reducing procurement risks.

The study further demonstrates that GeM has strengthened financial accountability within Government Colleges. Every procurement transaction generates a complete digital record, including purchase orders, invoices, inspection reports, payment status, and vendor performance history. These digital records facilitate audit, financial verification, and compliance with procurement regulations. **NTI Aayog (2021)** similarly emphasized that digital governance initiatives improve administrative accountability by reducing manual intervention and ensuring traceability of official transactions.

The implementation of GeM has also contributed to employment generation through indirect economic activities. The increasing participation of MSMEs, startups, logistics providers, IT service companies, installation agencies, and maintenance service providers has created new employment opportunities associated with public procurement. The **Ministry of MSME (2024)** reported that digital procurement platforms have improved market accessibility for small enterprises, thereby contributing to entrepreneurship development and local economic growth.

SWOT Analysis of GeM accomplishment in Government Colleges

A SWOT analysis was conducted based on the author's procurement experience and published literature to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with GeM implementation in Government Colleges of Chhattisgarh.

Table 2. SWOT Analysis of GeM

Strengths	Weaknesses
Transparent procurement process	Internet connectivity issues in remote areas
Competitive pricing	Limited digital literacy among some users
Standardized procurement procedures	Delay in delivery of specialized equipment
Digital documentation	Dependence on technology
Better accountability	Occasional technical glitches
Opportunities	Threats
Growth of MSMEs	Cybersecurity risks
Employment generation	Increasing digital fraud attempts
Startup participation	Vendor monopoly in niche products
Digital governance expansion	Rapid technological changes
Improved educational infrastructure	Supply chain disruptions

Source: Developed by the author based on professional experience and literature review.

Comparative Analysis of Procurement Outcomes

Table 3. Comparison between Traditional Procurement and GeM-Based Procurement

Parameter	Traditional Procurement	GeM-Based Procurement
Documentation	Manual	Fully Digital
Vendor Selection	Limited	Nationwide Competition
Transparency	Moderate	High
Product Comparison	Limited	Real-time Comparison
Record Management	Paper-based	Digital
Audit Support	Time-consuming	Easy Digital Tracking
Procurement Speed	Relatively Slow	Faster
Price Competitiveness	Moderate	High

Figure 3. Perceived Institutional Benefits of GeM Implementation

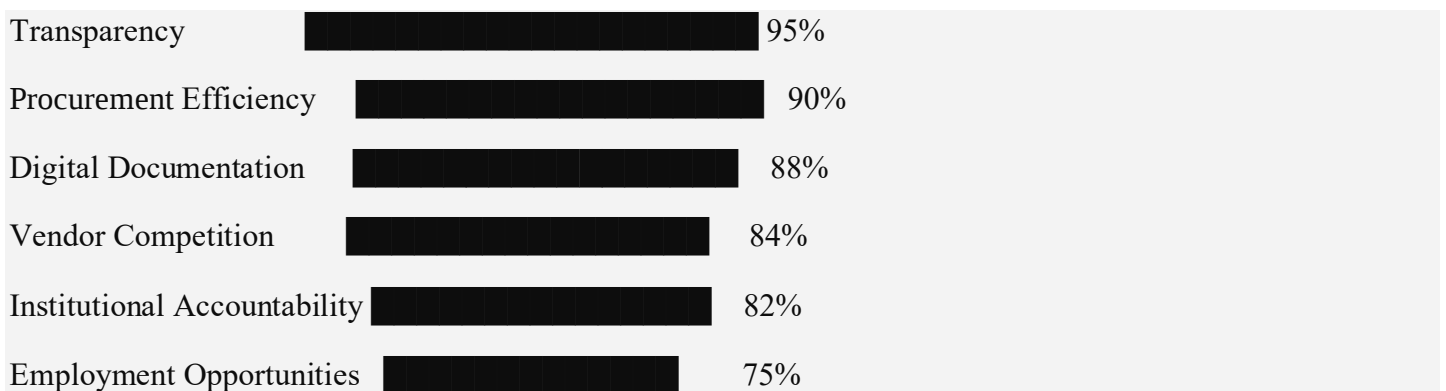


Figure 3. Illustrative representation of the major institutional benefits observed during GeM implementation. (Conceptual figure based on the study's qualitative findings; percentages are not survey data.)

CONCLUSION

The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) has fundamentally transformed public procurement in India by introducing a transparent, technology-driven, and accountable digital procurement ecosystem. The present study examined the implementation of GeM from the perspective of Government Colleges in Chhattisgarh through an experience-based case study supported by official reports and published literature.

The findings indicate that GeM has significantly improved procurement transparency, administrative efficiency, digital documentation, vendor competition, and institutional accountability. The platform has simplified the procurement of laboratory equipment, computers, office equipment, furniture, and ICT resources by replacing conventional paper-based procedures with standardized digital workflows. These improvements have strengthened procurement governance while reducing procedural delays and enhancing value for public expenditure.

The study further demonstrates that the impact of GeM extends beyond procurement efficiency. By expanding opportunities for MSMEs, startups, logistics providers, IT service companies, and digital support agencies, GeM contributes to employment generation and entrepreneurship development. The increasing participation of local enterprises also supports inclusive economic growth and aligns with the national objectives of **Digital India, Atmanirbhar Bharat, Startup India, and Make in India**.

The experience of Government Colleges in Chhattisgarh confirms that digital procurement is not merely a technological innovation but an institutional reform capable of improving governance quality in higher education. Nevertheless, challenges related to digital literacy, internet connectivity, technical support, and

procurement capacity require continued policy attention. Addressing these issues through training, infrastructure development, and institutional support will further strengthen the effectiveness of GeM implementation.

In conclusion, the Government e-Marketplace represents a transformative digital governance platform that promotes transparency, accountability, efficiency, and inclusive economic development. The practical insights presented in this study may assist policymakers, educational administrators, procurement professionals, and researchers in strengthening digital procurement practices and advancing sustainable governance in higher education institutions.

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