

## A Study on the Comparative Analysis of Common Service Centres from J&K and Kerala.

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### Abstract

Envisioned to function as frontline delivery points of g2c (government to citizen) services, Common service Centre is an ambitious 1.2 us billion-dollar project under the NeGP (National e-governance plan). Studies have shown that the CSC's had a remarkable impact on the government to citizen services on multiple parameters. Branded as Akshaya Centres in Kerala, CSC's from the state are figuring at the top across the country when it comes to performance while as Khidmet Centres from J&K are figured as average performers. This study is about the comparative analysis of centers from both states with an objective to investigate that what and how makes centers from one state as star performers while as from other as average. For the purpose of the study secondary data sources were consulted. This was followed by comparison of selected performance parameters. Findings showed Centres from Kerala way ahead to Centres from J&K

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### Keywords:

Telecentres;  
Electronic governance;  
G2c;  
Common Service Centres;  
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E-readiness;  
B2c;

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### 1. Introduction

One of the most important strategies for sustainable development in the twenty-first century has been identified as the use of information and communication technologies in the delivery of g2c services (Nations 2010). Governments all over the world are investing extensively in e-governance with the goal of making information and services easily accessible to their citizens (Estevez and Janowski 2013). The United Nations has spent 216 million USD on e-governance initiatives globally. Disintermediation, which can only be produced by establishing direct ties between the government and its constituents, can accomplish this. To establish direct, affordable, and accessible linkages with the people, the Indian government launched a US \$10 billion plan to establish more than 15,000 common service centres around the country (Anon n.d.-c). Many G2C and B2C services were to be front-end delivered through these Centers. The CSC scheme, which was approved in 2006, had a project budget of 5742 crores over a four-year term (1649 from government and 4093 from private entities) (Anon n.d.-b). The federal and state governments each contribute a portion of the government's share. These Centers were launched as a public-private partnership setup with the following three structure

- i) VLE: A village-level entrepreneur who would be adequately trained and chosen to manage a shared service centre that would be established in the group of five to six villages.
- ii) SCA: A service centre organization in charge of managing VLEs and CSCs on a state-by-state basis.
- iii) SDA: The State Development Agency will be in charge of the scheme's general operation and will be supervising the work of the SCA. The primary objective of setting up of common services centres

wasto offer a range of services to the citizens at their doorsteps. The services can broadly be categorized into G2c and Bc2 services.

**Table 1: - Services Originally Envisioned to be offered through Common Service Centres (Anon n.d.-c)**

Type of Service	Service to be offered
G2c (Government to citizen services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ration Card Registration</li> <li>• Nationality Certificate.</li> <li>• Caste Certificate.</li> <li>• Annual Income Certificate</li> <li>• Death/Birth Certificate</li> <li>• Land/Property Records</li> <li>• Passport Services</li> <li>• UID (Aadhar)</li> <li>• Online RTI</li> </ul>
B2c (Business to Consumer services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Payment of Bills (Electricity, telephone, Mobile, Internet)</li> <li>• Booking railway and airline tickets.</li> <li>• E-commerce services.</li> <li>• Long distance Video calls.</li> <li>• Opening of Bank Accounts.</li> <li>• DTP, Printing, Internet Browsing</li> </ul>
Other Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial Inclusion.</li> <li>• Online Education and Course Content.</li> <li>• Agricultural Services</li> </ul>

Statistics show that although some Indian states have been aggressive and supportive of the initiative, in some areas it is rarely proving to be effective on the ground because of a lack of support from the local government. There are however been cases where the SCA has made changes to the plan and those changes have led to an overwhelmingly positive response from the intended audience. The states where the programme has most effectively served the intended aim are Kerala and Gujarat (DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY Government of India n.d.).

According to the most recent statistics, there have been more than 133000 Common Service Centers established to date. The average daily volume of transactions through CSCs has surpassed the 59000 mark (May 2018)(Anon n.d.-b). This suggests that India has more operational Telencentres than the rest of the globe combined. According to studies, connectivity problems and a lack of G2C services are the main challenges faced by common service centres. Lack of literacy and VLE training have also come to light as major roadblocks to the effectiveness of the common service Centers.

CSC's are Known as Khidmet Centers in Jammu and Kashmir. Out of the projected 1109 977 Centers are operational. The Jammu and Kashmir Bank was chosen to serve as the state's service centre agency for the programme in February 2009. There were 9170 transactions done through Khidmet Centers in March 2018 alone. It is pertinent here to mention that J&K received the designation of "least achiever" in the NCAER report on e-Readiness. J&K contains twenty-two districts and more than one crore residents.

By launching the district-wide e-literacy project "AKSHAYA" in 2002 with the goal of "Empowering Kerala," Kerala became the first state in India to take the lead in the widespread transformation of ICT. The project opened the path for Kerala to become the first state with an e-literate population (Alathur, Vigneswara Ilavarasan, and Gupta 2016). Akshaya Centers have distinguished themselves as the best network of efficient Common Service Centers (CSC) designed to offer the general people a wide range of G2C, G2B, and B2C services all under one roof. There are currently 2662 Akshaya e-centers located throughout Kerala, with at least two of them located in each Panchayat. Akshaya serves as a platform for increased socioeconomic progress, information accessibility, and quality of life by introducing ICT to all societal segments (Bhatnagar et al. 2007).

## 2. Objectives of the Study.

There are a number of studies which have rated Kerala as one of the best performer states of the CSC's scheme. The objective of the study is to compare the CSC's from J&K and Kerala on the basis of performance. This will eventually help figuring out best practices for the below average performer states like Jammu and Kashmir.

### 3. Research Methodology

Since the nature of the study is exploratory, it is primarily based on the secondary data. The secondary data sources consulted for the purpose include: -

- i) Various research studies carried out by national and international agencies.
- ii) Policy document of National E-governance Plan and Common service centre scheme.
- iii) Data available on the government common service centre web-portal.

The comparative analysis of the two states was carried out on the following indicators.

- i) Services Offered.
- ii) Proportion of G2c services to B2c services.
- iii) No of common service centres with respect to population of the state.
- iv) No of transactions .
- v) Satisfaction of the VLE's
- vi) Gender Balance.
- vii) Infrastructure and support.
- viii) Awareness among masses.

This followed by identification and analysis of the causality factors influencing the performance of the above-mentioned parameters on which the performance was compared. Findings were produced through textual, tabular and pictorial representations.

### 4. Research Findings

Studies have shown that Jammu and Kashmir's Khidmet Centers lack credibility because of the limited availability of G2C services. The majority of state services have not been reengineered to be E-governance driven, which is the fundamental cause of the problem. The same has led to a situation where Khidmet centres are more frequently used as B2C delivery centres than G2C delivery centres. Table 2 represents the set of services which were originally envisioned to be offered through the CSC's and the present status in the both states.

It is evident from the above that the services offered through the Khidmet centres in Jammu and Kashmir are largely B2c oriented whereas in Kerala a large number of G2C services are being offered through the Akshaya centres. It is also pertinent to mention here that the G2C services that are being offered in J&K are all central government related services which are otherwise also being offered through online portals directly to the citizens. This clearly indicates that there is a complete absence of state government-based citizen services through the common service centres. There remains the hard fact that the Khidmet centres in that case are functioning as mere browsing centres with hardly any government service being offered specially through them.

In order to ensure the credibility of service centres as well as the livelihood of village level entrepreneurs the state government and the state development agency (i.e. Jammu and Kashmir Bank) need to give a serious consideration to reserving some of the services limited to centres.

Branded as Akshaya centres in Kerala, the common service centres in the state have emerged as one of the best in the country. Akshaya centers to a very large extent have emerged as single window contact points for citizens to government services. It will be pertinent to mention that Akshaya centers helped Kerala government to collect 100% Vat returns.

**Table 2: - List of services that were envisioned to be offered through CSC's and their status in J&K and Kerala. (Anon n.d. a)**

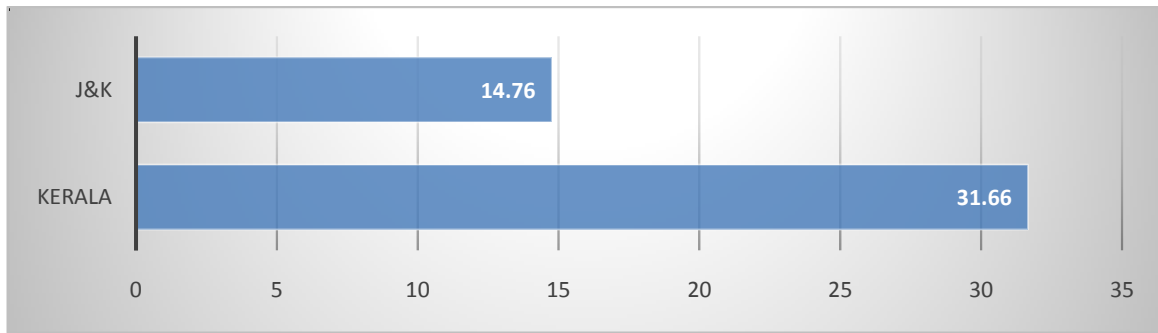
<i>Type of Service</i>	<i>Service to be offered as envisioned</i>	<i>Offered in J&amp;K</i>	<i>Offered in Kerala</i>
<i>G2c (Government to citizen services)</i>	•Ration Card Registration	No	Yes
	•Nationality Certificate.	No	Yes
	•Caste Certificate	No	Yes
	•Annual Income Certificate	No	Yes
	•Death/Birth Certificate	No	Yes
	•Land/Property Records	No	Yes
	•Passport Services	No	Yes
	•UID (Aadhar)	Yes	Yes
	•Online RTI	Partial	Yes
•Electoral Services	No	Yes	
<i>B2c (Business to Consumer services)</i>	•Payment of Bills (Electricity, telephone, Mobile, Internet)	Yes (Partial).	Yes
	•Booking railway and airline tickets.	Yes.	Yes
	•E-commerce services.	Yes	Yes
	•Long distance Video calls.	Yes	Yes
	•Opening of Bank Accounts.	Yes	Yes
<i>Other Services</i>	•DTP, Printing, Internet Browsing	Yes	Yes
	•Financial Inclusion.	Yes	Yes
	•Online Education Course Conten	Yes	Yes
	•Agricultural Services	NO	Yes

**Table 3: - Comparison of CSC's With Respect to Kerala and Jammu and Kashmir (Population Distribution/ no of Transactions/ %age of G2C Services. (National Informatics Centre 2018)**

<b>S. No</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Kerala</b>	<b>Jammu and Kashmir</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Population distribution per service Centre.</b>	<b>15818 persons</b>	<b>11316 persons</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Average Transactions per service Centre</b>	<b>25.85 (march 2015)</b>	<b>10.20 (march 2015)</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Percentage of G2c Services</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>25%</b>

**Table 4: - Comparison of CSC's With Respect to Kerala and Jammu and Kashmir (Actual Services being offered) (DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY Government of India n.d.)**

Kerala	J&K
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labor Welfare Board Data Entry,</li> <li>• Kiosk Banking</li> <li>• Unique Identification Number ,</li> <li>• E-Grantz,</li> <li>• Collection of subscription amount of NRK Welfare Fund,</li> <li>• Registration of APL/BPL families under RSBY,</li> <li>• e-Payment, Online,</li> <li>• e-Filing for Commercial Tax Department,</li> <li>• e-Ticketing,</li> <li>• Motor Vehicle Department services,</li> <li>• Aam Aadmi Bima Yojana (AABY) Registration,</li> <li>• e-Consignment</li> <li>• Payroll Administrative Repository of Kerala ,</li> <li>• Janamythri Police Station,</li> <li>• E-delivery of Admit Cards,</li> <li>• Nodal Centre for Malayalam Computing</li> <li>• Nodal Centre for Community web portal,</li> <li>• Public Grievances redressal</li> <li>• RELIS (Revenue Land Information System) Kerala</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loan Documentation</li> <li>• Utility Services</li> <li>• DTH Recharge</li> <li>• Financial Inclusion</li> <li>• Mobile Recharge</li> <li>• Distance Education</li> <li>• Computer Education</li> <li>• Solar Lantern Charging.</li> <li>• Solar Mobile charging</li> <li>• Common Banking Services</li> </ul>

**Fig A: - Population Distribution per CSC in Kerala and J&K (Anon n.d. b)****Fig B: - No of Transactions per CSC Per day in Kerala and J&K (Anon n.d.c)**

The aforementioned data shows unambiguously that while J&K has more CSC's per population as compared to Kerala, however Kerala's common service centres are comparably much more effective. There are a variety of G2C services available in Kerala through CSC's. Data sources unmistakably show that, aside from literacy level, Kerala's CSC programme has greatly profited from the state government's proactiveness. Furthermore Kerala is able to maintain a very high average of transactions when compared at the national level.

Common service centres in Jammu and Kashmir severely lack access to government services for citizens. In addition, village-level entrepreneurs claim that the meagre income they receive from operating a common service centre is not enough to cover their living expenses. The majority of village level employees agreed that, due to the minimal revenue produced, operating a common service centre cannot be one's main source of income. Village-level business owners attribute a lack of government to citizen services at common service centres as the main reason for the low level of income. In addition to the lack of government services for citizens, village-level business owners lamented the inadequate infrastructure. While basic equipment and connectivity were provided to Jammu and Kashmir's Common Service Centers, workers at the village level are having a very difficult time maintaining and upgrading their infrastructure needs because there is no such strategy or procedure in place.

Considering its national presence, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited was given the task of supplying internet connectivity to common service centres across the nation. However, the village level business owners are complaining of intolerable downtime, extremely high service costs, and inadequate technical support. After the introduction of 3G and 4G services in Jammu and Kashmir, the majority of common service centres have changed their Internet Service Providers. Internet disruptions are making things worse for common service centres, especially in the Kashmir valley. Common Service Centers in distant locations without 3G or 4G services still rely on Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited's pricey VSAT internet connectivity. Common service centres in J&K have also reported hours on downtime during the working hours due to power outages.

**Table 5: - Performance of CSC's in J&K for selected parameters.( Alathur et al. 2016)**

S. No	Performance Parameter	Value
1	Income Per Month/CSC (Average)	Rs 10000
2	Expenses per Month/CSC (Average)	Rs 3200
3	No of CSC's with Electricity Connection	100%
4	Overage Power outage during working. (Average in Hrs.)	3 hrs.
5	Percentage of CSC's who have reported of adequate backup	48%
6	Percentage of CSC's who have solar power.	13%
7	No of CSC's with three counters	57%
8	No of CSC; s with 256 kbps internet bandwidth or higher	60%
9	No of CSC's with internet leased line.	37%
10	No of CSC; s which were setup in a month's time	27%
11	No of VLE's who have reported of received any kind of training for running a common service Centre	90%
12	No of VLE's who have reported of being satisfied with the training	41%

**Table 6: - Performance of CSC's in Kerala for selected parameters. (Alathur et al. 2016)**

S. No	Performance Parameter	Value
1	Income Per Month/CSC (Average)	Rs 20000
2	Expenses per Month/CSC (Average)	Rs 8300
3	No of CSC's with Electricity Connection	100%
4	Overage Power outage during working. (Average in Hrs.)	1/h hr
5	Percentage of CSC's who have reported of adequate backup	100%
6	Percentage of CSC's who have solar power.	4%
7	No of CSC's with three counters	41%
8	No of CSC; s with 1 mbps internet bandwidth or higher	70%
9	No of CSC's with internet leased line.	100%
10	No of CSC; s which were setup in a month's time	37%
11	No of VLE's who have reported of received any kind of training for running a common service Centre	100%
12	No of VLE's who have reported of being satisfied with the training	49%

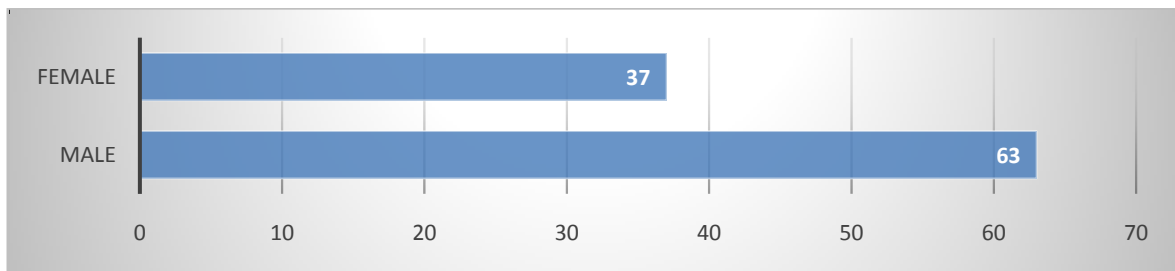
The financing of the centres, which required the VLEs to pay the costs of installing and maintaining the CSCs, posed one of the biggest difficulties for the initiative in its early phases. In response to this situation, the J&K bank introduced the J&K CSC Financing Plan, under which the VLEs are given a loan of Rs. 1.58 lakh at reduced interest rates for the purpose of establishing CSCs. Some of the difficulties encountered in

J&K for the execution of the CSC initiative can be attributed to the individual Departments' poor preparedness and the lack of an integrated approach. Several publications draw attention to the problem that, even three years later, government services are still not delivered through the Khidmet Service Centers. Till the rollout of G2C services through the Khidmet Centers, the government of Jammu and Kashmir proposed to provide revenue support to the VLEs throughout the state. Yet, a large number of J&K's self-employed VLEs lack adequate earnings as a result of the VLEs' failure to receive timely financial help to the full extent.

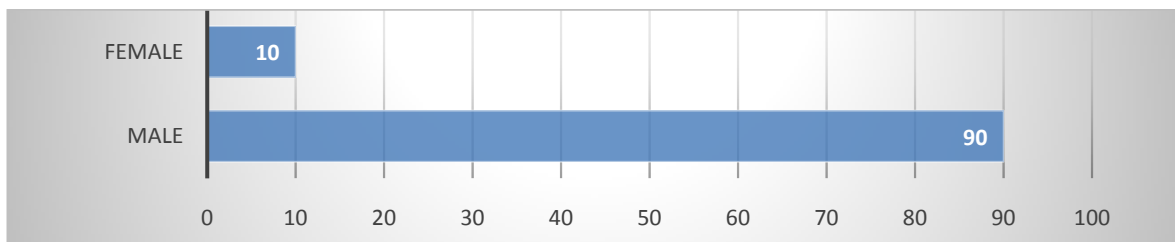
The Akshaya e-Kendra's operating in the State since 2002 are responsible for the e-Government initiative's success. The Akshaya programme, which aimed to bridge the digital divide, was initially started to address the demand for e-literacy in the Malappuram district of Kerala after realizing the importance of e-literacy in the development process. In July 2005, the programme launched its second phase, with an emphasis on making G2C, G2G, B2B, and B2C services accessible to the general public. The Akshaya e-Kendra's were initially established, as was said above, with the intention of providing computer education to at least one member of every family in the state. But, over time, they have expanded to provide a variety of services to the people of Kerala.

Now, Kerala can claim of having 2,662 Akshaya e-Kendra's, almost 2,328 of which are found in rural regions and offer both public and private services in one location. 14 To service 1,500–3,000 homes in the state, these centres are situated 2–4 kilometers from each home. E-Krishi, educational programmes, e-literacy, and "entegramam" are some of the other services offered by Akshaya in addition to these. According to a government order issued in February 2005, the programme is being carried out by the Kerala State IT Mission with functional autonomy. 15 The Kerala CSC initiative is managed by the Akshaya State Cell, which serves as the service centre agency. The Akshaya Model, whose slogan is "Gateway to Opportunities," has paved the path for the improvement of Kerala's IT preparedness while also enabling the people to become more economically and digitally empowered. The Akshaya initiative's substantial internet penetration and Kerala's high literacy rate have made it simple to facilitate the state's extensive CSC network. The development of the Akshaya e-Kendra's in the state has been greatly influenced by the Local Self Government Institutions, one of Kerala's distinctive qualities.

**Fig D: - Gender Ratio of VLE's Kerala**

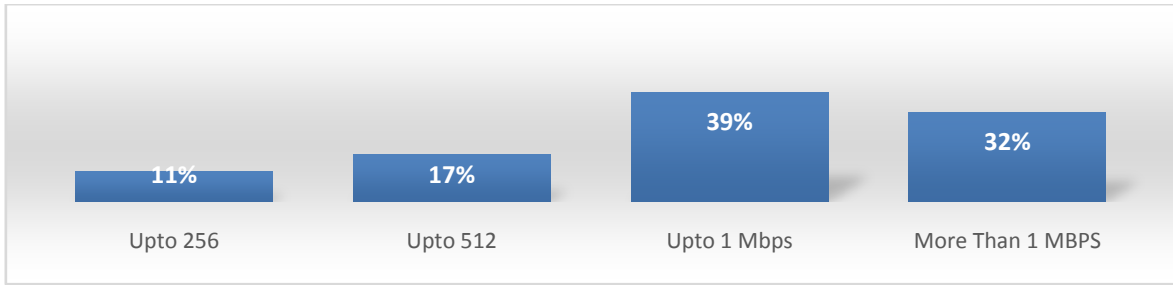


**Fig E: - Gender Ratio of VLE's in J&K**

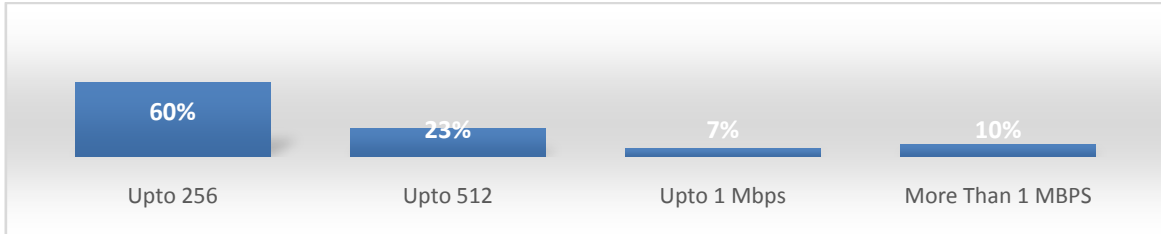


**Fig F: Internet Bandwidth of CSC's in Kerala**



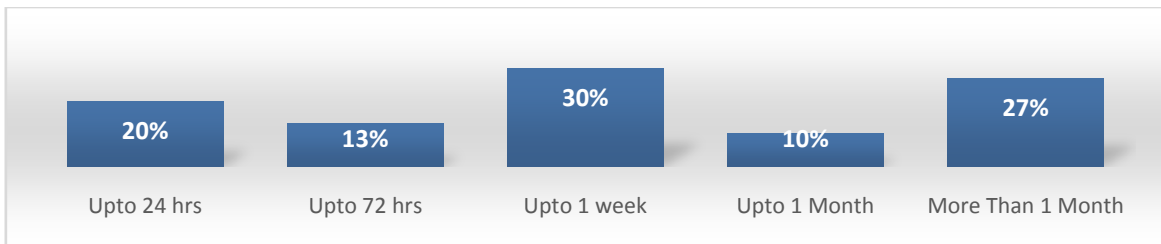


**Fig G: - Internet Bandwidth of CSC's in J&K**



(Fig D-G). (DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY Government of India n.d.)

**Fig H: - Time taken by SCA to resolve the complaint raised by the CSC/VLE in J&K**



The nature of business at any CSC makes internet backbone of its business process. In J&K only 17% of CSC's have 1 Mbps or more of internet bandwidth compared to 70% of Kerala. This obviously will enable CSC's in Kerala to operate seamlessly. Furthermore, the SCA in Kerala has proven itself to be more proactive when compared to SCA of J&K. It is pertinent to mention that the whopping 88% of the VLE's in Kerala have reported that their complaint was resolved with 24 hrs. of the complaint while as 27% of the of VLE's from J&K reported that their complaints are pending from more than a month.

**Fig I: - Time taken by SCA to resolve the complaint raised by the CSC/VLE in Kerala**

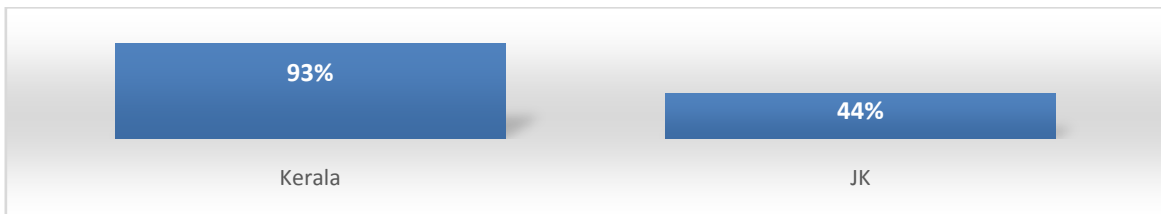


Fig H-I (National Informatics Centre 2018)

Kerala as a state have been successful in sensitizing the citizens about the CSC's and the available services through them. A sponsored by Ministry of IT, Govt of India reported that 93% of the population is aware of CSC's in Kerala while as the figure remains below 45 in J&K.

**5. Conclusion and Suggestions.** Findings clearly indicate that the CSC's in Kerala have the overwhelming support of the state government which is sole reason of the plethora of G2C services available to citizens

through the CSC's in the state. This availability of a number of G2C services to CSC's enable VLE's to execute more and more transactions per day which eventually leads to decent income and sustainability. Khidmet centres in J&K on the other hand are more financial inclusion driven. This is primarily because of the SCA in J&K being a bank itself. The lack of the G2C services in J&K through CSC's is a major causality and root cause of the all the shortcomings. Up to this point, common service centres in Jammu and Kashmir have provided more B2c services than G2c services.. The G2C service market in Jammu and Kashmir still has a lot of untapped potential, which presents the Khidmet centres there with their greatest opportunity. If offered, Khidmet centres will become the state's main hub for e-governance services. Most government systems in Jammu and Kashmir will need to undergo a thorough reengineering in order for e-governance to be practical. Since the Kashmir Valley is renowned for its locally produced goods, which range from agriculture to Kashmiri arts. A fantastic potential exists for the common service centres to provide web hosting and E-Commerce services so that the state's small- to-large-scale businesses can sell their goods online and connect with customers directly. Due to the lack of state services, it is important to actively supervise the common service centres to prevent them from being taken over by B2C businesses. The procedure for the assigned fund has not been functional, as seen by the scheme's delayed funding, as of recent years. The Kashmir valley's common service centres are severely affected by connectivity problems throughout the winter. The service centre agency faces a hurdle in offering the common service centres different, yet reasonably priced, connectivity options. In addition to B2C and G2C services, there are still undiscovered markets in fields like online education, share markets, and agriculture. The limited income of the entrepreneurs at the village level may force them to hunt for additional sources of funding. If the common service centres are truly become the one-stop shop for governance services, the state will make significant progress in terms of improving its ranking on the national corruption index. The largest problem in maintaining and thriving Common Service Centers in Jammu and Kashmir appears to be the lack of state G2C services. As a result of the lack of government-to-citizen services, Khidmet centres have transformed into more B2c delivery locations than G2c. The primary reason for the lack of G2C services continues to be the fact that the backend governance services are not electronically controlled, which necessitates a thorough reengineering of the procedure. The main goals of serving as front-end delivery locations for G2C services have not yet been met. The Common Service Centers' involvement in services has significantly reduced the price and time associated with receiving a service. To capitalize on the possibility for the state's common service centres, adequate measures are needed.

Around the nation, but particularly in south India, common service centres excel at providing public services. Jammu and Kashmir's state government and the National Informatics Center will need to play a significant role in the digitization of public services because the region has a very tiny footprint of digital electronic governance services. The amount of government services provided to citizens through electronic governance in Jammu and Kashmir is extremely minimal when compared to other states in the country with comparable populations and other criteria. The Jammu and Kashmir government may use PPP mode to digitize public services, as the National Electronic Governance Plan promotes PPP form for rolling out Electronic Governance services. Several states in India have benefited from the entry of private players. The common service centres can then be used to deliver the public services based on electronic governance, increasing their transaction volume and elevating their status. This will make it easier for individuals to access public services, especially in remote areas, and it will encourage the development of well-paying jobs for village workers. For the purpose of maintaining the technical infrastructure at the common service centres, the service centre agency and the state development agency must adopt a comprehensive strategy and policy. Moreover, precautions must be taken to avoid power and internet outages. The delivery of public services can be significantly improved via common service centres by enhancing accessibility, timeliness, cost, etc. Despite the exponential rise in mobile phone and smartphone adoption, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir, they can also offer jobs to competent youth.

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