

Users' Perception and Satisfaction in Public Service Delivery through Union Digital Centers in Bangladesh: A Case Study on Gobra, Gopalganj Areas



Sumona Akter¹, Md. Nasir Uddin², Falguny Hakim Himu³

ABSTRACT: This study intends to assess users' perceptions and satisfaction by reviewing and analyzing how the government delivers information and services to rural citizens through Union Digital Centers (UDCs). The era of information and communication technology (ICT) has brought about a great deal of change by playing a crucial role in the provision of governmental services. In order to strengthen local government systems and ensure that e-services are available at the doorsteps of the public, the government has taken a novel step with the Union Digital Center (UDC). Union digital centers are brand-new one-stop service locations that are open in all 4,554 Union Parishad locations across the nation. The current Bangladeshi administration is aware of this and has established an ICT-based Union Digital Center. The present government of Bangladesh has realized this fact of ICT and has introduced ICT based Union Digital Centre (UDC), district and upazila web portals to provide quicker and smoother services to the people for creating "Digital Bangladesh". Both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies were used in this study. Data were collected via a questionnaire from a purposive, quota-based sample drawn from the population of both service providers and receivers in Bangladesh who work for UDCs. In order to ensure good service delivery, it is advised that efforts be made to raise awareness and provide training and improve condition of offices. Although this study's and my research report's conclusions have substantial limitations, they also give me ideas for further investigation.

KEYWORDS: Union Digital Centre, e-services, digital Bangladesh, rural development, citizen participation, citizen satisfaction.

I. INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh really is a growing country with a big populace in south Asia. Most of the people definitely are uneducated, terrible and generally live in rural areas. They do no longer particularly have a generally great kind of deal scope for getting government services and information right and in a kind of timely fashion, or so they actually thought. People in rural areas really have to definitely go to distinct governmental workplaces quite a particularly few times for some important and pretty integral definitely basic services like-land records, for all intents and purposes more than a particularly few authorities allowances, land files, pretty contrary to popular belief. That's why Government wants easy access to the public. The present government has set up a single stop service. The Union Digital Centre is located at Union level. Improving the accessibility to government services is the main purpose. It makes easy to access accurate and latest information for people in rural areas. Implementation of UDCs can play an important role to promote the framework. There is e-government at the local government level. Electronic services ("e-services") can bring delivery closer to citizens so less money is spent on transportation and less time is spent waiting in lines. UDC is one of the significant examples of ICT based e-services at the local area of Bangladesh. In this regard, the present government has already set up one stop service centre at Union level which is known as Union Digital Centre (UDC) for the purpose of improving the accessibility to government services. ICT based UDC services are time and cost effective, reliable and smooth which gives rural people easy access to accurate and latest government services. Since the beginning of the establishment of UDCs, these institutions are playing an important role by providing different types of government, commercial and information services explained by Rahman and Bakshi (2016). So, successful implementation of UDCs can play an important and the vital role to promote the framework of e-government at the local government level in Bangladesh. As a result, people of local are now can save both money and time. UDCs have brought positive changes in the life of rural people (A2I 2015). But there are some challenges faced by the UDCs explained by Kumar and Kim (2017). This study tried to identify the challenges as well as users' perception & satisfaction with the UDCs services which will play an important role for further study and development.

1.2 Objective of the study

This study basically aims to evaluate the citizen's satisfaction on the e-service delivery of union digital center (UDC) at the grassroots level in Bangladesh. The specific objectives of the study are:

Users' Perception and Satisfaction in Public Service Delivery through Union Digital Centers in Bangladesh: A Case Study on Gobra, Gopalganj Areas

1. To know institutional efficiency for providing GOB public e-services through UDC.
2. To know the users' overall perception and satisfaction with UDC services.
3. To know the effectiveness of UDC in promoting e-government by delivering e-services to the people for changing rural life and development.
4. To identify what types of challenges faced by Union Digital Center (UDC) at the countryside of Bangladesh and to recommend possible solutions for ensuring efficiency of UDC services.

1.3 Research Question

- a. How effectively and efficiently does UDC supply its services to its customers?
- b. Does UDC affect how citizen services are delivered?
- c. Can the UDC program bridge the service delivery gap between the government and the general public?
- d. What is the user's perception & satisfaction with the UDC service delivery?

II. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Bangladesh's authorities recognize the industry's strategic importance and actually unique e-governance as a "thrust sector" in 1997, which particularly is fairly significant. If we wish to paint a picture of Bangladesh's entry into the digital era, we must mostly begin in the late 1990s. E-Governance, which in kind of particular strives to improve proper governance and kind of strengthen the democratic process, can also additionally be considered as a means of facilitating facts access, freedom of speech, better fairness, efficiency, product development, and definitely social inclusion in a major way identified by Alam and Ahmed (2008). UDC actually is a government initiative to generally promote technology exploration across the country. Empirical generally researches literature in this actually specific subject specifically has not evident exclusively very other than a really few limited areas; thus, the scope of literature covers some creating countries of South Asia regions in a big way. For example, the e-governance system made a amazing pathway of altering the mass digitalization system in the city and rural areas of Bangladesh through authorities schemes in a subtle way examined by Hoque and Sorwar (2015). Saleheen (2015) explained that there is an attempt to introduce a mechanism in international locations like Bangladesh with huge populace for imparting better services. This trouble can be solved by introducing UDC that would enable citizens to get right of entry to authorities facts and provider effectively. In respect of 1/3 world international locations like Bangladesh, the thinking of UDC is new and innovative. In the twenty first century, an integral position is played by the use of facts and communication technological know-how due to globalization. Vision 2021 was declared by the government in election manifesto for organizing a modern and imaginative country. According to the UDC Census, over 3.91 million people, including 949,120 women, received information and services directly from UDCs in 2013. People think that government employees routinely ask for information that is not necessary for making decisions. Using the UDC, people can save time and effort by only seeking the files they need to make decisions Khadiza et al. (2020). According to Saleheen (2020), the success of UDC is based on the combined efforts of UDC enterprises, Union Parishad (UP) officials, and various surrounding authorities, which is very important. According to what they believed, managing the UDC effectively required great assistance from the UP and local authorities. In terms of very appropriate e-service delivery in rural Bangladesh, entrepreneurs, UP officials, and local government officers all essentially play a critical role in making fairly sure the efficient operation of UDCs.

2.2 Concept of user's perception & satisfaction in public service delivery through UDC

Bangladesh is working to achieve digitization by integrating modern technologies into the corporate and public sectors. The government created online services for all offices, the computer council, Access to Information (A2I), and UDCs in all Union Parishad in order to transform Bangladesh into a digital nation by 2021. Different government departments have already implemented e-filing, digital signature, district e-services centers, and other digital services (e-TIN, e-passport service, e-tendering, e-registration, e-driving license, e-voter ID card, e-birth registration, and so on). The ICT Policy 2009 also reflected the government's vision to establish a "Digital Bangladesh" by the year 2021. The definition of satisfaction is the act of having one's wants, expectations, or pleasures met. Government policy and actions can be considered to have a direct impact on how satisfied citizens are with public institutions and services. The findings of satisfaction surveys can tell us a lot about how well governments are performing both in terms of citizens' actual experiences and expectations. Citizens have a set of rights and responsibilities, including the right to participate in decisions that affect public welfare. Citizen participation is needed for receiving services from the UDC. Citizen participation is the process of applying and receiving services that should be a kind of positive interaction. It is closer to "customer engagement" in the marketing field through self-service or cooperation with service personnel where customers actively participate and helps to create service value thus reducing costs, and get psychological satisfaction. In this paper, citizen participation can be defined as interaction and cooperation with service providers by providing relevant information, materials, time, and other resources that will help to assist the UDCs in providing complementary services and create appropriate service values.

Users' Perception and Satisfaction in Public Service Delivery through Union Digital Centers in Bangladesh: A Case Study on Gobra, Gopalganj Areas

III. METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive study aimed at elaborating the user's perception and satisfaction with UDC e-service delivery across the rural area in Bangladesh. The questionnaire was prepared for data collection from the citizen who got services from UDC. The study uses both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The study is classified as quantitative since it uses statistics to attempt to comprise the process, and the data is collected via the use of questionnaires. Information gathered through informal interviews with officials acting as service providers, as well as the qualitative research use words rather than statistics. In order to analyze the data descriptive statistics, document analysis, and thematic content analysis techniques have been followed.

Sample Size: In this research, the total sample size was 110 (one hundred & ten). Respondents were chosen from two strata and these are service providers and service receivers. The respondents are as follows-

Table 3.1: Respondents from different areas

| Research Area | Categories of Respondents | Number of Respondents |
|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Gopalganj, Gobra | Service seekers | 100 |
| | Service renders | 10 |
| Total | | 110 |

Research tools: Data for this study were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was gathered using a variety of data collection techniques. The primary data was obtained using a structured questionnaire from significant respondents and an interview with a service provider utilizing a series of questions. Face-to-face interviews with respondents from UDCs in the Gopalganj district were used to collect the data. Most respondents from service recipients had no formal education or only a minimal amount. I had to request the assistance of UDC entrepreneurs and authorities in this regard. I usually needed to apply different motivating strategies to collect responses from respondents. Secondary data was gathered from a variety of sources, data came from content analysis of research articles, textbooks, daily newspapers and numerous websites.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

TABLE 4.1: Services available in UDC & frequency of taking services by the people

| Serial no | Name of UDC services | Frequency | Percentages |
|-----------|--|-----------|-------------|
| 01 | Birth registration | 96 | 96% |
| 02 | Telemedicine and health related information | 12 | 12% |
| 03 | Electricity bill | 23 | 23% |
| 04 | Voter ID Card and election related information | 68 | 68% |
| 05 | Land registration, mutation, record, survey etc related information | 41 | 41% |
| 06 | Agriculture related information and services | 18 | 18% |
| 07 | Mobile Banking service | 13 | 13% |
| 08 | Weather, public exam and admission related information and result | 6 | 6% |
| 09 | Family planning and employment related information | 17 | 17% |
| 10 | Trade license | 11 | 11% |
| 11 | Computer training | 0 | 0% |
| 12 | Computer compose, printing, scanning, e-mail, video conference, communication etc. | 28 | 28% |
| 13 | Various types of government form download | 13 | 13% |
| 14 | Passport application and related information | 24 | 24% |
| 15 | others | 9 | 9% |

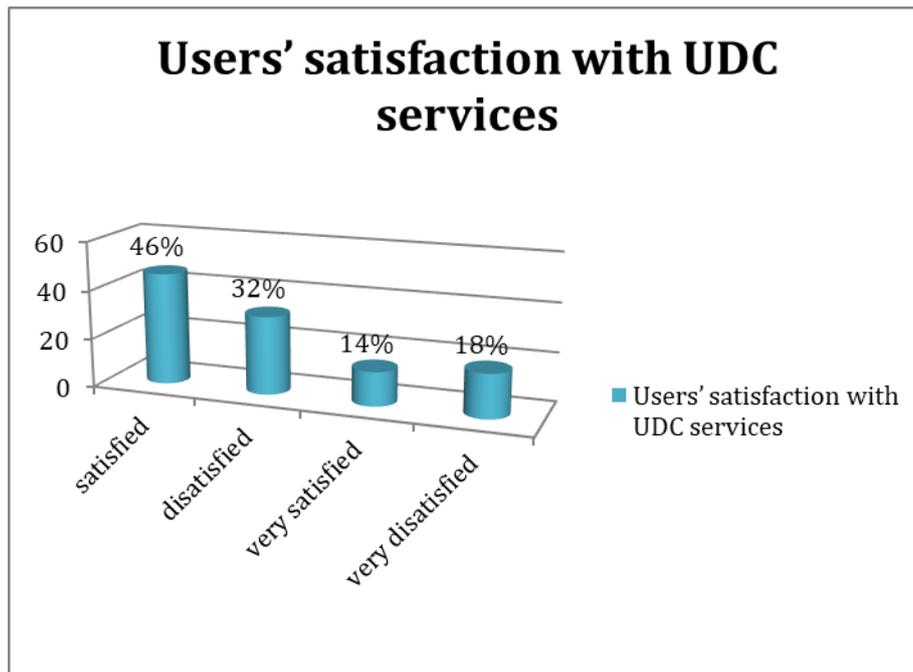


Figure-1: Users' satisfaction with UDC services

According to figure-1, it has been found that the service seekers are mostly satisfied with the UDC services which are 46% in number. But there also have 32% respondent who expresses their dissatisfaction with the UDC services. There are only 14% respondents who are very satisfied but also 18% respondents who are very dissatisfied with UDC services.

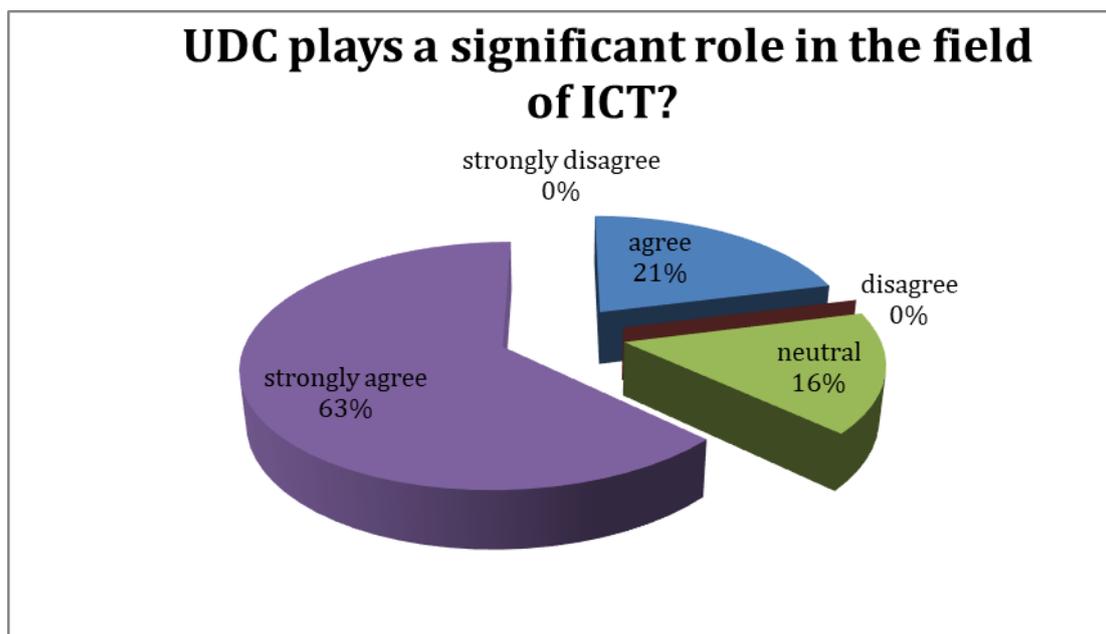


Figure-2: Perception of citizen about role of UDC in the field of ICT

From figure-2, it has been found that 21% respondents agree about the statement UDC plays a significant role in the field of ICT. There are found no respondents who disagree with the statement. About 16% respondents are neutral with this statement. Approximately, 63% respondents are strongly agree with that UDC plays a significant role in the field of ICT and there has no respondents who go with the strongly disagree option.

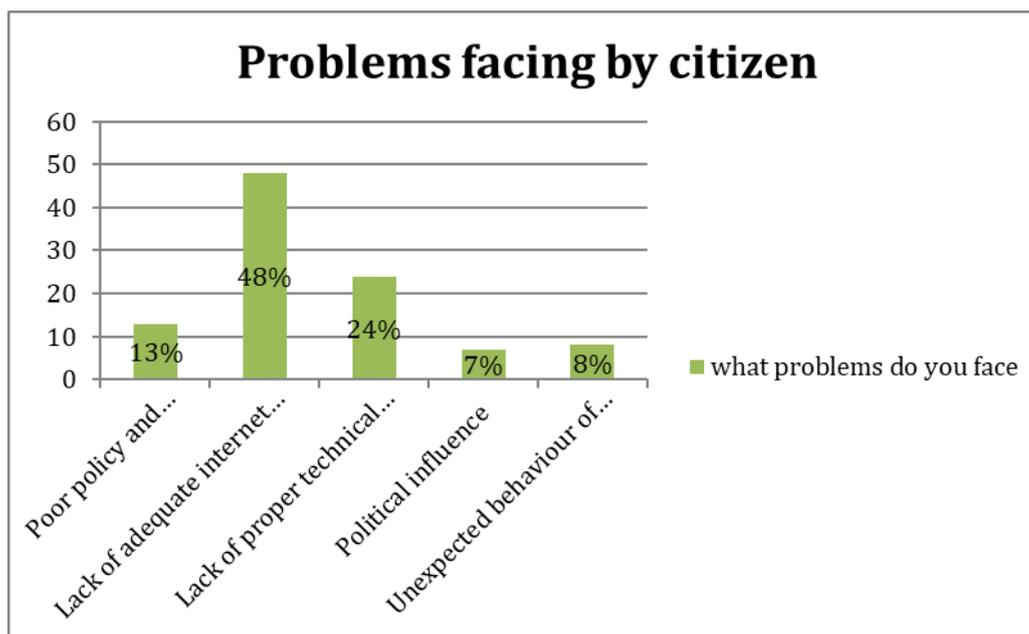


Figure-3: Problems facing by citizen in the time of taking services from UDC

From the above figure-3, respondents agree that they have to face many problems when they go to take services. 13% respond that they face poor policy and regulatory framework, 48% respondents face there has lack of adequate internet quality, 24% face proper technical skills of officials, 7% face political influence and 8% respondents face unexpected behavior of service providers.

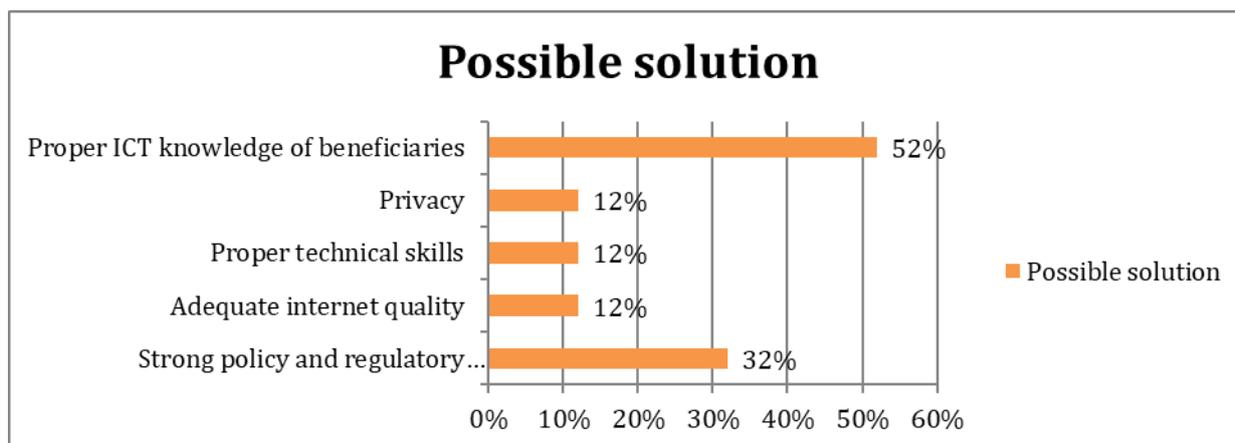


Figure-4: Possible solution to mitigate the problems which hinder the service delivery process.

From the above figure, the UDC officials give their opinion to remove the problems they face. Almost all of the respondents agree that there need to establish strong policy and regulatory framework, adequate internet quality, proper technical skills, privacy of officials and proper ICT knowledge of beneficiaries.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 General Findings

The respondents of the research, both the UDC officials (service provider) and the citizens (service seekers), were mostly in agree with the state of general availability for providing of e-governance services through Union Digital Center. Both groups commented on the fact that the general response to the e-services is fairly high. Their assessment the obstacles to accessing e-services are a big point of agreement between their opinions. There are the two main obstacles preventing the development of e-services, the first one is lack of infrastructure and equipment and training, and the second one is a lack of a policy and regulatory framework in Bangladesh, as well as a lack of an appropriate implementation mechanism.

5.2 Specific Findings

UDCs offer a variety of services related to public and private organizations to rural people using ICTs. The key focus of UDC is to provide government information and e-services. At first, the research question of the study is about the perception and

Users' Perception and Satisfaction in Public Service Delivery through Union Digital Centers in Bangladesh: A Case Study on Gobra, Gopalganj Areas

satisfaction of the rural people toward the UDC services which they may get through UDC offices. For this research question, the primary data were analyzed with the analytical framework. Majority of the people are satisfied with the UDC services and it is noticeable. They are used to going in the offices to take services and they are benefited. They also identified some problems which are namely poor policy and regulatory framework, lack of adequate internet quality, lack of proper technical skills, political influence and unexpected behavior of service providers.

The study reveals that the technical skill level of the officials working at the office is not so good. Their technical skill is considerably low. Even, most of the officials do not have adequate training about ICT technology & relevant knowledge. The skilled & expertise level of officials was not found to be noted. Even the condition of some basic equipment such as- computer, printer wasn't all right. The internet speed also poor in the office. Many service receivers also haven't proper knowledge about UDC service and their behavior also unexpected. Because of these factors, the officials are not able to provide services in proper way.

As officials are aware about the ICT law & rules which made them concern about their responsibilities. They also assured that people can believe them and they are available in their office time for providing e-services which they promised. But most of them don't have any personal computer at home which create problem to render services through online. Moreover, significant percentage of the officials has very low internet connection at their office as well as home. So, the internet connection may not satisfactory to them.

The laws are not strong enough to force government employees to use e-governance tools and methods. The government's limited capacity to provide necessary facilities is one potential cause of this inefficiency. After all, the government cannot mandate ICT adoption without supplying the required infrastructure support. Whatever the cause, Bangladesh's entire legislative and regulatory framework for the implementation of e-governance falls well behind expectations.

Incentives are indeed expected to play a crucial role to ensure the implementation's success by eliciting voluntary efforts from the officials. In the context of this study, it was found that there is no incentive mechanism that can encourage the officials to exert more effort to ensure the success of the implementation of e-governance. ICT expertise does not directly improve an official's chances of advancement, and those who put extra effort into e-governance initiatives do not receive any extra advantages (financial or otherwise). Therefore, it may be said that the incentive system for enhancing e-governance endeavors is woefully inadequate. The attitude of the implementing staff is very important whenever there is a question of implementation.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section discusses the most important policy implications what needs to be done in order to overcome the hindrances to e-governance implementation based on the major findings of the study. A few recommendations are made based on the officials, citizens and the interviewees.

1. The government should first focus on creating and enhancing the infrastructures needed for the implementation of e-governance services. One such key area that needs to be given top priority is internet access.
2. The nationwide high speed internet infrastructure needs to be given considerable consideration in addition to finding a solution to the infrastructure issue. Bangladesh is currently only connected to one submarine cable. To ensure constant internet connectivity, the government should take the required steps to link with a different underwater cable.
3. It is necessary to update laws, rules, and regulations to meet the rising demand for technological developments.
4. The introduction of services related to agriculture and subsistence might be mandated by UDCs, and additional solar systems should be made available to business owners. Both the cost and the speed of the internet should be reduced.
5. The trainings should be as purposeful as feasible and shouldn't just be done for the sake of doing it. To accomplish that, the training's topics must be carefully chosen.

VII. CONCLUSION

The success of an initiative is significantly influenced by the perception and satisfaction of the people, so the UDC users were questioned about how they view the e-governance initiative with reference to e-services. The study of UDC users' view of the e-governance strategy focused on the elimination of the digital gap and contribution to effective governance. The study looked into how users perceived the effectiveness of the e-governance project in bridging the technology gap in terms of access to ICT, access to government information and services, access to ICT training, and a general reduction of the gap. The users' impression of their potential to make a positive difference was examined in relation to participation, accountability and transparency, the eradication of corruption, interaction, change, and general good governance. UDC is a rural, citizen-centric service center that can guarantee effective and quick e-service delivery from a single service point. From this service location, people in rural areas can obtain many quickly, affordably, and conveniently obtain government information. It offers up-to-date, reliable information and can guarantee simple access for people in rural areas. UDC services increase responsiveness, accountability, and transparency, which reduce corruption. Running this e-Government system efficiently in rural areas is currently a significant issue for us. In terms of

Users' Perception and Satisfaction in Public Service Delivery through Union Digital Centers in Bangladesh: A Case Study on Gobra, Gopalganj Areas

availability, accessibility, the type and extent of usage of e-governance instruments, and the preparation and provision of services for the requirements and convenience of citizens, the growth and status of e-government vary from country to country. More e-governance study should analyze UDC service-by-service analysis and the changes UDC introduction in Bangladesh has brought about.

REFERENCES

- 1) Access to Information (A2I) Program, (2015), 'Initiatives: Union Digital Centers (UDC)', Dhaka: Prime Minister's Office.
- 2) Alam, M., & Ahmed, K. (2008, December). E-governance initiatives in Bangladesh. In Proceedings of the 2nd international conference on Theory and practice of electronic governance (pp. 291-295).
- 3) R.K. Bakshi and T. A. R. I. Q. U. R. Rahman, Expansion of selected services through Union Digital Centers. *Copenhagen Consensus Center*, 2016.
- 4) M.R. Hoque and G. Sorwar, ICT based e-government services for rural development: a study of Union Information and Service Center (UISC) in Bangladesh. *The Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries*, 71(1), 2015, 1-19.
- 5) S. Kumar, and Y.S. Kim, Key factors to be considered for making union digital centers (UDCs) sustainable in Bangladesh. *Asia Pacific Journal of Business Review*, 1(2), 2017, 89-105.
- 6) N.S. Khadiza, and M.N. Ullah, E-service delivery of union digital center in rural Bangladesh: A perspective analysis of client's satisfaction. *International Journal of Social Science*, 9(2), 2020, 75-84.
- 7) S.A. Saleheen, *Public service delivery-role of Union Digital Center (UDC) and impact on improving governance and development: a case study of Narayanganj District, Bangladesh* (Doctoral dissertation, BRAC University), 2015.
- 8) S.A. Saleheen, UDC and e-Service Delivery at Local Government Level in Bangladesh: A Framework for e-Government. *Bangladesh Journal of Public Administration*, 28(2), 2020, 67-92.



There is an Open Access article, distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution – Non Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits remixing, adapting and building upon the work for non-commercial use, provided the original work is properly cited.