

E-GOVERNMENT AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF DEVELOPING AND DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

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Abstract. This study explores the relationship between e-government implementation and citizen engagement by comparing practices in both developing and developed countries. Using a qualitative research approach, the study analyzes policy documents, government reports, and previous empirical studies to identify patterns, challenges, and opportunities in digital governance. The findings reveal that developed countries tend to achieve higher levels of citizen engagement due to advanced technological infrastructure, stronger institutional frameworks, and higher digital literacy among citizens. In contrast, developing countries often face barriers such as limited internet access, lack of trust in government institutions, and insufficient resources, which constrain the potential of e-government to foster participation. Nevertheless, innovative strategies such as mobile-based platforms and community-driven initiatives demonstrate that developing countries can leverage contextual strengths to enhance digital engagement. This research highlights the critical role of socio-political contexts, governance structures, and technological readiness in shaping the effectiveness of e-government initiatives. The study concludes that while the pathways differ, both developed and developing countries share a common goal: building inclusive, transparent, and participatory governance through digital transformation.

Keywords: E-Government, Citizen Engagement, Digital Governance, Developing Countries, Developed Countries

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology (ICT) has become one of the main catalysts for the transformation of modern governance (Sheoran & Vij, 2022). Digitalization in the public sector allows the government to provide services that are more efficient, transparent, and accessible to the public (Waheduzzaman & Miah, 2015; Kaya et al., 2020). The concept of e-government based on the use of ICT not only functions as an administrative tool, but also as a medium to strengthen accountability and build public trust through information disclosure. Governments that integrate ICT into the bureaucratic system are able to speed up service processes, reduce convoluted bureaucratic practices, and improve the quality of interaction between the government and citizens (United Nations, 2022; Alcaide-Muñoz et al., 2017).

In addition, the development of ICT in modern government also encourages the formation of more participatory governance. Through digital platforms, the community can play an active role in the decision-making process, convey

aspirations, and be involved in public policy formulation (Mutiarin et al., 2024). In developed countries, the use of ICT has evolved towards open government data and digital participation that strengthens the relationship between governments and their citizens (Kyakulumbye et al., 2019). Meanwhile, in developing countries, despite still facing obstacles in the form of digital divide and limited infrastructure, ICT remains a strategic opportunity to increase public involvement in government (Heeks, 2020; Bannister & Connolly, 2020). Thus, ICT plays a crucial role in shaping a new paradigm of government that is more responsive, inclusive, and adaptive to the needs of modern society (Khan et al., 2019; Kumar et al., 2018).

E-government plays an important role as a strategic instrument in increasing transparency and accountability in government administration (Sharma et al., 2014). Through the use of digital technology, the government can provide open access to public information, thereby reducing space for corrupt practices and increasing public trust in state institutions (Weerakkody et al., 2012). The online-based public service system also allows for stricter supervision of

bureaucratic performance, as every administrative process can be documented and traced digitally. This is in line with the idea that e-government creates a stronger checks and balances mechanism through data disclosure and public reporting systems (Bertot et al., 2010; Meijer, 2015).

In addition, e-government serves as a means to increase efficiency while strengthening citizen involvement in the government process (Sigwejo & Pather, 2016). Digitization of public services speeds up administrative processes, reduces operational costs, and improves service accessibility, especially for people in remote areas. Furthermore, e-government platforms provide a space for people to express their aspirations, participate in policy formulation (Benlahcene et al., 2024), and be involved in public decision-making. Thus, e-government is not only a managerial instrument for bureaucratic efficiency, but also a medium of democratization that encourages citizen participation more broadly (OECD, 2016; Criado & Gil-García, 2019).

The success rate of e-government implementation in developed countries is generally higher than in developing countries, mainly because it is supported by adequate digital infrastructure, high levels of digital literacy, and strong institutional stability (Olphert & Damodaran, 2007). Developed countries such as South Korea, Denmark, and Estonia often rank at the top in the United Nations E-Government Development Index (EGDI) survey because they are able to integrate information technology in public services in a comprehensive and innovative manner. This success is influenced by technological readiness, the availability of competent human resources, and the existence of consistent public policies in encouraging digital transformation (United Nations, 2022; Gil-García & Luna-Reyes, 2016).

On the other hand, developing countries still face various obstacles in the implementation of e-government, including limited technological infrastructure, low internet penetration, inequality of digital access between regions, and lack of public trust in government institutions. Socio-economic factors also play a big role, where poverty and low digital literacy limit community participation in utilizing government digital services (Kaya et al., 2020). In addition, governance problems such as inefficient bureaucracy, weak regulations, and political instability also hinder the successful implementation of e-government. Nevertheless, some developing countries are showing progress through innovative digital initiatives, such as the implementation of mobile government services in Africa and Southeast Asia designed to reach people with limited internet access (Heeks, 2020; Dada, 2006).

Citizen engagement is a fundamental element in realizing participatory and responsive governance (Khan et al., 2019; (Elsheikh & Azzeh, 2014). Through the active participation of the community, the government can obtain more comprehensive input on public needs, so that the policies formulated become more relevant and in accordance with the aspirations of citizens (Ayesha et al., 2025). Citizen engagement also strengthens the legitimacy of the government because the decision-making process is not only

top-down, but involves contributions from various levels of society (Joshi & Islam, 2018). In the context of e-government, this engagement is facilitated through various digital platforms such as e-consultation, e-participation, and open government data, which allow citizens to be directly involved in the democratic process in a more inclusive manner (OECD, 2017; Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015).

In addition to improving the quality of policies, citizen involvement also plays an important role in building a government that is responsive to social, economic, and political changes. Digital participation allows governments to respond more quickly to public issues, while increasing accountability through real-time community monitoring mechanisms. In developed countries, citizen engagement through digital platforms has strengthened the practice of deliberative democracy, while in developing countries, public participation has great potential to improve the relationship between governments and citizens and reduce the gap in public trust. Thus, citizen engagement is not only an instrument of participation, but also the key to realizing governance that is adaptive, inclusive, and oriented to the needs of the community (Fung, 2015; Criado et al., 2017).

A number of previous studies have shown that the implementation of e-government has a significant contribution to increasing transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement, although the results vary between countries. Research conducted by the United Nations (2022) through the E-Government Survey revealed that developed countries such as Denmark, South Korea, and Estonia have succeeded in integrating digital governance comprehensively so that the level of public participation through online services has increased significantly. Meanwhile, research by Alcaide-Muñoz et al. (2017) shows that the academic evolution of e-government continues to focus on the relationship between technology, institutions, and society, emphasizing the importance of digital infrastructure readiness in determining the success of implementation. On the other hand, research that highlights the context of developing countries shows that there are structural barriers that limit the effectiveness of citizen engagement. Dada (2006) emphasized that the failure of e-government in developing countries is generally influenced by weak institutional capacity, limited access to technology, and low digital literacy. However, the study of Heeks (2020) confirms that innovative initiatives based on mobile government and digital participatory platforms can be solutions to bridge the gap in citizen participation. Thus, previous literature confirms that differences in social, economic, and political contexts greatly affect the success rate of e-government, so comparative research between developed and developing countries is important to understand the patterns, challenges, and opportunities that exist.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a research with a qualitative approach. Qualitative research aims to show that the success of e-government is not only determined by technological readiness, but also by social, political, and cultural factors that influence

citizen engagement. For example, Criado and Gil-García (2019) through an in-depth qualitative analysis highlight that digital governance practices in developed countries are more effective because of the existence of a policy ecosystem that supports public participation in a sustainable manner. Meanwhile, qualitative research by Bannister and Connolly (2020) emphasizes the importance of citizens' trust in government institutions as a key variable in encouraging participation through digital platforms. These findings confirm that non-technical dimensions, such as political culture and public trust, are important factors that cannot be ignored in the study of e-government.

On the other hand, qualitative studies in developing countries show different complexities. Dada (2006) through a qualitative literature review found that the failure of e-government projects in many developing countries is caused by weak institutional capacity, bureaucratic resistance, and low digital literacy of the community. Heeks' (2020) research also underlines that the local context greatly influences the success of implementation, where community-based approaches and simple technological adaptation are more effective than the adoption of e-government models from developed countries directly. Thus, qualitative research is relevant to uncover contextual dynamics, understand citizens' experiences, and identify the socio-cultural factors that determine community engagement in digital governance.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

E-Government Implementation Level

The implementation of e-government in developed countries has reached a comprehensive level of integration with digital-based public services equally. Countries such as Denmark, South Korea, and Estonia often rank highest in the United Nations E-Government Development Index (EGDI) because they manage to provide innovative, efficient, and accessible online services to all levels of society. This success is supported by a strong digital infrastructure, high internet penetration, and adequate digital literacy of the community. In addition, the existence of consistent public policies and stable political support also encourages the sustainable implementation of e-government (United Nations, 2022; Gil-García & Luna-Reyes, 2016).

One of the hallmarks of e-government implementation in developed countries is the adoption of technological innovations such as open government data, smart governance, and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in public services (Tahiru et al., 2020). This innovation allows the government not only to provide administrative services online, but also to create a system that is proactive in responding to the needs of the community (Mutiarin et al., 2024). For example, Estonia developed an integrated digital identity system that allows citizens to access a wide range of public services with just one digital platform. This shows that developed countries are not only integrating technology for bureaucratic efficiency, but also to strengthen transparency

and public participation (Criado & Gil-García, 2019; OECD, 2016).

On the other hand, developing countries still face various limitations in the implementation of e-government. The main obstacles lie in uneven digital infrastructure, low internet penetration, and access gaps between urban and rural areas. This limitation has an impact on the difficulty of people using online-based public services optimally. In addition, the low digital literacy among citizens also exacerbates the gap in the use of e-government, so that only a small part of the community can access digital services effectively (Dada, 2006; Heeks, 2020).

In addition to technical factors, institutional problems also affect the low level of e-government implementation in developing countries. Many countries face challenges in the form of sluggish bureaucracy, a lack of skilled human resources in the field of technology, and political instability that hinders the sustainability of digital policies. As a result, e-government projects often stop halfway or do not have a significant impact on increasing citizen engagement. Dada (2006) emphasized that the failure of e-government in developing countries is largely due to weak institutional capacity and incompatibility of technology adoption models with local contexts. Nonetheless, some developing countries are showing progress by adopting a more adaptive approach to the socio-economic conditions of the community (Khan et al., 2019). Mobile government-based innovations in several African and Southeast Asian countries, for example, allow public services to reach people with limited internet access. This shows that although the level of implementation of e-government in developing countries is still low compared to developed countries, there is great potential to develop digital service models that suit local needs and conditions. With adaptive strategies and consistent policy support, developing countries can accelerate digital transformation and expand the reach of technology-based public services (Heeks, 2020; UNDP, 2019).

Factors Driving the Success of E-Government

The success of the implementation of e-government is greatly influenced by the availability of adequate digital infrastructure, including internet networks, technological devices, and information security systems. Countries with strong ICT infrastructure are able to provide faster, more transparent, and more efficient digital public services (World Bank, 2021). Good infrastructure also allows the government to reach out to a wider community, minimize geographical barriers, and increase digital inclusion. In addition to infrastructure, political leadership factors and government commitment play an important role in driving the success of e-government (Sharma et al., 2014). Research by Heeks (2006) shows that e-government projects in developing countries often fail not because of technology, but because of a lack of political support, inter-agency coordination, and policy sustainability. With the strategic vision of the government, e-government can be integrated into a more responsive governance framework.

The readiness of human resources is also a major factor in the success of e-government. State civil servants who have digital literacy, managerial skills, and technical skills will be more effective in managing technology-based services (Sharma et al., 2014). The study of Alcaide-Muñoz et al. (2017) confirms that increasing the capacity of human resources through continuous training and education is able to strengthen the quality of digital public services and increase public trust.

In addition to internal government factors, the level of community participation also contributes to the success of e-government. Citizens who are digitally literate and used to using online services will find it easier to be involved in the decision-making process and provide feedback on public services. According to Bonsón et al. (2012), citizen engagement through digital platforms increases transparency while strengthening the relationship between the government and the community. Finally, clear regulatory and data governance aspects are the foundation in supporting the success of e-government. Regulations that regulate personal data protection, cybersecurity, and system interoperability standards will create public trust in government digital services. Research by Zuiderwijk & Janssen (2014) emphasizes that open data policies managed transparently can increase accountability while accelerating innovation in the public sector (Joshi & Islam, 2018).

Citizen Engagement Using Digital Platforms For Public Consultation

Citizen engagement through digital platforms has become an important instrument in realizing participatory governance. Digital platforms allow people to express their aspirations, provide policy input, and be directly involved in the decision-making process without space and time limitations. According to Chadwick (2011), digital technology opens up a wider space for public deliberation, thereby increasing inclusivity in the modern democratic system. Public participation through digital-based public consultation also increases government transparency and accountability. With online communication channels, citizens can monitor the policy process in real-time and ensure that their voices are considered in the legislative and policy implementation processes. Coleman and Blumler (2009) emphasize that digital participation strengthens the legitimacy of policies because public involvement in its formulation is more real and measurable (Weerakkody et al., 2012).

Furthermore, digital platforms such as e-consultation portals, social media governance, and smart city applications have expanded the space for interaction between the government and the public. For example, the use of social media by local governments in Europe and North America has been shown to increase horizontal interaction between citizens as well as vertical interaction with the government (Mergel, 2013). This shows that digital technology is not only a channel of information, but also a medium of interactive dialogue (Sigwejo & Pather, 2016). However, the

success rate of citizen engagement through digital platforms is highly dependent on the level of digital literacy of the community. In developing countries, the digital divide is still a serious obstacle because not all groups of people have adequate access to the internet or digital devices. Norris' (2001) study on the digital divide shows that online participation is often biased towards more educated and high-income groups, thus potentially creating social exclusion. In addition, another challenge faced is the issue of public trust in the government in managing data and input obtained through digital platforms. Zuiderwijk, Janssen, and Dwivedi (2015) emphasized that citizen involvement through digital public consultation will only be effective if there is a guarantee of data security, transparency in the use of public input, and clarity of follow-up mechanisms. Without this, digital participation can cause skepticism rather than strengthen democracy.

Nevertheless, empirical evidence shows that public participation through digital consultation can improve the quality of public policy. The OECD (2020) notes that countries that consistently use digital consulting platforms, such as Estonia and Finland, have succeeded in expanding inclusivity, increasing citizens' satisfaction with public services, and strengthening public trust in government institutions. This proves that citizen engagement through digital platforms can be a catalyst for a more responsive, adaptive, and democratic government (Olphert & Damodaran, 2007).

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study show that the implementation of e-government has a strategic role in strengthening transparency, accountability, efficiency, and public participation, but the success rate is highly dependent on the context of the country. In developed countries, e-government has been comprehensively integrated through innovative digital public services, well-established ICT infrastructure, and high levels of digital literacy in the community. This makes citizen involvement in the policy process more active, deliberative, and evidence-based. On the other hand, developing countries still face obstacles in the form of limited infrastructure, internet access gaps, and low institutional capacity, so digital public consultation is not yet fully effective in increasing citizen participation. However, the results of the study also confirm that in both developed and developing countries, citizen engagement through digital platforms remains an important instrument in realizing participatory and responsive governance. Factors that determine success, such as political support, clear regulations, digital literacy, and public trust in government, are key in optimizing the benefits of e-government. Therefore, this study suggests the need for adaptive strategies tailored to the conditions of each country to bridge the digital divide and encourage more inclusive public participation in the digital governance ecosystem.

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