

Digital Technology Transformation in Enhancing Public Participation in Democratic Processes

Suherlan Suherlan¹

¹Universitas Subang, Subang, West Java, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

In the era of globalisation and the development of digital technology, the role of technology in various aspects of life is increasing. One of the areas significantly affected is the democratic process in society. This research aims to analyse the transformation of digital technology in increasing people's participation in the democratic process. The current research type is qualitative. Data collection techniques include listening and recording important information to conduct data analysis through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that the transformation of digital technology has brought a significant impact on public participation in the democratic process. The availability of online platforms, easy access to information, and the ability to interact with political leaders have changed the way individuals engage in political decision-making. Despite the positive potential, there are challenges and risks that need to be addressed in order for public participation in the digital era to truly contribute to the strengthening of democratic principles.

ABSTRAK

Dalam era globalisasi dan perkembangan teknologi digital, peran teknologi dalam berbagai aspek kehidupan semakin meningkat. Salah satu bidang yang terpengaruh secara signifikan adalah proses demokrasi dalam masyarakat. Riset ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis transformasi teknologi digital dalam meningkatkan partisipasi Masyarakat dalam proses demikrasi. Jenis penelitian saat ini adalah kualitatif. Teknik pengumpulan data meliputi menyimak dan mencatat informasi penting untuk melakukan analisis data melalui reduksi data, display data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa transformasi teknologi digital telah membawa dampak signifikan terhadap partisipasi masyarakat dalam proses demokrasi. Ketersediaan platform online, akses informasi yang mudah, dan kemampuan berinteraksi dengan pemimpin politik telah mengubah cara individu-individu terlibat dalam pengambilan keputusan politik. Meskipun potensi positifnya besar, terdapat tantangan dan risiko yang perlu diatasi agar partisipasi masyarakat dalam era digital benar-benar berkontribusi pada penguatan prinsip-prinsip demokrasi.

1. INTRODUCTION

Amidst the ever-evolving era of globalisation and the rapid advancement of digital technology, the role of technology has experienced a tremendous increase in various aspects of human life (Wahyoedi et al., 2023). One area that has been massively impacted is the democratic process in the structure of society. Through the emergence of digital technology, new opportunities have opened up that intensify the participation of community members in every stage of the democratic process (Congge et al., 2023). It is only natural that this would eventually lead to the further strengthening of the entire democratic system itself. The fundamental principle of modern democracy is active and inclusive civic engagement, and in this context, digital technology plays an infinite role in facilitating such forms of participation.

The transformation process that has been induced by advances in digital technology has provided an increasingly broad and diverse platform for public participation in political dynamics and decision-making processes (Rijal, 2023; Sudirjo, Diawati, et al., 2023). In this context, elements such as the internet, which includes social media that connects, online platforms that encourage interaction, and mobile applications that

* Corresponding author, email address: suherlanfia@gmail.com

extend reach, have significantly opened up access for individuals to gain information and insights in the political sphere (Appel et al., 2020). Not only that, this space also embraces invaluable opportunities for in-depth discussions, the expression of diverse views, and active participation in initiatives that promote democratic principles. The implications of these changes have the potential to increase universal accessibility to politics, bridge gaps in process transparency, and strengthen accountability at every stage of the political process.

However, despite the wide-open potential that awaits the realisation of digital technological transformation, its complexities still pose high-impact challenges that require careful understanding and response. For example, the harmony of access to these technological advancements has not been evenly distributed across society, creating a range of digital participation that is stretched between those with abundant access and those with limited access. In addition, there are a series of issues that raise concerns, such as the delicate balance between data privilege and security, the expansion of which is accompanied by the risk of spreading unsettling fake news, and the potential manipulation of public opinion that can undermine the integrity of the fabric of the democratic process as a whole. Addressing these essential questions thus requires a holistic approach and a collaborative effort involving a wide range of stakeholders (Ayala-Orozco et al., 2018).

In order to delve deeper into "The Transformation of Digital Technology in Enhancing Public Participation in the Democratic Process," the first step will be to go upstream to a number of relevant scholarly references to explore how digital technology has shaped the pattern of public participation in the frame of the democratic process. This exploration will open the pages of an ever-expanding literature, and in between will reveal the following aspects:

1. **Participation in Online and Offline Contexts:** The review will highlight how digital technology has underlined the importance of public participation in two dimensions, namely online and offline. In the digital space, we will reflect on various forms of participation such as online petitions, online campaigns, discussion forum platforms, and demonstrations organised through social media. On balance, it will illustrate how digital technology has bridged the gap between these two dimensions.
2. **Affordability and Inclusivity Aspects:** A look at the ability of digital technologies to overcome challenges such as geographical, physical and economic limitations in access. Discussions will also weave in important efforts to ensure that all groups in society, regardless of their backgrounds, are able to experience spaces of participation in the digital arena.
3. **The Role of Social Media in Politics:** The next issue will discuss the immense impact of social media in shaping public opinion, mobilising the masses, and opening a window for intense political dialogue between leaders and citizens. This layer reveals how digital technology has become the new foundation of modern political communication.
4. **Encouragement of Young Generation Participation:** Discusses how digital technology has become a catalyst that stimulates political participation from younger generations who tend to be more connected to technology. This generation will be the detailed focus to explore how technological shifts have played a vital role in fuelling their political participation.
5. **Technology-Related Threats:** An alignment will be made on the challenges that arise with the rapid growth of digital technology. Threats related to data security, privacy, and the spread of inaccurate information will be an important part of this discussion. Efforts to maintain healthy participation and accurate information will be highlighted.
6. **Real Case Studies:** The final space in this review will be dedicated to presenting real-life examples of technology initiatives that have made a significant impact in enhancing public participation in democratic processes in various parts of the world.

With this literature review, it is hoped that a deeper understanding of the impact of digital technology transformation on civic participation in democratic processes can be gained. With this understanding, it will be easier to identify related opportunities and challenges, and formulate appropriate policy recommendations to ensure that the development of digital technologies contributes to the strengthening of democratic systems and broader civic engagement.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Digital Technology

Digital technology refers to various types of technology that operate using digital signals or discrete representations of data (Sutrisno, Ausat, et al., 2023). Digital data consists of binary numbers (0 and 1), known as

bits, which are then used to represent information. Digital technology involves the use of electronic devices and software that work with this digital data to perform various tasks and functions (Harini et al., 2023; Sudirjo, Ausat, et al., 2023). Some key aspects of digital technology include:

1. **Digital Processing:** Digital technology involves the processing of information using electronic components such as integrated circuits (ICs), microprocessors, and software. This process involves manipulating digital data to perform various tasks, ranging from simple computing to complex tasks such as data analysis and image processing.
2. **Digital Communication:** Digital communication involves sending and receiving data in digital form over computer networks and digital media such as fibre optic cables or radio waves. The Internet is one of the most important examples of digital communication infrastructure that enables the exchange of information on a global scale.
3. **Digital Storage:** Digital technology enables the storage of data in digital form on various physical devices, such as hard discs, flash drives, or even in cloud computing. Digital data can be stored with a large capacity and accessed at any time.
4. **Digital Devices:** These include various electronic devices that use digital technology to operate, such as personal computers, smartphones, tablets, digital cameras, digital televisions, and other devices that use digital signals to generate and manage information.
5. **Sensors and Actuators:** Digital sensors measure physical phenomena and convert them into digital data that can be processed by computers. Digital actuators, on the other hand, respond to digital signals to perform specific physical actions, such as motors controlled by software.
6. **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data Analytics:** Digital technology also supports the development of artificial intelligence and data analytics. Digital data collected from various sources can be analysed using AI algorithms to generate valuable insights.

Digital technology has changed many aspects of human life, including in business, education, entertainment, communication, and more. It has a huge impact on the way we work, interact, and live our daily lives as a whole (Azzaakiyyah et al., 2023; Said Ahmad et al., 2023).

Community Participation

Community participation refers to the active involvement of individuals in various aspects of social, political, and economic life within a society (Ohara, 2023). It includes participation in decision-making, political processes, social activities, and other initiatives that affect people's lives. Community participation is one of the key pillars of democracy and indicates the extent to which citizens are involved in shaping the policies and direction of society's development (Zikargae et al., 2022). There are several forms that community participation can take:

1. **Political Participation:** This includes the right of citizens to engage in political processes, such as elections, political campaigns, voting, and the selection of representatives. Political participation also involves participating in political organisations, public discussions, and providing policy-related input.
2. **Social Participation:** This includes engaging in activities and organisations that focus on social and humanitarian development. This could include involvement in volunteer groups, charity campaigns, community empowerment initiatives, and other activities that aim to improve quality of life and social welfare.
3. **Economic Participation:** This involves participation in economic activities such as forming or being a member of a co-operative, consumer cooperative, or trade union. Economic participation can also mean being part of community-based economic initiatives.
4. **Cultural Participation:** This includes participation in cultural and artistic activities, such as music groups, book clubs, cultural festivals, and the like. Participation in culture helps nurture cultural identity and a diverse social life.
5. **Environmental Participation:** This pertains to participation in initiatives that aim to safeguard the environment and sustainability. This could involve environmental clean-up activities, nature conservation campaigns, and the use of environmentally-friendly technologies.
6. **Digital Participation:** In the digital age, public participation also includes interaction and engagement in online platforms such as social media, online discussion forums, and digital petitions. This can include sharing views, campaigning on important issues, or advocating for change through cyberspace.

Community participation is an important aspect of building an inclusive, equitable and sustainable

society. It gives individuals a voice in decisions that affect their lives and enables the development of a society that is more dynamic and responsive to the needs and aspirations of its citizens.

Democracy

Democracy is a form of government in which power and authority are vested in the people or citizens (Dahl, 1994). In a democratic system, political decisions are made based on the active participation of citizens, either directly or through their elected representatives. The main principle of democracy is that power comes from the people and governments are accountable to them (Khotami, 2017). Some of the key characteristics of a democracy include:

1. **Popular Sovereignty:** Democracy recognises that ultimate power rests with the people. People have the right to participate in political decision-making and have a say in determining the direction of the country.
2. **Elections:** In a democracy, elections are an important mechanism for electing representatives who will represent the interests of the people in government institutions. Elections are held periodically to elect rulers and legislators.
3. **Protection of Human Rights:** A democratic system respects human rights and guarantees the basic rights of citizens, such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, right to association, and so on.
4. **Division of Power:** Democratic systems often involve the division of power among different institutions of government, such as the executive, legislature, and judiciary. This aims to prevent excessive concentration of power in one hand.
5. **Transparency and Accountability:** Governments in a democratic system are expected to be transparent in their actions and decisions. They must be accountable to citizens for their actions.
6. **Protection of Minorities:** Democratic principles also recognise the rights of minorities. Although the majority has a say in decision-making, the rights of minorities must be respected and protected.
7. **Dialogue and Debate:** The democratic process often involves open dialogue, debate, and discussion on various issues. This allows citizens to voice their views, debate arguments, and seek solutions together.
8. **Peaceful Change:** In a democracy, changes in power usually occur through elections or other political processes, rather than through violence or force.

Democracies come in many forms and variations, including direct democracy (where citizens are directly involved in decision-making) and representative democracy (where citizens elect their representatives to make decisions on their behalf). Although democracy has various implementations and levels of effectiveness, at its core, it is about empowering the people in the political decision-making process and ensuring a government that functions in the interests of the people (Sari, 2023).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research aims to analyse the transformation of digital technology in increasing public participation in the democratic process. In this study, researchers conducted desk research so that they did not need to go directly to the field during the data collection process, but instead examined various reference sources that supported this research. The literature was obtained from online media and databases from journal portals in accordance with the keywords related to this discussion, namely the transformation of digital technology in increasing public participation in the democratic process. The author does not focus on specific journal portals or online media in determining relevant reference sources such as referring to the Emerald Insight, ResearchGate, and Elsevier journal portals, but is more flexible. In this article, with a focus on the transformation of digital technology in increasing public participation in the democratic process, the author makes these keywords the focus of the search so as not to widen the main discussion. The search for journals, articles and publications was mostly in the range of articles published between 1994 and 2023. Not all articles, journals and publications that appear in the search results will be used, but only those related to the transformation of digital technology in increasing community participation in the democratic process.

This research is a type of qualitative research. Data collection techniques include listening and recording important information to conduct data analysis through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing to obtain a conclusion picture regarding the literature study that will be developed in this study. Data validation using data source triangulation.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In the 21st century era characterised by the accelerated pace of technological advancement, the extraordinary transformation in the realm of digital technology has had a fundamental impact that extends to almost all areas of human life (Prastyaningtyas et al., 2023; Sutrisno, Kuraesin, et al., 2023). Among the most striking impacts are the fundamental changes that have taken place in various aspects of life. The democratic process is no exception to this change, as democracy has shifted into a more inclusive and responsive entity thanks to the rushing waves of technological advancement (Seskir et al., 2023). This phenomenal transformation has unequivocally opened up tremendous new opportunities in terms of enhancing the broad participation of the public in the entire democratic process. Indeed, this has enormous potential to strengthen and reinforce the values and underlying principles that democracy itself embodies.

The importance of active and inclusive civic participation has long been recognised as the cornerstone of modern democracy (Fatlolon, 2023). However, amidst the onslaught of the digital age, the role of technology cannot be underestimated, but rather as a key driver behind this paradigmatic shift in the form of participation. With the proliferation of easy access to the internet, which has become a global information hub, the proliferation of mobile devices, and the expansion of the social media scene, individuals from diverse social, cultural, and geographical backgrounds are now given amazing opportunities to participate in every political process. In ways that were once the stuff of fantasy, they are now an inevitable reality.

The transformations that have been brought about by the rapid advancement of digital technology have had tremendous consequences, and one of the most prominent is the emergence of a two-way communication channel that connects the government with the citizenry (Chen et al., 2021). With the emergence of various online platforms, such as the dominant social media, citizens are now privileged to be able to interact directly with their political leaders (Aytac, 2022). In this environment, they are not only able to ask nagging questions, but also have the means to voice their views, and are able to make requests for necessary information. More than just removing the geographical barriers that used to restrict them, this phenomenon also breaks down the time boundaries that used to influence and limit the communication framework between citizens and their leaders.

In addition to this, one cannot underestimate the significant role played by social media as an invaluable tool in mobilising the public. Through social media, political campaigns are run, online petitions are organised, and waves of social campaigns are easily spread quickly and evenly through the digital universe (Lorenz-Spreen et al., 2022). This provides a valuable opportunity for all levels of society to jointly campaign or voice their opinions on specific issues that are currently developing. Interestingly, involvement in such campaigns is no longer limited to physical participation through demonstrations or face-to-face meetings (Abela et al., 2023), but can also be done with a single click in cyberspace.

It is imperative to recognise and assess the impact that social media has had in giving a vocal platform to groups that were often unable to be accommodated in the past. In particular, minority groups, marginalised entities, and the youth now have a golden opportunity to express their opinions without having to wander within the usual and conventional political corridors (George et al., 2014). This phenomenon, in itself, has provided a major impetus in opening up a more diverse and colourful arena of discussion and dialogue, which then presents a variety of viewpoints that have important weight in supporting the progress of an ever-inclusive democracy.

However, along with the array of potential positives, it is important to recognise that the widespread transformation brought about by digital technologies also brings with it an array of challenges and risks that need to be carefully addressed. In this domain, issues relating to data privacy, cybersecurity governance and the proliferation of hoaxes are complex and relevant in the context of digital engagement and participation. In addition, concerns about the ability to manipulate public opinion and the utilisation of technology to strengthen extreme groups have also emerged as negative impacts that cannot be ignored in the journey towards more advanced technological developments.

Amidst the complexity of these dynamics, it is clear that the roles of government, regulatory institutions and civil society are of undeniable significance (Pratama & Sudirman, 2022). This role becomes central in ensuring that the extraordinary transformation driven by digital technology is able to have a real impact in increasing public involvement in every aspect of the democratic process, without having to sacrifice the fundamental principles that are the pillars of democracy itself. On this basis, efforts in developing people's digital literacy, a careful monitoring approach to online platforms, and strategic measures in addressing the expansion of the spread of inaccurate information are some of the inevitable strategic steps in addressing the challenges that emerge from this transformation.

In the overall picture, there is no denying that digital technology-driven transformation has brought about a fundamental shift in the paradigm of public participation in the democratic process. The existence of digital technology presents a vast expanse of change, realised through the provision of easier access, the opening of widespread communication channels, and the opening of countless opportunities to participate in various political campaigns online. In this horizon, digital technology is not just a tool, but a force that contributes strongly to strengthening people's participation in the process of determining the direction and policies relating to the state. However, while there is much to celebrate about these changes, it is important to recognise that new challenges are also likely to emerge with these developments. As such, it is imperative that we remain in a continuous process of adaptation and wise responses to these challenges. This is necessary so that the immense potential embedded in the transformation of digital technologies in enhancing public participation in every inch of the democratic process can be realised in a positive, sustainable manner, and successfully lead to overall beneficial impacts.

5. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, SUGGESTION, AND LIMITATIONS

The transformation of digital technology has had a significant impact on people's participation in the democratic process. The availability of online platforms, easy access to information, and the ability to interact with political leaders have changed the way individuals engage in political decision-making. While the positive potential is great, there are challenges and risks that need to be addressed in order for civic participation in the digital age to truly contribute to the strengthening of democratic principles.

This study has several important implications. Digital technologies enable participation from different walks of life, including minority groups and young people. This encourages the formation of policies that are more inclusive and reflect the aspirations of the whole society. In addition, digital transformation encourages governments to be more transparent in their actions and decisions, and makes it easier for citizens to monitor government performance and remind them of promises made. On the other hand, it is important for people to have strong digital literacy in order to critically understand information, recognise fake news, and participate wisely in online political discussions. Furthermore, the implications of digital transformation in public participation require co-operation between the government, technology institutions, and civil society to overcome the challenges and risks that arise.

While the suggestions that can be given in the results of this research regarding digital literacy education should be an important part of the education curriculum, so that citizens have the ability to participate intelligently and critically in the digital world. The government needs to develop regulations that ensure the protection of personal data and prevent the spread of false information. Cybersecurity should also be enhanced to protect digital infrastructure from attacks that could threaten public participation. Campaigns aimed at raising awareness about the potential adverse effects of spreading false information and manipulating public opinion need to be conducted to help people recognise and avoid inaccurate information.

This research also has several limitations. Firstly, the technology access gap: Not all citizens have equal access to digital technology, which can create a participation gap between connected and disconnected groups. Second, the spread of false information: The ability of digital technology to spread information quickly also carries the risk of spreading false information and hoaxes that can undermine healthy political discussions. Third, manipulation of public opinion: Digital platforms can be utilised to manipulate public opinion through disinformation or propaganda campaigns that can disrupt the democratic process. Finally, the limitations of physical interaction: While digital participation has many benefits, physical interaction in meetings and demonstrations also has important value in building community solidarity and unity. In this context, taking measures to strengthen digital literacy, safeguard data privacy, and promote critical and healthy participation in the digital world will contribute to optimising the positive impact of digital technological transformation in strengthening people's participation in democratic processes.

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