

Decentralized Participatory Governance under Digitalization: A Model Study

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Abstract: *Governance is a set of rules and regulations to run the country smoothly. Decentralization is the structural association of government-citizens relationship. Participation refers to involvement of citizens in affairs of government to promote inclusiveness. Digitalization is an emerging phenomenon to improve public services delivery, promote good governance and process of democratization. The research has been designed to examine whether or not reorientation of governance under ICT could promote more accurate participatory governance? The research aims to find out any association of participatory governance with informatization, good governance and decentralization. Additionally, E-governance and its mediating role with participatory governance have been analyzed. The study concluded that both the association of decentralization and E-governance could practice the participatory governance. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques are applied in this research.*

Keywords: Digitalization, Decentralization, Democratization, Good governance, Informatization

Introduction

Decentralization is defined as transfer of power from center to subordinate departments. Traditionally, it is associated with transformation of responsibilities and resources from central government to local government. It has administrative, political and financial dimensions in affairs of state. It promotes the culture of accountability and better service delivery. But in modern time, it is the subject matter of transferring administrative authority such as decision making, planning and budgeting from central institutions to provinces, local administrations, federal units as well as semi-autonomous public institutions and voluntary organizations. While centralization is defined as opponent of decentralization which power, resources and authority are vested in a single entity.

Traditionally, notion of face to face advisory board, public meeting, comment periods and public notice are the conventional means of public participation giving few minutes to their expression through open

microphone but now role of digitization and digital media is contributed to promote new forum of participation. E-government has been characterized through various channels such as improvement of quality of local services, enhancement of capacity of local councils, provision of visionary community leadership and increment of participation of citizens.

Although, decentralization and democratization have not the same meanings but culture of decentralization promotes transfer of executive, legislative and judicial autonomy to local bodies which is the unique feature of democracy. Due to it, decentralization can contribute both in democratic and authoritarian regimes. Historically, bureaucracy is the subject matter of personnel management. It is attributed to fulfill the goals of the state such as rationalized division of labor and characterized as relationship between government and citizens. Due to expansion of welfare state; objectivity to integration of public sectors is the need of the contemporary world. It fosters the need of exchanging and producing information between public administration and citizens as well as within administration.

The word public participation, active citizenship, public engagement, collaboration and inclusion are the terms highlight the importance of citizens 'involvement in public affairs. The study of citizen's participation has been increased since democratic values, empowerment and open government are the top agenda of the international community. Moreover, role of digitization and digital media is contributed to promote new forum of participation (Bartoletti & Faccioli, 2016). Increasingly, participation is being related to citizenship and to democratic governance. It construct the relationship between ordinary citizens and institutions especially those which affect their lives.

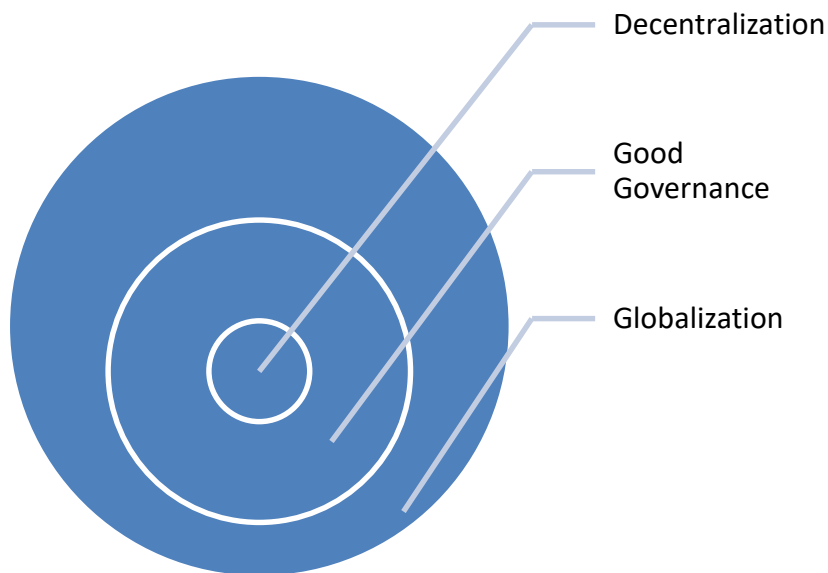
The main objective of this study is to examine relationship between decentralization and participation. This research will also examine the role of reformation of local governance under Information and communication technologies (ICTs). The research will try to find out that association of E-governance with decentralized participatory governance has an effective tool to promote process of democratization, informatization and local government.

Conceptual Framework of Decentralization

Decentralization is described as process that is applied to restructure relationship between state, society and market to participation of all stakeholders in formulation and implementation of policies. According to World Bank (WB) it is a process that ensures transformation of public authority from central government to local public-private organizations. United Nations Organization (UNO) also advocates that it guarantees local empowerment, accountability and responsive and significant reforms. Furthermore, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) also urged that decentralization is the associational relationship of local

governance that guaranty connection between human development, civic value and democratic governance. Due to it, decentralization is a set of institutions, process and system at local and subnational level through it, local administration interact and serve to citizens. Despite, decentralization has been characterized by various types: administrative decentralization, democratic decentralization, fiscal decentralization and devolution etc. Decentralization is believed to be the “third wave” of democratization, as Huntington puts it. UNDP echoed this sentiment, arguing that “decentralization” is a critical component of “logic democratization”. (Balisany, Ozgit, & Rjoub, The Nexus among Good E-Governance Practice, Decentralization, and Public Administration for Sustainable Local Development, 2022)

Need to Decentralization



The question has been raised that decentralized process is necessary to adopt advanced technology in affairs of governance or not? Firstly, Introducing (ICTs) in affairs of government is considered imperative cause of implementation of decentralization because (ICTs) demands decentralized governance structure. Secondly, concept of Globalization, Liberalization and Privatization bound states to adopt model of e-business which guaranty flatter government structure. Thirdly, centralized approach with e-government is not an easy task because it has very little room to flourish innovation, self-starters and creativity (Basu, 2011).

Moreover, concept of Globalization has identified the new models of governance for the sake of ‘Good Governance’. Mostly, good governance has been characterized through promotion of transparency, right to information, socio-economic enterprises and decentralization process (Bardhan, 2002). Meanwhile, E-governance has been is advocated a very effective tool to implement good governance. The governments of

the world have to accept the good characteristics of governance such as formulation and implementation of policies and exercise of political power that are transparent, non-discriminatory, inclusive, equitable, participatory and accountable. It integrates such government structure to meet these expectations whereas state, district and local level determine their responsibilities and functions. Due to it, system of E-government needs to be studied with decentralization as one of its outcomes (Hufty, 2012).

Nature of Participation

Participation is refers to involvement of every adult in mainstreaming associational affairs of the country. It could be either direct or indirect participation of citizens through their representative body. It is the degree of involvement of individual of the country in process of election for the purpose of decision making in affairs of government (Callahan, 2007). In this concept, participation needs to implement both “Freedom of Association” and “Freedom of Expression” as a in the corner stone of citizens participation and good governance (kenga & Chima, 2021).

Technology Mediated public sector

Mostly, the use of (ICTs) in public sectors has been associated with reforms agenda aiming at reducing the inefficiencies and burden of bureaucracies (Cordella & Tempini, 2015). Historically, technology has been adopted in public sector from the concept of e-business revolution. It guarantees more efficient and effective public services and foster access to government information as well as improving government performance (Callah, 2007).

The innovation of (ICTs) enables government to adopt itself into e-government. E-government is the integral part of modernization serving its functions orderly. The (ICTs) has enabled governments to behave accurately and efficiently. The (ICTs) has emerged new term and condition in affairs of governance for better public administration in which one of them is New Public management (NPM). It advocates the implementation of modern principles of management and principles for public-private partnership (Kumar & Misra, 2007).

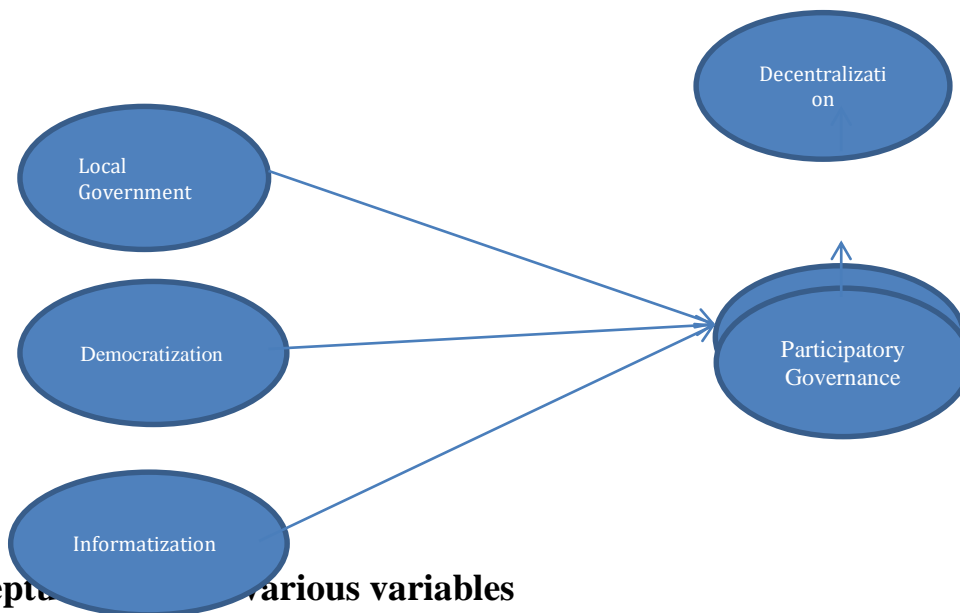
Relationship between E-Governance and E-Government

Governance is beyond from government and is defined as set of institution that carries out political representation, public services, sketches the interaction between citizens, administrative machinery, development and service processes. It is wider tool to improve efficient public discourses and open communication. Due to it, E-governance is described as technology-mediated relationship of citizens and government to facilitate processes of public administration or government while E-government defined as use of technology to support operations of government, engagement of citizens and promotion of services of governments (Salam, 2013). In this perspective, there is a huge difference between E-government and E-

Governance.

Research Methodology

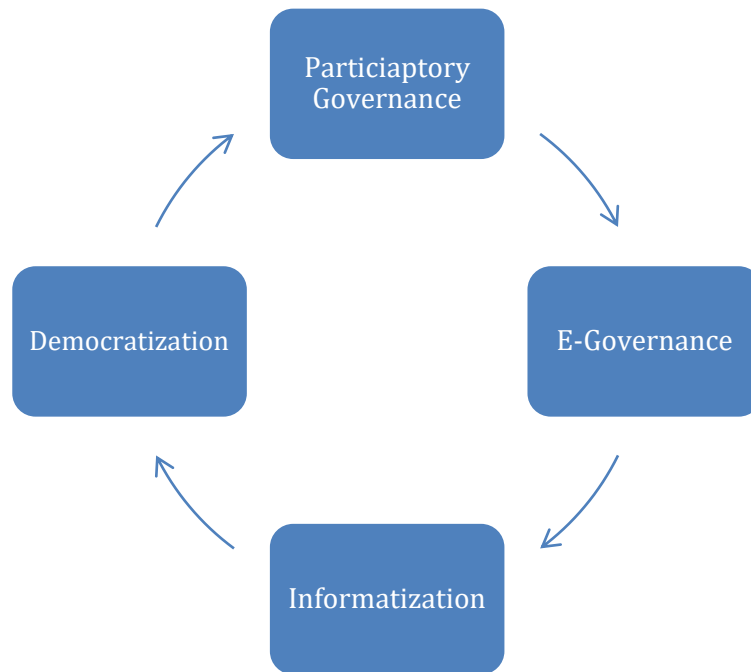
At the first stage, the objectivity of the E-governance has been examined to observe its effect on various elements such as Participation, democratization, informatization and local government. At the second stage, objectivity of E-government has been selected proportionally to measure the relationship of dependent variable with independent variables as well as moderating and mediating variables. This section incorporates the research methodology of the research paper which includes the research exploration technique, strategy, examination approach, sort of information analysis, strategies for information assortment and ethical observations.



Conceptual Framework of various variables

The conceptual framework is designed in such sustainability parameters observing future orientation of E-governance. It has defined the relationship of different variables in such a way that one variable impact on others.

Module: 1 Informatized Participatory Governance under E-Governance (IPE)



- Perceived E-governance is closely associated with informatization
- Perceived informatization is associated with participatory governance
- Perceived participatory governance is associated with democratization

E-governance and Informatization

Informatization has significant implications for various sectors, including government, business, education, healthcare and transportation. It aims to create a more connected and information-driven society, where data and information can be accessed, shared, and utilized efficiently and effectively for the benefit of individuals, organizations, and society as a whole. Informatization refers to the process of integrating and utilizing information technologies in various aspects of society, including government services, businesses, and daily life. It involves the application of ICTs to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency of government processes and services. Informatization aims to transform traditional paper-based systems into digital systems, enabling the electronic storage, processing, and exchange of information. Toffler claimed that western countries have already passed the two phases of development: agriculture revolution and industrialization. Now they have entered into third phase which is known as informatization (Malik, Gupta, & Dhillon, 2014).

E-governance, on the other hand, specifically focuses on the use of ICTs in the governance and decision-making processes of public administration. It involves the digitalization of government services, public

participation, policy-making, and communication between government agencies and citizens. E-governance aims to improve the delivery of public services, promote transparency and accountability, and increase citizen engagement in the decision-making process (Gupta, 2008).

The American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) and United Nations Organization (UNO) introduced the five-stage model of E-governance for the sake of informatization. The first is the “emerging” stage aiming to establish official online government existence. The second is the “enhancement” having the objective to increase number of government sites dynamically. The third is “interactive” which enables the users to interact with admiration through web and download forms. The forth is “transactional” through it, users have the ability to make transaction online. The fifth is “seamless” stage having aim of integration of E-services across government agencies (Yildiz, 2016).

Informatization and Participative governance

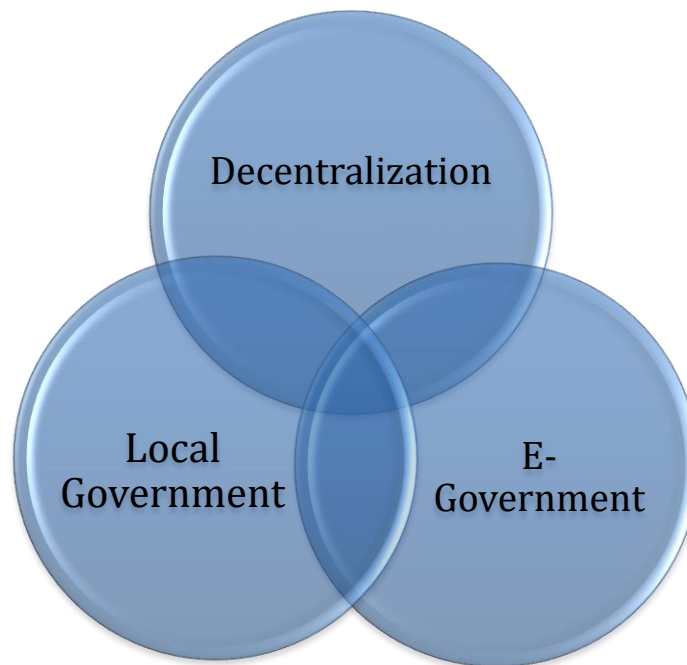
In 2017, according to World Bank participative governance is an effective tool to promote empowerment of ordinary citizens, transparency and service delivery in developing countries. It emphasis use of (ICTs), social media and digital platforms are the earlier sources to enhance public participation as well as benefited to engagement of citizens regarding affairs of local administration. As a result, cities would become “smart” and urban environment would become enable to resolve urban problems which are also underway in developed and developing countries. The model of participative governance has contributed to blur the boundaries between different political systems (Yildiz, 2016).

Participative Governance and Democratization

Democratization refers to the process of transitioning a society or political system towards democracy, where power is vested in the people and decisions are made through mechanisms such as elections, participation, and representation. It involves establishing and upholding the principles of political equality, individual rights, and civic participation. In recent decades, democratization has been a global trend, with many countries transitioning from authoritarian or autocratic systems to more democratic forms of governance. The spread of democratization has been facilitated by factors such as advancements in communication technology, increased global interconnectedness, and the desire for human rights and political freedoms. Some theories of democratization were also associated with process including transition, moderate, civil society, state and global order (Grugel, 2002).

Democratization and participative governance are two concepts that are closely related and often go hand in hand. Participative governance is also known as participatory democracy. It involves the active involvement of citizens in decision-making processes and the formulation of public policies. It aims to empower individuals and communities by giving them a voice and a role in shaping the decisions that affect their lives (Balisany, Özgit, & Rjoub, 2022).

Module: 2 Decentralized local government under E-governance (DLE)



- Perceived Decentralization is associated with E-government
- Perceived E-government is associated with local administration

Decentralization and E-Government

Using ICTs in affairs of government to facilitate citizens through online website, e-mail and portal is called E-government. Moreover, it is a source of information to increase transparency and increase interaction with citizens (Rafique & Rosilawati, 2020). The relationship between E-government and decentralization develop the new idea from service delivery to e-service and information to e-information anytime and anywhere. The relationship between both interacts: government to government, government to citizens and government to business. Decentralization is a necessary source to improve government services under the supervision of

ICTs. The governments of the world have adopted E-government system to apply the principle of decentralization (Wagana, Iravo, Nzulwa, & Kihoro, 2016).

In other words, strategy China regarding e-government reflects the state as an authoritarian system but under the basis of legitimacy. Its present priority in building e-government lies not in promoting participation and democracy, but rather in enhancing its own governmental functionality and professionalism (Ma, Chung, & Thorson, 2004).

E-Government and Local Government

Online sources provide a powerful tool to reinvent local governments smoothly and actively. The paradigm encourages transformation of traditional bureaucratic behavior which emphasizes external collaboration, coordinated network building and customer services. On that result, district governments have shifted from traditional bureaucratic paradigm to E-government model designing their websites differently in respect of their duties and functions. The district governments adopted two common approaches: “information-oriented” design and “user-oriented” design (Ho, 2002).

Local Government

Local governments are characterized by variety of discretionary powers to promote more participatory governance. For instant, it may create the chances of local neighborhood development council as a partner in service delivery and planning, publishing budgetary information and creating ad hoc citizen advisory committees. In the former Soviet Union, mayor appeared on a televised phone in a show to present the budget of municipality and answer the comments of the citizens. But developing countries still far from participatory approach such as NGOs and citizens complains they have no capacity to engage in affairs of government. Because behavior of the local government too bureaucratic and arrogant. Moreover, lack of trust and confidence is on peak in these countries (Hartanto, Dalle, & Anisah, 2021).

The strategy to implement infrastructure of E-government is expected to bring radical change in under the system in both citizens and business communities interact with one another. For instant, various countries of the globe such as Korea has founded that use of electronic government within department and agencies of the government has a catalytic impact on quality of public services (Irani, Love, Elliman, Jones, & Themistocleous, 2005). But implementation of paperless work management is not possible in developing countries due absence of policy framework, transparent legal mechanism and support of certain basic level of ICTs. (Pappel, Pappel, & Draheim, 2019).

Discussion and Analysis

- Similarly, perceived E-governance was found to be positively associated informatization with overall public trust in local government. It ensures responsiveness of government. This reflects the importance of government responsiveness to all certain and uncertain situations to respond promptly and immediately in the public's best interest. Furthermore, the findings related to perceived decentralized participative governance are consistent with the outcomes of democratization, informatization and local government.
- The co-relationship of E-governance and informatization develop the tech-driven community as well as governance. It encourages both government and citizen to utilize of more sophisticated technology for the betterment and prosperity of the country. Similarly, informatization revolves around daily affairs of the government to improve public services as well as transparency and accountability aim to involve citizens in decision making process. On that result, informatization and E-governance are benefited to practice participatory governance. It is resulted study of perceived Informatization is positively associated with E-governance and participatory governance.
- Furthermore, results revealed positive and significant relationship of both variables: E-government and local government. The association of respective subjects is interconnected interchangeably due to its duties and functions. The perceived Local government is closely associated with E-government because provision of better service delivery is the core concern of the local government. But advancement in communication and technology has emerged the new sources from government to E-government whereas designed portal and websites and online center are the effective sources of local government and public participation. So, result showed that analogy E-government and local government encourage decentralized participatory governance to facilitate citizens of the country.
- The relationship of participatory governance and democratization are responsible upholding the principles of good governance, rule of law, transparency and empowerment. It is perceived that E-governance is highly associated with development of both participation and democracy. Because both respective characteristics such as democratization and participatory encourages the unique model which is known participatory governance.
- The research interact use of most sophisticated technology develop the new ideas in affairs of governance such as E-services, E-information, E-participation and E-local administration as well as E-government. On that results, perceived E-governance is positively associated with decentralization.

Similarly, Decentralization is the basic needs of the contemporary world but under the supervision of digitalization to meet the new challenges regarding globalization and democratization.

- Others, finding related to the perceived effectiveness of E-governance is all local governance system emphasis on sound democratic system. The finding depicts that strategically application of digital governance not only facilitates the citizens to aware of the activities of government but also guarantee them to involve in decision making process of the government.
- In contrast, we found that transparent, responsive and accountable governments result in the E-governance system's effectiveness based on the people's belief in their governments. Moreover, these strong perceptions of e-governance effectiveness make citizens trust their governments based on the understanding that their governments keep citizens' interests on priority and make responsive decisions and transparently communicate those decisions with the public. Moreover, these findings related to confirmation of underlying mechanisms advance existing literature and will open new avenues for future researchers to explore and for practitioners and policymakers to focus deeply on such mechanisms while devising policies.
- Finally, the current study also depicts underlying mechanism consisted on Decentralization and participation and its association with E-governance promote accountable, responsive and transparent governments with overall public trust in local governments, proving the importance of modern technologies to disseminate timely and accurate information to the public efficiently and effectively to win objectivity of participatory governance

Conclusion:

All the study hypotheses were found to be supported, which shows perceived informatization and democratization were significantly and positively related to overall process of participatory governance. Moreover, Decentralization in local government is closely associated with perceived effectiveness of E-governance. While systematic study of E-governance mediated the relationship between participation and decentralization. So, the outcomes of research proved effective to E-governance with all variables such as informatization, democratization, and local government. Moreover, these variables are depicting the importance of decentralized participatory governance system establishing the broader level of trust among citizens and enable governance to fair and transparent practices of the government.

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