

**CITIZENS' ELECTRONIC PARTICIPATION: A SELECT
STUDY IN INDIAN CONTEXT**

by

SREEJITH A

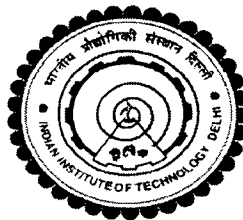
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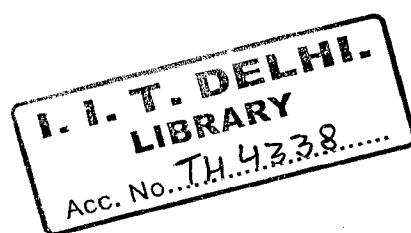
in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

to the



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Dedicated to

My Parents

Certificate

This is to certify that the submission of the thesis titled “**Citizens’ Electronic Participation: A Select Study in Indian Context.**” to the Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)** is a record of bonafide research work carried out by Sreejith.A. He has worked under my guidance and supervision and has fulfilled the requirements for the submission of this thesis, which has attained the standard required for a PhD degree of the institute. The results presented in this thesis have not been submitted elsewhere for the award of any degree or diploma.



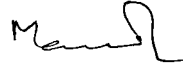
P Vigneswara Ilavarasan, PhD

Assistant Professor

Department of Humanities & Social Science

Indian Institute of Technology Delhi

New Delhi – 110016, India



M P Gupta, PhD

Professor

Department of Management Studies

Indian Institute of Technology Delhi

New Delhi – 110016, India

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SREEJITH A

Abstract

By enabling new ways for governance and alternate opportunities for interaction with citizens, the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has supported the government's efforts in accommodating citizens' inputs in the process of governance. This electronic participation is considered a pre-requisite for successful ICTs initiatives. The e-participation issues, including how citizens are heard and evaluated in governance become an important domain of research. This research is in the direction of e-participation, in which identifying the factors that influence citizens' e-participation is a primary research interest. The research was carried out using multiple studies in an Indian context with this aim.

India's democratic environment and existing policy towards improved e-participation are described first. This review identifies that in the Indian context, policies are weak for a secure e-participation and there is a decline in political culture and democracy. It is noted that, if ICTs initiatives directly influence only the elite and those in power, it may not gain much support as a medium that helps to protect democratic values. ICTs, when utilized in less favor for the disadvantaged, may further lead to an exacerbation of inequalities and to a deficit of democracy. The research gaps identified include the existence of less adequate studies that have explored influencing factors, especially in the Indian context. Along these lines, research that focuses on the Indian e-participation context, can offer valuable guidelines for successful ICTs initiatives.

To identify the factors that influence e-participation, qualitative and quantitative studies were conducted. The possible influencing factors derived from literatures have been classified into Individual, Governance and Technology (IGT) components, forming independent variables for the research model. A questionnaire survey was conducted among Indian citizens who often e-

participate. The IGT framework was tested using the 407 questionnaires received. The model was significant with 41 percent of variance and factors including individual, governance and technology were found to influence e-participation. To the extant literature, IGT framework is a comprehensive one.

To cross--validate the IGT framework further, the case of Lokpal (ombudsman) movement from India has been studied. For this case study, the primary data is from the questionnaire survey described earlier. The secondary data has been collected from citizens-created content in select e-participation initiatives. Using a Five Ws and One H question framework, analysis has been carried out, and has been integrated. This genre analysis was helpful in providing better explanations in terms of structural, spatial, functional and temporal aspects of the e-participation eco-system. The strength of the described eco-system lies in overcoming the earlier attempts that were limited to a few services and were less adequate for representing the e-participation domain.

Further, to explain the influence of ICTs in citizens' participation, e-petitioning and e-voting cases were studied. First, the case of Sutharyakeralam e-petitioning system was chosen to examine the influence of ICTs in effective e-petitioning. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with the resident association members, who filed the petition for protecting a public irrigation canal. The case of the 2011 Kerala State Assembly election was studied to examine the influence of ICTs in mobilizing the citizens. In-depth interviews were carried out with the representatives, officials, activists and citizens. The analysis identifies that political, economic, social and technological (PEST) factors do influence ICTs enabled mobilization. Using a policy grid in the dimensions of influencing factors and policy impact, this study outlines

recommendations to improve citizens' participation. The e-petitioning and e-voting case studies contend that ICTs can enable effective e-participation and can also mobilize the electorates to cast their vote, provided a favorable environment for the constructs identified is present in the public sphere. Compared to earlier literatures, the results are promising, as earlier scholars provided conflicting arguments about the influence of technology in e-participation.

The triangulation of the studies explains that the individual and governance factors exert an explicit influence and technology implicitly influences e-participation. Further, participation efficacy, value system and freedom to participate can influence e-participation. To the literature, a definition for e-democracy and e-participation has been contributed. The IGT framework has been derived and cross-validated using the case of Lokpal. The study delineates e-democracy models that have been following democracy ideals and characteristics of initiator dimensions. To improve e-participation, the study recommends, that ICTs initiatives must be equipped with legal support and adequate transferring mechanisms. Further, policies that help enhance values among participants and improve initiators' and participants' skills are essential for successful ICTs initiatives. Future research can incorporate upcoming e-participation services to the IGT framework. Further research can focus on how the citizens are heard by authorities and how their e-participation is accommodated in policy making.

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