

Digital Tools and Platforms for Enhancing Community Participation: A Review of Global Practices

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How to Cite: Sebunya, J., & Gichuki, A. (2024). Digital Tools and Platforms for Enhancing Community Participation: A Review of Global Practices. *International Journal of Scholarly Practice*, 4(2), 54-67.

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to review global practices in the use of digital tools and platforms to enhance community participation. It specifically aims to evaluate the effectiveness of these technologies in promoting inclusive and equitable engagement, while identifying key practices, challenges, and lessons from global experiences.

Methods: The study employs a qualitative research approach, systematically reviewing literature sourced from academic journals, reports, and case studies.

Results: The findings indicate that digital platforms—such as social media, e-governance tools, and participatory budgeting systems—have effectively enhanced citizen engagement, especially in developed regions. However, challenges such as the digital divide, low digital literacy, and limited infrastructure continue to impede participation, particularly in marginalized and underserved communities.

Conclusion: The paper concludes by recommending the expansion of digital infrastructure, the promotion of digital literacy programs, the design of inclusive platforms, and the strengthening of community-based participation. Additionally, it calls for future research on emerging digital trends and the influence of digital inequality in underserved regions.

Keywords: *Digital platforms, community participation, digital inclusion, e-governance, civic engagement, digital divide, qualitative research*

Received: 18th October 2024

Accepted: 11th November 2024

Published: 25th November 2024

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of Community Participation in Governance, Decision-making, and Social Development

Community participation plays a pivotal role in governance, decision-making, and social development. It allows citizens to contribute their perspectives, skills, and experiences to local and national development processes, promoting a sense of ownership and accountability. Historically, community participation has been recognized as essential for building democratic societies and achieving sustainable development. It fosters collaboration between government

entities and citizens, leading to better decision-making and ensuring that policies and development initiatives meet the needs of diverse populations (Mohan & Stokke, 2000).

Participation in governance often takes various forms, including direct participation in local governance structures, involvement in civil society organizations, or through feedback mechanisms that allow communities to voice their concerns and preferences (Gaventa, 2006). Such participation is a fundamental element of participatory democracy, where citizens are actively engaged in shaping the policies that affect their lives. Arnstein's (1969) "Ladder of Citizen Participation" offers a framework for understanding the varying levels of citizen engagement, from mere consultation to actual decision-making power. In social development, the involvement of communities is equally critical, as it ensures that projects and interventions are contextually relevant and culturally sensitive.

In many parts of the world, especially in developing countries, community participation is also a way to empower marginalized groups. It provides them with opportunities to have a voice in policy and decision-making processes, thereby reducing inequalities and ensuring more inclusive governance (Hickey & Mohan, 2004). However, despite its importance, achieving meaningful and sustained community participation remains a challenge due to a range of factors, including power dynamics, lack of resources, and limited access to information (Cornwall, 2008).

1.2 The Growing Role of Digital Tools and Platforms in Facilitating Community Engagement

In recent years, digital tools and platforms have significantly transformed how communities engage with governance and social development processes. The proliferation of mobile phones, social media, and online platforms has opened up new avenues for participation, making it easier for citizens to interact with their governments and participate in decision-making processes. According to Dahlgren (2013), digital tools have the potential to enhance participatory democracy by providing more accessible and scalable ways for communities to engage, regardless of geographic or socio-economic barriers.

One of the key drivers of this transformation is the use of e-governance platforms, which allow citizens to access government services, provide feedback, and participate in policy consultations. For instance, platforms such as *Decidim* in Spain and *Bristol City Council's Citizen Space* in the UK have empowered communities to take part in participatory budgeting, consultations on local policies, and other decision-making processes (Sampaio, Maia, & Marques, 2011). Similarly, the rise of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter has enabled citizens to organize and advocate for social change in real-time, as seen in movements like the Arab Spring (Tufekci, 2017).

Moreover, participatory budgeting, an innovative form of community engagement, has been widely adopted in cities like Porto Alegre in Brazil and New York in the United States. Digital tools have facilitated this process by allowing communities to submit budget proposals online, vote for their preferred projects, and monitor the implementation of these projects (Sintomer, Herzberg, & Röcke, 2008). These platforms have increased transparency and accountability while encouraging a wider range of participants, including young people and marginalized groups, to engage in governance processes.

However, the adoption of digital tools for community participation is not without its challenges. The digital divide, which refers to disparities in access to technology and the internet, poses a significant barrier to equitable participation. Studies have shown that low-income and rural populations often lack access to the necessary devices and connectivity to engage fully in

digital platforms (Selwyn, 2004). Additionally, concerns around data privacy, digital literacy, and platform usability can hinder meaningful engagement. Nonetheless, as digital infrastructure improves and more inclusive tools are developed, the potential for digital platforms to enhance community participation is expected to grow.

In conclusion, digital tools and platforms represent a powerful means to facilitate community engagement in governance, decision-making, and social development. While there are challenges related to access and equity, the benefits of using digital tools such as increased transparency, broader participation, and real-time interaction highlight their transformative potential in enhancing participatory democracy and fostering social development. Future research and policy initiatives should focus on addressing the barriers to digital participation, ensuring that the benefits of these tools are accessible to all segments of society.

1.3 Problem Statement

Community participation remains critical for inclusive governance and social development, yet marginalized and underserved communities face persistent barriers to effective engagement. These challenges include limited digital access, socio-economic disparities, and exclusion from decision-making processes, which inhibit their ability to participate meaningfully in governance (Gherghina et al., 2020). Additionally, the digital divide continues to exacerbate these gaps, particularly in rural and low-income areas, where access to technology and digital literacy is limited (Keryova, et al., 2020).

Digital platforms offer significant potential to address these challenges by providing more accessible, scalable, and inclusive methods for participation. These tools can promote wider civic engagement and empower marginalized voices. However, for these platforms to effectively bridge the participation gap, challenges such as digital literacy, platform design, and data privacy concerns must be addressed to ensure equitable access and engagement.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To review and assess the effectiveness of digital tools and platforms in enhancing community participation globally.
2. To identify key practices, challenges, and lessons from global experiences in utilizing digital platforms for community engagement.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What digital tools and platforms are used globally to enhance community participation?
2. How effective are these tools in fostering inclusive engagement, particularly among marginalized communities?
3. What challenges and opportunities arise from the use of digital platforms in promoting community participation?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theories of Community Participation

2.1.1 Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on Community Engagement

Community participation has long been regarded as essential to democratic governance and development. Historically, the idea of involving citizens in decision-making processes can be traced back to classical democratic traditions, where public deliberation and civic responsibility

were central tenets of governance (Pateman, 2012). In modern times, the concept has evolved to emphasize inclusive governance and participatory democracy, where individuals and communities actively contribute to policy-making and social development (Fung, 2015).

Scholars have explored participatory governance as a means of addressing power imbalances in decision-making processes. Participation is seen as a way to empower marginalized groups by allowing them to voice their concerns and influence policies that affect their lives. The theoretical frameworks of community participation often stress the importance of equity, social justice, and collective action in creating more inclusive and responsive governance systems (Cornwall, 2016).

Another key theory in understanding community participation is the concept of “public spheres,” as discussed by Habermas (1991), where public dialogue and debate are critical for fostering democratic participation. Habermas emphasized that a healthy democracy relies on open and accessible spaces where individuals can discuss, deliberate, and influence political outcomes. Digital platforms are now viewed as contemporary extensions of these public spheres, enabling more accessible and widespread participation (Dahlgren, 2018).

2.1.2 Models of Participation (Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation)

One of the most influential models for understanding citizen participation is Sherry Arnstein's (1969) "Ladder of Citizen Participation." Arnstein’s model categorizes participation into eight levels, ranging from non-participation (e.g., manipulation, therapy) to varying degrees of tokenism (e.g., informing, consultation, placation) and finally to degrees of citizen power (e.g., partnership, delegated power, citizen control).

At the lowest rungs of the ladder, citizen participation is more symbolic, with little actual influence over decision-making processes. As one ascends the ladder, citizens are granted more power, with the highest levels reflecting genuine control over decisions that affect their communities (Arnstein, 1969). This model remains relevant today, particularly in assessing the role of digital tools in either enhancing or limiting genuine participation. While many digital platforms claim to foster engagement, they often operate at the lower rungs of the ladder, providing information without enabling citizens to influence decisions meaningfully (Carpentier, 2016).

Recent studies have expanded on Arnstein’s work, examining how digital platforms can promote participation in governance. For instance, Carpentier (2016) argued that media platforms can either enable participatory practices or reinforce top-down governance models, depending on how they are designed and used. With the rise of digital engagement tools, understanding where they fall on Arnstein’s ladder can help assess their impact on community empowerment.

These references offer critical insights into both the historical and theoretical dimensions of community participation and the various models used to conceptualize citizen involvement. The Ladder of Citizen Participation, along with contemporary theories, provides a foundational framework for analyzing digital platforms’ role in enhancing or inhibiting meaningful engagement.

2.2 Digital Transformation and Civic Engagement

2.2.1 How Digital Technology Has Changed Civic Participation

The advent of digital technology has significantly transformed civic participation, making it more accessible, efficient, and widespread. Digital tools have created new avenues for citizens to engage with governance, policy-making, and social development processes. Unlike

traditional methods of participation, such as town hall meetings and physical consultations, digital platforms allow for real-time interaction and enable participation regardless of geographic location (Boulianne, 2020).

Social media platforms, mobile apps, and online forums have become important channels for civic engagement. They allow individuals to mobilize, share information, and collaborate on pressing social issues (Bennett & Segerberg, 2018). Additionally, the use of data analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), and digital surveys has improved governments' ability to collect feedback, enabling more responsive governance and policy-making. As digital technologies evolve, they continue to lower the barriers to participation, facilitating engagement from a broader segment of society, including traditionally marginalized groups (Mossberger, Tolbert, & McNeal, 2007).

However, despite the widespread use of digital platforms, the digital divide referring to inequalities in access to digital tools and skills remains a significant challenge. Those without reliable internet access or the necessary digital literacy are often excluded from these digital civic spaces (Bimber, 2019). Consequently, while digital technology has expanded opportunities for civic participation, it has also introduced new forms of exclusion that need to be addressed to ensure truly inclusive engagement.

2.2.1 The Rise of E-Governance and E-Participation

E-governance refers to the use of digital technologies by government institutions to deliver public services, interact with citizens, and improve the efficiency of governance processes. E-participation, a subset of e-governance, focuses specifically on using digital platforms to facilitate citizen engagement in decision-making and policy development (United Nations, 2020). The rise of e-governance has provided innovative solutions for bridging gaps between citizens and government, fostering transparency, accountability, and more participatory forms of governance (Medaglia, 2018).

Governments around the world have adopted e-governance platforms to enhance public service delivery and increase civic participation. For example, Estonia's e-residency program and its digital public services platform are considered global models for successful e-governance (Margetts & Dunleavy, 2018). Similarly, the use of participatory budgeting platforms in cities like New York and Madrid has enabled citizens to vote on how public funds should be allocated, giving them a direct say in governance decisions (Sampaio et al., 2021).

E-participation tools include digital platforms for voting, public consultations, and online discussions. These tools enable citizens to contribute ideas, provide feedback, and participate in deliberative processes without being physically present. The success of such platforms is evident in their ability to engage more diverse populations, including younger generations who may not participate in traditional political processes (United Nations, 2020).

Despite these advances, e-participation also faces challenges. The effectiveness of e-governance platforms depends on digital infrastructure, data privacy, and the ability to engage citizens in meaningful ways. Additionally, the digital divide and concerns over digital surveillance and data misuse may limit the extent to which citizens feel comfortable using such platforms (Medaglia, 2018). As e-governance continues to expand, these issues must be addressed to ensure that it contributes to more inclusive and democratic forms of civic engagement.

2.3 Global Digital Platforms for Participation

2.3.1 Overview of Digital Platforms Used Globally for Community Participation

Digital platforms have emerged as vital tools for enhancing community participation in governance, decision-making, and civic engagement. These platforms range from social media channels and mobile apps to dedicated e-governance platforms and participatory budgeting tools. They enable citizens to share opinions, organize collectively, and contribute to policy-making processes in ways that were previously limited by geography, time, and resources (Linders, 2019).

Social Media Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram play a significant role in political mobilization and community participation. These channels have enabled users to engage in debates, spread information, and collaborate on civic initiatives. Movements like the Arab Spring and #BlackLivesMatter demonstrate how social media can facilitate large-scale participation and foster social change (Howard & Hussain, 2013; Freelon et al., 2020). However, the use of social media for civic engagement also raises concerns about misinformation, polarization, and the limited depth of engagement facilitated by these platforms (Bennett & Segerberg, 2018).

E-Governance Platforms in countries around the world have adopted e-governance platforms to improve public service delivery and promote more direct citizen participation. Estonia's e-governance model is considered one of the most advanced, offering citizens digital IDs that allow them to access a wide range of public services, participate in elections, and engage in policy-making (Margetts & Dunleavy, 2018). Similarly, platforms like India's *MyGov* portal allow citizens to contribute to governance by submitting ideas and feedback on public policies (Chandra & Nanda, 2021).

Participatory budgeting (PB) tools allow citizens to decide how a portion of public funds should be spent, directly engaging them in governance. Cities like New York, Paris, and Madrid have successfully implemented PB platforms where citizens can submit proposals and vote on how resources should be allocated (Sampaio et al., 2021). These tools promote transparency and civic involvement, encouraging citizens to take an active role in shaping local budgets and services (Cabannes & Lipietz, 2018).

2.3.2 Comparative Analysis of Platform Use in Different Countries

Different countries have employed digital platforms in unique ways to enhance community participation, often reflecting local governance structures, technological infrastructure, and societal needs. While some nations have implemented comprehensive e-governance systems, others have focused on using social media or participatory budgeting tools.

Estonia is a global leader in e-governance, offering its citizens digital platforms for nearly all government services, including e-voting, e-tax filing, and e-consultations. The country's digital ID system enables secure and transparent access to these services, fostering high levels of trust in the digital government (Margetts & Dunleavy, 2018). Estonia's success can be attributed to its early adoption of technology and investment in digital infrastructure, allowing for widespread participation and innovation.

Brazil has been a pioneer in participatory budgeting, first implemented in Porto Alegre in 1989. The success of this initiative led to the adoption of participatory budgeting platforms in cities across the country. These tools have allowed citizens to directly influence the allocation of municipal budgets, with an emphasis on transparency and inclusivity. Despite some challenges

related to scalability and digital literacy, Brazil's participatory budgeting model has been influential globally (Wampler, 2020).

In India, platforms like *MyGov* have transformed citizen engagement by allowing people to interact with government officials, contribute to policy discussions, and access public services online. Given India's large and diverse population, digital platforms have proven essential for reaching a broad audience. However, issues such as the digital divide and limited internet access in rural areas remain challenges to full participation (Chandra & Nanda, 2021).

In the United States, social media and participatory budgeting tools have become prominent means of civic engagement. For instance, the City of New York has implemented a participatory budgeting platform that allows residents to vote on how municipal funds should be allocated. Similarly, social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook have been widely used for political activism, particularly in movements such as #BlackLivesMatter (Freelon et al., 2020). While these platforms have expanded civic engagement, concerns about misinformation, digital surveillance, and unequal access continue to impact their effectiveness (Bimber et al., 2015). These examples highlight how different countries have utilized digital platforms to engage their citizens, offering insights into best practices, as well as the challenges associated with scaling such initiatives. Each country's approach demonstrates the potential of digital platforms to foster inclusive and transparent community participation, while also revealing the obstacles that need to be overcome for these systems to be fully effective.

2.4 Digital Inclusion and Equity

2.4.0 Barriers to Digital Participation

While digital platforms have created new opportunities for civic engagement, significant barriers remain, particularly for marginalized and underserved communities. The *digital divide* the gap between those with access to digital technologies and those without continues to be a major obstacle to equitable participation (Robinson et al., 2015). The divide exists not only in terms of access to hardware and internet connectivity but also in digital literacy, or the ability to use digital tools effectively.

2.4.1 Access Barriers

Internet access remains unevenly distributed across the globe, with rural areas, developing countries, and low-income populations experiencing limited connectivity. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), approximately 37% of the world's population remained offline in 2021, particularly in Africa and South Asia (ITU, 2021). In places where internet access is available, the quality of the connection often varies, with slow speeds and high costs further impeding participation (van Dijk, 2020).

2.4.2 Digital Literacy

Beyond mere access, digital literacy is critical for meaningful participation in online platforms. Digital literacy encompasses not only technical skills but also the ability to critically assess information, navigate digital spaces safely, and engage in complex interactions. Many citizens, particularly older individuals, those with lower education levels, and people living in poverty, lack these skills, limiting their ability to participate fully in digital governance and social initiatives (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2019).

2.4.3 Gender and Disability Barriers

Marginalized groups such as women and people with disabilities face additional barriers to digital participation. Gender-based inequalities, particularly in the Global South, mean that

women are less likely to have access to the internet and digital tools than men (Heeks, 2022).). People with disabilities, meanwhile, encounter accessibility issues with digital platforms that are not designed to accommodate diverse needs, making it difficult for them to engage in civic processes.

2.5 Strategies for Ensuring Inclusivity in Digital Participation

Addressing these barriers requires targeted strategies that prioritize digital inclusion and equity, ensuring that digital tools for participation are accessible to all citizens, regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, location, or ability. Several strategies have been identified to bridge these gaps.

2.5.1 Infrastructure Development

Expanding digital infrastructure, especially in underserved rural areas and developing regions, is a fundamental step toward closing the access gap. Governments and international organizations can collaborate to invest in affordable, reliable broadband networks, with an emphasis on providing low-cost or subsidized services for low-income populations (Idzi and Gomes, 2022). For example, community-based networks, such as those seen in rural Chile, allow local communities to manage and expand their own digital infrastructure, making access more affordable and sustainable (Correa and Pavez, (2016).

2.5.2 Digital Literacy Programs

To address the skills gap, many governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have initiated digital literacy programs. These programs focus on providing marginalized communities with the skills needed to navigate and engage with digital platforms effectively. In different countries in Africa like South Africa and Rwanda, community-driven digital literacy programs have been launched to empower young people, women, and rural populations to participate meaningfully in digital spaces, such as agriculture and education (DO4 Africa, 2020)

2.5.3 Inclusive Platform Design

Ensuring that digital platforms are designed with inclusivity in mind is another key strategy. This includes adopting universal design principles that make digital tools accessible to people with disabilities (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, (2018) and ensuring platforms can be navigated by individuals with low literacy levels or those who speak local languages (United Nations, 2020). Additionally, gender-sensitive digital policies should be implemented to close the gender gap in internet usage and participation, especially in developing countries.

2.5.4 Public-Private Partnerships

Collaborative efforts between governments, the private sector, and civil society organizations are essential for promoting digital inclusion. Public-private partnerships can drive investment in digital infrastructure, support educational initiatives, and develop more inclusive digital platforms. For instance, partnerships between tech companies and NGOs have led to the creation of apps and online tools specifically designed for use in low-resource settings, enhancing participation in both civic and economic (Idzi and Gomes, 2022). These strategies underscore the importance of not only expanding access but also ensuring that digital platforms are designed to be inclusive, addressing the specific needs and challenges of underserved communities. By focusing on digital inclusion, societies can work toward a more equitable and participatory digital future.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research approach focusing on conducting a systematic review of existing literature and case studies. A systematic review allowed for the comprehensive synthesis of prior research on digital tools and platforms used to enhance community participation globally. This approach provided an in-depth understanding of the various frameworks, strategies, and challenges identified in previous studies. In addition to the literature review, case studies were selected to examine both successful and unsuccessful practices in digital community participation. These case studies offered real-world insights into how different regions and communities have leveraged digital tools for civic engagement, enabling the research to identify patterns and divergences across global practices.

3.2 Data Collection

Data was collected from various sources to ensure a robust and comprehensive review such as Academic Journals with Peer-reviewed articles on digital participation and community engagement which were sourced from databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ScienceDirect, etc. This ensured the use of reputable and current research, particularly articles. Other sources included Reports and Publications from international organizations like the United Nations, World Bank, and International Telecommunication Union (ITU) were included. These reports provided large-scale data on digital inclusion, participation trends, and governance innovations. Government Publications for National and regional government reports on digital governance and e-participation initiatives were reviewed, focusing on examples from both developed and developing countries. International Case Studies were selected based on their relevance to digital participation in governance and social development.

3.3 Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using content analysis and thematic coding to identify key trends, successes, challenges, and best practices. Content Analysis was applied to the literature and reports to extract relevant information on the digital tools and platforms used for community participation, the outcomes of these efforts, and the contextual factors influencing their success or failure. Thematic Coding was used to help organize data into recurring themes or categories, such as the types of platforms used, digital inclusion strategies, barriers to participation, and the impact on marginalized communities. The coding helped identify the broader trends in global digital participation, highlighting similarities and differences across various countries and regions.

4. Results and Discussion

This study provides a comprehensive review of global practices in the use of digital tools and platforms aimed at enhancing community participation, with a focus on their effectiveness in promoting inclusive and equitable engagement. The purpose of the research is to assess how these digital technologies foster civic involvement, identify the most effective practices, and examine challenges and lessons from various international contexts. By employing a qualitative research approach, the study systematically examines literature from academic journals, government and organizational reports, and relevant case studies to gain insights into the role of digital tools in civic participation. The results reveal that digital platforms, including social media, e-governance applications, and participatory budgeting systems, have significantly improved citizen engagement, particularly in developed regions. These tools have been instrumental in increasing access to information, providing spaces for public discourse,

and allowing individuals to contribute their voices to decision-making processes. The platforms have empowered communities by creating channels where citizens can participate in government discussions, express their concerns, and actively engage in shaping public policies.

However, the study also highlights substantial challenges. Despite the advantages in more technologically advanced regions, barriers like the digital divide, low levels of digital literacy, and limited infrastructure continue to obstruct participation in marginalized and underserved communities. In many of these areas, individuals may lack access to reliable internet or digital devices, while others might not possess the technical skills required to engage effectively on digital platforms. Such barriers lead to unequal participation, which threatens the inclusivity that digital platforms aim to promote. To address these disparities, the paper recommends expanding digital infrastructure, particularly in underserved areas, to ensure broader and more equitable access to digital tools. Additionally, promoting digital literacy programs can equip individuals with the necessary skills to navigate and utilize these platforms effectively. The study suggests designing more inclusive digital platforms that consider the unique needs of different communities, such as language accessibility and user-friendly interfaces. Strengthening community-based participation is also essential, as it encourages grassroots involvement and helps to build trust in digital tools.

Looking forward, the study calls for further research into emerging digital trends, such as artificial intelligence and blockchain, and their potential applications in civic engagement. It also stresses the importance of examining how digital inequality continues to impact marginalized communities, as this digital gap may widen if left unaddressed.

5. Conclusion

The review of global practices in using digital tools and platforms for enhancing community participation has revealed several important insights. Digital platforms, such as social media, e-governance systems, and participatory budgeting tools, have demonstrated significant potential in fostering more inclusive engagement across various communities. These platforms enable real-time interaction, provide opportunities for marginalized voices to be heard, and democratize access to governance and decision-making processes. Despite these advantages, the effectiveness of digital platforms is often undermined by persistent challenges, such as the digital divide, limited digital literacy, and unequal access to technological infrastructure, particularly in underserved regions.

The review highlights that digital tools are more successful in regions with robust infrastructure, where they contribute to increased citizen participation and engagement in governance. However, in low-income and marginalized communities, lack of access and insufficient digital skills continue to pose significant barriers to effective participation. Case studies further show that e-governance and participatory platforms, when designed to be accessible and user-friendly, can enhance transparency and accountability in governance processes, offering valuable insights into global trends in digital participation.

6. Recommendations

To address these challenges, several recommendations can be made for governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and communities. First, governments should focus on expanding digital infrastructure, particularly in rural and underserved areas, to close the digital divide. This can be achieved through partnerships with the private sector to reduce costs and increase coverage. Additionally, there is a need to promote digital literacy programs that target marginalized groups, including women, the elderly, and low-income communities. These programs should equip individuals with the necessary skills to effectively engage with digital

platforms. Governments and NGOs should also prioritize designing inclusive platforms, ensuring they cater to users with disabilities, low literacy levels, and diverse linguistic backgrounds. Lastly, strengthening community-based digital participation through awareness campaigns and local dialogues about the benefits of engaging with digital governance platforms will foster broader participation and inclusivity.

While this review has provided valuable insights, it also identifies areas for future research. There is a need for more empirical studies on how digital platforms are being utilized in underserved regions, particularly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of digital tools in these areas, examining the specific barriers to access and potential strategies to overcome them. Additionally, as new technologies such as blockchain, artificial intelligence (AI), and 5G continue to evolve, there is a need to investigate how these emerging digital trends can further enhance civic participation and governance. Research in this area will be critical to ensuring that digital platforms become more accessible, transparent, and effective in promoting community engagement.

Moreover, future studies should delve deeper into the impact of digital inequality on democratic participation and decision-making. Understanding how unequal access to digital tools shapes power dynamics in online civic spaces is essential for developing more equitable systems of participation. By addressing these research gaps, the academic community can build on existing knowledge and contribute to the development of more inclusive, equitable, and engaged global societies.

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