

E-Democracy- A Case Study of Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the meaning of e-democracy. It discusses the different models and types of e-democracy. This paper highlights the positive and negative aspects of e-democracy. The scenario of Pakistan has been highlighted. Where the country adopted the different models of e-democracy. In the process of the process of adaptation the country had to face different challenges which are discussed in the following text. The efforts of government are also mentioned, in order to remove the barriers which effect the application of e-democracy in the country. In order to explain the above facts, qualitative research methodology has been adopted.

Keywords: e-Democracy, Digital Governance, Pakistan, Qualitative Research

INTRODUCTION

E-Democracy or Digital Democracy is a specific technology which has been introduced to bring transparency in the political systems. It aims at giving citizens an opportunity to participate in the political process of the state through different and innovative means. The individuals can give their valuable inputs through different social forums. E-Democracy has been given several names which may include:

- Digital Democracy
- Online Democracy
- Cyber Democracy
- Electronic Democracy
- Web Democracy
- Virtual Democracy
- Net Democracy

Definitions Of E-Democracy:

E-Democracy has been defined by Hacker and Van Djk in the following words:

“We define Digital Democracy as collection of attempts to practice democracy without the limits of time, space and other physical conditions using ICT or CMC instead, as an addition, not a replacement for traditional analogue practices”

Digital Democracy is firmly defined by Hacker & Van Dijk in the following words:

“Digital democracy can be defined as the pursuit and the practice of democracy in whatever view using digital media in online and offline political communication. The online and offline distinction should be added because political activities are not only happening on internet.”

Hacker and Van Dijk are strong supporters of E-Democracy, but this does not mean we can leave behind the traditional means of communication.

Historical Perspective:

During the early 1960s, many scholars highlighted the importance of ICT i.e. Information & Communication Technology. They believed the internet can help in increasing political communication. The citizens can develop a stronger bond through different mediums with the political representatives of the state. Various terminologies have been used. The word “Tele Democracy” was used by Becker in 1981. “Digital Democracy” used by Hague and Loader in 1999 & by Hacker & Van Dijk in 2000. The term “Electronic or E-Democracy” by Schaal in 2016.

Types of E-Democracy:

There are many types of E-Democracy according to their nature and characteristics.

Models of E-Democracy:

There are several models of E-Democracy which may include:

1. REPRESENTATIONAL E-DEMOCRACY:

This model of democracy shows the traditional aspects of democratic systems and the relationship between the elected representatives and citizens.

2. DIRECT DEMOCRACY:

This model allows the citizens to directly participate in the political process of the country.

3. HYBRID E-DEMOCRACY:

The model combines both representational and direct democracy. This means the citizens get an opportunity to connect with their elected representatives and to freely participate in the political process of the state.

4. PARTICIPATORY E-DEMOCRACY:

This model highlights the participation of all individuals in the democratic process of the country through digital means.

Sub-Models of E-Democracy:

E-Democracy has various sub-models which have been defined by Van Dijk in 2012. These classifications are made on the basis of their utility.

1. Legalist Democracy:

This sub-model provides a democratic environment through constitutional and other laws.

2. Competitive Democracy:

This model of democracy provides an atmosphere of competition for all states. It may allow the political parties and different personalities to indulge in the electoral process of the state. These personalities can become Nominees through ICT.

3. Plebiscitary Democracy:

This model allows democratic personalities to hold plebiscites and referendums which can help in decision-making.

4. Pluralistic Democracy:

This sub-model focuses in combining all the aspects of democracy through ICT. The principles of direct democracy and representative democracy are merged on a single platform. They are connected via ICT and Cyber systems.

5. Participative Democracy:

This democratic model grants opportunities to the citizens to actively participate in all the political activities of the state by digital democracy.

6. Libertarian Democracy:

This view the pluralistic approach and the plebiscitary approach by the will of citizens. This concept allows citizens to openly give their opinions through different means.

Significance/Utility of E-Democracy:

E-Democracy has many benefits which may include: Voters Turnout, the efficient voting process, greater citizen engagement, increased transparency, better record-keeping, and cost-effective and improved accessibility for underrepresented groups.

1. **VOTERS TURNOUT:** The E-Democracy has increased the voters turnout during elections The Information Technology mediums have increased the number of voters as computers and laptops are in reach of most of the individuals.
2. **GREATER CITIZENS ENGAGEMENT:** The other significance ICT is that it has engaged citizens in the political activities of the state. In this way they have a greater sense of responsibility towards their country.
3. **INCREASED TRANSPARENCY:** E-Democracy promotes transparency during elections. Through this technology the manipulation of votes can be avoided.
4. **BETTER RECORD KEEPING;** It also helps to maintain a proper record of elections.

5. **COST EFFECTIVE:** The process of participation in democratic affairs of the state has now become less expensive. Digital means have reduced the cost of election campaigns and expenses of the day of elections.
6. **IMPROVED ACCESSIBILITY FOR UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS:** Digital democracy helps to improve the accessibility of less popular groups. It can promote people and allow them to play their roles in democratic systems.
7. **USEFUL FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS:** Digital technology helps citizens to vote conveniently. It helps to improve transparency at the local level. Technology can help citizens to get more information about political parties, candidates, and different issues allowing them to make proper decisions.
8. **POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS THROUGH E-DEMOCRACY:** Digital technologies can be used for carrying out political campaigns. It can help mobilize voters and political parties. These campaigns can be initiated by Email & SMS Campaigns, online fundraising, social media marketing, online advertising and voters targeting and analysis.

Role of Media for E-Democracy:

Media plays a very vital role in promoting E-Democracy. Some major contributions of Media may include:

1. **PROVIDING INFORMATION:** Media provides valuable information to the citizens regarding party manifesto, party meetings, election campaigns, election results etc.
2. **FACILITATING DISCUSSIONS:** Media provides various opportunities for discussion. People may have a chance to discuss several political issues.
3. **PROVIDING AN INDEPENDENT CHECK:** Media helps to keep a proper check and balance on the political process of the state.
4. **AMPLIFYING CITIZENS VOICES:** The media helps citizens strengthen their opinions in different political perspectives.

Social Media Tools for E-Democracy:

There are many social media tools which may include; Facebook, twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Reddit.

1. **FACEBOOK:** A platform that allows political discussions and debates. It also facilitates political campaigns.
2. **TWITTER:** This is social media networking site which helps real-time communication.
3. **INSTAGRAM:** This is the social media domain where people may share their stories.
4. **LINKEDIN:** This platform facilitates all professions for their discussions and connecting with other stakeholders.
5. **YOU TUBE:** It is a medium where videos are shared which may include broadcasting of political speeches, debates and town-hall meetings.

6. REDDIT: This platform is used for hosting online programs, and debates.

Tools of ICT For E-Governance:

The word ICT stands for Information and Communication Technology. It has several tools which can be very helpful

1. WEBSITE & PORTALS: Governments often use different websites and portals for providing information to citizens.
2. MOBILE APPS: Various mobile apps are utilized by government officials to extend services and information.
3. DATABASE & DATA MANAGEMENT: Government organizations mostly use database and management systems to protect and save data which is related to citizens.
4. GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM: GIS is utilized by the government to manage the location, maps, and demographic data.
5. CLOUD COMPUTING: The government uses this application for the storage of data. It also helps manage and share data.
6. E-PAYMENT & E-BANKING: Governments nowadays use e-payment and e-payment to facilitate citizens. Now citizens can easily purchase goods by online payment.
7. E-SIGNATURE: The government uses e-signature to facilitate the signing of documents, agreements, and contracts.
8. ELECTRONIC IDENTITY: The governments are providing electronic identities to citizens so that they can access to the special websites through their secret digital codes.

EVM as a Part of E-Democracy:

Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) is also an important element of E-Democracy. EVM is a safe technology to cast votes. It cuts all the costs which are spent on manual voting. It helps improve the transparency process and brings accuracy to election results.

Use of Evm in Different States:

EVM is used in many ways. Its utility varies from state to state:

1. INDIA: EVM has been used in India since 1999 and since then it is utilized in the elections.
2. UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: EVM has been adopted by some states. Most states still utilize the manual method in the electoral process.
3. BELGIUM: It has implemented the EVM since 1991 and since then it has been practiced in the local and national elections.
4. SOUTH AFRICA: EVM is used in South Africa since 2014 and are used in all national and provincial aspects.

5. PHILIPPINES: EVM is used in Philippines since 2010. After that it is used in both national and local elections.

E-VOTING: Electronic Voting is introduced by governments of different states and regions. These states include:

1. UNITED STATES: Electronic voting has been used by several states such as touch screen machinery and internet voting.
2. BRAZIL: Electronic voting is used across the country for federal and state elections.
3. FRANCE: Electronic voting is used in local areas of the country.
4. ESTONIA: Electronic voting is adopted in state elections since 2005.
5. INDIA: Electronic Voting Machines are used in all nation and state elections.

CONTROVERSIAL ASPECTS OF E-VOTING:

There are many points on which questions have been raised on E-Voting System.

1. SECURITY: E-Voting system can lead to hacking, malware and other forms of cyber-attacks.
2. RELIABILITY: This system may not be reliable or it may fail, leading to inaccuracies.

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