

“Hit the Bull's-Eye”- Electronic Participation through Social Media

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Abstract. This paper presents research findings of reviewing 42 studies concerning electronic participation (e-Participation) through social media. Overall, such initiatives have reflected the prevalence of a one-way communication strategy, what do not considerably foster citizen involvement in policy decision making process.

Keywords. E-Participation, Social Media, E-Government, E-Democracy.

1. Introduction and Research Methodology

The evolving of e-Participation through social media initiatives has been quite intense in these latter times. These initiatives are enthusiastically seen as a way to enhance citizens' political engagement and to foster their involvement in government policy decision making process [1], [2]. This ongoing research poster aims to summarize and organize the literature concerning such topic. Figure 1 presents the research methodology.

The search for relevant papers overlapped with other “neighboring” fields, namely e-Democracy and e-Government. In this sense, we developed and applied an assessment framework that includes three dimensions – 1) e-Participation as independent research area, 2) e-Participation as integral part of e-Democracy, and 3) e-Participation as integral part of e-Government. The three dimensions are depicted in Figure 2.

2. Results

Based on the analysis done up to date, Table 1 provides general findings related to each of the three dimensions depicted in Figure 2.

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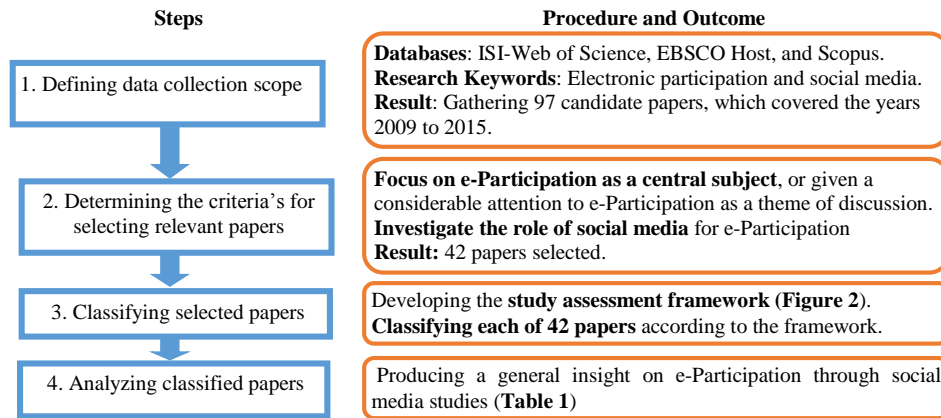


Figure 1. Literature Review Methodology

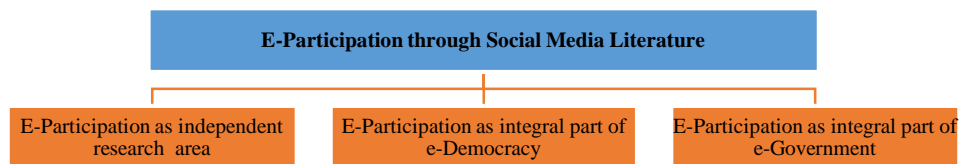


Figure 2. The Study Assessment Framework

Table 1. The Main Findings per E-Participation Dimension

Dimension	Main Findings and References Sample ²
E-Participation as independent research area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politicians-citizens interaction and political activities (e.g. e-campaigns and e-voting) are the central interests of the majority of studies in this dimension [3]–[5]. • Little attention towards other e-Participation activities (e.g. e-consultation and online decision making) in government context [6].
E-Participation as integral part of e-Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politicians often employ e-Participation through social media initiatives as additional communication channel. In particular, to promote themselves and to gain citizens votes during election time rather than conducting real dialogues with citizens [7], [8].
E-Participation as integral part of e-Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few studies address e-Participation as a central theme of discussion. Instead, e-Participation is treated as a “micro” subject along with other government /governance topics (e-service, openness and transparency), for example [9]–[11]. However, such public policy principles do not necessarily means truly participation [12], and e-Participation should not being examined for such impact [13].

² Due lack of space the complete list of papers reviewed is not included. Few references have been cited.

3. Conclusions³

E-Participation through social media initiatives have achieved little success on attracting greater citizens' engagement. Three challenges of e-Participation through social media should be understood. First, the field of e-Participation research focuses more on political activities; it rarely examines the adoption of e-Participation through social media sponsored and driven by governments. Second, e-Participation initiatives through social media within e-Democracy context are largely communication initiatives rather than truly citizens' participation. Third, e-Participation through social media initiatives in government context are widely employed as information and service provision initiatives rather than actual citizen participation government decision making process initiatives.

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³ Related authors' works including further discussions could be found in [14].