

Research article

Constructing Digital Public Service Democracy in the Era of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia

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ORCIDTrisno Sakti Herwanto: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7764-0709>**Abstract.**

The purpose of this paper was to reconstruct the practice of digital-based public service democracy, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is commonly assumed that service democracy places a high value on users and citizens. Furthermore, in the context of public services, democracy should be directed at the public, which includes all stakeholders with an interest in and a role in service delivery. This paper examined the findings of two previous research studies on digital public services in the era before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, based on this understanding. According to the findings of the analysis, the current digital public service democracy is still more focused on service users than on other stakeholders. A solution is proposed in the form of strengthening public service providers' human resources capacity as one of the keys to the success of digital public service democracy. Internalizing public service motivation, ethics, and culture must become a basic competency for civil servants providing digital services. Thus, digital public service democracy requires a greater focus on the role of each stakeholder.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is aimed to reflect and reconstruct the practice of digital public service democracy in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. We must promote the idea of put the citizens as the center of service delivery activities to guarantee the service rights they get from the government. Nevertheless, public service democracy will achieve its success when service providers have and carry out their capacity as good public servants. That logic emerged by the author's analysis on the two studies that related to the quality of digital-based services in the normal era and the era of COVID-19 pandemic that usually state as new normal era.

Facing the new normal era, there are various aspects of government administration that need to be systematically adjusted according to the needs and demands of citizens.

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New methods need to be developed to ensure the effectiveness of government performance, especially regarding to services delivery to citizens. This step needs serious attention considering that there is a phenomenon of disruption. The way of life has change from the normal phase to the new normal phase which of course has very different characteristics and patterns.

Before the world experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts to improve the quality of public services by strengthening the digital base had indeed become a concern. However, efforts to digitize public services have not yet found its best formula to give quick respon to the industrial revolution 4.0 which was followed by the 5.0 industrial revolution. In some cases, technology is still being developed to answer the demands of public services. Lack culture of government digital service is also being a big challenge in the technology application to support public services implementation.

¹Head of Undergraduate Program of Public Administration Study, Parahyangan Catholic University While the digital service strategy is still looking for its best form, the COVID-19 pandemic is here and becomes a challenge to our service system. Social restriction policies in Indonesia have created high demands of the comprehensive technology application for various public affairs. We all must be realize that technology owned and operated by the government is not fully ready yet. This technical issue also become potential challenge for public service democracy in term of promoting stakeholder participation and control over public services.

2. METHOD

Content analysis is the method in compiling this paper. The analysis was carried out on various reference sources such as relevant books and research journals to the discussion of digital-based public service democracy. Several steps taken to develop this paper consist of:

1. Conceptualizing Democracy in Public Service

The first step of this method is to examine the essence of democracy. This concept being basic framework for the implementation of public services. This stage starts with reviewing several perspectives and existing democratic paradigms. Contextualizing democracy to the public service process became next step which is conducted by the author. This activity is crucial to provide a complete analytical framework regarding democracy in term of public services implementation.

2. Reviewing Research Related to Digital-Based Public Services

Basically, this step is carried out by reviewing two research that have been carried out by the author. Those two studies relate to the value of democracy in digital-based public services both in the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic eras. The study results are present clear comparison between digital- based public service democracy in two different conditions.

3. Analyzing Digital Public Service by The Framework of Public Service Democracy

A complete understanding of public service democracy that has previously been built then has been conducted to analyze research findings on Digital Public Service Democracy. The discussion was carried out to find patterns of public service democracy that had been running well in digital-based public services before and after the pandemic.

4. Reconstructing Digital Public Service Democracy

Conclusions and suggestions are given to improve Digital Public Service Democracy, especially in digital public service delivery on this post-pandemic period.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1. Democracy and Digitalization of Public Services

Democracy is an old term that is currently become the basic essence of the administration activities of many countries. Basically, democracy in politics is defined as power in the hands of the people. Although politics and government systems are formally run by a few people, democracy is still directed to accommodate the interests of the people in form of policies and services. In the perspective of public administration, this definition then becomes the basic understanding of the public services implementation. This logic is proven by the emergence of the concept of good governance which clearly put the users or citizens as the center of public service activities. Lewis, Carol W & Gilman, Stuart C. [1] even mention good governance as the basis of ethics in the implementation of public services. Big attention to the service users in good governance can be understood from various dimensions such as accountability, transparency, effectiveness, efficiency, and other dimensions that pay a big attention to citizens.

A different and more holistic understanding of public service democracy is explained by Greg Palast, Jerrold Oppenheim, and Theo MacGregor [2] in their book entitled "Democracy and Regulation: How the Public Can Govern Essential Services". In this book, democracy is explained through the initial step of defining who is the "public" in term of public services. Public who are part of public services are clearly defined as all parties in public services. This explanation provides an understanding that public

service democracy does not only focus on the users but also all parties or stakeholders involved in service delivery.

This definition provides an alternative view to a more comprehensive and rational understanding of democracy in public services. Services are not only focused on users but also on the capacity of service providers. Hilary Wainwright and Mathew Little [3] explained that the new spirit of public management in the context of public service needs to put civil servant in flexible, creative, and innovative environment. In a more basic and ethical perspective, Durant [4] even stated that the role of service providers is very important because public services should be “a call” for them.

Contextualized with the digitalization process, the practice of public service democracy that has developed needs to be studied further. We can say that public service democracy in the digital era is related to various efforts to ensure effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, transparency, and equality of services. However, at a more critical level, this definition is not limited to efforts and focuses on managing the needs of users. Moreover, efforts to manage human resources who provide services are also very important. For this reason, it can be formulated that at the basic construction of public service democracy in the digital era is a digitalized effort to guarantee citizen's service rights by managing human resources that provide the service.

3.2. Digital Public Service Democracy Before the Pandemic: Election Voter Data Services [5]

Digital services as a strategic idea in the normal era have been implemented by all levels of government, from the central, regional, even reaching the village government level. Based on the results of studies that has been done by the author, digital-based services are not yet trusted and reliable. In 2019 Indonesia held elections with a Permanent Voter List or *Daftar Pemilih Tetap* (DPT) as the basis for citizens to be able to use their voting rights. Although the preparation of the DPT has been done digitally, the service system has not been able to guarantee the service rights of citizens.

The analysis is carried out by combining the website quality assessment model and the good governance model as the basis of democracy in public services. This effort held to identify the level of public service rights

in the case of Election Voters Data Services. The combination of the website quality assessment model and the principles of good governance in this study is shown in the following table

TABLE 1: Citizen's Service Rights in Website-Based Services.

Website Quality	Guarantee of Citizen Service Rights
Level 1 Informative Communication	1. Transparency Information that provided to the users must be easily accessible and easy to understand so that the information can also be used as a service monitoring and evaluation tool.
Level 2 Interactive Communication	1. Participation Service users can provide input and feedback for improvements that will be accommodated to produce better service quality. 2. Transparency Information that provided to the users must be easily accessible and easy to understand so that the information can also be used as a service monitoring and evaluation tool. 3. Responsiveness Service providers delivering services quickly and accurately. 4. Accountability Service providers can provide clarification and explanation regarding the mechanism and performance of the services provided.
Level 3 Government Cooperation	1. Participation Service users can provide input and feedback for improvements that will be accommodated to produce better service quality. 2. Transparency Information that provided to the users must be easily accessible and easy to understand so that the information can also be used as a service monitoring and evaluation tool. 3. Responsiveness Service providers delivering services quickly and accurately. 4. Accountability Service providers can provide clarification and explanation regarding the mechanism and performance of the services provided. 5. Effectiveness and Efficiency The direct transaction of services on the website is directed at increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the use of resources.
Level 4 Directly Service Provided	1. Participation Service users can provide input and feedback for improvements that will be accommodated to produce better service quality. 2. Transparency Information that provided to the users must be easily accessible and easy to understand so that the information can also be used as a service monitoring and evaluation tool. 3. Responsiveness Service providers delivering services quickly and accurately. 4. Accountability Service providers can provide clarification and explanation regarding the mechanism and performance of the services provided. 5. Effectiveness and Efficiency The direct transaction of services on the website is directed at increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the use of resources. 6. Public Control

The service mechanism directly allows the users to monitor and supervise every stage of service.

source: Herwanto et al. (2019)

Based on this table, we can find that the DPT service for voting rights owners through the website is still at level 1. Citizens only get one-way information about their status on the DPT through the official website kpu.go.id. Through the service provided by the website, it can also be understood that transparency is the only right that citizens get. They can openly check the status of their respective voting rights but do not have enough space to participate, carry out supervision, obtain responsiveness, accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency of services.

The low effectiveness and efficiency of services is caused by the lack of digital system support in the cooperation mechanism between the Directorate General of Population and Civil Registration as the owner of population data and the General Elections

Commission as the compiler of the DPT. Specifically, the low level of effectiveness and efficiency of this service can be understood by several evidenced consist of:

1. Gap Between Voter Data and Demographic Data

The 2019 election DPT that has been compiled is not in accordance with the List of Potential Election Voters (DP4). Based on the clarification by the Election Committee (KPU), there were only 160 million voter data that matched with DP4 out of a total of 192 million people who should have registered as permanent voters in the 2019 election.

2. Citizen with Identity Card (e-KTP) Has Not Been Registered as A Voter

The Directorate General of Population and Civil Registration released data that 31 million residents who already have an e-KTP have not been registered as permanent voters. Their names are not listed on the kpu.go.id website even though they already have a valid residential identity in the form of an e-KTP. Residents who face this problem must go to the KPU according to their ID cards to register themselves as voters. They cannot directly register themselves or provide feedback through a government website.

3. Multiple Selector

There are 25 million voter data recorded in duplicate on the Temporary Voter List (DPS). This issue should certainly be a concern of the KPU because the double data on temporary voters of 25 million people is very significant when compared to the total voters of 137 million voters in the DPS. Based on these data, it can be understood that there is an indication of an error of about 18% in the preparation of the provisional voter list.

4. Bureaucratic TPS Transfer Procedure

Another problem related to the preparation of the DPT is that there are difficulties for voters who plan to use their voting rights with polling stations (TPS) that do not match their ID cards. Some of the procedures that must be followed by voters who plan to exercise their right to vote at other locations or polling stations can be explained as follows:

a) Voters must report directly to PPS (Voting Committee) or KPU at Regency/City Level.

b) After the report is received, KPU will delete the name of the voter from the original TPS.c) When the voter's name has been deleted from the data at the original TPS, form A5 is given.

The form is a cover letter for moving TPS so that voters can vote at the TPS in their domicile area.

d) When exercising their right to vote at their domicile TPS, voters are required to bring Form A5 along with their e-KTP.

The various findings and results of the author's analysis then explain a tendency that even though it has been initiated with a digital system, the services provided have not been able to position citizens as the center or focus of service. The digital services provided have not even been able to fairly guarantee the fulfillment of citizens' suffrage even though they have met the requirements. A few procedures also still must be carried out manually by citizens for the right to vote that they should already have.

3.3. Digital-Based Social Aid Services in The Covid-19 Emergency Response [6]

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government provided 9 aid mechanisms sourced from the central to regional budgets. Several programs that were not previously directed as part of the aid mechanism have even been adapted to respond the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The nine types of aids are the Family Hope Program (PKH), Presidential Social Aid, Pre-Employment Card, Village Fund Direct Cash Aid, Ministry of Social Aid, Provincial Social Aid, District Social Aid, City Social Aid, and Meal Aid.

Although the government provides many types of aids, each type of aid is provided with different target group standards or indicators. The target group of every aid is also not allowed to receive more than one type of aid. In addition, due to the different types and sources of aid budgets, each type of aid is distributed in different times with the others. To ensure the accuracy of the distribution of these aids, the city or district governments are asked to make improvement to the database within one week.

Based on the aid mechanism, two major problems in the field were found when aid was distributed. The first problem that emerged and became news in the media was the refusal of aid by the residents. The action arose because they were worried that the time difference in receiving aid would lead to conflict between residents. Residents agreed to return and refuse the aid provided instead of having conflict and lose social cohesion. The second problem that arises from the distribution of aid during the COVID-19 emergency response is the accuracy of aid. There is a phenomenon that a luxury housing area receive aid while the poor in the village area do not receive any kind of aid.

According to the analysis conducted by the author, problems related to the aid mechanism during the

COVID-19 emergency response period occurred due to the following factors:

1. Poor Data Management

In normal situation, government does not have a good demographic data management culture. For example, there are many data problems related to the DPT. When good data management in normal

³Trisno Sakti Herwanto. "Observing the Aid Program in Combating the Covid 19 Outbreak in West Java" presented in National Webinar "Policy Strategy for Coping with Covid 19 in West Java" by Indonesian Association for Public Administration Regional West Java 2020. situation has not become a culture, a week time given to the city or district government to make data corrections becomes a very irrelevant provision.

2. The Attraction of Responsiveness-Accountability

During the emergency response period, service responsiveness, including aid services, is an important aspect that is very needed much by citizens. However, the need for responsiveness during the emergency response period is still intertwined with the accountability mechanisms that have been designed for normal work systems. Based on these findings, it can be understood that there has been a tug of war between responsiveness and accountability in the case of aid distribution during the COVID-19 emergency response period.

3. Limited Aid Distribution Autonomy

Nine types of aid from different budgetary sources across levels of government have not been able to produce program outputs that meet the expectations of citizens. This phenomenon is also caused by the diversity of indicators of target groups set by each aid mechanism but not necessarily relevant to be applied in the field. At this stage it can be understood that the autonomy of the lower levels of government as the party which is closest to the target group is still very limited.

The findings and discussions that have been described by the author confirm that services in emergency response situations are not yet have centered on citizens. The implementation, standards and mechanisms for aid governance are still designed by top-down scheme. The service outputs which are then urgently needed have not been able to be accessed by the target group effectively and efficiently. The local level government even must coordinate the provision of aid from the central government with the real conditions and needs of aid in the field. At the end, the aid that was the right of the target group during the emergency response period could not be fully guaranteed by government services.

Citizen-Centered Governance for Public Service Democracy: Is That Enough?

The two results of the analysis presented by the author in the previous section explained that both digital and non-digital-based services as well as services in normal conditions and during the emergency response period are not sufficiently had centered on service users. In addition to not putting enough service users as the focus, the services initiated by the government are also not sufficient to guarantee service rights.

Some of the public sector service literatures explain a formulation that public service democracy at least encourages the delivery of centralized services to citizens as service users. This thought then gave rise to a citizen-centered governance approach that is must be centered on service users. Andrews and Shah in World Bank [7] explain that citizen-centered governance is a governance reform approach that focuses on results rather than on procedures. Several elements that need to be considered related to the model are results-based management, participation, and decentralization.

Results-oriented management means that performance management needs to be the focus of the government in building a service governance system. Service performance including service user satisfaction needs to be used as the basis for building, monitoring, and evaluating service systems. Procedure remains an important aspect but is positioned more as an instrument to achieve service outcomes, rather than being placed as the center of all service activities.

Participation has the understanding that service users need to be given space for active involvement to participate in improving service processes and performance. Participation also includes the spirit of empowerment. Service users are openly given the freedom to submit input and ideas for service development. This step is quite important to produce services that are expected to always be able to answer the demands and developments of the needs of its users.

Decentralization has an explanation that services should be submitted to the lowest level of government units or levels that are always in direct contact with service users. This thought was initiated so that service delivery would enable the formation of a quick response to the needs of service users. Decentralization also describes the value of trust or trust between levels of government in the implementation of public services.

Citizen-centered governance is not a new approach, but this model continues to develop in accordance with the dynamics of science and often has not been used as the main basis for the implementation of various forms of public services. One form of public administration reform which is derived from the great concept of citizen-centered governance, for example, is described by Cheema [8] as an effort to decentralize governance or decentralizing governance. Governance is deemed necessary to be decentralized to bring services closer to the needs of service users. Through these

efforts, citizen satisfaction as the main indicator of service quality is expected to increase rapidly.

Service user satisfaction has even been emphasized by Dudley, Lin, Mancini, and Ng [9] as the main indicator of a citizen-centric approach. In the context of public services, the level of service orientation that is centered on service users can basically be measured by the level of user satisfaction. Dudley, Lin, Mancini, and Ng [10] further explain that the government's great attention to citizens through service delivery can also reduce costs. This explanation confirms a logic that the greater the attention or service orientation towards service users, the greater the efficiency of resources that can be done.

One of the developments of the citizen-centered governance model which the author views as very relevant to be used as a new orientation for public services in the new normal era is citizen-centric e-government services. Chen [11] explains that citizen-centric e-government services or government electronic-based services that are centered on service users must be accompanied by efforts to integrate citizen service information systems. The government needs to design the integration of digital databases with various forms of public services to simplify the process and improve the efficiency of public services for citizens.

The relevance of the citizen-centric e-government services model in supporting the public service system in the new normal era can at least be identified from service experience during the COVID-19 emergency response period. When the status of life changes from normal to emergency response, the electronic-based or digital-based service system significantly becomes the foundation of the government service system. Various types of services ranging from population administration documents to tax payments are carried out online wherever possible. This kind of digital-based service pattern will certainly be a form of service that will continue to be developed to support the implementation of the new normal life policy. This thinking then underlies the thesis that citizen-centric e-government services are very relevant to be implemented because they contain 2 main concepts, namely e-government services, or electronic-based government services and citizen-centric or user-centered services.

Although this model will continue to be the focus of the government in the future, including on service delivery in the new normal era, there are still a few challenges that may be overcome in the short term. The first challenge is the readiness of technology, both infrastructure and content. At the beginning of the adoption of digital-based services by developing countries, Aikins, and Krane [12] explained the results of research that local governments still do not fully believe in the use of information technology

including the internet in service delivery. They still believe that direct service user participation is more effective and efficient.

The next challenge that still must be faced in implementing the citizen-centric e-government services approach is the readiness of the government's digital culture. Based on the explanation in the previous section, it can be understood that the digitization of data, for example as a form of digital culture in the normal era, is still being a big problem. Through this explanation, the government needs to think strategically and realistically to promote digital culture transformation. The only hope that arises from the transformation of digital culture is the demands of public service quality in new normal life. It really depends on the quality of government digital services.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1. Digital Public Service Democracy: Stakeholders-Centered Rather Than Citizen-Centered

The relevance of the citizen-centric e-government services model in supporting the public service system in the new normal era can at least be identified from service experience during the COVID-19 emergency response period. When the status of life changes from normal to emergency response, the electronic-based or digital-based service system significantly becomes the foundation of the government service system. Various types of services According to the explanation in the previous section, citizen-centered governance as a form of democracy in public services still faces various challenges to be implemented. However, according to Andrews and Shah's explanation in World Bank [13], there are several dimensions that can be used as the basis for implementing citizen-centered governance

1. Community Empowerment Through Service Contract Approach

Service contracts or citizen charters need to be directed as an effort to empower citizens. Various service rights including rights that allow service users to provide input and monitor the service process must be accommodated in the service contract.

2. Bottom-Up Accountability Mechanism

One of the important characteristics of the citizen-centered governance approach is the bottom-up accountability mechanism. Accountability needs to be directed at efforts to increase service user satisfaction and not just to meet the accountability standards of higher levels of government regulation and structure.

3. Evaluation of Services Directly by Service Users

The government-initiated digital service mechanism should allow users to directly evaluate service quality. The complaint management mechanism needs to be strengthened and converted into an evaluation mechanism by service users.

Returning to the definition and scope of service democracy that the author presented at the beginning of the discussion, service democracy is not enough to only pay attention to citizens. Despite the implementation of citizen-centered governance, there is much bigger work to be done to ensure digital-based public service democracy. This effort, of course, involves the involvement of larger stakeholders. This means that the center of public service is not limited to service users but to all actors involved in each war.

In the author's opinion, the implementation of digital-based public services with an orientation to the role of stakeholders is the key to the success of service democracy. Based on the term "public" which does not only focus on citizens, but also public services should have focused on all stakeholders. At this stage, the term stakeholder-centered governance is more relevant than citizen-centered governance.

The raise of "public" or "stakeholders" term in this paper followed by several dilemmas. The term "public" or "stakeholders" not only describes a few actors but many actors. The concept also describes not only a few actors, but all actors involved. In this understanding, a more realistic democratic construction is needed, especially when a pandemic as a disaster environment is becoming a service environment.

As a first step in efforts to ensure democracy in public services in the digital era, government as an important actor should begin to pay big attention to citizens. In this discussion, term of government is not only limited to the entity or organizational structure that provides services. The government must be seen as a group of individuals, parties who seek to provide good service performance.

Based on this logic, it is not enough to construct service democracy simply by encouraging service performance. Greater attention to encourage individual performance of service provider is needed. In this context, public service democracy in the digital era must also be stimulated by encouraging resource management activities for civil servants. Furthermore, in this effort, motivation, ethics, and service culture must be truly internalized to all civil servants.

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