

Conference Paper

ICT and Pseudo E-Governance Trap – A Case Study of "SMS Pandan" and "ULAS" in Surakarta City

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Abstract

The performance of E-governance represents the government's usage of information technology for democratic community and nation building. This paper reports on a content analysis on the application of information technology to "SMS Pandan" and "ULAS" service by Surakarta City government to examine the extent of e-Governance in the Surakarta region. The analysis is supplement with in-depth interviews with government officials and the community. The analysis used community based monitoring (CBM) framework to explain the effect of information and communication technology (ICT) use on the social accountability of government service and organization. The results show that procedural formality and patriarchal bureaucratic cultures triggered the emergence of ICT paradox and led to pathologies such depersonalization, buck passing, and atrophy of personal responsibility. This in turn has led to the emergence of a pseudo e-governance.

Keywords: e-governance, institutional theory, ICT paradox, pathology

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1. Background

E-governance is the application of information technology to service organization, information exchange, communication and service process system from government to the public, business sectors and between government departments. The perspective of the e-governance is "the use of the technologies that both help governing and have to be governed", so it involves the aspect of law application, rule and regulation to support the organization of e-government and the society's knowledge on the benefit of e-government. Meanwhile, electronic government (E-Government) is the the process that the government takes to implement the use of computer networking and information technology in running the government and providing a public service. So, e-governance is a system enabling the utilization of information technology to improve the quality of public service and the living conditions of its citizens.

Previous studies believed that e-governance improve public service into a more efficient and transparent one [3, 11, 12] so that its use is encouraged. Generally, there

are four spaces of e-governance: government-to-citizen (customer), government-to-employees, government-to-government and government-to-business. The factors contributing to the successful e-governance are the transparent and reliable process of policy making pertaining to the substance of affairs, the coordinated and well-organized implementation, and the participative evaluative framework involving the users. The use of mobile phone technology is projected to contribute to the welfare of society and to remove the obstacles of distance [3].

In addition to the benefits, the implementation of information technology also generates the paradox of unethical information technology use. M. H. Charki et al [1] in citing provided one of the most widely used definitions of unethical behavior: "a decision that is either illegal and/or morally unacceptable to the larger community". Personally, IT is perceived as giving the public official the additional burden so that they lose their privacy time [9]. ICT is biased to the power holder and reinforces the state domination [6].

In the context of previous studies, this paper defers to institutional theory to explain the social and cultural triggers of the emergence of e-governance paradox.

1.1. Theoretical Foundation of Information Technology Use in Public Administration

Public administration theory uses a variety of related organizational, social, political, and historical theories to explain the meaning, structure, function of organizational order and structure of society related to public service and the fulfillment of community's right to living in any forms. E-governance phenomenon in this paper defers to the institutional theory to explain the individual and institutional actions, and administrative aspect and management practice. Institutional variable, according to this theory, reflects the pattern of cultural factors inherent to and legitimized in institution and society. It occurs because the institutional structure defines the social context of institution and environment, and the institutional structure can affect how the public apparatus in the institution should act on. Institutional structure is affected by local cultural context. This local culture legitimizes the public official based on comfort level and environment's acceptance of a certain action. So institutional theory cares about the effect of regulation order, social, norm, belief, and cultural aspects confirming an organization's sustainability and institutional practice legitimacy [2, 4, 5].

The effect of social-cultural context on institutional theory implies the presence of power relation in institution. In the context of ICT implementation, Sonia Livingstone [6] cited Warschauer's (2003) proposition that ICT is established by the group creating and operating ICT, what if the creation and the application of technology exists in the situation building on unequal power relationship within society? Such a situation leads

to the next question; will the application of ICT in empower the democratic community or even strengthen the expansion of elite group's effect on government, business realm, or elite group within society?

The application of ICT in public administration can be analyzed as well using reinforcement theory to complement the institutional theory. This theory explains how an individual can determine, select and make decision in the dynamics of life. Reinforcement theory notes that a behavior will continue with a certain level of frequency based on pleasant or unpleasant results. From reinforcement theory's view, the implementation of IT is dependent on the administrator's perspective, whether or not it has been consistent with the expected organizational change. Similarly, the community responds to ICT use in relation to the government depending on its level of trust in the government's response. It is here that the cultural value and social contexts play their part (role) as the contributor to the successful e-governance.

2. Methods

Institutional theory provides theoretical lens to the author to identify and to analyze the practice of information and technology use in SMS gateway program Pandan and ULAS by including cultural dimension of Surakarta City's government and community in responding to E-government implementation. This research aims to connect the analysis of cultural and social dimensions in e-government practice in Surakarta City and the application of "SMS (Short Message) Pandan (Health Grievance Service Center) and ULAS (Surakarta Grievance Service Unit). These two cases were selected because they represent the profile of SMS technology use and the use of internet-based (website) technology.

The data was collected through: (i) document study from SMS "Pandan" record and community's posting on "ULAS"; (ii) Focus Group Discussion with government, the organization of SMS "Pandan and Complaint "ULAS" and with community group that has ever sent SMS "Pandan" and "ULAS" posting taken randomly. Community FGD also involved the community group that has never used SMS Pandan and ULAS, taken using stratified sampling by job background as many as the number of group screened as the user; and (iii) in-depth interview with the selected FGD participants, and the community using health service in puskesmas randomly.

This research employed a case study with phenomenological focus, using constructivist paradigm in interpretive perspective, analyzing the phenomenon of actor behavior and its perspective on the practice of SMS Pandan use and grievance posting in ULAS. From this constructivist interpretive perspective, the contextual factors leading the actor behavior to be biased, tends to reveal paradox and pathological symptom

of the substance of ICT use to improve the quality of public service and government organization. This research was conducted in Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia.

3. Findings and Discussion

SMS Pandan is an application in the form of SMS Gateway *Pusat Layanan Aduan Kesehatan* (PANDAN = Health Grievance Service Center) initiated by *Pusat Telaah dan Informasi Regional* (PATTIRO = Regional Study and Information Center) and Health Service of Surakarta City to improve the quality of health service provided by Puskesmas (Public Health Center). The service through this short message system is provided to facilitate the Surakarta people convey their aspiration and grievance related to health service they received from Puskesmas. The data of grievance obtained can help the Surakarta Health Service identify the society's health needs and the weaknesses of service provided by the Puskesmas, and process it as information to manage and to collect the health data in Surakarta.

There are six categories the society can complain to Surakarta City's Health Service: procedure, facility, service, administration, personnel (officer), and cost grievances, through SMS to Number 0811 2767 700. During 1-year period (September 2015-September 2015) there are 90 SMSs corresponding to its grievance content. Sixty-five percents of total SMSs received through SMS Gateway Pandan are considered as consistent with the content. The informants coming from Health Service admitted that the service of SMS Gateway had not been efficient and effective yet, viewed from the comparison of budget allocation invested with the service utilization frequency by the citizen.

ULAS (Surakarta Grievance Service Unit) is the service of society's grievance with website-based electronic system to improve the government's performance. ULAS is established with Surakarta Mayor's Regulation Number 17 A of 2015. Surakarta City Government opened the online channel for the public grievance that will be responded to by Local Governance Agency related to the promised duration. This website-based public grievance service is called *Unit layanan Aduan Surakarta* (ULAS = Surakarta Grievance Service Unit). This grievance space is provided online in <http://pengaduanmasyarakat.surakarta.go.id> managed by Surakarta City's Inspectorate and opened for 24 hours. In addition, twitter account is also made with address @ulassurakarta and Facebook with account *Pengaduan Kota Surakarta*. ULAS is the product of cooperation between Solo City Government, and Bandung Trust Advisory Group (B-trust) and European Union. Every SKPD (Regional or Local Government Agency) is required to provide the operator as the administrator to show the response of community grievance within three days.

From January 2015 to June 2016, there were 661 grievances. Out of the incoming grievances, 602 (91%) were responded to, and 9% in-process grievances. The results of the evaluation on Surakarta City inspectorate as the one responsible for processing the grievance and coordinating the response from all Local Government Agency showed that the enthusiasm of complainers was stagnant (Data source: The Presentation of Surakarta City's Inspectorate in Coordination Meeting of Local Government Agency Administrators for *Unit Layanan Aduan Surakarta* (Surakarta Grievance Service Unit), August 11, 2016). It was because (1) the administrator of each Local Government Agency had not yet mastered the application and had not undertaken its role actively; (2) the chairman of Local Government Agency along with his subordinates had not completely responded to the incoming grievance actively/seriously; (3) the too complicated application with many steps and conditions to be passed through made it impractical.

The top five trending topics from the grievance number in the period of January 2015-September 2016 were: (i) public work affairs (28%); (ii) transportation (27%); (iii) community orderliness (26%); (iv) Public Service (18%); (v) cleanliness (12%); (vi) health (8%); (viii) personnel (7%); (viii) City Park (5%); (ix) living environment (4.5%) and (x) etc.

The result of Focus Group Discussion and in-depth interviews showed the relationship between social-cultural contexts represented by perspective and habit among government and community presumably affecting the effectiveness of ICT use for public service, and the improvement of community-based monitoring. From the government side, 80% considered that complaint media via SMS Pandan and ULAS was not urgent to deal with compared with other routine duty assigned by superior. The government also noted that answering with only sentence 'will be followed-up' had made the society quiet and accountable for the community's complaint, because they did not meet the society face to face. This perspective reflected that the position of reporting community was considered as unequal in the term of power relation compared with the superior in bureaucracy. This phenomenon showed that government had narrowed the meaning of social accountability. Social accountability was substantively defined as giving answer about rationality reason to what was and what was not done by the government directly to the society as its social accountability. In the case of government responding to the community's complaint via ICT, it could be seen that social accountability was defined as 'replying the community's complaint via ICT'. It suggests that the government feel superior power relation over the society. Thus, ICT event indirectly provides the narrowing condition of social accountability meaning.

From the demand driven aspect, the community felt more accustomed with oral culture than with writing. The community's statement indicated that they preferred

to ask question orally, because reading information often confused them. From social aspect, patriarchal culture considered the government as having higher level, so that 70% of informants were afraid of criticizing or having to deal with legal affairs with the government. This data showed a non-egalitarian social cultural condition making the ICT functions limited to formality only, thereby generating pseudo e-governance.

The case of SMS gateway Pandan and website-based grievance, ULAS, it can be seen the similarity of pathological symptoms. From government sides, it can be identified the pathological symptoms of buck passing and atrophy of personal responsibility. For example, when there were questions, grievances, and requests to clarification in ULAS forum, the chairman of service commanded the administrator to respond to the grievance with words "followed-up", but no explanation about the type of follow-up, the duration of promised process, and how the public could control the result. This Service Chairman's action could be categorized as the symptom of atrophy of personal responsibility and throwing away the responsibility of organization/government bureaucracy. The administrators excuse that it was not their authority to answer anything related to policy because they served as operators who wrote the answer only. This symptom belongs to buck passing pathology by denying their adequate authority in organization. As a result, he could not be asked for personal accountability (responsibility) for his action of responding to the public's grievances in ULAS. The phrase frequently used was "will be followed-up".

So, there is a symptom of administrators making the excuse that they have no adequate authority in organization when they are asked for responsibility by the society. The formalism of answer "will be followed-up" also reflects on the depersonalization symptom, because they feel not seeing face to face the members of society who convey grievance (complaint), thereby not feeling the obligation to solve the case directly. From normative aspects, there is a communication room for the society to question, to criticize, and to ask for clarification. However, substantively, communication room does not always explain the request for community accountability.

From society aspect, it can be identified the pathological symptom of depersonalization. This symptom emerges more frequently in the mechanism of SMS Gateway; because there is no face-to-face encounter, the content of many SMSs is not irrelevant and tends to play with or make a joke, and sometimes says the improper (coarse) words. In ULAS there is no coarse word or irrelevant suggestion found, because ULAS gives more discretion to complain, and the user identity is displayed in the opened screen. However, the open display also triggers the pathological symptom of being coopted, afraid of the ruler. For example, when there is a sufficiently sensitive grievance, indicated as involving the public officials, the one uploading the grievance

will be called by the inspectorate to be asked for further information as the whistleblower. However, those uploading the grievance do not want to continue the clearer information, so that the grievance is not followed up.

From institutional theory, the pathological symptom is inseparable from the social-cultural context of Surakarta City society. Institutional theory concerns with social, norm, trust, value order, and cultural effect aspects, based on shared value and trust. Reinforcement theory concerns with value order encouraging the actor to act on. The contextualization of institutional and reinforcement theories from the finding of research shows that the relationship between government and society and vice versa through the information technology application is affected by patriarchic culture, in which the government is considered as having higher and ruling position, so that the society does not criticize and complain too bravely.

Patriarchic culture affects the bureaucratic value order not considering the public's grievance as important, and the society controlled with the promise to follow up the grievance. However, the bureaucratic procedural formalism culture compels the government more strongly to organize the information technology-based grievance service, to meet the criteria of e-governance imaging, although they realize that the organization is ineffective and inefficient. Some community groups have less trust in the government, so that they do not care about the technology-based grievance media provided by the government.

The context of social-cultural environment encountered in the relationship between government and Surakarta City people in the implementation of ICT to organize the public service and to make community-based monitoring results in pseudo e-governance. It means that information technology is applied formally and procedurally to build democratic relation between government and society, but substantively, it is still wrestled with the domination of government cooptation and low participation of genuine community and less trust in the government's political will.

4. Conclusion

The power relations between government and society are the fundamental issue for the effectiveness of e-governance implementation. The use of ICT for public service and providing public participation room for monitoring the performance of government is not always effective, because the support from social environment, value order, and culture underlying the government and community's attitude and behavior is not always consistent with the character of ICT. The theoretical contributions of this study include: (1) the application of ICT not resulting in a democratic public service instantaneously, when the domination of bureaucratic patriarchic culture is still dominant;

(ii) bureaucratic cooptation and public distrust triggers the emergence of pseudo e-governance. The value order of transparency and reliability is the priority foundation for the ICT-based relation between government and citizen.

In the theoretical domain, further research should develop a meta-analysis to construct an inter-variable relation model that should be intervened to grow the mutual trust culture and position equality culture in e-governance relation. Meanwhile, in the practical domain, the contextualization of ICT should be supported by adopting the accountability value order inherent to the function of ICT. Further researches should develop syncretization (syncretized) of traditional media, citizen forum, and ICT application to reduce its pathological bias.

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