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AN EVALUATION OF DIGITAL GOVERNANCE VISION AND CURRENT PRACTICES WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REPUBLIC

Cumhuriyetin 100. Yıl Dönümünde Dijital Yönetişim Vizyonu ve Güncel Uygulamaların Katılımcı Yönetim Çerçevesinde Değerlendirilmesi

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ÖZ

Büyük Türk Milleti uzun yıllar mücadele etmiş, İstiklal mücadelesi vermiştir. Mustafa Kemal ATATÜRK'ün egemenliğin kayıtsız şartsız Türk Milletine ait olduğu yönetim şekli olan Cumhuriyeti ilan etmesiyle millet daha demokratik ve özgürlüklere dayalı bir rejime kavuşmuştur. Mustafa Kemal ATATÜRK, Cumhuriyet rejiminin ve geleceğinin korunması için Türk Milletinin gerek parlamento gerekse sivil inisiyatifler aracılığıyla her zaman katılımcı yönetim içerisinde olması gerektiğini vurgulamıştır. Cumhuriyetin kuruluşundan bu yana bilgi ve iletişim teknolojilerinde yaşanan gelişmeler, kamu hizmetlerinin sunumunu ve devlet-vatandaş etkileşimini önemli ölçüde değiştirmiştir. Katılımcı yönetim uygulamalarının geliştirilmesi için dijital fırsatların kamu hizmeti sunumunu ve vatandaş entegrasyonunu artırdığı dijital yönetim vizyonu ön plana çıkmaktadır. Dijital yönetim daha demokratik ve vatandaş odaklı bir yönetim yaklaşımıdır. Vatandaş-devlet ve özel işletmelerin toplumsal sorunların çözümü için ortak inisiyatifle hareket etmelerine olanak tanır. Cumhuriyetin 100. yılında halk iradesine ve katılımcı yönetime dayalı rejimin etkinliğini artırmak için dijital yönetim kavramı incelenmektedir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda mevcut e-devlet ve e-belediye uygulamalarına ilişkin bilgi ve değerlendirmeler paylaşılmaktadır. Çalışmanın, politika belirleyiciler ve vatandaşlar arasında dijital yönetim kavramına ilişkin farkındalığı artırarak, katılımcı yönetim yaklaşımının ve kamu yönetimi etkinliğinin geliştirilmesine katkı sağlaması beklenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dijital Yönetişim, Katılımcı Yönetim, Etkin Kamu Hizmeti, E-devlet, E-belediye

ABSTRACT

The Great Turkish Nation fought for many years and struggled for Independence. With Mustafa Kemal ATATÜRK's declaration of the Republic, a form of government in which sovereignty

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rests unconditionally on the Turkish Nation, the nation gained a more democratic and freedom-based regime. Mustafa Kemal ATATÜRK emphasized that the Turkish Nation should always be involved in participatory management, both through parliament and civil initiatives, to protect the Republic regime and its future. Since the founding of the Republic, the developments in information and communication technologies have significantly changed public service delivery and government-citizen interaction. To develop participatory management practices, the digital governance vision comes to the fore, in which digital opportunities increase public service delivery and citizen integration. Digital governance is a more democratic and citizen-oriented management approach. It allows citizen-government and private enterprises to act with a common initiative to solve social problems. On the 100th anniversary of the Republic, the concept of digital governance is examined to increase the effectiveness of the regime based on popular will and participatory management. In accordance with this purpose, information, and evaluations about existing e-government and e-municipality applications are shared. The study is expected to increase awareness of the concept of digital governance among policymakers and citizens, thereby contributing to the development of the participatory management approach and public management effectiveness.

Keywords: Digital Governance, Participatory Management, Effective Public Service, E-government, E-municipality

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 20th century, after World War I, new formations, public order, and management approaches were adopted globally. Following the French Revolution in 1789, the pursuit of equality, nationalism, and freedom increased pressure on governments based on the will of the people, rather than authoritarian regimes. However, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, a

visionary leader ahead of his time, declared the Republic of Turkey on October 29, 1923. He emphasized that sovereignty belonged to the Turkish People and shared the Republican regime with a limited number of people until the day the Republic was declared (Atatürk, 1969:838). He emphasizes that although the choice of Turkish democracy and the Republican regime was influenced by the equality and freedom movement that originated from the French Revolution, the establishment of the Republic of Turkey was based on its own needs and social characteristics (Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri, 2006;480). Furthermore, he highlights that the Turkish society, after years of struggle, successfully fought against the most powerful imperial forces in the world. On the anniversary of the Great Victory on August 30, 1924, he pointed out that the Turkish Nation had the right to every inch of the country and every decision to be made, and that the sovereignty of these lands should be in the hands of the people to live freely (Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri II, 2006:179). He asserts that sovereignty rests unconditionally with the Turkish Nation and that they must actively participate in public administration to establish this will. Furthermore, he emphasizes that since Turks are democratic, free, and responsible citizens, it is their duty to safeguard a Republic administration that aligns with their qualifications (Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri II, 2006; İnan, 1964, İnan, 1971). Additionally, he highlights the significance of public involvement in the public administration process and underscores the importance of participatory management.

The participatory management approach encourages stakeholders at all levels to contribute to decision-making processes in determining the organization's goals and solving existing problems that directly impact them (Business Dictionary, 2018). By involving internal and external stakeholders, diverse perspectives and ideas are gathered, leading to more effective decision-making. This increased efficiency improves both the management quality of the institution and the service recipients' expectations, ultimately creating sustainable welfare. Citizen participation in administrative processes plays a critical role in establishing a public

administration practice that aligns with the will of the nation, which is the founding philosophy of the Republic of Turkey. At this point, in addition to the traditional public management approach, the concept of governance emerges, which emphasizes the participation of all stakeholders through effective communication channels in the public management process. Governance represents a modern management approach that enables the implementation of participatory management practices by increasing power relations both vertically and horizontally within the authority structure (Levi-Faur, 2012:7-8).

Governance essentially highlights that a single authority in public administration cannot possess the necessary resources and information to manage all problems and processes. Therefore, a more effective management approach will be implemented, where the private sector and citizens contribute and share resources (Kooiman, 1999). In this regard, governance is an approach that emphasizes cooperation in terms of legitimacy and effectiveness. It is a management style that involves the participation of all internal and external stakeholders in the public management process. These stakeholders contribute to shaping the future vision of public service and making strategic decisions. Through this approach, all actors can benefit and gain in multiple ways, significantly contributing to social welfare and democratic management. The advancements in information and communication technologies have further transformed governance into digital governance. Thanks to technological possibilities, this concept enables resource efficiency and allows broad participation regardless of time and place.

Digital governance is a management approach that combines the expectations of citizens and stakeholders in a participatory manner, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the virtual environment. This approach has emerged due to technological advances and developments in information and communication technologies. It provides real-time data and collaboration (Milakovich, 2014; Williamson, 2016).

Digital governance is a vision that allows external actors to play a decisive role in the public administration process and enhances effectiveness in participatory management. It promotes democracy and represents a collaborative initiative where both the public and other actors contribute their resources towards shared prosperity and future, guided by a collective will and vision. This study aims to raise awareness about the digital governance vision, which aims to strengthen people's will and promote participatory management in the 100th anniversary of the Republic. Additionally, the study aims to provide information about current practices in Turkey regarding digital governance. To achieve this goal, the study provides information on e-government and e-municipality applications, as well as suggestions. This study is expected to serve as a guide for citizens and policymakers, helping to increase awareness of the concept of participatory management and digital governance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Digital Governance

Although governance is initially used synonymously with the word "government" in the management/administration process (Stoker, 1998), it differs from management by bringing a new perspective and inclusiveness to the process (Rhodes, 1996:652-653). Governance is a management approach that emphasizes communication between public institutions and all societal stakeholders (Rahman, 2016:44). It is built upon four main elements (Levi-Faur, 2012:9-10). In governance, the first element, structure, encompasses formal and informal institutions and parties, while process refers to policy formulation and implementation stages. The decision-making process, coordination, and control stages are considered elements of governance as a mechanism. On the other hand, the strategy involves the efforts and attempts to produce results through the interaction of guiding actors, parties, and institutions in making choices and preferences. Therefore, governance involves forming a strategy through

communication and interaction, utilizing various processes and mechanisms within the existing structure. It entails a collective decision-making process involving multiple actors (Chhotray and Stoker, 2009). In this context, governance is characterized by collaborative interaction, multi-centered and multi-stakeholder participation, and mutual communication, as opposed to traditional and authoritarian public management processes.

Like the post-World War era, the post-Cold War period has prompted a reassessment of political, economic, and social systems. The effectiveness of mechanisms and processes and the desire for change encompassing freedom and inclusivity were scrutinized. Technological advancements and a complex web of relationships necessitated the development of innovative solutions. Globalization, democratic progress, and local priorities have given rise to the governance mechanism (Rosenau, 2004:185-186).

Governance refers to using power relations based on the legal process defined as authority. It involves increasing upward, downward, and horizontal communication and interaction and carrying out processes from an innovative perspective with participation and management on a large scale (Levi-Faur, 2012:7-8). To ensure participation and inclusiveness, it is recognized that a single actor cannot be competent in solving all problems. Therefore, there is an approach in which public authorities, the private sector, and citizens come together within the framework of public administration, combining resources and forces to solve the problem (Kooiman, 1999:72-73). When examining the definitions related to the concept of governance collectively, it becomes apparent that they are concentrated under three main headings (Figure 1):



Figure 1: Features Highlighted in Definitions of the Concept of Governance (Kooiman, 1999:69)

When examining Figure 1 in detail, it is evident that governance is a regulation within a management process. In other words, it refers to a system. Governance is an approach to management that promotes collaboration and cooperation, emphasizing legitimacy and effectiveness. It involves updating and developing business processes, organizational structures, and methodological approaches to address new situations and expectations.

To better understand the practical meaning of governance, it is essential to grasp its conceptual framework. Stoker (1998) highlights five fundamental propositions that complement each other in explaining the concept of governance. These propositions are illustrated in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Governance Framework (Stoker,1998:18)

- **Governance refers to a group of institutions and actors that are both within and outside of government:** Governance challenges traditional views of government, emphasizing the complexity of modern systems with multiple centers of power and increased involvement of private and voluntary sectors. At this point, it is emphasized that multiple actors - government, private sector and citizens - should be involved in strategic decision-making.

- **Governance acknowledges the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities in addressing social and economic issues:** Governance plays an important role in determining the framework of existing problems in economic and social events and the responsibilities and boundaries regarding their solution. In determining responsibilities and boundaries, the contribution of each actor and the extent to which the resources they have will be involved in solving the problem are clarified. In this way, active participation and resource efficiency are ensured.
- **Governance identifies the power dynamics involved in the relationships between institutions involved in collective action:** Governance argues that the possibilities and resources of the state or government alone will not be sufficient in a world of endless expectations and demands. To address problems and find innovative solutions, it is important to utilize various resources and information collectively. In this context, it is suggested that a participatory and interactive management approach should be adopted to ensure a balance of power, rather than relying on processes centered around a single entity.
- **Governance is about self-governing networks of actors:** Governance refers to a collaborative process involving multiple autonomous and responsible actors in the management of a system. It involves collective problem-solving and decision-making, where information and resources are shared among the actors. During this process, the actors' own resources and skills are developed through interaction. In other words, governance is not solely the responsibility of the government in solving problems. It is a process that aligns with the goals and expectations of all involved parties, including various private sectors and citizens. It aims to meet and improve the resources, skills, and expectations of the actors participating in the process. In

summary, governance is a collective development process where participating actors are self-managing and autonomous elements working together in cooperation.

- **Governance recognizes the ability to achieve goals without relying solely on the power of government. It views government as being able to use new tools and techniques to guide and steer:** All kinds of actors and participating stakeholders make important contributions to determining the innovative tools and techniques that guide and guide the government to a certain extent, without limiting governance only within the specific management approaches of the government.

When evaluating all five propositions collectively, governance is considered a multifaceted management approach. It involves the participation of internal and external stakeholders (citizens) in the management process. They contribute to shaping the future vision of the country, public service, the services they will receive, and social welfare. Additionally, this approach allows for the development and mutual gains of both the stakeholders themselves and public actors through the synergy and interaction created during their collaboration.

Digital technologies have opened up new opportunities for data and knowledge exchange. However, it has also brought about challenges in terms of governance (Vial, 2019; Hanelt et al., 2021). Transactions conducted on platforms and interactions within online communities often involve extensive networks with multiple simultaneous interactions, making it difficult to rely solely on traditional governance mechanisms like contracts and relational norms. Consequently, gaining a deeper understanding of the governance mechanisms and choices suitable for the digital age is crucial. Margetts and Dunleavy (2013) propose that public administration reform has shifted from the New Public Management approach to Digital Governance. This new approach prioritizes providing holistic services for citizens and implementing significant digital changes in government administration. Digital governance, also known as e-governance, refers to an approach that utilizes information and communication

technology to improve managerial processes, decision-making, service quality, and resource utilization (Westerberg, 2021:3). Additionally, it involves the automation, sharing, and transformation of information, including e-democracy and e-government, to ensure the continuity of public services and processes (Özer, 2017:466-468). Demirel (2010) states that e-governance facilitates the rapid exchange of information, enables public personnel to communicate with other institutions and citizens, ensures standardization and control in the electronic environment, and enhances accessibility through the network. Furthermore, Demirel (2010) highlights two fundamental approaches to e-governance: the first approach involves the collaboration between the state and citizens to adopt a democratic management approach, moving away from authoritarianism; the second approach focuses on delivering services effectively and efficiently in the electronic environment.

Digital governance encompasses more than just e-government practices and approaches. It involves leveraging technological infrastructure for various public services and enabling citizen and stakeholder participation. This includes incorporating their data and suggestions into the system and facilitating real-time data and collaboration in the execution and process of services (Milakovich, 2014; Williamson, 2016). Therefore, it is both a vision and a participatory management goal that needs to be accomplished.

Based on the digital governance approach, it is recognized that it plays a crucial role in shaping decisions and strategies rather than just being a passive recipient of services in the digital environment. Adopting certain approaches in delivering public services is essential for enhancing digital management's effectiveness. To achieve a realistic digital governance model with a "we-governance" approach and active participation from the public and other stakeholders, Linders (2012) identifies three fundamental approaches:

- Citizens for Government (C2G): The C2G category promotes the active involvement of citizens in the government, aiming for a more efficient and responsive state. This

partnership encourages people to become more aware of the government's capabilities and to participate in decision-making.

- **Government for Citizen (G2C):** The State provides a service platform in the Government for Citizens (G2C) category, which serves as the main channel for information transmission. This platform helps taxpayers enhance their productivity and make well-informed decisions, ultimately leading to an improved quality of life. Although the government is not directly responsible for the success of these activities, its digital services platform can influence the public and contribute to positive outcomes. For example, the government may include information about a consumer's electricity consumption level, along with the neighborhood average, on their invoice, encouraging more responsible consumption. This is an example of the type of service provided in the G2C category.
- **Citizen for Citizen (C2C):** In the Citizen for Citizen (C2C) category, individuals take responsibility for creating opportunities for themselves through a "do it yourself" service model. The State does not play an active role in this category, but may offer resources or structures to support citizen-led activities. Examples of C2C activities include volunteering for social programs and participating in local community websites hosted on public servers.

In a comprehensive literature review and case analysis, Idzi and Gomes (2022) found that the implementation of the service and governance approach varied across different levels: C2G (43.64%), G2C (54.55%), and C2C (1.82%). The Government for Citizens (G2C) approach involves the government providing services through an internet portal for information and service delivery. However, the implementation at the Citizen to Citizen (C2C) level is significantly lower at 1.82%. It is evident that there is a need to promote citizens' inclination to

use civil initiatives and employ measures and practices to address each other's problems by leveraging public resources.

Challenges in digital governance

When examining the obstacles to digital governance, the first issue that arises is the lack of widespread internet use and limited inclination to purchase such services (Botric and Bozic, 2020). Fountain (2005) emphasizes that a significant obstacle is that despite technological advancements, business operations have become limited in terms of service and interaction, with only minor technical processes added. Navarra and Cornford (2012) argue that governments, in their understanding of power sharing and traditional public administration, are reluctant to engage in role sharing, resulting in slow progress in this process. Similarly, Kompella (2017) states that the advancement of digital governance primarily depends on intergovernmental or intergovernmental collaboration and highlights the adoption of a digital governance approach based on information flow.

When e-governance is considered a form of applying digital governance, it is observed that there are various challenges in practice. These challenges include resistance to change from practitioners, limited resources, political and organizational obstacles, social obstacles, infrastructure issues, capacity problems, and a lack of competent and process-oriented personnel (Meijer, 2015). Additionally, there are concerns about security risks, collaboration protocols, and archiving in the digital environment (Dawes, 2008).

AN EVALUATION ON DIGITAL GOVERNANCE PRACTICES IN TURKEY: E-MUNICIPALITY AND E-GOVERNMENT

Technological advances have brought about significant impacts and radical changes in various aspects of society, including management. These advances, especially in information and communication technologies, have revolutionized how organizations interact with their

target audience and handle their processes. Institutions have created systems to provide real-time and efficient solutions to various requests.

Moreover, the emergence of digital platforms has opened up new possibilities for providing public services to society. In Turkey, for instance, e-government and e-municipality applications have gained prominence. These applications will be thoroughly examined to better understand the current state of affairs about digital governance.

E-government

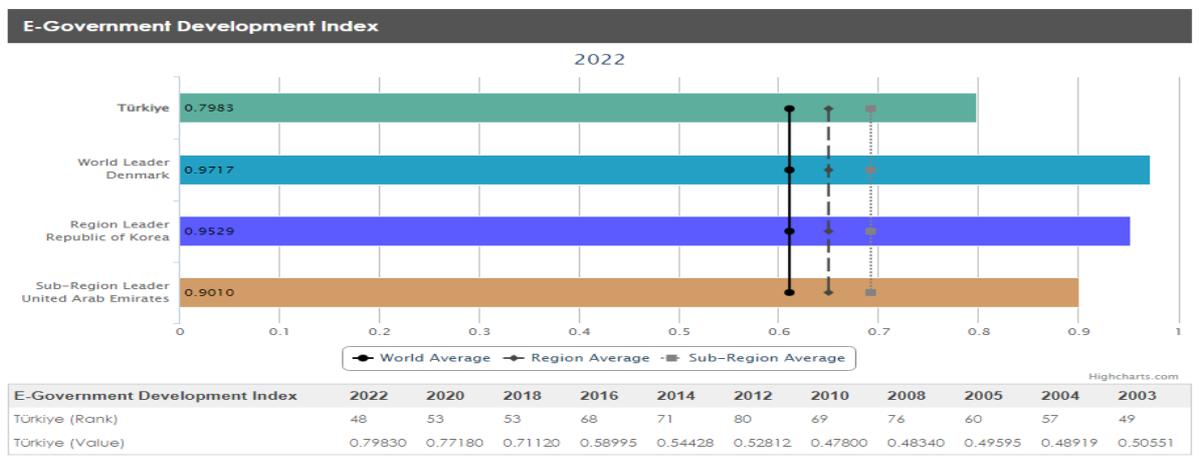
E-government is the utilization of information and communication technologies, particularly the Internet, to improve government services (OECD, 2003). It also involves providing services to citizens faster, more effectively, and transparently through information and communication technologies (İşleri and Negiz, 2005). The goal of e-government is to integrate digital technologies into the public management process, expand service delivery channels, and enhance service quality. Unlike the traditional public administration approach, e-government represents a structural and functional transformation and innovation in service understanding (Delibaş and Akgül, 2010).

Yurttay et al. (2015) emphasize that the transformation of e-government can be divided into four stages. The first stage involves transferring information to citizens through the internet and web pages. In the second stage, specific tasks and processes related to public service are made available online. The third stage involves consolidating all public services into a single portal. Finally, in the last stage, this portal introduces new services to citizens, aligning with their expectations and needs.

In Turkey, it is seen that e-government applications started with "KAMU-Net" in 1998, continued with the "e-Turkey" initiative in 2001, and continued with the "e-transformation Turkey project" in 2003 (TUENA, 1999; Erdoğan, 2019). The e-government platform, which

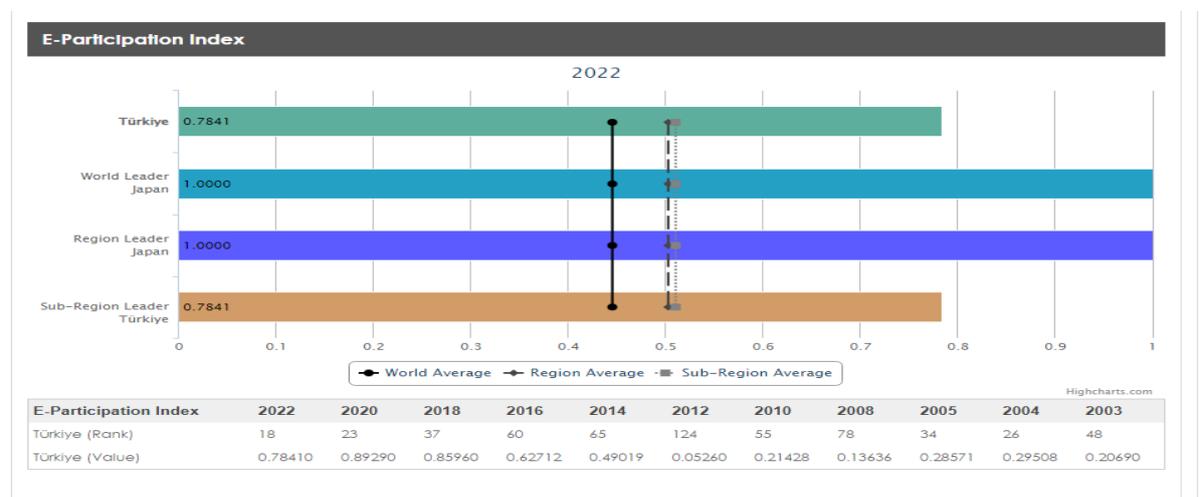
provides services in many areas today, is developing rapidly in 2022, according to UN data (Figure 3), and is above the world average in participation (Figure 4).

Figure 3: E-governement Development Index



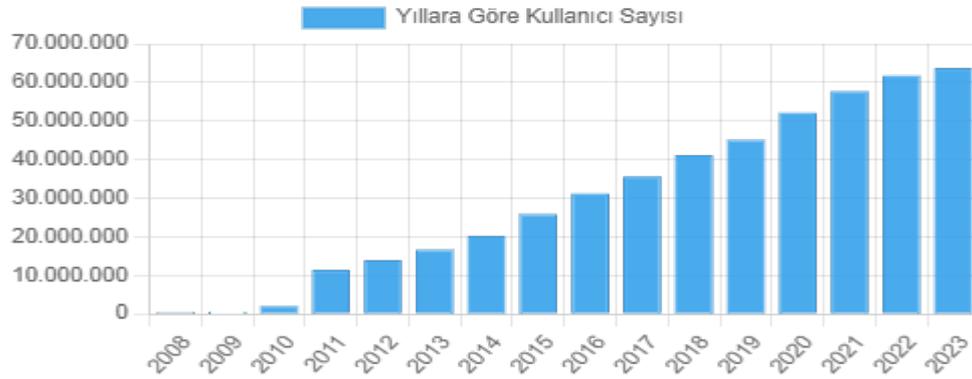
Source: <https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country-Information/id/176-Trkiye>

Figure 4: E-participation Index

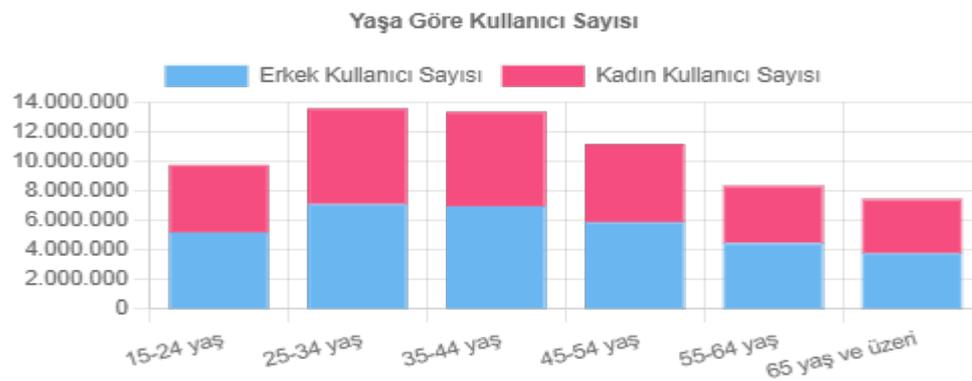


Source: <https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country>

When examining the statistics on the e-government website, it can be observed that there are 63,697,332 users as of 2023 (Figure 5). The age group with the highest number of users falls between the ages of 25-44, while the group with the fewest users consists of individuals over 65 years old, which is as expected (Figure 6).

Figure 5: Number of Users by Years

Source: <https://www.turkiye.gov.tr/e devlet-istatistikleri>

Figure 6: Number of Users by Age

Source: <https://www.turkiye.gov.tr/e devlet-istatistikleri>

When examining the statistics obtained from the e-government page, it can be observed that in the last month, the most critical institutional payments were related to SSI service breakdown (29.47%), retirement age determination (13.44%), social aid (13.25%), and PTT (7.82%). It indicates that these services are widely used.

Analyzing the e-government usage rates, it is reported that 68.7% of individuals who have utilized e-government for public service procurement in the past 12 months have a usage rate of 68.7%. Furthermore, 64.4% of them use e-government solely to obtain personal information from public institutions (TUIK, 2022). Additionally, 48.5% of e-government users utilize the

platform to make appointments. Despite the significant opportunities for providing public services, it is apparent that citizens are relatively passive in terms of usage rates and purposes. Therefore, it is evident that more fundamental and comprehensive steps need to be taken in the digital governance process.

E-municipality

E-municipality refers to the incorporation of e-government applications into municipal services, utilizing the capabilities of information and communication technologies to deliver municipal services effectively and efficiently. It serves as a platform where various public service institutions interact online, facilitating citizen feedback and addressing their demands and complaints (Alodali et al., 2012). E-municipality involves adopting a management approach that enhances municipal services' service capacity and speed by integrating them with the e-government platform, ensuring transparency, accountability, and auditable public services (Erdoğan, 2019).

Municipalities play a crucial role as providers of public services, being the primary point of contact for citizens in their daily lives. By meeting diverse expectations and needs and integrating them into the e-government platform through digital technologies, municipalities can offer significant advantages in terms of fast and reliable public service experiences. E-municipality applications provide substantial convenience to citizens and facilitate the establishment of a consistent data flow and standardized service quality in public administration through integration with e-government. They also offer significant advantages regarding service accessibility, supporting local participation, and implementing good governance principles (Ulusoy and Çobanoğulları, 2013).

The E-municipality application was accepted as a project in 2014. In 2018, the participation of municipalities became mandatory due to legal regulations. It is an information system consisting of 45 modules managed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and 22 modules executed

by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change (www.belediye.gov.tr).

Additionally, details about the e-municipality system are shared on the website as follows:

- Fast execution of services
- Ensuring information security
- Protection against cyber threat
- Carrying out municipal services that are independent of time and place
- Citizen-oriented mobile applications
- An open source software with reduced external dependency,
- Renewable infrastructure
- Bringing together all municipalities on a common platform
- Enabling the integration of municipal and ministry affairs in a systemic environment
- Saving resources, personnel and time
- A comprehensive platform that can provide instant reporting on municipal services and activities

It is stated that all modules will be completed in 2023. Currently, 20 out of 30 major cities have been integrated into the program. The system carries out its processes daily with more users and service providers. Not only the e-municipality application, but individual municipalities also use web-based systems to offer their services. According to a study by Önal and Alaca (2017), these services are provided under the following headings:

- E-municipal information services regarding rights and responsibilities:
- Social e-municipal information services:
- Cultural e-municipal information services:
- E-municipal information services regarding initiatives and innovations:
- Other e-municipal information services

Services related to rights and responsibilities encompass various items such as debt management, payroll, water debt payment, and tax payment. On the other hand, social municipality services include services like cemetery management, wedding procedures, and city guides. Cultural services include theatre performances, library services, and social events. Lastly, initiatives and innovations services are provided through modules such as request and complaint handling, application processing, and information retrieval, as well as other municipal activities like announcements, council decisions, and information services.

Since e-municipal usage statistics cannot be accessed on the site, it was aimed to make an evaluation based on *sikayetvar.com* data, which is also used as a reference in other studies on municipal service delivery (Kölgelir and Türk, 2022; Gündüz and Hoşgör, 2019). The primary purpose of this evaluation is to obtain data on the level of response to citizen demands in the digital environment with the brand report card of the municipalities from the perspective of a third service provider. Within the scope of e-municipality services, *sikayetvar.com* offers some significant results, especially regarding service quality and feedback concepts, in addition to the municipalities' service delivery tools. Each institution has an image card, and data on the services of the first five metropolitan municipalities and how well these municipalities respond to citizens' expectations in the digital environment are as follows:

Table 1: Brand Scorecard for Service Delivery of 5 Metropolitan Municipalities

	PUBLISHED COMPLAINT	CITIZEN SATISFACTION	NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS RESOLVED IN THE LAST YEAR
İSTANBUL	21.782	%62	4229
ANKARA	1398	%40	51
İZMİR	2234	%40	87
BURSA	669	%36	17
ANTALYA	1074	%40	30

Based on the number of citizens and service types served, it is evaluated that Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality provides higher citizen satisfaction compared to others. However, when considering the requests and complaints of citizens in the digital environment, it is

observed that the satisfaction level is low for Bursa Metropolitan Municipality, despite their lower demand for alternative digital platforms.

Addressing the issues with e-municipality applications in municipalities, Erdoğan (2019) highlights several problems. Firstly, there is no standardized service delivery method, some link addresses are non-functional and operational, and the cultural services offered are limited in quantity. In a study conducted on metropolitan municipalities, Karataş and Tehran (2021) emphasize that these municipalities generally provide services through their own websites, but lack integration with e-government for many services. Güven (2022), who examined municipalities in all 81 provinces, reveals that 22% of municipalities do not have a request-complaint system, 33% lack a rapid information acquisition application, and 35% have inadequate e-municipality practices. Furthermore, it is noted that payment transactions, which are relatively passive activities within the scope of e-municipality applications and digital governance, constitute the main service at a rate of 83%. This highlights the need for a service that allows mutual participation.

In e-municipality applications, the number of service provider municipalities on the central government's e-government integrated platform is increasing daily. However, it is also observed that almost all municipalities have web-based applications. To ensure service quality, participatory and inclusive management, and measurable service, it would be appropriate to introduce a transparent management practice through a single system in terms of digital governance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The form of government in Turkey, established since the Proclamation of the Republic, is founded on the free will of the Turkish Nation, as emphasized by the Founder of the Republic, Great Leader Mustafa Kemal ATATÜRK. Participatory management practice and democratic

initiatives are crucial for the Republic's achievements and future. Enhancing citizen participation in public administration is an important step to increase the effectiveness of the Republican regime and strengthen the government-citizen-state interaction. In this regard, digital governance plays a significant role in reinforcing the people's will and promoting participatory management. Investigations have been conducted on e-government and e-municipality public service platforms, vital components of digital governance. These investigations have yielded significant findings.

Firstly, digital governance is a participatory management approach where public institutions, the private sector, and citizens collaborate using information and communication technologies to determine and implement decisions and strategies. Three fundamental interactions are central to improving digital governance: Citizens for Government (C2G), Government for Citizen (G2C), and Citizen for Citizen (C2C). While significant progress has been made in terms of e-government and e-municipality services under Government for Citizen (G2C), there is still room for improvement in terms of Citizens for Government (C2G) and Citizen for Citizen (C2C). While the platforms for providing public services and facilitating access to these services exceed the country average in terms of service types, according to UN evaluations, there is a lack of infrastructure for citizens and other key actors in digital governance to participate in decision-making and collaborate. Instead of a communication mechanism that fosters engagement between citizens, public institutions, and private organizations, there is a tendency towards one-sided service provision. This represents a significant gap in terms of participatory management and the efficient use of resources. Therefore, it is crucial to establish active communication channels to address this deficiency and promote the adoption of Citizens for Government (C2G) and Citizen for Citizen (C2C) digital governance approaches.

Another issue identified in the investigations is the lack of integration of certain municipalities in providing public services through a single source and platform initiated by the

central government. This lack of integration can significantly decrease service quality and solution speed in e-municipality and e-government integration. Integrating all municipalities into the e-municipality platform, which serves as a common platform, is crucial to ensure participatory management. In addition to legal regulations, citizens should also demand the participation of their local units in e-government and e-municipality integration. This integration facilitates communication between public institutions at the point of service delivery.

Digital governance is an innovative and democratic management approach that aims to benefit society and promote the sharing of public authority and power. The measures to be taken at this stage also contribute to the development of all parties involved in the process. In this context, it is essential to consider the following:

- Firstly, e-governance and e-municipality applications are crucial components of the digital governance process. Increasing the number of people benefiting from these services and integrating all public institutions after ensuring the required security measures will result in significant advantages. To achieve this, it is essential to provide awareness training for the services offered on the platform, as it will significantly enhance citizen participation. Additionally, it is essential to accurately identify the expectations and concerns of institutions that have not yet integrated into the e-municipality system and expedite their integration into the system promptly.
- To enhance digital governance, expanding beyond Government for Citizen (G2C) modules and incorporating models on digital platforms that facilitate realistic and practical interactions among non-public actors is essential. This can be achieved by implementing Citizens for Government (C2G) and Citizen for Citizen (C2C) approaches, influencing decision-making and strategy development. The impact of these approaches should be evident throughout the processes. To achieve this,

adopting internationally recognized best practices can help establish a participatory management approach.

- To encourage citizen participation in the management process, utilizing e-government and e-municipal applications is essential. Additionally, evaluating expectations through platforms like sikayetvar.com, where various requests and complaints are shared, can enhance citizens' perception of their importance in the management process and motivate them to engage in digital governance. To further strengthen this perception and improve public satisfaction with service delivery, it is recommended to analyze, monitor, and evaluate the feedback provided by citizens through both institutional complaint systems and the public relations units of relevant institutions. This rational approach will validate citizens' role in the digital governance process and contribute significantly to improving the effectiveness of public services.
- For citizens to play a more active role in the digital governance process and feel that their interests are being considered, it is crucial to ensure cyber security and protection of their information. This will enable different opinions and civil initiatives to serve as valuable sources of information when formulating strategies to enhance public services' effectiveness. A concrete approach should be adopted to facilitate citizen participation, mainly through the initiatives and innovations in municipal services. Currently, there is limited feedback, primarily limited to requests and complaints. However, establishing a virtual platform where public surveys and suggestions can be shared regarding the steps to be taken at the unit level, as defined in the strategic plan, and allowing citizens to contribute to managerial decisions and strategies at every stage, will significantly increase interaction and participation in digital governance.

Digital governance represents the future vision of governance, driven by social and technological advancements. This vision aims to create a more accessible, inclusive, and participatory public management practice. In Turkey, significant steps and progress have been made towards achieving this vision by implementing e-government and e-municipality initiatives. The positive outcomes of these advancements and investments are also reflected in the United Nations satisfaction surveys. However, a comprehensive digital governance approach can only be realized when there is active involvement and collaboration among citizens, public institutions, and private stakeholders in decision-making and strategy development. Moreover, when public resources are limited, it becomes crucial for private and citizen stakeholders to initiate and contribute to solving social problems through alternative resources and projects. At this stage, improving the current e-government and e-municipality platforms is important. This includes increasing awareness and the number of modules that promote a participatory role. Addressing the abovementioned issues could pave the way for developing a digital governance vision. The Great Turkish Nation must actively participate in the digital governance process through participatory management. By doing so, they can contribute to producing resources and solutions for societal problems within the framework of civil initiatives. This will contribute to constructing a more prosperous, democratic, and sustainable public management in the second century of the Republic.

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