MORE IS NOT ALWAYS BETTER: A CRITICAL REVISIT OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRATIC SUSTAINABILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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ABSTRACT
Mainstream democratic theory posits that high levels of citizen political participation are essential for democratic sustainability. However, the digital age has exposed a profound empirical paradox: while digital technologies have expanded participation channels to unprecedented levels, global democratic quality is steadily declining. Utilizing documentary research, this article critically reviews existing literature and constructs a novel explanatory framework by analyzing socio-political dynamics across three distinct digital eras (1994-present). The findings reveal that the correlation between political participation and democratic sustainability is not a linear positive relationship, but a complex dynamic governed by four conditional relationships. Specifically: 1) the quality of participation supersedes sheer quantity; 2) the underlying regime type moderates outcomes; 3) varying forms of participation yield distinct institutional impacts; and 4) the information ecosystem, threatened by disinformation, acts as a crucial intervening variable. These findings refute the traditional volume-centric paradigm, demonstrating that manipulated participation can actively undermine democratic institutions. The article advocates a theoretical shift toward measuring the "quality of participation" and recommends policy interventions focused on media literacy and information-ecosystem regulation, rather than merely maximizing participation metrics.
Keywords: Political Participation, Democratic Sustainability, Digital Age, Conditional Relationship, Participation Paradox

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