

# Active Citizen E-Participation in Local Governance: Do Individual Social Capital and E-Participation Management Matter?

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## Research Purpose

- Attention to citizen participation and collaborative governance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- Government use of Web technologies and E-participation
  - Effectiveness of e-participation programs could depend on citizens' active e-participation, especially at the local level
  - Limited research on the factors affecting citizens' active e-participation in local government
- Do individual social capital and e-participation management matter for active citizen e-participation?

## Definitions of E-participation and Scope

- E-participation as:
  - The use of web technologies to provide information and to support “top-down” engagement, or to foster “**ground-up**” efforts to empower citizens to gain their support (Macintosh 2008)
  - The use of information technologies to engage in **discourse among citizens and between citizens and elected or appointed officials over public policy issues** (White 2007)
- E-participation scope:
  - A special type of e-government application designed to promote online community where citizens initiate participation in policy agenda setting
    - Citizen-initiated participation
    - Many-to-many communication and online community
    - Citizen participation in policy agenda setting
- Focus on e-participation program in Seoul Metropolitan Government

# Cheon Man Sang Sang Oasis (CMSSO) program

서울특별시 **천만상상** 오아시스

나의 상상나무 | 상상제안 | 상상토론 | 상상실현 | WOW서울

LOGIN   로그인 • 회원가입 • 아이디 찾기 • 비밀번호 찾기

### 01 상상제안

맑고 매력있는 세계도시 서울 건설을 위한 아이디어를 자유롭게 제안해 보세요

- 자유롭게 아이디어 자유상상 [▶ 제안하기](#)
- 지정된 주제로 테마상상 [▶ 제안하기](#)
- 제안된 아이디어 제안기록보기 [▶ 둘러보기](#)

### 02 상상토론

토론방으로 넘어간 안전에 대하여 찬반토론 해주세요

- 자유토론 토론제안에 대하여 자유롭게 찬반의견 나누기 [▶ 토론하기](#)
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### 03 상상실현

서울시 정책으로 최종 선정된 실현제안입니다

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- 실현진행상황

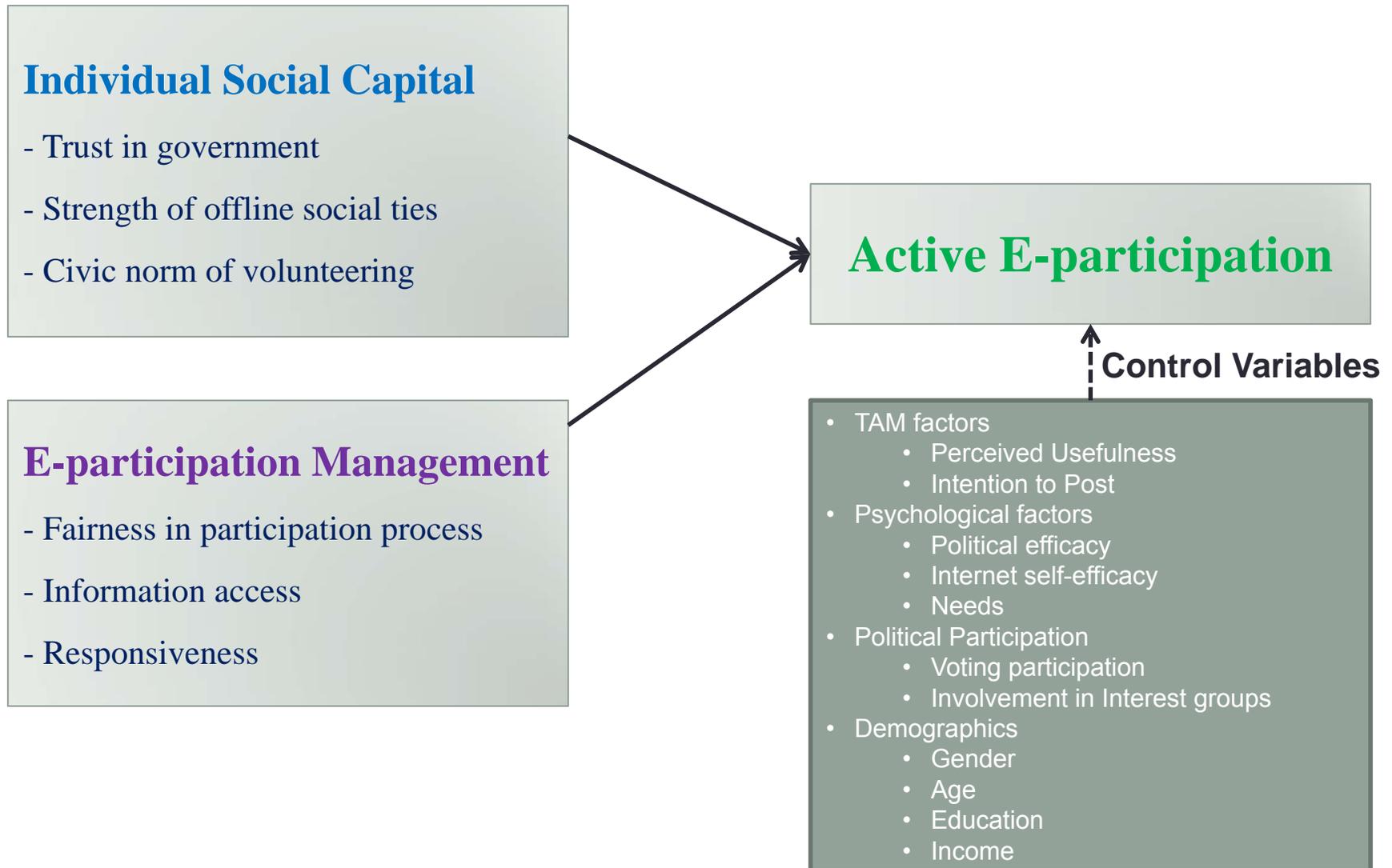
통지서를 보낼 때 시민의 Privacy를  
 제안자 : 정와식  
 개인의 privacy 보호를 위해 '중성차위반 과태료부과 사전 통지서' 의 발송후에 수신자와 발신자인 표시하여 발송되지

#### 오아시스 소식

- [04/02] 서울시공공자전거 명칭공모...
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# A Theoretical Model of Active E-Participation



# Trust in Government and Active E-participation

H1: The degree of e-participants' trust in government is positively associated with their active e-participation.

- Public trust in Government as the extent to which citizens have confidence in public institutions to operate in the best interests of society and its constituents (Cleary and Stokes 2006).
- The central indicator of the public's underlying feeling about its policy (Newton & Norris, 2000)
- Enhance the legitimacy and the effectiveness of democratic government (Braithwaite & Levi, 1998; Hetherington, 1998)
- Limited research on the relation between trust in government and citizen participation

# Strength of Social Ties and Active E-participation

H2: E-participants' strong offline ties are negatively related to their active e-participation.

- How does the strength of offline ties affect e-participation?
  - Strong offline ties (Granovetter 1973; Krackhard 1992)
    - More time spending in offline socializing, less time spending in online community activities such as e-participation
    - Likely to seek complimentary benefits (e.g. nonredundant information) by building weak online ties
  - Weak offline ties (Granovetter 1973; Burt 1992)
    - Less time spending in offline socializing, more time spending in online activities
    - Likely to seek complementary benefits (e.g. a sense of social bonds) by building strong online ties
- For citizens with weak offline ties, active e-participation could be an opportunity to create strong ties with other e-participants.

# Volunteering and Active E-participation

H3: E-participants' volunteering experiences are positively associated with their active e-participation.

- Volunteering as a Civic Norm
  - Shared belief and expectation among members about how they behavior in civil society (Knack 1992)
  - Focuses on volunteer activities (Edelmann and Cruickshank 2012)
- Positive relationship between citizens' volunteer experience and political participation (Billig, 2002; Wilson, 2000; Youniss et al, 1997).
- Limited research on relations between volunteer experience and e-participation

# Fairness and Active E-participation

H4: The level of perceived fairness in e-participation process is positively associated with e-participants' active e-participation.

- Habermas' theory of communicative action (1979): two criteria for assessing citizen participation process- fairness and access to information in participation process
- Fairness as one of design criteria measuring the quality and effectiveness of citizen participation programs (Coenen, Huitema, and O'Toole, 1998; Hansen, 1998; Webler and Tuler, 2000)
- Fairness refers to “the opportunity for all interested or affected parties to assume any legitimacy role in decision making process” (Webler and Tuler 2000; p. 568)
- Fairness in e-participation process
  - Availability of diverse participation opportunities
  - Equal opportunity for citizens and stakeholders to e-participation
  - Fair process of e-participation decision making

## Information Access and E-participation

H5: E-participants who perceive easier access to policy information via e-participation programs are likely to use e-participation actively.

- Limited access to government information and its interpretation discourages meaningful participation in policy making process (Webler and Tuler 2000; Garson 2006; Parasuraman et al. 2005)
- Greater information access reduces information asymmetry, decreases uncertainty and ambiguity about what and how governments do, and enables citizens to be better informed, enhances citizens' ability to understand government and thus, offer relevant suggestions, and monitor government.

## Responsiveness and Active E-participation

**H6: The level of perceived government responsiveness via e-participation programs is positively associated with e-participants' active e-participation.**

- Government responsiveness to participants' needs and feedback for their inputs are positively related to citizens' satisfaction with participation programs (Halvorse 2003; Kweit and Kweit 2004)
- Public officials' interpersonal, discourse and facilitation skills as a means of implementing authentic participation programs (King, Feltey and Susel 1998)
- Quality responsiveness motivates e-participants to stay longer and to engage in online community frequently (Moon and Sproull 2008).
- Quality feedback for e-participants' inputs and inquiries
- Sincere feedback
  - Reinforces their interests in e-participation and willingness to engage in it
  - Promote self-esteem in terms of a sense of being an important part of community

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 제안자 : 정와식

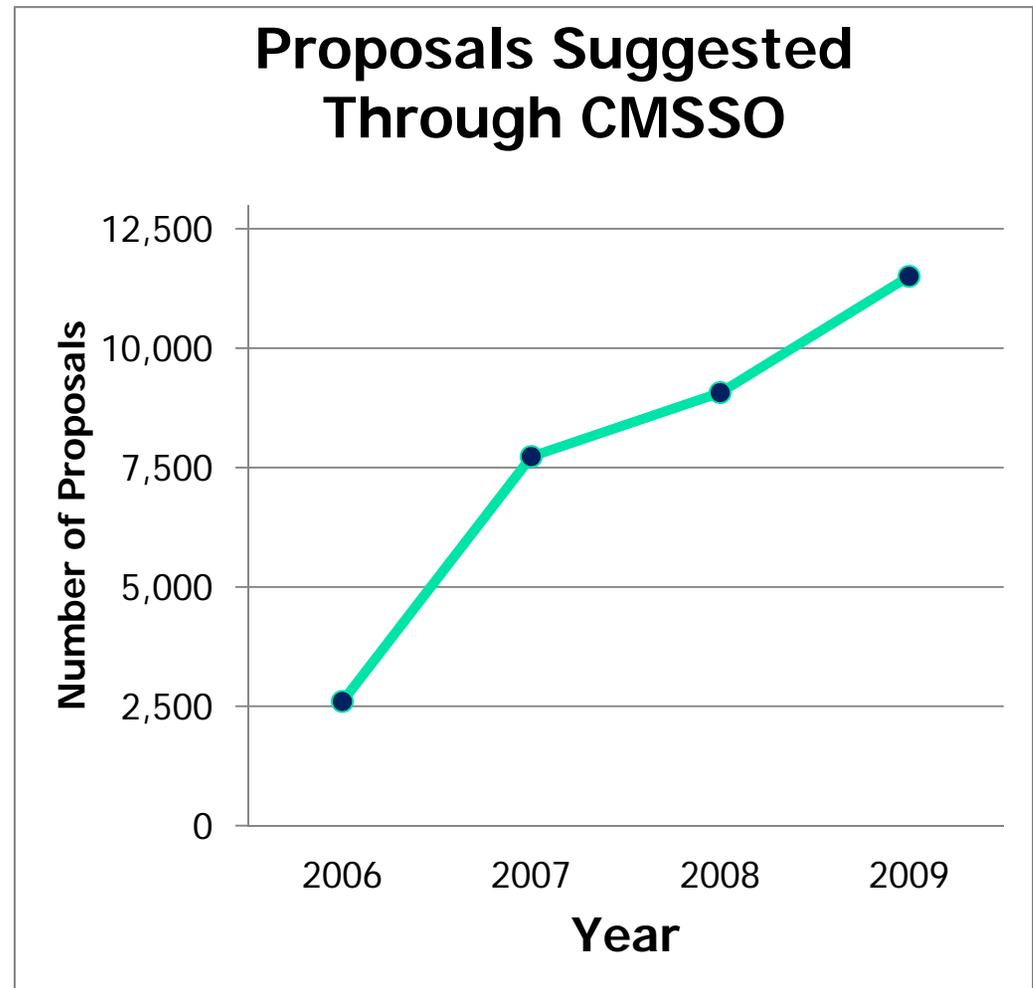
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## Cheon Man Sang Sang Oasis (CMSSO) program in Seoul Government

- E-participation program since 2006
- Online policy forums
- Bimonthly forum (offline) to assess feasibility and select the best ideas proposed by citizens
- 50,896 members in the Oasis (as of February 2011)
- 122,211 proposals and comments (as of February 2011)



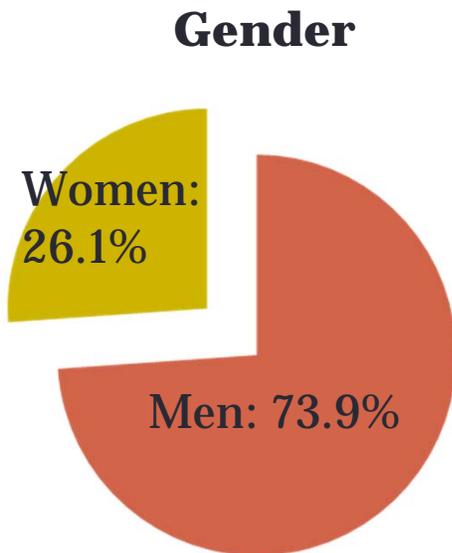
## **Survey Data:** 2009 E-participation Survey, Seoul, Korea

**SAMPLE:  
n=10,136**

**“CMSSO” Members who  
suggested more than one  
proposal through CMSSO in  
the last 3 years**

**Respondents:  
1,076  
(10.6 %)**

# Demographics of Survey Participants (n=1,076)



Age Range	% of Sample	Education	% of Sample
20s	22.1%	High School	13.9%
30s	29.3%	Bachelor in Progress	12.9%
40s	27.8%	Bachelor	59.7%
50s	15.2%	Master	13.5%
Over 60s	2.5%		

## Distribution of Demographics of Sample and Population

Variables	Characteristics	Sample (%)	Population (%)
Gender	Male	73.9	50.1
	Female	26.1	49.9
Age	20s or below	22.1	13.7
	30s	29.3	16.2
	40s	27.8	17.1
	50s	15.2	13.7
	Over 60s	2.5	15.9
Education	High school diploma or less	26.7	61
	Bachelor's degree or higher	73.3	39

# Measurement

- **Active e-participation:** How many suggestions have you posted on Oasis for the past three years? (Ordered categories)
  - 1 – 2 suggestions; 3 – 4 suggestions; 5 – 6 suggestions ; 7 – 10 suggestions; More than 10 suggestions
- **Individual Social Capital:**
  - *Trust in government* (1 item, 5-point Likert-type scale)
    - To what extent do you trust that SMG operates in the best interests of society? (1) Don't trust at all (5) Highly trust
  - *Volunteering* (1 item, 7-point Likert scale)
    - How often, on average, have you involved in volunteer works for the past three years?
  - *Strength of social ties* (5 items; 5-point Likert Scale;  $\alpha=.67$ )
    - How often do you go out with neighbors for socialization (e.g. having lunch, watching movie)?
    - Family members, neighbors, friends, co-workers , and members of social groups

# Measurement (cont.)

- **Management of E-participation Process:**
  - *Fairness in e-participation process* (4 items, 5-point Likert scale;  $\alpha=.76$ )
    - SMG has provided key stakeholders with an equal opportunity to participate in the Oasis program
    - The proposal is selected fairly through Oasis process
    - SMG has provided the citizens of Seoul with diverse opportunities to participate in policy making process
    - SMG has provided the citizens of Seoul with an equal opportunity to participate in policy making process
  - *Access to Information* (5 items, 5-point Likert scale;  $\alpha=.83$ )
    - It is easy to search for contents and proposals available on Oasis
    - Oasis provides effective functions that deal with my questions (Help desk, Q&A, contact information)
    - It is easy to submit ideas, receive feedback, and make comments on others on Oasis
    - Oasis provides well-designed content structure
  - *Responsiveness* (3 items, 5-point Likert scale;  $\alpha=.82$ )
    - SMG has provided answers and feedback for my proposal in a sincere manner
    - SMG has provided answers and feedback for others' proposals in a sincere manner
    - SMG has provided useful feedback for my proposal

# Measurement (cont.)

- **Control variables**

- TAM variables
  - Perceived usefulness (7 items)
  - Intention to post (1 item)
- Psychological factors
  - Political efficacy (3 items, Likert scale;  $\alpha=.83$ )
    - E.g. SMG actually uses my proposal(s) for making and implementing policies and programs
  - Internet self-efficacy (1 item)
    - How long have you had a membership of Oasis?
- Political participation
  - Voting participation: 4 different national and local elections
  - Involvement in interest groups (3 items)
    - nongovernmental organizations, unions, and political parties
- Demographics
  - Gender (male=1; female=0)
  - Age
  - Education (higher than college graduation=1)
  - Income (6 categories; lowest monthly income as a base dummy)

## Ordered Logistic Regression Results

Independent Variables		Coefficient	S.E
Individual Social Capital	Trust in government	.24**	.11
	Strength of social ties	-.17**	.08
	Volunteering	.08**	.05
Management of E-participation Process	Perceived Fairness	-.24	.18
	Information Access	-.12	.14
	Perceived Responsiveness	.28**	.14
<b>Control Variables</b>			
Perceived Usefulness		.04	.17
Intention to Post		.93***	.16
Political Efficacy		.08	.17
Internet Self-Efficacy		.44***	.07
Involvement in nongovernmental organizations		.08	.22
Involvement in labor unions		.06	.53
Involvement in political parties		-1.04	.88
Voting		.14**	.05
Interest in E-participation		.83***	.06
Gender (Male=1)		.28	.19
Age		.03***	.01
Education level (College graduation or higher=1)		.57**	.23
Income level 6		1.00***	.31
Income level 5		.52	.33
Income level 4		.56**	.28
Income level 3		.63**	.26
Income level 2		.67***	.26
R <sup>2</sup>		.41	
Max-rescaled R <sup>2</sup>		.44	
Score test for the proportional Odds assumption		$\chi^2 = 67.89$ ; d.f.=69; p=.51	
Note: For two-tail tests; ** p < .05; *** p < .01			

# Implications

- Individual social capital dimensions play crucial roles in shaping active e-participation: *trust in government, weak offline social ties, and volunteering*
- Management of e-participation process:
  - Government **responsiveness – quality feedback** – matters for facilitating active e-participation (Kweit and Kweit 2004; King et al., 1998)
  - No significance of fairness and access to information: E-participants may not as concerned about fairness in the participation process and information access because of the lower opportunity and transaction cost for them to engage in e-participation compared to offline participation programs.
- Implications for practice:
  - Local government can pay more attention to the role of government in enhancing **trust in government as a facilitator of active e-participation**
  - Building effective management capacity/system of e-participation programs to enhance **government responsiveness** to citizens' inputs.

# Conclusion

- *Contribute* to e-participation literature by uncovering both individual social capital and e-participation management factors affecting citizens' use of e-participation
- *Limitations*: external validity, cross-sectional research design, and online social networks
- *Future studies*:
  - How do online social ties/networks affect active e-participation?
  - How does government use citizens' inputs for decision-making?