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With the expansion of digital governance, ensuring that every citizen has an equal chance to access electoral processes is rapidly becoming a key measure of democratic sustainability. In this paper, the importance of e-voting as a foundation for inclusive and sustainable digital governance is discussed. Drawing from global case studies, it examines challenges faced by persons with disabilities and digitally excluded groups in accessing e-voting facilities. It identifies key barriers such as hardware and software limitations, low digital literacy, and infrastructural inequalities. The contribution of the research comes from visionary strategic policy recommendations for improved inclusiveness and trust in e-voting technology.

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Abstract
With the expansion of digital governance, ensuring that every citizen has an equal chance to access electoral processes is rapidly becoming a key measure of democratic sustainability. In this paper, the importance of e-voting as a foundation for inclusive and sustainable digital governance is discussed. Drawing from global case studies, it examines challenges faced by persons with disabilities and digitally excluded groups in accessing e-voting facilities. It identifies key barriers such as hardware and software limitations, low digital literacy, and infrastructural inequalities. The contribution of the research comes from visionary strategic policy recommendations for improved inclusiveness and trust in e-voting technology.

Keywords
E-voting; Accessibility; Digital inclusion; Disabilities; Democracy; Sustainable digital governance; Universal design;

I. Introduction

In the digital revolution, electronic voting (e-voting) represents one of the most significant changes. In addition to making elections faster, more accessible, and easier to use, e-voting should be accessible to all citizens, including those in remote areas, those with developmental disabilities, and those with disabilities. Accessible e-voting is vital for sustainable digital governance, ensuring that democratic participation is genuine and reflects the decisions of the entire population.

The three most important elements of digital systems - long-term sustainability, inclusiveness, and trustworthiness - are supported through sustainable digital

governance. Governments should include accessibility features in e-voting platforms from the outset to address the challenge of electoral integrity and encourage voting among marginalized groups whose voting rights have historically been limited due to physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities. In this way, the government could promise e-voting without compromising democratic standards. Accessibility is a fundamental condition for the implementation of fully democratic voting. The development of such a system faces a number of challenges, including technological, legal, social, and infrastructural. In this regard, it is necessary to implement a system that builds public trust and fosters digital literacy, including hardware and software that meet diverse accessibility needs, while preserving data privacy and security [1].

This research addresses the intersection of e-voting accessibility and sustainability. The research relies on the analysis of case studies from different countries selected according to the criteria described in the methodology section. It highlights how the design and implementation of inclusive practices in the development of voting systems across countries contribute to democratic digital governance ecosystems. It highlights best practices, challenges, and strategic recommendations aimed at a single goal: making e-voting a truly accessible tool for all citizens and strengthening democratic legitimacy.

The continuation of the work is organized as follows: Chapter 2 combines the theoretical background and literature review of accessible e-voting systems, Chapter 3 presents the methodology, Chapter 4 analyzes challenges to accessibility, Chapter 5 provides accessibility recommendations, and Chapter 6 concludes the paper.

II. Theoretical Background: Accessibility and Design Challenges in E-Voting

E-voting is a modern approach to voting. It greatly streamlines casting votes through electronic means such as e-voting machines (EVM), web-based voting systems (i-voting), and other electronic interfaces to devise the most effective way to conduct this essential process. Such a solution has to maximize the effectiveness of polls so as to enhance the voter turnout and maintain improved privacy and transparency. But now there is no single solution that will appeal to everyone. For this reason, many countries have not yet managed to implement it [2].

Accessibility of e-voting refers to the ability of all citizens to vote regardless of any type of disability. Whether they are related to the location of the voter, the level of information literacy that the voter has, or any type of disability, voters must participate in elections on an equal basis. According to Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), states must guarantee political rights, including accessible procedures and voting machines. Across Europe, few laws require accessible e-voting. Some of them only touch on the topic superficially (e.g. PSOE, VVD) [3]. In Nigeria, despite the enactment of the

Disability Discrimination (Prohibition) Act, political participation remains limited due to the absence of persons with disabilities in legislative bodies. The solution proposed by Shuaibu highlights that system reliability, inclusiveness and user-friendly interfaces must be a priority in low-resource environments [4], [2]. Accessibility of e-voting can be viewed from different perspectives:

- Physical access: How simple it is for voters to physically operate voting apparatus;
- Technical access: Support for assistant technologies including voice recognition utilities, touch and swipe devices, screen readers and magnifiers;
- Cognitive access: How easy and sensible the user interface is to help people with poor digital literacy or voters with disabilities;
- Cultural and linguistic access: Information available in more than one language and format can be understood by different populations.

From a moral perspective, given the fundamental democratic principle of equality, accessibility is essential for social stability, as it could lead to a decline in public trust and decreased political engagement. Failures during the 2000 US presidential election or the 2008 Finnish local elections are evidence of how poor design can lead to invalid votes and loss of trust [5]. Accessible e-voting systems must overcome a wide range of technical and design barriers that impact usability for people with different types of disabilities. These challenges can be of various types. From the physical layout of the device to the system's logic, and the clarity and intuitiveness of the interface. Lack of attention to these aspects of the system when creating it can significantly affect the results of the electoral process, but also violate a fundamental democratic right [6]. Some of the most important challenges are presented below.

A. Hardware Interface Limitations

Many e-voting systems use touchscreens, as do almost all devices today. However, they are not the ideal solution for people with visual impairments or those who rely on physical aids for navigation. Blind or visually impaired people will be denied the opportunity to vote if the machines lack a Braille keyboard, audio output, or tactile indicators [7].

B. Software Barriers and Compatibility

By contrast, software generates different kinds of problems. Without rigorous adherence to accessibility suggestions like WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines), their consumer interfaces are often too complicated, cluttered, hard to use, or devoid of screen reader functionality. Voting options can be difficult for users who depend on assistive software programs like JAWS or NVDA to understand.

C. Lack of real-time support and flexibility

Most e-voting systems lack adaptive features, which allow some basic adjustments, such as changing font shapes for blind persons, real-time translations for speakers who do not understand the prevailing language of the software, or text-to-speech. These inadequacies can affect all classes of individuals, but mainly affect old citizens and people who experience cognitive or language processing disorders, which in these groups results in a low percentage of individuals. In addition, the systems that do not allow voters to navigate backwards or repeat the instructions further complicate the experience for these users.

D. Accessibility and security trade-offs

Maintaining a high degree of safety while ensuring accessibility is another challenge. It remains very tough to find a balance between the two without compromising either. For example, customers with disabilities may additionally experience disruptions due to multi-element authentication or CAPTCHA verification [5].

E. Infrastructure and Maintenance Disadvantages

Even if a system is designed with solutions to all the aforementioned problems in mind, it is impossible to achieve good results if polling stations lack the necessary hardware or trained personnel. Poor internet connectivity, outdated firmware, and lack of device calibration will significantly hinder the use of the system, and in the worst case, lead to system failure, especially in rural or underdeveloped areas.

III. Methodology

The paper is based on case study analyses conducted across different countries. The research materials were selected in a way to include the diversity of geographical, technological, and political approaches to e-voting. Publicly available study databases, including IEEE Xplore, Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar, were searched. The queries used were “accessible e-voting”, “e-voting and people with disabilities”, and “e-voting and digital government”. The focus was on studies published after 2010 in English. Criteria that further narrowed the selection:

- geographical diversity,
- inclusiveness of access characteristics,
- inclusiveness of marginalized user groups,
- integration with national or regional digital governance strategies,

• documented results, assessments, or challenges, which allow the assessment of success or failure factors.

Estonia, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and other international locations were specifically selected for meeting these requirements. The available documented information allows for a comparative analysis of the situation in different countries. The variables relevant to the topic of accessible and secure e-voting systems were selected:

• Type of accessibility features provided;
• Technological infrastructure and devices used;
• Legal or institutional frameworks for support;
• Reported technical or societal challenges;
• Trade-offs between security and usability.

The results of the analysis provide an overview of how different systems work in terms of accessibility and inclusion. The analysis is not intended to strictly compare systems, but to identify key defaults, challenges, and strategies that can help future implementations increase inclusion in e-voting.

IV. Strategic and Global Perspectives

If the goal is a fully integrated system, accessibility cannot be viewed in isolation. It requires multi-stakeholder collaboration, legal harmonisation, and coordinated policy implementation. Yuliani proposes the Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) Phase in system evaluation to rank the criteria listed above and select a technology based on an informed decision [8]. A sustainable accessibility strategy must include:

• Early accessibility testing;
• Mechanisms for regular feedback gathering from people with disabilities;
• Investment in research and development of inclusive technologies.

In addition to consistency, such a framework also ensures social legitimacy and greater public trust in digital systems and their digital governance. By exploring the current state of the art in this area and examining international case studies - both successes and failures - we can better understand whether and how accessibility is currently integrated into digital governance systems around the world (Table 1).

Table 1. An Overview of Global E-Voting Systems' Accessibility

Country / System	Key Features	Accessibility Challenges	Reference
Estonia	- Digital ID card system - X-Road data exchange platform	- Not all citizens are advantaged equally	[9]

	- Screen reader compatibility - Strong encryption	- Issues with the elderly, rural populace, and those with disabilities	
Indonesia	- Efficiency and transparency in e-voting - Ongoing exploration of digital democracy	- Constant digital divide - Limited access for remote populations and voters with disabilities	[10], [11]
Voatz & Luxoft	- Biometric authentication for secure voting	- Lack of universal design - Limited clear accessibility features	[12]
POLYAS & Polys	- Focus on auditability and transparency - Citizen participation emphasis	- Common absence of accessibility standards	[12]
Bangladesh	- Biometric authentication - Integration of local cultural/ethical frameworks (Islamization of Knowledge)	- Complexity in balancing technical and cultural values - Accessibility implementation is still in progress	[13]
Austria	- Developed specifically for visually impaired voters - Tactile keypad, audio guidance, and simplified navigation - Based on inclusive design principles	- Limited deployment - Training and public awareness is required to maximize the purpose	[14]
Uzbekistan	- AI features: facial recognition, NLP - Low-power infrastructure (Helium blockchain)	- Challenges of electricity and internet access in remote areas	[15]
Gesture-Enhanced	- Gesture-based interface (eyebrow/nose)	- Still in prototype phase	[16]

Intelligent Blockchain Voting System	- High recognition accuracy (>90%) - Designed for digital illiteracy		
Sri Lanka	- Multi-modal voting system for the visually impaired (Button Tactile & Touch Tactile ballots) - Universal Design & UCD principles - Audio instructions and tactile overlays	- Visual design challenges in tactile layouts - Preference and usability vary across interfaces - Still a prototype	[17]

Countries like Estonia provide examples of digital voting systems that integrate security, transparency, and accessibility. The Estonian system includes features such as screen reader compatibility and strong encryption. A national digital ID card system that provides every citizen with a secure digital identity and access to a wide range of services is a central part of this system. The X-Road platform also enables data exchange between different systems, keeping it secure and transparent. The Estonian program has issues with inclusivity despite its effectiveness and inventiveness. The authorities recognize that not everybody, in particular the elderly, the rural inhabitants, and people with disabilities, benefits equally from digital services. While this model is definitely moving towards improvement, users with physical or mental impairments or lower digital literacy are still not adequately served. Simple interfaces, multilingual support, user training programs, and compatibility with a wider range of assistive technologies could alleviate these issues [9].

Another country that shows how much e-voting improves efficiency and transparency is Indonesia. Nevertheless, the digital divide continues in spite of laws (Law No. 8/2016) created especially for individuals with disabilities. Pilot tests have also been conducted. They confirmed allegations of exclusion of blind/deaf voters, as well as the very low level of digital literacy that is still not being addressed. Ways to ensure equal access and foster digital literacy, especially among groups with disabilities and those in remote locations, are still being sought [10], [11]. However, the local elections in Sleman Regency, Indonesia, serve as a real-world example of how technical support can help older voters lacking sufficient digital literacy successfully participate in the election. Despite minor technical issues, key accessibility indicators were adequately met [18].

Systems like Voatz and Luxoft use biometric authentication, enabling voters to participate securely in elections. Additionally, platforms like POLYAS and Polys focus on auditability and transparency, giving citizens a voice. However, despite

these benefits, a common limitation across most systems is the absence of clear accessibility features or universal design standards [12].

The implementation of digital voting technologies in Bangladesh demonstrates the complexity of accessible e-voting as a pillar of sustainable digital governance. Ensuring accessibility for all citizens requires not only technological solutions such as biometric authentication and voter information systems, but also the integration of democratic principles with local cultural and ethical values, as exemplified in the Bangladesh Islamization of Knowledge (IOK) framework [13].

The EVITA version (Austria) is a sophisticated European system that uses identity domain separation and hardware safety modules (HSMs) to ensure anonymity and verifiability without sacrificing accessibility. The version also includes a fallback option that allows voters to switch to traditional voting if the digital method fails, which is especially helpful for voters with disabilities, low digital literacy, or infrastructure issues [14].

The results of a study on citizens' perceptions of blockchain-based e-voting systems in Uzbekistan highlight the key role of accessibility and user-centred design in the successful adoption of digital voting technologies. By combining blockchain for data transparency and integrity with artificial intelligence-based features such as facial recognition and natural language processing, the system offers inclusive access to voters regardless of language, location, or socioeconomic status. Low-power infrastructure, such as the Helium blockchain, further enables access in remote locations, areas with limited access to electricity or the internet [15].

On the other side, researchers who assessed in "A Gesture-Enhanced Intelligent Blockchain Voting System" say that a gesture-based e-voting system offers significant evidence that accessibility and security are not just a pipe dream. They can exist in digital voting solutions. The Gesture-Enhanced Intelligent Blockchain Voting System is a research prototype, developed and tested in a controlled academic environment. It is not yet in real-world use, but it suggests a way to implement an accessible e-voting system. The systems are based on eyebrow and nose movements and achieve recognition accuracy of over 90%. The interface is designed to be adaptable and easy to use, allowing voting even for groups that are not digitally literate. Users from groups with disabilities rated the system as 90% satisfied. The author's commitment to exploring even more inclusive techniques, such as emotion recognition or vein patterns, shows that accessible and sustainable digital governance that puts the needs of all citizens at the centre is not unattainable [16].

A user-centric design approach is required to achieve true access in e-voting systems. A Sri Lanka study developed a multi-model e-voting prototype for voters, especially for visually impaired voters. The solution included Button Tactile (BT) and Touch Tactile (TT) ballots, both optimized for usability, privacy, and independence. The BT ballot, which included four physical buttons, was preferred

for simplicity, while the TT ballot offered slightly higher efficiency and accuracy. This research highlights that accessibility must go beyond compliance to deliver an equitable user experience [17].

While security and public trust remain fundamental challenges, the experiences of countries around the world illustrate that e-voting systems must explicitly address usability and inclusion challenges from the outset, such as providing solutions for visually impaired voters and other groups with disabilities to ensure equal participation [18].

V. Recommendations

In order to ensure e-voting systems support sustainable and inclusive digital governance, targeted strategies need to be applied that specifically address access to accessibility and security concerns. The following recommendations address the actions that will ensure equal participation of all citizens in the voting process, including persons with disabilities.

• Inclusive design of hardware and software:

System hardware elements should have built-in features that will enable improved accessibility. This includes Braille keyboards, audio output, haptic feedback, high-contrast interfaces, and alternative input methods (e.g., sip and puff devices). Software should be implemented adaptively and intuitively. Screen readers, adjustable fonts, and multilingual options should be integrated into the interface to accommodate different disabilities. One of the newest approaches for voter authentication is designed for voters with voice-based biometric systems, especially those with disabilities. By enabling safe login via voice patterns, these systems provide a touch-free, accessible solution for visually or dynamically limited voters. This law authentication improves inclusion, supporting the rights mentioned directly in the rights of the rights (UNCRPD) of individuals with rights mentioned in Article 29 of the United Nations Conference, while maintaining accuracy [19].

• Adherence to international accessibility standards:

Systems should be aligned with standards such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Country-specific legal requirements should also be met.

• Implementation of security and privacy protocols:

Sensitive voter data must be protected through end-to-end encryption. Data leaks must not occur. Secure biometric authentication and transparent audit trails for voters who cannot use standard methods will address concerns about accessibility features.

• Improving voter education and digital literacy:

Creating targeted campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of this way of voting. Explaining in detail how to use it through various communication channels to familiarize all voters with the e-voting processes and accessible tools. On the

other hand, launching a training program to educate officials so that they can effectively assist voters who need assistance [2].

• Involving stakeholders in co-design:

Whether a solution is of the highest quality will be known if tested by the people for whom it was designed. Therefore, involving people with disabilities in the design and testing phases will ensure that solutions meet the needs of real users. Much research has shown that this approach reveals barriers as standard-based testing misses. Tools such as the System Usability Scale (SUS) or the Software Usability Measurement Inventory (SUMI) are recommended [20], [4], [21].

• Providing infrastructure and technical support:

To ensure hardware and software are fully operational and available, without unwanted interruptions or crashes during the election, especially in remote and rural areas, it is necessary to provide sufficient technical support and maintenance.

• Monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation:

Establishing appropriate systems that will perform monitoring and continuous monitoring will ensure the timely detection of errors. The analysis and evaluation of the work will assess the effectiveness of accessibility functions and the overall user experience. With the help of the results of these processes, or their feedback, iterative improvements to the system can be made, which will ultimately lead to a system that meets everyone's needs and meets all the conditions that such a system should meet.

VI. Conclusion

Accessible e-voting really represents the first step required in achieving inclusive, equitable and sustainable digital governance. Introduction of systems that facilitate access to other areas, such as electoral safety and transparency, will increase equality for all. We all need to work together to break the obstacles in access. The governments ensure democratic values, empowering all voters to reach the electoral process independently and in security, regardless of physical, sensory, or intellectual ability and encourage citizenship to participate in the process. This increases the validity of elections.

Finally, e-elections that are accessible are more important than a technical fixation. It is one of the key guarantees of the Democratic system of flexibility and inclusion. Exhibitions should continue the stage of the center despite the rapid rhythm of digital technological progress to ensure that any citizen does not follow the values of equality, participation and confidence inherent in a durable democratic society.

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