

FACTORS INFLUENCING ETHNIC MINORITY PARTICIPATION IN URBAN COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

How to cite this paper: Ren, H., Lee, Y. F., Ku Samsu, K. H., & Adnan, Z. H. (2026). Factors influencing ethnic minority participation in urban community governance: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Governance and Regulation*, 15(2), 117–130.
<https://doi.org/10.22495/jgrv15i2art10>

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ISSN Print: 2220-9352
ISSN Online: 2306-6784

Received: 01.08.2025
Revised: 28.11.2025; 20.02.2026
Accepted: 11.03.2026

JEL Classification: I138, I131, Z0
DOI: 10.22495/jgrv15i2art10

The participation of minority groups in community governance plays a vital role in promoting social stability, ethnic integration, and effective governance. However, in community governance, there are often significant issues such as the under-representation of minority groups, trust gaps, and cultural and language differences, which limit the meaningful participation of minority residents (Turner et al., 2022). This paper aims to identify the key factors influencing the participation of ethnic minority members in community governance, with particular emphasis on the critical role of establishing networked communication between minority groups and governing bodies. It notes the role of community engagement as a key factor that drives the other factors influencing the participation of ethnic minority members in community governance, such as trust, transparency, awareness, and others. This study conducted a systematic literature review (SLR) of 31 peer-reviewed articles from 2020 to 2024 to analyze the trends, key factors, and challenges that affect the participation of minority groups in governance processes. The study highlights the need to develop governance frameworks prioritizing cultural sensitivity, collaborative decision-making, and addressing barriers to digital inclusion. It recommends future research and policy development to promote sustainable and inclusive governance.

Keywords: Community Governance, Urban Ethnic Minorities, Minority Representation, Participation, Factors Influencing, Systematic Literature Review

Authors' individual contribution: Conceptualization — H.R. and Y.F.L.; Methodology — H.R. and K.H.K.S.; Formal Analysis — H.R.; Investigation — H.R. and Z.H.A.; Resources — Y.F.L.; Data Curation — H.R.; Writing — Original Draft — H.R.; Writing — Review & Editing — Y.F.L., K.H.K.S., and Z.H.A.; Supervision — Y.F.L. and K.H.K.S.

Declaration of conflicting interests: The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the acceleration of global urbanization and demographic diversity, the participation of ethnic

minority groups in urban community governance has become an increasingly important topic in contemporary governance research. Studies on how to cultivate inclusive and participatory governance

models have become a priority for sustainable development and social inclusion. However, in many cities, ethnic minorities often face barriers such as cultural misunderstanding, structural exclusion, digital inequality, and limited representation in decision-making processes.

This study aims to identify the factors that influence the participation of ethnic minority members in community governance, and the recommendations for policy changes and the establishment of processes that drive the inclusion and representation of these members in the governing process. The study focuses on two key research questions:

RQ1: What are the key themes and challenges identified in the current literature regarding ethnic minority participation in urban community governance?

RQ2: What are the significant factors influencing the participation of ethnic minorities in urban community governance?

The study thus builds on the following objectives:

- to review and summarize the current academic literature on ethnic minority participation in community governance, identifying key research themes and existing gaps;
- to explore the key factors that significantly affect the participation of urban ethnic minorities in community governance, including digital inclusion, social networks, trust and transparency, and collaborative governance.

To achieve this, this paper conducts a systematic literature review (SLR) from the span of the past five years to identify the focus of existing literature on ethnic participation in community governance. The conceptual framework of SLR provides a structured, unbiased, and comprehensive synthesis of the existing literature to identify the key themes, gaps, and trends in approaches to research. The results enhance the reliability of the findings for an informed approach to policy design for supporting evidence-based establishment of ethnic minority participation in community governance.

The community participation and identity formation of ethnic minority members are influenced by various sociocultural factors, which demand evaluation of the cultural representation and interaction of the members with the governing bodies to form a social network that informs them of changes in policies. Studies indicate that the identification of minority communities occurs in terms of race, gender, age, and occupation, and ethnic minorities often remain under-represented as compared to the elderly, higher educated, and higher income groups, who are often over-represented in the representative test (Carlsen et al., 2021). However, public participation remains an important factor in the development of the urban community governance of countries. Li et al. (2020) note that the Chinese government has introduced policies for urbanization that prioritize the participation of the public, which is aimed at strengthening and developing the “social governance at the community level in urban and rural development” (p. 1). This influences positive interactions of the society and its residents with the government.

The primary significance for conducting this research is to identify the influence of various

factors such as the elements of social cultural background of the members, including their race, gender, ethnicity, class, education, age, and others along with their awareness of the policies, their discrimination or inclusion on promoting the participation and inclusion of urban ethnic minority members in the decision-making processes of community governance. The degree of communication of the policies by the governing bodies, such as through social media communication or other modes, and their acceptance of the opinions shared by these members in customizing the governance process, is the primary rationale for researching how it can promote the inclusion and visibility of ethnic minority members in the various aspects of community governance. This is because the inclusion of these members in the decision-making process in the governance can identify the problems and issues faced by these people, which will create impartial decision-making rather than prioritizing one community over others. The main objective of this research is to identify the multiple factors that contribute to the participation of the urban ethnic minority members in community governance. This can help to understand the formation of social networks and communication, which help the participants to express their opinions and influence the policies guiding the governance participation of ethnic minorities.

The study identifies the potential gap in the existing literature to present insights into the participation of ethnic minority communities in community governance, as the majority of research is concentrated in developed countries, thereby presenting a lack of observation of the minority communities. To that end, the existing literature focuses mostly on the cultural identities and representation but lacks focus on the emerging factors, such as digital inclusion, networked communication, and trust-building mechanisms. The interaction between social media engagement, collaborative governance, and minority participation is especially underexplored, presenting a significant research gap.

This SLR aims to synthesize and critically evaluate the existing research on factors influencing urban ethnic minority participation in community governance. By systematically analyzing studies published between 2020 and 2024, this SLR seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical perspectives, empirical evidence, and key challenges shaping participation in governance frameworks.

This study is relevant for systematically answering the above research questions, summarizes the core influencing factors of ethnic minority participation in community governance through a rigorous SLR, and proposes specific policy recommendations and future research directions. Moreover, it further proposes the role of social media and other communication channels in establishing community engagement and promoting the inclusion of minority voices in community governance.

The structure of this paper is divided into the following sections. Section 2 reviews the theoretical background. Section 3 details the methodological approach of SLR. Section 4 presents the findings of the study. Section 5 provides a detailed discussion of the findings that address the research questions

and objectives. Section 6 concludes the paper and identifies the limitations and scope for future studies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Communication as the basis of community governance

Communication is an important tool for performing effective community governance. Engagement in the context of community refers to the participation of individuals and groups of people of various sociocultural identities within a particular social boundary in the processes of designing, planning, community governance, and decision-making of the political governance systems (Seale et al., 2023). Notably, the understanding of a community is "redefined in relation to the common fate of all persons residing on the territory ... extending the boundaries of membership to temporary residents and those with precarious status" (Boucher et al., 2023, p. 538). This notion is supported by the idea that the political representation of the people in the policy developments and governance processes promotes democracy to identify the congruence of the people with the political representatives and their preferences for the governing policies (Costello et al., 2020). Such democratized identification of the members through their political representation then allows them to present their opinions in the development of the policies. This is because the participation in community governance, which can be communicated through a networked interaction of the policies by the governing bodies to the members, can help to recognize the relevance the policies might have with the people and the propensity for building trust among the people. To that end, one of the channels for building this communication can be through social media interaction by the stakeholders and participants. Hussain et al. (2022) note that politically tailored social media practices, such as the promotion of campaigns, can effectively address various social concerns among people in situations of crisis, such as the developing tendency of vaccine hesitancy among people in the United Kingdom (UK) during the COVID-19 pandemic. To that end, networked communication using digital platforms of social media increased inclusivity among the users by allowing many marginalized non-English speaking users to develop their English language learning skills (Muftah, 2024). Such observations suggest the increase of community bonding and the resulting emergence of the members within public discourse. This aligns with the proposition of a shift towards a model of governance by Zuckerman and Rajendra-Nicolucci (2023), which emphasizes the democratization of the use of social media for the political participation of community members in the governance, implementation, and communication of policies. Such use of social media has the potential to influence the participation of not just people in general but also of those people who might often be marginalized within the community, as the democratic space of social media can help them to engage more in their understanding of the policies and aid in the effective governance of the community through an inclusive

approach. To that end, the representation of these minority groups in the political system through social media is an important area of study for the research.

2.2. Representation of the minority groups in governance policies

Increasing inclusivity and visibility through representation can be improved by communication platforms such as social media. Social media acts as a tool for identity construction and the establishment of communication among various users, which can also be used by minority communities such as the LGBTQ+ communities to establish their social visibility in the political discourse (Craig et al., 2021). The platforms also allow these users to connect with others from their community and also access resources that aid in their identity formation. However, it is also to be noted that the participation of various minority communities remains limited despite the availability of networking sources, as the platforms are often seen as a site that increases competition in identity formation and influences the increase of social anxiety and crisis among the minority users (Jiang & Ngien, 2020). To that end, governments of various countries have been found to have effectively encouraged the participation of the people in community governance through digital communication and networking (Chen et al., 2020). However, the study has also noted that excessive use of these platforms also sometimes proves to be counterproductive, as in the case of China. To that end, Mansoor (2021) notes that social media can be effectively used by governments to promote information to the people to build their trust in the government, which can create a more inclusive policy development practice. Accordingly, Das et al. (2025) suggest the inclusion of public-private partnerships that can develop economic growth and leverage more effective policies and strategies for private-public collaborations for economic growth. However, social media platforms are also negatively used in political practices through the misuse of the platform to promote racialised memes and other regressive content that promote racial disparity among the users and negatively influence their participation in political and social governance. This presents an ambiguous identification of the use of social media in the representation and identification of minority communities in the governance processes.

2.3. Communication of experiences by ethnic minorities to increase visibility

While the recognition of the experiences and opinions of the community members is essential in developing their participation in community governance, communication channels help in communicating the various other factors that shape their cultural experiences by allowing the users to communicate with the governing bodies. Haimson et al. (2021) highlight issues of racial and ethnic discrimination as they identify the issues of content moderation and the experiences of ethnic minority communities, such as black and transgender people, where the content of social media platforms is

disproportionately removed, hampering the freedom of expression of identity by these members. To that end, Turner et al. (2022) also identify the issues of racial and ethnic disproportion in the other forms of governance in the UK, with only 43% of representation in the cases of clinical trials, suggesting an ethnic and racial under-representation of the demographic. Furthermore, this issue is further identified by Walker et al. (2021), who noted that the accessibility of proper internet and communication media remains limited for Australian Indigenous members, which limits their chances of participation in the policies and processes of community governance. However, studies such as that of Li et al. (2020) found that the inclusion of community members in the policy development processes to promote a collaborative approach to the development of community governance through top-down and bottom-up measures significantly improved the quality of community governance in China. Furthermore, "the phenomenon of religious hatred, insults, and similar phenomena, leads to addressing misinformation of different people, which consequently leads to the incident or occurrence" of hate crimes or hate speech towards a targeted community (Bajraktari, 2023, p. 153). These identifications indicate that communication channels such as social media and other forms of media can be used significantly by both the governing and political bodies, as well as the common people, to interact and collaborate to brainstorm ideas for the development of community governance. This can allow users to express their ideas through social media, which can benefit the authorities in promoting inclusive governance. It can be done by implementing experience-based policies that address the real concerns of these communities.

2.4. Establishing communication with ethnic minorities to identify their experiences

Following the previous section, establishing communication not only helps the community members to express their identities and experiences, but it can also help the governing bodies to identify the concerns and motivate the people to ensure they have trust in the government. Matamoros-Fernández and Farkas (2021) note the severe lack of representation of the racial and ethnic minority communities in the literature of academic research on race and hate speech as promoted through social media. To that end, they also note the significance of implementing models and frameworks in studies that can promote research grounded in the lived experiences of racial discrimination of people through their participation in the community and social identifications through engagement. To that end, Ryan et al. (2020) highlight the benefits of integrating communication for the development of inclusion and participation of community members in social and community engagements while identifying the positive sides of promoting such engagement through face-to-face interaction. On that note, Kelsey et al. (2022) reinstate the importance of the participation and engagement of community members, irrespective of their racial and ethnic

identities, for the decentralisation of social media and community sites. They note that the use of digital communication media can then reinforce the equal accessibility of clinical research by these communities, which can improve their representation in academic research, as well as build research areas through an equitable experience-based approach. To that end, Zuckerman and Rajendra-Nicolucci (2023) emphasize the evaluation of the community governance process and measures to ensure that the use of digital communication platforms promotes legitimacy and influences the training of the governing bodies in a democratized participation of users. These studies note the various limitations and processes in the ongoing communication of the governing bodies with the community members while suggesting measures for the implementation of inclusive policies that build community participation and user representation.

2.5. Development of policies for inclusive community governance

To promote the inclusion of ethnic and other minority community members in policy developments and the governance processes, it is important to implement inclusive governance policies that identify the diversity of the people within communities and their varied needs, which can be emphasized by the use of social media. Reed et al. (2020) highlight the success and the benefits of implementing Indigenous guardian programs for the promotion of efforts for local conservation. These programs highlight the importance of community-led initiatives and self-determination, which can inform policy frameworks for urban governance. On the contrary, Tormos-Aponte (2021) identifies the limited scope of the participation of the Indigenous community members in the policies for environmental sustainability and global climate governance, which presents a challenge within the urban contexts. To that end, Zhang et al. (2023) note that increasing and improving the participation of ethnic minority members in community governance helps migrants to deal with the issues of inequality, marginalization, and urban-rural adaptation, while it implements a mediating role that mitigates the issues of racial and ethnic tensions among the locals of the developed nations and the migrants. This helps the migrants to deal with the issues of cross-cultural/ethnic challenges and also compensates the internal migrants within the community space of the countries for political and institutional segregation. However, Zhang et al. (2023) also note that such measures do not always necessarily influence the social integration of these members in the governance due to a biased environment within the framework of community participation. However, Geekiyanage et al. (2021) note that currently, there is a significant lack of inclusion of any community members in the processes and implementation of urban development plans. This presents the need for the development of policies for the inclusion of urban ethnic minority community members in various situations of community governance.

2.6. Inclusion of urban ethnic minority outlook in developing community governance

The inclusion of the urban ethnic minority outlook in the development of community governance practices is important for promoting racial inclusivity and equitable outreach in governance practices. Sun et al. (2024) note that there is a structural synergy and interconnectedness in the digital governance practices that are promoting more globalized governance from the localized practices. To that end, Vince et al. (2024) identify the key factors of promoting an integrative framework for policy development, which are coordination and coherence; accountability, transparency, and legitimacy; and resourcing and adequate institutional architecture. Further, Parker et al. (2020) identify that such integration and collaborative practices for sustainable inclusion are best attributed to situations of crises that generate shared ideas and goals among all the actors within a community. On that note, Nkombi and Wentink (2022) identify that the lack and reluctance of community participation and collaboration led to the failure of disaster risk reduction. McNaught (2024) claims that the inclusion of community perspectives in the policy formation for climate and disaster-resilient developments can factor into the skilled facilitation of clear social learning and benefit the process through participation. However, actors and stakeholders with policy-making powers often are reluctant to share the power with other actors, such as the community people, making the processes difficult and inequitable. On that note, Zurba and Papadopoulos (2023) also emphasize the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and knowledge in the development of the Global Environmental Governance forums, which can help contribute to strategies for the development. Kington et al. (2021), on that note, emphasize the use of social media platforms for the communication and identification of health-related information in the community, and also to inform the people about the policies. This is identified by Geekiyanage et al. (2020), who identify that the community members and those who are marginalized are often unaware of the changes, policies, and other information that hinder their participation. To that end, Alenzi and Miskon (2024) re-emphasize the use of social media for the participation of community members, which can help to improve the community governance process. These ideas present a comprehensive assessment of the current situation of the inclusion of the urban ethnic and other minority community members in the community governance process and the extent of the use of social media in channelizing their participation.

3. METHODOLOGY

This literature review was conducted using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol, which provides evidence-based guidelines to systematically synthesize and critically evaluate existing research. Although this study applied an SLR, complementary approaches such as meta-analysis or bibliometric analysis could have been used to quantitatively

evaluate effect sizes or map publication trends, but these were deemed unsuitable given the predominantly qualitative nature of the available literature. PRISMA ensures transparency and rigor in the review process by following a structured framework that includes four major steps: 1) identification; 2) screening; 3) eligibility, and 4) data analysis (Liberati et al., 2009). The review adhered to a structured qualitative content analysis approach, systematically extracting and coding concepts, themes, and methodological characteristics from each eligible study to ensure consistent comparison and thematic synthesis.

3.1. Resources

The data for this study were sourced from peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and conference proceedings retrieved from key academic databases. The primary databases included Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and Google Scholar, selected for their extensive multidisciplinary coverage and high-quality, reliable research outputs in social sciences, governance, and community participation.

Scopus was selected due to its largest single abstract and indexing database, covering a wide range of disciplines, including social sciences, public policy, and governance (Burnham, 2006). WoS was chosen as it was considered the well-established and rigorous academic database that provides access to high-quality publications, particularly in governance, political science, and urban studies (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). Google Scholar, while less selective than Scopus and WoS, serves as a complementary database due to its broader coverage of open-access materials, policy reports, and non-traditional sources such as government documents and conference papers (Halevi et al., 2017). By incorporating these databases, this study ensures that the selected papers are methodologically robust and ensure a comprehensive collection of literature relevant to the intersection of ethnic minority participation and governance processes. The PRISMA framework was chosen because it provides a transparent, evidence-based, and internationally recognized protocol for synthesizing complex multidisciplinary research, making it suitable for capturing the breadth of studies on governance and ethnic minority participation.

3.2. Identification

This search resulted in over 1,700 peer-reviewed studies that initially matched the research objectives. The final search was completed on January 15, 2024, yielding 1,748 articles from the selected databases based on the search criteria (see Table 1). This dataset provided a robust foundation for synthesizing and critically evaluating existing research on the factors influencing ethnic minority participation in community governance.

A search strategy was developed that could identify the literature published in the past five years (2020–2024), which presented the use of a combination of the Boolean operators like “AND” and “OR” tailored to the specifications of the databases through the various phrases and the keywords:

1) Population: “urban ethnic minorities”, “marginalized communities”, “migrant populations”, “racial minorities”.

2) Concepts: “social networking”, “social inclusion”, “cultural identity”, “sociocultural background”, “minority representation”.

3) Context: “community governance”, “governance participation”, “local governance”, “policy decision-making”.

4) Participation: “participation”, “engagement”, “inclusion”, “collaboration”, “stakeholder involvement”.

These keywords were systematically applied during the literature search process by including them across the three databases in order to maintain consistency and relevance in the selection

of literature. For each search, the Boolean operators were used, such as:

(“urban ethnic minorities” OR “marginalized communities” OR “migrant populations” OR “racial minorities”) AND (“social networking” OR “digital platforms” OR “community networks” OR “cultural identity” OR “minority representation”) AND (“community governance” OR “participatory governance” OR “local governance” OR “policy-making” OR “decision-making”) AND (“participate*” OR “engage*” OR “involve*” OR “inclusion” OR “collaborate*”)

To comply with the screening requirements, search limiters were employed; every search was conducted against the themes and abstracts of articles.

Table 1. Search parameters and initial results

Search terms	Database	Search limiters	Hits
(“urban ethnic minorities” OR “marginalized communities” OR “migrant populations” OR “racial minorities”) AND (“social networking” OR “digital platforms” OR “community networks” OR “cultural identity” OR “minority representation”) AND (“community governance” OR “participatory governance” OR “local governance” OR “policy-making” OR “decision-making”) AND (“participate*” OR “engage*” OR “involve*” OR “inclusion” OR “collaborate*”)	Scopus	Scholarly journals	326
	WoS	Scholarly journals	422
	Google Scholar	Scholarly journals	986
	Total	Total with duplications removed	1734

3.3. Screening

The selection process in this study is based on the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, which included the identification of all the relevant research materials from the three selected databases spread across various journals and publications, which were studied to remove duplicates. The process was performed manually by studying the abstracts of the identified articles to study their research objectives, the methodologies they undertake, and their findings in the context of this current research. These articles were screened further for their eligibility. Studies were selected through a multi-stage PRISMA screening process involving database searches, duplicate removal, title and abstract screening, full-text eligibility assessment, and final inclusion based on predefined criteria relating to ethnic minority participation in community governance.

Based on the criteria outlined in Table 2, duplicate articles across the databases were identified and removed using Zotero, resulting in 1,236 unique entries. Following this initial screening, the results were refined by restricting them based on document type and language, resulting in a total of 42 retained articles. Further restrictions were

applied based on the publication date of the articles, ultimately narrowing down the selection to 31 articles published between 2020 and 2024. These articles formed the dataset for subsequent analysis and synthesis. To ensure replicability, the complete search syntax, inclusion/exclusion criteria, date of last search, and database parameters were documented in detail so that future researchers can reproduce the same set of studies under identical conditions.

3.4. Eligibility

For articles to be included in this review, inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied (see Table 2). Studies needed to be peer-reviewed and published in academic journals, delivered in the English language. Additionally, the studies needed to address topics related to community governance at the social level. This process involved an initial review of the title and abstract to ensure relevance. Entries were screened based on the following criteria:

- 1) focus on ethnic minority participation in community governance;
- 2) address factors influencing participation, including social networking, cultural identity, or stakeholder involvement.

Table 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
Peer-reviewed journal articles	Conference proceedings, book chapters, etc.
October 2020 to October 2024	Before October 2020 and after October 2024
Written in English	Written in other languages
Social and participatory governance	Governance not related to social or community aspects (e.g., forest governance, corporate governance)
Community-based governance, local governance	Non-physical community governance
Ethnic minority	Studies focusing solely on migrants without cultural or ethnic identity relevance

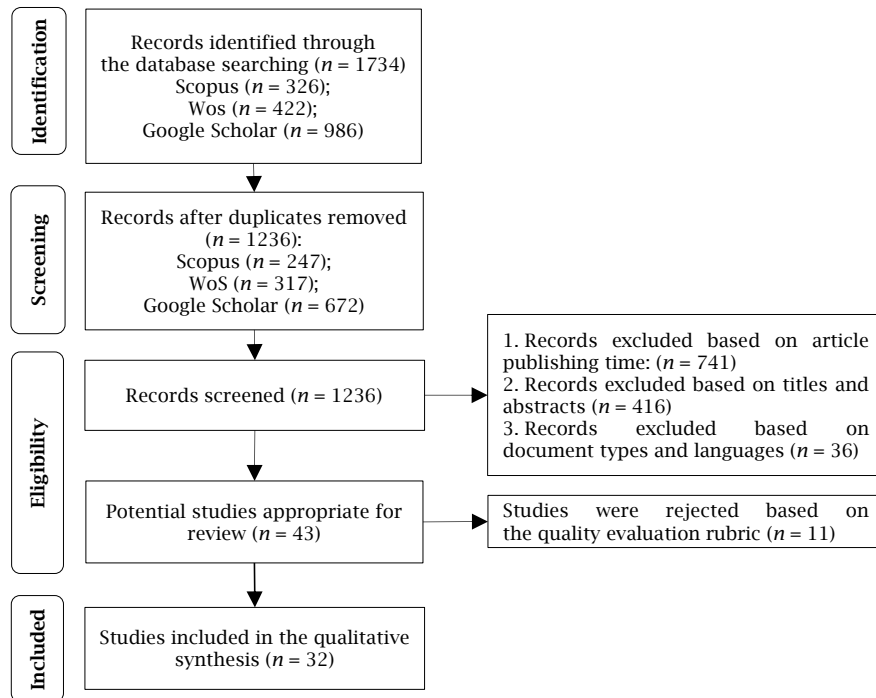
The exclusion criteria include any research that is before 2020, does not have the full text available online, is not written in English, lacks editorial and peer review criteria, and is a duplicate of existing

studies or is descriptive of any phenomena and lacks recognition of the problems and presenting focused solutions. This led to the exclusion of a total of 1193 sources, including 741 records excluded

based on article published time, 416 records excluded based on titles and abstracts, and 36 records excluded based on document types and language (see Figure 1). Out of the 43 articles

identified as relevant during the screening phase, 32 met the quality requirements and were included in the final analysis, while 11 were excluded for not meeting the minimum criteria.

Figure 1. Article selection flow diagram following the PRISMA framework 2020



3.5. Data analytic strategy

For the analysis of the data, the content analysis approach is considered suitable for the qualitative nature of the study, which is commonly used in qualitative research to interpret and structure textual data (Strijbos et al., 2006). This approach was considered suitable given the qualitative nature of the current study and its emphasis on understanding ethnic minority participation in community governance through social, cultural, and contextual lenses rather than presenting only numerical data that lacks any identification of the experiences of the people. Along with that, this approach also helped to identify the contextual differences in noting how each study is unique despite addressing the same subject, and how these selected studies present a significant amount of convergence and divergence within the literature. This also helped in identifying the gaps in the literature, which formed the basis for this current study.

Additionally, Microsoft Excel was used to create tables, systematically organizing key information from the selected articles. The tables included data such as article titles, authors, publication years, primary research objectives, participants, research methods, major findings, and recommendations for future research. Additionally, in alignment with the research questions, information related to factors influencing participation, stakeholder engagement, and challenges faced by ethnic minorities was also recorded.

4. RESULTS

4.1. General characteristics of literature on ethnic minority participation in community governance

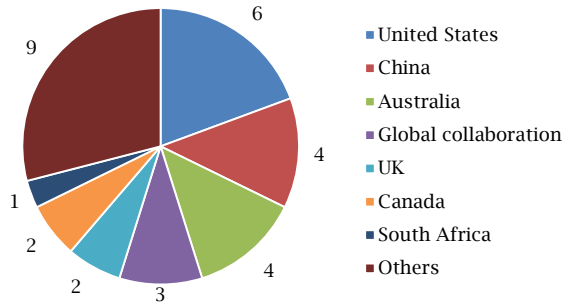
Several interesting trends were noticed after analyzing the 31 retained articles. Studies published between 2020 and 2024 were analyzed, reflecting an increasing scholarly interest in the influence of ethnic minority participation in governance processes. The datasets reveal a general characteristic of the studies on ethnic minority participation in community governance, including geographical distribution, research methods, sample sizes, and thematic focus areas. The findings provide insights into the current academic landscape and highlight key trends in the study of ethnic minority participation in community governance.

4.1.1. Country-wise distribution of studies

The studies were primarily conducted in developed countries, reflecting the availability of digital technologies, robust research funding, and proactive governance models. The United States led the research focus (six studies, 18.75%), emphasizing digital inclusion and the role of social media in enhancing minority participation. China and Australia (four studies, 12.5% each) contributed significantly with studies on participatory urban governance and the challenges of digital inequalities. Other notable contributions came from the UK, Canada, South Africa, and globally oriented studies.

These geographical trends suggest that the focus on digital and participatory governance is more pronounced in regions with developed infrastructure and proactive governance mechanisms (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. The number of studies in different countries



4.1.2. Distribution of data collection tools

The studies employed a variety of data collection methods, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the topic. Systematic reviews were the most frequently used method (22.58%), indicating an emphasis on synthesizing existing knowledge. Empirical methods, such as surveys (19.35%) and case studies (19.35%), were also prevalent, demonstrating the importance of both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Regarding the methods used in the studies, 15 (46.88%) employed qualitative methods, 10 (31.25%) used quantitative methods, and six (19.35%) utilized

mixed-method approaches to analyze the collected data. Mixed-method research provides an understanding of the complex factors that influence the participation of minority members through the integration of qualitative and quantitative modes, such as qualitative interviews and quantitative factors, to analyze public participation and content moderation online. The SLR approach was the most frequently used in 22.58% (seven studies), emphasizing the synthesis of diverse literature to identify common themes (Crosweiler & Tschakert, 2021; Matamoros-Fernández & Farkas, 2021). Further, in studies that focused on governance, public trust, and social media engagement, 19.35% used questionnaires and surveys (Chen et al., 2020; Mansoor, 2021; Jiang & Ngien, 2020).

These surveys helped collect empirical data on trust levels, citizenship perceptions, and participation outcomes. Case studies were also a significant component, reflected in 19.35% (six studies), which presented a context-specific, in-depth analysis of participatory governance mechanisms, urban regeneration, and digital exclusion (Li et al., 2020; Geekiyanage et al., 2020). Additionally, 9.68% (three studies) performed interviews (Craig et al., 2021; Seale et al., 2023), and 19.35% (six studies) included mixed-method research (Nkombi & Wentink, 2022; Haimson et al., 2021) and other methods in 9.68% (three studies). This includes the evaluation of digital inequalities among Indigenous Australians through policy documents and interviews (Walker et al., 2021). This highlights the emphasis on synthesizing diverse literature to identify the opportunities and challenges in the governance process.

Table 3. Distribution of data collection tools

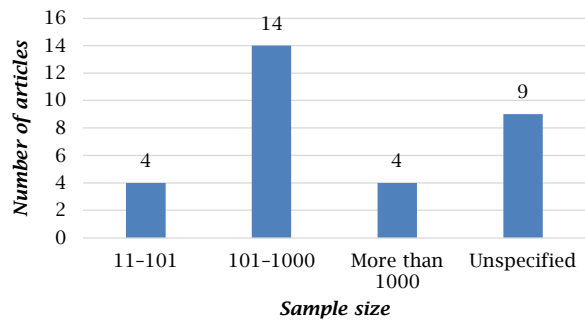
Data collection tool	f	%	Sample studies
Document analysis	7	22.58	Crosweiler and Tschakert (2021)
Surveys and questionnaires	6	19.35	Chen et al. (2020)
Case studies	6	19.35	Geekiyanage et al. (2020)
Interviews	3	9.68	Seale et al. (2023)
Mixed and other methods	9	29.03	Nkombi and Wentink (2022)

The studies exhibited diverse sample sizes, reflecting varied research objectives and methodologies. Medium-sized sample groups (101-1000 participants) were the most common (14 studies, 45.16%), often used in survey-based research on governance participation and public trust (Chen et al., 2020; Mansoor, 2021).

Small sample studies (11-100 participants) accounted for four studies (12.9%), typically utilized in qualitative research to gather in-depth insights (Craig et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2021). Additionally, large-scale studies (four studies, 12.9%) included datasets exceeding 1000 participants, such as Turner et al. (2022), which analyzed data from over 20,000 clinical trials on minority representation.

A notable proportion (nine studies, 29.03%) did not specify sample sizes due to their qualitative or systematic review nature (Matamoros-Fernández & Farkas, 2021; Vince et al., 2024). The diverse sample size distribution highlights a balance between empirical data collection and literature-based synthesis.

Figure 3. Distribution of sample size



4.1.3. Research themes on ethnic minority participation in community governance

Data analysis reveals that over the past five years (2020-2024), research on ethnic minority participation in community governance has primarily focused on five key themes (see Table 4).

1. *Digital inclusion and social networking:* Studies within this theme investigate how digital platforms either promote or hinder ethnic minority engagement. For example, Craig et al. (2021) found that social media positively influenced LGBTQ+ youth by providing educational resources and emotional support, while Haimson et al. (2021) noted challenges in content moderation affecting marginalized users. Walker et al. (2021) emphasized the digital divide and its role in limiting Indigenous Australians' access to community resources.

2. *Collaborative and participatory governance:* This theme focuses on incorporating minority voices into governance decisions. Li et al. (2020) studied collaborative participation in urban development in China, demonstrating the achievements of community public affairs consultative governance in urban communities under the leadership of the Communist Party of China through top-down and bottom-up approaches. Further, Geekiyanage et al. (2020) studied community-driven participation, while Vince et al. (2024) integrated policies on community development and public participation to promote inclusive governance.

3. *Social media, public engagement, and mistrust:* Studies such as Mansoor (2021) note the implications of trust and its lack thereof on the governance outcomes through digital communication, noting that it increases with information transparency. Seale et al. (2023) noted

the communication barriers and mistrust among ethnic minorities during the COVID pandemic that heightened the issues of vaccine hesitancy.

4. *Urban development and revitalization:* Research in this area focuses on community participation in urban planning, housing policies, and community revitalization. Li et al. (2020) demonstrated the success of participatory residents' congresses in engaging urban community residents in community improvement, while Geekiyanage et al. (2021) systematically reviewed the use of participatory governance methods to develop effective urban planning strategies.

5. *Policy influence on minority representation:* It studied the role of ethnic minority representation. Studies such as Turner et al. (2022) noted the influence of the under-representation of racial minorities in clinical trials, while Matamoros-Fernández and Farkas (2021) noted the lack of diversity in research on online hate speech against minority communities, citing its need for more reflective research. Reed et al. (2020) noted the role of the Indigenous Guardian Program in strengthening environmental governance by empowering the local communities.

These research themes reflect a growing awareness of the critical role ethnic minorities play in shaping governance processes, as well as the barriers they face due to digital exclusion, social mistrust, and under-representation.

Table 4. Distribution of research focus

Research topic	f	Percentage (%)	Sample studies
Digital inclusion and social networking	10	21.88	Haimson et al. (2021)
Collaborative and participatory governance	8	18.75	Geekiyanage et al. (2020)
Social media, mistrust, and public engagement	7	18.75	Seale et al. (2023)
Urban development and regeneration	7	9.38	Li et al. (2020)
Minority representation and policy influence	7	18.75	Turner et al. (2022)

The reviewed literature shows that most studies focus on developed countries, with limited attention to urban ethnic minority participation in developing contexts. Qualitative methods dominate, while large-scale quantitative and comparative studies remain scarce. Furthermore, while much attention has been given to cultural integration and identity, fewer studies systematically examine the role of digital inclusion, trust-building, or collaborative governance mechanisms. These gaps indicate a need for more focus on diverse geography, methodological pluralism, and deeper exploration of emerging factors, particularly in rapidly urbanizing cities in non-Western and developing regions such as China.

4.2. Factors influencing ethnic minority participation in community governance

According to the research on ethnic minority participation in community governance over the past five years, this review identified the critical factors influencing participation. These factors can be categorized into five themes (Table 5), highlighting barriers and opportunities affecting participation and representation in decision-making processes.

4.2.1. Representation and inclusion in governance

The findings highlight barriers ethnic minorities face, such as insufficient social capital, a lack of culturally inclusive participation frameworks, and bias in policy decision-making, resource allocation, and participation in citizen interest expression meetings. The SLR identified that Turner et al. (2022) reported on European clinical trials to find the under-representation of almost 43% of ethnic minority residents, while Kelsey et al. (2022) highlighted the notions of inclusion and representation of the ethnic minorities, which developed targeted strategies to increase the diversity of ethnic groups in the clinical trial samples. Studies by Tormos-Aponte (2021) and Zurba and Papadopoulos (2023) identified that social barriers hinder Indigenous participation in policy decisions on community environmental sustainability. This emphasizes improving outreach and cultural responsiveness to maintain fair representation.

4.2.2. Marginalized inclusion in social communication

Social networking and communication are also identified as tools for improving the experiences of the people by promoting their representation and inclusion in the governance processes. Studies such

as Craig et al. (2021) presented a detailed study on the use of social media by marginalized communities such as LGBTQ+ youth members. The study identifies the positive impact of social networking in this context, noting how it promotes the accessibility of educational and other community-specific resources as well as positively influences the emotional support for these members.

However, other studies have also found negative effects of communicating through social media. Haimson et al. (2021) emphasized that bias in social media content moderation disproportionately harms marginalized groups and limits their ability to enhance social capital through social media. Matamoros-Fernández and Farkas (2021) further revealed that social media software may be restricted by the Internet safety policies and Internet use strategies of various countries when used, resulting in a lack of geographical and theoretical diversity in the research samples obtained through social media for racial difference research.

4.2.3. Community engagement in crisis management

Crisis management situations present both challenges and opportunities for community engagement. Seale et al. (2023) and Ryan et al. (2020) identified the issues of community engagement in crisis due to mistrust of and ineffective government communication, which hindered cultural responsiveness and communication of residents during COVID-19. For example, Hussain et al. (2022) identified how mistrust affected vaccine intake among ethnic minorities, exacerbating health risks.

Some studies suggest that ethnic minority communities may not be singled out in formal crisis response plans due to communication barriers and a lack of trust in the government. Geekiyanage et al. (2021) note that community members are often simply informed of policies and developments rather than actively involved in decision-making. In contrast, Li et al. (2020) note that China has improved urban community living environments through top-down policy, financial and human resource support, and bottom-up multi-stakeholder collaborative participation. These studies revealed the challenges and advantages of including ethnic minority groups in community participation and identified barriers to such participation.

4.2.4. Trust and transparency in governance

The trust in governance structures also influences minority participation. Chen et al. (2020) noted that excessive use of social media could reduce

community trust without clear communication frameworks, while Mansoor (2021) emphasized transparency by the governing agencies. This was noted by McNaught (2024), who accounts for collaborative participation in building trust, while Vince et al. (2024) and Alenzi and Mikson (2024) highlighted collaboration and transparency in digital governance. These studies presented a comprehension of the existing practices of participation and inclusion of ethnic minority groups in community governance and the use of social media in stimulating these approaches further to emphasize shared responsibilities to bridge the gap in inclusive participation.

4.2.5. Cultural and linguistic barriers

Research shows that communication strategies not consider cultural differences or linguistic diversity often exclude minorities, limiting and reducing their representation in the community. Hussain et al. (2022) and Zhang et al. (2023) found that relying on a one-size-fits-all communication model often fails to attract residents of linguistically diverse communities to actively participate in collective activities organized by the community, especially in health-related governance during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Therefore, refinement in the language adaptation and communication strategies within the multicultural context of healthcare governance can ensure better responses to minority acceptance of community policy. Seale et al. (2023) noted the specific contextual information that added value to the community values and experiences. Zhang et al. (2023) also focused on language barriers that note other exclusions, such as socioeconomic status, to create minority disadvantages. For example, immigrant communities are often excluded not only because of language but also because of limited access to public services and a lack of understanding of governance mechanisms.

These overlapping barriers hinder their ability to participate in decision-making. Walker et al. (2021) and Reed et al. (2020) argue that including minority community leaders in communications efforts can help address these barriers by creating feedback channels and co-creating culturally relevant outreach. The participation of trusted minority elites and social organization group leaders living in the community can enhance the credibility of government information and ensure that the needs of minority groups are reflected in the feedback from the community's bottom-up consultation meetings.

Table 5. Factors influencing ethnic minority participation

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Key factors and barriers</i>	<i>Sample studies</i>
Representation and inclusion in governance	Systemic exclusion, inadequate outreach, lack of culturally inclusive frameworks	Turner et al. (2022), Kelsey et al. (2022), Tormos-Aponte (2021), Zurba and Papadopoulos (2023)
Marginalized inclusion in social communication	Bias in content moderation, social media-induced anxiety, and a lack of online representation	Craig et al. (2021), Haimson et al. (2021), Matamoros-Fernández and Farkas (2021)
Community engagement in crisis management	Mistrust in public authorities, ineffective communication, and a lack of early involvement in crisis planning	Seale et al. (2023), Ryan et al. (2020), Hussain et al. (2022), Li et al. (2020)
Trust and transparency in governance	Limited trust due to poor communication, lack of transparency, and unequal digital access	Mansoor (2021), Chen et al. (2020), Zuckerman and Rajendra-Nicolucci (2023), Reed et al. (2020), McNaught (2024)
Cultural and linguistic barriers	Limited access to linguistically and culturally appropriate communication; ineffective top-down outreach.	Hussain et al. (2022), Zhang et al. (2023), Seale et al. (2023), Nkombi and Wentink (2022), Alenzi and Miskon (2024)

These themes together emphasize that formal participation can give public participation opportunities, but the lack of transparent communication, cultural adaptation, and inclusive digital space can lead to under-representation and hinder the effective participation of minority groups in community governance.

5. DISCUSSION

Previous research findings revealed multiple factors influencing ethnic minority participation in community governance, including digital inclusion, social networks, cultural identity, and trust in governance structures. A more in-depth evaluation of the existing literature is needed to review the research gaps in the previous literature and make practical recommendations.

5.1. Representation and inclusion: Moving beyond tokenism

The SLR indicates that social media is dominant in promoting community engagement and networked participation of ethnic minority members in community governance. It highlights recurring themes of trust and communication regarding policy developments by policymakers in the context of inclusion and representation of minority members, which demands open communication through mutual participation of both the governing leaders and policymakers, as well as the ethnic members. Moreover, social media influences other factors, such as the development of trust among the ethnic members in the community leaders and governing institutions, transparency of policy-related information about changes and policies, and the overall willingness of ethnic minority members to participate in governance processes. Owing to its widespread global reach, social media platforms provide ethnic communities with accessible forums to voice their concerns on key aspects of community governance — such as healthcare and education.

This is found in studies such as Turner et al. (2022), which identified the inclusion of racial and ethnic minority communities in clinical trials in Europe. Similarly, Tormos-Aponte (2021) and Zurba and Papadopoulos (2023) observed that ethnic communities in regions such as Australia often face challenges expressing their concerns about environmental sustainability, primarily due to various sociocultural barriers. In this regard, Walker et al. (2021) argue that such barriers frequently stem from the lack of proper accessibility to the Internet and digital communication, leading to digital inequality and, accordingly, an inequality in their participation in community governance processes.

Taken together, these insights position social media as a critical tool for enhancing the social and political visibility of ethnic minority communities. Accordingly, this leads the paper to identify how networked communication, mutual interaction, and engagement in public discourses, such as policy development and governance practices, help the participation of ethnic minority members in community governance.

5.2. Social media: A double-edged sword for participation

The participation of the urban ethnic minority members in community governance is influenced significantly by various factors, including their inclusion, representation, and visibility in the governance models, as well as their lack of recognition in public communication spaces such as social media. The lack of social media communication leads to various forms of discrimination against minority members, such as in the fields of education, entertainment, recognition of their LGBTQ+ identities, and others (Craig et al., 2021). This leads to other factors, such as mistrust of the government and lack of awareness of the developing policies. Consequently, such mistrust causes a lack of emotional support that usually emerges from the community bondings and engagement created through social media communication.

The reason for such mistrust and emotional dissonance is that the platforms enable minorities to share experiences, express opinions, and engage in public discourse on issues affecting their communities, which the removal or the lack of availability of networked communication can restrict. These other factors include issues such as the development of mistrust of the people due to a lack of communication and transparency by the governing bodies that do not engage with these members and identify their concerns during policy development (Geekiyange et al., 2020; Hussain et al., 2022). Walker et al. (2021) associated this notion with the lack of internet facilities and accessibility of communication sources by ethnic minority groups, such as the Australian Indigenous members, which restricts them from community participation in governance by restraining their expression of values, opinions, and experiences.

5.3. Crisis management: From reactive to proactive engagement

Crises such as sudden pandemics and natural calamities often expose the limitations of reactive governance models. Seale et al. (2023) and Ryan et al. (2020) found that insufficient government-public communication during emergencies exacerbates public distrust and limits community engagement, particularly among immigrant populations. Similarly, Hussain et al. (2022) highlight that politically tailored social media strategies, such as campaign promotions, can effectively address emerging social concerns in crisis, including the rise of vaccine hesitancy in the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In line with these findings, Zuckerman and Rajendra-Nicolucci (2023) advocate for a shift toward a governance model emphasizing the democratization of social media to facilitate public participation in policy development, implementation, and communication. Such use of social media has the potential to influence the participation of not just people in general but also of those people who might often be marginalized within the community, as the democratic space of social media can help them to engage more in their understanding of the policies and aid in the effective governance of the community through an inclusive approach.

To that end, the representation of these minority groups in the political system through social media is an important study area for the research.

5.4. Trust and transparency: Necessity for inclusive decision-making

Several researchers have highlighted the issue of public trust in government. For instance, Chen et al. (2020) noted the hindrances caused by the Chinese government's excessive use of social media on community engagement. Mansoor (2021) emphasized the role of information-sharing, communication, and inclusion in building people's trust. Zuckerman and Rajendra-Nicolucci (2023) also identified models to further the community's participation.

In addition, Reed et al. (2020) identify the success of the participation of Indigenous members in environmental governance, while McNaught (2024) and Crosweiler and Tschakert (2021) emphasize the improvement of shared responsibility through collaborative governance of climate and disaster. In all these cases, social media communication has emerged as the primary motif that influences the communication of the ethnic minority members in the governing approaches, such as that in China, as well as the participation of the Indigenous members in environmental governance, noted by Reed et al. (2020). These findings collectively support the notion that the idea of shared responsibility as social media communication can improve community engagement of the ethnic members through a collaborative effort that can be made possible through the public recognition of the minority voices by the governing bodies and the inclusion of these members in the governance process.

This, in turn, contributes to the development of trust among these community members in the governing bodies and helps them to publicly share their concerns and rely on the policy changes and protocols that the governments introduce in various domains of community governance. However, digital inequality remains a barrier. Walker et al. (2021) identify the digital inequalities towards Australian Indigenous members due to limited access to the internet. Sun et al. (2024) note that access to digital communication improved community participation in governance, making a shift to the globalized perspective in city governance. Alenzi and Miskon (2024) and Vince et al. (2024) emphasized transparency and collaboration in promoting people's participation in digital governance.

These studies presented a comprehensive view of the existing practices of inclusion and participation of ethnic minority groups in community governance and how social media can stimulate it further. As such, the current research is grounded in a deductive analysis of this body of literature, aiming to bridge the gap between these studies and note the role of social media in promoting the inclusion of urban ethnic minorities in community governance.

5.5. Cultural and linguistic barriers: Toward contextualized solutions

Cultural identity and language barriers are persistent barriers to minority participation.

However, many current policies, documents, and practical implementation efforts on community governance still rely on top-down communication strategies that fail to consider cross-cutting barriers. For example, programs designed to address language barriers with minority residents often ignore the distrust of government agencies caused by differences in ethnic living habits, employment discrimination, and economic difficulties.

Policymakers should implement comprehensive communication strategies beyond relying on minority language translation to ensure that information is relevant and appropriate to the context, which also requires policymakers and implementers to incorporate emotional governance needs in the relevant community governance practices. Future research and policy interventions should address the overlapping barriers that arise from the interaction of linguistic challenges, socioeconomic conditions, and historical exclusion.

6. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify the factors that influence the participation of ethnic minority members in community governance, and the recommendations for policy changes and the establishment of processes that drive the inclusion and representation of these members in the governing process.

This study conducted an SLR of 32 studies in the selected topic area over the past five years. Guided by the PRISMA eligibility review and inclusion and exclusion research framework, this study systematically reviewed the general characteristics of research on ethnic minority participation in community governance and multiple interrelated factors of ethnic minority participation in community governance, including representation and inclusion, social media, crisis management, trust and transparency, and cultural and language barriers.

This study found that the representation and inclusion of ethnic minorities in decision-making bodies are hindered by symbolic participation and a lack of substantive decision-making participation. This addressed the first research question, noting the key themes emerging in the discourse of the participation of the members in community governance. Accordingly, it found that there is still a gap in theory and practice in achieving sustained and meaningful participation of ethnic minority groups in community governance. Therefore, structural changes are crucial, such as empowering residents to actively participate in community-led residents' committees, community livelihood deliberations, and other institutions. These identify the factors that influence the participation and focus on consultative governance to express residents' interests and rights and enhance the sense of ownership and citizenship of ethnic minorities in community governance.

In addition, this study also found that in the field of social communication, social media is both a tool for empowerment and a source of exclusion due to bias in content review. However, it is precisely because of the dual nature of social media that it can be identified as a potential tool to promote the participation and integration of urban ethnic minority members into the community

governance process and be included in the framework of understanding and strengthening ethnic minority participation in governance. By combining the public opinion supervision mechanism of social media with offline substantive participation, the symbolic representation of ethnic minority groups in community governance practices and decision-making can be alleviated, making up for the lack of trust established by over-reliance on formal communication channels in the past.

Accordingly, the study addressed the two research questions and also emphasized the need for policymakers to adopt flexible and localized strategies for the diverse needs of ethnic minority communities. Future research should focus on the long-term effectiveness evaluation of the participation model, focusing not only on the realization of residents' interests in the process of community governance but also on the effective interaction and governance effects of various stakeholders in community governance, integrating community opinions at each stage of the policy process, and making community governance more inclusive, fair, effective and sustainable.

The current study is limited in its methodological approach in conducting an SLR,

which provides data and evaluation of the existing research done on the inclusion of minority members in community governance. To that end, the research is also limited in its scope of identifying the nuances of the exclusion factors that lead to the lack of participation by these people. To that end, it is important to remove these limitations in future research that can be more inclusive of other factors and the nuances that lead to such a lack of participation of the people in community governance.

To that end, future studies can build on this study to integrate other approaches, such as empirical analysis of the findings of the literature through quantitative meta-analysis if future research undertakes the SLR approach. Further, other methods such as surveys, interviews, and case studies can also be conducted to gauge the experiences of the participants to directly note their observations, which can allow the identification of other sources of study, such as the grey literature. To that end, future research can also narrow down the scope of the research by focusing on the geographical regions separately or addressing the experiences of the people within a country and its governance.

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