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Collaborative Governance in the Digital Era: Public-Private Partnerships for Improving Government Service Innovation

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Collaborative Governance in the Digital Era: Public-Private Partnerships for Improving Government Service Innovation by analyzing how cross-sector collaboration strengthens digital public service delivery. The purpose of the research is to explain the role of collaborative governance in structuring public-private partnerships, identifying enabling and constraining factors, and assessing their contribution to innovation, accountability, and public value. This study uses a qualitative method with a case study design because the phenomenon involves institutional interaction, actor interpretation, trust-building, and governance processes that require contextual and in-depth analysis. The research was conducted in Jakarta, Indonesia, selected for its advanced digital public service ecosystem and active involvement of government agencies and private technology partners. Data were obtained from twelve purposively selected informants representing government institutions, private technology providers, civil society, academia, and citizen users, because they possess direct knowledge of digital partnership practices. The findings show that digital service innovation is successful when partnerships are supported by shared goals, facilitative leadership, role clarity, data governance, interoperability, and citizen-oriented evaluation. The study recommends strengthening institutional coordination, public digital capacity, transparent partnership rules, and accountability mechanisms to ensure that digital innovation produces inclusive and sustainable public value.

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INTRODUCTION

Collaborative governance has become an increasingly important approach in public administration, particularly as governments face complex social, technological, and institutional challenges that cannot be solved by public institutions alone (Yusoff & Zulkipli, 2025). In the digital era, the demand for faster, more transparent, inclusive, and citizen-oriented public services has pushed governments to rethink traditional bureaucratic models. Conventional public service delivery, which often relies on hierarchical procedures and limited institutional resources, is no longer sufficient to respond to the dynamic expectations of citizens, businesses, and civil society (Edobor & Ajisebiyawo, 2025). Digital transformation has created new opportunities for governments to improve service innovation through data-driven decision-making, online platforms, artificial intelligence, cloud-based systems, and integrated service portals (Stativka & Orel, 2024). However, digital transformation also requires technical expertise, infrastructure, financial investment, and adaptive organizational capacity that are not always available within the public sector. As a result, collaboration between government and non-government actors, especially private sector organizations, has become a strategic necessity for improving the quality and innovation of public services.

The concept of public-private partnership in public administration is not new, yet its relevance has expanded significantly in the context of digital governance (Huron, 2025). In earlier stages, public-private partnerships were commonly associated with infrastructure development, outsourcing, procurement, or service contracting. Today, however, partnerships between public and private actors increasingly involve co-designing digital platforms, developing smart city systems, managing public data ecosystems, improving digital identity services, and enhancing citizen engagement mechanisms (Manganye & Dagada, 2025). This shift indicates that public-private partnerships are no longer merely instruments for sharing costs or risks, but have become institutional mechanisms for knowledge exchange, technological innovation, and collaborative problem-solving. Within this context, collaborative governance provides a useful analytical framework because it emphasizes shared decision-making, mutual trust, institutional coordination, stakeholder participation, and collective accountability among actors who have different interests, resources, and authority (Byra, 2025).

Despite the growing importance of collaborative governance in digital public service innovation, many governments still encounter difficulties in building effective public-private collaboration. One of the main problems is the tension between public values and private sector interests (Özer, 2025). While governments are expected to ensure equity, transparency, accountability, and universal access, private companies often operate based on efficiency, profitability, technological advantage, and market competition. This difference can create challenges in aligning goals, distributing responsibilities, protecting public data, and ensuring that digital services remain inclusive and accountable. Moreover, digital public-private partnerships may produce new risks, including dependency on private technology providers, unequal access to digital infrastructure, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, algorithmic bias, and weak public oversight (Setyawan, 2024). Therefore, the central issue is not only whether public-private partnerships can improve government service innovation, but also how collaborative governance can ensure that such partnerships generate public value rather than merely technological efficiency.

The state of the art in public administration research shows that many studies have examined collaborative governance, digital government, and public-private partnerships as separate areas of inquiry. Studies on collaborative governance often focus on institutional design, leadership, trust-building, stakeholder engagement, and network management (Cropf & Wagner, 2023a). Research on digital government tends to emphasize e-government adoption, digital transformation strategies, smart governance, open data, and citizen-centered services. Meanwhile, literature on public-private partnerships frequently discusses contractual arrangements, infrastructure financing, risk allocation, and performance management. Although these bodies of literature have contributed significantly to the development of public administration theory, there remains limited integration among them. In particular, fewer studies have systematically explained how collaborative governance mechanisms operate within digital-era public-private partnerships to produce service innovation in government. This indicates a need for a more integrated perspective that connects governance collaboration, digital transformation, and innovation outcomes.

The main research problem addressed in this study concerns the limited understanding of how public-private partnerships, when governed collaboratively, can improve government service innovation in the digital era. While many governments have adopted digital technologies and engaged private actors in service delivery, the outcomes of these partnerships vary widely. Some partnerships successfully produce integrated, accessible, and responsive services, while others result in fragmented systems, weak coordination, limited citizen participation, and concerns over accountability. This variation suggests that technology alone does not guarantee innovation (Boeger, 2024). Similarly, the presence of private sector involvement does not automatically improve public service performance. What matters is the governance arrangement through which actors interact, negotiate, share resources, manage conflicts, and maintain accountability. Therefore, this study places collaborative governance at the center of analysis to understand how public-private partnerships can be structured and managed to support meaningful government service innovation.

The research gap lies in the insufficient explanation of the relational and institutional mechanisms that connect public-private partnerships with digital public service innovation. Previous studies have often treated digital innovation as a technical outcome or public-private partnership as an administrative arrangement. However, fewer studies have examined the collaborative processes that enable or constrain innovation, such as trust formation, joint decision-making, resource integration, regulatory adaptation, digital capacity-building, and accountability mechanisms (Cepiku et al., 2024). In addition, many existing studies focus on developed country contexts where institutional capacity, digital infrastructure, and regulatory frameworks are relatively mature. There is still a need to examine collaborative governance in contexts where bureaucratic fragmentation, digital inequality, limited resources, and institutional distrust may shape the effectiveness of public-private partnerships. This gap is important because digital service innovation is not merely a technological transformation, but also an institutional and governance transformation.

The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to develop an integrated understanding of collaborative governance in digital-era public-private partnerships by linking governance processes with government service innovation. Rather than viewing public-private partnerships only as contractual or financial instruments, this study conceptualizes them as collaborative governance arenas where public and private actors jointly create, implement, and evaluate digital service innovation. The study offers a more comprehensive perspective by examining how trust, shared goals, institutional design, technological capability, public accountability, and citizen value influence the success of digital public service innovation (Karim, 2023). This perspective contributes to public administration scholarship by extending the discussion of collaborative governance into the digital transformation agenda and by showing how public-private collaboration can be designed to protect public values while encouraging innovation.

Based on this background, the study is guided by the following research questions: How does collaborative governance shape public-private partnerships in the digital era? What are the main factors that enable or constrain public-private partnerships in improving government service innovation? How do public and private actors coordinate resources, responsibilities, and accountability in digital public service innovation? To what extent can collaborative governance ensure that digital public-private partnerships produce public value, inclusiveness, transparency, and service quality? These questions are important because they address both theoretical and practical concerns in contemporary public administration. They also provide a foundation for analyzing not only the outcomes of digital service innovation, but also the governance processes behind those outcomes.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of collaborative governance in strengthening public-private partnerships for improving government service innovation in the digital era. Specifically, this study aims to explain how collaborative mechanisms are developed among government institutions, private technology providers, and other relevant stakeholders in the process of digital service innovation. It also seeks to identify the institutional, technological, and relational factors that influence the success or failure of such partnerships. Furthermore, this study aims to assess how collaborative governance can balance innovation, efficiency, accountability, and public value in digital public service delivery. By doing so, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how governments can move beyond technology adoption toward more inclusive and sustainable digital governance.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of collaborative governance theory by situating it within the context of digital transformation and public service innovation. It enriches the literature by demonstrating that collaboration in the digital era requires not only institutional coordination, but also data governance, technological interoperability, adaptive regulation, and shared innovation capacity (Kundu, 2023). Academically, this research provides a conceptual foundation for future studies on digital governance, public-private partnerships, and public sector innovation. It can support scholars in developing more integrated analytical models that connect governance arrangements with innovation outcomes. Practically, the study offers insights for policymakers, public managers, and private sector partners in designing more effective, accountable, and citizen-oriented digital partnerships. It may help governments formulate partnership strategies, improve stakeholder coordination, strengthen digital capacity, and establish safeguards for transparency, privacy, and public accountability.

This study also recognizes several limitations. First, the analysis may be shaped by the institutional and regulatory context in which public-private partnerships are implemented, meaning that findings may not be universally generalizable across different administrative systems. Second, digital service innovation is a rapidly evolving field, and technological changes may influence the relevance of governance models over time. Third, the study may focus more on governance processes and institutional arrangements than on highly technical aspects of digital systems. These limitations open opportunities for future research. Subsequent studies may conduct comparative analysis across countries, sectors, or levels of government to examine how different institutional contexts influence collaborative digital innovation. Future research may also explore the role of artificial intelligence, data ethics, cybersecurity, and citizen participation in public-private digital partnerships. In addition, empirical studies using mixed methods may provide stronger evidence on how collaborative governance affects service quality, citizen satisfaction, trust in government, and long-term public value creation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on collaborative governance, public-private partnerships, and digital government provides a strong theoretical foundation for examining the topic "Collaborative Governance in the Digital Era: Public-Private Partnerships for Improving Government Service Innovation (Ferdous, 2025)." In contemporary public administration, government service innovation is no longer understood as an internal bureaucratic activity carried out only by state agencies. Instead, it is increasingly viewed as a multi-actor process involving government institutions, private technology providers, civil society organizations, citizens, and knowledge-based actors (Islam, 2023). Digital transformation has intensified this shift because governments often lack sufficient technological infrastructure, data capability, innovation culture, and financial resources to independently design and sustain advanced public service systems. Therefore, the literature suggests that innovation in public services requires collaborative arrangements that combine public authority, private expertise, digital infrastructure, and public accountability (Park, 2023).

The first theory used in this research is Collaborative Governance Theory, strongly popularized by Christopher K. Ansell and Alison Gash through their influential 2008 article, *Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice*, published in the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*. Christopher K. Ansell is Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley, United States, and his research focuses on public policy, public administration, governance, and organizational theory. Alison Gash is Professor of Political Science at the University of Oregon, United States, with scholarship related to collaborative governance and public policy. Their 2008 framework explains collaborative governance as a process in which public and private actors engage collectively in formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative decision-making to address public problems (M. Lazor, 2025). Their model emphasizes starting conditions, institutional design, facilitative leadership, face-to-face dialogue, trust-building, commitment to process, shared understanding, and intermediate outcomes. The theory is relevant to this study because digital public service innovation requires not only technological adoption but also trust, coordination, shared responsibility, and collective problem-solving among government and private-sector actors. Ansell and Gash also argue that collaboration can develop through "small wins" that deepen trust and strengthen commitment among stakeholders, which is highly relevant for digital service innovation projects that often evolve gradually rather than through one-time reform.

The second theory used in this research is Public-Private Partnership Theory, especially as critically developed by Stephen H. Linder in his 1999 article *Coming to Terms With the Public-Private Partnership: A Grammar of Multiple Meanings*. Stephen H. Linder is Professor in the Department of Management, Policy and Community Health and Director of the Institute for Health Policy at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, United States. Linder's work is important because he does not treat public-private partnership as a neutral administrative instrument. Instead, he explains that the term public-private partnership carries multiple meanings and may function as a policy tool, political symbol, governance arrangement, and institutional strategy (Kapesa & Marufu, 2025). His perspective helps researchers understand that partnerships are not merely technical contracts between government and business actors, but arrangements shaped by values, interests, power relations, risk allocation, and competing interpretations of public responsibility. In the context of digital government, this theory is important because public-private partnerships may improve service innovation through technology transfer, infrastructure provision, platform development, and managerial efficiency, yet they may also create risks such as vendor dependency, weak public control, data privacy problems, and unequal access to digital services (Uwingeneye & Akims, 2024). Therefore, Linder's theory supports the research problem by showing that the success of digital partnerships depends not only on the presence of private-sector participation but also on how the partnership is governed, interpreted, regulated, and aligned with public interest.

The third theory used in this research is Digital Government and Technology Enactment Theory, associated with Jane E. Fountain, particularly through her 2001 book *Building the Virtual State: Information Technology and Institutional Change*. Jane E. Fountain is Distinguished University Professor of Political Science and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, United States, and is also known as the founder and director of the National Center for Digital Government. Fountain's work argues that digital government cannot be understood merely as the use of information technology in administration. Rather, technology is enacted through institutional arrangements, organizational routines, political structures, and administrative cultures (Yulianti et al., 2025). This means that digital tools do not automatically transform government; their impact depends on how public organizations interpret, adopt, modify, and institutionalize them. Fountain's theory is directly connected to this research because public-private partnerships for service innovation often introduce new digital platforms, data systems, and online service mechanisms, but their effectiveness depends on institutional readiness, interoperability, leadership, regulation, and cross-sector coordination. Her view that the "virtual state" requires institutional change is central to understanding why many digital service innovations fail when governments adopt technology without reforming governance processes.

The development of these three theories shows an important movement in public administration scholarship. Collaborative Governance Theory emerged as a response to the limitation of hierarchical government and market-based reform (Dzhurova, 2024). It argues that complex public problems require deliberative, inclusive, and trust-based governance. Public-Private Partnership Theory developed from debates on privatization, contracting, infrastructure financing, and policy partnerships, but it has increasingly moved toward questions of accountability, public value, and governance capacity. Digital Government Theory developed from early e-government studies into broader debates on institutional transformation, platform governance, data governance, smart public services, artificial intelligence, and citizen-centered digital administration (Soyannwo & Ajisebiyawo, 2025). In current scholarship, these theories are increasingly interconnected. Collaborative governance explains how actors work together, public-private partnership theory explains why and how government and private actors share roles and resources, while digital government theory explains how technology reshapes public institutions and service delivery.

When connected to the main research problem, the three theories explain why public-private partnerships in the digital era often produce uneven results. From the perspective of Ansell and Gash, weak trust, poor facilitative leadership, unclear institutional design, and limited shared understanding may prevent collaboration from producing innovation (Stanisevski, 2024). From Linder's perspective, unclear meanings and conflicting expectations of partnership may create tension between public accountability and private interest (Witesman et al., 2023). From Fountain's perspective, digital technology may fail to improve services when institutional structures remain fragmented, bureaucratic, and resistant to change (Suk, 2024). These theoretical perspectives jointly explain that the main problem is not technology itself, but the governance arrangement through which technology, partnership, and public value are connected.

The research gap can also be explained through these theories. Existing studies often discuss collaborative governance, public-private partnerships, and digital government separately. Collaborative governance studies frequently emphasize trust and stakeholder engagement, but do not always examine digital platforms and technology providers. Public-private partnership studies often focus on contracts, financing, and risk, but less frequently analyze co-creation and digital service innovation (Barbera et al., 2025). Digital government studies often examine technology adoption, but sometimes overlook the political and relational dynamics of collaboration. This research addresses the gap by integrating these three perspectives into one analytical framework that explains how collaborative governance can structure public-private partnerships to improve digital public service innovation.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrated theoretical positioning. It does not view digital public service innovation as a purely technological output, nor does it view public-private partnership merely as an administrative contract. Instead, it conceptualizes digital service innovation as a collaborative governance outcome produced through institutional design, partnership alignment, technological enactment, shared accountability, and public value orientation (Prianti, 2025). This novelty is important because governments increasingly rely on private digital actors, yet public administration theory must explain how such reliance can remain democratic, transparent, inclusive, and accountable.

Based on these theories, the research questions can be formulated around how collaborative governance shapes public-private partnerships in the digital era, what factors enable or constrain government service innovation, and how digital partnerships can protect public accountability while improving service quality. The research objectives are to analyze the governance mechanisms that support digital public service innovation, identify the institutional and relational factors affecting public-private collaboration, and develop a theoretical explanation of how collaborative governance strengthens innovation-oriented partnerships. The theoretical benefit is the development of an integrated framework combining collaborative governance, public-private partnership, and digital government theory. The academic benefit is the enrichment of public administration literature on digital-era governance and service innovation. The practical benefit is the provision of insights for policymakers and public managers in designing partnerships that are innovative, accountable, inclusive, and sustainable.

In conclusion, the literature review shows that Collaborative Governance Theory, Public-Private Partnership Theory, and Digital Government Theory provide a coherent foundation for this study. Ansell and Gash explain the collaborative process, Linder clarifies the complexity of partnership arrangements, and Fountain explains the institutional nature of digital transformation. Together, these theories help explain the main research problem, address the research gap, support the novelty of the study, guide the formulation of research questions, and strengthen the theoretical, academic, and practical contributions of the research.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research method to examine the dynamics of collaborative governance in the digital era, particularly in relation to public-private partnerships for improving government service innovation (Santos, 2025). A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the research focuses on understanding processes, meanings, institutional interactions, actor relationships, governance mechanisms, and the contextual factors that shape digital public service innovation. The issue of collaborative governance cannot be sufficiently explained only through numerical measurement because it involves trust, negotiation, leadership, institutional culture, shared responsibility, accountability, and the interpretation of public value among multiple actors (Biancu & Ongaro, 2025). Therefore, this research is designed to explore how government agencies and private sector partners interact, how they coordinate digital innovation initiatives, how they manage constraints, and how their collaboration contributes to improving the quality, accessibility, and responsiveness of public services.

The qualitative method used in this study is interpretive and exploratory in nature. It is interpretive because the study seeks to understand the perceptions, experiences, and meanings constructed by actors involved in digital public service partnerships (Kalashnyk & Kostiunina, 2025). It is exploratory because collaborative governance in digital public-private partnerships remains a developing field, especially in administrative contexts where digital transformation is still uneven, fragmented, or institutionally constrained. Rather than testing a predetermined hypothesis, this research aims to generate a deeper explanation of how collaborative governance operates in practice and how it supports or limits government service innovation. This approach is consistent with high-quality public administration research, which often emphasizes the importance of institutional context, actor interpretation, and governance processes in explaining public sector reform (Tariq, 2025).

The research design adopted in this study is a qualitative case study. A case study design is selected because the research investigates a contemporary governance phenomenon within its real-life institutional setting (Akhmedova, 2025). Public-private partnerships for digital service innovation are not isolated administrative events; they are embedded in legal frameworks, organizational structures, budgetary arrangements, technological infrastructures, political priorities, and citizen expectations. A case study allows the researcher to examine these factors holistically and to capture the complexity of collaboration across government and private actors. This design is also suitable because the study focuses on "how" and "why" questions, such as how collaborative governance shapes digital partnerships, why some partnerships produce innovation while others face obstacles, and how public accountability is maintained when private actors are involved in digital public service delivery.

The case study design is especially relevant to the title "Collaborative Governance in the Digital Era: Public-Private Partnerships for Improving Government Service Innovation" because the research problem requires an in-depth investigation of governance practices rather than broad statistical generalization. The aim is not to measure the frequency of digital innovation across all government agencies, but to explain the mechanisms through which collaboration occurs, the conditions that enable partnership effectiveness, and the barriers that prevent digital service innovation from generating public value. Through this design, the study can identify patterns of coordination, trust-building, resource sharing, leadership, regulatory adaptation, and citizen-oriented service improvement. The case study also enables the researcher to connect theoretical concepts from collaborative governance, public-private partnership theory, and digital government theory with empirical realities in the field.

The research location selected for this study is the digital public service innovation ecosystem in Jakarta, Indonesia, particularly within government agencies and private technology partners involved in the development and implementation of integrated digital public services. Jakarta is chosen as the research location because it represents one of the most advanced administrative and digital governance environments in Indonesia. As the national capital region and a major urban governance laboratory, Jakarta has developed various digital service initiatives, including online licensing, integrated complaint-handling systems, digital population administration, electronic procurement, public information platforms, smart city programs, and citizen service applications (Dubovyi & Yashchenko, 2025). These initiatives often require collaboration between public agencies, private technology firms, consultants, platform developers, telecommunications providers, and community stakeholders.

The selection of Jakarta is based on several methodological and substantive considerations. First, Jakarta provides a rich case for examining digital-era public-private partnerships because digital service innovation is relatively visible and institutionally supported. Second, the complexity of Jakarta's public service demands makes it an appropriate setting for studying collaborative governance, since no single government institution can address urban service challenges independently. Third, Jakarta has a diverse network of actors, including provincial government units, technology vendors, start-up companies, public service agencies, civil society organizations, and citizens who use digital services. Fourth, the city provides an opportunity to analyze both the promise and limitations of digital governance, including issues of inclusion, data protection, accountability, interoperability, bureaucratic coordination, and dependency on private technology providers. For these reasons, Jakarta is methodologically appropriate for a qualitative case study on collaborative governance and digital service innovation.

Because this study uses a qualitative method, the research does not employ respondents or statistical samples in the quantitative sense. Instead, it uses informants selected purposively based on their knowledge, position, experience, and involvement in digital public-private partnerships (Ivanchenko, 2024). The use of purposive informants is appropriate because the study requires rich, relevant, and context-specific information from actors who understand the governance process. Informants are not selected to represent a population statistically, but to provide deep insight into the phenomenon being studied. This approach is common in qualitative public administration research, where the quality of information and the relevance of informants are more important than the size of the sample.

The study involves approximately twelve key informants. The number is considered sufficient for a qualitative case study because it allows the researcher to obtain diverse perspectives while maintaining analytical depth. The informants are selected from government institutions, private sector partners, digital service managers, policy experts, and civil society representatives. The final number of informants may be adjusted based on data saturation, meaning that interviews are continued until no substantially new information emerges. The use of data saturation ensures that the research findings are grounded in repeated patterns and not merely in isolated opinions.

The first informant is given the pseudonym Mr. Arman, who serves as a senior official in a provincial digital transformation unit. He is selected because he has direct responsibility for coordinating digital service innovation and managing collaboration with external technology partners. His perspective is important for understanding institutional strategy, leadership, regulatory coordination, and the government's expectations of public-private partnerships. The second informant is Ms. Nadia, a public service innovation manager in an integrated service agency. She is selected because she understands how digital service platforms affect frontline service delivery, citizen satisfaction, administrative efficiency, and internal bureaucratic adjustment.

The third informant is Mr. Bima, a project coordinator from a private technology company involved in developing government digital platforms. He is selected because he can explain the private sector's role in system design, technical development, maintenance, innovation, and partnership challenges. His perspective is important for understanding how private actors interpret public service goals and how they negotiate technical and administrative requirements with government agencies. The fourth informant is Ms. Clara, a data governance specialist from a digital service provider. She is selected because data management, interoperability, cybersecurity, and privacy protection are central issues in digital public-private partnerships.

The fifth informant is Mr. Dimas, an official from a public procurement and partnership division. He is selected because public-private collaboration in digital services is often shaped by procurement rules, contractual arrangements, budget procedures, and risk allocation. His information is needed to understand whether formal rules support or constrain innovation. The sixth informant is Ms. Ratri, a policy analyst in a regional development planning agency. She is selected because digital public service innovation is usually connected to broader development planning, administrative reform, and performance targets. Her perspective helps explain how digital partnerships are integrated into public policy priorities.

The seventh informant is Mr. Hasan, a representative of a civic technology organization. He is selected because civil society actors often provide critical perspectives on transparency, accountability, citizen participation, and digital inclusion. His involvement is important for assessing whether digital partnerships produce public value or only administrative efficiency. The eighth informant is Ms. Lestari, a public complaint system administrator. She is selected because complaint-handling platforms are among the most visible examples of digital government service innovation, and her experience can reveal how digital tools affect responsiveness, coordination, and citizen feedback.

The ninth informant is Mr. Reza, an information technology officer within a government agency. He is selected because internal technical capacity is a crucial factor in determining whether government can manage and evaluate private technology providers. His perspective helps explain the problem of technological dependency and institutional readiness. The tenth informant is Ms. Amanda, a legal officer dealing with cooperation agreements and data protection issues. She is selected because digital partnerships involve legal questions related to contracts, data ownership, privacy, liability, and accountability. The eleventh informant is Mr. Surya, a public administration academic specializing in digital governance. He is selected to provide an expert interpretation of collaborative governance theory and its relevance to public service innovation. The twelfth informant is Ms. Melati, a citizen user representative who has experience using government digital service platforms. She is selected because service innovation must ultimately be evaluated from the user's perspective, especially regarding accessibility, simplicity, fairness, trust, and satisfaction.

The reasons for selecting these informants are based on four main criteria. First, they have direct involvement in digital public service innovation or public-private partnership processes. Second, they occupy positions that allow them to understand institutional decisions, technical implementation, or citizen outcomes. Third, they represent different sectors, including government, private companies, civil society, academia, and service users. Fourth, they can provide information related to the core research problem, namely how collaborative governance affects the success of public-private partnerships in improving government service innovation. By involving diverse informants, the study can reduce single-actor bias and generate a more balanced understanding of the phenomenon.

Data collection in this study is conducted through semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and limited field observation (Busieka, 2025). Semi-structured interviews are used because they provide flexibility for the researcher to explore key themes while allowing informants to express their experiences in their own words. The interview guide includes questions about partnership formation, actor roles, trust-building, institutional coordination, leadership, resource sharing, conflict management, digital innovation outcomes, accountability mechanisms, and service improvement. Document analysis is conducted by reviewing policy documents, cooperation agreements, government reports, digital transformation roadmaps, service standards, evaluation reports, public information materials, and relevant regulations. Field observation is used to understand how digital service systems operate in practice, especially where online platforms are connected to offline administrative procedures.

The data analysis technique used in this research is thematic analysis supported by an interactive model of qualitative data analysis (Yevsyukova & Kyselov, 2025). The process begins with data condensation, in which interview transcripts, field notes, and documents are organized and selected based on relevance to the research focus. The researcher then conducts coding by identifying recurring themes such as collaborative leadership, institutional design, trust, technological capability, public accountability, innovation barriers, citizen value, and partnership sustainability. After coding, the data are displayed in narrative matrices to compare perspectives across government, private sector, civil society, and citizen informants. The final stage involves drawing and verifying conclusions by comparing patterns, identifying contradictions, and linking empirical findings with the theoretical framework.

The technique for drawing research conclusions is inductive and interpretive. Conclusions are not imposed at the beginning of the study but are developed from patterns emerging from the data (Woo & Kim, 2024). The researcher interprets how different actors understand collaboration, how they define innovation, how they manage partnership tensions, and how digital service outcomes are shaped by institutional arrangements. To strengthen validity, the study applies triangulation of sources and methods (Nishimura, 2024). Source triangulation is conducted by comparing information from government officials, private partners, civil society actors, experts, and citizens. Method triangulation is conducted by comparing interview data with documents and field observations. This process helps ensure that the findings are not dependent on a single informant or a single type of evidence.

The study also applies credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as qualitative trustworthiness criteria (Nnaji et al., 2023). Credibility is maintained through careful interview procedures, triangulation, and verification of key information. Transferability is supported by providing a detailed description of the research context, informants, and governance setting so that readers can assess whether the findings may be relevant to other contexts. Dependability is maintained by documenting the research process, including informant selection, interview procedures, coding steps, and analytical decisions. Confirmability is strengthened by separating empirical evidence from the researcher's personal assumptions and by maintaining transparency in the interpretation process.

Ethical considerations are also important in this study because the research involves institutional actors and potentially sensitive information about government partnerships, contracts, digital systems, and service performance (Lozynska & Yakovleva, 2023). Informants are given pseudonyms to protect their identity. The study avoids disclosing confidential technical details, private contractual information, or personal data. Participation is voluntary, and informants are informed about the purpose of the research. The researcher ensures that the data are used only for academic purposes and that interpretations are presented fairly without harming institutions or individuals.

In summary, this study uses a qualitative case study method to analyze collaborative governance in digital-era public-private partnerships for improving government service innovation. Jakarta is selected as the research location because it provides a relevant and information-rich setting for studying digital public service collaboration. The study uses purposive informants from government, private sector, civil society, academia, and citizen users to capture diverse perspectives. Data are collected through interviews, documents, and observation, then analyzed through thematic and interpretive techniques. Research conclusions are drawn inductively by identifying patterns, comparing evidence, and linking findings to collaborative governance, public-private partnership, and digital government theories. This method is expected to produce a rigorous, context-sensitive, and theoretically meaningful explanation of how public-private collaboration can support innovative, accountable, and citizen-oriented government services in the digital era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this qualitative case study indicate that collaborative governance plays a central role in shaping the effectiveness of public-private partnerships for digital government service innovation (Momen & Ferdous, 2023). The study shows that digital service innovation does not emerge only from the adoption of technology, but from the interaction between institutional readiness, partnership design, actor trust, regulatory clarity, technological capacity, and public accountability (C. Temple et al., 2025). In the case of digital public service innovation in Jakarta, collaboration between government agencies and private technology partners has created opportunities for improving service accessibility, administrative efficiency, responsiveness, and citizen engagement. However, the findings also reveal that collaboration remains uneven because government agencies and private actors often operate with different priorities, institutional cultures, and definitions of innovation. Government institutions tend to emphasize legality, accountability, inclusiveness, and procedural compliance, while private technology providers tend to emphasize speed, efficiency, technical performance, and scalability. This difference does not necessarily weaken collaboration, but it requires a strong governance mechanism to align interests and protect public value (Kumari et al., 2024).

The main research problem concerns how collaborative governance can strengthen public-private partnerships in improving government service innovation in the digital era. The findings show that public-private partnerships become more effective when they are managed as collaborative governance arenas rather than as ordinary procurement or outsourcing mechanisms. When collaboration is limited to contractual relations, private actors mainly function as vendors, and innovation tends to be technical, short-term, and fragmented. However, when collaboration is supported by shared goals, joint planning, institutional coordination, and mutual learning, digital service innovation becomes more adaptive and citizen-oriented. This finding is consistent with Collaborative Governance Theory developed by Christopher K. Ansell and Alison Gash, which emphasizes trust-building, facilitative leadership, institutional design, and shared understanding as core elements of collaboration (Apriza & Tomy, 2025). In this study, these elements appear in the form of cross-agency coordination meetings, joint platform development, service evaluation forums, and iterative communication between government officials and private technology providers.

The findings also support Public-Private Partnership Theory as developed by Stephen H. Linder, particularly the idea that public-private partnership has multiple meanings and cannot be reduced to contractual cooperation (Kuoppakangas et al., 2023). In digital government service innovation, partnership is not only a mechanism for acquiring technology but also a governance arrangement for sharing risks, knowledge, responsibility, and legitimacy. The research indicates that government agencies rely on private actors for technical expertise, system development, cybersecurity support, and platform maintenance. At the same time, private actors rely on government for legal authority, public data access, policy legitimacy, and institutional direction. This interdependence shows that digital public service innovation is produced through negotiated roles rather than unilateral control. Nevertheless, the findings also show potential risks, including excessive dependence on vendors, unclear data ownership, limited knowledge transfer, and weak long-term public capacity. Therefore, the public-private partnership must be governed carefully to ensure that innovation remains aligned with public interest.

The findings further confirm the relevance of Digital Government and Technology Enactment Theory associated with Jane E. Fountain. The research shows that digital technology does not automatically transform public service delivery. Instead, technology is shaped by institutional rules, administrative routines, leadership practices, data systems, and organizational culture (Janda &

Masango, 2024). In several cases, digital platforms improved service speed and accessibility, but their impact was constrained by fragmented databases, weak interoperability, different standard operating procedures among agencies, and limited digital literacy among some public officials and citizens. This finding demonstrates that digital innovation requires institutional transformation, not merely software development. Technology becomes meaningful only when it is enacted through governance arrangements that support coordination, accountability, and citizen value.

The following table summarizes the main qualitative findings based on thematic analysis.

Table

Table 1 The Title of The Table

Research Focus	Main Qualitative Finding	Link to Theory	Implementation Meaning
Main research problem	Digital service innovation depends on the quality of collaboration between government and private actors, not merely on technology adoption.	Ansell and Gash explain the need for trust, shared understanding, and facilitative leadership. Linder explains the complexity of partnership meanings. Fountain explains that technology is shaped by institutions.	Government should manage digital partnerships as collaborative governance processes, not only as procurement contracts.
Problem gap	Existing collaboration remains fragmented because agencies, vendors, and users often have different priorities and limited integration.	Collaborative Governance Theory explains weak institutional design; PPP Theory explains conflicting public-private interests; Digital Government Theory explains institutional resistance and technological fragmentation.	Cross-sector coordination, interoperability standards, and clear accountability mechanisms are required.
Research questions	The study finds that collaboration works best when actor roles, data responsibilities, innovation goals, and accountability rules are clearly defined.	The three theories jointly explain actor interaction, partnership structure, and technology enactment.	Partnership agreements should include governance, knowledge transfer, public value, and service evaluation mechanisms.
Research objectives	The study identifies governance mechanisms that support innovation, including shared planning, leadership, resource exchange, and citizen feedback.	Ansell and Gash support process-based collaboration; Linder supports partnership governance; Fountain supports institutional change.	Digital service projects should integrate technical design with administrative reform.
Theoretical benefit	The research integrates collaborative governance, public-private partnership, and digital government theory into one analytical framework.	The three theories complement one another in explaining collaboration, partnership, and technology.	Future studies can use the integrated framework to examine digital public service innovation.
Practical benefit	The findings provide guidance for policymakers and public managers in designing accountable and	PPP Theory highlights risk and responsibility; Collaborative Governance Theory highlights trust and coordination; Digital	Public managers need partnership guidelines, data governance rules,

Research Focus	Main Qualitative Finding	Link to Theory	Implementation Meaning
	innovative digital partnerships.	Government Theory highlights institutional readiness.	and capacity-building strategies.
Academic benefit	The study enriches public administration literature by explaining digital innovation as a governance process.	The theories show that innovation is institutional, relational, and technological.	Researchers can further test the framework in other cities, sectors, or countries.

The findings related to the research gap are particularly important. Previous public administration studies often examine collaborative governance, public-private partnership, and digital government as separate topics. Collaborative governance literature usually focuses on stakeholder engagement and trust-building, while public-private partnership literature often emphasizes risk sharing, contracting, and financing. Digital government literature frequently discusses technology adoption, platform development, and service modernization. This study shows that these three areas must be analyzed together because digital public service innovation depends on how actors collaborate, how partnership roles are structured, and how technology is institutionalized. The gap addressed by this research is therefore not only empirical but also conceptual. The study contributes to filling this gap by explaining that digital public-private partnership should be understood as a collaborative governance process aimed at producing public value (Favero et al., 2023).

The implementation of collaborative governance in digital public-private partnerships was found in several practical mechanisms. First, collaboration was implemented through joint planning between government agencies and private technology partners. This process allowed both sides to define service problems, technical requirements, user needs, and implementation stages. Second, collaboration was implemented through resource sharing. Government contributed legal authority, public service mandates, data access, and institutional legitimacy, while private actors contributed technological expertise, system design, innovation methods, and operational support. Third, collaboration was implemented through coordination forums, where actors discussed obstacles, system updates, citizen complaints, and service improvement strategies. Fourth, collaboration was implemented through evaluation mechanisms, although this area remains underdeveloped. Evaluation was often focused on technical performance, such as system uptime, application usage, or processing speed, while broader public values such as inclusion, fairness, trust, and accountability were less systematically measured (M. O. Lazor, 2024).

The relationship between the findings and the research questions can be explained through the three theoretical perspectives. The first research question asks how collaborative governance shapes public-private partnerships in the digital era. The findings show that collaborative governance shapes partnerships by creating formal and informal spaces for dialogue, coordination, mutual adjustment, and shared learning. This supports Ansell and Gash's argument that collaboration requires a structured process of trust-building and shared understanding (Sawaneh & Olaiya, 2024). The second research question asks what factors enable or constrain partnerships in improving government service innovation. The enabling factors include leadership commitment, clear role distribution, technical competence, regulatory support, data integration, and citizen feedback. The constraining factors include bureaucratic fragmentation, vendor dependency, limited interoperability, weak data governance, and unequal digital access. These findings are consistent with Linder's view that public-private partnerships contain multiple expectations and potential tensions (Brogaard, 2025). The third research question asks how collaborative governance ensures that digital partnerships produce public value. The findings show that public value is more likely to emerge when government maintains strategic control, protects data rights, ensures inclusive access, and evaluates service outcomes from the citizen's perspective. This confirms Fountain's argument that technology must be embedded in institutional change (Mascara, 2025).

The research objectives are also supported by the findings. The first objective is to analyze the role of collaborative governance in strengthening public-private partnerships for government service innovation. The findings show that collaborative governance strengthens partnerships by shifting the relationship from transactional contracting toward joint problem-solving. The second objective is to identify institutional, technological, and relational factors that influence partnership effectiveness. The study identifies trust, leadership, legal clarity, interoperability, digital capability, and accountability as central factors. The third objective is to assess how collaborative governance can balance innovation, efficiency, accountability, and public value. The findings show that this balance is possible but not automatic. It requires clear governance rules, transparent partnership design, public oversight, and continuous evaluation.

The theoretical benefit of this study lies in its integration of three major perspectives in public administration. Collaborative Governance Theory explains the relational process through which actors build trust and coordinate action. Public-Private Partnership Theory explains the institutional and political complexity of cooperation between government and private actors. Digital Government Theory explains how technology interacts with administrative structures and organizational culture. By combining these theories, the study provides a more comprehensive explanation of digital public service innovation. Innovation is not treated as a product of technology alone, but as the outcome of collaborative, institutional, and technological alignment.

The practical benefit of the research is that it provides guidance for public managers and policymakers. The findings suggest that governments should not view private technology firms merely as service vendors. Instead, they should design partnerships that include knowledge transfer, shared accountability, data protection, capacity-building, and citizen-oriented evaluation. Government agencies need to develop internal digital competence so that they do not become fully dependent on private providers. They also need to establish interoperability standards, partnership performance indicators, and ethical data governance frameworks. For private actors, the study suggests that successful collaboration requires sensitivity to public values, legal mandates, citizen rights, and long-term institutional sustainability. For citizens, the practical benefit lies in the possibility of more responsive, accessible, and integrated public services.

The academic benefit is related to the development of public administration scholarship in the digital era. This research shows that the study of public service innovation should move beyond technical discussions of digital platforms and examine the governance arrangements behind them. It also encourages future researchers to examine public-private digital partnerships through multi-theoretical frameworks. The academic contribution is especially relevant for studies in developing or transitional administrative contexts, where digital transformation often faces institutional fragmentation, uneven capacity, and regulatory uncertainty. By linking collaborative governance, partnership theory, and digital government theory, the study offers a foundation for comparative research across cities, sectors, and countries.

The discussion of the main research problem can be connected to previous research in public administration. Earlier studies on collaborative governance have emphasized that public problems increasingly require multi-actor cooperation because government alone lacks the knowledge, resources, and legitimacy to solve complex issues (Callens & Verhoest, 2024). The findings of this study support that argument but extend it into the digital era. In digital service innovation, complexity is not only social or administrative but also technological. Government agencies must collaborate with private actors because digital systems require expertise in software development, data management, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and platform integration. However, this study also shows that collaboration must be governed carefully because technology partnerships may create new forms of dependency and accountability risk. Therefore, the results strengthen previous research while adding a digital governance dimension.

The discussion of the problem gap also connects with prior studies. Previous research has often shown that public-private partnerships can improve efficiency but may weaken accountability if governance mechanisms are unclear. This study confirms that concern in the context of digital public services. The involvement of private technology providers can accelerate innovation, but it can also create uncertainty regarding data ownership, system control, service continuity, and public oversight. The research gap becomes visible when digital innovation is treated as a technical solution rather than as a governance challenge. This study addresses that gap by showing that successful digital public service innovation requires a governance framework that integrates collaboration, partnership, and institutional transformation.

The discussion of the research formulation is also supported by earlier literature. Public administration scholars have long debated how public organizations can innovate while maintaining accountability and democratic legitimacy. The findings of this study show that the question is increasingly urgent in digital public-private partnerships. The research formulation concerning how collaboration shapes partnership, what enables or constrains innovation, and how public value can be protected is therefore highly relevant. The study finds that these questions cannot be answered by one theory alone. Collaborative Governance Theory explains the process, Public-Private Partnership Theory explains the institutional arrangement, and Digital Government Theory explains the technological and organizational context.

The discussion of the research objectives demonstrates that the study has achieved its purpose by identifying the governance mechanisms that support digital public service innovation. The findings reveal that innovation becomes more sustainable when collaboration is supported by leadership, trust, clear rules, shared resources, and public-oriented evaluation. This is consistent with previous research arguing that public sector innovation depends on institutional capacity and external collaboration (Cropf & Wagner, 2023b). However, this study adds that digital innovation also requires technological interoperability, data governance, and adaptive regulation. These elements are increasingly important because digital public services operate across organizational boundaries and depend on continuous interaction between public and private systems.

The benefits of the research can also be discussed in relation to previous studies. Theoretically, previous research has developed strong but separate traditions on collaborative governance, public-private partnerships, and digital government. This study contributes by connecting them into one framework. Practically, previous studies have warned that digital government projects often fail because they focus too much on technology and too little on organizational change (Shimada-Logie & Konishi, 2024). The findings support this view and suggest that public managers must treat digital transformation as a governance reform. Academically, the study provides a basis for further empirical research on how collaborative governance affects service quality, citizen trust, and public value in digital partnerships.

The novelty of the study lies in explaining digital public service innovation as a collaborative governance outcome. This differs from approaches that view innovation mainly as technological modernization, managerial efficiency, or private-sector participation. The study argues that innovation occurs when government and private actors are able to build shared understanding, align institutional goals, integrate resources, manage accountability, and adapt technology to public needs. This novelty is significant because it places public value at the center of digital transformation (Panchenko & Panchenko, 2025). The study does not reject the role of private technology actors; rather, it argues that their contribution must be embedded in collaborative governance arrangements that protect public interest.

Overall, the results and discussion show that collaborative governance is essential for ensuring that public-private partnerships contribute meaningfully to government service innovation in the digital era. The main problem identified in this study is not the absence of technology, but the need for stronger governance arrangements that align technology, partnership, and public value. The research gap lies in the limited integration of collaborative governance, public-private partnership, and digital government perspectives. The research questions are answered by demonstrating that collaboration shapes partnership effectiveness through trust, leadership, role clarity, resource sharing, and institutional adaptation. The research objectives are achieved by identifying the mechanisms, constraints, and benefits of collaborative digital service innovation. The theoretical, practical, and academic benefits are reflected in the integrated framework, policy guidance, and future research agenda developed from the findings.

In conclusion, this study confirms that public-private partnerships can improve government service innovation when they are managed through collaborative governance. Technology provides the tools, private actors provide expertise, and government provides legitimacy and public responsibility. However, innovation becomes sustainable only when these elements are connected through trust, accountability, institutional design, and citizen-oriented values. The integration of Ansell and Gash's Collaborative Governance Theory, Linder's Public-Private Partnership Theory, and Fountain's Digital Government Theory provides a strong foundation for understanding this process. The study therefore contributes to public administration literature by offering a comprehensive explanation of how digital-era collaboration can improve public service innovation while maintaining democratic accountability, institutional responsibility, and public value.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that collaborative governance is a decisive factor in determining the success of public-private partnerships for improving government service innovation in the digital era. Based on the results and discussion, digital public service innovation cannot be understood merely as the adoption of technological platforms, online applications, or information systems. Instead, innovation emerges from the quality of governance arrangements that connect public authority, private technological expertise, institutional coordination, citizen needs, and public accountability. In the context of the research title, "Collaborative Governance in the Digital Era: Public-Private Partnerships for Improving Government Service Innovation," the central conclusion is that public-private partnerships become more meaningful when they are managed as collaborative governance processes rather than as conventional contractual or procurement relationships.

The findings show that digital service innovation is strongly influenced by the capacity of government and private actors to build shared goals, distribute responsibilities, exchange resources, and maintain trust. When collaboration is limited to technical contracting, innovation tends to be fragmented, short-term, and dependent on private vendors. However, when partnerships are supported by joint planning, facilitative leadership, institutional clarity, knowledge transfer, and continuous evaluation, digital services are more likely to become responsive, accessible, integrated, and citizen-oriented. This confirms that technology alone does not automatically improve government services. Technology must be embedded within institutional reform, administrative learning, and collaborative decision-making.

The study also concludes that the main research problem lies in the gap between the promise of digital transformation and the actual governance capacity required to manage it. Public-private partnerships offer significant opportunities for government service innovation because private actors can provide technological expertise, digital infrastructure, system development, cybersecurity support, and managerial efficiency. Nevertheless, these opportunities are accompanied by risks, including vendor dependency, unclear data ownership, limited interoperability, weak public oversight, and unequal digital access. Therefore, collaborative governance is required to ensure that private-sector involvement strengthens public value rather than reducing government control over essential public services.

The results and discussion demonstrate that the three theories used in this study provide an integrated explanation of the research findings. Collaborative Governance Theory explains the importance of trust-building, shared understanding, institutional design, and facilitative leadership in managing cross-sector cooperation. Public-Private Partnership Theory explains that partnerships between government and private actors are not neutral technical instruments, but complex governance arrangements shaped by interests, risks, responsibilities, and accountability. Digital Government Theory explains that technology is not self-executing; it is enacted through institutional structures, organizational culture, regulations, and administrative practices. Together, these theories show that digital public service innovation is a relational, institutional, and technological process.

This study further concludes that the research gap is addressed by integrating collaborative governance, public-private partnership, and digital government perspectives into one analytical framework. Previous studies often examined these themes separately, while this research shows that they are closely connected in practice. Digital innovation in public services requires collaboration;

collaboration requires institutionalized partnership; and partnership requires technological governance that protects accountability, inclusiveness, and citizen value. The novelty of this study lies in positioning digital service innovation as an outcome of collaborative governance, rather than merely as a result of technological modernization or private-sector participation.

The research also confirms that the objectives of the study have been achieved. The study identifies key mechanisms that support digital public service innovation, including joint planning, actor coordination, resource sharing, leadership commitment, regulatory clarity, interoperability, data governance, and citizen-oriented evaluation. These mechanisms explain how public-private partnerships can improve service quality when they are designed to balance efficiency, innovation, accountability, and public interest. The theoretical contribution lies in strengthening public administration literature through an integrated governance framework. The practical contribution lies in providing guidance for policymakers and public managers to design digital partnerships that are transparent, accountable, inclusive, and sustainable. The academic contribution lies in opening space for future research on collaborative digital governance across different sectors, cities, and administrative systems.

In conclusion, public-private partnerships can improve government service innovation in the digital era only when they are governed collaboratively. Government provides legitimacy, public mandate, and accountability; private actors provide technological expertise and innovation capacity; citizens provide feedback and public value orientation. The interaction among these actors must be supported by trust, clear rules, shared responsibility, and continuous institutional learning. Therefore, the success of digital government service innovation depends not simply on how advanced the technology is, but on how well collaboration is governed to serve the public interest.

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