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A Critical Network Governance Issues in Social Sciences Discipline: A Literature Review

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A CRITICAL NETWORK GOVERNANCE ISSUES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES DISCIPLINE: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

Some scholars have underlined network governance issues in theoretical, conceptual, operational, and practical terms. However, it is still requested to core map this issue, as past scholars have lacked attention. Therefore, this paper explores network governance's pivotal issues and proposes a theoretical model. A systematic literature review was conducted using Scopus database sources, and NVivo 12 Plus software was used as an assistive qualitative data analysis tool. This study revealed several viewpoints. First, network governance has received much attention over the last decade. Second, some essential core key terms are linked to network governance issues, such as social, public, government, policy, actor, political, institutional, and organizational. In addition, we proposed a theoretical model that can be used as a recommendation for future studies.

Keywords: Network Governance; Literature Review; Social Sciences Discipline.



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A. Introduction

Network governance is the collective decision-making of complex selforganized and cross-organization networks, including public and non-state institutions (Zhao et al., 2021; Handoyo, 2018). Therefore, network governance theories provide additive processes for a greater understanding of complicated decision-making and problem-solving processes (van Bortel, 2009). Furthermore, network governance is the management of cross-actors through interdependent decisions among different actors (Swe & Lim, 2019). In network governance, mutual responsibility links imply mutual interdependence and numerous partially unforeseen and emerging risks (Lehtonen, 2014).

Significant advances in the literature have addressed network governance from various viewpoints. For instance, some scholars debated the presence of network governance in policy issues regarding political decision-making and stagnation, political conflict, and distribution of critical resources (Boersma et al., 2021; van Bortel & Mullins, 2009; Vydra & Klievink, 2019; Tando et al., 2021). Other scholars have expressed the incorporation of various actors in network governance to facilitate the regulation (Lehmkuhl & Siegrist, 2009; Rye & Isaksson, 2018; Wagner et al., 2021). Others identified the proposed concept of ICT governance in network governance (Yu, 2022; Zulkarnain et al., 2022). Likewise, some scholars have been discussed network governance that interconnected with the education sector perspective (Goritz et al., 2019; Kim, 2020; O'Neill, 2017; Player-Koro et al., 2022) and the healthy sector (Matei et al., 2021).

However, scholars still rarely recognize the importance of classifying a mapping for pivotal features of network governance studies. Lehtonen's (2014) study mainly focused on network governance on megaproject infrastructure evaluations. Voiculescu (2018) developed methodologies in policy design for business and human rights issues that intersect with a network governance framework. This article addresses this void by elucidating how social science scholars understand network governance. This study addresses the following issues: (1) What are the key concerns and sub-topics in network governance in social scientific journals? (2) what new ideas and theoretical models may be

developed from these results? To answer this question, this study conducted a thorough literature review on network governance in the social sciences.

B. Method

This paper used a qualitative method with a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to initiate findings and discussion. Choosing the SLRs to identify knowledge gaps, evaluate a body of literature, highlight concepts, or investigate scholarly conduct (Munn et al., 2018). In addition, SLRs can identify patterns of insight distributed by scholars and synthesize diverse literature (Chen, 2017). Additionally, SLR's approach covered planning, conducting, and reporting the review (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007). In this sense, SLR is used to identify and summarize research results and provide interpretations of the data findings.

According to Wang et al. (2018), there are five steps to conducting a systematic literature review, as follows; the first step is to plan and formulate the problem; the second, such conduct a literature search; furthermore, data collection and quality evaluations, next steps, analyze and understand the data, and finally, presenting the findings and discussing future study. First, the data collected regarding network governance literature comes from the Scopus database, which classified all articles from the beginning to June 2022. This paper analysis uses a sample of all paper publishing years to eliminate bias from a limited sample size. As a result, this study obtained a representative and trustworthy sample.

Talking database classification for limitation of journal articles obtained are: title-abs-key is "network governance", access-type is "all open access", the year is all year, from the earliest available data up to June 2022; the subject area is "social sciences", source type is "journal", publication stage is "final stage", document type is "article", keywords is "network governance" and "network governances", the source is all publisher; country or territory is all covered; and language is "English". Therefore, this study found 81 total articles. Furthermore, data has been used from NVivo 12 plus software, an application for visualizing and classifying journal articles (Mortelmans, 2019). The NVivo tool is excellent for indexing aspects of textual materials and

searching for words and phrases in data (Edwards-Jones, 2014). This paper conducted data via Diagram Hierarchy menu analysis in NVivo to explore the knowledge code and examine the data classification between nodes. Lastly, this study proposes the theoretical model to deliver terms linked to network governance issues.

C. Result and Discussion

This section presents the results of a systematic literature review, such as annual publications, articles per author, citation per article, affiliation coverage, country or territory, journal publishers, and central themes proportions of network governance issues.

1. Result

a. Annual Article Journal Publications

This section provides an annual review of articles on network governance that aims to highlight the growth in the topic's contributions every year.

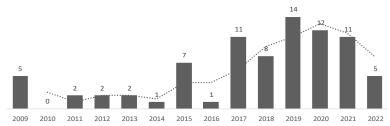


Figure 1. The number of articles relating to network governance per year Source. Processed from the Scopus Database.

Figure 1 depicts how the network governance study has improved fluctuating. The first mention was reported in 2009 from the Academic Scopus Database, with five articles. In 2019, the network governance study garnered the highest attention in fourteen years, with 14 articles published. However, all articles published from 2009 to 2022 that had a significant increase were from 2016 to 2017, with a difference in the total publication of 10 articles. Furthermore, this paper observes the number of articles by country, which makes it possible to assess which countries are concerned about network governance studies.

Document by Country or Territorial

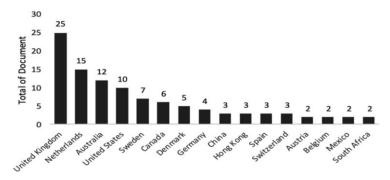


Figure 2. Counties analysis relating to network governance *Source. Processed from the Scopus Database.*

Figure 2 shows that the study of network governance has spread in almost all countries. However, the UK is the dominant country in studying network governance (25 articles), followed by the Netherlands (15 articles), Australia (12 articles), and the USA (10 articles). This finding is unsurprising because the United Kingdom is a country whose network and connectivity are deeply rooted in the world. Next, this paper reviews authors with a frequency of articles on network governance and compares them with one another. Finally, it can highlight writers who are productive in producing network governance studies.

Document by Author

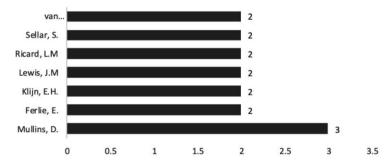


Figure 3. Number of article publication by author Source. Processed from the Scopus Database.

Only authors who published at least two papers about network governance were selected

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Figure 3, Mullins, D. (2009; 2015; 2020) has succeeded in cooperating with various other scholars, including Lang, R., Muir, J., and van Bortel., G., although Mullins, D. was the second author of all the publications, he was a prolific generated three articles, compared to the others. Several scholars have at least two publications on network governance, including Ferlie, E. (2018; 2021); Klijn, E.H (2017; 2018); Lewis, J.M (2017; 2018); Ricard L.M (2017; 2018); Sellar, S. (2013; 2019), and Van Bortel, G. (2009; 2009). In addition, this paper also explores the authors who have the highest citation impact on their articles. As a result, this study can provide an author's overview of what affects the development of network governance studies.

d. Articles Citation Analyze

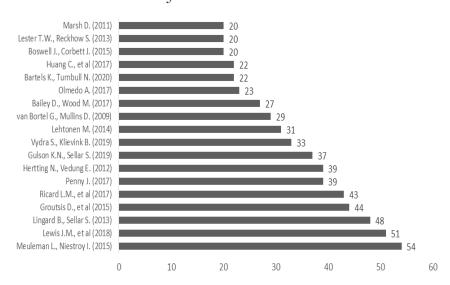


Figure 4. Coverage's citation per article Source. Processed from the Scopus Database.

Only articles that cited at least twenty citations about network governance were selected

Figure 4 presented the most citation frequencies from all articles that were published. There some authors have a high number of citations, such as Meuleman & Niestroy (2015) cited as much as 54 times, followed by Lewis et al. (2018) with 51 total citations, Lingard & Sellar (2013) with 48 cited, further, Groutsis et al. (2015) found 44 cited, and Ricard et al. (2017) present for 43

total of cited. However, it can be concluded that the five articles above are in the high-impact position of network governance study, in which current scholars have cited their articles. Furthermore, this paper explored the publishers that have collected several documents regarding network governance literature, this provides an overview of the high total frequency of distribution of articles to journal sources.

e. Analyzed the Journals

Table 1. Number of articles by publisher

No.	Journal	No. of Articles	%
1.	Sustainability Switzerland	10	12.345
2.	Administration and Society	3	3.703
3.	International Journal of Public Sector	3	3.703
	Management		
4.	Public Management Review	3	3.703
5.	Swiss Political Science Review	3	3.703
6.	Cogent Social Sciences	2	2.469
7.	Critical Policy Studies	2	2.469
8.	Evaluation	2	2.469
9.	Journal of Housing and The Built	2	2.469
	Environment		
10.	Policy Studies	2	2.469
11.	Politics And Governance	2	2.469
12.	Voluntas	2	2.469

Source. Processed from the Scopus Database.

Only journals that published at least two papers about network governance were selected

All publications of network governance articles have produced 81 articles in the Academic Scopus Database, which are contained in 57 different publishers. Table 1 shows the journals with at least two published articles on network governance. The journal that produced the highest number of articles was Sustainability Switzerland, with ten articles or 12.345% compared to the others, which only published three articles during the period. So, it can be claimed that the Journal of Sustainability Switzerland is a fast-producing network governance study. In addition, this paper further reviews several authors' affiliations who pay attention to network governance studies, as shown in Figure 5.

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f. Document by Affiliation

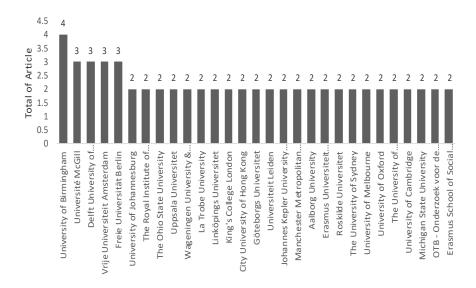


Figure 5. Articles by affiliations

Figure 5 shows that the most contribution to network governance study by affiliation is the University of Birmingham, with a total of 4 articles published, followed by Université McGill, Delft University of Technology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, and Freie Universität Berlin, and respectively had three articles. Apart from that, other affiliates only contributed 2 and 1 article to study network governance. Furthermore, this paper examines the network governance literature using the NVivo 12 Plus application, using the Hierarchy Diagram menu as an analysis menu to observe the distribution of terms related to network governance.

g. Main Issues on Network Governance in Social Sciences Discipline

Figure 6 and Table 2 present the main themes in the study of network governance. The coding results through NVivo 12 plus this software are obtained from the cluster analysis menu with the Jaccard coefficient approach, which produces data processing with validity up to eleven themes. Each theme is closely related to network governance.



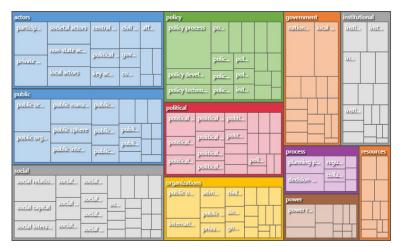


Figure 6. Hierarchy for Network Governance Study and These Sub-issues Source. Result from NVivo 12 plus.

According to Jaccard's coefficient, a sum of 0.5 suggests a substantial link. This research delves deeply into seven critical network governance concerns. Visualization aims to investigate the recurrence of each pivotal issue with other important terms. Each critical topic, theory, and prior study findings are explained below.

Table 2. Network Governance and These Sub-issues

Code A	Code B	Jaccard's coefficient
Nodes\\Network	Nodes\\Network	0.679012
Governance\Social	Governance	
Nodes\\Network	Nodes\\Network	0.604938
Governance\Public	Governance	
Nodes\\Network	Nodes\\Network	0.518519
Governance\Government	Governance	
Nodes\\Network	Nodes\\Network	0.506173
Governance\Policy	Governance	
Nodes\\Network	Nodes\\Network	0.481481
Governance\Actors	Governance	
Nodes\\Network	Nodes\\Network	0.407407
Governance\Political	Governance	
Nodes\\Network	Nodes\\Network	0.395062
Governance\Institutional	Governance	
Nodes\\Network	Nodes\\Network	0.395062
Governance\Organizations	Governance	

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Code A	Code B	Jaccard's coefficient
Nodes\\Network	Nodes\\Network	0.320988
Governance\Power	Governance	
Nodes\\Network	Nodes\\Network	0.308642
Governance\Process	Governance	
Nodes\\Network	Nodes\\Network	0.259259
Governance\Resources	Governance	

Source. result from NVivo 12 plus

Figure 6 shows the close co-occurrence of network governance' and other words. Referring to the Jaccard coefficient in NVivo analysis, proximity co-occurrence is characterized on a scale of 0 – 1. The closer to 1, the higher the number of co-occurrence occurrences. On the other hand, the further from 1, the lower the co-occurrence closeness. Table 2 confirms that the expression network governance occurs simultaneously with social (0.679), public (0.604), government (0.518), policy (0.506), actors (0.481), political (0.407), institutional (0.395), organization (0.395), and other word.

2. Discussion

a. Actor and Sub-section

Several scholars have discussed the study of network governance and touched on several issues, such as participating, political, private, and societal actors. This finding backs up the past studies and a core finding in understanding the actor issues linked to network governance. Wagner et al. (2021) noted that all participating actors are likely to make relatively equal contributions to the management and direction of network activity, with a consensus being reached about the network's goals and how to achieve them. Therefore, van Duijn et al. (2022) confirmed that in network governance, the participating actors had various ideas on the best way for the network to run. Despite the objective of establishing a robust network, the various participants had profound cultural and political disparities.

Lester & Reckhow (2013) explains that in network governance, political actors are the spectrum of solutions and problems for government tasks, so intelligent political actors are needed in the network. Voiculescu (2018)

showed that private actors have the power within the scope of the signed investment agreement to influence other major social domains, such as the realization of human rights, environmental protection, or domestic power to design policies. Furthermore, Parker and Hine (2015) confirmed that private actors with business experience have knowledge and skills. Apart from public and private actors in managing interactive network governance, Ottens and Edelenbos (2019) emphasized that societal actors also "co-regulate" network governance, no longer focusing on the political realm of the public sector government. Although it is agreed that a cross-governance model is preferable, Ottens and Edelenbos (2019) declared that governmental actors retain a prominent position in arranging and eventually leading these interactive governance processes.

Proposition one: The success of network governance depends on the participating actors, including political actors, governmental actors, private actors, and societal actors.

b. Public and sub-section

The public is a sub-element in the study of network governance, which has been discussed, such as public services, public interest, public organization, public funding, and public leadership. These findings corroborate earlier scholars' findings and highlight that little is known about the public issues linked to network governance. Johansson and Liljegren (2019) explored the fact that public services that have been transparent in network governance provide greater management control, including service accountability. Zhao et al. (2021) affirmed that building and managing an effective network is necessary to serve the public interest.

Furthermore, Lewis et al. (2018) explain that public organizations have a higher level of innovation potential because they have a greater desire to share ideas, information, and knowledge, which implies that some public organizations have a more robust institutional fit, seeing as they may not have to worry about providing a "competitive edge". Torfing et al. (2021) argue that public funding is required to provide quality services and

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solve pressing social problems. Furthermore, O'Neill (2017) noted that public funding is needed in a network governance modality to improve service delivery for the organization and the network itself. On the other hand, Barandiaran Luna (2018) underlined that public leadership and personality in network governance are needed to increase the trust of an institution, thus giving birth to the transformation of good general management conditions.

Proposition two: creating network governance must pay attention to public services, public interest, public organization, public funding, and public leadership.

c. Social and sub-section

The study of network governance has been in contact with several studies, including social capital, social interaction, social relations, and social structure. This analysis finds evidence that social issues are related to network governance. Groutsis et al. (2015) explain that social capital is one of those resources with authority and the ability to set norms and pursue and consolidate interests. Wagner et al. (2021) warned that social capital could be relied on to bridge networks in more considerable collective action. Gil-Garcia et al. (2015) confirmed that key players provide social capital as a linking network. It helps to build trust and social and political interactions in network governance.

On the other hand, Seo and Joo (2019) underlined that social interactions between actors and cultural resources (e.g., norms, values, knowledge) of specific periods and locations are crucial in building governance networks. Further, Lan & Peng (2018) noted that social interaction is gaining popularity at a time when technology-related network governance can be easily obtained. Stevenson et al. (2021) understand that complex social interactions are essential in an organization to find the right keys in network governance. It is related to Whetsell et al. (2020), who showed that social relations patterns could be found by combining heterogeneous shared resources in network governance. Wagner et al. (2021) argued that the social



structure is a set of horizontal and vertical linkages among connected actors that may comprise a variety of local, national, regional, and international actors from multiple sectors incorporated in network governance.

Proposition three: network governance requires social capital, social interaction, social relations, and social structure to emphasize collective action.

d. Policy sub-section

The study of network governance is closely related to policies, including policy process, policy design, policy instrument, policy development, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. This section summarizes the findings and contributions of policy issues connected with network governance. Alvarado and Bornstein (2018) noted that the policy process becomes the starting point for outlining the performance indicators of each policy cycle and applying them to the network as a whole and the actors involved in network governance. Gil-Garcia et al. (2015) showed that policy processes require collective action in network governance. Dabbicco & Steccolini (2020) pointed out that policy design will depend on the participation and consensus of the legitimacy of the actors who are members of the network governance; when the participants in a network are many and situated in different countries, coordination between them can become highly difficult, necessitating more structural network solutions. Hertting and Vedung (2012) illustrate that with all kinds of policy instruments, all actors have the potential to launch and maintain network governance.

Therefore, Voiculescu (2018) showed that diverse disciplines enable economic, political, and social policy development in network governance (Alidar et al., 2023). Fowler et al. (2019) assessed the implementation of policies from changes to the homeless service system, where a supportive network governance structure is needed. Hughes et al. (2015) confirmed that a framework for policy evaluation involving players in constructing

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ideas and capacity for network governance is required for future policy development.

Proposition fourth: Network governance certainly needs to provide a policy framework such as policy process, policy design, policy instrument, policy development, policy implementation, and policy evaluation.

e. Political and sub-section

One of the elements in the discussion of network governance is related to political issues, where several sub-issues are mentioned, such as political actors, political authorities, political power, and political institutions. Lester and Reckhow (2013) describe how political actors' involvement is considered capable of overcoming problems and solutions that arise due to the tasks faced by the public sector in network governance. Ottens and Edelenbos (2019) noted that political actors found it difficult to exercise their formal power because it required terms of agreement regarding the interests of all actors in network governance. Torfing et al. (2021) stated that political actors recognize their dependence on the same problem or challenge and, as a result, the need to exchange or pool resources in network governance is inhibited. Therefore, Bailey and Wood (2017) noted that the governance networks conducted by the central state are a set of political authorities.

However, political authority is a resource, regulatory competence, and agenda-setting capability that enables one actor (or group of players) to influence the habits and behavior of other actors in a government network. Thus, political authority is a conceptual relationship between meta-governance and power in network governance. Marsh (2011) revealed that political authorities need funds in network governance to address the issue of exclusion based on race, gender, and poverty. A further novel finding is that Lan & Peng (2018) said that to build political power, they rely on "dynamic coalitions" built by social actors—refreshing and productive relationships between public and private partners and "integrated action capacities in network governance".

Others have been shown by Barandiaran and Luna (2018), who mentioned that the distribution of political power requires a broad

territorial and organizational framework. The breadth and complexity of this power are embedded in multiple levels of institutions—tiers of network governance. Netelenbos (2020) claimed that all political institutions should be evaluated and coordinated by the list of democratic values and have the same universal notion in network governance. Ottens and Edelenbos (2019) conceptualized that the existing political institutions must play a role in governance involvement in network governance. From these results, it is clear that political issues are related to network governance.

Proposition five: Network governance is inseparable from political interests, where there are political actors, political authorities, political power, and political institutions.

f. Government sub-section

Superior results are seen for the government's involvement, which is undeniable in network governance, where several scholars have discussed issues relating to the national government, local government, governing coalition, governmental policy, and government strategy. From these results, it is clear that Auriacombe and Meyer (2020) noted that the national government is an enabling actor to take more severe steps for effective resource management in network governance. According to Dabbicco and Steccolini (2020), international powers and institutions shape the roles of national governments, standard setters, regulators, multinational corporations, and professional associations in the network governance domain.

Therefore, Johansson and Liljegren (2019) have argued that the national government ensures that all municipalities and districts have approximately the same tax revenue per capita to provide the same level of service to their residents, regardless of their ability to pay taxes. Zhao et al. (2021) pointed out that under pressure from local governments, some network governance actors must rebuild plans to increase compensation and provide more resources. Gil-Garcia et al. (2015) explained that the empirical evidence from the local government could be viewed from the leading role in supporting network governance. Therefore, Lan & Peng (2018) said that

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governing coalitions must bring together different elements of society and different resources so that they can influence collaborative processes and actions between institutions. Carter (2019) mentioned that in-network governance must also refer to government policy that aims to respond to the needs of local communities and general welfare. Others have shown that Carter (2019) stated that resources and government strategies could work within the government and are available for some activities in network governance. However, Hasle et al. (2017) affirmed that government strategies are required to build relationships and prevent power relations between network governance actors.

Proposition six: the government is a sector that must prioritize several strategies and the availability of resources to collaborate in network governance, such as national government, local government, governing coalition, governmental policy, and government strategy.

g. Organizations and sub-section

It is essential to highlight the fact that the success of network governance as the emergence of organizations as wheels for implementing activities is vital. In the study of network governance, several sub-issues have been mentioned, such as international organizations, public organizations, civil society organizations, funding organizations, and private organizations. Jha et al. (2021) noted that international organizations often accept potential conflicts of interest in their policymaking and agenda-setting. Furthermore, it is notable that Hickey et al. (2021) stated that international organizations are inter-organizational solid networks in network governance. Bianculli et al. (2017) confirmed that the position of power of international organizations affects national and domestic influences. In addition, Swe & Lim (2019) confirmed that the governance of public organizations is also necessary for public services and delivery.

Furthermore, van Dorp (2018) says that public organizations are responsive to situations that occur in government and maintain long-term prosperity in network governance. Lewis et al. (2018) argued that public



organizations have high innovation potential for sharing ideas, information, and knowledge because they do not have to worry about providing a "competitive advantage" due to a greater desire for network governance. Johansson and Liljegren (2019) illustrated that civil society organizations also participate in efforts to disseminate performance information and increase interest in network governance and democratic accountability (Marta et al., 2020). Alvarado and Bornstein (2018) noted that implementing an organization's program or project requires network governance funding. Therefore, Lehtonen (2014) said that partnering with the private sector is also quite large and complex in organizational arrangements formed from publicprivate partnerships involved in network governance.

Proposition seven: organizations are seen as one of the sub-issues that have a vital influence on the preparation and implementation of network governance, such as international organizations, public organizations, civil society organizations, funding organizations, and private organizations.

h. Proposed Theoretical Model on Network Governance

Furthermore, the social issue is linked to the four nearest topics: social capital, social interaction, social relations, and social structure. The public issue is related to the five aspects that are closest to it: public services, public interest, public organization, public funding, and public leadership. It is important to note that the present evidence relies on government issues that are interwoven with the following five issues: the national government, local government, the governing coalition, governmental policy, and government strategy. The policy issue is intimately tied to the six topics most directly associated: policy process, policy design, policy instrument, policy development, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. The topic of actors is connected to the three concerns closest to it: political, private, and societal.

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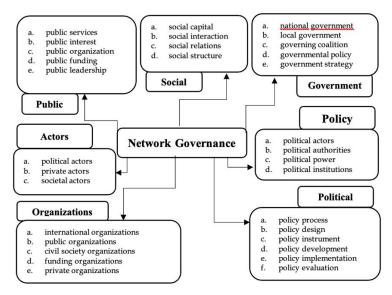


Figure 7. Proposed theoretical model on Network Governance

D. Conclusion

Many scholars in social science have studied network governance. This research contributes to a broader range of the standpoints of these social scholars. Our review of prior works on network governance encouraged us to evaluate the current situation of the discipline along with the scholarly trend. The study investigated for 81 total of Scopus-indexed journal articles. Therefore, this paper provides a novelty result highlighting some significant terms associated with network governance, such as the involvement of several actors and organizations and policies and political debates that influence key terms of network governance. Also, it suggests an extensive theoretical framework based on findings regarding network governance issues and subtopics.

The practical value of the research is that its stakeholders can establish network governance by designing responsive and inclusive governance, building public organizational capacity, and raising political participation in policy development and implementation. The research has several shortcomings, including the inability to identify more specific issues due to its overly broad scientific approach. Due to the small sample size, the

publications assessed may not accurately reflect the state of the art. The issue may differ in contemporary topics.

This study presents recommendations for future research. Future research should investigate network governance in various disciplines, such as politics, public administration, and sociology, to identify more specific concerns. In addition, future research should incorporate a greater quantity of literature from a variety of sources in order to assess the consistency of their difficulties. In future investigations, longitudinal design may be used to validate the newly presented theoretical model.

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