

# Mechanisms and Effects of Digital Technology Empowering Government Performance Management: A Case Study of Yuhang District, Hangzhou

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**Abstract.** Government performance management is a key measure for modern countries to improve their governance system and governance capacity and realize long-term stability. However, it faces practical dilemmas including unclear indicator systems, distorted information collection, and insufficient application of results. In recent years, the rapid development of digital technology has provided new solutions to these problems. Existing studies have widely discussed the empowering mechanisms and effects of digital technology. Yet most studies focus on single links such as indicator design, data collection, or performance evaluation. They lack a systematic explanation of how digital technology works in the whole process of performance management. Therefore, this paper builds a whole-process analytical framework consisting of indicator construction, information collection, result generation, performance attribution, and achievement utilization. Taking the digital government practice in Yuhang District, Hangzhou as a case, this paper deeply analyzes the operational mechanisms of digital technology empowering government performance management. The study finds that digital technology effectively solves defects in traditional public sector performance management. These defects include static and rigid indicators, subjective and distorted data, oversimplified evaluation, vague attribution, and improper result application. Digital technology achieves these improvements through dynamic indicator construction, concomitant data collection, algorithm-driven result generation, intelligent performance attribution, and implementable achievement utilization. Theoretically, this paper expands the whole-process perspective for explaining digital-enabled performance management. Practically, it provides a reference for local governments to promote intelligent performance governance.

**Keywords:** digital technology, government performance management, whole-process analysis.

## 1. Introduction

Government performance management is critical for modern countries to upgrade their governance system and governance capacity and achieve long-term stability[1]. The modernization of national governance system and governance capacity relies on the innovation of government performance management. For a long time, traditional performance management has suffered from performance failure. Typical problems include rigid indicators, data distortion, difficult attribution, and insufficient result application. These problems weaken the role of performance management in promoting governance modernization. In 2022, the State Council issued the Guiding Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of Digital Government[2]. It emphasized integrating digital government construction into government performance assessment, improving indicator systems, and strengthening supervision. It also encouraged deep integration between digital government construction and performance management. In 2025, the 15th Five-Year Plan proposed to further advance the construction of Digital China[3]. It required digital technologies such as artificial intelligence to empower all industries in an all-round way. These policies show that embedding digital technologies including big data, artificial intelligence, and Internet of Things into government performance management has become a national strategy. It provides a new way to solve the above problems and is an important path to advance governance modernization.

In line with national strategies, scholars have conducted rich research on the operational mechanisms and governance effects of digital technology empowering performance management.

However, existing studies mostly focus on single or a few links in performance management. They pay insufficient attention to the multi-link and whole-process empowerment of digital technology. Thus, they cannot systematically explain how digital technology reshapes the logic of performance management in the whole process.

Based on existing literature, this paper constructs a whole-process analytical framework of indicator construction, information collection, result generation, performance attribution, and achievement utilization. It selects Yuhang District, Hangzhou as a case for analysis. This paper aims to answer how digital technology works in the whole process of government performance management and what positive effects it brings. It hopes to provide constructive suggestions for building a modern government performance management system with Chinese characteristics.

## **2. Literature Review and Analytical Framework**

With the deep development of digital government, research on digital technology empowering government performance management has evolved. Early studies focused on descriptive analysis of technology application. Now studies turn to explanatory and evaluative research on the performance management system. They mainly discuss two dimensions: operational mechanisms and governance effects of digital technology empowering performance management.

### **2.1. Operational Mechanisms of Digital Technology Empowering Public Sector Performance Management**

The operational mechanism of digital technology empowering public sector performance management is complex. Existing studies mainly cover three aspects: organizational restructuring, information management, and result application.

In terms of organizational restructuring, digital technology optimizes organizational structure and resource allocation. It enables dynamic adaptation in the performance management process. A big data-driven management system transforms traditional top-down management into a more equal, interactive, and pluralistic network structure[4]. Such structural adjustment depends on coordinated allocation of technology and governance elements. It also requires sufficient resources and effective transmission of pressure from higher authorities and horizontal competition among local governments[5]. Only in this way can digital management processes be truly activated to promote high-performance government construction.

In terms of information management, digital technology reshapes data generation and processing. It lays a foundation for accurate performance evaluation. Traditional performance information often faces data distortion and time lag. Digital governance provides reliable and timely information processing, feedback, and response. It supports data-based decision-making[6]. Furthermore, big data reduces the risk of data manipulation and improves information authenticity. It also realizes real-time diagnosis, adjustment, and improvement of performance information. It solves the rigidity and time lag of information management in the manual era[7].

In terms of result application, digital technology addresses the problem of insufficient use of performance results. Accurate results supported by digital technology provide a technical basis for practical application. Open results help build an external supervision and social accountability system beyond internal management[8]. This improves the usability of performance results. It shifts government attention to specific groups and scenarios. It also enhances the accuracy of performance results in behavior correction and resource allocation optimization[9].

### **2.2. Governance Effects of Digital Technology Empowering Public Sector Performance Management**

Scholars generally hold positive attitudes toward the effects of digital technology in performance management. They agree that digital technology significantly improves government responsiveness and public value creation. First, digital technology greatly improves response speed. The application

of big data analysis fundamentally changes the model of government performance management. It enables governments to respond to public demands quickly and effectively and improve services based on public feedback[10]. Second, digital technology promotes the creation of new public values and the transformation of governance paradigms. Performance evaluation in digital government has gone beyond a single focus on efficiency. It expands to public values including behavior, citizenship, service, and society[11]. This indicates that China's government performance management is transforming from instrumental rationality to performance governance with multiple values such as democracy, rule of law, and fairness. It promotes sound interaction between government and society[12]. Transnational experience also shows that digital innovation promotes modernized service channels, process optimization, and public participation. It further improves public services and government performance[13].

However, some scholars point out potential negative effects of digital technology application. Although digital technology brings opportunities for performance management, it also raises concerns. These include algorithm black boxes, data manipulation, and possible intensified formalism[14]. Over-reliance on technology may lead to alienation of technology governance. Without effective institutional constraints and value guidance, digital dividends may not translate into real governance effectiveness.

### **2.3. Research Gaps and Analytical Framework**

Existing studies have revealed the theoretical mechanisms and practical effects of digital technology reshaping government performance management. However, most studies focus on single links such as indicator design, data management, and performance evaluation. Few studies examine the multi-link and whole-process empowerment of digital technology. As a result, these studies cannot fully explain the internal mechanisms of digital technology in improving performance management. They also fail to answer how intelligent, timely, and objective digital technology solves rigidity, time lag, and subjectivity in traditional performance management. Links of performance management are not independent. They are interrelated and coupled. The whole process from indicator design, information management, to result application and feedback is important. It helps improve governance and uphold the people-centered value. Therefore, it is urgent to explore how digital technology works in the whole process of government performance management to achieve good governance.

Specifically, this paper explores three questions. How can digital technology function in the complete process of performance management? What are its mechanisms? What effects can it bring to government performance management? To answer these questions, this paper builds a whole-process analytical framework. The framework includes indicator construction, information collection, result generation, performance attribution, and achievement utilization. By deconstructing the five key nodes, this paper systematically analyzes how digital technology reshapes the logic of performance management and its effects.

#### **2.3.1 Indicator Construction**

Indicator construction is the guideline and core of performance management. It determines evaluation contents and the behavior of evaluators. Traditional performance indicators are usually set at the beginning of the year and fixed for the whole year. Such unified and static indicators cannot meet diverse, differentiated, and dynamic governance needs. They reduce the ability to respond to emergencies. They may also induce task alienation where officials only focus on completing assessment indicators. Indicator construction empowered by digital technology fully considers organizational mission, vision, and functions. It uses big data to adjust indicator contents, weights, and key points dynamically according to external changes. It designs performance indicators highly matching actual needs.

### **2.3.2 Information Collection**

Information collection is critical to performance management. It determines the objectivity and authenticity of evaluation results. This paper uses “information collection” instead of traditional “data collection”. It emphasizes the transformation from massive raw data to effective management information. Traditional performance management highly relies on reprocessed data such as statistical reports and work summaries. Such data is time-lagged and leaves room for data falsification. It leads to inconsistency between evaluation basis and actual performance. Digital government uses big data, Internet of Things, blockchain, and other technologies. It collects behavioral data, process data, and result data in an all-round, real-time, and concomitant way. It objectively records information during business operations and avoids data distortion caused by manual recording.

### **2.3.3 Result Generation**

Result generation transforms scattered and informal raw data into systematic, formal, and intuitive outcomes. It is both an analysis of collected information and a value calculation embedding performance values into data. Accurate calculation of performance values relies on efficient data analysis and in-depth mining. Traditional performance evaluation mostly uses simple calculations. It oversimplifies complex evaluation objects and fails to explore public values behind complex public affairs. Digital technologies such as big data use specific algorithm models and strong computing power. They clean, correlate, and calculate multi-source data. They produce comprehensive evaluation results that reflect the real performance level of evaluation objects.

### **2.3.4 Performance Attribution**

Performance attribution explores causal mechanisms behind performance results. It aims to identify potential causal relationships between results and factors such as environment, organization, and actors. Precise causal attribution provides guidance for performance learning and improvement. Attribution depends on accurate data, complete causes, and effective causal identification methods. Traditional evaluation only informs performance levels but cannot identify deep reasons for performance differences.

Big data, artificial intelligence, and other technologies use correlation analysis, time series analysis, and causal inference. They deeply explore factors behind performance fluctuations. They build causal chains between performance results, organizational environment, resource input, and actor behavior. They help identify key factors affecting performance management.

### **2.3.5 Achievement Utilization**

Achievement utilization is vital to the function of government performance evaluation system. Performance management loses its core value if evaluation is only used for bonuses or rankings but not for management improvement. Achievement utilization means embedding information, knowledge, and attribution conclusions into government management functions. These functions include planning, organization, leadership, and control. It is applied to decision optimization, process reengineering, cadre selection, and public service improvement. Digital technology changes the time-lagged “post-evaluation” model. It turns it into real-time “pre-prediction” and “in-process intervention”. Through precise achievement utilization, it improves government governance capacity. It shifts from one-way control to interactive digital-intelligent governance focusing on both result generation and utilization. It comprehensively improves administrative efficiency.

## **3. Research Methods and Case Presentation**

### **3.1. Case Selection and Research Methods**

This study adopts the case study method and selects Yuhang District, Hangzhou as the research object. The reasons are as follows.

First, the case is typical. The practice of Yuhang District represents how technology solves performance failure. It addresses common problems in traditional performance management. These

problems include unclear indicators, data distortion, and difficult application. Its methods are highly referential for other regions.

Second, the case is exemplary. Yuhang District is a pioneer in digital government construction and national leader in digital governance. It integrates advanced technologies such as big data, Internet of Things, and artificial intelligence into the whole process of performance management. It fully shows positive effects of technology-enabled performance management. As a cutting-edge sample, it presents how digital technology improves government performance management and how digital dividends translate into governance effectiveness.

To restore the real situation of the case, this paper adopts the triangulation method. It ensures the authenticity and comprehensiveness of research and improves reliability. Data and materials come from three sources. First, official policy documents. This paper reviews government work reports, digital reform plans, and performance management methods of Yuhang District. It clarifies the development process and key nodes. Second, news media reports. It collects reports from People's Daily, Zhejiang Daily, and other authoritative media to supplement case information. Third, academic literature. It draws on scholarly analyses of digital government construction in Yuhang District to obtain theoretical frontiers and expert views.

### **3.2. Case Profile**

Yuhang District is located in northern Zhejiang and southern Hangjiahu Plain. It has a permanent population of 1.422 million. In 2025, its regional GDP reached 356.803 billion yuan. The technology industry centered on digital economy accounts for nearly 70% of GDP. It is a typical model of innovation-driven regional development and known as the No.1 District of Digital Economy in Zhejiang. The district government cooperates with local technology enterprises and research institutes. It forms a digital ecosystem with complementary collaboration. This provides a solid foundation for digital transformation of public management, especially performance management reform. The development of digital technology empowering performance management in Yuhang District can be divided into three stages.

From 2003 to 2013, it was the foundation period of e-government. It focused on office automation and government network. Electronic processes replaced manual processes to realize electronic tracking of government affairs. It alleviated heavy workload, time lag, and difficult traceability of official documents. It provided basic data support for early performance management.

From 2014 to 2020, it was the promotion period of data management. It focused on breaking departmental barriers and optimizing service performance. Led by the "Once at Most" reform, it built a data sharing platform. It used "Good or Bad Reviews" as an important evaluation basis. It shifted performance evaluation from internal compliance to external service performance and public experience.

From 2021 to now, it is the upgrading period of digital-intelligent governance. It focuses on digital-intelligent empowerment and process reshaping. It emphasizes all-round and real-time monitoring and analysis of governance processes. It extends performance management from post-evaluation to in-process early warning and pre-prediction. It forms a more dynamic and accurate performance governance model.

## **4. Implementation Logic of Digital Technology Empowering the Whole Process of Public Sector Performance Management**

### **4.1. Indicator Construction: From Static and Vague to Dynamic and Precise**

Indicator construction is the primary step of government performance management. It decomposes government strategic goals into specific tasks for functional departments. Traditional performance indicators only set macro directions without clear tasks. Vague tasks easily lead to implementation deviation and reduce overall performance[15]. Digital technologies represented by big data expand

the scope and ability of performance data collection. They include complete functions, responsibilities, and goals in the evaluation system. They conduct real-time evaluation of performance management. They help accurately locate performance goals and determine assessment indicators. Digital technology provides scientific support for indicator design based on organizational purposes. It predicts potential problems and future trends in the review stage. It timely records and dynamically adjusts indicators in the implementation stage.

Yuhang District uses digital technology to design and adjust performance indicators scientifically. Relying on the full perception and big data analysis of “Urban CT”, the district government mines scenarios of risk events and public demands. Based on macro governance priorities and specific tasks of functional departments, it outputs the importance and urgency of tasks. Through the “Four Platforms for Grassroots Governance”, it integrates specific and quantifiable task lists. Meanwhile, the system intelligently verifies indicator rationality based on historical baseline data. For example, if the flood control response time set by a sub-district deviates greatly from the historical average, the system automatically alerts. It avoids arbitrary decision-making and improves the scientificity of design and review. In the implementation stage, the system automatically triggers emergency response rules based on real-time situation data. It dynamically adjusts the caliber and weight of relevant indicators. It automatically assigns tasks to corresponding staff through the grassroots governance platforms.

#### **4.2. Information Collection: From Closed and Distorted to Open and Authentic**

Information control is a core challenge of Chinese governance and a common problem for all organizations[16]. As an important part of information control, performance information often suffers from low authenticity[17]. Authenticity of performance data directly determines the success of performance conclusion and application. Meanwhile, performance information is mostly filled manually. It is repetitive and cumbersome due to the particularity of public sectors. It brings heavy pressure to grassroots staff. Digital technology generates diverse and heterogeneous information sources. It provides complete data and factual evidence for performance evaluation. It reduces data distortion caused by human selection and administrative burden of information filling. Digital technology collects data both inside and outside public sectors. It realizes the transformation from manual recording to automatic recording and from regular recording to concomitant recording.

To solve the coexistence of data falsification and heavy report burden in traditional performance management, Yuhang District integrates departmental information. It relies on the “Four Platforms for Grassroots Governance” and “Integrated Intelligent Public Data Platform”. It breaks data silos between departments and builds a full-coverage data collection system. In internal management, the district directly captures operation traces and logs of civil servants in business systems. It replaces six types of paper reports and reduces grassroots filling workload by 70%. It ensures that performance data is generated concomitantly during business operations. It fundamentally avoids post-human tampering or fabrication. In external evaluation, Yuhang District integrates the “Good or Bad Reviews” system and complaint data. It collects public feedback on public services in real time. It realizes dynamic perception of governance effects. Such a collection mechanism based on “native information” reduces space for data falsification. It also frees grassroots cadres from cumbersome report filling and effectively reduces grassroots burden.

#### **4.3. Result Generation: From Simplified and Rough to Deeply Restored**

Result generation reflects the outcomes of performance management. Objective, precise, and public-value-oriented performance results are the basis for effective performance management. Traditional performance management mostly uses numerical and structured sample data. Its result generation methods are simple and single. It is difficult to restore the complex process of performance generation and provide accurate evaluation results. Big data and artificial intelligence technologies process raw performance data scattered in business systems. Through data cleaning, correlation, and algorithm models, they transform data into comprehensive evaluation information. This information

objectively reflects government governance effectiveness and public value creation. It restores the real performance facts of evaluation objects.

Yuhang District builds an automatic performance result generation mechanism. It relies on the “City Brain” and “Integrated Intelligent Public Data Platform”. The system uses built-in algorithm models to clean and calculate cross-departmental performance data in real time. It automatically generates visualized performance reports for towns, sub-districts, and departments. Managers can check real-time dynamics and historical trends of indicators on one screen. These indicators include petition handling rate and project commencement rate. They can even trace specific responsible persons and events. It realizes timely update of performance results. Technical processing and platform-based information tracking reduce manual intervention. Performance data and assessment results are highly credible and traceable. They ensure the objectivity and legitimacy of performance results.

#### **4.4. Performance Attribution: From Result Description to Causal Analysis**

Performance attribution aims to solve performance management problems through objective technology-driven attribution. Traditional evaluation only informs performance levels but cannot identify deep reasons for performance differences. It easily misjudges objective environmental difficulties as insufficient subjective efforts. The application of big data technology shifts performance management from simple result evaluation to in-depth causal analysis. On the one hand, based on full data traceability, digital technology correlates performance results with environmental and behavioral data of organizational operation. It builds a complete causal relationship. On the other hand, using correlation analysis and regression models, algorithms effectively identify key variables in complex governance scenarios. They accurately distinguish the impacts of external environment and internal management on performance results.

Yuhang District introduces intelligent analysis tools such as “AI Yuhang”. Using algorithm models including correlation analysis, cluster analysis, and trend prediction, it screens variables for abnormal or outstanding indicators. It objectively identifies and quantifies key influencing factors. It builds accurate connections between performance results and influencing elements. The system automatically identifies process bottlenecks, resource shortages, and cross-departmental collaboration barriers. It includes various variables and facts related to performance results in correlation analysis. It forms a complete causal chain and network and provides feedback to performance management departments. Such a technology-driven attribution mechanism reduces misjudgment and one-sided interpretation in performance attribution. It enhances the explanatory power and scientificity of performance-based decisions and subsequent optimization measures.

#### **4.5. Achievement Utilization: From Assessment and Notification to Continuous Improvement**

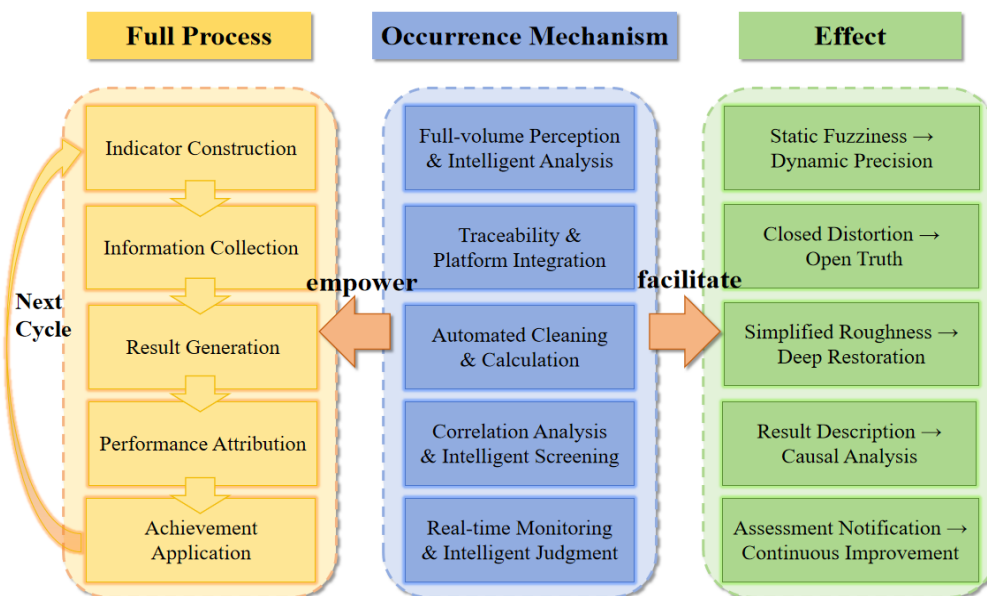
Achievement utilization is the final stage of one performance management cycle. It also provides a basis for the next round of performance evaluation. Achievements including performance information, attribution conclusions, and improvement suggestions should be embedded in government management. These areas include planning, resource allocation, process reengineering, cadre management, and public service improvement. They should be transformed into specific plans for governance practice[18]. However, this ideal state does not occur spontaneously. Instead, it faces difficulties in effective achievement utilization. The main reasons are lack of improvement mechanisms and time-lagged result presentation. Digital technology collects data automatically through business systems. It conducts real-time monitoring, early warning, and visual analysis. It timely detects anomalies and locates specific links and responsible persons. It helps performance managers optimize decision-making mechanisms for result application. It embeds these mechanisms into policy adjustment and resource allocation. It finally strengthens the capacity for continuous improvement.

Yuhang District does not stop at ranking and notification in achievement utilization. It uses intelligent technology to transform abstract performance results into concrete governance

effectiveness. Relying on performance information from big data analysis and assistant judgment of artificial intelligence such as “AI Yuhang”, it forms a achievement utilization mechanism combining technology and manual decision-making. On the one hand, these technologies intelligently interpret existing results and generate targeted improvement suggestions. They make up for insufficient improvement in traditional performance management. On the other hand, managers form preliminary judgments on problem types, influence scope, and disposal priorities based on technology-generated suggestions. They make decisions to continuously improve internal management and enhance social services and governance. Finally, they improve the government’s capacity for improvement.

In summary, the practice of Yuhang District, Hangzhou shows that digital technology effectively solves defects of traditional performance management. It optimizes the operational logic of government performance management through whole-process embedding. In indicator construction, full perception and intelligent analysis realize the shift from static and vague to dynamic and precise. Indicator design becomes more scientific and agile. In information collection, concomitant tracking and platform integration realize the shift from closed and distorted to open and authentic. It fundamentally ensures the objectivity of performance data and reduces grassroots burden. In result generation, algorithm-driven automatic cleaning and calculation realize the shift from simplified and rough to deeply restored. Performance evaluation better reflects complex governance facts. In performance attribution, correlation analysis and intelligent screening realize the shift from result description to causal analysis. It provides a scientific basis for accurate diagnosis of performance problems. In achievement utilization, real-time monitoring and intelligent judgment realize the shift from assessment and notification to continuous improvement. Performance results are truly transformed into governance effectiveness.

The five links are interrelated and progressive. Precise indicators guide information collection. Reliable information generates objective results. In-depth attribution promotes result-based improvement. Effective achievement utilization in turn optimizes the next round of indicator construction. Such a cycle forms a complete closed loop of digital technology empowering performance management. As shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Digital Technology Empowered Performance Management Mechanism and Effect Diagram under the Full Process Framework

## 5. Conclusion and Discussion

Based on existing research on digital technology empowering performance management, this paper constructs a whole-process analytical framework. The framework includes indicator construction, information collection, result generation, performance attribution, and achievement

utilization. Combined with the case of Yuhang District Government, Hangzhou, this paper deeply explains the operational mechanisms of digital technology empowering public sector performance management. The study finds that digital technology empowers traditional public sector performance management through five paths. These paths are dynamic indicator construction, concomitant data collection, algorithm-driven result generation, intelligent performance attribution, and implementable achievement utilization. It solves defects of traditional performance management. These defects include static and rigid indicators, subjective and distorted data, oversimplified evaluation, vague attribution, and improper result application. It transforms performance management into an ideal state of dynamic precision, openness and authenticity, fact restoration, causal analysis, and continuous improvement. Its empowering logic is to deeply embed technical rationality into the whole process of performance generation. It promotes government performance management from vague and extensive experience-based governance to precise and scientific intelligent governance.

In summary, this study has two theoretical contributions. First, it makes up for the deficiency of existing studies focusing on single or a few links. It explains how digital technology solves dilemmas of traditional performance management from a whole-process perspective. It provides a systematic path for understanding its empowering mechanisms. Second, it builds a whole-process analytical framework consisting of indicator construction, information collection, result generation, performance attribution, and achievement utilization. By comparing with practical dilemmas of traditional performance management, it reveals the whole-process empowering mechanisms of digital technology. It deepens the theoretical understanding of how technical rationality reshapes the logic of public sector performance governance.

Based on the above discussion, this paper puts forward three suggestions for further empowering government performance management with digital technology. First, connect all links of digital performance management. Promote the whole-process embedding of digital technology. Second, optimize shortcomings of traditional performance management with instrumental rationality of digital technology. Improve the implementation process of performance management through full collection, digital tracking, and assistant analysis. Third, strengthen intelligent capacity building. Shift performance governance from experience-oriented to intelligence-oriented.

However, this paper still has limitations. This analysis focuses more on the dividends of digital empowerment. It pays insufficient attention to negative externalities. In particular, it lacks discussion on problems such as digital formalism, alienation of technology governance, and grassroots pressure caused by digital technology embedding. Future research can systematically explore how interactions among technology, institutions, and behaviors induce alienation such as digital formalism. On this basis, it can build governance optimization strategies that balance effectiveness and public values.

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