

Research Article

Promoting Transparency and Civil Engagement through the Impacts of ICT and Social Media: A Case Study of Pagadian City

Received: 16th January 2025; Revised: 30th June 2025 ;

Accepted: 30th June 2025 ; Available online: 30th July 2025

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Abstract

As cities in the Philippines transition toward e-governance, Pagadian City has adopted ICT and social media to enhance transparency and civic engagement. This study explores the role of the city's official Facebook page, Asenso Pagadian, as a platform for information dissemination and public participation. Using a qualitative case study approach and analysis of engagement metrics from January to December 2024, the findings show that digital platforms foster direct communication and participation among citizens. The results highlight social media's potential as a cost-effective and accessible tool for promoting accountable governance at the local level.

Keywords: Transparency, Civil Engagement, Social Media, ICT, Pagadian City

How to Cite: Earl Jhon R. Yray, Achmad N, Muhammad Y, Wahdania S. (2025). Promoting and Civil Engagement through the impacts of ICT and Social Media: A Case Study of Pagadian City. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial*, 24 (1): 53-66 (doi: 10.14710/jis.24.1.2025.53-66), [Online]

Permalink/DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14710/jis.24.1.2025.53-66>

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INTRODUCTION

E-governance offers a transformative approach to improving government service delivery and citizen engagement. The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and social media in public administration allows for more transparent and participatory governance. As noted by the UN (2007), global trends show that the use of ICTs and social media has expanded citizen access to government information and processes. Social media, in particular, has become an essential channel for governments to communicate, engage, and collaborate with their constituents (Cusack, 2016). This paper investigates the role of ICT and social media in advancing transparency and civic participation at the local level in Pagadian City, Philippines. This study aims to answer the following questions: (1) How do local government units in Pagadian use ICT and social media to promote transparency? (2) What kind of civic engagement is generated through the city's social media platforms?

E-governance provides a fresh system of the government to deliver efficient service to the people. According to the UN (2007) e-government development and the use of information and communications technology (ICT) and social media in the public sector are measured and benchmarked across the world by various assessment tools generated by universities, private organizations, and multilateral development agencies. More specifically, social media use in government has drastically altered society, taking over as the primary mode of communication and changing the nature of interactions between commercial and public sector organizations and their constituents. (Cusack, 2016). This innovation has become a vital tool to disseminate information and collect data

With that said, it is difficult to overestimate the reach and importance of social media, especially given how rapidly it is expanding in terms of the quantity and kinds of tools it introduces, participation levels, and its influence across a wide range of activities (Banaji, 2008). Most significantly for local government organizations, research shows that citizens who use government websites and interact with them

online exhibit higher rates of civic engagement and interactive participation in community affairs compared to those who do not use these online channels to access government (Kang & Gearhart, 2010). In addition, given the fact that social media is influential in any shape or form to any factors, other areas in which social media has been used to improve local government efficiency include fostering community development and inspiring citizens to seek civic enhancements (Belle et al., 2013), broadening access to public services (Caylor et al., 2010), and addressing public safety concerns (Avery et al., 2010).

Furthermore, with Pagadian City as the regional center of Zamboanga Peninsula. Designated as Region IX, by which consists of three provinces, namely, Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, and Zamboanga Sibugay, and the chartered and independent city of Zamboanga City and Pagadian City (Department of Agriculture R9, nd). It is given that regional offices that benefit different provinces and cities considering its distance from each other makes it efficient to use ICTs and social media to promote transparency and improve civil engagement and also will fill the gap to entertain queries before doing transactions on site for efficiency. From the traditional on-site bulletin board to transitioning to technology-based approach, this study will determine the impacts of the shift knowing that using social media is cost-effective and time-efficient from the traditional like we used to. According to Bertot et.al (2010), many people regard information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a cost-effective and simple way to improve openness and transparency while also reducing corruption.

Moreover, this study looks into the impacts of ICT and social media in promoting transparency and civil engagement through the lens of Agenda-Setting Theory. This study is beneficial by combining the results of previous studies that fit into this broad theoretical framework and give empirical evidence to the contribution of social media in this theory. The goal of this study is to investigate the impacts of ICT and social media at the local government level on enabling citizen engagement

and increasing government transparency, using a sample of local government organizations from Pagadian City that are well-known for their social media presence. In order to identify instances of excellent practice and comprehend the benefits and impacts of using social media in local government. This study looks at the sample's broader experiences using social media, including to what extent do the factors driving the organization's motivation to use social media, to what extent social media tools impact in promoting transparency and civil engagement. This will also look into the capacity and attitudes of employees in the government in making ends meet towards its constituents in delivering efficient services.

However, new challenges for local governments in terms of how to design and carry out a social media initiative or strategy that will accomplish organizational objectives, optimize value, reduce risks, and remove barriers to social media use. This study will analyze their capability in adopting change from this ever-evolving development through their services provided in this contemporary era.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews relevant literature on e-governance, the use of ICTs and social media in government, and the theoretical framework of agenda-setting as applied to local governance.

2.1 What Is E-Governance

The development of information and communication technology (ICT) has strengthened and enabled public administration sectors throughout the world by enabling revolutionary change in governmental operations to guarantee citizens receive services at a reasonable cost. The Bangladeshi government (GoB) has also made every effort to improve public sector efficiency. The implementation of e-government in public sectors across multiple nations has led to enhanced transparency by favorably influencing corruption control, decreasing the poverty rate and significantly enhancing ties between the public, private, and citizen sectors (Avi et.al, 2015).

This study examined how e-government is being adopted and implemented in Bangladesh. The current government of Bangladesh (GoB) is having a great deal of trouble enacting and advancing e-governance across the public sector. management. Complete e-governance adoption in rural areas is hampered by low public literacy, inadequate ICT infrastructure, natural disasters, unstable political environments, people's aversion to change, and a host of other issues of Bangladesh. Governments and non-governmental organizations, however, are working tirelessly to raise Bangladesh's general standard of living and make it a digitally advanced nation. As a result, it shows that government websites only provide information on the numbers and functions under consideration due to their reliance on antiquated e-governance models. Therefore, a larger survey of the target city's residents and users as well as its officials would be extremely helpful in identifying their expectations and perceived needs from the city's e-government. This will provide data to help support the claims of effective adaptation to e-governance in the local setting. (IGI Global, 2019)

2.2 Use of ICT and Social Media in Government

Governments all across the world are under increasing pressure to open up governance processes to public participation. Participatory forms of governance, such as citizen engagement, are widely accepted in the academic and non-academic sectors for their ability to produce better democratic decisions, resolve conflicts, increase public trust in government institutions, and foster collaboration between governments and the public in addressing difficult governance and development challenges (Chhotray and Stoker, 2009).

Moreover, the literature highlights the benefits of ICTs in increasing citizen engagement in decision-making and governance processes. Social media platforms, for example, have been proved to empower citizens, civic groups, and journalists to reach a large audience at little or no cost, as well as to provide new forms of activism and mobilization that can challenge repressive and authoritarian governments (Kyriakopoulou, 2011; Funk and Shahbaz, 2019). Furthermore, ICTs can both improve

public decision making and challenge fundamental assumptions about how democratic governments are organized (Kumar and Vragov, 2009). The report demonstrated how the Tanzanian government has used modern ICT to make its actions more transparent. This study will be beneficial to this paper for the following manifestation that ICTs play a major role in promoting civil engagement.

2.3 Impact of Social Media in Government

In the current digital era, social media has become an essential component of daily life, and government officials and agencies are no different. Social media has revolutionized citizen-government communication, from tweeting about policy updates to holding online town hall meetings. More than ever, governments worldwide are depending on social media as a means of communication since an increasing number of people use it frequently to interact with others, get news updates, and connect with others. Initially, public entities used social media as a communication channel for public service announcements to spread news and safety information. However, the role of social media in government communication is always changing. (Sear, 2023)

Public sector organizations arguably have a duty to adopt social media in order to provide the kinds of transparent and personalized services that businesses and citizens alike expect, given how prevalent social media is now in both the business and general public spheres. The use of these communication and engagement channels by governments yields significant benefits. These include increased efficiency in the provision of public services (both in routine and emergency situations), information and data generation, and the development of relationships based on trust that contribute to the restoration of public confidence in local government. In general, social media use is probably going to help local governments provide better services and make better use of taxpayer dollars (Cusack, 2016).

Moreover, the results of this study demonstrated how frequently local government organizations use social media, with nearly 90% of them reporting a "medium" or "high" level of presence. Out of the eighteen organizations that participated, four revealed that they take a "collaborative" stance when using social media, encouraging users to co-produce content and participate as partners in the formulation of public policy. Nearly all participants are achieving some level of citizen engagement through social media, as evidenced by the fact that over two thirds (68%, n=13) of the sample reported having a social media presence where interaction is bidirectional and information is both pushed out to our citizens as well as pulled in through the form of feedback (Sear, 2023). With that said, this study shows that effective use of social media tools will have a great impact in improving the transparency and civil engagement of local government organizations. This study will help to support the claims which can be made in the local setting.

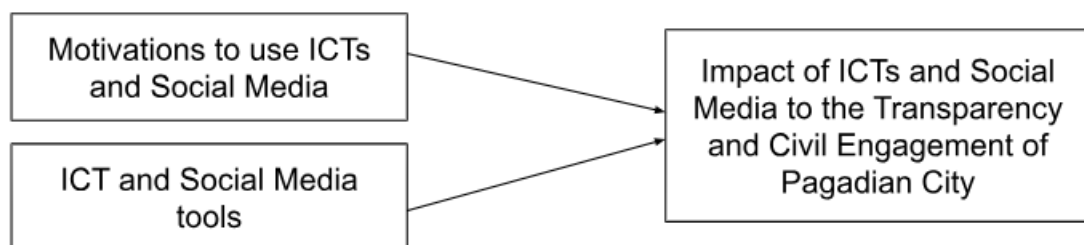
Figure 1. Theoretical Framework – Source: Created by Author

3. Research Method

This study utilizes a qualitative research approach through content analysis of social media analytics from the Asenso Pagadian Facebook page. Engagement data from January to December 2024 were collected to explore how ICT and social media platforms facilitate transparency and civic engagement. The explanatory case study design helps to understand the local government's strategy and its effect on citizens' online interactions.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

In reference to Figure 1 and the theoretical framework, this study will



highlight the impacts of ICTs and social media in promoting transparency and civil engagement in Pagadian City. With this, local government offices of Pagadian City, the regional center of Zamboanga del Sur will be the subject of analysis.

3.2 Research Questions

RQ1: How do local government units in Pagadian use ICT and social media to promote transparency?

RQ2: What kind of civic engagement is generated through the city's social media platforms?

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

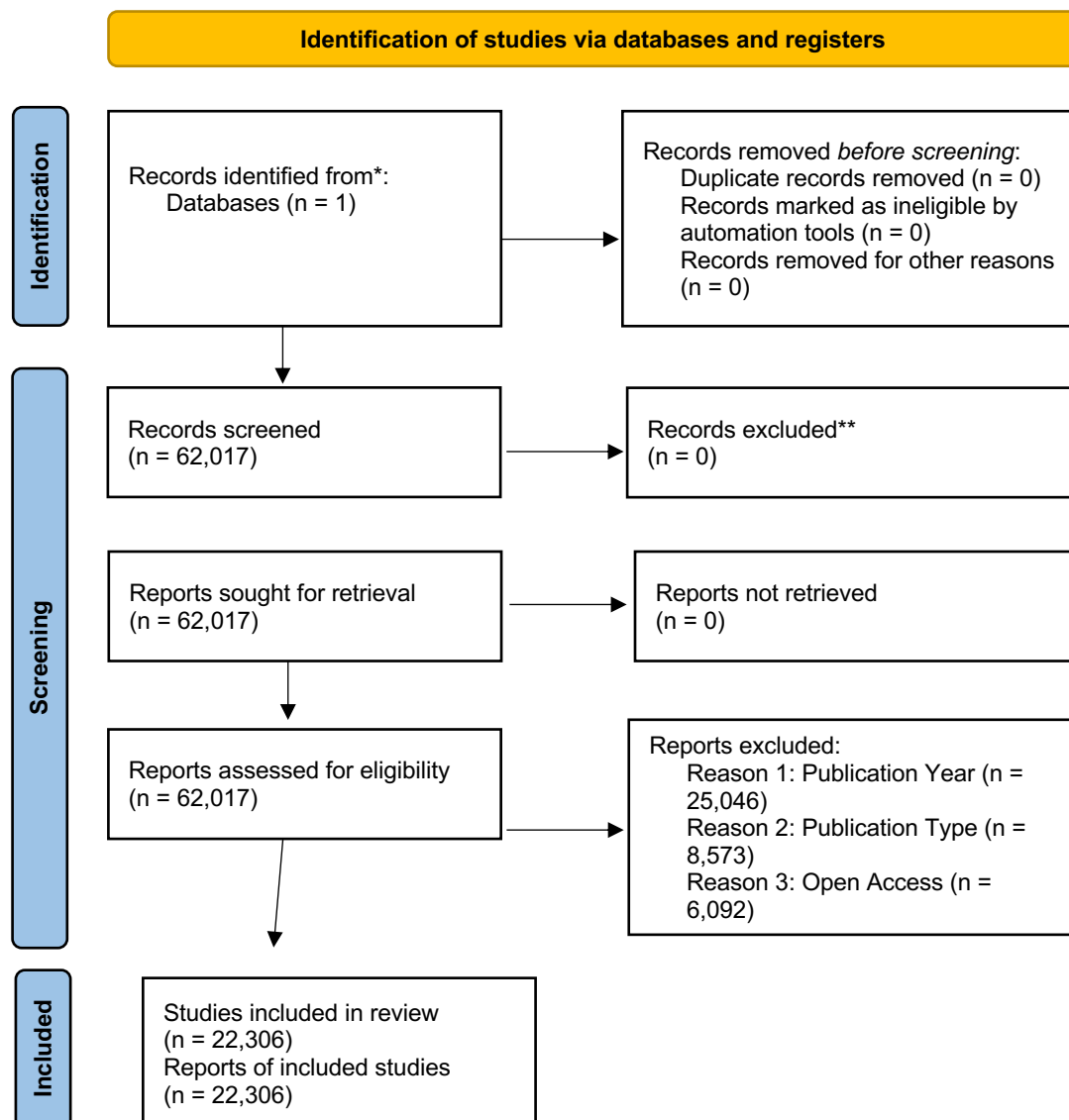


Figure 2. PRISMA Diagram – Source: Created by Author

In figure 2, it shows the number of studies existed in Dimensions.Ai. This data was extracted out from the existing literature about “E-Governance”. 22,306 came out related and can be used to support this study with e-governance being the common denominator.

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The data was collected from the Pagadian City Information Office. The researchers sent a letter to request data from their server in order to analyze how the use of social media impacts citizens of Pagadian City through the use of ICT and social media. The data were gathered through the Meta analytics where engagements and reach were recovered in order to compare and contrast each month to determine the impacts of ICT specifically social media in the case of Pagadian City. Moreover, the data were being analyzed based on engagement reports from January to December of 2024.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

In the height of technological advancement where social media becomes a mainstream media more than ever, local government organizations took the chance to create an avenue where transparency and civil engagement can be accessible and observed in every way of their operations.

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Month	Post Reach	Post Engagements
January	393,690	82,940
February	433,237	124,619
March	559,189	99,689
April	679, 626	85,789
May	840,796	88,978
June	1,339,837	189,895
July	948,982	152,690
August	689,906	98,078
September	775,960	78,036
October	903,912	152,067
November	1,076,142	159,385
December as of 12/05/24	340,389	124,987

Figure 3. Asenso Pagadian Facebook Page Insights

Source: Asenso Pagadian Facebook Page

4.2 Findings

With the data shown above, considering the population of Pagadian City, Zamboanga del Sur it manifests that Asenso Pagadian Facebook page is gaining more traction than its population. With consideration also to the wide audience social media can reach, some other nearby cities can subscribe to the page and at some point, engage with it. According to Sear (2023), social media has become an essential component of daily life in the current digital era, and government officials and agencies are no exception. From tweeting about policy updates to hosting online town hall meetings, social media has transformed citizen-government communication. Postings of the Asenso Pagadian Facebook page vary on updates, celebrations, alerts, notices, and notable events which can basically get traction based on the data.

Moreover, on June 2024 data, it shows that the reach of the page during this time was at its peak with 1,339,837 and 189,895 engagements with postings from their Pagadian City Fiesta celebration. It manifested that with social media presence, their activities were successfully promoted and executed with transparency and civil engagement highlighted. In a study of Poncian (2020) with initiatives that are being done through the use of ICT and social media, these are commendable efforts, especially given that information provision is a fundamental component of citizen engagement. Understandably, citizen engagement cannot take place unless citizens have access to information.

In this paper with the data provided, it shows that the use of ICT and social media is beneficial both to the local government unit of Pagadian City and the citizens of it. With the number of engagements their page gets, it manifests its effectiveness and purpose which is to inform, gather, and engage. Moreover, Pagadian City should also invest in media literacy and promote proper use of social media references and sources for nowadays, fake news is more rampant than can challenge their operations in promoting transparency and civil engagement.

5. Conclusion

The findings from this study suggest that the use of ICT and social media significantly contributes to transparency and civic engagement in Pagadian City. Social media platforms such as Asenso Pagadian have enabled real-time information dissemination and increased opportunities for citizen interaction. However, while online engagement is high, structured mechanisms for two-way dialogue are still needed to deepen participatory governance. This study is limited by its reliance on social media data without direct input from citizens or government officials. Future studies should consider qualitative interviews or surveys to further validate the impact of digital tools in local governance.

6. Acknowledgement

The research work of this article was supported by Jusuf Kalla School of Government, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. The researcher would like to express his immense gratitude to his supporters, who have provided all the necessary insight and expertise to assist in this research.

7. Funding

The authors of the paper reported that there is no funding associated with the work featured in the article.

8. Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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