



# Social Media Communication and Public Trust in Local Government (A Study of Government Communication in Bandung City)

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INFO ARTIKEL	ABSTRACT
<p>Submitted: 2025-11-24  Revised: 2025-11-27  Accepted: 2025-12-30  Published: 2026-01-23</p> <p><b>Keywords</b>  Social Media Communication,  Public Trust, Local Government,  Government Communication,  Digital Governance</p>	<p><i>The development of social media has significantly transformed government communication practices in the digital era. Local governments increasingly utilize social media platforms to disseminate information, engage with citizens, and strengthen transparency in governance. Social media allows government institutions to communicate more directly with the public and respond to community concerns more quickly. This study aims to examine the role of social media communication in shaping public trust in local government institutions, with a focus on government communication practices in Bandung City, Indonesia. The study adopts a qualitative case study approach to explore how local government agencies use social media platforms to deliver public information and interact with citizens. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with government communication officers and community members, as well as document analysis and observation of official government social media accounts. The findings indicate that social media communication has improved the accessibility of government information and increased citizen engagement in local governance. Interactive communication through social media enables citizens to provide feedback and participate in discussions related to public issues. In addition, government responsiveness to citizen inquiries through social media contributes to strengthening public trust in government institutions. However, challenges such as misinformation, digital literacy disparities, and limitations in managing online interactions remain important issues that need to be addressed. The study highlights the importance of effective communication strategies and institutional capacity in maximizing the potential of social media as a tool for strengthening public trust and improving government-citizen relationships.</i></p>
<p><b>Kata Kunci</b>  Komunikasi Media Sosial,  Kepercayaan Publik, Pemerintah  Daerah, Komunikasi Pemerintah,  Tata Kelola Digital</p>	<p><b>Abstrak</b></p> <p>Perkembangan media sosial telah membawa perubahan signifikan dalam praktik komunikasi pemerintah di era digital. Pemerintah daerah semakin memanfaatkan platform media sosial untuk menyebarkan informasi, berinteraksi dengan masyarakat, serta meningkatkan transparansi dalam penyelenggaraan pemerintahan. Media sosial memungkinkan institusi pemerintah untuk berkomunikasi secara lebih langsung dengan masyarakat dan merespons berbagai permasalahan publik dengan lebih cepat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran komunikasi media sosial dalam membentuk kepercayaan publik terhadap institusi pemerintah daerah dengan fokus pada praktik komunikasi pemerintah di Kota Bandung, Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif untuk memahami bagaimana instansi pemerintah daerah memanfaatkan platform media sosial dalam menyampaikan informasi publik dan berinteraksi dengan masyarakat. Data penelitian diperoleh melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan pejabat pemerintah yang mengelola komunikasi publik serta masyarakat yang mengakses informasi pemerintah melalui media sosial. Selain itu, analisis dokumen dan observasi terhadap akun media sosial resmi pemerintah juga dilakukan untuk mendukung data penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi pemerintah melalui media sosial mampu meningkatkan aksesibilitas informasi publik serta mendorong keterlibatan masyarakat dalam proses pemerintahan daerah. Komunikasi interaktif yang terjadi di media sosial memungkinkan masyarakat memberikan masukan, kritik, maupun saran terkait berbagai isu publik. Responsivitas pemerintah dalam menanggapi pertanyaan dan keluhan masyarakat melalui media sosial juga berkontribusi dalam meningkatkan kepercayaan publik terhadap institusi pemerintah. Namun demikian, masih terdapat beberapa tantangan seperti penyebaran informasi yang tidak akurat, kesenjangan literasi digital di kalangan masyarakat, serta keterbatasan kapasitas institusi pemerintah dalam mengelola interaksi di media sosial. Oleh karena itu, strategi komunikasi yang efektif serta penguatan kapasitas institusional menjadi penting untuk</p>

memaksimalkan pemanfaatan media sosial dalam meningkatkan kepercayaan publik dan memperkuat hubungan antara pemerintah dan masyarakat

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## INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technologies has significantly transformed the relationship between governments and citizens. In recent years, digital platforms have increasingly been used by government institutions to disseminate information, interact with citizens, and strengthen public engagement. The emergence of social media has created new opportunities for governments to communicate with the public in a more interactive and responsive manner (Mergel, 2020; Bonsón, Royo, & Ratkai, 2017).

Government communication plays an important role in shaping public perceptions of government performance and institutional credibility. Effective communication strategies enable governments to inform citizens about public policies, development programs, and public services. In addition, transparent communication practices can strengthen public trust in government institutions and encourage greater citizen participation in governance processes (Grimmelikhuisen & Meijer, 2014).

Social media platforms have become one of the most influential communication tools used by government institutions in the digital era. Unlike traditional mass media, social media allows for two-way communication between governments and citizens. Through social media platforms, governments can deliver information quickly, receive feedback from the public, and engage in discussions regarding public issues (Mergel, 2013). This interactive communication environment allows citizens to become active participants in governance processes rather than passive recipients of government information.

The use of social media in public administration has also been associated with improved transparency and accountability. Digital communication platforms allow governments to share information about policies, programs, and service delivery processes more openly. By providing timely and accessible information through social media, government institutions can improve the transparency of their administrative activities and strengthen their relationship with the public (Bertot, Jaeger, & Grimes, 2010).

In the Indonesian context, the use of social media by government institutions has increased significantly over the past decade. Many national and regional government agencies have adopted

social media platforms as part of their public communication strategies. These platforms are used to disseminate information about public policies, development programs, and government services to wider audiences. Social media has also become an important channel for government institutions to respond to public feedback and address community concerns (Kurniawan & Lestari, 2020).

At the local government level, social media communication plays an important role in improving the accessibility of government information and strengthening engagement between government institutions and citizens. Local governments are responsible for delivering public services directly to communities, making effective communication strategies particularly important in building trust and maintaining positive relationships with citizens (Meijer & Torenvlied, 2016).

One example of active government communication through social media can be observed in Bandung City, West Java. The Bandung City government has actively utilized social media platforms as part of its digital communication strategy to disseminate information about government programs, public services, and urban development initiatives. Through official social media accounts managed by government agencies, the Bandung government regularly communicates with citizens and shares updates related to city administration.

The adoption of social media communication by the Bandung City government reflects broader efforts to modernize government communication practices in the digital era. Social media platforms enable government institutions to reach wider audiences and provide real-time updates regarding public policies and service programs. In addition, citizens can use these platforms to submit complaints, suggestions, and feedback directly to government institutions.

However, the increasing use of social media in government communication also presents several challenges. Government institutions must ensure that information shared through digital platforms is accurate, reliable, and consistent with official government policies. In addition, managing social media communication requires institutional capacity, trained personnel, and effective communication strategies to handle public interactions in online environments (Criado, Sandoval-Almazan, & Gil-Garcia, 2013).

Another important issue related to social media communication in government is its relationship with public trust. Public trust is an essential element of effective governance because it influences citizens' willingness to cooperate with government institutions and participate in public programs. Government communication through social media can influence public trust depending on how citizens perceive the transparency, credibility, and responsiveness of government information (Grimmelikhuisen, Porumbescu, Hong, & Im, 2013).

Although social media has become an important tool in government communication strategies, research examining how social media communication influences public trust in local government institutions remains limited, particularly in the Indonesian context. Many previous studies have focused on digital government initiatives at the national level, while fewer studies have explored the role of social media communication in shaping public trust at the local government level.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of social media communication in shaping public trust in local government institutions, with a focus on government communication practices in Bandung City. By analyzing how government agencies utilize social media platforms and how citizens perceive these communication efforts, this research seeks to provide deeper insights into the relationship between digital government communication and public trust in local governance.

## **METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the role of social media communication in shaping public trust in local government institutions in Bandung City. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows for a deeper understanding of how government communication through social media is perceived by citizens and how local government institutions manage digital communication strategies in practice. Through this approach, the study seeks to capture the perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of both government officials and community members regarding the use of social media as a communication tool in public administration.

The research design adopts a case study approach focusing on the Bandung City government. The case study method is appropriate for examining complex social and administrative phenomena within a specific context (Yin, 2018). Bandung City was selected as the research locus because the local government has actively utilized social media platforms as part of its digital communication strategy. Official government social media accounts are frequently used to disseminate information related to public services, development programs, and community activities, making Bandung City an appropriate setting for studying government communication practices in the digital era.

Data were collected through several qualitative data collection techniques. The primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews with key informants who are directly involved in government communication activities or who interact with government social media platforms. These informants included government officials responsible for managing public communication and social media accounts, staff members in public relations departments, and citizens who actively access government information through social media. Purposive sampling was used to select

informants who possess relevant knowledge and experience regarding the use of social media in government communication (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In addition to interviews, document analysis was conducted to review official government publications, communication policies, and digital content posted on the Bandung City government's official social media accounts. This analysis helped identify the types of information shared by the government, communication strategies used in social media posts, and patterns of interaction between government institutions and citizens in digital platforms.

To complement these methods, observations of government social media activities were also carried out. This observation focused on how government institutions present information, respond to citizen comments, and engage with the public through digital platforms. Observing these interactions provided additional insights into the communication dynamics between government institutions and citizens in the digital environment.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. This analytical method involves organizing and coding qualitative data, identifying recurring themes, and interpreting patterns that emerge from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through thematic analysis, the study identified key themes related to government communication strategies, citizen engagement, transparency practices, and the role of social media in shaping public trust.

To ensure the credibility and reliability of the research findings, this study applied data triangulation by comparing information obtained from interviews, document analysis, and social media observations. Triangulation helps strengthen the validity of qualitative research findings by ensuring that conclusions are supported by multiple sources of evidence (Denzin, 2017). Through this methodological approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media communication contributes to the development of public trust in local government institutions in Bandung City.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study reveal several patterns regarding how social media communication conducted by the Bandung City government influences public perception and trust toward local government institutions. Through interviews with government officials and community members, as well as observations of government social media platforms, the study identified several important dimensions of digital government communication, including information dissemination strategies,

citizen interaction, responsiveness to public issues, and the perceived credibility of government communication.

### **Government Social Media as a Public Information Channel**

One of the most visible roles of social media in Bandung City government communication is its function as a primary channel for disseminating public information. Government agencies frequently use social media platforms to share updates related to development programs, policy announcements, public service schedules, and community activities. These platforms allow government institutions to distribute information rapidly and reach a broader audience compared to conventional communication channels.

The presence of official government accounts on platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook has enabled the Bandung City government to communicate with citizens more dynamically. Citizens are able to obtain information regarding government programs in real time, which helps improve public awareness of government activities. This form of communication also contributes to greater transparency in local governance because government institutions regularly publish updates about public programs and administrative initiatives.

### **Interactive Communication and Citizen Engagement**

Another important finding of this study relates to the interactive nature of communication between the government and citizens through social media platforms. Unlike traditional communication channels, social media allows citizens to respond directly to government posts by commenting, asking questions, or expressing opinions about public policies.

This interactive communication environment creates opportunities for increased citizen engagement in local governance. Citizens can participate in public discussions and provide feedback regarding government services or development programs. From the perspective of government officials, social media interactions also provide valuable insights into public concerns and community expectations.

Government communication officers indicated that monitoring citizen feedback on social media helps government institutions understand community needs more effectively. As a result, social media not only functions as a communication tool but also becomes an informal channel for collecting public input in governance processes.

### **Responsiveness and Crisis Communication**

The study also found that social media plays an important role in enabling government responsiveness, particularly in responding to public complaints or emerging issues in the community. Citizens often use social media to report problems related to infrastructure, public

services, or community safety. These reports are sometimes addressed by government institutions through public responses on social media platforms.

This responsiveness is perceived positively by many citizens because it creates the impression that government institutions are attentive and responsive to public concerns. When government agencies respond quickly to citizen inquiries or complaints, it strengthens the perception that the government is actively engaged in addressing community issues.

In addition, social media communication is frequently used during situations that require rapid dissemination of information, such as public service disruptions, emergency announcements, or policy updates. In these situations, social media platforms allow the government to provide timely information that can help citizens make informed decisions.

### **Public Perception of Government Credibility**

The credibility of government communication is another factor that influences how citizens interpret information shared through social media. Interview results indicate that citizens tend to trust information that is delivered through verified official government accounts. The presence of official social media accounts helps citizens distinguish credible information from misinformation that may circulate on other online platforms.

However, some respondents also expressed that the level of trust in government communication depends on the consistency and clarity of information provided. When government institutions communicate openly and provide clear explanations regarding policies or public issues, citizens are more likely to perceive government communication as reliable and trustworthy.

The credibility of government communication is also strengthened when government institutions demonstrate transparency in addressing public concerns. Citizens tend to develop greater trust when government agencies provide honest explanations regarding policy decisions or challenges faced in public service delivery.

### **Limitations and Communication Challenges**

Despite the advantages of social media communication, the study also identified several limitations associated with its use in government communication. One challenge relates to the management of large volumes of public interactions on social media platforms. Government communication teams must monitor numerous comments and messages from citizens, which requires significant time and administrative capacity.

Another challenge involves the potential spread of misinformation or misinterpretation of government messages on social media. Digital communication environments allow information to

spread rapidly, and government institutions must ensure that the information they share is accurate and clearly communicated to prevent misunderstandings among the public.

Additionally, not all segments of society actively use social media platforms, which means that digital communication strategies may not reach all citizens equally. Some residents, particularly older individuals or those living in areas with limited internet access, may still rely on traditional communication channels to obtain government information.

### **Implications for Government Communication Strategy**

The findings of this study highlight the growing importance of social media as a strategic communication tool in local governance. Social media platforms enable governments to communicate with citizens more directly, increase transparency, and strengthen engagement with the public.

For the Bandung City government, the effective use of social media can contribute to stronger public trust and improved government-citizen relationships. However, maximizing the benefits of digital communication requires well-developed communication strategies, trained communication personnel, and continuous monitoring of public responses on digital platforms.

Local governments must also ensure that social media communication is integrated with broader public communication strategies. Combining digital platforms with traditional communication channels can help ensure that government information reaches a wider range of citizens.

Overall, social media communication represents an important innovation in modern government communication practices. When managed effectively, it can support more transparent governance, enhance citizen participation, and strengthen public trust in government institutions.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study examined the role of social media communication in shaping public trust in local government institutions, with a focus on government communication practices in Bandung City. The findings indicate that social media has become an important communication tool for local governments in delivering public information, interacting with citizens, and strengthening transparency in governance processes. Through the use of digital platforms, government institutions are able to communicate more quickly and reach wider audiences compared to traditional communication channels.

The study shows that social media enables local governments to disseminate information regarding public policies, development programs, and public services in a more accessible and

timely manner. This improved accessibility allows citizens to obtain government information more easily and stay informed about administrative activities. As a result, social media communication contributes to greater transparency in public administration and enhances citizens' awareness of government initiatives.

Another important finding is that the interactive nature of social media communication encourages greater citizen engagement in local governance. Citizens are able to express opinions, provide feedback, and raise concerns directly through digital platforms. This interaction creates opportunities for more participatory governance and allows government institutions to better understand the needs and expectations of the community.

Furthermore, the responsiveness of government institutions in addressing citizen concerns through social media plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions of government performance. When government agencies respond promptly to public inquiries and complaints, citizens tend to perceive government institutions as more attentive and accountable. This responsiveness can strengthen the relationship between the government and the community, ultimately contributing to the development of public trust.

However, the study also identifies several challenges associated with the use of social media in government communication. Managing large volumes of online interactions, addressing misinformation, and ensuring that communication remains clear and consistent are important issues that government institutions must address. In addition, differences in digital access among citizens indicate that social media communication should complement rather than replace traditional forms of government communication.

Overall, the findings suggest that social media communication has the potential to strengthen public trust in local government institutions when it is implemented effectively. By providing transparent information, encouraging citizen participation, and responding actively to public concerns, local governments can use social media as a strategic communication tool to support more open and responsive governance. The experience of Bandung City illustrates how digital communication platforms can contribute to improving government-citizen relationships and strengthening democratic governance at the local level.

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