



Utilization of Instagram as An Instrument of Public Policy Transparency: A Case Study of The Palangka Raya City Government

***Refa Asmianur¹, Taufiqurokhman², Evi Satispi³, Andriansyah⁴,
Akwila T.A Awan⁵**

^{1,2,3} Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia

***Email: reffaasmianur9@gmail.com**

Abstract

The rapid development of digital communication has encouraged local governments to use social media to strengthen public policy transparency. Instagram, as a visually oriented and interactive platform, is increasingly adopted to disseminate policy information and public service messages. This study examines how the Palangka Raya City Government uses Instagram to support public policy transparency by focusing on: (1) the types of policy information communicated and their framing, (2) the dominant communication strategy pattern (push, pull, or networked), and (3) the implications of these practices for citizen interaction and perceived transparency. The study adopts a purposive case approach and qualitative content analysis. Data were drawn from peer-reviewed academic literature, official local government documents, publicly accessible Instagram content from relevant official accounts, and supporting news coverage (2019–2024). The analysis assessed informational completeness (why–what–how–so what), communication strategies, and observable interaction cues (e.g., questions, complaints, clarifications, and visible responses). The findings indicate that Instagram contributes to transparency mainly by increasing policy visibility and providing basic informational access. Substantive transparency is more evident in service-oriented posts that offer actionable guidance and link citizens to formal disclosure and complaint mechanisms such as KIP/PPID and SP4N-LAPOR. However, communication remains predominantly push-oriented, while pull-based interaction is limited and networked collaboration is largely absent. Consequently, digital transparency tends to emphasize information dissemination rather than demonstrably meaningful participation, and any implications for public trust are discussed as inferences rather than directly measured outcomes.

Keywords: *Instagram; public policy; transparency; local government; digital governance*

A. Introduction

Transparency is widely recognized as a core principle of good governance because it enables citizens to access and evaluate information about public policies and governmental actions. Rather than simply making information available, transparency requires that policy information be presented in ways that citizens can access, understand, and use to scrutinize governmental decisions. Conceptually, this includes openness of information, accessibility, and the provision of accurate and timely data (Hood, 2006).

The OECD (2017) similarly emphasizes transparency as a condition in which government information is available and accessible, allowing citizens to understand how policies are formulated and implemented. In Indonesia, the normative foundation for this principle is reinforced by Law Number 14 of 2008 on Public Information Disclosure (KIP). Accordingly, transparency strengthens accountability by enabling public oversight, reducing information asymmetry between government and citizens, and increasing the legitimacy of policy decisions.

In public policy practice, transparency is expected to improve decision-making quality by allowing citizens to understand policy rationales, evaluate alternatives, and anticipate impacts. Rahman (2016) emphasizes that transparency supports a participatory environment because citizens are more likely to engage when they have sufficient access to information. However, transparency is meaningful only when openness produces public understanding and facilitates scrutiny, rather than functioning as a formalistic display of information. This distinction is central because the channel through which policy information is communicated affects the clarity, reach, and perceived credibility of public information.

The eligibility of public information publication is closely linked to government accountability in providing information to citizens (Salsabila & Kumala, 2022). Yusmanizar et al. (2020) argue that transparency can contribute to strengthening mutual trust by ensuring that policy information is complete and easily accessible. At the same time, public expectations toward transparency have grown alongside digital technology, which enables citizens to obtain, compare, and disseminate information rapidly. Consequently, many public institutions have adopted digital platforms not only to broadcast information but also to open spaces for interaction, feedback, and public monitoring.

Participation in policy processes may vary in depth and influence. Arnstein (1969) conceptualizes participation through a “ladder,” ranging from non-participation, tokenism, to citizen power. Social media can provide new participatory spaces because citizens can respond to policies, voice critiques and suggestions, and share policy information to wider audiences. Yet interactivity alone does not guarantee meaningful participation; digital engagement may remain at the level of tokenism when citizen input is not substantively considered in deliberation or follow-up. Therefore, the analytical focus should address both the availability of policy information and the quality of government responsiveness in digital spaces.

Social media has become a prominent instrument for policy communication because it enables rapid, interactive, and wide-reaching dissemination of information. Governments use social media to share policy messages, shape public perceptions, and establish dialogue with citizens. Mergel (2013) identifies three patterns of governmental social media use: push (one-way information dissemination), pull (inviting engagement), and networked (collaborative interaction between government and citizens). Among various platforms, Instagram is increasingly used by public institutions due to its visual orientation and features that support concise communication and public interaction (e.g.,

comment threads, stories, reels, and live broadcasts). In the framework of new media theory, as discussed by McQuail (2010), social media constitutes a form of new media characterized by interactivity, speed, and the possibility of real-time communication. Accordingly, Instagram can be positioned not only as an information outlet but as a governance tool that potentially strengthens transparency and accountability—provided that communication is substantive and responsive.

The Palangka Raya City Government is among local governments that actively utilize social media, particularly through its official Instagram account managed by the Department of Communication, Informatics, Statistics, and Cryptography (Diskominfo). This account is used to convey information about policies, development programs, public service activities, and responses to current public issues. Citizens can submit complaints, questions, and aspirations through the platform, which may then be routed to relevant agencies through formal follow-up mechanisms (e.g., PPID and SP4N-LAPOR), depending on institutional response routines. This makes the Palangka Raya case relevant for examining how local governments operationalize digital transparency in day-to-day policy communication.

However, the extent to which municipal Instagram communication provides substantively complete policy information and enables observable feedback loops remains underexplored, particularly when assessed through informational completeness and push–pull–networked strategy patterns. In practice, policy-related posts may be limited to announcements without sufficient context (e.g., rationale, objectives, implementation mechanisms, and expected impacts), and interactions may not be managed consistently. From a transparency perspective, this may create a gap between “opaque transparency” (formal openness with limited informational value) and “clear transparency” (openness that enables public understanding and oversight). Moreover, citizen participation through social media depends heavily on how government institutions facilitate dialogue, respond to criticism, and provide feedback loops that demonstrate whether public input is acknowledged and acted upon.

Based on this background, this study explores how the Palangka Raya City Government uses Instagram as an instrument of public policy transparency. Specifically, the study examines, first, what types of policy information are communicated and how they are framed. Second, what communication strategy pattern (push, pull, or networked) is most dominant, and third, the implications of these practices for citizen interaction, perceived transparency, and plausible trust dynamics (discussed as inferences rather than directly measured outcomes).

B. Methods

This study employs a qualitative literature review combined with a purposive case study to examine the utilization of Instagram as an instrument of public policy transparency in the Palangka Raya City Government. The literature review drew on peer-reviewed national and international journal articles identified through targeted keyword searches and backward/forward citation checks, then screened for relevance to the

research objectives and synthesized to identify dominant concepts, empirical patterns, and analytical indicators for assessing transparency and citizen interaction in digital governance contexts.

The case study was selected purposively because Palangka Raya represents a local government that actively uses digital channels for public communication. The study focuses on 2019–2024 to capture variations in municipal Instagram communication practices across multiple administrative periods and issue contexts. Case-study data were drawn from: (1) official local government documents (regulations, activity reports, press releases, and open data), (2) posts from the official Instagram account of the Palangka Raya City Government published within the study period, and (3) relevant local and national news coverage. All materials were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, with Instagram posts as the primary unit of analysis. Coding focused on (a) informational completeness (why–what–how–so what), (b) dominant communication strategy patterns (push/pull/networked), and (c) observable interaction cues (e.g., questions, complaints, clarifications, and visible responses).

C. Results and Discussion

1. Policy Information Communicated on Instagram and Its Framing

Studies on government social media consistently show that local institutions tend to use digital platforms primarily to increase visibility, disseminate announcements, and document administrative routines, while more detailed policy explanation is often less prominent (Bonsón et al., 2015; Mergel, 2013). From a transparency perspective, the key issue is not only whether information is posted, but whether it is sufficiently accessible and informative to help citizens understand policy rationales, implementation mechanisms, and expected impacts (Hood, 2006; Meijer, 2014). In this study, the assessment of policy transparency on Instagram therefore focuses on two related dimensions. First, it examines the *types of policy information* communicated and how content is framed. Second, it evaluates *informational completeness*, particularly whether posts provide the “why–what–how–so what” elements that enable comprehension, evaluation, and public oversight (Grimmelikhuijsen & Welch, 2012; Hood, 2006; Meijer, 2014).

Against this analytical benchmark, the policy-related communication on the Palangka Raya City Government’s Instagram ecosystem indicates that Instagram is primarily used as a policy visibility and outreach channel, with content dominated by visually oriented announcements, documentation of administrative activities, and service information. Across the publicly accessible posts reviewed, a recurring emphasis appears on government coordination and oversight activities, such as monitoring and evaluation (monev) and other administrative routines, which often communicate governance as institutional activity rather than as a policy process that is open to public scrutiny. This orientation mirrors patterns widely reported in studies of local government social media, where platforms are frequently used for outward-facing broadcasting rather than for substantive policy explanation (Bonsón et al., 2015; Mergel, 2013).

When assessed through informational completeness, policy-related posts generally provide basic descriptive elements, including what is happening, who is involved, and when it takes place. Service-oriented posts are comparatively stronger in delivering actionable information. For instance, one post in the municipal account communicates the provision of free installation of transaction recording devices for businesses, an example of content that supplies practical guidance and reduces information asymmetry by informing citizens of a concrete service offer. Similarly, posts related to public complaint mechanisms and information disclosure highlight access pathways for citizens, including references to SP4N-LAPOR and Keterbukaan Informasi Publik (KIP). However, systematic explanation of policy rationale (why), implementation mechanisms (how), and expected impacts (so what) is not consistently visible in the publicly accessible materials, especially for development-oriented or regulatory issues. From a transparency perspective, this pattern aligns with opaque or formal transparency, where information is disclosed but not consistently accompanied by sufficient context to support informed public evaluation (Grimmelikhuijsen & Welch, 2012; Hood, 2006; Meijer, 2014).

In terms of framing, the content can be categorized into activity-centric and policy or service-centric communication. Activity-centric posts dominate and typically frame government performance through meetings, visits, and evaluation events, content that strengthens institutional presence but often lacks policy narrative depth. By contrast, policy or service-centric posts, particularly those describing public services or citizen-facing mechanisms, more directly support substantive transparency because they provide actionable information, including procedures, channels, and service access. This distinction matters because transparency that is perceived as useful and actionable is more strongly associated with trust-building dynamics than transparency that is primarily symbolic or promotional (Porumbescu, 2017).

A further indicator of substantive transparency is whether Instagram communication is connected to formal disclosure infrastructure. In the Palangka Raya case, the existence of PPID-focused communication in the local information environment reinforces the institutional basis for transparency. Publicly indexed PPID-related posts emphasize that citizens can access “informasi resmi” and request documentation through PPID mechanisms, suggesting that Instagram is complemented by formal information-disclosure pathways. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of this ecosystem for transparency depends on the consistency of linking posts to verifiable sources, such as PPID documents, regulations, or service SOPs, and on providing clarifications that help citizens understand not only what the government does, but also the policy logic behind it. This aligns with digital transparency scholarship emphasizing that transparency becomes meaningful when it enables comprehension, evaluation, and oversight, not merely access to fragments of information (Grimmelikhuijsen & Welch, 2012; Hood, 2006; Meijer, 2014).

The findings indicate that Instagram strengthens transparency in Palangka Raya mainly through policy visibility and basic informational access, while substantive

transparency is more evident in service-oriented posts and in content connected to formal disclosure mechanisms (KIP/PPID). Thus, the transparency contribution of Instagram is shaped less by posting frequency and more by framing and informational completeness, especially the provision of rationale, implementation details, and verifiable reference points that allow citizens to monitor and evaluate policy actions (Meijer, 2014; Porumbescu, 2017).

2. Dominant Communication Strategy: Push, Pull, or Networked

Studies in the Indonesian context suggest that government social media accounts, including Instagram, are often managed primarily to disseminate information and enhance institutional visibility, while consistent two-way interaction and collaborative engagement tend to be more limited. Research on local governments in Indonesia shows that although content about governmental activities is commonly produced, it often generates relatively low engagement, and interaction is strongly shaped by content format and presentation choices (Santoso et al., 2020). Similar patterns are also reported in content analyses of Indonesian government Instagram accounts, where posting practices frequently prioritize informational updates and institutional messaging, while interactive practices are less systematically developed (Nugraha et al., 2024). This literature provides an interpretive benchmark for assessing whether Instagram communication in the Palangka Raya case is dominated by one-way broadcasting, limited engagement invitations, or more collaborative networked practices.

The empirical pattern observed from the official Instagram presence of the Palangka Raya City Government indicates that communication is largely oriented toward broadcasting policy- and service-related information, consistent with the push strategy described in government social media adoption frameworks (Mergel, 2013) and widely observed in Indonesian government social media practices. This is reflected in the account's emphasis on disseminating announcements and documenting administrative activities. Posts indexed publicly show recurring content that reports coordination meetings, monitoring and evaluation activities, and official ceremonies, communication forms that prioritize one-way information delivery and institutional visibility. Such practices are widely documented in the local e-government literature as a common tendency of public institutions to use social media primarily for outward-facing communication rather than deliberative engagement (Bonsón et al., 2015; Meijer & Thaens, 2018). The Indonesian evidence aligns with this interpretation, indicating that activity-oriented content is common but does not automatically translate into deeper engagement outcomes (Santoso et al., 2020; Nugraha et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, limited elements of a pull strategy are visible through posts that contain direct calls for public action, particularly in service outreach and event participation. For example, Diskominfo's publicly indexed posts include explicit invitations such as "ayo datang dan kunjungi stand...," indicating attempts to mobilize citizens' attention and attendance. Service-oriented communication also appears in posts such as the public message offering free installation of transaction recording devices to

support local tax administration, which provides actionable guidance for citizens and businesses. However, these pull signals are mostly mobilizational, inviting attendance or uptake of services, rather than deliberative, inviting discussion on policy options, trade-offs, or evaluation. This matters because interaction in itself does not guarantee meaningful participation; it may remain at the level of tokenism when citizens' input is not institutionally incorporated into decision-making processes (Arnstein, 1969). Indonesian case-based evidence also indicates that two-way communication can improve public service functions when interaction is supported by clearer routines and response management, but such capacity requires deliberate operationalization rather than merely posting content (Aji et al., 2023).

Evidence of a networked strategy, where government and citizens collaborate as partners in agenda-setting, co-creation, or shared problem-solving, was not consistently apparent in the publicly accessible materials reviewed. In the sampled indexed posts, there were no consistent indicators of feedback loops, such as structured consultation threads, reporting back "what we heard and what we changed," or documented incorporation of citizen proposals. This finding supports broader arguments that the transformative potential of social media in government is often constrained by organizational routines and communication norms, resulting in digital channels that replicate conventional top-down governance practices (Meijer, 2014; Mergel, 2013). Comparable observations appear in Indonesian Instagram studies, where engagement is often associated with content type and visibility, while co-creation and public reporting of how citizen input shapes decisions remain relatively rare (Sukma & Aji, 2024). In service communication contexts, Indonesian public-sector Instagram accounts may facilitate outreach and procedural information, yet they do not necessarily demonstrate collaborative governance features unless feedback mechanisms are deliberately structured (Ikhsanto & Rahmawati, 2024). Consequently, Instagram use in Palangka Raya currently strengthens transparency mainly at the level of information access and visibility, but it remains limited in facilitating participatory transparency that would allow citizens to influence policy direction or evaluation (Porumbescu, 2017).

3. Citizen Interaction, Perceived Transparency, and Public Trust

Citizen interaction is central to whether social media-based transparency is perceived as meaningful. In digital governance, transparency tends to strengthen trust not simply through the availability of information, but through responsiveness and visible feedback loops that show how citizen questions, complaints, and suggestions are handled (Grimmelikhuijsen & Welch, 2012; Porumbescu, 2017). Therefore, the key issue is not whether interaction channels exist, but whether citizens can observe follow-up actions, clarifications, and institutional responses that make accountability legible in the public sphere (Hood, 2006; Meijer, 2014). In this study, "perceived transparency" and "public trust" are treated as plausible implications inferred from observable interaction cues and the design of public-facing mechanisms, rather than as directly measured outcomes.

In the Palangka Raya case, citizen interaction is facilitated through multiple channels and is not limited to comment-based engagement on Instagram. In addition to the main municipal communication accounts, Palangka Raya maintains a dedicated information-disclosure presence through the PPID Pemerintah Kota Palangka Raya Instagram account, which explicitly provides access points for official information services. Publicly indexed PPID content emphasizes that citizens can access “informasi resmi” through PPID, signaling an institutional pathway for information requests beyond general social media posting. This configuration is consistent with observations from Indonesian public-sector Instagram cases, where Instagram often functions as an outreach interface that directs citizens to procedural information and formal service routes rather than serving as the sole forum for deliberation or dispute resolution (Ikhsanto & Rahmawati, 2024).

Alongside PPID, the Palangka Raya City Government’s communication practice also references the national complaint-handling system SP4N-LAPOR!, which is legally established under Presidential Regulation (Perpres) No. 76 of 2013. Empirically, Diskominfo’s publicly accessible posts show activities related to socialization of SP4N-LAPOR and information disclosure, indicating that citizen input, including complaints and aspirations, is framed through an institutionalized channel rather than relying solely on ad hoc Instagram interactions. From an accountability perspective, this matters because SP4N-LAPOR is designed as a structured process with verification and follow-up stages, providing a procedural expectation of responsiveness when implemented consistently. Indonesian scholarship on government social media also suggests that interactive capacity improves when institutions have clear routines and response management, which helps move engagement beyond symbolic openness toward more functional public service interaction (Aji et al., 2023).

However, the existence of multiple channels does not automatically translate into meaningful participation or higher trust. Participation theory suggests that citizen input becomes meaningful when it has a pathway to influence decisions or triggers clear follow-up actions; otherwise, engagement risks remaining at the level of tokenism (Arnstein, 1969). In the Palangka Raya case, the institutional emphasis on PPID and SP4N-LAPOR indicates recognition of the need for structured interaction, yet publicly visible feedback practices remain limited. Without systematic public-facing feedback, such as clarification posts responding to recurring concerns, summaries of issues raised, or reporting back on “what was followed up and what changed,” transparency may be perceived as procedural rather than substantive, which can limit its trust-building potential (Grimmelikhuijsen & Welch, 2012; Hood, 2006; Meijer, 2014; Porumbescu, 2017).

The findings suggest that citizen interaction in Palangka Raya’s digital governance operates through a hybrid model: Instagram provides visibility and initial contact, while PPID and SP4N-LAPOR represent formal pathways for information access and complaint handling. This configuration may support perceived transparency and public trust when responsiveness is visible and consistent, but it may also reproduce one-way communication dynamics if interaction remains limited to channel provision without

demonstrable feedback loops. This interpretation is consistent with Indonesian government Instagram evidence showing that improved interaction outcomes depend on deliberate response routines and clear communication of procedural follow-up, not merely on the presence of official accounts or complaint channels (Aji et al., 2023; Ikhsanto & Rahmawati, 2024).

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that Instagram use by the Palangka Raya City Government contributes to public policy transparency primarily by increasing policy visibility and providing basic informational access, while the depth of transparency achieved varies by content type and framing. Communication practices are dominated by activity-centric posts and a push-oriented strategy that effectively disseminates announcements and documents governmental activities, but often provide limited contextual depth in terms of policy rationale, implementation mechanisms, and expected impacts. In contrast, service-oriented posts demonstrate greater alignment with substantive transparency because they offer actionable guidance and, in several instances, connect citizens to formal access and accountability mechanisms such as KIP/PPID and SP4N-LAPOR. These findings indicate that transparency outcomes depend less on posting frequency and more on informational completeness and the availability of verifiable reference points that enable public understanding and oversight.

At the same time, citizen interaction in Palangka Raya's digital governance operates through a hybrid configuration in which Instagram functions as an outreach gateway, while PPID and SP4N-LAPOR serve as formal pathways for information requests and complaint handling. Although this arrangement provides institutional channels for interaction, limited evidence of pull practices and the absence of networked collaboration suggest that engagement may risk remaining at the level of tokenism when responsiveness and public-facing feedback loops are not consistently visible. Therefore, strengthening municipal digital transparency requires standardizing policy-post content to include clear "why-what-how-so what" elements, expanding structured interactive practices such as clarification posts and moderated question-and-answer sessions, and institutionalizing feedback mechanisms that publicly communicate follow-up actions. Such measures would better align social media practices with transparency and participation principles and strengthen the conditions under which perceived transparency may improve and public trust may be more likely to develop in local governance.

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