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## **DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE CITY GOVERNMENT OF MARAWI: IMPLEMENTATION STATUS AND CHALLENGES**

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<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Abstract</b>
<i>Digital, Initiatives, Marawi, Government, Policy.</i>	<p>This study explored the implementation status of digital initiatives in the City Government of Marawi, with particular focus on the issues, challenges, and recommendations associated with their adoption. Specifically, the research examined the types of digital initiatives implemented, their degree of adoption, the barriers affecting their effectiveness, and the strategies proposed by stakeholders to enhance their functionality. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected from key government personnel and stakeholders involved in the city's digital services through structured questionnaires and interviews.</p> <p>Findings revealed that social media-based services (40.0%) and internal communication tools (33.3%) were the most commonly implemented initiatives, while critical citizen-facing platforms such as online payments (22.0%), mobile services (20.0%), and open data portals (18.7%) had low adoption rates. The overall weighted mean of 1.90 indicated that digital initiatives in Marawi are generally weak in implementation. Key challenges identified included poor internet connectivity, system downtime, lack of training, limited rural access, insufficient technical support, resistance to change, and budget constraints, highlighting both technical and institutional barriers.</p> <p>Respondents recommended system performance improvements, staff training, awareness campaigns, technical support services, offline access options, and increased ICT budget allocations to address these challenges and enhance adoption. These recommendations underscore the need for a multi-</p>



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dimensional approach that combines technological upgrades, human capacity development, inclusive access strategies, and sustainable funding. The study concluded that while Marawi has made progress in internal and communication-oriented digital tools, the implementation of advanced, citizen-centric services remains limited. Addressing infrastructural gaps, enhancing organizational capacity, and promoting inclusive access are essential to achieving effective, responsive, and sustainable digital governance. The findings provide actionable insights for policymakers and stakeholders aiming to strengthen the impact of e-governance initiatives, contributing to improved service delivery, operational efficiency, citizen engagement, and governance outcomes, in alignment with global digital governance frameworks and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### ➤ Background of the Study

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has redefined public governance worldwide, fostering efficiency, transparency, and citizen participation. Governments increasingly integrate digital transformation initiatives—such as e governance platforms, online payment systems, and mobile applications—to modernize service delivery and improve operational efficiency. However, the success of digital transformation depends largely on infrastructural readiness, institutional capacity, and stakeholder engagement.

In the context of Marawi City, digital transformation is a critical component in post conflict reconstruction and modernization. As the city rebuilds from the effects of the 2017 siege, the City Government of Marawi faces the dual challenge of rebuilding infrastructure and institutional systems while integrating digital technologies to improve governance and citizen services. Despite national initiatives such as the Philippine Digital Transformation Strategy 2022–2028 and the e-Government Master Plan, local implementation often lags due to contextual constraints such as limited connectivity, insufficient technical capacity, and budgetary pressures.

### ➤ Statement of the Problem

This study examined the implementation status of digital transformation initiatives in the City Government of Marawi. Specifically, it aimed to:

1. Identify the types of digital initiatives implemented by the city government;
2. Determine the degree of adoption and functionality of these initiatives;
3. Identify the challenges and barriers affecting effective digital transformation; and
4. Propose strategies and recommendations to enhance adoption and sustainability.

### ➤ Significance of the Study

The study provides valuable insights into the current state of local digital governance in Marawi City and contributes to the broader discourse on local e government transformation in developing and post-conflict contexts. The results can serve as a reference for policymakers, city administrators, and ICT professionals in developing data-driven strategies for sustainable digital governance.



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### ➤ Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and E Government Implementation Framework (EGIF), emphasizing that the success of digital transformation depends not only on technology infrastructure but also on user acceptance, institutional support, and organizational readiness. These frameworks guided the assessment of adoption levels, barriers, and enablers of digital governance in Marawi.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### • Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design to assess the current implementation status and challenges of digital transformation initiatives within the city government. The design was appropriate for documenting and describing the extent and characteristics of ongoing programs without manipulating variables.

### • Respondents and Sampling

Respondents included key personnel and department heads from the City Government of Marawi, as well as selected stakeholders involved in ICT and e governance programs. Respondents were chosen through purposive sampling, ensuring the inclusion of individuals directly engaged in digital planning, management, and operations.

### • Research Instruments

Data were gathered using:

1. Structured Questionnaires – to quantify the level of implementation, adoption, and perceived effectiveness of various digital initiatives.
2. Semi-Structured Interviews – to gather qualitative insights on operational challenges, institutional barriers, and strategic recommendations.

### • Data Collection Procedure

Surveys were administered in person and online, while interviews were conducted with department representatives handling ICT, public information, administrative services, and community outreach. Both primary and secondary data were validated through triangulation, comparing participant responses with official ICT reports and government policy frameworks.

### • Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, and weighted mean) to summarize adoption levels and performance indicators. The overall weighted mean (1.90) was interpreted as indicating a “weak” level of digital implementation. Qualitative data underwent content and thematic analysis, identifying recurring challenges and recommended interventions.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Implementation Status of Digital Initiatives:



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The study identified several digital initiatives in the City Government of Marawi, categorized according to their purpose and scope:

Type of Digital Initiative	Implementation Rate (%)	Adoption Description
Social media-based services (Facebook/Twitter pages)	40	Widely used for public communication and announcements
Internal communication tools (email systems, cloud storage)	33.3	Actively used within local departments
Online payment systems	22	Limited utilization; mostly in pilot phase
Mobile/citizen apps for services	20	Minimal deployment; accessibility issues
Open data and transparency portals	18.7	Rarely maintained or updated

The results indicate that internal and communication-based platforms are relatively adopted, while citizen-facing digital services remain underdeveloped. This trend mirrors findings in other local governments in developing contexts, where early stage digitalization focuses on internal efficiency before outward-facing services.

## 2. General Implementation Rating

The computed overall weighted mean of 1.90 (interpreted as “weak”) suggests limited integration and performance of digital systems at the city level. Many respondents described systems as “operational but unstable,” with frequent downtime or inconsistent accessibility.

## 3. Challenges and Barriers

Respondents cited a combination of technological, institutional, and socio-cultural challenges impeding digital transformation. These included:

- Technological Constraints: Poor internet connectivity, frequent system downtime, and outdated hardware/software.
- Human Resource Limitations: Lack of training, insufficient technical expertise, and limited ICT personnel.
- Institutional Challenges: Budget constraints, bureaucratic resistance to digital reform, and insufficient ICT policy direction.
- Inclusivity Barriers: Limited access in far-flung barangays and low digital literacy among citizens.
- Socio-Cultural Factors: Resistance to change due to fear of technology or preference for traditional transactions.

These barriers underscore how digital transformation is not solely a technical endeavor but also a complex socio-institutional reform process.



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#### **4. Recommendations and Proposed Strategies**

Respondents and key stakeholders proposed several strategies for improving digital transformation in Marawi:

1. Enhance System Infrastructure – Improve internet connectivity and provide redundant systems to ensure service reliability.
2. Invest in Human Capacity Development – Conduct regular ICT training and digital literacy programs for employees and citizens.
3. Expand Citizen Access and Awareness – Implement public information drives to encourage engagement with e-services.
4. Establish Technical Support Units – Provide real-time troubleshooting and maintenance services to ensure continuity.
5. Integrate Offline and Mobile Solutions – Create SMS-based or offline options for citizens with limited connectivity.
6. Increase ICT Budget Allocation – Institutionalize dedicated funding for the acquisition, maintenance, and sustainability of digital tools.

These recommendations align with the whole-of-government approach envisioned under the Philippine Digital Transformation Strategy, emphasizing interoperability, inclusivity, and long-term sustainability.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has redefined public governance worldwide, fostering efficiency, transparency,

The findings indicate that while Marawi has achieved progress in initial digitization, particularly in internal processes, advanced e-governance services remain underdeveloped. This situation reflects challenges typical of post-recovery localities where infrastructure rebuilding is still ongoing. Digital transformation, therefore, requires a multi-dimensional approach addressing not only technology but also institutional commitment, resource allocation, and citizen engagement.

#### **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **➤ Conclusion**

The study concluded that the digital transformation efforts in the City Government of Marawi remain at an early and fragmented stage. There are notable successes in social media-based communication and internal information systems, yet citizen-focused digital services are weakly implemented. The limited infrastructure, constrained resources, and institutional barriers continue to hinder comprehensive e-governance adoption.

However, with targeted interventions in technical infrastructure, personnel training, and public participation, Marawi has the potential to evolve into a digitally capable and responsive city



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government, capable of providing transparent, efficient, and inclusive services aligned with global governance and sustainable development frameworks.

➤ **Recommendations**

1. Institutionalize Digital Governance Policy Frameworks customized for Marawi's local context.
2. Upgrade ICT Infrastructure and partner with national agencies and private sectors for network improvement.
3. Develop Competency Programs for employees to enhance digital literacy and reduce resistance to change.
4. Implement Citizen-Centered Platforms for online payment, feedback, and information access.
5. Create an ICT Innovation Office to oversee digital integration, monitoring, and evaluation.
6. Align Digital Efforts with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure inclusivity and sustainability.

**6. AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION**

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**7. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, And/or publication of this article.

**8. PLAGIARISM POLICY**

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