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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT DIGITAL SERVICES
THROUGH SMART CITY DEVELOPMENT TO
IMPROVE COMMUNITY QUALITY OF LIFE
(CASE STUDY: REGIONAL GOVERNMENT OF
CIREBON REGENCY)**

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Abstract: Smart city is not merely a concept, but has become an important strategy in realizing modern, adaptive, and public-service-oriented governance. This study aims to understand and analyze how local government digital services through smart city development can improve community quality of life, with a case study of the Cirebon Regency Government. The era of digital transformation demands that the Cirebon Regency Government develop technology-based public service innovations to meet community needs quickly, efficiently, effectively, and transparently. This study employs a descriptive analytical approach with data collection techniques through interviews with government officials and observations of digital system implementation, including documentation studies of related policies and regulations. The research findings indicate that the Cirebon Regency Government has initiated several digital service programs, such as the

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population administration information system, online licensing services, and a community complaint platform. These initiatives have contributed to improved accessibility, service efficiency, and community satisfaction. However, implementation still faces challenges in the form of limited technology infrastructure, uneven digital literacy, and minimal integration among digital services. Nevertheless, the Cirebon Regency Government has great opportunities to create an inclusive, participatory, and sustainable environment to comprehensively improve community quality of life through the optimization of digital services. This study recommends the need to strengthen digital governance, enhance human resource capacity, and foster multi-stakeholder collaboration to support the sustainability of smart city development

Keywords: digital services, smart city, quality of life

Introduction

The information era, which emerged and expanded massively during the era of globalization and the Industrial Revolution 4.0, with information and communication technology (ICT) as its primary driving force, has exerted a profound influence across various aspects of life — from corporations to government (Aisyah & Ratama, 2023; Nurhayati, 2021 in Kurniawan et al., 2023) — including the development sector. The perspective of social welfare development argues that the movement to build and empower society requires a holistic approach carried out in a participatory, dynamic, and multidimensional manner (Suharto, 2017). One of the tools in this development and empowerment process is the utilization of information technology.

The emergence of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 has driven advances in information and communication technology (ICT) to modify and enforce changes in management across all domains, from corporations to government. The current development of ICT brings very significant changes to people's lives (Utomo & Hariadi, 2016). These technological advances have transformed all sectors of human life, including in central and regional governance, which now manifests in the concept of the smart city.

Meanwhile, cities face various risks, concerns, and problems with the rapid growth of urban populations worldwide – for example, physical risks such as deteriorating air quality and transportation conditions, and economic risks such as unemployment (Nam & Pardo, 2011). BPS population projection data shows that in 2020, 56.7% of Indonesia's population lived in urban areas, and this figure is predicted to increase to 66.6% by 2035. Furthermore, the World Bank estimates that by 2045, around 220 million people, or 70% of Indonesia's population, will reside in urban areas (Wahyudi et al., 2022).

The smart city concept has become a trend implemented in many cities around the world as urban life grows more complex, in line with the development of ICT that increasingly facilitates, accelerates, and improves the accuracy of solutions to these various problems. Smart city has thus become one of the urban development and management strategies to assist various community activities and to provide easier access to information (Marisa and Andre, 2019).

Local governments require sophisticated technology capable of managing all activities, from urban infrastructure development to the delivery of quality services to the community (Aisyah & Pratama, 2023). Mahayani (2024) states that smart city is a concept of using

digital technology to enhance the efficiency of public services, promote economic growth, and improve community quality of life. Similarly, Azahri and Sutabri (2024) describe smart city as focusing on the development and use of technology to improve efficiency, quality of life, and the urban environment.

Smart city is believed to be an innovative solution to urban development challenges in regions (Izzuddin, 2022). Utomo & Hariadi (2016) note that smart city has been implemented in various cities around the world and has been proven capable of resolving various issues rapidly, including being utilized by governments to create comfort, security, order, and a better quality of life. Therefore, smart city is not merely a concept, but a strategy for realizing modern, adaptive, and public-service-oriented governance that can improve community quality of life.

Smart city development aligns with the fundamental values of public service that are humanistic, participatory, and just. The state, through local government, has a moral and constitutional responsibility to ensure that all citizens can access public services easily, quickly, and equitably. Digital transformation is not just about technology; it is an instrument for realizing social justice, transparency, and societal well-being. Local governments are required to be adaptive and innovative in responding to these changes, particularly through the development of integrated digital services within the smart city framework.

In 2017, the movement for 100 Smart Cities in Indonesia was launched, driven by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Santoso & Rahmadanita, 2020). Smart city encounters various problems, particularly in improving community quality of life. The first is a lack of infrastructure and human resource readiness. The second is the digital divide and technological literacy gap. The third involves data security and privacy concerns. The fourth concerns sustainability

and long-term impact. The fifth relates to unclear governance and regulations. These five issues are most commonly encountered in a number of districts and municipalities implementing smart city.

The Cirebon Regency Government has initiated several digital programs, such as online-based population administration services, permit processing through an integrated licensing system, and community complaint services. However, in the field, various challenges are still encountered, such as low digital literacy among the community, limited technology infrastructure, and suboptimal data integration between agencies. This highlights the need for deeper study of the implementation of digital services within the smart city framework, and its impact on improving community quality of life in the region. This research background thus becomes relevant for further examining how local government digital services can be optimized through smart city development, and the extent to which these efforts can drive improvements in community quality of life in Cirebon Regency.

Study Objectives

The main objective of this study is to identify the implementation of local government digital services through smart city development in relation to improving community quality of life. The research questions are: 1) what are the characteristics of the informants, 2) how does quality of life improve through smart governance, 3) how does quality of life improve through smart branding, 4) how does quality of life improve through smart economy, 5) how does quality of life improve through smart living, 6) how does quality of life improve through smart society, and 7) how does quality of life improve through smart environment.

This study is expected to provide a picture of smart city implementation in Cirebon Regency in the context of improving community quality of life. This is because ICT is considered a tool with the capacity to boost various government services to the community, which in turn has an impact on community quality of life.

Methodology

Based on the research problems described above, this study uses a descriptive analytical approach. The research is located at the Cirebon Regency Government, which is a regency that is quite developed across various sectors of life.

Data collection in this study uses several techniques, namely:

1. Observation technique — a method of collecting data by systematically observing and recording the phenomena being studied or problems related to the research. In this study, a semi-structured observation approach was used, whereby the researcher was previously aware of the aspects of activities to be observed that are relevant to the research problem and objectives, which were then developed in greater depth.
2. Interview technique — a method of collecting data through questions and answers or requesting direct explanations. Initially, a series of structured questions were conducted using an interview guide from various parties related to the research object, which were then deepened by further probing. These interviews were conducted with relevant government officials or organizations associated with digital service programs.

3. Documentation study – a technique carried out by studying various sources such as books, magazines, journals, research publications, or other written literature. The documentation study was selected, sorted, and adjusted to the needs of the research.

Data analysis was carried out by organizing the data, then describing it into units, synthesizing and arranging it into patterns, selecting what is important and what will be examined, and finally drawing conclusions (Sugiyono, 2007). Meanwhile, data validity was tested using techniques that include: 1) credibility, to prove that the data collected corresponds to actual conditions; 2) confirmability, to test research results in relation to the processes carried out; 3) dependability, whereby this study was directed and carried out by the Poltekesos Bandung Research Center from start to completion of the research report; 4) transferability, providing detailed, clear, and systematic descriptions to demonstrate that the research results can be applied in other situations with similar characteristics; and 5) triangulation, as a means of testing research accuracy by examining data from different sources, locations, and times.

Research Result

Respondent Characteristic

This study examines local government digital services through smart city development to improve community quality of life, and is a case study of the Cirebon Regency Regional Government. The criteria for informants selected in this study were individuals who have involvement in smart city implementation and who are knowledgeable about the quality of life of Cirebon Regency residents, as

well as individuals capable of providing an overview of quality.

The informants included representatives from the Department of Communication and Information Technology (Diskominfo), the Regional Development Planning, Research, and Development Agency (Bappelitbangda), the Economics Division of the Regional Secretariat, the Social Services Department (Dinsos), and the Kedawung Sub-district Office. Each office provided 1 (one) informant, with the exception of Diskominfo which provided 2 (two) informants, bringing the total number of informants to 6 (six).

Table 1: Research Informants for Local Government Digital Services Through Smart City Development

No.	Position	Office/Agency	Gender
1	Head of Information Technology Division	Diskominfo	Female
2	Head of e-Government Division	Diskominfo	Female
3	Secretary	Bappelitbangda	Male
4	Head of Economics Division	Regional Secretariat	Male
5	Head of Social Empowerment Division	Social Services Dept.	Female
6	Sub-district Head (Camat)	Kedawung Sub-district	Male

In this study, informants were selected from agencies/offices that have relevance to smart city development and are key persons within those institutions who are knowledgeable and well-informed on the topic.

Research Findings

1. Smart Governance

The Cirebon Regency Government seeks to realize effective, efficient, communicative, and continuously improving governance through integrated innovation and technology adoption. Smart governance in the context of improving the quality of life of Cirebon Regency residents is directed at: 1) the quantity and quality of public services, 2) public involvement or participation, and 3) transparency of public services.

Smart city development in the context of governance (governance) is fully supported by Bappelitbangda, as expressed:

"I fully support smart city development. I even invite those who have innovation programs to submit them. I give the challenge – if the program is good, I will support it regardless of the budget."

Digital services within the smart governance framework are illustrated in the following diagram

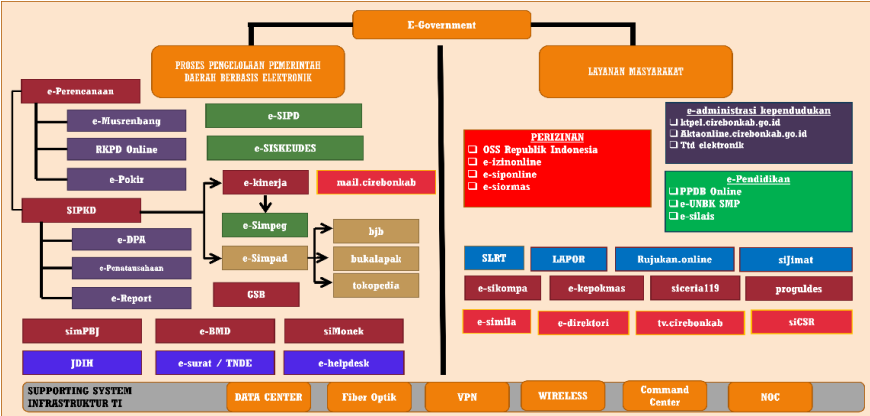


Figure 1: Smart Governance of Cirebon Regency Government
Source: Diskominfo of Cirebon Regency

Based on the smart governance framework, the community is expected to gain ease of access to services, which can improve access to the needs and problems they face, thereby improving quality of life.

2. Smart Branding

In today's digital era, the image of a region is greatly influenced by public perceptions formed through various media channels. Smart branding enables regions to proactively manage this image and build a positive reputation. The implementation of smart branding in Cirebon Regency is expected to:

- 1) Increase regional revenue: through tourism, investment, and local economic growth.
- 2) Improve community quality of life: through good public facilities, a clean environment, and more employment opportunities.
- 3) Increase attractiveness for investors: a positive regional image will attract investors to invest their capital.
- 4) Strengthen regional identity: strong branding will help the community feel more proud of their region.

This was conveyed by the Head of the Economics Division of the Cirebon Regency Regional Secretariat:

"Smart city must be able to enhance the image of the region so as to attract investment from outside. With IT services, we can attract investors, which in turn increases regional revenue (PAD) and subsequently improves the quality of life of the community."

Smart branding plays a role in improving quality of life. Cirebon Regency's smart branding is evident in the tourism promotion innovation known as BAS (Branding, Advertising,

Selling) — the Cirebon Katon Tourism Application, initiated by the Department of Culture, Tourism, Youth and Sports.

3. Smart Economy

The target of the Smart Economy dimension within Smart City in Cirebon Regency is to create an ecosystem that supports community economic activities in line with the region's leading economic sectors, which is adaptive to changes occurring in today's information era. Efforts to realize smart economy in Cirebon Regency are pursued through 3 (three) approaches, namely:

- 1) Industrial ecosystem,
- 2) Improvement of community welfare, and
- 3) Financial transaction ecosystem.

Therefore, smart economy must reach all levels of society so that it can optimally contribute, particularly to business actors and access to financial services. This was conveyed by the Economics Division of the Regional Secretariat:

"IT support for the economic sector has a considerable influence, especially for business actors. Internet access in villages through WiFi installation is expected to help entrepreneurs grow their businesses and provide access to various financial services. I believe IT services must continue to be optimized and comprehensively reach all levels of society."

A similar view was expressed by the Head of e-Government Division of Diskominfo: "Smart Economy is currently our priority for improving the quality of SMEs." Steps already taken include:

- 1) SME Digital Training — currently 600 SMEs have been facilitated and this has been carried out in collaboration with Bank Indonesia for Payment Digitalization.

- 2) Provision of business development services, showcasing SME products for tourists to view, as well as product development through assistance with Business Registration Number (NIB), Home Industry Food License (P-IRT), halal certification, and product photography training.
- 3) Provision of the Caruban Android application for local SME products.

4. Smart Living

Smart living is one of the dimensions in Smart City to ensure an adequate standard of living for the community, assessed from 3 (three) elements: 1) quality of lifestyle, 2) quality of health standards, and 3) quality of transportation modes. Smart living supports the mobility of people and goods. The Head of Social Empowerment Division of Cirebon Regency Social Services Department stated:

"The need – indeed the dependency – on gadgets or mobile phones has become an inseparable part of daily life. It has become a lifestyle. However, not all community members can afford it, as it remains too expensive for some underprivileged members of society."

The community must also be empowered in utilizing IT in their daily lives, as also stated by the Social Empowerment Division:

"The community must be empowered in utilizing IT so that they can improve their quality of life and use it to access information or gain access to education, health, and other services."

5. Smart Society

Smart Society can be observed from the following 3 (three) aspects:

- 1) Education level, measured by Mean Years of Schooling (MYS) and Expected Years of Schooling (EYS), though not yet maximized.
- 2) Green open spaces in each sub-district in the form of parks and open interaction spaces that absorb water reserves.
- 3) Disaster mitigation and preparedness development, though not yet integrated.

The objective of smart society is to create a humanistic and dynamic socio-technical ecosystem for the community, both physical and virtual, to create a society that is productive, communicative, and interactive with high digital literacy. The condition of the community can be described by the sub-district government, which is in direct contact with the community:

"Green open spaces in the sub-district are very beneficial for the community, also equipped with free hotspots that can be used for communication as well as for business or selling activities."

However, smart society development must be integrated with various other services, as emphasized by Bappelitbangda:

"Smart city must be integrated with various services including disaster mitigation, education, and others."

Thus, the community can utilize technology to interact and access learning spaces as well as security, which can improve quality of life.

6. Smart Environment

Attention to the living environment in urban development is equally important as attention given to physical infrastructure development and the development of facilities and infrastructure for residents. A clean and healthy environment, along with good energy management, is expected to improve quality of life.

Conclusion

Smart City has a very strong role in improving community quality of life, and is therefore being pursued by cities around the world to address various problems and services. This concept is certainly utilized by the Cirebon Regency Government to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of work and effort so as to improve the standard of quality of life of the community.

The implementation of smart city development must continue to be developed and therefore requires improvement in various aspects. This can be achieved through various actions by the Cirebon Regency Government, namely:

1. Development of applications and supporting software for Cirebon Regency Smart City.
2. Development of information technology infrastructure that can reach all corners of Cirebon Regency.
3. Strengthening policies or regional regulations regarding the governance and implementation of smart city, particularly in improving community quality of life.
4. Enhancement of human resource capacity in the utilization of IT.

5. Multi-stakeholder collaboration to support the sustainability of smart city development

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