

The Strategic Role of the Regional Secretary in Realizing Excellent Digital Services Based on Public Value in Population Administration Services

Annisa Fabriana^{1*}, Endang Larasati Setianingsih², Ika Riswanti Putranti³, Kismartini⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Universitas Diponegoro, Semarang, Indonesia
E-mail: annisafabri@gmail.com

Abstract

Digital transformation has become a strategic priority for improving public service quality and strengthening good governance within local governments. This study aims to analyze the strategic role of the Regional Secretary in realizing excellent digital services based on public value in population administration services. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed to obtain an in-depth understanding of leadership practices, digital governance, and service implementation. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews and direct observations involving the Regional Secretary, the Head of the Population and Civil Registration Office, service managers, front-office officers, and community members, while secondary data were obtained from official documents and relevant literature. The findings reveal that the Regional Secretary performs strategic functions by coordinating cross-sector policies, strengthening digital governance, facilitating resource allocation, promoting employee competency development, and ensuring the implementation of the Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE). The implementation of excellent digital services has significantly improved accessibility, responsiveness, reliability, transparency, and citizen satisfaction while generating public value through increased public trust, administrative efficiency, and simplified service procedures. However, challenges remain, including unequal digital infrastructure, limited digital literacy, system interruptions, and shortages of digitally competent personnel. The study concludes that sustainable excellent digital services require integrated leadership, collaborative governance, continuous organizational capacity building, and citizen-centered digital innovation to maximize public value creation and improve the quality of population administration services.

Keywords: Regional Secretary; Excellent Digital Service; Public Value; Population Administration.

Introduction

The rapid development of information and communication technology has significantly transformed public administration in many countries, including Indonesia. Digital transformation is no longer considered an option but has become a strategic necessity for improving bureaucratic effectiveness, increasing public service efficiency, and strengthening transparent, accountable, and responsive governance. The Indonesian government has introduced several policies, including the Electronic-Based Government System (*Sistem Pemerintahan Berbasis Elektronik—SPBE*), to accelerate digital transformation in public services. Through these initiatives, digital technology is expected to support adaptive governance and improve the quality of public services. Therefore, the success of digital transformation should not only be measured by the number of digital applications implemented but also by the government's ability to provide effective and citizen-oriented public services.

SPBE is designed to utilize information and communication technology (ICT) to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of government administration. In Indonesia, SPBE aims to enhance public service quality, simplify administrative procedures, and promote transparent and accountable governance. By integrating computers, internet services, and digital applications into government operations, SPBE enables better interaction between government institutions and citizens while improving administrative efficiency and public transparency. According to Wijaya and Saleh (2025), the implementation of SPBE is based on Presidential Regulation Number 95 of 2018, which requires both central and local governments to integrate digital technology into government administration. Through SPBE, local governments can improve public services by providing easier access to administrative information and services. The regulation also supports the principles of good governance by encouraging transparency, accountability, efficiency, and public participation. Furthermore, SPBE allows citizens to access information related to regional budgets, procurement processes, and public policies, enabling greater public oversight and participation in government decision-making (Wijaya & Saleh, 2025).

One of the most important sectors undergoing digital transformation is population administration services. Population administration is a fundamental public service because it provides citizens with legal identity documents such as Electronic Identity Cards (KTP-el), Family Cards (KK), Birth Certificates, and Death

Certificates. These documents are essential requirements for accessing healthcare, education, taxation, social assistance, and many other government services. Consequently, the quality of population administration services has become an important indicator of local government performance in delivering public services.

Although the government has introduced various digital innovations in population administration services, several challenges remain. These include limited ICT infrastructure, unequal digital competencies among government employees, insufficient data integration, and continuing public complaints regarding service quality and efficiency. These challenges indicate that digital transformation cannot be achieved solely through technological innovation. Instead, successful implementation also requires effective governance, strong inter-agency coordination, and sustainable bureaucratic leadership (Mutiara, 2026).

In this context, the concept of excellent digital service has become increasingly important in modern public administration. Excellent digital service emphasizes not only the use of digital technology but also the delivery of high-quality services that meet citizens' expectations. Characteristics of excellent digital service include accessibility, speed, transparency, data security, responsiveness, and user satisfaction. Therefore, digital service performance should not be evaluated solely based on technological capabilities but also on the government's ability to provide a positive service experience and establish effective communication with citizens.

However, high-quality digital services do not automatically create benefits for society unless they generate public value. The public value perspective provides a framework for understanding why and under what conditions citizens are willing to adopt e-government services. According to Rahayu, Niswah, Meirinawati, and Fanida (2026), the public value paradigm explains the relationship between citizens and digital government services by emphasizing the importance of services that create meaningful value for society.

Similarly, Mozin, Tantu, Pakaya, and Badjuka (2026) argue that Public Value Creation has become an essential framework for understanding how governments can design and deliver services that prioritize citizens' interests. This approach emphasizes that public service success should not be measured only by operational efficiency but also by the social benefits generated for society. Consequently, public service transformation should focus on improving service quality, strengthening public participation, and encouraging innovation in service delivery (Mozin, Tantu, Pakaya, & Badjuka, 2026).

From this perspective, digital transformation should produce more than electronic services. It should create inclusive, transparent, accessible, and legally reliable public services that provide tangible benefits for all citizens. Therefore, the success of excellent digital service should be evaluated based on the extent to which it creates public value rather than merely introducing digital technologies.

Achieving excellent digital service based on public value depends not only on technological readiness and organizational capacity but also on effective bureaucratic leadership. Within the structure of local government, the Regional Secretary (*Sekretaris Daerah*) plays a strategic role as the highest administrative coordinator responsible for assisting the regional head in policy formulation, coordinating government agencies, supervising program implementation, and managing public administration. Because the Regional Secretary coordinates multiple government organizations, this position is essential for ensuring collaboration among local government agencies in implementing integrated and citizen-centered digital services.

The Regional Secretary also plays an important role in aligning digital transformation policies across different government departments, strengthening institutional coordination, and ensuring that public service innovations are implemented consistently. Effective leadership at this level is necessary to overcome organizational barriers, encourage inter-agency collaboration, and promote continuous improvements in digital public services. Without strong strategic leadership, technological innovation alone is unlikely to produce sustainable improvements in population administration services or create meaningful public value.

Based on these conditions, it is important to examine the strategic role of the Regional Secretary in realizing excellent digital service based on public value in population administration services. This study aims to explore how strategic leadership, cross-sector coordination, and governance mechanisms contribute to successful digital transformation in local government. Furthermore, the findings are expected to enrich the literature on public administration while providing practical recommendations for local governments in improving the quality, accessibility, and sustainability of population administration services through digital transformation.

Research Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the strategic role of the Regional Secretary (*Sekretaris Daerah*) in realizing excellent digital service based on public value in population administration services. A qualitative approach was selected because the research aims to obtain a comprehensive understanding of leadership practices, policy coordination, governance mechanisms, and service

implementation within their natural setting. Rather than measuring variables statistically, qualitative research emphasizes understanding participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of social phenomena. Qualitative research does not rely on mathematical models, statistical analysis, or computational techniques. Instead, it begins with the formulation of conceptual assumptions and a logical framework that guides the entire research process. Data are collected in the form of words, observations, documents, and participants' experiences rather than numerical measurements. According to Sugiyono, qualitative research is "a research method used to examine natural conditions (as opposed to experiments), where the researcher serves as the key instrument, data collection is conducted through triangulation, data analysis is inductive, and the findings emphasize meaning rather than generalization" (Nurrisa, Hermina, & Norlaila, 2025). This approach is therefore considered appropriate for examining the complex interactions among leadership, digital governance, and public service delivery in local government.

The descriptive qualitative design enables the researcher to describe and interpret phenomena as they naturally occur without manipulating the research setting. The study seeks to present an in-depth description of how digital population administration services are implemented, how the Regional Secretary coordinates related government agencies, and how these processes contribute to the creation of public value. The findings are expected to provide a contextual understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with digital public service transformation.

The research utilized two categories of data sources. Primary data were collected directly from selected informants through interviews and field observations. These data provided first-hand information regarding leadership practices, digital service implementation, coordination mechanisms, and public experiences. Secondary data were collected to complement and validate the primary findings. Secondary sources included government regulations, official institutional documents, online administrative records, previous research, scientific journals, and other relevant publications related to digital government, public administration, and population administration services.

Data collection was conducted using three complementary techniques to enhance the credibility and validity of the research through triangulation (Mutiara, 2026).

The first technique was semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted to obtain comprehensive and detailed information from individuals directly involved in the implementation of digital population administration services. Different interview guides were developed according to each participant's responsibilities and expertise.

The Head of the Population and Civil Registration Office was interviewed regarding the coordination between the Population and Civil Registration Office and the Regional Secretary in implementing digital population administration services, digital service innovations introduced to improve service quality, challenges encountered during implementation, the Regional Secretary's support in terms of budgeting, human resources, and policy formulation, and the overall impact of digital services on public satisfaction.

The Head of the Information Systems or Service Division was asked about the daily implementation procedures of digital population administration services, common technical challenges encountered during service delivery, coordination mechanisms with organizational leaders when service disruptions occur, and routine evaluation practices for monitoring digital service quality.

The service operators and front-office staff were interviewed to explore their experiences in providing digital administrative services, the most common difficulties experienced by service users, public responses to digital services, and complaint-handling procedures implemented within the institution.

In addition, community members who had used digital population administration services were interviewed regarding their experiences using the services, whether digital services simplified document processing, their perceptions of service speed, accessibility, transparency, and overall satisfaction with the services received.

The second data collection technique was direct observation. Observation enabled the researcher to examine actual service delivery processes, interactions between service providers and citizens, the utilization of digital technologies, and organizational practices within the Population and Civil Registration Office. This method also allowed the researcher to verify information obtained during interviews by comparing participants' statements with actual practices in the field.

The third component of the research methodology involved selecting research informants. Informants were individuals possessing sufficient knowledge, professional experience, and direct involvement in digital population administration services. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, meaning they were intentionally chosen based on predetermined criteria relevant to the research objectives rather than through random selection. According to Subhaktiyasa (2024), purposive sampling is a sampling technique in which participants are deliberately selected because they possess characteristics considered relevant by the

researcher. This technique is widely used in qualitative research because it enables researchers to obtain rich and specific information from individuals with substantial experience regarding the phenomenon under investigation. However, because participant selection depends on the researcher's judgment, the findings are intended to provide contextual understanding rather than statistical generalization (Subhaktiyasa, 2024).

To maintain a clear analytical direction, this study focused on two principal areas. First, it examined the implementation of excellent digital service based on the public value perspective by analyzing how digital population administration services generate accessibility, transparency, responsiveness, efficiency, legal certainty, and benefits for citizens. Second, it identified the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing the Regional Secretary's strategic role in strengthening digital transformation. These factors include leadership capacity, policy coordination, institutional collaboration, technological infrastructure, human resource competencies, organizational commitment, and governance practices that collectively determine the sustainability and effectiveness of excellent digital service in population administration. Through these research focuses, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how strategic bureaucratic leadership contributes to the creation of public value through digital public service transformation.

Results

1) Strategic Role of the Regional Secretary in Realizing Excellent Digital Service

1.1 The Strategic Role of the Regional Secretary as Policy Coordinator

The findings demonstrate that the successful implementation of digital population administration services cannot be achieved solely by the Population and Civil Registration Office (*Disdukcapil*). Digital public services involve multiple stakeholders, including agencies responsible for information technology, regional planning, budgeting, human resource management, organizational supervision, and financial administration. Consequently, effective coordination among these institutions becomes a prerequisite for delivering integrated, efficient, and citizen-oriented digital services.

The Regional Secretary (*Sekretaris Daerah*) emerged as the central coordinating actor responsible for aligning policies and ensuring that all regional government agencies work toward a common objective. This finding is consistent with Muharsono (2022), who states that the Regional Secretary, as the chief administrative coordinator, is responsible for ensuring effective coordination among regional government agencies.

The interview with the Head of the Population and Civil Registration Office revealed that every major initiative concerning digital service development must receive strategic guidance and policy direction from the Regional Secretary. The Regional Secretary was perceived not merely as an administrative supervisor but as a strategic leader capable of synchronizing programs across multiple agencies.

The interview findings indicated that the Regional Secretary coordinated digital transformation through several strategic functions, including policy harmonization, inter-agency communication, program monitoring, institutional facilitation, and conflict resolution among government units. Respondents emphasized that digital population administration services require collaboration among numerous organizational units because technological innovation cannot function effectively without integrated governance.

- The study further found that the Regional Secretary ensured the integration of several critical elements of digital transformation, namely:
- Digital transformation policies;
- Information technology infrastructure;
- Human resource development;
- Budget allocation;
- Information system security;
- Public service standards; and
- Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Rather than treating these components independently, the Regional Secretary integrated them into a unified ecosystem of digital public service delivery. This integrated governance model minimized institutional fragmentation and enabled government agencies to implement digital service innovations consistently.

The findings suggest that the success of digital population administration services depends not only on technological readiness but also on bureaucratic leadership capable of integrating organizational resources, coordinating stakeholders, and maintaining policy consistency throughout implementation. Therefore, strategic coordination by the Regional Secretary represents one of the most significant determinants of successful digital transformation within local government.

1.2 The Role of the Regional Secretary in Strengthening Digital Governance

The research also found that the Regional Secretary plays an essential role in strengthening digital governance across local government institutions. Digital governance extends beyond introducing online applications; it involves establishing institutional arrangements, policy frameworks, governance standards, and collaborative mechanisms that ensure sustainable digital transformation.

Interview results indicated that the Regional Secretary actively supported the preparation of regional policies concerning digital government while strengthening the implementation of the Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE). Close coordination was maintained with the Department of Communication and Informatics (*Diskominfo*) to ensure interoperability among government information systems.

According to the Head of the Population and Civil Registration Office:

"The support of the Regional Secretary has been instrumental in providing financial resources for application development and strengthening information technology infrastructure."

This statement demonstrates that the Regional Secretary plays an important strategic role in mobilizing organizational resources rather than merely supervising administrative procedures.

Several respondents also explained that the Regional Secretary regularly facilitates coordination meetings involving multiple regional agencies to monitor digital transformation progress, identify implementation barriers, and formulate collaborative solutions. Through these meetings, policy inconsistencies between institutions can be addressed promptly.

The study therefore indicates that the Regional Secretary contributes significantly to strengthening digital governance by ensuring policy coherence, promoting institutional collaboration, facilitating budget allocation, encouraging technological modernization, and maintaining organizational commitment toward digital public service innovation.

1.3 The Role of the Regional Secretary in Human Resource Development

Another important finding concerns the Regional Secretary's contribution to developing the digital competencies of civil servants.

Interview participants consistently identified human resource capacity as one of the primary determinants of successful digital transformation. Although advanced digital systems are available, service quality largely depends on employees' ability to operate those systems effectively.

The Regional Secretary was found to actively encourage periodic education and training programs designed to improve employees' digital competencies. These programs include training on digital applications, electronic document management, cybersecurity awareness, online public communication, and digital administrative procedures.

One service officer explained:

"The training programs have significantly improved our ability to operate digital service applications and have accelerated administrative processing."

Participants also reported increased confidence in handling electronic administrative procedures after attending regular technical workshops organized under the Regional Secretary's coordination.

These findings indicate that digital transformation requires investments not only in technological infrastructure but also in organizational learning and professional development. The Regional Secretary therefore performs a strategic leadership role by promoting continuous competency development, encouraging innovation, and preparing civil servants to adapt to rapidly evolving digital environments.

2) Implementation of Excellent Digital Service

2.1 Accessibility

Accessibility emerged as one of the most significant improvements following the implementation of digital population administration services.

Community members reported that online services substantially reduced the need for repeated visits to government offices. One respondent stated:

"Now I can submit my application from home without having to visit the office several times."

This finding indicates that digital services have simplified administrative procedures while reducing transportation costs and waiting time.

Nevertheless, respondents also identified several accessibility challenges. One participant explained:

"Since the service is available to everyone regardless of age, elderly citizens who are unfamiliar with technology still find it difficult to use. Therefore, they often need to visit the office for conventional services."

Service officers confirmed these observations by stating:

"Most citizens have begun utilizing online services, although some groups still require assistance when accessing digital applications."

These findings demonstrate that while digital transformation has substantially improved service accessibility, digital inclusion remains an important challenge requiring additional support mechanisms for vulnerable populations.

2.2 Responsiveness

The study found that digital transformation significantly improved organizational responsiveness.

According to service officers:

"The service process has become much faster because most documents are submitted through the digital system before citizens arrive at the office."

Community respondents similarly indicated that administrative procedures required considerably less time than under previous manual systems.

Digital platforms enabled officers to verify documents in advance, reduce administrative duplication, accelerate decision-making, and shorten service queues. Consequently, citizens experienced faster service delivery while government employees managed workloads more efficiently.

These findings demonstrate that excellent digital service contributes directly to improved organizational responsiveness and more efficient public service delivery.

2.3 Reliability

Reliability was another important indicator examined in this study.

The Head of the Population and Civil Registration Office explained that comprehensive Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) had been established to ensure consistency and accountability in digital service delivery.

The standardized procedures improved service uniformity, reduced administrative errors, and enhanced operational consistency across different service units.

However, several respondents acknowledged occasional technical disruptions caused by unstable internet connectivity and temporary system failures during peak operating hours. These interruptions sometimes delayed document processing and affected service continuity.

Although these technological constraints remain, the overall findings indicate that digital population administration services have achieved relatively high reliability. Continued investment in ICT infrastructure and system maintenance will further strengthen service consistency and operational stability.

3. Public Value Generated by Excellent Digital Service

The findings reveal that digital population administration services have generated substantial public value for both citizens and local government.

3.1 Increasing Public Trust

Interview participants consistently stated that digital services have improved transparency because application progress can be monitored online throughout the administrative process.

This transparency reduced uncertainty, minimized opportunities for administrative misconduct, and strengthened public confidence in local government institutions.

From the perspective of Mark H. Moore (1995), these outcomes represent the creation of public value because government services produce meaningful social benefits while increasing citizens' trust in public institutions.

3.2 Improving Public Satisfaction

Most community members expressed satisfaction with the quality of digital population administration services.

Respondents emphasized several improvements, including shorter processing times, simplified administrative procedures, clearer information, and more professional service delivery.

The reduction in bureaucratic complexity significantly improved citizens' overall experiences when obtaining population administration documents.

These findings indicate that digital transformation has successfully enhanced service quality while meeting public expectations regarding efficiency, convenience, and responsiveness.

3.3 Improving Service Convenience

Digital service implementation substantially reduced the need for citizens to travel repeatedly to the

Population and Civil Registration Office.

Applicants could submit documents electronically, monitor application status online, and receive notifications regarding administrative progress.

Consequently, transportation expenses, opportunity costs, and waiting times decreased considerably.

These efficiencies demonstrate that excellent digital service creates tangible public value by reducing administrative burdens while improving service accessibility and convenience for citizens.

4. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

4.1 Supporting Factors

The research identified several factors supporting the successful implementation of excellent digital service.

The first is the strong commitment demonstrated by the Regional Secretary in coordinating government agencies and ensuring policy consistency.

Second, support from the Regional Head significantly strengthened institutional commitment toward digital transformation.

Third, implementation of the Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE) provided an integrated policy framework for digital governance.

Fourth, continuous improvement of civil servants' digital competencies enhanced organizational readiness to deliver technology-based services.

Fifth, close collaboration between the Population and Civil Registration Office and the Department of Communication and Informatics facilitated effective system integration and technical problem-solving.

Finally, sufficient financial support enabled continuous investment in digital infrastructure, application development, and employee capacity-building programs.

4.2 Inhibiting Factors

Despite significant progress, several challenges continue to limit digital transformation.

The most frequently reported obstacle was unstable internet connectivity, particularly in remote areas where digital infrastructure remains underdeveloped.

Another major challenge involved the relatively low level of digital literacy among certain community groups, especially elderly citizens unfamiliar with digital technologies.

Respondents also reported occasional system disruptions during peak service hours, affecting processing speed and service continuity.

Finally, limited numbers of government employees possessing advanced digital competencies reduced organizational capacity to maximize digital service innovation.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that successful digital transformation requires more than technological investment alone. Sustainable excellent digital service depends upon integrated leadership, effective governance, adequate infrastructure, competent human resources, institutional collaboration, sufficient financial resources, and an inclusive strategy that enables all citizens to benefit equally from digital public services.

Discussion

1. The Strategic Leadership of the Regional Secretary in Accelerating Digital Transformation

The findings demonstrate that the Regional Secretary plays a strategic leadership role that extends beyond administrative coordination. As the highest-ranking bureaucratic official in local government, the Regional Secretary functions as a policy integrator capable of aligning organizational objectives, mobilizing institutional resources, and ensuring that digital transformation initiatives are implemented consistently across government agencies. This strategic position is particularly important because population administration services involve multiple institutions, including the Population and Civil Registration Office, the Department of Communication and Informatics, the Regional Development Planning Agency, the Human Resource Agency, and the Regional Financial Management Agency. Therefore, effective coordination becomes the primary determinant of successful digital governance. These findings reinforce the view that strategic bureaucratic leadership is essential for integrating institutional resources and ensuring coherent implementation of digital public service policies (Mergel, Edelmann, & Haug, 2019).

The interview findings indicate that digital transformation cannot succeed when each regional agency develops policies independently. Instead, the Regional Secretary creates policy synchronization by ensuring

that digitalization programs, budget allocation, human resource development, technological infrastructure, cybersecurity, and service standards are integrated into a single governance framework. This finding indicates that collaborative governance and cross-sector policy integration are more effective than isolated technological initiatives because they strengthen institutional coordination and reduce organizational fragmentation. Strategic leadership also enables government institutions to develop shared objectives and maintain policy consistency throughout the digital transformation process (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2012).

Furthermore, the findings reveal that the Regional Secretary serves as a change leader who encourages innovation throughout local government institutions. Through regular coordination meetings, policy evaluation, and strategic supervision, the Regional Secretary ensures that every agency contributes to achieving common objectives related to public service improvement. This leadership approach reflects transformational public leadership, where leaders not only formulate policies but also inspire organizational commitment toward innovation and continuous improvement. Strategic leadership strengthens organizational adaptability, institutional learning, and collaborative governance, thereby supporting the long-term sustainability of digital transformation initiatives within local government (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006).

Another important finding concerns the Regional Secretary's role in managing institutional resources. The study found that adequate budgeting, information technology investment, and employee competency development were largely facilitated through the Regional Secretary's coordination. Rather than focusing solely on administrative compliance, strategic leadership enabled the government to allocate resources according to organizational priorities. Integrated management of financial resources, technological infrastructure, and human capital strengthens organizational readiness while improving the effectiveness of digital government implementation and service innovation (Mergel, Edelman, & Haug, 2019).

Overall, these findings indicate that the Regional Secretary functions as the central driver of digital transformation by integrating policies, coordinating stakeholders, allocating organizational resources, and promoting collaborative governance. Such strategic leadership creates institutional capacity that supports sustainable implementation of excellent digital services within population administration. The findings further demonstrate that effective bureaucratic leadership contributes not only to organizational efficiency but also to the creation of sustainable public value through integrated governance, continuous innovation, and improved service quality for citizens (Cordella & Paletti, 2019; Moore, 1995).

2. Excellent Digital Service as a Driver of Public Value Creation

The second major finding demonstrates that the implementation of excellent digital services has significantly improved the quality of population administration services from the perspectives of accessibility, responsiveness, reliability, and citizen satisfaction. Digital transformation has shifted service delivery from conventional face-to-face procedures toward integrated electronic services, enabling citizens to submit applications remotely while reducing administrative complexity. This improvement illustrates that digital technology contributes not only to operational efficiency but also to enhancing citizens' overall service experience. The findings further indicate that the integration of digital technology into public administration strengthens service effectiveness while creating more citizen-oriented administrative processes (Mergel, Edelman, & Haug, 2019).

The accessibility findings indicate that online population administration services have substantially reduced travel costs, waiting time, and administrative burdens for citizens. Nevertheless, interviews also reveal that elderly citizens and individuals with limited digital literacy continue to experience difficulties in utilizing online platforms independently. This suggests that digital inclusion remains an important challenge despite technological advancements. Digital transformation should therefore prioritize inclusive accessibility by ensuring that technological innovations accommodate users with diverse technological capabilities rather than merely increasing automation (Twizeyimana & Andersson, 2019).

Responsiveness also emerged as one of the strongest indicators of service improvement. Digital document submission, electronic verification, and online communication significantly shortened service completion time while improving administrative efficiency. Government employees reported that digital applications enabled them to process requests more systematically, reducing paperwork and minimizing repetitive administrative activities. These findings suggest that digital government initiatives improve organizational responsiveness by streamlining workflows, facilitating information sharing, and accelerating decision-making processes while enhancing overall service performance (Mergel, 2019).

Reliability was also found to improve through standardized operating procedures and integrated digital information systems. Although temporary network interruptions occasionally affected service continuity,

respondents generally perceived digital services as more consistent and transparent than previous manual procedures. Standardization reduced procedural ambiguity while improving accountability across service units. These findings indicate that reliable digital public services depend on stable technological infrastructure combined with standardized governance mechanisms that ensure consistency across organizational processes (Cordella & Paletti, 2019).

Perhaps the most significant contribution of excellent digital service lies in its ability to generate public value. Citizens perceived digital services as more transparent because application progress could be monitored electronically, thereby reducing uncertainty and increasing trust in government institutions. Furthermore, simplified procedures, faster service delivery, and improved convenience increased overall public satisfaction. Public organizations create value when they generate outcomes that improve citizens' well-being rather than merely achieving administrative efficiency, while innovative governance simultaneously strengthens public trust and encourages greater citizen participation in service delivery (Moore, 1995; Twizeyimana & Andersson, 2019).

Consequently, excellent digital service should not be understood merely as technological modernization but as a comprehensive governance strategy that produces measurable social benefits, institutional legitimacy, and sustainable public trust. Sustainable digital public services require continuous organizational innovation, collaborative governance, and adaptive leadership to ensure that technological advancement consistently creates meaningful value for citizens and improves the overall quality of public administration (Vial, 2019; Ahmad et al., 2026; Khoiruman et al., 2026).

3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors Influencing Sustainable Digital Transformation

The final discussion concerns the organizational and environmental factors influencing the sustainability of excellent digital services. The findings demonstrate that successful digital transformation depends upon multiple interconnected factors rather than technological investment alone. Strong leadership commitment, institutional collaboration, adequate financial resources, implementation of SPBE, employee competency development, and inter-agency coordination collectively contribute to successful service innovation. These findings indicate that digital transformation requires a comprehensive governance approach that integrates institutional, technological, and managerial dimensions to achieve sustainable improvements in public service delivery (Mergel, Edelmann, & Haug, 2019; Vial, 2019). Digital transformation in the public sector requires organizations to align technology adoption with strategic objectives, organizational capabilities, and institutional arrangements to ensure sustainable outcomes (Kane et al., 2015; Verhoef et al., 2021).

One of the strongest supporting factors identified in this study is organizational commitment demonstrated by both the Regional Secretary and the Regional Head. Their commitment encourages agencies to prioritize digital transformation, allocate sufficient budgets, and continuously evaluate service performance. Continuous employee training also strengthens organizational readiness by improving digital competencies among civil servants responsible for delivering public services. Institutional commitment, combined with continuous capacity development, enables government organizations to adapt more effectively to technological changes while maintaining the quality and consistency of public services (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Mergel, Edelmann, & Haug, 2019). Organizational readiness, leadership support, and employee capability development are consistently identified as critical determinants of successful digital transformation because they influence the ability of institutions to absorb and implement technological innovations effectively (Weiner, 2009; Warner & Wäger, 2019).

Collaboration between the Population and Civil Registration Office and the Department of Communication and Informatics also emerged as an essential success factor. This collaboration enables continuous maintenance of digital infrastructure, integration of information systems, and rapid responses to technical problems. Effective inter-agency cooperation facilitates information sharing, reduces organizational fragmentation, and supports the implementation of integrated digital services that are more responsive to citizens' needs. Such collaborative governance has become an essential characteristic of successful digital government implementation (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2012). Digital government initiatives increasingly depend on ecosystem-based collaboration involving multiple public organizations, technology actors, and stakeholders because complex public problems cannot be solved through isolated institutional efforts (Dawes, 2008; Gil-Garcia, Zhang, & Puron-Cid, 2016).

Despite these positive developments, the study identified several barriers limiting digital transformation. Limited internet connectivity in rural areas continues to restrict equitable access to digital services. Similarly, low digital literacy among elderly citizens reduces utilization of online administrative platforms, requiring governments to maintain conventional service channels alongside digital services. Temporary system failures

during peak operating hours also occasionally interrupted administrative processes, indicating that technological infrastructure still requires further strengthening. These obstacles demonstrate that sustainable digital transformation requires equal attention to technological readiness, digital inclusion, and infrastructure development across different regions (Vial, 2019; Twizeyimana & Andersson, 2019). Digital transformation must therefore consider social inequalities and accessibility issues because technological innovation alone does not automatically guarantee inclusive public service outcomes (Janowski, 2015; OECD, 2020).

Human resource limitations represent another significant challenge. Although employee competency has improved through regular training, the number of personnel possessing advanced digital expertise remains relatively limited. As digital technologies continue to evolve, governments must invest continuously in professional development to ensure organizational adaptability. Strengthening digital competencies among public servants is essential for maintaining service quality, increasing organizational resilience, and supporting long-term digital innovation within the public sector (Mergel, Edelmann, & Haug, 2019; Warner & Wäger, 2019). Public sector organizations require continuous learning capabilities and adaptive skills because digital transformation represents an ongoing organizational change process rather than a one-time technological implementation (Kane et al., 2015).

Overall, the discussion confirms that excellent digital service is the product of strategic leadership, collaborative governance, technological readiness, competent human resources, and citizen-centered service innovation. The Regional Secretary serves as the central coordinating actor who transforms these organizational components into an integrated governance ecosystem capable of creating sustainable public value while improving the effectiveness, transparency, and quality of population administration services. This finding reinforces the view that sustainable digital public service innovation can only be achieved through integrated leadership, institutional collaboration, continuous organizational improvement, and the ability to create public value through digital governance (Mergel, Edelmann, & Haug, 2019; Twizeyimana & Andersson, 2019; Cordella & Paletti, 2019).

Conclusion

This study concludes that the Regional Secretary plays a strategic role in realizing excellent digital services based on public value in population administration services. The Regional Secretary serves not only as the chief administrative coordinator but also as a strategic leader who integrates policies, coordinates cross-sector collaboration, strengthens digital governance, develops human resource capacity, and ensures the effective implementation of the Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE). These strategic functions enable the integration of digital infrastructure, organizational resources, budgeting, service standards, and institutional coordination into a comprehensive governance framework. The implementation of excellent digital services has improved service accessibility, responsiveness, reliability, transparency, and citizen satisfaction while creating tangible public value through greater administrative efficiency, increased public trust, and simplified service procedures. Nevertheless, several challenges remain, including unequal internet infrastructure, limited digital literacy among certain community groups, occasional system disruptions, and shortages of personnel with advanced digital competencies. Therefore, sustainable digital transformation requires continuous leadership commitment, collaborative governance, technological innovation, organizational learning, and citizen-centered policy implementation to ensure that digital public services remain inclusive, effective, transparent, and capable of generating long-term public value.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, local governments should strengthen the strategic role of the Regional Secretary by enhancing cross-agency coordination, expanding investment in digital infrastructure, improving cybersecurity, and continuously developing the digital competencies of civil servants through regular training programs. Greater collaboration between the Population and Civil Registration Office, the Department of Communication and Informatics, and other regional agencies should be encouraged to improve system integration and service interoperability. Furthermore, digital literacy programs should be expanded to assist elderly citizens and digitally disadvantaged communities in accessing online public services. Future studies are recommended to employ mixed-method or quantitative approaches involving multiple local governments to evaluate the effectiveness of excellent digital services and examine their long-term impact on public value creation, citizen trust, organizational performance, and digital government maturity.

References

1. Ahmad, R. A. R., Khoiruman, M. A., & Uslan, U. (2026). Effectiveness of using digital-based interactive media in improving fifth grade elementary school students' English-speaking skills. *International Journal of Educational Practice and Policy*, 4(2), 233-251. <https://doi.org/10.66314/ijepp.v4i2.855>
2. Ansell, C., & Gash, A. (2008). Collaborative governance in theory and practice. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18(4), 543-571. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mum032>
3. Cordella, A., & Paletti, A. (2019). Government as a platform, orchestration, and public value creation. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(4), 101409.
4. Dawes, S. S. (2008). The evolution and continuing challenges of digital government. *Public Administration Review*, 68(S1), S86-S102. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2008.00981.x>
5. Emerson, K., Nabatchi, T., & Balogh, S. (2012). An integrative framework for collaborative governance. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 22(1), 1-29. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mur011>
6. Fernandez, S., & Rainey, H. G. (2006). Managing successful organizational change in the public sector. *Public Administration Review*, 66(2), 168-176. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2006.00570.x>
7. Gil-Garcia, J. R., Zhang, J., & Puron-Cid, G. (2016). Conceptualizing smartness in government: An integrative and multi-dimensional view. *Government Information Quarterly*, 33(3), 524-534. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2016.03.002>
8. Janowski, T. (2015). Digital government evolution: From transformation to contextualization. *Government Information Quarterly*, 32(3), 221-236. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2015.07.001>
9. Kane, G. C., Palmer, D., Phillips, A. N., Kiron, D., & Buckley, N. (2015). Strategy, not technology, drives digital transformation. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 14, 1-25. <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/projects/strategy-drives-digital-transformation/>
10. Khoiruman, M. A., Irawan, D. H., & Ahmad, F. (2026, June). The role of English language education in social media-based marketing strategies and global trends: Digital ethnography study. In *International Conference on Humanity Education and Society (ICHES)* (Vol. 5, No. 1). <https://proceedingsiches.com/index.php/ojs/article/view/518>
11. Kraus, S., Jones, P., Kailer, N., Weinmann, A., Chaparro-Banegas, N., & Roig-Tierno, N. (2021). Digital transformation: An overview of the current state of the art of research. *SAGE Open*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211047576>
12. Mergel, I. (2019). Digital service teams in government. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(4), 101389. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2019.07.001>
13. Mergel, I., Edelmann, N., & Haug, N. (2019). Defining digital transformation: Results from expert interviews. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(4), 101385. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2019.06.002>
14. Mergel, I., Gong, Y., & Bertot, J. (2018). Agile government: Systematic literature review and future research. *Government Information Quarterly*, 35(2), 291-298. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2018.04.003>
15. Moore, M. H. (1995). *Creating public value: Strategic management in government*. Harvard University Press.
16. Mozin, S. Y., Tantu, R., Pakaya, R., & Badjuka, A. H. (2026). Public value creation sebagai penggerak transformasi pelayanan publik kontemporer. *Parlementer: Jurnal Studi Hukum dan Administrasi Publik*.
17. Mutiara, W. (2026). Implementasi e-government melalui Sistem Informasi Kearsipan Dinamis Terintegrasi (SRIKANDI) di Dinas Perpustakaan dan Kearsipan Kota Pekanbaru. *Digital Repository Universitas Islam Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau*.
18. Nurrisa, F., Hermina, D., & Norlaila. (2025). Pendekatan kualitatif dalam penelitian: Strategi, tahapan, dan analisis data. *Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran (JTTP)*.
19. OECD. (2020). *The OECD Digital Government Policy Framework: Six dimensions of a digital government*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/f64fed2a-en>
20. Rahayu, R. D., Niswah, F., Meirinawati, & Fanida, E. H. (2026). Strategi peningkatan kualitas layanan digital dalam perspektif public value: Studi pada Website PLAVON Dinas Kependudukan dan Pencatatan Sipil Kabupaten Sidoarjo. *Studi Administrasi Publik dan Ilmu Komunikasi*.
21. Subhaktiyasa, P. G. (2024). Menentukan populasi dan sampel: Pendekatan metodologi penelitian kuantitatif dan kualitatif. *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan*.
22. Sugiyono. (2023). *Metode penelitian kualitatif, kuantitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.

23. Twizeyimana, J. D., & Andersson, A. (2019). The public value of e-government: A literature review. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(2), 167–178. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2019.01.001>
24. Verhoef, P. C., Broekhuizen, T., Bart, Y., Bhattacharya, A., Dong, J. Q., Fabian, N., & Haenlein, M. (2021). Digital transformation: A multidisciplinary reflection and research agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, 122, 889–901. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.09.022>
25. Vial, G. (2019). Understanding digital transformation: A review and a research agenda. *The Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, 28(2), 118–144. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsis.2019.01.003>
26. Vial, G. (2021). Understanding digital transformation: A review and a research agenda. *The Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, 30(2), 101662. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsis.2020.101662>
27. Warner, K. S. R., & Wäger, M. (2019). Building dynamic capabilities for digital transformation: An ongoing process of strategic renewal. *Long Range Planning*, 52(3), 326–349. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2018.12.001>
28. Weiner, B. J. (2009). A theory of organizational readiness for change. *Implementation Science*, 4, Article 67. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-4-67>
29. Wijaya, A., & Saleh, M. (2025). Sistem pemerintahan berbasis elektronik (SPBE) dalam mewujudkan prinsip good governance pada pemerintahan daerah. *Jurnal Ilmu Hukum, Humaniora, dan Politik*.