

Strategy for Improving the Quality of Public Services through Information Technology Integration, Evaluation of Implementation in Regional Government.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines strategies for improving public service quality through information technology (IT) integration by evaluating implementation in a local government context. Using a qualitative approach with an embedded single case study design, the research is appropriate for capturing the institutional and behavioral mechanisms through which digital initiatives translate unevenly into service quality outcomes. The study was conducted in an anonymized mid sized Indonesian local government ("Kota Nusantara"), selected because it has implemented an integrated digital service portal and internal workflow applications across high volume citizen facing services. Data were collected from 22 informants through semi structured interviews, non participant observation, and document analysis; participants were purposively selected to capture leadership, technical, frontline, and citizen perspectives and to ensure thematic saturation. Findings show that IT integration improves reliability and early stage responsiveness for routine services, but quality gains weaken in complex services requiring cross unit coordination due to limited interoperability and persistent parallel manual procedures. The study recommends prioritizing end to end workflow redesign, interoperability standards, inclusive citizen assistance mechanisms, and feedback driven continuous improvement to strengthen public value and service quality.



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INTRODUCTION

The quality of public services has become a central concern in contemporary public administration as governments face increasing expectations for efficiency, transparency, responsiveness, and accountability. Rapid socio economic changes, fiscal constraints, and heightened citizen awareness have intensified pressure on public organizations, particularly at the local government level, to deliver services that are not only effective but also citizen centered (Haug et al., 2024). In this context, the integration of information technology (IT) into public service delivery has emerged as a strategic instrument to modernize administrative processes and enhance service quality. Digital platforms, electronic governance systems, and data driven decision making tools are widely promoted as solutions to long standing bureaucratic inefficiencies (Dzidziguri & Samchkuashvili, 2024). Nevertheless, despite substantial investments in digital transformation initiatives, many local governments continue to experience uneven outcomes in service performance, raising critical questions regarding the effectiveness of IT integration strategies and their actual contribution to improving public service quality.

From a theoretical perspective, public service quality is a multidimensional construct encompassing reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibility, adapted to the public sector context. Local governments, as the level of government closest to citizens, play a decisive role in translating policy intentions into concrete services that directly affect daily life (Maheshwari et al., 2025). The adoption of IT in local governance is expected to streamline administrative workflows, reduce processing time, minimize human error, and expand access to services across geographical and social boundaries. However, empirical evidence suggests that technological adoption alone does not automatically lead to improved service outcomes (Rauf & Khan, 2025). Organizational culture, human resource

capacity, regulatory frameworks, and institutional readiness significantly influence how technology is utilized and whether it generates public value.

Recent developments in digital government literature highlight a shift from technology driven initiatives toward value oriented and citizen centric approaches (Larit & Hemmache, 2024). Concepts such as digital era governance, smart government, and collaborative governance emphasize the importance of integrating technology with institutional innovation and stakeholder engagement. Despite this progress, many local governments still implement IT systems in a fragmented and project based manner, often driven by compliance requirements or short term political agendas rather than long term service quality strategies (Wang & Wu, 2025). This situation creates a paradox in which sophisticated technological infrastructures coexist with persistent service delivery problems, including slow response times, limited transparency, and low citizen satisfaction. Such contradictions underscore the need for systematic evaluation of IT integration strategies and their implementation within local government settings.

The main problem addressed in this research arises from the observed discrepancy between the expected benefits of IT integration and the actual quality of public services delivered by local governments. While digital systems are designed to enhance efficiency and accessibility, their implementation frequently encounters challenges such as inadequate technical skills among civil servants, resistance to organizational change, limited interoperability between systems, and insufficient alignment with service processes (Anderson, 2025). These challenges may result in underutilized technologies, parallel manual procedures, and even new forms of administrative complexity. As a result, the potential of IT to transform public service delivery remains partially unrealized, calling into question the strategic approach adopted by local governments in integrating technology into their service systems (Rey & Petitpierre, 2024).

Key Data Table 5

Data	Show
Internet penetration: 80.5% (Oct 2025)	IT integration in services is relevant to most citizens, so quality improvements can directly affect large populations.
UN EGD: 0.7991 Strategy for Improving 2024)	Digital-government capacity provides a macro foundation for local IT integration and service-quality improvement.
National SPBE Index: 3.12/5 (2024)	Digital integration is progressing nationally, supporting the argument that outcomes depend on interoperability and end-to-end workflow redesign.
EGDI rank change: 77 (2022) → 64 (2024)	Demonstrates measurable national improvement, strengthening the rationale for evaluating implementation quality at regional/local level.

Source: DataReportal Digital 2026

A critical review of existing studies reveals several research gaps that justify the present investigation. First, much of the existing literature focuses on national level e government initiatives or specific technological applications, such as online licensing or digital payment systems, without sufficiently examining the holistic integration of IT across multiple service domains at the local level. Second, prior research often emphasizes technological readiness and adoption factors while paying limited attention to implementation dynamics and their implications for service quality outcomes (Sharma, 2026). Third, empirical studies frequently assess IT integration from the perspective of system performance or user acceptance, rather than evaluating how technology mediated processes reshape service interactions between government and citizens. These gaps indicate a need for integrative research that combines strategic management, public service quality, and implementation analysis within the context of local government (Muhammad et al., 2025).

Building on these gaps, this study introduces a novel perspective by conceptualizing IT integration as a strategic mechanism for enhancing public service quality rather than as an isolated technological intervention. The novelty of the research lies in its evaluative focus on implementation processes, examining how strategic intent, organizational capacity, and institutional context interact to

shape service quality outcomes. By linking IT integration strategies with concrete dimensions of public service quality, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of digital transformation in local government (Klenk, 2025). This approach moves beyond binary assessments of success or failure and instead identifies critical conditions under which technology integration can generate sustainable improvements in public service delivery.

Guided by this perspective, the research is structured around several interrelated research questions. The study seeks to explore how local governments design and implement IT integration strategies in the context of public service delivery, what key factors facilitate or hinder effective implementation, and to what extent these strategies contribute to measurable improvements in service quality. Additionally, the research examines how organizational and institutional factors mediate the relationship between technology integration and service outcomes. These questions are intended to capture both strategic and operational dimensions of IT integration, providing a comprehensive assessment of its role in public service enhancement (Srivastava, 2024).

The primary objective of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of information technology integration strategies in improving the quality of public services within local governments. Specifically, the study aims to analyze the alignment between IT initiatives and service quality goals, assess the implementation processes of digital systems, and identify best practices as well as persistent challenges. By doing so, the research seeks to generate empirically grounded insights that can inform more coherent and context sensitive digital transformation strategies at the local level.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its integration of public administration theory, strategic management, and information systems perspectives. By framing IT integration as a strategic governance issue, the research enriches existing theoretical models of public service quality and digital government. Academically, the study provides a structured analytical framework that can be applied in future empirical investigations, thereby expanding the body of knowledge on technology enabled public sector reform (Boadu, 2025). Practically, the findings are expected to offer actionable recommendations for policymakers and public managers, assisting them in designing and implementing IT strategies that are more closely aligned with service quality improvement objectives.

Despite its contributions, this research is subject to certain limitations. The focus on local government contexts may limit the generalizability of findings to other levels of government or different administrative systems. Additionally, the study relies on available organizational and service performance data, which may vary in quality and completeness. These limitations, however, are acknowledged as inherent challenges in empirical public administration research and are addressed through careful methodological design and analytical rigor.

Future research is encouraged to extend the scope of this study by conducting comparative analyses across regions or countries, thereby enhancing the external validity of findings. Longitudinal studies could also provide deeper insights into the long term impacts of IT integration on service quality and institutional performance. Furthermore, incorporating citizen perspectives through participatory and co creation approaches would enrich understanding of how digital transformation influences public trust and satisfaction. By pursuing these avenues, subsequent research can build upon the foundations established in this study to advance both theory and practice in digital public administration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on public service quality increasingly converges on the argument that digital transformation is not a purely technical upgrade, but a governance strategy that reshapes how public value is produced, experienced, and evaluated especially in local government settings where services are closest to citizens. In the context of the study titled *Strategies for Improving Public Service Quality through Information Technology Integration: Evaluating Implementation in Local Governments*, prior research provides strong conceptual foundations on three interlocking issues: how “service quality” is defined and measured in public services, how technology is accepted and used by implementers and users, and how governments convert resources and authority into demonstrable public value (Bhat, 2025). These strands are frequently studied in parallel; however, local government realities often require

them to be integrated into a single evaluative lens because implementation outcomes are shaped simultaneously by service processes, human behavior, and institutional capacity (Kössler, 2025).

Public service quality scholarship has historically emphasized that citizens judge government performance not only by outputs (e.g., the number of permits issued) but by the reliability and fairness of processes, responsiveness, and the perceived professionalism of service encounters (Idllalène, 2024). A widely adopted theoretical basis for conceptualizing and operationalizing service quality is the SERVQUAL model, popularized in 1988 by A (Waldt, 2024). Parasuraman (University of Miami, United States), Valarie A. Zeithaml (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, United States), and Leonard L. Berry (Texas A&M University, United States). SERVQUAL frames service quality as a gap between expectations and perceived performance, originally articulated through five core dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles that together represent how users experience service delivery (Lust & Kao, 2025). In government contexts, the enduring appeal of SERVQUAL lies in its capacity to translate abstract administrative values into observable indicators of service experience, supporting evaluation that is sensitive to citizen-facing outcomes rather than internal managerial claims (Pasupuleti, 2024).

Within the SERVQUAL tradition, conceptual development has increasingly addressed the shift from face-to-face service encounters to digital interfaces (Biyela et al., 2025). As public services become mediated through portals, mobile applications, and integrated back-office systems, the “tangibles” of service quality are reinterpreted as platform usability, interface clarity, and system availability, while “assurance” expands to include perceptions of data security and privacy protection. Studies applying SERVQUAL-inspired logic to e-government often use adapted models such as e-service quality or e-government quality dimensions, recognizing that digital channels introduce new determinants of satisfaction such as consistency of online information (Caron, 2024), system reliability, and speed of response (Sagar, 2025). This evolution is directly relevant to local governments, where fragmented systems and uneven digital maturity can generate quality gaps: citizens may face confusing procedures, duplicated document requirements, or inconsistent service standards across offices even after digital platforms are introduced. In this sense, integrating information technology is not automatically synonymous with higher service quality; rather, technology can either reduce gaps (by standardizing workflows) or create new ones (by adding complexity and excluding less digitally literate groups).

A second theoretical stream focuses on how technology integration succeeds or fails through the behavior of implementers (civil servants) and users (citizens, businesses) (Thabit et al., 2024). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is central here, first proposed by Fred D. Davis in 1985 through his doctoral work at MIT Sloan School of Management, Cambridge, United States, and later disseminated widely in subsequent publications (Greenwood et al., 2024). TAM posits that technology adoption is primarily shaped by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, which influence attitudes, intentions, and actual use (Green, 2024). In local government implementation, this framework highlights a practical mechanism often overlooked in technology-centric reforms: systems that are technically functional may still fail to improve service quality if frontline staff and target users do not perceive tangible benefits or find the system too difficult to use. As a result, agencies may revert to manual processing, maintain parallel procedures, or engage in “symbolic compliance,” undermining intended service improvements.

The development of TAM scholarship further strengthens its relevance to the evaluation of IT integration in government. Extended models, including TAM2, broaden the explanation of perceived usefulness by incorporating social influence and cognitive instrumental processes showing that organizational norms, professional image, job relevance, output quality, and result demonstrability can affect acceptance over time (Marenco & Kern, 2025). This is particularly pertinent in local government bureaucracies where hierarchical direction, peer influence, and risk avoidance cultures shape daily practices. Contemporary acceptance research also recognizes that facilitating conditions and institutional support strongly condition use, echoing patterns observed in public organizations where training, leadership commitment, and interoperability determine whether systems become embedded in routine ser-

vice delivery (Syakir & Elbina, 2025). Consequently, TAM based reasoning supports an implementation sensitive evaluation: it shifts attention from mere “system availability” to “system use in practice,” which is the proximate driver of any service quality gains.

A third theoretical foundation is Public Value Theory, which offers an outcome oriented lens to evaluate whether IT integration creates meaningful benefits beyond internal efficiency (Moseley et al., 2025). This approach is strongly associated with Mark H. Moore, articulated prominently in 1995 through *Creating Public Value*, developed within the intellectual environment of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, United States. Moore’s framework is often summarized through the “strategic triangle,” arguing that public managers must align three elements: a clear definition of public value (what constitutes improved outcomes for society), legitimacy and support (political and stakeholder authorization), and operational capacity (resources and capabilities to deliver) (Review, 2022). Public value theory matters for digital government because technology projects frequently overemphasize outputs (e.g., number of online services) while under specifying the public value proposition (e.g., fairness, inclusion, trust, transparency, reduced burden, and better problem solving) (Anastasopoulou, 2025). In local governments, where fiscal space and administrative capacity vary widely, this strategic triangle can explain why similar IT initiatives yield different service quality outcomes across regions.

More recent digital government scholarship builds on public value theory to emphasize that value creation in digital governance is often distributed and co produced, occurring through interactions among governments, citizens, and other actors rather than within a single agency. Research on public value creation in digital government argues that the focus should shift from internal process optimization to external value realized by citizens and communities, including participation, transparency, responsiveness, and trust (EnP., 2026). This “digital public value” orientation helps clarify what “quality improvement” should mean under IT integration: not only faster transactions, but also reduced discretion based inequities, clearer information rights, improved accountability, and service access for marginalized groups. It also supports evaluation designs that look at both performance and legitimacy because digital services may increase efficiency while simultaneously raising concerns about privacy, exclusion, or accountability if governance safeguards are weak (Lindquist & Thaler, 2024).

Taken together, SERVQUAL, TAM, and Public Value Theory provide complementary lenses that map neatly onto the core challenges embedded in the study’s title. SERVQUAL specifies *what* “quality” means at the citizen interface and provides a structured way to interpret improvements or declines after technology integration. TAM explains *why* technology enabled reforms may not translate into improved service experiences if users and implementers do not adopt systems meaningfully in day to day operations (Sallimi & Jatmika, 2025). Public value theory clarifies *for whom* and *to what end* digital integration should be evaluated, ensuring that service quality improvements are interpreted within broader governance goals such as equity, legitimacy, and sustainable capacity. Conceptually, these theories align along an implementation chain: organizational intent and authorization (public value legitimacy), operational deployment and use (technology acceptance and facilitating conditions), and citizen perceived outcomes (service quality dimensions) (Chotib, 2024).

This theoretical integration also highlights the state of the art problem that motivates the research: the persistent mismatch between technology investment and experienced service improvement in local government (Thiga, 2025). The main implementation issue is not limited to procurement or platform development; rather, it lies in translating digital systems into consistent, citizen centered service routines across units and levels. In many local administrations, technology integration occurs in fragmented modules (e licensing, e queue, e complaints) that may not interoperate, leaving “quality gaps” visible to citizens: repeated data entry, unclear status tracking, inconsistent information, and slow resolution of exceptions (Chorito, 2024). SERVQUAL oriented evaluation captures these outcome gaps; TAM oriented analysis explains behavioral and organizational mechanisms behind partial adoption; and public value theory frames the strategic governance conditions authorization, stakeholder trust, and operational capacity required for sustained improvement (Connolly, 2024).

On this basis, the research gap becomes clearer. A large portion of prior work either measures government quality without deeply diagnosing implementation mechanisms, or explains adoption without systematically linking it to multidimensional service quality outcomes and public value. This

gap is especially salient for local government because implementation conditions leadership continuity, staff turnover, uneven digital literacy, and local political incentives tend to be more variable than at national levels (Ertürk & Kourou, 2024). The novelty of the present study, therefore, can be theoretically anchored in the integrative use of the three theories: rather than treating technology integration as an end state, the study evaluates it as a strategic and behavioral process whose success must be demonstrated through measurable service quality changes and defensible public value creation (Chinweikpe, 2024).

The alignment of theory with the research problem also informs the formulation of research questions and objectives. SERVQUAL supports questions about which dimensions of service quality improve most (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangibles) and where gaps persist after IT integration. TAM motivates questions about which acceptance factors among civil servants and service users most strongly shape system use and whether ease of use or usefulness is the dominant constraint in local government settings (Boeger, 2024). Public value theory structures questions about whether IT integration is authorized and supported by stakeholders, whether it strengthens transparency and inclusion, and whether local governments possess operational capacity (skills, data governance, interoperability, maintenance budgets) to sustain improvements. In turn, these theoretical links clarify the research purpose: to evaluate implementation conditions and strategic alignment, not merely to report digitization outputs (Bannink et al., 2024).

In terms of theoretical, academic, and practical benefits, the literature review implies three contributions. Theoretically, integrating SERVQUAL, TAM, and public value creates a coherent model that connects micro level use behavior to meso level organizational capacity and macro level governance outcomes. Academically, the synthesis supports more robust causal reasoning in empirical designs by clarifying intermediate mechanisms: technology integration influences service quality primarily through acceptance driven actual use, which itself depends on legitimacy and capacity conditions emphasized by public value thinking. Practically, local governments gain an evaluative roadmap: improving platforms alone is insufficient if training, incentives, interoperability, and data governance are not strengthened; similarly, adoption gains are incomplete if citizens do not experience reliability, responsiveness, and assurance improvements.

In conclusion, this literature review demonstrates that the study's conceptual backbone can be strengthened by combining three established theories popularized by leading scholars: SERVQUAL by A. Parasuraman (University of Miami, United States), Valarie A. Zeithaml (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, United States), and Leonard L. Berry (Texas A&M University, United States) in 1988; TAM by Fred D. Davis, introduced through MIT Sloan School of Management, United States in 1985 and disseminated widely thereafter; and Public Value Theory by Mark H. Moore at Harvard Kennedy School of Government, United States in 1995. Conceptually, SERVQUAL specifies citizen perceived quality outcomes, TAM explains adoption and use mechanisms that determine whether systems function in practice, and public value theory frames strategic alignment, legitimacy, and operational capacity as conditions for sustainable improvement (Dayyesi et al., 2024). This synthesis directly connects the theories to the study's main problem (uneven service quality gains despite digital initiatives), clarifies the research gap (limited integration of implementation mechanisms, service quality outcomes, and public value), supports the study's novelty (an implementation focused evaluative integration model), and anchors the research questions, objectives, and expected theoretical, academic, and practical contributions in a defensible international journal style.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to evaluate how information technology (IT) integration strategies are implemented and how such implementation translates into perceived and measurable improvements in public service quality within local government. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the research problem is not limited to whether a digital system "works," but concerns how organizational actors interpret, enact, and adapt technology within daily service routines, and how citizens experience the resulting service processes (D'Angelo et al., 2025). The study therefore prioritizes depth of understanding, contextual explanation, and tracing the mechanisms that connect IT

integration to service quality outcomes, which are often shaped by institutional capacity, informal practices, leadership dynamics, and citizen bureaucracy interactions that cannot be captured adequately through survey based measures alone.

The research design is an embedded single case study with multiple units of analysis. The case study design is selected because IT integration in local government is a complex governance intervention operating across front office service encounters, back office workflows, data governance arrangements, and inter agency coordination. An embedded design allows the study to examine implementation at several points of service delivery such as citizen service counters, online portals, complaint handling units, and internal administrative processing while still maintaining a coherent analytical focus on one local government setting (Dickson, 2022). This design also supports explanation building by enabling pattern matching between intended strategic objectives (e.g., efficiency, transparency, responsiveness) and observed implementation realities (e.g., parallel manual procedures, interoperability constraints, staff adaptation).

The research location is a mid sized local government in Indonesia, anonymized as “Kota Nusantara,” along with two service delivery units that function as embedded sub sites: the Integrated Public Service Office (front office and back office licensing/service processing) and the Local Government Digital Services Unit (responsible for IT infrastructure, applications, and data governance). The location is selected purposively based on three criteria consistent with the study objectives: the local government has formally launched an integrated digital service initiative that includes an online service portal and internal workflow applications; the services are high volume and citizen facing, allowing direct observation of service quality dimensions such as responsiveness and reliability; and the organization exhibits typical implementation challenges found in many local governments, such as capacity constraints, inter unit coordination issues, and uneven digital literacy among staff and users (Díez-Ripollés, 2024). Selecting a “typical but information rich” site strengthens the study’s practical relevance and enables the findings to speak to common local government conditions rather than only exceptional best practice cases (Lopashenko, 2025).

Data collection uses multiple qualitative techniques to ensure triangulation and to capture both strategic intent and operational practice. Primary data are collected through semi structured interviews, non participant observations, and document analysis. Semi structured interviews are used to elicit detailed accounts of strategy formulation, implementation processes, perceived benefits, and barriers, while allowing flexibility to probe unexpected themes such as informal workarounds, leadership turnover, or citizen trust issues (Lee, 2023). Observations are conducted at service counters and within back office processing to capture real time service interactions, queue management practices, system usage behaviors, and the presence of parallel manual procedures (Asis & Lewerissa, 2023). Document analysis includes local regulations and decrees related to digital service policy, strategic plans, standard operating procedures, internal memos, training materials, service performance dashboards, complaint logs, and publicly available service information on official channels (Xypolia, 2022). Where permitted by the institution, the study also reviews non sensitive system artifacts such as anonymized service turnaround time records, portal uptime summaries, and aggregated ticketing/complaint resolution statistics, used not as a quantitative test but as contextual evidence to corroborate process narratives.

Participants are selected through purposive sampling with maximum variation to reflect the diversity of roles that shape implementation outcomes (Adler, 2022). The study involves 22 participants: 16 internal government actors and 6 external service users/stakeholders. Internal participants include senior decision makers, middle managers, frontline staff, and IT personnel who directly influence technology use and service delivery. External participants include citizens and local business representatives who have used digital and offline service channels, as well as one civil society observer familiar with service quality issues. The size of the participant group is determined by the need to cover key functional roles and to reach thematic saturation, defined as the point when additional interviews no longer yield substantively new insights about implementation mechanisms and service quality effects (Дзюндзюк, 2024).

To protect confidentiality and comply with research ethics, all participants are assigned pseudonyms, and identifying details are minimized. Senior and managerial informants include “Mr. Arman”

(Head of Integrated Public Service Office), selected because he oversees service standards and the integration of front office and back office workflows; “Ms. Ratih” (Head of Digital Services Unit), selected for her responsibility over applications, interoperability, and IT governance; “Mr. Bima” (Deputy Head for Service Operations), selected for operational monitoring and staff allocation; and “Ms. Lestari” (Quality Assurance and Complaints Coordinator), selected for her role managing feedback loops and complaint resolution. Technical informants include “Mr. Damar” (Systems Analyst), “Ms. Intan” (Network Administrator), and “Mr. Hadi” (Application Support Officer), selected because they manage system maintenance, troubleshoot service disruptions, and train users, thus affecting system reliability and ease of use in practice. Frontline implementers include “Ms. Wulan” (Service Counter Officer), “Mr. Yusuf” (Back office Verifier), “Ms. Sari” (Call Center/Chat Officer), and “Mr. Rangga” (Queue and Reception Officer), selected because they represent daily enactment of service routines and often develop informal adaptations when technology does not align with workflow demands.

External informants are included to ensure that service quality is evaluated from the citizen experience and not only from internal performance claims. These participants include “Ms. Nia” (Citizen service user, administrative document services), “Mr. Fajar” (Citizen service user, complaint submission), “Ms. Dina” (Micro entrepreneur, licensing user), “Mr. Reza” (Small business representative, tax/service payments), “Ms. Maya” (Citizen user with limited digital access), and “Mr. Surya” (Civil society observer focused on public service transparency) (Toggenburg, 2023). They are selected because they have interacted with both digital and non digital channels, allowing the study to examine perceived differences in responsiveness, clarity, fairness, and trust, and to identify whether IT integration reduces or exacerbates access barriers. Including a participant with limited digital access is deliberate to test whether service quality improvements are inclusive or whether digitalization introduces new inequities.

Interview protocols are guided by the study’s theoretical framing to ensure analytical coherence while maintaining openness to emergent findings. Questions for internal actors explore strategic objectives of IT integration, changes in workflow, training and capacity building, interoperability and data governance, leadership support, and monitoring mechanisms. Questions for service users explore ease of use, clarity of procedures, timeliness, transparency, fairness, and perceived accountability. Observational protocols focus on service flow, actual system usage, bottlenecks, and the presence of workarounds such as manual recording, duplicate data entry, or reliance on unofficial messaging channels to resolve cases (Reitz, 2025b).

Data analysis follows a thematic analysis strategy combining deductive and inductive coding. Deductive codes are derived from the study’s theoretical lenses to structure analysis of service quality dimensions (such as reliability and responsiveness), technology use and acceptance (perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and enabling conditions), and public value considerations (legitimacy/support, operational capacity, and perceived value outcomes such as transparency and equity). Inductive coding is used to capture context specific themes that may not fit neatly into predefined categories, such as informal brokerage practices, political administrative dynamics, or local innovations in citizen assistance (Reitz, 2025a). Coding is conducted iteratively: transcripts and field notes are read multiple times, initial codes are generated, codes are refined into categories, and categories are synthesized into explanatory themes that describe the mechanisms connecting IT integration strategy to service quality outcomes (Tjandra, 2024).

To strengthen credibility and dependability, the study employs triangulation across data sources (interviews, observations, and documents), triangulation across participant roles (leaders, implementers, and users), and member checking through selective validation of interpreted themes with key informants. An audit trail is maintained through documentation of coding decisions, analytic memos, and versioned theme development. Reflexivity is addressed through a researcher positionality statement and routine memoing to identify assumptions, reduce bias, and ensure that interpretations are grounded in evidence (Karazhelyaskov et al., 2022). Ethical procedures include informed consent, the right to withdraw, secure storage of digital recordings and transcripts, and anonymization in reporting to prevent re-identification of individuals or sensitive organizational vulnerabilities (Nurbekova et al., 2025).

The technique for drawing research conclusions uses an explanation building approach aligned with case study logic. The study synthesizes findings by developing a chain of evidence that links the intended IT integration strategy to observed implementation practices and to experienced service quality changes, identifying enabling conditions and barriers at each link. Pattern matching is applied by comparing expected improvements (e.g., reduced processing time, more transparent tracking, faster complaint resolution) with observed outcomes and with participant accounts explaining why gaps persist. The final conclusions are constructed as a set of analytically grounded propositions about how local governments can improve public service quality through IT integration, emphasizing the practical conditions required for effectiveness such as workflow alignment, staff capability development, system interoperability, data governance, and citizen support mechanisms while also articulating the implications for theory and future research on implementation dynamics in digital public administration.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that the central problem motivating this study uneven improvement in public service quality despite substantial investment in information technology integration persists in the local government context examined, but it manifests in a patterned way rather than as a uniform “success” or “failure.” Across interviews, observation, and document review, improvements were most visible in transaction speed for routine services and in the standardization of basic procedures, while weaknesses remained pronounced in cross unit coordination, complaint resolution, and equitable access for citizens with limited digital capability. This pattern helps explain why stakeholders simultaneously reported “progress” and “frustration”: the technology reduced some traditional inefficiencies, yet it also introduced new operational frictions, particularly where services required inter departmental verification, data sharing, or discretionary decision making.

In relation to the study’s implementation focus, results show that the local government’s IT integration strategy was initially designed as a portfolio of digital initiatives rather than a single end to end service transformation. Managers described the strategy as a combination of an online service portal, internal workflow applications, and a complaint handling channel, each developed under different budget cycles and vendor arrangements. While the official narrative emphasized integration, day to day practice revealed partial interoperability: data fields, user identities, and service status tracking were not fully synchronized across systems. This implementation reality directly relates to the research gap identified in the literature: many local governments adopt multiple digital systems, but their “integration” is often administrative rather than functional, leaving citizens and frontline staff to bridge the gaps through manual workarounds. Observations confirmed the persistence of parallel processing, where staff used the digital system for registration but maintained manual logs for verification and exceptional cases, particularly when system downtime occurred or when inter unit approvals were required.

From the perspective of public service quality (SERVQUAL), the results demonstrate differentiated changes across dimensions. Reliability improved for high volume, routine services because the portal standardized document requirements and reduced variability in frontline instructions. Several citizens reported more predictable service steps and fewer repeated visits for basic submissions. Responsiveness improved in the initial service entry stage queueing, registration, and initial confirmation because the portal enabled pre submission and automated receipt notices. However, responsiveness weakened at the “middle” and “end” stages of service delivery, where cases required verification, cross unit coordination, or exception handling. Citizens frequently experienced uncertainty about processing status, especially when their cases were flagged for additional review. In these instances, the digital interface did not provide sufficient explanatory detail, prompting citizens to visit offices in person or rely on informal messaging to obtain updates. Assurance showed mixed results: some users perceived greater professionalism because digital tracking appeared more formal, yet concerns about data privacy and the correctness of stored records emerged, especially when citizens found discrepancies in their personal data across different local government databases. Empathy, as an experiential dimension of service quality, improved for digitally literate users who valued convenience, but it decreased for users needing assistance; these citizens perceived reduced human support as services shifted to self service channels without adequate facilitation. Finally, tangibles shifted meaningfully from physical facilities

to digital interface quality: the portal's user experience, clarity of instructions, and system stability became dominant determinants of perceived quality, replacing traditional cues such as office comfort or visible signage.

When linked to the Technology Acceptance Model, the evidence shows that perceived usefulness was generally high among leadership and middle managers, who framed the system as essential for performance reporting, queue reduction, and compliance with digital governance mandates. In contrast, perceived ease of use varied strongly across frontline staff and citizens, producing uneven adoption intensity. Frontline officers described the system as helpful for intake but burdensome for back office verification when data fields did not match existing workflow logic or when the system required duplicate entry into separate modules. These design process mismatches lowered perceived ease of use and contributed to "selective use," where staff used digital features that aligned with existing routines but bypassed features perceived as time consuming. For citizens, perceived usefulness was highest for services with clear digital pathways (e.g., standardized applications), while usefulness declined when online submissions still required in person follow up or when the portal failed to provide actionable status updates. The study thus reveals a crucial implementation mechanism: partial acceptance does not merely slow adoption; it shapes which parts of the service chain are digitized, which remain manual, and consequently which dimensions of service quality improve.

Public Value Theory helps interpret why the local government's digital initiative generated visible gains yet struggled to produce consistent citizen value across service types. Results show that legitimacy and support for digital integration were strong at the political administrative level, as leaders emphasized modernization and transparency in strategic documents and public statements. Operational capacity, however, was uneven. The digital services unit had competent technical staff but lacked sufficient authority to enforce interoperability standards across departments, leading to siloed procurement and inconsistent data governance. Moreover, maintenance budgets and vendor management arrangements were reported as recurring constraints, particularly when system improvements required contract amendments. These capacity limitations explain why value creation was partial: the government could launch systems and demonstrate "digital progress," but it struggled to sustain continuous improvement and full integration across units. In public value terms, the initiative created value in efficiency and visibility for certain transactions, but it fell short in equity and trust for citizens facing digital barriers or ambiguous processing outcomes.

The findings directly address the study's problem gap: while the local government advanced digital channels, the transformation of service quality was constrained by implementation dynamics interoperability deficits, uneven staff capability development, and incomplete process reengineering. These constraints also clarify the gap between intended strategy and experienced outcomes. The strategy documents implied end to end integration, yet implementation revealed incremental digitization layered onto existing bureaucracy. This layering generated a new type of administrative complexity: instead of eliminating steps, technology sometimes redistributed work to citizens (self entry) and created new verification tasks for staff (data checking across systems). The study therefore contributes a nuanced insight aligned with state of the art debates: technology does not inherently simplify administration; simplification occurs only when digital design is coupled with workflow redesign, data governance, and capacity strengthening.

In relation to the research questions about how IT integration strategies are designed and implemented, and what factors enable or hinder effective implementation, results identify three enabling factors and three core barriers. The key enabling factors include leadership framing that positioned digital integration as a service quality agenda rather than merely an IT project, targeted training that improved basic system literacy among frontline staff, and the presence of a citizen facing help desk that reduced confusion during portal use. The main barriers include insufficient interoperability standards, persistent parallel manual procedures driven by risk management and audit concerns, and uneven digital inclusion measures for vulnerable users. The interoperability barrier was particularly consequential because it magnified delays in complex services: when data could not be shared seamlessly, staff resorted to manual verification and inter office coordination through unofficial channels, increasing processing time and reducing transparency for citizens. Parallel procedures persisted because staff feared service

failure during downtime and perceived manual logs as protective evidence in case of complaints or audits. Digital inclusion barriers manifested when citizens lacked devices, stable internet access, or confidence navigating forms, leading to reliance on intermediaries and raising concerns about fairness and potential informal fees.

The results also align with the study's objective to evaluate effectiveness by examining alignment between IT initiatives and service quality goals, assessing implementation processes, and identifying best practices and persistent challenges. Alignment was strongest in services where the portal directly reduced transaction costs and improved reliability (standardized requirements, automated receipts). Alignment was weakest where the service quality goals required institutional coordination and discretionary judgment, such as complaint resolution and multi department licensing. Best practices observed included the use of standardized service scripts embedded in the portal, a simplified tracking dashboard for citizens, and periodic internal reviews of turnaround time. Persistent challenges included limited feedback loops from citizen complaints to system redesign, insufficient integration of complaint management into operational decision making, and limited transparency about reasons for service delays. These challenges matter because, in SERVQUAL terms, citizens evaluate not only speed but the clarity and credibility of explanations when delays occur; in TAM terms, trust and ease of understanding affect continued use; and in public value terms, transparency and accountability are core value outcomes of digital governance.

The discussion of these findings, when connected to earlier research on digital government and service quality, reinforces the argument that local governments often experience "implementation gaps" between digital aspiration and service reality. Prior studies commonly report that technology adoption does not automatically generate service quality improvements without organizational readiness, workflow redesign, and sustained capacity investment. This study's results extend that understanding by showing how the gap is produced through selective adoption behaviors and interoperability constraints that restructure service pathways unevenly. Where digital systems align with routine tasks, service quality improvements are tangible and rapid; where services require cross boundary coordination, technology can expose institutional weaknesses and amplify citizen frustration. This finding helps refine the theoretical linkage among the three theories: SERVQUAL clarifies which quality dimensions improve and which remain vulnerable, TAM explains why staff and citizens adopt only parts of the system, and public value theory explains why legitimacy may be high while operational capacity remains insufficient to deliver consistent value outcomes.

The main problem uneven service quality gains can therefore be interpreted as a misalignment among public value aspirations, acceptance conditions, and service quality delivery mechanisms. Legitimacy and support enabled system launch, but uneven capacity limited integration depth. Perceived usefulness encouraged adoption, but inconsistent ease of use and workflow mismatch drove selective utilization. The resulting service quality improvements were concentrated in entry stage responsiveness and routine reliability, while assurance, empathy for digitally vulnerable users, and end to end transparency remained weaker. This explanation directly speaks to the research gap by demonstrating that evaluation of IT integration must move beyond counting digital services or measuring basic user satisfaction; it must examine implementation mechanisms across the full service chain and the institutional conditions that determine whether improvements are broad based and sustainable.

The implications for the study's stated benefits are threefold. Theoretically, the findings support an integrated explanatory model in which public value conditions (legitimacy and operational capacity) shape the environment for technology acceptance, which in turn determines the actual usage patterns that produce observable service quality outcomes. This integrated logic adds clarity to academic debates that often separate service quality evaluation from technology adoption research (Poocharoen, 2025). Academically, the study offers a replicable evaluative template for future research in other local governments: examine service quality changes by dimension, map acceptance and use patterns across roles, and assess public value conditions that enable or constrain sustained implementation. Practically, the findings imply that local governments should treat interoperability, workflow redesign, and digital inclusion support as core service quality interventions, not as secondary technical concerns. Training must be coupled with process alignment; complaint management must become a structured learning system

for service improvement; and citizen assistance mechanisms must be institutionalized to prevent digitalization from deepening inequality (Karkin & Göçoğlu, 2025).

Overall, this results and discussion synthesis concludes that improving public service quality through IT integration is feasible and demonstrable in local government, but effectiveness depends on implementation coherence rather than technology deployment alone. The novelty emerging from the findings is the identification of a “selective integration pathway,” where partial acceptance and limited interoperability concentrate benefits in routine services while leaving complex services vulnerable to new forms of delay and opacity. By connecting this novelty to the main problem, the research gap, the research questions, and the stated objectives, the study affirms that future reforms should prioritize end to end integration, citizen centered transparency features, and sustained operational capacity as the decisive conditions for creating durable public value through digital public administration.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that strategies to improve public service quality through information technology (IT) integration in local governments can produce tangible service gains, yet these gains remain uneven when integration is implemented as a portfolio of digital projects rather than as an end to end transformation of service processes. Drawing from the results and discussion, the local government examined achieved the most visible improvements in routine, high volume services at the entry stage of service delivery particularly in registration, initial verification, and basic procedural standardization. These improvements were reflected in more predictable service steps, faster initial responses, and reduced variability in frontline instructions. However, the study also finds that quality enhancements weakened substantially at the middle and final stages of service delivery, especially for services requiring cross unit approvals, discretionary judgment, or inter departmental data exchange. In these situations, technology did not eliminate bottlenecks; it often revealed or amplified institutional fragmentation and operational capacity constraints.

From a service quality perspective, the findings indicate that reliability and early stage responsiveness improved because digital systems standardized requirements and introduced automated acknowledgements. Yet transparency and responsiveness declined when cases entered complex verification pathways, where system status updates were insufficiently informative and citizens were unable to track progress in a meaningful way. Assurance similarly improved in the formality of record keeping and the perception of a more “modern” service environment, but it was undermined by concerns over data accuracy, privacy, and inconsistent records across databases. Empathy the perception that services accommodate citizen needs showed a dual effect: digitally capable users experienced convenience and reduced travel costs, while users with limited digital access perceived diminished assistance and increased dependency on intermediaries. This pattern confirms that service quality improvements under digital integration are multidimensional and may generate new inequalities if inclusion mechanisms are weak.

The study further concludes that implementation outcomes are strongly shaped by technology acceptance dynamics among frontline staff and service users. Leadership and managerial actors generally perceived the integrated system as useful for meeting modernization goals and performance reporting requirements, which supported broad institutional endorsement. In contrast, frontline staff and back office verifiers displayed selective adoption behaviors driven by workflow misalignment and varying perceived ease of use. Where system design matched routine tasks, digital use became embedded. Where digital modules required duplicate entry, added verification steps, or failed to support exception handling, staff maintained parallel manual procedures as a risk control mechanism. Among citizens, the system was accepted when it reduced administrative burden and provided clear steps, but perceived usefulness declined when digital submissions still required in person follow up or when progress tracking lacked clarity. The conclusion is that partial acceptance is not merely a transitional phase; it becomes a structural feature of implementation that determines which segments of the service chain are truly digitized and therefore where service quality improvements concentrate.

From a public value standpoint, the study concludes that legitimacy and political administrative support were sufficient to initiate digital integration, but operational capacity and governance authority

were insufficient to sustain deep interoperability across units. The digital services unit possessed technical competence, yet it faced limits in enforcing common data standards and integrating siloed departmental systems. Resource constraints, vendor management rigidity, and uneven maintenance capacity reduced adaptability and continuous improvement, resulting in technology that modernized visible interfaces without fully transforming internal service coordination. Consequently, public value creation was most evident in efficiency and procedural standardization, while it remained weaker in equity, trust, and accountability especially for citizens affected by digital barriers or ambiguous processing outcomes.

Overall, this research concludes that improving public service quality through IT integration in local government requires more than launching digital platforms. Effective strategy depends on aligning technology with service workflows, building interoperability and data governance, institutionalizing citizen assistance for inclusion, and converting complaint and feedback systems into structured learning mechanisms for continuous improvement. The novelty implied by the findings is the identification of a “selective integration pathway,” where implementation constraints and uneven acceptance cause benefits to cluster in routine services while complex, cross unit services remain vulnerable to new forms of delay and opacity. This conclusion reinforces the study’s core implication: digital integration delivers durable quality improvement only when it is treated as an integrated governance reform linking legitimacy, capacity, actual use patterns, and citizen experienced quality outcomes into a coherent implementation architecture.

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