

OPEN GOVERNMENT: CASE IN SOUTH COTABATO, PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRAK

Filipina merupakan satu diantara delapan negara inisiator Open Government Partnership, sebuah upaya multi nasional untuk mempromosikan open government. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis tren dan kebijakan open government di Cotabato Selatan, Filipina .. Pendekatan kualitatif, metode analisis bibliometrik, dan metode analisis konten digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Data yang digunakan bersumber dari database Google Scholar dan dari dokumen kebijakan South Cotabato. Penelitian ini menemukan 127 artikel relevan, 683 sitasi, 13 h-index, dan 24 g-index yang menunjukkan bahwa studi open government South Cotabato memiliki dampak dan produktivitas yang tinggi. Terdapat 2646 total link strength, 668 occurrences, 103 topik, dan 9 klaster pada studi ini. Akses informasi, partisipasi publik, legislasi terbuka, akses publik, pelayanan publik, infrastruktur, pemantauan publik, informasi publik, keterbukaan informasi, dan ekstraktif merupakan topik-topik yang mendominasi. Sedangkan topik-topik penelitian potensial yakni pelayanan publik, kualitas pelayanan, akses, informasi publik, komunikasi, interaktif, keterbukaan informasi, kualitas informasi, akuntabilitas, monitoring dan evaluasi. Saat ini, Cotabato Selatan berfokus pada komitmen terhadap undang-undang terbuka, partisipasi publik dalam ekstraktif, pemantauan publik terhadap infrastruktur, dan akses terhadap informasi. Komitmen-komitmen tersebut berpotensi menjadikan South Cotabato lebih terbuka.

Kata kunci: Pemerintahan Terbuka, Open Government Partnership, Cotabato Selatan, Filipina

ABSTRACT

The Philippines is one of eight initiating countries of the Open Government Partnership, a multinational effort to promote open government. This study aims to analyze open government trends and policies in South Cotabato, Philippines. Qualitative approaches, bibliometric analysis methods, and content analysis methods are used in this study. The data used are sourced from the Google Scholar database and from South Cotabato policy documents. This study found 127 relevant articles, 683 citations, 13 h-indexes, and 24 g-indexes, indicating that the South Cotabato open government study has high impact and productivity. There are 2646 total link strengths, 668 occurrences, 103 topics, and 9 clusters in this study. Access information, public participation, open legislation, public access, public service, infrastructure, public monitoring, public information, information openness, and extractive are the dominant topics. Meanwhile, potential research topics are public service, service quality, access, public information, communication, interactivity, information openness, information quality, accountability, monitoring, and evaluation. South Cotabato is currently focused

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on commitments to open legislation, public participation in extractives, public monitoring of infrastructure, and access to information. These commitments have the potential to make South Cotabato more open.

Keywords: *Open Governmen,; Open Government Partnership, South Cotabato, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Many nations worldwide are now designing and implementing initiatives related to information access, transparency, participation, and collaboration because open government has emerged as a key administrative reform strategy (Abdussamad et al., 2024; Afandi, Afandi, Erdayani, et al., 2023; De Blasio & Selva, 2019; Gil-Garcia et al., 2020). Numerous governments have broadened the definition of open government. For instance, the Obama administration spearheaded the creation of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), an international initiative to advance open government globally, and announced the Open Government Directive in 2009 (Afandi, Afandi, & Anugerah, 2023; Hamsah, 2023; Moon, 2020; Schmidhuber & Hilgers, 2021).

The foundation of the Open Government Partnership is the belief that stronger ties between society and the government will benefit everyone in the long run and exponentially (Erdayani et al., 2023; Ruijer & Meijer, 2020; Suwidyanti, 2023; Tai, 2021). Open government is also more accessible, responsive, and accountable to citizens. National and

municipal governments are involved in the Open Government Partnership, which is a collaborative effort (Afandi et al., 2024; Gao et al., 2021; Ingrams, 2020; Ruijer et al., 2020).

Participating in the local Open Government Partnership (OGP) program offers advantages for promoting open reform, which is now part of every local government's vision and mission to achieve greater responsiveness, accountability, inclusion, and transparency (Afandi, Afandi, & Erdayani, 2023; Ingrams et al., 2020; Zulfa & Afandi, 2023). Each local government can learn new strategies for implementing open government and share perspectives, lessons learned, and resources to realize the ideals of open government by becoming a member of this global community (Afandi, Erdayani, et al., 2023; Lnenicka & Saxena, 2021; Wirtz et al., 2019).

In recognition of the fact that a great deal of open government innovation and reform takes place at the local level, where governments can interact more directly with communities and provide a multitude of crucial public services, the Open Government Partnership has initiated the Local Government Pilot Program (Afandi,

2024; Fraundorfer, 2020; Park & Kim, 2022; Piotrowski, 2020). Fifteen municipal administrations-Buenos Aires, Basque Country, Austin, São Paulo, Elgeyo-Marakwet, Madrid, Paris, Kaduna State, Jalisco, Sekondi-Takoradi, La Libertad, Scotland, Tbilisi, Seoul, and South Cotabato-are participating in this experimental program.

South Cotabato is one of the local administrations in the Philippines and one of the eight nations instrumental in establishing the Open Government Partnership. With the South Cotabato for Integrity and Jobs initiative, South Cotabato has effectively led the way in the Philippines in implementing integrity programs at the local government level. Following Caren Levy's Web of Institutionalization concept, the South Cotabato Integrity Circle (SCIC) was established and has created 24 integrity mechanisms (Canares, 2020; Canares et al., 2020). The purpose of this study is to examine open government practices in South Cotabato and the local administration's dedication to implementing them. The Philippines is one of eight initiating countries of the Open Government Partnership, a multi-national effort to promote open government.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study combines content analysis and bibliometric analysis techniques with a qualitative methodology. A technique for examining scientific literature in a specific field of study or subject is called bibliometric analysis (Donthu et al., 2021; Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020). Using this technique, trends and important discoveries derived from scientific literature are highlighted (Gaviria-Marin et al., 2019; Kulsum et al., 2022). By examining the contents of documents, content analysis is a technique used to research and comprehend particular problems or subjects (Subedi et al., 2022; Wang & Shepherd, 2020). Data for the bibliometric analysis were retrieved using Publish or Perish and the keyword "open government South Cotabato" from the Google Scholar database. To create a bibliometric map, the data was saved in RIS format, organized using Mendeley, and analyzed using VOSviewer. In the meanwhile, information

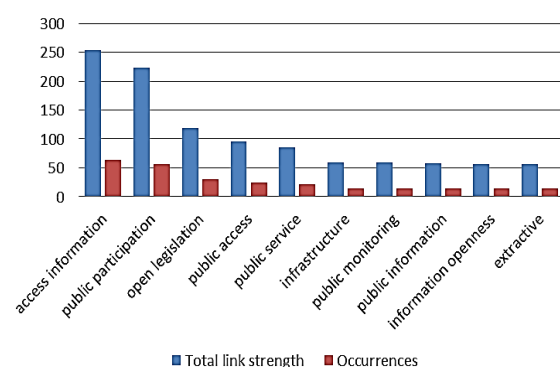


Figure. 2 Item Domination
Source: Processed by the Author

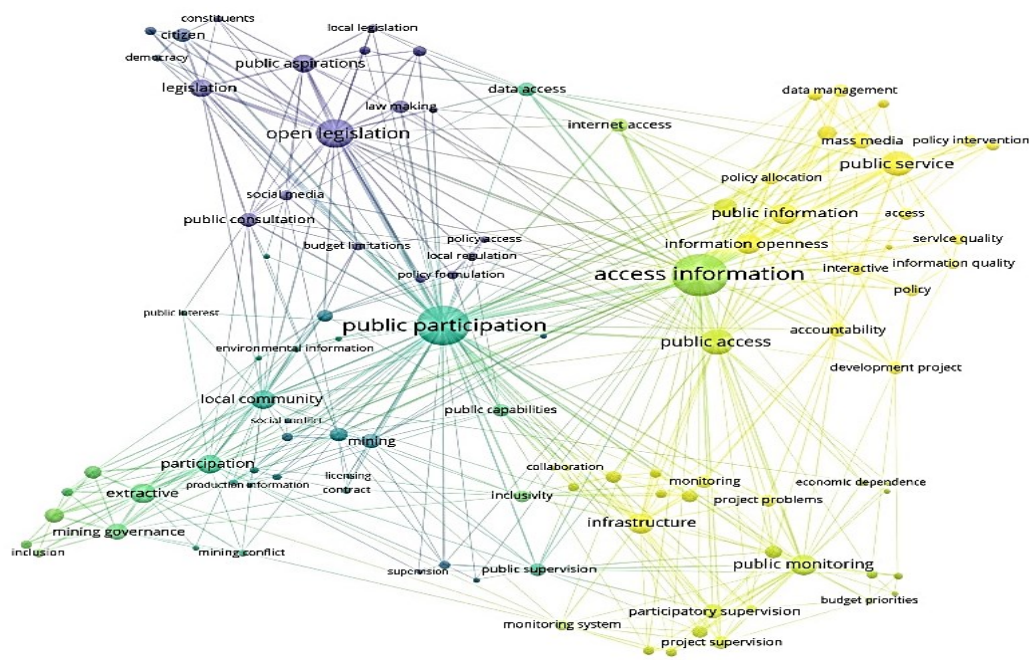


Figure 1. VOSviewer Network Visualization
 Source: Processed by the Author

used for content analysis is sourced from South Cotabato open government policy documents available on the official website. The findings of the South Cotabato open government policy analysis were derived from the categorization and interpretation of the data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Publication Trends of Scientific Articles on Open Government in South Cotabato

127 pertinent articles, 683 citations, 13 h-indexes, and 24 g-indexes were found in this research, suggesting that South Cotabato's open government publications are engaging, significant, and highly productive. It is customary to evaluate the productivity and impact of published

publications using the H-index and g-index. The g-index is produced using the distribution of citations and the average number of citations, whereas the h-index is computed using the number of articles generated and the number of citations received.

Figure 1 was created using the keywords from the articles included in this investigation. The given visualization does not display any duplicate objects. Items that were identical and appeared in more than one article were counted as a single item. Circles and labels are used to depict the components in this graphic. The labels' and circles' corresponding weights dictate their sizes. The label and circle that arise from an item appearing more frequently get

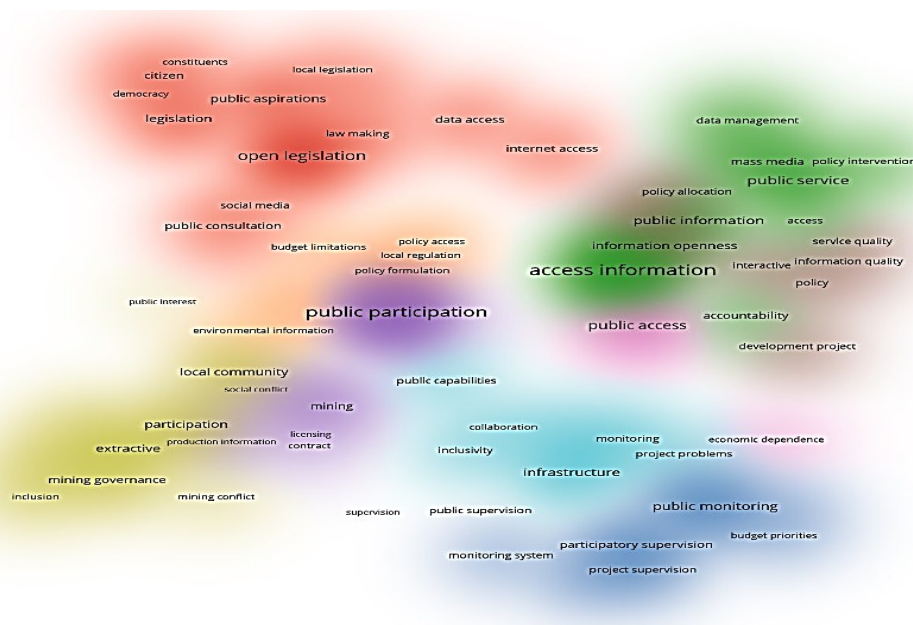


Figure. 3 Density Visualization
Source: Processed by the Author

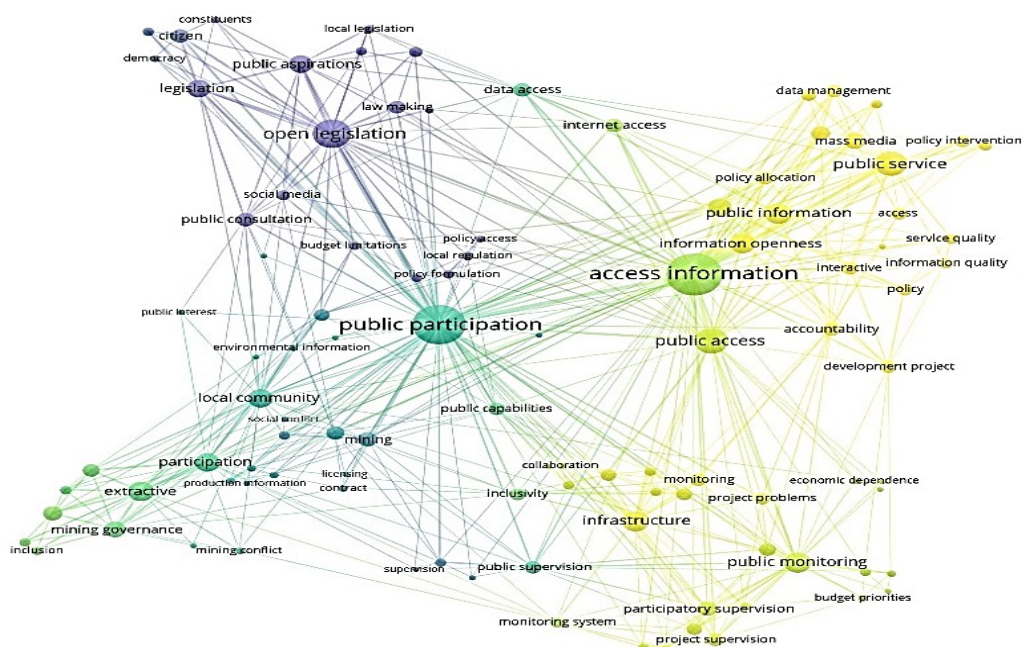


Figure. 4 Overlay visualization
Source: Processed by the Author

larger. The location of each item indicates how close the relationship is, and the lines between them represent connections. Figure 2 displays the prominent items,

Figure 3 displays item clusters, and Figure 4 displays the items from the most recent year.

In Figure 2, the color red denotes an item's overall appearance in all articles, while the blue tint shows an item's entire link strength. In South Cotabato's open government articles, there are 668 occurrences and 2,646 total link strengths. Access information, public participation, open legislation, public access, public service, infrastructure, public monitoring, public information, information openness, and extractives are the list of topics that dominate in this study. These topics are the most widely used by researchers and are the main focus of South Cotabato open government studies.

One hundred and three subjects were covered in the South Cotabato Open Government articles. Nine groups of varying sizes are created from the subjects presented. By drawing connections across subjects, each cluster ensures that every topic within it is closely related to every other topic (Figure 1). Policymaking, information, policy intervention, public dialogue, data management, development projects, interactive, policy allocation, public policy, mass media, communication, information openness, public information, public services, and information access are among the topics covered in Cluster 1.

The subjects covered by Cluster 2 include the mining portal, citizens, political process, decision-making, democracy,

legislative data, local legislation, social media, data access, internet access, public consultation, legislation, public aspirations, and open legislation. Cluster 3 covers civil society, cooperation, secretariat procedures, strategic initiatives, openness, assessment, evaluation, inclusivity, project oversight, issues with the project, oversight, public capacities, accountability, and infrastructure.

Cluster four encompasses the following topics: infrastructure projects, open data kits, budget priorities, regional funds, central funds, monitoring process, monitoring system, project quality, project status, project supervision, participatory supervision, and public monitoring. Culture, public interest, mining conflict, inclusion, local economy, regional income, social protection, environmental protection, mining governance, local community, participation, and extractive industries are the subjects covered in cluster five.

Cluster six covers licensing, public capacity, social conflict, contracts, extraction information, industrial information, extractive industry, industrial information, mining, excavation, and public engagement. Information on the economy, society, and environment, policy access, financial constraints, local regulation, policy formulation, public awareness, and public involvement are the

subjects covered in cluster seven. Cluster eight covers illicit extractives, public supervision, illicit mining, and supervision. Meanwhile, public access, social services, economic reliance, and fundamental services are the subjects of cluster nine.

With the exception of each item's color, the network representation (Figure 1) and the depiction above are identical. The colors in this depiction go from blue, which has the lowest score, to green, which is in the middle, and yellow, which has the greatest score. An item receives more attention the more yellow it is; the darker its color, the less attention it receives. Public service, service quality, access, public information, communication, interactive, openness, accountability, monitoring, and assessment are some of the topics that are now being discussed. These subjects open up possibilities for further study.

South Cotabato Commitment

The South Cotabato government, one of the fifteen local governments chosen for the Open Government Partnership regional government pilot program, has made four pledges to help implement open government in the area. *First*, let the laws be open. Participation of citizens in politics is crucial in democracies. Because public hearings are not required for all legislative acts, constituents' understanding of these

bills is limited, which contributes to the current low level of citizen involvement. Due to a lack of funding for correspondence and in-person meetings, only a tiny portion of the community is contacted for legislative initiatives requiring public consultation (Canares, 2020; Harrison et al., 2022).

One of the main issues is that the public does not know how to obtain policies or that they can truly participate in the creation of regional regulations and policies. In addition, official regulatory records—which are available both offline and online—are not always simple to access. Because of all of this, most people in society don't actively engage in the process of drafting laws. Meanwhile, the lack of clarity surrounding the process for sharing thoughts causes people who are aware of their entitlement to participate or receive legislative information to become disinterested (Canares, 2020; Siar, 2020).

By providing additional opportunities for community input through online channels, this commitment seeks to enhance the regional legislative process and raise the significance of regional rules in addressing development issues and community needs. First, a legislative information technology system will be developed. The system serves as a legislative records database where the general public may quickly look up

legislation and regulations that are in effect now or that are still in the works.

The public will be able to consult this legislative database online at any time by connecting it to the provincial online database. In addition, an official Facebook page will be set up and linked to an official website through which people can propose new rules and regulations and offer feedback on existing ones as part of the online platform. This will serve as a forum for members of the public to offer suggestions for new laws and rules as well as comments on current municipal policies and guidelines. This will complement the ongoing in-person public consultations.

The creation of online platforms for informational dissemination and public consultation on legislative procedures and policies would increase public participation in the legislative process and guarantee the enactment and execution of pertinent legislation that effectively addresses pressing social concerns and developmental challenges. This pledge may have an effect on enhancing public participation and information availability in the local legislative process.

Proposals commit to providing an online platform for legislative record-keeping and establishing social media channels for citizen participation in lawmaking, which represents a significant advancement in community engagement

and access to legislative information. Previously, the public was asked to provide feedback on proposed laws through convoluted procedures, offline public hearings, and manual procedures. Nevertheless, this commitment's reach is still constrained due to its reliance on online platforms, as not all areas have reliable internet connections.

Public involvement in extractives comes in *second*. Insufficient access and inaccurate information on mining and quarrying operations lead to lost revenue, deteriorated environmental conditions, and civil unrest. Communities around unlawful mining and quarrying operations frequently overlook these activities until they directly affect the community or until the authorities find out about the illegal mining. The community's involvement in observing and reporting illicit extractive activities is low due to a lack of access to and comprehension of mining and quarrying information, in addition to the government's limited capacity to monitor these activities (Canares et al., 2020; Huffman, 2020).

When information about production or extraction amounts is converted into actual income or benefits for the host community, for example, the public is still not impressed with the extractive industry because the numbers are not relatable to them or something they care about.

Conflicts over the application of mining and excavation rights and environmental deterioration make this worse. Numerous mining companies currently operate in the lands of indigenous peoples with both regular and special permits. The Mining Production Sharing Agreement's contract area includes this area (Canares et al., 2020; Ishii, 2020).

In order to increase community involvement in mining governance and, consequently, inclusion—particularly that of marginalized groups—in mining areas, this commitment will concentrate on policy development and the establishment of transparent electronic systems and channels. An online mining portal that is established and connected to social media, the Interactive Province Online Database, and the website of the province government will enhance public access to information about mining and quarrying. Stakeholders will be consulted to determine whether information is relevant, appealing, and of public interest and should be made public. The Provincial Mining and Regulatory Board (PMRB) will allow grassroots community engagement in addition to current CSO participation.

The public will be more aware of and involved in decision-making about the extractive industry as a result of improved transparency of social, environmental, and economic information through technology-

based and participatory web portals, standards, channels, and branding. This will minimize disputes and conflicts related to mining and excavation, increase the availability of information to grassroots communities and their participation in mining governance, especially for indigenous communities where mining areas are located, and foster the development of a community-based monitoring system that will support local culture. As a result, all of this can enhance tax collection, offer more chances for local economic development, raise participation in mining governance, and support environmental and sociocultural preservation in impacted areas.

This pledge could lead to more community participation in mining governance and improved information availability. By increasing public awareness and participation through the use of participatory-based technology and systems, standards, and branding, disputes and conflicts can be reduced, revenue collection and sharing between provincial and sub-provincial units can be increased, and socio-cultural and environmental protection can be encouraged. Increasing PMRB membership can broaden the forum for involvement where topics and concerns can be handled amicably and productively. This includes increasing participation from the grassroots level. When taken as a

whole, these measures are a significant advancement.

Third, infrastructure observation by the General Public. The government carries out development initiatives funded by central and regional budgets each year. A significant amount of the budget is often allocated to infrastructure initiatives. Unfortunately, poor quality, inefficient use of funding, and delays in implementation and completion plague many infrastructure projects. Therefore, regular, effective, transparent, and participatory monitoring of these programs is required. Similarly, the community should be allowed to provide input on the monitoring results. The public is not aware of the project's current status, though, as monitoring results are currently only shared with the Provincial Development Council and the Provincial Project Monitoring Committee (PPMC) (Canares & Shekhar, 2021; Gabriel & Castillo, 2020).

Due to these circumstances, communities are less able to offer input on how projects are really going (e.g., delayed, low-quality materials, misused funds, etc.) or whether the government is actually implementing the recommendations found in the monitoring results. Beneficiaries are impacted when monitoring and implementation issues arise with infrastructure projects, particularly when it comes to enhancing the

movement of people, products, and services; expanding access to basic social services for underprivileged, impoverished, and remote rural communities; and fostering economic interdependence between rural and urban communities (Canares & Shekhar, 2021; Yilmaz & Venugopal, 2020).

This promise involves making the public's ability to see and provide feedback on PPMC monitoring findings more widely available by putting the results online. In order to give the public access to project status updates in almost real-time, PPMC will release monitoring results to the province government website the day following the implementation of its quarterly monitoring program. To track projects in practically real-time, PPMC will thus implement the Open Data Kit, a mobile-based project monitoring system.

This commitment also entails updating the province government's Facebook page and website with recommendations derived from community monitoring of the project. Additionally, the general public can publish the status of ongoing initiatives in their communities online and share photographs of those projects. Additionally, in order to increase the participation of communities or groups directly impacted, this commitment will

enhance the PPMC's monitoring procedure and composition.

This promise may open up more opportunities for communities and civil society organizations to work with the province government to solve issues related to project execution, such as delays, subpar project quality, and inefficient use of funding. By taking part in this process, communities can offer input to enhance the way projects are implemented. The contractor and pertinent government officials will be held accountable for any delays in projects or non-compliance with the report's recommendations by other relevant agencies after the monitoring results and recommendations are released. Accordingly, the province's current complaint handling procedures—such as adding contractors to a blacklist or initiating legal action—will be reinforced to guarantee responsibility.

This promise can enhance PPMC's community involvement and help the government's monitoring and assessment process. This project has the potential to significantly advance inclusive project monitoring. PPMC's ability to consider significant projects on time may be hampered by the laborious secretariat procedure that monitoring and evaluation reports now have to go through. On the other hand, this commitment's aim of providing the community with near-real-

time project monitoring results might greatly minimize subpar project execution. The community's capacity to report on infrastructure deployment and proactively offer feedback and opinions will further improve this. Every step of a project's implementation can be addressed with greater cooperation between the government and civil society and transparency.

Information access is the *fourth*. The provision of suitable services and actions to fulfill the actual needs of society is severely hampered, among other reasons, by the restricted access to government information. Having access to accurate information is directly and powerfully related to guaranteeing that the community receives the right interventions and services. The government currently lacks a simplified information disclosure policy, even though South Cotabato already conforms with comprehensive information disclosure policies published by the department of the interior and local government. In general, specific information requests are fulfilled right away, and proactive disclosure is seldom (Perez & Henninger, 2020; Saxena, 2021).

The government has set up procedures for receiving and handling public information requests, and it has designated a Provincial Information Officer (PIO) to handle and monitor these

Table 1. South Cotabato Commitments

No.	Commitments	Potentials	No.	Commitments	Potentials
1.	Open legislation	Creating more space for community involvement to improve the regional legislative process through online channels, thereby increasing the relevance of regional regulations in meeting community needs and development issues.	3.	Public Monitoring of Infrastructure	Providing greater space for communities and civil society organizations to collaborate with the provincial government in addressing project implementation issues such as delays, poor project quality, and poor utilization of funds. Participation in this process can enable communities to provide feedback to improve project implementation. In line with this, grievance redress mechanisms (e.g., blacklisting contractors) are strengthened to ensure accountability.
2.	Public participation in extractives	Increasing community involvement in mining governance and increasing access to information. The use of participatory-based technology and systems, standards, and branding to increase community awareness and participation can minimize disputes and conflicts, improve revenue collection and sharing between provincial and sub-provincial units, and encourage socio-cultural and environmental protection.	4.	Access to information	Increasing public access to government data and information and enabling feedback on government programs and services by building online and offline platforms for community dialogue, data management training workshops, and creating local regulations. The combined use of multiple media channels can trigger feedback loops that can connect citizens with officials at the provincial, city, and even village levels and help policymakers design services that are more aligned with community needs.

Source: Government of South Cotabato, 2024

though, the citizen's personal presence—or simply proximity—to the provincial capital, where the application is filed with the PIO, frequently determines access to information. If a citizen wants information that is not regularly aired on television, radio, or print media, or published in public spaces, they must write a letter to the appropriate government agency and wait for a decision regarding approval. It is frequently necessary to send information from other provincial, regional, or national offices in order to react to such requests (Arpit, 2022; Saxena, 2021).

With the use of these channels—both online and offline—the public will be able to access more government information and offer feedback on services and initiatives. There will be more and higher-quality information released, encompassing not just the data needed to comply with the full disclosure policy of the Philippines and the province's socioeconomic profile, but also details about various projects, programs, and services, as well as project monitoring reports.

This includes creating an interactive online platform that allows the public to freely access, view, store, and print government data and information about services and programs right from the comfort of their own homes. It also includes features that allow the public to

comment on government services and initiatives. Workshops to create systems to react to community feedback are a part of that commitment. This commitment also entails institutionalizing the public's right to knowledge and localizing central government policies surrounding information freedom through regional rules.

For those without internet access, a direct community engagement initiative will be introduced as an offline option. During the weekly outreach program to underprivileged and isolated communities, where the provincial government provides its services directly to the community, questions from the public to the governor will be recorded. The province's official radio program will record and air the governor's answers to these inquiries once a week on days that will be made public.

By setting up online and offline forums for community discussion, conducting training sessions on data management, and drafting local laws that allow for the institutionalization of this commitment, public access to government data and information will be improved, and feedback on government programs and services will be facilitated. Several media outlets working together can create feedback loops that link locals with government representatives in towns, cities, and even provinces, assisting

policymakers in creating services that better meet the requirements of the community.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

Open government research conducted in South Cotabato has produced significant results and aroused attention. The findings of 127 pertinent articles, 683 citations, 13 h-index, and 24 g-index all demonstrate this. In addition, this study includes 2,646 total link strengths, 668 occurrences, 103 subjects, and 9 clusters. Public service, open legislation, public access, public involvement, and information access are the main subjects of this study. Meanwhile, there are a number of prospective research areas in the future, including communication, public service, service quality, access, and public information. These are suggestions for additional research to expand on the present findings.

Several local governments throughout the globe, including South Cotabato, have been chosen for the Open Government Partnership regional government pilot program. South Cotabato has made four pledges to demonstrate the sincerity of the government's implementation of this program: open legislation, public engagement in

extractives, public monitoring of infrastructure, and information availability. If these promises are carried out as best they can, they might inspire South Cotabato to open up.

Recommendation

The findings of this study serve as recommendations for scholars, to be used as a basis for studying open government in South Cotabato. This circle will provide real contributions for the South Cotabato government to achieve their open government commitments. The implementation of open government that has been carried out by South Cotabato can be a lesson for all local governments in the Philippines, including hundreds of local governments that are members of the Open Government Partnership. The practice of open government in South Cotabato is very relevant to be implemented in local governments that have characteristics that are not much different.

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