



# IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT (DSWD) IN REGION III

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**Abstract:** Social media is crucial for governments to improve public communication, deliver services, and manage crises efficiently. These platforms enable rapid engagement with a broad audience, encourage trust, address inquiries, and monitor public sentiment. Government use of social media underscores the need for public institutions to align with client needs, foster trust, adhere to legal requirements, and create a secure online community. Presently, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) stands as one of the national departments with an existing guideline governing the implementation of social media management within the Department.

This study focused on assessing the current state of the implementation of DSWD Administrative Order No. 16, Series of 2021. Employing a quantitative descriptive research design and utilizing survey questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis, the researcher assessed the perceptions of DSWD Region III's social media team and their clientele. Engaging these two distinct groups was crucial in this study to ensure that the existing guidelines focus on citizen-centric operations. In particular, this study described and evaluated the Department's implementation in terms of social media accounts, social media account management, content management, and crisis management. Furthermore, this research aimed to identify if a significant difference exists in the perceptions of these two distinct groups through a statistical technique. This helped the researcher identify existing challenges and propose measures to improve the Department's existing social media guidelines.

The study found that while the DSWD Region III's social media team strictly adheres to the comprehensive guidelines outlined in this Administrative Order to the best of their capacity and resources, there is a significant difference in the perception between them and the clientele in the areas of social media account management and content management. These areas particularly cover the concerns of only one social media account in the entire region, lack of updated contact information on social accounts, deficiency in content inclusivity, especially for persons with disabilities, and the existence of DSWD Region III "fake" accounts.

In summary, the Administrative Order has successfully directed the daily operations of the DSWD Region III social media team, benefiting a wide range of clients in the region. Nevertheless, it is imperative for the Department to reevaluate specific guidelines outlined in the AO to address the current challenges of the clientele. Likewise, challenges raised by the Region III social media team warrant attention from the Central Office to ensure the Department maintains optimal public service through social media.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Social media initially served as a communication tool primarily designed to facilitate more accessible, faster, and more convenient connections between family and friends. However, over the years, aside from personal-level communication, it has eminently evolved into a more diversely used platform.

This has transformed into a space where content creators can elevate their artistic expression, inspire others, and build opportunities for individuals to showcase their talents. It evolved into a hub of joy and positivity, with users displaying a strong affinity for amusing and relatable content. Most importantly, social media has become crucial for disseminating and receiving important news and valuable information, benefiting many audiences.

Amid the worldwide crisis caused by COVID-19, which impacted not only public health but also the socio-economic systems, many organizations, including government institutions, heavily leaned on this platform to navigate this challenging time. Significantly, even before the onset of the pandemic, various studies had underscored the transformative impact of this platform, recognizing it as a game-changer in information dissemination. Governments across different countries have already acknowledged its importance, highlighting its strategic role in communication. This signifies the platform's pre-existing significance and pivotal contribution during the COVID-19 pandemic, serving as a crucial tool for governments in managing information dissemination and navigating the complexities of the crisis.

According to a study conducted by Rutgers University, social media usage has affected not only personal lifestyles such as teenagers and parenting, stress levels, communication, and methods of receiving and sharing information, but likewise made a significant impact on topics surrounding politics and political debate, civic life, and methods of news consumption. Forty-three percent of social media users have decided to learn more about a political or social issue after reading a related post or comment on a social media website (Taylor, 2017).

In the Philippines, it was forecasted that there would be 91.3 million Filipino social media users by 2026. This can be attributed to the widespread popularity of social media in the country. Furthermore, the Philippines, tagged as one of the world's social media capitals, is characterized by the volume of users and the considerable amount of time spent on these platforms, averaging approximately four hours daily (Statista Research, 2021).

A youth advocacy group that surveyed in partnership with Social Weather Stations (SWS) presented that six out of 10 Filipino youths use social media to learn and engage on political issues. Sixty percent of these young netizens like or share political posts, 54% intentionally look for political issues, and 49% discuss what they picked up online with other people (The Manila Times, 2021).

The recently concluded 2022 National Elections in the Philippines and other national and local elections from recent years solidly displayed the strong influence of social media among Filipinos. This did not only serve as a strategic mechanism for the running candidates to reach even the country's farthest citizens, but their supporters evenly utilized it in helping disseminate their candidates' goals and achievements.

Furthermore, integrating social media as an effective means of government communication during the COVID-19 pandemic extended well beyond the Philippines. Many nations vigorously embraced and pioneered similar strategies, particularly those with advanced economies. Amidst the crisis, the evolution of social media transcended its traditional role as a medium for social interactions among family and friends, emerging as a valuable tool for disseminating information to wider audiences and showcasing its undeniable advantages.

This transformation underscores the vital role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in rapidly conveying directives, reducing physical risks, and expediting aid delivery to vulnerable populations. In government institutions, known as "E-Government," ICT is pivotal in enhancing public service efficiency and crisis management. E-government aims to improve service delivery, boost institutional efficiency, engage citizens, and strengthen government relationships with the public and businesses. It employs various tools, such as wide area networks, the internet, and mobile devices like laptops, smartphones, and tablets (World Bank, 2015).

Many countries have embraced this efficient innovation due to its capacity for profound effectiveness, speedy communication, and prompt delivery of services to the general public. Furthermore, with the government shifting from conventional and physical methods of serving the public to more digitized approaches to information dissemination, utilization, and access to public services, government institutions benefit from the cost-effectiveness of this form of governance.

In the Philippines, the advent of e-government gained recognition during the administration of former President Corazon Aquino. This happened during the ratification of the 1987 Constitution, wherein, as stated

under Article II Section 24, “the state recognizes the vital role of communication and information in nation-building.” This laid the groundwork for the following administrations to achieve significant milestones in e-governance in the country. During the administration of former President Joseph Estrada, ICT was established as the pillar for establishing an “online government” with a citizen-centric framework. Under the leadership of former President Gloria Arroyo, the growth of ICT focused on the thriving industries of e-commerce and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sectors.

In a later period under the administration of former President Benigno S. Aquino III, aside from the issuance of Administrative Order No. 39, s. 2013, which mandated government agencies to migrate their web hosting to the Government Web Hosting Service (GWHS) operated by the Department of Science and Technology-Information and Communications Technology Office (DOST-ICTO), his administration, through the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), enforced a mandatory requirement for government agencies to submit Information Systems Strategic Plans, including proposed budgets (United Nations, 2016).

Despite the ongoing importance of social media in the Philippine government, there is a clear need for formal directives and protocols governing its management and use within government institutions. Implementing these guidelines could have a substantial impact on government agencies, as well as national and local governments, by providing a robust framework for social media management. These guidelines also hold significant potential for enhancing public communication, expediting the delivery of public services, and fostering a reputable and professional image through the systematic and responsible use of social media.

In 2018, the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) proposed an Administrative Order (AO) titled “Social Media Use for Government.” Its primary objective was to encourage government agencies to utilize social media to promote their programs and policies and increase citizen engagement. This order outlined essential guidelines for creating and managing these social media accounts. The DICT's aim, as stated in the proposal, was to leverage social media's potential to enhance productivity and governance while safeguarding public trust and serving public interests (Pateña, 2018). However, there is currently no information regarding the status or progress of this proposed Administrative Order.

Meanwhile, in September 2021, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) issued Administrative Order No. 16, titled “Guidelines on Social Media Management and Use for the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Social Media Managers and Users Among DSWD Employees and Officials.” This AO was initiated as part of the Department’s ongoing efforts to boost their communication with the public, particularly addressing the challenges faced by the underprivileged and vulnerable populations. Consequently, this guideline was implemented to address the issues currently encountered in social media usage, such as unlawful activities, hacking, misinformation, and disinformation. This AO was designed to guide DSWD officials and employees in maintaining the department’s corporate image and reputation, fostering principles of good governance, transparency, accountability, citizen involvement, and continuous public service improvement.

Following this, the researcher intends to describe the implementation and progress of the DSWD Administrative Order No. 16, Series of 2021. Through the findings, the researcher also aims to offer recommendations to DSWD and other government agencies involved in shaping guidelines or orders concerning social media and other digital media channels for improving public communication and public service.

The researcher’s background and expertise in the Digital Marketing industry, particularly in utilizing, managing, advertising, and analyzing social media and other digital media channels, provides the capacity and authority to conduct the study.

## **Statement of the Problem**

This study described and evaluated the social media management of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in Region III.

In particular, the research sought to answer the following questions:

1. How is the implementation of social media management of DSWD Region III along with:
  - 1.1. Social Media Accounts
  - 1.2. Social Media Account Management
  - 1.3. Content Management
  - 1.4. Crisis Management
2. What is the significant difference in the responses of the social media team and their clientele regarding the implementation?
3. What are the problems encountered in the social media management of DSWD Region III?

4. What measures can be proposed to enhance the social media management of DSWD Region III?
5. What are the implications of the study for Public Administration?

### **Framework of the Study**

This study conducted an in-depth analysis of DSWD Administrative Order No. 16, s. 2021, specifically focusing on implementing this guideline within the DSWD Region III.

The research framework of this study centered on the current implementation of this Administrative Order in DSWD Region III's social media accounts, social media account management, content management, and crisis management. Furthermore, the study aimed to identify the problems within these guidelines and provide recommendations. The findings were likewise expected to yield valuable insights with potential implications for the field of Public Administration.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study entitled "Implementation of Social Media Management of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in Region III" is designed to benefit the following:

To the Department of Social Welfare and Development, this study will mainly benefit this government agency by conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the current status, progress, and challenges faced by the officials and employees covered under this Administrative Order. Beyond this internal evaluation, the inclusion of clientele perspectives allows the Department to gauge the impact of its social media efforts on its audience. In tandem, the research is poised to deliver practical and implementable recommendations to rectify identified gaps and enhance improvement areas, thereby contributing to the overall refinement of the agency's social media management strategies.

To the Citizens, aligned with the DSWD's commitment to ensure good governance and efficient communication with the public, the citizens stand to gain the most from the successful implementation of this Administrative Order. It aims to reach a broader population and increase engagement. Particularly in risk and crisis management situations, the department will be better equipped to provide swift assistance to those in need.

To the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), this paper could serve as a reference guide for the DICT when creating guidelines for government use of not only social media channels but also various information and communication technologies that may be employed by other government institutions, including department agencies and Local Government Units (LGUs) in the future.

To other Government Institutions, in cases where other government entities decide to craft their guidelines for using social media among their officials and employees, this paper can likewise be utilized as a reference guide to help in their endeavors.

To Future Researchers, this study addresses a significant gap in understanding the relationship between social media and public governance, especially in the Philippines. With the global pandemic emphasizing the significance of social media at both national and local levels, this survey-based study aims to enrich existing research materials and documents, offering valuable insights for future research. Furthermore, this research seeks to motivate other scholars to conduct additional investigations, promoting more evaluation studies in diverse regions and generating improved solutions and recommendations.

To the Students, this research aims to offer comprehensive insights into how well-defined guidelines and references for social media utilization can play an essential role in supporting government institutions in adhering to their responsibilities to the general public. This paper is designed to function as an educational resource, more importantly to the young generation, shedding light on the significance of proper social media practices within the government sector.

## **II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

For this study on the implementation of social media management in DSWD Region III, the researcher employed a quantitative descriptive research design to conduct a systematic investigation. This method gathers information about the existing conditions and provides accurate descriptions rather than making judgments or interpretations. It seeks to answer questions about what, where, when, and how, but not why (McCombes, 2023).

Quantitative descriptive research is well-suited for this study as it presented data collected from the social media team of DSWD Region III and their clients. The researcher utilized survey questionnaires, conducted random interviews, and performed document analysis to gather the necessary data. This approach helped assess the current status of DSWD's Administrative Order No. 16, issued in 2021, in this Field Office.

Furthermore, to enhance the understanding and assessment of the social media management implementation in DSWD Field Office III and with the utilization of two distinct populations within this study, the researcher also presented significant differences in the results between these populations. Employing statistical techniques such as t-tests, commonly applied in analyzing means across multiple populations, helps identify variations and discern notable distinctions in the gathered data (Wanjohi, 2014).

## 2.1 Location

The study was conducted in Region III, Central Luzon, in the Philippines. This geographical area includes seven provinces: Aurora, Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Tarlac, and Zambales. As of July 2021, information from the Philippine Information Agency indicated that Central Luzon had a recorded population of 12.4 million, as reported in the 2020 Census of Population and Housing (CPH).

This study involved the entirety of DSWD Region III, regarded as one of DSWD's Field Offices. As outlined in Section VI of the DSWD Administrative Order No. 16, issued in 2021, the Department has two main components: the Central Office Social Media Team and the Field Office Social Media Team, with the latter referring to the regional offices. The Central Office Social Media Team functions as the authority for content approval. As a result, the Central Office can only share regional posts with prior approval from the Social Media Accounts Director. Meanwhile, the Field Office Social Media Team includes the Regional Director, Managers or Administrators, Moderators, and Contributors/Editors.

## 2.2 Sampling Design

The researcher employed convenience sampling to select respondents from the two groups required for this study: the DSWD Field Office III social media team and its clientele.

According to Nikolopoulou (2023), convenience sampling is categorized as a non-probability sampling method that involves selecting units in the research sample due to their high level of accessibility to the researcher. Factors like geographical proximity, immediate availability, or participants' willingness to engage in the study often influence this choice. Meanwhile, it was emphasized that convenience sampling is commonly linked to potential research bias.

Therefore, it is crucial to highlight that the methodology adopted in this study was thoughtfully crafted to mitigate potential bias and elevate the credibility of the results. Data collection efforts were diversified by including participants on different days and times, utilizing physical and online participant recruitment strategies. Additionally, the researcher applied a suitable descriptive analysis method tailored for non-probability samples, enhancing the validity of the study's findings.

## 2.3 Respondents

In this study, a total of 114 participants took part, and they were divided into two distinct groups. The first group, with 14 participants, comprised the Field Office's social media team members, including individuals with roles such as social media managers, administrators, moderators, editors, and contributors. The Regional Information Officer, the Section Head for the social media team, assisted the researcher in conveying the study's objectives and engaging their team in participant recruitment. Also, it is essential to note that the team operates from the DSWD Field Office III office in San Fernando, Pampanga.

Meanwhile, the second group represented the clientele of the Field Office, consisting of Region III residents. This had a total of 100 participating respondents. In this study, the researcher ensured that the selected participants were aware of the social media presence of DSWD Field Office III. This method was pivotal in ensuring the reliability and validity of the results.

## 2.4 Data Gathering

The researcher initiated the data collection process for this study after securing the necessary approvals. First, authorization was obtained from the Dean of the College of Public Administration and Governance at Tarlac State University to research the implementation of social media management within DSWD Field Office III. Additionally, the researcher sought and obtained approval from the DSWD Field Office III Policy Development and Planning Section, ensuring the research aligned with the department's protocols and standards.

The researcher used a formal letter for the Field Office's social media team and clientele to establish direct contact with the study's target respondents. This letter introduced the research's objective and respectfully requested their participation. The researcher courteously sought assistance from the Regional Information Officer, who heads the social media team, to facilitate communication with the team members. Simultaneously, to enlist participants from the clientele, the researcher contacted them in person and online to request their participation.

In this research, data collection involved a multifaceted approach. The methods employed included survey questionnaires and random interviews with the DSWD Field Office III social media team members and their clientele. Additionally, extensive research was conducted, delving into pertinent studies, theses, journals, and periodicals, all carefully read and selected to serve as valuable references in the context of related literature and studies.

**Survey Questionnaire.** The primary instrument utilized in this study was a survey questionnaire designed to yield concise and straightforward responses regarding the current state of social media management implementation at DSWD Field Office III. Although there were two distinct groups of respondents in this study, the researcher opted for a single version of the survey questionnaire to ensure data uniformity and comparability of the collected data. Using a consistent questionnaire was motivated to mitigate potential bias, promote data standardization, and streamline subsequent data analysis.

Moreover, the survey questionnaire was thoughtfully divided into two segments. The first part featured a five-point Likert scale questionnaire, where the respondents could indicate their level of agreement about the current state of the implementation of social media management in the DSWD Field Office III. This section primarily addressed the first statement of the problem of this study, focusing on the current state of the social media implementation of DSWD Field Office III in terms of social media accounts, social media account management, content management, and crisis management. The design of these questions was predominantly based on the guidelines outlined in Administrative Order No. 16, issued in September 2021.

Conversely, the second part of the questionnaire adopted a checkbox format consisting of a single question about the challenges the respondents encountered concerning the current implementation of social media management at DSWD Field Office III. This segment directly addressed the third statement of the problem of this study. Furthermore, the researcher meticulously curated a list of issues from related literature and studies discovered during the documentary analysis process. To accommodate the potential scenario where the provided options might not cover a respondent's experience, the questionnaire included an "others; please specify" option in this section.

**Documentary Analysis.** The researcher primarily leveraged the internet as a resource to access a wide array of periodicals, journals, theses, and studies relevant to the various subjects covered within the scope of the study. Similarly, the researcher searched for related memoranda, administrative orders, and other legal directives that could substantially contribute to the comprehensive understanding and analysis of the research topic.

**Interview.** The researcher conducted personal and online interviews with the DSWD Field Office III social media team. The interview questions followed an open-ended format, allowing them to provide insights freely while the researcher ensured that the questions remained relevant to the study's objectives.

In addition, the researcher also conducted random and unstructured interviews with select clientele members. These interviews were primarily held while the respondents were in the process of completing the survey questionnaires. This approach facilitated the collection of supplementary information, offering additional context to their questionnaire responses and providing deeper insights into their current experiences related to the research topic.

## 2.5 Statistical Tools

The statistical treatment used in the study was the Likert Scale, Weighted Mean, T-test, Frequency, and Percentage. This comprehensive suite of statistical methods was selected to analyze the data accurately and provide meaningful insights into the research topic.

**Likert Scale.** The five-point rating scale was used in this study to analyze the results, focusing primarily on the first part of the survey questionnaire in which both the social media team and clientele of Field Office III participated. Within this scale, each unit of the rating scale meant:

Unit Weight	Mean Interval	Verbal Description
5	4.50 – 5.00	Very High Extent
4	3.50 – 4.49	High Extent
3	2.50 – 3.49	Moderate Extent
2	1.50 – 2.49	Slight Extent
1	1.00 – 1.49	No Extent at All

**Weighted Mean.** After employing the Likert Scale in the survey questionnaire, the study applied the weighted mean technique to determine the central tendency in situations where specific values hold greater significance than others. This method was primarily applied to analyze the first statement of the problem.

**T-test.** The application of the T-test method was directed toward addressing the second statement of the problem of this study, which entailed assessing the statistical significance in the responses from both the social media team and clientele of DSWD Field Office III. This method was applied to the results from the first segment of the survey questionnaire. By comparing means and evaluating data variability between groups, the t-test offered a statistical framework to determine whether the observed distinctions were statistically meaningful or simply the result of random variation.

**Frequency.** The frequency statistical method was employed to analyze the second section of the survey questionnaire, focusing on identifying problems presently encountered by both the social media team and the Field Office III clientele. In this context, the frequency of a data value in statistics represents the number of times the respondents have met the following predetermined problems.

**Percentage.** In addition to utilizing the frequency method, this study incorporated percentage calculations to compare item response frequencies to the total number of respondents.

## 2.5 Ethical Consideration

Research studies provide societal value through theory evaluation, project assessment, and guiding solutions, inspiring further investigations. Ethical principles, driven by scientific integrity, human rights, and the interplay between science and society, underscore research practices, emphasizing information and participant safety.

In this study about the implementation of social media management of DSWD Field Office III, the researcher meticulously followed established protocols and guidelines to safeguard participant well-being. The researcher introduced herself respectfully, clarified the study's purpose, and ensured that participants understood the objectives. The survey questionnaire had clear instructions, and participants could seek clarification. In the case of withdrawal, the researcher respected the participants' decisions without requiring further explanation.

The researcher likewise adhered to national data privacy regulations, Republic Act 10173, and the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Also, in alignment with guidance from the Policy Development and Planning Section of DSWD Field Office III, the study followed the department's research policy, Administrative Order No. 19, Series of 2011, titled "Policy Guidelines on the Conduct of Research Studies in DSWD Offices, Centers, and Institutions." This commitment to legal and institutional compliance ensured this research study's ethical and responsible conduct.

Furthermore, the researcher diligently cited and acknowledged various authors and references following the American Psychological Association (APA) standards to uphold academic integrity and respect intellectual property rights.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data is meticulously organized in alignment with the specific problems stated in the study. The results of the survey questionnaire administered to the social media team and DSWD Region III clientele were presented using tables. Moreover, the data analysis draws support from responses garnered through interviews, insights from documentary analysis, and the researcher's observations during data collection.

The researcher recognized that for a comprehensive description of the current social media management of DSWD Field Office III, it was imperative to understand the perspectives of the Field Office's social media team and their clientele. Consequently, the study aimed to determine the significance of variations in their responses.

### 1. Implementation of Social Media Management of DSWD Region III

In the Philippines, numerous public institutions at both the national and local levels have embraced the use of social media platforms. Aside from being used for updates and announcements, these platforms are pivotal for departments and agencies in their community outreach. Public institutions primarily focused on engaging with the public must be cautious about using social media.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development has established guidelines for managing social media platforms. The directive, outlined in DSWD Administrative Order No. 16, issued in September 2021, serves as the foundation for their Central Office and Field Offices. This demonstrates their recognition of social media as one of their vital communication tools. However, it is equally crucial to assess these guidelines to maximize their benefits and effectively address any challenges they may encounter.

### 1.1 Respondents' Perception on the Implementation of Social Media Accounts

Table 1 shows the data reflecting the respondents' perceptions regarding social media accounts of DSWD Region III. The statements presented to the respondents were based on the directives outlined in Section VII of Administrative Order No. 16, issued in September 2021. This section primarily focuses on the guidelines for establishing the identity of DSWD's social media accounts.

**Table 1**  
**Respondents' Perception on the Implementation of Social Media Accounts**

Statements	Mean	
	Clientele	Social Media Team
All social media accounts of DSWD Region III are used solely to advance the Department's mandate, programs, services, policies, and advocacy campaigns.	4.34 High Extent	4.64 Very High Extent
All social media accounts of DSWD Region III represent the Department as a whole and serve as the channel of the Department in reaching out to its online audience and stakeholders.	4.46 High Extent	4.86 Very High Extent
All social media accounts of DSWD Region III are apolitical and are not used for promoting any political or personal agenda.	4.28 High Extent	4.79 Very High Extent
All social media accounts of DSWD Region III are submitted to the existing government code of conduct and discipline of civil service and national policies on data privacy, transparency, freedom of information, and other related laws.	4.33 High Extent	4.50 Very High Extent
All social media accounts of DSWD Region III are managed only by trained and authorized/ designated social media managers (SMMs).	4.28 High Extent	4.71 Very High Extent
Overall Mean	<b>4.34</b> <b>High Extent</b>	<b>4.70</b> <b>Very High Extent</b>

To establish the identity of the DSWD's social media accounts, the first directive stated in Section VII (a) of Administrative Order No. 16, all social accounts will be utilized in advancing the Department's mandate, programs and services, policies, and advocacy campaign. As shown in the results of the first statement of Table 1, the social media team of Field Office III believes that the current implementation, particularly on this directive, is at 4.64 mean, a "Very High Extent." Meanwhile, the total mean for the clientele was lower at 4.34, a "High Extent."

This specific provision within DSWD AO No. 16 is aligned with the Department of Information and Communications Technology's (DICT) 2018 initiative, which encouraged government entities to employ social media to promote awareness regarding their respective programs and policies. This encouragement was presented as a proposed Administrative Order called "Social Media Use for Government" (Pateña, 2018). However, it is noteworthy that, as of the present time, there have been no reported updates regarding the status or implementation of this proposed Administrative Order.

In a random interview with one of the respondents from the clientele, the respondent highlighted the significant role played by DSWD Region III's social media presence, especially on Facebook. It was noted that the Field Office's updates on their Facebook News Feed have been a massive help for those who live far from the main office in Pampanga, enabling them to stay informed about ongoing programs and activities organized by the Field Office.

The second statement in Table 1 garnered the highest average ratings from Region III's social media team and the clientele for this category. The social media team recorded a mean of 4.86, signifying a "Very High Extent." Meanwhile, the clientele rated 4.46 mean, indicating a "High Extent." This specific statement pertains to Section VII (b) of DSWD Administrative Order No. 16, which focuses on the role of social media accounts in representing the Department and facilitating communication with its online audience and stakeholders.

Building upon the significant agreement of both Region III's social media team and its clientele regarding the utilization of social media for community outreach, this corresponds with David's conclusion in the



2016 review of a study, Social Media Use by Frontline Government Agencies in the Philippines that government agencies have the potential to establish valuable connections with a wide range of audiences through effective social media communication. This purpose, when well-executed, can enhance an agency's reputation and public perception. In the Philippines, a country with extensive social media usage, government agencies can leverage this interactive platform to build stronger connections and yield substantial advantages, particularly for frontline agencies.

The third statement in Table 1 about using DSWD social media accounts should be apolitical and not used for promoting any political or personal agenda received one of the highest total means in this category for the social media team at 4.79, a "Very High Extent." Meanwhile, the clientele scored at 4.28, one of the lowest total means for their group in this category; however, it remains at a "High Extent."

With this result, it is essential to consider this perception that while the social media team firmly believes that Region III's social media efforts stay apolitical, the disparity in perception within the clientele indicates a slight discrepancy in the messaging. It suggests that there may be room for improvement in conveying the non-political nature of the posts, ensuring that the content is indeed focused on the intended themes and objectives. To bridge this gap, it is essential to refine the communication strategy and enhance the clarity of the messaging to align with the intended apolitical stance.

Yusingco (2020) emphasized the undeniable influence of social media on Philippine democracy, highlighting its capacity to enhance political engagement and elevate citizens' political awareness when harnessed effectively. This observation has become particularly evident in recent national and local elections in the Philippines, where the populace's awareness and participation have experienced significant growth. Consequently, public institutions in the country must exercise heightened vigilance to prevent the potential presence of political biases in social media content, as such biases can adversely affect the Department's reputation. This holds particularly true in the current era, as Filipino internet users exhibit heightened online activity and are among the most vocal advocates on political matters.

The fourth statement in Table 1 addressed the compliance of DSWD's social media accounts with the established government code of conduct and discipline of civil service and national policies on data privacy, transparency, freedom of information, and other related laws. This aspect holds significant importance within any set of guidelines, especially in information-centric technologies like social media platforms, wherein information dissemination is rapid and demands robust security measures. Region III's social media team indicated a "Very High Extent" of agreement with a mean score of 4.50, while the clientele displayed a "High Extent" of agreement with a mean score of 4.33.

The DSWD Administrative Order No. 16 of 2021, which serves as the legal framework for this research, explicitly outlines the legal underpinnings for its implementation, ensuring the provision of secured public services. These legal bases encompass several vital documents, including Republic Act 6713, also called the "Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees," which is a fundamental law stipulating that public officials and employees are perpetually answerable to the public and must prioritize public interests over personal ones. Furthermore, DSWD Memorandum Circular 21, Series of 2012, delves into matters of transparency and confidentiality. Lastly, Section 7, Article III of the Bill of Rights of the Constitution, states the people's right to information on matters of public concern, and the 1987 Philippine Constitution under Section 3 (1) of the Bill of Rights.

In May 2020, the Philippine National Police issued Memorandum Circular 034 entitled "Guidelines and Procedures on Social Media Content, Post, and Engagement Utilizing Official Social Media Accounts and Individual Accounts of PNP Personnel." Like DSWD AO No. 16, Series of 2021, the PNP Memorandum Circular drew upon national policies and other related PNP memorandum circulars as points of reference in its implementation. The references include Republic Act No. 10173, known as the "Data Privacy Act of 2012," and Republic Act No. 10175, known as the "Cybercrime Prevention Act".

The final statement in Table 1 pertained to DSWD social media accounts managed only by trained and authorized or designated Social Media Managers. Region III's social media team recorded a 4.71 mean, signifying a "Very High Extent," whereas the clientele rated 4.28, indicating a "High Extent."

Considering that the clientele has limited insight into the internal training and operations of Field Office III's social media team, it is plausible that this lack of awareness contributed to their lower rating on this facet. This is where publicly accessible guidelines like the DSWD Administrative Order No. 16 of 2021 become invaluable, providing insight into the Department's current operations. However, upon examining the additional context provided by some social media team members, they highlighted a need for more crisis management training. This skill gap might have influenced their communication with constituents who reached out through online messages.

An essential suggestion found in David's 2016 analysis of Social Media Use by Frontline Government Agencies in the Philippines emphasizes the importance of hiring skilled professionals or training staff in social media use and marketing. This recommendation stemmed from the recognition that the evolving landscape of social media has matured and is technically intricate in recent years. This recommendation closely resembles the requirements of the United States Army on their social media guide for Social Media Managers. It is indicated that for official social media accounts to be registered in the social media directory, an account must be managed by an individual with a dedicated 1035 civilian or 46 series for military occupational specialty and likewise holds the necessary Operations Security level II training. Additionally, all social media accounts submitted for registration should have a dedicated Public Affairs Officer overseeing them, typically at the brigade level or higher within the organization's hierarchy.

## 1.2 Respondents' Perception on the Implementation of Social Media Account Management

Table 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the collected data, offering insights into the respondents' perspectives with the stipulations delineated in Section VIII of Administrative Order No. 16, issued in September 2021. This section serves as a crucial reference point, providing the framework and guidelines that govern the standards and expectations for social media account management within the context of the department's policies.

**Table 2**  
**Respondents' Perception on the Implementation of Social Media Account Management**

Statements	Mean	
	Clientele	Social Media Team
DSWD Region III has only one social media account for the Field Office to promote the concentration of content in the region.	3.88 High Extent	4.71 Very High Extent
All social media accounts of DSWD Region III can be easily found through account search.	4.15 High Extent	4.86 Very High Extent
All social media accounts of DSWD Region III follow the Department's branding guidelines for its page photos and cover photos.	4.21 High Extent	4.79 Very High Extent
All social media accounts of DSWD Region III have updated contact information such as telephone numbers, email, office address, and website link to be easily contacted.	4.11 High Extent	4.93 Very High Extent
All social media accounts of DSWD Region III are considered the "official" accounts of the field office and can be easily distinguished from "fake" accounts.	4.17 High Extent	4.79 Very High Extent
Overall Mean	<b>4.10</b> <b>High Extent</b>	<b>4.82</b> <b>Very High Extent</b>

Following the guidelines regarding establishing the identity of DSWD's social media accounts, the next crucial step is effectively managing these accounts. It is imperative to institute a standardized process for their management to ensure consistency, transparency, and compliance with the Department's mandates and policies. A well-defined management framework enables coordinated efforts in content creation, engagement, and maintaining the overall integrity of these platforms.

The first statement in Table 2 was derived from the "Existing Accounts" subsection within Section VIII of DSWD AO No. 16 (2021). This section emphasizes Field Offices' use of a single social media account to concentrate content within their regions. The social media team's response yielded a 4.71 mean, signifying a "Very High Extent." In contrast, the clientele achieved a mean of 3.88, indicating a "High Extent."

During an interview with a social media team member in Field Office III, it was noted that unofficial social media accounts are a recurring challenge in social media account management. It was noted that some staff members across the region have established these unofficial DSWD pages, focusing on specific provinces in Region III, intending to utilize these pages rather than their personal accounts. However, during the interview, it was emphasized that this action from some of their staff can be attributed to their

commitment to communicating with their clients. However, following this specific guideline, the Field Office team ensures the deactivation of these unofficial pages. Their action involves submitting memorandums to request the deactivation or removal of such accounts.

Conversely, as indicated by their lowest mean rating of 3.88 within this particular category, the clientele expressed a perspective where having a single social media account for the entire Region III appeared to have more disadvantages than advantages. During a random interview with one of the respondents, a noteworthy point emerged regarding the hesitancy observed in approaching the regional social media account. This hesitation primarily originated from concerns about whether it was the appropriate channel to address their inquiries and whether timely responses could be expected.

The second statement in Table 2 was drawn from the sub-section Naming Convention of Section VIII of the DSWD AO No. 16. This section highlights the significance of following the specified naming convention for DSWD Regional Offices, enabling easier locating these accounts through account search. The social media team exhibited a robust consensus with a mean rating of 4.86, indicating a “Very High Extent.” On the contrary, the clientele rated 4.15, a “High Extent” of agreement.

As observed, Field Office III’s social media team adheres to the naming convention, “DSWD III – Central Luzon,” as stipulated in the Administrative Order. Nonetheless, a slight disparity in perception was apparent among the clientele. In a random interview recounted by one of the respondents, she shared that the first time she searched for the DSWD office on Facebook, her initial assumption was to locate the DSWD office specific to her respective province. The search became more confusing due to the many pages representing the regional and provincial offices, making it increasingly difficult for clients like her to identify the correct account.

The third statement in Table 2 addresses the Department's branding guidelines for page and cover photos. The social media team rated it with a mean of 4.79, signifying a “Very High Extent,” while the clientele rated it at 4.21, indicating a “High Extent.”

Currently, the page photo and cover photo of the DSWD III – Central Luzon official Facebook page closely mirror the creatives used by the Facebook page Department of Social Welfare and Development, the National Office’s official Facebook page. However, it is worth noting that Field Office III's account on the Twitter platform, which has been recently rebranded as the X platform, is inactive, with its last tweet posted on March 31, 2020. Furthermore, Field Office III does not maintain a presence on YouTube.

As of this writing, when searching on Facebook using the naming conventions specified on the DSWD AO No. 16, it is highly noticeable that many other DSWD accounts are available on the suggestion list. However, the established rule that regional accounts should start with “DSWD” and their respective Region Numbers simplifies the identification of the official accounts. Additionally, a distinctive page or profile photo, similarly used among DSWD national and regional offices, further facilitates the recognition of official DSWD accounts.

In Australia, the New South Wales (NSW) Government has established a dedicated page on the NSW government website focused on their social branding efforts. They emphasize that maintaining a consistent and prominent NSW Government brand across social media platforms is crucial for effective customer communication. This website page provides a comprehensive guide covering profile pictures, logos in images and video, influencer content, account name and handle, NSW Government Visual Identity System, Brand Exemptions, and Compliance with the NSW Government Brand Guidelines.

The fourth statement in Table 2 pertains to contact information and is based on the sub-section Template in the DSWD guidelines. It specifies that DSWD's social media accounts should maintain updated contact details, including telephone numbers, email, office address, and website links, for easy accessibility. The social media team rated this aspect with a mean of 4.93, indicating a “Very High Extent,” while the clientele rated it at 4.11, signifying a “High Extent.”

At present, Field Office III's official Facebook page has updated contact information as outlined in the Administrative Order. The provided contact details are all visible in the Intro section of the Facebook page, except for the office address. Meanwhile, the contact information on their Twitter account (now the X platform) is only limited to the account’s location detail, the province of Pampanga, and a link to the official Facebook page of the Field Office.

The fifth statement in this category came from the sub-section Verification, found within the Administrative Order's Template section. It emphasizes that all DSWD social media accounts must be recognized as the Field Offices’ “official” accounts and easily distinguishable from “fake” accounts. The social media team rated this with a mean of 4.79, indicating a “Very High Extent,” while the clientele rated it at 4.17, signifying a “High Extent.”

The Intro section of the DSWD III – Central Luzon Facebook page has an updated description that states, “This is the official Facebook Page of DSWD Region III. It covers public concerns within the region.” This

informative description serves as a quick reference for visitors to the Facebook page to determine that this is an official account.

### 1.3 Respondents' Perception on the Implementation of Content Management

Table 3 displays respondents' perspectives on content management within DSWD Field Office III's social media accounts. The statements shown were based on the guidelines outlined in Section IX of AO No. 16, s. 2021. This section focused on the role of the Department's social media content in promoting the Department's mandates, advocacies, programs, and services. It likewise advocates for the "content is king" digital strategy, stressing the importance of investing in creative development, timing, and delivery. In collaboration with analysts, Social Media Managers are encouraged to analyze engagement behaviors and use this data to enhance their social media strategy.

**Table 3**  
**Respondents' Perception on the Implementation of Content Management**

Statements	Mean	
	Clientele	Social Media Team
All social media content made by the DSWD Region III complies with existing national policies on data privacy, transparency, freedom of information, and other related laws.	4.23 High Extent	4.86 Very High Extent
The social media content posted by DSWD Region III includes official statements, press releases, advisories, memoranda, circulars, orders, announcements, success stories with official photos and videos, original digital content following DSWD branding guidelines (e.g., photos, videos, GIFs, infographics), promotional activities to engage the audience, and events, advocacies, and observances relevant to the Department.	4.23 High Extent	4.86 Very High Extent
DSWD Region III does not post content that involves blackmail, insulting content, pornography, malicious, unauthorized copyrighted materials, personal information protected under the Data Privacy Act of 2012, unrelated information or promotions, jokes, top secret or confidential information, restricted, suspicious links, opinion, or critical issues that may negatively affect the Department and its clientele.	4.30 High Extent	4.79 Very High Extent
The content management of DSWD Region III is nurturing and compassionate, delivers immediate service, respects stakeholders, and responds calmly and politely to positive and negative inquiries and comments.	4.22 High Extent	4.86 Very High Extent
The content management of DSWD Region III is organized and publishes diverse content that aims to expose the audience to various programs and activities of the Department, engaging and easily understood using either English, Filipino, or regional language.	4.27 High Extent	5.00 Very High Extent
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.25 High Extent</b>	<b>4.87 Very High Extent</b>

The first statement in Table 3 was based on the provisions outlined in Section IX of DSWD Administrative Order No. 16. This section initially underscored the importance of ensuring that the Department's social media content complies with national policies concerning data privacy, transparency, freedom of information, and other applicable laws. The social media team received a mean rating of 4.86, indicating a "Very High Extent." Meanwhile, the clientele's response resulted in a mean of 4.23, denoting a "High Extent."

This directive to adhere to national policies is first introduced in Section VII of DSWD Administrative Order No. 16, which primarily centers around establishing the identity of the DSWD social media accounts. Reinforcing this within the content management guidelines section underscores the Department's steadfast

commitment to diligently comply with these national policies, ensuring Administrative Order No. 16's optimal implementation.

In various nations, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, Mickoleit's 2014 paper on social media use by governments in these countries presented a compilation of institutional duties associated with social media utilization. The Australian Public Service Commission (APS) introduced a comprehensive code of conduct for all government officials. The Chile Ministry Secretariat of the Presidency issued central guidelines encompassing a code of conduct and checklists to govern their government's social media usage. In Estonia, the Government Office under the Prime Minister plays a central role in coordinating government social media policy and communication efforts.

The second statement in Table 3 draws from the provisions outlined in the Scope of Section IX of DSWD AO No. 16. It delineates the types of social media content that the Department must disseminate, encompassing official statements, press releases, advisories, memoranda, circulars, orders, announcements, success stories with official photos and videos, original digital content adhering to DSWD branding guidelines, promotional activities for audience engagement, events, advocacies, and observances pertinent to the Department. The social media team gave this aspect a mean rating of 4.86, indicating a "Very High Extent," while the clientele's response yielded a mean of 4.23, signifying a "High Extent."

This specific provision, covering the parameters for the content to be shared on the Department's social media platforms, aligns with one of the critical points in the content management guideline section. This key point mandates Field Offices to create an annual social media plan, delineating the planned social media initiatives associated with DSWD-led campaigns, activities, and events. Some social media team members affirmed that they do not currently maintain an annual social media plan per se. Instead, their operational framework centers on an annual communication plan, encompassing campaigns such as information caravans, Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials, and monthly celebrations. This annual communication plan is their guiding document for determining the content to be disseminated on their social media platforms.

Moreover, in light of the numerous DSWD-initiated campaigns and activities spanning across Region III, the social media team emphasized that, while all campaigns hold significance, the team selectively highlights those of public concern and those that enhance the Department's brand by primarily addressing the needs of the most vulnerable. Routine campaigns, such as the daily financial assistance provided by the Field Office and the recurring national campaign "Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program" (4Ps) payout every two months, are no longer featured in their standard social media postings.

In addition to the second statement detailed in Table 3, which primarily addresses the types of content that should be published on the Department's social media accounts, the third statement pertains to the types of content that should not be posted. These restricted content types encompass blackmail, offensive materials, pornography, malicious content, unauthorized copyrighted materials, personal information safeguarded under the Data Privacy Act of 2012, unrelated information or promotions, jokes, confidential or classified information, restricted or suspicious links, expressions of opinion, or discussions of critical issues that could have a detrimental impact on the Department and its clientele. The social media team assessed this aspect with an average rating of 4.79, signifying a "Very High Extent." At the same time, the clientele's response yielded an average rating of 4.30, indicating a "High Extent."

During an interview with one of the social media team members, an illustrative instance was provided to emphasize their commitment to exercising caution in the content posted on social media. It was noted that a conscientious content management process is followed when featuring minors in photographs related to Field Office activities or events, ensuring that their faces are appropriately blurred when needed. In a separate, random interview with one of the respondents from the clientele, an agreement was reached on the stringent adherence to professionalism and formality in the social media content disseminated by the Field Office.

The fourth statement in Table 3 was rooted in the guidelines set forth within the Character and Approach sub-section of Section IX of DSWD AO No. 16. It underscores the importance of aligning social media content with the Department's well-recognized brand persona, characterized as "nurturing." Furthermore, this content should exemplify compassion, offer prompt service, display respect for stakeholders, and respond with composure and politeness to both positive and negative inquiries and comments. The social media team rated this aspect with a mean score of 4.86, denoting a "Very High Extent," while the clientele's response averaged 4.22, indicating a "High Extent."

While the social media team displayed a notably high response rating, indicating their rigorous compliance with the specified guideline, a subtle discrepancy emerged in the overall feedback received from their clientele. In some random interviews conducted with clients who participated in the survey

questionnaire, it was noted that the social media content of the Field Office consistently reflects professionalism. However, the primary area of concern raised by the clients pertained to the timeliness of responses to online inquiries and comments.

As per Dalton's recommendations in 2021, evaluating the necessity for addressing negative comments on social media is imperative, particularly in recognizing that contentious or rule-breaking comments may not necessitate a response. Vigilant monitoring for the dissemination of misinformation remains crucial. Internally, establishing engagement guidelines and internal customer service protocols serves as a valuable decision-making tool. Notably, removing negative comments in isolation may encroach upon the principles of freedom of speech. Furthermore, the proactive response to service-related complaints, the rectification of inaccuracies, and the promotion of professionalism are highly encouraged. More importantly, ensuring that significant feedback reaches the appropriate authorities is essential.

The final statement in Table 3 was grounded in the guidelines outlined within the Messaging subsection of Section IX of DSWD AO No. 16. It underscores the importance of sharing various content to introduce the audience to the Department's different programs and activities. This content should be engaging and easily understood, available in English, Filipino, or regional languages. The social media team has rated this aspect with an average score of 5.0, indicating a "Very High Extent," while the clientele's response averages 4.27, signifying a "High Extent."

According to a 2021 article published by Mncwango and Munyadziwa<sup>1</sup> in the International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS), indigenous languages are regularly utilized on social media platforms, with some users engaging in code-mixing and code-switching between English and their indigenous languages, a common practice in multilingual settings. Encouraging the continued use of indigenous languages on these platforms and involving native speakers would enhance the content and incentivize users. This is vital because if speakers of these languages express dissatisfaction with the lack of content in their languages, they can contribute to its enrichment. Social networks offer a conducive environment for self-expression and language learning, thus promoting indigenous languages.

The social media team of Field Office III displayed a perfect mean score of 5.0 in their endorsement of utilizing diverse languages to engage with their target audience in the region effectively. This is evident upon reviewing their official Facebook page, where many posts are in Filipino, alongside English-language content. Consequently, it is well-established that many Filipinos can readily understand English-language posts. Nevertheless, the DSWD's emphasis on using the Filipino language can be interpreted as a deliberate effort to ensure that their messaging is conveyed in the most accessible manner and has the potential to reach a broader audience.

#### **1.4 Respondents' Perception on the Implementation of Crisis Management**

Table 4 illustrates respondents' viewpoints concerning the implementation of crisis management in DSWD Field Office III's social media accounts. The statements presented to the respondents were derived from the provisions designed specifically for Field Offices, outlined in Section X of Administrative Order No. 16 (2021). This section focuses on the comprehensive set of guidelines, emphasizing the need for coordination between the social media team and other relevant departments to ensure a cohesive approach to communicating with those impacted by crises.

In the face of COVID-19, particularly during its peak in 2020, social media became an efficient tool for the government in its risk and crisis management efforts. This was primarily utilized by the LGUs and other national and local departments and agencies, the closest units to provide the services needed during this crisis. These government institutions could communicate and engage with a more extensive range of people, with less risk of physical interactions quickly and effectively. Social media was regarded to be highly advantageous in the Philippines during this time, given the significant usage of Filipinos on social networking sites (Asuncion & Flores, 2020).

The existence of established guidelines for crisis management on social media platforms is imperative, considering the substantial impact of this domain on the most vulnerable individuals during natural disasters and unforeseen circumstances. This is especially crucial for a frontline department like DSWD.

**Table 4**  
**Respondents' Perception on the Implementation of Crisis Management**

Statements	Mean	
	Clientele	Social Media Team
DSWD Region III has a crisis communication team composed of staff from different divisions/OBSUs of the Field Office.	4.28 High Extent	4.64 Very High Extent
The crisis communication team can post the initial statement during a crisis on time.	4.13 High Extent	4.57 Very High Extent
The crisis communication team shares on time the updates and developments of the crisis and shares supplemental and available information such as photos, videos, infographics, and quote cards during a crisis.	4.24 High Extent	4.64 Very High Extent
The crisis communication team uses fixed hashtags (e.g., #(Typhoon Name)PH, #DSWDMayMalasakit, #ReliefPH) to make the posts searchable on any social media platforms.	4.08 High Extent	4.64 Very High Extent
The crisis communication team answers relevant queries and other concerns from netizens within 24 hours and releases an FAQ for repeating queries.	4.14 High Extent	4.50 Very High Extent
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.17 High Extent</b>	<b>4.60 Very High Extent</b>

The first statement in Table 4 was related to forming the crisis communication team comprising members from various divisions within Region III. As specified in Section X of DSWD Administrative Order No. 16, this team is automatically activated to coordinate with the Field Office Quick Response Team (QRT). The social media team evaluated this guideline with an average rating of 4.64, signifying a “Very High Extent,” while the clientele assigned a mean rating of 4.28, indicating a “High Extent.”

The social media team’s noteworthy mean rating demonstrates their dedication to executing crisis management strategies effectively. In an interview with one of the social media team members, it was disclosed that posts related to crisis management undergo stringent approval processes, emphasizing the need for Region III to exercise extreme caution when sharing data and images on social media platforms. On the other hand, some respondents from the clientele acknowledged their awareness of crisis-related social media updates appearing in their Facebook News Feed, which mainly occurs during crisis and post-crisis.

This rigorous implementation of crisis management was further supported by a study conducted in Portugal by Bueno-Larraz et al. during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study highlights the critical role played by local governments in effectively addressing public health crises. It suggests that maintaining a similar level of social media engagement can be invaluable in preparing for future crises, benefiting both the government and the general public.

The second statement observed in Table 4 pertained to the timely distribution of initial crisis statements. The social media team recorded an average rating of 4.57, denoting a “Very High Extent,” whereas the clientele showed an average rating of 4.13, signifying a “High Extent.” This item is closely related to the third statement, which focuses on the Field Office's crisis communication team promptly sharing updates, developments, and additional resources, such as photos, videos, infographics, and quote cards during a crisis. The social media team assessed this aspect with a mean rating of 4.64, indicating a “Very High Extent,” while the clientele provided an average rating of 4.24, representing a “High Extent.”

Following an interview with one of the social media team members regarding crisis management implementation, it was revealed that there had been occasional delays in releasing crisis-related updates on its social media platforms. These delays are attributed to the multiple approvals required before final publication. However, he noted that these approval processes have consistently yielded highly accurate information and supplementary resources such as photographs.

In contrast, there was a lower level of agreement among the participants from the clientele side in their response ratings to the second and third statements compared to the social media team's perspectives. For the second statement, some participants in this group expressed that they were not fully aware of the initial posts published during pre-crisis periods, such as during typhoons, as they typically do not use social media during these times. On the other hand, some respondents confirmed that they had noticed some shared posts about the Field Office's preparations for incoming typhoons. Meanwhile, regarding the third statement, it is noteworthy that the mean rating of 4.24 was relatively higher compared to the third statement, which is attributed to the post-crisis social media content typically shared, including updates and activities around emergency cash transfers and relief operations.

The fourth statement in Table 4 referred to the guideline about crisis communication teams using fixed hashtags like #(Typhoon Name)PH, #DSWDMayMalasakit, and #ReliefPH. These sample hashtags aim to make the posts searchable. This item received a 4.64 mean, a "Very High Extent" among the social media team. Meanwhile, the clientele scored 4.08, a "High Extent."

As reviewed on some social media postings published in 2022 by Region III, the social media team has already been using relevant hashtags associated with the topic of each post they have published. Among the most used hashtags that could be considered general branding are #BawatBuhayMahalagaSaDSWD and #DSWDGitnangLuzon. Meanwhile, some crisis management-related posts found used the hashtags #KardingPH, #LagingHandaPH, and #PaengPH.

Furthermore, a notable disparity in response ratings on the clientele side was evident. A prevalent explanation emerged through random interviews with participants in this group, sharing that some respondents prioritized the primary message conveyed in the posts over the hashtags used, particularly in crisis-related content such as typhoons.

The fifth statement in Table 4 discusses the crisis communication team's capacity to promptly answer pertinent inquiries within 24 hours and provide a frequently asked questions (FAQ) resource for recurring queries. The social media team received a mean rating of 4.50, reflecting a "Very High Extent," while the clientele expressed an average rating of 4.14, indicating a "High Extent."

Notably, the social media team provided the lowest mean in this category at 4.50. Some social media team members from Region III expressed a need for additional training in crisis management communications to deliver maximum assistance. On the other hand, the lower level of agreement among the clientele was primarily attributed to the timeliness of responses to inquiries in both personal messages and comments on social media posts. During random interviews with participating clients, some reported not receiving any replies.

**Table 5**  
**Overall Grand Mean of the Respondents' Perception on the Implementation of Social Media Management**

Variable	Clientele	Social Media Team
Social Media Accounts	4.34 High Extent	4.70 Very High Extent
Social Media Accounts Management	4.10 High Extent	4.82 Very High Extent
Content Management	4.25 High Extent	4.87 Very High Extent
Crisis Management	4.17 High Extent	4.60 Very High Extent

Table 5 displays the overall grand mean derived from the respondents' evaluations on the implementation of social media management in the region in terms of social media accounts, social media account management, content management, and crisis management. Notably, the social media team consistently garnered a "Very High Extent" mean rating across all categories. Conversely, while the clientele provided lower ratings than the social media team, their perceptions remained relatively high. Despite the overall positive ratings, a perceptible gap exists between the perspectives of these two groups. It is imperative to address this gap to ensure that the constituents of DSWD Region III maximize the impact of the department's social media efforts.



## 2. Difference Between the Perception of the Respondents on the Implementation of Social Media Management

In the Philippines, numerous public institutions at both the national and local levels have embraced the use of social media platforms. Aside from being used for updates and announcements, these platforms are pivotal for departments and agencies in their community outreach. Public institutions primarily focused on engaging with the public must be cautious about using social media.

Throughout this research, it has become evident that various public institutions in the Philippines, encompassing both national and local levels, have readily adopted social media to communicate with their intended audiences. Several existing studies have delved into the description and evaluation of social media management within the Philippine government. However, it is notable that there needs to be more formal guidelines in many public institutions in the country, which could provide immense benefits in effectively and efficiently managing their social media accounts.

Written guidelines regarding the use of social media in organizations, whether public or private sector, establish a standardized approach. They are crucial for maintaining consistent ethical and moral standards in the digital landscape, particularly in the context of rapid technological changes. These guidelines offer clear principles, best practices, and protection against potential misinformation and privacy breaches. Consequently, their presence and adherence contribute to organizations maintaining ethical and responsible online presences that align with societal expectations and legal requirements.

This research study focuses on DSWD as one of the departments in the Philippine government with established guidelines in social media management. Evaluating the current state of these existing guidelines is of utmost significance. To accomplish this, the researcher considered it vital to gather input from both the social media team and the clientele of Region III. This approach offers a comprehensive foundation for analysis, as it encompasses the perspectives of those who adhere to the guidelines and put them into practice, as well as the observations of their clients.

Upon the meticulous examination of the responses from Region III's social media team and its clientele within the categories of social media accounts, social media account management, content management, and crisis management, this section follows the discussion about the significant differences in the responses of these two distinct groups.

**Table 6**  
**Difference Between the Perception of the Respondents on the Implementation of Social Media Management**

Variable	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	Decision	Result
Social Media Accounts	3.117	0.005	Reject $H_0$	Significant Difference
Social Media Account Management	8.088	0.004	Reject $H_0$	Significant Difference
Content Management	7.238	0.000	Reject $H_0$	Significant Difference
Crisis Management	2.720	0.013	Reject $H_0$	Significant Difference

The first category in Table 6, about the implementation of social media management in terms of social media accounts of DSWD Region III, shows that there is a significant difference in the perception of the two groups: the Region III's social media team and its clientele ( $t$ -value = 3.117,  $p$  = 0.005). The difference in perceptions is likely due to several factors, as evidenced by the significant disparities in the mean results calculated from the survey responses for this category.

One significant factor that likely played a substantial role in the observed variance for this category is the political neutrality of the social media accounts. While the social media team, as indicated by their collective response rating, essentially believes that they align with this guideline, the clientele's perception only partially coincides with this assessment in this particular aspect.

This clientele's perception may have stemmed from potential misinterpretation of social media content that includes political figures or political groups. Despite the Field Office III social media team's adherence to the guidelines, as shown in the level of their results in this area, some posts may inadvertently be misconstrued when they involve political entities. Further, this facet is particularly crucial as it intersects with the clientele's personal political biases, shaping how they perceive content. It may also be influenced by their understanding of political neutrality in public service.

A 2019 study conducted by Ahmad et al. in some rural areas in Pakistan demonstrated that the influence of online media platforms on political efficacy resulted in a significant increase in people's awareness of political matters, with social networking sites playing a significant role. The research highlighted that active engagement in online political activities, including content sharing, discussions, and participation, has substantially bolstered citizens' confidence in political matters.

This study attests to the current strong trend observed among Filipino social media users, who exhibit a strong affinity for political news and issues, not only on a national and local scale but also on a global level. The Philippines' netizens are known for active involvement and quick participation in these discussions. Consequently, it becomes imperative for the Philippine government to ensure that its use of social media remains strictly apolitical. Failure to do so could harm the reputation of government departments and agencies.

Another aspect within this domain, which has exhibited a notable variance in perceptions between the social media team and the clientele, is managing the social media accounts by trained and authorized or designated Social Media Managers. The perception of the social media team was seen to have a "Very High Extent" in agreement with this, while the clientele showed a lower response rating, a "High Extent."

One recurring observation from random interviews with participants on the clientele side pertains to the perceived delay in receiving responses to their inquiries. This concern extended beyond personal messages, as clients also raised questions in the comments section of social media content posted on DSWD Field Office III's Facebook page. These questions encompassed topics such as the disbursement of financial assistance, application procedures for specific programs, event locations, and the potential extension of these initiatives to their respective areas. While these inquiries were made informally, it is plausible that these clients anticipated timely responses. The quality of communication between the social media team and the clients may influence the client's perception of how Field Office III's social media accounts are managed. Consequently, this could impact the level of trust in the competence of the team responsible for overseeing these social channels.

The second category in Table 6 pertains to implementing social media account management at DSWD Field Office III. Similarly, it reveals a significant perspective difference between the social media team and the clientele ( $t$ -value = 8.088,  $p$  = 0.004). Among all the categories examined in this study, this category, with a  $t$ -value equal to 8.088, stands out as having the most significant variance in perceptions between the two groups. The guideline concerning having only a single social media account for Field Office III in the entire region received the most significant difference. Other aspects within this category, such as the differentiation between official and fake accounts and ensuring the ease of locating the official accounts through account search, were found likewise to exhibit noteworthy disparities in the outcomes. Moreover, these two areas have a substantial connection with the guideline about the single social media presence of Field Office III.

As indicated by the response ratings and insights from random interviews, the clientele's perspective highlights a significant disadvantage in having only one DSWD social media account serving the entire Region III. A key consideration is the geographical challenge clients face, particularly those residing in remote provinces, who may need to be made aware of the region's singular DSWD social media account. Consequently, when they seek the DSWD's presence on social media platforms, their initial inclination is to search for a DSWD page corresponding to their respective provinces. This situation gives rise to various associated issues, including the proliferation of multiple fake DSWD pages, not only impersonating the regional office but also adopting the names of specific provinces. Such occurrences carry the potential for unwarranted social media scenarios, encompassing scams, dissemination of false information, and breaches of private data.

On the other hand, the social media team places significant importance on maintaining a single social media account for Field Office III and strictly following branding guidelines to facilitate the clear identification of the Department's official accounts. This commitment to compliance is reflected in their high response rating and the present state of the Field Office's official Facebook account. Nevertheless, the social media team acknowledges that the limitation of having only one social media account for the entire region can impede their ability to provide prompt responses to clients in distant provinces. As shared by one of the social media team members, it was revealed that DSWD staff from satellite offices occasionally took it upon themselves to create DSWD accounts bearing the names of specific regional locations, aiming to facilitate direct communication with their clients. The team has taken steps to address this issue by issuing directives to have these unauthorized pages removed. Despite this initiative violating the policy, the social media team recognized the dedication of their staff in fulfilling their responsibilities. Therefore, it may be necessary to reconsider and revisit this particular guideline.

The data presented in Table 6, outlining the disparities in perceptions between the social media team and clientele regarding content management on Field Office III's social media accounts, reveals a substantial difference ( $t$ -value = 7.238,  $p$  = 0.000). This significant variation in results mainly centers on content messaging within this category.

The primary directive concerning content messaging that substantially contributes to the differing perceptions between the social media team and clientele pertains to the delivery of Field Office messaging on social media platforms in English, Filipino, or regional languages. The social media team has rated this directive as "Very High Extent." This preference is evident in their current posts, which incorporate a combination of English and Filipino, with a predominant use of the Filipino language, especially in content related to the Field Office's programs and services. However, the clientele's perception believes that there is room for improvement based on their response rating. The mention of regional languages in the survey questionnaire may have influenced the clients' overall assessment, considering the numerous dialects in Region III.

The second guideline related to content messaging that contributed to the significant difference in perceptions of the content management category was the requirement for the social media team to deliver the Field Office's message and respond to inquiries in a nurturing, timely, and calm manner. While the social media team rated themselves successful in this area, the clientele's responses were less favorable. Based on interviews with some participating clients, their main concern was the timeliness of the social media team's responses. Most likely, as a frontline agency primarily serving clients in need, the clientele's expectations are generally high.

It is essential to acknowledge that this guideline applies to all social media usage, whether in a public or private setting. Social media has become a go-to platform for organizations to communicate with their clients and vice versa. Therefore, a robust set of ethical and standard procedures should be in place for how the organization can effectively communicate online. While controlling customer behavior in online interactions is quite challenging, these standardized guidelines can empower social media team members to effectively address a wide range of situations, whether in private messages or public comments.

Lastly, as gleaned in Table 6, the social media management of DSWD Field Office III, in terms of crisis management, also presents a significant difference ( $t$ -value = 2.720,  $p$  = 0.013) in the perceptions of the social media team and clientele. Notably, while a significant difference exists in their perceptions, both groups exhibit similar low average ratings across all categories. This is likely due to the fact that crisis management on social media is considered a critically important and sensitive aspect that social media platforms have been facing. Amongst the areas where perceptions between the two groups in this study contributed to the most significant differences is the use of hashtags in crisis communication to make the posts searchable and the perception about the crisis communication team posting the initial statement during crises.

Hashtags in social media management in a government setting have many uses. Among these are to raise awareness of government programs and services, track public opinion, connect with constituents or find what they are posting about public-related topics, and respond to crises. The use of hashtags during crises has become a part of situations, especially when getting the news online. Often, social media users find, for example, #EgayPH, to find the most recent updates and relief efforts activities. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) even has a specific guideline on how their department should use hashtags in their social media efforts. The USDA states that hashtags link social media posts to a particular subject, event, theme, or discourse.

DSWD Field Office III's social media team greatly emphasizes adhering to the guidelines for hashtag usage during crises, as outlined in DSWD Administrative Order No. 16, Series of 2021. This commitment is evident in the content they share on their official Facebook page, before, during, and after a crisis. However, when it comes to the response and feedback from the clientele, they give this particular guideline the most minor consideration compared to other aspects of crisis management. This is likely due to the fact that their clients appear to be more focused on receiving news and updates and pay less attention to or have limited interest in the hashtags being used.

Furthermore, another critical factor that significantly influences the disparity in how the implementation of crisis management is perceived by the social media team and the clientele is the guideline concerning the release of initial statements by the crisis communication team. The social media team has rated their adherence to this guideline as "Very High." This commitment is again evident in the content shared on Field Office III's Facebook page before a crisis occurs. For example, one post featured updates and photos of Field Office III's crisis communication team, led by the Regional Director, engaging in online meetings for planning and monitoring with the DSWD Secretary and other Regional Directors during Typhoon Paeng in 2022.

In contrast, during random interviews with some of the participating clients, it was revealed that they are occasionally aware of these initial statements or updates posted on the Field Office's Facebook page. However, more often than not, they remain uninformed. This discrepancy is likely the key reason behind the lower response rating for this specific aspect.

### 3. Problems Encountered in the Social Media Management of DSWD Region III

Following a thorough analysis and presentation of the perceptions of both the social media team and the clientele regarding the present state of social media management in Field Office III, as well as understanding the significant differences in their responses, it is essential to address the challenges currently being encountered by both groups. The objective is to guarantee that the guidelines outlined in Administrative Order No. 16 (2021) are effectively executed and to identify improvement areas.

By analyzing the existing challenges of social media management implementation in the region, an opportunity arises to construct resilient and well-informed social media policies. These policies can provide guidance, placing a paramount emphasis on ensuring the safety of staff members and effectively managing potential risks. In doing so, they serve as a protective shield for the credibility of online interactions with clients. This strategy not only strengthens the government's online visibility but also establishes a robust framework for accountability.

**Table 7**

#### **Problems Encountered in the Social Media Management of DSWD Region III by the Social Media Team**

Situations	Percentage	Rank
Misunderstandings of the role and management during crises/disasters.	21.43%	1
The DSWD Region III social media unit lacks designated point of contacts for certain scopes of work.	14.29%	2
The DSWD Region III social media unit lacks staff/personnel.	14.29%	2
The DSWD Region III social media unit do not have a formal training on crisis communications.	14.29%	2
The DSWD Region III social media unit has insufficient time to come up with a more engaging content.	7.14%	5
The DSWD Region III social media unit has internet issues when working.	7.14%	5
The staff within the social media unit of DSWD Region III do not hold permanent positions.	7.14%	5
The content of the central office (who mandates all field offices on what to post) sometimes overlaps with the field content calendar of DSWD Region III.	7.14%	5
The DSWD Region III social media unit has no funds allocated for paid advertising.	7.14%	5

The primary responsibility for enforcing DSWD Administrative Order No. 16, Series of 2021, lies with the social media team of Field Office III. According to the survey responses and interviews conducted with the social media team, document analysis, and social media analysis during this research, the team adheres to these guidelines to the best of their capacity and available resources. Nevertheless, similar to other business operations or processes, encountering potential challenges during implementation is expected.

Table 7 reveals the prevailing problems faced by the social media team of Field Office III. On top of the list at 21.43% frequency is the misunderstanding of the role and management during crises or disasters. This is followed by no formal training on crisis communications, with a frequency of 14.29%. One social media team member shared that the Information Officer for disaster response operates separately from the social media team. This leads to occasional delays in updates. Therefore, it is crucial to establish close collaboration between the involved teams to ensure a smooth flow of information and a unified communication strategy in disaster response times.

Addressing these challenges aligns with Lorenzo and Siar's (2022) emphasis on the importance of LGUs enhancing their risk and crisis communication endeavors in readiness for potential scenarios akin to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Their research proposed employing dedicated staff for managing social media platforms and offering training and capacity development for government personnel across different facets of strategic communication, encompassing risk communication, science communication, crisis communication, and communication with the public during health emergencies.

Further, issues related to staff and role assignments, identified at a frequency of 14.29%, include the absence of a designated point of contact for specific scopes of work and insufficient personnel within the Field Office's social media team. A 2017 research study by Engetou at the Regional Treasury of Cameroon emphasized that understaffing significantly impacts organizational performance, underscoring the need for an adequate number of skilled employees adhering to human resource management principles to enhance overall effectiveness. The study also recommended holding regular department meetings to discuss organizational activities and achievements.

Meanwhile, among the Region III's social media team's least concerns, each with a frequency of 7.14%, included constraints on the team's time to create more engaging content, absence of allocated funds for paid advertising, content overlap between the Central Office and the Field Office, internet connectivity issues during work, and the lack of permanent positions for staff within the social media team.

Some of these problems revolve around content management. Firstly, limited time for the team to create engaging content may be attributed to understaffing, quick turnaround of time-sensitive content, or multiple approvals for certain posts, which would require more work. Secondly, there is a concern about the content overlap between the Central and Field Office teams. A reassessment of content management guidelines outlined in the Administrative Order is essential to address this issue internally, reducing duplication and enhancing communication. Lastly, the absence of allocated funds for paid advertising in Region III was raised as a concern. However, it is worth noting that DSWD AO No. 16 of 2021 provides guidelines for Social Media Advertising in Section XI. In an interview, a team member highlighted the potential use of social media advertising for advisories on scams exploiting DSWD, aiming to prevent deception and protect individuals from financial or information-related harm.

On the other hand, it is also important to note that one of the respondents in the social media team raised the absence of permanent positions for staff within their team. This lack of stability might give rise to worries about career development, job satisfaction, and overall stability. Such concerns can potentially influence team morale and effectiveness, potentially impacting its members' long-term commitment and performance. Exploring strategies to enhance job stability or create avenues for professional growth within the social media team could be considered to tackle this personnel issue.

**Table 8**

**Problems Encountered in the Social Media Management of DSWD Region III by the Clients**

Situations	Percentage	Rank
The social media accounts of DSWD Region III have slow or no response to inquiries, comments, or complaints submitted through social media channels.	88%	1
The social media accounts of DSWD Region III cover the entire region and do not have dedicated social accounts for individual provinces.	74%	2
The social media accounts of DSWD Region III are difficult to find in social media channels due to several fake social media accounts pretending to be the DSWD Region III	58%	3
The social media accounts of DSWD Region III display inaccurate contact information on contact details section.	55%	4
The social media accounts of DSWD Region III lack sufficient content updates due to lack of comprehensive social media plan or strategic content.	45%	5
The social media accounts of DSWD Region III do not offer content that is inclusive or tailored to individuals with disabilities.	42%	6
The social media accounts of DSWD Region III is only focused on Facebook.	40%	7
The social media accounts of DSWD Region III has difficulty in	39%	8

translating terminologies in layman's term or translating in multiple languages for diverse-dialect citizens to understand.		
The social media accounts of DSWD Region III are being handled by staff who did not receive formal/proper training based on the content quality found on social channels.	2%	9
The social media accounts of DSWD Region III lack timely updates on social media during crises such as typhoons and calamities.	2%	9

Obtaining the perception of DSWD Region III clients regarding the enforcement of DSWD Administrative Order No. 16 (2021) is crucial for aligning the guidelines with client needs, improving communication efforts, fostering accountability and trust, and ensuring compliance with legal requirements, thereby contributing to more effective and citizen-focused operations.

Table 8 presents the prevailing issues faced by clients of Field Office III. Based on the data in the table, there is a notable emphasis on establishing connections and interactions with the Field Office. These concerns encompass social media accounts exhibiting delayed or nonexistent responses to inquiries, comments, or complaints submitted via social media channels (88% frequency); DSWD Field Office III's social media accounts covering the entire region without dedicated accounts for individual provinces (74% frequency); challenges in identifying DSWD Field Office III's social media accounts due to the presence of several impersonating fake accounts (58% frequency); and the presentation of inaccurate contact information in the contact details section of DSWD Field Office III's social media accounts (55% frequency).

In a 2020 study by Amalia et al., analyzing citizen participation communication in Bekasi City, Indonesia, it was found that complaints regarding local government development initiatives primarily mark participative communication. Social media emerges as a potent tool for citizens to engage with the government. Nevertheless, the study underscores the importance of prompt responses and sustained efforts from the city government to address public input and concerns. The recommendation advocates for the local government's efficient management of social media accounts, facilitating timely responses to complaints and the integration of public input into the development program evaluation process.

This study affirms the crucial role of social media in facilitating communication between citizens and government institutions. Rather than opting for traditional avenues like physical offices, individuals increasingly turn to social media to express inquiries, thoughts, and complaints through personal messages or comments. Consequently, in instances where communication challenges arise, proactive measures are essential to ensure optimal service delivery.

The subsequent significant concerns among clients of Field Office III were focused on content management. Among these are experiencing a deficiency in content updates (45% frequency) and lack of inclusivity, failing to provide content tailored to individuals with disabilities (42%).

Implementing well-established and timely content management in social media accounts is an essential area of social media management. This primarily covers the content being published to the social platforms and the content where the audiences or social media users are getting the information they need to receive. The study conducted by David in 2016 underscored the pivotal role of content quality, timing, and frequency in engaging and retaining audiences on social media accounts. According to the study, through the high-quality and relevant content, the Department of Education (DepEd) and Pag-IBIG have engaged a broader audience by sharing national-level information. DepEd's exceptional performance during disaster preparation and response activities significantly contributes to its reach and audience engagement.

On another note, clients expressing concern about the lack of inclusive content, especially for individuals with disabilities, presents an interesting observation for DSWD to consider when enhancing existing guidelines. A thorough examination of AO No. 16 (2021) reveals the absence of specific guidelines addressing this aspect. The U.S. Digital.gov website's guide, "Improving the Accessibility of Social Media in Government," concentrates on delineating specific guidelines that offer valuable tips and best practices to guarantee the usability and accessibility of social media content for all citizens, including individuals with disabilities.

Furthermore, the participating clients observed that DSWD Field Office III is currently maintaining an active presence solely on Facebook at this present time. This was posed as a concerning issue, with a frequency of 40%. According to DSWD AO No. 16 (2021), the directive explicitly includes Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube as part of the guidelines. As reviewed in social media platforms, it was found that Field Office III has existing Facebook and Twitter accounts but no active YouTube account. The highlighted concern underscores the potential missed audience engagement on other social media platforms.

Another noteworthy concern in content management highlighted by participating clients involves the challenge of translating terminologies into layman's terms or providing translations in multiple languages for citizens with diverse dialects. This received a frequency of 39%. Despite accounting for less than half of the total respondents, addressing this issue is crucial, as emphasized in Section XI Content Management of AO No. 16, where it is stated that "content is king." This specific concern is not only about the content but also holds considerable importance in ensuring that messages are conveyed in a highly understandable manner.

Furthermore, with a frequency of only 2% each, concerns were identified regarding the management of Field Office III's social media accounts by staff lacking formal or proper training in content quality and the absence of timely updates on social media during crises. This suggests that these issues are relatively less prominent compared to other challenges. However, despite their lower prevalence, they still indicate areas for improvement in staff training and crisis communication readiness on social media. Addressing these concerns can enhance the overall effectiveness and responsiveness of Field Office III's social media presence.

#### **4. Proposed Measures to Enhance the Social Media Management of DSWD Region III**

Mahama's 2020 research in Ghana highlights the increasing interaction between the government and its constituents through social media platforms. Despite the positive impact of social media in bridging the gap between government entities and the public, Mahama's study emphasizes the need for long-term viability. Recommendations include dedicating significant time and resources to engage citizens for feedback, prioritizing technology and infrastructure investments, and formulating social media policies to guide and secure staff responsible for management.

This study aligns with the aforementioned research by proposing a comprehensive set of measures to enhance the social media management of DSWD Region III. The focus is on improving efficiency and effectiveness by addressing identified challenges within the existing framework and strategically capitalizing on opportunities for enhancement. The researcher ensures alignment with DSWD Administrative Order No. 16, Series of 2021, confirming that proposed measures adhere to existing guidelines or require refinement within the Administrative Order for implementation by Field Office III.

For the first category, social media accounts, the researcher proposes two action plans. The initial proposal aims to strengthen the apolitical stance through improved social media messaging, ensuring the non-political nature of DSWD Field Office III's social media. The objective is to enhance audience comprehension, maintain a positive reputation, and seamlessly align content with non-political themes. The necessary actions include conducting training sessions led by the Central Office on this topic. Meanwhile, the Field Office III social media team should actively participate in these sessions and systematically review and refine content copies. Additionally, they should periodically share educational posts promoting the Department's mission and objectives to enhance brand promotion.

According to Anderson (2022), social media has significantly elevated young adults' political and social engagement, fostering discussions on issues that directly impact them. In recent years, there has been a notable increase in participation in voting and addressing important social issues, showcasing the authentic concern of younger adults for the world's future. Creating safe communities on social media platforms has played a pivotal role in facilitating their active involvement. Consequently, this study asserts that there is already existing active involvement within social media platforms among users in terms of political topics. Therefore, there is a pressing need for public institutions to maintain their apolitical nature to sustain neutrality and avoid unwarranted negative discussions from their constituents.

The second proposal centers on improving client communication through crisis management skills training on social media. Implementing this essential training equips the team to effectively navigate and respond to challenging situations, fostering a more resilient online presence. To implement this plan, the Central Office should take the lead in organizing training sessions focused on crisis management. Simultaneously, the Field Office social media team is encouraged to actively participate in specialized workshops that emphasize practical crisis management skills, addressing real-world scenarios and effective communication strategies. Collaboration with and guidance from crisis management experts is also suggested to tailor strategies to the team's unique challenges.

Under the social media account management category, the researcher suggests three enhancement measures. First, a centralized regional account with local Social Media Managers. This could improve social media effectiveness by considering a centralized regional account with local managers, fostering unified regional branding while maintaining tailored communication for individual provinces. Following this, the Central Office needs to revisit DSWD AO No. 16 (2021) Section VI as it currently does not mention appointing local social media managers from the Field Office's provinces. This is crucial in the Field Office

III social media team operations as it could result in more diverse content that would most likely resonate among many regional residents.

This proposed action is driven by a prominent concern raised by the clientele of Field Office III: the current social media accounts of DSWD Region III cover the entire region without dedicated accounts for individual provinces. While the centralized account is beneficial, appointing local managers from various provinces aims to bridge the gap and enhance the Department's accessibility to clients. This initiative benefits not only the clientele of Field Office III but also facilitates efficient communication for other DSWD offices across provinces, preventing the unnecessary creation of unofficial DSWD social media accounts.

The second proposed action item aims to bolster the identification of the official DSWD Field Office III on social media. Despite the social media team's meticulous adherence to guidelines, such as correct naming conventions and using similar creatives as the national office, introducing a distinctive badge on social media platforms can further facilitate easy differentiation of the Department's official social accounts from potential fake ones. To implement this, it is recommended that the Central Office revisit DSWD AO No. 16 (2021) Section VIII, the "Verification" guideline, to consider incorporating the distinctive official badge or verification icon for Field Office social media accounts. Simultaneously, while actively addressing fake accounts, Field Office III's social media team can contribute by publishing educational posts about fake accounts and promoting awareness of the official accounts.

Lastly, the third proposal underscores the importance of maintaining updated contact information on social media accounts, recognizing the widespread use of these platforms for locating organizations and establishing communication channels. The primary objective is to enhance accessibility and align with DSWD guidelines. The recommended actions include the Field Office III social media team updating the regional office address in the introduction section and consolidating satellite office addresses into a single-image creative as a pinned post on profile pages. Additionally, the team is advised to include mobile numbers for contact information alongside telephone numbers. This addition aligns with the Statista (2023) data about the growing trend of smartphone use in the Philippines, projecting a steady increase of 11 million users (+22.7%) from 2024 to 2028.

Meanwhile, the content management category takes this study's most proposed action plans. Social media content stands as the key conduit for organizations to convey messages to their target audience. The initial proposed enhancement in this category centers on enriching DSWD social media content through language diversity. This initiative ensures diverse and inclusive content by actively engaging native speakers. Consequently, the social media team is encouraged to implement a robust language diversity strategy, involving native speakers in content creation and promoting native language learning through social media content to foster community and language appreciation.

In a 2019 publication, Wyschogrod further supports this proposal by noting that Facebook has extended its reach to include indigenous languages like Aymara, Cherokee, K'iche', and Quechua. This underscores the importance of building a web presence and leveraging social media for endangered languages, emphasizing these platforms as crucial connection points for individuals aiming to preserve their language.

In addition to fostering language diversity, the second proposed improvement aims to enhance inclusivity by improving accessibility in Field Office III's social media content, particularly for individuals with disabilities. It is strongly advised to implement a comprehensive plan incorporating inclusive multimedia formats to ensure engagement and representation for this audience. Specifically, the social media team is encouraged to diversify content formats by incorporating videos, infographics, and audio clips and design content with accessibility features such as high contrast, clear fonts, text overlays, and video captions.

This recommendation aligns with established social media practices observed by U.S. Digital.gov, published on their website. Key best practices include enhancing Facebook accessibility, especially for users unfamiliar with acronyms or relying on screen readers. It is suggested to spell out acronyms in their first instance and enclose them in parentheses. For example, "Social Media Emergency Management (SMEM)." Additionally, captions for photos should offer brief contextual descriptions. Finally, the recommendation is to upload videos to a YouTube Channel for accurate closed-captioning, complemented by an uploaded transcript to enhance accessibility. This strategy ensures that visitors when directed to the YouTube link in a Facebook status update, encounter an accessible video with captions.

The third proposed measure aims to improve the timeliness and professionalism of DSWD's social media responses. To achieve this, it is crucial to implement a strategy that involves analyzing response timelines, introducing a tiered system for prioritizing inquiries and ensuring continuous improvement in line with DSWD's nurturing brand persona. Therefore, the social media team should analyze and refine existing response timelines for online inquiries and comments and implement a tiered system for prioritizing responses based on the nature of the inquiry.



Social media response is crucial for effective communication on these platforms. Besides serving as a way for organizations to convey messages to their audiences, social media also functions as a means for users to communicate back to organizations. This proposition gains additional backing from a 2022 study conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), exploring the KSA government's utilization of social media for communication. The findings underscore the significant impact of social media tools in facilitating government communication during the pandemic in KSA. Survey participants highlighted the effectiveness of social media platforms as communication tools for the government, facilitating the sharing of crucial information. The government utilized these platforms to disseminate important information related to health and safety, vaccines, regulations, policies, and restrictions.

The final proposal in the content management category involves implementing strategic social media planning for impactful DSWD campaigns. The goal is establishing a well-structured social media plan that aligns with Field Office III's Annual Communication Plan. Collaboration between the Central Office and Field Office III social media teams is crucial to achieve this. The Field Office should coordinate the annual communication plan for national and regional offices to prevent content overlap, prepare and construct a social media plan, and formulate a framework for prioritizing and spotlighting campaigns of public concern and brand enhancement.

Additionally, this structured social media plan can incorporate additional details beyond serving as an overall guide for posting campaigns or content. These details are content types (human interest narratives, brand promotion, new projects, financial assistance, relief efforts, etc.), captions or copies, content format (infographics, photos, videos, etc.), hashtags to be used, and the scheduled publication date. David (2016) recommends using visual elements like infographics and photos as best practices. It is observed that reposted news and announcements often result in lower public engagement, indicating a need for a balanced content variety. Additionally, the assumption that human interest angles consistently attract audiences should be periodically reassessed to optimize engagement strategies.

Lastly, two proposed action plans are presented in the crisis management category to address the prominent concerns identified in the perceptions of Field Office III's social media team and its clientele. The first initiative enhances crisis communication by incorporating tailored and searchable hashtags. This involves refining hashtags to align with audience preferences to maximize searchability and follow hashtag best practices. According to U.S. Digital.gov, it is advisable to restrict the use of hashtags. Employing camel case, where the initial letter of each word is capitalized, is not only a widespread practice but also a beneficial one. This formatting makes multi-word hashtags more readable, particularly for individuals using screen readers. Moreover, hashtags are likewise specified in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's social media practice.

The second initiative focuses on ensuring effective crisis communication through timely and established updates on social media. This involves streamlining the distribution of crisis statements and updates to facilitate accurate communication across all crisis phases: pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis. For the Central Office, it is advisable to revisit DSWD AO No. 16 (2021) Section X - Field Office and assess the current crisis communication process in Field Offices to enhance citizen updates and organize crisis-related training sessions potentially. Simultaneously, Field Office III's social media team should diversify pre-crisis updates by incorporating safety tips, disaster updates, and FAQs in engaging formats like infographics. Additionally, the team can improve post-crisis content by sustaining engagement with updates on emergency cash transfers and relief operations.

In addition to the proposed measures targeting this study's four main social media management categories, it is crucial to address personnel-related issues raised by Field Office III's social media team members. These concerns include inadequate staffing levels and the absence of permanent positions, which significantly affect workforce efficiency. Engetou's 2017 research emphasizes the importance, particularly for goods and services organizations, of having an ample workforce, promoting the adoption of human resource management functions among personnel, and implementing successful marketing research strategies to attract top-tier employees.

All the suggested improvement measures need careful consideration to ensure optimal adherence to the guidelines in DSWD AO No. 16 (2021). Following this, assessing success becomes pivotal. While these measures target different challenges faced by Field Office III's social media team and its clients, leveraging social media analytics is the primary method for gauging success. As stipulated in Section XIV of Administrative Order No. 16, titled "Monitoring and Evaluation," periodic studies on the impact of social media use within the Department are mandated. Social Media Managers and analysts are required to monitor and document the analytics of social media accounts consistently. This practice serves as the foundation for the optimal timing of posts, content modification, and continuous enhancement of online communications and strategies.

The researcher recommends that Field Office III's social media team analyze content performance by employing relevant social media Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). For awareness goals, focus on metrics like impressions and reach to assess the content's visibility to social media users. For engagement objectives, examine metrics such as likes, comments, and shares. Finally, review the clicks metric for goals related to driving traffic to the DSWD website or any other government website. Furthermore, it is important to monitor online reputation indicators, including reviews, comments, and overall sentiment (Macready, 2023). By utilizing these social media KPIs, the social media team will have the capacity to gauge and assess the effectiveness of their social media efforts, especially in terms of communication initiatives.

A 2022 study further supported using social media analytics for more effective communication conducted by Lorenzo and Siar. The study suggested hiring dedicated personnel for social media management and leveraging social media analytics for more effective communication. The study recommended the establishment of social media listening channels to identify issues and opportunities, along with training and capacity building for government personnel in various aspects of strategic communication, including risk communication, science communication, crisis communication, and public communication during health emergencies. Furthermore, the study advised training local government unit (LGU) personnel in communication planning, monitoring, and evaluation.

These proposed action plans, designed to augment the implementation of social media management in DSWD, seek to address the identified gap between the social media team and its clientele. This initiative holds significance for Field Office III. It extends to the Central Office, prompting a reassessment of processes to ensure alignment with improved practices amidst the evolution of innovations and trends over the years.

## 5. Implications of the Study for Public Administration

The transformation of social media from a personal communication tool into a multifaceted platform has profoundly impacted various domains, particularly information dissemination. This influence is evident in the Philippines, where the platform significantly shapes Filipino social media users' engagement on diverse national, local, or global topics. Furthermore, on an international scale, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic has further emphasized the pivotal role of social media in spreading information and engaging wider audiences.

This evolution underscores the growing importance of ICT and e-government in Public Administration. Governments worldwide, including the Philippines, increasingly recognize the effectiveness of digitized approaches in enhancing public service efficiency and communication, especially in times of crisis. However, examining the pervasive integration of social media platforms within various public institutions in the Philippines, spanning national and local levels, reveals a notable absence of standardized guidelines across these entities, emphasizing the necessity for formalization.

Established guidelines play a pivotal role in upholding consistent ethical and moral standards in the face of technological progress. They offer explicit principles, best practices, and safeguards against misinformation and privacy breaches. The study, centering on DSWD Administrative Order No. 16, Series of 2021, not only underscores the importance of having such guidelines but also highlights the need to continually assess and enhance them for sustained effectiveness and efficiency in social media management.

This study holds substantial implications for Public Administration, emphasizing the necessity of tackling the present condition and obstacles confronted by the social media team and clientele of Field Office III in implementing the Administrative Order. The evaluation of the perspectives of these two entities provides a valuable approach to discern notable differences in their perceptions, thereby contributing to a nuanced understanding of effective social media governance.

Evaluating existing guidelines brings forth significant disparities in perceptions between the social media team and clientele across various categories, stemming from distinct factors. These differences are notably shaped by factors unique to each group. The social media team's current processes are highly based on adherence to the guidelines outlined in the Administrative Order. Hence, the team is working on strict compliance, available resources, and current skills. Meanwhile, the varying perceptions of the clients are mostly influenced by their personal experiences and expectations.

First, challenges emerge in having only a single social media account for an entire region, particularly considering the diverse geographical makeup of the clientele. This issue is further compounded by difficulties in accommodating regional languages and ensuring effective communication. Moreover, the study underscores essential client considerations to enhance communication endeavors, emphasizing the importance of timely responses, dedicated social media accounts tailored to specific provinces, and strategies to counteract deceptive impersonation through fake accounts. These concerns align with broader

trends in citizen participation communication, underscoring the crucial role of adeptly managing social media accounts in addressing public input and concerns.

Another notable distinction in perceptions between the two studied groups lies in the efforts to maintain political neutrality within the social media content of Field Office III. The significance of political neutrality is underscored by the study's findings, indicating potential misinterpretations of content featuring political figures or groups, thereby influencing the clients' overall perception.

The study delves deeper into the consequences of these differences, underlining the significance of strict adherence to guidelines for hashtag usage during crises. Despite the social media team's unwavering commitment to these guidelines, clients might prioritize receiving news and updates over engaging with hashtags. Another pivotal area of distinction lies in releasing initial statements during crises, where perceptions diverge between the social media team and clientele. The findings suggest that clients may not consistently receive sufficient information about initial statements, consequently influencing their perception of crisis communication.

In content management, clients express concerns about deficiencies in content updates. This points to the crucial role of well-established and timely content management in engaging audiences effectively. Additionally, the absence of guidelines addressing inclusivity for individuals with disabilities prompts a call for enhancing existing guidelines to ensure the usability and accessibility of social media content for all citizens.

In conclusion, addressing these disparities and refining guidelines is imperative for public institutions to cultivate effective and ethical social media practices in Public Administration. Tackling these challenges aid in bridging the perception gap and minimizing potential misinterpretations. This proactive approach contributes to promoting citizen-focused operations and aligns with contemporary trends in Public Administration, emphasizing principles such as transparency, accountability, and efficient communication through digital platforms.

#### **IV. RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the aforementioned findings and conclusions, the subsequent recommendations are put forth for consideration.

1. For the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to revisit the existing guidelines outlined in Administrative Order No. 16, with a particular need for their approval for necessary amendments: 1. Considering the appointment of local Social Media Managers from provinces across regions or Field Offices; 2. Adding the process of acquiring a "verified badge" for the official accounts of Field Offices; 3. Adding a guideline in the Administrative Order about content inclusivity among constituents with disabilities, and 4. Proposing measures to address the shortage of personnel in social media teams and advocating for the incorporation of full-time positions within the team.

2. For the DSWD Central Office social media team to lead training and skills workshops to enhance content management. This involves the creation of a well-structured social media plan and strategically implementing content, messaging, and hashtags best practices to engage diverse audiences effectively.

3. For the DSWD Central Office social media team to lead training and skills workshops to enhance crisis management. This encompasses effectively handling crisis-related inquiries, with a particular emphasis on response time. Additionally, developing a tiered system for prioritizing inquiries and implementing best practices to enhance efficiency in approvals during crises involving multiple teams.

4. For Field Office III to consistently carry out routine "social media housekeeping," which includes updating profile information (particularly contact details), responding to messages or comments, and maintaining privacy settings and security measures.

5. For Field Office III to leverage the use of social media analytics in order to determine the impact of their efforts on the communication efforts in the Field Office. In addition to extracting and analyzing social data from native platforms, the team should actively monitor comments and reviews on social accounts to grasp the overall sentiment of their audience.

6. For the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) to kindly consider revisiting and updating the draft they initiated in 2017 titled "Social Media Use for Government," specifically addressing agencies under the Executive Branch.

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