

INTEGRATING LOCAL WISDOM INTO DIGITAL GOVERNANCE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF A'BULO SIBATANG AND DIGITAL COLLABORATION BEHAVIOR AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS IN JENEPONTO REGENCY

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Abstract

Digital transformation has become a strategic priority for local governments in improving public service quality, transparency, and administrative efficiency. However, the success of digital governance depends not only on technological infrastructure but also on the ability of civil servants to collaborate effectively across organizational boundaries. This study aims to explore the role of A'Bulo Sibatang local wisdom in fostering Digital Collaboration Behavior among civil servants in Jeneponto Regency. A qualitative case study approach was employed using in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving government officials, civil servants, cultural leaders, and academics selected through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the values of solidarity, mutual support, collective responsibility, and integrity embedded in A'Bulo Sibatang serve as important social capital that encourages knowledge sharing, interdepartmental coordination, and collaborative problem-solving in digital work environments. These cultural values strengthen trust and cooperation among civil servants and contribute to more effective digital governance practices. The study concludes that integrating local wisdom into organizational culture can support sustainable digital transformation and enhance collaborative performance within local government institutions.

Keywords: *A'Bulo Sibatang; Digital Collaboration Behavior; Digital Governance; Local Wisdom; Public Sector*

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has become a strategic priority for governments worldwide in improving public service quality, transparency, accountability, and organizational efficiency. The rapid development of information and communication technologies has encouraged public organizations to adopt digital governance practices to deliver integrated and citizen-centered services. In Indonesia, digital transformation has been reinforced through the implementation of the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy and Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE), which aim to modernize public administration and improve service effectiveness (Bappenas, 2024; BPPT, 2020). Furthermore, digital governance has been recognized as an important instrument for achieving sustainable public

sector development through improved institutional effectiveness and inter-organizational collaboration (Castro & Lopes, 2021; Ishengoma & Shao, 2025).

Despite substantial investments in digital technologies, many public organizations continue to face challenges in achieving effective collaboration across organizational boundaries. Previous studies indicate that technological infrastructure alone cannot guarantee successful digital transformation because organizational fragmentation, silo mentality, and resistance to technological change frequently limit collaborative practices among employees (Yang et al., 2022; Lane et al., 2024). Consequently, public sector organizations require not only advanced digital systems but also supportive behavioral and cultural mechanisms that facilitate cooperation and knowledge sharing among civil servants. Digital Collaboration Behavior (DCB) has emerged as a critical factor in enhancing organizational effectiveness in digital work environments. DCB refers to employees' willingness and ability to communicate, coordinate, share knowledge, and solve problems collaboratively through digital platforms (Lane et al., 2024). Several studies have emphasized that digital transformation in the public sector requires not only technological readiness but also institutional capability, organizational learning, and inter-organizational collaboration to achieve sustainable outcomes (Zuiderwijk et al., 2021; Carter et al., 2024).

Effective digital collaboration contributes to improved decision-making processes, faster information exchange, and more efficient public service delivery. In local government institutions, DCB becomes increasingly important as public services often require coordination among multiple organizational units with different responsibilities and operational procedures. Leadership is widely acknowledged as a key factor influencing employee behavior and organizational performance. Among various leadership approaches, empowering leadership has received considerable attention due to its emphasis on autonomy, participation, information sharing, and employee empowerment. Empowering leaders encourage employees to take initiative, contribute ideas, and participate actively in organizational decision-making processes (Kim & Yoon, 2025). Previous research has demonstrated that empowering leadership positively affects employee motivation, adaptability, knowledge sharing, and innovative behavior (Syahrul, 2020; Kim & Yoon, 2025). In digital environments, empowering leadership can help employees adapt to technological changes while fostering collaborative interactions necessary for effective digital governance. Empowering leadership encourages employees to participate actively in organizational processes, enhances work motivation, and improves adaptability in dynamic work environments (Syahrul, 2020; McCarter et al., 2022). However, leadership alone may not fully explain collaborative behavior within organizations. Cultural values often serve as important social mechanisms that shape employee attitudes and interactions. In recent years, scholars have increasingly emphasized the importance of local wisdom as a source of social capital capable of strengthening organizational relationships and collective action. Local wisdom encompasses values, norms, and cultural practices that guide social behavior and facilitate cooperation within communities. Integrating these values into organizational contexts may provide a culturally grounded approach to enhancing collaboration and organizational effectiveness.

One form of local wisdom that remains highly relevant in South Sulawesi is A'Bulo Sibatang. This cultural philosophy emphasizes solidarity, togetherness, collective responsibility, integrity, and mutual support in achieving common goals (Haerani et al.,

2021). The values embedded in A'Bulo Sibatang closely correspond to the principles of collaboration required in contemporary digital governance environments. Previous studies have highlighted the significance of local wisdom in supporting governance innovation and community participation within smart city initiatives (Alfian & Margono, 2023). Therefore, A'Bulo Sibatang possesses considerable potential to function as social capital that strengthens Digital Collaboration Behavior among civil servants. Effective digital collaboration is increasingly recognized as a prerequisite for achieving institutional effectiveness and sustainable governance objectives, particularly in environments characterized by complex service delivery networks (Castro & Lopes, 2021; Ishengoma & Shao, 2025). The context of Jeneponto Regency provides an interesting setting for examining the relationship between local wisdom and digital governance. Similar to many local governments in Indonesia, public institutions in Jeneponto continue to expand the use of digital technologies to improve administrative efficiency and public service delivery. Nevertheless, achieving effective digital collaboration requires not only technological readiness but also organizational cultures that encourage trust, cooperation, and collective responsibility. In this regard, local wisdom may play a strategic role in supporting sustainable digital transformation initiatives.

Although previous studies have extensively investigated digital transformation, leadership, and organizational performance, relatively limited attention has been given to the contribution of local wisdom to Digital Collaboration Behavior in public sector organizations. Existing research predominantly focuses on technological, managerial, and structural determinants of digital governance while overlooking indigenous cultural values as behavioral drivers of collaboration (Adie et al., 2024; Carter et al., 2024). Consequently, there remains a significant research gap concerning how local cultural philosophies can strengthen collaborative behavior in digital work environments. The novelty of this study lies in integrating A'Bulo Sibatang local wisdom into the digital governance literature as a cultural mechanism that supports Digital Collaboration Behavior among civil servants. Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasize technology and leadership, this research explores the role of indigenous cultural values in fostering knowledge sharing, coordination, trust, and collaborative problem-solving within local government institutions. Therefore, this study aims to explore how A'Bulo Sibatang contributes to strengthening Digital Collaboration Behavior among civil servants in Jeneponto Regency and to identify its implications for sustainable digital governance practices.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to explore the role of A'Bulo Sibatang local wisdom in fostering Digital Collaboration Behavior among civil servants in Jeneponto Regency. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations regarding digital collaboration and the integration of local cultural values within public sector digital governance. Qualitative inquiry enables researchers to investigate social phenomena in their natural settings and generate a deeper understanding of contextual realities (Amir-Behghadami & Sadeghi-Bazarghani, 2024).

The study was conducted in several local government agencies (*Organisasi Perangkat Daerah* OPD) in Jeneponto Regency that have implemented digital systems in administrative and public service activities. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in digital governance practices and their understanding of local cultural values. A total of 16 informants participated in this study, consisting of three heads of government agencies, four division heads, six civil servants, two cultural leaders, and one academician. The selection of diverse informants was intended to obtain comprehensive perspectives regarding collaborative practices and the relevance of A'Bulo Sibatang values within contemporary organizational settings. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore participants' experiences related to digital collaboration, organizational communication, leadership practices, and the application of local wisdom in government institutions. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and was conducted either face-to-face or through online communication platforms, depending on participant availability. Observations were conducted to examine actual collaborative interactions and the utilization of digital platforms in daily administrative activities. In addition, relevant documents, including government regulations, strategic plans, administrative reports, and SPBE-related policies, were reviewed to provide contextual understanding and support data triangulation.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The process began with data familiarization through repeated reading of interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents. Subsequently, open coding was conducted to identify meaningful statements related to digital collaboration, organizational culture, and local wisdom. Similar codes were grouped into categories and developed into broader themes representing the key findings of the study. This analytical procedure follows contemporary qualitative analysis approaches that emphasize systematic coding and thematic interpretation to uncover patterns and meanings within textual data (Nordstrom et al., 2025). Furthermore, the analysis considered contextual interpretation to ensure that cultural meanings embedded in A'Bulo Sibatang were accurately reflected in the findings (Guenduez et al., 2025). To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several validation strategies were employed, including source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different categories of informants, while method triangulation involved cross-checking evidence from interviews, observations, and documents. Member checking was also performed by discussing preliminary interpretations with selected participants to verify the accuracy of the findings. These procedures were applied to enhance the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research results (Coffey et al., 2024).

The final stage involved interpreting the findings within the broader context of digital governance and organizational behavior. Particular attention was given to understanding how the values of solidarity, mutual support, collective responsibility, and integrity embedded in A'Bulo Sibatang contribute to strengthening Digital Collaboration Behavior among civil servants. Through this process, the study generated contextually grounded insights regarding the integration of local wisdom into digital governance practices in local government institutions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Digital Collaboration Practices among Civil Servants

The findings indicate that digital collaboration has become an essential component of administrative and public service activities in Jenepono Regency. Civil servants regularly utilize digital communication platforms, cloud-based document sharing systems, and online coordination mechanisms to support organizational performance. The use of digital technologies has enabled faster information exchange and improved coordination among government agencies. However, several challenges remain evident, including differences in digital competencies, limited interdepartmental communication, and organizational silo tendencies. Informants emphasized that effective collaboration requires not only technological infrastructure but also a supportive organizational culture that encourages openness and collective responsibility.

One informant stated:

“Digital platforms help us coordinate more quickly, but successful collaboration still depends on the willingness of employees to share information and work together across departments.” (I5)

Similarly, another informant explained:

“Technology alone cannot eliminate organizational barriers. We need trust and cooperation among employees to make digital governance work effectively.”

Table 1. Profile of Research Informants

No	Informant Category	Number
1	Heads of Government Agencies (OPD)	3
2	Division Heads	4
3	Civil Servants	6
4	Cultural Leaders	2
5	Academics	1
Total		16

Source: *Data Processed, 2026*

Table 2. Major Themes of Digital Collaboration Behavior

Theme	Description	Supporting Informants
Knowledge Sharing	Exchange of information and expertise through digital platforms	I2, I5, I8, I10
Digital Coordination	Cross-departmental communication and task coordination	I1, I3, I6, I12
Collaborative Problem Solving	Joint efforts to solve organizational problems through digital interaction	I4, I7, I11

Theme	Description	Supporting Informants
Digital Responsiveness	Rapid response to administrative and public service issues	I5, I9, I13

Source: *Data Processed, 2026*

The findings demonstrate that Digital Collaboration Behavior extends beyond the use of technology and involves behavioral commitment toward cooperation, communication, and shared organizational objectives. This finding supports previous studies indicating that digital collaboration is strongly influenced by communication quality, organizational trust, and collaborative work structures rather than technological availability alone (Yang et al., 2022; Lane et al., 2024).

3.2 A'Bulo Sibatang as Social Capital for Digital Governance

The analysis revealed that A'Bulo Sibatang functions as an important source of social capital within local government organizations. Informants consistently associated the philosophy with solidarity, togetherness, integrity, and collective responsibility.

According to a cultural leader:

“A'Bulo Sibatang teaches us that progress can only be achieved when people support one another. This value remains relevant in government organizations today.” (I14)

Another informant explained:

“The principle of mutual support encourages employees to assist colleagues who face difficulties in using digital systems.” (I9)

Table 3. Core Values of A'Bulo Sibatang Identified in the Study

Core Value	Interpretation in Public Organizations	Contribution to Digital Collaboration
Solidarity	Supporting colleagues in achieving organizational goals	Encourages teamwork and mutual assistance
Integrity	Maintaining honesty and accountability	Builds trust in information sharing
Collective Responsibility	Shared commitment toward organizational outcomes	Strengthens collaborative decision making
Mutual Support	Helping others overcome challenges	Facilitates knowledge exchange and learning

Source: *Data Processed, 2026*

These findings suggest that A'Bulo Sibatang provides a cultural foundation that promotes trust and cooperation among civil servants. Such values help reduce organizational fragmentation and encourage collaborative behavior necessary for effective digital governance. The results support previous studies highlighting the importance of local

wisdom in strengthening governance innovation and community-oriented development (Haerani et al., 2021; Alfian & Margono, 2023).

3.3 Integrating Local Wisdom into Digital Governance

The integration of A'Bulo Sibatang values into organizational practices was found to strengthen Digital Collaboration Behavior in several ways. First, cultural values encourage trust among employees, making knowledge sharing more frequent and effective. Second, collective responsibility promotes active participation in organizational decision-making processes. Third, mutual support contributes to organizational adaptability during digital transformation initiatives. Several informants highlighted that cultural values continue to influence workplace interactions despite increasing reliance on digital technologies.

One respondent stated:

“Although we communicate through digital platforms, our commitment to helping one another is still guided by local cultural values.” (I7)

Another participant noted:

“The spirit of A'Bulo Sibatang creates a sense of belonging and encourages employees to prioritize collective goals over personal interests.” (I3)

Table 4. Contributions of A'Bulo Sibatang to Digital Governance

Organizational Dimension	Contribution of A'Bulo Sibatang
Communication	Promotes openness and trust among employees
Coordination	Encourages cross-departmental cooperation
Knowledge Sharing	Supports exchange of expertise and experiences
Innovation	Facilitates collective problem solving
Organizational Adaptability	Strengthens readiness for digital transformation

Source: *Data Processed, 2026*

The integration of cultural values into organizational practices is consistent with contemporary digital governance frameworks emphasizing human-centered transformation and adaptive institutional cultures (Adie et al., 2024; Carter et al., 2024). These findings reinforce previous evidence suggesting that local wisdom can strengthen governance innovation and promote collective action through culturally embedded norms and values (Alfian & Margono, 2023).

3.4 Discussion

This study demonstrates that Digital Collaboration Behavior among civil servants is influenced by both technological and socio-cultural factors. While digital platforms facilitate communication and information exchange, the effectiveness of collaboration largely depends on interpersonal trust, collective responsibility, and organizational culture. The findings reinforce previous studies suggesting that successful digital transformation requires human-centered approaches rather than purely technological solutions (Yang et al., 2022; Lane et al., 2024). The study also extends the literature by showing that local wisdom can

serve as a strategic resource for strengthening collaborative behavior within digital governance environments. Furthermore, A'Bulo Sibatang functions as a form of social capital that supports organizational cohesion and collaborative performance. The values of solidarity, integrity, and mutual support align closely with the requirements of Digital Collaboration Behavior, making them particularly relevant for public sector organizations undergoing digital transformation. Consequently, local governments should consider incorporating indigenous cultural values into leadership development programs, organizational culture initiatives, and digital governance strategies.

The study contributes to the growing literature on digital governance by demonstrating that local wisdom remains relevant in contemporary public administration. Integrating cultural values into organizational practices can enhance collaboration, strengthen employee engagement, and support sustainable digital transformation in local government institutions.

4. CONCLUSION

This study explored the role of A'Bulo Sibatang local wisdom in fostering Digital Collaboration Behavior among civil servants in Jeneponto Regency within the context of digital governance implementation. The findings reveal that digital collaboration among civil servants is not solely influenced by technological infrastructure but is also strongly shaped by socio-cultural factors embedded within organizational practices. The study identified that knowledge sharing, digital coordination, collaborative problem-solving, and responsiveness are key dimensions of Digital Collaboration Behavior that support effective public service delivery. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that A'Bulo Sibatang functions as an important form of social capital that strengthens collaboration in digital work environments. The values of solidarity, integrity, collective responsibility, and mutual support encourage trust, cooperation, and information sharing among civil servants. These cultural values help reduce organizational fragmentation and foster a collaborative culture that supports the implementation of digital governance initiatives.

The study also highlights the importance of integrating local wisdom into organizational development strategies. Rather than viewing digital transformation solely as a technological process, local governments should recognize the strategic role of cultural values in shaping employee behavior and organizational effectiveness. The integration of A'Bulo Sibatang into leadership development programs, organizational culture initiatives, and digital governance policies can contribute to more sustainable and inclusive public sector transformation. From a theoretical perspective, this study enriches the literature on digital governance by demonstrating how indigenous cultural values can influence collaborative behavior within public organizations. From a practical perspective, the findings provide valuable insights for local governments seeking culturally grounded approaches to strengthen interdepartmental collaboration and improve digital governance performance. This study is limited to the context of civil servants in Jeneponto Regency; therefore, future research may expand the investigation to other local government institutions and regions with different socio-cultural characteristics. Comparative studies involving multiple regions may provide a broader understanding of how local wisdom contributes to digital transformation and collaborative governance in the public sector.

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