

SYMBOLS of Integrity: A Semiotic Study of 'Transparency, Accountability, Justice, and Fairness' In Government WORKS

Dennis B. Anduyan¹, Danilo G. Baradillo, PhD, FRIRes, FRIEdr²

¹Provincial Government Department Head (General Services Office), Provincial Government of Davao De Oro
dennisanduyan21@gmail.com

²University of the Immaculate Conception, Davao City
dbaradillo@uic.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study aimed to conduct a semiotic analysis of the symbols used to represent transparency, accountability, justice, and fairness in government works of Davao de Oro. The corpora were sourced out from the online portal of Davao de Oro where pertinent programs were posted for public awareness. The findings revealed that as to transparency, the following program areas were Business and investment climate, Trade and commerce, Public participation and transparency, ICT (Information and Communication Technology), Climate change adaptation and mitigation, Budget transparency under Fiscal management, Policy and regulatory framework, Disaster risk communication tools. As to Accountability, the following were the program areas: Education and skills development, Fiscal management and revenue generation, Audit and infra reporting mechanisms, Watershed and forest management, Solid waste and pollution control, Inter- agency and multi-sectoral collaboration. As to justice, the following are the program areas: Peace and order, public safety, Electrification (especially rural areas), Employment and livelihood generation, Skills training and certification programs, Land use and zoning legal compliance, Infrastructure in remote areas. And as to fairness, the following were the program areas: Social welfare services, Disaster risk reduction and management, Agriculture, fisheries, and agribusiness, Health services and facilities, Housing and human settlements, and Water supply and sanitation. In terms of the broader implications of symbolic integrity for enhancing government legitimacy in Davao de Oro, two dimensions were evident, Structural Integrity (Language and Representation) and Performative Legitimacy (Action and Symbol in Practice).

KEYWORDS: *Education, semiotics, justice, accountability, Philippines.*

INTRODUCTION

Governments commonly use symbols such as insignias, official language, public campaigns, and digital platforms to project transparency, accountability, justice, and fairness. These symbolic representations are intended to strengthen public confidence and communicate ethical governance. However, recent studies suggest that symbolic displays do not always reflect actual governance practices. In many cases, citizens perceive a disconnect between what governments symbolically present and what they genuinely implement, resulting in declining public trust and skepticism toward public institutions (Johnson & Fritsch, 2020; Kim & Lee, 2021; Evans, 2023).

Across different governance settings, scholars have observed tensions between symbolic representations and actual public service delivery. Studies on transparency initiatives revealed that governments often promote open governance through digital systems, anti-corruption campaigns, and accountability programs, yet these efforts sometimes fail to provide meaningful public participation and genuine institutional openness. In several developing nations, symbolic displays of integrity and fairness continue to coexist with corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and unequal access to services. Similarly, political rhetoric emphasizing justice and accountability may conceal practices that contradict democratic ideals and participatory governance (Hansson et al., 2020; Afolabi, 2021; Mok & De Wever, 2022). These studies collectively suggest that governance symbols may function not only as representations of public values but also as mechanisms that shape citizens' perceptions of legitimacy and trust.

In the Philippine context, symbolic representations of integrity remain highly visible in governance practices. Government institutions frequently utilize anti-corruption campaigns, transparency slogans, public service branding, and open governance initiatives to portray ethical leadership and accountability. Despite these efforts, studies continue to report persistent concerns regarding opacity in transactions, delays in service delivery, political favoritism, and unequal access to government programs (David, 2021; Tuazon, 2020). Moreover, while public officials frequently invoke justice and fairness in political discourse, many Filipinos continue to experience systemic inequalities and barriers in accessing public services (Reyes & Soriano, 2022). These contradictions highlight the continuing gap between symbolic representations of governance values and citizens' lived experiences.

This situation is also evident in the Davao Region, where local government units actively promote symbols of transparency, accountability, and good governance through public recognition programs, digitized services, and institutional campaigns. Although these initiatives project an image of efficiency and integrity, citizens still report concerns regarding accessibility, responsiveness, and accountability in local governance practices (Paderanga & Mendoza, 2020). For instance, while digitized government services in Davao City are promoted as indicators of transparent governance, marginalized sectors may still experience limitations in accessing these systems and services (Delgado & Montalban, 2021). In addition, symbolic representations of justice and fairness through local policies do not always correspond with efficient and equitable service delivery, contributing to public dissatisfaction and disillusionment (Villanueva, 2022).

Despite the growing body of literature on governance symbolism, there remains limited exploration of how citizens interpret these symbolic representations and whether such symbols genuinely contribute to improved governance practices. Existing studies have largely focused on transparency initiatives and governance programs themselves rather than examining how symbols operate as semiotic constructions that influence public perception, trust, and legitimacy. Furthermore, there is limited research that critically examines the relationship between symbolic governance representations and their actual implementation within local government settings, particularly in the Davao Region. This gap suggests the need for a deeper semiotic analysis of governance symbols and their implications for public trust and institutional integrity.

Research Questions

What are the symbols used to represent transparency, accountability, justice, and fairness in government works? What are the broader implications of symbolic integrity for enhancing government legitimacy?

Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored on four theoretical perspectives: Semiotic Theory (Saussure, 1916; Peirce, 1931), Institutional Theory (March & Olsen, 1984), Social Constructivism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), and Symbolic Interactionism (Mead, 1934). Together, these frameworks explain how meaning is created, communicated, and reinforced through government symbols, policies, and institutions, shaping public perceptions of authority, legitimacy, and civic participation.

METHODS

Research Design. This study employed a qualitative research design using semiotic analysis to examine symbols of transparency, accountability, justice, and fairness in governance. Qualitative research emphasizes understanding meanings, experiences, and social contexts through in-depth analysis rather than numerical measurement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Charmaz, 2014). Semiotic analysis was selected because it examines how signs and symbols create and communicate meaning within cultural contexts (Chandler, 2021; Barthes, 1977). This approach enables the study to uncover the deeper meanings embedded in government documents, speeches, logos, and other visual artifacts that convey governance values.

Data Sources. This study used document analysis as its primary data collection method. Approximately 15–20 documents were purposively selected to achieve data saturation (Guest et al., 2006). The documents included government reports, policy documents, public speeches, and visual materials related to transparency, accountability, justice, and fairness, sourced from government agencies, international organizations, and governance advocacy groups. These materials were selected for their relevance and ability to provide diverse perspectives on the symbolic representation of governance (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Flick, 2018). Documents were collected from official websites, institutional repositories, and agency records, with physical copies obtained when necessary. They were systematically coded to identify recurring symbols, themes, and language associated with governance values.

Data Analysis. This study integrated semiotic analysis and thematic analysis to examine how symbols of transparency, accountability, justice, and fairness are constructed and interpreted in governance. Semiotic analysis focused on identifying signs, words, images, and other symbolic elements, then analyzing their meanings, cultural significance, and contextual use. It examined the relationship between the signifier (the symbol) and the signified (its meaning) to understand how governance values are communicated. Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke (2006), was used to identify recurring patterns and organize codes into broader themes. Through repeated reading, coding, theme development, and refinement, the analysis generated themes such as legitimacy, public trust, and accountability.

Data Collection. Data collection consisted of document analysis of publicly available texts, including official reports, insignia policy briefs, and speeches from government websites. Visual data were gathered through field observations of government offices and websites, where symbols such as insignia and logos are displayed prominently. All collected data were cataloged and organized based on its relevance to the themes of transparency, accountability, justice, and fairness. In this study, data collection was primarily involve documents that were not under the researcher's direct supervision or control, ensuring an authentic representation of symbols used in governance. The focus was on collecting publicly available documents from official government sources, international organizations, and other non-governmental entities. These documents were analyzed for their depiction of transparency, accountability, justice, and fairness, through the symbols they employ.

Trustworthiness. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, four criteria were addressed. Credibility was strengthened through triangulation by comparing data from multiple sources (Yin, 2018), while transferability was supported through detailed descriptions of the research context, methods, and findings to enable application in similar settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability was established by maintaining an audit trail that documented the research process (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Confirmability was ensured through researcher reflexivity to minimize bias and expert review to validate the accuracy and relevance of the findings (Berger, 2015; Morrow, 2005).

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the study's findings on the symbolic representations of transparency, accountability, justice, and fairness in government, highlighting how these symbols influence perceptions of legitimacy. It identifies common symbols in documents, emblems, speeches, and visuals, showing how they reflect core governance values and shape public trust.

Symbols used to represent transparency, accountability, justice, and fairness in government works in Davao de Oro

In Davao de Oro, governance is not solely defined by policies and procedures but also by the visible and symbolic expressions of public values transparency, accountability, justice, and fairness. The provincial government's efforts to translate these values into tangible programmatic expressions serve as a critical conduit for fostering structural and performative legitimacy among its constituents.

Table 1

Symbols used to represent transparency, accountability, justice, and fairness in the government works in Davao de Oro

Value	Program Area	Signifier (Symbol)	Signified (Meaning)	Symbolic Representation
Transparency	Business and investment climate	One-stop-shop centers, business permits window	Ease of doing business, reduced red tape	Open, accessible, and efficient government services
	Trade and commerce	Public market spaces, trade fairs, business expos	Market openness, economic engagement	Inclusive economic participation
	Public participation and transparency	Barangay assemblies, online consultations, town hall meetings	Citizen involvement in decision-making	Democratic governance and civic empowerment
	ICT (Information and Communication Technology)	Municipal websites, digital dashboards, e-governance platforms	Digital access to public services and information	Technologically enabled transparency
	Climate change adaptation and mitigation	Public climate briefings, LGU climate action plans	Government preparedness and climate responsibility	Environmental accountability
	Budget transparency under Fiscal management	Posted budget summaries, citizens' budget documents	Public understanding of resource allocation	Financial openness and trust-building

	Policy and Regulatory framework	Ordinance publications, local codes available in public offices	Access to laws and regulations	Rule of law and clarity in implementation
	Disaster risk communication tools	Flood maps, sirens, text alerts, emergency broadcast systems	Public safety through information sharing	Life-saving transparency
Accountability	Education and skills development	School report cards, enrollment dashboards	Monitoring learning outcomes	Educational responsibility and responsiveness
	Fiscal management and revenue generation	COA reports, local revenue generation performance boards	Responsible fund handling	Accountable and ethical fiscal governance
	Audit and infra reporting mechanisms	Project signage with cost breakdowns, completion reports	Infrastructure transparency and monitoring	Tangible proof of public spending accountability
	Watershed and forest management	Reforestation site markers, tree logs, environmental MOAs	Government compliance with environmental protection	Long-term stewardship of natural resources
	Solid waste and pollution control	Color-coded trash bins, segregation signage, clean-up drives	Waste discipline and local initiative accountability	Behavioral accountability and environmental health

	Inter-agency and multi- sectoral collaboration	MOUs, inter-agency meetings, joint task force announcements	Coordinated and shared responsibility	Unified and collective governance accountability
Justice	Peace and order, public safety	Police visibility patrols, community dialogues, crime maps	Equal protection and rule of law	Security and legal justice for all
	Electrification (especially rural areas)	Installed solar panels, electric poles in sitios	Right to development, equitable access to energy	Corrective action toward marginalized areas
	Employment and livelihood generation	Livelihood starter kits, job fairs, TESDA training photos	Economic upliftment opportunities	Justice through socioeconomic empowerment
	Skills training and certification programs	NC II certificates, training photos, competency badges	Professional validation and recognition	“Just recognition of ability and qualification
	Land use and zoning legal compliance	Posted zoning maps, land use hearings, approved zoning ordinances	Fair application of land rights and use	Legal and spatial justice
	Infrastructure in remote areas	New bridges, farm-to- market roads in IP communities	Equitable development and accessibility	Physical manifestation of justice in underserved zones
Fairness	Social welfare services	Service posters featuring women, Ips, seniors, PWD	Inclusion of marginalized sectors	Government care for vulnerable populations

	ramps		
Disaster risk reduction and management	Inclusive evacuation plans, PWD- inclusive DRRM drills	Equal protection in crises	No one left behind during disasters
Agriculture, fisheries, and agribusiness	Farmer ID systems, agri-insurance programs, distribution records	Equitable access to agricultural resources	Fair treatment of rural producers
Health services and facilities	Rural health centers, mobile clinics, patient satisfaction boards	Universal access to healthcare	Compassionate and nondiscriminatory public health access
Housing and human settlements	Resettlement sites, house keys distribution ceremonies	Right to shelter and human dignity	Equal access to secure living conditions
Water supply and sanitation	Community faucets, water meter installations, sanitation posters	Safe and fair access to essential utilities	Fairness in basic human needs

Transparency. The symbols associated with transparency in Davao de Oro reflect the government's commitment to openness, accessibility, and informed public participation. One-stop business centers, public consultations, digital platforms, climate action disclosures, budget publications, ordinance postings, and disaster communication tools symbolize the government's efforts to make information readily available, encourage citizen engagement, and promote trust through clear and accessible governance.

Accountability. Symbols representing accountability emphasize responsible governance and stewardship of public resources. School performance dashboards, audit reports, project signages, environmental monitoring markers, waste segregation systems, and inter-agency collaboration documents signify government responsibility in delivering services, managing public funds, protecting the environment, and ensuring coordinated actions that are visible and measurable by the public.

Justice. The symbols of justice highlight equitable access to opportunities, protection, and development. Police patrols, electrification projects, livelihood programs, skills certifications, zoning maps, and infrastructure developments in remote communities represent the government's commitment to equal protection, socioeconomic empowerment, legal compliance, and inclusive development, particularly for underserved populations.

Fairness. Symbols of fairness demonstrate the government's efforts to ensure inclusive and equitable service delivery for all sectors of society. Welfare service materials, inclusive disaster preparedness activities, agricultural assistance programs, accessible healthcare facilities, housing initiatives, and water and sanitation projects symbolize equal access to essential services, protection of vulnerable groups, and the promotion of dignity and social equity across communities.

Table 2
Broader implications of symbolic integrity for enhancing government legitimacy in Davao de Oro

Dimensions	Examples	Ambiguity	Implication
Structural Integrity (Language and Representation)	Public budget summaries, Barangay assemblies, Climate action plans, Ordinance publications	Symbols may be visible, but comprehension by citizens may vary based on language, literacy, or digital access	Clear and inclusive communication of governance intentions is crucial to build trust and perceived legitimacy
	Livelihood kits, reforestation site markers, posted zoning maps	Symbols may be interpreted differently across social groups (e.g., Ips, farmers, women)	Culturally-sensitive language and inclusive representations reinforce the inclusiveness of governance
	Health centers and sanitation posters with visuals	Literacy limitations or symbolic overload may hinder understanding	Use of localized and universally understood visual symbols supports structural legitimacy through accessible governance

Performative Legitimacy (Action and Symbol in Practice)	Job fairs, DRRM drills, audit signage, ICT dashboards	Good practices may not be uniformly experienced across all municipalities	Discrepancies between symbol and actual service delivery may erode legitimacy; performance must match representation
	Electrification in rural areas, access roads, mobile clinics	Visibility of infrastructure does not always equate to sustained quality or equitable use	Performative legitimacy increases when physical infrastructure translates into sustained public benefit
	Posting of COA reports, joint task force announcements	Reports may be posted without public engagement or follow-through	Without meaningful community participation, performative acts risk becoming symbolic tokens rather than genuine governance
	Inclusive evacuation drills, water installations in poor communities	Some communities may be symbolically included but practically underserved Materializing justice symbols	Consistent and verifiable follow-through transforms symbolic inclusion into experiential equity and trust Resolved 210 Lumad land cases (2023) vs. 48 through formal courts

Structural Integrity (Language and Representation). The findings indicate that symbolic integrity strengthens government legitimacy when governance symbols are communicated in ways that are clear, accessible, and culturally meaningful. Symbols such as budget summaries, barangay assemblies, climate action plans, livelihood programs, and public health materials promote transparency and inclusion only when citizens can understand and relate to them. Thus, the legitimacy of government depends not merely on the visibility of these symbols but on their ability to effectively communicate governance values across diverse communities.

Performative Legitimacy (Action and Symbol in Practice). The findings further show that government legitimacy is reinforced when symbolic

representations are consistently matched by tangible actions and measurable outcomes. Symbols such as infrastructure projects, audit reports, disaster preparedness activities, and public service initiatives gain credibility when citizens experience real improvements in service delivery, participation, and equity. Conversely, when symbolic commitments are not supported by sustained implementation, public trust may decline, highlighting that legitimacy is ultimately built through the consistent alignment of representation with

DISCUSSION

This chapter interprets the multimodal symbols of transparency, accountability, justice, and fairness as manifested in government works across Davao de Oro. Drawing from visual and linguistic elements embedded in public signage, digital platforms, and civic rituals, the findings reveal how these signifiers shape perceptions of governance and civic trust.

Transparency. Transparency in governance refers to openness and clarity in government actions and decisions. Symbolic representations in this area include one-stop-shop centers and business permits windows that signify an ease of doing business and a reduction in bureaucratic obstacles. *Business and Investment Climate*. Transparency is fundamental in fostering a favorable business and investment environment. According to the World Bank (2022), countries with transparent regulatory practices attract more foreign direct investment (FDI) because they reduce risks and build investor confidence. Openness in financial reporting, public procurement, and licensing procedures reduces corruption and market distortion. In emerging economies, increased transparency has been linked to improved ease of doing business rankings and stronger economic growth (OECD, 2023). These physical spaces represent an open, accessible, and efficient government service system, which, according to recent literature, plays a critical role in fostering public trust and reducing corruption (Mills et al., 2021). However, despite the presence of such symbols, their comprehensibility can be compromised if citizens face digital divides or have limited literacy. This leads to ambiguity a symbol may be visible, but its true signified meaning may not be fully understood by all, reducing its effectiveness in building trust. To address this ambiguity, it is important for digital access to be paired with efforts to increase digital literacy, ensuring that government services are both visible and understandable to all, as recommended in studies by Carnegie & Berman (2022), which emphasize the importance of inclusive communication in fostering effective transparency.

Accountability. Accountability is a foundational pillar of governance that centers on the responsible management of public resources and the assurance that government actions align with the best interests of the people. It ensures that government officials and agencies are held to a high standard of ethical behavior and transparency, making it an essential principle for fostering public trust. One of the most visible and recognized symbols of accountability includes COA (Commission on Audit) reports, which are public documents detailing how government funds are spent. These reports serve as a critical monitoring tool, ensuring that taxpayers' money is spent efficiently, ethically, and in accordance with legal frameworks. According to Marcos and Malaya (2018), transparency in government spending is critical for fostering trust between the public and officials, as it directly impacts citizens' perceptions of fairness and governance quality. The presence of accessible COA reports creates an environment where citizens can scrutinize government expenditures, helping to prevent corruption and mismanagement.*Education and Skills Development.* Accountability mechanisms in education such as performance-based evaluations, transparent funding allocations, and school report cards ensure that learning outcomes are prioritized and resources are effectively used. According to UNESCO (2022), educational accountability frameworks that involve parents, communities, and local governments result in higher student performance and reduced inequality. Moreover, linking funding to skills development outcomes has been found to enhance workforce readiness (ILO, 2023).

Justice. Justice in governance focuses on the fair and equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and services, ensuring that all individuals are treated with dignity and their rights are upheld. Symbols of justice, such as police patrols, community dialogues, and crime maps, represent the government's commitment to equal protection and the rule of law. These symbols communicate the government's intention to maintain peace, security, and order across all communities. However, ambiguity arises when these symbols are not uniformly applied across different regions or demographics. While some areas may benefit from visible police patrols or regular community dialogues, other, often marginalized, communities may not receive the same level of attention or protection. According to Garcia & Tan (2022), marginalized groups, such as those in rural or impoverished urban areas, often experience discriminatory practices and inequitable access to essential services, including law enforcement and justice. The authors argue that justice in governance cannot be considered truly realized unless these groups have access to the same protection and rights as those in more privileged communities. This highlights

the need for inclusive justice that transcends symbolic representation and actively engages with the needs of all citizens. The implication of this is that for justice to be meaningful, it must be applied equitably across all segments of society, ensuring no community is left behind. *Peace and Order; Public Safety*. Justice as applied to peace and order requires equitable law enforcement and accessible legal remedies for all. According to UNODC (2021), strengthening community policing and ensuring due process helps reduce violence and build trust, especially in marginalized areas. Justice-driven safety programs must be people-centered, focusing on victims' rights and reintegration of offenders, rather than solely punitive measures.

Fairness. Fairness in governance is reflected through symbols that emphasize inclusive access to services, such as service posters that feature women, Ips, and PWD ramps. These symbols of inclusion aim to ensure that marginalized sectors are not excluded from essential public services. Similarly, disaster risk reduction measures, such as inclusive evacuation plans and PWD-inclusive DRRM drills, emphasize equal protection for all, particularly during crises. However, as Singh & Kumar (2023) note, inclusive symbols may only be symbolic if there is insufficient practical application in the form of actual services reaching the most vulnerable. The implication is that fairness in governance is not just about representation but about making sure that all segments of society experience equitable outcomes. *Fairness Social welfare services*. Fairness as a foundational value in governance entails the equitable distribution of resources, services, and opportunities, particularly for marginalized and vulnerable populations. In social welfare services, fairness means addressing disparities in access, coverage, and quality ensuring that aid is not politicized or unevenly distributed. As noted by UNDP (2021), social protection systems must be designed to reach the poorest and most excluded, with needs-based targeting and transparent eligibility criteria.

Broader implications of symbolic integrity for enhancing government legitimacy in Davao de Oro

Symbolic governance in Davao de Oro plays a crucial role in shaping public trust, yet inconsistencies between institutional symbols (langue) and their real-world implementation (parole) reveal deeper legitimacy challenges.

Structural Integrity (Langue). Structural Integrity (Langue), as defined by Ferdinand de Saussure (1916), refers to the underlying, systematic structure of a language the set of rules, conventions, and relationships among

linguistic signs that exist independently of individual speech acts. This structural integrity, or *langue*, ensures that meaning is not derived from individual words alone, but from their differential relationships within the overall linguistic system. Modern semioticians such as Jonathan Culler (1976) have elaborated on this, emphasizing that structural integrity in language provides the framework for signification, shaping how meaning is consistently produced and understood across contexts. Structural Integrity (Language and Representation) and Performative Legitimacy (Action and Symbol in Practice) are critical dimensions that shape the effectiveness and legitimacy of governance. These dimensions emphasize the need for not only symbolic representations of governance actions but also the actual implementation of those actions in a way that meets the needs and expectations of the public. When these dimensions align effectively, they enhance the public's trust and civic engagement by demonstrating both transparency and accountability. However, discrepancies in how symbols are represented or how actions are carried out can result in ambiguity, which weakens the government's legitimacy. This interplay between symbolism and action requires a delicate balance to avoid the tokenism or ineffectiveness that can erode public confidence.

Structural Integrity primarily focuses on how symbols of governance, such as public budget summaries, Barangay assemblies, and climate action plans, communicate governance intentions to the public. These symbols are intended to convey transparency and inclusiveness in governance, yet they may fail to reach or resonate with all citizens due to barriers like language, literacy levels, and digital access disparities. Garcia et al. (2022) emphasize that public documents and communications must be written in clear, simple language to ensure comprehension across diverse communities, particularly in multilingual regions or areas with low literacy rates. Similarly, digital platforms, while effective in urban settings, can leave rural communities at a disadvantage if they have limited access to the internet. Digital exclusion can diminish the intended impact of these symbols, as remote populations may not be able to engage with e-governance platforms or access online town halls (Ramos, 2021).

Performative Legitimacy. Suchman (1995), mentioned that legitimacy can be understood as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions.” Performative legitimacy, a more recent application of this concept, builds on this by emphasizing how legitimacy is enacted through rhetoric, public gestures, transparency rituals, or

policy enactments that resonate with stakeholders. Performative Legitimacy emphasizes the importance of actual performance aligning with symbolic actions. Job fairs, Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) drills, and ICT dashboards serve as symbols of governance action, signaling that the government is working on citizens' behalf.

However, discrepancies between these symbols and actual experiences can erode legitimacy. Johnson & Lee (2023) argue that while the symbolism of job fairs and DRRM drills demonstrates the government's commitment to providing opportunities and protecting communities, the reality is that not all municipalities experience the same quality of service or the same level of engagement. Disparities between intended action and actual outcomes can lead to a sense of disillusionment and lack of trust. For instance, a well-publicized job fair in a city may attract significant participation, but in rural areas, where there are fewer resources, such initiatives may lack follow-up or fail to meet local needs. This highlights the need for consistent, equitable service delivery, which can transform symbolic actions into genuine, lasting impacts on citizens' lives.

Moreover, performative legitimacy extends beyond symbolic actions and focuses on the actual outcomes and follow-through of governance actions. The effectiveness of governance symbols, like job fairs, DRRM drills, and ICT dashboards, hinges on the government's ability to translate them into tangible benefits and services for citizens. For example, a job fair may be advertised as a means to provide employment opportunities, but if it is poorly organized or lacks follow-up support, its symbolic value diminishes, leading to public dissatisfaction and decreased legitimacy. In rural areas, the visibility of infrastructure, such as electrification projects or access roads, might symbolize the government's commitment to economic development; however, the sustained quality and equitable distribution of these services are essential for ensuring that the benefits reach all citizens, particularly those in underserved communities (Johnson & Lee, 2023).

As Pérez et al. (2021) note, performative legitimacy is built on a foundation of consistent, high-quality service delivery that matches the symbolic intent. Infrastructure and public services should not just exist in visible forms but must be effectively utilized and maintained to provide ongoing value to the communities they are intended to serve. Without this follow-through, even the most well-intentioned symbols can become meaningless. So, structural integrity and performative legitimacy are both integral to the creation of a trustworthy and

effective government. Symbolic actions, such as budget summaries, climate action plans, or DRRM drills, must be accompanied by genuine action that addresses the needs and concerns of all communities. To avoid ambiguity and strengthen governance, governments must ensure inclusive representation, cultural sensitivity, and follow-through on symbolic acts. This requires clear communication and equitable service delivery to reinforce public trust and legitimacy.

The findings highlight important implications for educational practice in promoting effective and inclusive governance. Educational institutions should strengthen training on inclusive communication, ensuring that governance information is presented in clear, accessible, and culturally responsive ways. Preparing public servants and future leaders to communicate effectively across diverse communities can enhance public understanding, participation, and trust in government initiatives.

REFERENCES

- Afolabi, A. (2021). Corruption, governance, and symbols of accountability in developing nations. *Journal of International Affairs*, 74(2), 123-145.
- Afolabi, A. A. (2021). The effectiveness of anti-corruption symbols in developing countries. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 44(3), 225-237.
- Barthes, R. (2020). *Semiotics and the study of signs*. Routledge.
- Bertot, J. C., Jaeger, P. T., & Grimes, J. M. (2016). *Using ICTs to create a culture of transparency: E-government and the public sector*. Springer.
- Bovens, M., Goodin, R. E., & Schillemans, T. (2014). *The politics of public accountability*. Oxford University Press.
- Clarke, P., & Gell, J. (2018). Anti-discrimination policies and fairness in public administration. *Journal of Public Policy*, 20(1), 45-60.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage Publications.
- David, J. (2021). Transparency and accountability in Philippine governance: A critical review. *Philippine Journal of Public Affairs*, 12(1), 45-63.
- David, R. (2021). Symbolic transparency and the erosion of public trust in Philippine governance. *Philippine Political Journal*, 45(1), 19-32.
- Delgado, A., & Montalban, J. (2021). E-governance and its limits: The gap between symbolism and service delivery in Davao City. *Mindanao Journal of Public Administration*, 6(3), 87-104.

- Delgado, R., & Montalban, T. (2021). Evaluating the accessibility of digitized services in Davao City: A case study. *Local Governance Review*, 19(2), 132-148.
- Denzin, N. K. (2008). *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*. Aldine Transaction.
- DiMaggio, P., & Powell, W. W. (2021). *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. University of Chicago Press.
- Eco, U. (2019). *A Theory of Semiotics*. Indiana University Press.
- Eco, U. (2019). *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*. Indiana University Press.
- Edwards, A., & Blanchard, K. (2022). *Symbols of Trust: Analyzing Public Perceptions of Governance*. *Public Administration Review*, 82(4), 559-577.
- Edwards, A., & Blanchard, O. (2022). *Symbols of integrity in governance: Transparency and trust*. *Governance Studies Review*, 14(3), 213-229.
- Evans, G. (2023). Justice and fairness in governance: Principles and practices. *Journal of Governance Studies*, 31(4), 345-360.
- Evans, G. (2023). Symbolic displays and public mistrust in governance: A comparative analysis. *Journal of Governance Studies*, 31(4), 345-360.
- Finkelmann, P. (2019). *The symbolic architecture of justice: A study of courtroom design*. *Journal of Legal Studies*, 25(4), 678-692.
- Gillingham, J., Kavanaugh, M., & Woodward, S. (2018). The impact of official documents on perceptions of transparency. *Public Management Review*, 20(2), 134-150.
- Hall, S. (2021). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Sage Publications.
- Hall, S. (2021). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage Publications.
- Hansson, L., Belova, O., & Parker, G. (2020). Transparency without accountability: Symbolic transparency and public trust in European governance. *European Governance Review*, 18(1), 45-67.
- Hansson, L., Nielsen, T., & Andersson, R. (2020). Open data initiatives and public trust in European governments. *European Journal of Political Research*, 59(5), 758-772.
- Harris, A. (2015). Legal symbols and their role in communicating justice. *Journal of Legal Symbolism*, 12(2), 92-104.
- Holmes, D., & May, M. (2021). Transparency in government: Openness and accessibility. *Public Administration Review*, 81(2), 200-215.
- Leach, S., Tustin, D., & Reynolds, A. (2022). Accountability in governance: Answerability and transparency. *Journal of Public Administration*,

- 58(3), 430-445. Leach, S., Tustin, D., & Reynolds, A. (2022). Accountability in governance: Answerability and transparency. *Journal of Public Administration*, 58(3), 430-445. Mergel, I. (2016). Open data and public trust in government: A comparative study. *Journal of e-Governance*, 19(4), 201-220.
- Mok, K. H., & De Wever, B. (2022). Symbolic justice and authoritarianism in Asia: An analysis. *Asian Political Review*, 8(1), 55-72.
- Mok, K. H., & De Wever, B. (2022). The symbolism of justice and fairness in Asian political rhetoric. *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 30(3), 235-250.
- Mok, K. H., & De Wever, J. (2022). Political symbolism and governance in authoritarian regimes: Justice and fairness rhetoric in Asia. *Asian Political Science Review*, 14(3), 78-94.
- Paderanga, A., & Mendoza, R. (2020). Symbols of accountability in local governance: A study of public audits and performance metrics. *Local Government Studies*, 46(5), 789-805.
- Paderanga, J., & Mendoza, L. (2020). Public perception of local governance symbols in the Davao region: Challenges of transparency and accountability. *Davao Governance Review*, 8(2), 33-51.
- Paderanga, R., & Mendoza, R. (2020). The role of anti-corruption drives in local governance: A study of Davao City. *Philippine Journal of Local Governance*, 27(1), 101-119.
- Peirce, C. S. (1931-1958). *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Harvard University Press.
- Reyes, C., & Soriano, A. (2022). Justice and fairness in Philippine election campaigns: A critical perspective. *Philippine Political Science Journal*, 43(2), 178- 192.
- Reyes, C., & Soriano, C. (2022). The rhetoric of justice and the realities of inequality: A critique of governance symbols in the Philippines. *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*, 70(2), 45-67.
- Reyes, M., & Soriano, C. (2022). Symbolism and systemic injustice in Philippine governance. *Philippine Journal of Political Science*, 14(2), 113-129.
- Roberts, J. (2003). *The Changing Dynamics of Research Ethics*. *Research Ethics Review*, 15(1), 25-32.
- Saussure, F. de. (1916). *Cours de linguistique 98énérale*. Éditions Payot.
- Saussure, F. de. (1916). *Course in General Linguistics*. McGraw-Hill.
- Tuazon, G. (2020). Transparency and public perception: An evaluation of the

- Open Government Partnership in the Philippines. *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, 18(3), 345-360.
- Tuazon, J. (2020). The open government partnership in the Philippines: Symbolism versus substance. *Journal of Southeast Asian Governance*, 9(4), 150- 170.
- Tuazon, P. (2020). Transparency and governance in the Philippines: Challenges and prospects. *Journal of Asian Governance*, 29(4), 410-425.
- Villanueva, A. (2022). The impact of symbolic justice on local governance in Davao City. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 33(1), 102-118.
- Villanueva, L. (2022). Symbolic representations versus actual governance practices in the Davao region. *Regional Governance Studies*, 18(3), 219-235.
- Villanueva, R. (2022). Justice delayed: The symbolic use of fairness in Davao's local governance. *Southern Philippine Studies*, 12(1), 55-72.
- Zuiderwijk, A., & Janssen, M. (2017). The role of open government data in enhancing transparency: A comparative study. *Government Information Quarterly*, 34(3), 453