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The Role of Effective Communication in Enhancing the Transparency of Public Institutions: A Case Study in Local Public Administration

Mihaela RUS [1]

[1] Faculty of Law and Administrative Sciences, *Ovidius* University, Constanța, Romania, The Institute of Philosophy and Psychology of the Romanian Academy, Romania; psiholog_m@yahoo.com

Abstract: *In the context of increasing demands for public accountability and the consolidation of participatory democracy, effective institutional communication emerges as a key determinant of administrative transparency. This article examines the relationship between public communication and institutional transparency within local public administration in Romania, integrating theoretical, legislative, and empirical perspectives.*
The study employs a mixed-methods design (qualitative–quantitative), combining document analysis with a case study conducted on a sample of N = 108 citizens. The findings reveal a significant correlation between the clarity and accessibility of communication and the perception of transparency. Statistically significant differences were identified between urban and rural respondents ($t(106) = 2.34$, $p = 0.021$), as well as across educational levels ($F(2,105) = 4.98$, $p = 0.009$).
Although digitalization is perceived as a facilitating factor, the overall level of civic participation remains limited. The study confirms the hypothesis that effective communication does not merely reflect institutional transparency but actively generates it, provided that it is strategically supported and embedded within an organizational culture grounded in openness and responsiveness.

Keywords: *institutional communication; administrative transparency; local public administration; participatory governance; digitalization.*

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Introduction

The transformations brought about by the information society have redefined the relationship between public administration and citizens, placing public communication at the core of good governance. Transparency is no longer merely a normative obligation, but a fundamental condition of democratic legitimacy. Within local public administration—where interaction with citizens is direct and continuous—the effectiveness of communication becomes a key indicator of the quality of administrative action (Zaharia, 2019).

This article investigates the role of effective communication in strengthening institutional transparency, starting from the central hypothesis that communication efficiency generates a more positive perception of transparency and fosters civic engagement.

In the dynamic context of contemporary socio-institutional transformations and increasing demands for public accountability, effective institutional communication emerges as a central determinant of modern governance (Mureşan, 2020). Decision-making transparency, unrestricted access to public information, and the institutionalization of dialogue between authorities and citizens go beyond formal legal requirements; they constitute structural prerequisites for consolidating participatory democracy and strengthening trust in public institutions. In this framework, communication can no longer be reduced to a technical function of information dissemination; rather, it must be understood as a strategic mechanism of administrative legitimation, civic engagement, and social capital building.

Local public administration, positioned at the direct interface with the community, plays a crucial role in operationalizing these principles. Its ongoing interaction with citizens requires the development of coherent, transparent, and community-oriented communication practices. The absence of an integrated and professional communication system fosters perceptions of institutional opacity, erodes public trust, and increases distance from the decision-making process. In a context characterized by accelerated digitalization, intensified public participation, and heightened social responsibility, analyzing the interdependence between communication efficiency and institutional transparency becomes not only relevant but necessary.

The present study aims to examine the role of effective communication in promoting transparency within public institutions, with a specific focus on local public administration. Through an applied case study,

the research seeks to assess the extent to which current communication mechanisms implemented at the local level contribute to meeting standards of public information, decision-making transparency, and democratic participation.

Theoretical framework

The specialized literature positions institutional communication at the intersection of public management and democratic governance. The two-way symmetric model proposed by Grunig & Hunt (1984) underpins the paradigm of reciprocal communication based on feedback, dialogue, and mutual adaptation. In parallel, deliberative theory (Habermas, 1984) and the participatory governance model emphasize the central role of dialogue in legitimizing public decision-making processes.

Administrative transparency is conceptualized as the visibility, accessibility, and intelligibility of decision-making processes. In Romania, the normative framework governing transparency is primarily structured around Law no. 544/2001 on free access to public information and Law no. 52/2003 on decision-making transparency in public administration, which regulate access to information and public consultation mechanisms.

From the perspective of modern governance, effective communication is characterized by clarity, relevance, timeliness, and bidirectionality. In the absence of these dimensions, transparency risks becoming merely formal and lacking substantive impact.

Communication as an instrument of good governance and accountability

The concept of good governance refers to an administrative model grounded in democratic values, institutional efficiency, public participation, and decision-making transparency. Within this normative and functional configuration of modern administration, effective institutional communication assumes a central role, as it mediates the relationship between public authorities and the community, facilitates access to information, and strengthens mechanisms of civic oversight over public power (Beetham, 1991). Communication thus becomes an infrastructure of political and administrative legitimacy.

Within the logic of participatory governance, public communication serves as an essential instrument for institutional accountability toward citizens. When practiced coherently, transparently, and bidirectionally, it contributes to increased trust in public authorities, reinforces the legitimacy of decision-making processes, and strengthens the relationship between the state and society (Gramberger, 2001). In this sense, institutional

communication functions as a "public mirror" of administration, reflecting the level of openness, integrity, and responsibility assumed in decision-making within a social context characterized by widespread access to information and accelerated digitalization.

Public accountability inherently requires communicative transparency (Sandu, 2016). Public authorities, both at local and central levels, are obliged to provide relevant information regarding budgets, expenditures, projects, and adopted decisions—not only to ensure legal compliance, but also to create the conditions for a deliberative public space in which citizens can critically evaluate governmental action (Bovens, 2007). Transparency thus becomes an operational mechanism of accountability.

The literature further indicates that institutions adopting open, interactive, and feedback-oriented communication policies tend to achieve higher levels of civic satisfaction and public engagement, as well as a reduced perception of corruption (Neamțu, 2015). From this perspective, effective communication constitutes a key indicator of administrative performance and public ethics.

Operationally, communicative good governance requires the development of clear communication strategies, transparency in internal and external information flows, the integrated use of traditional and digital channels, continuous staff training in public communication, and the establishment of genuine consultation and feedback mechanisms (Zaharia, 2021). In the absence of these components, public institutions risk being perceived as opaque, bureaucratic, and inefficient, which undermines legitimacy and public trust.

Consequently, communication should not be regarded as an auxiliary element of administration, but as a constitutive dimension of governance itself, supporting accountability, efficiency, and democratic participation (Zaiț & Spătariu, 2014).

Relevant theoretical models in the analysis of institutional communication

The study of communication in public administration is supported by several theoretical models that provide both conceptual tools and normative benchmarks for evaluating institutional practices (Raboca, 2010).

A reference framework is the two-way symmetric model formulated by Grunig & Hunt (1984), which conceptualizes communication as a reciprocal process of exchange and adaptation between an organization and its public. Within this paradigm, communication is not limited to the unilateral transmission of information; rather, it involves incorporating feedback and adjusting organizational behavior in response to public

reactions. This model is widely regarded as the ethical standard of modern public communication, closely associated with transparency and institutional dialogue.

Another relevant theoretical framework is deliberative communication theory, developed by Habermas (1984), which places communication at the core of the democratic process. According to this perspective, the public sphere should function as a forum of argumentative rationality, where decisions are legitimate insofar as they can be justified through publicly accessible and contestable arguments. Applied to public administration, this theory implies openness to consultation, transparent justification of policies, and responsiveness to criticism.

At the applied level, the participatory governance model promotes collaboration between public authorities, citizens, and civil society organizations in the co-creation of public policies. In this context, effective communication serves as the coordinating mechanism that enables informed participation (Bovaird & Löffler, 2009).

Furthermore, within the paradigm of digital administration, network communication theory emphasizes the continuous interconnection between institutions and citizens through digital platforms and social media. Communication becomes decentralized, rapid, and permanently monitorable, increasing demands for institutional coherence and transparency (Castells, 2009).

Integrating these theoretical models into administrative practice enables the development of coherent communication strategies adapted to the requirements of the information society. Within this framework, communication becomes a space for constructing legitimacy, negotiating the public interest, and strengthening the social contract between administration and citizens.

Methodology of research

The methodological approach adopted in this study is based on a mixed-methods design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research strategies. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between institutional communication and administrative transparency by combining conceptual, normative, and empirical dimensions.

The theoretical and documentary component involves a systematic review of the relevant literature and an analysis of the national legislative framework governing communication and transparency in local public administration. The empirical component includes the administration of a

standardized questionnaire addressed to both public officials and citizens, as well as the conduct of semi-structured interviews designed to provide complementary qualitative insights.

The case study was carried out within a local public administration institution in Romania. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques and thematic analysis in order to identify patterns and relationships between communication effectiveness and the level of perceived institutional transparency.

Research objectives

The general objective of the study is to examine the extent to which effective institutional communication contributes to enhancing transparency within local public administration, while also identifying existing obstacles, best practices, and citizens' perceptions of this process.

In order to achieve this general aim, the study pursues the following specific objectives:

1. To identify and analyze the conceptual framework of public communication and administrative transparency in national and international literature;
2. To examine the legislative and institutional framework regulating communication and transparency in Romanian local public administration, with emphasis on its practical implementation;
3. To identify the main dysfunctions and challenges affecting institutional communication at the local level from the perspective of both public officials and citizens;
4. To conduct a comparative analysis of selected best practices from Romania and the European Union regarding effective communication and local administrative transparency;
5. To assess the impact of digitalization on the quality of communication and the level of transparency in local administration, focusing on accessibility, interactivity, and digital inclusion.

Research instrument

In order to address the research objectives and collect relevant data regarding communication effectiveness and perceptions of transparency, a structured questionnaire was developed and administered to citizens who interact directly or indirectly with local public administration institutions.

Structure of the questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of three main sections:

1. **Sociodemographic data:** This section includes questions regarding age, gender, level of education, place of residence (urban/rural), occupational status, and frequency of interaction with local public administration. The purpose is to establish respondents' profiles and to explore potential correlations between demographic variables and perceptions of public communication.
2. **Perception of institutional communication:**This section includes items assessing:
   - the clarity of information provided by public institutions;
   - the accessibility of communication channels;
   - the responsiveness of institutions to citizens' inquiries and requests;
   - the coherence of messages communicated in the public sphere;
   - the degree of digitalization in institutional interactions (website, email, applications, etc.).
3. **Perception of Institutional Transparency: This section focuses** on:
   - access to public interest information (e.g., budgets, projects, decisions);
   - citizens' involvement in local decision-making processes (public consultations, hearings, participatory budgeting);
   - trust in local public administration;
   - the usefulness and timeliness of information available through official channels.

The questionnaire includes both closed-ended items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree") and factual or multiple-choice questions. An open-ended section at the end allows respondents to provide additional comments, suggestions, or observations.

Participants

For the empirical research phase, a non-probabilistic voluntary self-selection sample was employed, consistent with the exploratory nature of the study and the focus on perceptions and attitudes regarding communication and transparency in local public administration.

Sample Size

The study aimed to collect a minimum of 108 valid responses in order to ensure a sufficient basis for statistical analysis and to enable

correlations between sociodemographic variables and perceptions of institutional communication. The final number of respondents was influenced by participants' availability and accessibility.

This sample size provides an adequate foundation for descriptive statistical analysis and inferential testing (e.g., t-tests and ANOVA), allowing the identification of statistically significant differences across demographic groups.

Presentation of results

Perception of the effectiveness of institutional communication

Respondents were asked to evaluate, on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), a series of statements concerning the clarity, accessibility, and interactivity of institutional communication practices implemented by local public administration. The analysis indicates a generally moderate perception of communication effectiveness, with notable variation across the evaluated dimensions.

Regarding the clarity of messages conveyed by public institutions, 41% of respondents expressed agreement or strong agreement with the statement that the information provided is clear and easy to understand, yielding a mean score of 3.26. However, a considerable proportion (35%) reported partial or total disagreement, indicating difficulties in understanding administrative language. This relatively balanced distribution suggests the persistence of an overly formalized institutional discourse, often characterized by technical terminology or ambiguous formulations, which may limit accessibility for citizens without legal or administrative expertise. These findings support the need for simplifying administrative language and adopting user-centered communication standards, including plain language principles.

Concerning the accessibility of information, 54% of participants considered practical information—such as office hours, available services, or required documentation—to be relatively easy to locate and consult. Nevertheless, 22% of respondents reported delays in updating online content or difficulties navigating institutional websites. This highlights an issue related to the operational sustainability of digital communication: although informational infrastructure is in place, consistent maintenance and timely updates are not always ensured. Consequently, formal accessibility does not necessarily translate into functional accessibility.

The dimension of communication interactivity, assessed through the perceived responsiveness of public officials to citizens' inquiries, obtained a mean score of 3.12, reflecting a predominantly neutral to moderately positive

perception. However, the distribution of responses reveals significant variation depending on the type of institution and the communication channel used (face-to-face interaction at the counter, telephone, email, or social media). Respondents who relied primarily on digital channels frequently reported longer response times or standardized replies, whereas direct, in-person interactions were evaluated more favorably in terms of empathy, clarity, and problem resolution.

Overall, the results indicate that institutional communication is perceived as moderately effective, without reaching high levels of citizen satisfaction. While certain functional aspects are positively evaluated, persistent shortcomings remain in terms of linguistic clarity, timely information updates, and consistency of interaction. These findings underscore the need for strengthening an integrated public communication strategy that combines the simplification of administrative discourse, optimization of digital platforms, and the continuous development of communication competencies among local public administration staff.

Statistical analysis of the relationship between communication and perceived transparency

To examine the relationship between institutional communication effectiveness and the perceived transparency of local public administration, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated between the main variables: clarity of messages, accessibility of information, communication interactivity, and the overall perceived transparency score.

The results indicate statistically significant positive correlations:

- Clarity of messages and perceived transparency: **$r = .48$, $p < .001$**
- Accessibility of information and perceived transparency: **$r = .52$, $p < .001$**
- Communication interactivity and perceived transparency: **$r = .44$, $p < .001$**

The obtained coefficients reflect moderate associations, suggesting that improvements in communication quality are positively correlated with more favorable perceptions of institutional transparency. Among the analyzed dimensions, information accessibility shows the strongest association, indicating that the ease with which citizens can identify and consult public data plays a central role in shaping their evaluation of transparency.

Multiple linear regression model

To determine the extent to which the communication dimensions predict the perceived level of transparency, a multiple linear regression

analysis was conducted. Perceived transparency was entered as the dependent variable, while clarity, accessibility, and interactivity served as predictors.

The regression model proved statistically significant:

$F(3,104) = 18.72, p < .001, R^2 = .35$

The R^2 value indicates that approximately 35% of the variance in perceived transparency is explained by communication-related variables, representing a substantial effect size within social science research.

The standardized regression coefficients (β) reveal the following individual contributions:

- Accessibility of information: **$\beta = .31, p < .001$**
- Clarity of messages: **$\beta = .27, p = .002$**
- Communication interactivity: **$\beta = .21, p = .012$**

These findings confirm that all three communication dimensions significantly contribute to explaining perceived transparency. However, informational accessibility demonstrates the strongest predictive power. This suggests that, from the citizens' perspective, transparency is primarily assessed through the concrete ability to access relevant and up-to-date public information.

From a conceptual perspective, the findings support the hypothesis that effective communication is not merely a procedural mechanism but a determinant of institutional legitimacy. Clear, accessible, and interactive communication significantly contributes to strengthening the perception of transparency, and this relationship is statistically measurable. The moderate but consistent correlations and the explanatory power of the regression model confirm that communication effectiveness plays a substantive role in shaping citizens' evaluations of public institutions.

At the same time, the fact that the regression model explains 35% of the variance in perceived transparency suggests the presence of additional relevant factors that were not directly captured in this study. Variables such as prior experiences with the institution, political orientation, general trust in government, or levels of social capital may also influence perceptions of transparency and constitute valuable directions for future research.

Perception of Institutional Transparency

Participants were asked to assess the extent to which they feel informed about the activities of local public administration and to indicate whether they have been involved or consulted in decision-making processes affecting their community. The analysis reveals a relatively low level of perceived information

and limited civic participation, suggesting a discrepancy between the formal framework of transparency and citizens' lived experiences.

Only 27% of respondents stated that they feel "well" or "very well" informed about decisions adopted by local authorities. This finding indicates that, despite existing legal obligations regarding the publication of public interest information, the majority of citizens perceive institutional communication as insufficient or inadequately promoted. The low level of perceived information may reflect either difficulties in accessing relevant data or limited visibility of the channels through which such information is disseminated. From a theoretical standpoint, this situation points to a potential dysfunction between formal transparency (the publication of information) and effective transparency (the actual understanding and internalization of information by citizens).

Regarding participation in public consultations, 63% of respondents reported that they had never taken part in such processes. Furthermore, 42% stated that they were unaware of the possibility of submitting official proposals through the municipality's website. These findings highlight a significant deficit in the promotion of participatory mechanisms and suggest that decision-making transparency, although normatively regulated, is not perceived as an accessible or meaningful process. Limited participation may be explained by insufficient publicity of consultations, procedural formalism, skepticism regarding the impact of individual contributions, or the absence of a strong culture of civic engagement.

The dimension of financial transparency further reveals a low level of engagement with public financial information. Only 12% of respondents reported having ever consulted the local budget execution report or a draft budget. This result is particularly significant given that public budgets represent one of the most important expressions of administrative accountability. The limited consultation of budgetary documents may reflect their technical complexity (specialized language, extensive documentation) or a generalized perception that such information is difficult to understand or does not directly affect citizens' daily lives.

Overall, the data indicate a gap between the formal existence of transparency mechanisms and their actual use and internalization by the community. Limited perceived information, low participation in consultations, and minimal engagement with financial data suggest the need to reconfigure public communication strategies. More specifically, a shift is required from transparency centered on procedural compliance to transparency oriented toward comprehensibility, relevance, and active engagement.

These findings support the idea that transparency is not solely a function of publishing information, but a relational process dependent on communication quality, data accessibility, and citizens' trust in the effectiveness of their participation. The relatively low level of perceived transparency appears to stem primarily from insufficient promotion of communication channels and the formalistic implementation of participatory mechanisms rather than from the complete absence of transparency structures.

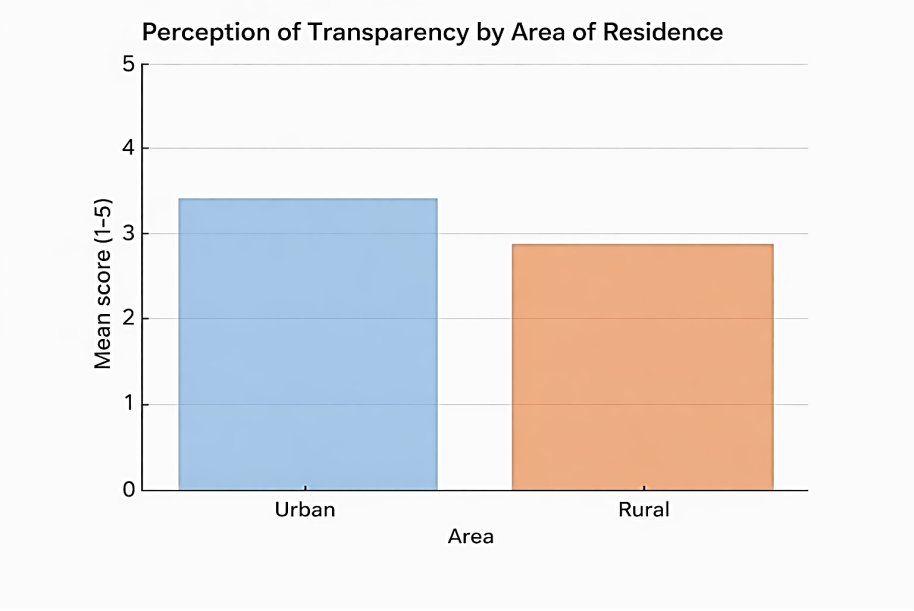


Figure 1. Perception of transparency by place of residence

Preferred communication channels

Respondents were asked to indicate the channels through which they would prefer to receive information from local public administration, in order to identify dominant trends in information consumption and to assess the adequacy of institutional communication strategies. The results reveal a clear orientation toward digital channels, while also highlighting the continued relevance of traditional instruments depending on respondents' socio-demographic profiles.

A substantial majority (72%) identified the official institutional website as their primary preferred source of information. This finding confirms that the institutional portal remains the central infrastructure of digital public communication, perceived as the formal and legitimate source of official information. The strong preference for the official website

suggests high expectations regarding regular content updates, clarity of information, and accessibility of public documents. At the same time, this preference implies a corresponding responsibility on the part of local authorities to ensure technical functionality, intuitive navigation, and user-friendly content organization.

A significant proportion of respondents (64%) indicated social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram) as preferred information channels. This reflects the transformation of institutional communication into a more dynamic and interactive process aligned with everyday media consumption practices. Social media platforms are perceived not only as tools for rapid information dissemination but also as spaces for dialogue, immediate feedback, and citizen engagement. However, their effective use requires strategic and professional management to avoid message fragmentation, inconsistency, or communicative ambiguities.

SMS notifications and mobile applications were preferred by 33% of respondents, indicating moderate interest in direct, personalized communication and real-time alerts. This type of communication is associated with operational efficiency and the rapid transmission of relevant updates (e.g., schedule changes, public alerts, community events). The comparatively lower percentage, however, may suggest either the limited development of such applications at the local level or a degree of reluctance among certain population segments toward automated communication systems.

Traditional channels recorded lower preference rates: local press (21%) and physical notice boards at municipal offices or public spaces (16%). Although less prominent within a predominantly digital context, these channels remain important for specific social categories, particularly elderly citizens or residents of rural areas where internet access may be limited and digital literacy levels lower. These findings point to the persistence of a digital divide that necessitates the adoption of a multimodal communication strategy.

Overall, the distribution of preferences indicates a clear digital predominance, accompanied by the need to maintain a hybrid communication approach. The digitalization of institutional communication is perceived as a marker of administrative modernization and informational efficiency. Nevertheless, the complete abandonment of traditional channels could risk marginalizing vulnerable population groups. Therefore, an optimal local public communication strategy should integrate digital and traditional channels, ensuring both speed and interactivity, as well as inclusiveness and universal access to information.

The chart highlights the communication channels preferred by citizens in their interaction with local public administration. The institutional website (72%) and social media platforms (64%) rank highest, reflecting the majority's orientation toward digital channels. Nevertheless, a notable proportion of respondents still prefer traditional means of communication, such as local press or public notice boards, indicating the continued relevance of hybrid communication strategies.

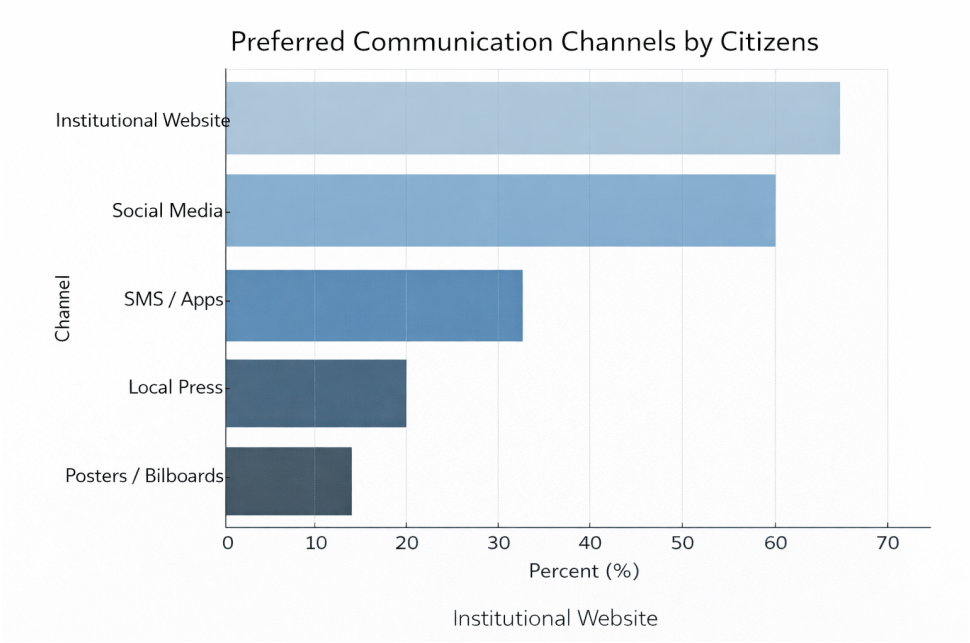


Figure 2. Preferred communication channels identified by citizens

Analysis of differences by sociodemographic variables

a) Differences between urban and rural areas

Table 1 Differences between urban and rural respondents in the perception of transparency (Independent Samples t-Test)

Variable	Urban (n = 79)	Rural (n = 29)	t(106)	p
Perception of Transparency (M)	3.42	2.88	2.34	.021*

Note. M = mean score on a 5-point Likert scale (1–5),p < .05.

The independent samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between respondents from urban and rural areas regarding their perception of local administrative transparency, $t(106) = 2.34$, $p = .021$. The

mean score was higher among urban respondents (M = 3.42) compared to those from rural areas (M = 2.88), indicating a significantly more favorable evaluation of transparency among citizens residing in urban environments.

b) Differences by level of education

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare perceived communication scores across respondents with different educational levels—secondary (high school), university, and postgraduate education. This statistical procedure allowed for the identification of potential differences in how institutional communication is evaluated depending on respondents' educational background.

Table 2 *Differences in the perception of institutional communication by level of education (One-Way ANOVA)*

Variable	High School (n = 19)	University (n = 64)	Postgraduate (n = 25)	F(2,105)	p
Perceived communication effectiveness (M)	3.01	3.18	3.56	4.98	.009**

Note. M = mean score on a 5-point Likert scale (1–5), ** p < .01.

The one-way ANOVA revealed statistically significant differences between groups defined by educational level, $F(2,105) = 4.98$, $p = .009$. Respondents with postgraduate education evaluated the effectiveness of institutional communication significantly more positively compared to those with high school or university education. This trend suggests that educational level influences individuals' capacity to interpret and assess administrative communication processes.

Conclusions

The review of the relevant literature and the conceptual framework developed in the first part of this study highlight that the relationship between institutional communication and administrative transparency is structural rather than circumstantial. Public communication cannot be reduced to a technical instrument for information transmission; instead, it must be understood as a constitutive dimension of good governance. It mediates the relationship between administration and society, contributes to the consolidation of social capital, and strengthens civic trust—essential elements for the democratic functioning of public institutions.

At the same time, administrative transparency extends beyond the status of a formal legal obligation, emerging as a fundamental democratic value. It entails not only the publication of public interest information but also ensuring

real, intelligible, and usable access to such information, as well as enabling citizens' active participation in decision-making processes. The literature consistently emphasizes the convergence between effective communication and institutional transparency, demonstrating that communication effectiveness depends on its bidirectional, accessible, and audience-oriented character.

Established theoretical models—such as the two-way symmetric model developed by Grunig and Hunt, participatory governance theory, and Habermas's deliberative communication paradigm—provide solid foundations for conceptualizing an open, democratic, and responsive administration. Within this framework, communication becomes a mechanism for negotiating the public interest and legitimizing administrative decisions.

The digitalization of administrative communication introduces a significant reconfiguration of these classical paradigms. New technologies create enhanced opportunities for interaction, access, and monitoring; however, their effectiveness depends on coherent institutional strategies, the level of digital inclusion, and the authorities' capacity to integrate citizen feedback into decision-making processes. Communication and transparency cannot be analyzed in isolation but must be linked to other essential dimensions of governance, such as accountability, participation, public ethics, and administrative efficiency (Neamţu, 2015).

Overall, the theoretical analysis supports the central hypothesis of the study: effective institutional communication does not merely reflect transparency but actively contributes to its production and consolidation, provided that it is supported by an organizational culture of openness, clear legislative frameworks, and professional administrative practices.

The empirical findings confirm these theoretical premises. Effective institutional communication is directly correlated with a more favorable perception of transparency, and this effect is amplified in communities with broader access to digital resources. From the citizens' perspective, transparency is evaluated through concrete indicators: clarity of information, ease of access to public data, institutional responsiveness, and opportunities for participation in decision-making processes.

However, the research also reveals a gap between the formal transparency framework and the actual level of civic engagement. Participation in public consultations remains limited, and citizens' awareness of their participatory rights and mechanisms is insufficient. Although digitalization offers substantial opportunities for optimizing institutional communication, it must be managed strategically, with particular attention to inclusion, security, and adaptation to the socio-demographic diversity of the community.

The identified differences between urban and rural areas, as well as across educational levels, indicate the need for differentiated communication strategies tailored to the local context and the profile of target audiences. Examples of best practices from local administrations in Romania and across the European Union demonstrate that transparency and communication can become genuine pillars of good governance when treated as strategic priorities, implemented professionally, and approached in a participatory manner.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of institutional communication represents a decisive factor in strengthening transparency and, implicitly, the legitimacy of local public administration. Sustainable democratic governance cannot exist in the absence of a coherent, open, and citizen-oriented communication system.

AI tools use statement | I, Mihaela Rus, author of the manuscript entitled "The Role of Effective Communication in Enhancing the Transparency of Public Institutions: A Case Study in Local Public Administration," declare that, in the process of preparing this work,I used artificial intelligence tools exclusively for the translation of sections of text from Romanian into English. The AI tool used was a linguistic model designed to assist in translation, without interfering in the analysis or interpretation of data and without contributing to the formulation of the scientific conclusions of the study - DeepL. The author bears full responsibility for the accuracy, consistency, and originality of the content, and the material fully complies with academic integrity standards and the journal's policy on the use of AI.

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