

Use of Social Media for Government and School Information Dissemination

Lorenzo Miguel Cruz

Abstract

Social media allowed government offices and schools to publish rapidly during the COVID-19 emergency, but publication is not the same as successful public information. This communication-policy review treats dissemination as a service with five tests: authority, findability, comprehension, actionability, and correctability. Evidence through 2021 shows that platform reach can coexist with exclusion, message overload, impersonation, outdated posts, rumor circulation, and unanswered public questions. A two-lane model is proposed. The public lane issues short, dated, shareable instructions; the record lane preserves the full advisory, version history, contact point, and correction. Social media is positioned as one layer in a redundant channel system that includes text, print, websites, hotlines, and community intermediaries. The article develops a message card, correction protocol, and operational metrics that go beyond follower counts. It is a conceptual synthesis and does not evaluate a particular agency or school.

Keywords: public information; social media governance; school communication; corrections; infodemic

Introduction

During emergencies, government offices and schools turned to social media because messages could be published and shared within minutes. Speed solved one problem but introduced others. A screenshot could circulate after the original post changed. An unofficial page could appear more active than the official account. Several offices could announce different schedules. Comment sections could fill with the same unanswered question.

The communication task is not complete when a post is uploaded. People must recognize its authority, locate it among competing posts, understand what changed, act within a deadline, and discover a correction if the first message was wrong. These are service requirements, not matters of graphic design alone.

Purpose of the Article

This review develops a governance model for social-media dissemination by public offices and schools. It asks what a reliable message must contain, how corrections should travel, and which audiences require another route.

Conceptual Approach

Design and Source Base

The synthesis draws on public-sector social-media research, health risk-communication guidance, studies of the COVID-19 infodemic, Philippine privacy law, and education-continuity policy available through 2021. Sources were read against the lifecycle of an official message: authorize, draft, publish, amplify, answer, correct, archive, and review.

Platform engagement was not treated as an outcome by itself. A post can receive many reactions because it is confusing or controversial. The framework instead asks whether the intended public received a consistent and usable instruction.

The Public Information Service

Test One: Authority

An official message should make its source visible even after it is copied. The page name alone is not enough because screenshots detach content from context. A message card should include the issuing office, date and time, subject, affected group or location, reference to the full advisory, and contact point. Where platforms offer verification or account transparency features, offices should use them and publish the list of official channels elsewhere.

Governance must identify who may approve urgent posts, who monitors responses, and who can issue a correction. Shared passwords and informal access create security and accountability risks. Role-based access, multifactor authentication, and an exit procedure for staff changes are basic controls.

Tests Two and Three: Findability and Comprehension

Critical instructions compete with ceremonies, greetings, photographs, and reposts. Offices can improve findability by pinning the current advisory, using a stable naming pattern, and linking related updates. Every post should say whether it replaces an earlier instruction. A current-information index on the official website or page can reduce the burden of searching a timeline.

Comprehension depends on structure. The first lines should state who is affected, what action is required, and when. Supporting explanation follows. Plain language does not mean removing necessary detail; it means arranging detail around the reader's decision. Local-language versions, captions, alt text, readable contrast, and text alternatives for image-only advisories extend access.

Image posters should not be the sole record. They may be compressed, unreadable on small screens, or inaccessible to screen readers. The same information should appear as searchable text.

Test Four: Actionability

A message is actionable when a person can complete the next step without guessing. Enrollment notices, aid announcements, class suspensions, health guidance, and document requests should name the required action, deadline, eligibility or affected area, documents or links, cost if any, and help route. If no action is required, the post should say so.

Calls to send personal information through public comments or unsecured messages should be avoided. The Data Privacy Act requires appropriate handling of personal data. Public posts should direct users to an authorized collection channel and state why information is needed.

Test Five: Correctability

Deleting an incorrect post can leave screenshots in circulation and remove the visible path to correction. Except where exposure creates additional harm, the preferred practice is to mark the old post as superseded, link the correction in both directions, publish the corrected message in the same channels, and state exactly what changed.

Corrections should be at least as visible as the original. If an error reached parent group chats, barangay pages, or text-message lists, the correction must travel through those routes. A version code and timestamp help users distinguish current from outdated instructions. Rumor monitoring can inform clarifications, but it should focus on recurring questions and information gaps rather than identifying or shaming individuals.

Social Media Is One Lane, Not the Whole Road

The digital divide means that social media cannot be the only official route for essential information. Shared devices, data cost, platform accounts, signal gaps, disability, and language affect reach. A redundant system may combine official web pages, SMS, printed notices, hotlines, school advisers, barangay workers, radio, and community organizations.

Redundancy is not uncontrolled repetition. Every channel should trace back to the same approved record. The two-lane model separates the public lane - concise, shareable, time-sensitive messages - from the record lane - the full advisory, attachments, version history, and correction log. This allows speed without surrendering institutional memory.

Table 1

Five tests for an official social-media message

Test	Required feature	Failure signal
Authority	Office, date, subject, reference, contact	Users ask whether the post is official
Findability	Pinned current notice; stable label; supersession note	Old versions keep circulating
Comprehension	Plain text, local language where needed, accessible format	Repeated questions about basic meaning
Actionability	Who, what, when, where, cost, help route	Incomplete or misdirected submissions
Correctability	Linked correction, timestamp, channel redistribution	Deleted post persists as screenshots

Note. The table is an analytic tool proposed in this article; it does not report field measurements.

Discussion

Follower count and reactions measure exposure imperfectly. Operational measures are more informative: time from approval to publication, proportion of priority channels updated, recurring unanswered questions, click-through to the full advisory, correction delay, and confirmation that high-risk groups received the message through at least one route.

Scope and Research Agenda

This article does not measure public understanding or compare specific pages. Social-media platforms and user behavior change, and evidence from health communication cannot be transferred mechanically to every school notice. Local user testing remains necessary.

Conclusion

Reliable dissemination is an institutional promise: the public can identify the source, find the current instruction, understand the next action, and encounter a visible correction. Social media is valuable when it serves that promise and remains connected to accessible alternatives.

References

- Cinelli, M., et al. (2020). The COVID-19 social media infodemic. *Scientific Reports*, 10, 16598. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-73510-5>
- Department of Education. (2020). DepEd Order No. 12, s. 2020: Adoption of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan for School Year 2020-2021.
- Go, D. J., Hung, N., Ferrolino, H., Wilson, K., Choi, M., Mayhugh, D., & Lau, L. (2020). Utilizing social media technology during the COVID-19 pandemic to assist highly vulnerable populations in the Philippines. *Christian Journal for Global Health*, 7(5). <https://doi.org/10.15566/cjgh.v7i5.479>
- Mergel, I. (2013). Social media adoption and resulting tactics in the U.S. federal government. *Government Information Quarterly*, 30(2), 123-130. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2012.12.004>
- Republic of the Philippines. (2012). Republic Act No. 10173: Data Privacy Act of 2012.
- Tsao, S. F., Chen, H., Tisseverasinghe, T., Yang, Y., Li, L., & Butt, Z. A. (2021). What social media told us in the time of COVID-19: A scoping review. *The Lancet Digital Health*, 3(3), e175-e194. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2589-7500\(20\)30315-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2589-7500(20)30315-0)
- World Health Organization. (2020). Risk communication and community engagement readiness and response to coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Interim guidance.