ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26mar868

Development of an AI-Driven Operational Assistant for Disaster Preparedness and Response in Quezon, Nueva Ecija

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Publication Date: 2026/03/24

Abstract: Disaster preparedness of Local Government Units (LGUs) in the Philippines is hindered by the collisions of disorganized systems, delays in reporting processes, and a scarcity of available current (in real-time) raw data. These restrictions often inhibit the ability for LGUs to make timely and accessible decisions and coordinate effectively when an emergency event occurs. This study has created an AI-Driven Operational Assistant for Disaster Preparedness and Response in Quezon, Nueva Ecija. The Assistant provides real-time access to crucial disaster information, performs risk analysis, and generates automated responses to guide LGU staff in the management of disaster operations. A mixed-methods evaluation conducted with IT experts and LGU end-users, using structured assessment tools, revealed that LGUs were able to achieve high and very high system quality and user acceptability ratings. Ultimately, the findings of this research indicate that the AI-driven Operational Assistant enhances the speed of decision-making, improves how easily disparate data sources are integrated, and improves the overall efficiency of disaster response as compared to traditional manual systems.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence; Disaster Preparedness; Disaster Response; Local Government Units (LGUs); Decision Support System; Real-Time Data Integration; Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM); ISO/IEC 25010; Digital Transformation; Emergency Management.*

How to Cite: Mariecris A. Cairlan; Rachel T. Alegado; Rolaida L. Sonza (2026) Development of an AI-Driven Operational Assistant for Disaster Preparedness and Response in Quezon, Nueva Ecija. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 11(3), 1916-1921. https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26mar868

I. INTRODUCTION

Geographically the Philippines has high vulnerability to a number of natural hazards including typhoons, flooding, earthquakes and other climate-related events. Local Government Units (LGUs), as the primary institutions responsible for disaster governance, play an important role in carrying out risk preparedness, response and recovery responsibilities according to the national Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) framework. However, greater frequency and intensity of disasters has revealed operational deficiencies in many LGUs, specifically in the areas of data management, interdepartmental coordination, and timely decision-making.

Most LGUs have taken steps to digitalize; however, many continue to rely on manual reporting systems and have multiple, segregated information systems that prevent them from having real-time situational awareness of events to support disaster response operations. As part of an effective disaster response, timely, consolidated and analyzed data from multiple sources (e.g. meteorological warnings, hazard assessments, inventory of logistics, and situational reports from the field) must be available to enable timely provision of relief assistance, maximize efficiency of resources, and improve operational coordination/command among emergency responders.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is developing to meet the challenges we currently face as a society. AI technologies can be used to automatically integrate data, run predictive models and to generate actionable insights to assist in making evidence-based decisions. The use of AI tools also allows for improving proactive risk assessments, expediting response processes, and providing improved situational awareness in the event of a disaster. By integrating AI technologies into local governmental processes, municipalities will benefit from the digital transformation of the public sector, and local governments can implement technology-based strategies for disaster resilience.

This research project will develop and assess an AI-based Operational Assistant that will assist the Municipality

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of Quezon, Nueva Ecija in preparing for and responding to disasters. The Project will develop an AI-Powered Operational Assistant that employs real-time data processing, predictive analytics, and automated decision-making capabilities to enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness. The Agile Software Development Lifecycle will be employed to develop the system, and the Software Quality Standards will be employed to assess the technical soundness and acceptability of the proposed system in the LGU setting.

This study adds to the increasing body of literature about public-sector systems that use artificial intelligence (AI) by researching how AI can be utilized in disaster governance on the local level and providing experimental data to support evidence for how AI-based platforms can improve local governments' abilities to prepare for and respond to disasters.

II. METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study consists of mixed-methods and developmental-descriptive. This study will also be used to support both the development of an AI-Driven Operational Assistant and the assessment of its technical quality, usability, and acceptability within a real-world Local Government Unit (LGU) environment. The research development design provided the structure to allow for the creation of the AI-Driven Operational Assistant via the use of a structured, methodical approach including planning, design, development, testing, and refinement steps throughout this process. During this phase of the development, requirements for the AI-Driven Operational Assistant were identified and specified, and a system design was created, implemented, and tested. Improvements to the system were based upon a combination of technical testing and expert review of the system functionality; therefore, the system was developed with not only sound theoretical foundations, but with functional and operational aims that were directly aligned with the actual needs of LGUs when they prepare for and respond to disasters.

The developed system was assessed using the descriptive research design and quantitative descriptive methods. Researcher used a descriptive research design and structured questionnaire in order to obtain data about IT-related topics from both IT professionals as well as the intended end users of an IT product or service, which consists of local government units, or LGUs. The researchers sought to determine the quality of these systems from a variety of perspectives: Functional Suitability, Performance Efficiency, Usability, Reliability, Security, Maintainability, Compatibility, Portability and Acceptability.

Weighted means and verbal interpretations produced descriptive statistics that summarized the general perceptions of users and experts about the operational assistant system (which is the developed system).

The qualitative descriptive component involved interviews conducted with selected LGU personnel, in order to allow for further insights into the user experiences with the developed system and to capture more details about the nature of the benefits, operational challenges, and recommendations that they had given regarding the developed system. The qualitative data was thematically analyzed to corroborate and provide a deeper understanding of the findings from the quantitative analysis.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The Agile Software Development Life Cycle Model can be used to design and implement AI-based assistant applications. The Agile Software Development Lifecycle emphasizes iterative software development with ongoing stakeholder involvement. Through the process of developing this AI-based assistant, the researcher identified the operational challenges faced by local government units (LGUs) in preparing for and responding to disasters, using interviews, observations, and document analysis conducted during the requirements phase. The results of interviews with the MDRRMO office in Quezon, Nueva Ecija, have revealed that several needs exist in the current operation of their disaster management system. It indicated that they were having a lot of difficulty obtaining current and complete disaster-related information due to the decentralization of information, as well as the absence of automated reporting and information systems. The lack of timely and complete information results in delays in assessing and responding to emergencies. Respondents identified several challenges related to real-time data sharing and coordination, as well as the tracking of resources and consistency of data, all of which create inefficiencies and lead to a reliance on personal experience rather than the use of factual data when making decisions.

The Head Chief expressed a desire for the development of an AI-driven operational assistant to improve these circumstances, which will integrate various data sources, provide automated data analysis, and aid in the development of informed decision-making processes. Key features of the system will include a user-friendly, multi-device user interface, real-time reporting and analysis, secure record management, and intelligent recommendations to enhance the coordination and effectiveness of disaster response. With the implementation of such a system, the disaster preparedness and response activity of the Local Government Units should significantly improve. As a result, disaster management practices will be more rapid, reliable, and data-driven.

In the requirements phase, the researcher also organized the schedule and timeframe for the system's development using a Gantt chart. According to Shweta & Bottorff (2022), a Gantt chart helps developers plan, schedule, and monitor a project.

The development of an AI-driven operational Assistant for Disaster Preparations and Responses in Quezon, Nueva Ecija, has been structured into distinct phases from August to December to facilitate a feasible implementation process. During the requirements phase, which occurred in August, the operational requirements and challenges of the Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26mar868

(MDRRMO) were examined through interviews, observations, and document reviews, which then resulted in defining the needed functionality (e.g., real-time access to data, incident reporting, and decision support) and the storage and retrieval of data securely. In September, the project entered the design phase, during which the framework of the system was mapped out, including its overall architecture, database structure, and user interface(s). The design identified usability and adherence to LGU's operations through wireframes, Data Flow Diagrams (DFD), and the overall System Framework. The design emphasized ease of use and accessibility, as well as the integration of AI components, including a Natural Language Processing Engine for Query Handling and Basic Predictive analytics tools for disaster risk assessments.

The development phase began in late September and October, during which the basic functions of the system were established, including the front-end, back-end, implementation of the AI engine, and integration with the expected data sources. Agile development methodologies were employed to enable developers to receive continuous feedback.

The month of November was when the system underwent both testing of functions and usability of the program by the end user(s), as well as a final evaluation for suitability against the ISO/IEC 25010 software quality criteria through test scenarios of simulated disaster responses and to determine systems' effectiveness and reliability, both of which can only be determined through user acceptance testing. All information received from IT specialists or end users regarding the completed system, including suggestions for any improvements that could be made, was recorded and used as part of the refinement process.

The deployment/review phase took place in December, when the AI-Driven Assistant was deployed into a test environment for use by a local government unit (LGU). These test environments are designed to provide users with an opportunity to become familiar with the developed system; therefore, orientation sessions were held with LGU users. After the completion of the test period and with the completion of the information provided by users, a final review of the developed system was conducted to evaluate the overall performance of the developed system, to document any additional recommendations or suggestions for improvements, and to ensure the end user feels their disaster preparedness and response needs were adequately addressed through the developed system. This phased approach will ensure that the developed system remains relevant, usable, and easy to understand for the intended end-users.

The following are the summarized results of the IT Experts system evaluation based on the Software Product Quality Standards, which outline eight primary criteria: functional suitability, performance efficiency, usability, reliability, maintainability, compatibility, security, and portability; and for End users are the following: functional suitability, performance efficiency, usability. Also, the End-users' acceptability rating of the Development of an AI-Driven Operational assistant for Disaster Preparedness and Response in Quezon, Nueva Ecija data for each is presented below.

Table 1 Summary of the IT Experts' Evaluation of AI-Driven Operational Assistant for Disaster Preparedness and Response in Quezon, Nueva Ecija

AI-Driven Operational Assistant for Disaster Preparedness and Response in Quezon, Nueva Ecija	**Overall Mean**	**Verbal Description**
Functional Suitability	3.60	Highly Functional
Performance Efficiency	3.44	Highly Efficient
Usability	3.76	Highly Compatible
Reliability	3.40	Highly Usable
Security	3.42	Highly Reliable
Maintainability	3.54	Highly Secured
Compatibility	3.56	Highly Maintainable
Portability	3.54	Highly Portable
Grand Mean	3.53	Excellent System Quality

Source/s: IT Experts' Evaluation Tool Based on the ISO 25010 Software Product Quality Standards

The summary of the assessment in Table 1 of the Development of an AI-Driven Operational Assistant (DADO), as evaluated by IT experts based on ISO/IEC 25010 criteria, indicates an excellent level of system quality, with a grand mean of 3.53. It received an overall classification of "High Functional, High Efficient, Highly Compatible, Highly Usable, Highly Reliable, Highly Secured, Highly Maintainable, and Highly Portable" indicating its strong performance across the board.

In terms of functional suitability, performance efficiency, usability, reliability, security, maintainability, and portability, the DADO demonstrated exceptional capabilities, with scores ranging from 3.42 to 3.76. These results highlight the system's effectiveness, efficiency, compatibility, ease of use, reliability, security, ease of maintenance, and adaptability across various operational and usage settings.

DADO exhibits a strong software product quality profile, underscoring its readiness for deployment and its ability to support disaster management operations effectively and efficiently within LGU disaster preparedness and response activities.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26mar868

Table 2 Summary of the End-Users' Evaluation of an AI-Driven Operational Assistant for Disaster Preparedness and Response in Quezon, Nueva Ecija

AI-Driven Assistant for Calamity Response for LGU Operations and Management	Overall Mean	Verbal Description
Functional Suitability	3.62	Highly Functional
Performance Efficiency	3.40	Highly Efficient
Usability	3.57	Highly Usable
Grand Mean	3.53	Excellent System Quality

Source/s: IT Experts' Evaluation Tool Based on the ISO 25010 Software Product Quality Standards

Based on the evaluation results, the evaluation concluded that the LGU's AI-Driven Operational Assistant for Disaster Preparedness and Response is of "Excellent System Quality" with an overall average grand mean rating of 3.53. The Functional Suitability rating, as assessed by respondents, yielded an overall average of 3.62, indicating that 88% of users strongly agreed that the AI-Driven Assistant provides functions that are accurate and relevant to meeting the requirements of LGUs in carrying out disaster response activities. Therefore, it is reasonable to determine that the AI-Driven Operational Assistant (DADO) will adequately address the needs of LGU personnel in relation to their operational responsibilities associated with disaster preparation and response (Mitchell et al., 2020).

When evaluating Performance Efficiency, respondents rated the AI-driven operational assistant with a score of 3.40 (Highly Efficient). This indicates that LGU personnel using the AI-Driven Assistant have reported that it performs its tasks in a timely fashion, responds highly effectively to multiple task demands, and remains stable through long-term usage. In addition, the Usability dimension received high ratings, with an overall score of 3.57 (Highly Usable). This confirms that LGU personnel find the AI-Driven Operational Assistant (DADO) very easy to learn and use. They are also able to navigate the software's intuitive interface easily. This is consistent with the ISO/IEC 25010 software quality model, which identifies functional suitability, performance efficiency, and usability as key characteristics in determining whether an information system is usable and practical (Pressman & Maxim, 2020). In addition, systems developed for use in mission-critical environments, such as LGUs in terms of disaster preparation and response, must have a combination of functionality, efficiency, and usability.

Table 3 Summary of the End-Users' Evaluation of the Acceptability of an AI-Driven Operational Assistant for Disaster Preparedness and Operations in Quezon, Nueva Ecija

Acceptability	Overall Mean	Verbal Description
Acceptability and Usefulness	3.62	Highly Acceptable
Ease of Use	3.53	Highly Acceptable
Efficiency	3.50	Highly Acceptable
User Satisfaction	3.62	Highly Acceptable
Grand Mean	3.57	Highly Acceptable

Source/s: End Users' Evaluation Tool on the Level of Acceptability

The summary of findings on Acceptability showed that the AI-Driven Operational Assistant for Disaster Preparedness and Operations in Quezon, Nueva Ecija, is very well-accepted by end-users, as it obtained a grand mean of 3.57, which is perceived as highly acceptable. Among the assessed dimensions, it was found that Acceptability, Usefulness, and User Satisfaction earned the highest overall mean of 3.62 "Highly Acceptable", indicating that end-users perceive the system as useful, productive, and helpful in their work during calamity response operations. Ease of Use earned an overall mean of 3.53, indicating "Highly Acceptable", which confirms that the system is user-friendly and can be efficiently used by end-users, despite their lack of technical expertise. Efficiency achieved an overall mean of 3.50, indicating "Highly Acceptable", which reinforces the notion that it helps improve coordination, communication, and task management during LGU operations. These results support those of Davis' Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which states that perceived usefulness and ease of use are key components in users' adoption and attitudes towards a system. When users feel that the system is helpful and user-friendly, the acceptability and user satisfaction can be maximized. DeLone and McLean (2003) further assert that user satisfaction and perceived benefits are significant.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An artificial intelligence (AI)-driven operational assistant was successfully developed in order to aid creative disaster preparation and response within Quezon, Nueva Ecija through an agile software development life cycle (SDLC) methodology. Additionally, using the agile SDLC allowed for designing the system to map to actual operational workflows for local government units (LGUs) and what their needs are during emergency responses.

According to this study's findings, the system meets all technical requirements and conforms to ISO/IEC 25010, so it can be counted on to be a dependable, safe, easy to use, and perform adequately for users under extreme conditions during a major emergency such as a disaster.More importantly than just having technical compliance, the system will allow LGUs to have proactive preparedness based on predictive analytics,

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26mar868

real-time processing of information, and structured decision support.

Based upon end-user evaluation of the system, it was found that the system improves LGU situational awareness (SA), inter-departmental coordination, and evidence-based decision-making as compared to prior methods (i.e., fragmented manual processes). The artificial intelligence (AI)-driven operational assistant provides a centralised, intelligent platform (i.e., a solution) to assist in the reduction and management of disaster risk by filling critical gaps within LGU disaster risk reduction and management operations. Therefore, as supported by this study, the integration of AI has significantly enhanced the ability of local disasters to be governed together in terms of efficiency, responsiveness, and resiliency.

Although Development of an AI-Driven Operational Assistant for Disaster Preparedness and Response was successfully developed using the Software Development Life Cycle and attained an excellent quality rating, continuous system enhancement is recommended. The local governments (LGUs) are encouraged to develop sustainable and scalable implementations of AI-integrated decision support systems within their disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) processes. The integration of predictive analytics and real-time data within the operating procedures may help in optimizing proactive preparedness, situational awareness, and evidence-based response planning.

The future development should aim at using the modular system approach and facilitating API interoperability with the national disaster monitoring agencies to enable seamless data transfer among the agencies, thus promoting the widespread implementation of LGU within the municipalities. The following are the key components required to develop long-term reliability and relevance: (a) periodic performance audits, (b) cyber security enhancement initiatives, and (c) system updates.

During the implementation of a system, training and simulations (such as those done through an exercise) would help to build up the strength of the user for the purpose of using AI-generated insights to successfully operate in an emergency situation.

For another version of research make into advanced AI techniques and their use will help inform future efforts, such as: Conducting additional studies that focus on the use of advanced artificial intelligence techniques; Developing new models of predictive resource allocation that utilize the use of deep learning; and Therefore, conducting multi-site studies of how these systems perform in a variety of local government units.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher sincerely thanks her research adviser, statistician, English critic and panel members for their guidance, insights, and valuable recommendations throughout this study. Appreciation is extended to the Local Government Unit of Quezon, Nueva Ecija, particularly the MDRRMO, for their cooperation and participation in system evaluation. Gratitude is also given to the IT experts and LGU personnel who contributed their time and feedback. Finally, heartfelt thanks to family and friends for their unwavering support and encouragement.

To God be the glory.

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