

Electronic Governance and Public Administration in Southern Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examines electronic governance and public administration in southern Nigeria. The advancement in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has added a new dimension to effective administration globally. Standard deviation was used to analyze data. The study discovered that e-governance and e-administration can lead to cost savings for government organizations because it eliminates the need for physical infrastructure, decreases the use of paper, and optimizes resource utilization. The study went on to say that although electronic governance could be a way for public administration to solve some of its problems, particularly with public policymaking, the government doesn't have the resources to make it work to its full potential because of low literacy rates. The study's recommendations include making sure the government has the money to enforce e-governance effectively and having strong political will and commitment to make sure the initiative succeeds in Nigeria.

Keywords: Electronic, Governance, Public Administration, Southern, Nigeria

Introduction

In recent years, the advent of technology has given rise to various advancements, including e-governance systems that aim to transform traditional public administration into more efficient and inclusive processes. Nigeria, like many other countries, has embraced e-governance as a means to enhance public service delivery and promote transparency. In today's rapidly evolving global landscape, information and communication technologies have catalyzed substantial transformations across various sectors. One of the most significant areas that has witnessed these technological revolutions is the realm of governance and public administration. E-governance, an innovative approach to public administration that leverages digital technologies, has become a critical tool for enhancing the efficiency, transparency, and accessibility of government services.

In an age where the rapid advancement of technology is reshaping the global landscape, Nigeria, as one of the most populous nations in Africa, stands at the threshold of a digital transformation that promises to revolutionize its public administration and governance. The advent of E-Governance has heralded a new era, marked by the fusion of technology and the machinery of government, aiming to enhance efficiency, transparency, and citizen engagement. While Nigeria's embrace of E-Governance carries with it the promise of a brighter future, it also presents a complex set of challenges and dilemmas that require thoughtful consideration. (Maduabum, 2008)

In the context of Nigeria, a nation with a dynamic blend of challenges and opportunities, the adoption and implementation of e-governance have emerged as a promising avenue for addressing long-standing administrative hurdles, reducing corruption, and promoting citizen engagement. However, like any transformative endeavor, the integration of e-governance into the public administration system brings with it a range of both positive and negative consequences. This comprehensive exploration aims to delve into the multifaceted landscape of e-governance in Nigeria, critically examining the pros and cons of this technological paradigm shift. While Nigeria has made commendable strides in harnessing digital technologies for governance, the journey is not devoid of obstacles and dilemmas. The effective use of e-governance in Nigeria presents exciting opportunities for modernization, cost reduction, and citizen empowerment. At the same time, it presents potential challenges, including digital divides, data security concerns, and the need for capacity building. (Aderonmu, Owolabi, & Iyiola, 2019).

According to Adoghe, (2018), e-governance and public administration have become essential components of modern governance systems around the world. As governments embrace the rapid advancements in technology, Nigeria is no exception. In addition to revolutionizing individuals' day-to-day lives, the notion of information and communication technology (ICT) has also altered the conventional interaction between citizens and their governments. Consequently, the concept of transferring conventional services to the Internet by the majority of governments has shown the process of executing a thorough internal and external process transformation. In a similar spirit, almost every industrialized nation has recently introduced extensive e-government practices for a wide range of service and policy offerings. According to, Dada, Balogun, and Adeleke (2020), the goal of e-governance and public administration reforms was to make public service delivery more efficient, transparent, and accountable. With a focus on Nigeria, this article examines the benefits and drawbacks of electronic government and public administration. It delves into the potential benefits that e-governance can bring, such as enhancing service delivery, promoting transparency, and reducing corruption. It also highlights the challenges and drawbacks, including limited access to technology, the digital divide, and the risk of cybersecurity threats. Moreover, the paper examines the role of public administration in the context of e-governance in Nigeria. It discusses how streamlining bureaucratic processes, improving coordination between government departments, and leveraging technology can lead to more effective and efficient public service delivery.

As the paper embark on this journey to dissect e-governance in southern Nigeria, it will navigate through the advancements and setbacks, the aspirations and apprehensions, and the promises and pitfalls that characterize this dynamic shift in public administration. By scrutinizing the pros and cons, the paper endeavor to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the role of e-governance in shaping Nigeria's public administration and, in doing so, the paper will answer two basic questions; in what ways can e-governance enhance public administration in southern Nigeria? and what are the challenges of e-governance in southern Nigeria? The study will therefore examine electronic governance and public administration in Southern Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Karl Deutsch's communications theory, which has been developed further by researchers including Morton R. Davies, James Charles worth, Vaughan A. Lewis, David H. Everson, and Joan Papard Paine, serves as the theoretical basis for this study. A key component of communications theory is cybernetics, the study of communication as a means of controlling systems. Cybernetics is analogous to information control technology (ICT) gadgets that regulate data flow inside a system, such as computers. Communication is the bedrock of all political endeavors, according to Nwachukwu and Pepple (2015), the central tenet of communication theory. Improving political life and expediting policy execution are both made possible when information flows freely from the top to the bottom of a political system. One of the components of an efficient system is communication theory. Important parts of the theory include: By controlling and organizing the flow of data via various channels, humans play a crucial role in every system. That means data cannot enter or leave a system unless people do anything about it. Coordination and cooperation among members of society, influenced by communication, are necessary for the attainment of political objectives. The success of political choices, according to Deutsch, is dependent on people' habits, which are in turn formed by the dissemination of knowledge. An effective system ensures that all agencies are in constant contact with one another. The feedback mechanism is another facet of communication theory; according to Deutsch, feedback is an essential part of the communication process. Decisions are generated from information that is first communicated to other systems or environments. Then, this modified data is distributed throughout the system. The feedback mechanism is used to apply these choices and relay the results back to the user output.

E-Governance

As a result of their unique social contexts, worldviews, and personal quirks, e-governance has undoubtedly been characterized differently by a number of experts. Here in our discussion, we will take a look at the majority of the theories put forth by well-known academics. Ojo (2014) sees e-governance as a political approach that makes use of communication technology to make the government's operations public. According to Estevez and Janowski (2013), e-governance is the process by which the government uses technology to change itself and its relationships with citizens in a way that has a lasting effect on society. According to Hassan and Siyanbola (2010), e-governance is the use of ICTs by the public sector to improve the delivery of services and information, increase public engagement in policymaking, and boost government efficiency, openness, and accountability. According to Ayo (2014), the term e-governance refers to the function of information and communication technologies in governing a nation or state. So, it seems that e-governance is all about using technology to run government services. In order to streamline and enhance democratic government and business components of governance, Backus (2003) defines e-governance as the use of electronic methods in interactions between the government and people, companies, and internal government activities. Oyawoye (2006) defines e-governance as the use of information and communication technologies to improve government-citizen relations and the provision of public services. He elaborated by saying that encompasses both the legislative and executive branches' interactions with the general public. Electronic government, according to Coleman (2005), comprises three essential components of governing societies: the regulation and representation of social actors, the provision of public services, and the creation and dissemination of official information.

Challenges of E-Governance in the Context of Public Administration

There seem to be significant hurdles and problems with e-government and e-governance, even if e-government has been successfully adopted and implemented in African and Western nations (Molobela, 2023; Cater, 2022; Upadhyay, 2022). Many problems persist to this day in Africa, and South Africa is no exception (Muridzi, Meyer & Masengu, 2021). Among the most prevalent difficulties, there is a digital divide; a lack of political will and strategic vision; aversion to change; insufficient funding for information and communication technology infrastructure; unreliable internet connections; and concerns about data privacy and security (Muridzi, 2019). The digital gap is a worldwide issue, even though there have been tremendous advancements in information and communication technology infrastructure (Marion, Pariso & Picariello, 2023:205). In spite of efforts to improve access, many communities continue to face obstacles when trying to manage their companies and day-to-day lives with crucial data and information. The inefficiency of certain nations' e-government services, like Nigeria's, leads to a lack of technical and digital responsiveness, which in turn causes significant risks and delays in the adoption of such services (Molobela, 2023). According to Marion (2023: 205), paradoxical challenges worsen the current information and communication technology divide, preventing public administration from enjoying digital government advantages and exploring more efficiency via e-Government. Pontones-Rosa, Pérez-Morote, and Santos-Penalver (2021:1) state that not all groups are assured digital inclusion, yet the usage of ICT is partially sufficient and suitable, lending credence to the current paradoxical dilemmas. Moreover, it does not seem that total interconnection between e-Government and public administration can be claimed based just on accessibility, utilization, and satisfaction with ICT infrastructure growth.

In Nigeria and other African nations, digitizing public services has been a huge challenge due to a lack of political will and strategic direction (Muridzi, 2019). The Nigerian government cannot thrive in the modern digital era without a dedication to formulating policies and implementing e-government initiatives driven by a combination of political determination and strategic guidance

(Bizimana, 2020:6; Muridzi, 2019). Candidates for public service should show political assurance and faith in e-government initiatives (Nven-akeng& Sirajul, 2013).

According to Nven-akeng and Sirajul (2013), government reluctance to change is one of the main obstacles to the full acceptance and execution of e-government services. Public administration experts from the postmodern school and more traditionalists continue to struggle in the present administration of Nigeria and other African nations (Nkomo & Moyane, 2021). Upadhyay (2022) notes that government service digitization programs are impeded by the dispute. Although many in the traditionalist camp see e-government and e-governance as a threat, those in the postmodern camp see it as a cutting-edge tool for streamlining government services through collaboration and the elimination of inefficient bureaucratic processes (Malodia, 2021). Politicians and government workers who are resistant to change may obstruct the rollout of e-government initiatives (Muridzi, 2019). In addition, the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the availability of the internet are essential for electronic government and e-governance (Molobela, 2023). The legitimacy and public opinion of electronic government are tarnished when citizens are unable to fully use the information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure that the government provides. The connection, engagement, and communication between the government and citizens might become unstable due to inadequate access to ICT infrastructure (Molobela, 2023). Government service digitization might be postponed due to unreliability of internet connectivity. One big obstacle to e-governance changes in South Africa and other African nations is the lack of public wifi/internet terminals and computers in public libraries, schools, and other government offices (Nkomo & Moyane, 2021).

Finally, using e-government services, it seems that less regulatory frameworks are in place to safeguard consumers' personal data and information (Muridzi, 2021). Keeping sensitive information safe requires more than just a policy; measures must be put in place to prevent unauthorized individuals from gaining access to sensitive data and information and to deter them from utilizing it for illicit purposes (Muridzi, 2021). For example, in order to pay municipal bills online, you need to connect your bank account with the service. However, some consumers are wary of using e-government services because they don't feel safe doing so (Nkomo & Moyane, 2021). There are many problems that may be identified; nonetheless, many e-government users are quite concerned about the aforementioned issues, which are widespread. It follows that there are still many problems with e-government that need fixing before it can win the public's full confidence.

Empirical Review

Nigerian public administration and electronic governance have been the subject of several empirical investigations. While illuminating the benefits and drawbacks of technology-inspired governance, these studies have also shed light on the difficulties associated with electronic governance. To better understand e-governance, Terrance (2022) performed research on public administration and government. Specifically, she sought to understand how to use the public administration paradigm of governance. By use of qualitative research techniques. The results show that both public administration and e-government practitioners need a better grasp of the field's theoretical foundations in order to break free of the information management ideology that aims to propel public administration to the position of e-government domination. Because it introduces huge changes to the organization of government, the duties and responsibilities of government employees, and the procedures for providing public services, the results also show that e-governance provides a new approach to administration in all areas of public administration. The impact of e-government is indicative of a sea change in public administration, since it has transformed the system to facilitate efficient decision-making and public policy processes, as well

as to facilitate communication and engagement between the government, businesses, and citizens, and to make government services available online around the clock.

Research on the use of electronic mediation in public service provision in Nigeria was carried out by Samuel and Daniel (2023). The research strategy used in the study was quantitative. The results demonstrated that the government stands to gain the most from the automation of administrative tasks, both in terms of efficiency and the quality of the services it provides. From their point of view, e-administration may improve administrative efficacy, efficiency, and equality in providing services to the public.

An overview of e-governance and service delivery in the Nigerian public sector was studied by Desmond, Asomba, and Egwuagu (2024). A qualitative research approach was used in the investigation. According to the study's results, e-governance boosts citizens' access to government programs and makes public operations more transparent. Online government has the potential to improve several areas, including: efficiency, productivity, transparency, simplicity of use, income generation, cost savings, and reduced corruption.

Examining Nigeria as an example of a developing state, Abah and Nwoku (2021) examined the challenges and opportunities of e-governance. A quantitative research approach was used in the investigation. According to the study's results, electronic governance is here to stay, and governments throughout the globe are actively working to incorporate the technology into their public administration. The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in government has great promise for radically altering current administrative practices. Governance is made more efficient, effective, accountable, transparent, and easy with its help. Most importantly, it has the potential to foster a government that is inclusive and where individuals actively participate in making decisions. This ultimately allows the government to better meet the evolving demands of its citizens. Consequently, any nation interested in embracing e-governance has a lot of potential. However, there are still a number of obstacles that have prevented Nigeria from fully using ICT in government. These include a lack of reliable electricity, a lack of political will, and an inadequate workforce with the necessary expertise.

Methodology

The descriptive research survey design was used in building up this research work. The descriptive research survey design has many advantages which includes Its empirical nature which allows the collection of large quantity of data statistically from a large number of people in a relatively short time, hence its selection. In order to gather information for this study, the researcher created a systematic questionnaire. Following its administration in Rivers State (representing the South-South geopolitical zone), Imo State (representing the South-East geopolitical zone), and Lagos State (representing the South-West geopolitical zone), the questionnaire was collected for testing and analysis. After sending out 300 surveys, we were able to collect 273 completed surveys for statistical analysis. The impact of independent factors on the dependent variable was determined using percentages, and descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions were employed for data analysis. Data analysis made use of standard deviation. Data was shown in a tabular and graphic format.

Table 1: Administration and Retrieval of Questionnaire

State	Copies Distributed	Copies Returned	Percentage Returned	Unreturned Copies
Rivers State	100	97	32.3	3
Imo State	100	86	28.6	14
Iagos State	100	90	30	10
Total	300	273	90.9	27

Source: Authors' Computation

Table1 indicates that 300 (three hundred) copies of questionnaire were administered to respondents, 27 copies were not returned, while the remaining 273 were dully completed and returned making 90.9% of the total number of returned questionnaires and used for the study.

Demographic Data

The demographic data assessed the characteristics of the sample for the study by providing a more detailed representation of the individuals or cases that make up the respondents.

Table 2: Gender Disribution

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	170	62.3	62.3	62.3
	Female	103	37.7	37.7	37.7
	Total	273	100.0	100.0	

Source: Authors Computation

Table 2 shows that 170 respondents representing 62.3% of the total respondents are male while 103 respondents representing 37.7% are female

Table 3: Marital Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	126	46.2	46.2	46.2
	Married	130	47.6	47.6	47.6
	Widow	14	5.1	5.1	5.1
	Divorced	3	1.1	1.1	1.1
	Total	273	100.0	100.0	

Source: Authors' Computation

Table 3 shows that 126 respondents representing 46.1% of the sample are single, 130 respondents representing 47.6% are married while 14 and 3 respondents representing 5.1% and 1.1% are widows and divorced respectively.

Table 4: Educational Qualification

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	WASC/GCE	20	7.3	7.3	7.3
	OND/NCE	85	31.1	31.1	31.1
	BSc	98	35.9	35.9	35.9
	MSc	56	20.5	20.5	20.5
	PhD	14	5.1	5.1	5.1
	Total	273	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, Authors' Computation

The distribution of respondents' academic qualifications is seen in Table 4 above. Per the data in the table, we can see that 20 respondents (or 7.3% of the total) have WAEC/GCE, 85 (or 31.1% of the total) have OND/NCE, 98 (or 35.9% of the total) have BSc degrees, 56 (or 20.5% of the total) have MSc degrees, and 14 (or 5.1% of the total) have PhDs.

Research question One:How can e-governance enhance public administration in southern Nigeria

Table 5: Mean AnalysisE-governance and Public Administration in Southern Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MEAN (X)	STD DEVIATION
1	E-governance is Efficient and Productive	139	101	24	6	3	4.35	0.264
2	E-governance is fast	110	105	40	10	8	4.10	0.278
3	E-governance is cost saving	130	120	20	3	0	4.49	0.278
4	E-governance will reduce too much paper work	140	100	25	5	3	4.35	0.264

Source: Field Data 2024

The answer rate on a 4-item instrument with a 5-point likert scale for how e-governance might improve public administration in southern Nigeria is shown in Table 5, which is up there. A mean score of 4.35 on the first question item places it in the highly agreed category, according to the statistics. Respondents lean further toward the highly agreed end of the measurement scale for questions 2, 3, and 4, with mean scores of 4.10, 4.49, and 4.35, respectively.

Research question two: What are the challenges of e-governance in southern Nigeria?

Table 6: Mean Analysis on the Challenges of E-governance in Southern Nigeria

S/ N	ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MEAN (X)	STD DEVIATION
1	Poor power supply	150	105	10	8	0	4.45	0.274
2	Poor funding	120	110	35	5	3	4.24	0.255
3	Lack of political will	160	90	20	3	0	4.44	0.278
4	Inexperienced personnels	120	110	35	5	3	4.24	0.255

Source: Field Data 2024

Table 6 shows the percentage of people who responded to a 4-item survey on the difficulties of e-governance in Nigeria using a 5-point Likert scale. A mean score of 4.45 on the first question item places it in the highly agreed category, according to the statistics. Respondents lean closer toward the highly agreed end of the measurement scale for questions 2, 3, and 4, with mean scores of 4.24, 4.44, and 4.24, respectively.

Discussion of Findings

The focuses on electronic governance and public administration in southern Nigeria. Besides the study revealed that the first question item has a mean score that falls into the highly agreed range, at 4.35. Respondents lean further toward the highly agreed end of the measurement scale for questions 2, 3, and 4, with mean scores of 4.10, 4.49, and 4.35, respectively. The chart makes it quite evident that electronic governance (e-governance) will lessen the need for paperwork while simultaneously increasing efficiency, productivity, speed, and cost savings. Desmond, Asomba, and Egwuagu's (2024) research on e-governance and service delivery in the Nigerian public sector: an overview aligns with these results. Less corruption, more openness, more convenience, more money, lower costs, more efficiency, and more productivity are some of the advantages that they listed for electronic governance.

Table 6 reveals that the first question item has a mean score that falls into the highly agreed range, at 4.45. Respondents lean closer toward the highly agreed end of the measurement scale for questions 2, 3, and 4, with mean scores of 4.24, 4.44, and 4.24, respectively. Electronic governance in southern Nigeria has obstacles such as a lack of political will, inexperienced people, inadequate budget, and insufficient power supply, as seen in the table. The results of this research are consistent with those of Abah and Nwoku (2021), who examined the challenges and opportunities of electronic government in a developing nation (Nigeria as an example). That being said, they maintained that e-governance has great potential to any nation that is willing to embrace it. However, there are still a number of obstacles that have prevented Nigeria from fully embracing ICT in government. These include a lack of reliable electricity, a lack of political will, and an inadequate workforce with the necessary expertise..

Conclusion

The study centres on electronic governance and public administration in southern Nigeria.

An enhanced paradigm for administrative efficiency and effectiveness has been introduced by the information revolution, which has improved service delivery and contributed to a country's socioeconomic progress, peace, and stability. Because it improves the quality of public services, electronic governance makes public service management easier. Despite the many benefits—including increased transparency, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness—the implementation of ICT operations in Nigeria's public sector faces significant obstacles.

Recommendations

The study recommends that if we want to reap the many advantages of e-governance in Nigeria, we should follow these suggestions:

- 1) Active political determination and dedication for actors of the government in ensuring e-governance..
- 2) Adequate funding should be provided foeffectively imposition of e-governance in the nation;therefore, making funding freely accessible.

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