
E- GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Electronic governance entails the application of information and communication technologies within the public sector to enhance governmental efficiency and governance quality. It is well recognized as an efficient instrument for service delivery. The progression of information and communication technology (ICT) has introduced a novel aspect to efficient global administration. ICT is an essential political instrument designed to overcome traditional barriers of distance in the administration of public affairs. The objective of this study is to offer insights into the diverse perspectives, issues, and opportunities of e-governance and public administration in Nigeria. This study utilizes secondary data sources, including journals, books, and publications, and applies decision theory to e-government to integrate many theoretical and practical principles. The study indicates that electronic governance could address the challenges of public administration, particularly in public policy formulation and implementation. However, its optimal utilization remains unachieved due to low literacy rates and the government's failure to provide essential infrastructure. The paper advocates for government at all levels to implement policies that promote and expedite the use of ICT, as well as the training of government officials in e-governance to enable sustainable growth in Nigeria.

KEY WORDS: E-governance, E-administration, Information Communication Technology, Sustainable development, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, technological breakthroughs have led to the development of e-governance systems designed to enhance traditional public administration through increased efficiency and inclusivity. Nigeria, akin to numerous other nations, has adopted e-governance to improve public service delivery and foster openness. In the current swiftly changing global environment, information and communication

technology have instigated significant changes across multiple sectors. The sphere of governance and public administration has experienced substantial technological advances. E-governance, a progressive method of public administration utilizing digital technology, has emerged as an essential instrument for improving the efficiency, transparency, and accessibility of governmental services.

In an era of swift technological growth, Nigeria, one of Africa's most populous countries, is poised for a digital transformation that might fundamentally alter its public administration and government. The emergence of e-governance has initiated a new epoch, characterized by the integration of technology with governmental operations, with the objective of improving efficiency, transparency, and citizen participation. Nigeria's adoption of e-governance offers the potential for a more promising future, yet it also introduces a multifaceted array of obstacles and dilemmas that necessitate careful deliberation. (Dada et al., 2020)

The rapid advancement of ICT has brought significant changes across various sectors worldwide, including public administration. Nigeria, being one of the most populous countries in Africa, is no exception. The integration of ICT into public administration has been touted as a promising avenue for enhancing governance, improving service delivery, and fostering transparency. However, the current realities often present a mixed picture. This essay argues that while ICT has transformative potential for Nigeria's public administration, several challenges hinder its optimal implementation. By examining both the advantages and obstacles of using ICT in public governance, we will understand how Nigeria can harness technology for better administration and citizen engagement.

In Nigeria, a country characterized by a complex mix of difficulties and opportunities, the adoption and implementation of e-governance have surfaced as a viable strategy for overcoming persistent administrative obstacles, mitigating corruption, and enhancing public participation. Nonetheless, akin to every transformational initiative, the incorporation of e-governance into the public administration framework yields a spectrum of both advantageous and detrimental effects. This thorough investigation seeks to analyze the complex realm of e-governance in Nigeria, critically assessing its advantages and disadvantages.

Conceptual Clarifications

The term e-governance refers to the integration of the prefix 'E', denoting electronic, with governance, leading to significant changes in the terminology of governance and administration. It elucidates the significance of the information and telecommunications revolution in governance. E-governance signifies the substitution of Weberian bureaucratic governance concepts with tendencies characterized by horizontal, streamlined, dynamic, and networked government. E-governance denotes governance procedures wherein ICT's actively contribute to efficient and effective governance, enhancing accessibility and accountability of the government to its population.

The notion has become essential to public sector reform, since ICTs have facilitated the provision of more contemporary services for citizens and enterprises. It catalyzes the development of the Information Society, propels public sector transformation, and assists governments in preparing for future public administration models (Medupe, & Ajuwon, 2020).

The World Bank articulates that e-government refers to the utilization of information technologies, including Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing, by government agencies to enhance interactions with citizens, businesses, and other governmental entities. These technologies can fulfill various purposes: enhanced delivery of government services to citizens, improved engagement with business and industry, citizen empowerment via access to information, or more efficient governmental administration. The resultant advantages may include diminished corruption, enhanced transparency, increased convenience, revenue augmentation, and cost reductions. The focus is on utilizing information technologies to enhance citizen-government interactions while implementing cost-reduction strategies in administration and developing reliable and lucrative revenue generation methods that promote efficiency, accountability, and transparency in public affairs. UNESCO defines governance as the implementation of political, economic, and administrative authorities in managing a nation's affairs, encompassing the expression of citizens' interests and the execution of their legal rights and obligations. The global scientific and cultural educational agency concludes that e-governance refers to the execution of governance through electronic means to ensure an efficient, rapid, and transparent dissemination of information to the public and other agencies, as well as to conduct governmental administrative functions. This term illustrates the utilization of electronic media in the exercise of authority in managing a nation's affairs, alongside the expression of people's interests, resulting in enhanced transparency and efficiency. (Molobela, 2023).

E-administration, a component of e-governance, emphasizes the automation and digitalization of government processes and interactions between government agencies and the public. It encompasses a range of online services that facilitate administrative tasks, including applications for permits, tax declarations, citizen feedback, and information dissemination. In essence, e-administration is about making government services more accessible to the public through the application of ICT (Oluwagbemi et al., 2017). While some may argue that technology could complicate processes or lead to data breaches, numerous benefits illustrate that e-administration is a vital step forward in modern governance. (Oluwagbemi et al , 2017).

One of the primary benefits of e-administration is increased efficiency within governmental operations. Traditionally, public services have been marred by bureaucratic delays, paperwork, and inefficient manual processes. These challenges not only frustrate citizens but also lead to a significant waste of resources. E-administration streamlines these processes by automating tasks and reducing the need for physical paperwork. According to a study by the World Bank, e-governance initiatives have been shown to decrease processing times for various administrative tasks by as much as 85%

(World Bank, 2021). For instance, take the example of e-filing taxes. When citizens can file their taxes online, the government can process these applications much faster than by handling printed forms. Moreover, it reduces the likelihood of human errors associated with manual data entry (Garris, 2022). This efficiency not only saves time for both citizens and government employees but also allows for the optimal allocation of resources and improved workflow within government departments.

E-administration also provides significant improvements in accessibility. Traditional public administration often creates barriers for individuals in remote or underserved communities, who may struggle to access government services due to distance, lack of transportation, or limited office hours. With the introduction of online services, citizens can access vital information and services from the comfort of their homes. This shift is particularly beneficial for individuals with disabilities or those who operate under tight schedules, as they are no longer reliant on visiting government offices during specific hours. (Medupe & Ajuwon, 2020).

Methodology

The paper is a qualitative study utilizing a case study design. The case study method enables researchers to acquire more concrete, contextual, and in-depth knowledge regarding e-governance and public administration in Nigeria. The study relies on a secondary source of data, which was gathered through a literature search. It utilized content analysis to interpret the data.

Theoretical Framework

Humans make numerous judgments daily. Decision theory seeks to comprehend the rationale underlying an agent's choices and enhance the decision-making process. Descriptive choice theory examines the actual decision-making processes of individuals, while prescriptive decision theory focuses on offering guidance to enhance decision-making efficacy. Keeney (1992). The primary aim of decision analysis is to enhance rational decision-making, hence improving the probability of achieving the decision maker's objectives and aligning actions with their desires and values. Nonetheless, a definitive definition of rationality is absent, and a successful decision may not consistently be founded on reasonable principles. In circumstances characterized by significant uncertainty, it may be virtually hard for a decision-maker to ascertain the appropriate course of action. Aderonmu et al, (2019). Decision theory offers several organized methodologies to mitigate ambiguity in decision-making and enhance outcomes. Decision issues are frequently intricate and poorly defined, and humans are motivated by a wide array of values; hence, what constitutes rationality is likewise subject to dispute.

Literature Review

Olorunsogo & Obamiro (2016) analyze the opportunities and obstacles of e-governance in Nigeria. It examines the prospective advantages of e-governance, including enhanced service delivery and augmented transparency, while also addressing the obstacles, such as restricted access to technology and apprehensions around data security. The study concludes with recommendations for the proper execution of e-governance efforts in Nigeria. The analysis by Jegede et al. (2018) examines the opportunities and obstacles of e-governance in Nigeria in relation to public administration. It emphasizes the prospective advantages of e-governance, like the optimization of bureaucratic procedures and enhanced coordination, while simultaneously addressing the obstacles, such as opposition to change and resource constraints. The report offers recommendations for policymakers to address problems in achieving successful e-governance within public administration.

The paper by Aderonmu et al. (2019) examines the opportunities and obstacles of e-governance and public administration in Nigeria. It examines multiple facets, including the prospective advantages of e-governance in enhancing service delivery and mitigating corruption, alongside the obstacles posed by restricted technological access and cybersecurity vulnerabilities. The report offers solutions for addressing these problems and optimizing the potential of e-governance in public administration. The study by Dada et al. (2020) evaluates the advancements, obstacles, and prospects of e-governance and public administration in Nigeria. The text addresses advancements in the implementation of e-governance methods and underscores the obstacles encountered, including resource constraints and opposition to change. The research examines the potential for utilizing e-governance to improve public administration in Nigeria. It finishes with advice for policymakers to tackle obstacles and optimize the advantages of e-governance.

The evaluations of this literature offer insights into the diverse perspectives, issues, and opportunities of e-governance and public administration in Nigeria. They can provide a basis for additional research and analysis in comprehending the subtleties and ramifications of these subjects within the Nigerian setting. The assessments provide significant insights into the issues, prospects, and policy implications of e-governance and public administration in Nigeria. They offer an extensive comprehension of the diverse facets related to these subjects, enhancing the current corpus of knowledge on e-governance implementation and public administration reforms in Nigeria.

Stages of E-Governance

According to Olorunsogo & Obamiro (2016), e-governance is fundamentally connected to the advancement of information and computer technology, as well as the networking of computers and communication networks. In underdeveloped countries, such technology and systems become accessible with a noticeable delay relative to developed nations. The creation, penetration, access, and utilization of these technologies and their

components encompass vocational, generational, gender, income, and geographical dimensions. The implementation and utilization of e-governance occur in the following stages:

- **Computerization:** During the initial phase, the advent of personal computers led to the widespread equipping of several government offices with computer technology. The utilization of computers first with word processing, subsequently succeeded by data processing.
- **Networking:** During this phase, select units of various government organizations established connections via a hub, facilitating information sharing and data flow among different governmental institutions (Medupe, & Ajuwon, 2020).
- **Online presence:** The rise in internet connectivity necessitated the establishment of a web presence. This led to the upkeep of websites by governmental departments and other organizations. Typically, these web pages/websites included information regarding the organizational structure, contact information, reports and publications, as well as the aims and vision statements of the respective governmental entities (Yusuf & Yusuf, 2016).
- **Online interactivity:** A direct result of online presence was the establishment of communication channels between government bodies and individuals, as well as civil society organizations. The primary objective at this stage was to reduce personal interaction with government institutions by offering downloadable forms, instructions, acts, rules, and similar documents. In certain instances, this strategy has already resulted in the online submission of forms. The majority of citizen-government transactions can be transitioned to e-governance mode.

Forms of E-Governance

The utilization of ICTs in governmental operations enhances relationships among various stakeholders, governmental tiers, and societal groups in governance. These interactions can be characterized as follows:

Government to Government (G2G): This approach utilizes information and communications technology to both reorganize governmental procedures and enhance the exchange of information and services among various institutions. This type of interaction occurs within the realm of government at both horizontal levels (among various government agencies and departments) and vertical levels (between the tiers of government: national, state, and local agencies/parastatals). This mode of contact enhances efficiency, performance, and productivity in public enterprises (Medupe, & Ajuwon, 2020).

Government to Citizens (G2C): An interface is established between the government and

citizens, facilitating the effective provision of a wide array of public services to the populace. This enhances the availability and accessibility of public services while simultaneously improving their quality. It provides citizens the autonomy to determine when, where, and how to engage with the government. This mode of engagement underpins governance by facilitating citizen participation in decision-making processes. It fosters more citizen engagement in governance and enhances governmental responsiveness (Oluwagbemi et al. 2017).

Government to Business (G2B): E-governance instruments facilitate the smooth interaction between the business sector—suppliers of goods and services—and the government. The aim is to eliminate bureaucratic obstacles, conserve time, lower operating expenses, and foster a more transparent business climate in interactions with the government. G2B projects may be transactional, encompassing licenses, permits, procurement processes, and revenue collection. They can also serve promotional and facilitative roles, particularly in trade, tourism, and investment. These methods utilize the connections between the government and the business sector. It also facilitates a conducive climate for businesses to operate more efficiently (Oluwagbemi et al. 2017).

Government to Employees (G2E): The government is the largest employer in Africa and regularly participates in a bilateral engagement with its employees. The utilization of ICT technologies enhances the speed and efficiency of interactions while simultaneously elevating employee satisfaction levels (Oluwagbemi et al. 2017).

E-Governance and Public Administration in Nigeria

The Weberian approach to administration and management is rapidly becoming obsolete. Bureaucratic red tape, deliberate delays, and distorted application of theories and principles resulted in alienated, parochial, and self-serving leadership. New public management, as recently defined, has enhanced old practices but is insufficient in the context of globalization. Advancements in ICTs have facilitated e-administration, e-democracy, e-voting, e-commerce, e-learning, e-examinations, and have invariably transformed all human behavior and action. Two analytical dimensions can be examined to understand the trend towards e-government. What is the locus of e-government? Which components of companies are being supplanted by information technology? Which stages of the policy process are executed with the use of computers? In what ways do political actors utilize computers? Which interactions between government and citizens are digitized? Secondly, what is the primary aim of e-government? Which processes, procedures, routines, and departments are digitized? Initially, the electronic execution of government services is more customer-oriented.

Online applications and registrations streamline and expedite public business processes, as taxes, permits, levies, and dues can be completed through the simple download of requisite brochures and forms from the internet, resulting in a substantial decrease in bureaucratic obstacles and depersonalization in public service. E-government enhances the efficiency of governmental administration. Public administration's connection to the

Internet helps conserve both individuals and resources. Procedures and routines are automated to reduce costs associated with pricey civil servants who now communicate via inter- and intranets. Third, e-government modernizes public administration. This process is a principal feature of e-government. As societies increasingly become information-driven, governments should implement e-governance. The movement toward e-government is regarded as an element of a larger global public sector reform initiative (Zhang & Bhattacharjee, 2024).

The success narratives of IT-focused private enterprises necessitate their integration into public administration. Is it appropriate to equate the online sale of books or insurance with electronic governance? The proliferation of online publications and e-learning resources, such as YouTube, e-books, and virtual libraries, has propelled the globe into a knowledge and information economy. Students and lecturers are capable of engaging in online learning and instruction. Individuals reliant on book sales should be aware that their intellectual property achieves enhanced visibility and patronage when marketed online. The utilization of web-based groups and blogs facilitates teaching and learning significantly. Discussions are facilitated via group emails on Yahoo and Google for critical examination. How should we comprehend e-government if not in this manner? (NITDA, 2020).

Transformative Potential of ICT in Public Administration

One of the most significant benefits of ICT in public administration is the enhancement of service delivery. By utilizing technology, government services can be streamlined and made more accessible to citizens. For instance, e-governance initiatives allow individuals to access vital services such as tax payments, land registries, and social welfare programs through online platforms. This reduces the need for physical visits to government offices, which can be marred by inefficiencies, bureaucratic red tape, and corruption.

According to a study by the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) in Nigeria, implementing ICT solutions can increase the speed and efficiency of government operations, thus enhancing overall productivity (NITDA, 2020). For instance, Nigeria's Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) was designed to curb the menace of ghost workers in the civil service, and it has reportedly saved the government substantial resources (Adebayo, 2021).

Moreover, ICT can significantly enhance transparency and accountability in governance. With the proper application of technology, citizens can access information related to government budgets, expenditures, and project implementations. This access allows for greater community involvement and scrutiny of governmental actions, which can reduce corrupt practices and promote good governance. The Open Government Partnership (OGP) in Nigeria is an excellent example, where efforts are being made to ensure that citizens can engage with government processes through the provision of reliable data (OGP, 2022).

Furthermore, ICT facilitates communication between the government and its citizens, leading to increased civic engagement. With the widespread use of mobile phones and the internet, government agencies can disseminate information quickly and gather public feedback. This interactive approach empowers citizens, fostering a more participatory form of governance. As reported by the World Bank, digital platforms have the potential to bridge gaps between citizens and the administration, making governance more inclusive (World Bank, 2021).

Challenges of E-Governance in Nigeria

Nigeria, with a population exceeding 200 million, faces numerous challenges to e-governance adoption due to an extraordinary increase in cellular phone usage within a telecommunications market characterized by nearly zero percent ICT production and a significant deficiency in power supply. Proficient communication and organizational abilities are essential for upholding the vision, values, and goals of all stakeholders in e-government. According to Oluwagbemi et al. (2017), the current situation raises questions about the role of government officials in Nigeria. Will they demonstrate sincerity in the implementation and management of e-government effectively? Do they comprehend the conditions for e-government? Government agencies and officials in underdeveloped nations may view e-government as a potential challenge to their authority and sustainability, resulting in hesitance to endorse its objectives (Kaaya, 2003). Medupe et al. (2020) cites instances where e-government initiatives in Africa completely or partially failed owing to "human" reasons. The shortcomings of prior committees in Nigeria tasked with ICT matters were ascribed to deficiencies in organizational skills and dedication (Ifinedo, 2004). A body is established today and dissolved for another tomorrow, so illustrating the prevalence of policy instability. For example, prior to NITDA, the NCC was established to guide the nation into the Information Age.

Social and Cultural Problems

Nigeria is a vast nation, with almost 45.72% of its population residing in rural regions (CIA: World Factbook, 2023). Illiteracy prevails, affecting around 31% of the population (CIA: World Factbook, 2023), and participation in secondary education is minimal. Yusuf & Yusuf (2016) contend that ICT and other technology-driven fields will prosper more effectively in civilizations with a mechanistic worldview, in contrast to Africa, where informality prevails. The influence of culture on ICT adoption in poor countries has garnered attention in IT and development literature. Research demonstrates that sociocultural aspects are critically significant in ICT-related matters for developing cultures.

The culture of self-motivation among government officials is prevalent in Nigeria (Adoghe & Cao, 2018). This encompasses a propensity to excessively politicize decision-making, engage in substandard practices, and implement convoluted bureaucratic procedures for personal gain. Certain deficiencies were identified as

contributing factors to the prevalence of bad governance in the Sub-Saharan African region (Yusuf & Yusuf, 2016). Consequently, it can be inferred that individuals with authority or vested interests in Nigeria may perceive no advantages in e-government or may want to undermine it. West (2004) contends that cultural norms and individual behavioral patterns influence how technology is utilized by a nation's residents and policymakers.

Economic Constraints

The economic condition is critical for both the nation and its citizens. Nigeria is impoverished and in debt (World Bank Group, 2024). The price of a PC in Nigeria is sixfold the monthly salary of an ordinary employee. The expense of subscribing to a telephone line burdens the typical individual. The same applies to obtaining Internet connection in Nigeria, where nearly all Internet service providers are situated outside the country's borders. Ordinary folks encounter significant challenges in accessing the internet in an environment characterized by minimal broadband growth and prohibitively high installation costs. Computers and Internet connections are essential resources for e-government initiatives; yet, in the absence of these facilities, as shown in Nigeria, the adoption of e-government by the populace remains uncertain. The access and utilization of the internet among our youth depend on the reliance and frequent disruption of networks, such as 2go (a social network), unauthorized and unprotected Opera Mini usage on mobile phones, following the discontinuation of freedom lines, and access through blocked SIM cards from certain network providers (Chiamogu, 2011).

Infrastructural and Technical Constraints

The activities of telecom carriers are marked by inefficiency and substandard services, as seen by frequent network breakdowns and the utilization of modems lacking internet connectivity. A significant infrastructural limitation in Nigeria is insufficient power generation and distribution. Cell phones, laptops, and other devices such as radios and televisions, along with various components of information and communication technologies, operate solely inside a stable and functional electrified environment. This problem is seen in the extensive utilization of generators and the rampant challenges associated with device charging, leading to the possession of ICT devices and components without appropriate usage. It also manifests as economic waste, with users repeatedly purchasing and changing batteries at inconsistent intervals. Government officials in the country now acknowledge that the success of any e-government effort relies on a consistent supply of electricity. Nigeria suffers from insufficient infrastructure and a deficiency of trained IT experts (Medupe et al. 2020).

Prospects of E-Governance in Nigeria

One pessimistic reading of the current state of African politics is to dismiss the relevance of e-governance because the trajectory of development of bureaucratic institutions in Africa has produced internal and external contexts that differ fundamentally from those

of the Western states within which computing and IT have been developed (Berman and Tettey, 2001). The argument for African exceptionalism is rejected by most writers on contemporary African governance, who argue that that institutions of governance, including the parliament, the executive, and the state bureaucracy, should adopt modern information and communication technology in order to transform their operations and make their work more transparent and people-centered (ECA, 2004). The fourth African Development Forum (held in Addis in October 2004) produced a Consensus Statement declaring that:

E-governance ... is an important innovation for enhancing good governance and strengthening the democratic process and can also facilitate access to information, freedom of expression, greater equity, efficiency, productivity growth, and social inclusion. Successful e-government initiatives can have a demonstrable and tangible impact on improving citizen participation and quality of life as a result of effective multi-stakeholder partnerships. African governments need to develop appropriate policy frameworks, supported by legislation for e-governance, that are linked to strategic development objectives; enlist high-ranking political e-government champions; focus awareness, outreach, and training efforts on the less privileged segment of targeted users, particularly women and neglected rural communities; and promote local content and support local language development.

A pessimistic interpretation of the present condition of African politics is to regard e-governance as irrelevant, given that the evolution of bureaucratic institutions in Africa has resulted in internal and external contexts that are fundamentally distinct from those of Western states where computing and information technology have originated (Berman and Tettey, 2001). The notion of African exceptionalism is dismissed by the majority of scholars on modern African governance, who contend that governance institutions, such as parliament, the executive, and state bureaucracy, must embrace contemporary information and communication technology to enhance their operations and promote transparency and a focus on the populace (ECA, 2004).

Concluding Remarks

E-governance signifies unprecedented transformations in the processes and frameworks of public behavior, politics, and administration. It provides numerous advantages to the government and its citizens, with significant potential for achieving institutional and personal objectives. In Nigeria, the challenges of widespread poverty and fragile democratic and bureaucratic institutions, exacerbated by corrupt leadership, could be mitigated through the strategic use of e-governance models. Consequently, the formulation and implementation of e-governance in the era of digital societies is consistently transforming the landscape of public administration research and practice. The discipline is rapidly transitioning from the intricate mechanisms of governance

defined by global institutions to electronically driven reforms that facilitate increased citizen participation in policy formulation, responsive governance and administration, and shared global best practices aligned with various political systems. The governance of Nigeria, together with the study and practice of public administration, should be strategically aligned with the effective utilization and implementation of information and communications technology as a national priority.

Recommendations

To fully leverage the potential of ICT in public administration, Nigeria must adopt a more strategic approach that addresses the underlying challenges. First and foremost, the government should invest in infrastructure development to ensure that all regions, particularly rural areas, have access to reliable internet and electricity. This investment will create a more equitable environment where all citizens can benefit from ICT initiatives.

Secondly, implementing comprehensive training and education programs will boost digital literacy among the populace. Collaborating with educational institutions and non-governmental organizations to deliver training sessions on ICT usage will empower citizens, enabling them to engage with public administration tools effectively.

Additionally, enhancing security measures is paramount. The Nigerian government should actively develop and enforce robust cybersecurity policies to safeguard public information and build citizens' trust. Implementing regular cybersecurity audits and investing in cutting-edge technology to protect public data from cyber threats can augment the effectiveness of ICT in governance.

Lastly, fostering public-private partnerships can also facilitate technological adoption and innovation in public administration. By engaging with technology companies, the government can co-develop solutions tailored to Nigeria's unique challenges. Collaborative efforts might include establishing tech hubs, incubators, and scholarships that promote the growth of a local digital economy.

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