

# **The Challenges of e-governance and Public Administration in Nigeria**

by

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## **Abstract**

Nigeria faces significant governance issues, including inefficiency, poor resource allocation, corruption, and inadequate infrastructure. The adoption of E-governance is seen as a critical solution to streamline administrative processes, enhance transparency, and improve service delivery. However, poor technological infrastructure, limited internet connectivity, resistance to change, and low Information Communication Technology literacy remain key obstacles. The paper therefore traces Nigeria's E-governance journey from the early 2000s, highlighting initiatives such as the establishment of the National Information Technology Development Agency, the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System, and the Government Integrated Financial Management Information System. Despite notable progress, Nigeria's E-Governance Development Index ranking has declined, reflecting persistent challenges. Empirical studies reveal infrastructural deficiencies and socio-cultural barriers as major constraints. Additionally, power supply issues and lack of accountability, further complicate implementation. The study emphasizes the importance of leadership commitment, digital literacy, and sufficient investment in Information Communication Technology infrastructure for the success of E-governance. The paper concludes with Nigeria being advanced in E-governance adoption, but issues like poor infrastructure, limited connectivity, power shortages, and resistance hinder progress. Finally, the study recommends the establishment of Ministry of ICT Affairs, training of public staff members on the use E-governance to provide efficient service delivery, and availability of power supply among other things. The paper adopted desk review methodology to consolidate findings from secondary sources, including scholarly articles, government reports, policy documents, organizational publications, and credible online resources.

**Keywords:** E-governance, Information Communication Technology, Nigeria, Public Sector and Service Delivery.

## **Introduction**

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation with a significant economy, faces persistent challenges in public sector management. The calls to reform and modernize the sector have intensified, emphasizing the need for alignment with international best practices to drive national development. As noted by Ogwola and Uranta (2022), key challenges include poor governance, inefficient resource allocation, inadequate revenue mobilization and distribution, policy discontinuity, information asymmetry, low morale, and a lack of skilled human capital. Historically, corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and limited access to public services have hindered effective governance and socio-economic progress. In response, the Nigerian government has initiated technological reforms to enhance service delivery and improve governance outcome.

In the digital era, leveraging technology has become essential for governments worldwide to enhance efficiency, transparency, and citizen engagement. E-governance is a key strategy for transforming public sector administration by streamlining processes, improving service delivery, and fostering greater public participation. When properly implemented, a well-structured E-governance system can significantly reduce service delivery time and enhance administrative effectiveness. However, Nigeria faces significant challenges in adopting E-governance due to outdated technological infrastructure, including obsolete hardware and software in government offices and limited access to reliable internet connectivity. These deficiencies contribute to frequent communication breakdowns and delays in policy implementation. Additionally, poor accountability, lack of transparency, and ineffective policy execution further undermine the efficiency of public administration. The inadequate digital budget, lack of professionalism, and substandard public service management exacerbate these challenges, resulting in poor service quality and weakened governance.

Given the crucial role of public sector management in national development overseeing essential services such as education, healthcare, national security, social insurance, and foreign relations addressing these challenges is imperative. The persistence of inefficiencies in E-governance threatens Nigeria's socio-economic progress, making urgent reforms necessary. This study is a response to the pressing need for a coordinated effort to overcome these obstacles, instilling a sense of duty and patriotism to strengthen Nigeria's public sector management. This paper's primary goal is to highlight the obstacles to E-governance

implementation in Nigeria's public sector and offer recommendations that could help in the successful implementation of E-governance in Nigeria's public sector. This study will be discussed in four parts, the first and second parts will be the concept of E-governance and the historical progression of E-governance in Nigeria respectively. Thereafter, the study will highlight empirical review of challenges in the implementation of E-governance in Nigeria and finally it will conclude and offer actionable recommendations.

### **Concept of E-Governance**

E-governance is one of the new phases in public administration it is the methodology involving the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in improving transparency, providing information speedily to all citizens, improving administrative efficiency, improving public services such as transportations, power, health, water, security, and municipal services(Onuigbo, 2015). Invariably, E-governance is the public sector's use of ICT with the aim of improving information and service delivery, encouraging citizen's participation in the decision-making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective. Similarly, World Bank(2001) defines E-governance as the government owned or operated systems of ICT that transforms relations with citizens, the private sector and/or other government agencies so as to promote citizens' empowerment, improve service delivery, strengthen accountability, increase transparency, or improve government efficiency.

E-governance is a general term for web-based services from agencies of local, state, and federal governments. In E-governance, the government uses ICT and particularly the internet to support government operations, engage citizens, and provide government services. The interaction may take the form of information retrieval, filing, or payment, among a variety of other activities via the World Wide Web (Sharma & Gupta, 2003, Sharma, 2004, Sharma 2006). Additionally, according to Silcock (2001), E-governance is the use of technology to enhance the access and delivery of government services to benefit citizens, business partners, and employees.

Furthermore, E-governance, as defined by Abdullahi (2017), is the use of ICT and its application by the appropriate government entity to provide the public with public services and information. Fang (2002), defined E-governance as a means for governments to improve service delivery by utilizing the most cutting-edge information and communication technology, especially web-based Internet applications.

The given definitions of E-governance captured its fundamental essence leveraging technology to enhance government service delivery and accessibility. However, these definitions are somewhat broad and do not fully encompass the multifaceted nature of E-governance. Beyond

service delivery, E-governance extends to areas such as e-democracy, e-voting, and data-driven policymaking, ultimately reshaping the relationship between governments and citizens. Hence, from my perspective, E-governance is not just about technology adoption but about transforming governance structures to make them more citizen-centric, accountable, and responsive. It should bridge the gap between the government and the people, ensuring inclusivity while minimizing bureaucracy and corruption. However, challenges such as the digital divide, cybersecurity threats, and resistance to change must be addressed for its full potential to be realized.

### **Methodology**

This study addresses a significant gap in research on the challenges of E-governance and public administration in Nigeria, particularly examining the barriers to effective implementation. Existing literature on this subject remains limited, necessitating a methodological approach that systematically synthesizes available information and insights. A desk review methodology was chosen to consolidate findings from secondary sources, including scholarly articles, government reports, policy documents, organizational publications, and credible online resources. This approach allows for a comprehensive assessment of the importance of E-governance in Nigeria, the current state of its implementation, the key obstacles hindering its effectiveness, and potential strategies for overcoming these challenges. By leveraging existing knowledge and addressing gaps in empirical research, this paper aims to contribute valuable insights to policy-making and administrative reforms in Nigeria's governance landscape.

### **Historical Progression of E-Governance in Nigeria**

The development of E-Governance in Nigeria has been gradual, driven by the increasing need for efficient public service delivery and enhanced government transparency. The evolution of E-governance in Nigeria can be traced back to the early 2000s, marked by various policy frameworks and initiatives aimed at modernizing governance structures. According to Akpan and Titus (2019), the first major push towards E-Governance came in April 2001 when Nigeria recognized the need to adopt ICT in governance. This period saw the establishment of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) and was tasked as the primary agency responsible for implementing Nigeria's ICT policies and promoting digital infrastructure. This period also saw the launch of the National e-Government Strategies (NeGSt) initiative in 2004, which aimed to create a roadmap for digitizing government operations and facilitating seamless interaction between the government and citizens. By 2007, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) began rolling out the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System

(IPPIS) to address payroll fraud and enhance accountability within the civil service. The success of IPPIS demonstrated the potential for E-governance to streamline administrative processes and reduce corruption (Quadri, 2017)

In 2012, the launch of the Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS) marked another milestone in Nigeria's E-governance journey. The GIFMIS was designed to improve financial planning, budgeting, and reporting across various government ministries and agencies. This initiative complemented the Treasury Single Account (TSA) policy introduced in 2015, which consolidated all government revenues into a single account, significantly enhancing fiscal transparency and reducing leakages. The expansion of E-governance in Nigeria continued with the development of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) online passport application system and the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) E-registration platform for university entrance examinations. These initiatives demonstrated the government's commitment to simplifying bureaucratic processes and reducing physical contact in service delivery (Umaru, 2019).

Most recently, the Digital Nigeria Programme, launched in 2020, seeks to deepen the integration of digital technology across all sectors of the economy, including governance. This programme aligns with Nigeria's National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS), which envisions a digital transformation of government services by 2030 (Ogwola & Uranta, 2022). The progress of E-governance in Nigeria, while commendable, faces some challenges in its implementation especially in the area of limited power supply and inadequate infrastructure despite its increased internet usage. According to the UN E-governance Survey (2024), Nigeria has dropped in ranking from 140<sup>th</sup> place in 2022 to 144<sup>th</sup> in 2024. Nigeria E-Government Development Index (EGDI) value in 2024 is 0.48146 while it was 0.45250 in 2022. Nonetheless, the consistent efforts of the FGN reflects a strong commitment to leveraging technology for national development and improved governance.

### **Empirical Review of Challenges in the Implementation of E-Governance in Nigeria**

Overtime, different authors have examined E-governance and public sector administration from different angles and in different ways. Accordingly, Francis and Ojo (2013) looked at the prospects and difficulties of establishing E-governance in Nigeria. Their study also looked at the difficulties that would arise from its implementation. It briefly examined the procedures and related them to the Nigerian context

before coming to the conclusion that the following are necessary for success; a leader who is committed to embracing E-governance as a matter of government policy, more effective cyber laws and cafes, intentional and coordinated plans for training on the efficient use of the tools and machinery required for E-governance, provision of sufficient funding for computer hardware and software, establishment of community E-centers, and easily accessible websites of governmental and non-governmental organizations, among others.

Abasilim, Gberevbie, and Ifaloye (2017) examined the relationship between the adoption of E-governance and achieving effective service delivery in Nigeria, as well as potential obstacles to its achievement. The study used a qualitative ex-post-facto research design and based its conclusions on secondary data. It found that E-governance is a viable strategy for achieving effective service delivery in Nigeria, but it also argued that addressing obstacles like infrastructure (hardware and software) and human resource quality are necessary prerequisites for achieving effective service delivery. Abdulkareem (2015) conducted a qualitative evaluation of pertinent literature to investigate the obstacles to the adoption of E-governance in the Nigerian public service. Critical factor analysis of infrastructure and digital preparedness, among other significant variables, served as the foundation for the study's results. Infrastructure gaps, power outages, digital divides, low ICT literacy, ICT equipment theft and vandalism, and privacy and security concerns were identified by the research as major obstacles to Nigeria's adoption of E-governance.

Other factors that hinder the successful implementation of E-governance in Nigeria's public sector were also identified by ITU (2006) and Adeyemo (2011). These factors are lack of ICT infrastructure and attitude or resistance to change.

**Lack of ICT Infrastructure:** As stated in the definition of E-governance above, it is the use of ICTs in government business operations. Basic ICT infrastructure is still missing in Nigeria's public sector. For example, some public organizations still do not have basic computers, let alone the knowledge needed to operate them. What you observe in their day-to-day actions is the conventional approach. In other words, they are still known for completing a great deal of paperwork manually, which would have decreased if E-governance had been completely adopted. In a better scenario, the digital approach will be combined with the old method of doing things. The majority of public sector offices still lack regular power supplies, internet network connection, and other necessities. These factors present obstacles to Nigeria's public sector's adoption of E-governance (ITU, 2006; Adeyemo, 2011).

**Attitude or Resistance to Change:** This is another issue in the public sector, because most public servants are still accustomed to doing government tasks the old-fashioned way, which involves moving files from desk to desk or office to office, they are resistant to implementing E-governance in their work, which has led to the low rating of E-governance implementation in the public sector. Some of the reasons for this include the fact that the majority of public servants lack computer literacy, are not qualified, and have little to no training in the installation, maintenance, design, and implementation of ICT infrastructure.

Okwueze (2010) also noted that an adequate power supply is an important element to be considered for the successful implementation of E-governance in the country's public sector. In contrast to the current picture of what exists in most of the public service, most government agencies operate on generators, and occasionally the generators lack capacity to power the ICT facilities adequately. Another challenge relates to the state of power supply in the country, which is said to be epileptic and irregular in terms of supply. These factors have posed a significant obstacle to the realization of E-governance objectives in Nigeria. Gberville et al. (2015) support this viewpoint by emphasizing that for E-governance to be implemented successfully, the government must set up the necessary infrastructure in areas such as computer hardware, internet connectivity, telecommunications, and optical fiber cables. This suggests that addressing these present issues, among others, is essential to the deployment of E-governance in the Nigerian public sector.

However, Olaopa (2014) succinctly itemized inadequate funds allocated to the E-governance projects, difficulty associated with streamlining various silos of E-governance projects already existing or being implemented prior to the creation of the Ministry of Communication Technology, disparity between urban and rural dwellers or those with low literacy levels in accessing the internet, potential to erode the privacy of the citizenry, perceived lack of value for money when the huge cost of deploying E-governance projects is compared to the actual value to the people, false sense of transparency as the challenges to the adoption and delivery of E-governance in Nigeria.

Thus, in a descriptive survey research, Chukwuemeka, Ubochi, & Okechukwu (2017) examined the effect of E-governance on University service delivery focusing on the Federal University Ndufualike Ikwo, Ebonyi State. Data were obtained from 287 teaching and non-teaching staff of the university selected through a proportional random sampling technique. Structured questionnaire was used in data collection from the respondents. Frequency counts, percentages and Chi-square statistics were used in analyzing the study data. The study results showed that E-governance had strong positive effect on the workers' service delivery. The authors, hence, recommended improvement on the current ICT infrastructure, internet access and reduce digital divide

among staff as panacea to continuously experience the benefits of E-governance in the institution.

Olaitan (2015) examined the socio-cultural factors determining of adoption of E-governance services by Nigerians. Socio-cultural variables including age, gender, and ethnic background were investigated. The study was survey-based. A structured questionnaire consisting of 27 items were used in collecting data from 270 respondents selected randomly. Responses to the questions were measured on 5-point Likert scale. Frequency counts, percentages and measures of central tendency were used in analyzing the study data. Findings revealed a general less favourable perception and disposition to E-governance initiative. However, significant difference was found in the propensity to adopt E-governance on the basis of gender, age and ethnic group. The study recommended that government should endeavor to understand the public's attitude to e-governance services and their readiness to adopt it to avoid mismatch and failure.

### **Challenges of E-Governance in Nigeria**

Thus, from the above empirical review of challenges in the implementation of E-governance in Nigeria, it is evident that various obstacles hinder full realization of E-governance in Nigeria. Therefore, below are key challenges of E-Governance in Nigeria that this paper will highlight.

1. **Bureaucratic Resistance:** Government officials often resisted transitioning to digital processes due to fears of losing control, job security, fearing increased accountability and transparency that digital processes might bring. This resistance slowed the adoption of E-Governance initiatives within agencies.
2. **Cultural Factors:** Cultural perceptions of ICT and governance affected the acceptance of E-Governance. The traditional methods of governance and public service interactions can hinder the acceptance and use of digital platforms. Some citizens prefer traditional face-to-face interactions with government officials
3. **Cyber security Threats:** With the growth of digital platforms, cyber security concerns emerged, including high-profile data breaches and cyber attacks raised awareness about the need for robust cyber security measures. The lack of robust cyber security measures created public distrust in online services, hindering participation.
4. **Lack of Maintenance and Updates:** Many E-governance platforms suffer from outdated technology and lack regular updates, leading to functionality issues and a poor user experience. More so, these platforms have struggled overtime to achieve the desired end-state of modern outcomes.

5. **Digital Literacy Gap:** A significant portion of the population lacks the skills to use digital tools and platforms effectively. This digital divide can exclude many citizens from benefiting from E-governance initiatives.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Like many other developing nations, Nigeria has been working to implement effective E-governance. Due to its necessity and significance, its implementation is paramount even though there are several obstacles to the successful deployment of E-governance. Examples of such include the digital divide, a lack of infrastructure, a shortage of skilled labour, etc. Public service's adoption of E-governance will decrease cost of governance, increase accountability and transparency in public service.

Given the study's conclusions, it is essential to give actionable recommendations that could lead to a more effective adoption of E-governance in Nigeria's public sector at this time. The following suggestions are put out in light of the challenges that have been highlighted as some of the main obstacles to the adoption of E-governance in Nigeria's public sector:

1. It is impossible to overstate how crucial E-governance is to creating a strong service culture. Consequently, it is recommended that government agencies create a culture of positive service and establish E-governance implementation committees to devise strategies for the successful implementation of the concept. These committees should include performance evaluation units to assess the concept's accomplishments and shortcomings, as well as feedback mechanisms to report on the effectiveness of implementation. The Ministry of ICT Affairs should be established by the FGN in order to establish ICT implementation framework assessment units in all Ministries and Parastatals, with the Permanent Secretaries serving as the heads of these units. In order to assess performance and provide input to support its efficacy, the ICT Ministry will communicate with the implementation committees at other ministries, including state ministries. Additionally, at the local, state, and federal levels, the government should pass ICT laws that require computer literacy for all public servants. Developing ICT awareness and computer literacy programmes for public employees should also be part of the policy. Once the aforementioned is completed, the difficulties will be negligible and the nation will be listed among the top nations in the world for E-governance. It should be mandatory for all public sector entities to adopt E-governance.

2. By demonstrating a high degree of E-readiness in their operations, public sector organizations may take advantage of the windows of opportunity that E-governance offers in their quest to improve service quality. The government must implement everything that is required, particularly what they are able to do. For example, make sure that every office has a working computer, hire highly qualified ICT staff, and provide ongoing training to staff members so they are aware of the best ways to use E-governance to provide efficient service delivery, among other things.
3. The government must also provide the infrastructure needed to support the successful implementation of E-governance in Nigeria's public sector in order to improve service delivery. For example, reliable broadband services, a necessary internet network, and the availability of power supply are all important factors that must be addressed because they have been identified as one of the main obstacles to the public sector's adoption of E-governance. This means that the public sector's ability to successfully implement E-governance is dependent on the availability of power supply, in this case, electricity. Additionally, government offices must have internet access and be manned by qualified and trained personnel. Finally, the human element must be taken into account. This is significant because human beings are the ones who will drive technology; therefore, their willingness is crucial to the success or failure of E-governance implementation in Nigeria's public sector. This is because they have the power to stifle any innovation and advantages that E-governance promises to offer. Therefore, the government must carefully address the human factor issue, which frequently shows up as resistance to change, casual attitudes, and the like. This issue is the reason why most government-installed ICT facilities are underutilized, particularly in offices or departments that tend to embrace E-governance in their operations, undermining the government's good efforts.

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