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AN OVERVIEW OF E-GOVERNANCE DEPLOYMENT AND PENETRATION IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF IBARAPA EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
Low e-governance deployment and penetration in Ibarapa East Local Government, Eruwa have negative impact on the ability of the local government to deliver public service in an effective and efficient way. Limited financial capacity of the local government and low ICT literacy level of the grassroots dwellers were among the factors responsible for this situation. This study deployed a descriptive empirical approach through the use of questionnaire to elicit responses from 300 residents of the three major communities making-up the local government. The study revealed that though there exists basic Global System Mobile-Communication (GSM) infrastructure in the area, yet the local government has not adequately deployed its e-governance capabilities to drive the local government public service delivery. The conclusion drawn from this research was that though finance infusion needed for deployment and penetration of e-governance platforms remained insufficient yet respondents believed that prudent financial management and proper utilization of available personnel could go a long way to setting the pace for improved e-governance public service delivery in Ibarapa East Local Government, Eruwa.

Keywords: E-governance, e-governance deployment, E-governance penetration, Local Government, Low.

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Introduction

The emergence of internet connectivities and advance communication technology has brought rapid change to administration of human and material resources of the world thereby revolutionizing the conduct of government business across all tiers. The objective essence of this change is to improve the delivery of government services to citizens, business and enhance inter-governmental relations. There are clear effort by Ibarapa East Local Government Area, Eruwa to align itself to provision of service pertaining to its functions to the people of the area using e-governance, however, the challenges of weak communication infrastructure, low literacy born out of poverty and official finance maladministration if not outright corruption is mitigating government effort to provide its services to the citizen through the deployment of internet.

Internet system was first introduced in Nigeria in 1992 through the provision of limited email service through mobile telecoms Eneng, 2022. The Guardian however, reported that by 1995, the Regional Information Network of Africa (RINAF) in collaboration with Rose Clayton Nigeria Limited started the provision of full internet services at the Department of Computer Science, Yaba College of Technology through the Nigerian Postal Service (NIPOST). The licenses for Global System for Mobile Communication was granted to telecommunication companies in 1998, setting the ground for the operations of internet connectivity in the country by the end of 2003 (Enang, 2022).

The evidence of the possibility of the strength of communication technology had been well established in Ibarapa East Local Government Area, Eruwa even before the advent or introduction of Global System of Mobilecommunication (GSM) in February 2001 by the Olusegun Obasanjo administration (Olaoluwa, 2019). The predecessor entity for what are today's GSM providers was the Nigerian Telecommunication Limited (NITEL); a public enterprise of the Federal Government of Nigeria. In the 1980s, NITEL had establish one its Satelite Earth Station for External Communication in Lanlate the second biggest community in the local government (Olaoluwa, 2019).

The access that the people of Ibarapa East Local Government, Eruwa had to analogue and digital telephones were early and massive and this instigated them to wholehearted embraced the opportunities that GSM provided in its early days as they erected tall bamboo trees and arrayed with some wire connections, attaching same to one or two mobile phones (Nokia 3310) that served as pay-phones. These were before the construction of base stations (B.S) in the LGA. These early attempts to mitigate the infrastructural gap of the late entrant of basestations to the local government was done to ensure that the communities were not isolated from the transformative possibilities of GSM operations.

Similarly, few individuals who are majorly civil servants, market traders, especially, who resided outside of Ibarapa East Local Government Area, Eruwa but who week-in, week-out travelled in and out of the LGA but whose business and activities had to keep for days within the local government sought refuge in communicating with their families and business partners outside Ibarapaland by climbing mountains and trees in specific locations that through chances and explorations have been identified and designated as places where network connections can be gotten mainly due to the wavelength and electromagnetic transfers of some installations from not too far towns from Eruwa like Abeokuta, Iseyin and Ibadan.

However, as time progressed the first mobile telecom base station in Ibarapa East Local Government, Eruwa was activated in the year 2005 by MTN and it was located at OritaEruwa. Other base stations by rival GSM operators followed in quick successions but not without it attendance challenges, especially, the problems of lack of network connection due to limited capacity of operators to service the stations with adequate power supply, vandalism of installed facilities, theft of fuel, and sometimes absolute lack of capacity to operate the facility by the locals employed to oversee them. Nevertheless, the base stations became operational in the Local Government Area and services became improved in term of availability, and the issue of access by rural dwellers becamepronounced since the cost of Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) card was on the high side. This situation continue until Vmobile, the successor operator of Econet completed its base station at OritaEruwa in 2007. This operator in its attempt to have a fair share of Ibarapa East Local Government Area , Eruwa mobile market embarked on distributing its SIM cards to students in the then The Polytechnic, Ibadan, Eruwa campus, Oyo State College of Education, Oyo, Lanlate Campus and the general population at reduced prices with the proviso that subscribers must recharge to the tune of Five Hundred Naira in the first instance. This scenario saw an upsurge in the number of persons with active mobile lines within the Local Government Area thereby enhancing internet penetration and the possibility of e-governance deployment for the conduct of government business, social engagement, political mobilization and fair/better coordination of private business activities within the area.

Definition of terms

E-governance

E-governance is a far broader classification of the activities of government through the use of ICT. The idea of official institutional administration through electronics means is known ase-government. E-government forms a subset, yet a major one at that, of e-governance. Meaning that e-governance encompasses e-government and all the use of ICT by government and civil society to promote greater participation of citizens in the governance of political institutions (Palvia and Sharma, 2007). This idea covers the deployment of electronic technology by government to galvanise support, elicit favourable views and opinions for policies and programmes in an efficient manner that engender widespread publicity among members of the society (Ododo and Anigbata, 2015).

E-governance is attractive because it allows for e-service delivery, that is where and when government can provide information and services at reduced cost, in reduced time and with greater convenience. It also aids transparency, accountability and minimizes corruption. Greater access to information, procedures and processes increase transparency, ensure accountability and checks corrupt practices since citizen are aware of the issues involved in the activities they are participating in. similarly, it allows for increased participation by people. The opportunity of easy access to government services enable citizens to develop faith and trust in government. When this happens, citizens' readiness to volunteer information become enhanced and feedback channels are well utilized (Oghuvbu, Gberevbie and Oni, 2022).

Local Government

This is a political subdivision of a constituent unit or non-central government in a federal system, which is constituted by law and has substantial control over local affairs including the powers to impose taxes or exact labour for prescribed purposes, the governing body for such an entity which is elected or otherwise locally selected (Abubakar, 2022). The guideline for Local Government Reform, 1976 cited in Egunjobi (2020) view it as, Government at the

local level exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas.

E-governance penetration

E-governance penetration is the extent and effectiveness of how government digital services are accessed and utilized by citizens, business and other stakeholders. Penetration means the proportion of the population using e-governance services. Factors as internet accessibility, digital literacy, infrastructural (quantity and quality) are the determinants of penetration in any society (United, 2020; Bhatragar, 2004; Heeks, 2006).

E-governance deployment

This refers to the process of planning, developing and implementing digital tools and platforms that allows government to deliver services, communicate, and interact with citizens electronically. Deployment comprises everything including building the necessary technological infrastructure such as websites, apps and databases) to integrating different government services like healthcare, education, roads, commerce, extension service etc. into a unified digital system. Factors as accessibility, security, user-friendliness and meeting community needs are crucial, while ensuring adequate training for government officials, ensuring cybersecurity firewalls and promoting digital services to encourage usage among citizens (Palvia and Sherma, 2007).

Low

The word low can convey different meanings depending on the context. In this particular context it means when something is below average in amount, extent and/or intensity (Oxford Dictionary 2020). It can also be said to be a situation where something is smaller than the usual amount or level that is considered appropriate (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024). It similarly means that there exist in less degree or intensity or amount something that is required. Again, it is the state of having something in small quantity or for something to be insufficient. Synonyms such as small, little, minimal reflect the usage of the word “low” in this paper.

Ibarapa East Local Government Area, Eruwa at a glance

Ibarapa East Local Government Area is one of the 33 administrative councils within Oyo State, Nigeria (OYSG, 2021). It is located in the southwestern part of Nigeria and forms part of the larger Ibarapa region. The region is known for its rich culture, agricultural productivity and rural landscapes (Ojo, 2014). Eruwa is the administrative headquarters of the Local Government Area. The economy of the local government is primarily agriculture-driven, though it gets the bulk of its revenue from monthly allocation from the Federation Accounts. The local government by design plays a role in local administration, infrastructure development and service delivery support for rural communities through the provision of basic amenities.The Local Government Area houses two tertiary institutions owned by Oyo State Government i.e. the AdeseunOgundoyin Polytechnic, Eruwa and Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate (the only state-owned college of education). It also housed the now moribund Nigerian Satellite Earth Station, (subsidiary of the defunct Nigeria Telecommunications Company Limited, NITEL), former United African Company (UAC) farm, one of the branches of Obasanjo Farms Nigeria Limited, Femo West Africa Limited (a industrial and engineering concern), Femo Scorpion Football Club and numerous other entities too many to mention here.

Ibarapa East Local Government Area, Eruwa just like other public institutions in Nigeria have had its fair share of ups and downs and it is therefore appropriate that this study be conducted to avail everyone concerned about the stability of local government administration and the central position it holds in the provision of infrastructural services at grassroots the opportunity of reinventing its capacity to drive national development from the bottom-top approach the significant of e-governance deployment and penetration in modern-day public administration.

Local government administration in the era of e-governance

Again, it is suffice to state that electronic governance or e-governance is the application or deployment of information and communication technology (ICT) or internet connectivity in the delivery of government services. The central focus is to allowfor interchange of information that can aid government policies and transactions, and the coordination of various individual level activities of ministries, departments and agencies including tiers of government in a way that would maximize the attainment of the set objectives that government has planned as its target. The effective administration of a community relies so much on the availability of data which is encapsulated in its easy of collection, storage and retrieval for use in addressing the needs of the community. The ever-increasing interest of the population and the dynamism that pervadedevelopment challenges in our various communities require that more effective and efficient methods of administration are deployed to ensure quality service delivery. To this end, it is not out of place to beam searchlight on information and communication technology (ICT) as tool for achieving this objective because of how it is exponentially impacting the drive towards economic advancement, social wellbeing, political mobilization, programmes coordination and cultural awareness in the public and private sectors.

Today, it is safe to affirm that without some form of ICT deployment little or nothing can be meaningfully achieved in the efforts at addressing governance challenges. It is on the basis of this that this paper seeks to establish a quantitative analysis of e-governance penetration and deployment in Ibarapa East Local Government Area, Eruwa.

No doubt the world has witnessed rapid and revolutionary changes occasioned by the rise of electronic technology. These changes are limitless as they have affected all facet of human endeavor including governance. The use of electronic technology to address social, economic and political challenges in the everyday administration of a politically organized body of people is now a given and it is referred to as e-governance. E-governance improve the deliveryof government services to citizens, businesses and government agencies. The deployment of e-governance as could be seen from the statement above is not limited to public sector as it include the management and administration of policies and procedures in private sector (Fernandes and Annapoorna, 2022).

As important as e-governance is, the challenges of low literacy level among the people, poverty of the population, limited financial capacity of governments, mismanagement by officials and poor infrastructure by service providers have been identified as some of the reasons why third-world public administration institutions have not been able to fully harness the benefit inherent in e-governance deployment (Bhatnagar, 2004, Adbulrazaq and Abdulrasaq, 2016).Despite the myriads of services such as: Government to citizens (G2C), Government to Businesses (G2B), Government to Government (G2G) and Government to Employees (G2E), the deployment and penetration of e-governance remains low in public administration, especially, in local government administration in Nigeria. This study

addresses this postulation by investigating the factors mitigating internet/ICT deployment and penetration in Ibarapa East Local Government Area , Eruwa, Oyo State, Nigeria. The objectives of this study is not to generalize about the dearth of e-governance is every local governments in Nigeria but to assist in the understanding of the factors that are undermining its effects deployment and penetration in the administration of Ibarapa East Local Government Area, Eruwa.

Statement of the problem

The problem of low e-governance deployment and penetration that exist in Ibarapa East Local Government Area, Eruwa, Oyo State, Nigeriais attributable to the challenges of low literacy level of the people, poverty among the population, limited financial capacity of the LGA, mismanagement of scarce resources by officials, and poor infrastructure by service providers. These existing factors are negatively affecting citizens' participation in local affairs and it hampering effective and efficient service delivery by the local government. This situation is undermining the capacity of the local government to judiciously mobilize its human and material resources for grassroot development.

Research questions

The following research questions were deployed to elicit responses from the sample population.

1. Do you agree that there is low e-governance deployment and penetration in Ibarapa East Local Government, Eruwa, Oyo State, Nigeria?
2. Do you agree that the challenges of low literacy level of the people, poverty among the population, limited financial capacity of the LGA, mismanagement among of scarce resources by officials and poor infrastructure by service providers are the reasons for low e-governance deployment and penetration in Ibarapa East Local Government, Eruwa, Oyo State, Nigeria?
3. Do you agree that low e-governance deployment and penetration in Ibarapa East Local Government, Eruwa, Oyo State, Nigeria is negatively impacting the provision of effective and efficient service delivery?

Methodology

A questionnaire title "The impact of e-governance deployment and penetration in IELG, Eruwa, (impact_e.gov.eruwa) was developed to test the research questions raised in this study. The study as a whole adopted the descriptive method to investigate the perception of citizens of Ibarapa East Local Government Area, Eruwaabout the subject matter. Ibarapa East Local Government Area, Eruwa has 3 major communities: Eruwa (Headquarters), Lanlate and Maya. The study population is 300 respondents randomly selected equally from these 3 communities. The sampling was simultaneously carried out in the 3 communities over a period of 2 days through the use of research assistants. The self-designed structured questionnaire was divided into 3 parts with 9 items. The items were validated by researchers in the field of public policy and local government administration. The 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Strongly Disagreed (SD) and Disagreed (D) was used to generate responses from the respondents.

The instrument's co-efficient was set at 2.50 validity. To easethe burden of respondents, the questionnaires were administered to them at their various offices, shops, parks, markets and homes. The analysis of the data gathered was done using mean as could be seen from the tables below:

Table 1

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Decision
i.	There islow e-governance deployment in Ibarapa East Local Government, Eruwa	112	54	75	59	2.54	Agreed
ii.	There is low e-governance penetration in Ibarapa East Local Government, Eruwa.	109	62	58	71	2.69	Agreed
iii.	The problem of low e-governance deployment and penetration can be addressed if council managers are willing and innovative enough.	101	52	96	51	2.68	Agreed

n = 300

Table 2

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Decision
i.	Low level of literacy is responsible for low e-governance deployment and penetration in Ibarapa East, Eruwa.	97	82	80	41	2.78	Agreed
ii.	Poverty of the people and lack of fund bothering on limited resources and sometimes mismanagement are hampering e-governance deployment and penetration in Ibarapa East Local Govt., Eruwa.	104	51	96	49	2.68	Agreed
iii.	Poor infrastructure as a result of lack of adequate investment in digital technology by service providers in Ibarapa East Local Government, Eruwa is the reason for low e-governance penetration and deployment in the LGA.	87	42	93	78	2.46	Disagreed

n = 300

Table 3

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Decision
i.	Low e-governance deployment and penetration is inhibiting the provision and delivery of social and economic services to the people of Ibarapa East Local Government Areas, Eruwa.	96	63	88	53	2.94	Agreed
ii.	Inability to generate substantial financial revenue internally is attributable to low e-governance deployment & penetration in Ibarapa East Local Government Area, Eruwa.	89	69	89	53	2.86	Agreed
iii.	The human and material resources at the disposal of Ibarapa East Local Government, Eruwa is sufficient to drive e-governance deployment and penetration for service delivery in the LGA.	58	93	110	39	2.56	Agreed

n = 300

Discussion of findings

Table 1: Investigated the question of whether there is low e-governance deployment and penetration in Ibarapa East Local Government, Eruwa, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Findings showed that responded agreed to this notion. Similarly, the responded accepted that the problem of low e-governance deployment and penetration can be addressed even as things stand in the LGA. What this suggest is that if the managers of the council can be more innovative in utilizing the the human and material resources at their disposal the possibility of e-governance deployment and penetration is achievable. The final analysis that can be inferred from this is that the people consider that administrators of LGA need to do more to arrive at this objective.

Table 2: This section interrogated the question of whether the challenges of low literacy, poverty, corruption and poor infrastructure are the reasons for the low e-governance deployment and penetration in the local government. Findings revealed that the challenges of low literacy, poverty, limited fund and mismanagement at the level of the people and the local government council are hampering the deployment and penetration of e-governance in the LGA. However, the same cannot be said concerning the level of ICT infrastructure availability in the local government. The responses showed that if the council is willing and ready the infrastructure and level of services being provided by the telecom service providers operating in the area is good enough to drive e-governance services of the local government.

Table 3: This segment addressed the question of whether low e-governance deployment and penetration in IELG, Eruwa is negatively impacting the provisions of effective and efficient service delivery. Here, findings revealed that there is a general agreement that provision of social and economic services are being inhibited because low e-governance deployment and penetration. Similarly, the inability to generate reasonably high financial revenue internally is attributed to lack of e-governance deployment and penetration, just as the respondents agreed that human and material resources at the disposal of Ibarapa East Local Government is sufficient to drive e-governance deployment and penetration for effective and efficient service delivery.

Conclusion

The study has revealed that there is low e-governance deployment and penetration in Ibarapa East Local Government, Eruwa, Oyo State, Nigeria, this position confirms the postulations of Fernandes and Annapoorna (2022). This situation is hampering the effective delivery of services to the people of the local government. Evidence showed that internet connectivity is are yet to be adequately utilized to aid governance in the administration of Ibarapa East Local Government, Eruwa despite the opportunity inherent in its usage. There is also the obvious challenge of poverty, low literacy, limited financial capacity and sometimes mismanagement mitigating the deployment and penetration of e-governance in the administration of the local government. It is the light of the recognition of the significant of immediate commencement of the use of e-governance platforms by the LGA that the following recommendations below are suggested.

Recommendation

Considering the very important role that ICT plays in administration and management of public affairs globally, it is essential for Ibarapa East Local Government, Eruwa to embrace the deployment and penetration of e-governance to enhance service delivery, cut mismanagement, mobilize socio-economic and political support and device a bottom-top development initiative. For these to happen, the following steps are recommended:

- **Preparation**: The local government should undertake to identify areas of intervention, determine existing infrastructure, and potential partners, by building stakeholders engagement, especially, locals and community leaders in the planning and preparation process for e-governance deployment while outlining goals, objectives, and timeliness for the types of e-governance platforms being selected.
- **Build Basic Infrastructure:** Effort must be made to establish reliable internet connectivity by partnering with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to improve communities' networks. Attempt should also be made to attract low-cost devices or promote device-sharing programmes while also creating public internet access points.
- **Training Grassroots dwellers:**The Ibarapa East Local Government Area, Eruwa, Oyo State, Nigeria should organize basic computer skills acquisition training programmes for market men and women, farmers, artisans, and students alike to enhance usage by the people. The local government should also teach online safety and digital citizenship to their citizens and employees. The council should also develop localized content by creating relevant and accessible digital contents relatable to grassroots people. It must be noted that digital literacy may not be entirely hampered by lack of education, though it is a mitigating factor, therefore continuous exposure to train can help to ameliorate this problem.
- **Deploy e-governance platforms**: The local government should leverage on the open-source solution by utilizing cost-effective and customizable platforms like the OpenGov, and CivicPlatform to drive and engage their people in the delivery of public service. Resources as cloud-based service which gives opportunity for security and scale; and the mobile-first approach that allows engagement through mobile devices due to its limited bandwidth should be utilized.
- **Seek funds and partnership**:Since the challenge of limited funds in a major impediment, the local government should seek collaboration with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who have experience in digital inclusion. Similarly, the government can access funding, resources, and expertise from other levels/tiers of government for the purpose of e-governance deployment and penetration. Again, engaging community members in fundraising is another means to raise part of the financial resource needed to drive this agenda.
- **Fight mismanagement, wastage, and other unwholesome practices**:There must be monitoring and evaluation by tracking key performanceindicators (KPIs) by monitoring usage, evaluating user satisfaction, and assessing impact on service delivery through the conduct of regular survey to evaluate progress and identify areas of challenges.One other way to check wastage, mismanagement and other unwholesome behaviours is to constantly engage the communities heads, market leaders, artisans heads, youths leaders, religious heads, the general population, and traditional rulers by soliciting regular feedbacks on e-governance deployment and penetration in the LGA. Similarly, officials of the council must exhibit transparency and openness in the use of government resources. The bottomline is that there should be greater accountability on government utilization of resources officials, agencies and institutions responsible for doing so in Ibarapa East Local Government, Eruwa.

It is believed that if these recommendations are followed, Ibarapa East Local Government Area, Eruwa, Oyo State, Nigeria can commence the drive the deployment and penetration of e-governance for the administration and management of its affairs despite the challenges identified. This situation would lead to the establishment of a solid base for effective and efficient service delivery in the area.

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