

Viewpoints of Nigeria's South-South Residents on Digital Communication, Transparency and Accountability in Governance in the Country

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Abstract:

This study investigated the perspectives of residents in Nigeria's South-South region of Nigeria on the role of digital communication in promoting transparency and accountability in governance. The objectives of the research were threefold: to determine if digital communication is being utilised in the pursuit of transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria; to assess the extent to which digital communication is being deployed in this pursuit; and to identify the challenges associated with digital communication in achieving transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria. Using a quantitative approach, the study surveyed 385 residents in the South-South region. It made use of the Social Influence Theory (SIT) and the Technological Determinism Theory (TDT). The study found that digital communication is minimally employed in the quest for transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria. The study also discovered that digital communication is being deployed in a low extent in the quest for transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria. The findings further revealed that there are significant challenges hindering the effective use of digital communication in governance, including inadequate infrastructure, lack of digital literacy, and regulatory hurdles. It concluded that digital communication has the potential to enhance transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria, but its effectiveness is contingent upon addressing the identified challenges. It was recommended that policymakers and stakeholders prioritise addressing these challenges to unlock the full potential of digital communication in promoting transparency and accountability in governance. Specifically, the study suggests that the government should invest in digital infrastructure, implement digital literacy programmes, and streamline regulatory processes to facilitate the effective use of digital communication in governance.

Keywords:

Accountability, Digital Communication, Transparency, Governance, Viewpoints

I. Introduction

In the contemporary era, mass media and digital communication technologies have become pivotal in shaping governance processes worldwide (Chadwick, 2013; Norris, 2001). The advent of digital technologies has transformed how information is disseminated, consumed, and utilised, significantly impacting the dynamics of governance and accountability. Nigeria, as Africa's most populous country and a leading economy, presents a unique context for examining the intersection of media, digital communication, and governance (Okoro, 2013). The country has a vibrant media landscape, characterised by numerous print, broadcast, and online platforms, and is home to a burgeoning digital ecosystem. However, despite these developments, the media's capacity to leverage digital communication technologies for monitoring governance remains questionable.

No doubt, digital communication technologies, encompassing social media, online news platforms, and various digital tools, have revolutionised journalism and media practices globally (Yellowbrick, 2023). These technologies enable real-time information sharing, interactive engagement with audiences, and comprehensive data analysis, all of which are crucial for effective governance monitoring. In Nigeria, where governance issues such as corruption, inefficiency, and lack of transparency are prevalent, the media's role in holding government accountable is indispensable.

The media are expected to ensure transparency and accountability of governments' financial activities (Yar'Adua et al., 2023). Hence, while calling on the media, the Office of the Auditor-General, Public Accounts Committee, and Civil Society to ensure performance audits are carried out to access implementation of government programmes, projects and policies, and to make sure certain accountability documents such as the citizens accountability reports are published online and timeously, and sustain participation in the audit process, Paradigmme Leadership Support Initiative's (PLSI) Programme Officer, Abdullahi Adebayo, notes that participation mechanisms' sustenance also constituted accountability gaps in the audit process (Ekene, 2024). However, the extent to which Nigerian media leverage digital communication technologies remains underexplored.

This study, probed into the interplay between these technologies and the media's role in monitoring governance in Nigeria (Yar'Adua et al., 2023). Pointedly, it sought to ascertain the extent to which media practitioners in Nigeria employ digital communication technologies in their operations, to identify the challenges faced, and propose solutions to enhance their efficacy in promoting transparent and accountable governance. The study aimed to provide empirical insights into the media's utilisation of digital technologies and the associated challenges. The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform policy and practice, ultimately enhancing the media's role in governance monitoring and fostering a more transparent and accountable government in Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The governance system in Nigeria has been plagued by numerous challenges, including corruption, lack of transparency, and poor accountability. These challenges have had a significant impact on the country's development and the well-being of its citizens. The South-South region of Nigeria, in particular, has been affected by these challenges, with the region's natural resources contributing to the prevalence of corruption and poor governance (Msughter & Pate, 2021).

Despite the potential of digital communication to enhance transparency and accountability in governance, the deployment of these technologies in Nigeria has been limited. The country's digital infrastructure is still underdeveloped, particularly in rural areas, and there is a lack of digital literacy among citizens (Guanah et al., 2020). This has hindered the effective integration of digital communication into governance processes.

Furthermore, the lack of a clear digital communication strategy that aligns with the country's governance objectives has also contributed to the limited deployment of these technologies in governance. This has resulted in a disconnect between the potential benefits of digital communication and its actual impact on transparency and accountability in governance (Msughter, 2019). The viewpoints of Nigeria's South-South residents on the role of digital communication in enhancing transparency and accountability in governance are important in understanding the challenges and opportunities associated with the deployment of these technologies. When these viewpoints are adequately explored, the study can provide valuable

insights that can inform the development of policies and strategies to effectively integrate digital communication into the governance processes in Nigeria.

1.2 Objectives of the study

1. To determine if digital communication is being employed in the quest for transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria
2. To ascertain the extent digital communication is being deployed in the quest for transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria
3. To identify digital communication's challenges in the quest for transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Theoretical Anchor

This study is anchored on the Social Influence Theory (SIT) and the Technological Determinism Theory (TDT). The Social Influence Theory (SIT) provides a framework for understanding how individuals adjust their behaviour to meet the demands of a social environment (social pressures and expectations). The theory, originally developed by Herbert Kelman in the 1950s, identifies three main processes through which social influence can occur, that is, compliance, identification, and internalization (Papagiannidis & Davlembayeva, 2024).

Compliance occurs when individuals publicly conform to the expectations of others, but privately maintain their own dissenting opinions. This type of influence is often driven by a desire to be liked, or to avoid social sanctions. Identification happens when individuals accept influence from someone they respect or admire, such as a celebrity or authority figure. In this case, the individual adopts the influenced behaviour or belief because they want to maintain a relationship with the influencing agent. Internalization, on the other hand, occurs when individuals fully accept a belief or behaviour and agree with it both publicly and privately. This type of influence is driven by a desire to be right and to align with one's personal values and beliefs.

Recent research has expanded on Kelman's original theory, proposing a decision tree model that differentiates between various types of interpersonal influence, including unintentional and unconscious forms of influence (Papagiannidis & Davlembayeva, 2024). This model highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of social influence, which can occur through both explicit and implicit processes (Papagiannidis & Davlembayeva, 2024).

In the past, SIT has been applied to the study of consumer behaviour, with researchers proposing a "social influence theory of consumer cooperation" (Godwin, 1987). This framework suggests that consumers can engage in cooperative behaviours, such as following instructions or participating in the service production process, based on the same processes of compliance, identification, and internalization (Godwin, 1987).

As the world navigates the "new normal" brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, social influence theory has become increasingly relevant in understanding how individuals and communities respond to social and behavioural changes (Weng, 2022). Researchers have proposed a "theory of social influence in the new normal," which explores how social influence processes may be altered or amplified in the context of the pandemic (Weng, 2022).

The Social Influence Theory is relevant to this study because the identified three main processes through which social influence can occur (compliance, identification, and internalization) can help explain how digital communication may influence the viewpoints and behaviours of Nigeria's South-South residents regarding transparency and accountability in governance. The theory also highlights the role of informational influence (social proof) and normative influence (conformity to social expectations) in shaping individual and group behaviours. These concepts can be applied to understand how digital communication platforms may impact the perceptions and actions of South-South residents towards governance transparency and accountability (Msughter et al., 2023).

Besides, SIT emphasises the importance of social networks in the diffusion of ideas, behaviours, and influence. This is particularly relevant in the context of digital communication, where social media platforms can facilitate the spread of information and shape the viewpoints of South-South residents on governance-related issues. Also, the theory acknowledges that social influence is affected by various contextual factors, such as the strength, immediacy, and number of influencing agents. These factors can be relevant in understanding the specific dynamics of digital communication and its impact on transparency and accountability in the South-South region of Nigeria.

The Technological Determinism Theory (TDT), the second theory of this study, posits that technological developments have a deterministic influence on societal change, shaping behaviour, values, and structures within a given society. It suggests that technologies possess inherent qualities and affordances that actively shape how individuals and institutions interact with each other and their environment (Winner, 1986). According to this theory, technological innovations are not neutral tools, but, rather, agents of social transformation that impose their own logic and constraints on human activities (Bijker, Hughes, & Pinch, 1987).

The theory argues that the introduction of new technologies can lead to profound societal impacts, often altering cultural practices, economic systems, and political dynamics (Williams, 2014). For instance, the advent of digital communication technologies has revolutionised communication patterns globally, enabling instant global connectivity and reshaping traditional media landscapes (Castells, 2000).

The theory aligns with this study because it provides a framework to understand how digital technologies influence media practices and their role in governance monitoring. The theory suggests that the adoption and integration of digital communication technologies by Nigerian media organisations are not merely passive responses but transformative processes that reshape journalistic practices and public engagement. For example, digital platforms such as social media and online news portals empower Nigerian media to disseminate information rapidly and interactively engage with audiences (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2006). These technologies facilitate real-time reporting, data-driven analysis, and enhanced public scrutiny of governance processes, potentially increasing transparency and accountability (Olorunnisola, 2014).

However, the theory also highlights the reciprocal relationship between technology and society. While digital technologies offer new opportunities for media and governance, their impact is mediated by social, political, and economic factors (Castells, 2000). In Nigeria, challenges such as regulatory constraints, digital infrastructure limitations, and disparities in digital literacy among journalists influence the extent to which media can harness these technologies effectively (Olorunnisola, 2014).

2.2 Transparency and accountability in governance: An Overview.

Transparency and accountability in governance are fundamental principles that underpin democratic systems and effective public administration (Guanah, 2022). These concepts are closely intertwined, and they play a crucial role in fostering trust between citizens and their government, promoting good governance, and combating corruption.

Transparency in governance refers to the openness of government processes, procedures, and decision-making to public scrutiny. It involves the free flow of information from government bodies to citizens, allowing them to understand how and why decisions are made. This principle is essential for informed citizen participation and helps to ensure that government actions align with public interest (Guanah, 2024). Transparency can be manifested through various means, such as open access to government documents, public hearings, and the proactive disclosure of information (Grimmelikhuijsen, Porumbescu, Hong, & Im, 2013).

Accountability, on the other hand, refers to the obligation of government officials and institutions to answer for their actions, and be held responsible for their performance. It involves mechanisms through which citizens can hold their representatives answerable for their conduct and the outcomes of their decisions. Accountability can be vertical (between citizens and elected officials) or horizontal (between different branches of government), and it is essential for preventing the abuse of power and ensuring that public resources are used efficiently and effectively (Bovens, 2007; Guanah et al., 2023).

The relationship between transparency and accountability is symbiotic. Transparency provides the information necessary for citizens and oversight bodies to hold government accountable, while accountability mechanisms create incentives for governments to be more transparent. Together, they form a virtuous cycle that can lead to improved governance outcomes (Hood, 2010; Guanah, 2024).

However, implementing these principles is not without challenges. Governments may resist transparency due to concerns about national security, privacy, or the potential for information to be misinterpreted. Moreover, too much transparency can sometimes lead to information overload, or decision-making paralysis. On the accountability front, complex bureaucratic structures and the technical nature of many government functions can make it difficult for citizens to effectively hold officials accountable (Cucciniello, Porumbescu & Grimmelikhuijsen, 2017; Guanah, 2022).

Despite these challenges, the importance of transparency and accountability in governance continues to grow, particularly in the digital age. E-government initiatives, open data portals, and social media platforms are increasingly being used to enhance government openness and citizen engagement (Guanah, 2024; Nwafor et al., 2024). These technological advancements offer new opportunities for promoting transparency and accountability, but they also bring new challenges related to data privacy, digital divide, and the spread of misinformation (Bertot, Jaeger & Grimes, 2012; Guanah et al., 2023).

2.3 The Role of Digital Communication in Promoting Transparency and Accountability in Governance

The role of digital communication in promoting transparency and accountability in governance has become increasingly significant in the modern era (Owens-Ibie & Aondover, 2024). Digital technologies have transformed the way governments interact with citizens,

disseminate information, and conduct their operations, leading to potentially greater openness and responsiveness in public administration.

At the forefront of this transformation is the enhanced accessibility of government information. Digital platforms such as websites, social media, and mobile applications have made it easier for governments to share data, policies, and decisions with the public. This increased accessibility allows citizens to stay informed about government activities, fostering a more transparent environment. For instance, many governments now publish budgets, expenditure reports, and legislative proceedings online, enabling citizens to scrutinise public spending and policy-making processes (Bertot et al., 2012; Vitalis et al., 2025).

Social media platforms, in particular, have emerged as powerful tools for real-time communication between government officials and citizens. These platforms enable immediate dissemination of information, especially during crises or emergencies. Moreover, they provide a space for citizens to directly engage with their representatives, ask questions, and voice concerns. This two-way communication can enhance accountability by allowing citizens to challenge government actions and demand explanations (Mergel, 2013).

Open data initiatives have also played an important role in promoting transparency. By making large datasets available to the public, governments enable citizens, journalists, and researchers to independently analyse government performance and decision-making processes. This practice can lead to increased accountability as it becomes more difficult to conceal inefficiencies or misconduct (Janssen, Charalabidis, & Zuiderwijk, 2012).

However, the effectiveness of digital communication in promoting transparency and accountability faces several challenges (Mojaye & Aondover, 2022). The digital divide remains a significant barrier, as not all citizens have equal access to digital technologies or the skills to use them effectively. Also, concerns about privacy, data security, and the spread of misinformation can undermine trust in digital governance initiatives (Bannister & Connolly, 2011).

2.4 The Utilisation of Digital Communication in the Pursuit of Transparency and Accountability in Governance in Nigeria

Digital communication has emerged as a powerful tool in the pursuit of transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria, a country grappling with long-standing challenges of corruption and opaque governance (Maikaba & Msughter, 2019). The advent of digital platforms has opened new avenues for citizen engagement and government oversight, transforming the landscape of public administration in Africa's most populous nation. Social media platforms, in particular, have become instrumental in amplifying citizens' voices and demanding accountability from public officials.

Platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook have been used to organise protests, share information about government activities, and expose corruption, as seen during the #EndSARS movement in 2020 (Akerle-Popoola, Azeez & Adeniyi, 2022; Omoera & Guanah), and recently the #EndBadGovernance protest in Nigeria.

The Nigerian government has also taken steps to leverage digital communication for improved transparency. The implementation of the Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS) represents a significant effort to digitise financial transactions and reduce corruption in public spending (Olurankinse & Oloruntoba, 2018). Likewise, the creation of online portals for government services has aimed to reduce face-to-face

interactions that often breed corruption, although the effectiveness of these initiatives has been mixed due to infrastructure challenges and digital literacy issues (Idris & Msughter, 2022).

However, the utilisation of digital communication for transparency in Nigeria faces significant hurdles. The digital divide remains a pressing concern, with a substantial portion of the population lacking access to the Internet or digital devices, particularly in rural areas (Adeleke, 2020). This inequality in access limits the reach and effectiveness of digital transparency initiatives. Moreover, there have been instances of government attempts to control digital spaces, such as the X (formerly Twitter) ban in Nigeria in 2021, which raised concerns about the state's commitment to digital openness (Anyim, 2021).

Despite these challenges, civil society organisations and tech-savvy citizens continue to push for greater utilisation of digital tools in governance. Initiatives like BudgIT, which uses digital platforms to simplify and disseminate budget information to the public, demonstrate the potential of digital communication in fostering transparency (Budgit, 2022). As Nigeria continues to navigate its path towards more open governance, the role of digital communication remains crucial, albeit complex and evolving (Hile et al., 2023).

It is important to note that while digital communication offers promising avenues for transparency and accountability in Nigerian governance, its impact is contingent upon broader systemic reforms, improved digital infrastructure, and a genuine commitment from both government and citizens to leverage these tools for positive change. The ongoing interplay between technological advancements and socio-political realities will likely shape the future trajectory of transparency efforts in Nigeria's governance landscape.

2.5 Challenges Associated With Digital Communication in Achieving Transparency and Accountability in Governance in Nigeria

Digital communication has emerged as a powerful tool for promoting transparency and accountability in governance, yet its implementation in Nigeria faces numerous challenges. These obstacles stem from a complex interplay of technological, socio-economic, and political factors that characterize the Nigerian context (Aondover et al., 2022).

One of the primary challenges is the persistent digital divide in Nigeria. Despite significant growth in internet penetration, a large portion of the population, particularly in rural areas, still lacks access to digital technologies. This inequality in access limits the reach and effectiveness of digital transparency initiatives, potentially exacerbating existing disparities in citizens' ability to engage with and hold the government accountable (Adeleke, 2020).

Infrastructure deficiencies pose another significant hurdle. Unreliable electricity supply and inadequate telecommunications infrastructure in many parts of the country hamper the consistent use of digital platforms for government-citizen interactions. These technical limitations can undermine the reliability and accessibility of digital transparency tools, reducing their effectiveness in promoting accountability (Shenkoya, 2023; Aondover, 2024).

Low digital literacy rates among a significant portion of the population also present a challenge. Many Nigerians lack the skills necessary to effectively navigate digital platforms and engage with online government services. This knowledge gap can lead to the exclusion of certain demographics from digital governance initiatives, potentially reinforcing existing power imbalances (Okafor, 2023).

Guanah and Guanah (2022) admit that cyberspace is important to every sphere of human life or operations, and there is hardly anything that can be done today without the use of cyberspace. They adumbrate that ensuring cyber security requires coordinated efforts throughout an information system. The issue of cybersecurity and data protection is another critical concern. As more government operations move online, the risk of cyber-attacks and data breaches increases. Inadequate cybersecurity measures can compromise the integrity of digital governance systems, potentially exposing sensitive information and eroding public trust in these initiatives (Sule, Yahaya, Sambo & Mat, 2021).

Political resistance to transparency also poses a significant challenge. Some government officials may be reluctant to embrace digital communication tools that increase scrutiny of their actions. This resistance can manifest in various forms, from the deliberate withholding of information to the manipulation of digital platforms for political gain (Abasilim & Edet, 2015). Moreover, the spread of misinformation and disinformation through digital channels presents a complex challenge. While digital communication can enhance transparency, it can also be used to spread false or misleading information, potentially undermining accountability efforts and eroding public trust in government institutions (Hassan, 2023; Aliyu et al., 2023).

Lastly, the legal and regulatory framework surrounding digital communication and e-governance in Nigeria is still evolving. The lack of comprehensive legislation on data protection, digital rights, and online civic engagement can create uncertainty and limit the effectiveness of digital transparency initiatives (Luminate, 2021).

2.6 The Intersection of Digital Communication, Transparency and Accountability and Governance

The intersection of digital communication, transparency, accountability, and governance represents a crucial nexus in modern public administration, shaping the way governments interact with citizens and conduct their operations. This convergence has led to significant transformations in the landscape of governance, offering new opportunities for openness and citizen engagement while also presenting unique challenges.

Digital communication technologies have revolutionised the potential for transparency in governance. Government agencies can now disseminate information rapidly and widely through websites, social media platforms, and mobile applications (Aondover et al., 2025). This ease of information sharing has made it possible for citizens to access government data, policies, and decisions more readily than ever before. For instance, many governments now publish budgets, expenditure reports, and legislative proceedings online, allowing for greater public scrutiny of government actions (Bertot et al., 2012).

The enhanced transparency facilitated by digital communication directly feeds into increased accountability. With more information available to the public, citizens, civil society organisations, and the media are better equipped to monitor government activities and hold officials responsible for their actions. Digital platforms also provide new channels for citizens to voice their concerns, ask questions, and demand explanations from their representatives, fostering a more interactive and responsive form of governance (Meijer, 2009).

E-governance initiatives have emerged as a key manifestation of this intersection. These initiatives leverage digital technologies to deliver government services, facilitate citizen participation in decision-making processes, and streamline administrative procedures. E-

governance can potentially reduce corruption by minimizing face-to-face interactions in administrative processes and creating digital trails of transactions (Andersen, 2009).

Social media, in particular, has become a powerful tool at this intersection. It allows for real-time communication between government officials and citizens, enabling immediate dissemination of information and rapid response to public concerns (Aondover et al., 2025). This immediacy can be particularly crucial during crises or emergencies, where timely and accurate information is essential (Mergel, 2013).

However, the intersection of these elements also presents significant challenges. The digital divide remains a pressing issue, with disparities in access to technology potentially exacerbating existing inequalities in citizens' ability to engage with government. Privacy concerns and the risk of data breaches also pose significant challenges, as governments must balance the push for transparency with the need to protect sensitive information (Bannister & Connolly, 2011).

Moreover, the abundance of information made available through digital channels can sometimes lead to information overload, making it difficult for citizens to discern what is truly important or relevant. The spread of misinformation and disinformation through digital platforms also poses a threat to the integrity of public discourse and the effectiveness of transparency initiatives (Flew, Martin & Suzor, 2019).

2.7 Empirical Review

There are some studies that explore similar themes related to digital communication, transparency, and accountability in governance in Nigeria; for instance, Shenkoya's (2023) research titled "Can digital transformation improve transparency and accountability of public governance in Nigeria?" examines how digital transformation, driven by the fourth industrial revolution, can enhance transparency and accountability in Nigerian governance. It highlights the current technological infrastructure challenges and suggests solutions for improving governance through digital means

Bassey-Duke and Etta (2021) studied "Development Communication, Digital Media and Democracy in Nigeria." This article appraises the role of digital media in fostering participatory development communication and democracy in Nigeria. It discusses how digital media platforms can strengthen transparency and accountability in the governance process. In their study "Online Media and Global Communication Research in Nigeria," Mojaye and Ogunyombo (2022) review articles on online media and global communication published in Nigerian academic journals.

The study highlights the focus on social media and the challenges faced by Nigerian communication researchers, such as lack of funding. Ashiru, Nakpodia and You's (2022) study, titled "Adapting Emerging Digital Communication Technologies for Resilience," explores how emerging digital communication technologies affected SMEs' resilience during the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. It provides insights into how digital communication can facilitate connections, collaborations, and process diversification.

III. Research Methods

This study was situated in the South-South region of Nigeria that has the main oil producing States that collect the highest monthly allocation of fund from the federal government coffers, due to the 13% derivation they receive. Management of these funds need accountability

and transparency. Though the region is made up of six States, but this study was conducted in three selected States in the region, namely: Bayelsa, Delta and Edo States. These states were selected based on the fact they are located in the western periphery of the region, and Edo State shares boarder with Ondo State, another oil producing state, in the western region of the country.

The study's population consists of residents of the capital cities of Bayelsa, Delta and Edo States. Their capitals are cosmopolitan in nature, and can easily represent what is tenable in other states in the south-south region of Nigeria. According to World Population Review (2024), based on the Nigeria`s census of 1991 and 2006, the projected population of Yenagoa (Bayelsa State capital) is 24,335, that of Asaba (Delta State capital) is 73,374 (Asaba Travel Guide, 2024; World Population Review, 2024; GeoNames Geographical Database, 2024), and that of Benin City (capital of Edo State) is 1,973,000 (Macrotrends, 2024). Therefore, the population of this study is 2, 070,709. The sample size is 385, and it was determined using the Sample Size calculator of Calculator.net (2008) at a 95% level of acceptance (confidence level) and 5% confidence interval (margin of error), and a population proportion of 50%.

The proportionate allocation approach was used to determine the number of respondents to select from each state, according to the population of each state capital thus: Yenagoa- $24,335 \times 385 \div 2, 070,709 = 5$; Asaba- $73,374 \times 385 \div 2, 070,709 = 14$; and Benin City- $1,973,000 \times 385 \div 2, 070,709 = 366$. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents.

A questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. A total number of 385 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents, but only 365 (94.81%) copies were successfully filled and collected to be analysed for this study.

3.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1. Digital communication is being employed in the quest for transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria

Responses	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	70	19.18
Agree	105	28.77
Can't Tell	10	2.74
Disagree	76	20.82
Strongly Disagree	104	28.49
Total	365	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Likert - type five points rating scale and dichotomous was used: 5= Strongly Agree (SA), 4=Agree (A), 3= Can't Tell (CT), 2= Strongly Disagree (SD), and 1= Disagree (D) responses as well as open-ended questions. The data in Table 1 clearly show that digital communication is being minimally employed in the quest for transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria.

Table 2. The extent digital communication is being deployed in the quest for transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria

Responses	Frequency	%
Very Large	86	23.56
Large Extent	79	21.64

Can't Tell	3	0.83
Little Extent	96	26.30
Very Little	101	27.67
Total	365	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

KEYS: Very Large- 90% - 100%; Large Extent- 89% - 70%; Can't Tell- 50% - 69%; Little Extent- 40% - 49%; Very Little- 1% - 39%. Table 2 reveals that the extent digital communication is being deployed in the quest for transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria in low.

Table 3. Digital communication`s challenges in the quest for transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria

Responses	Frequency	%
Inadequate infrastructure	60	16.44
Sabotage by government officials	14	3.84
Systemic challenges	52	14.25
Lack of digital literacy	71	19.45
Epileptic electricity	34	9.32
Inadequate digital instructors	37	10.13
Regulatory hurdles	97	26.57
Total	365	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 shows that the major challenges digital communication face in the quest for transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria include inadequate digital infrastructure, lack of digital literacy among media professionals, and regulatory bottlenecks.

IV. Result and Discussion

This study found that digital communication is minimally employed in the quest for transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria. This underscores that, though technologies are employed, but their usage is generally low and often inadequate for comprehensive governance monitoring.

The reason for this minimal deployment of technology may be due to inadequate information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure which constitutes a major threat to digital open government and there is need for massive investment in digital infrastructure to ensure open and transparent government (Ake, Nwozor, Ayanrinde, Nweke-Love, Oladapo & Olanrewaju, 2022).

The study also revealed that digital communication is being deployed in a low extent in the quest for transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria. This is must be one of the reasons. Ekene (2024) reports Paradigme Leadership Support Initiative`s (PLSI) Programme Officer, Abdullahi Adebayo as identifying the absence of performance audit, legal framework and lack of transparency as major accountability gaps towards guaranteeing effective public auditing in Anambra state, and invariably, in other states in Nigeria too.

When digital communication is fully deployed to promote transparency and accountability in governance, it will ultimately lead to improved public service delivery and enhanced citizen

engagement. Where digital communication is embraced as a tool for enhancing good governance, it highlights the importance of fostering a culture of openness and collaboration between the government and citizens.

Thirdly, the study discovered that there are significant challenges hindering the effective use of digital communication in governance, such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of digital literacy, and regulatory hurdles. This finding aligns with the outcome of Ibikunle and Sarumi's (2012) study tagged "Electronic-Governance for Nigeria: Opportunities and Challenges in the Digital Era," which did not only identify the primary issues, opportunities, and challenges that e-government initiatives present for Nigeria but also highlights the inadequate ICT infrastructure, lack of trained personnel, and irregular power supply as major barriers to effective e-governance. This shows that, although digital transformation can enhance transparency and accountability, the current technological infrastructure in Nigeria is insufficient to support widespread adoption. Key infrastructures like high-speed internet and harmonised data storage systems are lacking (Shenkoya, 2023).

The challenges of digital transformation in Nigeria also include infrastructure deficits in rural areas, lack of digital skills among employees, frequent power outages, and inadequate policies. These factors collectively hinder the seamless integration of digital communication in governance (Udegbonam, Igbokwe-Ibeto & Nwafor, 2023).

V. Conclusion

Digital communication has the potential to enhance transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria, particularly in the South-South region. However, the effective deployment of digital communication in governance is hindered by limited infrastructure, low digital literacy, and a lack of a clear digital communication strategy. To overcome these challenges, Nigeria need to invest in digital infrastructure, implement digital literacy programmes, and develop a comprehensive digital communication strategy.

Recommendations

The study recommends that policymakers and stakeholders prioritise addressing the challenges hindering the effective deployment of digital communication in governance in Nigeria to unlock the full potential of digital communication in promoting transparency and accountability in governance. Specifically, the government should invest in digital infrastructure, particularly in underserved areas of the South-South region, to ensure widespread access to digital platforms.

Also, the government should implement digital literacy programmes to empower citizens to effectively utilise digital communication tools. Likewise, regulatory processes should be streamlined to facilitate the efficient use of digital communication in governance.

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