

# Towards a Participatory e – Governance Implementation Delivery in Rivers State Nigeria: Challenges and Benefits

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**Abstract:** This study focused on e – Governance Implementation delivery in Rivers State Nigeria. In this way, the exploitation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in applications in Public administration has enhanced the delivery of public services to citizens and clients not only by improving the process and management of government, but also by redefining the traditional concepts of citizenship. The study found that there are certain challenges that hinder the adoption and effective implementation of e-governance that would have engendered qualitative Public service delivery in Rivers State Nigeria. We collected data from both primary and secondary sources, to elicit information from stakeholders in the research area. The research unravel that the challenges facing the deployment of e-governance in Rivers State were incessant power failure, communication infrastructure deficit and low IT professional manpower. The survey also revealed that the use of e-governance would bring improved efficiency in government operations without necessarily increasing the cost of state governance. It would strengthen democratic principles and ideologies which in turn brings good governance to the people.

**Keywords:** ICT, e-governance, Internet, digital divide, service delivery

## 1. Introduction

In recent times, the intensity of progression of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Nigeria has reached an upsurge. This is because the usage of technology has permeated almost all endeavors of life, by providing ways of ensuring efficient, easy processing and delivery of services. This makes the application of technology to service delivery imperative. E-governance is no doubt a tool for managing the activities of the public service at the international, national and state levels. Its application has aided the swift delivery of services in nations of the world. In most countries of the world, revitalizing the public service so as to make it effective, efficient and people-centered through the adoption of new and emerging technologies for speedy delivery of services to the populace has become quite imperative. In this context, information and communication technology have been recognized as an effective tool that could assist government reinvent itself faster, run cheaply, better and produce newer outcomes. Since the emergence of civil democracy in 1999, the states in Nigeria had better autonomy because the state governors were elected by the people as against the usual appointment by the President. This brought into the scene a set of politicians with a

strong private sector background, who were determined to make their marks by results rather than patronage [1]. If this pursuit will succeed, there must be a platform to enable the citizenry to participate in governmental decision making process; a platform where everyone will be given equal opportunities to express their views about government policies and programmes without the fear of being victimized.

E-governance in its simple term refers to the application of ICT to improve the delivery of services in the public service to attain transparency, accountability, timeliness, and efficiency [2]. The implementation of e-governance cannot become a reality without the adoption of modern day technologies [3]. Although from the traditional practice of administration, ICT have been in use in businesses and other fields, governments across the world are beginning to embrace and deploy information and communication technology to the public service due to the fact that they have realized that the application of ICT is a useful tool that can leverage public sector organisations to change from their routine command and control organisations that are inwardly focused on administration

to knowledge-based, networked, learning organisations that are externally focused on service delivery [4].

In the words of [5], a situation in which all interaction with the government can be done through one counter 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, without waiting in lines at government offices is possible even now if governments are willing to decentralize responsibilities and processes through the use of electronic means such as the Internet.

### 1.1 Concept of E – Governance and Public Service delivery

The origin of e-governance is from the word governance. The term governance is referred to as the use of economic, political and administrative power when managing a nation's affair, which includes citizen's interest articulation and the exercise of legal rights and obligations [6]. This definition by implication, opines that governance is good when citizen's rights are put into consideration and their inputs are recognised in the policy formulation process. There are different opinions on e-governance from various scholars. To [7], E-governance is the application of technology by government organisations to transform its activities and its interactions with the citizen so as to create an impactful society. As viewed by [8], e-governance as a concept that contains the application of information and communication technology by a number of government agencies and civil society in stimulating the frequent participation of citizens in the governing and administrative process of political institutions. Similarly [9] opines that e-governance is the use of ICT by departments of government to promote accountability, awareness creation and further guarantee openness in the administration of government. In other words, an administrative and managerial process of an organization is the major concern of e-governance. Also [10] substantiate this view by asserting that the basic focus of e-governance is the internal utilization of information and internet technologies in the management of certain resources such as human, material, capital and machines, which are arranged to aid managerial activities in an organization.

In [11] his argument asserts that e-governance is a shift from the traditional model of public administration. The shift is in terms of the delivery of government services to the citizens through the use of ICT. In agreement with the forgoing, [12] described e-governance as the governance of a nation through the use of Information Communication Technology. By this definition, the adoption of technology enhances the effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and transparency in the exchange of information. From the

above, e-governance is adopting the use of technology in an effective, efficient manner in the exercise of economic, political, administrative and social management of public affairs by involving the citizens in public policy making. The adoption of e-governance involves citizens in public policy making which facilitates the easy implementation of policies for enhanced delivery of public services [12]. Adopting e-governance facilitates significant reduction in government expenses, while increasing the earned interest and ability to reduce government contracts.

## 2. The concept of Public Service delivery

In [13] their work conceptualized service delivery as the relationship that exists between policy makers, service providers and the populace. To them, it consists of services and its supporting systems which are generally referred to as state responsibility. These services include infrastructure, social services and services that enhance personal security. Public service delivery can be regarded as providing citizens with services of public interest. Examples of these services of public interest include: security, education, energy, water, public transport and healthcare. Service delivery according to [14], presupposes that in public service, there is a contractual relationship between the public and a government agency in which the latter is legally bound to render service to the former in terms of quality. To Fox and Meyer (1996), public service delivery is the provision of public goods which are tangible, and services which are intangible and the private sector cannot produce. Similarly, service delivery as the provision of a product or service by a government body to the citizens. Due to the increase in customers' expectations and technological revolution, public sector organizations have come under increasing pressure to deliver quality services and improve efficiency like the private sector. Customer needs and expectations, are changing when it comes to governmental services and their quality requirements. However, service quality is a measure of how well the service level delivered matches customers' expectations. Thus, governments are saddled with the responsibilities of providing goods and services that meet the citizen's expectations.

### 2.1 The Concept of e-Governance in State Administration

The concept of e-governance is closely related to that of e-commerce. E-governance emerged in an attempt to translating the gains made in business through e-commerce into state government administration. From the definitions given above, the three main distinct groups interacting in

e-governance concepts are government, citizens and businesses/interest groups. E-government has been seen to have four primary delivery tracks namely: Government-to-Citizen or Government-to-Customer (G2C); Government-to-Business (G2B); Government-to-Government (G2G); and Government-to Employee (G2E). This delivery tracks are also known as the models of e-governance, which refer to the interaction that exist between and among government, citizens, business, employees and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) respectively.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1.1 Data Collection

In this paper, we used questionnaires as the instrument to collect data from primary source. We carried out a study using a questionnaire with a 10- point items. The 10-point items were structured to assess the readiness of the stakeholders for the adoption of e-governance strategies for state administration in Rivers State. We distributed a total of 125 questionnaires .We addressed various aspects of e-governance in the questionnaire.

#### 3.1.2 Results Presentation

**Survey coverage:** The questionnaire was distributed to both indigenes and non indigenes resident in the three senatorial zones (Rivers South, Rivers East and Rivers West) of the state at the time of the survey.

#### 3.1.3 Data Analysis and Results Presentation

Table 1: shows the senatorial area covered and the number of questionnaire distributed. A total of 125 respondents' opinions were sampled and responses collected and analyzed on a 5 – point likert type scale as shown in table below.

Senatorial Zones in Rivers State Nigeria

Table 1: Area covered in the questionnaires distribution of interviewed respondents

S/n	Senatorial Zones	No.	Percentage (%)
1.	Rivers South	15	12%
2.	Rivers East	10	8%
3.	Rivers West	100	80%
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100%</b>

Senatorial Distribution of Respondents:

The senatorial spread of the respondents that participated in the survey is shown in the pie chart of figure 1. An interesting observation was from the survey, it showed that

greater number 80% (i.e. for Rivers West as shown in pie chart) of the respondents, reside in the capital city (Port Harcourt being a cosmopolitan city in Rivers West) and other towns within the capital city where there is intensive ICT awareness and where government business is more pronounced and as well they have intensive knowledge of ICT applications. Few respondents (12%) were from Rivers South and (8%) from Rivers East.

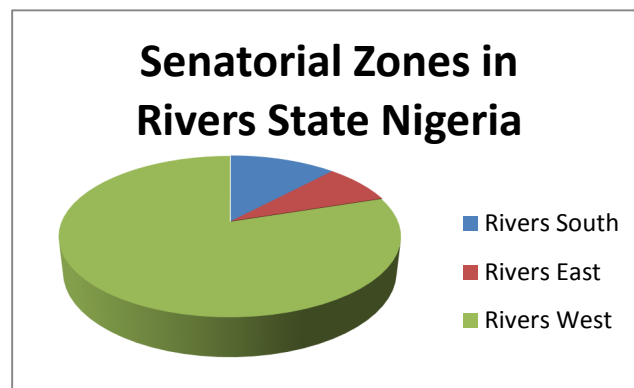
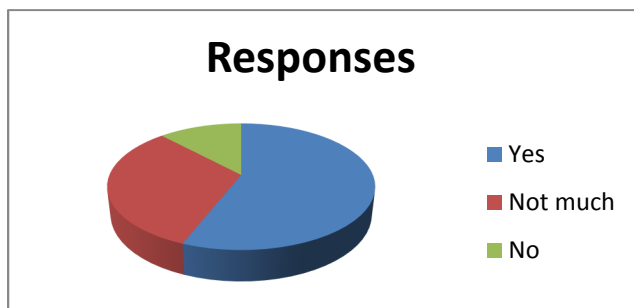


Fig. 1: Pie Chart showing the Senatorial Zone distribution of interviewed respondents

Possession of computer/IT skills is an important factor in e-governance implementation. When asked whether they know how to operate computer, figure 2 shows that 56.4% of the respondents said “Yes”, 32.2% said “Not much” while only 11.5% answered “No”. Of the number that has the skill, they acquired the knowledge through private training personally funded by them or their guardians.

S/n	Responses	Percentage (%)
1.	Yes	56%
2.	Not much	32.2%
3.	No	11.5%
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>100%</b>



Level of IT knowledge  
 Fig. 2: Possession of computer/IT skills among respondents

Considering the frequency at which respondents use Internet services, figure 3 shows that greater number of the respondents 58.2% use Internet/Online services very often, 25.1% use it rarely (not often) while 16.7% do not use it at all.

S/n	Internet / Online services Usage	Percentage (%)
1.	Very often	58.2%
2.	Rarely	25.1.%
3.	Do not use it all	16.7.%
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>100%</b>

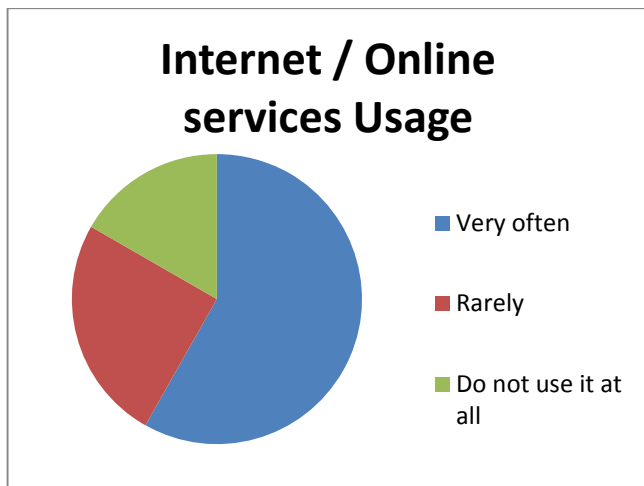


Fig. 3: Frequency of usage of internet/online services

### Factors that hinder the use of e-governance services in Rivers State

These responses were studied and measured on a 5-point *likert-type* rating scale. The arithmetic mean of the responses were calculated to determine their levels and presented in table 1. The result showed that the most pronounced challenges to the implementation of e-governance in Rivers State were:

1. lack of steady or no power supply with a calculated mean of  $\chi=4.53$ ,
2. lack of security and confidentiality of personal data ( $\chi=4.14$ ),
3. high cost of computer/internet equipments with a calculated mean of  $\chi=4.62$ ,
4. Lack of useful information on the internet with arithmetic mean of  $\chi=4.74$

5. Lack of computer/internet knowledge with a calculated mean of  $\chi=4.80$ ,
6. lack of /very slow internet browsing equipments with a calculated mean of  $\chi=3.86$  and
7. lack of awareness on the existence of such services ( $\chi=4.54$ ) were next strong hindrances.

The other factors considered namely: high cost of training on the use of internet with a calculated mean of  $\chi=3.34$  and poor communication infrastructure with a calculated mean of  $\chi=3.41$  were low in the *likert-type* scale which shows that the respondents were of the opinion that the two factors were not strong hindrances to the use of e-governance services in the sampled communities.

Table 1: Analysis of responses on the factors that hinder the use of e-governance services in Rivers State

S/N	Factors	X	F	FX	X (MEAN)	%	
1.	Lack of computer /Internet knowledge?	5	100	500	4.80	80.00	
	• Strongly Agree	4	25	100			20.00
	• Agree	3	0	0			0.00
	• Undecided	2	0	0			0.00
	• Disagree	1	0	0			0.00
	• Strongly Disagree						
2.	High cost of computer /Internet equipments?				4.62	66.67	
	• Strongly Agree	5	83	417			26.67
	• Agree	4	34	136			6.67
	• Undecided	3	8	25			0.00
	• Disagree	2	0	0			0.00
	• Strongly Disagree	1	0	0			0.00
3.	Lack of useful information on the Internet?	5	100	500	4.74	80.00	
	• Strongly Agree	4	17	68			13.33
	• Agree	3	8	24			6.67
	• Undecided	2	0	0			0.00
	• Disagree	1	0	0			0.00
	• Strongly Disagree						
4.	Lack of steady/no power supply?	5	83	415	4.53	66.67	
	• Strongly Agree	4	25	100			20.00
	• Agree	3	17	51			13.33
	• Undecided	2	0	0			0.00
	• Disagree	1	0	0			0.00
	• Strongly Disagree						

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disagree</li> <li>• Strongly Disagree</li> </ul>					
5.	Poor communication infrastructure? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly Agree</li> <li>• Agree</li> <li>• Undecided</li> <li>• Disagree</li> <li>• Strongly Disagree</li> </ul>	5 4 3 2 1	17 17 91 0 0	85 68 273 0 0	3.41	13.33 13.33 73.33 0.00 0.00
6.	High cost of training on the use of Internet? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly Agree</li> <li>• Agree</li> <li>• Undecided</li> <li>• Disagree</li> <li>• Strongly Disagree</li> </ul>	5 4 3 2 1	25 42 17 33 8	125 168 51 66 8	3.34	20.00 33.33 13.33 26.67 6.67
7.	Lack of awareness on the existence of such services? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly Agree</li> <li>• Agree</li> <li>• Undecided</li> <li>• Disagree</li> <li>• Strongly Disagree</li> </ul>	5 4 3 2 1	67 58 0 0 0	335 232 0 0 0	4.54	53.33 46.67 0.00 0.00 0.00
8.	Lack of security and confidentiality of personal data? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly Agree</li> <li>• Agree</li> <li>• Undecided</li> <li>• Disagree</li> <li>• Strongly Disagree</li> </ul>	5 4 3 2 1	67 42 8 8 0	335 168 24 16 0	4.34	53.33 33.33 6.67 6.67 0.00
9.	Lack of /Very slow Internet browsing equipments? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly Agree</li> <li>• Agree</li> <li>• Undecided</li> <li>• Disagree</li> <li>• Strongly Disagree</li> </ul>	5 4 3 2 1	58 42 17 0 8	290 168 51 0 8	4.14	46.67 33.33 13.33 0.00 6.67
10.	Lack of					

	governmental framework not processes?	5	50	250	3.86	40.00
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly Agree</li> <li>• Agree</li> <li>• Undecided</li> <li>• Disagree</li> <li>• Strongly Disagree</li> </ul>	4 3 2 1	33 17 25 0	132 51 50 0		26.67 13.33 20.00 0.00

#### 4. Discussion

The number of questionnaires distributed and returned with valid information were 125 i.e. 100% of the total number of questionnaires distributed. This number is a statistically acceptable size of the population for analysis. The distribution of the questionnaires was spread over the area considered for the survey in an acceptable proportion thus Rivers South (12%), Rivers East (8%) and Rivers West (80%). We observed and would want to report that Rivers West had the highest number of questionnaires distribution since most densely populated Local Government Areas are in the senatorial district and the Rivers State capital which is Port Harcourt resides in the Rivers West senatorial district. 100% of the respondents owned at least a GSM phone and also have a phone call centre in their communities no matter how rural their community was. Other interesting findings include that 98% of the respondents were of the opinion that government services can be delivered to government clients namely: citizens, organizations and other government departments through GSM phones which 98.8% do not know whether Rivers State government has a functional website or not and 98.7% like to know about the activities of government functionaries.

#### 5. Conclusion

The study has shown that the most difficult challenges facing the deployment of e-governance in Rivers State were: lack of steady power supply, poor communication infrastructure and high cost of computer and internet equipments. The survey has also revealed that the use of e-governance would bring improved efficiency in government operations without necessarily increasing the cost of state administration. E-governance will induce accountability and prudence in the management of public fund. There will be easy access to information and government services, greater access to the people's representatives, and greater participation of the people in the governance processes and hence e - governance strengthens democratic principles and ideologies. These are the real features of good governance. So, the

implementation of e-governance in Rivers State-Nigeria has very high prospects. There are truly some challenges, but the challenges are surmountable. Therefore, e-governance is a sure way of bringing good governance to the people.

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