Challenges Facing Coherent Digitization of Government Processes Across All Policy Areas and Levels of Government to Enhance Efficient Public Service Delivery in Kenya.

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Abstract

Goal 17.14 of the Sustainable Development Goals emphasizes the need for all countries to strengthen policy coherence for sustainable development to adopt a unified digital strategy. The second section of the PCSD framework consists of ideas for enhancing existing coherence mechanisms. To do so, it is essential to recognize the benefits of joint efforts and the necessity to eliminate institutional and policy incoherence. According to this research, a centralized electronic government system that coordinates financial and technological choices would be favorable across all policy domains. The objective of this study was to identify and assess the most significant obstacles limiting Kenya's efforts to fully digitalize its government operations across all sectors and levels of government to enhance the effectiveness of public service delivery. Although there is consensus on the positive effects of incorporating ICT into delivering public services, governments in less developed countries encounter obstacles in e-development. This research explores some significant barriers to executing e-Government programs in less developed nations. The paper focuses heavily on Kenya and evaluates the feasibility of implementing some of its ideas there. E-Government has also become a fundamental element of good contemporary governance, ensuring that governments execute their obligations as efficiently as possible globally. Utilizing responsible, adaptable, and upgradable technology, e-Government can provide services that are effective, transparent, citizen-centric, user-friendly, and accessible 24/7. The government's capacity to be held responsible, efficient, and successful in both the public and commercial sectors strengthens when they adopt cutting-edge technological solutions. Most people feel that properly adopting e-Government services will result in many positive developments that will benefit both the government and the people. The study aimed to identify the hurdles that must be overcome before Kenya can launch its E-government initiative. In addition, the research aimed to achieve the following specific objectives: to determine how key stakeholders from different levels of government could collaborate to improve public service delivery; to determine how current monitoring, analysis, and reporting mechanisms impact the efficiency with which public services are provided and learn how the implementation of proper organizational and governance frameworks for consistent digitalization increases the efficiency of public service delivery. Specifically, A descriptive research method and a field survey of a cross-section of government agencies were used to compile the data presented in this study. The engaged departments and ministries were Education, Agriculture and Livestock, Finance, Lands, Devolution, and Health. Using questionnaires, we collected primary data from employees of these ministries' central offices. The results were analyzed and interpreted using a mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. In the study, descriptive statistics, including percentages and frequency distributions, were used. The data analysis aimed to grasp the results of the 2021 survey of Kenyan Ministries. Survey questionnaires were used to obtain data. Data processing and analysis were performed using Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS. Based on the gathered data, researchers were able to classify the hurdles of e-governance into four categories: technological (4.12 mean score), organizational (3.92), financial (3.67), and social (3.51). According to the research, the implementation of the E-government project in Kenya faces obstacles associated with information-sharing policy barriers, such as legalistic obstruction to the flow of information, unauthorized access by a subset of employees, prohibited access by members of the general public, fear of breaching confidentiality, and a lack of innovation in secure information-sharing within Government agencies. There is a lack of government commitment to developing an ICT policy to guide Ministries in developing their e-government infrastructure, slow procurement processes, low prioritization of ICT development within Ministries, awareness of e-Government, and a lack of innovation in ICT development within Ministries.

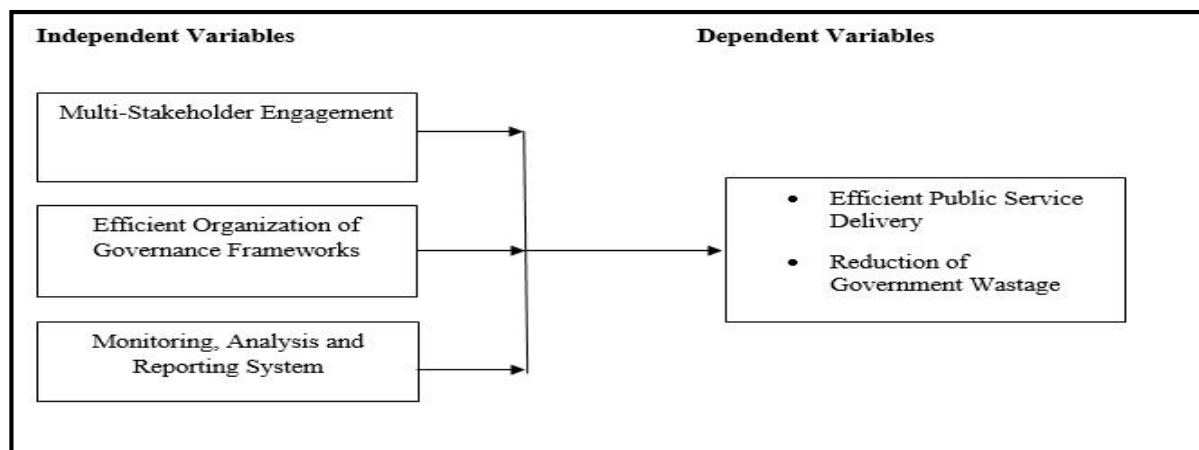Keywors: Challenges; Coherent; Digitization; Government; Service delivery

1. Introduction

The OECD defines E-government as "the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs), and particularly the Internet, to achieve better government" (from OECD The e-Government Imperative, 2003). This definition focuses on why countries are implementing e-government than the ICT tools themselves. Faced with the pressure of increasing government performance while being responsive to citizen's needs, OECD countries have realized that e-government goes beyond the simple exercise of putting information and services online and can be used as a powerful instrument to transform the structures, process, and culture of government and make it more efficient, user oriented and transparent. E-government can help achieve specific outcomes in crucial policy areas (e.g., online information can help boost the use of an educational or training program), and ICT is expected to contribute to broad policy objectives (e.g., the use of ICT can contribute to other economic policy objectives by reducing government expenditures through more effective Programmes, improving business productivity through administrative simplification, and promoting the information society and ICT industry).

E-government has become a popular focus of government efforts in many countries worldwide. More and more governments worldwide have implemented and introduced e-government systems to reduce costs, improve services, save time, and increase effectiveness and efficiency in the public sector. E-government and the Internet have made an essential change in the whole social structure, values, culture, and ways of conducting business by utilizing the potential of ICT as a tool in daily work. The purpose of e-government is not only the conversion of traditional information into bits and bytes and making it reachable via the internet, giving government officials computers, or automating old practices to an electronic platform. But it also calls for rethinking how government functions are carried out today to improve processes and integration. Governments have different strategies for building e-government. Some have created comprehensive long-term plans. Others have opted to identify just a few key areas as the focus of early projects. In all cases, however, the countries identified as most successful have begun with smaller projects in phases on which to build a structure. This paper presents the most critical challenges that affect the implementation operation of the e-government system.

The system's goal is to save time and financial waste by ensuring that no two government agencies conduct the same process again. In addition, case studies from OECD nations that have effectively deployed unified e-government systems in the public sector are evaluated critically. Examples include Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and Norway. In Norway, by simplifying interactions between individuals and government agencies, the E-Government has the potential to minimize bureaucracy, increase efficiency, and save money. Digital government, electronic government, and electronic governance all refer to the same concept: the use of information and communication technology in the public sector as an indispensable mechanism for collecting and distributing government information and delivering government services.

1.1. Conceptual Framework

(Source; Authors 2022)
Figure 1: Conceptual framework model of Challenges Facing Coherent Digitization of Government Processes Across All Policy Areas and Levels of Government

2. Literature Review

2.1 Coherent Digitization

To adopt a consistent use of ICT across all policy areas, overarching national objectives must be tied to attainable outcomes. A well-defined mission statement will guide this execution, and a central office will be responsible for managing the digital strategy for all public service users. Citizens, companies, sector ministries and agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private sector actors must all be included in the government's digital strategy formulation process. Therefore, the overarching vision must be a roadmap for integrating the digital government agenda with broader public reform and other pertinent sector objectives. To achieve consistency, governments have established national coordinating institutions with rules and procedures to ensure that strategic development choices at all levels of government are consistent. This methodology reduces data silos at the national and county levels by providing a uniform system for integrating national policies and managing data at both levels (OECD, 2017, pp. 94-98). According to the UN Development Assistance Framework (2018), Kenya (2018), coordinating MTP III, the Big 4 Agenda, Agenda 2063, and the SDGs requires unified assistance. One possibility is to enhance vertical coherence and encourage cross-functional interaction. Using a range of criteria, Table 1.0 examines and contrasts how Nordic nations are implementing strategies for the growth of their electronic administrations (Joseph &Avdic, 2016).

2.2 Multi-Stakeholder Engagement

The 2030 Agenda highlights the need for international collaboration in achieving its goals. Consequently, it is essential to create communication channels via which government officials may discuss difficulties, define priorities, coordinate activities, and pool resources to support sustainable development (OECD, 2018, pp. 98-99). In 2014, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development published a report outlining Finland's systematic and collaborative stakeholder engagement. Across Finland, meetings are being organized to collect input from various stakeholders, such as academic institutions, expert panels, concerned people, and representatives of different civil society sectors. In addition, the legislature gets updated on implementing the 2030 Agenda. Finland created a monitoring and evaluation approach based on the eight-goal agenda of its strategic framework to ensure the SDGs are consistently implemented (IISD, 2017). The Voluntary National Reviews submitted by 45 states at the 2017 High-level Political Forum (HLPF) of the United Nations emphasized the necessity for a multisectoral engagement strategy. 31 nations consulted with non-state actors through online and offline surveys, whereas 6 nations did not declare whether or not they did so. Just Argentina, Denmark, and Honduras discussed only state actors. Kenya is one of nine countries that have encountered challenges due to the absence of a multisectoral organization. Non-state actors were engaged in the process of establishing national priorities for Sustainable Development Goals, according to the Kenyan Voluntary National Review. The paper also underlines the need to develop a multi-stakeholder platform for implementing policy coherence to reduce the danger of duplication of policy efforts among stakeholders (CCIC, 2018, pp. 27-29).

2.3 Efficient Organization of Governance Frameworks

The governance and coordination of organizational frameworks implemented by a government will determine the purposeful and consistent usage of new technology inside that government. To be effective, e-government frameworks must have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. This topic encompasses everything from ensuring the government's internet rules is standardized to enforcing them. The OECD council on digital government strategies recommended in 2014 to form of a single organization or department with the declared responsibility of leading and administering the government's ICT policies to achieve a unified e-government framework. Therefore, a suitable organization should oversee digital services and information systems while promoting user-centric approaches to digital governance (OECD, 2014). While analyzing the several government agencies, it is essential to identify and remove any unnecessary or overlapping procedures or duties. Determining appropriate staffing levels, performing job evaluations, and implementing a new government-wide assessment system centered on establishing a standard digital policy all contribute to reducing wasteful expenditure and enhancing the digital strategy's effectiveness (OECD, 2014). 92.5 percent of OECD countries have established central administrations coordinating their e-government programs (see table 1.0). These organizations are charged with promoting the interoperability of public sector policies and frameworks via technology and ensuring the adoption of a standardized language across

all policy sectors. To ensure that the coherence strategy is suited to the developing global digital government goals, the coordination mechanisms should be reviewed often in light of the constantly changing technical surroundings and trends (OECD, 2017). Denmark, an OECD member and recipient of a coherent e-government strategy, has shown how these coherent framework principles may be successfully used to increase the coherence of public sector structures and procedures. It was shown that a cohesive framework might be applied effectively to generate coherence in facilities and activities. The "Danish Digital Strategy 2016-2020" has promoted continued collaboration between the country's federal, regional, and local authorities by outlining ambitious goals for a digitally connected public sector. The Danish government has worked consistently for several years due to the unified management of digital solutions across the board. People have increased faith in the government since so much government work is conducted online and on computers. (SCDA, 2017). Similarly, it is the responsibility of the Dutch ministerial council to ensure that the country's laws and policies are consistent with one another and with the country's overall development goals. To expedite the process of policy coherence, the Dutch government has assigned cross-cutting responsibilities to the Ministries of Economic Affairs, Climate Policy, and Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation. The ministries' remits have been expanded to include the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, this technique requires coordination and a comprehensive evaluation of policy concepts to minimize the danger of conflicts and overlapping duties. (OECD, 2014)

2.4 Efficient Monitoring, Analysis, and Reporting System

In their 2017 report on institutional and coordinating mechanisms, the UNDP advises that the National Statistics Office and Local Government Units be included in the National Monitoring System. Local governments and the NSO collect, process, and disseminate official data. An excellent national monitoring system requires strict adherence to statistical laws and the provision of reliable data. In addition, it must oversee the data collection process and analyze the implementation of development objectives and strategies. The investigation also revealed a lack of communication and coordination between global and national statistical systems' data sources. In addition, the study recommends that governments use periodic monitoring techniques to better assess policy implementation over time (UNDP, 2017, pp. 21-25). According to the Finnish government's plan for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, special attention should be paid to identifying groups within and outside Finland at risk of falling short or behind in their sustainable development reports on progress toward these goals. In addition, the 30 indicators and national objectives of the German Sustainable Development Strategy account for the global ramifications of policy.

In contrast, the PCD Action Plan for the Netherlands was presented to the parliament in 2016. Since then, the country's annual report on policy coherence for development has tracked progress in eight areas annually. The 2017 study investigates the connection between pharmaceutical affordability, tax evasion, and remittance expenses, as well as the Dutch government's efforts in these areas (OECD, 2018, pp. 100-101). According to the Kenyan Voluntary National Review 2017 presented to the HLPF, 128 indicators have been devised to track the country's progress towards the SDGs. However, it is unclear if the article refers to national or global statistics. The assessment also suggests that the Second Medium Term Plan's result-based monitoring framework and evaluation of development policies and programs would be used to track all national and subnational sustainable development targets. This review will be conducted over the next three years. In addition, questions on the SDG indicators will be included for the first time in national elections (CCIC, 2018, p. 29).

3. The Study Results

In this study, we aimed to investigate the significant challenges facing implementing the coherent digitization of government processes across all policy areas and levels of government in enhancing the efficiency of public service delivery in Kenya. The model below describes the barriers at four levels: Technical, with the highest mean (4.12); Organizational (3.92); Financial (3.67), Social factors (3.28); facilitating factors, including relationships (See Table 1 below)

Table 1. Barriers to coherent digitization of government processes in Kenya

Factor	Mean score
Technical factors	4.12
Organizational factors	3.92
Financial factors	3.67
Social factors	3.28
SDEV.S	0.361973756

Our findings also show that the coherent digitization of government processes experiences many odds, including insufficient ICT infrastructure perpetuated by prevailing working conditions in the ministries. Unauthorized access by a section of the employees further burdens the implementation. Shortage of highly trained ICT professionals (ICT literacy) suggests that access and uptake are compounded by a lack of capacity resulting in low adoption with the aggregated outcomes of Poor collaboration between users and the Digital divide among end users. Key barrier at individual level identified include low e-Governance awareness. Given the sensitivity of the subject matter, Legalistic obstruction to the flow of information with the aspect of privacy and confidentiality records a higher association with the barriers at 1.588(0.162, 10.559) AOR level.

A literature review shows many challenges common among developing countries: a lack of ICT literacy, incomplete infrastructure, a digital divide existing between the rural poor and the emerging urban middle class, the uncertainty about data privacy and data security, the absence of comprehensive ICT policies and legislation, lack of an ICT culture in government and the traditional components of the economy, questions regarding the government's ongoing financial commitment to the project, e-Government awareness, willingness of ministries to engage in information sharing, a void of ICT leadership outside the technologically oriented Ministries, resistance to change, a historical lack of intergovernmental coordination and low stakeholder involvement are just some of the many challenges identified.

All respondents agreed that some significant challenges are stakeholder involvement, coordination, information sharing, ICT literacy, awareness, resistance to change, ICT, finance issues, ICT policy, leadership, data privacy, legislation, ICT culture, and the digital divide for e-Government implementation in Kenya. (See table 2 below)

3.1 Technical Barriers

Slightly more than 8 in 10 (82%) affirmed that the implementation of e-government faces some technical difficulties, such as a lack of shared standards and compatible infrastructure among departments and agencies. Also, privacy and security are critical barriers to implementing e-government in citizen concerns.

3.2 Organizational Barriers

The implementation of e-government is not devoid of organizational challenges, as cited by 78% of the stakeholders interviewed, such as Top management support, lack of goodwill, Resistance to change to electronic ways, Collaboration, and Lack of qualified personnel and training.

3.3 Financial Barriers

The most severe and significant barrier to the implementation of e-government is a lack of money, a position cited by 72% of the stakeholders affirming that e-government implementation is expensive. It is necessary to ensure the availability of the existing and expected budgetary resources in order to achieve the goals. Moon declared that the lack of financial support is a significant obstacle to implementing e-government in many countries.

Table 2. Crude and adjusted odds ratios (and 95% confidence intervals) from logistic regression analyses identifying associations between selected influences and
processes in Kenya

Are you aware of any challenges facing coherent digitization of government processes across all policy areas and levels of government to enhance efficient public s			
Characteristics	**Yes (n=168)**	**Valid percent**	**Crude odds**
ICT infrastructure	163	97%	3.308(0.162,
Unauthorized access by a section of the employees	147	88%	1.623(0.142,
Electronic ways (connectivity)	144	86%	1.592(0.534,
Legalistic obstruction to the flow of information	143	85%	1.588(0.162,
Low e-Governance awareness	129	77%	1.5721(0.635
High cost of investment in ICT	124	74%	1.560(0.877,
Privacy within government structures	116	69%	1.554(0.016,
Shortage of highly trained ICT professionals (ICT literacy)	115	68%	1.526(0.027,
Security of information (National security)	107	64%	1.502(0.142,
Poor collaboration between users	97	58%	1.391(0.482,
Digital divide among end users	82	49%	1.359(0.809,
Prohibited access by members of the general public	76	45%	1.155(0.016,
Lack of government's commitment towards development of an ICT policy to guide the Ministries in developing their e-governance infrastructure	70	42%	1.054(0.158,
Culture divide (slow adoption of technology in service delivery)	67	40%	0.804(0.247,
Low prioritization of ICT development in the Ministries	65	39%	0.763(0.700,
High cost of support services by ICT software and equipment vendors	56	33%	0.514(0.364,
Lack of innovativeness in ICT development in the Ministries	53	32%	0.451(1.147,
Lengthy procurement procedures	45	27%	0.312(0.193,

*p<0.05

3.4 Social Barriers

Social issues are mainly concerned with the usability of a large variety of people. This implies that the interface must be usable by
government. Social obstacles include many factors, such as the digital divide, culture, education, and income.

4. Conclusion

This study examines the effects of digital transformations on the delivery of public services in Kenya. Concern has been expressed about the long-term effects of adopting ICT improvements in the public sector. Changes of this size have resulted in substantial improvements in the provision of public sector services worldwide. However, several organizational and technical obstacles, a lack of experience in producing high-value online public services, and other underlying causes, such as the structure of the digital divide among end users, are preventing the successful implementation of digital reforms in Kenya's public sector at present. Because it establishes the operational framework for future operations, the implementation phase involves skill and meticulousness. This is the most significant issue that must be solved if the benefits of e-government are to be achieved to their full potential. Kenya's national and devolved governance structures appear to be managing the entire e-government strategy systematically and coherently, as well as determining the budget and financing for digital reforms. However, a direct partnership with the people, private sector, civil organizations, and non-governmental organizations would provide a broader range of new ideas and funding sources. This is because a partnership among public, private, and non-governmental groups is more likely to produce positive results. The continued development of open governance characteristics inside the e-government system requires special attention and investigation.

Regarding e-technological, social, and organizational details, meetings with government authorities are commonplace. Interviews of this kind are widespread in the United States and may help provide a more thorough understanding of the institutional backdrop and current difficulties facing e-government. Consequently, there is a need for more extensive research based on user-oriented surveys and interviews with all relevant stakeholders conducted over a sufficient period. This will provide a deeper analysis of Kenya's efforts to develop a uniform e-government phenomenon.

5. Recommendations

This Recommendation aims to support the development and implementation digital government strategies that bring both national and devolved governments closer to citizens and businesses. It recognizes that today's technology is not only a strategic driver for improving public sector efficiency but can also support the effectiveness of policies at all levels and create more open, transparent, innovative, participatory, and trustworthy governments. The Recommendation can enable a fundamental shift from citizen-centric approaches (government anticipating the needs of citizens and businesses) to citizen-driven strategies (citizens and businesses formulating and determining their needs in partnership with governments).

1. Ensure greater transparency, openness, and inclusiveness of government processes and operations by adopting open and inclusive approaches, accessibility, transparency, and accountability among the main goals of national digital government strategies;

2. Taking steps to address existing "digital divides" (i.e., the fact that societies can be divided into people who do and people who do not have access to - and the capability to use – digital technologies) and avoid the emergence of new forms of "digital exclusion" (i.e., not being able to take advantage of digital services and opportunities).

3. Encourage engagement and participation of public, private, and civil society stakeholders in policymaking and public service design and delivery through addressing issues of citizens' rights organization and resource allocation, adoption of new rules and standards, use of communication tools, and development of institutional capacities to help facilitate engagement of all age groups and population segments, in particular through the clarification of the formal responsibilities and procedures

4. Create a data-driven culture in the public sector by developing frameworks to enable, guide, and foster access to, use, and re-use of, the increasing amount of evidence, statistics, and data concerning operations, processes, and results to (a) increase openness and transparency, and (b) incentivize public engagement in policymaking, public value creation, service design, and delivery;

5. Reflect a risk management approach to addressing digital security and privacy issues, and include adopting effective and appropriate security measures to increase confidence in government services.

6. Secure leadership and political commitment to the strategy through a combination of efforts to promote inter-ministerial coordination and collaboration, set priorities, and facilitate engagement and coordination of relevant agencies across levels of government in pursuing the digital government agenda.

7. Ensure coherent use of digital technologies across policy areas and levels of government by engaging relevant stakeholders and other levels of government to provide input to the development of the digital government strategy
8. Establish effective organizational and governance frameworks to coordinate the implementation of the digital strategy within and across levels of government by identifying clear responsibilities to ensure overall coordination of the performance of the digital government strategy
9. Strengthen international cooperation with other governments to serve citizens and businesses across borders better, and maximize the benefits that can emerge from early knowledge sharing and coordination of digital strategies internationally.

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