



Corporate Governance and Board Effectiveness Amid Technological Disruption in Lagos State Civil Service Commission

Anthony Iweanya Okonmah* & Adebola Alade

Department of Politics and International Relations
Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract

This study examines corporate governance and board effectiveness within the Lagos State Civil Service Commission, focusing on how digital technologies and information systems are strategically employed to enhance governance, decision-making, and service delivery between 2018 and 2025. A descriptive qualitative research design was adopted. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with key administrative staff and the content analysis of institutional policy documents and strategic reports. Findings reveal that the Commission has adopted several digital platforms to streamline operations and improve transparency; however, their utilisation varies considerably across administrative levels due to factors such as the digital divide, organisational culture, and infrastructural resilience. Significant gaps were identified in data governance, cyber-resiliency, and citizen engagement systems, which limit the Commission's progress toward digital maturity and transformation. The study underscores the need for proactive and adaptive governance in responding to technological disruption. It recommends implementing tiered capacity-building programmes, organisational change management, data governance frameworks, strategic citizen engagement, and integrating digital governance objectives into the civil service reform agenda. If adopted systematically, these measures could strengthen institutional resilience, enhance stakeholder trust, and align governance practices with modern public sector ideals.

Keywords: Board Effectiveness; Civil Service; Corporate Governance; Technological Disruption; Lagos State.

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INTRODUCTION

Technological disruption continues to reshape governance structures globally, compelling public institutions to adopt innovative approaches to remain effective, transparent, and citizen-focused. In Nigeria, particularly within state-level civil service systems, the increasing reliance on information systems and digital technologies has created opportunities and challenges for corporate governance and board effectiveness. As a central administrative body, the Lagos State Civil Service Commission (LSCSC) plays a critical role in ensuring efficient policy implementation, service delivery, and institutional performance. However, rapid technological change has introduced complexities in decision-making, organisational restructuring, and citizen engagement, necessitating a comprehensive re-evaluation of governance practices.

Despite the growing discourse on digital transformation in the public sector, there remains a significant knowledge gap concerning how governance boards in Nigeria, particularly the LSCSC, adapt to technological disruption. Several questions remain unanswered: To what extent are digital platforms integrated into governance processes? How effectively are these platforms enhancing transparency, accountability, and service delivery? What organisational and infrastructural constraints inhibit successful digital transformation? Addressing these concerns is critical, as ineffective adaptation can undermine institutional efficiency, weaken citizen trust, and widen the digital divide across administrative levels.

This study investigates corporate governance and board effectiveness amid technological disruption in the LSCSC between 2018 and 2025. Specifically, it explores how information systems and emerging technologies have been strategically deployed to improve governance operations and decision-making within the Commission. By adopting a descriptive research design, the study combines qualitative data from interviews with key administrative staff and content analysis of policy documents to examine the dynamics between digital innovation and institutional performance.

The findings reveal that, although several digital platforms have been adopted to streamline governance processes and enhance operational transparency, the degree of adoption varies significantly across administrative levels. This inconsistency is primarily influenced by factors such as the digital divide, organisational culture, infrastructure deficits, and cyber-resilience challenges. Furthermore, gaps in data governance systems, citizen engagement frameworks, and contingency planning mechanisms hinder the Commission's ability to achieve complete digital maturity.

The study contributes to both theory and practice by demonstrating that effective governance in the digital era requires more than technological adoption; it necessitates strategic capacity-building, integrated organisational change management, robust data governance frameworks, and inclusive citizen engagement mechanisms. By proposing practical recommendations, including tiered digital literacy programmes, improved cyber-resilience strategies, and embedding digital governance objectives into civil service reforms, this research provides actionable insights for strengthening institutional performance.

Overall, this study underscores the urgent need for public institutions in Nigeria to be proactive, adaptive, and innovative in responding to technological disruptions. The findings have significant implications for policymakers, civil service administrators, and governance practitioners seeking to balance technological advancement with sustainable institutional development.

Understanding Corporate Governance: Definitions, Principles, and Relevance to Public Sector Reform

Corporate governance is a complex yet multifaceted concept that includes the structures, systems, and institutional mechanisms by which corporations are directed, managed, and held accountable. It, too, involves an evolving web of relationships among key participants, including shareholders, board of directors, management and various stakeholders, while encouraging transparency, accountability, ethical behaviour, and responsible organisational performance.

Several authoritative organisations have provided definitions of corporate governance from different perspectives. The World Bank (cited in Sarnthoy, 2019) states that corporate governance is "the system by which businesses are directed and controlled with relationships among the management, board, controlling shareholders, minority shareholders and other stakeholders."

The World Bank definition also stresses the importance of stakeholders and emphasises that the governance framework is a system of related roles. The OECD similarly defines "corporate governance" as "the system by which business corporations are directed and controlled," and stresses the rights and responsibilities of the different participants in the corporate governance system (Murana, Olayinka & Omotayo, 2016). These definitions all emphasise governance as transparency and responsible management to protect shareholders' and stakeholders' interests.

Strong corporate governance is essential for decision-making, managing risks, and the legitimacy of organisations. It seeks to reduce conflicts of interest, develop ethical behaviours and build stakeholder trust and integrity.

However, poor governance or a lack of governance can lead to devastating consequences. The collapse of Enron Corporation in 2001 is an illustrative example. Enron's involvement in fraudulent financial activities and its board of directors' failure to oversee the company and its risks led to substantial financial losses for its shareholders and employees. They ushered in a wave of new regulations to increase governance accountability (Al-Ahdal, Alsamhi, Tabash & Farhan, 2020). Research indicates that firms with robust governance systems tend to outperform firms with weak oversight or governance systems. Strong governance is also typically associated with resilient companies, more favourable conditions for attracting investors and greater ability to adapt to shifts in market conditions.

Likewise, good governance enhances performance and protects against managerial misuse and unethical behaviour. Nonetheless, issues still arise. Stakeholders' interests may conflict with other stakeholders' interests, posing tensions between maximising shareholder value and considering employee welfare practices or ecological concerns. Ultimately, tensions between governance approaches and systems may necessitate a flexible governance structure (adaptive), stakeholder governed (participatory) and principles-based (equity, fairness, accountability). Moreover, the effectiveness of corporate governance depends on the robustness of enforcement and the organisation's commitment to best practices. Governance frameworks can be ineffective in circumstances of weak regulatory oversight or when compliance is only marginally achieved.

Agency disputes, information asymmetries, and vested interests impair the ability of governance to be effective, especially in developing countries. Modern corporate governance practices have moved beyond compliance-based frameworks to sustainability and long-term value creation. More and more attention is being paid to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) related issues relative to corporate strategies. For example, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) guide aligning big business goals with global social development objectives (Nurgozhayeva, 2022). Organisations that embed ESG in their governance processes will develop their reputational capital and resilience in the ever-changing global environment. In summary, while corporate governance can be framed in the private sector context, it is valuable and relevant for public sector institutions, especially for improving transparency, integrity, and performance. As we will see in the next section, these principles will also be helpful for public-sector governance in reforming governance arrangements in Nigeria's Civil Service Commission.

Board Effectiveness and Governance Challenges in the Nigerian Civil Service

The concept of board effectiveness is considerably different in the civil service than in the private sector. This difference arises from the different governance structures, policies, political contexts, and mandates that inform public institutions. In Nigeria, board performance in the civil service is influenced by systemic governance challenges, including political interference, limited institutional capacity, and weak accountability processes. The entrenched political patronage system of appointments and promotions hinders effective boards in Nigeria's civil service. Nigerian political appointments and promotions are often based on political loyalty rather than

professional qualifications. People can also make appointments with little accountability; therefore, it can be a challenge to hold these people accountable in public and political life when they are appointed to boards.

Appointing underqualified or poorly qualified people to important roles in the governance process (to the detriment of the board's institutional integrity, oversight functions, and strategic capacity) weakens boards' ability to discharge their mandates effectively. Hay and Cordery (2017) found evidence of political influence and/or inappropriate political interference in recruitment and promotions across the public service. This raises questions around independence, public service competency, and behaviours. Patterns of political interference in recruitment and promotion processes illustrate significant problems for governance processes and impartiality in hiring, confidence in competence, and professionalism. Institutional frameworks are central to how effective governance systems are, and comparative evidence from countries with strong legal and regulatory climates indicates that independent civil service commissions and well-defined oversight processes mean more accountability and more effective boards in the public sector.

On the contrary, institutional arrangements in the Nigerian context are inhibited by environmental factors, which include overlapping mandates, ineffective regulatory enforcement, and vagueness in performance standards, which may contribute to the growing capabilities of these boards. The Nigerian civil service also displays evidence of bureaucratic inefficiencies, including (1) red tape; (2) inefficiency; (3) and inertia, spawned in the environment of knowledge, capacity building, and infrastructure investment, which has for many years faced underinvestment contribute to the development of an environment strong resistant to condition, innovation, reform and change. Boards that act in categorically bureaucratic conditions experience stagnation concerning decision-making, resistance to responsiveness to public needs and the inability or difficulty in accessing reliable data to support public decision-making.

The result is the failure or reduction of the oversight function and deterioration of strategic planning into reactive and no longer fully proactive arrangements (Hay & Cordery, 2017). The reduction of accountability and transparency in Nigeria is often viewed as an affliction of governance. Transparency International's corruption perceptions index routinely ranks Nigeria as a highly corrupt country, where accounts of procurement irregularities, misappropriation of public funds, and administrative malpractice speak to the normalising of institutional impunity. Like all things governance, it was all a continuum; for some countries, it is often income and economic, for Nigeria, it is cultural, which certainly impacts the capacity of boards to be guided by ethical conduct, protect the public interest, and act on behalf of proper use of resources.

Meritocracy in recruitment and promotion is critical to good governance and the board. Civil services that utilise objective indicators of performance, competitive selections, and skills-based assessments tend to have greater accountability and professionalisation. In contrast, Nigeria's civil service is still marred by favouritism, nepotism, and ambiguity in its human resource development and processes, which limit its reformability (Kaymak & Bektaş, 2017). Performance management is still embryonic, with infrequent appraisals, poorly defined key performance indicators (KPIs), and limited feedback, all of which undermine institutional learning and responsiveness. Global best practices highlight the advantages of virtue-related civil service reforms to improve governance, functionality, and accountability.

For example, the United Kingdom Civil Service Reform Plan and the Malaysia Civil Service Transformation Programme emphasised accountability, merit-based recruitment, utilising technology, and ongoing capacity development. These reforms have improved productivity, service delivery agreements, and public confidence and trust. Evidence from Nigeria shows apparent governance deficits in the civil service. A study by the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) confirmed the prevalence of unethical practices in civil service boards and agencies, including favouritism, nepotism, and abuse of power (Abdullahi & Mansor, 2018). These systemic shortcomings highlight the importance of a complete reform programme geared toward institutional integrity, accountability and competence.

There is a need for a comprehensive approach to addressing these issues, for instance, by developing institutional capability through proper training and professional development of

board members and civil servants. This could be complemented with transparent recruitment and promotion systems, reinforcing anti-corruption contexts, building and communicating mechanisms for performance appraisal, and improved service delivery, which means relying on digital technologies, which will facilitate data transparency and diminish administrative waste. More specifically, Board effectiveness in the Nigerian civil service is tied to a bigger governance context simply because addressing dysfunction requires lots of work from mitigating opportunities for political interference to developing appropriate accountability structures meant to institutionalise performance or drive responsiveness, transparency, and professionalism. A recommitment to meritocracy, ethical leadership, and a learning culture can ensure that the civil service can function formally in good governance and support sustainable national development.

Theoretical Perspectives on Corporate Governance and Technological Disruption in the Lagos State Civil Service Commission

We would need a strong theoretical basis to understand how corporate governance and board effectiveness operate in times of technological disruption, particularly in the public sector, as exemplified by the Lagos State Civil Service Commission. In this section, I discuss four interconnected frameworks (Accountability Theory, Technology Acceptance Model, Resource Dependence Theory, and Institutional Theory) that provide a deeper understanding of how governance structures, technology uptake, and performance relate in public service.

Agency Theory

Agency Theory is a theory of organisations described by Meckling and Jensen (1976) in terms of principal-agent relationships in which agents (for example, managers of a civil service) act in the interests of a principal (for example, the state or the public). Information asymmetry and divergent interests can create moral hazard (discretion and authority exercised in pursuit of personal interest), shirking (non-exercise of discretion and authority), or adverse selection (public service leadership selection choices). In the context of the Lagos State Civil Service Commission, it can be used to identify the governance issues facing political appointees and career civil servants, where political appointees may act instead in support of their party or patronage arrangements rather than by an organisational and institutional agenda.

Corporate governance mechanisms like independent oversight bodies, governance structures like boards of directors, and associated performance measurement and evaluation narratives may assist agents' ability to behave according to publicly held expectations of their actions in public service. Changes in technology, primarily associated with recordkeeping and documenting a recruitment process and workflows like the deployment of DocuSign, can reinforce transparency and accountability. However, rational-choice theorising developed by Agency Theory does not consider cultural expectations, persons' ethical considerations and motivations beyond remuneration or gain, and organisations' resistance to change or inertia present in many bureaucracies.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) suggested two significant determinants of adopting a technology: Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU). In the Lagos State Civil Service Commission, this model informs the adoption of innovations (e-recruitment portals, electronic documents, digital workflow systems) and improving technology uptake means that nurses and support staff may only engage with technology when they perceive that it will enhance their performance in that job. However, employees can only embrace technology when the system is responsive to their existing behaviours as employees and adequate supporting conditions are available (working from home, or adequate power supply). While the TAM framework assists in implementation-level strategies, it pays particular attention to individual employee attitudes to the extent that it neglects to account for the institutional, political, and socio-cultural aspects that can enhance or hinder public sector innovation.

Resource Dependence Theory

Resource Dependence Theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003) argues that organisations are open systems reliant on external resources to operate effectively. When considering the Lagos State

Civil Service Commission in the digital transformation process, the theory highlights the importance of partnerships for providing appropriate technology and expertise and engaging with relevant stakeholders (and donors) to drive digital transformation through partnerships. Partnerships can provide the essential resources needed for innovation in terms of technical expertise, infrastructure, or funding. However, there are risks associated with relying on external third parties, particularly regarding increased dependence on the external organisation (which, in turn, may limit autonomy) or the alignment of incentives with priority (i.e. funding or financial accounting).

Therefore, building internal capacity and diversifying paths of accessing resource channels will be important considerations in ensuring that the independence of the civil service is maintained during reform. The theory helps examine inter-organisational relations and how the adopting organisation engages with external political actors; it has a drawback in that it can be overly optimistic regarding the assumptions hindsight implies.

Institutional Theory

According to Institutional Theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), institutional forces impact organisational behaviours through the need for organisations to conform to norms, rules, and expectations in their environments in a quest to be legitimate. In the case of digital governance reform in the Lagos State Civil Service Commission, direct pressures of performance goals may be more evident than compliance with federal requirements, donor requirements, or public expectations. This may result in more symbolism than substance in technology implementation, where the technology is introduced or planned with more concern for the impressiveness of the appearance than for meaningful institutional change. Institutional theory is a valuable lens for analysing resistance to change due to the burden of bureaucratic processes and a long-standing established way of doing things; it sometimes fails to adequately consider the aspects of agency and the motivations for internal and external reform.

These theories should be viewed as mutually informative: Agency Theory highlights the importance of oversight and incentives being aligned; TAM helps to highlight user engagement and system design; Resource Dependence Theory focuses on external strategic partnerships and leverage; and Institutional Theory helps to conceptualise legitimating behaviours and resistance to change. Ultimately, they point to a vision for strengthening corporate governance and board effectiveness and agency for accountability in the face of technological disruption informed by an integrated multidimensional approach to accountability, participatory innovation, resource diversification, and more.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilised the qualitative research approach and case study design to examine the relationship between corporate governance practices and board effectiveness vis-à-vis technological disruption within the Lagos State Civil Service Commission (LSCSC) between 2014 and 2024. This qualitative approach and case study design were chosen to yield a more profound insight into considerations of institutional dynamics and stakeholders' lived experiences in an administrative setting.

Study Population and Context

The study population here included many strategic departments and units of LSCSC such as the Directorate of Administration and Human Resource; Directorate of Career Management; Directorate of Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS); Directorate of Promotion, Conversion and Advancement; Directorate of Employee Relations; Directorate of Learning and Development; Directorate of Career Progression; Department of Procurement; Department of Planning; Department of Internal Audit; Department of Information and Communication Technology; Department of Public Affairs; Department of Human Resources Measures and Accountability; Recruitment and Appeal Unit; Appointment Unit; Discipline and Exit Unit; and Planning, Research and Statistics Unit. Citizen stakeholders were the ultimate beneficiaries of the activities of this Commission.

The leadership staff of the Service represented some of the departments. An example is the Chairman of the LSCSC, who is also the head of human resource management in the State. The

HODs of various Departments of the Directorate of Administration and Human Resources also represented their departments. The other respondents were heads of various sections, units, and departments. However, all Commission officials can be considered key stakeholders during an LSC disciplinary case. Every stakeholder can make an essential contribution towards the effective functioning and performance of the LSC. The Commission's very existence depends on these stakeholders. As a result of these considerations, an attempt was made to include all stakeholders with a "stake" in the LSC's functioning in the study.

Lagos State was purposively selected as the research site, since it is the economic hub of Nigeria, and, therefore, possesses much demographic and institutional variation. Lagos is a heterogeneous bureaucratic environment in urban governance, and formal and informal systems coexist. Given its relatively modern infrastructure, access to public records, and an information-rich media ecosystem, adequate conditions were created for rigorous data collection and interrogation of governance and digital transformation processes.

Sampling and Data Collection

Purposive sampling was adopted to identify and select participants with the requisite knowledge, experience, and perspectives relevant to the study. The sample comprised 20 participants, and categories comprised 20 participants were identified by type of participant, specifically: board members (n=5), members of the senior management team (n=5), middle management members and external stakeholders (n=5). It was assumed that each group's (n) number provided an opportunity to explore their response to the framing of open-ended questions to inform insight against a literature review relevant to governance in corporate governance and digital disruption. Each group had a purpose, and the sampling procedure was defined via a body of work relating to governance and digital disruption to inform justification for the conduct.

The data for this study were drawn from two primary sources: semi-structured interviews and documentary evidence. The semi-structured interviews provided the opportunity to engage directly with key stakeholders involved in governance processes and digital transformation initiatives within Lagos State. An interview protocol was developed to guide the discussions, focusing on higher-order dimensions such as policy formulation, institutional decision-making, and integrating digital technologies in public administration. The flexible format of the interviews allowed participants to reflect deeply on their experiences, express personal insights, and provide contextually rich information based on their professional positions and lived realities.

In addition to the interviews, a wide range of documentary sources were collected and reviewed to strengthen the credibility and depth of the study. These included board meeting minutes, annual reports, governance policy documents, strategic plans, and other relevant archival materials. The documents offered valuable background information, helped clarify institutional priorities, and supported the triangulation of themes that emerged from the interview data, thereby enhancing the overall trustworthiness of the findings.

Data Analysis

Data analysis utilised thematic analysis. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and read thoroughly several times to become familiar with the dataset. The initial understanding and discussions informed the coding process, during which meaningful segments of texts were systematically applied codes to reflect the various concepts such as institutional bottlenecks, technology adaptation, and deliberative accountability of the boards. These codes were eventually sorted into categories that developed their themes. Qualitative data analysis software facilitated the organisation of the data and supported its retrieval and categorisation. The emerging themes were continually and recursively evaluated for coherence, representativeness, and alignment with the research aims. Representative quotations were selected to exemplify and substantiate the themes and ensure the analysis's trustworthiness.

Credibility and Dependability

Consistency was the primary indicator of dependability. An audit trail of method and analytic decisions was kept to maximise transparency. This audit trail guaranteed that the findings were data-driven, verified, and possibly repeatable - thus providing a more cohesive methodological approach.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Response Rate

A total of 30 participants were targeted for this study, while 25 were interviewed, yielding an overall response rate of 83.3%. The non-response of five participants (16.7%) was due mainly to scheduling issues, previous administration workloads, and the last-minute unavailability of senior officials. While it was unfortunate that five participants did not contribute to the study, the diversity of the participants provided sufficient representation for qualitative research of this nature, despite being marginally lower than the original sample size. Participants represented all levels of the Commission's strategic and operational capacities. The inclusion criterion required that all internal or external participants had been engaged with the Commission for at least three years in the time frame between 2018 and 2025. The likely existence of contextual knowledge and experiential depth concerning governance processes and technology adoption was presumed.

Table 1: Response Rate by Category

Category	Targeted Participants	Actual Responses	Response Rate (%)
Commissioners	3	2	66.7%
Directorates (7)	7	7	100.0%
Departments (6)	6	6	100.0%
Units (4)	4	4	100.0%
Citizens [Internded Beneficiaries of the Commission]	10	6	60.0%
Total	30	25	83.3%

Table 1 presents a complete response rate across Directorates, Departments, and Units. This demonstrates a notable level of institutional buy-in. Participation rates from Commissioners were slightly less, at 66.7%, which is pretty typical given the scheduling demands on senior officials. Citizen participation rates were lower, at 60%, and were confined to barriers to availability for the citizens and sometimes the criminal engagement levels with each research outcome of community capacity. However, an overall response rate of 83.3% must be viewed as quite favourable for qualitative research, and the wide-ranging inclusion of strategic, operational, and beneficiary perspectives through our sampling processes.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic composition of the respondents is important when interpreting the research findings about governance practices and the ethical use of technology in the Lagos State Civil Service Commission.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 25)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	15	60.0%
	Female	10	40.0%
Age	31-40 years	6	24.0%
	41-50 years	11	44.0%
	Above 50 years	8	32.0%
Educational Qualification	Bachelor's Degree	10	40.0%
	Master's Degree	12	48.0%
	Doctorate/Professional Qualification	3	12.0%
Marital Status	Married	20	80.0%
	Single	3	12.0%
	Widowed/Divorced	2	8.0%

Employment Status	Currently Employed in the 19 Commission	76.0%
	Retired from Public Service	3
	Citizen (Service Beneficiary)	3
Role/Category	Commissioners	2
	Directorates	7
	Departments	6
	Units	4
	Citizens	6
		24.0%

Gender Distribution

Of the participants, 60% were male and 40% female, with all levels of the organisation represented. The diverse perspectives on governance reforms and ICT adoption from male and female representatives were imperative, especially in a profession with a well-established male majority. The essence of including women in directorate and departmental leadership roles illustrates an imperfect case of gender diversification continuing to emerge in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Age Profile

The largest cohort is aged 41–50 (44%), 32% over 50 years, and 24% aged 31-40. Professionals in the above categories have enough professional experience and other public administration roles to provide reflective observations on long-established governance and the more recent digital migration.

Educational Attainment

Respondents predominantly had a high educational profile: 48% had earned a Master's degree, 40% a Bachelor's degree, and 12% had doctoral qualifications and/or professional accreditation. Given this level of education, respondents were well prepared to engage critically and reflectively with the governance frameworks of their organisations, engage with individual and organisational policies, and work through the technical issues associated with digital integration and governance.

Marital Status

Eighty percent were married, 12% single, and 8% separated/widowed. While marital status (married, separated, single or divorced) did not directly affect their ability to implement governance reform or implement ICT strategies, marital stability in the public sector is often viewed as increasing employees' commitment to the organisation in the long term, which may influence their desire to engage with institutional change.

Employment Status and Role Composition

The vast majority (76%) of participants were active staff of the Commission, meaning that their accounts are the most current and practical experiences and practices of governance and ICT. The retired staff (12%) provided historical reference points to help contextualise any governance and ICT processes and practices. The citizen beneficiaries, who represent 12% of the participants, also brought out this dimension of being a service user. However, the mixed role format of participation allowed us to talk about and analyse the three strategic levels of governance (i.e. stewardship, managerial, and public service) from the perspective of both Commissioners (8%) and Citizens (24%).

In summary, the response rate and demographic information indicate that the study is characterised by a well-represented, experienced, and more diverse participant sample. The combination of seniority type, years of service, and stakeholder type enabled me to explore the research area of study, involving digital technologies and governance, and the impact of the use of digital technologies on governance structures, governance decisions made, and governance service delivery in the Lagos State Civil Service Commission, for the period 2018 to 2025.

Analysis of Research Objectives

Objective 1: Utilisation of Digital Technologies and Information Systems to Support Governance Practices

The first research objective looked at how different digital technologies and information systems were applied to enhance governance practices within the Lagos State Civil Service Commission. Several associated themes emerged based on the interviews with ten respondents, including operational/strategic beneficiaries. The two most dominant themes were: 1) digitisation of records, 2) workflow automation; the other secondary themes were: 3) data-informed decision-making, 4) capacity and uptake, 5) service delivery, and 6) cyber security/data integrity.

Digitisation of Records was an unambiguous reform pronounced by the respondents, because all respondents noted that electronic document and digital archiving of personnel files improved audit readiness, eliminated errors in records, and shortened administrative delays. Senior ICT officials described their digitisation and digital archiving of archived paper records on a whole-of-government basis - which began in 2018 - as a watershed moment in complying and improving administration. Some staff have continued to maintain paper systems through hybrid models based on hesitance or resource limitations, which has somewhat created inconsistencies in retrieval.

Workflow Automation, through routing improvements, established productivity improvements by digitising simple routine administrative processes. The introduction of online approvals, automated notifications and e-governance dashboards improved turnaround times for various activities, including promotions, training approvals and procurement requests.

Departmental heads appreciated being able to confirm outstanding tasks and view real-time pending requests in the approval queue, leading to improved accountability. However, some mid-level officers opined that their visibility in processes has increased performance expectations, reinforcing the need for a balanced performance.

The paradigm shift to Data-Driven Decision-Making was described as disruptive, with foundations in Human Resource Analytics and Performance Dashboards, enabled by real-time reporting to enhance evidence-based governance. The Directors referred to benefits such as better allocation of resources, fairer processes for promotion, and greater transparency in tracking nominations for training. However, the caveats are that the accuracy of the migrated data was still, together with a demand for ongoing data quality assurance processes.

Capacity and Adoption Problems were recurring themes throughout. Gaps in digital literacies, particularly for older and longer-serving employees, were still concerning. While training was perceived positively, ongoing sustainability will not happen without technical support and changing cultural journeys.

Both agency staff and citizen participants reported improvements to service delivery. Online portals decreased foot traffic in offices for in-person visits, decreased citizen inquiry response times and increased transparency in the process. Citizens felt access and convenience had improved; nevertheless, they noted certain inconveniences and performance complications due to system outages, which suggests agencies are considering contingency planning for service delivery improvements.

Finally, in examining the overall sustainability of this study and its efforts and outcomes for citizens, cybersecurity and data integrity considerations were serious concerns. While backup systems were in place, as were security policies and protocols, there were significant feelings around breaches and security errors, which need to be factored into building trust within digital governance.

In all, the findings indicate that while there was apparent adoption and usage of digital technologies with significant advantages for governance, the advantages were not equally experienced by all Commission participants. The sustainability of governance gains will depend on other elements of developing capacity building, addressing culture with people in the workplace and establishing and using a data governance framework.

Objective 2: Technological Effect on Governance Structures, Decision-Making, and Service Delivery

The second research question investigated how technology changed the Commission's governance structure, decision-making practices, and service delivery from 2018 to 2025. Six

connected themes emerged from the eleven participants interviewed: restructuring of governance processes; efficiencies in decision-making; transparency and accountability; staff capacity and change management; improvements in service delivery; and public perception/trust.

The restructuring of Governance Processes was the most cited impact. Technology framed the governance processes at the Commission while giving more time for relationship building with clients; the processes, as digital workflows, eliminated all manual transfers and duplicated work by clearly articulating escalation processes. Project management and tracking software brought systematic collaboration with the co-op directorates. However, the degree of integration depended on the extent of leadership commitment with each Directorate and each individual's readiness.

Decision-making efficiency was improved in each instance. Decision-making was made much more efficient with direct access to real-time data, automated approvals workflows, and a repository of information that is central and consolidated. Processes that typically took days or weeks to complete (i.e. promotions and disciplinary reviews) can be completed in days. While citizens experienced much faster processing, some managers mentioned that the transparency of the measurement may have created pressure to perform, which suggested how important it is to have supported change management.

Renewed Transparency and Accountability were also achieved through digital audit trails and recorded evidence of automation. Some respondents said the digital tracking of approvals and recorded timelines mitigated the opportunities for corruption and added credibility for the organisation. Some concerns about data security and the potential abuse or misuse of recorded information with such a simplified approach suggest we need to work to simplify it as it relates to governance. Ongoing concerns and challenges were raised in Staff Capacity and Change Management, particularly for ageing staff with low ICT skills. Younger staff adapted more readily, but the skill gaps already observed resulted in delays and required further reiterative training. This further proves that adopting technology is as much of a cultural transition as a technical transition.

Service Delivery Improvements were acknowledged, both internally and externally. Whereas citizens experienced online application, thus fewer visits to the offices, and much shorter feedback timelines, the Commission experienced process efficiencies and increased public perception. Service reliability was not yet optimum because there were still infrastructure challenges and occasional bureaucratic delays. In total, Public Perception and Trust were somewhat mixed. Although many citizens indicated higher confidence around the Commission's processes, for example, because of improved and additive transparency, there remained scepticism about productivity and data security. It is a reminder that while we have leveraged technology to reform the Commission, we must remain engaged with the public and have solid privacy protections to build trust.

The Lagos State Civil Service Commission's use of technology for governance has vastly improved public service delivery and decision-making speed. Nevertheless, infrastructure gaps, low adoption rates, and low public trust confirm that successful technology implementation that fully digitises processes requires balancing technical infrastructure with human capacity building, ethical governance, and mechanisms for citizen engagement.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that implementing digital governance reforms within the Lagos State Civil Service Commission (LSCSC) has reshaped governance structures, decision-making processes, and service delivery. However, these reforms are constrained by entrenched organisational cultures, limited ICT literacy, infrastructural deficits, and political interference. A more comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding digital transformation emerges by situating these findings within the theoretical frameworks of Agency Theory, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Resource Dependence Theory, and Institutional Theory.

Integrating Governance Practices with Agency Theory

Consistent with Agency Theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976), the findings highlight tensions between political appointees and career civil servants in the LSCSC. While digital tools, such as automated recruitment workflows and HRM information systems, were introduced to reduce discretion and improve transparency, instances of selective reporting of data and informal political influence indicate that principal-agent challenges remain. These patterns support Adebite's (2015) claims that technology can counteract patronage systems but cannot wholly eliminate elite capture.

Furthermore, the study extends Agency Theory by demonstrating how technological innovation reconfigures principal-agent dynamics. Automated performance dashboards provide oversight mechanisms that limit the discretion of individual actors, yet political principals continue to exert influence through alternative informal channels. This duality underscores the need for strengthening **corporate governance mechanisms**, including independent oversight bodies and transparent evaluation frameworks, to align managerial behaviour with organisational objectives and public expectations.

Technology Acceptance and Digital Innovation

The findings reveal that successful technology adoption depends on employee perceptions of usefulness and ease of use, as suggested by the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989). Younger staff members reported greater confidence and enthusiasm toward e-governance platforms, viewing them as empowering and efficiency-enhancing. In contrast, long-serving employees demonstrated significant resistance, often preferring manual, paper-based procedures. This generational divide reinforces Asaolu, Adedokun, and Monday's (2016) assertion that technical investment alone is insufficient without deliberate change management strategies.

However, the findings also extend TAM by exposing the limitations of individual-level models in the context of public sector reforms. For example, participants reported systemic barriers, such as inconsistent power supply, unreliable internet infrastructure, and limited digital literacy, which constrained employees' ability to embrace technological tools. These constraints illustrate that user acceptance is mediated by broader institutional and infrastructural conditions, requiring policies that combine technical skilling, organisational restructuring, and sustained leadership commitment.

External Partnerships and Resource Dependence

The study further demonstrates that the LSCSC's digital transformation depends heavily on external partnerships for funding, technical expertise, and infrastructure, consistent with Resource Dependence Theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Donor-supported projects, private-sector collaborations, and vendor-driven system deployments facilitated the rapid rollout of digital platforms. However, as several administrators observed, such dependencies risked reducing organisational autonomy, particularly when external actors shaped implementation priorities and timelines.

These findings align with Olanrewaju (2019), who argues that over-reliance on external resources can create structural vulnerabilities in public institutions. They also highlight the strategic importance of building internal capacity and diversifying resource channels to reduce exposure to external pressures. Digital reforms remain fragile without such measures, particularly when donor priorities diverge from local institutional needs.

Institutional Pressures and Resistance to Change

Despite substantial investments in digital systems, the findings indicate persistent organisational inertia, as captured by Institutional Theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). While the LSCSC adopted innovative technologies to align with federal mandates and donor expectations, many participants described these initiatives as symbolic rather than transformative. This phenomenon mirrors Osemeke and Osemeke's (2017) observation that procedural reforms in Nigerian public institutions often fail to penetrate deep-seated cultural norms.

For instance, some employees maintained handwritten records alongside electronic files, reflecting institutionalised work practices resistant to disruption. This dynamic suggests that technology implementation, in isolation, risks reproducing symbolic legitimacy rather than driving substantive change. A sustainable transformation requires a dual focus on procedural reform and cultural change, with leadership playing a critical role in redefining norms and fostering collective ownership of innovation.

Comparative Insights and Theoretical Synthesis

Integrating insights from the four theoretical frameworks provides a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics shaping digital governance reforms within the Lagos State Civil Service Commission. The findings reveal that successful implementation requires a multi-dimensional approach that simultaneously addresses structural, behavioural, institutional, and resource-related challenges. Drawing from Agency Theory, the study demonstrates the critical importance of strengthening oversight and accountability mechanisms to mitigate elite capture and reduce the discretionary power exercised by political appointees and senior officials. While technological tools such as automated workflows and digital dashboards enhance transparency, the persistence of informal political influence underscores the need for stronger corporate governance structures and clearly defined performance evaluation frameworks.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) offers valuable insights into the role of user engagement and perceptions in shaping the success of e-governance initiatives. The study shows that employees' willingness to adopt digital tools depends significantly on their perceptions of usefulness and ease of use, with younger staff demonstrating greater adaptability and confidence than their long-serving counterparts. However, the findings extend TAM by illustrating that user acceptance in the public sector is not determined by individual attitudes alone but is shaped by broader infrastructural, organisational, and socio-political contexts. Limited ICT literacy, inconsistent power supply, and unreliable internet connectivity present systemic barriers that constrain technology uptake, underscoring the need for targeted capacity-building strategies alongside digital investments.

Similarly, Resource Dependence Theory illuminates the Commission's reliance on external partnerships to acquire the technical expertise, infrastructure, and financial support necessary for driving digital transformation. While collaborations with private vendors, donor agencies, and development partners have facilitated the deployment of innovative systems, they also introduce vulnerabilities that risk undermining institutional autonomy. The findings highlight the importance of balancing external resource mobilisation with internal capacity development to ensure sustainable reforms. Digital transformation initiatives remain susceptible to external actors' shifting priorities and constraints without deliberate strategies to diversify resource channels and strengthen internal technical competence.

Finally, Institutional Theory provides a lens through which the study examines the persistence of cultural norms and bureaucratic inertia that hinder meaningful change. Despite significant investments in digital platforms, long-standing administrative practices, such as maintaining handwritten records alongside electronic files, continue to shape workplace behaviours. In several instances, digital systems were adopted symbolically to project an image of modernisation, while substantive changes in work processes and decision-making structures lagged. This finding echoes existing scholarship, suggesting that reforms aimed at legitimacy rather than functionality often produce limited transformation. Overcoming such inertia requires a dual focus on procedural reform and cultural change, supported by strong leadership that fosters inclusive participation and collective ownership of technological innovations.

These theoretical perspectives provide a coherent framework for understanding the complexities of digital transformation in public administration. They reveal that technological investment alone is insufficient to achieve sustainable governance reforms. Instead, successful digital transformation demands a holistic strategy that integrates technological innovation with human capacity development, institutional restructuring, cultural realignment, and strategic resource management. By synthesising these insights, the study advances an integrated model

for digital governance reform that moves beyond fragmented, technology-driven approaches toward a more inclusive and context-sensitive vision of public sector modernisation.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the adoption and implementation of digital governance reforms within the Lagos State Civil Service Commission (LSCSC) between 2018 and 2025, focusing on how technology-enabled systems have reshaped governance structures, decision-making processes, and service delivery. The findings demonstrate that digital transformation has enhanced transparency, improved workflow efficiency, and strengthened accountability mechanisms. However, these benefits are unevenly distributed and remain constrained by entrenched organisational cultures, varied levels of ICT literacy, infrastructural deficits, and persistent political interference.

The study makes a significant theoretical contribution by demonstrating that digital transformation in the public sector is not merely a technical upgrade but a socio-technical process. Drawing on Agency Theory, the findings reveal that while digital platforms improve oversight, political principals still exercise influence through informal mechanisms, underscoring the enduring challenges of elite capture. Similarly, extending the Technology Acceptance Model, the study highlights that user adoption depends on individual perceptions of ease of use and usefulness and broader institutional and infrastructural contexts. Resource Dependence Theory further explains how the LSCSC's reliance on external technical expertise and donor funding creates vulnerabilities that could threaten institutional autonomy. Institutional Theory illustrates the persistence of deep-rooted cultural norms that limit the transformative potential of reforms. The study advances an integrated conceptual framework for understanding digital governance reforms in developing contexts by integrating these perspectives.

From a policy and practical perspective, the findings underscore the importance of moving beyond technology deployment toward holistic governance strategies. Digital reforms should be complemented by sustained capacity-building programmes tailored to different organisational levels, from senior administrators to front-line staff, and supported by credible ICT training partnerships. A structured change management framework is also essential to address cultural resistance, incorporating peer mentorship, pilot projects, and incentives for early adopters. To enhance public trust, government agencies must embed transparent accountability mechanisms, including regular security audits, publicly accessible data privacy policies, and clear channels for citizen engagement. Furthermore, the integration of digital governance goals with broader civil service reform agendas will ensure alignment between technological innovation and institutional restructuring, helping sustain reform momentum over the long term.

Despite these insights, the study is subject to several limitations. First, it relied on a qualitative approach involving a relatively small purposive sample, which, although rich in context, limits the breadth of perspectives captured across the LSCSC. Second, the study is context-specific, focusing on Lagos State, and findings may not be directly transferable to other jurisdictions with different institutional arrangements, political cultures, and resource environments. Third, the research was conducted during an active reform period, meaning that governance dynamics, user attitudes, and technological capabilities may evolve as systems mature and new challenges emerge.

These limitations present opportunities for future research. Comparative studies across Nigerian states or other developing-country contexts would provide valuable insights into how institutional environments shape digital transformation trajectories. Quantitative studies could complement qualitative findings by measuring adoption rates, user satisfaction, and efficiency gains across departments. Longitudinal research would also deepen understanding of how reforms evolve and organisational cultures adapt to technological change.

In conclusion, the experience of Lagos State demonstrates that while digitalisation can enhance transparency, efficiency, and citizen engagement, technology alone is insufficient to transform governance. Lasting reform requires balancing technological innovation with investments in human capacity development, cultural realignment, resource sustainability, and

inclusive public participation. The lessons from Lagos offer practical guidance for policymakers, reform practitioners, and scholars seeking to implement digital governance in contexts of political complexity, institutional inertia, and resource constraints. They highlight that the success of digital transformation ultimately lies in its integration with broader governance reforms, ensuring that technological progress translates into enduring institutional change and improved public service delivery.

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