

## **Media Practitioners' Perceptions of e-Governance and Dissemination of Government Policies/ Programmes in South-East Nigeria**

### **Percepções dos profissionais de mídia sobre governança eletrônica e disseminação de políticas/ programas governamentais no sudeste da Nigéria**

*Cosmos Chukwudi Ndukwe<sup>1</sup>*

*Patrick Ene Okon<sup>2</sup>*

*Chidinma Joan Nweke<sup>3</sup>*

*Uzoma Chukwuemeka Okugo<sup>4</sup>*

**Resumo:** *Esse estudo trata da conscientização e percepção dos profissionais da mídia no sudeste da Nigéria sobre o uso das ferramentas de governança eletrônica. O método de survey foi utilizado e, de uma população de 2.671, uma amostra de 1.340 foi escolhida por amostragem proporcional estratificada. O referencial teórico está baseado na Teoria da Comunicação sobre o Desenvolvimento e os resultados foram analisados usando o SPSS. O estudo concluiu que existe um baixo nível de conhecimento sobre as operações de governança eletrônica entre os profissionais da mídia no sudeste da Nigéria e recomenda-se que os profissionais da mídia adquiram uma cultura de atualização periódica de seus conhecimentos.*

**Palavras-Chave:** *comunicação; governança eletrônica; profissionais de mídia; percepção; Sudeste da Nigéria.*

1 University of Calabar (UNICAL). Calabar, Nigeria.  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0465-5317> E-mail: benudechukwu@gmail.com

2 University of Calabar (UNICAL). Calabar, Nigeria.  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8474-5920> E-mail: eneokon@yahoo.com

3 University of Calabar (UNICAL). Calabar, Nigeria.  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2401-0062> E-mail: jnweke@unical.edu.ng

4 University of Calabar (UNICAL). Calabar, Nigeria.  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3507-5312> E-mail: uzomaokugo@yahoo.com

**Abstract:** *This study is on the awareness and perception media practitioners in South-East Nigeria have about the use of e-governance. The survey method was used; and from a population of 2,671, a sample of 1,340 was chosen through stratified proportional sampling. Theoretical framework was hinged on the Development Communication Theory. Findings were analysed using the SPSS. The study concluded that there is a low level of knowledge on operations of e-governance among media practitioners in South-East Nigeria. Recommendations made included that media practitioners should imbibe the culture of periodic upgrading of their knowledge.*

**Keywords:** *communication; e-governance; media practitioners; perception; South-East Nigeria.*

## Introduction

Mass media is central in the existence and success of any modern society. It is true that the media are indispensable in the development of any society. Apart from the widely acclaimed indispensability of the media in the existence and success of a society, diverse literature on media indispensability seem to agree on the common denominator of the mass media being pivotal in the success of virtually all programmes, policies and activities that are geared towards human development and/or societal benefits.

Interestingly, e-governance is a trending communication initiative in which effective implementation may also be a direct function of knowledge, awareness and perception (KAP) of media practitioners. That is why this research was set up to investigate the postulation that the acceptability, believability and effective implementation of e-governance within the South-East zone of Nigeria may have a relationship with the knowledge, awareness and perception of media practitioners in the area. It follows that any innovation the media practitioner has low knowledge of suffers great setbacks in acceptability. Therefore, what are the levels of knowledge on e-governance operations among media practitioners in South-Eastern Nigeria? What are the perceptions among the media practitioners about e-governance? To what extent do media practitioners' attitudes influence their assessing e-governance operations? How do the knowledge, attitude and perceptions of e-governance affect dissemination of government policies and programmes? And what are the likely impediments to the application of e-governance among media practitioners? These constitute the core of this work.

## Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated for this study:

1. What is the level of knowledge on e-governance operations among media practitioners in South-East Nigeria?

2. To what extent do the Knowledge, Attitude and Perceptions of media practitioners on e-governance affect the dissemination of government policies/programmes in the mainstream media?
3. What are the impediments to the application of e-governance operations or services in Nigeria?

## Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the outcome of this research:

$H_0^1$ : There is no significant relationship between media practitioners' knowledge of e-governance and their attitude to the practice.

$H_0^2$ : There is no significant relationship between media practitioners' perceptions of e-governance and dissemination of government policies and programmes.

## Understanding the Concept of E-governance

Governance is as old as human civilization. It refers to the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented (OLUFEMI, 2012). Governance can be used in several contexts such as corporate, international, national and local governance. Governance is not an exclusive concept of government. It extends to civil society and private sector. It covers every institution and organisation, from the family to the state. It involves the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority and the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. It can be better understood as the complex mechanisms, processes, relationships and instructions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations and mediate their differences.

Boeninger (1992) sees governance as the process by which a political system achieves such values as accountability, participation, transparency and respect for the rule of law and due bureaucratic participation

or process. It includes the capacities of a system to exercise authority, win legitimacy, adjudicate conflicts and implement programmes. In other words, the basis of governance is its ability to respond to the needs, aspirations and yearnings of the majority of the citizenry. Once a political system is able to achieve this, it is seen as responsive, accountable and effective governance (UNESCO Report, 2011).

E-governance, on the other hand, is broad, divergent, and has no commonly accepted definition. Olufemi (2012) says the concept originated at the beginning of the 21st century, mostly as a copy of e-commerce into public sector. He further observes that all intentions of e-governance are directed towards the presence of the public services on the internet. In the early years of its development, e-governance followed the evolutionary e-business, and the primary focus of its e-services was simple appearance of graphic user interface with no interactions. Today, the focus is on co-ordination and effective assessment of the needs, efficiency and public benefits for such services.

The definitions of e-governance and its evolution have been the focus of a large body of research (FANG, 2002; HU, PAN, LU & WANG, 2009). More or less restrictive definitions of e-governance have been given, but there is still no unique definition of the term (YILDIZ, 2014, cited in OLUFEMI, 2012). Nevertheless, it has been generally recognised that e-governance offers a huge potential to increase the impact of government activities for citizens (FANG, 2012).

As stated by Moon (2002), e-governance is the use of information technologies by government agencies to transform their relationship with citizens, businesses, different areas of government, and other governments. These technologies help deliver government services to citizens, improve interaction with businesses and industries, and provide access to information (UNITED NATIONS, 2008). E-government can be described as utilising the internet and the worldwide web for delivering government information and services to citizens.

Kumar (2004) posits that e-governance can be seen as the transformation of public sector's internal and external relationship through

net-enabled operations, information technology and communications to optimise government's service delivery, consistency participation and governance. The use of information technologies and new business processes to transform how governments interact with citizens and businesses is considered e-governance. As seen by the World Bank, e-governance is expected to minimise corruption, provide increased transparency, afford greater convenience, improve revenue and reduce cost. (GODSE & GARG, 2009).

### **An Overview of e-Governance in Nigeria**

Ranked 162 out of 193 countries in 2012 in the United Nations e-governance development ranking, Nigeria improved its ranking to 141 in 2014 (UBABUKOH, 2014), but slipped two places to 143 in 2016 and remained on that spot in 2018. As at 2016, it also ranked 97 in the e-participation index, an improvement of 22 points up from 75 in 2012 (AMAEFULE, 2019). Ubabukoh further holds that in line with the e-governance initiative, Nigerian government has implemented two flagship projects – Government service portal (GSP) and Government contact centre (GCC). The GSP provides a single-window technology access by citizens and other stakeholders to government services being provided by various ministries, departments and agencies. It is multi-faceted and includes collaborative channels that deliver core content management capabilities. The primary objectives of deploying GSP are to create a single point of entry to Federal Government services, enhance accountability and improve the delivery and quality of public services through technology-enabled civic engagement (mobile technology, *Facebook*, *Twitter*, interactive mapping, blogs, etc.).

Also, Nkanga (2014) points out that the first phase of the GSP includes the automation of 10 government processes from the Federal Ministries of Education, Health, Agriculture, Industry, Trade and Investment as well as Communication Technology. She adds that the Nigerian government is setting up government contact centres (GCCs), which will facilitate efficient response to citizens' request through a two-tier

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response approach. The picture painted here is that of an on-going and improving state and operations of e-governance in Nigeria. However, there are strong claims of low level awareness of the attempts among citizens in both rural and urban centres (ADEYEMO, 2011; OLUFEMI, 2012; UBABUKOH, 2014; NKANGA, 2014).

As observed by Olufemi (2012), Nigeria believes that e-governance is necessary in order to make the public sector more efficient. The older forms of ICTs-mass media channels involving the use of media, such as television, radio or newspapers are still currently prevalent in many developing countries including Nigeria. These forms of communication are generic and do not consider individual interests or needs. Such channels are more applicable to literate individuals and elite classes of society.

In Nigeria, there are several initiatives geared at accelerating development via the technological platform in the polity (OLUFEMI, 2012). E-governance initiatives, geared towards connecting communities, vital agencies, government establishments and educational institutions at all levels to ICT, are currently being pursued by government: from the National Rural Telephony Projects to other laudable initiatives like the Nigerian telemedicine initiative, public service network initiative, internet exchange point initiatives, state and local government ICT facilities loan scheme initiative, and wire Nigeria initiative. According to Ekeh (2007), these initiatives are aimed at enabling the rapid development of the nation.

Olufemi (2012) points out that although the implementation of e-governance has begun in Nigeria, there is little evidence to suggest that a clear framework for the adoption of e-governance is being followed. According to Yusuf (2005), e-governance activity in Nigeria is low. Most of the government websites are in the publish stage and some government organisations even bypass the interact stage, thereby giving no opportunity for citizens' requests and feedbacks. Olatokun and Adebayo (2012) observe that findings from a recent study by Mundi and Musa (2010) shows that only 30% of Nigerian state websites reached the second stage

of e-government while 70% were still very much in the publish stage. These States were Lagos and Imo and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, which provide services that invite citizens to interact with them and give online feedback.

An interesting finding by Awoleye (2008) is that a huge percentage of both government and non-government employees are aware of e-governance in the States, and these governments have achieved this high rate of awareness through mass media. In spite of this high rate of awareness, only half of the population could be said to have proficiency in the use of e-government. The perception, level of awareness, stage of implementation, as well as the challenges of e-governance differ in States and regions of Nigeria due to lots of peculiar factors (OLUFEMI, 2012).

As observed by Ifinedo (2004), Nigeria has an e-governance development index of 1.02, which is below the UN's benchmark 1.62. The emergence of e-governance in Nigeria can be traced to the advent of democracy in 1999. The first real activity in this regard was the development of government websites. These efforts were un-coordinated and only a few agencies with the resources could establish an online presence. In pursuance of this objective, the government established the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) under the Ministry of Science and Technology to champion development of information technology in Nigeria and midwife implementation of the national IT policy (AJAYI, 2003). NITDA is also charged with the responsibility of implementing e-governance initiative using National e-Governance Strategies (NeGSt), a public-private-partnership (PPP) as a special purpose vehicle with the mandate to facilitate, drive and implement the Nigerian e-government programme (NITDA, 2007).

As noted by Nkanga (2014), some components of e-governance have already commenced in Nigeria, such as the Nigerian Customs ASSY-CUDA Programme, the computerisation of resident permit by the Nigerian Immigration Services, and computerisation of land and certificate of occupancy in the Federal Capital Territory Administration. The e-payroll of staff, online checking of West Africa Examination Council,



National Examination Council, and Joint Admission and Matriculation Board results as well as National Youth Service Corps postings are part of real-time and cost-effective services which are part of e-governance. There is, therefore, the need to consolidate and spread it to other services that have not been incorporated, as well as to the rural areas (MUHAMMED, 2010).

Nigeria seems to be moving in the right direction with the formation of its new national ICT policy, which appears to promote e-governance initiatives. However, the main problem for the country continues to be the unavailability or poor condition of the enabling infrastructure for e-governance such as telecommunication facilities (OLUFEMI, 2012). Basic telecommunication services such as telephone lines, internet access, etc., required for e-governance are insufficient in sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria (IFINEDO, 2004). The teledensity (number of telephone lines per 100 inhabitants) in Nigeria in 1999 was 0.5, but rose to 2.0 in 2002 after Nigeria liberalised its ICT sector (AJAYI, 2003). There were 100,000 internet users in Nigeria in 2002, and around 6 million in 2012. But there has been great improvement in the subscription services ever since – from 85 million in 2010, to over 120 million in 2013 and to more than 179 million in September 2019 (Nigerian Communications Commission, 2019). These improvements are providing fertile ground for e-governance.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The Development Communication Theory is found relevant to this study. This theory mainly focuses on the use of the mass media to facilitate development. Earlier postulations of the theory by McQuail (1987) made reference to the need of media restriction and state intervention in media affairs for development sake. These postulations were criticised for intruding on press freedom. Hence, scholars like Domatob and Hall (1983) and Forlarin (1998) modify some of McQuail's postulations to accommodate respect for press freedom in the task of using the media

for development. Forlarin (1998) redefines the development principles of media theory as follows:

- I. Media should accept and carry-out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy or ideology without prejudice to their national functions of information, education and entertainment.
- II. Media should also accept and help in carrying out the special development tasks of national integration, socio-economic modernisation, promotion of literacy and cultural creativity.
- III. Media should carefully identify and give due attention in foreign news to links with other countries with similar socio-cultural orientation and/or political and economic aspirations.
- IV. In order to safeguard the ideas of press freedom, journalists and other media workers should always faithfully fulfil their obligations and stoutly defend their rights in the course of their information-gathering and disseminating tasks.
- V. The State, with its systems, has a duty to ensure that media or journalists presumed to have contravened any national dissemination tasks conveniently face prosecution, expecting a fair speedy trial.

In relation to this study, it is observed that the knowledge and perceptions of media practitioners affect or influence their attitude towards the media coverage they give on an issue. Hence, their knowledge, attitudes and perceptions can either position the media for development or rob the media of their development functions. E-governance is a national development practice and the media should encourage and support it. Carrying out this function by the media bothers, to a large extent, on media practitioners' knowledge, attitudes and perceptions.

## **Research Design**

The research design used for this study is the survey method. The population was 2,671 registered media practitioners in the five South-Eastern states, namely: Abia - 526, Anambra - 674, Ebonyi - 545, Enugu - 531,

and Imo - 395 (Source: NUJ and RATTAWU Secretariats in the five states, 2016).

The larger the sample size, the more representative the sample is of the population. Some authors have recommended sample sizes or sampling proportions for specific population sizes. Nwana (1981, p.72) recommends "at least, 50% of a population of few thousands". Comrey and Lee (1992) as well as Wimmer and Dominick (2000) prefer the percentage to be based on such contingency factors as population, project types, project purpose, complexity, time and financial constraints, etc. Based on the observations, this study adopted the percentage-population recommendation of 50% in determining the sample size, which was approximately 1,340.

The stratified proportional sampling was used. The choice of this procedure was made largely by the characteristics of the population, chiefly among which is the availability of a comprehensive and functional list of all members of NUJ and RATTAWU in the five States.

The measuring instruments were questionnaire and personal interview schedule. The 1,340 copies of questionnaire were distributed as follows: Abia State – 264, Anambra – 338, Ebonyi – 274, Enugu – 266, and Imo – 198. Also, 10 members of NUJ and RATTAWU were interviewed during the joint quarterly meeting of the bodies held in Enugu on May 20, 2016.

In order to make for uniformity in the data gathering, the Likert rating scale was used given that the research is quantitative.

## **Presentation and Analysis of Data**

Out of 1,340 copies of questionnaire, 1,200 (or 89.55%) were validly filled while 140 copies were not retrieved, representing a mortality rate of 10.45%. A 4-point Likert Scale was used, and any item with mean greater than 2.5 is significant; is marked and on bold. Otherwise, it is not significant.

**Research Question 1** – What is the level of knowledge on the operations of e-governance among media practitioners in South-East Nigeria?

Table 1: Knowledge of the operations of e-governance

S/No	Questions	SA	A	D	SD	Total	N	mean
1a.	Use of e-governance by Government MDAs	642	0	486	90	48	1200	4.00
b.	Use of e-governance by Organised Private Sector	200	90	268	642	2250	1200	1.88
c.	Use of e-governance by multi-national agencies	268	200	90	642	2494	1200	2.08
d.	Use of e-governance by state security agencies	90	200	268	642	2138	1200	1.78
2a.	Do you find multi-media computer handy in the gathering of information	40	0	581	642	1964	1200	1.64
b.	Do you find laptop handy in the gathering of information	241	0	317	642	2240	1200	1.87
c.	Do you find palmtop handy in the gathering of information	120	0	438	642	1998	1200	1.67
d.	Do you find digi-palmtop handy in the gathering of information	40	0	642	518	1962	1200	1.64
e.	Do you find iPad handy in the gathering of information	328	0	518	354	2702	1200	2.25
f.	Do you find multi-media mobile phone handy in the gathering of information	431	0	251	518	2744	1200	2.29
3a.	Do you consider Facebook, a suitable choice for dissemination of information regarding e-governance	621	0	328	251	3391	1200	2.83*

b.	Do you consider email, a suitable choice for dissemination of information regarding e-governance	310	0	269	621	2399	1200	2.00
c.	Do you consider tweeter, a suitable choice for dissemination of information regarding e-governance	69	0	0	1131	1407	1200	1.17
d.	Do you consider <i>Instagram</i> , a suitable choice for dissemination of information regarding e-governance	50	0	0	1150	1350	1200	1.13
e.	Do you consider bulk SMS, a suitable choice for dissemination of information regarding e-governance	150	0	0	1050	1650	1200	1.38
f.	Do you consider flicker, a suitable choice for dissemination of information regarding e-governance	0	0	0	1200	1200	1200	1.00

Source: authors

In Table 1 above, out of 16 items, only two (or 12.5%) are significant. This shows that 87.5% is not significant. Hence, it is concluded that majority of the practitioners have no knowledge on e-governance.

Some aspects of knowledge in the operations of e-governance among the respondents are highlighted. Most of them said that e-governance is more applied by Government ministries, departments and agencies which is the practice in Nigeria. Also, the use of mobile phone for gathering of information among the respondents is high as majority of them agreed that the multimedia mobile phones are most handy in information gathering. The use of *Facebook* in disseminating information on e-governance is high among the respondents.

**Research Question 2** - To what extent do the ‘KAP’ of media practitioners on e-governance affect the dissemination of government policies/ programmes in the mainstream media?

Table 2: ‘KAP’ and dissemination of government policies and programmes

S/No	Questions	SA	A	D	SD	Total	N	mean
1	The knowledge and perception of e-governance has affected in the dissemination of government policies using e-governance	400	789	0	11	3978	1200	3.32*
2	Exposure to social media tools and government’s adoption of e-governance has affected dissemination of government policies using e-governance	210	541	259	190	3171	1200	3.29*
3	e-government has helped to promote awareness on government policies and programmes	624	376	120	80	3944	1200	3.24*
4	Media practitioners are still favourably disposed to disseminating government policies through traditional means than the new concept of e-governance	389	711	100	0	3889	1200	3.24*
5	Media practitioners would prefer referring government official web-sites as the most credible means of disseminating government policies.	100	79	821	200	2479	1200	2.07

Source: authors

The table above reveals some information about the relationship between the knowledge, attitude and perceptions of e-governance by media

practitioners in Nigeria's South-East geopolitical with regard to the dissemination of government policies. Most of the subjects strongly agree that their knowledge, attitude and perception of e-governance has helped in the dissemination of government policies using e-governance. A significant number also strongly agree that the exposure to social media tools, not government's adoption of e-governance, affected their dissemination of government policies using e-governance. This also shows that quite a sizeable segment of these media practitioners agree that e-governance has helped to increase the level of awareness on government policies and programmes. The table shows a significant degree of lacklustre attitude by the practitioners who are still more favourably disposed to disseminating government policies through traditional means than the new concept of e-governance. The table further reveals that practitioners do not find government websites as the only credible means of accessing information regarding e-government. It could be deduced from the analysis that the subjects accept that their knowledge, attitude and perception of e-governance has helped in the dissemination of government information.

**Research Question 3** - What are the impediments to the application of e-governance operations or services in Nigeria?

Table 3: Impediments to applications of e-governance

S/No	Questions	SA	A	D	SD	Total	N	mean
1	Literacy could impede media practitioner's application of e-governance	1110	20	8	62	4578	1200	3.82*
2	Level of interest shown by a media practitioner is barrier to his application of e-governance	90	800	120	190	3190	1200	2.66*
3	Dearth or non-availability of infrastructure affects application of e-governance	71	750	300	79	3213	1200	2.68*
4	Issues regarding accessibility could impede application of e-governance	1151	9	10	30	4681	1200	3.9*

Source: authors

Since every mean in Table 3 is above 2.5, it follows that the items significantly contribute as impediments to the application of e-governance. From the table, literacy and accessibility are identified as the greatest impediments. Literacy here means ability to use and operate e-governance. This is on the part of government, which is supposed to have the technological knowledge and ability to operate the e-governance technology. Accessibility refers to citizens' ability to reach, afford and operate the technology that drives e-governance, which is essentially driven by ICT. But even with the popularisation of ICT in Nigeria, majority of Nigerians, especially in rural areas, have no access to ICT. Worse still, ICT is enabled to work with electricity and this obviously is a major challenge in Nigeria. Other factors such as interest and infrastructure, though equally significant, are less significant than literacy and accessibility as impediments to the application of e-governance in Nigeria.

## Test of Hypotheses

The study had two hypotheses and they were tested using SPSS for analysis. The tabulations for both hypotheses are presented below:

**Hypothesis 1:** *There is no significant relationship between media practitioners' knowledge of e-governance and their attitude to the practice.*

To test the hypothesis above, we made the following assumptions: Let X represent the media practitioners' mean knowledge of e-governance obtained from the last column of Table 7 and let Y represent their mean attitude to the practice obtained from Table 4.

X	2.19	1.72	2.06	2.00	1.17
Y	2.92	4.10	3.61	3.44	1.33

Using SPSS for analysis, these results emerged: the correlation coefficient (R) between media practitioners' knowledge of e-governance and their attitude to the practice was 0.675, and the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was 0.456. This implies that only 45.6% of their attitude to the practice was explained by their knowledge of e-governance. Also, the ANOVA in Regression showed that the regression was not significant



( $p > 0.5$ ). This implies that there is no significant relationship between media practitioners' knowledge of e-governance and their attitude to the practice. Therefore, it was agreed that the media practitioners' knowledge of e-governance with respect to their attitude to the practice is insignificant, since  $t = 1.587$  lies between the 95% confidence intervals of  $-1.783$  and  $5.328$ .

**Hypothesis 2:** *There is no significant relationship between media practitioner's perceptions of e-governance and dissemination of government policies and programmes.*

To test Hypothesis 2 above, we also make the following assumptions: Let X represent the media practitioners' mean perception of e-governance obtained from Table 1 and let Y represent their mean responses on KAP and dissemination of government policies and programmes obtained from Table 2.

X	4.00	3.63	3.69	3.47	3.59
Y	3.32	2.64	3.29	3.24	2.07

Using SPSS for analysis, these results emerged: the correlation coefficient (R) between media practitioners' perception of e-governance and their responses on KAP and dissemination of government policies and programmes is  $0.357$  while the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is  $0.127$ . This implies that only  $12.7\%$  of their responses on KAP and dissemination of government policies and programmes was explained by their perception of e-governance. The ANOVA in Regression showed that the regression was not significant ( $p > 0.5$ ). This implies that there is no significant relationship between media practitioners' perception of e-governance and dissemination of government policies and programmes. It is agreed that there is insignificance of media practitioners' perception of e-governance as far as their attitude towards KAP and dissemination of government policies and programmes is concerned, since  $t = 0.661$  lies between the 95% confidence intervals of  $-3.758$  and  $5.729$ .

## Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study are discussed based on the research questions and the two hypotheses tested.

### **RQ 1: What is the level of knowledge on the operations of e-governance among media practitioners in South-East Nigeria?**

Analyses of data in Table 1 reveal that there is an obvious knowledge gap on the operations of e-governance among media practitioners in South-East Nigeria. Knowledge here involves the workings, technicalities and all issues around e-governance. But why this gap? One reason is that most of these practitioners, who are agenda setters, may have failed to update or refused to be schooled in the rudiments of modern ICTs. Since e-governance is ICT-driven, it is obvious that journalists in this part of the world hardly attend conferences or trainings that would help them upgrade their knowledge on e-governance, and, thus, raise the public awareness on the benefits accruable from e-governance. Responses relating to knowledge in this study are as revealing as they are alarming. When over 50% of the respondents are not even aware that security agencies in Nigeria apply e-governance in their everyday business, it brings to light the palpable fear that those who ought to know do not know. This trend is similar to the discouraging responses that most of the media practitioners are also not familiar with the latest innovations like *Twitter*, *Instagram* and *Flickr* that have been deployed for disseminating short simple messages among many people across the world. A media practitioner's role as a social mobiliser would become easier when he has a mastery of the latest media of mass communication. These days, audiences of mass communication are favourably disposed to short but detailed messages. This desire can only be met when the right tools are used. There is no need seeking to issue press releases on the radio and/or television when millions of people could be reached in seconds using *Twitter* or *Instagram*.

One may agree that many media practitioners in South-East Nigeria are inadequately exposed to trending communication innovations,

which negatively affects them in the effective performance of their function as social catalysts. It is even more worrisome when their role in society extends to that of agenda-setting. It is easy to imagine the quality of agenda a practitioner would set regarding e-governance when he has no or limited knowledge of the tools driving it.

The findings in this study do not corroborate with some earlier studies carried out as related to ICT and the media in other parts of Nigeria. For instance, Uwajeh (1999) holds that the level of knowledge of media practitioners on the use of ICT for news gathering and dissemination is very high. Similarly, Wilson (1997) observes that every ICT-driven process relevant to the activities of the media “naturally” attracts high level of knowledge/awareness among media practitioners. Similar views are reflected in Nwogu (2014), and Okugo and Onwukwe (2012).

Adeyemo (2011) thinks that the ultimate benefits of e-governance can only be derived when e-governance has been achieved and this requires high level of knowledge by stakeholders such as political leaders, opinion leaders, and the media. Similarly, the place of high level of knowledge among media workers and indeed the media as an entity in the success of e-governance has been profusely advocated. This is borne out of the fact that mass orientation, enlightenment, and mobilisation are required to make e-governance effective.

To further underscore the place of a high level of knowledge by the media in effective e-governance, Adeyemo (2011, p.16) observes that “knowledgeable media is a prerequisite for actualising the salient features for any initiative leading to e-governance implementation”. He identifies the features and explains the place of the media in each of them. The first, he calls stakeholders’ statement of requirements. This is based on consultations between key stakeholders in government, business/private sector and civil society. He opines that the platform for such feedback can affectively be pioneered by the mass media. The second, he describes as “baseline assessment”, which is an assessment of the state of e-readiness or e-preparedness in composing the baseline assessment of critical success factors, existing ICT infrastructure, existing

ICT Info-structure and Public Private Partnerships. The third feature is the “blueprint for e-governance” which implies that there should be a natural e-governance master plan resulting from the articulation of stakeholders’ statement of requirements and baseline assessments for e-governance. The fourth feature is “implementation” – a combined project-management and change management process for e-governance. Change Management may be perceived as a critical aspect of enabling the implementation of an e-governance master plan. “The change management process is engineered by the media and projected in such a way that the citizens buy into it” (p.21). These opinions of Adeyemo remain a mirage in Nigeria’s South-East region arising from the existing gap in knowledge.

**RQ 2: To what extent do the KAP of media practitioners on e-governance affect the dissemination of government policies/ programmes in the mainstream media?**

Analysis of data gathered from Table 2 of this study reveals that knowledge on operations of e-governance is low, attitude is commensurate (positive) and perceptions are positive about e-governance. However, it is pertinent to observe that media practitioners as ‘gatekeepers’ influence and or contribute to social development. This is borne out of the dependency syndrome – where a society depends on the media for existence and other things. Holder and Treno (1997, p.12) properly explain the issue when they observe, “Media coverage of any issue particularly social, economic and health-related attract most often audience awareness on such issues”. However, the degree of coverage and extent of awareness are subjects of research argument, including the impact of such awareness on attitude or behaviour.

Moyer (1995) observes that the mass media play a crucial role in informing and educating as well as shaping the knowledge and attitude of the public on many issues and these depend largely on the disposition of journalists on the issue in question. This underscores the place of the media practitioner in influencing the society. In fact, according to

McBride (1980, p.20), “there is no doubt the mass media – press, radio and TV – do have a capacity not only to reflect but also to shape opinion and to play a part in forming attitudes”. In the past, the communication system has been seen as an isolated phenomenon within society, related essentially to technology, relatively divorced from other aspects of society. The media’s place in shaping perceptions and attitudes of the public on any issue is tied to the perceptions and attitudes of media practitioners in their reporting and covering as well as framing of such issues. Media practitioners personify the media, and media influence begets media practitioners’ influence on the society.

In view of the observation above, therefore, one can say that the KAP of media practitioners on e-governance affects the dissemination of government policies and programmes. The extent of this influence can be understood from the knowledge level, perceptions and attitude of media practitioners on e-governance. However, it can be deduced from the data gathered and analysed that the KAP of media practitioners on e-governance directly affect the dissemination of government policies and programmes in the mainstream media. We are talking of two separate media here – the new media on which e-governance thrives and the mainstream media. Invariably, the attitude of the subjects to e-governance in terms of accessing and covering e-governance is commensurate with media influence on dissemination of government policies and programmes. We could consider some factors in this respect.

First, the level of implementation and or adoption of e-governance in Nigeria is still a work-in-progress. This can be ascertained when we consider the fact that though virtually all the States in Nigeria and security agencies claim to be operating e-governance, only a few like Abia, Lagos, Enugu, Imo, Delta, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Independent Corrupt Practices Commission, just to mention a few, are seen as effectively operating e-governance. This is reflected in the ranking of Nigeria on the adoption of e-governance (ADEYEMO, 2012). If we had a high level of implementation, it would have translated to a

situation where almost all government information was accessible on the internet. However, this is not the case in Nigeria.

Second, most government-owned media organisations are, by certain laws guiding their establishments, under the obligation to disseminate government policies and programmes whether they have positive knowledge, attitude and perception towards e-governance or not. And the fact is that almost all State governments in Nigeria have both broadcast and print outfits. As a result, government policies and programmes are always disseminated irrespective of what obtains in their KAP towards e-governance.

### **RQ 3: What are the impediments of the application of e-governance operations or services in Nigeria?**

From interviews with the media practitioners, it was unanimously agreed among them that the absence of a clear policy on the provision of infrastructure to power ICT tools was responsible for its poor usage and application in South-East Nigeria. This occurred because for one to gather and disseminate information about e-governance, the person must have the right tools. In the South-East and virtually every part of Nigeria, access to data is either unavailable or provided at exorbitant rates. In a country where a media practitioner battling with meagre salary is saddled with the task of buying data bundle to power his devices, e-participation would remain a mirage.

Table 3 sought to ascertain what media practitioners saw as impeding the application of e-governance. Many of the respondents agreed that literacy, infrastructure, interest and accessibility contribute largely to hinder the application of e-governance. The story would have been different if e-governance was not driven by ICT, which requires high level literacy, varieties of infrastructures; and is largely dependent on the ability of citizens to access it. Also, the literacy level in Nigeria today is low with still a large population grappling with comprehension of innovations such as e-governance.

Nchuchuwe and Ojo (2015) agree that the challenges of e-governance in Nigeria are the same in many other developing countries. Thus, there appears to be a consensus among scholars that the major problem of e-governance implementation in Nigeria is poor internet and telecommunications infrastructures. Fatile (2012) aptly accepts that the enabling technological frameworks of e-governance are still insufficient or substandard. Coleman (2005) identifies the following three major barriers which African countries, such as Nigeria, must overcome while adopting e-governance:

- Adopting technologies without developing human skills and capacities to manage, integrate and sustain them;
- Centralising the use of technologies by national government departments without devolving the benefits of technology to intermediary institutions such as local government, parliament, parties, civil society organisation and the independent media;
- Failing to link better governance to broader and more inclusive democracy which gives voice to those who cannot afford technologies but have needs and ideas to express.

Omeire and Omeire (2014) identify some challenges facing e-governance implementation in Nigeria. These include low ICT literacy rate, lack of necessary regulatory/legal framework, and poor ICT infrastructure. Perhaps, if the challenges posed by these impediments are tackled consciously, the South-East region and Nigeria in general would make appreciable progress in the application of e-governance.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

From the findings of this study, it is concluded that there was low level of knowledge on operations of e-governance among media practitioners. There were positive perceptions with commensurate attitude in terms of accessing and reporting e-governance. There was no significant relationship between media practitioners' knowledge of e-governance and their attitude to the initiative. Again, it is concluded that media practitioners

in Nigeria's South-East region, despite being confronted by devastating effects of low literacy, poor infrastructure, limited accessibility and low interest, still have positive perceptions and commendable ideas towards the application of e-governance in their day-to-day businesses.

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. Media practitioners in the South-East and their counterparts in other regions should periodically upgrade their knowledge through attending seminars, conferences and workshops that would school them in the rudiments of e-governance applications.
2. Media practitioners should be encouraged and willing to play more active roles in the e-governance initiatives such as accessing government information on the internet, covering/reporting e-governance in order to ensure mass awareness on e-governance in Nigeria and the South-East.
3. Media practitioners should canvas that the legislative vacuum between policy formulation and implementation on e-governance be properly closed by National Assembly and State Houses of Assembly for easy accessibility and implementation of ICT centres in various ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs).
4. Media practitioners should effectively play their roles as social mobilisers and change agents through framing of reports on the roles expected of MDAs and security agencies in order to awaken them to full consciousness of their responsibilities.

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## About the authors

*Patrick Ene Okon* – Ph.D. in Mass Communication by the University of Uyo, Nigeria. Teaches Journalism, Public Relations and Advertising in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria. In the current article, the author participated in research design conception, in the development of the theoretical discussion, in data interpretation, in the manuscript writing and in the text revision.

*Cosmos Chukwudi Ndukwe* – Ph.D. in Mass Communication from the Abia State University, Nigeria. In the current article, the author participated in research design conception, in the development of the theoretical discussion, in data interpretation, and in the manuscript writing.

*Chidinma Joan Nweke* – Master's degree in Mass Communication from the Abia State University, Uburu; and is a Lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Calabar, Nigeria. In the current article, the author participated in data interpretation and in the manuscript writing.

*Uzoma Chukwuemeka Okugo* – Ph.D in Mass Communication from the University of Uyo, Nigeria. Professor of Mass Communication and lecturers in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Calabar, Nigeria. In the current article, the author participated in research design conception, in the development of the theoretical discussion, in data interpretation, and in the text revision.

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