

E-Administration and Service Delivery in Akwa Ibom State Judiciary

Ernest Udo Titus Akpan

Department of Public Administration
Akwa Ibom State University
Email: akpan.ernest@yahoo.com.

Imoh Imoh-Ita, Ph.D

Department of Public Administration
Akwa Ibom State University
Email: imohita@yahoo.com

Udo N. Ekpo, Ph.D

Department of Economics
Akwa Ibom State University
Email: udonekpo@yahoo.com; udonekpo@aksu.edu.ng

Abstract

This study examined the impact of e-administration on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary. E-administration variables adopted in the study were e-filing, e-service of court proceedings, and e-case record management system. The theory adopted for this study was the Digital Governance theory. The survey research design was used, in which information was gathered from a sample of respondents. The population of the study was the entire staff of the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary, 2,150 staff, as of the time of this study. The sample size for the study was 337. The questionnaire was administered using a simple sampling technique. Data was analysed using a frequency table and percentages, while hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with the aid of Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS). The findings of the study revealed that all the e-administration variables adopted in the study had a significant positive effect on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary. Hence, e-administration has a significant positive effect on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary. It significantly enhances service delivery by improving efficiency, accessibility, and cost-effectiveness, as well as streamlining administrative functions, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and facilitating greater transparency and citizen engagement in the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary. It was recommended, among others, that all documentation should be handled in a paperless manner, as there is still some paper-based documentation among judiciary staff and agents, to ensure absolute accountability and foster service delivery. Also, the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary should prioritise continuous training of the personnel in all departments and units to keep them informed on how best to utilise the electronic service of court proceedings in rendering effective services.

Keywords: E-filing, e-service of court processes, e-administration and service delivery and Akwa Ibom State Judiciary.

1. Introduction

Over the years, public administration and its dysfunctions have been the focus of debate and criticism, specifically among the users of public services. This has prompted public authorities to a series of reforms to upgrade public administration's strategic and operational processes in view

of the changing political, economic, and social environment. The beginning of the digital age on a global scale, which brought about radical movements towards the increased use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the business world as well as the personal lives of people, prompted governments to join the bandwagon (Dahiru et al., 2022). Towards the end of the 1980s, there was the emergence of electronic administration (hereafter, e-administration) as a potential means of modernising public administration, improving the accessibility and quality of public services, increasing the efficiency of managing public resources, improving governance, enhancing democratic transparency, and ensuring better service delivery (Adelana, 2020).

The dotcom era, which dominated the 1990s and 2000s, saw a heavy reliance on the World Wide Web and the internet by public sector businesses in their daily business transactions. The high rate of efficiency and accountability achieved with Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has become a ray of hope for the public sector to redeem its tarnished image of inefficiency, lack of transparency, and accountability. Thus, the adoption of e-administration has become an inevitable reform that is expected to promote better service delivery in public organisations (Charles & Mmassy, 2024). E-administration is the delivery of service to members of the public using electronic devices. Alahakoon & Jehan (2020) posited that e-administration depicts a situation where key activities of governance are done using information technology or electronic devices. It involves the strategic and systematic use of computer networks and ICT facilities to promote efficient and effective public service delivery. E-administration could also be applied to improve the quality of services provided by government agencies through supporting the external workings of government by processing and communicating with members of the public. The importance and impact of e-administration on service delivery cannot be overemphasised (Dahiru et al., 2022).

According to Adelana (2020), e-administration involves the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in government administration to enhance accountability, create awareness, and ensure transparency in the management of government activities. Similarly, Dahiru et al. (2022) posited that e-administration is a process of reform where management works, shares information, engages people, and delivers services to external and internal clients electronically for the benefit of the populace. The features of e-administration include the ability of citizens to provide feedback to various government offices, subscription-based list services or electronic media that keep citizens and other agencies informed; online discussion forums or chat rooms to discuss policy issues; cross-agency participation, and online citizens' surveys and polls on specific issues (Ahmed, 2018).

The adoption of e-administration in Nigeria started in March 2001, with the formulation of the Nigerian National Policy for Information Technology. Among the objectives of e-administration as stated in the Nigerian National Policy for Information Technology include improvement in the accessibility to public administration for all citizens, ensuring transparency in government processes, to bring the government to the doorsteps of people by creating virtual forum and facilities to strengthen accessibility to government information and facilitating interaction between the governed and government, leading to effective service delivery, accountability and the strengthening of democracy (Waseem et al., 2024). Consequently, the judicial arm of government at both national and state levels, including Akwa Ibom State Judiciary also adopted e-administration to ensure proper delivery of judicial services to the public in terms of case filing, case listing, and copies of judgments, increased access, transparency, and reduce delays through use of information and communication technology gadgets such as computer, internet service, mobile phone and other equipment to upgrade the quality of service rendered to the people. These were to be achieved through e-services, e-court, e-evidence, e-registration, and e-justice.

Indeed, it is an open secret that contemporary judicial services and practices are highly influenced by ICT. In other words, e-administration is currently perceived as the engine room for innovation and growth in judicial service delivery. The goal of the judiciary as an arm of government is to provide judicial services to the citizens for the betterment of society through the smooth conduct of administrative operations, which makes e-administration more user-centric (Dahiru et al., 2022). Good policymaking and service delivery often require the sharing of information between the people and the judicial administration to improve collaboration, up-to-date information, analysis, and monitoring of different activities (Nnamani et al., 2023). In addition to electronic interaction and exchange of information between citizens, e-administration also involves the use of electronic means to provide judicial services to the people. Despite the lofty aims of the policy, which were geared towards ensuring that the judiciary provides an expanded range of services to citizens in a manner that is systematic and cost-effective, leveraging on the adoption of ICT in its day-to-day activities, it has been observed that the positive expectations from the adoption of e-administration in the judiciary, which promises swiftness of procedure, have been grounded. The service delivery has slackened, even with the introduction of e-administration, and judicial service delivery to the masses is still poor in all ramifications. It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate the impact of e-administration on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary, Nigeria.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of E-administration on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the effect of e-filing on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary.
2. Identify the impact of e-service of court processes on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary.
3. Assess the effect of the e-case record management system on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What is the effect of e-filing on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary?
2. What is the impact of the e-service of court processes on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary?
3. What is the effect of the e-case record management system on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary?

1.3 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide this study:

H₀₁: E-filing has no significant effect on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary.

H₀₂: E-service of court processes has no significant impact on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary.

H₀₃: E-case record management system has no significant effect on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary

2.0 Review of Related Literature

2.1 Conceptual Issues

2.1.1 E-Administration

The advent of the internet and its benefits saw a simultaneous appearance of the concept of e-administration in the 1990s (Oluwajobi & Fatimehin, 2024). E-administration refers to the provision of online administrative services and public information via the internet or any other digital means to the people (Nnamani et al., 2023). It is a radical change in the management of public information to provide enhanced services to citizens, whether private, business, or other public structures. The OECD (2001) described e-administration as the use of ICT, and particularly the internet, as a tool for delivering better quality administration to citizens. Similarly, Oluwajobi & Fatimehin (2024) stressed that e-administration is the use of technology, particularly web-based applications, by the government apparatus, to improve access to information and public services for citizens, business partners, employees, other organisations, and government structures. E-administration involves the network structure for inter-connectivity, electronic service delivery, e-workflow, etc, aimed at ensuring efficiency, transparency, and accountability offered by public institutions without regard to the spatiotemporal factor (Ahmed, 2018; Nnamani et al., 2023).

Ibrahim et al. (2024) described e-administration as any of several mechanisms that convert traditional office paper processes into electronic processes, intending to create a paperless office. This is the use of ICT tools, with the goal of improving productivity and performance. It encompasses both intra-office and inter-office communication in any organisation. Its objective is to improve the internal working of the public sector by cutting process costs, managing process performance, creating strategic connections within government bodies, as well as introducing total transparency and accountability. In general, e-administration indicates the use by the administrative institutions of information and communication technologies with the capacity to transform relations with citizens, businesses, employees, and public entities. These technologies are used to achieve the objectives of electronic administration: improving the quality of services provided to citizens, developing interactions with legal personalities, especially businesses, and strengthening the autonomy of citizens through access to information and the guarantee of the effectiveness of public administrative management. This, given the continuous provision of administrative services to citizens, minimises the response time, reduces the error rate, and limits paper documents (Nnamani et al., 2023).

2.1.2 Service Delivery

Service delivery means the extent to which an individual, unit, department of an organisation, or the government discharges its assigned or statutory responsibilities (Ikhenoba & Atakpa, 2023). It is also a means by which an organisation evaluates an individual employee or a unit's input and output level, especially in the area of attaining set goals or tasks assigned. Service delivery is the degree to which an employee accomplishes the tasks that make up his or her job (Byars & Rue, 2006). Service delivery can also be described as the degree of an organisation and/or employee performance, output, and productivity in the discharge of assigned responsibilities within the available time, money, and other resources, towards the achievement of the overall goals of the organisation (El-Rufai, 2013). The spate of service delivery is determined by the performance of employees in achieving organisational goals and satisfying the public.

Okpowodu et al. (2022) described service delivery as an encompassing activity aimed at promoting the general welfare of the community. Geol (2021) stated that service delivery is a process of bringing community welfare through social change and the implementation of social policy decisions for the total welfare of the community. It encompasses every act, technique, and

consideration in the process necessary to transform social policy. Service delivery is an essential function in the relationship between government bodies and citizens. Donnison (2018) asserted that service delivery is the government's key task. Government exists, among other reasons, because it is the only structure that can properly provide certain critical services such as public order, safety, infrastructure, management and maintenance of public roads, and so forth. The requirement and concern for such provisions give legitimacy to government activities. It is laid down in the constitutions and international treaties that the government is responsible for providing basic services in many social areas.

2.1.3 Electronic Filing

The electronic filing (hereinafter, e-filing) of court processes is an electronic method of filing court processes and documents in the Process Department of the Judiciary by litigants and counsels, and those issued by courts are electronically filed and presented, as opposed to paper form. This innovation has revolutionised the judicial system in Nigeria by enhancing the speed of profiling and assigning newly filed cases to different courts, reducing delays and congestion in the judicial system, and transforming and providing more accessible, transparent, and efficient justice systems (Okpowodu et al., 2022; Shah & Gupta, 2017). As asserted by Bajandas & Ray (2018), the government undertakes the digitisation of court processes to improve productivity, consistency, case flow, and quality of justice systems. E-filing is a significant milestone in the country's judicial system, as it enabled lawyers to file court processes electronically, thereby reducing the need for physical appearance in court (Charles & Mmassy, 2024).

African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (2015) recommended the development of strategies for digitising court processes to improve the delivery of justice for the African Union member states. In Nigeria, the e-filing system was first introduced in the National Industrial Court of Nigeria (NICN) in 2017, under the National Industrial Court Rules, 2017. The success of the e-filing system in the NICN led to its adoption by other courts in Nigeria, including the Court of Appeal, which introduced electronic filing and service of court processes under the Court of Appeal (Practice Directions), 2014. Similarly, the Lagos State High Court introduced e-filing services in its Judiciary Information System (JIS), enabling lawyers to file cases online from anywhere in the world. The e-filing system has numerous benefits, including reduced delays, increased efficiency, and cost savings for lawyers and litigants. It also enables real-time access to court records and processes, making it easier for lawyers to manage their cases effectively.

Traditionally, filings in courts and government agencies have been in paper form. No doubt, e-filing has a pervasive effect on the legal system than the adoption of administrative procedure acts or codes of civil procedure. It has ushered in fundamental changes in organisation, operation, management, and resource utilisation by courts, lawyers, clients, citizens, and government entities. According to Mohamad et al. (2019), the introduction of e-filing provides several advantages, such as a tremendous increase in the speed of applications and transmission of court documents for faster disposal of cases. E-filing provides the possibility to with the instant filing receipt and allocation of application number. The e-filing system automatically checks the information provided in the electronic application over the internet before saving the latter in an approved standard format in the platform's database for future review.

2.1.4 E-Service of Court Processes

The e-service of court processes is an electronic method of serving court processes and documents. Ibrahim et al. (2024) described the e-service court process as an innovation which has enhanced efficiency and speed of court proceedings, reducing delays and congestion in the judicial system.

As elsewhere in the world, the development of digital justice in Nigeria was prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in the adoption by the Chief Justice of Nigeria of Circular NJC/CIR/HOC/II/656 in April 2020; it allowed for remote court sessions.

The process of establishing electronic justice in Nigeria started with the introduction of amendments to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and Section 84 of the Evidence Act 2011, which consolidated electronic access to court cases (Nwaeze, 2020). The first courts allowed to carry out actions in electronic form were the National Industrial Court of Nigeria and the Court of Appeal. These rules establish the possibility of applying to the court and carrying out several procedural actions in electronic form, to speed up proceedings. The National Industrial Court of Nigeria adopted e-service of court processes under the National Industrial Court Rules, 2017. The Rules provide for electronic filing and service of court processes, and the Court has held that service of court processes through social media is a valid means of service. The Taraba State High Court also adopted e-service of court processes in 2018, in the case of *Mohammad Awwaldanlami, Esq. v. Governor of Taraba State & Twenty-four Ors* (Suit No: TRST/11/2018). The High Court ordered that the originating process in the case and other processes of the court be served on the 3rd to 25th Defendants/Respondents by posting and sharing on social media. The e-service of court processes was first introduced in the Lagos State High Court under the Lagos State High Court (Civil Procedure) Rules, 2012. Order 7 (5) of the Rules provides that where personal service of an originating process is required by the Rules or otherwise, and a Judge is satisfied that prompt personal service cannot be affected, the Judge may, upon application by the claimant, make such an order for substituted service as may seem just.

According to *The Nigerian Lawyer* (2018) and Rusakova & Frolova (2022), the e-service of court processes has numerous benefits, including reduced delays, increased efficiency, and cost savings for lawyers and litigants, and ensures the security of court documents. It also enables real-time access to court records and processes, making it easier for lawyers to manage their cases effectively. The e-service of court processes has transformed the judicial system in Nigeria, enhancing efficiency, speed, and access to justice. Its introduction in various courts in Nigeria has demonstrated the country's commitment to embracing technology in the administration of justice. Several studies attempted to examine the relationship between the E-Service of Court Processes and the performance of the judiciary. According to Bosire et al. (2018), the E-Service of Court Processes had a significant influence on the judiciary system and affected the operational performance of their judicial system. The use of a customer-focused delivery of service system within courts also helped in improving the level of confidence in the institution, which is a crucial factor in eliminating or reducing the lawyer-based or party-based case delays. The digitisation of court processes aims to improve the efficiency of judicial systems based on the standardisation of procedures, the generation, storage of quality information, and faster access to information.

2.1.5 Electronic Case Record Management System

An Electronic Case Record Management System (hereafter, ECRMS) refers to a platform that allows the handling of case procedures securely and systematically for the parties, court staff, officers, and judges. The purpose of the ECRMS was to ensure prompt and efficient treatment of cases. It can provide important case-related information such as the number and status of pending cases, decisions yet to be issued, the number of completed or uncompleted trials, statistical reports, and the status of completed cases and archives (Adelana, 2020). According to Mohamad et al. (2019), the ECRMS allows the automation of case processes and includes a planner to manage cases using case application references and dates. They also noted that an ECRMS gives room to perform various tasks concurrently and speedily, facilitating the treatment of case backlogs until

the complete clearance of the queue. According to Satirah et al. (2013), the electronic docketing and scheduling system is part of the ECRMS and aims to make all case files and dockets accessible from any remote location by judges, lawyers, jurors, and involved parties. It is noted that the ECRMS allows lawyers to file a case from a remote location over the internet to create docket entries. The strategies adopted in the ECRMS aimed at responding to judicial institutions' primary goal, which is the administration and delivery of justice

Adelana (2020) noted that the scheduling system for pretrial investigation, which allows non-complex cases to be resolved in a click within an accelerated process, offers the possibility to resolve cases in a few days because of the Electronic Case Record Management System. He also stated that all the parties receive the docket and case scheduling-related information via electronic calendars and assistants' scheduling, offering an overlap of suitable time slots. According to Dahiru et al. (2022), during the court sessions of scheduled cases, courtroom technology services and legal database information are available to the parties via a secured wireless network, allowing faster retrieval of information and making paper files obsolete.

ECRMS is crucial in judicial service delivery. Bajandas & Ray (2018) noted that, beyond the possibility of improving the filing procedure, submission of evidence, maintenance of records, and management of court procedures, an Electronic Case Record Management System provides the opportunity to improve court processes. The e-case record management system is promising for the improvement of productivity, streamlined case flow, reduction of case processing time, and better quality (Bajandas & Ray, 2018). According to Nwaeze (2020), the e-case record management system operates with an integrated electronic calendar or side-by-side with electronic docketing and scheduling systems that are crucial in managing case processes.

2.2 Empirical Review

Many empirical studies have been conducted to examine the effect of e-administration on service delivery. Nnamani et al. (2023) examined e-governance and service delivery in the Nigerian public sector with the aim of finding out the extent to which electronic governance has improved public bureaucracies in Nigeria. Specifically, the study aimed at finding out the extent to which the adoption of electronic governance encourages quality service delivery in implementing the policies and programmes in Nigeria's public sector. The findings of the study revealed that the adoption of e-governance in running the affairs of the ministries brought about effective service delivery in Nigeria by curtailing the level of corruption, unnecessary waste, and leakages, as well as arbitrary behaviour in bureaucracies, thereby ensuring accountability and transparency in governance.

Ihemadu & Anyiam (2024) studied the challenges and prospects of e-governance and service delivery in Nigeria using an analytical technique whereby the study heavily relied on secondary data. The paper found that challenges of inadequate infrastructure, cybersecurity risks, and digital literacy gaps underscored the need for strategic interventions to overcome barriers to the effective implementation of e-governance initiatives. The study also discovered that e-governance holds a lot of prospects for the country, such as providing information on job vacancies, an e-policing system, a medium for information dissemination, and economic development, among others. The study concluded that e-governance is the sine qua non for the actualisation of accountable, responsive, and transparent administration in the country. The paper, therefore, recommended, among others, that Nigeria should take advantage of the opportunities presented by digital technologies to address its service delivery challenges and guarantee the welfare of the citizens.

Edet et al. (2024) examined the impact of e-governance and service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State civil service. The study adopted a descriptive method, which allowed it to rely on

documentary evidence as its source of data collection to examine how digitisation and e-payment systems affect ghost worker fraud and financial corruption within the Akwa Ibom State civil service. It was found that while advances in ICT had significantly improved service delivery in developed nations, developing countries like Nigeria faced a notable digital divide. This divide is due to factors such as limited technology access, inadequate infrastructure, resistance to change, and the dearth of skilled ICT personnel. To build on the successes of e-governance, the study recommended, among others, the implementation of comprehensive biometric systems to ensure payroll accuracy.

Aliia (2024) studied the development of existing e-justice systems in Kyrgyzstan. The paper evaluated the effects of the development of e-justice on some relevant dimensions, including access to justice, the right to a fair trial, the right to an effective remedy, data privacy, the rule of law, and the main judicial values. In addition, the paper analyses the risks of e-justice implementation and determines areas of improvement from technological, legal, organisational, human resources, and educational perspectives. The methodology adopted was analysis of national legislation and public information about e-justice, complemented by an exploratory empirical study based on ten semi-structured interviews with judges, court staff, and advocates, and an online survey of twenty-one advocates. The findings of the study identified challenges of e-justice systems to include technical barriers, like a lack of infrastructure, poor connectivity, and data security concerns; human resource limitations, such as inadequate ICT skills and resistance to change among judicial staff. Regulatory and governance gaps, including the absence of clear legal frameworks for digital processes and data protection, were also identified in the study.

Mutale (2024) investigated the impact of electronic records management (ERMS) on Service Delivery in the Department of Immigration in Zambia. The study adopted a case study research design using a single cross-sectional mixed methods approach, which made use of both qualitative and quantitative data. Structured questionnaires were administered to 100 respondents who interact with the electronic management system (ERMS), and oral interviews were conducted with 10 key informants who were purposively selected for this study. While qualitative data were analysed using thematic techniques, quantitative data were analysed using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS) version 26. The findings revealed that automation has improved the retrieval and accessibility of records, improved storage of records, reduced storage costs, eliminated misfiling and loss of records, enhanced the speed at which work was carried out and consequently, improved service delivery.

Charles & Mmassy (2024) examined the contribution of the e-filing system to the quality of judicial service delivery in Rukwa District courts in Tanzania. This work applied a mixed approach with a case study design using both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from 78 respondents through the survey method, while seven (7) key informants were involved in interviews and supplemented by the non-participant observation method. On the other hand, secondary data was collected through a documentary review. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used to generate frequencies and percentages, followed by correlation analysis. The findings revealed that the e-filing system had the potential to improve the quality of judicial service delivery through time-saving, increased accessibility, and enhanced convenience of specific judicial services such as case filing.

Waseem et al. (2024) examined the role of e-courts in transforming access to justice in India. According to them, the digital age has revolutionised various aspects of society, including the justice system. E-courts utilising digital technology have the potential to make legal proceedings more efficient, accessible, and user-friendly. By overcoming geographical barriers, e-courts enable individuals, regardless of their physical location, to participate in legal processes

remotely. The paper stressed the significance of robust technological infrastructure and policies to protect privacy and confidentiality. The admissibility of electronic evidence and safeguarding fundamental rights are discussed as legal and ethical challenges. They advocated collaborative efforts among policymakers, legal professionals, and technology experts to leverage the benefits of e-courts while upholding principles of justice in India's digital age.

2.3 Theoretical Framework: Digital Governance Theory

The study adopted the Digital Governance theory. Digital governance theory was propounded by Richard Heeks (2000). Digital Governance theory posits that the use of digital technologies can transform the way governments and institutions operate, making them more efficient, transparent, and accountable. It advocates the use of digital technologies, like the internet and data analytics, to transform governance processes and improve government operations, enhance citizen engagement, facilitate more effective decision-making processes and promote transparency, accountability, and accessibility in the public sector through digital platforms and practices. This theory argues that digital governance can improve public service delivery, enhance citizen engagement, and promote good governance.

The Digital Governance theory explores how information and communication technologies (ICTs) can be utilised to enhance government processes, improve citizen engagement, and promote transparency and accountability within a digital landscape, fundamentally transforming traditional governance structures through the integration of digital tools and practices across all levels of administration. It emphasises the collaborative nature of digital governance, where multiple stakeholders (government agencies, citizens, and businesses) interact within interconnected networks to achieve shared goals. Digital governance theory builds upon the concept of e-government, which focuses on delivering public services electronically through online platforms, but extends further by incorporating broader societal impacts and the need for systemic change through digital technologies. According to the theory, digital governance aims to empower citizens by providing accessible channels for feedback, participation in decision-making processes, and access to government information through online platforms, fostering greater democratic engagement.

The Digital Governance theory highlights the potential of digital technologies to revolutionise government operations by promoting citizen engagement, transparency, and accountability while also acknowledging the challenges that must be addressed to achieve effective digital governance in a complex and evolving technological landscape. It provides digital platforms that enable governments to publish information proactively, making their operations more transparent and allowing citizens to hold them accountable through accessible monitoring mechanisms.

Digital Governance Theory is relevant to this study because it examines how digital technologies can be utilised to enhance the administration of justice, making it more efficient, transparent, and accessible. In the context of this study, digital governance theory suggests that the adoption of e-filing, e-service of court proceedings and e-case record management systems and electronic evidence collection in courtrooms can transform the justice delivery process, reducing delays and improving the accuracy of evidence management. Furthermore, digital governance can enhance citizen engagement and participation in the justice process, promoting transparency and accountability. Overall, the Theory of Digital Governance provides a framework for understanding the potential benefits and challenges of using digital technologies in governance and administration, making it a valuable lens to access justice delivery in Akwa Ibom State (Heeks, 2001).

3. Research Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design to examine the impact of e-administration on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary. The researcher made use of data from both primary and secondary sources. The secondary data were obtained from textbooks, journals, articles, official government publications, and other documents, as well as internet sources; while the primary data were obtained through a survey questionnaire. The population of the study was the entire staff of Akwa Ibom State Judiciary, which comprised 2,150 staff as of the time of this study (Akwa Ibom State Judiciary Administration Records, 2024). The sample size for the study was 337, obtained through Taro Yamane's sample size determination technique.

The researcher adopted the simple random sampling technique for the administration of the questionnaire to ensure equal opportunity for every member of the sample to be selected. The researcher employed both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis. Two types of data analysis were carried out on the data collected: descriptive data analysis method, which used frequency tables and percentages, while hypotheses were tested using Analysis of variance (ANOVA), and using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

3.1 E-filing and Service Delivery in Akwa Ibom State Judiciary

In 2012, the then Chief Justice of Nigeria, Hon. Justice Dahiru Musdapher, CJN, set up a special committee, composed of experts, to brainstorm and draw up a policy document for the Nigerian Judiciary, to drive the practice of law based on information technology. The project aimed to migrate from a legal practice based on paper or hard copy to a technology-based system. The technology-driven procedures that could be applied in the administration of justice would depend on the nature of the proceeding and the goal sought to be achieved. For example, the technology needed to process staff salaries is not the same used in admitting electronic evidence in a courtroom. The technology required for video taking of oral evidence of a witness in court, and the technology needed for the e-filing of court processes, service of electronically filed processes on litigants, their counsels, and the respective courts are different. Although this technology requires skilled manpower, constant electricity power supply, and reliable internet connectivity, its functions and operation differ greatly.

To join the technology-driven administration, the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary has been at the forefront of adopting the practice of e-administration. The supplementary Powers of the Chief Judge in Order 53 (2) of the Akwa Ibom State High Court Civil Procedure Rules, 2024 provide that,

“The power of the Chief Judge exercisable under Rule 1 of this Order may include the designation of a date ,for the commencement of electronic filing of processes and documents in the court and protocols and directives in connection therewith.”

This provision set the pace for the beginning of electronic filing of court processes, affidavits, and other documents in the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary by allowing the Chief Judge, in the exercise of his/her Constitutional powers, to issue practice directions, protocols, and directives to regulate the practice of electronic filing in the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary.

Considering filing documents in the Akwa Ibom State High Court, Order 3, Rule 3 (3) provides that-

(3) Filing of documents.

- (1)
- (2)
- (3) A document may be filed by:
 - (a) delivering it to the Registrar at the Court office; or
 - (b) by posting it to the Registrar of the Court; or
 - (c) transmitting it by any electronic means of communication as may be authorized by the Chief Judge in a Practice Direction, to the Court office where the claim is proceeding or intended to proceed.

More descriptively, explaining the structural framework, process, and procedure of electronic filing, Order 3, Rule 5 (1), (2), (3),(4), (5), and (6) of the Akwa Ibom State (Civil Procedure) Rule, 2024 captures the following-

Order 3, Rule 5-

- (1) (a) All court processes shall be filed manually and or electronically,
 - (b) Where filed electronically, the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary Portal, or any other portal approved by the Chief Judge, shall be used.
- (2) Without prejudice to Rule 3 of this Order, there shall be established in the court:
 - (a) An electronic filing system for the filing of court processes and documents by parties.
 - (b) An electronic filing unit in the Registry with responsibility for administering the electronic filing system of the court and the management of processes and documents electronically filed through the court's electronic filing system.
- (3) The Chief Judge may prescribe:
 - (a) The format of any document filed or to be used in the court to facilitate electronic recording or filing of the document; and
 - (b) The conditions under which documents may be served or filed electronically.
- (4) Where a process or document is electronically filed by this Rule after the hour of 3 pm on any working day, it shall be deemed to have been filed on the next working day.
- (5) The electronic filing system shall assess and generate the fees payable for every process and document sought to be filed, and upon payment thereof, the system shall generate a receipt in proof of both the payment and filing.
- (6) An electronic signature shall constitute the signatures of both the Registrar and the parties or their Legal Practitioners on every electronic filed process and document.

In practice, Akwa Ibom State High Court No. 5, sitting at Uyo, presided by Justice Edem Akpan in suit No. HU/FHR.316/2021, between Mr John Johnah Mkpog, Mr Ekerete Okon Jackson, Mr Samuel Basse Jackson (suing for themselves and as representing Mkpog's family, Ikot Eno, Ukat Ubium Village in Nsit Ubium Local Government area, Akwa Ibom State vs. Mr Moses

Akpan Nko, Mr Anietie Akpan Nko, the plaintiff's counsel, Nsinyene Charles, Esq., moved the court in an application filed on the 11th December 2023, praying the court for an order granting leave to the 1st Plaintiff, Mr. John Johnah Mkpog, to give oral evidence in the suit through Zoom or any other virtual platform connection, and an order deeming the evidence of Mr John Jonah Mkpog given through the mode in prayer 1 as proper and admissible before the Court. This order was granted on the 28th October 2024.

Similarly, in suit No. HAB/33/2023, the Akwa Ibom State High Court, Ikot Abasi Judicial Division, presided by Hon. Justice Iniudobong, in a case between Mr Ini Elijah Akpan, Mr Anietie Elijah Akpan, Mr Elijah Elijah Akpan, Deaconess Nse A. Elijah (plaintiffs) vs. Mr Essien Udo Isa, Mr Mfon Udo Isa (Defendants), the 2nd Defendant, Mr Mfon Udo Isa, a witness who is based in the United States of America, was scheduled to testify and give evidence virtually.

Further, in the matter of reading of the last will of the Late Mr. Itallica Asuquo Obott, in Will No. 2478, on the 3rd July 2025, the court hearing the application of Miss Mfoniso Itallica Obott, Dr. Inibehe Eno Adams (Beneficiary/Applicant), through their lawyer, Ernest Akpan, Esq., in an application brought pursuant to Order 56 Rule 4, Order 36(1) and (2) of the High Court (Civil Procedure) Rule 2024 granted leave that Dr. Inibehe Eno Adams to testify electronically through WhatsApp video call from his residence at 622 Dean Street, Hayward, CA, 94541, USA.

In Order 7, Rule 14 (1) of Akwa Ibom State High Court (Civil Procedure) Rules, 2009, presently, Order 6, Rule 6 (1) of Akwa Ibom State High Court (Civil Procedure) Rules, 2024, it is stated thus-

Order 6, Rule 6: Service by Electronic Means-

- (1) "Service by electronic means is proved by an affidavit of service by the document server responsible for transmitting the document to the person to be served.
- (2) The affidavit of service shall exhibit a copy of:
 - (a) The document served
 - (b) Any cover sheet or email to that document:
 - (c) The transmission record.
 - (d) Proof of electronic service of the document, and must state the
 - (i) Electronic means by which the document was served.
 - (ii) E-mail addresses or electronic means by which the document was transmitted; and
 - (iii) Date and time of the transmission.

The above law supports electronic filing and the service of court processes on litigants, their legal representatives. Contrary to this lofty technological dream, this vision is greatly hindered by facilities at the process and Ballif departments of the Akwa Ibom state Judiciary to allow for the implementation of e-filing and e-service of court processes to fulfil its enabling legislation.

The criminal jurisprudence of Akwa Ibom State Judiciary embraced the introduction of electronic devices and technology into investigation, admissibility of electronic evidence, electronic recording of court proceedings, and general practice in courts through Section 84 (a), Section 258 (definition section) of the Evidence Act, 2011 (As Amended), Order 12 of Practice direction No.1 of 2023, and Section 15 (4), Section 17(2)(b) of the Administration of Criminal Justice Law of Akwa Ibom State, 2022.

Section 15 (4) of the Administration of Criminal Justice Law of Akwa Ibom State, 2022 states thus,

“Where a suspect is arrested with or without a warrant, volunteers to make a confessional statement, the Police Officer shall ensure that the making and taking of the statement shall be in writing and may be recorded electronically on a retrievable video compact disc or any other visual means.”

The above provision of this law allows for the making and taking of a confessional statement of a suspect using an electronic retrievable device, which is geared towards reducing the frequent objections challenging the voluntariness of a suspect’s extrajudicial statements taken at the Police investigative level.

While Section 15(4) of the Administration of Criminal Justice Law of Akwa Ibom State is about a suspect who volunteers to make a confessional statement to the Police at the investigation level, Section 17 (2) (b) states as follows:

(3) Subject to Sections 6 and 14, where a suspect who is arrested with or without a warrant volunteers to make a statement-

(a)

(b) The statement may be recorded electronically on a retrievable video compact disc or device, or any other audio or visual device.

Interpreting the word “MAY” in Section 17(2) (b) in the case of *Friday Charles vs. The State of Lagos* (2023) 13 NWLR(P.T.1901), P.213, H.11 @P.242, PARA. B-F, it was held that the general principle of interpretation is that the use of the word “may” connotes permissive action. The courts, however, would interpret the word “may” as mandatory wherever it is used to impose a duty upon a public functionary to be carried out in a particular form or way for the benefit of a private citizen. (Nigerian Weekly Law Reports, Parts 1901). This, therefore, makes it compulsory for the use of an electronic recording system to record a suspect while making a statement, whether confessional or not. This law was domesticated in Akwa Ibom State in principle, but the practice or implementation of these provisions is not in sight.

Till the time of conducting this study, provision of facilities for the implementation of the above legislation, which was geared towards enhancing judicial services to the public, remains a mirage because the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary portal is not enabled to receive electronic filing of documents or court processes. Electronic filing systems are not established in the courts, and there are no electronic filing units in the registry of the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary, as all processes and documents filed are done manually. The expectation of the above Rule mandated the Chief Judge to prescribe the format in which documents are to be filed to allow electronic recording with such formats, and the conditions such documents or processes may be served on courts and other parties. These provisions are intended to allow for the speedy dispensation of justice at the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary. Contrary to expectations, the judiciary is still manually operated, with movements of hard copies of files, documents, and processes from one table to another. The automated payment system proposed in Rule 5 (6), and electronic signatures only exist in paper documents.

To attain these height is possible, hence the recommendation that the Akwa Ibom State judiciary provide the Registry and sub Registry units of all courts including the Judge’s Chambers with electronic facilities to send and receive processes, files and other documents at the comfort of their offices, engage judicial personnel in information technology periodic trainings and

seminars, provide steady and stable power supply and internet access to all Judicial units involve in electronic transmission of files, documents and processes.

4. Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of Findings

The data collected from the respondents were presented and analysed using tables and percentages. Only responses from 312 copies of the questionnaires that were completed and returned by the respondents were analysed in the study. All the questions were measured according to a 5-point Likert scale.

4.1 Analysis of Research Questions

Analysis of Research Question One

Table 1: The relationship between e-filing and service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary.

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Strongly Agreed | 89 | 29 |
| Agreed | 65 | 21 |
| Strongly Disagreed | 50 | 16 |
| Disagreed | 59 | 19 |
| Undecided | 49 | 15 |
| Total | 312 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis of data in Table 1 reveals that 89 respondents, representing 29%, strongly agreed that there is a relationship between e-filing and service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary, and 65 respondents, representing 21%, agreed on the same assertion. 50 respondents representing 16% strongly disagreed, 59 respondents representing 19% disagreed, while 49 out of the total respondents representing 15% were undecided. Therefore, since the total of 89 respondents representing 29% were strongly in agreement, it is concluded that there exists a relationship between e-filing and service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary.

Analysis of Research Question Two

Table 2: The effect of the E-Service of Court Processes on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary.

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Strongly Agreed | 79 | 25 |
| Agreed | 99 | 32 |
| Strongly Disagreed | 68 | 22 |
| Disagreed | 41 | 13 |
| Undecided | 25 | 8 |
| Total | 312 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis of data in Table 2 indicates that 79 respondents, representing 25%, strongly agreed that e-service of court processes affects service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary, 99

respondents, representing 32% agreed, 68 respondents, representing 22%, strongly disagreed, 41 respondents, representing 13% disagreed, while 25 representing 8% were undecided. Based on the analysis, it is very clear that the e-service of court processes affects service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary.

Analysis of Research Question Three

Table 3: The relationship between the e-case record management system and service delivery in Akwa Ibom State judiciary.

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Strongly Agreed | 85 | 27 |
| Agreed | 89 | 29 |
| Strongly Disagreed | 78 | 25 |
| Disagreed | 31 | 10 |
| Undecided | 29 | 9 |
| Total | 312 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis of data in Table 3 shows that 85 respondents, representing 27%, strongly agreed that there exists a relationship between the e-case record management system and service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary, 89 respondents, representing 29%, agreed, 78 respondents, representing 25% strongly disagreed, 31 respondents, representing 10% disagreed, while 29 respondents, representing 9% were undecided.

4.2 Test of Hypotheses

Test of Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between e-filing and service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary.

Table 4: Model Summary for Hypothesis 1

| Model Summary b | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------|---|-----|-------|---------------|
| Model | R | R ² | Adjusted R ² | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics | | | df | df | Sig. F Change |
| | | | | | R ² Change | F Change | 1 | 2 | | |
| 1 | 0.860 ^a | 0.739 | 0.738 | 0.37338 | 0.739 | 1126.047 | 1 | 398 | 0.000 | |

a. Predictors: (Constant), E-filing

b. Dependent Variable: service delivery

Table 5: ANOVA for Hypothesis 1

ANOVA^a

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|----------|--------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 156.983 | 1 | 156.983 | 1126.047 | 0.000 ^b |
| | Residual | 55.486 | 398 | 0.139 | | |
| | Total | 212.469 | 399 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: service delivery

b. Predictors: (Constant), E-filing

In the model summary shown in Table 4, the R-value is 0.860, while the coefficient of determination, R² value, is 0.739. This implies that 73.9% of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary is accounted for by e-filing. Furthermore, the ANOVA in Table 5 shows an F-value of 1126.047 and p= 0.000 < 0.05. We reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant relationship between e-filing and service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary.

Test of Hypothesis 2

H₀₂: E-Service of Court Processes has no significant effect on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary.

Table 6: Model Summary for Hypothesis 2

| Model Summary ^b | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------|------|------|-------------|---|
| Model | R | R ² | Adjusted R ² | Std.Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics | | | | | |
| | | | | | R ² Change | F Change | df 1 | df 2 | Sig. Change | F |
| 1 | 0.457 ^a | 0.209 | 0.207 | 0.63127 | 0.209 | 104.845 | 1 | 398 | 0.000 | |

a. Predictors: (Constant), E-Service of Court Processes

b. Dependent Variable: service delivery

Table 7: ANOVA for Hypothesis 2

| ANOVA ^a | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|--------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|--------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 41.781 | 1 | 41.781 | 104.845 | 0.000 ^b |
| | Residual | 158.606 | 398 | 0.399 | | |
| | Total | 200.388 | 399 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: service delivery

b. Predictors: (Constant), E-Service of Court Processes

In the model summary in Table 6, the R-value is 0.457, while the R²-value (coefficient of determination) is 0.209. This shows that 20.9% of service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary is accounted for by the e-service of court processes. Furthermore, the ANOVA in Table 7 shows an F-value of 104.845 and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. On the basis of this, the null hypothesis is rejected, and we conclude that e-service of court processes has a significant effect on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary.

Test of Hypothesis 3

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between e- case record management system and service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary.

Table 8: Model Summary for Hypothesis 3

| Model Summary ^b | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------|------|------|---------------|
| Model | R | R ² | Adjusted R ² | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics | | | | |
| | | | | | R ² Change | F Change | df 1 | Df 2 | Sig. F Change |
| 1 | 0.688a | 0.474 | 0.473 | 0.54013 | 0.474 | 358.604 | 1 | 398 | 0.000 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), E- Case Record Management System

b. Dependent Variable: service delivery

Table 9: ANOVA for Hypothesis 3

| ANOVA ^a | | | | | | |
|--------------------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|--------------------|
| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| 1 | Regression | 104.620 | 1 | 104.620 | 358.604 | 0.000 ^b |
| | Residual | 116.113 | 398 | 0.292 | | |
| | Total | 220.733 | 399 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: service delivery

The model summary in Table 8 shows an R-value of 0.688 and a coefficient determination, the R-Square value of 0.474. This implies that 47.4% of the service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State

judiciary is accounted for by the e-case record management system. Furthermore, the ANOVA in Table 9 shows an F-value of 358.604 and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. We reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant relationship between the e-case record management system and service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

E-administration has been recognised as an important tool for service delivery. This research was aimed at assessing the relationship between e-administration and service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary. The e-administration variables used to examine the relationship were e-filing, e-service of court processes and e-case record management system. The first objective of this study was to ascertain the relationship between e-filing and service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary. The findings of the study show that there is a significant positive relationship between e-filing and service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary. This is in agreement with the findings of Charles & Mmassy, (2024), who studied the contribution of the e-filing system to the quality of judicial service delivery in Rukwa District courts in Tanzania and found that the e-filing system had improved the quality of judicial service delivery through time-saving, increased accessibility, and enhanced convenience of specific judicial services such as case filing.

Regarding the second objective of the study, the findings revealed that the e-service of court processes has a significant effect on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary. This collaborates with the finding of Bosire et al. (2018) that the e-service of court process has a significant influence on the judiciary system and affects the operational performance of their judicial system.

The third objective was to assess the effect of the e-case record management system on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary. The finding shows that there is a significant relationship between the e-case record management system and service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary. This finding is in line with Bajandas & Ray's (2018) argument that, beyond the possibility of improving the filing procedure, submission of evidence, maintenance of records, and management of court procedures, the e-case record management system provides the opportunity to improve court processes. Affirming the stance above, Vasista (2018) argued that the electronic case record management system offers significant value in the possibility of replacing failing systems in courts.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to investigate the effect of E-administration on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary. E-administration variables adopted in the study were e-filing, e-service of court proceedings and e-case record management system. The findings reveal that all the e-administration variables adopted in the study have a significant effect on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State judiciary. From the research findings, e-administration exerts a significant positive influence on service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary. It significantly enhances service delivery by improving efficiency, accessibility, and cost-effectiveness as well as streamlining administrative functions, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and facilitates greater transparency and citizen engagement in the Akwa Ibom State Judiciary.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i.** Akwa Ibom State Judiciary should ensure complete implementation of the e-filing system in all its documentation, as there are still some paper handling of documentation by judiciary staff and agents to ensure absolute accountability to foster service delivery.
- ii.** Akwa Ibom State Judiciary should prioritise continuous training of the personnel in all departments and units to keep them informed on how best to utilise the electronic service of court proceedings in rendering effective services.
- iii.** The Akwa Ibom State Judiciary should ensure full automation of processes in recordkeeping, encouraging the E-Case Record Management System
- iv.** Akwa Ibom State Judiciary should ensure that Judiciary staff adopt new technologies and processes, requiring adequate change in mindset to enhance adequate use of the E-Court service delivery.

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