

# The Usability of E-government as a Mechanism to Enhance Public Service Delivery in the South African Government

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## Lessons from Practices

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### Abstract

The Government of South Africa faces unique difficulties in providing public services to society. These difficulties in providing services are of paramount significance for the government of South Africa as the problem extends from national to local governments. This is due to the fact that these difficulties often cause countless issues, including protests against the supply of public services, which usually result in property losses. The introduction of electronic government is expected to be the start of an instrument to promote efficient and effective service provision. Currently, there is insufficient knowledge of the effectiveness of electronic government as an instrument to improve public service delivery at all levels of the government in South Africa. With the aid of qualitative methodology and relying on secondary data, the study was able to determine the effectiveness of electronic government as an instrument to enhance public service delivery in the government of South Africa. The findings of the study highlighted the benefits of electronic government, including streamlined administrative processes, reduced wait times, improved transparency, accountability, and citizen involvement. Successful practices such as online service portals, digital identity verification, and mobile applications demonstrated the capacity of e-government to transform public service delivery. On the other hand, difficulties such as digital literacy gaps, uneven internet access, data privacy concerns, and lack of monitoring and evaluation of e-government initiatives hinder the full realization of electronic government's potential in South Africa. The study noted that e-government has proven to be successful in enhancing the supply of public services in the South African government, and also noted that electronic government can be utilized as a supplement to traditional paper documentation government as some services require the residents to visit public offices for further assistance. The study concludes with recommendations for the South African government to launch government programs aimed at improving the literacy of society as well as government employees. Moreover, more investment in ICT and more ICT personnel are needed to ensure the accessibility and effectiveness of the usage of electronic government in South Africa. The study successfully proposes techniques that the Government of South Africa can utilize to address challenges related to electronic government initiatives, especially in rural and remote areas, to further enrich the knowledge base.

**Keywords:** E-government, Public Service Delivery, Governance, Information Communication Technology

## Introduction and background

Bojang (2019) noted that several governments around the world have described electronic government as a way forward to attain efficiency and a better supply of public services for citizens and enterprises. This has made electronic government not only an option but also a demand for nations seeking better governance. South Africa accepted the necessity of electronic government as a public service platform to implement this initiative. Like many other governments, the South African government enters digital government to aid in improving public service delivery (Galushi & Malatji, 2022). This is because currently, the South African government encounters several challenges in providing public services such as education, healthcare, public safety, housing, social security, water, food, and property. However, based on the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Chapter 2 contains the Bill of Rights, and the abovementioned services are rights that the residents are entitled to.

Therefore, this clearly indicates that the residents of South Africa should receive these public services from the government. Failure to provide those services would then imply that the residents are denied their rights as stated in the Bill of Rights. The Government of South Africa recognized the significance of the electronic government and began implementation in recent years. Yet, it is difficult to fully implement electronic government. Although the execution of electronic government is underway, some serious gaps remain in South African public administration that must be closed. In terms of public service delivery, South Africa faces many conundrums, including inequality, corruption, poverty, illiteracy, unrest, and shortfalls of skills (Galushi & Malatji, 2022). Murenzi and Olivier (2017) point out that in the digital age, the electronic government has emerged as a transformative mechanism for making good changes to service delivery, promoting transparency, accountability, and citizen participation.

This implies that the objective of introducing electronic government is to improve service quality standards, increase government overall efficiency, and foster transparency, accountability, and citizen participation. Therefore, the implementation of electronic government serves as a catalyst to address these difficulties by taking advantage of digital technologies. However, the fruitfulness of the usage of electronic government as an alternative method of providing public services is not known. The 2011 National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030 recognizes the role of electronic government in building an appropriate state that responds to the demands of its people. This research aims to determine the effectiveness of electronic government in the South African government by assessing the current state of electronic government in South Africa and exploring the difficulties, limitations, failures, and successes of electronic government initiatives in the South African government. By doing so, the research can be able to propose alternative solutions that can be employed by the government of South Africa to address difficulties concerning the implementation of digital government. Although there is existing literature on digital government, this paper adds to the body of existing knowledge because it is based on current knowledge and the development of electronic government in the South African Government.

## Conceptual framework

### Electronic government

Apleni and Smuts (2020) define electronic government as the procedure that governments employ to attain efficiency as well as effectiveness in government, enabling society access to public services while fostering accountability as well as transparency in government. E-government focuses on the methods and processes used to deliver government services electronically. It includes online portals, mobile applications, self-service kiosks, and other digital channels through which citizens can access services such as permits, licenses, tax filing, and social services. For instance, during COVID-19, SASSA was successful in offering e-services where applications for social relief grants were done online and the majority of society successfully managed to apply for and receive their grants. However, e-government is faced with difficulties such as digital literacy gaps, limited access to technology, and resistance to innovation and transformation. In short, electronic government is therefore seen as a tool used to enhance public service delivery in this study.

### Public Service Delivery

Campbell (2014) asserts that public service delivery involves the efficient and equitable provision of services to the general public. Moreover, these services include education, healthcare, public safety, infrastructure, housing, food, and social security. The focus is on meeting the diverse demands of residents while ensuring accessibility, responsiveness, and accountability in the delivery process. For the purposes of this paper, public service delivery focuses on the potential of electronic government to streamline service delivery processes, enabling citizens to access government services online in a more efficient and user-friendly manner.

### Governance

Zaitul, Ilona, and Novianti (2023) define governance as the structures, processes, and mechanisms through which public policies and programs are formulated, implemented, and evaluated. In other words, governance is considered as the organizational capacity of public establishments to prepare public goods, as well as other goods, to meet the demands of countries' societies in a fruitful, fair, transparent, and responsible manner. This study presents a conceptual framework for governance that emphasizes the role of technology in transforming public administration and public service delivery. This indicates that it examines how e-government initiatives can facilitate greater transparency, efficiency, and accountability in government processes.

### Information communication technology

Information Communication Technology (ICT) in modern government is the application of modern ICT platforms such as the Internet, mobile devices, and digital platforms, to ameliorate the efficiency of government operations and the provision of services (World Bank, 2018). The conceptual framework in this study is based on ICT as a tool for transforming public service delivery through digital channels. In this paper, it examines how electronic government initiatives can improve efficiency, transparency, accountability, and accessibility in government operations and services. These include the user experience of government websites and online portals, the level of citizen engagement with these

services, and the overall effectiveness of e-government in delivering timely, accurate, and user-friendly services.

## Literature Review

### Electronic Government in South Africa

In 1996, the former late President, Nelson Mandela, established a Presidential Review Committee (PRC) to examine the structure and functions of public services, specifically to examine alternative means to optimize the supply of services in post-apartheid countries. Alternative modes of service delivery have been pointed out in the field of information technology, enabling potential electronic government tactics to enhance public service delivery. With the arrival of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), technological progress offers great possibilities for governments to address public service delivery challenges. Therefore, alternative ways of providing services to society such as electronic government are of paramount importance today. The government of South Africa adopted the electronic government in the year 2000 as an attempt to transform its main activities to make procedures more effective, efficient as well as society oriented (Roblek, 2020). Since the government of South Africa adopted digital government, it has made significant progress in the provision of e-services. However, despite the significant progress made, the execution of electronic government remains an important problem for several municipalities because some municipalities are located in rural areas. Instead of providing e-government as a means to remove barriers and divisions between rural and urban ways of accessing information quickly and easily via smartphones, the electronic government problem continues (Uwizeyimana, 2015). Electronic government has emerged as a transformative mechanism for enhancing service delivery, promoting transparency, and citizen participation. It is hoped that the presence of electronic government will better the supply of public services and eradicate problems in the government of South Africa.

### The Demand for Electronic Government in the Government of South Africa

Currently, the government of South Africa is faced with several problems that impede the ability of the government to render public services to the residents. The work of Thusi and Selepe (2023) has indicated that there is massive corruption, financial irregularities, and maladministration in the government of South Africa which has been criticized for poor provision of services. Even after 28 years of freedom, Thusi, Mahlatse, and Matyana (2023) believe that all levels of government in South Africa are still experiencing issues with regard to providing public services to the residents. This has created a situation where residents demonstrate anger with the government by engaging in public service protests. Moreover, it must be noted that with the excessive levels of unemployment in the country most of society depends heavily on the government to supply public services. Yet, the government of South Africa continues to fail dismally to provide these services. The poor supply of services in the South African government is also shown by government departments, entities, and municipalities continuously yielding poor audit outcomes. These poor audit outcomes indicate poor governance which results in poor public service delivery. It must be noted that where there is proper governance, the funds of the government are spent responsibly, as a result, this translates to the successful delivery of public services (Motubatse, Ngwakwe & Sebola, 2017).

Bvuma and Joseph (2019) indicated that the digitalization of the government has the potential to empower several members of society and eradicate public service delivery protests, as well as the likes of corruption. Friedman (2020) asserts that the South African government is characterized by bureaucratic red tapes and that is likely to cause corrupt activities in government. As an illustration, in most government departments there are procedures to be followed for services to be rendered, concerning traffic departments especially those located in deep rural areas, the procedure to obtain a learner's license can be a long and time-consuming process. The residents in response to these long procedures may offer bribes to officials employed in these departments to speed up the procedure in an attempt to receive services faster. Electronic government can provide these services in a timely manner and lessen the likelihood of bribes in the public service. Galushi and Malatji (2022) concluded that society portrays a belief that the digitalization of the government can eradicate the possibility of corrupt activities in public office. Subsequently, digital government serves as an alternative instrument to provide and ensure the provision of services to society through digital government. However, it must be noted that there will still be a demand for traditional paper documentation government as there may be instances that may still require an individual to visit a government establishment to acquire certain services. This then implies that electronic government becomes a supplement to the traditional paper documentation government.

### The Significance of Electronic Government in South Africa

The digitalization of the government promises many benefits to citizens and government organizations (Shambare, 2020). Moreover, previous studies have shown that electronic government has continuously improved the quality of life, lessened the cost and time of delivery of services, and ameliorated governance (Lee-Geiller & Lee, 2019; Gasova & Stofkova, 2017). This includes ensuring that public services are delivered to society promptly, for instance, the Department of Home Affairs went digital and collaborated with banks to deliver services such as Identity card services promptly. This provides a clear indication that the use of digital government has a great promise of increasing community engagement by enabling society to get a hold of public services and information. It also has the potential to enhance the nexus between government and society. Thus, by providing public services and information through digital channels, the government can be able to supply public services when citizens need them (Aikans & Krane, 2010).

For instance, the South African government provides information such as the budget speech and its outcomes of government entities, departments, and municipalities on the government websites. That fosters transparency and establishes trust between society and the government.

Moreover, the government further builds trust with society by providing public services in accordance with the principles of Batho Pele will lead to increased confidence in the Government (Jackoet-Salie, 2020). In other words, the government will be building trust between itself as well as society; the society will develop faith in the government when they receive services that are in accordance with the Batho Pele principles. Moreover, when the digital government gives society an opportunity to access government information online it promotes transparency and accountability. As a result, this also improves the relationship between the government and society, and society will trust the government because accessing government information allows them to hold the government accountable. Therefore, it

can be concluded that digital government is important as it fosters transparency, trust, citizen engagement, and accountability and enhances the supply of public services.

### The Nexus between Batho Pele Principles and Electronic Government

The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) instigated the Batho-Pele principles (People First) and considered and respected the electronic government initiative placing more emphasis on enhancing the supply of public services, as well as the transformation from a system of traditional paper documentation to a technological system (Mohale, 2024). Nevertheless, the Presidential Review Committee (PRC) recommended the usage of technology in the distribution of public services as an instrument to improve the standards of public service delivery. In view of this situation, the Presidential Review Committee has further recommended the inauguration of a National Information Technology Agency in South Africa, rationalizing IT procurement to provide IT-related training as well as ensuring functional use of IT in establishments of the government (Mohale, 2024). However, Malomane (2021) believes that due to inadequate supervision, the agency failed to attain its obligations. As a result, there are various policies as well as structures currently in operation to support and guide the execution of electronic government initiatives in South Africa. It is noted that the Batho Pele Principles (BPP) are related to digital government and are aimed at implementing a proactive, transparent, and service-oriented approach.

**Table1:** The eight principles of BPP

Bathopele Principles	Elucidations
Consultation	The society must be consulted on the quality of the service standards they receive. Concerning digital government and service provision, society must be consulted online and be asked to respond to new programs and policies. Society can express their views and opinions at any time and at their convenience.
Service standards	The community must be aware of the level and quality of the services it receives and know what it is expecting. Service standards can be provided online, and society can access them anywhere and at any time. The digital government ameliorates access because when services are provided by using the digital government, access will be easier and better.
Access	All members of the society must have equal access to services. Society can record errors or suggestions for enhancement with their mobile phones in order to supply access to services equally. Through the provision of electronic means of government information and services to the public, the government can supply services to residents when they demand them.
Courtesy	The society must be treated with courtesy and consideration. Society can register complaints online, and municipal representatives can respond politely to gain community confidence. Customer satisfaction surveys can be distributed on these online platforms.
Information	The society must receive comprehensive and accurate information on the public services to which they have access. Using digital government initiatives, communities can update information at any time and get a hold of this information as they wish.
Openness and transparency	Society must be aware of how local authorities operate and the information they have access to. The digital government can be utilized to provide security, accountability, and transparency in the government's decision-making procedures on allocation as well as resource distribution. As a result, in the presence of digital government, the society will get a hold of full access to the information on their devices.
Redress	If society does not receive the services promised, they should have the right to full elucidations and swift remedies. The use of digital government will aid in quickly identifying which services are not being executed and then implementing tactics to correct them on time.
Value for money	Services must be provided economically, to ensure that society enjoys the best value for money. Furthermore, digital government programs can strengthen their value as an engine of efficiency as well as fruitfulness while supporting continuous service delivery through corrective measures as well as allocation of funds where necessary.

**Source:** (Jakoet-Salie, 2020)

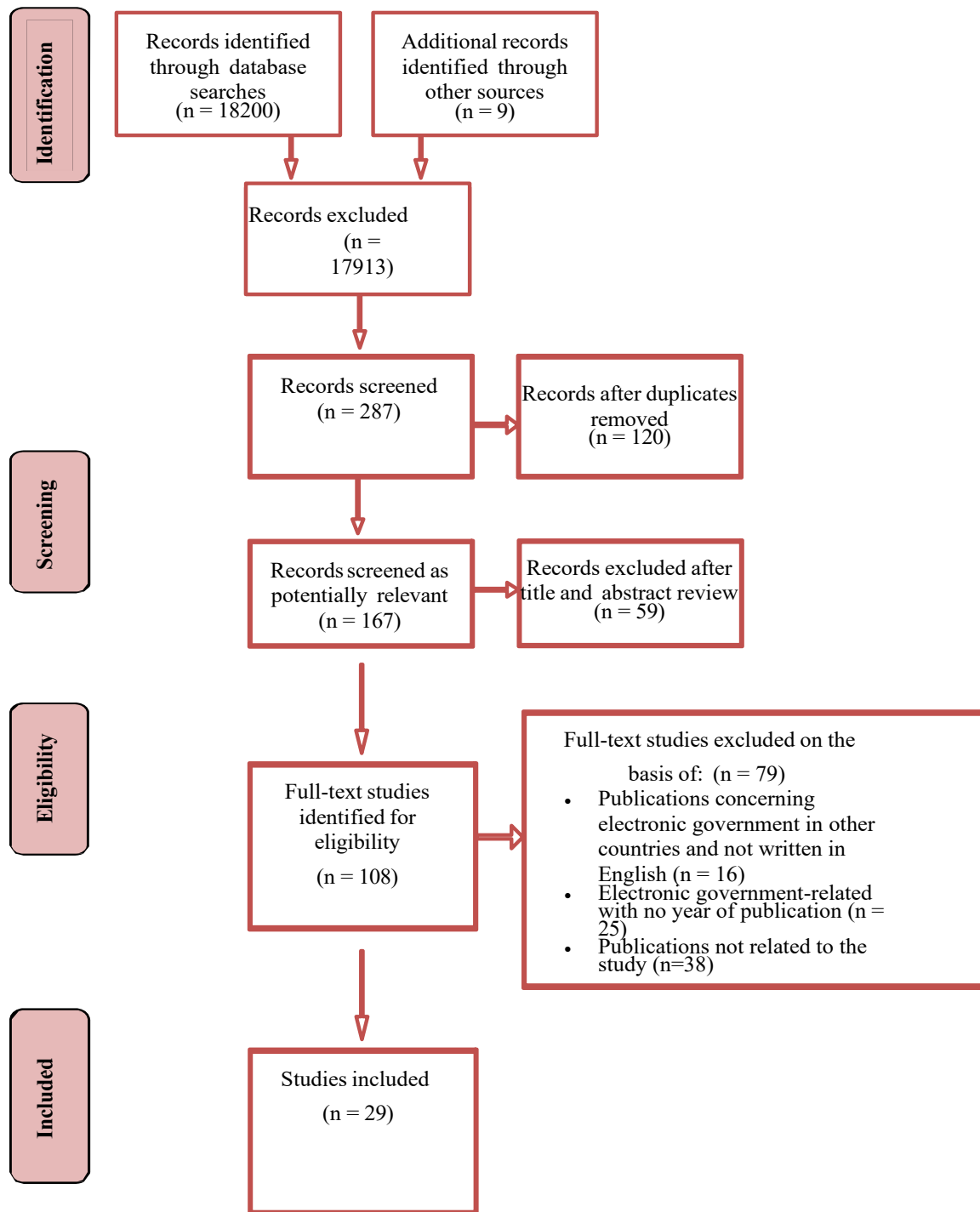
## Research Methodology

This study followed the qualitative methodology and depended heavily on secondary data. Bouchrika (2022) asserts that secondary research is a method of study that uses data gathered before. The existing data have been recapitulated and compiled to enhance the inclusive efficacy of the research. The study has reviewed publications published between the years 2019 and 2024 on the usage of the digital government as a mechanism to enhance the supply of public services in the South African government. The purpose of reviewing publications from the years 2019 to 2024 was to generate research outcomes that are based on the latest developments in electronic government. These publications were derived from scientific databases such as Google Scholar, Science Direct, published reports, Web of Science, EBSCOHost, and JSTOR. The search tactic followed the PICO format (population, intervention, control or comparator, and outcome), and made use of relevant keywords such as 'e-government in South Africa', 'e-government successes and challenges in South Africa', and the 'Current status of e-government in South Africa'. The motive was to determine the effectiveness of electronic government in the South African government by assessing the current state of electronic government in South Africa by investigating in terms of barriers, successes, failures, and areas for enhancement in the execution of digital government in South Africa. Therefore, the study followed selection criteria to select the literature that is deemed appropriate and relevant for this study. Figure 1 portrays the inclusion and selection criteria.

## Findings and Discussion

### Electronic Government as a Tool to Enhance the Supply of Public Services in the South African Government

The ongoing narratives and discussions concerning the poor supply of services in South Africa reflect how poor governance has exposed inequality, corruption, and increased poverty. As a result, the lack of governance and the poor supply of public services is a major challenge in South Africa (Masuku, 2021). The reason behind the establishment of digital government was to address some of the challenges mentioned above to ensure a successful supply of public services to residents. Masinde and Mkhonto (2019) believe that the digital government is utilized as a weapon to combat the likelihood of corrupt activities. On the contrary, several challenges such as corrupt activities persist to thrive even in the digital government. Comparing the traditional paper documentation government with digital government, the traditional paper documentation enabled corrupt activities to thrive. This is because of bureaucratic red tapes in government encouraging government processes to be time-consuming and opening a way for corrupt activities to thrive (Hinson, Madichie, Adeola, Nyigmah, Bawole, Adisa, & Asamoah, 2022).



**Figure 1:** PRISMA flow diagram demonstrating the flow of included and excluded studies

Figure 2 shows the difference between the traditional paper documentation government and the electronic government.



## The Traditional Paper Documentation Government



## Electronic Government

**Figure 2:** The functioning of traditional paper documentation and electronic government.  
**Source:** (Shambare, 2020)

Therefore, the table above, demonstrates how the electronic government operates as compared to the traditional paper documentation government. In the traditional paper documentation government, the society had to fill out papers, attach necessary documentation, and allow public officials to process them which could be a time-consuming process. Shambare (2020) believes that this process has led to rampant corruption in the South African public office. In a sense that in most cases, some members of the society desire to get a hold of public services faster and they end up paying bribes to public officials to ensure a faster process of their applications to receive public services. To illustrate this, citizens who would like to apply for passports through the Department of Home Affairs can apply for them and pay bribes to public officials so that they can receive their passports immediately. It must be noted that the likes of corruption in the South African public sector harm good governance and service delivery. Where there is corruption, the delivery of public service is usually poor. On the other hand, with the electronic government, the society uses the digital government to access services. Moreover, with the electronic government, society makes use of ICT to access public services and public officials process their applications. However, it must be noted that not all public services can be accessed online some require society to visit a government entity for further assistance.

For instance, concerning renewing a driver's license at the traffic department, one can book a slot online and visit the traffic department for further assistance, such as eye testing assistance. Therefore, this may be a long process that may lead to corrupt activities such as bribes for faster service rendering. This gives a clear indication that corruption may still thrive even in the presence of digital government. This remains a challenge associated with e-government in South Africa and harms the provision of services. On the brighter side, several measures are implemented that serve as preventive actions against possible problems that might occur in the digitization of the government (Adams & Paul, 2023). These include measures that the South African government employed to prevent corrupt activities from taking place in the digitalization of public services. As an illustration, the Department of e-Government established a policy imposing zero tolerance for fraud, corruption, theft, mismanagement, or any other similar fraud. Therefore, it can be concluded that corrupt activities remain inevitable in the government of South Africa even in the presence of digital government, it persists to thrive. However, there are policies in place as preventative and corrective actions.

## The Current Status of Electronic Government in South Africa

### Progress and Attainments

South Africa has made significant strides in implementing e-government initiatives (Terrance, 2023). This is seen by the work of Maluleka (2023) affirming that the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) has attained the establishment of an electronic procurement system that enables open and transparent procurement of government tenders to eradicate corruption. Another attainment of the digital government project is the SARS electronic submission system, which provides a way to carry out transactions concerning tax returns on the Internet between governments and businesses (Mohlala, 2023). Moreover, the National Traffic Information System (eNaTIS) is an electronic government initiative for obtaining driving licenses, registering, and granting car licenses, notifying of changes in ownership/sale of cars, and obtaining learner licenses. Jakoet-Salie (2023) also identified the attainment of the digital initiatives of The National Department of Health, the Medical Research Council (MRC), and the National Health Information Systems Committee on South Africa (NHIS/SA). The Presidential Hotline platform is also regarded as the attainment of a digital government initiative that deals with complaints about unresolved issues concerning the distribution of public services.

Looking at the government departments, most of them have successfully implemented e-government initiatives such as the Department of Home Affairs, which provides digital services for visa and permit applications and simplifying processes for foreign nationals intending to visit or reside in South Africa. This includes the Home Affairs National Information System (HANIS) project which the society can utilize to access death as well as birth registration forms online. Furthermore, the initiative of the Department of Home Affairs to collaborate with South African banks to render public services such as ID cards. Then again, the Gauteng Department of e-Government is another success of the electronic government in South Africa as it aims to modernize the public service to make certain that there is a supply of public services fruitfully to residents in Gauteng, employees, and businesses through digital platforms. The work of Madyibi (2020) identifies the attainments of digital government such as the Department of Transport providing electronic services (e-transport) and the Department of Education through the e-Sams. Furthermore, the Department of Communication and Information Systems established a one-stop website for all the information concerning the government.

With regard to local government, most metropolitan municipalities have made significant progress in electronic governmental initiatives. As an illustration, the City of Tshwane has made progress in e-government having successfully established “e-Tshwane” as a digital platform for offering services. On the other hand, the city of e-Thekwini has made progress towards the achievement of digital government initiatives, but the effectiveness of digital government in this municipality is limited by internet connections (Kariuki, Ofusori, & Goyayi, 2019; Reddy & Govender, 2019). Concerning the City of Johannesburg (CJ), it has implemented various e-services such as e-statements, e-recruitment, and e-payments. The residents of CJ can view statements online, apply for jobs listed on the municipality’s website, and pay their municipal accounts 24hrs. This indicates the success of the initiatives of the e-government as services can be provided digitally. The same can be said for the City of Cape Town (CCT). The CCT has also adopted digital services, this is seen through the municipality having e-recruitment, and e-billing. It is therefore clear that South Africa managed to make significant progress in executing electronic government initiatives.

## Barriers, Difficulties, Failures, and Lessons from Practices

The execution of e-government in South Africa, similarly with many other countries, faces several difficulties (Nokele & Mukonza, 2021). This includes unequal access to technology which remains one of the difficulties in the execution of digital government in South Africa, especially in deeply rural areas. This remains a huge difficulty that hampers the successful execution of electronic government because most of the societies in rural areas are not able to access technology due to various reasons such as internet connectivity and inability to operate computers. This then creates a situation where people residing in rural areas perceive electronic government negatively while people residing in urban areas perceive electronic government positively and believe it is useful and yields fruitful outcomes. This is because the lack of access to electronic government can also contribute to excessive levels of unemployment and a poor quality of life in rural areas (Aruleba, 2022). Additionally, rural areas often lack adequate internet infrastructure, leading to limited or no access to high-speed internet and this hinders citizens' ability to engage with e-government platforms.

It must be noted that one of the electronic government initiatives is e-recruitment where jobs are listed online, the society applies for jobs online rather than traditional paper applications. For instance, some of the provincial departments such as Kwazulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, and Gauteng have launched e-recruitment where people apply for jobs online. Therefore, some of the members of the society in rural areas may struggle to engage with e-recruitment due to limited or poor internet connectivity. Consequently, unemployment levels in South Africa will continue to grow. This highlights a demand for the government to invest more funds in ICT to ensure that South Africa has enough personnel to tackle the challenges experienced in rural areas such as poor internet connectivity. However, Jacket-Salie (2020) noted that the shortfalls of talented ICT graduates were identified as one of the key difficulties in South Africa. On the other hand, Thusi and Chauke (2023) noted that the Government of South Africa is currently dealing with high-volume turnover issues, especially in the scarcely qualified sectors of ICT. Subsequently, this shows that the South African government must acquire and keep ICT personnel in the nation because the success of electronic government depends on the ICT personnel to aid in removing barriers in rural areas and safeguard the confidential information of the residents.

According to Terrance (2023), electronic government initiatives are limited by the ability of society to utilize computers and mobile smartphones. However, this includes government employees because the success of electronic government depends on their knowledge of technology and their ability to utilize computers, laptops, and mobile smartphones. This is because employees of the government also play a role in processing the digital applications of the residents through technological means such as computers, laptops, and cell phones. Furthermore, the limited ability to read and understand English also limits the usage of digital government services by many people in rural areas. There is a difference in household internet access between low-served and urban areas, and rural areas have lower connectivity levels (Afzal, Khan, Daud, Ahmad & Butt, 2023). These disparities restrict the opportunities for society to participate in electronic government platforms. Mello and Shai (2019) in support of the above-mentioned statement attest that the execution of electronic government is a futile exercise if most rural poor people cannot access such e-services. Although most government entities, departments, and metropolitan municipalities are thriving in offering e-services, local municipalities encounter several challenges in implementing e-government. For example, Galushi and Malatji (2022) carried out a study at Musina Local Municipality in the Limpopo province, the study proved that implementing

electronic government in the municipality will be difficult. This is because the interviewees demonstrated no knowledge and faith in digital government.

Therefore, this implies that there is insufficient knowledge and grasp of electronic government in local municipalities especially those municipalities located in rural areas. To ensure a smooth transition to electronic government, the municipalities are expected to educate their communities about electronic government. The local government lacks sufficient ICT infrastructure to provide municipal services, which is exacerbated by the lack of basic digital literacy affecting society's members. For this reason, skills and training in ICT are crucial in rural areas. This has been aggravated by the expansion of electronic divisions, which have constantly increased the distance between cities and rural areas. It must be noted that society might have poor faith in digital government because of a fear of their confidential information being revealed to third parties. Previous studies highlighted the need for the government to ensure robust data security measures to safeguard society's sensitive information because occurrences such as breaches of data can erode public trust in e-government systems (Xia, Semirumi & Rezaei, 2023; Zakrzewska & Miciuła, 2021; Yang, Elisa & Eliot, 2019; Sutherland, 2021).

**This implies that** society needs assurance that their data is being used responsibly and ethically because a lack of transparency regarding data use can lead to distrust and hesitation to engage with e-government services. Within government institutions, there may be resistance to changing traditional ways of operating, leading to challenges in adopting new technologies. However, it must be noted that this can also be caused by insufficient knowledge about electronic government benefits. This then highlights the demand for training because inadequate training has the potential to lead to resistance among government employees and citizens. Electronic government has not attained the anticipated outcomes and this is shown by projects such as the Golaganang project, which is a project that failed to supply basic digital literacy for employees of the government and promote the usage of ICT in the working environment (Mohale, 2024). It must be noted that digital literacy hinders the fruitful supply of electronic government services to all members of society.

On the other hand, Mzekandaba (2023) indicated that at the end of the year 2017, an automated biometric identification system, part of the Home Affairs Department's move to a digital identification system to replace the e-Hanis system, was made known, the first phase of which was expected to be operational in 12 months. Yet, this project has not started and is affected by technical issues that have detained the system. The significance of monitoring and evaluation is highlighted in the aforementioned statement. All projects of the government must be closely monitored and evaluated to ensure that they attain the set objectives. The work of Niyansiro (2021) supports the above idea by highlighting that one of the main roots of the difficulties of electronic government in developing nations such as South Africa is a lack of monitoring and evaluation (Niyansiro, 2021). Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation are essential in preparing business cases for the justification of electronic government projects, distributing necessary funds for electronic government, and assessing the progress of projects towards the specified goals (Fan & Pan, 2023). Subsequently, there is a demand to continuously monitor and evaluate the initiatives of the electronic government to detect failures and implement corrective actions to ensure that the projects of the government attain their goals as anticipated.

## Electronic Government as a Tool to Foster Citizen Involvement through Electronic Participation.

Tejedo–Romero, Araujo, Tejada & Ramírez (2022) believe that electronic government serves as a powerful tool to foster citizen engagement through e-participation, creating opportunities for the general public to take part in the decision-making procedures of governance. One of the main advantages of digital government is that it fosters the involvement of citizens through electronic participation and provides opportunities for the society to take part in decision-making processes. This approach strengthens democracy by making government more transparent, accountable, and responsive to the needs and concerns of citizens. In the case of the Coronavirus, social media platforms were available and used for distributing information. On the other hand, the internet allowed society to access government e-services such as SASSA Social Relief Grants. Therefore, this highlights the significance of social media platforms in communicating with society to share updates and seek input on various issues. As an illustration, the South African Parliament makes use of live streaming of parliamentary sessions, and this enables society to follow debates as well as proceedings in real-time and stay informed about government actions. This includes the budget speech which is broadcasted on social media platforms and on television as well to afford the society a chance to hear the financial plans of the government. Therefore, it is evident that the use of online platforms in the government of South Africa provides the society with information on budget proposals and allocations enhancing transparency and accountability. With that being said, it can be concluded that electronic government can be utilized as an instrument to foster e-participation.

Adnan (2022) concluded that, among other things, the satisfaction of the general public with electronic participation as well as the government's responsiveness was excessive and to some extent reached excessive levels of the degree of participation. Therefore, this implies that the increasing evidence points to the fast growth of electronic participation as a tool for engagement and strengthened partnerships between governments as well as society. The main goal of electronic participation is to ensure access to information and to foster engagement in policymaking, both for the empowerment of individual residents and the benefit of society. Subsequently, electronic government as an instrument to foster electronic participation is perceived to have been very effective. Furthermore, making use of ICT tools will continue to promote citizen involvement and democracy through electronic government initiatives such as online voting, electronic passports, electronic registration, electronic banking, electronic procurement, electronic passports (passport applications), electronic ID/smart identity cards, and card reservations (Molobela, 2023). However, South Africa recently declined the demand for electronic voting. In general, electronic participation tools foster democracy by creating a way for crucial engagement of citizens, promoting transparency and accountability, and ultimately leading to more responsive and inclusive governance.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite the success of the electronic government system, not all residents can digitally obtain and access services. The findings of the study indicate that electronic government serves as a supplement to the traditional paper documentation government. It is evident that the use of electronic government can foster democracy, accountability, governance transparency, and enhance service delivery. Although the initiatives of electronic government proved

to be effective in enhancing public service delivery problems such as ICT staff shortages, limited digital literacy, and infrastructure limitations continue to exist.

The study provides the following recommendations:

### Digital Literacy

South Africa must launch government programs aimed at improving the literacy of society. This will be done to ensure that society and public sector employees can read and write as well as operate mobile devices, laptops, or computers. Training public sector employees can assist in avoiding resistance to technological innovations which is mostly caused by a lack of understanding or familiarity with new technologies. These programs must be done in both urban and rural areas, however, more focus must be on rural areas where there is a lack of internet connectivity.

### Information Communication Technology Infrastructure

The literature indicated that most of the society that resides in rural areas often face difficulties with internet connectivity. Therefore, this hinders their ability to take advantage of the benefits of e-government. The government of South Africa is therefore recommended to invest funds more in ICT technology infrastructure to ensure that all members of the society can have equal access to e-services.

### ICT Staff Shortages

For South Africa to address personnel shortfalls in ICT, it is recommended that South Africa invest more in basic and higher education in an attempt to prepare students and equip them with the relevant basic ICT skills that can possibly result in students pursuing careers in ICT. For instance, the South African government can provide students with bursaries to pursue studies in ICT with contractual requirements that after graduation, the student will work for the government for a certain number of years in an attempt to address shortfalls in ICT. Furthermore, concerning the excessive levels of turnover of ICT personnel in South Africa, the government can revise its retention strategies to maintain ICT personnel, this can include offering fair and competitive remuneration packages.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

In light of a few initiatives of electronic government not attaining their anticipated outcomes, the study makes a recommendation to the Government of South Africa to continuously monitor and evaluate all of the digital government projects implemented to ensure they attain the desired outcomes.

## Limitations and Areas for Further Research

Although a thorough assessment of existing literature as well as other published sources is necessary, the author found some significant shortcomings in this study. The authors relied on published publications. In South Africa, there is little research into the fruitfulness of electronic government in ameliorating the distribution of public services, transparency, accountability, and democracy. Future researchers can focus on exploring the following:

- The effectiveness of digital government in enhancing accountability, transparency, and service delivery: Challenges, Failures and Attainments in the local government of South Africa.
- Factors Hindering the Accessibility of the Initiatives of Electronic Government in the South African Local Government.
- Challenges Experienced by the South African Local Municipalities in Implementing Electronic Government.
- Electronic Government as an Alternative Mode of the Supply of Public Services in the South African Local Government: Lessons from Practices.

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