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Inter-Agency Collaboration And Service Delivery In Selected Public Sector Organisations In South West Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study examines the effect of interagency collaboration on service delivery in selected public sector organisations in South West, Nigeria. The objectives of the study are, to ascertain whether inter agency information sharing can help reduce the cost of biometric data capturing in Nigeria and to ascertain the effect of a single multipurpose biometric database on policy making and implementation in Nigeria. On the basis of the above objectives, two research questions and hypotheses were formulated and tested for the study. The study was anchored on the Stakeholder Theory by Freeman (1983). Data was collected from a population of 728 staff of the selected organizations under study. The data collected were presented using frequencies and mean scores and analyzed, using Pearson correlation analyses. The study found out, among others, that interagency information sharing can help to reduce the cost of biometric data capturing in Nigeria. The study therefore, recommended that the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) should be overhauled and reinforced to effectively cater for the biometric data needs of the federation. Their server should be accessible to other government agencies (especially at the federal level) so as to avoid unnecessary repetition of biometric data capturing at every point in time.*

Keywords: *Information and Communication Technology, Biometric Technology, Public Sector, Service Delivery*

INTRODUCTION

An average Nigerian adult must have had his or her biometric information captured at various times, at least twice. If he or she operates a bank account, then, his or her data must have been captured during the process of issuing the account holder with a Bank Verification Number (BVN). A Bank Verification Number, commonly called BVN is a biometric identification system implemented by the Central Bank of Nigeria to curb or reduce illegal banking transactions in Nigeria. A leading commercial bank in the country, First Bank of Nigeria Plc on its website (https://www.firstbanknigeria.com) defines BVN as an 11-digit number that acts as a customer's universal ID in all commercial banks in Nigeria. The process of issuing a customer a Bank Verification Number works by recording fingerprints and a facial photograph of the client, along with other biodata information like full names, age, date of birth, state of origin, etc.

A car owner in Nigeria who drives must have a permit known as the drivers' license issued by the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), a federal government agency charged with the statutory responsibility of road safety administration in Nigeria. The process for issuing a road user in Nigeria with a driver's license ranges from attending an accredited driving school, to passing a driving test, then payment of necessary fees and ultimately biometric data capturing where a temporary driver's license will be issued before the original driver's license is ready for collection.

Where a Nigerian citizen intends to travel abroad, he or she will have to obtain the Nigerian passport, popularly called international passport. This travel document is issued by the Nigeria Immigration service (NIS). The Nigeria Immigration Service is an agency of the Federal Government charged with the responsibility of among others, border surveillance and patrol and issuing travel documents to bona fide Nigerians in and outside Nigeria. Again, this process involves a number of procedures which culminates with the applicant appearing in person at any designated immigration office for biometric data capturing. Suffice it to say that the process is not complete until one's biometric information has been captured by the NIS.

The most popular of these biometric data capturing exercises is the Continuous Voters' Registration (CVR). This exercise is undertaken by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), a federal government institution set up to oversee the conduct of democratic elections in Nigeria. Just like the BVN, Drivers' License and the Nigerian passport, prospective voters are expected to go through the ritual of biometric data capturing before they are issued with permanent voter cards. There is also the National Identity card being issued by the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) and the mobile SIM registration exercise being embarked upon by Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC). Also, in 2013, the Nigeria Police Force introduced the Biometric Central Motor Registration (BCMR), which was later jettisoned following public criticisms and outcry. Pensioners also go through various forms of verification exercises, involving biometric data

capturing, civil servants at various levels also go through biometric data capturing to check the incidence of ghost workers' syndrome, and the list seem almost endless.

At various points of biometric data capturing, Nigerians have been subjected to untold suffering and hardship in trying to get their information captured. A typical scenery in a voter registration center depicts a situation where prospective voters are crowded waiting under harsh weather conditions to be registered. This is not considering the fact that most of these prospective voters might have gone through the rigours of obtaining a valid drivers' license, national identity card or even the Nigerian passport. Prospective travelers who wish to process their international passport also experience difficulties getting their data captured for that particular purpose irrespective of the fact that many of them might have voter cards and drivers' license.

Though there are evidence of interagency collaboration in most government institutions, it does not include the process of data and information sharing. For instance, one will need to present a means of identification to be able to register for the National Identity cards, for which a voter card, driver's license or an international passport will suffice. However, the collaboration stops there as the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) have no means of feeding from the information of the applicant already supplied to these other government agencies and maybe, updating same where necessary. Instead, a fresh data is collected and in most cases might have some dissimilarities from the information at the disposal of other government agencies.

This is in contrast to what is obtainable in the Nigerian banking sector. A common practice in the Nigerian banking sector for all account holders and prospective account holders is that biometric registration is done ONCE and for all. If a customer who operates an account with bank A – for instance, goes to open another account with bank B, the other bank will simply harvest the customer's biometric information using the customer's BVN and will not go through the rigours of conducting a fresh biometric data capturing exercise. This was made possible because the database is domiciled with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and accessible to all commercial banks operating in the country.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The fact that the banking sector have a central database for all its customers while various government institutions and agencies do not have, calls for concern. This has some economic and socio-political implications. Economically speaking, multiplicity of biometric data capturing exercises in the country has serious financial implications for government. Adepetun, (2017) in his report on how Nigeria wastes billions of naira on data capturing, published by The Guardian Newspaper of Monday September 18 stated that between 2014 and 2017, banks have spent close to N45 billion on BVN registrations, capturing about 51.7 million bank customers. In the same vein, the report stated that the NCC and the MNOs spent over N46.1 billion on SIM registrations in the last five years, beginning from 2012 (Adepetun, 2017). Specifically, while NCC spent about N6.1 billion, the GSM operators, including MTN, Globacom, Airtel and 9mobile (Etisalat) jointly spent about N40 billion.

According to Adepetun, (2017), the Federal Executive Council under former President Goodluck Jonathan in 2011 approved N30.66 billion to NIMC to embark on the provision of an electronic national identity card for all Nigerians of 18 years old and above in the first phase of the exercise. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in 2015 spent about N87 billion on voters' registration and other data-capturing activities and the figure is higher for the 2019 elections. In the face of dwindling government revenue occasioned by the vicissitudes in the price of oil – Nigeria's major revenue earner – on the international market, these heavy spending are economically unsustainable in the long run.

A socio-political consequence of multiple biometric data capturing in Nigeria is that it makes planning difficult because the system is not all inclusive. The Nigeria government, under the current system cannot capture the biometric information of all its citizens. There are those who are apolitical and may not have a need to register to get their PVCs; there are also others whom do not have the desire and means to travel abroad and may not bother themselves with procuring an international passport. Also, millions of Nigerians do not operate bank accounts and do not have BVN, yet many do not have cars and have no need for the procurement of drivers' license.

This social exclusion will negatively affect planning and policy making. Again, government inability to fashion out modalities to capture the biometric information of all its citizens as well as harmonize existing biometric data scattered across different agencies and organisations through effective inter agency collaboration and communication is a major hindrance to efficient and effective public service delivery and economic planning. In view of the above challenges, coupled with the fact that there is a dearth of empirical studies that assess the possibilities of a potential harmonization of biometric information in Nigeria, our mission in this

study is to examine the effect of inter-agency collaboration on service delivery in selected public sector organisations in Southwest Nigeria.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of this study is to examine the effect of inter-agency collaboration on service delivery in selected public sector organisations in Southwest Nigeria. The specific objectives are;

1. To ascertain how inter agency information sharing can reduce the cost of biometric data capturing in Nigeria.
2. To ascertain the effect of a single multipurpose biometric database on policy making and implementation in Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This empirical study was guided by the following research questions.

1. How can inter agency information sharing reduce the cost of biometric data capturing in Nigeria?
2. What effect will a single multipurpose biometric database have on policy making and implementation in Nigeria?

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study:

1. Inter-agency information sharing cannot reduce the cost of biometric data capturing in Nigeria.
2. A single multipurpose biometric database has no effect on policy making and implementation in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Information and Communication Technology: There is all-inclusive single definition of the term Information and Communication Technology (ICT). However, the term is generally accepted to mean all devices, networking components, applications and systems that combined to allow people and organizations to interact in the digital world. In a broad sense, ICT refers to all the machinery or tools used to handle telecommunications, broadcast media, intelligent building management systems, audiovisual processing and transmission systems, and network-based control and monitoring functions (https://www.techopedia.com). The International Telecommunication Union (ITU, 2006) states that Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is a term currently used to denote a wide range of services, applications and technologies, using various types of equipment and software, often running over telecoms networks. ICT include well known telecom services such as telephone, mobile telephone and fax. Telecom services used together with computer hardware and software form the basis for a range of other services, including e-mail, the transfer of files from one computer to another, and, in particular, the Internet, which potentially allows all computers to be connected, thereby giving access to sources of knowledge and information stored on computers worldwide.

Biometric Technology: Biometric technology is an ICT driven initiative used mainly for identification and access control. The simple idea of biometric verification is that every person can be accurately identified by his or her intrinsic physical or behavioral traits. According to Wikipedia online dictionary, biometric identifiers are the distinctive, measurable characteristics used to label and describe individuals. Biometric identifiers are often categorized as physiological versus behavioral characteristics. Physiological characteristics are related to the shape of the body. Examples include, but are not limited to fingerprint, palm veins, face recognition, DNA, palm print, hand geometry, iris recognition, retina and odour/scent. Behavioral characteristics are related to the pattern of behavior of a person, including but not limited to typing rhythm, gait, and voice.

Biometric data capturing is important for a number of reasons, ranging from economic, social to security and political purposes. It assists in effective planning and policy making. Accurate data can also help in the fight against corruption, criminality and insurgency. The BVN revolution, for instance, have assisted in combating certain categories of financial crimes operated through the banking system. Also, most criminal cases like armed robbery and kidnapping have been successfully investigated by security agents through the information provided by Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) on the mobile phone numbers used to perpetrate the crime.

Public Sector: The public sector consists of those organizations and economic units that are owned and controlled by the government. Wodzicki (2007) sees the public sector to be central to the effective working of government and the effective

governing of the society. This is because; it is the fundamental instrument for implementing laws enacted by the Legislature and providing services to the public. He went further to pinpoint four important functions of the public sector as:

- Giving advice to the government,
- Implementation of government policies,
- Law enforcement and regulatory functions and
- Delivery of public goods and services.

In the views of Ahmed (2006), public service - which in Nigeria is used interchangeably with the term public sector - is a cluster of all institutions that exists as components of governmental instruments for the delivery of services to the public. Also, Broadbent and Guthrie (2008) sees the public sector as an including organization which renders services to the public at government expense and that are publicly owned and operated. In Nigeria, public sector organisations includes – but may not be limited to – the following;

- The National (and state) Assembly or of each House of the National Assembly;
- The judiciary;
- Agencies, Commissions or other statutory bodies;
- Local government;
- Public educational institution established or financed principally by the Government;
- Companies or enterprises in which the Government of the Federation (states) or its agency owns controlling shares or interest;
- The armed forces of the Federation or the Nigeria Police Force or other government security agencies established by law, etc.

Service Delivery: The impact of any organization be it in the public or private sector is felt through the nature of the services it renders to its clients or the public at large. In the public sector, service delivery is the standard gauge of all governmental institutions and the effectiveness or otherwise of governance per time is assessed by it. A service is an intangible good that may be in the form of education, healthcare, legal services etc. According to Fagbemi, (2006), service delivery simply put is getting goods and services as expected and as quickly as possible by (recipients) customers. Thus, the way and manner that public goods and social services are delivered constituted the rudiments of the term public service delivery which Akhakpe (2014) sees as the provision of goods and other life support amenities by government to maximize the welfare and well-being of the people.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this study is the Stakeholder Theory by Freeman (1983). By way of a definition, a stakeholder is anyone who has an interest in a project, business or organization. In project management terms, a stakeholder is an individual or group that will be impacted by the outcome of the project. Stakeholders can be within the organization or outside of it; either way, they are very interested in the project and its proceedings. In short, stakeholders are important. They sponsor a project or organization and are invested in its successful completion. But that doesn't mean they just sit idly by and watch. They are often active, and they can have a positive or negative influence depending on their actions. Stakeholder theory addresses business ethics, morals and values when managing stakeholders involved with a project or organization. It seeks to optimize relations with stakeholders, thereby improving efficiencies throughout the project or organization.

Principles of Stakeholder Theory: Freeman outlined six principles that should govern the relationship between the stakeholders and the corporation.

- **The principle of entry and exit:** According to this principle, there must be clear rules that delineate, for example, the rules when it comes to hiring employees and terminating their employment should be clear-cut and transparent.
- **The principle of governance:** This principle is concerned with how the rules governing the relationship between the stakeholders and the firm can be amended. With unanimous consent, any changes made should endeavor to accommodate the peculiar needs of the major stakeholders and the general needs of the organization.
- **The principle of externalities:** This is concerned with how a group that does not benefit from the actions of the corporation has to suffer certain difficulties because of the actions of the corporation. The principle of externalities suggests that anyone who has to bear the costs of other stakeholders has the right to become a stakeholder as well. Anyone who is affected by a business becomes a stakeholder.

- **The principle of contract costs:** Each party to a contract should either bear equal amounts when it comes to cost, or the cost they bear should be proportional to the advantage they have in the firm. Not all of these costs are financial in nature, so they may be difficult to quantify.
- **Agency principle:** This principle states that the manager of a firm is an agent of the firm and therefore has responsibilities to the stakeholders as well as the shareholders.
- **The principle of limited immortality:** This principle deals with the longevity of a firm. To ensure the success of the organization and its owners alike, it is necessary for the organization to exist for a prolonged period of time. If the firm only exists for a very limited period of time, it would be advantageous for some of the stakeholders and disadvantageous for others. This violates the concept of a stakeholder. Thus the firm must remain in existence for a length of time, and it should be managed in a way that ensures its survival. "Limited" immortality refers to the fact that the firm can be long-lasting but it is impossible for it to actually be immortal.

These are the basic principles of Stakeholder theory, and it requires the corporation to act in the interests of not only the shareholders and not just a few of the stakeholders, but all of the stakeholders.

Relevance and Application of the Theory to the Study

The views of scholars in the stakeholder theory is relevant to the study. The Nigerian public sector can be likened to an organization with many stakeholders. Going by the principle of externalities, anyone who is affected by the activities of an organization becomes a stakeholder and as such all Nigerians are stakeholders in the Nigerian public sector, while the public servants, according to the agency principle of the stakeholder theory, are agents of the Nigerian people and therefore has responsibilities to the stakeholders.

One of the key features of the Nigerian public sector is permanence, which agrees with the principle of limited immortality of the stakeholder theory. Thus, all the individual organisations in the Nigerian public sector, by design are stakeholders in the Nigerian project, whose actions or inactions affect the Nigerian people. A key argument of this study has been that as stakeholders, government agencies should collaborate and share information instead of the practice of multiple collation of similar information by different agencies of the government.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in the South Western part of Nigeria and adopted the descriptive survey research method as the research design for the study. Data for the study was obtained through primary and secondary sources and the organizations of focus in this study are the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) with a total population of 728 respondents, from where a sample of 258 was obtained using Taro Yamani Formula. The data collection instrument for the study was a questionnaire structured on a five-point Likert scale to elicit information from the respondents. Data obtained from the respondents was presented in table and analyzed using frequency counts and mean scores and the hypotheses were tested using Pearson correlation at 0.05 level of significance.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND TEST OF HYPOTHESIS

Data for this study was presented and analyzed according to the research questions and hypotheses formulated for the study. We begin with the first research question.

How can inter agency information sharing reduce the cost of biometric data capturing in Nigeria?

Answers to the above research question will be presented in table 1 below and analyzed accordingly.

S/N	QUESTIONS	ΣFx	X	Decision
1	Multiple data capturing comes with multiple cost for similar services.	928	3.75	Agreed
2	Data sharing among various agencies of government implies that the cost of generating similar data at every occasion will be eliminated.	970	3.92	Agreed

3	It will be more expensive and time consuming to harmonise all biometric information than to continue to maintain the existing multiple system in operation.	552	2.23	Disagreed
4	It is more efficient to update existing data obtained from sister organisations than to generate new ones at every occasion.	933	3.77	Agreed
5	Availability of data should supersede the issue of efficiency in the data capturing process.	535	2.16	Disagreed
6	Data sharing among various agencies of government may not necessarily translate to a reduction in the cost of biometric data capturing in Nigeria.	945	3.82	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table one above presents the responses of the respondents to issues relating to the first specific objective of the study which is on how inter agency information sharing can reduce the cost of biometric data capturing in Nigeria. Efficiency is an important aspect of governance in view of the fact that resources are scarce and limited in comparison to societal needs and wants. Six statements make up the table for which the respondents affirmed four of the statements and disagreed to the other two. Respondents agreed that multiple data capturing comes with multiple cost for similar services and that data sharing among various agencies of government implies that the cost of generating similar data at every occasion will be eliminated, while rejecting the idea that it will be more expensive and time consuming to harmonise all biometric information than to continue to maintain the existing multiple system in operation. In agreeing that it is more efficient to update existing data obtained from sister organisations than to generate new ones at every occasion, respondents disagreed to the subsequent statement that availability of data should supersede the issue of efficiency in the data capturing process. By implication, the responses show that in ensuring availability and accuracy of biometric data and all the advantages that comes with it, efficiency is also paramount as government resources, especially in an oil dependent economy like Nigeria, is limited in comparison to societal wants and needs.

Test of hypothesis one: Inter-agency information sharing cannot reduce the cost of biometric data capturing in Nigeria.

Correlations

		Inter-agency information sharing	Accuracy of biometric information
Inter-agency information sharing	Pearson Correlation	1	.822
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.033
	N	247	247
Accuracy of biometric information	Pearson Correlation	.822	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.033	
	N	247	247

The analysis in the test of the first hypothesis shows that the probability value (0.033) is less than the alpha value (0.05), the researcher therefore rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that inter-agency information sharing can reduce the cost of biometric data capturing in Nigeria

Research question two: What effect will a single multipurpose biometric database have on policy making and implementation in Nigeria?

Answers to the above research question will be presented in table 2 below and analyzed accordingly.

S/N	QUESTIONS	ΣFx	X	Decision

7	The BVN revolution in the banking industry is testimony to the fact that a single multipurpose biometric database will enhance the quality and accessibility of biometric information.	879	3.55	Agreed
8	Inter-agency communication, collaboration and information sharing shows unity of purpose in government.	1115	4.51	Agreed
9	A centralized database will impact negatively on data accessibility, retrieval, storage and security.	490	1.98	Disagreed
10	Accurate demographic information can assist government to better cater for the needs of its citizens.	1109	4.48	Agreed
11	Nigeria's experience with its citizens' biometric information has been woeful, hence the need for an overhaul.	987	3.99	Agreed
12	A one size fits all database is not practicable in our present Nigerian situation.	407	1.64	Disagreed

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The possibility of Nigeria having a central database from where citizens' biometric and other information can be readily available and accessible and how it will impact on governance in terms of policy making and implementation is the major concern of table two above. This is in line with the second specific objective and research question. In the table above, respondents agreed to four of the assertions while disagreeing to two of them. Drawing inferences from the Nigerian banking sector, respondents agreed to the assertion that the BVN revolution in the banking industry is testimony to the fact that a single multipurpose biometric database will enhance the quality and accessibility of biometric information and that inter-agency communication, collaboration and information sharing shows unity of purpose in government.

Respondents do not however, subscribe to the view that a centralized database will impact negatively on data accessibility, retrieval, storage and security. While agreeing that accurate demographic information can assist government to better cater for the needs of its citizens, the respondents rejects the notion that a one size fits all database is not practicable in our present Nigerian situation. By implication, the respondents seemed to be favourably disposed to the idea of a single multipurpose biometric database that will be accurate and can readily be relied upon for policy formulation and implementation.

Test of hypothesis two: A single multipurpose biometric database has no effect on policy making and implementation in Nigeria.

Correlations

		Single biometric database	Policy making and implementation
Single biometric database	Pearson Correlation	1	.864
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.041
	N	247	247
Policy making and implementation	Pearson Correlation	.864	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.041	
	N	247	247

In the test of the second hypothesis, the analysis shows that the probability value (0.041) is less than the alpha value (0.05), the researchers therefore reject the null hypothesis and conclude that a single multipurpose biometric database has an effect on policy making and implementation in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study focuses on an investigation of the effect of interagency collaboration on service delivery in selected public sector organisations in southwest Nigeria. It therefore, becomes appropriate for us to conclude at this juncture by asserting that government agencies collating the same data at different times and for different purposes, aside from its huge cost implications, time and stress both for the government and the citizens, appears to infer that government agencies are working at cross purposes. If different banking institutions independent of one another can effectively share information for effective banking transactions and customers' satisfaction, it then behooves on the government to fashion out modalities to ensure that the era of constant repetition of data collection exercises by different agencies of government becomes a thing of the past. To achieve this, the following recommendations are necessary.

1. The National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) should be overhauled and reinforced to effectively cater for the biometric data needs of the federation. Their server should be made accessible to other government agencies (especially at the federal level) so as to avoid unnecessary repetition of biometric data capturing at every point in time.
2. Appropriate legislative framework and enforcement should be put in place to ensure that every segment of the Nigerian society is captured in the nation's database. To this end, policies such as financial inclusion, micro pension plan etc. should, aside from their core objectives, ensure to capture as many Nigerians as possible and transmit same to the central database so as to enrich the nation's database.

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