

ICT AS STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING POLITICAL STABILITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

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ABSTRACT

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have become the keys to the efficient running of virtually all facets of the national economy, transcending every industry and service. The purpose of the study was to determine how ICT could possibly enhance the Nigeria political and economic development. However, the importance of ICT in the achievement of this objective cannot be overemphasized. Ex-post facto research design was adopted. Proportional stratified and simple random sampling techniques were utilized to select 300 participants from three States in Ogun, Lagos, and Oyo State, Nigeria. One standardized self-report questionnaire was used for data generation. Two hypotheses were raised and tested using multiple regression and t-test statistics. Findings revealed among others that the ICT predicted the criterion variables (political stability and economic development). Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that if ICT is used appropriately, it has the potential to vastly improve political stability and economic development.

Keywords: ICT; Political Stability; Economic Development

INTRODUCTION

Information technologies have experienced an extraordinary rate of development in developed countries over the years, though not relatively new in developing countries. Technologies have brought a significant change in the perceptions, attitudes and ways of thinking of its users. It is believed that information technology relieves many parts of our life by playing significant role (Nunn & Quinet, 2002¹).

However, the emergence of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) are rapidly transforming the way citizens interact not only with each other but also with private businesses, public service utilities and government institutions. Traditionally citizens went to a government office to transact a government interaction, whether to get a certificate, apply/renew a passport/driving licence or to pay utility bills. Today using ICTs it is possible for the same interaction to take place in a service centre close to the citizen or over the Internet.

Guvheya and Léautier (2011²) noted that leveraging Information and Communications

Technologies (ICTs) is critical for any country's international competitiveness and transition to a knowledge economy, particularly for African countries as they endeavor to achieve the MDGs and close the knowledge divide with developed countries in the increasingly globalized world. ICTs have shown potential for transforming businesses, markets and organizations; transforming the provision of healthcare, learning and knowledge-sharing; fostering greater citizen participation in the political and development process through information provision; in short, ICTs have shown potential for enhancing human capabilities. Accordingly, the G8 Charter for a Global Information Society — hammered out at the June 2000 meeting at Okinawa, Japan — was a clarion call to the development of effective policy responses to leverage ICT for development (UNDP, 2003).

Proponents of e-government argue that ICT can afford politicians and public-sector officials a better idea of what the public wants (demand) and how to provide it (supply), and that embracing e-government can fundamentally transform the way government works (Guvheya & Léautier, 2011²). The positive use of ICT today is crucial for the development of economic and social change worldwide (Kozma, 2005³; Leach, 2008⁴).

All the aforementioned review is a pointer to the fact ICT plays a major role in helping nations to go through economic, political, social and cultural development. Yet, there is a serious dearth in research in Nigeria to establish the extent at which ICT could be seen as strategy for enhancing political stability and economic development. Also, examine if any relationship will be established among the variables under study.

ICTs and the political system

ICTs can potentially contribute to the democratic process by supporting three different types of activities. These activities according to Tsagarousianou (1999⁵) cited by Oates (2003⁶) are:

- a. **Obtaining information:** It has been suggested that citizens may lack the information necessary for participation in the political process, and need to be "trained in democracy" (Barber 1984⁷; Hale et al. 1999⁸). ICTs could help provide information about government and the democratic process through, for example, websites developed by government institutions, political parties, campaigning groups and on-line news services. The use of digital communications technology also supports 24-hour news-gathering and dissemination about current political events.

However, critics argue that although such citizenship information may be necessary, it is not sufficient for public engagement. Merely providing information implies conveying „facts“ from the experts to the citizenry at large (Hale et al. 1999⁸; Yankelovich 1991⁹). Moreover, political websites may be perceived as another aspect of political „spin“ - designed to make the owner look „cyber-hip“, modern and responsive to the information age (Becker 2001¹⁰). Having set up a web site or a 24-hour rolling news programme, there is no guarantee that the citizens will come to it.

- b. **Engaging in deliberation:** It is not just voter turnout that is declining, but also attendance at public meetings, political party membership and participation in political fundraising activities (Bryan et al. 1998¹¹; Hale et al. 1999⁸). The gap between government and the governed has been attributed to the increased size and power of the bureaucracy, the political dominance of big businesses and other influential lobbies, and/or the perceived buying and selling of political candidates (Hale et al. 1999⁸), and the perception of public politics as a form of „spin“ and public relations (Coleman 1999¹²). ICTs could help reduce this gap and increase deliberative dialogue by providing new communication links between citizens and their representatives. On-line citizen discussion forums in which elected representatives also participate could enable the represented and the representatives to share experiences and deliberate public values.
- c. **Participating in decision-making:** The most obvious way in which citizens participate in political decision-making is when they cast their vote for their government representative. ICTs could make the voting process more convenient by enabling electronic voting, either from a voting station of the voter's choosing or over the Internet from anywhere (LGA 2002¹³). This would also speed up vote counting. ICTs therefore have the potential to enhance or re-invigorate political participation and the democratic process.

ICTs and Economic Growth

According to Olawepo, and Joseph (2014¹⁴) Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has now been accepted as one of the main driving force behind organizational competitiveness in the present day business environment. Presently, ICT is having dramatic influence on almost all areas of human activities and one of the areas of economic activities in which this influence is most manifest is the banking sector. The banking industry is one of the critical sectors of the economy which makes invaluable contributions to the pace of economic growth and development of nations (Ajayi, 2003¹⁵; Madueme, 2010¹⁶).

Most developing nations have embarked on various reforms that foster the use of ICTs in their economies. These reforms tend to yield little or minimal benefits to economic growth and development, especially when compared with the developed countries of the world. Technological advancement is known to impact fast rate of economic development. In Nigeria, policy on adoption of Information and Communication Technologies was initiated in 1999, when the civilian regime came into power of government. The operations of the licensed telecommunication service providers in the country has created some well-felt macroeconomic effects in terms of job creation, faster delivery services, reduced transport costs, greater security and higher national output (Emmanuel and Adebayo, 2011¹⁷).

Attempts to ensure sustainable economic development and poverty reduction of most nations usually involve the development of agriculture, mining, industrial as well as the service sectors. The Industrial Revolutions in Europe and America, generally and specifically, have been premised on technological breakthroughs. During the late 1990s, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) was the largest contributor to growth within capital services for both Canada and the United States (Baldwin & Harchaoui, 2002¹⁸). Similar trend has been observed with the economic development of China, Korea, Taiwan, India, South Africa, and other emerging economic powers (Fuss and Waverman, 2005¹⁹).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to empirically investigate the impact ICT as strategy for enhancing political stability and economic development in South-West, Nigeria. This will help to give direction for further study and enhance political will in Nigeria. There is dearth of research on the subject matter. We have not been able to find studies in which ICT has been used as strategy for enhancing political stability and economic development. Therefore, this study is crucial to the understanding of ICT as tool for enhancing political stability and economic development.

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, the following hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance.

Two hypotheses were raised and tested using multiple regression and t-test statistics. Findings revealed among others that the ICT predicted the criterion variables (political stability and economic development)

1. There is no significant influence of ICT on political stability and economic development as perceived by the public.
2. There is no significant relationship between ICT, political stability and economic development.
3. There is no significant moderating influence of demographic factors (education, age, and gender) to the contribution of ICT on political stability and economic development as perceived by the public.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

This study adopted an ex-post-facto survey research design where questionnaire were used to collect data from the respondents on the studied variables.

Participants:

A total of three hundred (300) participants from three States in Ogun, Lagos, and Oyo State, Nigeria. The Proportional stratified and simple random sampling techniques were utilized. The age range of the respondents is between 19- 59 years with mean age of 26.4 and standard deviation of 18.91.

Measures:

One standardized self-report questionnaire was used for data generation. The self-report questionnaire was tagged ICT, Political and Economic Development Questionnaire (ICTPEDQ). The instrument has 20 items that adopt a four-point Likert-type format ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The internal consistency reliability of ICTPEDQ in this study yielded a Cronbach's alpha = .77. The biographical data information sheet was used to collect information on the participants' gender (male or female), age in years, and educational status.

Procedure:

ICTPEDQ was administered on the sample through the assistance of four (4) other research assistants.

Data Analysis:

Multiple Regression Analyses and Product Moment Correlation were used to run the analysis of the data collected.

RESULTS

Table 1: Model Summary of the multiple Regression Analysis of the significant influence of ICT on political stability and economic development as perceived by the public

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	SE	Change Statistics				
					R ² Change	F Change	d f 1	d f 2	Sig. F Change
Political Stability	.223	.049	.049	8.122	.049	11.214	1	298	.116
Economic Development	.413	.171	.108	13.041	.108	6.803	1	298	.098

a. Predictions: (Constant), ICT

b. Dependant Variable: Political stability, economic development

The results in Table 1 indicated that ICT will significantly influence of ICT on political stability and economic development as perceived by the public. As shown on the Table 1 above, it was observed that ICT accounted for 4.9% variability of the political stability as perceived by the public ($R = .223$; $R^2 = .049$; Adj. $R^2 = .049$; $F_{(1,298)} = 11.214$; $p < .05$). Also, the predictor variable accounted for 10.8% variability of economic development as perceived by the public ($R = .223$; $R^2 = .171$; Adj. $R^2 = .108$; $F_{(1,298)} = 6.803$; $p < .05$).

Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated no significant influence of ICT on political stability and economic development as perceived by the public was rejected by this finding. This implies that ICT will influence the political stability and economic development. It should be noted, however, that the influence if ICT is higher on the economic development compared to that of political stability.

Table 2: Correlation matrix of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables

Variables	ICT	Political Stability	Economic Development
ICT	1.000		
Political Stability	.309*	1.000	
Economic Development	.449**	.411**	1.000

** Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

The results in Table 2 revealed that there is a significant inter-relationship among the variables of the study. A significant high convergent relationship was observed between ICT and economic development ($r = .449$) as well as political stability ($r = .309$). Also, positive relationship was observed between political stability and economic development (.411). The findings imply that ICT, political stability and economic development are positively related.

Table 3: Model summary of the multiple regression analysis showing the significant moderating influence of demographic factors to the contribution of ICT on political stability and economic development

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	SE	Change Statistics				
					R ² Change	F Change	d f 1	d f 2	Sig. F Change
Predictor Variables	.205	.189	.177	15.072	.177	16.040	5	294	.000

Significant at 0.05 alpha level

The results in Table 3 indicated significant moderating influence of demographic factors (education, age, and gender) to the contribution of ICT on political stability and economic development as perceived by the public ($R = .205$; adj. $R^2 = .189$; $F_{(5, 294)} = 16.040$; $p < .05$). The total variance accounted for by the moderating influence of demographic factors (education, age, and gender) to the contribution of ICT on political stability and economic development as perceived by the public is 17.7% ($R^2 = .177$). Analysis of variance shows that this value is significant ($f = 16.040$, $P > .05$). Therefore, 17.7% of the total variability in political stability and economic development is accounted for by the prediction variables (ICT, education, age, and gender). Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant moderating influence of demographic factors (education, age, and gender) to the contribution of ICT on political stability and economic development as perceived by the public was rejected by this finding. This implies that there was a significant moderating influence of demographic factors (education, age, and gender) to the contribution of ICT on political stability and economic development as perceived by the public.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The outcome of the first hypothesis revealed a significant influence of ICT on political stability and economic development. The implication of this finding is that ICT to a great extent if properly utilized could help to enhance economic and political system of the country. This result is in tandem with the report of Guvheya, and Léautier (2011²) that ICT can afford politicians and public-sector officials a better idea of what the public wants (demand) and how to provide it (supply), and that embracing e-government can fundamentally transform the way government works. Therefore, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have become the keys to the efficient running of virtually all facets of the national economy, transcending every industry and service

Findings of the second hypothesis revealed that ICT, political stability and economic development are positively related. It can be deduced that individual belief about themselves to achieve educational goals and appropriate use of technology can enhance their academic success or career. This finding corroborates the earlier findings of UNDP (2003) and Guvheya, and Léautier (2011²) who have reported that ICTs have shown potential for transforming businesses, markets and organizations; transforming the provision of healthcare, learning and knowledge-sharing; fostering greater citizen participation in the political and development process through information provision; in short, ICTs have shown potential for enhancing human capabilities. Also, ICTD (2009) noted that the revolutionary advances in Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) are ushering in change in every aspect of life. Everything from business to governance is undergoing change.

Demographic factors (education, age, and gender) moderate the contribution of ICT on political stability and economic development as perceived by the public by 17.7%.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

African nations are moving rapidly to introduce Information Communication and Technologies (ICTs) into all aspects of life – economics, education, politics and so on, and not just as a means of striving and be more competitive in the global market but to improve social, economic and political life of the citizenry. It should be noted, however, that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are shaping our everyday lives both as consumers as well as in the work place. But it is of a rather recent date that ICT also show a more than trivial impact on the political sphere, which is characterized by collective decision-making. Thus, this paper empirically assessed the perceived potential influence of ICT on political stability and economic development.

As rightly noted by Eckardt (2014²⁰) "The main feature of ICT is to provide information and to communicate it at much higher speed and at much lower costs over time and space than it was possible with mere analogous modes of communication. Therefore the uses of ICT in providing public goods and services reduces production and transaction costs, implying efficiency gains. Moreover, ICT also influence the political transaction costs of public policy making. In addition, ICT could also result in changing the underlying institutions shaping the political process so as to make further improvements possible".

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