



Effectiveness of Government's e-Communication in Tanzania: Survey of Dar es Salaam Residents

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author JM designed the study and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author FN managed the manuscript and confirmed the literature searches. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

As governments recognize the capacity of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to create a favourable socioeconomic shift for the populace, digital technologies continue to open up exciting opportunities around the world. This paper presents part of the findings of the research titled "Effectiveness of Government's e-Communication in Tanzania: Survey of Dar es Salaam Residents." The paper set out to explore the views on the government's e-communication services in Tanzania from Dar es Salaam residents. The study relied on the Technology Acceptance Model, which is relevant to the study, as it shows that the majority of the respondents became more interested in e-communications services owing to the ease of use of such services. Likewise, when e-communication devices are deemed difficult by some government officials, there is a likelihood of limited or no use of such e-communication services. The study relied on a survey design, where 150 respondents from selected households in Dar es Salaam were sampled with a structured

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questionnaire about their knowledge of the e-communication services offered by the various government departments in Tanzania. The majority of the respondents (54%) showed that they had accessed various types of e-communications services; however, one of the drawbacks was that 46% of respondents did not take some of these services very seriously, as they believed that such services were not as efficient as they had thought. Despite the shortcomings associated with e-communications, when asked about the usefulness of e-communication services, the majority of the respondents (46%) strongly agreed that, indeed, the government's e-communication services were critical. It can be concluded that given the wave of technological advancements sweeping across the globe, the government is supposed to strengthen ICT services and the capacity of its officials for more service delivery. This study recommends the need for an e-communication policy and strategic plan as one of the ways to improve the use and promotion of e-communication services in almost all government departments.

Keywords: E-communication; services delivery; Dar es Salaam residents on e-government services; Tanzania; technology acceptance model.

1. INTRODUCTION

As governments recognize the capacity of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to create a favorable socioeconomic shift for the populace, digital technologies continue to open up exciting opportunities around the world. Numerous researchers and practitioners have acknowledged and extensively studied the value of ICTs in enhancing government-to-citizen contact through what is commonly referred to as electronic communication (e-communication) [1,2] (Sawe, 2013). While the commercial sector has received the majority of focus on e-communication, citizens and public leaders are becoming more aware of the opportunity for e-communication to enhance public communication with the government. Electronic government, or e-government, has become a tool that can assist government organizations by lowering costs, enhancing coordination and communications, increasing citizen participation, and improving government accountability.

Governments may enhance their operations and services by more effectively leveraging IT at all levels, according to both citizens and policymakers. Governments all over the world have passed several laws over the past ten years encouraging government agencies to upgrade their IT and proactively adopt e-government. A road map for the adoption of e-government and more effective and efficient use of IT has been developed through several particular laws. For instance, the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996, which was later repealed by the E-Government Act of 2002, was developed in the United States and advanced the better management and promotion of electronic government services and operations. Since then,

numerous governments in developing nations such as Tanzania have adopted a similar approach. The use of e-communications by government ministries, departments, and agencies is stressed in Tanzania's ICT Policy (2016) as a means of assuring better service delivery to the public (United Republic of Tanzania, 2016).

However, there are numerous barriers that e-government initiatives must overcome before they can bear fruit. These barriers may be technical, organizational, social, cultural, and psychological (Heeks, 2019; Mechling and Applegate 2017). Effective communication among all stakeholders is essential to overcoming these barriers to a successful e-government or IT initiative. Successful e-government requires establishing proper communication channels to share and collaborate the vision, values, and expectations of the community among all stakeholders (Garnett, 1992). Questions abound: How useful is e-communication? How easy is it to use by those involved? How is e-communication likely to be perceived by various stakeholders, especially the public? To address some of these questions, this paper gives the perceptions of the various stakeholders regarding the use of e-communication services in Tanzania.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Nuridin et al. (2022) [3] looked at the social framework for long-term e-government. This paper provides an interpretive analysis of two local e-government case studies based on in-depth interviews with local government information technology (IT) managers, local leaders, and staff. Data analysis based on

constructivist grounded theory is needed to completely comprehend how a social system supports e-government systems in local governments in developing nations. The social system theory that was originally developed for industry initiatives was updated in this study for use in public organizations. The distinctive characteristics of the public sector and e-government innovation are utilized to find new components of the social system related to local e-government. To assist municipal e-government, social system players must collaborate to utilize resources and solve challenges.

Szopiski and Staniewski (2017) [4] examined the use of e-government in Europe's post-communist countries. The goal of the study was to ascertain how frequently e-government services were used in post-communist countries of the European Union. Participating in the survey were 7,984 individuals from the nations of Bulgaria, Romania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. The analysis focused on the following examples of e-administration use in these nations: emailing public administrations, visiting websites run by public administration bodies, downloading forms necessary to obtain a public service, sending completed electronic forms to appropriate offices, and communicating electronically with politicians, activists, or offices to discuss issues crucial for a region or a state. The results of the analysis show that a respondent's propensity to use different e-government services and the state in which they reside are statistically correlated.

Saxena (2018) [5] investigated how the uptake of mobile government (m-government) services in India was impacted by "perceived risks". This article has focused on the role of "perceived risks" coupled with "social efficacy," "influence" of important individuals, and "attitude" on the uptake of m-government services in India. "Privacy risks" are regarded as one of the key factors affecting the uptake of e-services. In particular, 311 genuine users of m-government participated in the study, and constructs from theories including the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) were used to produce the study.

A situational analysis reveals that Tanzania has various government programs for electronic communication. The programs include a few

G2C (Government-to-citizen) channels for information sharing [6]. Government websites that provide useful content to the public, as well as information and communication features, such as government gazettes, circulars, news/updates, budgets, e-newsletters, video and photo galleries, advertisements/public notes, feature articles, tenders, and vacancies, are examples of G2C services [5]. On numerous digital platforms, including social media sites such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook as well as other platforms such as YouTube, there are also pages, channels, and accounts. The communication function is carried out via these platforms and websites, which serve as sources of data and resources.

Ajira Portal, corruption complaints, TACAIDS Online Library, REA E-Library, and Tanzania Socio-Economic Database (e-GA, 2020) are only a few of the specific G2C portals that are also accessible. Some portals, such as the government e-mailing system (GMS) and the government mobile platform (mGov), are built to offer two-way communication channels. Both push SMS (government to citizens) and pull SMS (citizens to government) services are available on the mobile platform (e-GA, 2020).

Considering the importance of the government's e-communication and the newness of such services to the public, this study assessed the effectiveness of the government's e-communication in Tanzania.

3. METHODOLOGY

The researcher applied a survey design of 150 respondents from selected households in Dar es Salaam. It was complemented with limited qualitative interviews from key expert stakeholders in government-citizen public relations. To collect data, a structured questionnaire based on specific questions regarding the perceptions of e-communications services by the citizens was administered among randomly selected respondents in Dar es Salaam. While the questionnaire was written in English, the researcher asked the questions in Swahili, in which the respondents were conversant. The researcher also administered key informant interviews with selected experts in Tanzania about the role of e-communications services and how the same is perceived by the public. For data collected through the questionnaire, the researcher entered the raw data into Microsoft Excel and went on to analyse the same, where it

was analysed and presented using frequencies and illustrated with figures. For qualitative data from the experts, the researcher used thematic analysis, where raw data were transcribed and presented using both reported speech and verbatim statements.

Regarding the theoretical framework, this paper is based on the theory of the technology acceptance model (TAM), which analyses how people come to accept and employ technology, such as e-communication. The point at which people utilize a system is the end-user. An element that influences people's decision to use technology is their behavioral intention. The attitude (A), or general opinion of the technology, has an impact on the behavioral intention (BI). Numerous academics have used various theoretical models to investigate the justification for the adoption of mobile banking. The technology acceptability model (TAM), created by Davis et al. [7] to describe the factors that influence computer acceptability in general, serves as the foundation for the majority of the concepts employed in these investigations. The TAM appears to be the model that is most frequently employed in research on the acceptability of mobile banking globally [8,9,2].

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To understand the knowledge about the availability of e-communications services in the government, the respondents were asked whether they were aware of the availability of e-communication services offered by the government. The majority (63%) indicated that

they were not sure. Only 24% of the respondents answered in the affirmative, with 13% of the respondents saying no.

The researcher was also interested in knowing the various services the respondents received through e-communication services. The majority (54%) indicated that they were accessing the various governments' e-communication. Only 26% of the respondents showed that they accessed government e-communication through social media, such as Instagram, WhatsApp applications, Facebook, and Twitter. Another chunk of the respondents (14%) showed that they accessed such services through websites.

The majority of the respondents (70%) showed that they had indeed ever used this e-government in search of various government services, with only 21% saying that they had never used these services. Only 9% of the respondents said that they never used these services. The fact that the majority of the respondents (70%) had used these services testifies to the fact that these services are increasingly becoming widespread.

The study respondents found that 46% of the respondents did not take some of these services very seriously, as they believed that such services were not as efficient as they had thought. The study further revealed that 28% of the respondents showed that they did not like these services simply because whenever they needed support services from these e-communication channels, they were not always getting the required support.

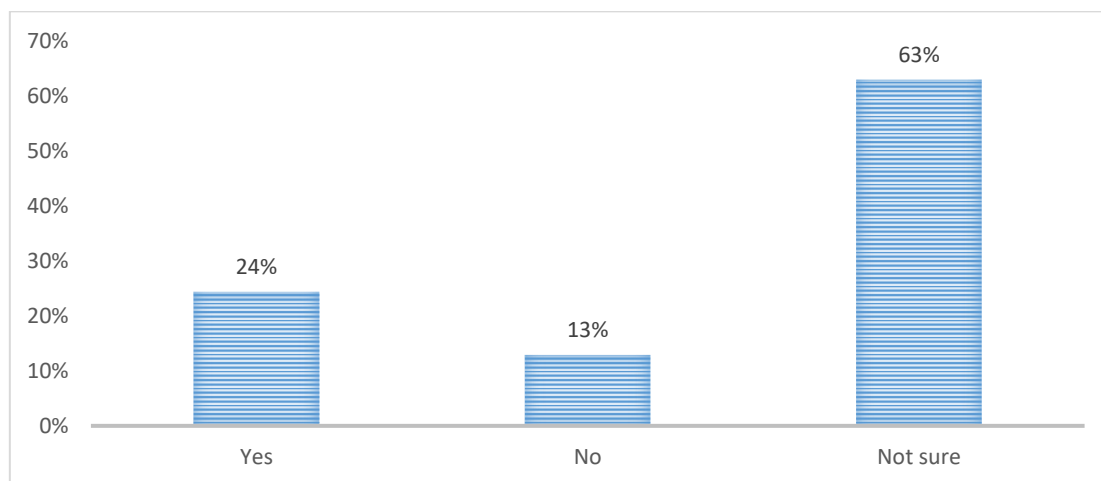


Fig. 1. Knowledge of E-communication services

Source: Research Findings (2023)

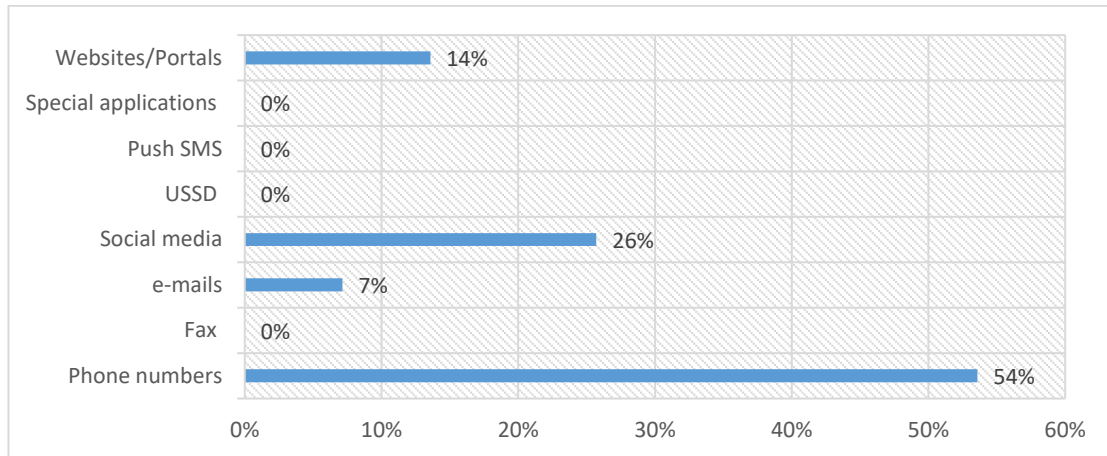


Fig. 2. Kinds of E-communication services
Source: Research Findings (2023)

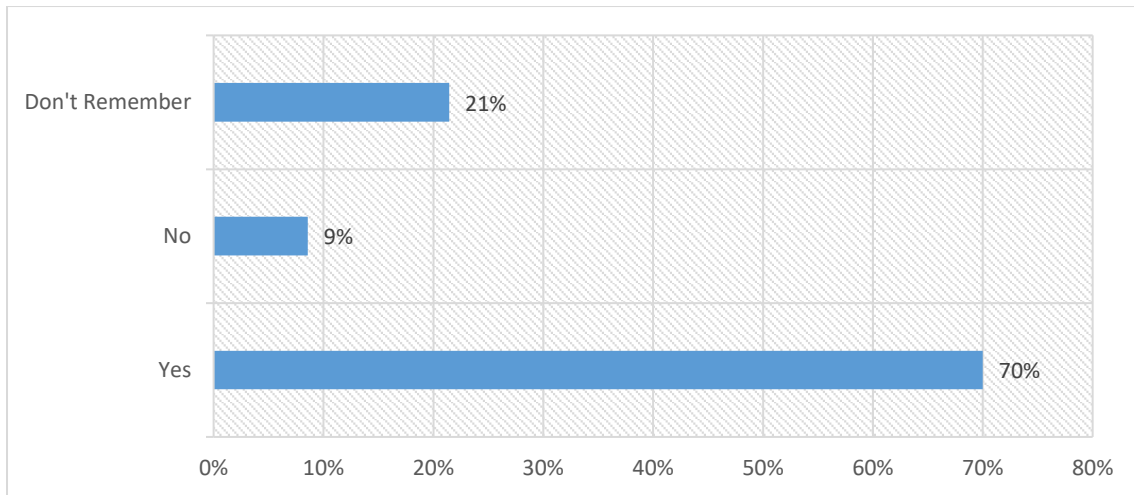


Fig. 3. Ever-used government's e-communication
Source: Research Findings (2023)

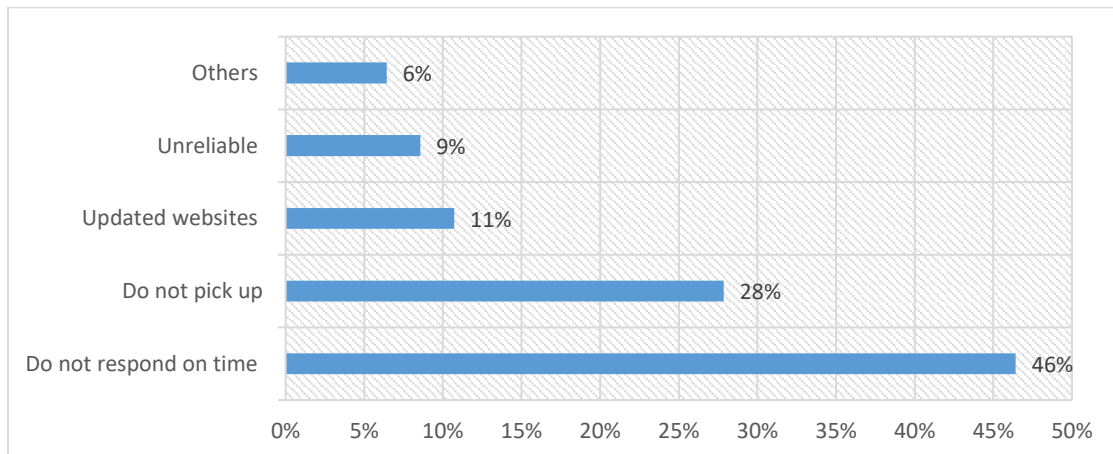


Fig. 4. Why the government's e-communication is not preferred
Source: Research Findings (2023)

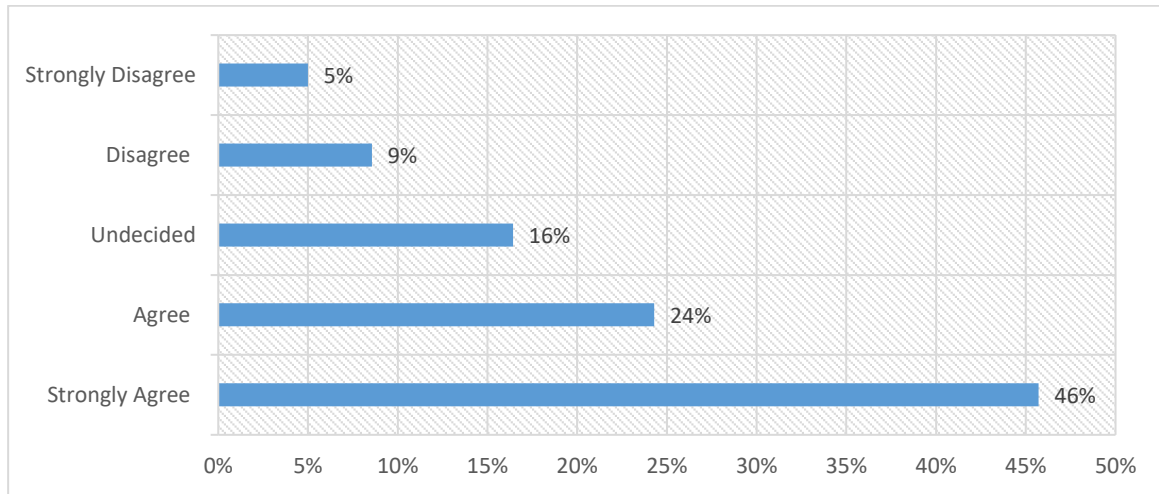


Fig. 5. Agreement on the usefulness of e-communication services

Source: Research Findings (2023)

Despite the shortcomings associated with e-communications, when asked about the usefulness of e-communication services, the majority of the respondents (46%) strongly agreed that, indeed, the government's e-communication services were critical, with 24% agreeing. Only 16% of the respondents were undecided.

The majority of the respondents (46%) of the respondents showed that the government's e-communication services were easy to use. This is one of the reasons that the majority of the respondents were indeed happy with the services being provided through the

government's e-communication. They were followed by 31% of the respondents who showed a moderate attitude regarding the ease of use of the government's e-communication. It was a small percentage (23%) that showed that the government's e-communications services were not easy to use.

This is not spurring, as some previous studies in Tanzania [10] (Mwakyusa, 2015; Zhao et al., 2021), based on the technology acceptance model, have shown that for any technology to be effective, including e-communication, certain criteria must be met, including the fact that such technology must be easy to use.

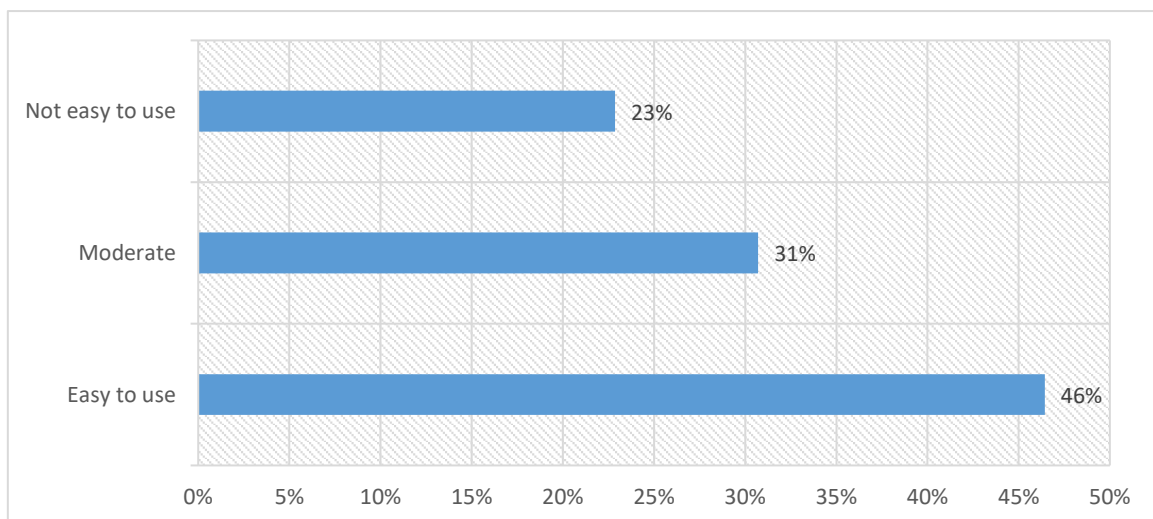


Fig. 6. Ease of use of government's E-communication

Source: Research Findings (2023)

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Moreover, these findings further show us that the majority of the respondents were aware that the government was using some social media outlets, such as Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram, to reach out to the public. This was indicated by 54% of the respondents who indicated that they were accessing the various governments' e-communication systems. This indeed testifies to the fact that there is a growing use of social media in service delivery by government agencies. These findings are in line with previous studies by Gokhan (2016), who indicated that governments around the world are indeed changing the way they are providing services, including the fact that they have now started adopting the use of social media in various aspects.

It was further indicated that the majority of the respondents (53%) accessed the government's e-communication services regularly through social media. This is in line with a previous study by Jim (2020) that indicated that governments around the world are going to migrate their services on the internet, notably through social media, so that they can reach out to a wider spectrum of people. The fact that the majority of the respondents were able to use these governments' e-services daily testifies to the fact that technology has become vital as a communication channel. These findings are indeed in agreement with previous studies that have shown that the use of e-communication by government agencies is increasing. These studies further point out that the use of these

services has increased service delivery in the public sector (Mwakyusa, 2015; Akgül, 2017).

5. CONCLUSION

Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are especially crucial since economies are becoming increasingly dependent on technical knowledge and expertise. ICT also has an impact on governments by promoting governance practices, enhancing responsiveness, and boosting efficiency. Governments may promote the use of ICT by providing online services and using new technology themselves. Governments now have new opportunities to modernize, serve, and engage with the public online and through other digital channels thanks to the fast expansion of the internet and other ICTs. Global public services have greatly improved as a result of these ICT industry improvements. The use of electronic government administration is replacing conventional government administration in governments.

According to Alshehri and Drew [11], e-government is now a common area of concentration for government initiatives in many nations worldwide. E-government systems are being developed and deployed by a growing number of governments as a means of lowering costs, enhancing services, saving time, and boosting effectiveness and efficiency in the public sector [11]. By utilizing the potential of information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool in daily work, e-government and the internet have fundamentally altered the structure, values, culture, and business practices of the entire society [1].

The findings of the study align with the TAM, as they indicate that a significant proportion of the participants exhibit increased interest in e-communications services due to the perceived ease of use associated with these services. The evidence suggests that to achieve progress and enhance service provision, governments must use information and communication technology (ICT), as exemplified by industrialized nations such as the United States, which exhibit superior service delivery in comparison to developing countries such as Tanzania. The 2016 Tanzania Communications policy adequately addresses the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the field of communications. Government organizations must prioritize the inclusion of pertinent and user-friendly information on their websites and other

platforms. This practice is crucial for enhancing service delivery throughout extensive regions of the nation.

Based on the study findings, there is an overall agreement that e-communication services by the government are user-friendly. Furthermore, there was a widespread use of e-communication services, a sign of the technological revolution that is currently sweeping the world. This implies that any government that wants to serve its people must use e-communication. Tanzania has thus far been doing well regarding the adoption of ICT in its government operations. This has been enabled by the fact that there is already a policy on the e-government, commonly known as Tehema. All these have been enabled by the e-government [12].

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Owing to the findings of the study, these recommendations are worth taking into consideration:

There exists a necessity to implement electronic communication services inside local government entities. The utilization of electronic services across various government platforms, including local government entities, is particularly significant because a substantial portion of the populace relies on these platforms to obtain governmental services. Furthermore, to enhance the efficacy of e-communication services, it is imperative to provide comprehensive training to a greater number of government personnel, particularly about developing technologies that facilitate efficient service provision. In addition, the effective utilization of e-communication is contingent upon the presence of essential infrastructures and hardware, including computers, tablets, internet connectivity, and phones. Consequently, there is an increased imperative for governmental entities to furnish these vital resources within various ministries, departments, and services to ensure the efficient delivery of services.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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