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EDITORIAL NOTE

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From Policy to Practice: Governance, Education, and Social Transformation in Africa:

Welcome to the October 2026 issue of the Journal of Contemporary Society and Education (JCSE). The sixteen articles assembled in this volume reflect the journal's commitment to rigorous, interdisciplinary scholarship on the pressing social, political, and educational challenges confronting contemporary Africa. Together, they illuminate a central tension of our time: the persistent gap between policy ambition and lived reality.

Several contributions in this issue grapple directly with the question of governance and service delivery. Motadi examines the opportunities and barriers shaping digital transformation in South African government departments, while Moloto and Pillay explore technology's influence on governance at the local municipal level. Akindele, Sanni, and Lamidi assess citizen satisfaction with public transportation in Lagos State, offering an important reminder that the legitimacy of the state rests on the quality of everyday services. Jutta and Alao interrogate the democratisation of the administrative state through South Africa's Government of National Unity, and Okudolo examines decentralisation and the effectiveness of local political leaders in Nigeria. Kambiri's analysis of governance challenges in managing internal displacement further underscores the consequences of normative commitment without implementation capacity. Agbor's critical perspectives on the operational independence of Elections Cameroon and the Constitutional Council round out this focus on democratic institutions.

Education remains a cornerstone of social progress, and this issue devotes considerable attention to it. Mtshali and Meyiwa assess the role of climate change education in maritime studies, while Modiba asks whether rural secondary schools are adequately managing learners with special educational needs associated with HIV/AIDS. Babalola interrogates the legal and policy complexities of foreign partnerships in Nigerian higher education, and Shabangu examines how school management teams respond to violence in rural South African schools. Nephawe and Mudimeli offer a distinctive contribution on the indispensability of English as a lingua franca in interpreting selected Pauline epistles.

The issue also foregrounds questions of gender, culture, and well-being. Nesane and Amaechi explore *Mamalo* as a resource for gender equality and women's empowerment in Limpopo, while Gudani, Khosa, and Nomatshila examine adolescents' perceptions of child support grant management through a family systems lens. Matheere offers an

exploration of the life journey of traditional healers in rural Limpopo, and Nkuna and colleagues provide an analytical study of compounding and naming in Siswati personal names. These articles remind us that social transformation is experienced at the level of culture, family, and community.

Collectively, these contributions demonstrate the vitality and breadth of contemporary social science research in Africa. They challenge scholars and policymakers alike to move beyond policy pronouncements toward meaningful implementation. We thank our authors and reviewers for their dedication and trust that this issue will stimulate further inquiry and debate.

Editor

Prof. TJ Mudau

Institute of Gender and Youth Studies

University of Venda, South Africa

Email: Thizwilondi.Mudau@univen.ac.za

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ANALYSING THE INFLUENCE OF TECHNOLOGY ON GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICAN LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES

Phuti Ignatius Moloto

Department of Public Administration

University of Limpopo

South Africa

[*Phuti.moloto@ul.ac.za*](mailto:Phuti.moloto@ul.ac.za)

&

Rosinah Pillay

Department of Public Administration

University of Limpopo

South Africa

[*Rosinah.pillay@ul.ac.za*](mailto:Rosinah.pillay@ul.ac.za)

Abstract

This study examines how technology and governance work together in South African municipalities. The analysis is based on a systematic review of secondary data on technology and governance, using a conceptual framework. Secondary sources formed the core of the data, ranging from published books and journal articles to policy documents, which were analysed to present the findings and recommendations. South Africa's technology and democracy system is imperfect, and democratic governance primarily aims to expand rights, broaden democracy, and enhance its credibility. Digital transformation also affects the political landscape and the state of civil society. This article contributes to the conversation on digital governance and the literature on this in South African local government. Findings reveal that citizens in local municipalities often struggle to access information and government programs and initiatives. This article recommends implementing digital transformation to improve public access to e-government policies, programmes and digital services. The study concludes that local governments should regularly interact with residents to gather feedback and identify areas for improvement. To deliver digital government services efficiently, local governments need to develop detailed, user-friendly online platforms and ensure they are secure.

Keywords: *South African Municipalities, Digital transformation, Governance and Technology,*

1. Introduction

Public access to information is a global phenomenon that dominates discussions in government and academic circles, particularly in South Africa, where the right to access information is integral to its democracy (Republic of South Africa, RSA, 1996). A cursory look at the possibilities of technology in governance inspires immense hope and is often posited as the panacea for many political maladies in African democracy, but this is not without shortcomings, as technology is not neutral; it reflects the intentions of its makers and responds to their socio-economic directions (Shava & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2022). Investment in technology also influences development, which can strengthen or hinder the spread of democracy. For example, technology can enable people to more easily monitor legislation, express their preferences, and ensure accountability through specific policy actions (Benton Foundation, 2000). Technology promises to enable the masses to participate in the political process and to draw the disillusioned back into political engagement. Democratic political systems face many challenges, including how to ensure democracy. They work well when citizens have access to technology and information. Nevertheless, control of technology, especially when linked to governance, can exclude or marginalise others. Inclusion for one is exclusion for others; this study therefore

contributes to the ongoing conversation on e-governance by considering its manifestations, benefits, and challenges in South Africa (Schmitter, 1999).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Challenges of Digital Technology Adoption in Local Governments

Several obstacles to its acceptance and effective application in local government exist, including uneven access and cultural resistance to change (Aruleba & Jere, 2022). According to Apleni and Smarts (2020), addressing these issues is essential to ensure digital governance functions properly in the African political ecosystem. One major barrier is the digital divide in access to technology and skills, especially in low-income areas (Faloye & Jayi, 2020). Data costs are so high in rural areas, and many lack devices such as laptops and smartphones to access these resources, leading to exclusion (Enaifoghe & Ndebele, 2023). Certain local communities have demonstrated the inequalities created by technologies in governance. Sengu Municipality in South Africa exemplifies this disparity between the rich-and-connected and the poor-and-disconnected, with almost 84 percent living in poor socio-economic conditions (Sengu Local Municipality, 2022).

2.3. The Impact Of Digitalization On Democracy

Digital technology has become more widely used in governance in recent years; however, South African municipalities are struggling to improve service delivery. Digital governance embodies the possibilities of democracy in its truest form, where every eligible citizen is properly integrated into governance and government programs and policies meet citizens' diverse needs (Nokele & Mukonza, 2021). In recent years, the state of governance has embraced digital technology. Regional municipalities struggle to improve service delivery. Digital governance is becoming a promising avenue for innovation and advancement to meet citizens' diverse needs (Nokele & Mukonza, 2021). For both established and emerging democracies, digital technologies offer opportunities and pose challenges. When evaluating the effects of digitalization on democracy, we have witnessed an unexpected and concerning shift over the last ten years from optimism to pessimism. Ten years ago, digital technologies were hailed as tools of liberation that enabled democratic participation and undermined authoritarian regimes.

Furthermore, scholars have shown the disruptions that technology, social media platforms, Artificial Intelligence, etc., have created for governance and the unprecedented future issues (Boulosky, 2019; Delbert, 2019;

O'Neil, 2016; Shahbaz, 2018). Digital governance not only affects the participation of the people, but it also changes the very nature of democracy, its platforms, contestations, and the points of negotiation. It is also important to consider the resistance to change shown by many people on the one hand, and digital optimism on the other.

We call this a shift in the ontology and context of democracy, similar to the impact of the invention of writing, printing, and television (Deibert, 1997). Digital media and other technologies are facilitating a historical transformation of social and individual identities. We can view digitalization as the co-production of people and digital technologies (Mayer *et al.*, 2014, p.31). Digitalization is transforming the relationship between the public and private sectors, with social media and other private companies supporting or undermining the public sphere, and people expressing themselves politically through digital networks that are neither fully public nor private (Papacharisi, 2010). Digitalization cannot only accelerate the shift from centralised, hierarchical power to decentralised, networked forms (Slaughter, 2017), but also strengthen centralised, authoritarian control (Freedom House, 2018).

South African scholarship increasingly treats municipalities as the critical site for testing digital governance because local government is the sphere closest

to citizens and bears the most visible burden of service delivery failures, protest politics, and everyday accountability demands (Galushi & Malatji, 2022; Okeke-Uzodike & Dlamini, 2019; Enaifoghe & Ndebele, 2023; Mawela et al., 2017; Sibanda & Solms, 2018). In this context, e-government, e-municipality systems, smart-city tools, AI, GIS, open data platforms, mobile applications, dashboards, and digital procurement systems are framed as instruments to improve responsiveness and rebuild trust (Nokele & Matshela, 2026; Nomzaza, 2025; Kenneth & Makganya, 2023; Zindi, 2026; Tahulela & Hashemi, 2026). However, scholars reject the strongest form of technological determinism. Municipal outcomes vary less by tool sophistication than by the quality of governance surrounding it (Zvaita & Shava, 2026; Ranchod, 2020; Mammadova et al., 2026).

Technology can improve core administrative functions as studies repeatedly report gains in financial reporting, internal communication, information management, procurement monitoring, and access to services such as online billing, statements, recruitment, and complaint routing (Malinga et al., 2026; Zindi, 2026; Nkgapele & Mokgolobotho, 2024; Nokele & Matshela, 2026; Netshirando et al., 2024). ICT is therefore widely presented as an enabler of faster, more reliable, and more traceable municipal

operations, especially when municipalities move away from paper-based systems that fragment records and slow coordination (Mofokeng et al., 2025; Netshirando et al., 2024; Bunyula et al., 2025; Okeyo et al., 2026). Broader African evidence also supports a positive association between ICT expansion and governance quality, especially when education and human capabilities are strong enough to convert connectivity into institutional performance (Wirajing & Nchofoung, 2023; Evans, 2018).

Other scholars emphasise accountability and transparency. Digital governance systems can strengthen oversight through real-time dashboards, revenue systems, audit support, anomaly and fraud detection, procurement traceability, and open data tools (Zvaita & Shava, 2026; Nokele & Matshela, 2026; Zindi, 2026; Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2024). This is why many authors link digital transformation to cleaner audits, reduced corruption risks, and stronger monitoring of public decisions (Galushi & Malatji, 2022; Joseph & Williams, 2022; Mncwango & Mncwango, 2024; Bhatnagar & Bhatnagar, 2014). However, the evidence is more cautious about whether procedural transparency translates into substantive accountability. Several studies argue that digital systems make processes more visible without automatically improving follow-through, enforcement, or political

responsiveness (Malinga et al., 2026; Nokele & Matshela, 2026; Ngcobo & Mbandlwa, 2026; Latchu & Singh, 2026). Put differently, technology appears to expose problems faster than municipalities can necessarily resolve them.

Citizen participation is another major theme. E-participation platforms, social media, mobile tools, online portals, self-service systems, and chat functions are described as mechanisms for broadening engagement, reducing travel burdens, and enabling more continuous communication than ward meetings alone (Molobela, 2025; Nomzaza, 2025; Phahlane & Malungana, 2025; Mulaudzi, 2025; Ochara & Mawela, 2015). The literature treats this as especially important in municipalities marked by poor communication, delayed feedback, and protest-based channels of voice (Ntando & Mofolo, 2025; Okeke-Uzodike & Dlamini, 2019; Joseph & Williams, 2022). Some South African case evidence suggests that digital tools can improve perceived inclusivity, responsiveness, and access to municipal information, particularly for connected users in metropolitan settings (Mofokeng et al., 2025; Nkgapele & Mokgolobotho, 2024; Ngcobo & Mbandlwa, 2026).

However, inequality sharply constrains participation gains. High data costs, weak network coverage, poor broadband, limited device access,

digital illiteracy, and low trust repeatedly restrict the reach of digital participation, especially in rural and peri-urban municipalities (Mofokeng et al., 2025; Molobela, 2025; Nomzaza, 2025; Nkgapele & Mokgolobotho, 2024; Mncwango & Mncwango, 2024). Citizen adoption studies show that intention to use local e-government depends on facilitating conditions, trust, perceived privacy, perceived risk, price value, and effort expectancy, which means municipal digital reform is partly a behavioural and social challenge, not only a technical one (Netshirando et al., 2024; Verkijika, 2018). This helps explain why scholars increasingly recommend hybrid models that combine digital channels with face-to-face and traditional communication rather than assuming a full digital substitution (Ntando & Mofolo, 2025; Mulaudzi, 2025).

The urban-rural divide is one of the most stable findings in the corpus. Metropolitan municipalities tend to report more visible progress because they possess larger budgets, stronger infrastructure, more specialized staff, and greater exposure to innovation networks (Zvaita & Shava, 2026; Nkgapele & Mokgolobotho, 2024; Cecilia, 2020; 2025). By contrast, rural municipalities often struggle with basic readiness conditions such as electricity, connectivity, outdated hardware, staff shortages, and weak institutional capability (Mofokeng et al., 2025; Mawela et al., 2017; Netshirando et al.,

2026; Tahulela & Hashemi, 2026). Studies from Musina, Vhembe, Thulamela, and broader rural local municipality settings all point to the same conclusion: without foundational capacity, sophisticated digital tools remain aspirational (Galushi & Malatji, 2022; Mulaudzi, 2025; Tahulela & Hashemi, 2026).

Leadership and institutional design emerge as decisive mediators. Multiple studies find that digital projects stall when municipalities lack executive support, dedicated ICT leadership, interdepartmental coordination, strategic alignment with Integrated Development Plans, and clear governance frameworks (Ncamphalala & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2022; Kenneth & Makganya, 2023; Govender & Reddy, 2019; Sibanda & Solms, 2018). Research on digital leadership beyond South Africa reinforces the same point: transformation requires a value-based vision, legitimacy management, political involvement, and deliberate competence building, not just procurement of platforms (Branderhorst & Ruijter, 2024; Gascó-Hernández et al., 2022). South African authors similarly argue that leadership and trust are the key pillars of smart governance in the 4IR era (Manda, 2021).

This institutional emphasis also shapes more critical work on AI and smart governance. AI is presented as useful for fraud detection, audit support,

procurement monitoring, complaint routing, predictive service management, and staff productivity (Nokele & Matshela, 2026; Bunyula et al., 2025; Niyitunga & Modibedi, 2024). Municipal employees often view AI positively when they see it as useful, but low ease of use, inadequate training, and limited awareness reduce adoption (Bunyula et al., 2025). The literature therefore treats AI as a governance support tool rather than a cure for municipal dysfunction (Nokele & Matshela, 2026). This caution is intensified by ethical concerns about privacy, bias, fairness, transparency, algorithmic accountability, and unclear liability when automated systems affect rights or resource allocation (Mvikweni & Masumbe, 2026; Baloyi, 2025).

The legal and regulatory literature argues that South Africa's municipal statutes were largely designed for an analogue administrative order and poorly match data sovereignty, algorithmic decision-making, cybersecurity liability, and inclusion obligations in digitally mediated governance (Mvikweni & Masumbe, 2026). This helps explain why several authors call for stronger regulatory frameworks, adaptive governance, and interoperable standards that align innovation with constitutional rights and public accountability (Zindi, 2026; Okeyo et al., 2026; Latchu & Singh, 2025). Technology's influence on governance is therefore partly constitutional and legal, because digital

systems reconfigure who can decide, who can see, and who can contest decisions.

Another important contribution of the literature is its move toward socio-technical explanations. Studies on smart governance, local digital transformation, and e-participation stress that technology outcomes emerge from interactions among tools, organizational routines, political pressures, citizens, and external actors rather than from devices alone (Ranchod, 2020; Ayodele et al., 2025; Przybilowicz & Cunha, 2024; Soesanto & Rumbekwan, 2026; Patalon, 2026). Co-design evidence from rural South African municipalities is especially important: when stakeholders help design and implement ICT systems, capacity can increase across governance, engagement, institutional memory, and access to information (Jacobs et al., 2019). This suggests that technology influences governance most effectively when municipalities treat reform as organizational learning and collaborative redesign.

The literature also notes new forms of inclusion and exclusion produced by digital governance. Vernacular social media use can amplify marginalized voices and improve the authenticity and accessibility of citizen-based monitoring, but municipalities often lack the linguistic capability and systems to respond effectively

(Matlala, 2026). Similarly, mobile technologies are seen as promising tools for more socially sustainable e-participation, especially in African contexts where mobile access can exceed fixed broadband access (Ochara & Mawela, 2015). Even so, inclusion remains conditional on local content, capacity support, community intermediaries, and governance mechanisms tailored to vulnerable groups (Ojo et al., 2012).

Overall, the literature shows that technology influences governance in South African local municipalities by improving administrative capability, widening participation channels, and strengthening opportunities for transparency and oversight. However, these gains remain partial, uneven, and contingent. Where municipalities align technology with leadership, skills, budgets, institutional reform, citizen-centred design, and legal safeguards, governance outcomes tend to improve (Mangai & Ayodele, 2025; Gascó-Hernández et al., 2022; 2025). Where they do not, digital systems replicate the existing crisis of local governance in electronic form (Zvaita & Shava, 2026; Ngcobo & Mbandlwa, 2026; Tahulela & Hashemi, 2026). In all, technology has a real influence on governance in South African local municipalities. However, institutional capacity, social inequality, and political commitment mediate that influence, not technology alone.

2.4 The Lack Of Adequate Technological Infrastructure

E-governance relies on fiber optics and modern technological infrastructure for effective adoption and use in local government. However, many municipalities in South Africa lack access to the required infrastructure (Nel Sanders & Malomane, 2022). Most local governments consider other issues, such as employment opportunities and reducing the cost of living, more important than digital governance, although these are not mutually exclusive (Mathane et al., 2024). In the Ulundi area, for example, equipment, including computers and servers, is very old, nonfunctional, and ineffective, often slowing down due to low processing speeds (Ulundi Local Municipality, 2021).

Additionally, some local municipalities are located in deep rural areas, and their limited financial resources are insufficient to cover the cost of expanding internet connectivity and broadband across the board without private-sector support (Mkhonto, 2020). Municipalities such as Thabazimbi and Mogalakwena Municipality are without internet connectivity, hindering the effective use and adoption of digital technologies (Mogalakwena, 2022; Thabazimbi, 2022). Inadequate technological infrastructure undermines digital transformation and service delivery, making it difficult for citizens to access basic services. For example, residents

in municipalities with intermittent internet connectivity struggle to use online government services (Nzimakwe, 2021).

2.5 The Lack Of Regulatory Frameworks And Policies

According to Nchampalala (2019), another barrier is the lack of laws and policies that enable digital adoption within local governments. Because of uncertainty about the legal and regulatory implications of digital projects, local governments are often reluctant to invest in new systems or adopt innovative practices without clear policies and regulations (Mathane *et al.*, 2024). This uncertainty often delays promising initiatives. Furthermore, without supportive policies, local governments may implement different digital adoption strategies.

2.6 The Lack of Adequate Technological Infrastructure

Digital technologies rely on robust infrastructure and internet connectivity for effective adoption and use, and local governments struggle to provide adequate infrastructure (Nel-Sanders & Malomane, 2022). Most local governments rely on intergovernmental grants and equitable shares to maintain service delivery and operations, but they lack the revenue-generation mechanisms needed to finance technology infrastructure upgrades (Mathane et al., 2024). Municipalities such as Ulundi Municipality rely on outdated, inefficient hardware and

services. Moreover, some municipalities are located in rural areas with limited financial resources that are insufficient to fully expand inadequate connectivity and broadband without private-sector involvement (Mkhonto, 2020). As a result, municipalities such as Thabazimbi and Mogalakwena local governments face intermittent internet connectivity, hindering the effective use and adoption of digital technologies (Mogalakwena, 2022; Thabazimbi, 2022). Inadequate democratic infrastructure negatively affects digital transformation and service delivery, as citizens may struggle to access basic services; for example, residents in municipalities with intermittent internet connectivity may struggle to access the online government portal (Nzimakwe, 2021).

2.7 Digital Transformation in South African Perspectives

Digital transformation is a key aspect of modern governance in South Africa. Nkgapele (2023) defines digital transformation as using digital technologies to improve service delivery. Similarly, Mohale (2024) defines it as using technology to improve service delivery models, organizational culture, and the population's experiences and needs. In South Africa, the Department of Public Services Administration (DPSA, 2021) defines digital transformation as the use of Technology to improve government services, provide accessible digital solutions, connect South Africa, and

expand postal services. Many South African municipalities are embarking on digital transformation initiatives to improve service delivery and increase citizen participation. However, we must work to ensure that digital transformation benefits all citizens (Malomane, 2021).

South African municipalities are embarking on digital transformation initiatives to improve service delivery and citizen engagement. For example, the city of Johannesburg has established an electronic services portal, 'Johannesburg Connect,' which allows citizens to access and pay for municipal services online (City of Johannesburg, 2022). The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has accelerated digital transformation in South African Municipalities, exposing the limitations of traditional management systems and the need to innovate and adapt so that citizens can access and pay for municipal services online (City of Johannesburg, 2022). The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic accelerated digital transformation in South African Municipalities, exposing the limitations of traditional management systems and underscoring the need to innovate and adapt to minimize face-to-face and physical interactions and ensure continuity of government service delivery (Mohale, 2024). He also highlighted the important role of digital transformation in improving service delivery.

2.8 Digital Divide

Digital technologies and skills are limited, especially in underserved areas and communities. Faloye and Ajayi (2022) define the digital divide as unequal access to digital technology that impedes public services delivery at the local government level. This gap has major implications for services delivery. Local government staff affected by the digital divide often struggle to access information about government programs and initiatives, such as rebates and low-income programs and services (Enaifoghe & Ndebele, 2023). In rural areas where traditional methods and service delivery are entrenched, these practices are deeply rooted. This ignorance may stem from suspicion and distrust of digital technology, hindering efforts to implement e-government (Mkhonto, 2020). Meanwhile, city hall employees and government officials often resist digital transformation. They fear initiatives because they worry about losing their jobs. They fear that new systems and technologies are designed to replace them. This stems from automation and misunderstanding. They need to understand the benefits of effectively implementing digital technology (Beniera, 2022). For example, in the city of Tshwane, authorities initially resisted introducing a central electronic billing center (City of Tshwane, 2021). Mohale (2024) attributed this to cultural resistance among citizens. Such resistance can

hinder efforts to modernize and simplify maintenance. Resistance to change can jeopardize efforts to modernize and simplify service delivery.

2.9 The Application of Governance in the South African Public Service

Subsequently, the White Paper was published in 1997, providing further guidance for a revolution in public service delivery (Kanyemba, 2017). Since apartheid, South Africa has implemented various e-government initiatives to improve service delivery and address historical inequalities established under the previous government. In South Africa, since the early 2000s, there has been strong support for the introduction of electronic platforms, particularly the Internet, to facilitate public service delivery. The country's first e-government policy document, introduced in 2001, sets out a detailed framework and specific standards for implementing information and communication technologies (Nokele & Mukonza, 2021).

There is no doubt that progress has been made over the past few decades in e-government initiatives and in providing electronic access to government services through mobile government portals. All major national

and state ministries and most local governments now maintain an online presence and provide a wide range of information to the public (Murenzi & Olivier, 2017; Kanyembe, 2017). Many ministry websites provide informational materials such as legislative information, annual reports, speeches by government officials, press releases, green and white papers, and policy documents (Nokele & Mukonza, 2021).

Government departments, such as the Department of Public Services and Administration (DPSA) and the State Information Technology Agency (SITA), held briefings with stakeholders as part of the Gateway Project. This initiative aimed to enable 24/7 delivery of government services to citizens, regardless of their location (Nokele & Mukonza, 2021). In addition to receiving information from ministries, citizens have online access to various forms of government. These forms include ID cards, passports, marriage certificates, and applications for government employment opportunities. Some departments offer online application services, making the application process easier for citizens and eliminating the need to visit a physical office. The Ministry of Labour allows citizens to register their domestic workers with the Unemployment Insurance Fund online.

In addition, citizens can check the progress of various applications online, for example by checking the status of identity documents or passport applications at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Mbambo, 2019). In South Africa, despite significant interventions aimed at promoting e-government, several challenges remain. One challenge is South Africa's linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as the digital divide (Hoag, 2014; Kanyemba, 2017; Nokele & Mukonza, 2021). Although e-government and m-government provide opportunities for governments, South Africa's ability, as a developing country, to fully exploit these benefits is limited and significantly hampered by political, social, and economic barriers (Murenzi & Olivier, 2017).

2.10 The Electronic Communications and Transactions (ECT) Act, No .25 of 2002

The Electronic Communications and Transactions Act 2002 facilitates electronic communications and transactions with public and private duty organizations and South African residents, while providing the legislative framework for e-governance services (RSA, 2002). This Act is essential to the Republic of South Africa's national e-strategy and to developing human resources for electronic transactions. It also seeks to advance universal access to and transactions within the electronic

community. Within two years of the announcement, Chapter 2 of the Act required the MTPs to develop a five-year national e-strategy for South Africa in conjunction with the cabinet (RSA, 2002). Similarly, MTPs can promote e-strategy through the ECT and its revisions. The MPSA must resolve all concerns about e-governance services in consultation with the MPSA while developing the national e-strategy. According to the Microsoft Products and Services Agreement (MPSA), the MPSA must create an e-strategy and must seek advice on e-governance issues from the MPSA (RSA, 2002a).

2. Theoretical Framework Underpinning the Study

Digital Governance Theory

This study adopted digital governance theory as a theoretical lens to understand the role of e-government in transforming local government service delivery in South Africa. Manuel Castells developed this theory, and other scholars later refined it, including Patrick Dunleavy (Lukis, 2022). Digital governance theory advocates using digital technology and IT to improve local government efficiency. Local governments in South Africa can utilize digital governance theory to develop e-government strategies to improve service delivery and local government effectiveness (Nzimakwe, 2021).

The use of digital technologies to implement digital governance theory in

South African local governments reduces the costs and time constraints associated with traditional service delivery models, while improving the quality of service delivery. Lukis (2022) suggests that local governments can use e-government as an element of digital governance theory to improve communication and citizen participation, since digital technologies facilitate these processes and highlight their potential to enhance management and administrative processes. For example, electronic services streamline administrative processes, reduce traditional paper-based processes and administration, and improve communication within local government in the country (Faloye & Ajayi, 2022). Electronic services deliver value to local communities through efficient, time-saving automation.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative case study design and qualitative research methods. It used secondary data analysis and drew on existing academic literature to investigate e-government and its role in transforming local government service delivery in South Africa. This data was collected from a variety of sources, including scientific journals, government documents, news articles, and policy documents. One can find these studies using keywords such as e-government, local government service delivery, and digital

transformation on Google Scholar, ISI, ProQuest, and Scopus.

4. FINDINGS

Several studies have found that barriers to accessing digital technologies and skills, especially in low-income areas, include the digital divide, limited digital literacy, and a lack of programs, such as training workshops, to help citizens learn to use digital technologies. Citizens affected by the digital divide often struggle to access information and government programs and initiatives, such as rebates, low-income programs, and service delivery interventions (Enaifoghe & Ndebele, 2023).

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends implementing digital transformation and addressing the digital divide to ensure equal access to all e-government initiatives. Local governments should invest in digital literacy programs, such as training workshops, to help citizens use digital technologies and access digital services. Local governments need to develop detailed and comprehensive digital transformation strategies with clear goals, milestones, and action

plans. This plan should be developed in consultation with stakeholders, including the public, private-sector organisations, and other government agencies, to meet their needs and priorities. Local government needs to build partnerships with other government agencies and private-sector organisations. Public-private partnerships can be a particularly effective way to share resources, expectations, and funding for digital transformation efforts.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, local governments should regularly interact with residents to gather feedback and identify areas for improvement. Such efforts may take the form of online surveys, focus groups, and public meetings and should be tailored to the needs and preferences of the communities. To deliver digital government services efficiently, the government needs to develop detailed, user-friendly, and secure online platforms. These platforms should be regularly tested and updated to ensure they meet public needs and expectations and protect against cybersecurity threats.

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