Compliance of e-Records Readiness, a Trajectory of the Federal Ministry of Finance in Nigeria

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Abstract

The awareness of the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the public service environment has created different prospects and challenges which include in-depth understanding, usage and access in different sectors of the general public. Several organizations (government and private businesses) around the world have embraced the idea of e-government in their bid to improve service delivery to citizens. The objective of this study is to assess the compliance of e-records readiness at the Federal Ministry of Finance Nigeria (FMFN) using an e-records readiness assessment tool, and Integrating Records Management in ICT Systems. Due to the nature of the study, the pragmatic paradigm was used. This entailed the use of mixed methods, (i.e., quantitative and qualitative approaches) for data collection and analysis. The quantitative phase of the study used a survey questionnaire. A total number of 260 were distributed to respondents using purposively and randomly selected among various departments/units in the FMFN. The quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The result of the data collected from the study provides a better understanding of the level of e-records readiness, particularly, compliance with the legal policy and regulatory frameworks that govern the electronic record system in the ministry. The study stands to benefit the public sectors that are desirous of opting for e-records management in Nigeria and provide benchmarks for policymakers on e-record management, particularly compliance on how to maintain proper e- records readiness status.
Keywords: e-Records Readiness, Compliance, e-Government, Public Sector, Nigeria.

Introduction

The increase in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) has developed prospects and challenges in parallel with the establishment of e-records around the world. This e-record initiative was geared at ensuring the use of ICT to advance service delivery in the public sector (Johnson, 2014; Wato, 2006). Before the existence of e-records, traditional approaches happened to be the methods used to document evidence in organizations. The information of the organization has worn the new look as e-record are now used as a documentary source of information in the most establishment (Kalusopa & Ngulube, 2012). Nigeria is not an exception as government produces, collects, disseminates and uses a larger volume of records and information than any other organization. Previous studies confirmed that e-record is a byproduct of e-government and as an indisputable source of government information (Maseh 2016; Kamatula, 2010). Several studies revealed that most countries in sub-Sahara Africa lacked strategies for e-records management which are generated through the functioning of the e-government system (Idris, 2017; Mukred, Yusof, Mokhtar, & Abdul Manap, 2016). Despite this positive attribute, the implementation of e-government was slowly done considering the long term management and preservation of electronic records in Nigeria. Management of e-record has progressively turned into the current issues. Even though the ICT revolution came at the same time that the government initiated public sector reform in Nigeria (World Bank, 2001), the reform agenda has not been able to influence an increase in the generation of e-record management in the public sector of Nigeria.

This highlighted the need for careful evaluation and understanding of the broadness of the utilization of ICTs in record managing in the public sector environment. This also necessitated the need for e-records readiness. Since the measurement of the depth of the capacity and infrastructure needed for information and e-record management in the organization is insufficient. The review of the prior studies on e-record readiness assessment revealed that different types of models were used in the past to examine e-records management (Mnjama, & Wamukoya, 2007). This includes ICT and Records Management Integration; e-record assessment tools by IRMT; Risk Profiler for Records and Information designed by the Archives and Record Management Association; and National Archives of Canada's Information Capacity Check Model. Even though, this model has no agreed framework in examining the e-records readiness because the model aimed to address various audiences at varying coverage for different purposes (Kalusopa & Ngulube, 2012). However, as the model for evaluating e-record readiness in the public sector (Federal Ministry of Finance FMFN) were designed based on the context and consensus, there is a need to develop a

framework for e-records readiness in the Nigerian context most especially in the Federal Ministry of Finance. This current study intends to address these gaps in the literature on e-records readiness in the public sector of Nigeria by introducing factors that enhance e-records management in Nigeria.

Also, the Federal Ministry of Finance involved in the implementation of information management systems which include but not limited to: the Integrated Financial and Economic Management Information System (IFEMIS), an ICT-driven platform that enhanced record management practices such as information storage and sharing of financial documents through the provision of storage, organization and increasing easy access to financial information (USAID, 2008). Evidence shown from the previous studies revealed that the concept of e-record readiness in Nigeria is still evolving, as few e-record management practices have been established to assess e-record readiness in FMFN. Thereby, the ministry has implemented IFEMIS which lead to the generation of e-records. However, the evidence did not show if the FMFN is fully preparing and ready for the long term preservation of e-records and problems associated with digitalized records.

In addition to the stated evidence, it is noted that most of the prior studies carried out in Nigeria have indicated e-records readiness in one way or the other, but none of the literature has assessed the concept in-depth and about the FMFN. They neither offered detailed compliance on e-record readiness nor proposed any framework for evaluating e-record readiness in the public service in Nigeria. Based on the gap revealed, the study intends to examine the compliance effect of e-record readiness at the federal ministry of finance, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study
The main aims and objectives of this study are to examine the compliance of e-records readiness at the federal ministry of finance, Nigeria with the view of proposing a research framework for assessing e-records readiness in the Nigerian public sector. The specific objectives are as follows:
1. To assess the compliance of the FMFN with the laws, policies and procedures guiding e-records management.
2. To propose a framework that will enhance the compliance of e-records readiness in the FMFN.

Concepts of e-records Readiness
Conceptually, e-records readiness is described as the technological, institutional and legal frameworks capacity of establishment in having the required infrastructure to anchor a systematic records and information management programme (Kalusopa, 2012). Also, e-record readiness ensures good governance by increasing accountability and transparency. In this study, the assessment tools

for e-record readiness is used to measure organization capacity on e-record using many measurement criteria that address necessary institutional legal framework and information management infrastructure.

Therefore, e-records readiness assessments guide development efforts by providing benchmarks for comparison and gauging organizational progress regarding the depth of e-records management (Asogwa, 2011). Since the advancement of the first e-readiness tool, several other e-readiness tools have come into the limelight, through development agencies, governments, research organizations, business enterprises, individuals among others (Asogwa, 2011), and each of the ranking schemes uses different approaches, and methodologies and their definitions of e-readiness differ (Asogwa, 2011). It also assists the government to focus their efforts within, and identify areas where external support is required (Kimbe, 2008).

However, the lack of e-readiness was recognized as a major hindrance to the implementation of e-government (Vaezi & Bimar, 2009). This called for the government to embrace e-readiness assessment. In their effort to use the e-readiness tools effectively, government and organizations faced the following challenges: i) the need to understand how ICT can help their countries achieve economic and social benefits, and set achievable goals accordingly; ii) the need to take real steps toward using an effective and sustainable ICT that will assist the countries or establishments realize their objectives.

Though governments and agencies have long made several efforts on the adoption of ICTs in the management of records, assessment on the readiness of adopting these innovations has not been conducted and recorded (Wamukoya, & Mutula, 2005). This may result in poor implementation of e-record management (Ajami, Ketabi, Isfahani, & Heidari, 2011). While several e-readiness initiatives have been launched over the years to evaluate the depth of ICTs utilization, the assessment of e-readiness by governmental agencies remains a dream as many of them do not make any attempt even though there are many e-records readiness tools developed. Therefore, the present study will focus on assessing and developing a framework for understanding e-records readiness in the Federal Ministry of Finance, Nigeria.

Compliance with Laws, policies and procedures

The commitment of the government to e-records readiness can be assessed by their availability of records management, policies and procedures. In addition, having rules and regulations guiding the e-records is not sufficient proof that an establishment is dedicated to managing its e-records. Most of the time,

government agencies failed to have policies and guidelines for managing e-records, as their legislative and regulatory framework is weak and outdated (IRMT, 2009). In the same vein, in some countries management of information is not properly assigned to say the least unclear. Also, the existence of a policy that failed to embrace all forms of records is insufficient. The aforementioned evidence revealed that compliance with the law, policies and procedures is imperative to examine whether government accepts e-records as evidence (Idris, 2017).

However, other studies conducted in Africa relating to e-records identified various factors and challenges of e-records management (Malanga, & Kamanga, 2018). According to these studies, the factors were: Lack of budgets devoted to managing records; absence of organization plans; limited awareness of the role of records management in support of organizational efficiency and accountability; Absence of stewardship and coordination in handling paper as well as electronic records.

The previous literature on electronic records management also indicates that Sub-Sahara Africa is lagging in the management of e-records readiness systems (Hamajoda, 2018). As a result of the gap in the prior studies, the study will examine the e-record readiness in the public sector in Nigeria and contribute to the literature on e-record readiness in Nigeria. Unlike prior literature where document analysis and observation have been mostly used, this study would employ a quantitative method for data collection and analysis. The study will use the main constructs in e-record readiness which has been identified in the IRMT tool and explained earlier as constructs of focus.

Methodology
Data collection for this study was done through the use of questionnaires. Questionnaires were administered to officers in fourteen units in the FMFN while interviews were conducted with senior managers from each unit. As this study targeted respondents that are professional staffs in the federal ministry of finance in Nigeria, the respondents consist of staffs in the office of information units; ICT, Servicom; Technical Staffs; Economic Research and Policy Management, Home Affairs; Human Resource Management; Internal Audit; Anti-corruption; Finance and Accounts among others. The study used a cross-sectional design and a survey method. The questionnaire requests the respondents on their e-record readiness in the FMFN. 260 questionnaires were distributed to various respondents as shown. Out of which, 250 questionnaires were duly completed and returned giving a response rate of 97%. The study had proposed to conduct interviews with 12 respondents from senior management at the Federal Ministry

of Finance, but only 9 out of the proposed 12 senior managers were successfully conducted giving a response rate of 75%. Therefore, the study arrived at descriptive and inferential analysis.

Findings and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics
The profile of the respondents was analyzed by the researcher using their demographic characteristics in terms of position, academic qualification, as well as years of experience in the FMFN. The detailed analyses are presented in Tables and Figures.

Position of the respondent in the FMFN
This study also sought to determine the positions held by the respondents at the Federal Ministry of Finance. The findings show that the majority 68 (27.2%) were ICT personnel followed by 60 (24%). Administration officer's Record officers were third 38 (15.2%), while data processing personnel came fourth 35 (14%). Senior managers were 30 (12%) while junior managers were the least 18 (7.2%). This cadre points to the person dealing with e-records management at the FMFN. Administration officers include those handling administrative tasks such as invoicing, archiving, calendar management, reporting, and customer service. Senior managers in the FMFN refers to the head of the various units and are involved in the supervision and planning while junior managers include senior managers usually supervise those in charge of small departments and. They may also serve as account managers on various projects. Data processing personnel evaluate designs, administer the implementation of new or revised systems and develop technical procedures and standards for system operation and maintenance. ICT personnel manage the overall technology infrastructure in the FMFN which includes planning, implementation, and management of the software applications and hardware infrastructure that support operations. Recording personnel records custodians who maintain, secure and maintain records. These findings are summarized in Table1.

Academic Qualification of the respondents in the FMFN
As regards the educational level of the respondents, the findings indicate that the majority 182 (72.8%), of the respondents, are degree holders (bachelors or masters) followed by 46 (18.4%) holders of Advanced Diploma and lastly 15 (6.1%). Diploma holders these findings are summarized in Table 2.

Years of Experience at the FMFN

As regards the number of years the respondents had worked at the Federal Ministry of Finance; the findings indicate that the majority 152 (60.8%) have 16 to 20 years of work experience while 6 (2.4%) are those with less than one year of work experience. These findings are briefed in Table 3. This finding implies that the respondents had the required experience to participate in the study via questionnaires.

Testing of Hypotheses

The study examines the e-records readiness in the federal ministry of finance, Nigeria which based explicitly on the compliance with applicable laws, policies and procedures needed to provide for the e-record management in the FMFN. The hypotheses of the study are in line with the stated objective as stated earlier.

To assess the compliance of the FMFN with the laws, policies, and procedures guiding record management

The IRMT e-records Readiness Tool (2004) postulates that organizations should establish policies and responsibilities for records and information management on top of the regulatory framework. These policies should be based on organizational structure, resources, and culture. Objective three sought to determine the levels of compliance to policies of records management and general compliance to international standards among the officers in the Ministry.

General compliance to National Policies of Records Management

Based on our understanding, the study sought to determine if there exists a policy framework on e-records at the FMFN and whether the ministry is compliant with its provisions. From the study findings, 232 (92.8%) of the respondents are aware of the existence of a policy framework at the FMFN, specifically the Nigeria National Records and Archives Act. Respondents were asked to state their level of general compliance to the national policies on records management. The findings indicated that 100 (40%) of the respondents do not seem to fully comply with the national policies on records management, 25 (10%) highly comply while 95 (38%) moderately complied moderately. It is also interesting to note that 10(4%) respondents showed low compliance, citing reasons such as lack of clear definition on responsibilities regarding records management and lack of clear understanding of the requirements of the policies and procedures. One Action Officer in ministry thus commented, "I don't know whether compliance to records management of the FMFN is real. This response is an indication that some of the officers may not trust compliance with policies of record management by the ministry in terms of the fulfilment of promises. The response

on officers' compliance with national policies on record management is summarized in Figure 1.

The International Standard on Records Management ISO

IRMT (2004:6) opines that e-records management systems should observe internationally accepted standards and functional requirements essential in ensuring that government ICT systems maintain consistency in creating, capturing, organizing, storing, searching, retrieving and preserving e-records, and also protecting the integrity and credibility of these e-records." The aim of question seven-under Section C was, therefore, to establish the officers' level of compliance to internationally accepted standards on records Management. The findings indicate that 196 (76%) respondents are moderately compliant with universally accepted standards on record management. Notably, the percentage of those highly compliant is encouraging (12%), that is, 30 respondents. Only 20 (8%) of the respondents are below average in terms of compliance. This is an indication that the officers in the FMFN have made significant efforts towards complying with internationally accepted standards of records management. Only one percent showed low compliance. Figure two shows a response to the question "Level of compliance to international accepted standard on records management." The findings relating to levels of compliance with internationally accepted standards on records management are illustrated in Figure 2.

Conclusion

This study presents the interpretation of data collected through questionnaires. The researcher analyzed the data right from the descriptive statistics to the inferential statistics. The findings showed that FMFN is lagging in some aspects of e-records readiness, as subscribed from the IRMT Tools. Prominent among these include low compliance with the national policies on records management and inadequate training on records management. However, there are some positives that the findings revealed, such as the existence of the Nigeria National Records and Archives Act 2008 and moderate compliance with internationally accepted standards on record management.

The implication of these findings is that there is the existence of national and internal laws and policies in the FMFN for the use and management of e-records. Despite the FMFN staff being aware of the existence of these policies, compliance is low, which was attributed to a lack of clear definition of responsibilities regarding records management and a lack of clear understanding of the requirements of the policies and procedures. Compliance with international standards on records management was, however, high among the staff.

Summarily, the e-record readiness of the FMFN is average as indicated by compliance with laws and policies on e-records. There is a need for the federal government of Nigeria to create awareness of the national policies on records management and enforce its implementation. An adequate budgetary provision for records management programs is necessary for the purchase of tools and equipment, and also for staff training. This is especially important because technological advancement is necessitating the digitalization of records; hence staff needs to have the capacity to operate effectively.

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Figure 1: General Compliance to National Policies of Record Management

General Compliance to National Policies of Record Management
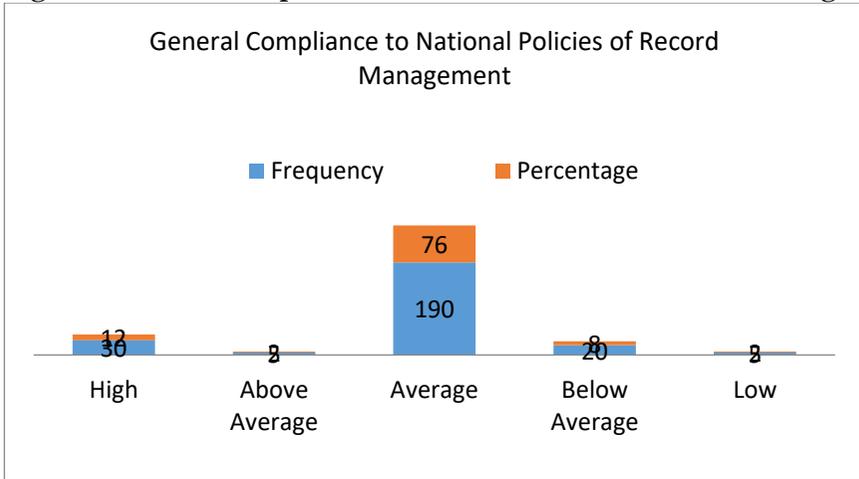
Figure 2: Compliance to International Accepted Standards on Records Management

Compliance to International Accepted Standards on Records Management
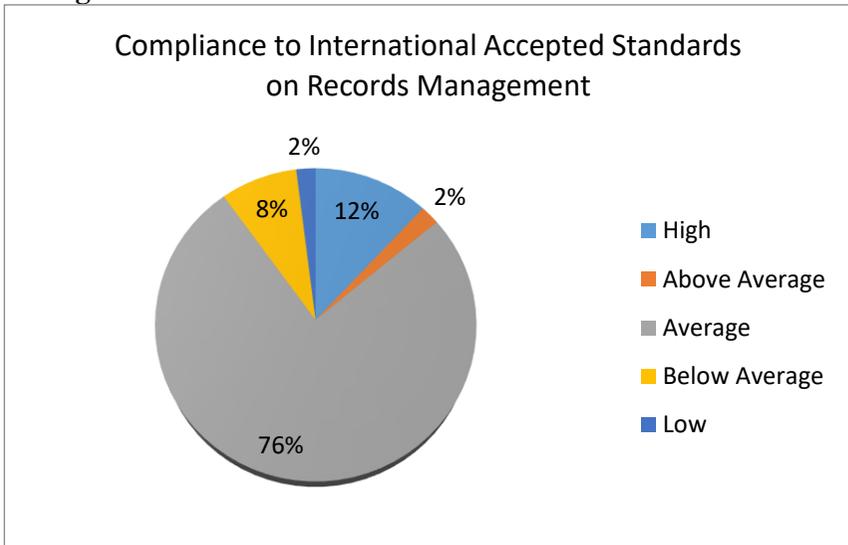
Table 1: Position of the respondent in the FMFN (N=250)

Position	Frequency	Percentage
Administration Officer	60	24.0
Senior Manager	30	12.0
Junior Manager	18	7.2
Recording Personnel	38	15.2
Data Processing	35	14.0
ICT	68	27.2
Non-Responses	1	0.4
Total	250	100

Sources: Abdulkareen et al. 2020

Table 2: Academic Qualification of the respondents in the FMFN (N=250)

	Frequency	Percent
Advance Diploma	46	18.4
Diploma	15	6.1
Others like Degree, Master	182	72.8
Non respond	7	2.8
Total	250	100.0

Sources: Abdulkareen et al. 2020

Table 3: Years of Experience at the FMFN (N=250)

	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1	6	2.4
1 – 5	16	6.4
6 – 10	39	15.6
11 – 15	23	9.2
16-20	152	60.8
Above 21	14	5.6
Total	250	100.0

Sources: Abdulkareen et al. 2020

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