BUREAUCRATIC DELAY IN E-PASSPORT PROCESSING: INSTITUTIONAL LOGISTICS AND USER ADAPTATION IN NIGERIA, 2021 - 2025

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Abstract

This study examined bureaucratic delay in e-passport processing and its implications for institutional logistics and user adaptation in Nigeria between 2021 and 2025. It is anchored on Max Weber's Bureaucratic Theory which explains how hierarchical procedures, rule-based administration, and centralized decision-making can generate inefficiency and delays when overstretched, and Institutional Theory, which accounts for the persistence of informal norms and practices such as corruption and favouritism within formally reformed systems. This study adopted a descriptive and analytical approach based on secondary data drawn from investigative reports, institutional publications, court rulings, and relevant literature. Findings indicated that despite e-governance reforms in the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), passport processing was still characterized by cases of bureaucratic delays driven by poor internet connectivity, weak inter-agency coordination, inefficient database integration, partial workflow automation, and unreliable power supply, all of which disrupt biometric capture, verification, and processing timelines. This study further revealed that corruption-related practices, including extortion, preferential treatment, and unofficial fast-tracking payments, persist within the system, reflecting institutional adaptation of corrupt behaviour within a digital framework. In response, users adopt coping strategies such as reliance on intermediaries, repeated rescheduling, informal payments, and frequent physical visits to passport offices. This study concludes that while digitization has introduced procedural improvements, its effectiveness is constrained by infrastructural deficiencies and entrenched institutional inefficiencies. It recommends strengthened ICT infrastructure, full workflow automation, improved inter-agency integration, reliable power supply, and intensified anti-corruption enforcement to enhance efficiency and transparency in Nigeria's e-passport system.

***Key words:** Bureaucratic Delay, E-Passport Processing, Institutional Logistics, User Adaptation, Nigeria Immigration Service, Digitization, Corruption.*

Introduction

The adoption of electronic governance systems has become an important strategy for improving public administration and service delivery in developing countries. According to Nwafor, Ojiako, Okonkwo and Onyeulo (2023), effective public service delivery is one of the most crucial responsibilities of a responsible government. In Nigeria, the introduction of the electronic passport (e-passport) system by the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) represents a major digital reform aimed at modernizing passport administration, improving national security, reducing corruption, eliminating manual inefficiencies, and enhancing citizens' access to travel documentation. Through online applications, biometric enrollment, electronic payments, and contactless renewal, the reform seeks to make passport processing faster, more transparent, and technology-driven.

Globally, e-governance is intended to reduce bureaucratic bottlenecks by automating administrative procedures and minimizing unnecessary human interference. Oghuvbu, Gberevbie, and Oni (2022) note that digital governance systems can promote efficiency, accountability, responsiveness, and citizen satisfaction. However, their effectiveness in developing countries is often constrained by weak institutional capacity, inadequate infrastructure, administrative rigidity, and technological limitations. Nwachukwu, Nwafor, & Ojiako (2026) posit that the effectiveness of digital administrative systems depends not only on the availability of technology but also on institutional capacity and users' ability to adapt to technological processes. Similar challenges continue to affect Nigeria's digital transformation efforts despite increased government investment in e-governance.

Between 2021 and 2025, the Nigerian government intensified reforms in passport administration through automated applications, electronic document management, application tracking, online payments, and contactless processing. In January 2024, the Federal Government introduced a fully automated passport application process designed to reduce physical interaction with officials and minimize delays and corruption. Despite these measures, applicants continue to encounter prolonged processing periods, appointment difficulties, biometric verification problems, technical failures, delayed approvals, and inadequate communication. These challenges indicate that digitization has not completely eliminated bureaucratic inefficiency in passport administration.

Existing studies also show that technological reforms in Nigeria face significant institutional and logistical constraints. Okoh, Okonoboh, and Edegware (2025) identify inadequate infrastructure, poor internet connectivity, organizational resistance, policy inconsistencies, and insufficient technological expertise as barriers to effective e-governance implementation. Similarly, Akujuru and Nkwonta (2025) identify lengthy processing times, operational inefficiencies, and limited accessibility as major

challenges confronting the NIS. These problems are particularly important because passport processing requires coordination among the NIS, National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), payment platforms, biometric systems, ICT providers, passport production centres, and foreign missions. Delays or technical failures within any part of this institutional network can affect the entire process.

The integration of National Identification Number (NIN) verification has further created challenges where technical failures and poor system interoperability disrupt applications. Consequently, applicants often adopt coping strategies such as repeated online applications, reliance on unofficial agents, personal connections, social media guidance, and informal communication channels. These experiences reflect broader challenges involving technological literacy, system reliability, accessibility, and institutional responsiveness. The persistence of bureaucratic delays raises concerns about the effectiveness of Nigeria's digital governance reforms and their ability to improve public service delivery. Such delays can undermine public trust and impose financial, academic, professional, and personal difficulties on applicants, particularly those whose international travel, employment, education, migration, or residency documentation depends on timely passport issuance or renewal.

Although existing studies have examined e-governance and public sector reforms in Nigeria, limited attention has been given specifically to bureaucratic delay in e-passport processing from the perspectives of institutional logistics and user adaptation between 2021 and 2025. This gap limits understanding of how administrative structures, technological systems, and citizen coping strategies interact in Nigeria's passport administration. Therefore, this study examines bureaucratic delay in e-passport processing in Nigeria between 2021 and 2025, with particular emphasis on institutional logistics and user adaptation.

Literature Review

Bureaucratic Delay

Bureaucratic delay refers to prolonged administrative procedures, institutional bottlenecks, procedural rigidity, and operational inefficiencies that slow the delivery of public services. In public administration literature, bureaucracy is traditionally associated with hierarchy, formal rules, documentation, and procedural control, which are designed to ensure accountability and orderliness in governance. However, excessive bureaucratic procedures often result in administrative inefficiency, slow decision-making, and poor service delivery (Weber, 1947). In the context of e-governance, bureaucratic delay occurs when digital technologies fail to eliminate institutional inefficiencies and instead reproduce traditional administrative bottlenecks in electronic form.

Within Nigeria's e-passport administration system, bureaucratic delay manifests through prolonged processing timelines, repeated procedural requirements, technical interruptions, appointment bottlenecks, and administrative congestion. The Nigeria Immigration Service introduced digital passport processing reforms to improve efficiency, transparency, and accessibility. These reforms included online applications, biometric enrollment systems, contactless renewals, and automated verification platforms. Oghuvbu, Gberevbie & Oni (2022) argue that despite these innovations, the persistence of institutional inefficiencies, infrastructural weaknesses, and poor administrative coordination continues to undermine service delivery outcomes in Nigeria's digital governance framework.

According to Akujuru and Nkwonta (2025), the Nigeria Immigration Service still experiences operational inefficiencies, lengthy processing periods, limited accessibility, and administrative bottlenecks despite ongoing e-governance reforms. Similarly, Benson, Yerima, and Cosmas (2026) observe that although digital platforms have reduced certain bureaucratic constraints within the Nigeria Immigration Service, unstable internet connectivity, inadequate ICT infrastructure, and system downtime continue to impede effective passport processing.

Processing Time

Processing time refers to the duration between passport application submission and final issuance or collection of the passport. In e-governance systems, reduced processing time is considered a major indicator of administrative efficiency and institutional responsiveness. Efficient digital systems are expected to simplify workflow procedures, accelerate approvals, and improve service delivery timelines. However, in Nigeria, passport processing time remains inconsistent due to institutional inefficiencies and infrastructural constraints. Reports indicate that applicants often experience delays extending beyond officially stated timelines because of server failures, biometric bottlenecks, and verification complications. Benson, Yerima, & Cosmas, (2026) argue that although e-government systems improve productivity and record management, poor technological infrastructure and inadequate technical support frequently prolong service delivery processes. Cordella and Tempini (2015) added that digital technologies do not automatically eliminate bureaucratic inefficiency unless supported by institutional restructuring and administrative capacity development. Therefore, processing time remains a critical proxy for assessing bureaucratic efficiency within Nigeria's e-passport system.

Appointment Waiting Period

Appointment waiting period refers to the time applicants spend before obtaining biometric enrollment or interview appointments during passport processing. In highly bureaucratic systems, appointment scheduling delays often emerge because of poor administrative coordination, excessive demand, limited operational capacity, and inadequate personnel deployment. The introduction of online appointment systems in Nigeria was intended to reduce congestion and improve accessibility. Nonetheless, users continue to report prolonged waiting periods caused by overloaded booking systems, limited appointment slots, and technical interruptions. The Federal Government's automation initiative launched in 2024 aimed to reduce human contact and streamline scheduling processes. However, institutional limitations continue to affect implementation outcomes. Egbara & Ayogu (2024) maintain that appointment delays often reflect broader institutional weaknesses such as poor resource allocation, weak inter-agency collaboration, and insufficient infrastructure. Thus, appointment waiting period constitutes an important indicator of bureaucratic delay in passport administration.

Frequency of Application Rescheduling

Frequency of application rescheduling refers to the repeated postponement or alteration of application appointments, biometric enrollment sessions, or processing timelines. Frequent rescheduling reflects instability in organizational workflow and administrative coordination. In Nigeria's e-passport system, rescheduling commonly results from server failures, unavailable personnel, equipment malfunction, verification delays, or technical outages. Oseni (2024) argues that unstable digital infrastructure and weak institutional readiness significantly hinder the successful implementation of e-services in Nigeria. Such disruptions compel applicants to repeatedly adjust their appointments and processing schedules. More so, repeated rescheduling not only delays service delivery but also increases financial and psychological burdens on applicants. Consequently, frequency of application rescheduling serves as a measurable indicator of administrative instability and institutional inefficiency.

Queue Congestion

Queue congestion refers to overcrowding and prolonged waiting lines at passport processing centers despite the existence of digital application systems. One of the principal objectives of e-governance is to reduce physical congestion through automation and remote access systems. However, evidence suggests that many Nigerian passport offices continue to experience overcrowding because applicants often visit offices physically to resolve online processing problems, verification issues, or delayed approvals. According to Awodokun (2024), studies on Nigerian public

administration indicate that weak digital integration and institutional distrust frequently compel citizens to rely on physical interactions despite digital reforms. Queue congestion also reflects inadequate workflow management, insufficient staffing, and limited technological capacity. In many cases, applicants spend several hours or days waiting for biometric capturing or passport collection. Therefore, queue congestion remains a visible manifestation of bureaucratic inefficiency within Nigeria's e-passport system.

File Movement Delays

File movement delays refer to slow administrative movement of applications, approvals, records, or digital documents across departments and processing stages. In traditional bureaucracies, file movement delays are often associated with excessive hierarchy, procedural duplication, and poor communication systems. Although Nigeria's e-passport system is digitized, file movement delays continue to occur because of unstable databases, poor interconnectivity, inconsistent power supply, and inadequate workflow automation. According to Okoh, Okonoboh, and Edegware (2025), digital governance initiatives in Nigeria frequently experience operational disruptions due to infrastructural deficiencies and implementation gaps. File movement delays can also emerge when there is poor synchronization between the Nigeria Immigration Service, the National Identity Management Commission, and other verification agencies. Consequently, delays in transmitting or validating records contribute significantly to prolonged passport processing timelines.

Institutional Logistics

Institutional logistics refer to the administrative, technological, infrastructural, and organizational arrangements that facilitate the operation of public institutions. In e-governance literature, institutional logistics encompass ICT infrastructure, database management systems, workflow coordination, electricity supply, technical personnel, and inter-agency collaboration mechanisms necessary for effective service delivery. It is noteworthy to mention that effective institutional logistics are fundamental to digital governance because electronic systems depend heavily on stable infrastructure, technological integration, and organizational coordination. Oghuvbu et al. (2022) note that inadequate institutional capacity, infrastructural deficiencies, and weak technological support systems remain major barriers to successful e-governance implementation in Nigeria.

Internet Connectivity Quality

Internet connectivity quality refers to the speed, stability, accessibility, and reliability of internet networks supporting digital passport operations. Since e-passport systems rely heavily on online applications, cloud databases, and biometric verification platforms, internet disruptions can significantly hinder service delivery. According to Benson et al., (2026), studies on Nigerian e-governance identify unstable internet infrastructure as a major contributor to digital service inefficiency. Poor connectivity often causes portal downtime, incomplete applications, delayed uploads, and interrupted biometric synchronization processes. Consequently, internet connectivity quality directly affects processing efficiency and administrative responsiveness.

Inter-Agency Coordination

Inter-agency coordination refers to the level of collaboration and information sharing among institutions involved in passport processing, such as the Nigeria Immigration Service, National Identity Management Commission, banks, and ICT providers. Efficient coordination enhances verification accuracy, reduces duplication, and improves workflow efficiency. However, weak institutional collaboration often produces delays in identity verification and data synchronization. According to institutional theory, fragmented organizational structures reduce administrative effectiveness and impede service delivery efficiency (Awodokun, 2024).

Database Integration Efficiency

Database integration efficiency refers to the ability of digital systems to exchange, synchronize, and process information across interconnected institutional platforms. In Nigeria's passport administration system, database integration involves linking passport records with NIN databases and biometric verification systems. According to Lo et al., (2022), poor integration often results in validation errors, duplicate records, and interrupted processing procedures. Scholars emphasize that effective digital governance requires integrated data systems capable of ensuring seamless administrative coordination.

Workflow Automation Level

Workflow automation level refers to the extent to which administrative procedures are digitally managed with minimal manual intervention. Highly automated systems improve consistency, reduce human error, and accelerate administrative processes. The Nigerian government introduced automated passport application systems to reduce physical interactions and bureaucratic bottlenecks. Nevertheless, incomplete automation and dependence on manual approvals continue to slow operational efficiency. Workflow automation therefore remains a critical determinant of

bureaucratic performance in passport administration.

Power Supply Reliability

Power supply reliability refers to the consistency and stability of electricity necessary for operating digital infrastructure and biometric equipment. Nigeria's persistent electricity challenges significantly affect ICT operations across public institutions. Unstable power supply can interrupt biometric capturing, server operations, internet connectivity, and digital record management. Azeta et al. (2021) identify infrastructural inadequacies, particularly electricity instability, as major barriers to successful e-governance implementation in developing countries. Thus, reliable electricity remains essential for efficient e-passport processing.

Effect of Internet Connectivity Quality on E-Passport Processing Time in Nigeria

Internet connectivity is essential to e-governance because digital platforms depend on stable networks for communication, data transfer, biometric verification, and online scheduling. In Nigeria's e-passport system, poor connectivity affects application uploads, biometric synchronization, payment validation, and communication between passport offices and central databases. Imam (2024) argued that poor internet connectivity undermines e-governance by disrupting online authentication, delaying data transmission, and reducing system responsiveness. Similarly, Oghuvbu, Gberevbie, and Oni (2022) identified inadequate ICT infrastructure and unreliable broadband as major barriers to efficient electronic government services. Within the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Benson, Yerima, and Cosmas (2026) found that unstable connectivity causes system downtime, processing delays, and reduced staff productivity, while Chikaji and Jegede (2024) reported weak internet networks and inadequate digital infrastructure as continuing limitations to NIS automation.

The 2024 introduction of contactless and automated passport applications further demonstrated this dependence, with users reporting delayed uploads, failed biometric synchronization, system errors, and prolonged approvals. From the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) perspective, poor connectivity reduces perceived usefulness and ease of use, thereby weakening technology adoption, satisfaction, and operational efficiency (Chikaji & Jegede, 2024). Overall, poor internet connectivity increases e-passport processing time through system interruptions, failed data transmission, slow verification, and repeated applications.

Inter-Agency Coordination and Appointment Waiting Period in E-Passport Processing in Nigeria

E-passport processing requires coordination among the NIS, National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), banks, security agencies, and ICT providers for identity verification, payment confirmation, background checks, and biometric validation. Adeleye, Ahlan, Ibrahim, and Ahmed (2024) identified poor inter-agency coordination as a major institutional barrier to e-government implementation, resulting in fragmented communication, duplicated procedures, delayed approvals, and inconsistent verification.

The integration of National Identification Number (NIN) verification has increased the need for NIS–NIMC coordination, but validation failures and database synchronization problems have caused delays. Benson et al. (2026) similarly found that coordination gaps among departments and technical partners continue to create appointment backlogs despite improvements from e-government reforms. Network governance theory further suggests that effective digital public services require synchronized institutional relationships; therefore, weak inter-agency coordination creates bottlenecks that prolong appointment waiting periods.

Database Integration Efficiency and the Frequency of Application Rescheduling in Nigeria's E-Passport System

Database integration enables digital systems to exchange and synchronize applicants' identities, payment records, biometrics, and documents. Chikaji and Jegede (2024) found that fragmented information systems reduce automation efficiency and increase documentation errors in the NIS. Ogbeide, Israel, and Sophia (2024) similarly argued that AI-enabled immigration systems depend on centralized and synchronized databases for effective service delivery.

Poor integration can cause unsuccessful data synchronization, missing documents, unupdated application statuses, and malfunctioning appointment systems. Interoperability problems among identity, biometric, and payment platforms may also require repeated manual verification. Thus, inefficient database integration increases application rescheduling through verification failures, inconsistent records, and appointment-management disruptions.

Workflow Automation Level and Queue Congestion in E-Passport Processing Centers in Nigeria

Workflow automation uses digital systems to perform routine tasks such as online applications, document verification, scheduling, biometric capture, and approval routing. Benson et al. (2026) reported that digital reforms improved staff productivity

and reduced bureaucratic bottlenecks, while the Federal Government's 2024 contactless passport initiative sought to reduce physical queues and human interference. However, Chikaji and Jegede (2024) observed that many immigration documentation processes remain manual despite automation reforms. This partial automation creates hybrid systems in which online applications still require manual verification and approval, slowing workflow. Inadequate infrastructure and insufficient staff training further limit automation effectiveness. User experiences also indicate delays in scheduling and approval, showing that incomplete automation continues to contribute to queue congestion. Higher automation therefore reduces congestion, whereas partial automation sustains overcrowding and slow service delivery.

Power Supply Reliability and File Movement Delays in E-Passport Processing in Nigeria

Reliable electricity is necessary for servers, biometric equipment, internet routers, and electronic documentation. Adeleye et al. (2024) identified inconsistent power infrastructure as a major constraint on digital government, while Oghuvbu et al. (2022) regarded inadequate electricity as a critical barrier to e-governance. In the immigration sector, Chikaji and Jegede (2024) found that unstable electricity disrupts biometric capture, database access, and file transmission. Power outages also interrupt internet connectivity and system operations, sometimes forcing officers to return to manual procedures. Research on AI integration similarly shows that continuous power is necessary for real-time processing and data synchronization. Consequently, unreliable electricity contributes to file movement delays, communication breakdowns, system downtime, and administrative inefficiency.

Bureaucratic Delay in E-Passport Processing: Institutional Logistics and User Adaptation in Nigeria

Although Nigeria's e-passport digitization sought to reduce corruption, eliminate middlemen, and improve efficiency, evidence from 2021–2025 indicates continued extortion, illegal payments, favouritism, and preferential treatment. Akewushola (2022), citing ICIR investigations, reported that some immigration officers frustrated applicants using official procedures while prioritizing those who paid unofficial fees for "fast-tracking." Extra payments were reportedly demanded before biometric capture, approval, or printing. Applicants who refused bribes experienced longer delays, while those with financial influence or personal connections received preferential treatment (Akewushola, 2022). Bankole (2022) similarly reported continued extortion, including cases where applicants paid amounts above official fees to obtain passports within a reasonable period. Al Jazeera (2022) further documented

how unofficial "express processing" allowed connected or paying applicants to bypass normal queues. Institutional corruption was also reflected in anti-corruption actions. The ICPC (2024) secured the conviction of NIS officer Quadri Adeyinka for fraudulently collecting ₦100,000 from a passport applicant, resulting in a seven-year prison sentence. The EFCC also investigated passport and visa racketeering following complaints of extortion and illegal collections (Within Nigeria, 2024). Public testimonies and online discussions from 2022–2025 likewise indicated perceptions that bribery remained a faster route to passport issuance.

Overall, the evidence suggests that digitization has improved automation but has not eliminated bureaucratic corruption. Instead, extortion, preferential treatment, and unofficial payments have adapted to the electronic system, reflecting continuing weaknesses in institutional accountability, personnel monitoring, and administrative control.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Max Weber's Bureaucratic Theory (Weber, 1947) and Institutional Theory, as developed by Meyer and Rowan (1977) and Scott (2014). Bureaucratic Theory explains how hierarchy, formal rules, specialization, and procedural control influence administrative efficiency. In Nigeria's e-passport system, digitization was introduced to standardize procedures, reduce human interference, improve transparency, and accelerate passport processing. However, excessive procedures, centralized approvals, and weak administrative coordination have continued to contribute to delays within the Nigeria Immigration Service.

Institutional Theory explains how organizational norms, culture, and informal practices shape institutional behaviour. The theory suggests that formal reforms may coexist with established unofficial practices. In Nigeria's passport administration, reported extortion, favouritism, illegal cash collection, and preferential treatment persisted alongside digital reforms. Akewushola (2022) reported, based on ICIR investigations, that some immigration officers manipulated delays to obtain unofficial payments from applicants.

Tenets of the Theories

The major tenets of Bureaucratic Theory include hierarchy, division of labour, formal rules, specialization, impersonality, and merit-based administration. Institutional Theory emphasizes institutional norms, organizational culture, legitimacy, adaptation, and the persistence of informal practices.

Application of the Theories to the Study

Bureaucratic Theory is relevant because the study examines how multiple approval stages, administrative procedures, technological challenges, and other bottlenecks contribute to delays in e-passport processing. Institutional Theory is equally relevant because it explains the persistence of informal practices and corruption despite digital reforms. Evidence from ICIR investigations and anti-corruption agencies indicated that applicants who paid unofficial fees sometimes received faster processing, while others experienced prolonged delays (Bankole, 2022). Together, the theories provide a framework for understanding how formal administrative structures and informal institutional practices influence e-passport processing in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopts descriptive research design to explain how institutional logistics and user adaptation result to bureaucratic delay in e-passport processing in Nigeria from 2021 to 2025. Data were obtained from government publications, investigative reports, journal articles, and anti-corruption agency reports. This study was conducted in Nigeria, focusing on selected Nigeria Immigration Service passport offices located in Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, and Enugu. These locations were purposively selected due to their high concentration of passport applications, biometric enrolment activities, and documented cases of processing delays and service delivery complaints within the e-passport system. Based on operational evidence from the Nigeria Immigration Service, Nigeria processes millions of passport applications annually, with high-volume centres such as Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, and Enugu accounting for a substantial proportion of national applications (Nigeria Immigration Service, operational reports, 2023 - 2025).

Qualitative data obtained from official reports and documented investigations are analyzed through content analysis. This method enables interpretation of corruption patterns, institutional inefficiencies, and administrative practices within the Nigeria Immigration Service. The findings are presented in thematic form to establish relationships between bureaucratic delay, institutional logistics, corruption, and public adaptation strategies.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that poor internet connectivity significantly affected e-passport processing time in Nigeria between 2021 and 2025. Unstable connectivity disrupted online applications, biometric verification, data transmission, and other digital processes, thereby increasing waiting times and reducing administrative efficiency.

The study also established that bureaucratic delays persisted despite digitization reforms. Technological inefficiencies, centralized approval procedures, weak inter-agency coordination, and administrative bottlenecks within the Nigeria Immigration Service contributed to prolonged processing periods, leading some applicants to rely on agents and intermediaries.

Furthermore, poor integration of biometric databases, identity verification systems, and passport platforms resulted in failed uploads, incomplete records, repeated biometric appointments, and congestion at processing centres. Limited workflow automation also contributed to delays because several stages continued to depend on manual verification and human intervention. The findings further revealed that unreliable electricity supply disrupted biometric equipment, internet services, printing, and electronic document transmission, resulting in operational downtime and accumulated applications. In addition, reported extortion, illegal cash collection, and preferential treatment persisted despite digitization, undermining transparency, accountability, and fairness.

Overall, the findings show that e-passport administration during 2021–2025 was constrained by poor infrastructure, bureaucratic inefficiency, weak institutional coordination, inadequate database integration, limited automation, unreliable electricity, and reported corrupt practices. Thus, digitization alone is insufficient to guarantee efficient passport administration.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that the efficiency of Nigeria's e-passport system between 2021 and 2025 was influenced by interconnected technological, infrastructural, administrative, institutional, and user-related factors. Poor internet connectivity, inadequate database integration, limited workflow automation, and unreliable electricity were associated with longer processing periods, repeated appointments, operational interruptions, and application backlogs.

The study further concludes that institutional and administrative arrangements remained critical to the effectiveness of digital reforms. Fragmented verification procedures, centralized decision-making, weak inter-agency coordination, and continued reliance on manual processes created procedural bottlenecks that digitization alone could not eliminate.

Regarding user adaptation, applicants responded to delays and uncertainty through repeated visits, appointment rescheduling, reliance on agents, and alternative communication channels. This demonstrates that citizens actively adapt to weaknesses in digital service systems and that e-governance effectiveness should therefore be assessed from both institutional and user perspectives.

The study also concludes that digitization did not completely eliminate reported

malpractice, including illegal cash collection and preferential treatment. From the perspective of Institutional Theory, this suggests that formal technological reforms may coexist with established informal practices where accountability, enforcement, and institutional structures remain weak.

Ultimately, improving Nigeria's e-passport system requires more than technological expansion. It demands reliable infrastructure, integrated databases, greater workflow automation, streamlined administrative procedures, effective inter-agency coordination, stronger accountability mechanisms, and user-centred services that minimize repeated physical visits and dependence on intermediaries.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Federal Government, through the Ministry of Interior and the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), should strengthen internet infrastructure at passport centres through reliable broadband, upgraded servers, and alternative network links. The NIS ICT Directorate should monitor network performance and downtime, while service-level agreements with accredited providers should ensure regular maintenance and prompt technical support.
2. The NIS, in collaboration with the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), identity-verification institutions, payment platforms, and other relevant agencies, should establish an integrated interoperability framework for secure information exchange. Common data standards, secure data-sharing protocols, and application programming interfaces should improve synchronization, while regular audits should address incomplete records, duplicate information, and data inconsistencies.
3. The NIS should expand automation in routine passport processes, including application submission, payment confirmation, appointment scheduling, document routing, tracking, and notifications. However, human oversight should be retained for biometric verification, identity authentication, security screening, fraud detection, and sensitive approvals through risk-sensitive workflows and escalation mechanisms.
4. The Ministry of Interior and NIS should establish sustainable power-continuity systems at passport centres, including, where feasible, hybrid combinations of solar energy, battery storage, grid electricity, and standby generators. Dedicated funding should cover preventive maintenance, equipment replacement, fuel management, and technical support.
5. The NIS should strengthen disciplinary, supervisory, audit, and complaint-handling mechanisms to address illegal payments, preferential treatment, and other misconduct. Transparent complaint channels, inspections, transaction monitoring, and complainant protection should be institutionalized, with ICPC

and EFCC providing external investigation and enforcement support where legally appropriate.

6. The NIS should strengthen citizen-centred support by providing clear online instructions, transparent fee and processing information, real-time status updates, appointment reminders, and accessible complaint channels. Regular assessment of applicants' experiences should guide improvements in usability, accessibility, responsiveness, transparency, accountability, and public confidence in e-passport administration.

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