

# POST COVID-19 AND THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC SERVICE: CHANGES AND CHALLENGES TO ADAPT TO NEW NORMAL

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**Abstract:** One of the most significant endeavours affected by the coronavirus pandemic is the public administration. The pandemic hit the Nigerian Public Service and its employees in an unprecedented way. The pandemic outlined in bold relief the inadequacies of public administration and effectively disrupted previous operational models (Old normal), and imbued changes such as telework and digital adoption. These changes are pervasive and has the potential to last beyond the pandemic. The Nigerian Public Service in the post Covid – 19 pandemic whether we like it or not has to re-adjust to a new normal that requires urgent reform administrative framework. Amid these circumstances it is essential to ask how has the Nigeria public service changed in the Post Covid-19 to achieve the “New Normal”. Though many scholars have conducted research on Covid -19 pandemic, there is no comprehensive research on the changes to achieve the new normal at the Public Service and public servants levels in Nigeria. The study aims to study this using the emergency-learning-institutionalization-New Normal (ELIN) Framework based on the timeline of the pandemic. Specifically, the article aims to study the overall trends on how the Nigerian Public Service and its employees are adapting to tele-work and digital tools in the new normal, what they have learnt and how they would sustain the change, and the challenges they encountered in adopting the changes. The study analyzed secondary data such as published and unpublished articles in Public Administration etc. The findings of the work include, that there is increasing trends towards the adoption of tele-work and digital tools among the public servants in Nigeria, and that efficient and effective` implementation of tele-work policies and digital transformation plans at the management level will ensure the sustainability in operation of the Nigerian Public Service in the new normal, that there is an overall increase in the flexibility of the Nigerian public service and the public servants in adopting digital innovation solutions to service delivery etc. In order to sustain the changes adopted in the new normal, we recommend among others that resources should be deployed at the public service organization level and employees’ level to enhance digital transformation.

**Keywords:** Post Covid-19, Public Service, New Normal, Tele-work.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Corona-virus disease, otherwise known as Covid-19 originated within China in December, 2019 (WHO, 2023) and gripped the world with shock. In March 2020, the disease was declared a pandemic, and has affected over 180 countries of the world. As at June, 2023, the world has recorded Seven Hundred and Sixty-Eight Million, One Hundred and Eighty-Seven Thousand and Ninety Six (768,187,096) confirmed cases, Six Million, Nine Hundred and Forty Five Thousand Seven Hundred and Fourteen (6,945,714) deaths globally (WHO 2023). Nigeria recorded her first case of COVID-19 on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020, As at 25<sup>th</sup> June 2023, Nigeria recorded about 266,675 confirmed cases and, 3,155 deaths (WHO, 2023).

The disease turned out to be a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) event which chocked and distressed every segment of human civilization (Murugan, Rajavel Aggarwal and Sing, 2020). Governments all over the world, implemented some measures to contain it, such as, strict lockdowns, social distancing, contact tracing and digitalization to save lives, while ensuring continuity of essential service (Murugan et, al. 2020).

The pandemic changed the way of life of citizens of Nigeria. It affected all areas of the public service and the citizens directly and indirectly. The Nigerian government enforced some restrictions and implemented some policies to contain the pandemic.

The restrictions affected the Nigeria public service in many ways. Attendance of workers to their official places of work turned out to be very low to the extent that most Ministries, Departments and Agencies recorded poor service delivery, and absenteeism. The intensity and duration of mobility restrictions significantly affected all organisation and their employees across sectors (Kniffin, Narayanan, Anseel, Antonakis, Ashford, Bakker, Bamberger, Bapuji, Bhawe, Choi, et al, 2021).

As the Nigerian economy and the society gradually reopen, the major challenge becomes how to properly and gradually reopen to gain efficient foothold for the public service in the new administrative normal, and to make the public administrative system sufficiently dynamic and pre-emptive to anticipate a future pandemic. With the sudden change to a new normal, we look at work and workplace dynamics the Nigerian public service had to embrace- new administrative change and forecasting.

The continuity of services became challenging across public sector (Schuster, Weitzman, Sass Mikkelsen, Meyer Sahling, Berskh, Fukuyama, Paskov, Rogger, Mistree and Kay 2020). Basic services such as healthcare (Mann, Chen, Chunara and Testa 2020) education Aefsky 2021) public administration and food delivery (Bekir, 2021), community service (Bin-Nashwan and Daihani 2020) were affected. The brutal and abrupt disruption by Covid-19 significantly threw the Nigerian public servants into a frenzy, forcing them not only to deal with fighting its spread but also trying to manage its socio-economic fall out. The pandemic experience allowed Nigerian public service to demonstrate their digital agility and challenges of remote working.

In the post Covid-19 era, organizations tend to make digitalization and digital transformation a rapid strategic focus (Accenture, 2020; Bajaj 2020). According to Bajaj, (2020); Iansiti and Richards, (2020), one of the most important aspects of the this transformation has been providing a remote infrastructure that can support an entirely workforce.

The new administrative normal requires a new professional skills and competency for navigating the administrative demands of a public service in the post Covid-19 pandemic era.

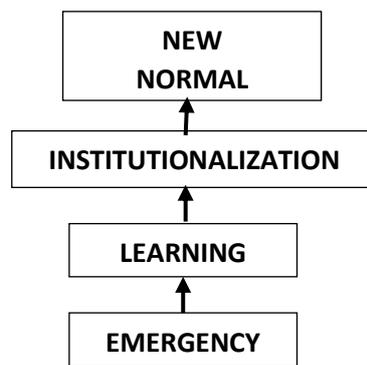
To overcome the challenges, the Nigerian public service has to reconfigure her work mechanisms, resources, systems and workforces. The Post Covid-19 public servants are faced with unexpected changes to their work environment, many had to adjust themselves to remote work structures and adopt digital solutions to ensure service continuity (14, 17, 20).

According to the Director General of National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) Inuwa Abdullahi, what was normal before now, such as going to school, attending religious congregation and socializing with family and friends is now a huge risk, especially with the new strain in this 2023. He noted that Nigeria is prioritizing digital solution because that is the only thing working in both pandemic and post pandemic era. He went further to say that pandemic accelerated technology trends and shaping the future of digital world and digital economy in general. Prof. Sanjay Sorma, while speaking on "Radical Innovation", tasked Nigerian government to carry out the institutionalization of innovation culture in her public service. He further charged public servants to think outside the box in carrying their statutory functions. The duration, intensity and implications of the Covid-19 pandemic however offered a significant opportunity for the organizations and its employees to invite change (Schuster, Weitzman, SassMikkelsen, Meyer Sahling, Bersch, et al2020, Ansell, Serensen, Torfing 2020, Nemteanu, Debija, 2020, Ahmad, Alshurideh, Alkurdi, Salloum 2021, Rai, Rai, Sngh 2021).

Motivated by these developments, the study aims to answer these research questions: Are there increasing trends towards the adoption of tele-work and digital tools by the Nigeria public servants in the new normal?, how would efficient and effective implementation of tele-work policies and digital transformation plans ensure sustainability in operations of the Nigerian public service and the employees in adopting innovation to service delivery in the new normal? The unit of analysis in this study is the Nigerian public service and public servants.

The Nigerian Public Service and Public Servants in order not to be left behind evolved in their response to the crises throughout the lifecycle of the pandemic and beyond. Based on this idea, the researchers adopted the emergency-learning-institutionalization-new normal (ELIN) frame work as was used by Raghavan et al (2021) in their work. This helps to

explain the transition from pre-to-post Covid-19 public service delivery. ELIN framework describes the Covid-19 pandemic as a disruption that elevates the response of organizations and employees to a new level – i.e, a post Covid-19 “New Normal”. (See figure 1 below). We propose that the principles and model of Nigerian Public service sustainability has significantly changed in the post Covid-19 situations since Covid-19 disrupted the operations of the public service. In as much as some research has been carried out on Covid-19 pandemic, there is need for a more and proper understanding of the changes the Nigerian Public Service and the Public Servants have undergone to adapt to the new normal.



**Figure 1: The emergency-Learning-Institutionalization-New Normal (ELIN) Framework for discussing the effect of Covid-19 on the Nigerian public service delivery change to a New Normal.**

## 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Nigerian Public Service in the Pre-Covid-19 Pandemic.

The term public service is a very wide organ encompassing the civil service, legislature, judiciary, executive, statutory corporations/parastatals, educational institutions, security agencies, and other organizations in which the federal or state governments own controlling share or interest (Anazodo, 2014). It involves a service which is provided by government to the people through public servants, for the benefit of the citizens.

The Nigerian public service has its antecedence in the British Colonial Administration, from where it derived its culture and practices (Anazodo, 2014). It is the main engine for delivering public policy, public goods and administration.

The Nigerian Public Service system before Covid-19 had been afflicted by a bureau-pathological protocol defined by a collusion between what we all know as the Nigerian factor and some damaging debilities (Basoenewokoma, 2020, Olaopa, 2020, 9, Aug.).

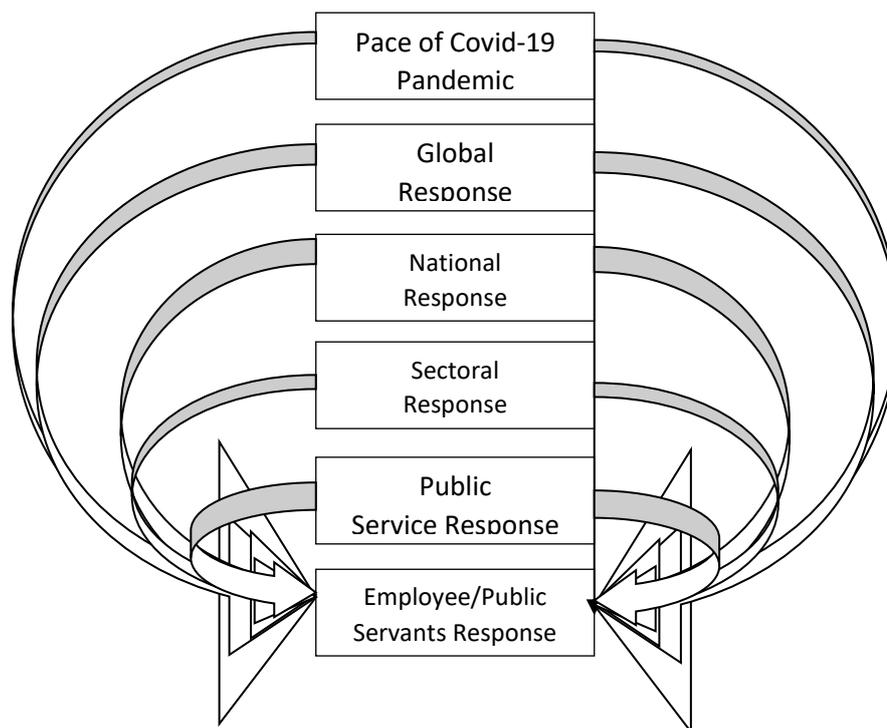
The public service was bogged down by bureaucracy, red tapism, graft, nepotism, inefficiency occasioned by poor work environment and poor remuneration. The Nigerian Head of Service therefore stated and agreed that there is need for urgent review of the civil service rules that stifle creativity, ingenuity and innovation. Furthermore, some analysts called for thorough re-orientation of public servants across all cadres on the present policy direction, noting that the Nigeria public service is filled with men and women who are not amendable to changes.

The Nigerian public service before COVID-19 outbreak lacked sufficient flexibility or change orientation and competence for smart innovation and good practices. It also has poor sensitivity to re-skilling to address capacity deficits in the dynamics of programmes and project implementation. The weberian bureaucratic model which the Nigeria public service adopts rides on a one-model fits-all service-wide standard operating framework encoded in what we call the “Nigerian Public Service Rule (Olaopa, 2020). According to Olaopa, (2020), McGregor calls this “Theory X” as it was founded on regulatory control and maintenance of law and order. Thus it is suitable for managing the “Input process, but is essentially weak in managing the outcome results framework (Basoenewokoma, 2020). Unfortunately, this was the Old administrative system normal the Covid-19 met Nigeria public service with. The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the unpreparedness, weakness and fault lines of the old Nigerian public service system (the old normal). The consequences was enormous for Nigerians, ranging from unmitigated disruption, economic recession, to loss of lives. He further stated that, as the Nigerian economy and the society gradually re-open, the major challenge becomes how to properly and gradually re-open to gain an efficient foothold for the public service in the new administrative normal. The problem is how to make the administrative system of Nigeria sufficiently dynamic and preemptive.

**2.2 The New Normal**

What is the New Normal? Everyday something new happens and takes world leaders by surprise, the latest being Omicron, the new variant for COVID-19 that is disrupting all spheres of human endeavor.

From the perspective of this work, the new normal can be defined as a situation where the nature and behavior of the Nigerian public service and public servants have changed in response to service delivery in a post Covid-19 period . The new normal is a transitional phase where changes are implemented and perceived at varying spaces, scale, intensity across the public service organization. The new normal also signifies fundamental shifts in operations respectively, due to the sustained nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has lasted for more two years (Raghavan, Demireioglu and Orazgalivyevev, 2021). It indicates a significant change in the existing model, but does not limit the extent of change that can be achieved. The new normal is therefore an ideal opportunity to undertake a path-breaking changes or innovations at the operational, structural and behavioural levels (Raghavan et al 2021). In the Nigerian public service, the term institution has been used to identify change that may outlive the pandemic to be part and parcel of service delivery in the new normal. Institutionalized changes have been adopted by the Nigerian Public Service and its employees based on their experience of the crises and will continue to be part of the public service system thereby becoming a new normal. The changes have allowed the Nigerian public service to build resilience and have clear road map to similar crises in the future. Figure 1 above represent the emergency-learning-institutionalization-new normal framework. Going by the frame work, the emergency phase represents the very difficult times and overwhelming reaction of the Nigerian public service and public servants to the pandemic occasioned by the nationwide lock down imposed by the Nigerian government. The pandemic made digitalization and digital transformation a rapid strategic focus (Accenture, 2020, Bajaj, 2020). The service implemented tele work during this disruptive time in their operational model. The Nigerian public service having survived the response phase entered the learning phase where they started changing their service delivery models. It is the phase where it is adopting technology based service delivery viz: Cashless payments, teleconferencing, digital management virtual teaching and e-learning, etc. This phase marks a proactive approach by the Nigerian public service to enable the safety of the public servants and Nigerian citizens by experimenting with the new ideas and technology. Example include the increased adoption of telemedicine and digital solutions in the health care sector (Ichor; Yip; 30 Zhao; Foo; Lim: Ting: Loan; Wong; Yong; Tan et al 2020), enhanced mobile ordering systems observed in businesses, interestingly solutions that are effective against the pandemic were adopted more widely by the public service (See figure 2 below), showing a trend of adoptive innovation in the Nigerian public service. This helped the service to bring about changes that has shaped their operations and service delivery in the new normal.



**Figure 2: Factors that Influenced Covid 19 response in the Nigerian Public Service**

From the figure 2 above, we can observe that from a broader perspective the pace of the pandemic was the key determinant of how the Nigerian public service and public servants responded to the pandemic, followed by global, national and sectoral responses.

Periscoping the above from the system theory point of view, the learning or adaptation of different sectors relationships and interdependencies can be explained by the response effectiveness across each box as shown in Fig. 2 above. Although the study focuses on Post Covid-19 and the Nigerian public service, changes and challenges to adapt to new normal, the other responses equally affected the service and employees response. Successful responses were integrated into the system as best practices, failures forced the public service to adopt new solutions or imbibe effective solutions implemented by others as part of the learning phase (Chesbrough, 2020, Sampat and Shadlen, 2021). Survival pushed the Nigerian public service and its employees to change the old bureaucratic attitudes they are used to and adopted innovative and behavioural change patterns. At the institutionalization phase, the lessons learned in the learning phase became more embedded as new public policies and operational models which indicated a fundamental shift from the old normal. The Nigerian Public Service saw incredible transformations in service delivery such as e-courts, where court hearings were shifted to virtual platforms thus saving, huge resources (Chiodo, 2020 42), Virtual teaching and learning where lecturers and tutors teach their students online, e-governance, telemedicine etc become the new normal. The public servants adopted the new normal changes to become more resilient in case of potential future crises (Seetharaman, 2020).

### ***2.3 The New Normal Sustainability in the Nigerian Public Service***

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century public service, technology enables the organization to interact with stakeholders, manage large volume of data, information and knowledge, building relationships, obtain feedback and implement control mechanisms for adaptation and improvement (Lai and Lin, 2017). Learning and institutionalization comprise the changes in the Public Service which can continue to evolve perpetually in the new normal (Raghavan et al, 2021). The new normal can be perceived as a situation where organization may start to own and lead the change continuously, even after the threat of the pandemic has subsided to some extent, it is at this point that the changes learnt and institutionalized by the public service is said to have become more sustainable in the above phases. The pandemic has enhanced intra and inter-departmental learning through collaboration observed in the public servants. This created a dynamic and multidimensional learning sphere where new solutions and innovations were adopted to survive, and if this process continues, it can make public service employee more resilient and help to create sustainable working models and solutions in the long run.

During the Covid-19 pandemic the key characteristics of the new normal for the Nigerian public service and its employees is telework, and digital adoption, which are the cross-sectorial changes that emerged in response to the pandemic. Telework is a work arrangement that allows employees to perform work, during any time or place approved as alternate worksite (e.g home, telework center etc). It is an essential tool for achieving a resilient result-oriented workforce. It is people doing their work at locations different from their normal office. It entails making use of the internet, email, telephones/mobile phones and other fast communication channels (Raghavan et al, 2021). In the coming sections adoption of telework and digital adoption and how it has affected the Nigeria public service and public servants will be looked into

## **3. DIGITAL ADOPTION AND TELEWORK IN NIGERIA PUBLIC SERVICE ORGANISATION LEVEL**

Covid-19 crises affected the Nigerian Public service and forced it to adjust its activities to adopt enhance service delivery. The crises led to learning and change at the organizational level (Smith and Elliott, 2007). In the event of the pandemic the public service as an organization faced the fundamental challenge of protecting her employees, which is her most valuable resource while providing services to the citizens. This led the public service to embed greater flexibility in processes, digitize operations, increase collaboration and integrate nimbleness while responding to uncertain situations.

### ***3.1 Tele-work/Telecommuting.***

Before the crises of Covid-19 the Nigeria public service has always been reluctant to change, but rather operates through a great tide line that is managed through damage control and bureaucratic bottlenecks. The factors that hindered the public service willingness to change among others is lack of preparedness and technological limitations. Tele-work altered the employment and psychological contract between the public service organization and the employees. Some studies highlighted the potential benefits of telework (Rocha, 62-64 and Aador, 2018: Tremblay: 2002: and Martin and MC Donnell 2012), and observed that telework can have positive outcomes such as improved service delivery. Because this model was different from the bureaucratic model in use, the Nigerian Public Service struggled in the beginning but within

a few months it was able to implement procedures to improve telework adoption. Despite the challenges, the Nigerian public service adoption of telework enunciated positive changes as a greater awareness of employee well-being, a more inclusive work environment and value based administration in the service became apparent. The public service was thus encouraged to develop and adopt policies that integrate telework training, implementation and management, making it easier for public servants to adopt.

According to Raghavan et al, (2021), due to wider cross-sectorial adoption, experts observe that telework will generate long term change in organisations, and the new normal may see organisations adapting hybrid working models which is a combination of office work and telework. The Nigerian Public Service employees no doubt entered a new era of working by implementing a hybrid approach to work.

### **3.2 Public Service and Digital Adoption**

Effort to upgrade technological infrastructure at the public service organisational level and the deployment of adequate technological support for employee can be key factors in enabling wider adoption for effective service delivery. Cyber security is a primary concern for the public service to digitize its operations. This is because, moving fluidly between the public service and home networks might mean the organizations network is suddenly without secure borders. Further, scholars have suggested that collaboration can help the service overcome their capacity and skill gaps. For the Nigerian public service to sustain digital adoption, it has to address the growing digital issues of transformation in this post pandemic era. Lack of understanding the relevance of digital solution, the absence of digital strategy, lack of skills and risk of change are the key challenges in post pandemic era. For sustainable digital adoption the Nigerian public service need to address the problem of poor knowledge in digital divide within and outside the service.

## **4. WORK MODEL TRANSITION AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES CHANGE**

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic and adaptation to the new normal, the Nigerian public servants, many who were used to operating in routine predictable and regulated systems have to deploy quick thinking, instant creativity and innovation to counter the destruction caused by the pandemic in service delivery, especially at areas such as healthcare and education. The pandemic has seriously changed the way public servants deliver services to citizens. The sudden transition of the working model has had a significant effect on employee attitudes and behaviour (Dunlop, Ongaro and Baker, 2020). According to research, not less than 63 percent of all employees adopted telework in the post Covid-19 pandemic. Adoption of telework was not wide spread before Covid-19 due to resistance from employees at the managerial and operational levels of the public service. However, the pandemic created a dire situation where employees were forced to adopt telework, and to some extent improve their perception of the model. The inherent challenge to this transition remained in the form of reluctance to changing working models. Organizational policies and managerial support increased adoption of telework among employees in the Post Corona virus pandemic era. Work from home (WFH) arrangements were made by the public service managers, and the arrangements required configuration of bureaucratic structures of control, funding, accountability and patterns of oversight (Schuster, et al, 2020). Empirical research has shown that work from home is effectively implemented in the public service organization under certain conditions (Taskin and Edwards, 2007). However, it is widely recognized that organizational policies and administrative support have increased the adoption of telework among employees. It is important to note that telework is more common among high skilled groups of public employees.

Interestingly, the pandemic has led to a significant improvement in the perception of digital technologies across sectors (Nagel, 2020 121). Nigerian employees have become more accepting of advanced technologies, which may increase curiosity and motivation to learn them. Going forward, it is expected that public service will not only prioritize digital skill development among employees but also engage leading telecom, firms such as MTN, Airtel and government agencies such as the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Nigerian Communications Satellite Systems, Galaxy Backbone and Nigerian Postal Service (NIPOST), to help implement service effectively.

## **5. DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY**

### **5.1 Summary**

The study found out that the Covid-19 pandemic has sped up telework/or e-work and digital adoption in the Nigeria public service and also at the public servants' levels in the post pandemic era. We also discovered that telecommuting or telework by the Nigeria public employees is positively rife for long-term adoption, however some of the employees still face some

challenges in adopting it. The public service having engaged in digital adoption faces some challenges, such as cybercrime and continuous' threat of cyber security. The effect of the disease on the public service and public servants/employees is enormous and complicated, it has both positive, negative and uncertain trends due to numerous factors as can be seen in the table 1 below;

Certain trends observed across the public service level and employee level in the new normal include;

S/N	TELEWORK	DIGITAL ADOPTION
a.	On the positive side, there is; increased attention to the public employee welfare as policy	In the positive side of digital adoption, there is acceleration of digital transformation at the public service organization level.
b.	Adoption of hybrid working models	There is greater acceptance of digital solutions and managerial support
c.	Decreased resistance to use of technology/telework in service delivery	While on the negative side, there is increase in digital divide, and arise in cyber threats
d.	Implementation of telework policies	There is urgent need for digital skill development
e.	On the negative side, not all employees are conversant with tele-work	
f.	There is uncertainty that success depends on organization policy.	

- (a) Telework resulting from social isolation has inspired the Nigeria public service to adopt a hybrid working models.
- (b) Telework acceptance and digital adoption has increased significantly both at the public service organization level and on the employee level.
- (c) Implementation of the telework policies at the public service organization level has a direct effect on adoption of the model at the level of public service employees.
- (d) Increase in digital divide at the public service level magnifies the skill gaps at the employee level which call for digital skill development programmes.
- (e) Cyber threats and crimes can undermine trust in digital solutions and its benefits.

**5.2 Implications**

In the words of former American President, John F. Kennedy “The Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word “Crises”. One brush stroke stands for danger, the other for opportunity”.

The Corona Virus pandemic has pushed the Nigerian public service into opportunities to achieve more within short timelines, innovations, quick service delivery, digital connectivity, adjustment in management practices/managerial innovations and sustainability of the public service increased in the learning phase of the pandemic despite serious resources constraints and pressure. As Event Lindquist puts it “Many governments have instituted digital services agencies, established open data, platforms, adopted social media channels, created innovation labs and proclaimed commitment to open government”. The public service has become more agile and adaptive, leading to improved efficiency of operations in service delivery.

The public service collaborated actively and spontaneously with community-based organizations (Chen; 125 Shen; Huang, 2020), and the private sector (Ito; Ponge Luppe, 2020 125) for effective responses to the pandemic. However, the crucial contribution of this study is to analyze and understand how the Nigerian public service has changed in the post Covid-19 pandemic to achieve the new normal, and the challenge bedeviling it in achieving result. By bringing together the public service organization and the public employees who work in it, the study aims to bring the more pervasive long term changes in the service. This approach also helps the study to overcome the lack of level diversity, generally observed in social science studies. Therefore, including the different levels of analysis is crucial to understanding how employees of the public service, and the public service organization have been affected by the pandemic in the post Covid-19 era. Digital adoption and telework have effect on the long-term sustainability of the public service (Loia; Adionlfi, 2021) by reducing costs and

enhancing service delivery of the public service and its employees. Inferring from our discussion and summary above, we saw that positive changes improved work in the Nigerian public service and change behavior of the employees thus making their adoption to the new normal sustainable.

As has been highlighted earlier, technology adoption will be irreversible, in the post covid-19 new normal. Since digital technology is a rapid strategic focus, it is expected to reduce negative effects such as cyber threats. As the benefits of digitalization and digital solutions are higher than their negative effects, the Nigerian public service and its employees are expected to sustain its adoption even after Covid-19 in Nigeria.

In this study the attempt at taking stock of post Covid-19 was made focusing on learning and the institutionalizing of telework and digital adoption by the Nigeria Public Service and Changes to achieve a new normal.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Sustaining resilience and building more effective and responsive public service is very crucial.

The public administrators should prepare the public service to be more resilient for any future crises, public servants must turn the challenges posed by covid-19 pandemic into opportunity for devising strategies for strengthening the resilience, effectiveness and responsiveness of the public service and the services they deliver.

2. Resources should be deployed at the public service organizational level and employees level to enhance digital transformation.

3. The Nigerian public service need to update their information and communication technology (ICT) resources and talent for enhanced digital adoption. They should adopt and embed cyber security tools and services as part of digital processes in order to ensure trust by the public employees in the post covid-19 public service.

4. Collaborative networking should be prioritized. Government must pay attention to continuously developing capacities of the public service and public servants by collaborating with technology firms and academic institutions to improve the digital skills of the employees. It is important to note that, digital skill development in employees is an effective way to overcome the digital divide within the public service.

5. Enhancement of remote work infrastructure for employees is paramount. The government should create the necessary infrastructure for employees to adopt in telework and potentially hybrid working models in the future.

6. Information improvement: The Nigerian public service should continue to make use of digital tools to enhance employee engagement, job satisfaction and motivation, social networks can also be used to facilitate interactions among employees.

7. There is need for an improvement in public service education system to teach the public servants' way of detecting potential cyber attackers to protect the service and themselves.

8. It is necessary for the government to provide efficient measures for data protection and information that are vital to the public service and public employees.

9. Government should put in place effective technology driven public service that can accommodate remote-work building platforms for community engagements, ownership and public feedback, and build a conducive workplace.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This study analyzes Post Covid-19 and the Nigeria Public Service, the changes and challenges to achieve the new normal. It studied the changes induced by the corona virus pandemic at the public service level and at the public employee's level. The study aimed to answer these research questions, are there increasing trends towards adoption of telework and digital tools by the Nigerian public servants in the new normal, how would efficient and effective implementation of tele work policies and digital transformation plans ensure sustainability in operations of the Nigerian public service and employees in adopting innovation to service delivery in the new normal? The changes were classified based on the emergency-learning-institutionalization-new normal (ELIN) framework, which is derived from the timeline of the pandemic and captures its effect on the Nigerian public service. The service and its employees widely adopted the telework and digital adoption in service delivery, which going forward, has increasingly become the norm. However, the telework and digital adoption has

not been effectively implemented due to lack of resources and level of preparedness among the public service organization and public servants. To adapt to the new normal, the public service needs to implement employee centered policies, and co-produce solutions. The public service employees will constantly require to up-skill themselves to continuously adapt to a changing work environment. The limitation of this study is that it relied heavily on secondary data. Its findings are not based on primary data and statistical analysis. It is a conceptual work in spite of the above limitation, the study serves as a useful reference document for further research that may be based on primary data collection and analysis.

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