# Embracing E-Government during the Covid-19 Pandemic and Beyond: Insights from the Gambia

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Our results show that there is a huge opportunity to leverage e-Government during the pandemic. Moreover, our findings contribute to the literature by arguing that the opportunities e-Government presents to The Gambia government during a health crisis are endless: governmentcitizen engagement is intensified through online interaction, the effective flow of bidirectional information enables citizens to participate in the governance process and thus promote trust in their elected officers, high interactivity provides transparency and improves the quality of public services delivery, the e-Government is an enabler of reliable and trustworthy public health and safety information during the pandemic and thus enhances public awareness, participation, and support in controlling the health pandemic.

*Keywords: e-Government, Coronavirus, e-Administration, The Gambia, Public Management.*

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Despite the opportunities of e-Government adoption in time of health crisis, our results argue that four strategies inhibit the Government's e-Services-citizens engagement: integrated content design, interactivity, content management, and choice of e-Sites. However, more empirical research is needed to provide context-specific issues confronting e-Government initiatives in The Gambia. Such results will further advance the research and application of e-Government, particularly in Africa.

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## I. Introduction

Electronic government (henceforth e-Government) is often signalled as a way forward for governments around the world to achieve efficiency and better service delivery to both citizens and businesses (Dada, 2006). This has made e-Government not just a choice but a requirement for countries seeking for good governance and quality public service delivery. In fact, numerous scholars (e.g., Bojang, 2019; Heeks, 2002; Yildiz, 2007) recognized the enormous benefits of e-government adoption: greater political participation by citizens, improved transparency in public administration, and reduction public sector corruption.

The adoption of e-Government projects during a global health crisis (e.g., coronavirus pandemic), allows countries to provide relevant health and safety related information and emergency contacts using various e-Service platforms including the national admin portals, mobile apps and social media platforms. Despite the important role of these digital platforms, recent study of the national portals of the 193 United Nations Member Countries, the study reveals that up to 57% (of 110 countries) have put in place some kind of information on COVID-19, while about 43% (83 countries) did not provide any information (United Nations Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, 2020). In the face of high "fake news" associated with unverified information on numerous digital media platforms (e.g., WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter) and plethora of government-sponsored "fake news" between 2017-2020 (Lin *et al.*, 2020) make e-Government projects alternative sources of more reliable, and relevant information about the health crisis(Destiny Apuke and Omar, 2020; Elías and Catalan-Matamoros, 2020) and thus ensure public safety and protects lives and livelihoods. Due to the interactive nature of digital media, trust between citizens and their government is further strengthened (Parent et al., 2005; Warkentin et al., 2002) allowing citizens to be engaged and informed about governance practice. Despite the potential positive roles of e-Government during global health crisis, there is a relative paucity of literature in the field.

Thus, our study tries to contribute to the literature by examining how The Gambia government leverages e-Government projects for citizen effective engagement during the global coronavirus pandemic. Specifically, the objective of this paper is twofold: (a) to discuss the application of e-Government practices during the pandemic, and (b) to discuss the effective e-Government-citizen engagement practices in time of crisis and beyond. Thus, the adoption of various e-Government initiatives has the potential to address the increased global *fake news,* promote government-citizens engagement particularly in period of global health pandemic. To do these, we adopted content analysis of digital media based on researchers'

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observation of the government's e-Government projects during the crisis.

The research starts with a brief introduction of the paper. The second section discusses the normative literature and challenges of e-Government. The second section highlights the research problems and a brief history of coronavirus pandemic. Section three describes the research method adopted in this study followed by section four which analyses the empirical data. The final section is the discussion, conclusion and future research agenda are briefly discussed.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### a) The Application of E-Government

E-Government, which lacks a universally accepted definition (Yildiz, 2007), is a generic term for web-based services from governments and other relevant stakeholders. However, according to the Working Group on e-Government in the Developing World, e-Government involves the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to promote more efficient and effective government, facilitate more accessible government services, allow greater public access to information, and make government more accountable to citizens. These services might be delivered through integrated e-Government platforms: the internet, telephone, community centres, wireless devices or other communications systems (Palvia and Sharma, 2007:2). Thus, IT infrastructure, and other digital technologies are critical aspects of e-government application, but more so beyond the technical to efficiency of public service delivery (Dada, 2006; Heidegger, 1978). While the extant literature emphasized the importance of IT-enabled e-services, however, studies found several factors influence citizens' adoption of e-government projects: some of these include usefulness, trust, data security, internet safety, and privacy (see, Carter and Belanger, 2003; Huang et al. 2002; Hung et al. 2006).

Information technology is a catalyst for administrative and economic reforms across the world. For example, Singapore though limited in natural resources but exploit the potentials of ICTs in transforming her economy and hence national development (Chua, 2012). In Nigeria, Ojo (2014), argues that on e-Governance allows effective political participation and public governance on development and socio-economic issues confronting the society.

### b) The challenges of e-Government success

Numerous studies indicate basic challenges of e-Government implementation, particularly in emerging countries (e.g., Bojang, 2019; Dada, 2006; Heeks, 2003; Ndou, 2004; Nkohkwo and Islam, 2013) and in the African continent (e.g., Nkohkwo and Islam (2013). For instance, recent studies found several challenges of Africa's e-Government adoption, including the high disparity in digital gap across many regions and countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Evans and Yen, 2006), lack of leadership and institutional readiness (Ran Kim, 2012), high cost of IT systems infrastructure (Heeks, 2002; Schuppan, 2009) and low literacy, and various cultural factors (Rorissa and Demissie, 2010), human capacity, legal framework, and internet connectivity (Nkohkwo and Islam, 2013), etc. Some of these challenges resulted in much slower rate of e-Government adoption, thus leading to highly untapped potentials of the e-Government field (Ndou, 2004).

Robust and sound digital policies, often found in several developed countries around the world, reinforced e-Government initiatives (Dada, 2006:39, citing Avgerou and Walsham, 2000). Scholars argue that socio-economic and cultural differences between developing and developed nations, makes most e-Government initiatives, policies and strategies in developing countries to fail, due to high imitation (see, Chen et al., 2006; Mutula, 2013).

The funding requirement to finance complex e-Government infrastructure greatly inhibit e-Government adoption for most poorer nations of the world (e.g., Dada, 2006). The huge digital gap in developing countries has significantly accounted for the failure of several e-Government projects in the continent (see, Bojang, 2019; Ndou, 2004; Dada, 2006). In fact, Heeks (2003) finds that about 85% of e-Government initiatives in developing countries can be categorized as failure, either, total or partial—thus resulting in many abandoned projects at a prime stage or a time when desired outcomes are not met. Rorissa and Demissie (2010) stressed the absence of adequate literature, because e-Government projects are not well documented thus making it even more challenging for the understanding of the best practices across nations or sectors. On demand side, citizen trust in e-Government project (Carter and Bélanger, 2005) influences the e-Services adoption. Thus, increased cultural awareness, and trust-building are common practices of government-citizen e-Service adoption (Meftah et al., 2015).

## III. RESEARCH SETTING

### a) A brief history of the COVID-19 crisis

In late December 2019, World Health Organization (WHO) first reports an unknown pneumonia-like viral infection (now dubbed as the novel Coronavirus) that emerged in Wuhan city, Hubei Province of China (WHO, 2020b). After the report, the virus infection quickly spread to the other parts of China, and abroad. By the 20th January, 2020, WHO reported a total confirmed case of 282 from several countries including China (278 cases), Thailand (2 cases), Japan (1 case) and the Republic of Korea (1 case) (WHO, 2020b) and subsequently a new report indicated a total

of 581 from China and in several countries around the continent (WHO, 2020c) confirming increasing surge in global infection and fatalities (Spinelli and Pellino, 2020). By the 30th January 2020, WHO declared a global health emergency (WHO, 2020a) when the number of infections arose rapidly from China to more than 20 countries globally. Consequently, six months into the global health crisis, the number of infections and fatalities rise exponentially (as reported in the table below) resulting in many hospitals overwhelmed by COVID-19 patients and deaths (Ranney, Griffeth and Jha, 2020). In the Gambia, the Health Ministry's data reveal a relative surge in the number of cases and fatalities in the country (as of August 15, 2020) with 1,872 indexed cases, 62 deaths, 401 recovered and 1,408 active cases (MoH, 2020b).

*Table 1:* Global cases and daily infections (as at 12 August 2020)

| Globally | 20 162 474 cases (214 985) | 737 417 deaths (4 835) |
|---|---|---|
| Africa | 909 574 cases (6 325) | 17 198 deaths (213) |
| Americas | 10 799 062 cases (101 230) | 393 727 deaths (2 877) |
| Eastern Mediterranean | 1 669 933 cases (12 342) | 44 288 deaths (410) |
| Europe | 3 641 603 cases (23 951) | 217 716 deaths (355) |
| South-East Asia | 2 757 822 cases (66 370) | 55 564 deaths (931) |
| Western Pacific | 383 739 cases (4 767) | 8 911 deaths (49) |

*Sourced: (WHO, 2020d)*

The unfolding challenges of the COVID-19 crisis, led to the intense disruption in global supply chains, many businesses shuttered (Hoorens, Hocking and Fays, 2020), scores of people lose their jobs, the global economy has contracted in the first quarter, and stock markets plummeted. These outcomes have intensified global response to control the spread of the virus. For instance, several governments introduced a state-of-public emergency – leading to a complete shutdown of the economies of various countries. To curb the spread of the virus, many governments around the world instructed citizens to observe social distancing, wearing of face mask, maintain personal hygiene such as regular hand washing, avoiding open coughing, hugging and handshakes (Cojoianu, Haney and Meiring, 2020; Gostin, 2004; Nicola *et al.*, 2020). In the Gambia, the government imposed series of state-of-the-public emergency directing the closure of all schools, marketplaces, places of worship and borders and restricting movement and social events (Amie Bensouda & Co, 2020; MoH, 2020). These practices bring new challenges to lifestyles and social interaction. Such concerted and sustained efforts on the part of governments are required to effectively advised and engage the citizens about its response plans, containment strategies, and recovery are fundamental to government-citizen engagement in the course of COVID-19 responses. The focus of this research is, however, on how the government leverages e-Governance projects to facilities citizens' engagement.

*b) Global COVID-19 responses*

During the COVID-19 crisis, various countries adopted specific e-Government practices. For instance, many countries have intensified the used of various e-Government services such as adopting a centralized web sites, and social media platforms to engage citizens and deliver essential medical and food supplies. In addition to government e-Service adoption, many governments collaborate with the private sector to foster government e-Services delivery, such as Japan, China, governments use Aerial Drones and Robots for various public services, including dispersing public gathering in observance to the social distancing, and delivery of medical supplies. The United Kingdom, and America governments collaborate with technology giants such as Google, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, etc. to activate coronavirus related information and promote public participation in COVID-19 surveys. In other parts of Europe and the Africa, the governments in collaboration with private corporations develop online community engagements. These online communities are used for several reasons: to provide up-to-date and reliable health-specific advisory and information, to provide preliminary COVID-19 testing through a self-administered online survey, to provide emergency hotlines and contacts for citizens to seek medical health services.

In the Gambia, the government adopts various COVID-19 related information sources and public engagement practices. Some of these practices involve the use of numerous e-Services such as dedicated websites, digital TV outreach and social media to control the spread of the virus and engage citizens in the crisis responses. The government uses e-Platforms (or e-Services) to engage and inform the citizens, private sector, and international partners in their response to the COVID-19 crisis. The ICT policies, programme and technical capabilities of the government are managed and coordinated by the Ministry of Information and Communication Infrastructure (MOICI). Thus, the Ministry supports the development of government digital services and e-Administration.

## IV. METHODOLOGY

The data for this study was gathered between March, when the first case of the virus was reported in

The Gambia, to August 2020. We adopt online content review (Saunders et al., 2009;Yin, 2017) based on researchers' observation of the e-Government practices of both the central and local Government during the pandemic. We recognized that this method is not without delimits due to observer bias, however, at the time of state-of-public emergency which characterises lockdown, it is a suitable approach for this research. We tried to minimize the errors associated with researchers' observation bias by complementing results with the empirical data on the state and private online contents about the Government's e-services during the pandemic.

There are three objectives of using data from official government online sources about the COVID-19 related information during the crisis. First, we recognized that digital outlets are important elements of e-Government to citizen engagement, thus enabling the government's orientation to the wellbeing of the citizens (Criado and Ramilo, 2003), particularly during the pandemic. Second, the content of digital outlets is a critical aspect of e-Government information and communication practices and providing relevant health and safety-related information to the citizens. Third, e-Service platforms are relevant in citizen-to-government trust-building particularly during crisis (Parent et al., 2005; Warkentin et al., 2002).

## V. Findings on E-government Initiatives During Covid-19 Crisis

Our study provides empirical insight into the Government's e-Services during the COVID-19 crisis. Our study draws data from three (3) official government e-Sites (including website and social media platforms), five (5) affiliate agency e-Sites, and ten (10) private e-Platforms leveraged by the government during the health emergency. To do this, we mapped online review from relevant documents, online information, and public reaction according to two categorises of engagement: Government-to-citizen (G2C) and Government-to-businesses (G2B) engagement.

### a) E-Government-to-citizen (G2C) engagement during the crisis

The e-Government-to-citizen (G2C) engagement practices characterize the "opportunities for greater citizen access to information and interaction with the government" (Lee, Tan and Trimi, 2005, p. 101). Such engagement practices enable complete, two-way flows of communication, allowing the government and citizens to adopt coherent and effective preventive measures during the health crisis. In the case of the Gambia, the government adopts e-Administrative platforms including government website and information portal, Facebook page, and digital TV and online Radio broadcast. Some of these e-Platforms are state-operated while others are owned and operated by

individuals, private businesses and other development partners.

We found that the government mainly uses website and social media pages of the Ministry of Health (MoH): (http://www.moh.gov.gm/), (Facebook), and (Twitter). Based on the online content review of the Government-run e-Sites, we found that Ministry of Health is the primary source of detailed information on COVID-19. The website and social media pages of the Ministry of Health has official seal and address of the site; thus, the site could be viewed by citizens as trustworthy to engage with government and rely on the content of information presented. The Ministry's social media statistics reveal a number of followers: Facebook15, 400, Twitter 3,400. All the pages maintained an average of 2 post contents per week. We found that these sites are used for cross-sharing online contents (such as videos, text, and pictures). Other affiliate e-Sites to MoH includes Covid-19 Response Ministry of Health The Gambia (Twitter), National Public Health Laboratory (Twitter), The State House of The Gambia (Facebook), The Office of the First Lady The Gambia (Facebook), and COVIDGAMBIA (Twitter). These sites are users of MoH and government's online COVID-19 information. To create a more relational links, these sites use links, hash tags, and other online references to government COVID-19 related information with their followers.

Furthermore, the local government councils have intensified the use of e-Government platforms. For example, Kanifing Municipal Council (Facebook, Website) (20,080 followers); Brikama Area Council (Facebook) *(3,847 followers)*; Banjul City Council (Facebook) *(7,566 followers);* Mansankonko Area Council (Facebook) (3,081 followers); etc. All the sites are found to be conveniently designed, and official seals and addresses of the councils are provided for. However, we found no official local council websites. Moreover, we found that the local councils maintained relatively significant online followers compared to the central government; they have large online followers, and there is evidence of large citizen reactions (comments, likes, shares, follows, videos watched, etc.) on each online post related to COVID-19. Local council are found to be key content creators of information related to COVID-19 ranging from awareness campaigns, to implementation of COVID-19 restriction, testing, and contact tracing in local communities (WHO, 2020e). Relative to central government sites, we found a higher degree of citizen engagement on these sites. However, we found no website or external links to central government (i.e. MoH) websites or social media pages embedded on councils' social media pages, as an important best practice in e-government practice.

To increase authenticity and accuracy of COVID-19 related information, our review finds that the government makes several references to online content and information from various development partners

such as, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) the Gambia (https://gambia.unfpa.org/), World Health Organization (https://www.who.int/), The Gambia Red Cross Society (https://www.facebook.com/GambiaRedCross/), Medical Research Council (MRC) Gambia (https://www.mrc.gm/), and WHO Africa Region (Twitter). These sites reinforce the relevance of government online information contents. Moreover, creating an online reference (i.e. hashtags) improve the government's online visibility to a larger population.

b) *E-Government-to-businesses (G2B) engagement practices*

Government-private sector engagement is critical aspects of COVID-19 response in The Gambia. Such engagements with the private sector reinforce government COVID-19 response activities related to the public awareness campaign, prevention and control methods, contact tracing, treatment, quarantine practices and fundraising (Seddighi et al., 2020; WHO, 2020e). The online connectivity of private businesses provides citizens access to relevant information and intense online engagement through government

sponsored content. Our data show that The Gambia government leverages various private digital platforms(i.e. Facebook, websites, and twitter) during the pandemic, namely QTV (Facebook, Twitter), The Fatu Network (Facebook, Website, Twitter), Mengbe Kering TV (Facebook), Kerr Fatou (Facebook, Twitter), Eye Africa TV (Facebook, Website), Gambia Talents TV (Facebook, Twitter), The Chronicle (Facebook, Website), Star TV Gambia (Facebook, Website), Paradise TV Gambia (Facebook, Twitter) and What's On – Gambia (Facebook, Website). Table two illustrates the digital platforms of private businesses that the central government leveraged with the pandemic. These online platforms help relay government press-releases, daily COVID-19 situation reports, and awareness campaigns in the form of short videos, pictures, and texts. The alliance between government and business in times of crisis, extends the corporate social responsibilities of businesses and thus improves their legitimacy (Samu and Wymer, Jr., 2001).

*Table 2:* Statistics of private e-Platforms (authors' deduction from online)

| E-Platforms/ Private media | Website | Facebook No. Followers | Twitter No. Followers |
|---|---|---|---|
| The Fatu Network | Yes | 408,093 | 6,597 |
| Eye Africa TV | Yes | 127,212 | - |
| Gambia Talents TV | - | 193,741 | 2,773 |
| Paradise TV | - | 75,005 | 5, 725 |
| The Chronicle | Yes | 4,578 | - |
| Kerr Fatou | Yes | 195,115 | 5,334 |
| Star FM | Yes | 28,676 | - |
| What's On-Gambia | Yes | 296,610 | - |
| QTV | - | 66,749 | 6,414 |
| Mengbe Kering TV | - | 66,895 | 66 |

We observed that, thanks to the various private e-Platforms, the government delivers various public services during the pandemic, example, online/distance learning to grade 9 and 12 students, and students of Gambia College and the University of The Gambia (UTG).Moreover, government-to-business engagement results in fundraising of about GMD20 million Dalasis as part of the COVID-19, improved health services delivery, legal services (distant court hearing), various online training and conferences for public and civil servants, the procurement process involving the purchase of stimulus food package for the country, etc, are some of the important practices that exemplified e-Government projects during the pandemic.

# VI. Discussion

We discuss the findings of the research according to the opportunities, e-Content management, relational information, and design style of e-government projects during and beyond the health pandemic

(Criado and Ramilo, 2003). The results of this analysis have a policy implication for e-Government adoption.

a) *Opportunities for e-Government adoption during the crisis*

More than 49% of Gambia's population has an active digital presence (Ceesay and Sanyang, 2018). The population has a variety of digital tool such as Facebook, Twitter, digital TV, etc - enabling them to interact with others and access electronic information. Engagement between the government and citizens is an essential part of the crisis responses (Pan, Pan and Devadoss, 2005). Such practices promote collective action and thus reduce the spread of the virus. It is a common belief that when citizens participate in the governance process, they develop trust in their elected officials.

Of the five administrative areas of The Gambia, there is a lack of well-co-ordinated e-Government practices in the country. Our review finds differences in

local messaging about the COVID-19 awareness campaigns, no concerted national response approach, and lack of integrated e-Platforms were found in government's e-Administration. To increase a more robust e-Government practice, that encourages larger access to the population (and in various local languages) across the country is fundamental to the adoption of e-Government (Criado and Ramilo, 2003; Seddighi et al., 2020). The websites and social media pages of the Ministry of Health ought to be directly connected to the entire regional and local council offices. Because all the local councils maintained their e-Platforms that local communities depend on for information, it is useful to operate an integrated state-operated e-Platforms from that is secured, fully operational and thus enabling single-sourced information about the government crisis responses to the COVID-19. These practices must be enforced across all government operated e-Sites.

## b) E-content management

The information content of the e-Sites is the key attributes of an effective e-Government process (Carbo, 2007). Videos, images, texts, and relational links to sourced websites or social media pages are the most important content attributes. In a time of COVID-19 crisis, the creation and management of digital content make online content vital to public health and safety (Pan, Pan and Devadoss, 2005). Content creation should include standardized messaging on COVID-19 awareness campaign, general prevention, key myths, integrated government response strategy, and economic and social stimulus assistance. Large misconception which often surround public emergencies, could be attributed to public misinformation and lack of verifiable, reliable government information (Destiny Apuke and Omar, 2020; Lin et al., 2020).

During e-Content management, we suggest that the central government adopt multiple languages in their e-Content creation. According to the data, only a few videos in major e-Sites were made in various local languages, thus limiting a large mass of people from relying on the information. Moreover, the adoption of private e-Platforms should further reinforce broader access to the public, particularly in various languages and timing.

## c) Online citizen engagement

Interactivity makes e-Governance process more participatory for citizens. Our results show that intensity in online interactivity with users promotes the government's COVID-19 response. We found that the Government's adoption of various social media handles makes it easier for citizens to react online contents (though comments, like, share, etc) -thus promoting their full engagement with government actions. To increase transparency, we found that the website of

MoH offers downloadable pdf information for users. However, other e-Sites operated by the government provides no such e-Services.

In online interaction, our review reveals that there is relatively low government-to-citizen interaction on virtually all government-operated social media sites. Results show that communication on social media sites was mainly one-way, limiting citizens choice and voices from the governance process. In fact, we found that unlike private platforms, the handlers of government e-Sites are accustomed to no responses to citizens' online reactions (through comments, shares and emojis) which limits citizens participation to COVID-19 responses. We found that all posts on these sites have series of comments (both positive and negative) and sometimes questions, however, we found no single response to citizens' online reactions from the handlers of the state social media sites. On the website, we cannot verify whether government engages with citizens via email contact provided in the website. In terms of citizens' online reactions to COVID-19-related posts on the website, we however, cannot reveal the underlying reasons for this.

## d) Relational information

This category reflects the ability of the social media page or website to link (or direct) the user to/with other e-Sites, pages, other agencies or individuals. Based on the analysis of the websites and social media pages, we tried to identify direct links offered and types of organizations, agency or individual linked to the online posts. We reveal that majority of links on COVID-19 related posts are connected to the Ministry of Health, MRC the Gambia, and WHO. On social media like twitter posts, we found the use of common *hash tags* related to *#coronavirus, #COVID-19, #Social Distancing, #SolLenMask, #COVID Gambia, #MoH, #CoronavirusIs Real, etc.* These links increase cross-platform access to online contents from various online users.

Moreover, our review reveals that the website of MoH provides no embedding of external links (social media links) to media pages the ministry handles or e-Sites of its partners. This thus, inhibits the citizens from having direct links to posts made on social media. Embedding external links to a website make it easier to access information across e-Platforms, and enables users to easily share contents via social media platforms.

## e) Content style and design

During a crisis, citizens demand greater transparency and accountability and thus e-Government systems must ensure that (Pan, Pan and Devadoss, 2005). Thus, the design, visuals, and usability features of e-Government systems are fundamental to citizen online engagement (Becker, 2005; Criado and Ramilo, 2003). To do this, an effective e-Sites must have the capability to communicate, transact, and present

information thus allowing citizens to easily access and use. Based on the analysis of the several official websites, we found categories related to the latest news, updates, feedbacks/reviews sections on the government website. These functions in a website promote usability and convenience to online users (Criado and Ramilo, 2003). Aside from the website of MoH, websites of several other departments remain non-responsive, others non-existent, and few appear to have no information related to COVID-19. Several websites have no domain names related to official government seal and address. For example, no single COVID-19 related information could be found on the website of the Ministry of Information and Communication Infrastructure (MOICI), and no details on Office of Government Spokesperson (as at August 15th, 2020). These are, however, important implementing agencies in government's e-Government projects. This corroborates with the study of Lin et al., (2011) whom conclude that official government websites lack quality information, and poor design which greatly influence low perceived ease of use by the public. Also, while e-Service transaction (online shopping) is fundamental to e-Government implementation cycle, however, we found that no dedicated e-Shopping services, such as e-Participation and e-Consultation (Islam and Okuda, 2005; Lin et al., 2011) on official pages nor any links to online sales, particularly the ones related to COVID-19. Similarly, our finding validates and corresponds with the results of Chango (2007) who concludes that Gambia's e-Government strategy is at best less informative with little interaction between government and citizens.

## VII. Conclusion

The objective of this research is to highlight the Gambia Government's adoption of e-Government practices as part of the COVID-19 response. Based on the content review of various online contents, our results show that there is a large opportunity for e-Government use during the pandemic. The state has centralized the activities of the crisis within the Ministry of Health. We find that the opportunities e-Government presents to the Gambia government during this pandemic are endless: citizen engagement is intensified through online interaction, the flow of bi-directional information enables citizens to participate in the governance process and thus develop high trust in their elected officers, and high transparency, improved public service delivery quality, reduced public misinformation about the health crisis, etc,. However, more empirical research is needed to provide context-specific issues confronting e-Government initiatives in The Gambia. Such a result will further advance the application of e-Government in The Gambia and the Sub-region.

Our online content review reveals that the e-Government project is not done in silos, but rather, in a more integrated, coordinated fashion, thus enabling total quality and efficiency in citizen engagement and service delivery. Just like many other countries in Africa, the Gambia e-Government project is not well-developed and almost non-existent. Therefore, an empirical research into the basic e-Government adoption in a developing country like The Gambia will advance the application and theory of e-Governance.

We conclude that the basic systems of e-Government adoption in the Gambia including, human resources (in terms of the content design specialists), integrated government-wide online presence, quality information inputs, and government-to-citizen online engagement, are some of the biggest challenges confronting the country's e-Government initiatives. To advance the application of e-Government process, these basic components are critical for citizens' e-Service adoption and trust.

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