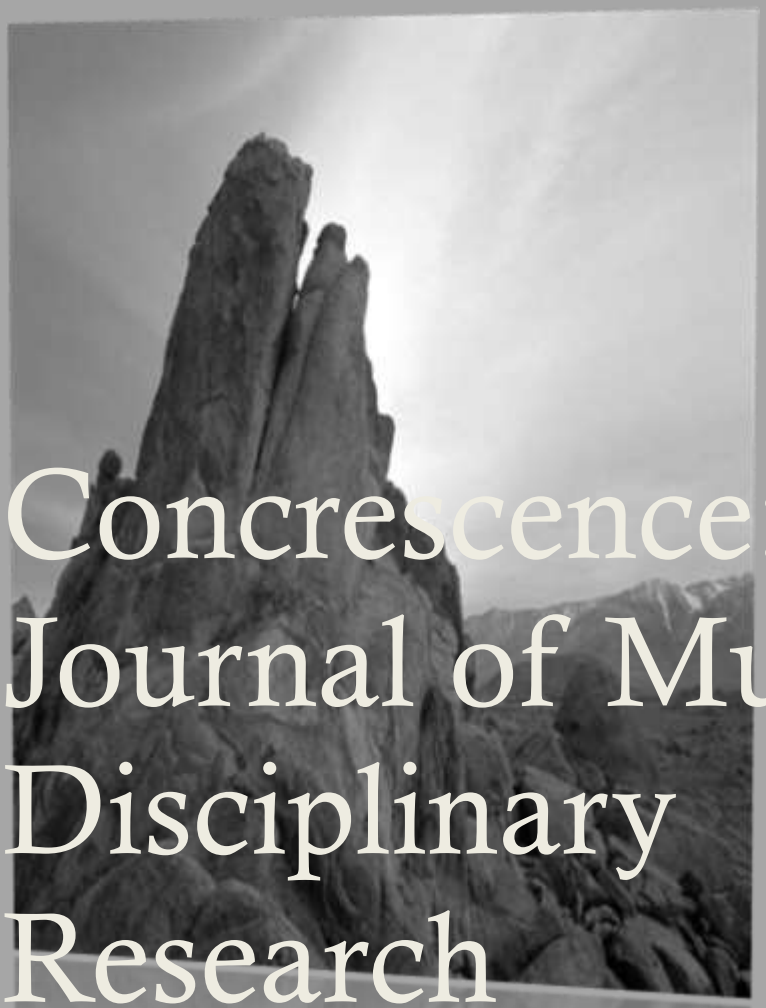

Concrescence: Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Research

Volume 2, Number 3, 2025, E-ISSN: 1595-9287

Faculty of Humanities, Imo State University

Concrescence: Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Research
Vol. 2, No. 3, 2025, E-ISSN: 1595-9287

A Glitched State: Technology, Public Institutions and the Nigerian Captured State

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Abstract
This paper interrogates the intersection of technology, governance, and state capture in Nigeria, highlighting how digital systems intended to enhance transparency and efficiency often reproduces institutional weaknesses. Using the lenses of institutional theory, technological determinism, and the captured state framework, the study examines case studies of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), and the West African Examinations Council (WAEC). While technology has been integrated across Nigeria's political, social, and financial institutions, recurrent "glitches" have become normalized, eroding trust, reinforcing elite capture, and widening social inequalities. The analysis demonstrates how technological failures, whether

accidental or instrumentalised, shift costs onto citizens while consolidating discretionary power within institutions. Findings reveal that Nigeria's digital governance is undermined by corruption, infrastructural fragility, and weak oversight, making the glitched state a critical lens for understanding the reproduction of dysfunction in a technologically mediated but institutionally captured environment.

Keywords: Glitched state; Technology; Public institutions; State capture; Nigeria; Governance; Electoral integrity; Digital infrastructure.

Introduction

Technology is now deeply embedded in daily life, reshaping communication, work, healthcare, and education through connectivity, automation, and data-driven insights. It holds immense potential to advance the Sustainable Development Goals by tackling poverty, disease, and inequality, while also creating new risks such as surveillance, bias, and deepened divides (UN, 2019; Wolf, 2021; Carriero, 2024). Developed nations have largely integrated technology across governance, education, and industry, with safeguards against misuse, though abuses persist. In contrast, many developing countries face a different reality: public institutions often deploy technology as a tool of control under the guise of modernization, reinforcing patterns of state capture. Nigeria exemplifies this paradox, where digital systems promise reform but is frequently manipulated to serve elite interests rather than the public good.

In an era of rapid technological transformation and global interconnectivity, Nigeria stands at a critical crossroads. The interplay between technology, institutions, and governance now shapes the nation's developmental trajectory. While various studies have explored technology's role in governance and the dynamics of Nigeria's captured state (Goar and Madugu, 2023; Aina, 2024), less attention has been paid to how technology itself has been appropriated and abused by public institutions and the implications this carries for national development.

This paper examines the complex realities of Nigeria's socio-political landscape, where the promise of technological innovation collides with entrenched institutional weaknesses and systemic capture. It investigates how digital tools, data systems, and emerging technologies are reshaping governance, public trust, and economic progress, while simultaneously exposing the vulnerabilities of a state undermined by corruption, bureaucratic inertia, and elite domination. The study is guided by three key questions: How have Nigerian political, social, and economic institutions integrated technology since the 21st century? How do recurrent technological glitches in institutions like INEC, JAMB, and WAEC shape public perceptions of legitimacy, trust, and fairness? And what are the implications of these glitches for Nigeria's democracy and national development? To address these questions, the study adopts a qualitative research design, drawing on documentary analysis of scholarly works, policy reports, media publications, and official records from key institutions. These sources provide insights into the adoption of technology across sectors and reveal how recurrent failures have shaped governance outcomes.

Literature review

The contemporary global society is increasingly shaped by technology, with sustainable development now largely technologically driven. Many challenges confronting humanity are being addressed through innovations in digital tools, automation, and connectivity (Aina, 2024). Technology permeates almost every aspect of national life and is widely seen as central to accelerated development in the modern world (Asaju & Ashepo, 2025). In Africa,

the growth of the digital economy has transformed the continent from an agrarian and resource-dependent system into one of the fastest-growing internet markets, reflecting widespread adoption of digital services and emerging technologies (Agboola, 2025). Yet in Nigeria, the outcomes of technological investments have been disappointing. Despite government efforts to promote digital advancement, progress is undermined by poor funding, infrastructural decay, regulatory uncertainty, and the absence of a clear national strategy (Asaju & Ashepo, 2025). Akingbohungbe (2025) further highlights the impact of vandalism and theft of telecommunication infrastructure, which is central to connectivity and the digital economy. Similarly, Ifunanya (2025) reports that nearly 56% of IT projects in Nigerian public institutions fail due to non-compliance with clearance guidelines intended to ensure coordination and standardization. These realities underscore the urgent need for stronger regulatory oversight and a centralized framework to protect infrastructure and achieve the goals of the national digital economy (Ekimini, 2025).

The integration of technology into public institutions is now inevitable under globalization. However, challenges exist even in advanced contexts. Hinkley (2023) notes that in the United States, about 15% of the workforce are employed in government service, yet, adoption of technology has lagged behind the private sector. This is due to limited funding, fragmented structures, and complex contracting. While digital tools can streamline services and improve access, they may also overburden already stretched systems if not carefully implemented. Since 2008, stagnation in public sector employment alongside growing demand has widened the gap between needs and resources. Uneven adoption and overreliance on digital tools without adequate safeguards highlight the risks of premature substitution of human judgment. Rekunenko et al. (2025) show through case studies that while digital governance can enhance efficiency and citizen engagement, its success depends on leadership, collaboration, user-centered design, and investment in infrastructure and skills.

Education demonstrates both the promise and challenges of technology. ASCD (2011) observes that digital tools have transformed teaching, learning, and assessment, improving productivity and deepening understanding of how students learn. Empirical evidence supports this. Ghavifekr and Rosdy (2015), for example, found in Malaysian schools that ICT integration improved teaching and learning, especially when supported by teacher training and professional development. Haleem et al. (2022) similarly argue that digital technologies are critical to the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, particularly in education. By serving as knowledge providers, mentors, and assessors, digital tools have reshaped pedagogy, a shift accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which expanded digital adoption and made learning more interactive, accessible, and efficient.

Still, the transformative power of technology in education remains uneven. UNESCO (2023) cautions that integration varies by income, teacher readiness and local context. Large-scale classroom adoption remains limited outside technologically advanced nations, while costs are often underestimated, and disadvantaged groups are excluded. For poorer countries, maintaining digital connectivity can cost as much as $1 billion daily, raising questions of sustainability. To address this, UNESCO calls for a clear "policy compass" to guide equitable and effective adoption of digital learning. At a broader level, Acemoglu (2025) introduces the "utility–technology possibilities frontier," which explains how societies distribute resources and make technological choices during disruptive periods. He shows that institutional paths shaped during moments like the Industrial Revolution or the current rise of artificial intelligence can produce long-term developmental differences across societies.

These debates are especially significant for Nigeria, where recurring technical glitches undermine trust in public institutions. Akingbohungbe (2025) stresses that decisive action is needed to protect technological infrastructure and address systemic weaknesses. Without this, technology's potential to foster inclusive growth will remain unrealized, and recurring failures will continue to erode trust, legitimacy, and national development.

Theoretical Framework

The paper adopts Institutional Theory, Technological Determinism, and the Captured State Framework to analyze Nigeria's technological and governance landscape. Institutional Theory explains how external factors such as culture, regulations, and industry norms shape organizational behavior (Bajracharya, 2025). Institutions often adopt practices that conform to societal expectations to gain legitimacy, resources, and support. Key concepts include legitimacy, isomorphism, and the institutional environment. Legitimacy relates to actions perceived as proper or desirable; isomorphism describes the tendency of organizations to imitate others due to coercive, normative, or mimetic pressures; and the institutional environment encompasses cultural norms, legal frameworks, and educational systems that influence behavior.

Lee (2025) shows that Institutional Theory is useful in understanding technology adoption in the public sector. Institutions may adopt technologies not because they are efficient but because others are using them or they are seen as best practice. This dynamic helps explain why Nigerian institutions persist with malfunctioning systems. For instance, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) spent billions on technologies such as BVAS for the 2023 elections. When glitches emerged, such as BVAS failing to recognize voters, switching systems was unlikely given the scale of investment and institutional inertia. Moreover, organizations often prioritize appearances and perceived competence over resolving underlying problems, hiding behind claims of "technical glitches" rather than addressing them. Similarly, WAEC recently announced the introduction of Computer-Based Tests (CBT) despite poor electricity supply, limited computer access, and low digital literacy in rural areas. Such decisions reflect mimetic isomorphism, where institutions adopt "international best practices" without considering local capacity.

Technological Determinism Theory complements this by emphasizing technology as the primary driver of societal change. The theory, rooted in the works of Thorstein Veblen and Karl Marx, argues that technological innovations shape social structures, governance, and even historical trajectories. Marshall McLuhan's assertion that "the medium is the message" (1964) reflects this logic, highlighting how technologies reshape culture and institutions beyond their immediate functions. Applied to governance, technological determinism suggests that digital tools not only transform administration but also redefine power relations, security, and legitimacy, especially in weakly governed spaces (Smith & Marx, 1994). In Nigeria, the spread of electoral and educational technologies has altered governance processes, but these tools have also reinforced elite control and exposed institutional fragility.

Finally, the Captured State Framework situates these developments within the broader problem of corruption and elite dominance. According to the World Bank and Transparency International, state capture occurs when powerful individuals, companies, or groups manipulate public institutions, laws, and policies to advance private interests at the expense of the common good. Unlike petty corruption, which bends rules, state capture reshapes the rules themselves. Its consequences are severe: undermining accountability, distorting competition, weakening democracy, and reducing the quality of services in sectors such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. In Nigeria, state capture manifests in politically

influenced policymaking, skewed regulatory frameworks, and compromised institutions. Glitches in electoral systems, educational examinations, and digital governance processes reflect not only technical weaknesses but also the deeper entrenchment of elite interests.

Taken together, these three frameworks offer a comprehensive lens for examining Nigeria's glitched state. Institutional Theory explains how organizations adopt and persist with flawed technologies; Technological Determinism shows how innovations reshape governance and power; and the Captured State Framework situates glitches within systemic corruption and elite manipulation. Together, they illuminate how technology in Nigeria operates not simply as a neutral tool of modernization but as an arena where dysfunction, legitimacy, and power struggles are continuously negotiated.

Figure 1: Capturing policymaking and implementation

Actors	
Captured: The executive, Parliament, parliamentary staff, factions of parliamentarians, parliamentary committees, regulatory agencies, military leaders, judges	**Captors:** Business people (including tycoons, oligarchs), interest groups, political parties

Goods and services captured	Process indicators	Outcome/Impact indicators
Text of the law/regulation/legislation	Lack of/biased Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)	Favorable treatment of certain economic actors/firms/party donors – economic concentration
Absence of law/legislation/regulation	Lack of/biased/shortened consultation period	Legal immunity / impunity
	Emergency procedures initiated	Weakened access to political institutions / weakened checks and balances
	Amendments - Timing (last-minute, hence little chance of scrutiny) - Substance	Political concentration
	Bill timing/voting timing (both last-minute and long windows)	
	Filibustering	
	Transparency impediments	
	Modification after ratification	
	Amendment of parliamentary rules and procedures (framework laws – those that determine Parliament's rules of procedure)	
	Use of delegated legislation	
	Control over appointments to key parliamentary committees (e.g., budget)	

Source: David-Barrett, Kaufmann and Ceballos (2023:6)

Figure 1 illustrates the actors of state capture, showing how lawmakers often manipulate budgets through practices such as padding. State capture occurs when elites, private actors, or networks reshape institutions, policies, and regulations to serve narrow interests rather than the public good. Unlike petty corruption, which bends rules, state capture rewrites them, eroding accountability, distorting competition, and weakening democracy.

In Nigeria, capture is evident across sectors. Oil and gas regulations favor select elites, public procurement and licensing are skewed, and politically connected networks dominate

judicial and legislative outcomes. Examples include opaque fuel subsidy regimes, customs revenue leakages, and manipulated budgetary allocations, all of which hinder reforms and stall equitable development. This entrenched system has deepened inequality and eroded public trust in governance. Addressing it requires stronger institutional autonomy, transparency in policymaking, and empowered oversight by civil society to check elite dominance.

Technology and Public Institutions in Nigeria

Since the 21st century, Nigerian institutions have increasingly embraced technology in recruitment, service delivery, and governance to reduce delays and rebuild public trust. Today, technology plays a central role in political, social, and economic life.

In politics, it is seen as a tool for transparency, accountability, and citizen participation. To address electoral fraud, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) introduced the Automated Fingerprint Identification System in 2011, Smart Card Readers (SCR) in 2015, the Z-pad in 2020, and the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) in 2021. The SCR aimed to curb multiple voting by verifying voter cards and fingerprints, yet these innovations fell short. Weak human capacity, inadequate training, and entrenched political practices undermined their effectiveness (Thompson et al., 2023; Abowei, 2023). As Abowei (2023) puts it:

> In the Nigerian case, the vulnerability of the system to human interference appears to have led to major problems for two reasons. First, INEC spent too little time training its officials to avoid teething problems. Second, INEC effectively lost control over officials in some areas, so that due process was not followed, and the electoral process was effectively captured. A parallel vote tabulation conducted by Yiaga, for example, found that the results in Rivers and Imo states did not match their figures, and some officials operated in a partisan way.

Thompson, Idris et al. (2023) argue that while BVAS and IReV represented important technological advances, their effectiveness was undermined by entrenched political culture, the nature of the state, and INEC's lack of independence. Nonetheless, technology has become increasingly embedded across Nigeria's political, social, and economic institutions since the 21st century.

In the social sphere, digital tools are bridging gaps between citizens and public institutions through improved access to information, services, and civic engagement. E-governance portals, digital health records, and education management systems promise greater inclusion. Education in particular has embraced technology, from the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) to the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), with schools at all levels using digital tools for exams, assessment, and elections.

Economically, technology has enhanced fiscal management through initiatives such as the Treasury Single Account (TSA), Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), and Bank Verification Number (BVN). However, persistent infrastructural gaps, cyber risks, and corruption continue to threaten these gains.

Manifestations of Glitched Institutions

Glitched institutions are state or quasi-state bodies where repeated "technical failures" and inefficiencies become normalized, creating space for rent-seeking, exclusion, and loss of public trust. These failures are not always accidental; in contexts of weak accountability,

they often serve as subtle tools of capture, granting discretionary power to insiders and intermediaries. In Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), and the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) provide telling examples.

INEC's adoption of electoral technologies, including the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV), was designed to strengthen electoral transparency and credibility. Yet recurring glitches, delayed uploads, unexplained outages, and system breakdowns have consistently undermined confidence. These failures often occur at decisive moments, fueling suspicion of manipulation. During the 2023 presidential elections, IReV failed to upload results in real time, raising doubts about the process. Instead of accountability or investigation, INEC dismissed the problem as a "technical glitch," leaving citizens in the dark (West Africa Weekly, 2025).

JAMB's computer-based testing reform sought to standardize admissions but has been plagued by server crashes, login errors, and biometric verification failures. Rural and low-connectivity candidates suffer most. In May 2025, technical failures during the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) led to mass failure: out of 1.9 million candidates, over 1.5 million scored below 200. Outcry followed, especially when teachers also failed the test. Only after public pressure did Registrar Ishaq Oloyede admit glitches and apologize. JAMB later confirmed that nearly 380,000 candidates in Lagos and the South East were directly affected (Sanusi, 2025). Yet, accountability was again absent, while intermediaries offering paid "assistance" thrived, privileging the connected and excluding the poor.

WAEC's registration and result platforms have faced similar failures. Delays, inaccessible portals, and system breakdowns disrupt timelines and enable unofficial agents to profit by "fast-tracking" access. In August 2025, WAEC admitted to technical issues discovered in its post-release review of Senior School Certificate Examination results. These glitches further entrenched inequality and deepened mistrust in a vital educational institution. It furthered that:

> As part of our efforts to curb malpractice, the Council embarked on an innovation—paper serialisation—already deployed by a national examination body. It is worth noting that this is in line with best assessment practices. The paper serialisation was carried out in Mathematics, English Language, Biology, and Economics. However, an internal post-release procedure revealed some technical bugs in the results (Tolu-Kolawole and Akinselure, 2025).

The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) admitted technical issues in its 2025 Senior School Certificate Examination results, linked to a new paper serialisation system meant to curb malpractice in key subjects. Though aligned with best practices, post-release checks revealed bugs. Alongside INEC and JAMB failures, this highlights how "glitched institutions" shift dysfunction onto citizens while empowering insiders, showing that technology in weak institutions often reinforces rather than resolves governance failures.

Implications of Glitched Institutions on the Captured State

The implications of the glitched state on national development are profound, as they highlight the challenges in leveraging technology and reforming institutions to drive Nigeria's progress.

a. Political

One of the most serious implications of a glitched state is the erosion of public trust in institutions. When governance structures are captured and prioritize elite interests over public welfare, confidence in state processes declines. This discourages citizen participation, undermines democratic engagement, and weakens compliance with critical policies such as taxation or public health initiatives. The 2023 elections, whose disputed outcome ended in court, exemplify this erosion. Though concluded, their effects continue to reverberate. Subsequent polls, including the Lagos council elections of July 2025, recorded increased voter apathy, particularly among youths who now perceive institutions not only as captured but also compromised by unreliable technologies. The recurring "glitch" narrative has fostered the belief that votes may not count. As one observer lamented during the Lagos poll: "This process is a mockery of our democracy; officials arrived late, yet the outcome was predetermined" (Iwok & Salau, 2025). As Amaechi (2023) posits:

> The judiciary and police – the primary law enforcement agencies – have aided INEC in making a complete mess of Nigeria's democracy. Under President Tinubu's watch, a Nigerian judge ordered the Nigerian Police Force to abdicate its constitutional responsibility as the principal law enforcement and lead security agency in Nigeria and violate Section 4 of the Police Act by shirking its responsibilities of prevention and detection of crime, apprehension of offenders and preservation of law and order.

There is no doubt that these institutions are germane for any democracy, especially for its survival or consolidation, and their capture may spell doom for not just the present democracy but may present a precedent for future generations.

b. Social

In the social sphere, glitched institutions erode public trust and generate crises of legitimacy. The controversies surrounding JAMB's technological failures and WAEC's flawed results have cast doubt on the integrity of these institutions, with some calling for their dissolution. When JAMB's systems fail, candidates and families often interpret the glitches not as mere technical issues but as evidence of incompetence, corruption, or systemic bias. Such perceptions weaken confidence in the fairness of educational pathways and fuel broader distrust in government agencies, particularly among young people.

Secondly, glitches deepen social inequality. Candidates from rural or underprivileged backgrounds who lack stable internet, access to information, or resources to navigate appeals are disproportionately disadvantaged. This widens existing divides, particularly when wealthier or better-connected candidates appear to secure quicker redress. For instance, after JAMB rescheduled some examinations, of the 336,845 candidates affected, 21,082 were absent (Okafor, 2025). Many lacked the means to return, jeopardizing their academic prospects. Such outcomes infringe on children's rights as protected under the Child Rights Act and risk long-term consequences for affected students unless remedial support and counseling are provided.

Thirdly, recurring failures contribute to generational disillusionment and strain social cohesion. For many families, education remains the main pathway to upward mobility. When institutions repeatedly fail, young people may grow resentful, distrust state institutions, and feel alienated from national progress. In some cases, this disillusionment fuels ethnic profiling and accusations that technological failures are deliberately targeted. In extreme scenarios, frustrations manifest in protests, online activism, or withdrawal from

formal educational pursuits, weakening collective faith in merit-based advancement. By undermining both trust and equity, glitched institutions not only endanger educational outcomes but also corrode the social fabric and intergenerational confidence in Nigeria's democratic and developmental trajectory. The National President of Ohanaeze Ndigbo Youth Council Worldwide, Okwu Nnabuike, noted that:

> It was a deliberate design to punish the people of the South-East, clearly to deny them education opportunities. Should JAMB fail to heed our request, we shall not hesitate to drag them to court; no form of crocodile tears by the Registrar will save the Board (Ekugbe, 2025)

Another disturbing implication of glitched institutions is the pressure they place on families and communities. In Nigeria, JAMB success is often linked to family pride and community honor, especially in collectivist cultural contexts where individual achievement reflects on the household. When glitches distort results, candidates face strained relationships, disappointment, and stigma. Many interpret poor outcomes as evidence of personal inadequacy rather than institutional failure, damaging their self-esteem and sense of worth. In extreme cases, such pressure has led to suicide. For instance, Timilehin, a candidate from Abeokuta, Ogun State, reportedly took her life in Ikorodu, Lagos, after scoring 190 in the 2025 UTME, lower than her previous year's score. Though not all cases are reported, many candidates undergo trauma that demands greater counseling services, mental health support, and institutional accountability (Wahab, 2025). As the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) argued:

> The National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) is deeply outraged by the disgraceful and unforgivable negligence exhibited by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), an act that has now cost not just academic dreams but also a precious young life in Lagos State. While JAMB has publicly acknowledged errors in the recently released UTME results particularly in Lagos and across five South East states, this admission does not absolve it of responsibility. On the contrary, it confirms our worst fears: that the board, under the leadership of Prof. Ishaq Oloyede, has failed woefully in its core responsibility. What should have been a straightforward process has instead become a source of trauma, confusion, and irreparable loss (Wahab, 2025).

Finally, glitches carry psychological consequences. When systems fail to perform as promised, users feel frustration, confusion, and disappointment. The gap between expected and actual performance erodes trust in the service provider and diminishes confidence in the institution's reliability. Repeated occurrences deepen this disillusionment, leaving users doubtful of organisational credibility and reinforcing perceptions of incompetence or neglect, thereby weakening overall public confidence in institutional effectiveness.

Economic/ Financial

In a system where government agencies routinely invoke "glitches" to mask anomalies or conceal state capture, ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) may exploit this precedent to perpetrate financial crimes and misconduct. Such practices erode public trust and normalize evasion of accountability under the guise of technical failure. The implications extend into the economy. Investors and business owners, domestic and foreign, may lose confidence in financial systems, fearing instability and opacity. This distrust discourages foreign direct investment, triggers capital flight, and dampens local

economic activity. Prolonged withdrawal of investment and declining domestic confidence could, in extreme cases, fuel inflationary pressures and recession.

Announcements of "glitches" by key institutions also ripple through the stock and money markets, influencing perceptions of the Central Bank of Nigeria and broader financial governance. Over time, this normalizes glitches as a convenient cover for sharp practices, enabling misappropriation and data manipulation without scrutiny. Such trends not only destabilize the economy but also damage Nigeria's global reputation, reinforcing perceptions of systemic corruption and weak institutional governance.

The Glitched State and Technology in a Captured State

The findings of this study reveal that while technology has long been used in different forms, its widespread adoption in Nigeria gained momentum in the 21st century. This shift is most visible in the political arena, where innovations were introduced to strengthen electoral integrity and safeguard Nigeria's democracy. From the 2011 general elections onward, successive modifications included the Automated Fingerprint Identification System, the Smart Card Reader, the Z-Pad, and eventually the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS). Similarly, social and economic institutions increasingly embraced digital tools, from the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) conducting the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), to the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and financial institutions such as the Central Bank of Nigeria and the Nigerian Stock Exchange.

Although "technical glitches" may have occurred before, the term became entrenched in public discourse during the 2023 general elections, when the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) blamed its failure to transmit results on a glitch despite earlier assurances of readiness (Idris Thompson et al., 2023). After lengthy court battles, opposition parties were unable to prove otherwise, effectively legitimizing the excuse. Soon after, JAMB and WAEC also announced glitches in their systems, further entrenching the narrative.

The study's findings underscore that glitches in the adoption of technology across public institutions carry profound political, social, and economic implications. Politically, they erode legitimacy and weaken public trust. As Alike (2023) observed, INEC's reversal on mandatory electronic transmission of results signaled that the commission is not bound by its own promises, undermining confidence in future elections. This has contributed to rising voter apathy, as citizens, particularly youth, increasingly view assurances from electoral bodies as hollow. In similar terms, Dávid-Barrett (2023) emphasizes that state capture fundamentally undermines development, and Nigeria's electoral processes exemplify this risk.

Socially, glitches in education and public examinations carry severe consequences. Affected candidates experience anxiety, depression, and, in extreme cases, suicide, such as the publicly reported case of a student who ended her life after the 2025 UTME. Komarnitska (2023) notes a clear link between system failure and heightened stress levels. According to Full Scale (2025), when dissatisfied users air their frustrations online, glitches quickly escalate into viral controversies, amplifying reputational damage. If users perceive these failures as neglect, they may abandon the service provider. However, in monopolistic institutions like JAMB, where no alternatives exist, students are trapped, compounding their frustration and sense of helplessness.

Economically, repeated failures undermine Nigeria's reputation and investor confidence. Institutions such as JAMB, INEC, and WAEC hold monopolistic control, yet lack

accountability. The JAMB Registrar's public apology in 2025, delivered with tears, offered symbolic contrition. Still, no structural reforms followed. Past mandatory digital policies, such as linking candidate data to the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), also led to avoidable deaths, reflecting institutional negligence (Thompson et al., 2020). These failures reveal not only policy shortcomings but also institutional incapacity to adapt technology responsibly.

Ultimately, the persistence of glitches reflects more than technical malfunctions. They are symptomatic of a captured state, where institutions lack autonomy, accountability, and resilience, and where digital transformation is co-opted by entrenched interests rather than harnessed for genuine reform. Obasanjo (2024) did not mince words when he warned that:

> Public institutions such as the legislature, the executive, the judiciary, and regulatory agencies both at the federal and local levels are subject to capture. As such, state capture can broadly be understood as the disproportionate and unregulated influence of interest groups or decision-making processes, where special interest groups manage to bend state laws, policies, and regulations (2024:28-29).

These institutional cases show that glitches function less as random technical accidents and more as political and economic tools. Each "system down" moment becomes a site of discretionary power—whether electoral officers in INEC deciding if accreditation continues, exam officials in JAMB or WAEC controlling access to portals, or intermediaries monetizing workarounds. Citizens are diverted into informal pathways where access depends on connections, payments, or chance rather than formal rights. Ifunanya (2025) argues that such glitches, particularly in examination bodies and the telecommunications sector, have created widespread distrust and compelled citizens to question the reliability of public institutions. This climate of skepticism has sparked calls for urgent reforms to prevent future glitches that could damage Nigeria's reputation and escalate into national crises (Mbachi, 2025).

This dynamic captures the essence of the Glitched State, where institutions adopt modern technologies but continue to reproduce dysfunction in digital form. Weak accountability and opacity allow digitization to entrench, rather than dismantle, exclusion and rent-seeking. In this way, INEC's electoral credibility, JAMB's fairness in admissions, and WAEC's integrity in assessment are all crucial pillars of democracy and social mobility, which are consistently undermined. Glitched institutions, therefore, not only erode public trust but also consolidate state capture in everyday governance.

Conclusion

The study concludes that while technology has the potential to promote accountability, efficiency, and democratic deepening, in Nigeria's captured state, it often serves the opposite purpose. The recurrence of glitches in electoral management, education systems, and financial institutions illustrates how weak institutions appropriate technology to mask failures, evade accountability, and entrench rent-seeking. These outcomes exacerbate political apathy, social disillusionment, and economic uncertainty, ultimately undermining national development. Addressing the glitched state requires reforms that go beyond technological adoption to strengthen institutional capacity, enforce transparency, and build resilient infrastructures. Only through such holistic reforms can technology serve as a tool for public good rather than as a digital extension of state capture.

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