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PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR OF EMPLOYEES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES PENRO CAGAYAN

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of government personnel involved in document management workflows at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Specifically, the study examined bureaucratic challenges, process inefficiencies, and personnel perspectives regarding the implementation of automated tracking systems in public sector offices. Using a qualitative phenomenological research design, the study involved purposively selected administrative personnel, records officers, and staff members directly engaged in document processing and records management. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that participants experienced delays in document routing, manual tracking difficulties, communication gaps, records retrieval problems, and workload pressures associated with traditional document management systems. Participants perceived that automated tracking systems could improve transparency, accountability, monitoring efficiency, and document accessibility. However, concerns regarding technological readiness, personnel training, resistance to change, internet connectivity, and data security emerged as barriers to digital transition. Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated adaptability and positive attitudes toward technological innovation aimed at improving bureaucratic efficiency and public service delivery. The study highlights the importance of strengthening digital infrastructure, institutional readiness, personnel training, and policy support in implementing automated document management systems in public sector offices.

Keywords: document management, bureaucratic processes, automated tracking systems, public sector offices, qualitative inquiry, records management

Introduction

Efficient document management systems are essential in ensuring organizational effectiveness, transparency, accountability, and timely public service delivery within government institutions. Public sector offices process large volumes of official documents, communications, reports, permits, memoranda, and administrative records that require systematic organization, monitoring, routing, and retrieval. Effective document management workflows contribute significantly to operational efficiency, decision-making processes, institutional accountability, and records preservation. In government agencies such as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, document management workflows involve multiple administrative procedures including receiving, routing, processing, approval, archiving, and retrieval of official records and communications. These processes often require coordination among different offices, departments, and personnel. Consequently, inefficient document management systems may result in processing delays, misplaced records, communication gaps, workflow bottlenecks, and reduced organizational productivity.

Traditional paper-based and manual document tracking systems continue to dominate many public sector offices in the Philippines. Although these systems facilitate records preservation, they are often associated with bureaucratic inefficiencies, time-consuming workflows, limited monitoring capabilities, and retrieval difficulties. Existing studies emphasize that inefficient records management practices negatively affect organizational performance, transparency, and public trust in government institutions.

The increasing integration of information and communication technologies has encouraged public institutions to adopt automated document management and tracking systems to improve administrative efficiency and service delivery. Automated tracking systems enable real-time document monitoring, faster records retrieval, workflow transparency, reduced processing delays, and improved inter-office coordination. These systems likewise strengthen accountability by providing traceable records of document movements and processing timelines.

According to Max Weber's Bureaucratic Theory, organizational efficiency in bureaucratic institutions depends on structured administrative systems, standardized procedures, and clearly defined workflows. However, excessive bureaucracy and rigid manual processes may contribute to inefficiencies and procedural delays. The study is likewise anchored on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Fred Davis, which emphasizes that perceived usefulness and ease of use significantly influence users' acceptance of technological systems.

Despite the potential advantages of automated tracking systems, several public institutions continue to encounter challenges in transitioning from manual to digital document management systems. Existing literature identifies concerns related to technological readiness, internet connectivity, insufficient personnel training, resistance to technological change, budget limitations, and data security risks as barriers to digital transformation in government offices.

Although numerous studies have examined records management systems quantitatively, limited qualitative inquiries have explored the lived experiences of government personnel directly involved in document management workflows in public sector offices. Understanding personnel experiences provides deeper insights into bureaucratic realities, process inefficiencies, technological readiness, and institutional challenges associated with document management practices.

Hence, this study explored the lived experiences of government personnel involved in document management workflows at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Specifically, it examined bureaucratic challenges, process inefficiencies, and perspectives regarding automated tracking systems in public sector offices.

Research Objectives

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of government personnel involved in document management workflows at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Specifically, it sought to:

1. examine the existing document management workflows and practices utilized in public sector offices;
2. explore the bureaucratic challenges and process inefficiencies encountered by personnel in document management processes;
3. determine personnel perspectives regarding the implementation of automated tracking systems; and
4. identify coping mechanisms, adaptations, and recommendations for improving document management efficiency in public sector offices.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore and understand the lived experiences of government personnel involved in document management workflows.

Participants and Locale of the Study

The participants consisted of ten purposively selected government personnel from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, including records officers, administrative staff, office personnel, and employees directly involved in document routing, processing, and records management.

Data Collection Procedure

Semi-structured interviews were utilized to gather in-depth information regarding document management experiences, workflow practices, process inefficiencies, and perspectives on automated tracking systems. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and audio-recorded with participants' consent.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework of Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke. Coding, categorization, and thematic interpretation were conducted to identify recurring themes and patterns.

Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical principles including confidentiality, informed consent, anonymity, voluntary participation, and protection of participants' professional identities throughout the conduct of the study.

Results and Findings

Theme 1: Manual and Bureaucratic Document Processing Workflows

Participants consistently described document management workflows as predominantly manual, paper-based, and bureaucratic. Personnel explained that documents pass through multiple offices, approval layers, and routing procedures before completion.

One participant shared:

"Documents go through several offices before approval, which often causes delays."

Another employee explained:

"Manual logging and routing consume a lot of time, especially during peak workloads."

Participants highlighted that manual tracking systems required repetitive encoding, physical routing, signature verification, and paper filing processes. Personnel observed that these workflows increased processing time and affected overall office efficiency.

The findings indicate that traditional bureaucratic document management systems contribute to operational delays and workflow inefficiencies in public sector offices.

Theme 2: Process Inefficiencies and Administrative Challenges

Participants identified several process inefficiencies and administrative challenges affecting document management workflows. Common concerns included delayed document routing, misplaced records, communication gaps, incomplete submissions, retrieval difficulties, and workload pressures.

One participant stated:

"Sometimes documents are difficult to trace because there is no real-time monitoring system."

Another employee shared:

"Delayed approvals happen when documents are left unattended in offices."

Participants emphasized that manual tracking systems limited transparency and made it difficult to monitor document status and accountability. Personnel also highlighted challenges associated with records storage, filing organization, and retrieval of archived documents.

The findings suggest that administrative inefficiencies and lack of integrated tracking systems significantly affect organizational productivity and workflow coordination.

Theme 3: Perceived Benefits of Automated Tracking Systems

Participants consistently perceived automated tracking systems as beneficial in improving document management efficiency, transparency, and accountability.

One participant remarked:

"Automated tracking systems can help monitor documents in real time."

Another employee explained:

"Digital systems reduce delays because offices can immediately track document status."

Participants emphasized that automated systems could improve records retrieval, minimize document loss, strengthen monitoring processes, and facilitate inter-office communication. Personnel also perceived that digital systems would improve public service delivery through faster processing and reduced bureaucratic delays.

The findings reveal that government personnel recognize the potential of automated tracking systems in strengthening efficiency, accountability, and workflow transparency in public sector offices.

Theme 4: Technological Readiness, Resistance, and Institutional Adaptation

Despite positive perceptions regarding automation, participants identified concerns related to technological readiness, internet connectivity, insufficient training, resistance to change, and data security.

One participant shared:

“Some employees are not yet comfortable using digital systems.”

Another employee stated:

“Stable internet connection and proper training are necessary before implementation.”

Participants emphasized the importance of personnel capability-building and institutional support in ensuring successful digital transition. Some employees expressed concerns regarding cybersecurity risks, system reliability, and technical troubleshooting.

Despite these concerns, participants demonstrated adaptability and willingness to learn technological systems that improve workflow efficiency.

The findings suggest that institutional readiness, personnel training, and technological infrastructure significantly influence successful implementation of automated tracking systems in government offices.

Discussion

The findings revealed that document management workflows at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources remain predominantly manual and bureaucratic, resulting in process inefficiencies, delayed document routing, and monitoring difficulties. Participants described repetitive paper-based procedures, multiple approval layers, and limited real-time monitoring capabilities that affected workflow efficiency and administrative coordination.

These findings support Max Weber's Bureaucratic Theory, which recognizes that while bureaucratic systems provide organizational structure and procedural consistency, excessive administrative formalities and rigid workflows may contribute to inefficiency and procedural delays. Similarly, existing public administration studies emphasize that traditional manual records management systems negatively affect institutional productivity and public service efficiency. The study further revealed that participants perceived automated tracking systems as valuable tools for improving workflow transparency, accountability, document retrieval, and inter-office coordination. Personnel recognized that digital systems could minimize processing delays, reduce document loss, and facilitate real-time monitoring of records and communications.

These findings align with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Fred Davis, which suggests that perceived usefulness significantly influences users' acceptance of technological innovations. Participants' positive attitudes toward automation indicate recognition of the practical benefits associated with digital transformation in public administration.

However, the study also identified several barriers affecting technological transition, including limited technological readiness, unstable internet connectivity, insufficient personnel training, resistance to change, and cybersecurity concerns. These findings corroborate previous studies highlighting infrastructure limitations and digital competency gaps as major barriers to e-governance and digital transformation in developing public sector institutions.

Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated adaptability and willingness to adopt automated systems provided that sufficient institutional support, technical assistance, and training opportunities are available. The findings underscore the importance of strategic digital transformation initiatives, organizational readiness, and capacity-building programs in modernizing public sector document management systems.

Conclusion

The study explored the lived experiences of government personnel involved in document management workflows at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Findings revealed that existing document management processes remain predominantly manual, paper-based, and bureaucratic, resulting in delayed routing, workflow inefficiencies, retrieval difficulties, and administrative coordination challenges.

Participants perceived that automated tracking systems could significantly improve document monitoring, transparency, accountability, records retrieval, and overall administrative efficiency. However, concerns regarding technological readiness, internet infrastructure, personnel training, resistance to technological change, and data security emerged as barriers to digital transformation.

Despite these challenges, personnel demonstrated adaptability and positive attitudes toward technological innovations aimed at improving workflow efficiency and public service delivery. The study concludes that successful implementation of automated document tracking systems requires strengthened digital infrastructure, institutional readiness, personnel capability-building, and supportive administrative policies.

Implications of the Study

The findings provide important implications for government administrators, policymakers, information technology personnel, and public sector institutions. Government offices may strengthen records management systems by adopting integrated automated tracking platforms that improve workflow transparency, accountability, and document accessibility.

Institutional investments in digital infrastructure, internet connectivity, cybersecurity systems, and technical support services may further enhance operational efficiency and support successful digital transformation initiatives. Public

institutions may likewise implement comprehensive personnel training programs focusing on digital literacy, records management technologies, and system utilization competencies.

The study also highlights the importance of developing policy frameworks that support e-governance initiatives, data security protocols, and organizational readiness strategies for automated systems implementation. Future researchers may conduct similar studies involving comparative analyses across government agencies and mixed-methods approaches examining the effectiveness of automated document management systems in public administration.

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