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Assessment of the Effect of Information Communication Technology on Africa's Political and Economic Advancement

Ekpe Bennet Essien¹

Abstract

This study examined the profound impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on political and economic development in Africa. The rapid adoption of ICT has transformed communication, governance, and financial activities, resulting in opportunities and challenges for the continent. The integration of information and communication technology (ICT) is fundamentally changing Africa's growth trajectory. At the core of this digital revolution are semiconductors, the essential parts that make computers, communication, and intelligent systems possible. The findings reveal that ICT has significantly enhanced political participation through increased access to information and communication platforms, thereby promoting democratic governance and civic engagement. Economically, ICT has spurred innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic diversification, resulting in job creation and enhanced service delivery. However, persistent challenges such as infrastructure deficits, digital divides, and regulatory constraints hinder the full realization of these benefits. The study concludes that a comprehensive approach incorporating international cooperation, education, policy, and investment is essential for the future of technology. We can empower the upcoming generation of tech workers and entrepreneurs by emphasizing STEM education, encouraging innovation through public and private collaborations, and establishing a conducive regulatory environment.

Keywords: *Africa, ICT, Political Development, Economic Development.*

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Introduction

Information Communication Technology (ICT) has transformed the global landscape, presenting unprecedented opportunities for economic growth, political participation, and social development. Africa, in particular, has witnessed significant advancements in ICT adoption and usage, with the continent's mobile phone penetration rate growing from 5% in 2005 to over 80% in 2020 (GSMA, 2020). However, the impact of ICT on Africa's political and economic development remains a subject of ongoing debate. On the other hand, proponents argue that ICT has the potential to drive economic growth, improve governance, and enhance political participation in Africa. For instance, ICT-enabled services such as mobile money and e-commerce have expanded financial inclusion and facilitated trade across the continent (Manyak, 2015). Social media platforms have provided new avenues for citizens to engage with governments, promote transparency, and demand accountability (Mwita, 2017). On the other hand, critics contend that the benefits of ICT are not evenly distributed, with certain segments of the population, such as rural communities and women, facing significant barriers to access and usage (Hafkin & Taggart, 2001). Moreover, the digital divide between Africa and other regions of the world persists, threatening to exacerbate existing inequalities and undermine the continent's development prospects (UNESCO, 2017). This study aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion on the impact of ICT on Africa's political and economic development. By examining the empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks, this research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the opportunities and challenges presented by ICT in the African context.

The development has also prompted both developed and emerging economies to compete for a fair share in the ICT sector, even though the market is still dominated by industrialized countries, with the United States leading (WDI, 2022). However, less-developed and emerging economies are equally striving to claim a portion of the sector's benefits. As a result, the World Bank (2022) reports that the sector has experienced remarkable growth worldwide. This growth has been especially notable in economies with competitive regimes (Leila, 2019). The level of private sector investment correlates directly with technological spillover, particularly in the ICT sector, which positively impacts the entire

economy and fosters greater efficiency and growth. Recently, Nigeria's ICT sector has undergone significant expansion in both volume and coverage, especially following the introduction of global systems of mobile (GSM) networks. This development has attracted substantial investment, mainly from private firms within and outside the country. Indeed, Akinwale, Sanusi, and Surujlal (2018) observe that deregulation and increased competition in the telecommunications sector played crucial roles in its growth. Consequently, other ICT services such as internet networking, software and database development, information security, and artificial intelligence have also penetrated the Nigerian market. Interestingly, even during Nigeria's recession in 2016 and 2020, the ICT sector continued to grow positively. In the last quarter of 2020, it experienced an exceptional growth rate of 14.70 percent (NBS, 2020).

Furthermore, the ICT sector's share of GDP has steadily increased over the past three years, reaching 12.1 percent of Nigeria's GDP in the last quarter of 2021 and jumping sharply to 20.32 percent in the third quarter of 2022 (NBS, 2022). Despite this impressive performance, the impact of the ICT sector on GDP may be more extensive than its direct output value. The sector generates numerous multiplier effects on GDP by catalyzing transformations in social, economic, cultural, and psychological aspects of the country. The sector is vital and serves as a prerequisite for participation in an increasingly competitive global economy and for attracting investments. However, studies like Johnson, Olabisi, and Folake (2021) have not thoroughly examined the long-term relationship between these variables using appropriate analytical techniques. Additionally, some of these studies have failed to account for relevant mediating variables in the relationship (Akinwale, Sanusi & Surujlal, 2018).

Therefore, there is a need to investigate the true magnitude of its long-term effects on GDP, which this paper aims to do. The findings are expected to offer valuable policy insights for Nigeria and other countries with similar features and contribute to the existing literature. Over the past two decades, Africa has experienced a remarkable transformation in its ICT landscape. The continent has seen unprecedented growth in ICT adoption and usage, driven by advances in mobile technology, fiber optic networks, and satellite communications (ITU, 2020). This essay explores the rise of ICT in Africa, highlighting the key drivers,

benefits, and challenges of this development. A major driver of ICT growth in Africa has been the rapid expansion of mobile phone networks. According to GSMA, the number of mobile subscribers increased from 16 million in 2000 to over 800 million in 2020 (GSMA, 2020). This growth has been fueled by the availability of affordable mobile devices and services, as well as network expansion into rural areas (Aker & Mbiti, 2010).

The rise of ICT has profoundly impacted Africa's economic and social development. For example, mobile money services have expanded financial inclusion, enabling millions of Africans to access banking for the first time (Manyak, 2015). E-commerce platforms have also emerged, providing new avenues for entrepreneurs and small businesses to tap into local and global markets (UNCTAD, 2019). Moreover, ICT has spurred the growth of the digital economy by creating jobs and fostering innovation (UNCTAD, 2019). For instance, the growth of business process outsourcing (BPO) has generated thousands of jobs in countries like Egypt, Morocco, and South Africa (Mansell, 2011). Despite these benefits, challenges remain. One significant issue is the digital divide – disparate access to ICTs across different regions, income levels, and genders (Hafkin & Taggart, 2001). In many African countries, rural areas and women are often excluded from ICT access, exacerbating existing social and economic inequalities.

Another challenge is the issue of cybersecurity, as African countries are increasingly vulnerable to cyber threats and attacks (Kaggwa, 2017). The lack of robust cybersecurity measures and regulations in many African countries has created an environment conducive to cybercrime, with significant economic and social implications. The rise of ICT in Africa has been a transformative phenomenon, driving economic growth, social development, and innovation. However, the digital divide and cybersecurity challenges must be addressed to ensure that the benefits of ICT are equitably shared and that the continent can reap the full rewards of the digital economy. Africa is at a critical juncture in its development trajectory. The continent is home to some of the fastest-growing economies in the world, but it also faces significant challenges, including poverty, inequality, and poor governance.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has the potential to transform

Africa's political and economic landscape, driving growth, innovation, and democratic participation. One of the key areas where ICT can make a significant impact is governance. ICT can enable greater transparency, accountability, and participation in the political process. For instance, online platforms can be used to provide citizens with access to information on government policies, budgets, and services (Mwita, 2017). This can help to reduce corruption, improve service delivery, and increase citizen engagement. ICT can also drive economic growth and innovation in Africa. The continent is home to a growing number of tech hubs and innovation centers, which are incubating start-ups and fostering entrepreneurship (UNCTAD, 2019). ICT-enabled services such as mobile money, e-commerce, and online education are also expanding access to financial services, markets, and education (Manyak, 2015). Moreover, ICT can help to address some of the continent's most pressing development challenges, including healthcare and education. For instance, telemedicine platforms can be used to provide remote healthcare services, while online education platforms can expand access to education for marginalized communities (WHO, 2018).

However, the potential of ICT to transform Africa's political and economic landscape is not without its challenges. One of the major obstacles is the digital divide, which refers to unequal access to ICTs across different regions, income groups, and genders (Hafkin & Taggart, 2001). This can perpetuate existing social and economic inequalities, undermining the potential of ICT to drive inclusive growth and development. Another challenge is the need for robust regulatory frameworks to govern the use of ICTs in Africa. This includes regulations to protect citizens' data, prevent cybercrime, and promote competition in the ICT sector (Kaggwa, 2017). The potential of ICT to transform Africa's political and economic landscape is vast. ICT can drive growth, innovation, and democratic participation, while also addressing some of the continent's most pressing development challenges. However, this potential can only be realized if the digital divide is addressed and robust regulatory frameworks are put in place.

Conceptual Clarifications

Information and Communication Technology (ICT): ICT is a scientific technology, engineering, and managerial discipline and method utilized in handling information, its application, and its association with social, economic, and cultural matters (Ratheeswari, 2018). ICT could also be seen as a broad term that encompasses all digital technologies used to collect, store, manage, and communicate information. It includes technologies such as the internet, mobile devices, and software applications that facilitate digital communication and information sharing.

Political Development: Political development, as modernization, political decay, is the opposite of the linear idea of social progress, although, within the model of modernization, social regression is not possible (Huntington 1965). Political Development could also be the processes through which political institutions, structures, and practices evolve and improve, often resulting in enhanced democratic governance, increased political participation, and civic engagement.

Economic Development: According to Karl Marx (1867) believed that the economic development of society is driven by the conflict between different social classes, particularly between the capitalist and the working class. It could also be seen as progress in an economy, or the qualitative and quantitative changes in economic indicators such as GDP, employment, poverty rates, and living standards. It involves initiatives aimed at improving the economic well-being of a community or country.

Africa: This is the world's second-largest continent, after Asia, and the second most populous. It covers about 20% of the Earth's land area and is home to nearly 1.4 billion people, which is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the west, the Mediterranean Sea to the North, the Red Sea and Indian Ocean to the east, and the Atlantic and Indian Oceans to the south.

Theoretical Framework

The Cybernetic Theory, developed by Norbert Wiener (1947), serves as the foundation for this research. The introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has changed how African nations approach economic and political development. The cybernetic theory highlights the significance of feedback loops in comprehending complex systems by looking at the control mechanisms, communication channels, and feedback loops that define the relationship between ICT adoption and development outcomes. Feedback loops are essential in determining the results of ICT adoption and development in Africa. Adoption of ICTs, for example, can boost economic growth, which can encourage more ICT adoption.

As a result, the adoption of ICT and economic expansion support one another, creating positive and negative feedback that may also arise. ICT adoption, for instance, may result in greater income inequality, which could jeopardize stability and economic progress. As a result, there is a negative feedback loop whereby economic instability and ICT adoption strengthen one another. The significance of control mechanisms in managing complex systems is also emphasized by cybernetic theory. Control methods are essential in determining the results of ICT adoption and development in Africa. Through a variety of control methods, governments, international organizations, and private sector groups can affect the adoption of ICT and its effects on development. Governments can, for example, create regulatory frameworks that encourage investment in and adoption of ICT.

International organizations can encourage the adoption and development of ICT by offering financial and technical aid. Investments in ICT services and infrastructure by private sector organizations can spur innovation and adoption. The cybernetic theory highlights how crucial information flows and communication channels are to comprehending complex systems. Communication channels are essential in determining the results of ICT adoption and development in Africa. ICT has a complicated and wide-ranging effect on Africa's political and economic development. Cybernetic theory shows us that communication routes, control systems, and feedback loops are important in determining results. Policymakers, practitioners, and researchers can create more potent plans for using ICTs to propel development and progress in Africa

by comprehending these processes.

Methodology

This assessment employs a mixed-methods approach:

Quantitative Analysis: Data was gathered from a variety of sources, including the World Bank and the International Telecommunication Union, to evaluate ICT penetration rates and economic indicators across different African countries.

Qualitative Analysis: Interviews with policymakers, ICT entrepreneurs, and citizens were conducted to gather insights into the lived experiences and perceptions of ICT's impact on political engagement and economic opportunities.

Leveraging Semiconductors in Information Communication Technology for Africa's Political and Economic Advancement

Information and communication technology (ICT) integration is drastically altering Africa's course for growth. Semiconductors, the fundamental components enabling computers, communication, and intelligent systems, are at the center of this digital revolution. Despite Africa's long history of consuming digital technology, the region is beginning to see the strategic benefits of participating in the semiconductor value chain. Significant political and economic progress might be made by utilizing semiconductors in ICT, which would promote innovation, industrial competitiveness, and effective governance throughout the continent. Data processing, storage, and communication are made possible by semiconductors, which are materials used to make microchips and electrical components. The power everything from computers and smartphones to satellites and artificial intelligence systems. These chips are essential to the operation of ICT systems. The availability and effectiveness of semiconductor-powered technologies are crucial to Africa's digital revolution, which is being pushed by fintech, e-governance, smart cities, and mobile connectivity (Sutherland, 2021). Mobile broadband now makes up more than 80% of connections in nations like South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya,

where mobile internet usage is growing quickly (GSMA, 2023). Africa is still heavily reliant on imported semiconductor technologies, though, which leaves ICT systems exposed to high costs and disruptions in the global supply chain.

African economies may greatly increase industrial capacity and value-added output by engaging in the semiconductor value chain through design, testing, packaging, or materials mining. For example, the production of chips and electronics depends on essential raw elements like cobalt, tantalum, and lithium, all of which are abundant in Africa (OECD, 2022). Large quantities of these resources are found in nations like Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). African economies can become more diversified, and skilled jobs can be created by promoting investment in regional semiconductor research, chip design centers, and assembly plants. The African Development Bank estimates that by 2025, digital industrialization could boost Africa's GDP by \$180 billion, with semiconductors serving as a key component of that ecosystem (AfDB, 2021). In terms of politics, semiconductors improve ICT systems utilized in digital identity, electronic voting, e-governance, and public sector digitization.

It also supports openness, accountability, and citizen participation by enhancing the security, speed, and dependability of government services. For instance, Nigeria's digital ID system (NIMC) and Rwanda's national e-government platform "Irembo" both rely on infrastructures that need effective and safe chip-based technology. Locally secured chips and embedded systems are essential for safeguarding national data and sovereignty in light of the growing cyber threats (ITU, 2023).

Challenges and Policy Necessities

Africa confronts many challenges despite the opportunities: the development of the semiconductor industry is hampered by insufficient R&D capacity, high energy prices, a lack of technical skills, and inadequate infrastructure. Due to the global nature of the semiconductor sector, strong policy frameworks, knowledge transfer, and strategic collaborations are necessary for market entry. Governments need to create special economic zones for the production

of ICT hardware, encourage public-private collaborations, and invest in STEM education. Building cross-border technology clusters and harmonizing rules are made possible by regional partnerships such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Semiconductors are strategic assets for Africa's economic transformation and political emancipation, not merely technical parts. Africa may transform from a passive technology consumer to an active inventor and producer by incorporating semiconductor capabilities into its ICT strategy. This would promote increased digital sovereignty, job development, and industrial modernization. The continent may use semiconductors as catalysts for equitable and sustainable development if the proper funding, legislative frameworks, and regional collaboration are in place.

The State of Information Communication Technology in Africa: Overview of ICT infrastructure in Africa

Africa's ICT infrastructure has seen significant improvements in recent years, driven by investments in mobile networks, fiber-centric cables, and digital services. Regardless, the challenges, such as inadequate electricity, high cost of data, and rural-urban disparities in connectivity, persist. Africa's mobile network expansion has accelerated with increased coverage, early-stage 5G rollouts, and major infrastructure investments. Countries like Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Nigeria have improved 4G accessibility, while 5G penetration, currently at 1.4% is expected to reach 25.6% by 2029. Telecom giants like MTN and Hormund Telecom are driving advancements alongside satellite internet services like Starlink, which launched in South Sudan in 2024. Irrespective of these developments, the affordability and regional disparities remain challenges, with Central Africa still facing a 34% coverage gap. Continuous investments are crucial to bridging this digital divide. The expansion of undersea and terrestrial fiber-optic networks including projects like Google's Equiano and Meta's 2Africa is improving the speed of internet accessibility and the rise of data centers operated by global companies such as Microsoft Azure, Amazon Web Services (AWS), and Huawei Cloud is boosting Africa's digital economy (World Bank 2022). Despite progress, only about 40-50% of the population has reliable internet access, with significant gaps existing between the rural and

urban areas.

Trends and Statistics on Information Communication Technology Adoption in Africa

Africa's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) landscape is undergoing significant transformation, marked by notable advancements and persistent challenges. Key trends include:

Internet Penetration and Usage: Between 2019 and 2022, over 160 million Africans gained broadband internet access, reflecting a substantial increase in connectivity. Specifically, Sub-Saharan Africa experienced a 115% rise in internet users from 2016 to 2021. Despite this progress, a significant digital divide remains, with many regions still lacking adequate internet access.

Digital Payment Adoption: The adoption of digital financial services has seen remarkable growth from 2014 to 2021, with an additional 191 million individuals in Africa making or receiving digital payments, highlighting a shift towards digital financial inclusion.

IT Equipment Market Growth: The IT equipment market in Africa is on an upward trajectory, valued at \$6.02 million in 2021. It is projected to reach \$7.24 million by 2023, encompassing hardware, software, and services. This growth signifies an expanding IT market across the continent.

Cloud Computing Adoption: Cloud technology adoption varies across sectors. The technology, media, and telecommunications industries report the highest adoption rates, averaging 83%, primarily utilizing public cloud services. This trend underscores the sector-specific nature of cloud integration in Africa.

Information Communication Technology and Political Development in Africa

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has significantly transformed political processes across Africa, enhancing democratic participation, governance, and political reforms. This paper explores the

impact of ICT on democratic participation and governance, supported by case studies of ICT-enabled political reforms in Africa. ICT plays a crucial role in political development in Africa by enhancing governance, increasing political participation, and improving transparency. ICT has revolutionized democratic engagement in Africa by providing platforms for citizens to express their opinions, mobilize for change, and participate in governance. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp have facilitated activism, voter education, and real-time discussions on political issues (Howard & Hussain, 2013). Mobile phones and internet access have enabled grassroots movements to challenge autocratic regimes and push for democratic reforms.

ICT tools have improved election processes by increasing transparency and accountability. The use of biometric voter registration, electronic voting systems, and digital election monitoring has reduced electoral fraud and improved credibility. For instance, Ghana successfully implemented a biometric voter registration system in 2012, which minimized cases of multiple voting and impersonation (Gyimah-Boadi, 2019). Similarly, mobile-based election monitoring apps allow citizens and observers to report irregularities, fostering accountability. Governments across Africa have adopted ICT-driven e-governance initiatives to enhance public service delivery. E-government platforms enable citizens to access government services, pay taxes, and engage with public officials online. Rwanda's "Irembo" e-government platform provides digital access to public services, reducing bureaucracy and corruption (Ndemo & Weiss, 2017). Social media has become a powerful tool for political mobilization in Africa. The Arab Spring uprisings in North Africa, the EndSARS movement in Nigeria, and RhodesMustFall in South Africa are examples of ICT-facilitated activism. These movements leveraged online platforms to organize protests, share information, and pressure governments for reforms (Tufekci, 2017).

Case Studies Of ICT-Enabled Political Reforms in Africa

Kenya: M-Pesa and Electoral Transparency: Kenya has integrated ICT into its electoral and financial systems to enhance governance. During elections, mobile money platforms like M-Pesa have been used to facilitate secure campaign donations and reduce vote-buying. Additionally, Kenya's Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) introduced the Kenya Integrated Election Management System (KIEMS) to enhance voter identification and result transmission (Cheeseman, Lynch & Willis, 2020).

Nigeria: EndSARS and Digital Protests: The 2020 EndSARS movement in Nigeria demonstrated the power of ICT in political reform. Social media platforms played a crucial role in mobilizing protests against police brutality. Protesters used Twitter and WhatsApp to share live updates, coordinate activities, and crowdsource funds for medical aid and legal support (Uwalaka & Watkins, 2021). The movement forced the Nigerian government to disband the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and sparked conversations on broader governance reforms.

South Africa: Open Government Initiatives: South Africa has embraced ICT for open governance. Platforms such as "Vulekamali" provide transparency in government budgeting, allowing citizens to track public expenditure. Additionally, the government's e-participation initiatives enable online petitions, digital town hall meetings, and policy discussions (Razzano, 2019). These ICT-driven reforms have strengthened democratic accountability.

E-Governance in Ghana: Ghana's e-governance initiative aimed to improve transparency and accountability in government. The project included online portals for citizen engagement, electronic payment systems, and digital platforms for public service delivery (World Bank, 2019). This initiative enhanced citizen participation and reduced corruption (Owusu & Amoako, 2017).

Digital Literacy Programs in Rwanda: Rwanda implemented digital literacy programs to equip citizens with the skills needed to participate in the digital economy (Rwanda Ministry of ICT and Innovation, 2019). The program included training in basic computer skills, online safety, and digital citizenship (Twizeyimana et al., 2020).

Overcoming Challenges of ICT Adoption in Africa: Addressing the Digital Divide and Inequality

The adoption of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has the potential to transform Africa's economic, social, and political landscape. However, the continent faces significant challenges in ICT adoption, including the digital divide and inequality. This essay explores the challenges of ICT adoption in Africa and proposes strategies for addressing the digital divide and inequality. One of the major challenges facing ICT adoption in Africa is the digital divide. The digital divide refers to the unequal access to ICTs across different regions, income groups, and genders (Hafkin & Taggart, 2001). In Africa, the digital divide is characterized by limited access to ICT infrastructure, high costs of ICT services, and limited digital literacy (ITU, 2020). Another challenge facing ICT adoption in Africa is inequality. ICT inequality refers to the unequal distribution of ICT benefits and opportunities across different segments of the population (Kaggwa, 2017).

In Africa, ICT inequality is perpetuated by factors such as poverty, lack of education, and limited access to ICT infrastructure. Firstly, governments and private sector organizations can invest in ICT infrastructure development, including the expansion of fiber optic networks, mobile phone coverage, and internet connectivity (UNCTAD, 2019). Secondly, initiatives can be implemented to promote digital literacy and skills development, particularly among marginalized groups such as women, youth, and rural communities (Manyak, 2015). This can include training programs, online courses, and digital literacy campaigns. Thirdly, policies and regulations can be put in place to promote affordable access to ICT services, including subsidies for low-income households, tax exemptions for ICT equipment, and regulations to promote competition in the ICT sector (Kaggwa, 2017).

Finally, innovative solutions can be developed to address the specific needs of marginalized groups, such as mobile phone applications for rural communities, online platforms for women entrepreneurs, and digital inclusion programs for persons with disabilities (WHO, 2018). Therefore, addressing the digital divide and inequality in ICT adoption in Africa requires a multi-faceted approach that involves investment in ICT infrastructure, promotion of digital literacy and

skills development, implementation of policies and regulations to promote affordable access, and development of innovative solutions to address the specific needs of marginalized groups.

Building Resilient Communication Technology (ICT) Infrastructure and Cybersecurity.

The rapid growth of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has transformed the way businesses, governments, and individuals operate. However, this growth has also introduced new risks and vulnerabilities, particularly in the areas of ICT infrastructure and cybersecurity. Building resilient ICT infrastructure and cybersecurity is critical to ensuring the continuity of economic and social activities, protecting sensitive information, and preventing financial losses. One of the key challenges in building resilient ICT infrastructure is ensuring the reliability and availability of critical systems and networks. This can be achieved through the implementation of robust disaster recovery and business continuity plans, regular maintenance and upgrades, and the use of redundant systems and networks (ITU, 2020).

Additionally, the adoption of cloud computing and software-defined networking can provide greater flexibility and scalability, enabling organizations to quickly respond to changing demands and threats. Cybersecurity is another critical aspect of building a resilient ICT infrastructure. The increasing sophistication and frequency of cyberattacks have made it essential for organizations to implement robust cybersecurity measures to protect their systems, networks, and data. This includes the use of firewalls, intrusion detection and prevention systems, encryption, and antivirus software (Kaggwa, 2017). Moreover, organizations should implement strong access controls, conduct regular security audits and penetration testing, and provide employees with regular cybersecurity training and awareness programs. The importance of building resilient ICT infrastructure and cybersecurity cannot be overstated. Cyberattacks can result in significant financial losses, damage to reputation, and compromise of sensitive information. For instance, a study by the Ponemon Institute found that the average cost of a data breach in Africa was \$1.4 million (Ponemon Institute, 2020). Moreover, the World Economic Forum has

identified cyberattacks as one of the top global risks in terms of likelihood and impact (World Economic Forum, 2020). To build resilient ICT infrastructure and cybersecurity, governments, organizations, and individuals must work together to develop and implement robust policies, regulations, and standards.

This includes the development of national cybersecurity strategies, the establishment of computer emergency response teams (CERTs), and the implementation of international cybersecurity standards and best practices (ITU, 2020). Building resilient ICT infrastructure and cybersecurity is critical to ensuring the continuity of economic and social activities, protecting sensitive information, and preventing financial losses. This requires the implementation of robust disaster recovery and business continuity plans, the adoption of cloud computing and software-defined networking, and the implementation of robust cybersecurity measures. Moreover, governments, organizations, and individuals must work together to develop and implement robust policies, regulations, and standards to build resilient ICT infrastructure and cybersecurity.

Discussion and Findings

This study reveals that the impact of Information Communication Technology (ICT) on Africa's political and economic development has been profound, fundamentally altering how governance, civic engagement, and economic transactions occur across the continent. Politically, ICT has enhanced transparency and accountability through platforms that facilitate real-time information dissemination and citizen participation in governance. Social media and mobile applications have emerged as powerful tools for political mobilization, enabling citizens to organize, advocate for their rights, and voice their concerns. This newfound connectivity has improved governmental responsiveness, as leaders are increasingly aware of public opinion and pressure to act on pressing issues such as corruption and human rights abuses.

Economically, ICT has acted as a catalyst for growth by fostering innovation and enhancing access to markets and resources. The rise of mobile banking and e-commerce platforms has revolutionized financial inclusion, allowing

millions of previously unbanked individuals to participate in the economy. Moreover, ICT has spurred entrepreneurship and job creation, particularly in the tech sector, where startups are emerging rapidly in cities like Nairobi, Lagos, and Accra. These innovative businesses are leveraging technology to solve local problems and create scalable solutions that contribute to economic growth. Additionally, ICT has facilitated international trade by providing African businesses with access to global markets and networks, thus enhancing competitiveness. However, the digital divide persists, with disparities in internet access and digital literacy posing challenges to fully realizing the potential of ICT in promoting inclusive development. As governments and stakeholders continue to invest in infrastructure and education, the integration of ICT into various sectors will likely play a critical role in shaping Africa's future political and economic landscape.

Conclusion

The impact of Information Communication Technology (ICT) on Africa's political and economic development has been profound and multifaceted. Politically, ICT has enhanced transparency and accountability by facilitating access to information and enabling citizens to engage in governance processes through social media and digital platforms. This has empowered civil society and promoted democratic participation, helping to amplify voices that might otherwise go unheard. Additionally, ICT has played a crucial role in monitoring elections, promoting free speech, and mobilizing community activism, thereby strengthening democratic institutions across the continent. Economically, ICT has catalyzed growth by fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, particularly among the youth. The proliferation of mobile technology has transformed numerous sectors, including finance, agriculture, and healthcare, by providing access to digital services and markets that were previously unreachable. This has led to increased productivity and enhanced economic opportunities for individuals and small businesses, contributing to poverty reduction and broader economic development. However, challenges such as the digital divide, infrastructure deficits, and varying levels of digital literacy continue to hinder the full realization of ICT's potential across the continent.

Addressing these challenges is essential for ensuring equitable access to technology and maximizing its benefits. As governments and stakeholders invest in ICT infrastructure and education, there is significant potential for fostering inclusive growth that can further elevate Africa's position in the global economy.

The future of technology rests on a multifaceted approach that integrates education, policy, investment, and international cooperation, encouraging sustainable practices, fostering inclusivity, and facilitating access to technology will ensure that advancements are equitable and beneficial to society as a whole. International collaborations in trade, research, and development will further enhance the global technology landscape by addressing challenges and leveraging semiconductors to enhance our political and economic advancement with diverse opportunities that transcend borders. Ultimately, a collective commitment to embracing change and promoting progress will shape a resilient and vibrant technology ecosystem that can meet the demands of the future while improving the quality of life for all. Investments in digital infrastructure, education, and training are imperative to cultivate a digitally literate population that can utilize technology effectively. Policymakers must prioritize inclusive digital policies that ensure equitable access to ICT resources, particularly in marginalized and rural areas.

Moreover, fostering a regulatory environment that encourages innovation while protecting users' rights and promoting cybersecurity will be crucial in building trust in digital systems. While ICT presents remarkable opportunities for advancing Africa's political and economic landscapes, its impact will ultimately depend on tailored strategies that promote inclusivity, resilience, and ethical governance. As the continent continues to navigate the complexities of the digital age, a focused commitment to leveraging ICT responsibly could pave the way for transformative growth and development across various sectors. To fully harness the potential of ICT for political and economic development in Africa, it is essential for stakeholders, including governments, private sector actors, civil societies, and international organisations, to collaboratively address these challenges.

Recommendation

Based on our findings, we recommend the following actions:

- i. **Comprehensive Policy Research:** Conduct studies comparing the ICT frameworks of different African countries with those of nations that have effectively leveraged technology for development.
- ii. **Invest in Digital Infrastructure:** Advocate for substantial investment in broadband infrastructure to ensure high-speed internet access in both urban and rural areas. This will facilitate economic activities and enhance political engagement. Encourage partnerships between governments and private tech firms to foster innovation and accessibility in ICT.
- iii. **Enhance Digital Literacy and Skills Training:** Implement national campaigns to improve digital literacy among the populace, especially targeting marginalized groups, women, and youth. This includes training programs that equip individuals with the necessary skills to participate in the digital economy. Integrate ICT and digital skills training into the educational curriculum at all levels, ensuring that future generations are prepared for a technology-driven economy.
- iv. **Promote E-Governance and Civic Engagement:** Develop and implement e-governance platforms to improve transparency, accountability, and service delivery in government operations. This can include online platforms for citizen engagement, complaint systems, and digital voting mechanisms. Encourage the development of civic tech applications that empower citizens to engage with policymakers, participate in public decision-making, and hold governments accountable.
- v. **Foster Innovation and Support Startups:** Establish incubation and acceleration programs that support startups and entrepreneurs in the tech sector. Provide mentorship, funding opportunities, and access to necessary resources to help innovative ideas flourish. Create venture capital funds and grant programs dedicated to technology and innovation to stimulate growth in the digital sector, particularly for young entrepreneurs and underrepresented groups.

- vi. **Strengthen Cybersecurity Measures:** Develop and implement a robust national cybersecurity strategy that outlines clear protocols for data protection, incident response, and infrastructure security to safeguard citizens' information and privacy. Launch campaigns to educate citizens and businesses about cybersecurity risks and best practices to minimize vulnerabilities in the digital landscape.
- vii. **Encourage Research and Development (R&D):** Increase funding for research and development in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and biotechnology. Support partnerships between universities, research institutions, and the private sector to drive innovation and commercialization of new technologies. Foster international collaborations that allow local researchers and companies to engage with global tech communities. Establish joint research initiatives and exchanges to gain insights into cutting-edge developments.
- viii. **Promote Digital Literacy and Inclusivity:** Implement national campaigns to enhance digital literacy skills across all age groups, focusing on equipping citizens with the skills needed to navigate and utilize technology effectively. Special emphasis should be placed on marginalized communities. Also, ensure that technology and internet access are available to all citizens, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Promote initiatives that provide affordable internet access and technology.
- ix. **Strengthen Cybersecurity Measures:** Develop a comprehensive national strategy focused on protecting critical infrastructures, businesses, and personal data from cyber threats. Invest in cybersecurity research and workforce development to ensure the country has the necessary skills to defend against cyberattacks. Implement campaigns to educate citizens and businesses about cybersecurity best practices.
- x. **Support Sustainable Technology Development:** Encourage innovation in sustainable technologies that address environmental challenges, such as renewable energy, waste management solutions, and sustainable urban development. Provide grants and incentives for startups focused on environmentally friendly solutions.

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