

**Digital Transformation and Enhancing Administrative Transparency
-Strategies for Combating Administrative Corruption in Algeria-**

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Abstract: In recent years, the Algerian administration has undergone significant digital transformations aimed at improving administrative performance and enhancing transparency in public administrations. Digital transformation is an effective tool in combating administrative corruption, as it reduces direct human interaction which is often a source of corruption and increases transparency and accountability.

This study aims to demonstrate the role of digital transformation in achieving transparency and improving the quality of services provided, contrary to the situation under traditional administration which offers greater opportunities for those with corrupt practices to benefit from public services. This will be achieved by presenting the most important measures to combat administrative corruption and highlighting the role of electronic administration in activating these measures.

Keywords: Digital transformation; Administrative corruption; Electronic administration; Digitization; Administrative transparency.

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Introduction:

Administrative corruption is a social and ethical scourge that poses numerous obstacles to the progress of administration and the development of the state in general. It is also a serious phenomenon that has spread in many Arab countries, particularly developing ones, for a long time and in various aspects of administrative life. Its continuation is linked to human desire for material and moral gains through illegitimate means by using the authority granted to them. On this basis, its risks and negative effects have extended to various economic, social, political, and legal aspects of society. Therefore, it has become necessary for states to combat this epidemic and control the factors leading to its spread.

With the current developments in information and communication technologies, electronic administration has imposed itself as a suitable and effective solution to address administrative corruption. It serves as the optimal alternative to traditional administration, which has proven its utter failure in dealing with this phenomenon. It has facilitated public service seekers to obtain services without direct contact with public employees, who are often subject to bribery and extortion to receive undeserved benefits. Therefore, electronic administration aims to provide public services promptly, cost-effectively, efficiently, and transparently, thereby contributing to combating all forms of corruption.

From the above, we can pose the following questions:

How does digital transformation contribute to combating administrative corruption in Algeria?

To what extent does digitization contribute to enhancing administrative transparency in the delivery of public services?

To answer these problems, we relied on the descriptive and analytical method in presenting the information under study by reading and reviewing a set of studies and research that addressed the research topic. and we will divide our study into two topics. The first topic will address the preventive measures to combat administrative corruption and the role of electronic administration in activating them. The second topic will be dedicated to studying electronic oversight and electronic signatures as other mechanisms to combat administrative corruption.

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I.TITLE 1 : Preventive Measures to Combat Administrative Corruption and the Role of Electronic Administration in Activating Them.

Law No. 06-01¹ on the prevention and combating of corruption has introduced significant preventive measures to combat corruption crimes. Electronic administration has played an important role in the actual implementation of these measures by providing advanced systems that allow for more effective confrontation. It relies on mechanisms and tools that, through their application and reliance, achieve positive results in reducing this phenomenon at various levels. This is done by establishing advanced monitoring systems that can track any irregularities that may be issued by public employees or by raising awareness among citizens and providing them with the necessary information and tools, making them key participants in the fight against corruption. In this section, we will try to identify these various mechanisms and how to activate them.

First Subtitle: In the Field of Public Procurement

As an example of expanding the use of electronic administration in administrative work to enhance oversight on public spending and contribute to reducing manipulation or any practices that may be issued by the supervising public officials to prevent administrative and financial corruption, the legislator in Presidential Decree No. 15-247 on the regulation of public procurement and public service delegations² adopted an innovative method in managing public procurement. Chapter six of the decree is dedicated to communication and information exchange through electronic means. It establishes an electronic portal for public procurement managed by the Ministry of Finance and the ministry in charge of information and communication technologies, dedicated to public administrative communication in the field of public procurement³. This portal will facilitate the process of awarding public contracts by enabling all concerned parties to access the information online and track all matters related to the payment of their dues related to the execution of public contracts. This will necessarily lead to the elimination of all suspicious behaviors, especially those related to bribery and favoritism, which may occur through direct contact between the contracting authority or employee and the contractor.⁴

By implementing this electronic platform, it will significantly enhance control over the procedures of awarding and executing public contracts, enshrine the principle of transparency and efficiency in the field of procurement, and combat suspicions of corruption, whether from the public employee or from the contracting parties who sometimes push contracting authorities to grant them undue advantages in exchange for unjustified benefits.

¹ - Law No. 06-01 dated February 20, 2006, concerning the prevention and combating of corruption, as amended and supplemented, published in Official Gazette No. 44 on March 8, 2006.

²- Presidential Decree No. 15-247 dated September 16, 2015, regulating public procurement and delegations of the public facility, published in Official Gazette No. 50 on September 20, 2015.

³ - See Article 203 of Presidential Decree No. 15-247.

⁴ - Abdelaziz Shamlal, "Electronic Administration and its Role in Combating Corruption," Journal of Legal and Political Sciences, Volume 10, Issue 02, September 2019, p. 1383.

Second Subtitle: In the Field of Transparency in Accessing Public Services

Electronic administration is a means to enhance administrative transparency in government administrative work by providing services that can be monitored for the proper conduct of required administrative transactions, whether by internal or external administrative oversight bodies, or by the service recipient or information seeker, regardless of who they are.

Transparency can also be provided in terms of providing information, as the transition to providing government services and required information from its traditional form to the technical form represented by electronic administration means stopping direct contact between the public employee and the service recipient or information seeker, thus eliminating any influence on the employee's work. In electronic administration, the employee deals with clients remotely, giving them the required space to accomplish more work with greater accuracy in a transparent environment that ensures the required justice among all service recipients.⁵

This also achieves justice among the public, as service or information seekers can enter the administrative procedures leading to their request simultaneously and receive the required service or information at the same time, ensuring that the transaction is not subject to the whims and inclinations of the employee.⁶

This administrative transparency and achieved justice contribute to reducing instances of administrative corruption due to the precise direct oversight of employees' work and the possibility of detecting administrative errors, whether intentional or unintentional, as soon as they occur.

The public authorities in Algeria have taken notable steps in the field of access to public services by centralizing many procedures, notably:

- **Access to Public Positions:** The Directorate General of Civil Service has taken the initiative to publish all advertisements for recruitment competitions organized by public institutions and administrations on its website www.concours-fonction-publique.gov.dz. This site allows all citizens, without exception, favoritism, or bias, to access and register for their respective competitions.
- **University Registrations for New Baccalaureate Holders:** Registration and transfer from one university to another are conducted through the ministry's electronic platform, which opens at regular intervals allowing students to access the platform and submit their applications without any intervention or mediation.
- **Obtaining social housing:** Since 2012, the national housing registry, created through e-administration applications, has enabled monitoring and controlling the distribution

⁵ - El Hashmi Mezahoud, Mustafa Rabahi, "The Role of Electronic Administration in Institutionalizing Administrative Transparency and Combating Financial and Administrative Corruption," *Journal of Humanities Sciences*, Volume 31, Issue 04, December 2020, p. 184.

⁶ - Abdelfattah Bioumi Hajazi, "E-Government," *Dar Alfikr Aljamii*, Alexandria, 2007, p. 170.

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of social housing and combating all forms of declaration fraud and speculation, as well as fighting manipulation of housing by distributors in return for benefits. This process is carried out with the highest possible fairness, as seen in the AADL housing linked to the digital platform, which significantly contributed to eliminating favoritism, bribery, bureaucracy, and all forms of corruption.

Third Subtitle: In the Field of Electronic Management of Public Facilities Regularly and Achieving Equality

The e-administration system will lead to the strict application of the principle of continuous operation of public facilities almost entirely by providing electronic portals that offer their services on the internet 24 hours a day, daily, without holidays or breaks, and without being tied to working hours, for seven days a week. This means that office hours for employees are not set, and the facility operates around the clock, only stopping in case of a technical malfunction of the technology necessary to benefit from its services. In addition, the public is relieved from the obstacle of queues, which spares them the hassle of standing in lines to obtain information or complete a transaction.

Managing public facilities electronically through electronic portals that offer services will inevitably eliminate all forms of employee misconduct, especially related to absenteeism, neglect, and early departure from their work locations. These unsound behaviors are classified under the administrative corruption that our administrations suffer from.

It is noted that e-administration helps mitigate the severity of the consequences resulting from violating the principle of continuous and regular operation of public facilities. If the service is provided without the intervention of employees, cases of employee strikes and refusal to perform service decrease significantly, as services are not affected by the presence of employees. Individuals can obtain the service even in their absence by accessing the internet at any time, day or night, and proceeding with the service procedures until completion.

The impact of the e-administration system on the principle of equality among public service beneficiaries is evident through the non-discrimination between clients in determining usage fees, equality in following the procedures for obtaining the service, and eliminating direct confrontation between the service provider and the seeker, which helps eradicate favoritism, bribery, and other manifestations of corruption.

TITLE 2: Electronic Oversight and Electronic Signatures as Additional Mechanisms for Combating Administrative Corruption

Electronic oversight and electronic signatures are additional tools of e-administration used in its applications to combat administrative corruption. These tools typically revolve around administrative work within organizations and public administrations and regulate the relationship between superiors and subordinates thanks to the mechanisms they provide to managers in monitoring work or ensuring the security of administrative documents and papers.

First Subtitle: Electronic Oversight

Electronic oversight is defined as the use of modern electronic methods and means to monitor activities and transactions within the organization, achieving economy in effort, time, and cost to reach the desired results with the least possible risks.⁷

Therefore, electronic oversight means relying on the control system's use of computers in performing the oversight process according to computer programs specifically prepared for this purpose, achieving economy in effort, time, and cost to reach the desired results with the least possible risks and with greater accuracy.

The use of electronic systems will enhance the subject of transparency for executive bodies, making their activities clear to oversight bodies, thereby enhancing their work in identifying areas of administrative corruption, increasing the effectiveness of decision support systems and facilitating the work of oversight bodies, ultimately leading to the eradication of corruption hotspots.⁸

Electronic oversight works to mitigate administrative corruption through:⁹

- Utilizing electronic systems to enhance transparency within executive agencies, thereby making their activities transparent to oversight bodies. This facilitates the identification of administrative and financial corruption hotspots, enhancing effectiveness.

- Relying on monitoring programs to detect deviations and issue electronic alerts without the need for direct inspector intervention in investigative processes.

- Many oversight personnel face breaches or threats during their monitoring activities due to direct interaction with employees of executive agencies. Electronic oversight works to mitigate this through remote monitoring.

- Contributing to streamlining communication between organizational levels and providing effective and rapid communication channels.

- Administrative corruption is a crime punishable by law in various countries. Therefore, the information provided by electronic oversight agencies constitutes compelling evidence in the eyes of the judiciary, thus limiting the practices of corrupt employees.

Second Subtitle: Electronic Signature

An electronic signature is defined as a signature composed of letters, numbers, symbols, sound, or an electronic processing system, attached or logically associated with an electronic

⁷ - Emad Ali Al-Kassabah, "The Impact of Electronic Monitoring on the Quality of Internal Services in Islamic Banks Operating in Jordan," Master's Thesis in Electronic Business, Department of Electronic Business, Middle East University, Jordan, 2011, p17.

⁸ - Ahmed Hashem Al-Saqal, Mohammed Hussain Mahdi Saeed, "The Role of Electronic Supervision in Combating Corruption," Inspector General's Office at the Ministry of Commerce, Iraq, p 08.

⁹ - Ahmed Hashem Al-Saqal, Mohammed Hussain Mahdi Saeed, Ibid., pp. 13-14.

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message with the intention of authenticating or endorsing that message. It is also defined as anything placed on an electronic document and taking the form of letters, numbers, symbols, signs, or others, possessing a unique characteristic allowing the identification of the signatory and distinguishing them from others¹⁰.

The electronic signature is a technological means imposed by technological advancement to keep up with electronic commerce, bond trading, and the conclusion of electronic contracts among absent individuals. However, the electronic signature can secure the essential functions of handwritten signatures, which include identifying the signer's identity and expressing their consent to the content of the document, as well as their agreement and willingness to familiarize themselves with its content. We can summarize the role of electronic signatures in combating administrative corruption in the following points:¹¹

- Its potential as a substitute for traditional signatures, coupled with its alignment with modern information systems.
- The use of electronic signatures enhances security and privacy for internet users, particularly in the realm of electronic commerce.
- The ability to electronically identify senders and recipients and verify the credibility of individuals and information.
- Electronic signatures assist all institutions in protecting themselves from counterfeiting and signature forgery.
- Electronic signatures allow for remote contract execution without the physical presence of the parties involved, thereby aiding in the development and assurance of electronic commerce.

Conclusion:

- Electronic management is an important mechanism in combating administrative corruption. Deviation within administration represents primarily an erosion of ethical standards, and it reflects the distorted mindsets of corrupt individuals who lack human conscience. Consequently, their practices deviate from their assigned duties, turning administration into a dysfunctional tool rather than a facilitator. The absence of ethics leads to the emergence of crooked and corrupt methods in society, resulting in a negative system. The presence of a bribe-taking employee is evidence of a bribery culture. Therefore, it is imperative to invest all efforts concurrently with the adoption of new electronic management applications to counteract this phenomenon.

¹⁰ - Alaa Faraj Al-Tahir, "E-Government Between Theory and Application," Dar Al-Raya for Publishing and Distribution, First Edition, Jordan, 2009, p. 8.

¹¹ - Ibid., p42.

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In light of the foregoing, and based on this study, the following recommendations can be made:

- Enactment of a comprehensive law on electronic administration, incorporating provisions detailing measures to combat and prevent corruption through government Expedite the implementation of all digital projects while redirecting policy within the framework of administrative activities management, through the revision of all texts regulating public function and service to align with these modern technologies.

- Ensure the provision of suitable conditions and capabilities, including robust infrastructure, for the optimal implementation of electronic administration projects.