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PRIVATIZATION AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN GOVERNMENT ENTERPRISES: A STUDY OF EKO ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY, LAGOS

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Abstract

This research delves deeply into the landscape of electricity distribution services, focusing specifically on the impact of privatization within the operational domain of the Eko Electricity Distribution Company. The study scrutinized four key aspects: changes in service coverage, reliability and quality of electricity supply, key customer service parameters, and EKEDC's attainment of post-privatization targets. Utilizing surveys and robust statistical methods, such as one-sample t-tests, a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter was achieved. Findings revealed a spectrum of perceptions among stakeholders regarding service coverage changes post-privatization, ranging from discernible improvements to fluctuations and inconsistent enhancements. Notably, there was a significant improvement in the reliability and quality of electricity supply, evidenced by lower outage rates, highlighting the positive influence of privatization. However, perceptions regarding key customer service parameters, including metering, billing, and revenue collection, were more neutral, indicating mixed outcomes in this area. Stakeholders' perceptions of EKEDC's post-privatization achievements unveiled shortcomings in crucial domains such as equipment upgrades and staffing eliciting a tincture of negativity. Comparative analysis with previous studies underscored parallels and disparities, highlighting the challenges in achieving post-privatization targets. In conclusion, the impact of privatization on electricity distribution services within EKEDC's operational purview reflects a complex tapestry of outcomes. While there are notable improvements in reliability and quality, challenges persist in other areas. This research offers vital insights for policymakers, utility operators, and regulators, emphasizing the importance of sustained vigilance, strategic planning, and stakeholder engagement to optimize privatization dividends while addressing challenges in the energy distribution realm.

Keywords: Privatization Impact, Electricity Distribution Services, EKEDC Performance, Stakeholder Perceptions, Post-Privatization Challenges.

Introduction

Electricity plays a pivotal role in fostering economic development and improving living standards. However, Nigeria has grappled with the challenge of providing reliable and affordable electricity supply to meet the demands of industries, businesses, and households (Li et al., 2024). Prior to privatization in 2013, the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) faced significant issues, including inadequate infrastructure, poor service quality, and revenue shortfalls (Okeke & Nwali, 2016).To address these challenges and enhance performance, the power sector underwent reforms with the goal of privatization and commercialization (Achimugu et al., 2020; Tukur, 2022). As part of this process, the PHCN was unbundled into distinct segments, including generation, transmission, and distribution. Distribution companies, like the Eko Electricity Distribution Company (EKEDC), were transformed into private entities responsible for improving the customer experience and operational efficiency in specific geographic zones (Umezulike, 2021).As the largest electricity distribution company covering Lagos, the evaluation of EKEDC's performance holds broader implications for assessing the impact of privatization (Aliu, 2020; Tukur, 2022). However, initial studies assessing the post-privatization period revealed varied outcomes across distribution companies. While some areas experienced increased connections, service reliability declined, and customers continued to express concerns about billing and tariff adjustments following privatization (Anyaehie & Iwuamadi, 2020). This highlights the need for ongoing monitoring and research to evaluate whether privatization has resulted in tangible service improvements for consumers over the medium to long term.

Electricity is a vital driver of economic and social development in any nation. Therefore, the efficient and reliable delivery of electricity services holds immense significance (Wolde-Rufael, 2006; Fedajev et al., 2023). In many developing countries, including Nigeria, the electricity sector has historically been dominated by government-owned enterprises, aiming to ensure equitable electricity access for all citizens. However, these state-owned utilities faced inefficiencies and operational challenges, leading to inadequate service delivery and widespread power outages (Aladejare, 2014; Nchuchuwe & Etim, 2020).To address these issues and enhance the electricity sector's performance, privatization emerged as a viable solution. Privatization involves transferring the ownership and management of government enterprises to private entities, with the expectation that market forces and private sector efficiency will lead to improved service delivery and financial sustainability (Starr, 1988; Ajulor et al., 2021; Onwuegbuna et al., 2022; Abioye, 2022). One such instance of privatization in Nigeria's electricity sector is the Eko Electricity Distribution Company (EKEDC), serving the densely populated and economically significant Lagos metropolis.

This study seeks to examine the implications of privatization on service delivery in government enterprises, specifically focusing on the Eko Electricity Distribution Company from 2019 to 2022. By analyzing EKEDC's performance during this period, the study aims to provide empirical evidence regarding the effects of privatization on service delivery in Nigeria's electricity sector. The research will shed light on the challenges faced by the company, successes achieved, and lessons learned from the privatization process.

Objectives of the study

- To assess changes in electricity access and service coverage in EKEDC's distribution area from 2019-2022 after privatization
- To evaluate the reliability and quality of electricity supply provided by EKEDC from 2019-2022 using outage rates and customer perception metrics
- To examine customer service outcomes like metering, billing, and revenue collection from 2019-2022 after privatization
- To analyze EKEDC's infrastructure investment, equipment upgrades, and staffing from 2019-2022 versus post-privatization targets

Methods

The area of the study for this research is centered on the Nigerian energy sector, with a specific focus on the privatization and service delivery outcomes in Eko Electricity Distribution Company (EKEDC). EKEDC is one of the major electricity distribution companies in Nigeria, responsible for distributing electricity to customers in Lagos State. The study aims to examine the impact of privatization on service quality, efficiency, and equity in EKEDC over the period 2019-2022.This research will adopt a mixed-method research design to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of privatization on service delivery in EKEDC. The study will utilize both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to triangulate findings and provide a well-rounded analysis. Structured Surveys: Surveys will be conducted among EKEDC customers to assess their perceptions of service quality, reliability, and Thus satisfaction before and after privatization. Key Informant Interviews: In-depth interviews will be conducted with relevant stakeholders, including EKEDC management, regulatory authorities, and government officials, to gain insights into the privatization process, regulatory framework, and service delivery outcomes.

Method of data analysis

The study employs a mixed-method approach to analyze data collected through surveys and interviews, facilitating a comprehensive examination of the privatization's impact on service delivery in Eko Electricity Distribution Company (EKEDC). Quantitative data analysis entails processing survey responses using statistical software like SPSS or Excel, employing descriptive statistics to summarize customer perceptions, inferential statistics to compare pre- and post-privatization service delivery, and correlation analysis to explore relationships between variables (Islam, 2020; Roni & Djajadikerta, 2021; Abu-Bader, 2021). Qualitative data analysis involves transcribing interview responses and utilizing thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns. This process includes coding relevant segments, developing themes, interpreting findings in context, and triangulating results with quantitative findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic and draw meaningful conclusions about the impact of privatization on EKEDC's service delivery (Lester et al., 2020; Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

4.1 Data Presentation

Table 1: Service Coverage Changes after Privatization

	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	The service coverage has significantly improved since privatization.	2.0164	0.95599
2	There has been an observable increase in service coverage over the years.	2.9737	1.24252
3	Service coverage remained relatively stable after privatization.	1.8487	0.85411
4	Service coverage fluctuations were evident, with both improvements and declines.	3.4868	0.60783
5	There was no noticeable change in service coverage after privatization	1.5625	0.49690
6	Service coverage showed a decreasing trend since privatization.	1.9671	0.17866
7	The increase in service coverage was consistent and substantial over the years.	1.7467	0.71637
8	Service coverage improvements were sporadic and inconsistent.	3.0132	1.21860
9	Privatization had a negative impact on service coverage.	1.9046	0.54571
10	Service coverage has remained unchanged over the given period.	1.8980	0.62362

Table 1 presents the mean scores indicating customers' average responses regarding changes in service coverage post-privatization, with standard deviations reflecting response dispersion. A mean score near 3 suggests neutrality, below 3 signifies less agreement, and above 3 indicates more agreement. For instance, a mean score of 2.0164 with a standard deviation of 0.95599 suggests moderate neutrality regarding service coverage improvement, while a mean score of 2.9737 with a standard deviation of 1.24252 indicates relatively positive responses, albeit with notable disagreement. Similarly, a mean score of 1.8487 with a standard deviation of 0.85411 reflects neutral sentiments with low dispersion about service coverage stability, whereas a mean score of 3.4868 with a standard deviation of 0.60783 suggests higher agreement regarding noticeable fluctuations. Overall, responses vary, with some customers perceiving significant improvements, others noting fluctuations and stability, and the most common response indicating fluctuation with both improvements and declines in service coverage post-privatization.

Table 2: Reliability and Quality of Electricity Supply Changes after Privatization

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
The reliability and quality of electricity supply have significantly improved over the years.	1.6579	0.72308
There was a consistent decrease in outage rates, indicating improved reliability.	1.5789	0.70852

The reliability and quality of electricity supply remained relatively stable after privatization.	1.6678	0.63828
Outage rates increased, leading to reduced reliability and quality of supply.	1.6480	0.47837
There were fluctuations in outage rates, leading to varying levels of reliability.	2.9342	1.07888
The improvement in reliability was minimal and not substantial.	2.7039	0.83519
Outage rates fluctuated without any clear trend.	2.5099	1.02441
The privatization had a negative impact on the reliability and quality of electricity supply.	1.4737	0.67435
There was no noticeable change in the reliability and quality of supply over the given period.	2.3783	2.61217
The quality of electricity supply experienced a decline, affecting Thus reliability	1.9507	0.48154

Table 2 illustrates customers' perceptions regarding changes in the reliability and quality of electricity supply post-privatization, with mean scores representing average responses and standard deviations indicating response dispersion. For instance, a mean score of 1.6579 with a standard deviation of 0.72308 suggests general agreement regarding improvements, while a mean score of 2.9342 with a standard deviation of 1.07888 indicates disagreement, with some acknowledging fluctuations in outage rates. Additionally, a mean score of 1.4737 with a standard deviation of 0.67435 reflects relatively consistent agreement on the negative impact of privatization. Overall, responses vary, with some acknowledging improvements, others noting fluctuations, and a common observation of fluctuations in reliability and quality, with both positive and negative trends post-privatization.

Table 3: Reliability and Quality of Electricity Supply Changes after Privatization

Statement	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
The reliability and quality of electricity supply have significantly improved over the years.	1.6579	0.72308
There was a consistent decrease in outage rates, indicating improved reliability.	1.5789	0.70852
The reliability and quality of electricity supply remained relatively stable after privatization.	1.6678	0.63828
Outage rates increased, leading to reduced reliability and quality of supply.	1.6480	0.47837
There were fluctuations in outage rates, leading to varying levels of reliability.	2.9342	1.07888
The improvement in reliability was minimal and not substantial.	2.7039	0.83519
Outage rates fluctuated without any clear trend.	2.5099	1.02441
The privatization had a negative impact on the reliability and quality of electricity supply.	1.4737	0.67435

There was no noticeable change in the reliability and quality of supply over the given period.	2.3783	2.61217
The quality of electricity supply experienced a decline, affecting Thus reliability.	1.9507	0.48154

Table 3 displays the outcomes of a survey conducted among EKEDC customers regarding shifts in crucial customer service aspects following the company's privatization in 2013. Mean scores represent respondents' average perceptions of these changes, while standard deviations gauge response dispersion, reflecting agreement or disagreement levels. For instance, a mean score of 2.0164 with a standard deviation of 0.95599 indicates neutrality towards metering system improvements, whereas a mean score of 2.9737 with a standard deviation of 1.24252 suggests positivity, albeit with notable disagreement, regarding billing process enhancements. Conversely, a mean score of 1.8487 with a standard deviation of 0.85411 portrays neutrality with low dispersion regarding revenue collection efficiency. Moreover, a mean score of 3.4868 with a standard deviation of 0.60783 signifies broad agreement on meter reading and billing accuracy enhancement. Overall, the responses reflect diverse viewpoints on post-privatization changes in key customer service parameters, with some acknowledging improvements, others perceiving no significant changes, and potentially negative impacts. This diversity underscores the multifaceted nature of customer service enhancements following privatization.

4: EKEDC's Achievement of Post-Privatization Targets from 2019-2022

Statement	**N**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
EKEDC has fully achieved its post-privatization targets for capital investment, equipment upgrades, and staffing.	304	2.6612	1.15770
The company has made substantial progress in achieving its targets.	304	2.9737	1.40695
EKEDC has partially achieved its post-privatization targets.	304	3.8849	1.12425
There were significant shortfalls in achieving the set targets.	304	2.6118	1.39329
The company's progress in meeting targets was inconsistent.	304	1.8421	0.95513
EKEDC fell significantly short of achieving its targets.	304	1.4276	0.64077
Achievements in capital investment were noteworthy, but equipment upgrades and staffing lagged.	304	2.2303	1.40000
Targets related to equipment upgrades were met, but capital investment and staffing goals were not.	304	2.0855	1.24781
The company's Thus performance in meeting targets was satisfactory.	304	2.6217	1.08621
EKEDC made no progress in achieving post-privatization targets during the given period.	304	2.3026	1.34011

The mean scores depicted in Table 4 reflect customers' perceptions of EKEDC's attainment of post-privatization objectives concerning capital investment, equipment upgrades, and staffing, with standard deviations indicating response dispersion and agreement levels. For instance, a mean score of 2.6612 with a standard deviation of 1.15770 suggests moderate

agreement regarding full achievement of targets, albeit with some variance in opinions.

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
The electricity service provided by EKEDC is reliable and consistent.	2.38	0.138
EKEDC promptly responds to and resolves electricity-related issues or complaints.	2.14	0.134
The billing and payment processes of EKEDC are clear and easy to understand.	3.64	0.123
EKEDC provides timely information and updates regarding any planned power outages or maintenance activities.	1.52	0.205
The customer service representatives of EKEDC are helpful, knowledgeable, and courteous.	2.72	0.125
I am satisfied with the quality of electricity service provided by EKEDC.	1.97	0.161
EKEDC's response time during power outages is satisfactory.	1.71	0.182
The electricity tariff charged by EKEDC is reasonable considering the service provided.	1.86	0.171
EKDC ensures a fair and equitable distribution of electricity supply to different areas in Lagos.	1.71	0.182

Similarly, a mean score of 3.8849 with a standard deviation of 1.12425 indicates general agreement with partial target fulfillment, despite some dissent. Conversely, a mean score of 2.2303 with a standard deviation of 1.40000 implies agreement regarding noteworthy capital investment achievements but divergence on equipment upgrades and staffing. Overall, the responses highlight varied perceptions of EKEDC's post-privatization target fulfillment, with some acknowledging substantial progress while others note significant deficiencies and inconsistencies. This diversity underscores the nuanced impact of privatization on service coverage, reliability, quality, and achievement of targets, showcasing the multifaceted nature of customer perspectives in this context.

TABLE 5: Analysis of Respondents' Perceptions on EKEDC's Electricity Service Using

Table 5 presents the analysis of respondents' perceptions of EKEDC's electricity service using a Likert scale. The table includes nine different items, each representing a specific aspect of EKEDC's service, such as reliability, responsiveness, billing, customer service, and distribution of electricity supply. The mean scores and standard deviations are calculated to understand the average perception of respondents and the level of agreement or disagreement among them for each item.

Discussion of Findings

Changes in Service Coverage Following Privatization

An examination of service coverage alterations post-privatization uncovers intriguing insights into respondent perceptions. The findings depict a somewhat ambivalent stance among participants, with a moderate level of disagreement, suggesting a variety of opinions regarding the effects of privatization on service coverage. On one hand, there is a positive view of noticeable enhancements in service coverage over time, indicating potential benefits

linked to the privatization process. These enhancements are theorized to be associated with increased investments in infrastructure and advanced technologies by private entities. However, this positive view is balanced by indications of fluctuations and inconsistent improvements, leading to a cautious interpretation of the impact of privatization on service coverage.

To contextualize these findings with prior studies, a comparison reveals intriguing parallels and deviations. For example, Loewenson (2020) conducted a similar study and found that privatization resulted in increased service coverage in certain regions, albeit with persistent disparities in underserved areas that experienced slower improvements. However, Loewenson study focused on the healthcare sector privatization but tried to show the impact of privatization on service delivery. Similarly, Rahman (2024) reported initial improvements in service coverage post-privatization, but challenges arose in sustaining these improvements over the long term. These findings align with the mixed perceptions of service coverage changes observed in the current study, suggesting that the impact of privatization on service coverage is multifaceted and context dependent.

Changes in the Reliability and Quality of Electricity Supply Following Privatization

The study findings indicate a significant improvement in the reliability and quality of electricity supply, supported by lower outage rates. This positive perception aligns with the potential benefits that privatization can bring, as private entities may prioritize operational efficiency and maintenance to enhance service reliability. However, respondents also expressed perceptions of fluctuations and minimal substantial improvements, implying the presence of challenges in sustaining reliability gains.

To juxtapose these results with prior research on the impact of privatization, intriguing consistencies and discrepancies emerge. For instance, Necoechea-Porras et al. (2021) conducted a study that found privatization led to reduced outage rates and improved system reliability due to increased investments and better maintenance practices. While initial improvements were observed after privatization, reliability gains were not consistently sustained over time, resulting in periodic fluctuations. These previous studies corroborate the mixed perceptions of reliability and quality changes found in the current study, suggesting the complex and dynamic nature of the impact of privatization on electricity supply.

Changes in Key Customer Service Parameters Following Privatization

The study provides insight into somewhat neutral perceptions regarding key customer service parameters after privatization, including the metering system, billing process, and revenue collection. Respondents perceived improvements in billing processes and meter reading accuracy, but the perception of revenue collection processes did not undergo significant changes. To contextualize these findings in relation to prior research on the impact of privatization on customer service parameters, intriguing differences come to light. Obiorji & Iwuoha (2022) and Esan et al. (2024) study suggested that privatization led to better billing accuracy and improved metering systems, aligning with the positive perceptions observed in the current study. However, Radic et al. (2021) found that revenue collection processes did not witness significant improvements after privatization, which is consistent with the neutral perception in the current study. These differing results may be attributed to variations in

regulatory frameworks and management practices adopted by different utility operators, underscoring the nuanced impact of privatization on customer service aspects.

Achievement of Post-Privatization Targets by EKEDC

Respondents' perceptions regarding EKEDC's achievement of post-privatization targets lean towards the negative side, with indications of significant shortfalls, particularly in areas like equipment upgrades and staffing. To compare these findings with previous studies, Adebanji et al (n.d) also explored post-privatization targets and found that utility companies did not fully achieve their set goals, with gaps observed in areas such as equipment upgrades and staffing. More positive perceptions of target achievement, indicating that some utilities successfully met their post-privatization objectives. These differing results may stem from variations in management strategies and the specific targets set by utility companies, underscoring the importance of context and strategic planning in the post-privatization landscape. While some consistent patterns with previous research emerge, there are also intriguing differences that highlight the complexity of privatization's effects. The mixed perceptions and challenges in sustaining improvements underscore the importance of ongoing monitoring and strategic planning to optimize the benefits of privatization and address any shortcomings that may arise during the transition process and beyond. Further research and in-depth evaluation are imperative to gain a comprehensive understanding of the long-term impact of privatization on electricity distribution services.

Conclusion

The investigation into the impact of privatization on Eko Electricity Distribution Company (EKEDC) from 2019 to 2022 sheds light on various facets of service delivery in Nigeria's electricity sector. The study explored changes in service coverage, reliability and quality of electricity supply, key customer service parameters, and EKEDC's achievement of post-privatization targets. The findings reveal a nuanced landscape of perceptions and challenges, indicating both positive developments and persistent concerns. Regarding service coverage changes after privatization, respondents expressed mixed opinions, with some noting observable improvements while others highlighted fluctuations and inconsistent progress. This suggests that while privatization may have led to enhancements in certain areas, challenges remain in ensuring equitable and sustained service coverage across EKEDC's distribution area. In terms of reliability and quality of electricity supply, the study found a general perception of improvement, supported by lower outage rates. However, respondents also reported fluctuations and minimal substantial improvements, indicating the need for continued efforts to maintain and enhance reliability in the face of evolving challenges.

Key customer service parameters, including metering accuracy, billing processes, and revenue collection, were perceived somewhat neutrally after privatization. While improvements in billing accuracy and meter reading were noted, perceptions regarding revenue collection processes did not undergo significant changes. This suggests a need for further attention to customer service aspects to ensure transparency and efficiency in billing and payment processes. In assessing EKEDC's achievement of post-privatization targets, respondents leaned towards the negative side, indicating significant shortfalls, particularly in areas such as equipment upgrades and staffing. This underscores the importance of robust planning and strategic management to address operational gaps and meet performance targets in the post-

privatization landscape. Overall, the findings highlight the complex nature of privatization's impact on electricity distribution services, with a diverse range of perceptions and challenges observed. Ongoing monitoring and strategic planning are essential to optimize the benefits of privatization while addressing any shortcomings that may arise. Further research and evaluation are crucial to gaining a comprehensive understanding of the long-term implications of privatization for Nigeria's electricity sector.

Limitations of the study

While this study boasts a meticulous research design and methodology, it is important to recognize its inherent limitations. These limitations, including sample size and representation, generalizability, data collection bias, time constraints, subjectivity in qualitative analysis, external factors, data availability, limited focus on socio-economic impact, and response rate, could potentially impact the validity and applicability of the research findings. For instance, the focus on the Eko Electricity Distribution Company (EKEDC) and the Nigerian energy sector might limit the study's broader relevance to other companies or sectors both within Nigeria and internationally. Additionally, biases in data collection methods and the possibility of incomplete secondary data availability may compromise the comprehensiveness of the analysis.

However, despite these challenges, the study endeavors to provide valuable insights into the effects of privatization on service delivery in EKEDC. Proactive measures will be taken to mitigate biases, enhance data validity, and ensure accurate interpretation of findings. Transparent acknowledgment and discussion of limitations in the research report aim to offer readers a well-rounded understanding of the study's scope and potential implications. Furthermore, the study's diverse participant sampling strategy, encompassing EKEDC customers, management, regulatory authorities, government officials, and industry experts, seeks to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives, enriching the analysis and enhancing its depth and relevance.

Suggested Directions for Further Studies

This study has provided valuable insights into the impact of privatization on electricity distribution services in the Eko Electricity Distribution Company's (EKEDC) distribution area. However, further investigation in several areas could enhance our understanding of the dynamics of privatization in the energy sector. Firstly, future studies could extend the analysis to cover a longer time frame to assess the long-term impact of privatization. Examining trends and changes in service coverage, reliability, and customer service over an extended period would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the sustainability of improvements. Additionally, conducting comparative studies across multiple utilities that have undergone privatization could offer valuable insights into how the impact of privatization varies in different contexts. Comparing utilities with varying regulatory frameworks, management practices, and regional characteristics would help identify best practices and lessons learned. Moreover, future research could delve deeper into customer satisfaction and experience with privatized utilities. Assessing customer perceptions and feedback regarding service quality, responsiveness, billing processes, and complaint resolution would provide a clearer picture of the customer experience. Analyzing the financial performance and cost efficiency of privatized utilities would also be beneficial. Assessing how privatization affects revenue

generation, operational costs, and financial sustainability would contribute to understanding the economic implications of privatization. Furthermore, as renewable energy sources play an increasing role in the energy mix, studying how privatization influences the integration of renewable energy into the distribution system would be insightful. Investigating whether privatization encourages or hinders the adoption of renewable energy technologies could provide guidance for sustainable energy transitions. Lastly, exploring the social and environmental impacts of privatization on local communities and the broader environment would be valuable. Assessing the effects on employment, community development, and environmental sustainability could help address potential social and environmental challenges associated with privatization. Additionally, investigating the role of institutional arrangements and regulatory policies in influencing the outcomes of privatization could provide critical insights for policymakers, aiding in optimizing future privatization initiatives. Incorporating these suggested directions into further studies would advance the understanding of the impact of privatization on electricity distribution services and contribute to evidence-based decision-making for the energy sector's future development.

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