Whatsapp Communication in Tanzanian Organizations

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Abstract

Technological developments that are Information and Communication Technology (ICT) related such as social media, offer the opportunity to improve public sector performance. WhatsApp has gained popularity in Tanzania ahead of other social media tools. This study assesses the extent to which WhatsApp is used in organizations in Tanzania and the implications therefrom. The study deployed a qualitative and analytical methodology through an electronic questionnaire administered through WhatsApp communication platforms to selected groups and interviews with CEOs of some public sector organizations. The result shows that WhatsApp is widely used in organizations due to its benefits of fast and ease of use, leading to performance improvement. The adoption of WhatsApp for communication in the public sector is despite any formal authorization. The issue that arises is how useful the communication platform could be through the adoption of appropriate policies and frameworks to guide its use within the sector.

Keywords: WhatsApp, social media, communication, organizational performance

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Introduction

Public sector performance in Africa has been an issue of concern for many years. Mthuli (2023) uses the word 'wicked' to describe public administration's performance in the public sector in South Africa. The issues that have often been attributed to ineffective performance in the public sector in Africa include the following: a focus on compliance rather than performance, lack of accountability, inadequate skills (Cameron, 2022); limited involvement of stakeholders and unequal power relationships (Putu et al., 2007; Denedo et al., 2017); patronage; corruption; weak governmental structures and regulatory frameworks (Bakre et al., 2017).

Currently, we live in an increasingly digital or internet-connected world encompassing social network platforms where people create content and share it with each other at a very high rate (Acheaw and Larson, 2015). Some of the popular social networks frequently used by many people include WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. WhatsApp was conceived in 2009 by Jan Koum and Brian Acton and primarily became accessible on the market in 2010. It is now common among people of different age groups in the society; young people have greatly embraced it as a communication platform for information sharing (Olaleke, Iroju & Olajide, 2015). Once used as a platform for communication with family and friends, it has become useful in workplace. WhatsApp has transformed people's lives and has been adopted by both public and private organizations to enable communication and knowledge transfer, a situation that was not there before**.** WhatsApp is now also used for commercial purposes, following the launch of WhatsApp for business, that allows commercial brands to initiate private chat conversations with users through their direct messaging platform (Zarouali et al., 2021). The acceptance of WhatsApp comes from the view that it offers real-time information sharing in

terms of mobile messaging, exchanging of contacts, and sharing graphic contents (Kariuki, 2017).

Studies on the use of WhatsApp within organizations are limited, and most of them focus on the interface with external clients. For example, the study by Ali Qalati et al., (2020) on factors affecting SME performance indicates that social media has a positive effect on the relationship with customers in Small and Medium Enterprises – SMEs. Therefore, this study explores the use of WhatsApp in Tanzanian organizations and its implications that arise therein. In developing countries, such studies are few since the countries are adopting developments in information technologies, creating new platforms for positive change that would otherwise take long to achieve.

Despite the possible benefits of social communication platforms, in the Tanzanian context, a new Code of Ethics and Conduct for the public service was released in September 2023 as a revision of the last two codes of 1998 and 2005. The revision corresponds with current developments in information and communication technologies, with the addition of new value on appropriate use of information, whereby public servants are prohibited from using social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) for official communications to prevent leakage of information. On the other hand, the guideline on safe use of information and communication technology systems within Tanzanian government, released in 2022, cautions public servants against unsafe use of the ICT system in government.

Some caution is necessary, but developments, particularly in information and communication technologies, provide new avenues for positive change. Early and contemporary theorists underscore the effectiveness of communication in organizations.

This study is carried out in a developing country context and explores the relevance of WhatsApp communications within organizations in Tanzania. The study deployed qualitative, in-depth, and analytical methodology through the use of an electronic questionnaire administered through WhatsApp communication platforms to selected groups and interviews with CEOs of some public sector organizations. The study is guided by the following questions: -

Q1. How important is the use of WhatsApp as a communication tool in formal organizations in the country?

Q2. Does WhatsApp communication contribute to organizational leaders' and employees' performances?

Q3. What challenging issues are involved in the use of WhatsApp in organizational communication?

Literature Review

A number of factors are considered important in promoting organizational effectiveness. These include the internal work environment of organizations; which constitutes patterns of delegation, authority, controls, interactions between key stakeholders, communication channels, and relationships between and among employees (Cera and Kusaku, 2021). A positive relationship is said to occur between the sharing of knowledge and individual organizational members' performances (Henttonen & Kianto, 2016).

Public sector institutions in Africa have to be effective, efficient, transparent, and results-oriented which can be achieved by practices and processes that are different from old and ineffective practices (Nze and Nkamnebe, 2003). The objectives of the public sector service delivery are likely to be realized where knowledge creation mechanisms and internal and external environments are leveraged by operational officers (Elbashir et al., 2022). Again, informal

horizontal and network relationships within government entities are important to governance and performance management research (Stone and Strower, 2007; Conaty, 2012).

Efforts to strengthen public service delivery through effective organizations have a long history in Tanzania (Kiragu, 2002; Njunwa, 2011; World Bank, 2014). This noble objective is yet to be achieved at the desired levels. Specifically, despite years of reform, the following are put forward that affect public sector performance in Tanzania:

"…shirking, mismanagement, embezzlement, and opportunistic behavior of self-serving politicians. (The other issues identified) … relate to capacity, competence, policymaking, organizational resources, ethics, and institutional autonomy and have been advanced in explaining ineffective civil service performance." (Mukandala and Gunning, 2018).

There are those who advocate for strong political leadership and/or strong institutions to create sustainable change (Scot and Moti, 2020). What is acceptable, though, is that any positive means are welcome, including possibilities made available through social media platforms that promote transparency and openness and reduce the distance between positions in the hierarchy as far as information exchange is concerned.

The social media, in particular WhatsApp, has gained popularity in the society as it offers many benefits that include its ability to allow fluid and instant conversations, its capacity to create a sense of cohesion, and its ease of access and use for communication purposes (Church & de Oliveira, 2013). WhatsApp, as a smartphone application, enables instant messaging among individuals or groups of people, and it allows sharing of audio-virtual files, attachments, pictures, website links, and other files (Ujakpa et al., 2018). WhatsApp also facilitates interfaces among people, enabling them to generate, share, and exchange information and opinions in virtual communities and networks (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

The social media platform can contribute to organizational performance due to information transfer and knowledge creation (Garcia et al., 2018). The usefulness of the WhatsApp application has been observed in many life situations. For instance, among students, it allows the sharing of academic information and motivates students to learn, creating a more engaging atmosphere (Mistar & Embi, 2016). It is also contended that social networking sites such as the WhatsApp platform are important media for creating and maintaining social connectivity among employees (Ledbetter et al., 2011). WhatsApp is also frequently used among employees for the purposes of sharing work-related information, giving feedback on information shared by other staff, and socializing (Kariuki, 2017). Similarly, it assists individuals to network with people of the same interests, objectives, and dreams, and it provides them with a platform for the exchange of information (Campbell & Park, 2008).

Despite the benefits associated with social media applications, there are ethical challenges. For example, the recent launch of the WhatsApp business platform as a formal communication tool between two agencies is seen to provide positive engagement between businesses and clients, but at the same time, the inherent risks are to be given adequate attention (Zarouali et al., 2021).

While this study engages with the important issues of usefulness, formalization, and the magnitude of use of WhatsApp, it does explore the possibility of it being a catalyst for positive change. This is significant because technological developments determine our future, and a more ICT-driven public service will certainly see social media at the center of public sector life in the future.

In addressing the critical issues of the study, Organizational Adaptation Theory is considered. The organizational adaptation theory suggests that an organization as a whole or part may transform its mechanisms or procedures to adapt to a changing situation. Among others,

adaptations are to improve operational effectiveness that arise from intentional decision-making by organizational members so that they take advantage of the developments in their organization and the larger context (Podsakoff et al., 2016). In respect to communication platforms following the introduction of social media, particularly WhatsApp, there might be some adaptations taking place in the Tanzanian public sector organizations or actors within those institutions to adapt to the new avenues of communication despite some important challenges, whereas the organizational adaptation theory demands organizations to adjust or change procedures and practices in adopting and coping with new situations.

Methodology

The study deployed mostly a qualitative exploratory methodology whereby a sample of inquisitive questions were designed and shared electronically with the respondents through WhatsApp groups to which the researchers belong. One of the WhatsApp groups conveniently selected was made up of Mzumbe University graduates, graduating between 1991 and 1996, with work experience of between 32 and 27 years. The group members are currently employed in different institutions in the country, serving as middle and senior officials.

As a mixed-methods research, and to widen the catchment area to increase objectivity, interviews were also held by telephone with Chief Executive Officers (Top Bosses) of some public sector organizations that were also conveniently selected. The public sector organizations include the executive agencies and regulatory authorities and exclude the parent government ministries.

In qualitative studies, the sample can be small and acceptable as it can allow in-depth analysis and purposeful orientation that promote efficiency while being context-sensitive (Vasileiou, et al., 2018). Sample size in qualitative research is contextual, and with a homogenous population, a large sample is not necessary as data saturation can occur (Boddy, 2016). Data saturation means

no additional useful information can be obtained through further interviews or cases and is useful in discussing sample size in qualitative research (Guest et al., 2006). This study's target group was generally public and private sector individuals conveniently engaged through various WhatsApp groups to which the researchers belong.

The WhatsApp group respondents through the questionnaire, were given two weeks to submit their responses. The number of responses received was eighty-two (82). The data was descriptively and analytically analyzed based on relevant themes as to the purpose of the study.

Results

Respondents' Characteristics

The WhatsApp group respondents were 82: males were 47 (57.3%) against 35 (42.7%) females. The respondents were from different categories of employers, with the majority, 68 (82.9%) being from public sector organizations, while 14 (17.1%) were from private sector businesses and non-governmental organizations. This data is indicative of the fact that the public sector has been the major source of formal employment of graduates for many years. The gender statistics also reflect the formal education and employment bias towards males in most developing countries like Tanzania.

WhatsApp Usage and Importance

In determining whether or not WhatsApp is a medium of communication in respondents' organizations, 56 respondents (69.1%) say that WhatsApp is used as a medium of communication in their respective organizations, compared to 25 respondents (39.1%) who disagreed. This shows that WhatsApp is an important communication tool in most organizations from which the respondents originate. Additionally, 68 (82.9%) indicate WhatsApp to be an important medium of communication, and only 14 (17.1%) indicate not to be important. The responses indicated in

the Likert scale show that the majority (44) equivalent to 53.6% of the respondents indicate that WhatsApp is a very important tool; 24 (29.3%) showed that it is of medium importance, and only 14 (17.1%) respondents consider WhatsApp not an important communication tool. Therefore, the majority (82.9%) considers it to be important as a communication tool in their organizations.

The benefits of WhatsApp as a communication tool

The respondents who observed that WhatsApp is an important communication tool at the workplace were asked to provide reasons for their answers. The 82 responses received are collated into 13 items indicated under Box 1 below and are taken to be inclusive of all responses, much of which were related and repetitive.

Box 1: Benefits of WhatsApp Communication in Organizations

- Facilitating easy and quick communication
- Easy and convenient to use
- Affordable means of communication
- Immediate feedback on receiver's access to the sent information
- WhatsApp replaces the less effective means of communication
- Provide forum for same minded people or people with same technical and functional responsibilities
- Assists in information sharing
- Facilitates information sharing to public, like public notices
- Provides good communication network
- Same message can be received by many people at the same time
- All types of information can be conveniently communicated
- Immediate issues can be addressed quickly, e.g., emergency meetings, etc.
- Elevates engagement

Source: Study findings, 2022

Sending of official information through workplace WhatsApp groups

The study intended to find out, in addition to the importance attached to WhatsApp communication, the use of official information through WhatsApp groups. The respondents were asked to specifically say if they themselves and their CEOs are using the medium to communicate official information. Table 1 shows responses on use of WhatsApp for official communication.

Table 1: Sending of official information through WhatsApp

#	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes often	16	19.5 %
2	Yes sometimes	40	48.8 %
3	Rarely	14	17.1%
4	Not all	12	14.6 %
Number of respondents		**82**	**100%**

The majority, 68.3% (more than two-thirds), use WhatsApp for official communication; a small number, about one-third, rarely use or do not use the platform at all. This tells us WhatsApp for official communication is important in the respondents' organizations.

Effectiveness of CEOs and WhatsApp use in organizations

The study sought to see to what extent are the organization top leadership (CEOs) members of the groups formed by organizational members. The responses received indicate that 57 (69.5%) acknowledge that their CEOs are members of one of the WhatsApp groups in the organizations that include the governing board WhatsApp groups, management teams, college/university staff groups, organization/department groups, COVID-19 response groups, football association groups within organizations, etc.

About one-third of the respondents that is, 25 (30.5%) were of the opinion that their CEOs are not part of any organization's or staff WhatsApp groups. This one-third was further asked to give reasons as to why the CEOs do not belong to any of the WhatsApp groups. The responses were diverse, as shown in Box 2 below:

Box 2: Responses on reasons for CEOs not belonging in WhatsApp groups

- 'I don't know why they never belong to WhatsApp groups',
- 'It is for juniors to remind themselves on deadlines and meeting schedules rather than the CEOs',
- 'The CEOs have other groups with external stakeholders',
- 'They are not part due to risks associated with WhatsApp',
- 'They are too busy with tight schedules',
- and 'WhatsApp is not an official communication channel thus they communicate through e-mails.'

Source: captured responses from respondents, 2022

The majority of the respondents, 47 (83.93%) who said yes, WhatsApp is a medium of communication in organizations, agreed that CEOs being members of WhatsApp groups improves their effectiveness, and only 9 (16.07%) said it does not. Additionally, the respondents who said WhatsApp is not a medium of communication in their organizations, 10 (40%) said that it improves CEOs' effectiveness; conversely, 15 (60%) observed that CEOs membership in WhatsApp groups of organizations does not improve their effectiveness.

Interviews were also held over the telephone with CEOs of organizations owned by governments as next-step agencies, regulatory authorities, and independent departments. These organizations were created to improve public service performance. The CEOs were also asked if the use of WhatsApp as a communication tool is important in their organization; whether WhatsApp

communications contribute to their own performance, and the challenges that arise from the use of WhatsApp as a communication tool. The responses were as follows:

CEO1's (Female) response:

"I truthfully use WhatsApp very much; it is very helpful. If you have visitors and I need information quickly, ask for weekly reports, give and get immediate feedback, project management; here we are late, here we have not reached our goals. I prefer WhatsApp than making calls; if you miss someone, they will read when available or aware, and mostly you know they have read. The government does not want us to use it for official communication, but it is hard to draw a line. If it could be improved so that we can send letters through WhatsApp, it would be very good. It also facilitates communication with the mother ministry; for example, if we have a visit from them, we can ask what they need and what to prepare. It helps in following up on issues.

I do not belong to staff WhatsApp groups because we are several hundred employees, so it is difficult to control. If I have issues to share, I ask my support staff to do so. I belong to the management group. I have made them understand the groups are not places to hold up meetings to discuss issues such as per diems or other issues; there are channels to discuss on staff welfare. In our leadership positions, we know each other and can manage our behaviors, not among several hundred employees. They have to use WhatsApp on social issues such as deaths and work-related within given groups.

We use other platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, but for external communication only. WhatsApp is used for both and is thus the most important communication platform. There are also challenges, but I told them this is not a government platform but a group of people working at the organization. Some platforms are very challenging as identities are

concealed; they can start issues against you there, and you have to fight back. I also keep an eye on all staff WhatsApp groups despite not belonging.

CEO2's (Male) response:

"WhatsApp has two usefulness: first, communicating easily with internal customers. It is also a tool for communication with the Ministry and other institutions on issues that are less confidential. For example, arranging and communicating for board meetings. I belong to all staff WhatsApp groups and the management WhatsApp group. We are only 11 employees; therefore, it can be managed. Where I was working before, there were three hundred employees. There were some challenges as government employees; we need not show to openly differ with the government given the huge number; it is difficult to control everybody." We also use Twitter, but WhatsApp is the most popular."

CEO3's (Male) response:

It is easy to send and receive messages. Someone can say, "I did not see the email you sent to me," but with WhatsApp, that is not easy. It helps in keeping contact with staff while on travel. You can still get input from the directors while he or she is away, rather than relying on the ones deputizing the director.

I have excluded myself from all staff WhatsApp groups so that they enjoy their freedom. They included me, and I removed myself. I am in the management team WhatsApp group. The challenge is that some management personnel cannot keep secrets; when we say this should remain in the team, it goes out. It can also be used as a vehicle for lobbying for group interests. If you are not careful and objective, you can be influenced. Do not involve yourself in the discussions in the WhatsApp groups, so that you remain objective. It is a social tool not, an

official one. If there are problems between staff in WhatsApp communications that affect job performance, the director for human resources attends.

CEO4's (Female) response:

"WhatsApp has simplified communication within the institution. If a message is sent to all staff, they all get the message. You get feedback quickly. I can even reach my stakeholders quickly. If I want my issue to go viral, I send it to someone with many groups or a big group and ask them to send it to the group members."

As public employees, we are not allowed to send official information through WhatsApp. But it is the easiest way to communicate. If you accidentally send a message, you will find it everywhere. That is the risk. At least now you can delete a message after some time; you have to pray that someone did not forward it.

I belong to the management team WhatsApp group. I used to belong to the entire staff WhatsApp group, but they removed me. I do not know why they did that. If I ask them to have me back, they say they will, but nothing has happened.

We also use Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. My public relations person has to make sure that our performance is visible outside.

CEO5's (Male) response:

"WhatsApp communication is very important. It has made it easy to communicate to each other. When I joined the organization, there was a workers' WhatsApp group and a management group. There were also intradepartmental groups; I think there were also some add hock WhatsApp groups. I belong to both groups, but I keep silent. I never contribute to the WhatsApp group of all workers. I have not seen any ethical problems."

CEO6's (Female) response:

WhatsApp is very useful for communication. We have coordinators in all the 25 regions of the country; if we have information, we can reach them quickly. We, as CEOs, have a WhatsApp group where we meet and discuss issues and get each other informed on the issues relevant to us. If one needs information about anything, you ask through WhatsApp: is there anyone with the contact number of this person, etc., and you get a response. Others also seek advice from each other through the same communication platform. The ministry has more than 20 institutions; we have a group for these institutions under the ministry that provide a platform for sharing and exchange of information.

There are challenges: one can misuse the information you gave. One can take your letter and share it without your consent; some send bad information and regret as well. There is a WhatsApp group for all staff, management, and for different units. There is also a WhatsApp group for staff who have worked before at my institution.

In this institution, people quarrel through WhatsApp, and I hear about this and try to solve the problems. I do not belong to the entire staff WhatsApp group because it is social. If I am in the group, they can talk about anything; it makes me understand the staff because they shared what they think is agreeable to them, but it can also make me know about a person. I belong to the management WhatsApp group, and here we inform each other about work issues. I also belong to several governing board groups, and most information about meetings and other non-sensitive stuff is shared through WhatsApp.

WhatsApp is also helpful for getting information you missed from the mainstream media; if someone sees it worth sharing, then you will find it in a WhatsApp group. We use this outlet to share information with the public. We also share information through Facebook with the public.

Staff Work Performance increases as a result of communication in WhatsApp groups

Top leadership performance is subject to context and followers; this study sought to get opinions as to the benefits derived for the staff in terms of work performance. The majority of the respondents, 48 (85.72%) who said yes, WhatsApp is a medium of communication in organizations, agree that it increases staff performance; only 8 (14.29%) think otherwise. Moreover, of the respondents who said WhatsApp is not a medium of communication in their organizations, 15 (60%) said that it can improve CEO effectiveness; conversely, 10 (40%) observed that CEOs membership in WhatsApp groups of organizations cannot improve their effectiveness. The p-value is 0.038, which is less than the level of significance of 0.05, indicating that there is a statistically significant relationship between WhatsApp communication in organizations and staff work performance.

Official Authorization of WhatsApp for Official Communication

In finding out if the WhatsApp tool is used for official communication in respondents' organizations, the study also needed to create a line of inquiry as to whether formal authorization is there for WhatsApp use. The respondents were asked to provide their views on the same. Table 2 shows the responses.

Table 2: Authorization and acceptability/ toleration of WhatsApp use

	#	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Authorization inquiry	1	Yes, it is there	16	19.5%
	2	No, it is not there	64	78%
	3	I do not know	2	2.4%
	Total responses		**82**	**100%**
A cc e	1	Yes acceptable	54	65.9%

	2	Not acceptable	19	23.2%
	3	I do not know	9	11%
	Total responses		**82**	**100%**

Source: Study findings (2022)

Among the 82 respondents, 64 of them (78%) admit that WhatsApp is not officially authorized as a communication tool in their organizations; what is perhaps significant is that 54 of them (65.9%) indicate that although WhatsApp is not officially authorized, it is acceptable, tolerable, and used for communication.

Risks and Confidentiality Dimension

The respondents were asked to give their opinions on whether WhatsApp communication is more beneficial than it is risky. The responses were that WhatsApp communication is generally more beneficial, despite any associated risks. The respondents were asked about the presence of social media control systems at work places, and their responses were as follows: 61% have the view that organizations have no control systems on the use of social media, while 39% say that organizations have control systems, and the control systems include: the Public Service Code of Ethical Conduct, a general guide that has been there before the onset of WhatsApp; the ICT department limiting staff access to social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.); the guideline on the use of official internet; making sure that only staff members are in the groups and are only posting relevant official information; and the organization's Wi-Fi not supporting social media in a few organizations.

Table 3 below provides respondents' opinions on confidentiality, benefits versus risks, and the presence of control measures.

Table 3: Risks and ethics associated factors

Is WhatsApp communication affecting confidentiality at work	82	100%
• Yes	37	45.1
• No	45	54.9
Benefits outweigh risks in WhatsApp communication	80	100%
• Yes (more advantageous)	62	77.5%
• No (more disadvantageous/risky)	18	22.5%
Availability of controls to promote ethical requirements in the use of WhatsApp at work place	82	100%
• Conditions are set as need arises	14	17.1
• Conditions are prescribed during the formation of WhatsApp groups	26	31.7
• Organizational-wide ethics and integrity guidelines apply	38	46.3
• Not answered	4	4.9
Presence of means or a system to control the use of social media at work	82	100%
• Yes	32	39
• No	50	61
Actions taken as a result ethical problem from WhatsApp messages	82	100%
• Yes	32	40.2
• No	18	22
• I do not know	31	37.8

Those who feel that WhatsApp affects confidentiality at the workplace proposed measures to prevent leakage of official information. Some of the proposed measures seem important to fill the existing gap because technological developments require responses to mitigate challenges that arise and maximize benefits. Box 3 below shows the responses.

Box 3: Measures to prevent leakage of official information through WhatsApp communications

- Limiting sharing of official information through WhatsApp;

- Using WhatsApp with great care and precautions;

- Conducting ethics awareness and training on effects of using WhatsApp as an official communication tool;

- Using WhatsApp for socialization only and not for official matters;

- Establishment of a policy on the use of social media, avoiding sharing confidential information through WhatsApp groups;

- Using official e-mail rather than WhatsApp for official communication;

- Establishing WhatsApp group rules and conditions, including forbidding sharing official documents through WhatsApp groups, and

- Taking disciplinary action (punishment) for those who share official information.

Source: Study Findings, 2022

This in-depth study explored and assessed the case of using WhatsApp communications in organizations in Tanzania, particularly the public sector organizations. The issues addressed include: WhatsApp as a medium of communication, the importance attached to it, reasons for the formation of WhatsApp groups, its usefulness to leadership and staff work performance, ethical issues associated with the use of WhatsApp communications: authorization of its use, confidentiality issues, etc.

The findings show that WhatsApp communication is not only used, but it is also important in Tanzanian organizations. Despite the fact that the public sector is rule and regulation-based and WhatsApp communication is not formerly authorized, its use is ubiquitous. Most institutions use WhatsApp groups for formal communications. This is in line with the observation that WhatsApp

can be used as an effective work communication medium for sharing and circulating information (Ariffin and Omar, 2018). The WhatsApp communication tool is also said to be a high source of satisfaction for organizational users (Attalla, et al., 2020). As pointed out earlier, there is a raised importance of WhatsApp as a social and community organizational tool in Tanzania (Ngowi, 2021). Nonetheless, as argued, organizations are yet to have clear minds about social media platforms, as they are sources of both positive and negative results (Dodokh and Al Ma'aitah, 2019).

This study, in exploring the benefits of using WhatsApp communication at the workplace, uncovered among others, certain observations worth noting, for example: the issue of elevation of engagement on issues at the workplace; WhatsApp communication as an emergency tool; affordability and ease of use; agility of use to cover different information needs; and a platform for like-minded people of similar technical and functional backgrounds, etc. As observed, WhatsApp allows users to share information quickly and to decide on appropriate or immediate action to be taken (Kariuki, 2017).

Top leadership being part of the workplace WhatsApp groups, indicates the significance of WhatsApp communication in the respondents' organizations. Most organizations have their CEOs communicating through created WhatsApp platforms. Not belonging to workplace WhatsApp groups by a few CEOs is said to result from, among others, the risks associated with it, and because it is not considered a formal internal communication tool, they are afraid to use it, or more correctly, fail to admit using it more than they actually do.

In respect of the work performance of both the leadership and staff of respondents' organizations, it was purported that CEOs performances greatly improved with WhatsApp communications at the workplace. CEOs, despite the challenges, find WhatsApp to be the most important platform

for communication within their organizations and without. Likewise, as probably more emphatically suggested, staff work performance is likely to improve as a result of WhatsApp communications at the workplace. Other scholars also make similar sentiments on the association between social media platforms and organizational performance issues: A team works effectively and efficiently when team members communicate effectively, a platform that WhatsApp can offer (Owoseni et al., 2017). It is also pointed out that social media has a positive impact on organizational performance through, among others, increased information accessibility (Parveen et al., 2016). There are positive correlations between social media usage and organizational performance (Thakur & Arora, 2021).

The ethical dimension explored raised a number of issues: WhatsApp communication is not authorized in public sector organizations; it is not a formal means of communication. Despite the lack of formal authorization, formal communication takes place through the created WhatsApp groups, though possibly not all kind of information is communicated. It is generally not considered ethically right to send official information through WhatsApp groups. Similarly, more than half of the respondents do not consider the use of WhatsApp communications to affect confidentiality at the workplace. The occurrence of ethical incidences is seen not to happen by many respondents, and the number of respondents who have sent regrettable information through WhatsApp communications is also small.

On the question of risks versus benefits, most see WhatsApp communications as beneficial and worthy of the risks associated with its use. This explains the fact that it is widely used despite lacking formal authorization as it is with institutional emails as differentiated from personal email accounts. It is opined that technological innovations that come ahead of policy lead to "back door

adoption"– that from usefulness they receive organizational-wide adoption while not regulated (De Benedictis et al., 2019).

On the issue of the presence of controls, most of the respondents made reference to the code of ethics and conduct in the public sector. This might be useful to some extent, but how robust is the regulation (code) relative to this unique and adaptive technological platform? WhatsApp communication is associated with accountability and privacy issues in organizations (Attalla et al., 2020). Can WhatsApp adopt some simple in-built control measures, such as a quick confirmation inquiry of Yes or No before a communication is sent out?

Conclusion

Based on the study, it can be concluded that WhatsApp communication is widely used by organizations in Tanzania, enabling individuals and groups of people to communicate and share both social and official information. WhatsApp is not only used for communications in organizations studied, but also it is very important in most organizations. The CEOs find the platform useful and probably a game changer, despite some challenges. WhatsApp offers a number of benefits, including quick, instant, and easy sharing of information; social connectivity; facilitating the posting and sharing of documents, videos, and pictures; informing employees on meeting schedules; and sharing ideas and plans for the benefit of the organizations. Most importantly, it also promotes staff engagement. However, there are ethical risks associated with its use, though they are not perceived to overshadow the benefits. The confidentiality and indiscipline problems associated with WhatsApp communication are also less monumental and may be tolerable. It has been indicated as well that, despite the lack of authorization for its use, it is an important tool for organizational leadership and staff. WhatsApp communication is said to promote work performance. However, it is important to synchronize regulations and policies

with technological developments that create useful and innovative results while keeping in mind the relevant controls.

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