**Exploring the Role of WhatsApp in Enhancing Internal Organizational Communication: Evidence from the Institute of Accountancy Arusha in Tanzania**

**Abstract**

*Effective communication channel is an imperative demand in the current working and management situations in ensuring effective communication within an organization. This study explores the role of WhatsApp as a communication channel in enhancing internal organizational communication in Tanzanian higher educational institutions, drawing evidence from the Institute of Accountancy Arusha (IAA). Specifically, it evaluates the suitability of WhatsApp as a communication channel within the organization; and analyzes the risks of using WhatsApp as a formal communication channel within the organization. The study was informed by the Media Synchronicity Theory which posits that effective organizational communication is enhanced by the right choice of communication media.* *The study employed a convergent parallel design to collect data from 190 workers (7 from the management team, and 183 regular workers)* *at IAA, using questionnaires and interviews. Interviews were used to collect data from 7 management team. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the 183 regular workers whereby they were sent a 12-item questionnaire through email. These were then analysed descriptively and thematically respectively. The results showed that the employees were highly satisfied with the frequency and freedom of sharing information through WhatsApp whose overall satisfaction level was rated with a mean value of 4.2368 on a five-point Likert scale. The study also found potential risks of using WhatsApp which are highly connected to security issues of the employees in the organization. The study concludes that WhatsApp is an effective communication channel within organizations when used under control. The study recommends for the safe formalization of WhatsApp to be used as a formal internal channel of communication, training of employees and a policy for regularly collecting users’ opinions should be formulated.*

**Keywords:** *WhatsApp, Communication channel, Formal internal channel, Internal Organizational Communication, Employee satisfaction*

1. **Introduction**

The current business environment is significantly influenced by the emerging Fourth Industrial Revolution. Industry 4.0 is the conceptual era where the Internet and digital technology become an enabler for innovation and transformation. The exponential speed of developments; disruption across all major industries; and the impact on entire systems of production, management, and governance are what differentiate these developments from previous “industrial revolutions.” Communication considerably influences the innovation process in every organisation. Effective communication is therefore one of the essential goals of organisations. The transformation towards an open communication workplace is supported by new communication tools e.g. networked platforms as they might be used as an internal sharing place of information and documents (Stacho et al., 2019; Salim, 2022).

Business involves constant interaction with various kinds of parties, including management, workers, and clients. Successful communication ensures that information flows between all necessary parties, limiting the possibility of misunderstanding, dissatisfaction, and lack of trust (Bahrain et al., 2023). There is unquestionable empirical evidence of employee dissatisfaction in several organizations justified by frequent complaints among employees to their employers. Studies show that dissatisfaction among workers is attributed to several factors including poor internal organizational communication (Mehra & Nickerson, 2019). Consequently, employee dissatisfaction leads to high employee turnover, absenteeism, lateness, low level of involvement, lack of organizational commitment, poor performance and low productivity(Lukosi, 2015; Yilmazsoy *et al.,* 2020). Higher education institutions (HEIs) in Tanzania face a critical challenge of employee dissatisfaction (Lukosoi, 2015; Payowela & Mrema, 2023). Kyando (2013) exposed many lecturers at the Mbeya Institute of Science and Technology (MIST) who were dissatisfied with their workplace environments. Current studies’ findings show that employees at Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute (TAFIRI) were dissatisfied and this job dissatisfaction led to employee turnover (Payowela & Mrema, 2023). In a similar vein, Msuya, Sanga and Dominic (2023) showed that academic staff in HEIs in Tanzania are not satisfied while some of the factors for their dissatisfactions relate to lack of work benefits, work relationships, talent management and innovation and effective communication.

Like other HEIs in Tanzania such as MIST, the Institute of Accountancy Arusha (IAA) is not excluded from internal miscommunication and employee dissatisfaction whereby delayed communication, under-load of information and incorrect or improper choice of communication channels are mentioned to be the key causing factors (Lukosi, 2015). To curb the problem, IAA has been formulating various human resource policies for the sake of motivating employees as a means of overcoming employee dissatisfaction. In 2011, the IAA approved a service scheme to ensure that employees understand their career paths and responsibilities (IAA, 2011). In 2013, it formulated a staff training and development policy to ensure the availability of highly qualified human resources and prepare staff for promotion (IAA, 2013). In 2022, it formulated the Academic Staff Promotion Guidelines which set standards for evaluating performance and promoting academic staff (IAA, 2022). However, there is limited understanding of how the right choice of a communication channel influences effective internal organizational communication, particularly in relation to human resource policies and job satisfaction among academic staff in Tanzanian HEIs including IAA (Abbas, Aman, Nurunnabi & Bano, 2019). It is from this background that the current study intends to address the aforementioned problem.

Ineffective communication including under-load of information and incorrect or improper choice of communication channel are mentioned to cause employee dissatisfaction in several organisations (Shah, 2022; Sospeter, 2022). Regardless of the need of effective internal organisational communication, many HEIs continue struggling with miscommunication and misinformation internally, an example being Aga Khan (Kakale, et al., 2025). Like other HEIs in Tanzania, the Institute of Accountancy Arusha (IAA) is not excluded from internal miscommunication and employee dissatisfactions. To curb the problem, IAA has been formulating various human resource policies for the sake of motivating employees as a means of overcoming employee dissatisfactions. In 2011, IAA approved a service scheme to ensure that employees understand their career paths and responsibilities (IAA, 2011). In 2013, it formulated a staff training and development policy to ensure the availability of highly qualified human resource and prepare staff for promotion (IAA, 2013). In 2022, it formulated the Academic Staff Promotion Guidelines which set standards for evaluating performance and promoting academic staff (IAA, 2022). However, there is limited understanding of how right choice of a communication channel influences effective internal organizational communication, particularly in relation to human resource policies and job satisfaction among academic staff in Tanzanian HEIs including IAA. It is from this background, the current study intended to address the aforementioned problem.

1. **Statement of the problem**

With the rapid development of Information Communication Technology (ICT), there are increasing organization and employees’ demands for quick communication within organizations. It should be noted that the goal of communication is to reach a common understanding that is achieved by effective communication (Miskin & Dongarkar, 2022). It is understood that effective communication is a motivational tool among employees and a key catalyst to any successful organization. Nonetheless, effective organizational communication within the organization is obstructed by several factors including delayed feedback and inappropriate channels used in the process. Consequently, the situation leads to employee dissatisfaction and poor organizational performance (Lukosi, 2015; Mehra & Nickerson, 2019; Issa & Makubi 2024).

A study by Lukosi (2015) has demonstrated that organizations with poor employees’ performance have slow transmission of information. Similarly, Mehra and Nickerson (2019) indicate that there are critical delays of feedback in organizations with poor employee performance. Likewise, Issa and Makubi (2024) have shown that in organizations with poor employee performance, employees receive only twenty to thirty percent (20%-30%) of the necessary information to be communicated downward. Nevertheless, little is known about the causes of the slow dissemination of information and delays of feedback at the Institute of Accountancy Arusha especially in this digital age where various social media like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp have become dominant communication channels in many public and private owned organizations. To address this challenge, this paper was centered on exploring the role of WhatsApp in enhancing internal organizational communication. The study focused on addressing the following specific objectives:

1. To evaluate the suitability of using WhatsApp as a formal channel of communication within the Institute of Accountancy Arusha.
2. To analyze the risks of using WhatsApp as a formal channel of communication within the Institute of Accountancy Arusha.

# **Theoretical Framework**

The current study was informed by Media Synchronicity Theory (MST) by Dennis, Fuller and Valacich (2008) as cited in (Razali *et al.,* 2022). The theory considers more advanced electronic communication media including WhatsApp Messenger to be more effective in disseminating information in organizations with large and complex structures. Media synchronicity is the extent to which a communication environment encourages individuals to work together on the same activity, with the same information, at the same time. In this manner, it takes an outcome‐centered approach often associated with developing virtual teams and communities of practice. To reach a group outcome, conveyance and convergence are essential to encourage communication suitability among social groups (Bhat, 2023; Farah *et al.,* 2024; Dennis & Valacich, 1999).

Conveyance signifies the exchange of information. Communication participants do not all have to agree on the meaning of the information. Low media synchronicity is preferred for the conveyance process. On the contrary, convergence means the development of a shared meaning to information. In this, all participants must work together to establish the same meaning for each bit of information. High media synchronicity is preferred for the convergence process. Media synchronicity advocates that a set of five media capabilities is important to group work such that every task is composed of communication conveyance and convergence. Effective communication is influenced by matching the media capabilities to the needs of the fundamental communication processes (conveyance and convergence). Also, the theory states that the relationship between communication process and media capabilities varies between established and newly formed groups, and changes over time (Dennis & Valacich, 1999; Farah *et al.,* 2024).

# **Empirical Literature Review**

The development of Mobile Communication Technologies (MCT) has resulted in the creation of several platforms that are frequently used in both internal and external organizational communication. WhatsApp Messenger is a good example of the MCT adopted by organizations and its use has equally penetrated within institutions and organizations (Soka & Kimencu, 2018).

Effective communication is aimed at reducing conflicts, building and strengthening relationships, and enhancing employee satisfaction at the workplace. This signifies the importance of the right communication channel (Men & Bowen, 2017; Miskin & Dongarkar, 2022). When the workplace environment is approachable and the subordinates are motivated to communicate their views, productivity increases (Raman & Singh, 2006; Popa, 2020; Tesfay, et al., 2022). Effective communication in the organization is the most important ingredient for the success of an organization. If the organization is clear and open in its communication, employees will clearly know what the organization needs. Thus, they will deliver the same to the best of their abilities (Mehra & Nickerson, 2019; Miskin & Dongarkar, 2022). In this regard, every enterprise, small or large, must ensure that both internal and external communication is effective in order to achieve its goal through various forms of communication.

Therefore, it is undeniable that employee satisfaction at the workplace leads to high motivation for workers (Bott, Montagno & Lane, 2010; Milanovic & Radicevic, 2019). Effective communication plays a key part in shaping employee satisfaction and impacts job performance (Abbas et al., 2019; Hashim, Shahid & Razak, 2022; Tesfay, et al., 2022). Measuring employee satisfaction is one of the key components of human resource management. In order to increase productivity, responsiveness, quality, and recognition of service, employers must ensure that employee satisfaction levels are high (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Nonetheless, complaints and dissatisfactions among the employees in various organizations have continued to be reported worldwide due to several reasons including miscommunication within the organizations.

For that reason, understanding the suitability of WhatsApp as a formal communication channel and its risks of using it in the organization should not be overlooked. For any organization to be proper in terms of employee satisfaction, performance and customer service, effective communication is of paramount importance. This is supported by Omipidan and Sanusi (2024) who advocate that WhatsApp is vital to daily relations, allowing respondents to connect with friends from different parts of the world effortlessly. WhatsApp offers convenience and connectivity in the digital age, and so far its widespread usage has raised relevant concerns regarding effective communication.

Similarly, WhatsApp is widely used by employees for sharing workplace information. The platform provides convenience in relations to speed, accessibility and user satisfaction. WhatsApp allows rapid and effective communication, leading to enhanced collaboration and coordination among coworkers. The effectiveness of WhatsApp is attributed to the instant group chats, multimedia sharing abilities and instant messaging (Farah, et al., 2024).

Thus, effective communication within an organization can be achieved through various ways including selection of the right channel in terms of its ability to reduce risks that are prevalent in communication platforms. The choice of right channel helps an organization overcome miscommunication (Campbell1, Campbell-Phillips, & Phillips, 2020; Gamba, 2015). Organizational miscommunication can be caused by several factors including organization structure, closed communication style and incorrect choice of medium. This means that the chosen channel is required to be fast, information-rich and convenient to a large audience. Effective communication requires a lot of interactivity which means that the chosen communication channel needs to be as rich as a channel as possible.

Importantly, the key to effective communication is to match the communication channel with the goal, context and the nature of the receiver of the message. Like face-to-face and telephone conversations, videoconferencing has high information richness because receivers and senders can see or hear beyond just the words. That is, they can see the sender’s body language or hear the tone of their voice (Pavilion Dinfos online learning, 2024; Raman & Singh, 2006). This view aligns with Media Synchronicity Theory (MST) which advocates that effective communication is influenced by matching the media capabilities to the needs of the fundamental communication processes. The theory also proposes that the relationships between communication processes and media capabilities vary between established and newly formed groups, and change over time (Dennis & Valacich, 1999). Thus, reconsidering and adopting computer-mediated communication channels are mandatory in this digital age and competing business environment.

In addition, the choice of the right channel is guided by several factors that enhance the ability to reduce risks in information effectiveness, business networking and user literacy. Due to people’s preferences for virtual communication, there is a need for a better plan of communication that would enhance the effectiveness of workplace communication to increase employee satisfaction and productivity (Mamat *et al.,* 2022). Thus, there is an assumption that computer-mediated communication such as WhatsApp application or Messenger can be an effective channel of communication in organizations. WhatsApp as an instant and cross-platform messaging application on smartphones allows users to actively interact, both personally and within the organization. Besides, WhatsApp is able to send messages in the form of text, photos, videos, audio files and other forms that cannot be shared easily in other applications (Andrade, 2020).

Furthermore, general social networking platforms are more commonly used for internal communication, owing mainly to cost issues and familiarity with the features of these platforms. Some organisations acknowledge the potential of allowing employees to use general networking platforms due to the innovative ways employees can communicate across organisational boundaries with larger audiences (Moyo & Nkhahle, 2024).

According to Miswan, Widaya and Rudiana (2023), with low risks in communication channels, there is a linear relationship between communication built using WhatsApp messenger and employee performance. This relationship has a positive and significant influence on employee performance. Also, there is a direct relationship between organizational culture, employee performance and a positive and significant influence on organization performance. Communication built using WhatsApp messenger and organizational culture together have a linear relationship with employee performance and simultaneously affect the performance of employees in the organization. Similarly, Issa and Makubi (2024) show that WhatsApp Messenger has a greater possibility of information safety due to its quickness and easiness of use.

Again, WhatsApp in organisational communication has a direct impact on productivity and work efficiency in organisations. For instance, WhatsApp improves communication within the same teams. WhatsApp allows team members to create group chats where they can discuss ideas, share files, and collaborate on projects. Group members can easily communicate with each other, ensuring effective teamwork. It is a widely used messaging application that offers end-to-end encryption for its users, which means that the content of your messages is encrypted and can only be accessed by the sender and the recipient. This encryption provides a certain level of security and privacy, making it difficult for third parties to intercept and read your messages. It provides an option to back up your chats to cloud storage services such as Google Drive or iCloud. These backups are not encrypted end-to-end, and the security of your chat history relies on the security measures provided by the cloud storage service. Companies can create dedicated WhatsApp groups for specific teams, departments, or projects. This allows employees, supervisors, and customers to easily share suggestions, instructions, and complaints related to their work within a focused environment (Abdelhay et al., 2024).

Also, limiting risks in WhatsApp channel as an electronic communication influences effective organizational communication and the organization’s public satisfaction. There is a statistically significant level of relationship between e-communication and effective organizational communication. E-communication has a significant effect on effective organizational communication. The use of digital communication tools increases the safety feeling of the employee and affects positively on the productivity and motivation of the employees, which results in increasing the employee engagement (Adetunji & Al Jamaan, 2012; Aroian & Garabedian, 2020). The popularity of WhatsApp channels in organizational communication is due to their free, easy-to-use, and familiar interface, leading to their widespread use in creating groups for sharing information and building teamwork among employees. WhatsApp is one of the most preferred platforms to act as a communication tool as well as to aid in disseminating work-related information among the staff compared to other platforms such as Telegram, WeChat, LINE and Facebook (Allaguiy, 2014; O'Hara, et al., 2014).

1. **Methodology**

The study was conducted at the Institute of Accountancy Arusha (IAA), Arusha region, Tanzania. The current study used a convergent parallel design. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) advocate that convergent design follows pragmatism as a theoretical assumption. The choice of the convergent parallel design aimed at creating an exclusive set of data that informs each other to undertake an efficient and popular approach of mixing-methods research. The design allows for gathering comprehensive insights by merging statistical information with in-depth participants’ perspectives. Convergent design aided in developing comprehensive, valid and confirmed results and interpretations to expand understanding.

Purposive and random sampling techniques were used to select participants. The participants were selected based on being employees of IAA who use WhatsApp as a communication channel within the organization. The use of random sampling was important in ensuring fairness in the sample by eliminating researchers’ personal biasness (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The study used a sample size of 190 (7 from management team, and 183 regular workers).

Interviews and questionnaires were deployed to collect data. An interview was used to collect data from 7 management team. We collected general information on messaging from the currently informally operating WhatsApp in one academic year 2023/2024: total number of messages sent out, delivered, read and received. We also collected data on the pattern of use of the service by employees: day and time, need for in-person assistance with his/her job tasks, response time and most frequent reasons for assistance need. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the 183 regular workers whereby they were sent a 12-item questionnaire through email to rate their experiences about the suitability of WhatsApp as a formal channel of communication and the risks of using WhatsApp messenger as a formal channel of communication within IAA. The collected data were mixed to obtain the triangulated results and then analyzed independently using quantitative and qualitative analytical approaches (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Thematic analysis was used in analyzing qualitative data while descriptive statistics was used to analyse quantitative data using the SPSS software version 27.

1. **Data Presentation and Findin****gs**

This section presents the results of the analysis of data gathered through questionnaires and interviews and then discusses the findings. The presentation of the findings was based on the two specific objectives which guided the study:

1. To evaluate the suitability of using WhatsApp as a formal channel of communication within the Institute of Accountancy Arusha.
2. To analyze the risks of using WhatsApp as a formal channel of communication within the Institute of Accountancy Arusha.

**Suitability of using WhatsApp as a formal channel of communication within IAA**

**Table 1. Ratings of Satisfaction WhatsApp use of surveyed participants**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Satisfied with WhatsApp use |  Frequency | Percent |
| Valid | Not satisfied | 4 | 2.2 |
| Very well satisfied | 152 | 83 |
| Well satisfied | 20 | 11 |
| Satisfied | 7 | 3.8 |
| Total | 183 | 100.0 |
| Satisfied with WhatsApp usefulness to share communication | Frequency | Percent |
| Valid | Not satisfied | 00 | 0.0 |
| Very well satisfied | 174 | 95 |
| Well satisfied | 9 | 5 |
| Satisfied | 00 | 0.0 |
| Total | 183 | 100.0 |
| Satisfied with WhatsApp useful information shared | Frequency | Percent |
| Valid | Not satisfied | 4 | 2.2 |
| Very well satisfied | 152 | 83 |
| Well satisfied | 20 | 11 |
| Satisfied | 7 | 3.8 |
| Total | 183 | 100.0 |
| Satisfied with WhatsApp response from the management | Frequency | Percent |
| Valid | Not satisfied | 5 | 2.7 |
| Very well satisfied | 125 | 68.3 |
| Well satisfied | 37 | 20.2 |
| Satisfied | 16 | 8.8 |
| Total | 183 | 100.0 |
| Most frequently means of communication with management and fellow staff | Frequency | Percent |
| Valid | WhatsApp | 90 | 49.2 |
| Email | 66 | 36 |
| Phone  | 27 | 14.8 |
| Total | 183 | 100.0 |

**Source:** Field Data, 2024

Though the platform is yet formalized, observations revealed that in the period under study, through WhatsApp platform 174 employees are connected to WhatsApp 95% of all staff members, and about 83% of the surveyed respondents used the platform effectively. The platform also received 352 questions on the institutional activities of employees asked directly through WhatsApp. The platform was found to have 1392 received messages and 1227 sent out messages from 157 staff. Most were received on weekdays from Monday to Friday (86.6%) and in the evening (56.5%).

Of these total respondents, 59.5% were directed to supervisors like heads of departments. Of the messages to supervisors 61.4% were responded to within a day. The most frequent reasons for questions to supervisors were individual task-related issues 49.6%, administrative issues (22.5%), financial issues (17.9%), and social issues (10.0) Table 2). We received responses to the satisfaction survey from 190 respondents (82.5%) were very well satisfied, and found that overall, they strongly agreed that the use of WhatsApp can facilitate access to the organization's communication sharing (95.2%), that the organization should use the WhatsApp platform officially (98.2%), that they are satisfied with the response provided by the management or job leaders through the platform (68.3%) and that they found information sharing through WhatsApp useful (95.9%).

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics test results**

|  |
| --- |
| Descriptive Statistics Test Sharing communication Usefulness of information shared Satisfaction level |
| Mean 4.2368 4.2473 4.2368Median 4.0000 4.0000 4.0000Standard Deviation 0.6989 0.6953 0.69137Variance 0.4885 0.4834 0.47800 |

Table 2 indicates the descriptive statistical test results of the sharing communication attribute obtained mean = 4.2368 which is “agree ratings on the Likert scale, the median = 4.0000 rating, standard deviation = 0.6989, and variance = 0.4885. The usefulness of information shared obtained mean = 4.2473 which is interpreted as “agree” rating, median = 4.0000, standard deviation = 0.6953, variance = 0.4834, and the level of satisfaction with the WhatsApp platform obtained mean = 4.2368 which is interpreted as “agree” rating, median = 4.0000, standard deviation = 0.69137, and variance = 0.47800.

**Interview results**

The researcher sought to understand the satisfaction level of WhatsApp communication channels amongst the respondents through interview research question 1 on how employees use WhatsApp. To measure users perceived ways of using WhatsApp, the respondents were asked to rate the medium on how they frequently used the platform for different needs. All respondents mentioned the two outstanding themes which include work-related connection to the organization, and getting cognitive needs through the organization's society. The respondents were also asked to respond on their satisfaction level with WhatsApp consumption in the organization.

*How are you satisfied with the work related information communicated through WhatsApp in the organization?*

The research findings revealed that the method of WhatsApp gives opportunity to be satisfied with the work related connection of employees.

*“There are few employees who are left behind in reading messages often feel that they have lost information because of the large number of incoming messages however, as the platform can handle large number of users relative to the organization there is no confusion or necessity of repeated explanations on pertinent issues to communicate.” (Key informant, Official 2)*

The study shows that most of the management members in the institutions were impressed by the way the platform is used satisfactorily in messaging announcements for updates from the management. The study revealed that respondents are satisfactorily impressed with efficiency, fairness and effectiveness of providing an employee participation process for conducting surveys and fetching feedback from the other who needed instruction to conduct the appraisal process.

*How is the employee level of satisfaction influenced on the use of WhatsApp in the organization?*

The most important variable prioritized in getting cognitive information from the organization was the government and organization policy and reform programs. Specifically, the WhatsApp platform has enabled employees to link with their day-to-day information activities in the organization.

*“Management members are aware that the level of individual workers satisfaction can be influenced by management based on proper rules of use of platform and position ethics and therefore it has been their key responsibility to ensure that workers are not intimidated or discouraged to air out their concerns in the platform.”*(Key informant, Official 4)

Management members and employees do not have the rigidity of the situation in the discussion of the organization development issues so that they can understand each other's personalities, moreover, the intensity of communication is also quite high in the entity.

**The risks of using WhatsApp as a formal channel of communication within IAA**

For this research objective data were first analyzed descriptively into four measures that are related to risks that can arise from WhatsApp use in the organization (informational function, command and instructive function, influence and persuasive function, and integrative function). The measures determine the respondents’ level of productivity, profitability and prosperity as illustrated in table 3 as follows:

**Table 3. Perceived risks of WhatsApp use on surveyed participants**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Security concerns in formalizing the WhatsApp channel | Frequency | Percent |
| Valid | Not concern | 36 | 19.7 |
| Critical concern | 52 | 28.4 |
| Very critical concern | 95 | 51.9 |
| Total | 183 | 100.0 |

Confidentiality concern in formalizing WhatsApp use

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Valid | Not concern | 39 | 21.3 |
| Critical concern | 32 | 17.5 |
| Very critical concern | 112 | 61.2 |
| Total | 183 | 100.0 |

Lack of due response concern of WhatsApp use

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Valid | Not concern | 43 | 23.5 |
| Critical concern | 41 | 22.4 |
| Very critical concern | 99 | 54.1 |
| Total | 183 | 100.0 |

Failure to effectively achieve the purpose

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Valid | Not concern | 116 | 63.4 |
| Critical concern | 37 | 20.2 |
| Very critical concern | 30 | 16.4 |
| Total | 183 | 100.0 |

Resulting to fears and anxiety

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Valid | Not concern | 123 | 67.2 |
| Critical concern | 37 | 20.2 |
| Very critical concern | 23 | 12.6 |
| Total | 183 | 100.0 |

Communicating freedom

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Valid | Not concern | 97 | 53 |
| Critical concern | 51 | 27.9 |
| Very critical concern | 35 | 19.1 |
| Total | 183 | 100.0 |

**Source:** Field Data, 2024

According to Table 3, results indicate that more than half of the respondents (5l.9%) expressed concerns about security risks. In addition, 61.4% of respondents considered that the concerns on issues of confidentiality risk are a challenge. Furthermore (51.9%) were not satisfied with the response they received from the management when critical issues were discussed, which however would not lead to failing to effectively achieve the purpose as only (17.5%) of respondents perceived this way. Apart from that, a few respondents (12.6%) felt that this platform may fail to prevent fears and anxiety. Of all respondents, only 19.1% reported using this means of contact officially would result in many employees declining to chat due to fear of losing freedom as they experience now.

1. **Discussion of the Findings**

**The suitability of WhatsApp as a formal channel of communication within IAA**

This evaluation of the suitability of the use of WhatsApp as a formal communication channel within IAA showed a well-description of the employee satisfaction on the suitability of using the platform using the frequency ratings on the open ended questions.

Typically, the WhatsApp as a channel of communication, literature assumes organizations are socially and culturally autonomous. Although such assumption might be defensible for some organizations, it is implausible for the organizations whose employees do not spend much of the time interacting by any formal platform, many factors are highly mobile and there are virtual barriers for interact among employees.

Respondents can receive different experiences of engagement and satisfaction with WhatsApp use as a channel of communication at IAA. This happens from the usefulness of the platform to share communication among working staff, the usefulness of the information shared and the response from the management received and the fact that it deserves to attract users as a mostly frequent means of communication corroborating the findings of Amal (2023) and contrasting the results of Issa and Makubi (2024).

The suitability of WhatsApp as a formal channel of communication within the organization is likely to be high and invariant among working staff who perceive satisfaction with the formalizing of the social platform tool. This establishes the fact that working staff have reasons to use WhatsApp as a formal channel for communication in the organization (Soka & Kimencu, 2018; Allaguiy, 2014; Raodatul, 2023).

The interview results found that the management in the organization places the highest regard on the WhatsApp communication channel since the method of WhatsApp gives the opportunity to be satisfied with the work related to the connection of employees. The study shows that most of the management members in the institutions are impressed by the way that the platform is used satisfactorily in messaging announcements for updates from the management. The study revealed that respondents are satisfactorily impressed with the efficiency, fairness and effectiveness of providing employee participation process for conducting surveys and fetching feedback from the other needed instruction to conduct appraisal process. These findings are similar to the findings by Men and Yue (2019) who found that the higher the social support through communication platforms, the higher they perceive to be satisfied with the importance of interacting and engaging as a family group. These results indicate the importance of communication platforms, as they enable individuals to feel that they are engaged, esteemed, and valued in the organization by the management.

**The risks of using WhatsApp as a formal channel of communication within IAA**

In the second research objective, the study analyzed the risks of using WhatsApp messenger as a formal channel of communication within IAA. Results show that there are potential risks of using WhatsApp which have to be controlled if the platform is to be officially used, which means that WhatsApp messenger as a formal channel of communication is highly connected to security a very critical concern of employees in the organization. The high risk is attributed to the capability of WhatsApp cyber-attacks that happen to other social media tools and as a matter of fact is that the risk is a global concern of communication. These results are similar to the findings by Awal and Imami (2023).

In addition, the findings revealed that WhatsApp as a formal channel of communication was highly connected to confidential risk as a very critical concern of employees in the organization. This implies that employees are worried by the unintended disclosure and limited control over the content distribution in using the medium though it enables them to share information with their colleagues and participate in discussions of various issues pertaining to organization activities thus the management is enabled to smoothly fulfill its obligations. Again, this lays the responsibility of ensuring the convenience of protecting confidentiality in using the medium (Adetunji & Al Jamaan, 2012).

Furthermore, the findings revealed that the use of WhatsApp as a formal channel of communication raised concern about the lack of due response from the responsible feedback as a very critical concern of employees in the organization. This is the feedback fear from management who may be getting instant information on various issues and not addressing them adequately, the results are similar to those of Awal and Imam (2023). These results indicate the importance of management and employee teams on the use of platforms to save time in information sharing as it enables individuals to feel that they are obliged to adopt the demands of the information shared.

1. **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The study concludes that employees are highly satisfied that WhatsApp can be a vastly and frequently used within the organization of Institute of Accountancy Arusha if officially and formalized. Men and Yue (2019) note that “this application is highly conducive to staff in sharing information and can create a great impact on regular users, and apart from that it can influence quick response to tasks performance.”

The expectation that one must respond to WhatsApp messages immediately is also an influence of the usage and effective utilization of the intended information, hence most users raised concern about information that is only shared through WhatsApp and demands quick implementation. WhatsApp capabilities of leveraging communication technology in organizational practices by controlling the risks, in that it creates a tendency for employees in the organization to frequently access information regardless of geographical location, especially with the numerous travel of employees to branches of work and other routines, and this has an impact on employee performance.

Based on the findings, this study recommends that IAA should formalize the use of WhatsApp channels. Furthermore, to prevent or minimize the risks observed in the study, strategies for training employees before creating the official WhatsApp channel and regular collection of opinions from users be formulated so as to meet the formal communication needs that are currently fully embraced by the medium as the tool is not made official. Some key aspects of satisfaction levels were rated with high ratings on frequency, there is also a need to address the potential risks of confidentiality, misinformation, and insecurity suspected to arise in WhatsApp use to build confidence in communication engagement, the strategies and policies that should formulate to govern WhatsApp use should cover all employees needs in the use of the platform.

**COMPETING INTERESTS DISCLAIMER:**

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests OR non-financial interests OR personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

Option 2:

Author(s) hereby declare that generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models, etc. have been used during the writing or editing of manuscripts. This explanation will include the name, version, model, and source of the generative AI technology and as well as all input prompts provided to the generative AI technology

Details of the AI usage are given below:

1.

2.

3.

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