

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND THE USE OF WHATSAPP IN DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION BETWEEN THE DISTRICT SECRETARIAT OF BOANE AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

This study verifies the effectiveness of using WhatsApp as a communication tool between the Boane District Secretariat and the local community, as well as its impact on democratic participation in the decision-making process. Through the review of the Organizational Communication, organizational communication is a concept and details of the advantages and disadvantages of WhatsApp. The district bureaus, which are responsible for promoting the socio-economic development of the districts, have an institutional link with the population, which requires accessible communication to meet the needs of the citizens. Using a qualitative method, the study analyzes, from the community perspective, the influence of communication technology on the relationship with the District Secretariat. The research shows that the use of WhatsApp, despite having some disadvantages, makes a significant contribution to improving organizational communication. Furthermore, it is identified that efficient communication between the body and the community stimulates people's willingness to participate in the decision-making process, especially in situations of social and civic interest.

Keywords: communication; organizational communication; WhatsApp; Community.

1. Introduction

In order to define Community participation, citizens need a simple and objective communication that strengthens their ideal of citizenship (Vitor, 2019). Organizational communication, coupled with the media section, can also be used, creating an effective channel of communication with citizens. WhatsApp now presents itself as one of the key tools for processing the dialog, as well as organizational communication between citizens and employees of the Boane District institution. In this way, a case study was carried out to demonstrate the impact of the use of WhatsApp by staff at the District Bureau of Boane, especially on interaction with the local community.

The relevance of this work stems from the need to analyze the benefits and advantages of using the WhatsApp tool in the rapid organizational communication between the Boane District Secretariat and the population, which plays an important role in the participation of the community in the democratic process.

2. Contextualization of Organizational Communication

According to (Nassar, 2008), organizational communication is a versatile and interdisciplinary area, used to promote a common understanding between members who would otherwise be separated from each other in time and space. When these operations occur between groups, communication is fluently expanded to cover the organizational question. Many international, national, regional, and local organizations are structurally different, but share the need for management structures to keep employees involved in pursuing common goals (Coelho Dias & Lima Silva, 2017; Valladares et al., 2014).

To fulfill their mission, they must establish communication procedures. Conversation and the transmission of ideas are possible within and between organizations and society. The organizational communication shall establish connections with all stakeholders involved in the organization's activities, ensuring continuity of operations despite existing differences. Its success is measured by the ability of the selected messages to generate a corresponding influence on the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of the target clients.

According to (Kunsch, 2009) the organizational communication activities aim to clarify and influence a diverse group of loss of strength, including: employees, trade unions, shareholders, various government authorities, pressure groups, press, customers, opponents and suppliers. For the optimal functioning of organizations, they must structure and fulfill their tasks dedicated to the development of organizational communication processes. In this way, it can be ensured that the organizational objectives are achieved without communication errors and conflicts generated by the absence of communication.

Thus, to (Cristina Guimarães, 2016; Santos Miranda, 2007) the generation, transmission and propagation of knowledge is one of the most significant tools for organizational success. The full extent of these tasks requires the implementation of effective reporting and dissemination procedures. Moreover, the institution's position in the scale of complexity and formalization admits advent and challenges. The establishment of a communication channel between the Boane District Secretariat and the local community aims to analyze the possibilities and limitations of using the WhatsApp application in democratic participation during the decision-making process. To this end, it is fundamental to know the role of the Secretariat, the profile of the Boane community and the level of interaction between the two.

3. The Role of Whatsapp in Communication

Founded in 2009, created by two former Yahoo! employees, Brian Aton and Jan Koum, who were looking for a way of replacing SMS with the Internet. Availability on multiple platforms and their free use were the main drivers of growth. As Mello and (Souza, 2014) (Lehmann & Parreira, 2019) said, it became popular fast and grew steadily, new features emerged such as image transfer, videos, calls, audio, uploading the location via Google Maps, communication has changed due to WhatsApp and especially social media. Transparency, real-time communication and the development of marketing teams offered by these services lead users to create pages or groups to improve interaction. Communicating should not be just an obligation, but a moment of comfort in creating the relationship with the superior and knowing the reality of the community. The group should discuss the interests of the population, share news and even communicate better decisions of the institution; besides speed in information, employees remain in contact with the community, and develop equal ideas for the benefit of society. A very important factor is using WhatsApp in companies to establish fast and effective communication to better control and manage work with management members.

As Gomes Ferreira and Gradim Alves maintain (2014), social media has recently become a lifesaver in times of a pandemic between communities to keep daily news, requests for help between members, and all kinds of information. However, it has also been shown that social networks are double standards; the information may either be true or false. People take advantage of rapid communication to spread false ideas by impacting people's minds and disabling participation. Some researchers confirm that the use of WhatsApp has different solutions and uses that can promote democracy and the citizen.

It is in this context of the importance of organizational communication in democratic participation, which forms part of the use of WhatsApp to analyze the extent to which its use by the District Secretariat and the entire local community in Boane will allow participation in the decision-making

process of local life. Following on from this point, as organizational communication is the broad framework, its concepts are primarily relevant to understanding research.

3.1 WhatsApp Features

In the past, communication within companies was very slow, information became very late, so the authorities at that time were creating other alternatives to reduce these delays. A new communication system, based on new information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as WhatsApp, has now been set up and can be used in all sectors of society to allow people to be in contact with their work or any other need on a mobile basis. With all of this, it is appropriate to analyze the importance of using WhatsApp, in organizational communication, for the decision-making process, through the case study at the Boane District Secretariat.

According to (Rios, 2018), today's technology allows people to be in touch with their work or other needs on the go. In this context, WhatsApp, the messaging application for smartphones, offers advantages such as the immediate sending of videos, photos, audio files and text, as well as calls coming out cheaper than conventional ones. On the other hand, it has disadvantages, mainly related to the disclosure of confidential information. Considering these specificities, the application became a means of communication between employees of the Boane District Secretariat and residents to deal with everyday issues.

3.2 WhatsApp Usage Advantages

As mentioned by (Martins, 2019), there are several advantages to WhatsApp, starting with the speed of communication, easy uploading photos, videos, files, documents, melodies and contacts. WhatsApp provides real-time news and information that facilitates communication around the world and dispenses with face-to-face communication by providing group communication. In addition, WhatsApp lets you send videos and photos to more than one person at the same time. To improve communication and the establishment of everyone to the new reality, the leadership of the Boane District Secretariat created a WhatsApp group between the Bureau and the local community. It should be noted that WhatsApp is an extremely favorable application in the organizational context.

3.3 WhatsApp Usage Disadvantages

WhatsApp's downside in organizational communication has been identified to recognize the limitations of its use. Officials at the Boane District Secretariat have explained that using the WhatsApp restricted group as the main means of communication has been disadvantageous, as the content still does not reach a large number of people. The interlocutors perpetuate the idea that the

local population is not interested, preventing them from creating another less restricted group, capable of bringing together the users of the municipality.

The secretariat identified that communication from one side also makes it difficult to open up for the participation of the community in the decision-making process. For these reasons, employees considered information dispersal to be one of the disadvantages, as many people in the community do not have participatory behavior, although they have WhatsApp. In the opposite line, the population realizes that the Boane District Secretariat is still not making use of the tool's potential to take information, receive suggestions and promote democratic participation.

4. The District Secretariat of Boane

The government of the district of Boane has a long tradition of providing basic services to the local population, following the country's various political moments. In spite of the weight of tradition, the institution did not hesitate to embrace the development and technology of information, adapting itself and implementing new forms of relationship with citizens. It is known that the provision of good services can threaten the perpetuation in the power of any government. However, the projection of public actions that transform social life is a verified necessity, and the Boane District Government has adopted these transformations in a replicable manner.

The District Administration of Boane is one of the 65 district administrations in the province of Maputo. It is located in the district of Boane, in the province of Maputo, and provides a range of basic services to the population. One of the tasks of the State Secretariat is to ensure dialog between citizens' groups. As it serves as a link between the Secretariat and the local community, it has become apparent that the group of citizens is made up of communities that request information from the Secretariat and, in turn, present their concerns. Despite the physical presence of citizens, it is not possible to obtain a large number of people for discussions on topics related to local development.

5. The Local Community of Boane

The local community, the main beneficiary group of the public actions implemented by the Boane District Secretariat, constantly needs updated information. This is important because the public authorities, responsible for the development of the locality, recognize that the democratic participation of citizens in the decision-making process of public matters influences the outcome of decisions. As pointed out (Cabraia, 2013), one must consider that the individual is the center of all governmental thinking and action, as well as influencing the projects and processes carried out for the community of which he or she is a member. Its participation results in better, ethical and responsible citizens, strengthening political, economic and social development.

The question is: Does communication between the Boane District Bureau and the local community via WhatsApp contribute to the democratic participation of public organizations in the decision-making process? This statement, recently implemented, aims to shorten distances and achieve greater communication between the two parties. In response, it appears that several communication initiatives have advantages and disadvantages. Some favored by digital inclusion and real-time information. Others are lost in the quantity of failures caused by the lack of training of public servants or by the reluctance of the community to participate in the discussion of public themes at the study stage.

6. Interaction between the Registry and the Community

As a consequence of the specific nature of the tasks to be carried out by the public administration, irrespective of the area or sector, the relationship between its departments and the local community is governed by criteria which confer legitimacy on the development of actions in the public interest. Like (Oliveira, 2019), the Public Administration must relate to society at various levels, with the aim of keeping the population informed, constant and correctly updated on the subjects referring to each area or sector (the role of WhatsApp in the communication).

Thus, the Boane District Secretariat is responsible for administering and managing the relationship with the local community, a process that in practice presents serious difficulties, since the interaction between the community and the Secretariat seems insufficient. The fact that it does not keep the entire population constantly up to date on the weaknesses and opportunities that arise in the district of Boane helps to make a negative assessment of the management of the registry by the community. Discussing the contribution of using WhatsApp to democratic participation is, for all practical purposes, based on the need to promote the involvement of the population and to discuss issues relating to the District Region.

7. Democratic participation in the decision-making process

Democratic participation refers to the participation of citizens, especially the less wealthy, in the formulation and implementation of decisions leading to development at local, national and international level, Teixeira (2006). As a political concept, democratic participation gained increasing importance in the 1980s with the introduction of poverty reduction projects in poor communities outside the third world. As stated by (Souza, 2014), many experts believe that the participation of communities in the decision-making process increases accountability and creates a greater awareness of the power and interest of citizens, thus facilitating participation in general services and policy-making.

The same can be applied to the problem of the District Secretariat that tries to implement social projects in the residential areas that need several answers, because the problem lies in the decision-making process. The District Bureau of Boane, which uses WhatsApp as a communication tool for democratic participation, believes that this makes decision-making less complex, increases the level of stakeholder involvement in decision-making and their confidence in the process. It also helps to make better decisions, leverage the individual performance of decision-making and can also support the development of a positive image of its environment.

7.1 Importance of Community participation

The organizational communication aims to administer the information within the organization and among its public, to include it in the decision-making process, with a view to bringing power closer to those governed, in the democratization of the communication between the District Secretariat of Boane and the local community. Based on the understanding of WhatsApp's role in the communication, the study involves interaction between the Boane District Secretariat and the local community, trying to determine whether the network is used to bring employees closer to the Secretariat of the Community in the decision-making process, thus conferring democratic participation on the community. To this end, the target audience was limited to using WhatsApp in social-political processes at the Boane District Secretariat. The research focuses on the democratic participation of the community in the decision-making process on district issues, using WhatsApp as a tool for accessing and accessing the Boane District Secretariat. The data gathered show that WhatsApp is a platform still restricted to communication by the Ministry of State Administration and Civil Service with the Community at the District Secretariat of Boane.

According to Gomes Ferreira (2018), the presence of the community in the political process of district issues gives them the status of active electing citizens. An organized society based on these principles allows each of its members to communicate the needs and concerns over which decisions are to be taken, Grijo & Wenceslau (2017). The participation of citizens in democratic decision-making processes must build a process and model of political communication, highlighting its importance. The importance of community participation lies in strengthening the relationship between the Boane District Secretariat and the local community, enabling civil society to interact by organizing, programming and taking part in its own issues.

8. Case Study: Using WhatsApp at Boane's Department

Advances in communication technology are undeniable facts. In this sphere, a question arises to be considered: to what extent can WhatsApp improve communication between the Boane Secretariat and the local community in the democratic participation process? This case study aims to respond to

such an inquiry by addressing the areas of the Organizational Communication and the decision-making process that forms the basis of democratic participation. To this end, it is based on the conception and contextualization of Organizational Communication, followed by an examination of WhatsApp's role in communication, including its advantages and disadvantages. All of this in connection with the Boane District Secretariat and the local community, to better understand the proposed issue.

As he points out (Rodrigues, 2020), WhatsApp's role in Organizational Communication translates into facilities and benefits for both the communicator organization and the local community. Field research identifies its usefulness, as it enables rapid, easy and cost-effective communication with the local community; provides an open environment for multi-level dialog, allowing for clarification of doubts and ensuring access to the entire group. For (Mendes, 2019), its application in the public area enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of organizational communication by broadening the basis of beneficiaries participating in the decision-making process, contributing to inclusive, transparent, democratic and participatory governance.

On the other hand, the analysis of the responses also detects the existence of drawbacks that may hinder the proper functioning of the relationship. In view of the staff difficulties, it is recommended that the Secretariat provide training to address the lack of dominance in the use of WhatsApp and that the local community should better understand the democratic process and strengthen its voice.

9. Research Methodology

The aim of this work was to analyze the importance of Whatsapp's communication at the District Bureau of Boane (Mozambique) for the decision-making process, on the premise that the installation of communication and information technologies in an organization allows communication to be speeded up both internally and externally, thus providing the community with better information for decision-making, thus answering the research question: "What is the importance of using WhatsApp at the Boane District Secretariat for democratic participation?"

In order to put it into context, studies were carried out on organizational communication and the role of WhatsApp in communication; the district office in Boane was identified, the concepts of local community were defined, as well as the channels of communication and respect for each. The investigation described itself as qualitative, since the case study worked as a method, this approach allows for a deeper understanding of the phenomena studied, using the case study as a valuable tool for collecting data, (Oliveira, 2019).

The research data showed that Whatsapp exists in groups at the Boane Secretariat to communicate with citizens and to share information on the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the focus on decision-

making, although the population remains far removed from relevant governance; training of employees in the use of the tool and motivation of the population for more active and inclusive participation in decision-making was suggested.

9.1 Results

The gradual and constant formation of the Community of Boane's locality to raise issues affecting them at Community level has made the Boane District Secretariat known through the WhatsApp tool, considering that the issue of democratic participation in decision-making is of great importance to the community. WhatsApp is a free mobile application that is integrated with all types of mobile devices. Since it enables one to send messages and other content, such as videos, photographs and recordings, instantly and free, and now becomes one of the most popular mobile services applications. It also allows for high-level and low-speed training and communications. It is popular in low-bandwidth operations involving low-speed data, as it can work on the GPRS network.

Through the gradual and constant formation of the Community of Boane's locality to raise issues that afflict them, communication with the District Bureau of Boane is made through the WhatsApp tool, using a group called "Fala Boane". The results obtained and the conclusive considerations were achieved in the study entitled "Organizational Communication and the use of WhatsApp in democratic participation - The case of the Boane District Secretariat".

9.2 Results Analysis

Another problem that emerges from the analysis is the limited participation of the community in the communication established with the local Secretariat. Most of the community recognizes the importance and need to respond to messages from the Secretariat, which reinforces the right to feedback. However, such participation is not so significant or frequent. Nevertheless, it is observed that the responses are directed towards procedures and policies that directly affect the community.

The use of WhatsApp by the District Secretariat helps to guarantee the right to information for the local community. The messages sent not only keep residents informed about what happens in the management and the services offered, but also enable them to defend their rights in the Assemblies held in the district. In addition, the messages enable the community to be actively involved in the political process, allowing them to express their opinions, criticisms, allegations and suggestions. However, it was found that the inappropriate use of WhatsApp by the Secretariat's employees undermines the quality of their interactions and thus the quality of communication.

10 WhatsApp Usage Implications in Organizational Communication

It is undeniable that WhatsApp offers several advantages, including time and reduced cost, and is popular. Therefore, it is understandable that people see this tool as an opportunity to be in constant contact with others. On the other hand, their use implies some disadvantages, putting individuals continuously in contact with machines or equipment, often leaving them isolated in the middle of this universe.

It is understood that, by transforming communication into something that is easy, instantaneous and also global, WhatsApp changes the nature of the communication process. As an application designed for mobile devices, intended primarily to adapt features previously existing in other communication channels, its messages go beyond simple transactions between individuals. They are directly related to the flows of social and political life of the local community, which must be actively involved in the decision-making process, participating in democracy, and able to express needs, opinions and suggestions.

10.1 Positive Impacts

The organizational communication highlights WhatsApp as a tool for democratic participation, applied as part of the interaction between the Boane District Secretariat and the local community. The research discusses the influence of the new information and communication technology, which inexorably accompanies the world's growth today, making communication between government bodies and the population, at all levels, a social factor of paramount importance. This is a qualitative study focusing on the employment of the application and the opinion of the citizens, with the aim of highlighting its impact on the decision-making process. In short, the study confirms that the introduction of WhatsApp was the means to speed up communication, making it simpler and more effective. From the answers, WhatsApp tightened communication between the Boane District Secretariat and the local community, even though it had a large population coverage.

10.2 Negative Impacts

One of the advantages of using WhatsApp has been the ability to keep young people involved in discussing various issues related to the local community, which is usually very limited or even non-existent due to young people's lack of interest in localized community activities. The fact that data can be passed on more quickly to the inhabitants of the area has also been highlighted, so that they can be better prepared for natural disasters, and can still participate actively. Finally, it is also worth noting that the people, who feel responsible and active, can reprimand the wrong behavior of civil servants, thus helping to improve the provision of services.

With regard to WhatsApp's downside, it has been pointed out that some employees abuse the tool, thereby delaying the information transfer to the citizen and thus becoming less effective, it will be under discussion. Another point that was referred to was the lack of an official group for the entire local community, which would allow the dissemination of everyday subjects, visits to health centers, schools and the city of Maputo. The existence of an open group would certainly impose some care and behavioral standards, as well as expensive means of control.

11 Recommendations for improving communication

The analyzes concluded that the use of WhatsApp in the organizational communication of the Boane District Secretariat has advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it improves internal communication, making it more efficient and faster. Furthermore, the use of the current method significantly undermines the quality of communication between the Secretariat and the local community, since the majority of citizens do not participate in the public group serving as external communication. It is suggested that a set of training courses targeted at the Secretariat's staff on the use of WhatsApp, together with strategies to actively involve citizens in decision-making and governance processes, would have a positive impact on the quality of organizational communication and on the democratic participation of the local community.

12 Conclusion

As mentioned above (Mendes, 2019), organizational communication is essential for the functioning of each public institution. The faster the dialog between the employees and also between institutions vis-à-vis users, the better the development will be for maintaining the needs required by the community. The extent of the responsibility of each system shall organize a list of available work and requirements for the proper functioning of the organization concerned. In the case of the Boane District Secretariat, the tasks link the district of Boane to the capital, from which the district originates. All WhatsApp versions have been operating on mobile networks and operating systems, contributing to the advance of communication within the local district and even the community, due to the relationship with the operation of the Boane District Secretariat in receiving the information.

The proposal of this research work is the study of organizational communication and the use of WhatsApp in democratic participation processes. For better understanding, the context of organizational communication and the description of WhatsApp features are presented. They are then exposed to the Boane District Secretariat and the Boane local community. The interaction between the Boane District Secretariat and the local community in Boane and the concept of

democratic participation in the decision-making process have been shown. The case study examines how WhatsApp has been used at the Boane District Secretariat to improve organizational communication and the democratic participation of the Boane local community.

In short, although the use of WhatsApp may pose risks to organizational communication, it has proved to contribute greatly to the strengthening of communication between the Secretariat and the local community. It shall promote open and inclusive participation by influencing the social, economic, political and cultural regime of the local community and the land in general. In this sense, it can lead to adaptive and effective decisions that break down non-functional traditions.

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