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## An Adoption Model for WhatsApp Messaging in Enhancing Public Participation in Budgeting Process: A Study of Migori County Government, Kenya

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### **Abstract:**

Globally the use of WhatsApp messaging has gained power. WhatsApp succeeded to make its place in the top 20 leading applications in US by early 2011 (Prathap et al. 2014). Just like many social media platforms, it provides a platform for instantaneous sharing of information (Jebakumar & Jisha, 2014). Many people in Migori County have not been able to participate in county budgeting process because of ineffective communication. The finding of a study on 'Citizen perception on the status of county governance practices; a case study of Migori county' shows that there is engagement gap which should be filled by increased involvement of the citizens by both county assembly and the executives so as to meet citizens' satisfaction (Mbihi, 2016). This study was underpinned on the Technology Acceptance Mode (TAM) which indicates that perceived ease and usefulness are the most determinant factors of a technology or information system used by an individual and Participatory Development Theory which argues that any development project can be successful if its beneficiaries are put at the centre. The aim of this study was three fold: 1) To examine the use of WhatsApp messaging in enhancing public participation budgeting process in Migori county 2) To investigate factors influencing the adoption of WhatsApp messaging in public participation budgeting process and 3) To propose an adoption model of WhatsApp messaging for public participation budgeting process for Migori County. A survey study design was followed in which 399 respondents who are 18 years and above, use WhatsApp messaging and are literate participated. Data sampling was done through systematic random and purposive sampling and analysis was done both qualitatively and quantitatively. The study revealed majority of the respondents in the study proposed the use of WhatsApp messaging for public participation because of its convenience, timely communication, and ease of use among others. The respondents, however, indicated that issues of high cost of bundles, non-inclusivity, poor coordination and identification of people to participate in public participation should be addressed. The study has also proposed a five staged model for WhatsApp messaging. The study recommended that the county government of Migori should adopt WhatsApp messaging as one of the communication tools for public participation in budgeting process and other development programmes.

**Keywords:** Adoption Model, WhatsApp messaging, public participation, budgeting

### **1. Introduction**

The promulgation of the Kenyan Constitution in 2010 ushered a new era for citizen participation in Kenya by introducing public participation as a principle of governance. Before this development, the public participation process was centralized. The decentralization of public participation process following the pronouncement of Kenyan constitution (2010) has seen various government policies and development activities like the budget making process being done with the involvement of the citizen at the county level. The public management Act (2012) in the Kenyan constitution (2010) gives the counties powers to make their own budget. Nabatchi and Leighninger (2015) define public participation as an umbrella term that describes the activities by which people's concerns, needs, interests and values are incorporated into decisions and actions on public matters and issues and thus it also includes the deliberative practices that are understood to be part of the more general participatory domain.

World e-Parliament Report (WEPR) (IPU, 2012) indicates that the current global trend is to increase and enhance public participation through the use of the modern technology which includes: the newer generations' mobile networks,

Satellite Media Tours (SMTs) and multimedia platforms. It emphasizes on the use of Information Communication and Technology for public participation to engage the generation.

The dissemination of information to the public on budget making at both national and county levels is stipulated under section 39(8) of the Public Finance Management Act, 2012. The right of the public to get information is also enshrined in Article 35 of the Kenyan constitution.

For the citizen to get proper information and to participate in the budget making process, an effective media channel should be employed by the authorities rolling out the public participation exercise (Kenya public participation Act, 2018). The Kenya public participation Act (2018) indicates that the responsible authority shall establish mechanism to enable the widest reach which may include- (a) television stations; (b) information communication technology centres; (c) websites; (d) community radio stations; (e) public meetings; and (f) traditional media.

In November 2009 Brian Acton and Jan Koum launched WhatsApp application which was built with an intention to replace Short Messages Service (SMS) by providing some additional information to users such as the double tick in blue color option of WhatsApp which lets users know that the recipient has read their message (Church & De Oliveira, 2013). One of the unique features of this application is its ability to enhance communication within a group of people that makes it one of the most widely downloaded applications having more than 600 million users globally (Husain & Adamu, 2014). Yeboah & Ewur (2014) cite that with WhatsApp messenger, communication through mobile phones has become easier, faster and cheaper.

A survey done by Bloggers Association of Kenya released in the month of February 2018 reveals that about 12 Million Kenyans access WhatsApp which is an application available on the new generations' smart phones. This means that WhatsApp messaging is becoming one of the dominant tools for communication in Kenya, hence can be used in enhancing public participation in budgeting process.

In the republic of Paraguay, WhatsApp was used to increase the no. of participants in the 4<sup>th</sup> National Action Plan (2018-2020). Sixteen online WhatsApp groups were created to increase public participation in the Action plan (OPSI 2018). Individuals were invited to participate in various issues which include: Access to Information, Environment and Water, Fight against Corruption, Public Participation among other issues. The innovation solved the problem of lack of communication with marginalized, impoverished and hard to reach rural communities, hence enabling them to share their ideas.

According to Moloi (2018) the government of South Africa is using GovChat WhatsApp to interact with citizens and enable them to report issues, make inquiries and rate services among other features. It uses the recently launched WhatsApp for the Business back-end technology. The collaborative effort makes South African Government the first in the world to create a digital communication tool where government becomes instantly accessible to over 16 million people. County of Nyandarua in Kenya, in preparing its budget estimate for the financial year 2020/2021, has invited the members of the public and interested groups to submit written memoranda via WhatsApp. In a public notice published in the Kenyan local daily, the county of Nyandarua provided a list of 25 WhatsApp groups for each ward (Nyandarua county assembly, 2020.p9).

Unlike other media channels like print, television and radio which have suffered from barriers in some regions, WhatsApp messaging can mitigate communication barriers and expand the number and diversity of voices providing input to the county's development and decision-making process like budget making process. This research has answered the questions on how effective WhatsApp messaging is in enhancing public participation process; factors influencing the adoption of WhatsApp as means of communication during a public participation exercise and Adoption model for WhatsApp messaging that enhances public participation in budgeting process.

### *1.1. Significance of the Study*

Though there is a soaring growth in WhatsApp usage globally and locally, little studies have been done to ascertain its effectiveness in public participation budget making process and its effective adoption model in public participation budgeting process at the county level.

Not only are the studies that have been on WhatsApp usage limited, but they have been conducted in the context of Europe and America (Church & DeOliveira, 2013).

Effective public participation process is not just a requisite in the budget making process but all other development programs which involves the citizen, government and other stakeholders. This, therefore, means that coming up with a proper adoption model for WhatsApp messaging in public participation is also instrumental in other development projects like the Kenyan Big 4 Agenda which include: expansion of Manufacturing Sector; Affordable Housing; Affordable health care; Food security. It is because the agenda requires the involvement of public through public participation process which can only be feasible with an effective communication channel.

These research findings and recommendations are useful in the attainment of Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals which include: Quality education, clean water and sanitation, peace justice and strong institution, affordable clean energy among others. It will also be useful for the attainment of Vision 2030 whose three key pillars include: Economic, Social and Political pillars and more specifically the political pillar which aims to realize an issue-based, people-centered, result-oriented and accountable democratic system which requires an effective public participation process. The findings of this study will also reduce barriers to public participation exercise which include financial constraints, time among others both at county and national level and also provide a road map for the policy makers while redesigning the public participation policy both at national and county government level.

### 1.2. Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study was to design an adoption model for WhatsApp messaging in public participation budgeting process in Migori County while specific objects are: (i) to examine the use of WhatsApp messaging as a communication tool in public participation in the budget making process.

- To investigate factors influencing the adoption of WhatsApp messaging in public participation budgeting process.
- To propose an adoption model of WhatsApp messaging for public participation budgeting process for Migori County.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Budgeting

Budgeting is a comprehensive and coordinated plan which is packaged by the management of an organization, and expressed in financial terms for the operations and resources of an enterprise for some specific period in the future (Lambe, 2012). A budget can also be defined as a document that sets out the government's proposed revenues, expenditure and priorities for a specific financial year (PFM Act, 2012). The government must avail the information on budgets to the public and they must have been involved in its preparation. Similarly, the government should have capability of collecting information on preferences of electorate, in the absence of which it would be difficult to allocate resources efficiently (Pierre & Peters, 2011).

In Kenya there are three key legal documents which guide the budget process which include: the Constitution, Public Finance Management Act, 2012 and Public Finance Management Regulations.

### 2.2. The Concept of Public Participation

Public participation in budgetary process is the act of giving a voice to citizens so as to accord them an opportunity to influence the making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of budgetary decisions that concern their socio-politico-economic wellbeing (Speier, 2009).

Constitution makes citizens' participation a central part of Kenya's governance system. Participation of the people is recognized in Article 10 of the Constitution of Kenya as one of the national values and principles of governance. Further, Article 174(c) provides that the object of devolution is to enhance the participation of people in the exercise of the powers of the State and in making decisions affecting them. The County Government Act, Kenya (2013) and other devolution laws mandate county governments to engage citizens in planning and policy making processes, facilitate public communication and access to information, establish citizen fora and conduct civic education, among others.

To ensure this is done, public participation mechanisms like public hearings, town hall meetings, and direct community engagements involvement, participatory planning and budgeting should be enhanced (Esonu & Kavanamur, 2011).

Education level of the citizenry also has a significant correlation in the level of public participation (John, 2009). Joshi and Houtzager (2012) contend that education has a high positive correlation with public's engagement in local Governance.

### 2.3. Concept of WhatsApp

The accessibility of social media platforms presents a chance for citizens to interact directly and actively with the system (Chatora, 2012). New mobile and networked communication technologies will facilitate the participatory process (Brabham, 2009).

In November 2009, Brian Acton and Jan Koum launched WhatsApp application which was built with an intention to replace Short Messages Service (SMS) by providing some additional information to users such as the double tick in blue color option of WhatsApp which let users know that the recipient has read their message (Church & De Oliveira, 2013). Some of its major features include sending text messages, audio notes, videos, location details, files and many more. One of the unique features of this application is its ability to enhance communication within a group of people that makes it one of the most widely downloaded applications having more than 600 million users globally (Husain & Adamu, 2014).

WhatsApp is perceived as a safe app because since 2014 the application has used end-to-end encryption (E2EE) technology, which allows for data between communicating parties to be secured, free from eavesdropping, and hard to crack (Endeley, 2018).

Two critical challenges related to ICT usage in Africa, and which currently create a vicious cycle of non-adoption are access and affordability (Stork *et al.*, 2013). Lack of affordability leads to reduced access, which, in turn, creates technologically poor consumers. WhatsApp is actively in use by individual, government and non-governmental organizations to undertake various development programmes.

In February 2021, WhatsApp in collaboration with World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF AND UNDP launched WhatsApp Coronavirus Information Hub to provide simple actionable guidance to health workers, educators, community leaders, on-profit organizations, local government and local business communities that rely on WhatsApp to communicate.

Since its launch in February 2021, WhatsApp has reached out to a dozen of government to assist her effort to provide accurate information to the general public. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of WHO, said, 'Digital technology gives us an unprecedented opportunity for vital health information to go viral and spread faster than the pandemic, helping us save lives and protect the vulnerable. The new service, which is free to use, has been designed to

answer questions from the public about Coronavirus, and to give prompt, reliable and official information 24 hours a day, worldwide.

#### 2.4. Social Media Adoption Models

- **OASIS** stands for Objectives, Audience, Strategy, Implementation and Sustainment. This model was developed by L. Mason in 2008.
- **ACCESS** stands for Audience, Concept, Competition, Execution, Social media, and Sales viability. This model emphasizes on the need for specific content generation for the audience based on the concepts developed during communicating with its audience.

This model was developed by Safko and Brake in their book (The Social Media Bible: Tactics, Tools, and Strategies for Business Success) in 2009.

### 3. Methods

The study adopted a survey research design. A literature review was also conducted with the intent to gather secondary data. This study employed mixed research method, which involved collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data through a questionnaire and interviews. The study was conducted in three sub counties in Migori County which are Rongo, Awendo and Suna East. The sub counties were selected purposively because of the high education level and internet usage. The sub counties have a cumulative population of 143,468 with 18 years and above. Yamane formula was used to calculate a sample size of 399. A total of 392 questionnaires were administered to main respondents and all were filled and returned. All the seven Key Informants, who were county government workers and are key in the public participation budgeting process, were also interviewed, hence the return was 100 percent. The validity and reliability of the instrument was established using test-retest method and expert opinion. This research yielded both qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data were analyzed with the Statistics Package for Social Sciences, and are hereby presented in Tables and graphs. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically, and are presented in narrative form.

### 4. Data Presentation and Analysis

#### 4.1. Hourly Usage of WhatsApp Messaging

The researcher inquired the number of hours the respondents spend on WhatsApp per day. As presented in the table 1 below, the study revealed that majority of the respondents 128 (32.7%) spends between 3-5 hours on WhatsApp in a day.

	Number of Hours	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
	1-2hrs	62	15.8	15.8	15.8
	3-5hrs	128	32.7	32.7	48.5
	6-7hrs	104	26.5	26.5	75
	over 8hrs	97	24.7	24.7	99.7
	Blank	1	0.3	0.3	100
	Total	392	100	100	

Table 1: Hourly Usage of WhatsApp Messaging

#### 4.2. Reasons for Using WhatsApp Messaging

The researcher determined why the respondents preferred WhatsApp messaging. As illustrated in the table 2 below, majority of the respondents 157(40.1%) indicated that they prefer WhatsApp because it is convenient. 102 (26%) cited ease in communication as their main reason for preferring WhatsApp messaging. 53(13.5%) said they prefer WhatsApp messaging because of the safety of the information.

	Reasons for Using WhatsApp Messaging	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Ease of communication	102	26.0	26.0	26.0
	Real time messaging	47	12.0	12.0	38.0
	It's cheaper/ cost effective	30	7.7	7.7	45.7
	It's convenient	157	40.1	40.1	85.7
	Safety of the information	53	13.5	13.5	99.2
	No response	3	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	392	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Reasons for Using WhatsApp Messaging by Respondents

#### 4.3. Use of WhatsApp for Development

In this section the respondents were asked if they have been in any WhatsApp group created to discuss the issues of development. As outlined in table 4.6, 204 (52.0%) revealed that they are in WhatsApp groups created to discuss development issues in Migori county, while 183 (46.7%) were not in such groups. 5 respondents that account for 1.3 percent did not respond.

Whether in WhatsApp Group Created for Development or Not		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Yes	204	52.0	52.0	52.0
	No	183	46.7	46.7	98.7
	No response	5	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	392	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: Respondents on WhatsApp Groups Created for Development

Qualitatively majority of the key informants, who participated in the study, said they are in WhatsApp groups, some of which were created by county government workers like ward and sub-county administrators. Some were also members of WhatsApp groups created by members of the public not working with the county government of Migori where issues of development including budget were discussed. During the data mining process, the researcher targeted 7 key informants and at the end of the exercise all the seven responded. The researcher used the tag 'W' to refer to the key informants and therefore, in these cases we have informants W1, W2, W3, W4, W5, W6 and W7.

Respondent W7 said he is in several WhatsApp groups where members of the public discuss development issues including budget.

'Today there are so many social fora where public participation takes place; actually they are voluntary ones, started even by residents themselves. All the constituencies in Migori county, I know there are Suna West, Suna East, North Kanyamkago; there are Kuria professionals, all over there are fora and they are always on public participation; they talk about the governance process in their county; we see feedback from there even if we are not invited, we are on those forum and we look at the comments and some of the comments and feedback, we take them seriously.'

Similar responses were shared by respondent W2:

'...Yes am in several WhatsApp groups where issues of development are discussed, beginning from the assembly, we have the elected forum and we have the county assembly forum which contain both the elected and nominated. I have fora in the ward where a given group comes up with idea like may be women group and youth group and they would want to discuss issues of development and how that would correlate to the county government based on the devolved units.'

Respondent W1 also reported that he is a member of over 40 WhatsApp groups in the county formed to discuss development issues including budget.

'Yaaa.. We have, in fact we have many WhatsApp groups formed and these WhatsApp groups have been formed for different purposes, for example in the governor's office, every office.....And then when we are coming up with an event, sometimes we create WhatsApp groups so that we can communicate there, so WhatsApp groups are many.'

#### 4.4. Usefulness and Conclusiveness of Discussions on WhatsApp

In this section, the respondents were asked about the usefulness and conclusiveness of the discussions done on WhatsApp. As indicated in the table 4 below, 177 respondents that translate to 86.3% indicated that the discussions on the platform were useful and conclusive. Four participants (2%) said the discussion on WhatsApp was not useful and conclusive, while 7 (3.4%) of the respondents abstained.

Whether Discussion on Whatsapp Are Useful and Conclusive Or Not		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Yes	177	45.2	86.0	86.0
	No	4	1.0	2.0	88.0
	Other	7	1.8	4.0	92.0
	No response	17	4.3	8.0	100.0
	Total	205	52.3	100.0	
Missing	System	187	47.7		
Total		392	100.0		

Table 4: Conclusiveness and Usefulness of Discussion Done on WhatsApp

In regard to its usefulness and conclusiveness of the discussion on WhatsApp, key informants indicated that they have been able to successfully hold important discussions on WhatsApp.

Respondent W5 noted, 'From my own observation and experience, I think it's one of the resourceful medias of interaction because out there you realize that we have very resourceful people who can contribute and participate effectively through WhatsApp and if you want to look for them physically, you cannot hold on them but on WhatsApp group, you can be able to interact and exchange ideas freely.'

Similar views were echoed by respondent W7 who added that WhatsApp provides a platform for healthy discussion.

'I think it is very healthy; it keeps everybody updated in thematic areas. You find that the information is flashed and immediately everyone is aware of what's happening without wasting time for physical meeting, facilitations. So, I think it's a good forum. We have been able to achieve so much as ward administrators, whether it's a social issue, work related issue, e.g. when a programme is being rolled out like governor scholarship, and you find that a single click of information on WhatsApp group makes everyone aware without even making a phone call. So, it's effective.'

Some of the respondents indicated that some of the information shared via the WhatsApp group has influenced the county decisions on various issues as indicated by Respondent W1.

'Wawawa..it's wonderful; let me tell you we have a case; we tried two WhatsApp groups and now it has gone to 40 ward; we started with Gotkachola and North Kadem. We are only discussing development; we have ward administrators, Mps, locals. To an extent that members of the public communicate and the ward admin take report and this is what we report to the governor. These help during the budget process.

#### 4.5. Whether or Not Respondent Has Participated in County Budgeting Process

The respondents were asked if they have participated in Migori county budget making process. Majority of the respondents which account for 80.36 percent indicated that they have not participated in any county budgeting process since the inception of devolution, while only 19.64 percent indicated that they have participated in the process.

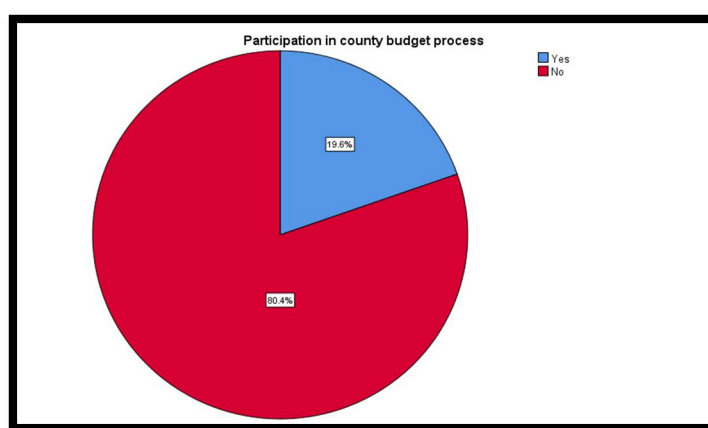


Figure 1: Participation in the County Budgeting Process

#### 4.6. Reasons for Not Participating in the County Budgeting Process

Having established that majority of the respondents had not participated in any county budget making process since the inception of the county government, the researchers inquired why they had not participated in the budgeting process. 140 respondents which translate to 35.7 percent cited lack of information as the main reason for not having participated in the budgeting process.

83(21.2%) of the respondents cited lack of involvement (21.2%), while 40 (10.2%) of the respondents said the county budgeting process is not convenient to them. 10 (2.6%) said they never had interest in the county budgeting process. Political interference and lack of time were also cited as some of the reasons why some of the respondents had never participated in the Migori county budgeting process.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Expensive	4	1.0	1.0	1.0
	It's political	3	.8	.8	1.8
	Lack of information	140	35.7	35.7	37.5
	Lack of interest	10	2.6	2.6	40.1
	Lack of involvement	83	21.2	21.2	61.2
	Lack of time	35	8.9	8.9	70.2
	Not convenient	40	10.2	10.2	80.4
	Yes	77	19.6	19.6	100.0
	Total	392	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: Reasons for Having Not Participated in Public Participation Budgeting Process

Qualitatively, the respondents indicated that the county budgeting process which has always been done through public meetings has been useful because it fulfills the constitutional requirement. They, however, acknowledged that the budgeting process has not been very inclusive because of various challenges including poor communication, financial constraints among other factors.

Respondent W2 said poor communication channels are among the issues that have undermined public participation in the county budgeting process.

'If you put something in newspaper, somebody in the village will not know what is happening. Newspaper is not effective. We majorly used newspaper to reach our people on matters of public participation. The law requires that we use a medium platform which circulates nationally but it is not effective because, many people are reading newspaper. My mum in the village should also be participating.'

Lack of public participation policy has also been cited as an obstacle by respondent W3.

'Well to start with, public participation. We experience teething problems, one- we lack public participation policy because we don't have public participation policy in most counties; we tend to face such challenges. Two- there is no clear cut threshold, how many people make a quorum for public participation. Some time you find there is public participation but only handfuls attend.'

#### 4.7. Access to Information on the Budgeting Process

During the study, the respondents were asked about the medium they had been using to access information about county budget making process. Majority of the respondents, who participated in the study, indicated that they got information through WhatsApp groups (46.75%). 38.96% of the respondents said they got the information through radio, while 7.79% got it through Newspaper. Only 6.49% got the information through television.

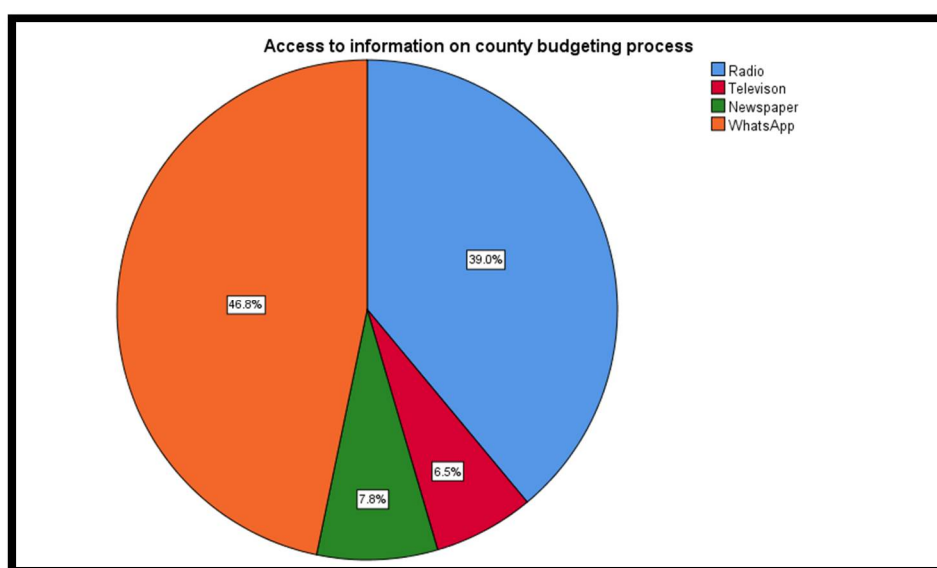


Figure 2: Access of Information on County Budgeting Process

#### 4.8. Use of WhatsApp in Public Participation Budgeting Process in Migori County

During the study, the respondents were asked if they have participated in any budget making process in Migori County through WhatsApp. 75.82% of the respondents said that they have never been on WhatsApp group discussing issues related to budget, whereas 22.88% of the respondents indicated that they have participated in budget related discussion via WhatsApp. 1.31% of the respondents did not respond as indicated in Pie chart. Even though majority have not been in any WhatsApp group discussing issues of budget for Migori county, 291(74.2%) of the respondents said WhatsApp can be a good platform to discuss county budget as illustrated in the table below.

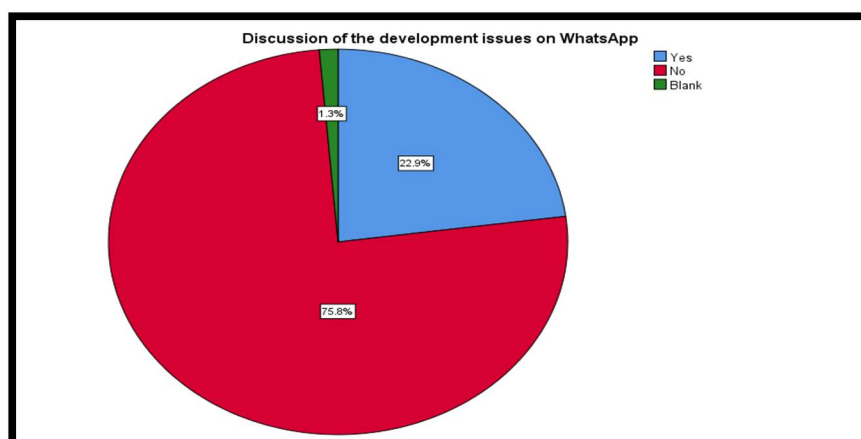


Figure 3: Discussion of Development Issues on WhatsApp

#### 4.9. Whether or Not WhatsApp Forms a Good Platform for Discussing County Budget

Before coming up with a proposed WhatsApp messaging adoption model, the respondents were asked whether or not WhatsApp can form a good platform for discussion budget. 291 respondents, which account for 74.2 percent, indicated that WhatsApp can be a good platform for discussing budget, while 88 (22.4%) of the respondents, however, indicated that WhatsApp cannot be a good platform for carrying public participation in budgeting process. 13 (3.6%) did not give their response.

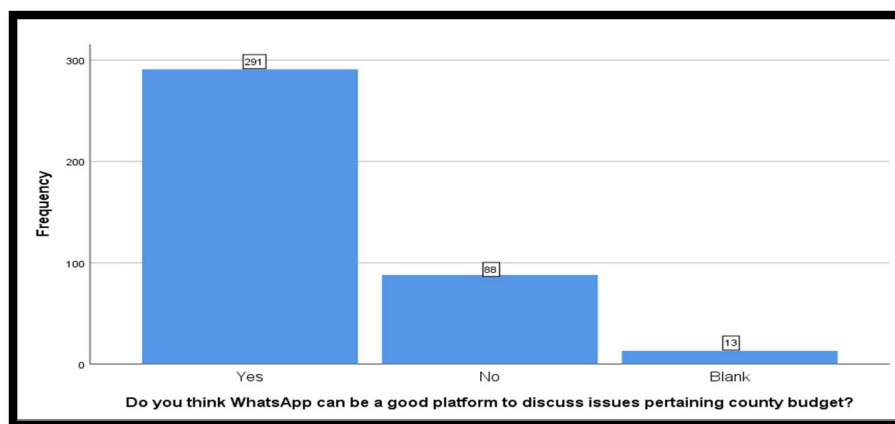


Figure 4: Use of WhatsApp as a Platform for Discussing Migori County Budget

Qualitatively various informants indicated that WhatsApp can form a good platform for public participation.

Respondent 5 indicated that WhatsApp messaging will enable people to participate in the budgeting process at the comfort of their homes, hence effective.

'Mmm...WhatsApp would be effective in discussing issues of budget and even public participation, one reason being members of the public would have a forum to write down what they feel should be done in areas they come from and they post such to the wall.

Similar remarks were shared by respondent W7 who said that WhatsApp would be an effective tool for public participation when it's implemented properly.

Definitely, I will subscribe to that idea and I will support it and participate in it and of course it's something which should have been done more urgently at this particular time and I think we only need to put structure so that the WhatsApp is not prone to abuse.'

#### 4.10. Reasons for Choosing WhatsApp Messaging for Public Participation

The respondents were asked to give one major reason why they could chose WhatsApp messaging for public participation budgeting process. The respondents, who indicated that WhatsApp can be a good platform for discussing county budget, cited various reasons which include: convenience and ease of use among others as illustrated in the table 6 below.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Bring together many people regardless of distance	51	13.0	13.0	13.0
	Cheap	19	4.8	4.8	17.9
	Conclusive discussion	62	15.8	15.8	33.7
	Convenient	44	11.2	11.2	44.9
	Ease of communication	21	5.4	5.4	50.3
	Ease of use	21	5.4	5.4	55.6
	Easily accessible	24	6.1	6.1	61.7
	Effectiveness	3	.8	.8	62.5
	Efficient	8	2.0	2.0	64.5
	End to End encryption/privacy	12	3.1	3.1	67.6
	Flexible	3	.8	.8	68.4
	High level of interaction	5	1.3	1.3	69.6
	No response	13	3.3	3.3	73.0
	Not for WhatsApp platform	88	22.4	22.4	95.4
	Real time messaging	18	4.6	4.6	100.0
	Total	392	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: Reasons for Choosing WhatsApp Messaging for Public Participation



Qualitatively, majority of the respondents said they would choose WhatsApp for public participation because it's convenient, cost effective and timely among others.

Respondent W1 said WhatsApp messaging will enable people in the diaspora to participate in the county budget process without necessarily coming back to their home counties.

If we have something like WhatsApp group, it will enable those in diaspora, the Migori people outside the county to participate in budgeting process and policy development.

Its convenience was echoed by respondent W2.

I believe if well-understood, it's an idea which can be bought because it has its own conveniences in terms of ending a lot on media, mobilization through brochures, print and non-print media. We can use this in a direct way.

Respondent W5 said the ease with which information is passed using WhatsApp makes him feel that WhatsApp is a good tool for public participation budgeting process.

'It's better for us to pass information with ease and without wasting a lot of time. We have normally used the physical gathering itself; we normally use WhatsApp to invite them, so by use of such we have realized that there is no need for the physical meeting itself.'

Similar views were noted by respondent W4 who said that COVID-19 pandemic has made him understand that meeting can be done virtually using platforms like WhatsApp.

'...Actually Corona itself has actually taught us a lot because there are times we don't need the physical meeting, sometime we need virtual kind of meeting and WhatsApp can actually be of good help to use and I think we are raising this to our bosses so that we can see if this can be used for public participation.'

#### 4.11. Concerns While Using WhatsApp as a Platform for Discussing Migori County Budget

The respondents, who endorsed WhatsApp messaging for budget making process in Migori County, highlighted various concerns regarding WhatsApp which include: abuse of the platform by participants, cost of bundles; coordination challenges; non-inclusivity, challenges in identifying participants for the WhatsApp group among others as shown in the table 7 below.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Accuracy of information/reliability	31	7.9	7.9	7.9
	Attitude towards technology	3	.8	.8	8.7
	Awareness being created about the technology	102	26.0	26.0	34.7
	Choice of language to use	3	.8	.8	35.5
	Confidentiality /privacy	21	5.4	5.4	40.8
	Consistency in participation	1	.3	.3	41.1
	Controlling of discussion	15	3.8	3.8	44.9
	Convenience	14	3.6	3.6	48.5
	Cost of bundles	13	3.3	3.3	51.8
	Cyber bullying	2	.5	.5	52.3
	Documentation/storage	1	.3	.3	52.6
	Effectiveness	9	2.3	2.3	54.8
	Ethics	7	1.8	1.8	56.6
	Information overload	20	5.1	5.1	61.7
	Literacy level	7	1.8	1.8	63.5
	Network challenges	4	1.0	1.0	64.5
	No response	18	4.6	4.6	69.1
	Ownership of smart phone	45	11.5	11.5	80.6
	Participant selection criteria	50	12.8	12.8	93.4
	Regulations /policy	17	4.3	4.3	97.7
	Unity of the members	9	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	392	100.0	100.0	

Table 7: Concern While Using WhatsApp for Public Participation Budgeting Process

Key Informant Interviewees ('W') also indicated that a lot of issues including lack of proper regulation on the WhatsApp usage as medium for public participation, digital divide, and illiteracy among others might undermine the use of WhatsApp in public participation budgeting process in Migori County.

Respondent W4 noted that there is a lot of interruption in WhatsApp groups, hence making some communication informal.

My chief fear that would be to any person is that it does not have a formal way of communication. Members would post nonsensical issues which might interrupt the process; members may talk without having the turn taking part of each member and may talk with emotion and such may interfere.

Similar observation was shared by respondent W3:

This forum brings on board so many people; somebody can just wake up and forward irrelevant topic that distracts the attention of entirely all members; another challenge is that you can wake up one morning and find that you don't have a smart phone, may be somebody has stolen it.

Limited number of people who are able to access smart phones, which are mandatory for whoever want to use WhatsApp, has also been pointed as a challenge by respondents W1 and W4.

I would like you to do a survey of the entire country to find out the people using the fora and also look at whether it covers the cross-section of the county in terms of different groups so that nobody is left out.

#### 4.12. The Proposed Adoption Model for WhatsApp Messaging for Public Participation Budgeting Process

Identification of the people to participate in budgeting process through this model is the first key stage in this model. Participants should be identified based on various factors which include level of literacy, ownership of WhatsApp enable phone, interest, regional balance among others. After identifying the right participants, the second stage is to define the concept. In this stage, the county government of Migori needs to explain what it needs to use the model for. This may include specific stage of the budget making process. The third stage is institutionalization which involved formulating the communication strategies and also policies to guide the model. This includes setting formal standards and guidelines that will enable the integration of the model into any existing framework. Different social media personnel and a dedicated social media department is also setup. WhatsApp groups to be used for the public participation budgeting process are also created. Having identified the audience, define the concept and also put in place necessary structure, policies and strategies. The fourth stage is to test the model. At this stage, a few individuals are invited into a WhatsApp group and are engaged in discussion on budget to test the effectiveness of the model before other participants are brought on board. The fifth and final stage is to operationalize the model. At this stage, all the participants identified to participate in the public participation budgeting process are brought on board. It should be noted that awareness creating to the members of the public should be done before the implementation of the model. During the study, it was established that technological, social political, organization and individual factors affect the adoption of the model.

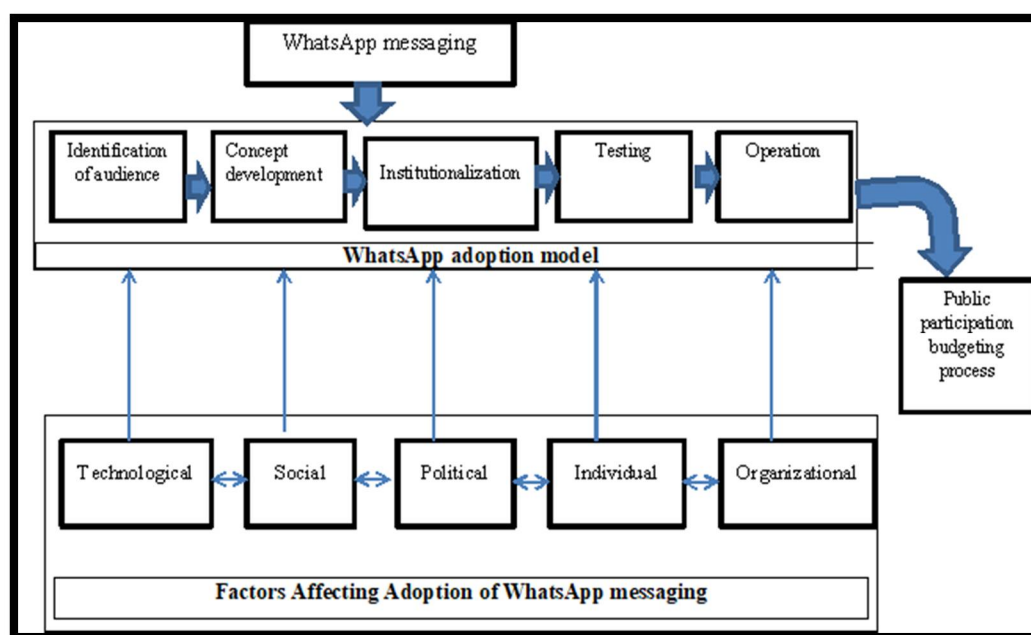


Figure 5: Proposed Adoption Model of WhatsApp Messaging (Researcher's Own 2022)

The findings are in contrast participatory development theory. Cited in Schenck and Louw (1995), Rogers (1987) argues that any development project can be successful if its beneficiaries are put at the centre and they feel to be part of the programme. In that way they feel that their capacities, talents, energies and other human resources are appreciated and hence they contribute more towards the project.

To achieve a proper budget which is a key element in development process in the county; having the citizens at the centre, participating in the budgeting process is paramount.

The member of the public should also be able to access or participate in public participation budgeting process with ease. For participation to be successful, citizens must be cognizant and have access to information on issues that affect them. Failure to access of information regarding local development alienates citizen from participating in development projects as well as provides an environment for corruption to take place (TISA, 2010). The finds in this study indicated that majority of the people would prefer the use of WhatsApp messaging for public participation because of ease of use among others. This is in tandem with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) which was developed by David (1989). According to this model, perceived ease and usefulness are the most determinant factors of a technology or information system used by an individual.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

In regard to the objective one of the study which was to explore the use of WhatsApp messaging as a communication tool in public participation budgeting process, it was concluded that the county of Migori has not embraced the use of WhatsApp in public participation during the budgeting process, even though many people are already in various WhatsApp groups created to discuss the issue of development in the county. It was deduced that the public participation during the county budgeting process is not inclusive because of the limited number of people participating in the exercise.

The study, which was meant to propose an adoption model of WhatsApp messaging for public participation in budgeting process, concluded that WhatsApp messaging can be adopted for public participation budgeting process in Migori County based on its convenience, accessibility, affordability among other reasons cited by people already using the platform to discuss various issues of development in the county. It was also concluded that identification of audience, concept development, institutionalization, testing and Operation are key stages while coming up with a WhatsApp messaging model for public participation.

In view of the finding, the research has recommended that The county government of Migori should adopt WhatsApp messaging as one of the communication tools for public participation in budgeting process and other development programmes; Public participation policy, which recognizes the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), should also be developed by the county assembly so that the communication channels like WhatsApp can be recognized within the legal framework; Installation of free Wi-Fi should also be done in all county government offices and more particularly in those offices for county officials who play key role in county budgeting process to facilitate the use of ICT. Members of the public participating in the budgeting process through this model should also be given money for bundles and Use of WhatsApp should be incorporated in the county communication strategy.

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