Enhancing Corporate Governance through Digital Communication Tools: A Case Study of Wama Hospital, Kenya

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Abstract: **Digital communication tools are increasingly vital to organizational governance, offering improved transparency, accountability and stakeholder engagement. However, their integration remains inconsistent, particularly in healthcare institutions like Wama Hospital. This study, "The Impact of Digital Communication Tools on Corporate Governance: A Case Study of Wama Hospital, Kenya" explores how such tools influence governance practices, focusing on their types, impact and perceived effectiveness. Using a qualitative case study design, the research involved 30 participants selected through stratified purposive sampling. Data was gathered through interviews, content review and observation and analyzed thematically. The findings show that Wama Hospital employs a mix of digital tools for internal and external communication. Internally, email and memos are the primary formal channels, supported by virtual meeting platforms like Zoom and Google Meet while WhatsApp is used for quick updates. Externally, the hospital uses its website, social media (such as Facebook and Instagram), and SMS alerts. Patient management is facilitated through platforms like Afridoctor and Ecare Africa. Despite this digital presence, the tools' governance impact is limited. Fragmentation, inconsistent adoption and low interactivity reduce their effectiveness. While electronic health records and feedback systems offer traceability, delayed responses and unequal access hinder accountability. Internally, the absence of a centralized system restricts coordination and cohesive governance. The study further identifies a tension between operational efficiency and governance depth. Thus, to strengthen governance, the study recommends investing in centralized communication infrastructure, enhancing interactivity on external platforms, ensuring equitable access to digital tools, implementing automation for performance tracking, offering regular digital literacy training and conducting periodic evaluations of communication strategies.**

Keywords: **Corporate Governance, Digital communication tools.**

1. Introduction

Corporate governance plays a critical role in ensuring organizational success and operational efficiency. It provides a structured framework of rules, regulations and processes that guide the relationship between management and shareholders, enabling objective setting, monitoring and decision-making for long-term prosperity (Shailer, 2018). Tricker (2022) emphasizes that corporate governance defines principles, policies and procedures regulating relationships and responsibilities among stakeholders, ensuring oversight, accountability and protection of stakeholder interests. Empirical studies, including Mwende (2023) on mission hospitals in Nairobi and Ndege et al. (2022), show that strong governance practices, such as shared strategic vision and accountability, positively influence organizational performance.

In recent years, digital communication has emerged as a critical enabler of effective governance. Defined by Graw (2023) as any form of electronic communication using tools like email, instant messaging and video conferencing, digital communication facilitates transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement. In the health sector, these tools are particularly transformative. Digital supervision tools, such as checklists and algorithms, improve adherence to standards and provide timely feedback, which is crucial during emergencies (Deussom et al., 2022). Similarly, well-equipped digital systems streamline data collection, automate analysis and efficiently identify performance trends (Yu & He, 2021).

Globally, digital tools have revolutionized healthcare delivery. Telehealth, for instance, maintained mental health services during the COVID-19 pandemic through video and phone consultations, ensuring continued care for vulnerable populations (Molfenter et al., 2021). However, adoption in Africa faces significant barriers, including resistance to technology, high costs, inadequate infrastructure and lack of expertise (Mukasa & Kibukamusoke, 2018; Aruleba & Nobert, 2022). Additional challenges, such as unreliable internet, electricity issues, limited patient identification systems and provider reluctance, further hinder integration of digital communication into governance processes (Ibeneme, 2022).

In Kenya, the healthcare system comprises over 14,366 facilities (KHFCR, 2023). Since the 2010 Constitution, service delivery has been devolved to counties, while the national government retains policy and regulatory functions (Masaba et al., 2020). National referral hospitals, including Kenyatta

National Hospital (KNH), Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital (MTRH), and Kenyatta University Teaching, Referral, and Research Hospital (KUTRH), along with county facilities, form the backbone of service provision (Abdi et al., 2023). Effective communication is essential for quality care and patient trust, with digital tools offering opportunities to bridge gaps when time for in-person consultations is limited (Muinga et al., 2020; Kwame & Petrucka, 2021). However, constraints such as limited access to journals, unreliable internet and reliance on personal devices restrict evidence-based decision-making and knowledge sharing (Ashiq et al., 2022).

Although some Kenyan hospitals have adopted digital tools, their use has largely been administrative, with limited integration into clinical care. Challenges include usability issues, insufficient training, poor infrastructure and lack of technical support. Financial constraints, service prioritization, user reluctance and absence of data-sharing protocols further limit full implementation (Muinga et al., 2020; Mentis, 2021). Nevertheless, organization-wide adoption of digital communication can facilitate knowledge transfer, enhance internal communication, promote innovation and strengthen corporate governance through transparency, accountability, and collaboration.

Considering these factors, this study aimed to assess the impact of digital communication tools on corporate governance at Wama Hospital, Kenya.

2. Problem Statement

Despite the growing adoption of digital communication tools, their practical impact on corporate governance in healthcare remains uncertain (Mentis, 2021). While tools such as email, video calls, and messaging apps are theoretically praised for enhancing efficiency, accountability, and transparency, it is unclear whether these benefits are realized in practice, particularly in smaller private hospitals like Wama Hospital.

Most research on digital transformation has focused on sectors such as banking and education, leaving a gap in understanding how digital communication tools actually impact governance in Kenya's private healthcare settings (Mentis, 2021). This study seeks to explore whether these tools truly improve stakeholder engagement and corporate governance or if practical challenges limit their effectiveness.

3. Study Objective

The main objective of this study was to evaluate the impact of digital communication tools on corporate governance practices at Wama Hospital. The study was further guided by the following specific objectives:

   a. To assess the types of digital corporate communication tools currently employed at Wama Hospital.
   b. To evaluate how these digital communication tools are perceived to impact elements of corporate governance at the hospital.
   c. To assess the perceived effectiveness of the hospital's digital communication tools among staff members.

4. Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework illustrates how digital corporate communication tools directly impact corporate governance practices. It also acknowledges the potential mediating role of contextual factors in shaping the effectiveness of these communication tools on governance outcomes. Through empirical investigation, the relationships between these components can be explored in this study, providing insights into the mechanisms through which digital communication tools both internal and external (independent variable) influence corporate governance within healthcare organizations.
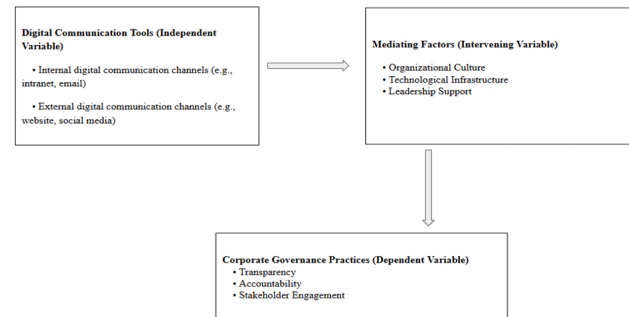

Fig. 1. Conceptual framework

5. Literature Review

Transparency and accountability are key to good corporate governance, as they promote openness, trust and stakeholder engagement (John, 2023). Digital communication tools like social media, intranets, emails and video calls help improve transparency by making it easier to share information quickly, involve stakeholder, and keep automatic records (Jaiswal, 2024). In Kenya's healthcare sector, while transparency has been linked to better performance in areas like pharmaceuticals and laboratories (Kiriinya et al., 2018), little research has looked at how digital tools specifically improve transparency and accountability in hospitals. According to the Diffusion of Innovation theory, these tools also help adopt innovations such as Health Information Systems, allowing real-time feedback and stakeholder engagement that strengthen governance outcomes (Bernardi, 2017).

Stakeholder engagement represents another pillar of governance encompassing the recognition inclusion and active participation of individuals who influence or are affected by organizational outcomes (Sedmak 2021). In healthcare, effective engagement enhances operational systems such as referral networks and promotes collaborative governance across multiple actors (Akwanalo et al 2019). Digital platforms particularly social media, extend these opportunities by enabling accessible, transparent and real-time interactions while structured channels like websites and emails provide reliable centralized information (Walsh et al 2021). Investigating how Wama Hospital utilizes these tools is essential to understanding their role in fostering inclusivity, trust and governance effectiveness.

Internal and external communication form interconnected

processes that underpin organizational coordination and stakeholder relations. Internal communication channels spanning verbal written and digital media facilitate information flow, engagement and collaboration across teams (Adams 2024). Intranets and messaging platforms like WhatsApp serve as secure cost-effective tools for communication though challenges remain regarding content management, interactivity and digital literacy (Muinga 2020). Externally hospitals leverage social media and websites to inform, educate and engage patients, partners and regulatory bodies enhancing transparency and trust (Camilleri 2017). Effective integration of internal and external communication channels strengthens overall governance and aligns digital strategies with institutional goals.

Organizational culture and leadership further shape governance and the adoption of digital tools. Culture encompassing shared values, beliefs and norms influences behaviour innovation, adoption and governance outcomes (Gacheri 2018). Supportive leadership characterized by trust-building, collaboration and proactive guidance empowers staff to embrace digital communication tools fostering innovation, transparency and accountability (Gafner et al 2022). Cultures that prioritize openness, collaboration and adaptability reinforce governance mechanisms while leaders who model digital engagement ensure that tools are effectively integrated into organizational practices.

Theoretical frameworks provide critical lenses for understanding digital governance adoption. Diffusion of Innovation theory explains how technologies spread through stages of adoption influenced by perceived benefits communication channels and social context while highlighting barriers such as low digital literacy and socio-economic disparities (Rogers 1962). New Media Theory emphasizes how digital platforms transform communication, stakeholder interaction and organizational dynamics promoting transparency, accountability and participation while recognizing challenges including shallow engagement, digital exclusion and misinformation (Giraud 2018). Together these frameworks underpin the analysis of how Wama Hospital leverages digital communication tools social media, websites, surveys and AI-based systems to enhance governance inclusivity and decision-making while addressing systemic and technological constraints.

6. Research Methodology

The study employed a qualitative case study design at Wama Hospital. Thirty participants were selected through stratified purposive sampling to capture diverse perspectives among hospital staff. Data was collected through interviews, content analysis and observation. The interview guide and content analysis framework were refined following a pilot test to improve clarity and reliability. Ethical principles, including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality and sensitivity to participants' experiences, were strictly observed throughout data collection. Data analysis involved systematic content analysis of documents and thematic analysis of interview and observational data, with findings presented narratively and supported by direct quotes and excerpts from the collected materials.

7. Research Findings and Analyses

A. Types of Digital Corporate Communication Tools Currently Employed by Wama Hospital

Based on the qualitative data collected, Wama Hospital employs a hybrid mix of digital communication tools reflecting both modernization efforts and gaps in institutional cohesion. Internally, email and WhatsApp were the most frequently used platforms, supporting operational coordination and rapid updates, while video conferencing tools like Zoom and Google Meet were limited to administrative meetings. However, the absence of a centralized intranet or document-sharing system hindered broad information sharing and workflow efficiency.

"At Wama Hospital, we mostly use WhatsApp, to share updates and coordinate shifts, patients normally interact through social media by commenting or messaging, for stakeholders or investors, they mainly use email" [Nurse, 1].

Externally, the hospital utilizes a multichannel strategy incorporating the website, social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram), SMS alerts, WhatsApp Business, and the Afridoctor platform. The website functions as a central information hub, offering updates on services, appointments, and specialist availability, promoting transparency.

"...The hospital website serves as the main info hub, offering updates on services, specialists, health packages, appointments and news promoting transparency and trust with patients and the community" [Communication Officer, 3].

While these channels enhance visibility and efficiency, interactivity remains limited, particularly on Facebook and the website, constraining stakeholder engagement.

Thematic analysis revealed three core patterns: public and stakeholder engagement, patient records management, and modes of meeting interaction. For patient reception, the Ecare Africa electronic health record system ensures secure storage and rapid retrieval of patient data, facilitating continuity of care.

"When patients arrive at Wama Hospital, they first go to the reception, where their medical details are taken. Returning patients have their previous records retrieved..." [Clinical Officer, 1].

This reflects the principles of New Media Theory, emphasizing digital tools for efficiency, coordination, and user-centered service.

The adoption of digital tools at Wama Hospital also aligns with Diffusion of Innovation Theory, with platforms like Afridoctor and WhatsApp Business representing early adoption aimed at enhancing efficiency and patient engagement. While these tools demonstrate innovation and responsiveness, gaps persist in participatory decision-making, interactivity, and

formalized internal systems.

Overall, Wama Hospital exhibits a diversified approach to digital corporate communication, leveraging technology for operational efficiency, patient care, and external engagement. However, the limited use of interactive features and centralized internal platforms highlights opportunities to strengthen transparency, accountability, and stakeholder involvement in governance practices.

B. Impact on Transparency, Accountability and Stakeholder Engagement

The analysis of Wama Hospital's practices revealed that digital communication tools exert a partial yet positive influence on corporate governance, particularly in promoting transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement. Transparency was most evident in the routine dissemination of updates via email, WhatsApp, and Google Hangouts.

"With digital apps, we can easily document, update and share protocols, treatment guidelines and reports. It keeps everyone in the loop on decisions and operations" (Nurse, 8).

These tools foster internal clarity and trust, reflecting New Media Theory, which highlights the transformative role of interactive and accessible digital platforms (Kelly & Dean, 2022). Nonetheless, inconsistent management of these platforms occasionally hindered transparency.

"A change in the clinic's duty rota was communicated only to a few senior staff… it caused some confusion that morning" (Clinical Officer, 1).

Accountability was partially supported through digital task tracking with Google Sheets, which created traceable records of responsibilities. Respondents emphasized that digital tools facilitate responsibility and corrective action, particularly in clinical scenarios:

"If wrong medication is given, it's reported immediately, an incident report is filled, and an investigation follows… it prevents future errors" (Nurse, 1).

However, the absence of advanced project management systems like Trello or ERP limited full efficiency and optimization of accountability processes (Jaiswal, 2024).

Stakeholder engagement was observed but remained uneven. Patients and staff benefited from feedback mechanisms through platforms such as Afridoctor and hospital messaging apps, whereas regulatory bodies and some external partners experienced primarily one-way communication.

"For regulatory bodies, communication is more structured, monthly or quarterly, based on reporting requirements… frequency varies depending on the stakeholder group" (Communication Officer, 1).

While digital tools supported decision-making and operational efficiency, the lack of inclusive mechanisms such as suggestion boxes or interactive surveys restricted broader participation (Lehtinen & Aaltonen, 2024).

In summary, Wama Hospital's adoption of digital communication tools has strengthened key governance elements. Transparency is supported through routine updates, accountability is reinforced by traceable records, and stakeholder engagement is facilitated through real-time platforms. Nonetheless, gaps in tool sophistication, inclusivity and consistent management suggest areas for strategic enhancement to fully realize the potential of digital governance.

C. Perceived Effectiveness of the Hospital's Digital Communication Tools Among Staff Members

Findings indicated a balanced view, with some staff reporting enhanced coordination and efficiency, while others noted limitations such as inconsistent use and restricted access across departments. Observations revealed that most staff navigated digital systems with minimal assistance, reflecting an adaptable organizational culture that supports technology adoption. However, access to devices like computers was uneven, limiting inclusivity and workflow continuity. Staff reported that digital tools accelerated work processes and facilitated real-time collaboration, particularly through platforms like Google Hangouts and WhatsApp, though some reliance on paper records persisted.

Under the theme of usability and efficiency, participants highlighted mixed experiences.

"Digital communication tools are technically sound but not always user friendly, especially for non-tech-savvy employees" (IT Official, 2).

Conversely, a communication officer emphasized the positive impact on internal coordination:

"…WhatsApp is great for quick updates and team coordination, while email is more for formal stuff… it's made things faster and more organized… I feel like it's easier to stay informed and connected with others" (Communication Officer, 2).

In terms of service delivery, staff acknowledged that digital tools improved decision-making, reduced response times and enhanced patient outcomes, though challenges such as system downtimes and login delays occasionally hindered efficiency.

"Efficiency varies across departments… even minor tool failures or slow internet connection could affect patient outcomes" (Clinical Officer, 3).

Patient feedback, as reported by staff during interviews, further reflected the effectiveness of these tools in scheduling, telemedicine and information sharing. Staff shared insights based on their interactions with patients, highlighting both the benefits and challenges. For instance, while patients appreciated SMS reminders, online appointments, and virtual

consultations, staff noted frustrations related to delays or overreliance on screens, which sometimes affected the perceived quality of care. Overall, the findings suggest that while Wama Hospital has made substantial progress in adopting digital communication tools, achieving their full potential requires addressing usability challenges, enhancing access and investing in digital literacy training for both staff and patients (Shiferaw et al., 2025).

8. Discussions

The findings of this study provide insights into the adoption and effectiveness of digital corporate communication tools at Wama Hospital, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement in governance and operational efficiency.

A. Types of Digital Corporate Communication Tools

Wama Hospital employs a hybrid mix of digital communication tools, reflecting efforts toward modernization alongside gaps in institutional cohesion. Internally, email and WhatsApp are the most frequently used platforms, supporting coordination and rapid updates, while video conferencing tools like Zoom and Google Meet are primarily limited to administrative meetings. The absence of a centralized intranet or document-sharing system constrains broad information sharing and workflow efficiency, consistent with prior research emphasizing the importance of integrated digital systems for effective healthcare communication (Kelly & Dean, 2022). Externally, the hospital leverages a multichannel strategy, including social media, SMS alerts, WhatsApp Business, the Afridoctor platform, and its website, to enhance visibility, transparency, and patient engagement. While these channels facilitate information dissemination, interactivity remains limited, reflecting a gap in participatory engagement (Lehtinen & Aaltonen, 2024).

The use of the Ecare Africa electronic health record system illustrates efforts to ensure secure and rapid retrieval of patient information, supporting continuity of care and operational efficiency. This aligns with New Media Theory, which underscores the role of digital tools in enhancing coordination, responsiveness, and user-centered service delivery. Moreover, the hospital's adoption of platforms like Afridoctor and WhatsApp Business can be interpreted through the Diffusion of Innovation framework, representing early adoption of tools aimed at improving efficiency and patient engagement (Rogers, 2003). Nonetheless, gaps persist in participatory decision-making, interactive features, and formalized internal systems, signaling opportunities for enhanced governance and operational integration.

B. Impact on Transparency, Accountability, and Stakeholder Engagement

Digital communication tools exert a partial but positive influence on corporate governance at Wama Hospital. Transparency is primarily supported through routine updates via email, WhatsApp, and Google Hangouts, which facilitate information sharing across departments and build trust among staff. These observations reflect New Media Theory's assertion that interactive and accessible digital platforms enhance organizational transparency (Kelly & Dean, 2022). However, inconsistent management of digital tools occasionally hindered transparency, demonstrating the need for standardized processes and inclusive communication practices.

Accountability was partially facilitated through digital task tracking with Google Sheets, creating traceable records of responsibilities and corrective actions, particularly in clinical contexts. However, the lack of advanced project management systems such as Trello or ERP limited the efficiency and optimization of accountability mechanisms (Jaiswal, 2024). Stakeholder engagement was present but uneven. While patients and staff benefited from feedback mechanisms through platforms such as Afridoctor and internal messaging systems, regulatory bodies and some external partners experienced primarily unidirectional communication. This underscores the need for inclusive digital governance strategies that promote two-way communication and broader stakeholder involvement (Lehtinen & Aaltonen, 2024).

C. Perceived Effectiveness of Digital Communication Tools

Staff perceptions of the hospital's digital communication tools reflected a balance of positive outcomes and challenges. Many employees reported that these tools improved coordination, reduced response times, and enhanced workflow efficiency, consistent with findings by Shiferaw et al. (2025) on the role of digital tools in healthcare service delivery. Usability and efficiency emerged as critical factors, with some staff highlighting difficulties in navigating certain systems, particularly for non-tech-savvy employees, while others noted improvements in internal coordination and task management.

Challenges such as uneven access to devices, system downtimes, and login delays were reported, particularly in high-demand departments. Patient feedback, as reported by staff during interviews, highlighted the effectiveness of these tools in appointment scheduling, telemedicine, and information sharing while also pointing to frustrations with delays or overreliance on screens, which occasionally affected the perceived quality of care.

Overall, these findings suggest that Wama Hospital has made substantial progress in adopting digital communication tools. However, maximizing their effectiveness requires addressing usability challenges, ensuring equitable access across departments, and investing in digital literacy training for both staff and patients (Shiferaw et al., 2025). Staff competence, infrastructural readiness, and inclusive access are critical determinants of perceived tool effectiveness and service quality.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Conclusions

In conclusion, Wama Hospital has made notable progress in adopting digital communication tools, enhancing internal coordination and external outreach. Platforms such as email, WhatsApp, and Google Hangouts support operational efficiency and real-time updates, while social media, SMS,

newsletters, and platforms like Afridoctor improve public information access and patient services. However, the absence of centralized systems, limited task management tools, and primarily one-way communication with some stakeholders restrict cohesion, participatory governance, and engagement (Kelly & Dean, 2022; Lehtinen & Aaltonen, 2024).

Digital tools have partially strengthened corporate governance by improving transparency through routine updates, supporting accountability with traceable records, and facilitating stakeholder engagement, particularly with patients and staff. Nevertheless, inconsistent platform use, infrastructure gaps, and uneven digital literacy hinder full effectiveness, especially among frontline staff, and limit inclusive participation (Jaiswal, 2024; Shiferaw et al., 2025).

B. Recommendations

The study's findings indicate several areas where Wama Hospital could strengthen the impact of its digital communication tools on corporate governance. Key recommendations include investing in centralized digital infrastructure, such as a hospital intranet, document-sharing systems, and task management tools, to improve internal coordination and workflow consistency. Enhancing external platforms by incorporating features that enable real-time feedback and interactive engagement can transform currently static channels like the website and social media into more participatory tools. Ensuring equal access to digital devices and tools for all staff, including new recruits and frontline workers, addresses disparities in platform usage. Strengthening transparency and accountability could be achieved through advanced digital systems for performance tracking, project management, and incident reporting, with automation facilitating timely action and traceability. Additionally, implementing digital literacy programs and regular training workshops would build staff competence, particularly for those less familiar with technology. Finally, periodic assessments of digital communication strategies through feedback surveys and performance audits would support continuous improvement and adaptability.

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