Perspectives of Students, Teachers and Parents on the WhatsApp Platform Remedy for Covid-19 Learning Restrictions in Tanzania

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Abstract: The study explored the WhatsApp platform's effectiveness as an alternative to traditional classroom learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in Tanzania by examining parents, students, and teachers' perspectives regarding its use in education. The study employed the descriptive survey design. The design was particularly useful as the researchers sought to explore patterns or trends of its use in education. The study sample comprised parents, students and teachers who voluntarily participated in the study, reflecting a range of viewpoints from Tanzanian school communities. The study involved 125 participants from four schools. Data were acquired through a combination of telephone interviews, online group discussions and an online questionnaire, providing a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences and opinions on the use of the platform during the pandemic. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were applied to the quantitative data, whereas qualitative data analysis employed the thematic approach. The results indicate that WhatsApp is an effective classroom-learning platform, facilitating connectivity among students, parents and teachers during the pandemic. The study highlights benefits like improved parental involvement, enhanced student inquiry skills and subject mastery. The study recommends integrating WhatsApp into the curriculum and, during teaching, combining it with other digital tools for comprehensive student-directed learning.

Keywords: WhatsApp; Covid-19, remedy; traditional classroom; learning restrictions.

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Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has unprecedentedly affected all aspects of life, including education. In response, schools around the world had to resort to online learning as a means of providing education during the pandemic. WhatsApp was an alternative platform for everyday classroom learning in schools during the Covid-19 pandemic to mitigate the pandemic's effects on educational continuity. Assessing the effectiveness of using this platform as

an alternative to traditional classroom learning is vital if similar pandemics come in the near future. Therefore, this study examined the effectiveness of WhatsApp as an alternative classroom-learning platform during the Covid-19 pandemic.

On March 1, 2020, WHO declared Covid-19 a global public health pandemic (WHO, 2020). A virus called Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV-2), which emerged in Wuhan, China, in 2019, causes

Covid-19. According to WHO (2020), the disease had spread to more than 215 territories and had contacted close to four million people by May 10, 2020. The number kept increasing daily. Globally, the pandemic led to aggressive and drastic measures to stop the exponential infectivity rates. The measure varied from country to country. However, the commonly applied measures were complete lockdown, curfew and partial lockdown, where some services were restricted. For example, in East Africa, the countries with a complete lockdown (Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda) closed doors and imposed restrictions on all services except emergency ones such as water, electricity, medical, police, fire, telecommunications, pharmacy and media. Although different countries took different actions to lessen the effect of Covid-19, a study by Dutta et al. (2020) indicates that the measures had both economic and social effects. Generally, the pandemic caused a significant disruption in many areas, including education systems, leading to a rapid closure of schools, universities and other learning centers. As a result, the closure necessitated alternative learning methods to continue the education process while learners were at home.

The first Covid-19 case in Tanzania was reported on March 16, 2020. The announcement of this first case in the country was followed by strict measures, such as canceling large conferences, limiting regular meeting sizes, emphasizing social distancing, avoiding crowded places and closing schools, universities and other learning centers. Like other countries (see Almarzooq et al.,2020; Choudhary et al., 2020; Wilp, 2020), the closure of schools compromised the traditional teaching model in Tanzania, which requires physical interaction of teacher-student and book/board. However, Choudhary et al. (2020) uphold that the closure of schools globally prompted educational innovation where hundreds of digital tools were adopted in teaching and learning. In addition, Almarzooq et al. (2020) and Wilp (2020) report adopting a virtual learning platform as a new way of addressing education commotions. Although these studies report virtual learning such as video-calling-based teaching platforms and online learning platforms (Choudhary et al., 2020), Microsoft team and Zoom (Almarzooq et al., 2020 and digital media, academic sources and newspapers (Wilp, 2020), these platforms have been there before Covid-19 (Mwakapina et al., 2016). For example, Barhoumi

(2015) and Mwakapina et al. (2016) report blending traditional teaching with a WhatsApp mobile tool in higher education. These studies demonstrate positive results of using this mobile tool in learning.

WhatsApp, a messaging application that allows users to communicate via text, audio and video, has emerged as an essential tool in supporting teaching and learning. WhatsApp is primarily used for socialization as well as for collaboration, communication and organization. Its ability to enable asynchronous communication has benefited students and educators, allowing them to connect quickly and easily. A significant benefit of using WhatsApp is its ease of use, with most users having a basic understanding of how to use the messaging platform. It is a free, widely accessible, user-friendly interface that makes it easy for teachers and learners. It also allows for real-time synchronous communication between teachers and students, which is essential for remote learning (Mwakapina et al., 2016). Additionally, it allows for easy sharing of audio and video files, which can be used to give lectures or host virtual discussions. However, there are also several drawbacks associated with WhatsApp. Firstly, WhatsApp is not designed as a learning platform and no specialized features in it are explicitly designed for educational purposes. Secondly, WhatsApp does not provide the same level of privacy and data protection as other educational technologies, such as Google Classroom or Moodle. Additionally, there is a possibility for inappropriate content to be shared. All these are some of the potential risks associated with using the platform.

The emergence of the pandemic impacted educational activities around the world. With physical distancing guidelines in place, many teachers were forced to find alternative platforms to conduct classroom teaching and learning. The situation necessitated the rapid adoption of alternative modes of teaching and learning. The global Covid-19 pandemic drastically changed the way education was delivered in schools. As a result of the health risks associated with in-person schooling, many schools were forced to transition to online learning. WhatsApp is one of the most widely used messaging applications worldwide and has become a popular platform for teachers and learners to communicate and collaborate (Mwakapina et al., 2016). Tanzania's education system was not left behind through these innovations. For example, several private primary

and secondary schools adopted WhatsApp mobile tools in the country as a new approach to address the Covid-19 effects or restrictions on education.

Although studies (Barhoumi, 2015; Mwakapina et al., 2016; Cetinkaya, 2017) indicate that the WhatsApp platform has a positive impact on learning, it should be kept in mind that it was blended with traditional classroom teaching methods or sessions (Barhoumi, 2015; Mwakapina *et al*., 2016). There is little evidence (if any) of positive results where the WhatsApp tool has been used as the only teaching platform. Similarly, there is a lack of evidence of the positive performance of this mobile tool when used in lower levels of education, primary and secondary schools. Given the circumstances that the adoption of the WhatsApp mobile tool by some Tanzania private primary and secondary schools happened with short notice, there was a need to explore if this new learning platform revised learning outcomes. Therefore, this paper explored the WhatsApp platform's potential to facilitate teaching and learning during Covid-19. Specifically, the study examined the extent to which WhatsApp was effective in facilitating teaching and learning at the lower levels and analyzed the perceptions of parents, teachers and students in using the tool for learning.

Literature Review

Technology integration in education has revolutionized traditional classroom settings, offering new avenues for teaching and learning. One such technological tool that has gained significant attention is WhatsApp. This section presents a literature review that explores the use of WhatsApp as a support system for traditional classrooms and as an alternative platform for teaching and learning.

WhatsApp in Traditional Classrooms

Studies (Barhoumi, 2015; Mwakapina et al., 2016; Ujakpa et al., 2018; Baguma et al., 2019) indicate that the use of WhatsApp in supporting teaching and learning in higher education has a positive impact on student engagement, learning outcomes and teacher professional development. For example, Barhoumi (2015) explored mobile technologies' effectiveness in supporting a blended learning course. The study's results indicated a positive effect of the blended course first on the good test results achieved after the experimentation and then on the positive attitudes of students in the experimental group compared

with those in the control group. Furthermore, the study revealed that most students preferred the WhatsApp platform to traditional classroom methods. Mwakapina et al. (2016) evaluated the use of WhatsApp mobile tool to support the teaching and learning of English grammar course among university students pursuing different programs where English grammar course was compulsory. The scholars realized that the WhatsApp platform played a great role in helping students learn English interactively and collaboratively outside the classroom situation. Cetinkaya (2017) assessed the impact of WhatsApp on students' success. The results showed that students developed positive opinions towards using WhatsApp in their courses. They demanded the same practice in their other courses as well. They reported that learning could also occur unconsciously, and the messages with images were more effective for their learning. The majority of the participants reported that they felt more confident and motivated when using WhatsApp. Cansoy (2017) assessed teachers' perceptions of using WhatsApp for professional development in Turkey and found that teachers generally viewed it as an effective tool for professional development, enabling them to collaborate with colleagues and access resources quickly and easily. They also noted that it could provide timely feedback and support to students.

Similarly, Alsharif et al. (2020) examined the effectiveness of hybrid learning by utilizing WhatsApp as an adjunct to traditional learning in delivering knowledge and supporting the learning of undergraduate dental students. The findings showed significant improvements in students' performance using the hybrid-learning tool. Positive perceptions of hybrid learning and improved academic performance indicated that WhatsApp is a convenient new teaching tool. Rahaded et al. (2020) analyzed the impact of WhatsApp on undergraduate students' behavior. The study showed that WhatsApp positively impacted student behavior as it affected the learning process through students sharing knowledge, preparing for class and participating in learning.

Other studies, such as Ujakpa et al. (2018) and Mtega (2021), indicate that the WhatsApp mobile tool positively affects student engagement, learning outcomes and accessibility of reading materials. Notably, Ujakpa et al. (2018) found that when used to support communication in teaching and learning, WhatsApp enhances student-to-lecturer interaction,

student-to-student interaction, student-to-lecturer intimacy and student-to-student intimacy. It also increased students' interest in a course because lecturers and other students create some sense of humor during teaching and learning on the WhatsApp platform. Furthermore, Mtega (2021) indicates that WhatsApp Messenger was highly adopted by students and used for supporting learning. He further indicates that the usage of WhatsApp messenger has improved the accessibility of reading materials and reading culture among students in a university in Tanzania.

WhatsApp, among teachers, is considered a valuable tool for teaching and learning due to its easy-to-use interface, affordability and wide accessibility (Lopes et al., 2021). Teachers have used WhatsApp to send students educational materials such as lesson plans, assignments and lecture notes (Mwakapina et al., 2016). Furthermore, WhatsApp has been used for communication with students to provide support, advice and feedback (Khan et al., 2020). In addition to being used for instructional purposes, WhatsApp has also been used for assessment and evaluation (Khan *et al.*, 2020). Assessment activities such as quizzes, tests and examinations have been conducted through WhatsApp, and teachers have used the platform to provide students with feedback on their assessments. While WhatsApp has been used for online classes (Mwakapina, 2016), there are some limitations associated with using WhatsApp as an alternative platform for teaching and learning. Firstly, WhatsApp has a different level of interactivity than traditional classroom teaching (Lopes et al., 2021). The lack of privacy and security in WhatsApp may present a problem for teachers and students when sharing confidential information (Khan et al., 2020). Furthermore, the lack of technical expertise among some teachers and students may limit their ability to use WhatsApp effectively for teaching and learning.

Research on the use of WhatsApp to facilitate learning during the Covid-19 pandemic is still in its early stages. While few studies have been conducted (Syahputri et al., 2020; Ahmady et al., 2020; Munir et al., 2021; AlSulami, 2021; Alghamdi, 2021), most of the studies did not focus on the effectiveness of WhatsApp as an alternative platform for learning during covid-19. For example, Syahputri et al. (2020) assessed the psychological effects that have been drawn by the implementation of online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic on university students while Alghamdi (2021) focused on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the social and educational aspects of Saudi university students' lives. On the contrary, AlSulami et al. (2021) explored the experience of international students studying in Saudi Arabia during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The recent Covid-19 pandemic has unprecedentedly affected education worldwide. Schools and universities in many countries closed their physical locations and transitions to online learning. This shift puts tremendous pressure on teachers and students, who must adjust to the new virtual environment. One of the most widely used platforms for virtual education was WhatsApp. Some of the early studies, such as Ahmady et al. (2020) and Alqabbani et al. (2020) focused on assessing whether a transition to virtual learning during Covid-19 is an opportunity or challenge. Alqabbani et al. (2020 explored readiness regarding the sudden shift towards emergency remote teaching and its correlation with perceived effectiveness, satisfaction, anxiety, and attitudes among instructors in Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University (PNU) in response to the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. The results of the study showed that readiness in terms of emergency remote teaching was high at 44.9% among instructors while 64.8% of them scored moderately regarding their perception of the emergency remote teaching's effectiveness. Thus, the scholars concluded that instructors at PNU were ready to provide emergency remote teaching, which led to high perceived effectiveness and satisfaction levels; the high level of anxiety could be attributed to stressful circumstances related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, Maphosa et al. (2020) evaluated WhatsApp as a lecture delivery tool during Covid-19. This was a randomized evaluation of weekly lecture delivery through WhatsApp to Lupane State University students. The results revealed that students' attitudes, the behavioral intention of using WhatsApp for learning and the platform's usefulness were rated highly, implying high adoption. The positive perceptions suggested that it would be easy for the institution to formally integrate the platform during an event that disrupts traditional face-to-face lecture delivery. Furthermore, Saud et al. (2020) highlighted the situation of Indonesian society when the outbreak position was relatively high. The study collected

data from social media users from March to April 2020. The results demonstrate that social media has been used to seek social support from the respondents' online networks and offline friends, relatives and colleagues. The study also indicated that the usage of social media platforms was easy and accessible for sharing, posting and reacting to any medical information regarding the pandemic.

Likewise, Nsabayezu et al. (2020) assessed teachers' perceptions towards using WhatsApp in supporting the teaching and learning of chemistry during the Covid-19 pandemic in Rwandan-selected secondary schools. The findings illustrated that WhatsApp is effective for teaching chemistry and supporting students learning. This application promoted students' motivation, engagement, collaboration, interaction, participation and ubiquitous learning. Mulyono et al. (2021) evaluated university students' technological acceptance and connectedness to online learning with WhatsApp support. Findings show that most students accepted social media use to support learning and felt connected to the learning. The findings also identified several drivers that promoted high acceptance and connectedness to learning, such as perceived usefulness, availability of learning support, motivation and connectedness.

Other studies (Munir et al., 2021; Enyama et al., 2021) explored the view of students and teachers after implementing the platform in teaching and learning. For example, Munir et al. (2021) explored students' views on the use of WhatsApp during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Batusangkar, Indonesia. The study's findings indicated that students' views on the use of WhatsApp in English teaching during the covid-19 pandemic were mainly positive. The students' views on the use of WhatsApp were as a media for doing the online learning process as an educational media, as an evaluation and assessment benchmarks, as an application for sharing information, as a tool for doing group discussion and as a medium for increasing interaction and sharing learning materials. Furthermore, Enyama et al. (2021) described the opinion of students and lecturers after the implementation of e-learning through WhatsApp at the faculty of medicine and pharmaceutical sciences of the University of Dschang (UDs) in Cameroon. The results indicated that while lecturers were more comfortable conveying their lectures' contents, students tended to be less prone to participate actively. The motivation and satisfaction of the latter group toward WhatsApp learning were modest compared to classroom-based lectures while their feedback about the organization was positive. Generally, the researchers concluded that learning through WhatsApp could be an effective alternative to conventional classroom-based lessons during the Covid-19 pandemic because the platform helped the students in learning activities.

Synthesis of the Review

The literature review indicates that students prefer WhatsApp for their educational activities as it improves academic performance, increases student engagement and facilitates collaboration between students and teachers. It also suggests that WhatsApp can be a helpful tool for supporting teaching and learning in higher education. It provide students with an effective communication channel for interacting with instructors and peers and can be used to provide timely feedback and support. Although the majority of the studies (e.g., Amry, 2014; Barhoumi, 2015; Mwakapina et al., 2016; Cansoy, 2017; Cetinkaya, 2017) indicate that the WhatsApp platform has a positive impact on learning, it should be kept in mind that in these studies, the WhatsApp platform was blended with traditional classroom teaching methods or sessions. There is little evidence (Ahmady et al., 2020; Maphosa et al., 2020; Enyama et al., 2021; Munir et al., 2021) of positive results where the WhatsApp tool has been used as the only teaching platform.

Furthermore, there is a lack of evidence of the positive performance of WhatsApp when used in lower levels of education given the circumstances that its adoption by some Tanzanian private primary and secondary schools during the Covid-19 pandemic happened with short notice. Furthermore, in Tanzania, many schools discourage students' use of phones. Thus, there is a need to explore if this new learning platform revised learning outcomes and updated teaching approaches, given shifting from traditional to virtual teaching and learning requires skills and changes in learning outcomes and perceptions.

Methodology
Design

The study employed the descriptive survey design. The design is a research methodology used to gather information about characteristics, behaviors, opinions, attitudes or perceptions of a specific population or group. Through the design, the researchers were employed to investigate the effectiveness of WhatsApp as an alternative

platform for classroom learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The design was appropriate to the study's objective of exploring the WhatsApp platform's potential as an alternative to traditional classrooms to facilitate teaching and learning during Covid-19 when pupils and students had to learn from home due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This design allowed the researchers to describe and analyze the existing conditions within the context of remote learning using WhatsApp.

Population and Sampling
The study took place between May and July 2020 in Morogoro and Dar es Salaam regions of Tanzania. Two English Medium Primary Schools and two secondary schools participated in the study. The sample included 60 secondary school students, 20 pupils, 6 English language teachers and 39 parents selected through purposive sampling. The schools were chosen based on the presence of WhatsApp groups, which, before the outbreak of the pandemic, used to share information about pupils or students. The study used these existing WhatsApp groups, then transformed into teaching and learning platforms during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Instruments
Data collection encompassed multiple tools, including an online questionnaire, an interview guide and Focus Group Discussions. The online questionnaire assessed participants' perspectives on WhatsApp's effectiveness as an alternative classroom-learning medium. Interviews took place with teachers and parents to gain deeper insights. Four FGDs took place through WhatsApp voice notes involving primary and secondary school students. Each FGD, comprising ten members, engaged either standard seven pupils or form four students. The rationale for selecting these levels was their significance as exit points where learners take national exams. Given this importance, schools and educators dedicated substantial effort to these classes. Recognizing the significance of these exit levels, teachers and parents transformed WhatsApp information groups into platforms for student learning to counteract the learning disruptions caused by COVID-19 classroom restrictions.

Validity and Reliability
Reliability was achieved by employing a mixed-methods involving a questionnaire, an interview and focus group discussions. Data triangulation enhanced credibility while diverse sources ensured a comprehensive understanding of the results. Similarly, validity was ensured by employing multiple data collection tools. This approach supported internal validity. Participant selection from various levels contributed to external validity, hence broadening generalizability.

Table 1: Participants' Perspectives on the Use of WhatsApp during Covid-19

SN	Participants' Perceptions Of Different Aspects (N=100)	Disagree f	Disagree %	Undecided f	Undecided %	Agree f	Agree %
1	Using WhatsApp in teaching and learning has been a waste of time	68	68	14	14	18	18
2	I enjoy using WhatsApp to facilitate learning because it is motivating	5	5	0	0	95	95
3	WhatsApp is easy to use, increases engagement and interaction	1	1	6	6	93	93
4	The teacher provides lectures and learning materials through WhatsApp	10	10	9	9	81	81
5	The class progresses well through WhatsApp as if it is face-to-face	4	4	3	3	93	93
6	WhatsApp class is more interactive than traditional classroom	12	12	4	4	84	84
7	Teaching and learning objectives are effectively met through WhatsApp	24	24	2	2	74	74
8	WhatsApp is used in asking and answering questions	2	2	0	0	98	98
9	Teachers experienced a problem in conducting tests and examinations	19	19	3	3	78	78
10	I do not experience problems taking up classes through WhatsApp	23	23	10	10	67	67
11	Teachers provide prompt feedback through WhatsApp	12	12	1	1	77	77
12	We have a specific time/timetable for beginning our WhatsApp classes	11	11	4	1	85	85
13	We conduct oral presentations through WhatsApp video recording	29	29	3	3	68	68
14	Listening, writing, speaking and reading take place through WhatsApp	14	14	1	1	85	85

Statistical Treatment of Data
Data analysis involved descriptive statistics in terms of frequencies and percentages. Analysis of the qualitative data involved the thematic approach whereby the researchers combined similar results in the process of analysis and interpretation.

Ethical Considerations
The researchers obtained informed consent from participants before data collection. Participation was voluntary and participants could withdraw anytime. The researchers ensured confidentiality and used data solely for the intended purpose.

Results and Discussion

This section reports findings and discussions of the results.

Research Question 1: What are the participants' perceptions on using WhatsApp in learning as an alternative platform?

Parents, teachers and students perceived positively the use of WhatsApp during covid-19 as reflected in Table 1.

For instance, more than a half of respondents disagreed that using WhatsApp for teaching and learning wastes time. They reported that students enjoyed using WhatsApp to facilitate learning and considered it easy, increasing engagement and interaction. They admitted that teachers provided lectures and learning materials through WhatsApp and that the class progressed well through WhatsApp as if it were face-to-face mode. They considered WhatsApp as more interactive than traditional classrooms and admitted that WhatsApp meets teaching and learning objectives effectively.

Furthermore, the majority of students did not experience problems taking up classes through WhatsApp and they admitted that teachers provided prompt feedback through WhatsApp. There was a specific time/timetable for beginning WhatsApp classes and students conducted oral presentations through WhatsApp video recording. Listening, writing, speaking and reading took place through WhatsApp.

Thus, the perception of students, parents and teachers was positive with the WhatsApp platform as it supported various aspects of the teaching and learning process. However, the majority of respondents indicated that teachers experienced a problem in conducting tests and examinations while using the WhatsApp platform in the process of teaching and learning. These findings align with previous studies that highlighted the positive impact of WhatsApp on education during the pandemic. For example, Maphosa et al. (2020) found that students rated WhatsApp's usefulness highly and accepted it as a lecture delivery tool. Nsabayezu et al. (2020) demonstrated that WhatsApp effectively supported chemistry teaching and promoted student motivation and engagement. Munir et al. (2021) and Enyama et al. (2021) discovered that students viewed WhatsApp positively as a medium for online learning and engagement. However, the study identified challenges teachers faced in conducting tests and examinations through WhatsApp. This aligns with the findings of AlSulami (2021), who revealed that international students experienced assessment challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. These difficulties might stem from the platform's limitations in replicating traditional assessment methods.

The positive perceptions among parents, teachers, and students regarding using WhatsApp for learning during the pandemic highlight its potential as an effective alternative platform. This implies that when appropriately integrated, WhatsApp can facilitate engagement, interaction and communication in teaching and learning. Furthermore, WhatsApp's ability to facilitate various aspects of teaching and learning, including lectures, sharing learning materials, conducting oral presentations and listening, writing, speaking and reading activities, underscores its versatility. This implies that WhatsApp can effectively support multiple dimensions of the education process.

Table 2: Participants' Perspectives on the Effectiveness of WhatsApp

SN	Effectiveness of WhatsApp Tool during Covid-19(N=100)	Not Effective		Uncertain		Effective	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1	English is taught effectively through WhatsApp	15	15	3	3	82	82
2	WhatsApp is effective in asking and answering questions	18	18	10	10	72	72
3	It was easy to access course materials through WhatsApp	16	16	7	7	77	77
4	Learners enjoyed writing, speaking, reading and listening	6	6	7	7	87	87
5	Learners are motivated to construct knowledge and skills	4	4	0	0	83	83
6	Evaluation is effectively through WhatsApp	63	63	5	5	9	9
7	Language learning is effective through clips via WhatsApp	0	0	4	4	96	96
8	Students do group work and share activities via WhatsApp	18	18	13	13	69	69
9	WhatsApp engages students in learning during Covid-19	2	2	6	6s	92	92
10	Learning is effectively at home through WhatsApp	16	16	7	7	67	67

Research Question 2: To what extent did respondents rate WhatsApp effectiveness in promoting teaching and learning?

In Table 2, participants considered the use of WhatsApp Parents, teachers and students received positively tools effective in facilitating teaching and learning during Covid-19. This is reflected by the fact that the majority of respondents scored between 67 and 96% in favor of WhatsApp's effectiveness, except for one item about evaluation, to which they scored 9%. Particularly, they agreed that teaching English is effective through WhatsApp, that WhatsApp is effective in asking and answering questions and that it is easy to access study materials through WhatsApp. Furthermore, respondents accepted that learners enjoyed writing, speaking, reading and listening and were motivated to construct knowledge and skills. Finally, respondents reported that WhatsApp engaged students and effectively facilitated learning at home. These findings align closely with those by Mwakapina et al. (2016), Cansoy (2017), and Cetinkaya (2017).

Qualitative data through FGDs and interviews supported the quantitative findings that the WhatsApp platform is an effective alternative platform for teaching and learning during the Covid-19 period. Activities that took place in traditional teaching and learning settings would still occur during Covid-19 through WhatsApp. For example, teachers could send reading, writing, speaking and listening activities, and students could respond instantly to teachers' instructions. Additionally, the participants consider the platform as an effective alternative as it increased parents' involvement in their children's learning. Through FGD, one of the students reported, "I think WhatsApp is very effective because since schools are closed, we have no other ways to continue studying except through WhatsApp. So, our teachers have been sending notes and questions and teaching us through the WhatsApp group." Another student reported,

> WhatsApp class is very good. It makes Mom and Dad very close to monitoring our learning and assisting us in learning. I wish that even when we go back to school, our parents should continue giving us their mobile phones so that we can use them to learn.

One of the parents had this to say, "WhatsApp is suitable during this coronavirus epidemic because it works well and is easy for us parents and even our children. My children know how to use my smartphone; I do not know where they learned about it." Another parent added, "This disease has come very suddenly. What do you do now? You use the weapon, which is at your disposal. We have decided to use WhatsApp because the platform seems easy and known to all parties: teachers, children, and parents." One more parent reported,

> WhatsApp supports teaching and learning this time. One problem is that these teachers make us very busy with children's weekly activities as if we were school students or pupils. Look here, for example! Today, you are told to connect your child to a class at a particular time, ensure s/he answers questions, listen to a video clip, lecture, or teachers' voice notes, and participate in classroom discussions. We are being kept busy. I would not say I like it, but I have to do it because the class is connected to my smartphone.

Some of the parents cited the negative impact of the WhatsApp learning platform. In interview, one parent, for example, reported, "WhatsApp lacks security; it is very easy for these children to find them looking at or sharing bad pictures like those of naked people." Another parent added, "I think the main challenges in using WhatsApp for learning are four: no privacy, lacks security, distracts students and bundles are costly." Scholars have also raised a concern about using WhatsApp as an alternative platform for teaching and learning. Lopes et al. (2021) highlight differences in interactivity compared to traditional classrooms and point out privacy and security issues, including the potential for sharing confidential information. Khan et al. (2020) emphasized the lack of privacy and security, potentially affecting both teachers and students in sharing sensitive information.

Conclusion and Recommendations
Conclusions
In conclusion, the utilization of WhatsApp as an alternative platform for traditional classroom learning amidst the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed its efficacy in diverse educational aspects. The study's findings underscore its effectiveness in promoting communication, collaboration and engagement among learners,

educators and parents. Moreover, WhatsApp has demonstrated its potential as a versatile tool for delivering instructional content, assignments and assessments, bridging the gap between remote learning and the classroom environment. By fostering a sense of connection and support, especially for students grappling with the pandemic-induced changes, WhatsApp has proven instrumental in maintaining the continuity of education. The benefits encompass heightened parental involvement, enhanced inquiry skills, and student subject mastery. However, it is crucial to acknowledge and address potential risks, including issues related to inappropriate content sharing, student addiction and concerns about security and privacy. As educational institutions navigate the complexities of remote learning, the successful integration of WhatsApp underscores its role as a valuable ally in ensuring educational continuity and adapting to evolving pedagogical landscapes.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the researchers recommend that schools consider using WhatsApp as a viable alternative platform for classroom learning. The researchers recommend that schools use WhatsApp with other digital tools and platforms, such as Zoom or Google Classroom to ensure a comprehensive learning experience. This will enable school administrators to ensure that learners have access to all the necessary resources while providing them with the support they need to stay engaged with their studies. WhatsApp can be a useful tool for facilitating teaching and learning. However, it is important to consider the potential risks associated with its use. As such, teachers need to use strategies to ensure that learners use WhatsApp responsibly and appropriately. Finally, the study recommends that schools ensure that all WhatsApp usage follows student privacy laws and other applicable regulations. This will help protect students from any potential risks associated with using this platform for remote learning.

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