

# Using Whatsapp in Learning During Covid-19: Voices of Kindergarten Students' Parents in Indonesia

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**Abstract**

*The advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) has big effects on human life in many facets, one of them is in education. However, the use of this technology left some problems faced by its users. Therefore, this study aims to explore in-depth the kindergarten student parents' perception of the use of WhatsApp in the teaching and learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. The study employed the exploratory study which engaged twenty-nine students' parents in Lebak - Indonesia where online learning using WhatsApp was implemented. Then, six participants were voluntarily involved in the interview. The questionnaire and semi-structured interview were administered in collecting the data. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed in percentage while the content analysis technique was used in analyzing the data from the semi-structured interview. From the data analysis, this study reveals two major research findings. Firstly, the use of WhatsApp helped students in learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and physical distancing, establishes student and teacher communication, Secondly, technical problems were found such as unstable internet connection, student-teacher communication and interaction are not maximized, and lastly, after a long period, the students got bored. In brief, the use of WhatsApp can be used as an alternative teaching platform in the COVID-19 age on the one hand, on the other hand, its usage faced barriers such as unstable internet connection.*

## INTRODUCTION

The pandemic of Corona Virus Disease (COVID) -19 spread almost all over the world. This is the biggest pandemic crisis in history that human beings faced for years. This epidemic affected individuals' psychological problems and caused fear, and anxiety and millions of people were infected with this virus (Pakpour, Griffiths, & Lin, 2020). This lethal pandemic caused disruption in many sectors such as health, economic activities, education, tourism, etc (Moodley, Seerane, & Gravett, 2022), (also see Hafeez, Kazmi, & Tahira, 2022). This epidemic successfully causes global shutdowns and educational closures and migrates to online learning (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). Like blessing under disguises, this condition created the chance to be creative, innovative and transformative as well. Inter alia for teachers to create and use the technology of ICT in running teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and school closure.

Historically, the case of COVID-19 was officially reported from Wuhan, China, on 31 December 2019. Then, on March 13 2020, Europe became the centre of this pandemic outbreak, and the USA and Australia are not far behind (Jandrić et al., 2020; Srivastava, Baxi, Ratho, & Saxena, 2020; Reyes, 2020; Salzberger, Glück, & Ehrenstein, 2020; Yadav & Saxena, 2020; Hafeez et al., 2022). In this regard, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that the world is facing a global pandemic crisis which drew huge attention throughout the world (Srivastava et al., 2020; Yadav & Saxena, 2020; Hafeez, Kazmi, & Tahira, 2022). This virus become a major concern for every people and nation as well as policymakers in many countries.

Due to this pandemic crisis, the Indonesian government implemented the enforcement of restrictions on community activities rules for the majority of Java and Bali to protect against the spreading of this lethal disease. In the educational field, the teaching and learning process at any level should be conducted via online or hybrid learning, and health protocol is strictly implemented. One of the platforms used by many teachers in conducting online learning is using WhatsApp as a teaching and learning tool. This platform is widely used among teachers in delivering material during the pandemic age, especially in the southern part of the Banten Province. The teachers of kindergarten also make this platform for transferring knowledge to their students through this tool. This platform is widely used for the teaching and learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic and a series of scientific writings published by scholars. Churchill, Pegrum, & Churchill (2018) affirm in Indonesia, there are some interesting studies conducted regarding the use of mobile learning such as Abidin et al. 2015; Tifani, et al. 2016; Darmanto and Hermawan, 2016; Seangly et al. 2016; Susanti and Tarnuji 2016; Ulfa, 2013; Astra, et al. 2015; Sulitoto and Toifur, 2016. These mentioned studies concerned the obstacle to using mobile learning in Indonesia.

Many scholars conducted studies on the use of WhatsApp to see the effectiveness and experiences of its' usage (Yan et al., 2021; Mushtaque, Rizwan, Dasti, Ahmad, & Mushtaq, 2021; García-Gómez, 2022) while neglecting to perceive the students' parent perception in another way. Therefore, this study addresses unfilled the gap of the research in the field of teaching and learning mediated by WhatsApp and focuses on students' parents' perceptions, moreover, the article also examines the use of WhatsApp in teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The use of online learning is a heating issue in educational fields during the age of the COVID-19 pandemic. National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that there are 6.3 million students enrolled in online courses (Singh & Thurman, 2019). Online learning is considered an alternative device to support the process of teaching and learning in many countries. Logical consequences, both teachers and students should adapt to the new system from face-to-face learning to remote online teaching and learning (Yan et al., 2021). Lim, Rosenthal, Sim, Lim, & Oh, (2021) highlight that this technology already changed the way people communicate and share information with others. The change in transferring knowledge drags the attention of the researchers to explore this phenomenon. Therefore, a plethora of studies conducted by scholars and educational practitioners deal with online learning using mobile learning. A large number of countries in Asia were called to report on such online learning in their different context and setting such as Brunei, Cambodia, China, honking, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Macau, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam (Churchill et al., 2018).

Due to the pandemic age, there is a huge migration of teaching and learning modes from face-to-face to distance learning modes using certain learning platforms or applications installed to facilitate distance (Yeboah & Nyagorme, 2022). The application of social networking service that most Indonesian people use is WhatsApp due to its practicality this technology is used for delivering the learning materials conducted by teachers and students or student parents to keep in touch. This digital technology has a vital role in modern learning. This application offers a learning process through various affordances like further engagement in social media, multimodal affordances, and interpersonal connectivity as well (Shirin, 2020). The platform also offers broad functions such as note-taking and giving fascinating to the learners in learning and is widely used and prevalent among people (Tümen Akyıldız & Çelik, 2022). While, the reason for choosing online learning is for its flexibility and can be conducted whenever and wherever (see Landrum, Bannister, Garza, & Rhame, 2021; Joosten & Cusatis, 2020).

In addition, the practical use of WhatsApp is affirmed by Çetinkaya & Sütçü (2018), WhatsApp is a simple and widely used social networking and it has been developed for mobile platforms and later

extended to web and desktop versions. Moreover, Orlando (2019) highlights WhatsApp as a Facebook-owned free cross-platform messaging and voice-over IP service. Text messages and voice calls, as well as video calls, photos and other media, documents, and user location, are all possible. This application is becoming one of the favoured mobile-based applications and become a part of human life. This platform permits its users to communicate individually or in group discussions for any kind of purpose. Some studies conducted dealing with the use of WhatsApp in the educational field reveal that this learning medium can support learning anytime and anywhere, increase interest, and motivation, provide cooperation, and enhance learning, this platform also enhances the interaction among learners, and learner-teacher (Cetinkaya, 2017 and Çetinkaya & Sütçü, 2018). Considering its practicality and the simple use of WhatsApp as a learning platform, many educators, as well as teachers, use this kind of technology for delivering materials and maintaining the relationship between teachers and students. Framing on these needs, the use of this technology in the educational field is irresistible and inevitable. In Indonesia, which is the context of the study, there is a great number of initiatives related to the use of ICTs in education and mobile learning. The Minister of Education and Culture (MoEC) of Indonesia introduced an initiative to endorse and regulate the use of online learning programs such as the National Education Network (Jardiknas). However, this project was suspended for political reasons (Churchill et al., 2018).

## METHODS

This study is an attempt to address the issues of WhatsApp usage as an Online learning platform and pursue the kindergarten parent students' feedback. The study employed an exploratory study in investigating students' parents' perception of the use of WhatsApp during online learning due to the epidemic of Corona Virus Disease (COVID) - 19 in Lebak the southern part of Banten Province- Indonesia. Twenty-nine participants from the parents of kindergarten students were voluntarily involved in this study. The participants were asked to provide feedback on the use of WhatsApp in online learning during the pandemic. Questionnaires and semi-structured - interviews were utilized by the writer to collect the data needed in this study. The questionnaire functions to measure the parents' perception (attitude questionnaire) to explore the student parents' opinions regarding the use of WhatsApp in the teaching and learning process. The questionnaire is comprised of 10 items with four Likert-type items ranging from "**strongly agree**" to "**strongly disagree**". To strengthen the data from the questionnaire, therefore, semi-structured- interviews with six female offenders were also conducted. The quantitative data from the questionnaire were then systematically analyzed in percentage. Lastly, content analysis techniques were used to construe the qualitative data of the study (Singh & Thurman, 2019).

Regarding the participants of the study, in detail, the demographic data of the participants are reported in the table 1.

Table 1. Demography data of the research participants

Level of Education	Number of Participants	Gender		The Length of Using WhatsApp		
		Male	Female	1-3 Years	4-5 Years	6-7 Years
Elementary school	2	√				
Junior high school	3	√				
Senior high school	6	√		6	12	11
Bachelor	4	√		(20,69%)	(41,38%)	(37,93%)
Undergraduate school	13	√				
Graduate school	1	√				
Total	29					

Table 1 demonstrates the demographic characteristics of the participants in the current study. There are twenty-nine participants involved in the study. They are students' parents whose children experienced Online learning using WhatsApp as the chosen platform in the teaching and learning process during the pandemic. The participants are from different levels of educational background, ranging from elementary school up to university level. They also have different lengths of using WhatsApp from 1 year to 7 years. There are 6 participants or 20,69 % of Parents who use WhatsApp for 1-3 years, 12 participants or 41, 38% who use WhatsApp for 4-5 years, and 11 participants or 37, 93% of participants who use WhatsApp along with 6 up to 7 years. Meanwhile, the educational background of the participants is presented in the following graph.

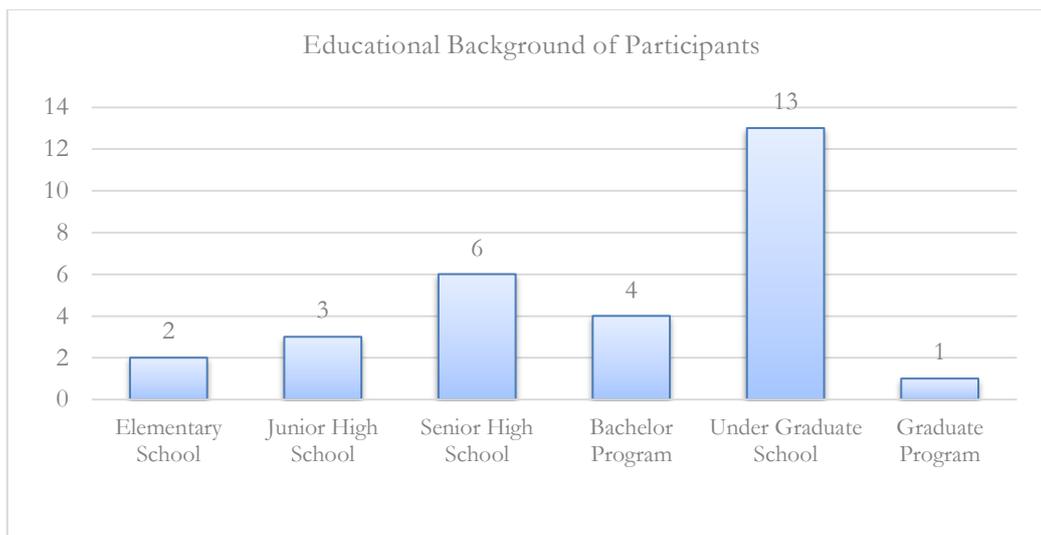


Figure 1. The educational background of the participants

Graph 1 shows there are a variety of the participants' educational backgrounds participated in the study, starting from elementary school to the university level. They are all the parents of kindergarten students' parents who experienced Online learning using WhatsApp during the pandemic age. Two of the nine participants graduated from elementary school, three graduated from Junior High school, six participants had completed their education from Senior High School, and four participants graduated from the bachelor's degree programs. Moreover, some graduated from the university level, thirteen participants are from the undergraduate program, and at last, one participant is from the graduate program. Of twenty-nine participants, six participants were voluntarily involved in an interview. The five participants being interviewed are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Demography data of the interviewee

No	Name <sup>a</sup>	Age <sup>b</sup>	Gender	Level of education	The Length of Using WhatsApp
1	SH	33	Female	Bachelor Degree	6
2	EN	52	Female	Undergraduate (S1)	6
3	AR	42	Female	Undergraduate (S1)	6
4	SN	30	Female	Senior High School	5
5	PS	24	Female	Junior High School	4
6	RS	31	Female	Undergraduate School (S1)	5

<sup>a</sup>All participants' names are self-selected pseudonyms.

<sup>b</sup>Age (in years) at the onset of participation in the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data from the questionnaire of the current study which investigates the use of WhatsApp as a teaching and learning platform during the pandemic era. The parameters were then classified into five classifications, they are to help to understand teaching materials (understanding booster), graciousness and flexibility, motivation learning booster, establishing students and teachers' interaction and features in WhatsApp optimizing the learning process. The research findings are presented as follows:

Table 3. The responses of participants in percentage

No	Using WhatsApp in Learning Process During the COVID-19 Pandemic		Choices				Total
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
1	To help understanding of teaching materials (understanding booster)	Count	1	19	8	1	29
		Percentage	3,45	65,52	27,59	3,45	100
2	Graciousness and Flexibility	Count	2	20	7	0	100
		Percentage	6,90	68,97	24,14	0,00	100
3	Motivation learning booster along pandemic age	Count	4	16	9	0	29
		Percentage	13,79	55,17	31,03	0,00	100
4	Establishing student and teacher interaction	Count	3	14	12	0	29
		Percentage	10,34	48,28	41,38	0,00	100
5	Features in WhatsApp optimize the learning process	Count	0	19	10	0	29
		Percentage	0,00	65,52	34,48	0,00	100
Means		Percentage	6,90	60,69	31,72	0,69	

In light of information on table 3 shows that the data was obtained from questionnaires which delve the student parents' experiences in using WhatsApp in Online learning with their children during the pandemic. Some interesting findings were found. They are: Firstly, the use of WhatsApp is used to help students and parents understand related teaching materials given by the teachers. In this case, WhatsApp is utilized as a medium for consulting material between students' parents and teachers, in this case, N=1, 3,45% of participants selected "strongly agree", 19 participants of 29 (65,52%) selected "agree", N=8, 27,59% selected "disagree", and N=1,3,45% selected "strongly disagree". From the data, it is proven that the majority of the participants selected "agree" which means WhatsApp can be used as the medium or learning platform that functions to help students learn and understand the teaching materials (understanding booster).

Secondly, regarding the graciousness and flexibility of WhatsApp, there are 2 participants (6,90%) who selected "strongly agree", N= 20 (68%,97) selected "agree", N=7, 24,14% selected disagree, and N=0, 0% selected "strongly disagree". From this data finding, most of the participants affirm that WhatsApp as a learning platform has a high graciousness and flexibility. Third, not only WhatsApp has a high graciousness and flexibility, but using WhatsApp as a learning platform in the pandemic age also gives sustaining learning motivation during the pandemic age. It's seen that there are 4 participants (13,79%) selected "strongly agree", 16 (55,17%) participants selected "agree", 9 participants (31,03%) selected disagree, and no participants (0%) selected "strongly disagree". Fourth, the use of WhatsApp establishes students' and teachers' interaction during the pandemic age. The data findings indicate 3 (10,34%) of participants selected "strongly agree", (N= 14 or 48,28%) selected "agree", moreover, N=12 (41,38%) disagree, and N= 0 (0%) selected "totally disagree". Lastly, deals with the features of WhatsApp that optimize the learning process, neither participant selected "strongly agree and strongly disagree, meanwhile 19 participants (65,52%) participants selected agree and 10 (34,48%) of participants selected disagree. It can be stated that a large number of participants agree to confirm that the features in

WhatsApp can optimize the learning process. Meanwhile, seeing from the results of the percentage of all the items indexed, 6,90 % of the participants selected strongly agree, 60,69% selected agree, 31,72% selected disagree, and 0,69 selected strongly disagree.

Based on the results of data analysis from the questionnaire, most of the participants feel that the use of WhatsApp as a learning platform in the pandemic age can assist the learning process for its graciousness and flexibility usage, also helps to increase understanding since the learners can establish communication with their teachers. This research finding was supported by other researchers such as Shirin (2020) that the use of WhatsApp applications can facilitate the learning process and improve learning achievement more than using traditional ones. Deals with learning community WhatsApp can be used for learning community and have a more positive attitude on the use of mole technology as the learning platform. Moreover, In the Indonesian context, mobile learning provides a lot of opportunities to enhance the quality of education (Churchill et al., 2018). Deals with online learning using WhatsApp can motivate learners to study in the pandemic age, the finding of the current study is congruent with the study conducted by Alshaibani & Qusti in 2021, that learning platforms using WhatsApp can motivate students to learn.

Through WhatsApp, the teacher is also able to give feedback as one of the powerful influences on the learning process, evaluating the process and reporting the results of the assessments as well. This e-learning platform also can be used as a backchannel to link each other in distance learning between learners to learners, and students to their teachers (Orlando, 2019). In one way, this research finding is congruent with those reported by Mushtaque et al., 2021; Hu, Chiu, Leung, & Yelland, 2021 that 53% of the respondents expected future online teaching to continue after the COVID-19 pandemic go away and 11% of educators believe that parents would reject this form of online learning. In another way, this study is not congruent with those reported by Mushtaque, et al., 2021 and Hu, et al., 2021.

### **Data from interview**

To strengthen the data obtained from the questionnaire above, therefore, the interview was then conducted to pursue information regarding the students' parents' perception of the use of WhatsApp as a learning platform during the pandemic age. Six participants were interviewed and the results are presented as follows:

Based on the data from the interview, some of the interviewees disagreed with the implementation of online learning using WhatsApp as a learning tool at the very beginning for some reasons: firstly, the use of WhatsApp as a learning platform is not effective since the teachers sometimes only share the materials and didn't give clear instruction. Moreover, most of the participants faced unstable internet connections that caused teaching and learning using WhatsApp was ineffective. Both teachers and students faced problems in running online learning and felt not satisfied with it due to their readiness for the new learning platform (Hafeez et al., 2022). Due to the technical problem, these findings are also in line with the study conducted by Bunga et al., (2022) that in the Indonesian context, some areas don't have a sufficient internet connection.

Referring to the data obtained from the questionnaire and interview, the parents' attitudes toward using WhatsApp as a learning platform can be divided into two classifications. They have positive and negative attitudes to WhatsApp as a learning platform. *Firstly*, the participants felt that the use of WhatsApp helped run the teaching and learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic. WhatsApp gives graciousness and flexibility in usage, and the features of WhatsApp also give some benefits, therefore, teaching and learning can be made. Other participants affirm that the use of WhatsApp is used to receive instruction from teachers and send assignments as well. This process of learning is conducted by using safe devices and conditions in which the learners can study from home.

Secondly, most of the participants of the study found trouble with online learning using WhatsApp as a learning tool due to the unstable internet connection, for a long period of learning the students felt bored. The student's parents felt difficulty in following the learning process since they were unfamiliar with the material taught and learnt by their children. Moreover, teaching is not their job, and at the same time, some parents should manage their time tightly since should work to some extent.

In brief, in the Indonesian context. The participants agree with online learning using WhatsApp due to the pandemic age in one hand. On the other hand, they reject online learning in normal conditions. They prefer their children to have a face-to-face teaching and learning process. The findings of the current study are in line with previous studies conducted by Agung et al., 2020; Basuony et al., 2020; Bączek et al., 2021; Yates et al., 2020 in Yan et al., 2021; Bunga et al., 2022.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis and findings from both the questionnaire and interview, this study reports that WhatsApp is an effective learning platform used in the COVID-19 pandemic age for some reasons. Firstly, its usage can be used to send and explain learning material as well as establish communication between teachers and learners. Secondly, flexibility and graciousness are other components of why WhatsApp is an effective learning platform. Thirdly, the use of WhatsApp as a learning platform also motivates students to learn in the pandemic period. Lastly, the features in WhatsApp can assist both teachers and students to make an interesting teaching and learning process. Conversely, referring to the data from the interview the participants found unexpected experiences when they used WhatsApp in the teaching and learning process, such as unstable internet connection, and the learners got bored after being taught for a long period of time. In brief, WhatsApp can be used as a learning platform in the pandemic age and become a supplementary tool for delivering teaching material or running instruction. On the other hand, technical problems were experienced by WhatsApp users such as unstable internet connection.

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