



WhatsApp Platform a Remedy for Covid-19 Classroom Learning Restrictions: Students', Teachers', and Parents' Perspectives in Tanzania

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Abstract

This paper investigates the use of WhatsApp as an alternative platform for classroom learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in Tanzania. In particular, it examines the effectiveness of using WhatsApp as a platform for classroom learning and surveys parents', students', and teachers' perceptions of its use. The paper is based on a survey of 125 volunteered parents, students, and teachers from four schools in Tanzania. Data were collected through telephone interviews, online group discussions, and an online questionnaire. The results revealed that most participants found WhatsApp an effective platform for classroom learning. However, there were some concerns about the security of the platform and potential distractions for students. Also, the majority of participants felt that the use of WhatsApp enabled them to stay connected to their school community during the pandemic, although there were some concerns about privacy and data-sharing. Generally, the study found that the Covid-19-adopted remedy was effective in several ways, including increasing parents' participation in students' learning, improving students' inquiry and searching skills, and mastering the subject matter. The study concludes that WhatsApp effectively creates a collaborative community learning environment as an alternative platform. Thus, WhatsApp is recommended first to be mainstreamed through the curriculum as an online mobile learning tool and, second, to be combined with other digital platforms during teaching and learning to ensure a comprehensive learning experience as a way to student-directed learning in schools.

Keywords: *WhatsApp, Covid-19, Remedy, Traditional classroom, Learning restrictions*

1. introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has unprecedentedly affected virtually all aspects of life, including education. Schools around the world had to resort to online learning as a means of providing education during the pandemic. WhatsApp has been used as an alternative platform for normal 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. This research paper aimed to examine the effectiveness of using WhatsApp as an alternative platform for normal classroom learning in schools during the Covid-19 pandemic and to analyze the perceptions of parents, students, and teachers towards the use of the tool in learning.

On March 1, 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared Covid-19 a global public health pandemic (WHO, 2020). Covid-19 or Coronavirus disease is caused by a virus called severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV-2), which emerged in Wuhan, China, in 2019. According to WHO (2020), the disease had spread in more than 215 territories and had contacted close to four million people by May 10, 2020, and 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 which had a complete lockdown (Kenya, Rwanda, & Uganda) closed doors and imposed restrictions on all services except emergency services 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 has caused globally a significant disruption in many areas, including education systems, leading to a rapid closure of schools, universities, and other learning centres. As a result, the closure necessitated the need for alternative learning methods to continue with the education process while students were at home.

In Tanzania, the first Covid-19 case 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 centres. 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 have been adopted in education 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 via videos (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 important tool in supporting

teaching and learning. WhatsApp is largely used for socialization, as well as for collaboration, communication, and organization. Its ability to enable asynchronous communication has incredibly 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, and user-friendly interface that makes it easy for teachers and students. 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 there are no specialized features designed specifically 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 has 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 or the situation has 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 students to communicate and collaborate on assignments (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 effect 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 regular 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

on the positive performance of this mobile tool when used in lower levels of education (mainly primary & secondary schools). Given the circumstances that the adoption of the WhatsApp mobile tool by some Tanzania private primary and secondary schools has happened with short notice, there was a need to explore if this new learning platform revised learning outcomes and updated teaching approaches, given the fact that shifting from traditional to virtual teaching and learning requires skills and changes in learning outcomes and perceptions. Therefore, this paper explored the WhatsApp platform's potential in facilitating teaching and learning during Covid-19. Specifically, the study examined the extent to which the use of WhatsApp was effective in facilitating teaching and learning at the lower levels and analyzed parents', teachers', and students' perceptions of using the tool in learning. The paper provides educators, parents, and policymakers with valuable insights into using WhatsApp for remote learning during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Literature Review

2.1 WhatsApp in Supporting a traditional classroom

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 the effectiveness of using mobile technologies to support a blended learning course. The study's results clearly 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 the students in the control group. Furthermore, the study revealed that most students preferred the WhatsApp platform to traditional classroom methods. Also, Mwakapina et al. (2016) evaluated the use of WhatsApp mobile tool to support the teaching and learning of English grammar course among university students who were pursuing different programmes, where English grammar course was compulsory course for them. The scholars realized that the WhatsApp platform played a great role in helping students learn English interactively and collaboratively outside the classroom situation. Also, 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. Furthermore, Cansoy (2017) assessed teachers' perceptions of using WhatsApp for professional development in Turkey. The research found that teachers generally viewed it as an effective tool for professional development and that it enabled them to collaborate with colleagues and access resources quickly and easily. They also noted that it could be used to 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 student performance using the hybrid learning tool. Positive perceptions of hybrid learning and improved academic performance indicated that WhatsApp is a convenient new teaching tool. Also, Rahaded et al. (2020) analyzed the impact of WhatsApp on undergraduate students' behavior. The result of this research showed that WhatsApp positively impacts student behavior as it affects 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 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 on the condition that lecturers and other students create some sense of humor during teaching and learning on the WhatsApp platform. Also, Mtega (2021) indicates that WhatsApp Messenger was highly adopted by students and used for supporting learning. He indicates further 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 useful tool for both 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 WhatsApp to provide students with feedback on their assessments. Moreover, WhatsApp has also been used for conducting online classes (Mwakapina, 2016). However, 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). Also, 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 for teaching and learning effectively.

2.2 WhatsApp as an alternative platform for a traditional classroom

Research on the use of WhatsApp to facilitate learning during the Covid-19 pandemic is still in its early stages. Few studies have been conducted (Syahputri et al., 2020; Ahmady et al., 2020; Munir et al., 2021; AlSulami et al., 2021; Alghamdi, 2021). However, 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 time.

The recent outbreak of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has had an unprecedented effect on education worldwide. Schools and universities in many countries were forced to close their physical locations and transition 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, and 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 and assessing readiness towards emergency shifting to remote learning during Covid-19 pandemic among university instructors respectively. 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 levels of satisfaction, while the high level of anxiety could be attributed to stressful circumstances related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Also, Maphosa et al., (2020) evaluated WhatsApp as a tool for lecture delivery during the time of Covid-19. This was a randomized evaluation of weekly lecture delivery through WhatsApp to Lupane State University students. A questionnaire was delivered to 200 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 for use 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 and April 2020. A total of 348 responses were collected from respondents through a random sampling technique, and most respondents reflected positive attitudes toward using social media as medical information instrument. The results demonstrate that social media have 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 is perceived as easy and accessible to every individual for sharing, posting, and reacting to any medical information regarding the pandemic.

Likewise, Nsabayezu et al. (2020) assessed teachers' perceptions towards the utilization of WhatsApp in supporting the teaching and learning of chemistry during the Covid-19 pandemic in Rwandan-selected secondary schools. They collected data by using a survey questionnaire from 18 chemistry teachers in Nyarugenge and Kicukiro districts. The findings illustrated that WhatsApp is effective for teaching chemistry and supporting students' learning. This application promotes students' motivation, engagement, collaboration, interaction, participation, and ubiquitous learning. Also, Mulyono et al. (2021) evaluated university students' technological acceptance

and connectedness to online learning with WhatsApp support. A total of 202 students from three different courses at an Indonesian private university participated in an online survey. Findings show that most students accepted social media use to support learning and felt connected to the learning. The findings also have identified several drivers that promoted the high level of acceptance and connectedness to learning, such as students' perceived usefulness, availability of learning support, motivation, and connectedness with their friends.

Other recent studies (Munir et al., 2021; Enyama et al., 2021) explored students' and teachers' views 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 at Batusangkar Indonesia. The sample involved 168 students using a stratified random sampling technique. The study's findings indicated that students' views on the use of WhatsApp in English teaching during the covid-19 pandemic were mostly positive (73.2%) and the negative responses were only (26.8%). The students' views on the use of WhatsApp were as a media for doing the online learning process, as an educational media, an evaluation and assessment benchmarks, an application for sharing information, as a tool for doing group discussion, and 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 actively participate. 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 in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic because the platform empirically helps the students to get enthusiastically involved in learning activities.

2.3 Synthesis of the review

The literature review indicates that students generally prefer to use WhatsApp for their educational activities and that it can improve academic performance, increase student engagement, and facilitate collaboration between students and teachers. It also suggests that WhatsApp can be a useful tool for supporting teaching and learning in higher education. It can provide students with an

effective communication channel for interacting with instructors and peers and can also 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 regular 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 this mobile tool when used in lower levels of education (mainly primary and secondary schools). Given the circumstances that the adoption of the WhatsApp platform by some Tanzania private primary and secondary schools during the Covid-19 pandemic happened with short notice, and given the fact that in Tanzania, many schools discourage students' use of phones while at school, there was a need to explore if this new learning platform revised learning outcomes and updated teaching approaches, given the fact that the shifting from traditional to virtual teaching and learning requires skills and changes in learning outcomes and

perceptions. This paper, therefore, explored the potential of the WhatsApp mobile tool in facilitating teaching and learning during Covid-19 as an alternative to traditional classrooms. Specifically, the study examined the extent to which the use of WhatsApp was effective in facilitating teaching and learning at the lower levels and analyzed parents', teachers', and students' perceptions of the use of the tool in teaching and learning.

3. Methods

This study employed a descriptive survey design to investigate the effectiveness of using WhatsApp as an alternative platform for normal classroom learning in schools during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study was conducted in May-July 2020 in regions of Morogoro and Dar es Salaam, in Tanzania, involving four private schools. In the schools, there were parents' and teachers' WhatsApp groups, which before the outbreak of the pandemic, the groups were used for sharing important information concerning the students/pupils. Just after the outbreak of **Table 1: Sample** . According to Matata *at el.* (2001), a sample of 120 respondents is quite enough to conduct the socio-economic study. A sample of 120 was also regarded desirable in this study due to the pandemic restrictions and enough for statistical analysis. The researchers of the study were also participants in the study because they were also parents in those

Covid-19 and the closure of the schools by the government, the groups had to be turned into teaching and learning platforms. In Tanzania, school students/pupils are not allowed to possess mobile phones while at school. Thus, these smartphones, which were used, many were parents' phones. At this time, most of the parents were at home or had to work from home because of the pandemic. Many of these schools/teachers had weekly packages which were sent to students and some teachers recorded short videos/ lectures and sent them to the students.

The sample size was 125 participants from the four schools: two English Medium Primary Schools (EMPS) and two secondary schools, one secondary school and one EMPS were selected in the Morogoro region, as well as one EMPS and one secondary school in Dares Salaam region. Specifically, the participants were 80 students (i.e. 60 secondary schools and 20 pupils), 6 English language teachers, and 34 parents as summarized in WhatsApp groups. In this study, schools were purposively selected as well as the teachers. The schools which had WhatsApp groups for learning during Covid-19 were those which were selected and the English language teachers in those groups were purposely involved in the research. Furthermore, the parents and pupils in those WhatsApp groups were asked to volunteer

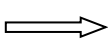

in the research, and those who were willing gave their consent and participated either in interviews and responding to a questionnaire or to FGDs.

In the primary school, the pupils involved were those of standard 7 while the secondary school students were those in form 4. These two levels were chosen purposely because they are the exit levels where the learners sit for the national examination at the level. Thus, schools and teachers put much effort into those classes.

The data were collected through an online questionnaire, interviews, and FGDs. The questionnaire was sent to students, parents, and teachers, and was designed to measure the perceived effectiveness of using WhatsApp as an alternative platform for normal classroom learning. The questionnaire was developed in English and translated into Kiswahili for those participants (parents) who were not very proficient in English. Interviews were conducted with the teachers and parents to gain more

insight into their thoughts and experiences of using WhatsApp as an alternative platform for learning, while four FGDs were held with pupils and students through WhatsApp voice notes with each group having ten members. Two FGDs were conducted with the primary school pupils and the other two groups were with the secondary school students who were also involved in filling the questionnaire. The data were analyzed and summarized using the IBM SPSS Statistics software package using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results were interpreted and discussed based on the objectives of the study. Furthermore, the ethical considerations of the study were strictly followed. Oral informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to the data collection. The participants were made aware that participation in the study was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. All the collected data were kept confidential and only used for the purpose of the research.

Table 1: Sample

Schools 					Total for @Category
Participants 	Primary 1	Primary 2	Secondary1	Secondary2	
Pupils	10	10			20
Students			30	30	60
Teachers	1	1	2	2	6
Parents	8	6	10	15	39
Total Participants					125

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Use of WhatsApp as an alternative platform

The use of WhatsApp during covid-19 was very well received positively by parents, teachers, and students (**Table 2: Participants' Perspectives on the Use of WhatsApp during Covid-19**). They reported increased engagement and interaction. When participants were asked if the use of this platform was wasting their time, more than half (55.0%) indicated that it was not a wastage of time; the platform is a valuable remedy or alternative platform for learning during the time of the pandemic; they cited increased engagement and interactivity as the main benefits. This finding is supported by

Mulyono et al. (2021), who also realized that students accepted WhatsApp because of its perceived usefulness, motivating and engaging students interactively. The majority (78.0%) indicated that they felt good and enjoyable using the platform for language teaching and learning during Covid-19. Also, most (59%) agreed that each week, teacher(s) provided students with lectures, reading materials, tasks, and expected learning outcomes through WhatsApp. Again, most (50%) of the participants reported that their English language class progressed well through WhatsApp as if it is face-to-face interaction, and 60% indicated that during Covid-19, their WhatsApp class was more interactive than their traditional class.

Table 2: Participants' Perspectives on the Use of WhatsApp during Covid-19

S/N	PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFERENT ASPECTS(N=100)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Uncertain (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree(%)
1	Using WhatsApp in teaching and learning has been a waste of time	55(55.0)	13(13.0)	14(14.0)	14(14.0)	4(4.0)
2	WhatsApp is conducive for learning because it is easy to use, increases engagement and interaction	0(0.0)	1(1.0)	6(6.0)	30(30.0)	63(63.0)
3	During this time of Covid-19, we have a specific time/timetable for beginning our online WhatsApp classes	2(2.0)	9(9.0)	4(4.0)	52(52.0)	33(33.0)
4	We do conduct oral presentations through WhatsApp by recording video/audio clips and sending them to the group	9(9.0)	20(20.0)	3(3.0)	50(50.0)	18(18.0)
5	Each week, our teacher provides us with lectures, notes, assignments/tasks, different reading materials, and expected learning outcomes through WhatsApp	10(10.0)	0(0.0)	9(9.0)	22(22.0)	59(59.0)
6	Our teacher provides us with prompt feedback or instant feedback through WhatsApp	12(12.0)	0(0.0)	1(1.0)	43(43.0)	44(44.0)
7	Our class progresses well through WhatsApp as if it is face-to-face	0(0.0)	4(4.0)	3(3.0)	50(50.0)	43(43.0)

8	interaction I don't experience any problems taking up online classes through WhatsApp	5(5.0)	18(18.0)	10(10.0)	12(12.0)	55(55.0)
9	We have been doing listening, writing, speaking, and reading activities through WhatsApp	0(0.0)	14(14.0)	1(1.0)	51(51.0)	34(34.0)
10	I find an online WhatsApp class during covid-19 is more interactive than a traditional classroom	2(2.0)	10(10.0)	4(4.0)	24(24.0)	60(60.0)
11	I have experienced a problem in conducting tests and examinations through WhatsApp	1(1.0)	18(18.1)	3(3.0)	32(32.0)	46(46.0)
12	The platform is used in asking and answering questions	0(0.0)	2(2.0)	0(0.0)	77(78.0)	21(21.0)
13	The teaching and learning objectives are effectively met through the use of WhatsApp	6(6.0)	18(18.0)	2(2.0)	48(48.0)	26(26.0)
14	I enjoy using WhatsApp to facilitate my learning/my child/students' learning because it is motivating	3(2.0)	2(4.0)	0(0.0)	17(21.0)	78(78.0)

Furthermore, 51.0 % of participants reported that WhatsApp was an efficient platform for English learning as it allowed for quick and easy access and sharing of listening, writing, speaking, and reading materials/ activities, which are important for English learning. Also, many students (63.0%) reported that WhatsApp was conducive as an alternative platform for learning during the time of the pandemic because it was easy to use, and increased engagement and interaction. Further, 77.0% of the participants reported using the platform to ask and answer questions. Also, the results indicated that the majority (63.0%) of participants found the platform conducive to English language learning, and the majority (55.0%) did not experience problems using WhatsApp for students' classroom learning.

Table 3: Participants' Perspectives on the Effectiveness of WhatsApp) suggest that WhatsApp is an effective alternative platform for regular classroom learning in schools during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. The majority (65%) of the participants (parents, teachers & students) indicated that WhatsApp was an

However, the majority (46.0%) indicated that using the platform in conducting tests or examinations was challenging. This possibly was due to the platform lacking security and confidentiality. Similarly, the majority of the participants indicated that through the platform, students could ask and answer questions, teachers send notes, lesson lectures, and assignments/activities; students were able to do group works and share activities, send sound notes or video clips of their responses to their teacher(s)' questions. Also, they were able to do writing, listening, reading, and speaking tasks through the platform.

4.2 Effectiveness of WhatsApp as an alternative platform

The research results (

effective tool as an alternative teaching platform because it allowed instant feedback, communication, and collaboration. Also, most participants (62.0%) reported further that through the platform, it was effective for students and teachers to ask and answer questions instantly. Additionally, 62.0%

reported that WhatsApp was an efficient platform for learning as it allowed for quick and easy access to course materials. Similarly, 70.0% of the participants reported that they enjoyed using WhatsApp effectively in learning the English language through the listening, writing, speaking, and reading activities that were sent through the platform. Moreover, most (69.0%) of the parents and teachers indicated that WhatsApp effectively motivated students to seek and construct knowledge and skills.

This finding fundamentally reflects what takes place in a normal or traditional classroom. In a traditional classroom, students ask teacher(s) or peers questions, and respond to questions instantly; a teacher teaches or gives lectures or reading materials/lesson notes, motivates students, and so forth. Students also do group

discussions or assignments. Again, language students do listening, writing, speaking, and reading activities in a traditional class. Thus, this finding shows that the WhatsApp platform has been able to emulate a normal class or be an effective alternative to the traditional classroom. However, a WhatsApp platform can have advantages and limitations of its own over a traditional class, as well as a normal traditional class over only a WhatsApp class or an online class. Generally, this research suggests that WhatsApp can be used as an effective and efficient alternative platform for regular classroom learning in schools during the Covid-19 pandemic. The platform was received positively by the students, parents, and teachers. They thus reported increased engagement, collaboration, creativity, and interactivity as the platform's main benefits.

Table 3: Participants' Perspectives on the Effectiveness of WhatsApp

S/N	Effectiveness of WhatsApp Tool in Teaching and Learning during Covid-19(N=100)	Not effective (%)	Off little Effectiveness (%)	Uncertain (%)	Effective (%)	Very effective (%)
1	Students/children/we are taught English effectively through WhatsApp	3(3.0)	12(12.0)	3(3.0)	65(65.0)	17(17.0)
2	Students /children/we are tested and evaluated effectively through WhatsApp	11(11.0)	52(52.0)	5(5.0)	9(22.0)	0(0.0)
3	There is effectiveness when students ask and answer questions through WhatsApp	7(7.0)	11(11.0)	10(10.0)	62(62.0)	10(10.0)
4	When students /children are participating in online classroom learning through WhatsApp are motivated to seek and construct knowledge and skills	4(4.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	24(24.0)	69(69.0)
5	My students/children/we do group works and share activities with their fellow peers through WhatsApp	18(18.0)	0(0.0)	13(13.0)	60(60.0)	9(9.0)
6	There is effectiveness in learning language through video/audio clips sent through WhatsApp for our language class	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	4(4.0)	61(61.0)	35(35.0)
7	WhatsApp engages students actively in learning during this time of Covid-19	0(0.0)	2(2.0)	6(6.0)	76(76.0)	16(16.0)
8	We/students/children are doing effective writing, speaking, reading, and listening activities through WhatsApp	3(3.0)	3(3.0)	7(7.0)	70(70.0)	17(17.0)
9	Students' English teacher/I deliver(s) effectively students' lectures, notes, assignments, and different reading materials through WhatsApp	6(6.0)	4(4.0)	0(0.0)	28(28.0)	62(62.0)
10	A lot of activities on English teaching and learning which students/we were doing in the class many are done effectively at home through WhatsApp	6(0.0)	10(10.0)	7(7.0)	67(67.0)	10(10.0)

On the contrary, the majority (52.0%) of the participants perceived the platform of little effectiveness for administering tests or

examinations. Tests and questions could be sent to students through the platform. However, the management of the tests seemed to be

complicated. Generally, this research suggests that WhatsApp can be used as an effective and efficient alternative platform for normal classroom learning in schools during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Also, the qualitative information from FGDs and interviews (see Table 3) of the participants supports the quantitative findings that the WhatsApp platform is an effective alternative for traditional classrooms or a remedy for Covid-19 classroom restrictions. The participants considered the platform effective first because a lot of activities that can be done in a normal or traditional English classroom were done on this platform. For example, the teachers were able to send reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities and students were able to respond instantly or after some moments depending on the teacher's instruction. Also, participants considered it to be effective

because it has benefits of its own like engaging students actively in learning and increased collaboration, creativity, and interaction. These features sometimes cannot be well realized in a traditional class because of so many limiting factors. Additionally, the participants consider the platform an effective alternative because it increases parents' involvement in their children's learning. During the pandemic, parents were fully engaged in their children's learning. One parent looked at it negatively, and he said:

WhatsApp is very good to be used for teaching this time. One problem is that these teachers make us very busy with children's weekly activities as if we are also school students or pupils. Look here for example! Today, you are told to connect your child to a class at a particular time, make sure s/he answers questions, listens to a video clip or lecture or to teachers' voice notes, and participates in a classroom discussion. We're being kept busy. I don't like it, but I have to do, because the class is connected to my smartphone...

Table 4: Parents, Pupils, Students, and Teachers' Qualitative Information

S/N	Parents, Pupils, Students, and Teachers Quotes	Themes
1	<i>'Yes, I think it is effective even though you cannot compare it with students being in the classroom. The fact that students are present in the classroom has its benefits that sometimes cannot be found on WhatsApp. WhatsApp also has things that you can't find in class. ...'</i> (Sec. School Teacher, Interview July 10-15, 2020).	A Concern that it is effective.
	<i>'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, questions and teaching us through the WhatsApp group'</i> (FGD Pupil July 16, 2020)	A Concern that it is effective.
	<i>'Absolutely, WhatsApp is very suitable to be used during this corona epidemic because it works well, and it is easy for us parents and even for our children. My children know how to use my smartphone so well that I don't know where they learned about it. (Interview with a Parent of a Primary school pupil, July 10-15, 2020)</i>	A Concern that it is effective.
	<i>'Of course, WhatsApp is suitable to be used during this time. Just imagine how we would continue studying without it while schools are closed, and we don't know when. After all, I feel more comfortable learning through WhatsApp. I find it easy, enjoyable, and instant as if we are in the real classroom.'</i> (FGD Sec. school Student, 16 July 2020)	A Concern that it is effective.
	<i>'WhatsApp class is very good. It makes Mom and Dad very close to monitoring our learning and assisting us in learning. I wish even when we go back to school our parents should continue giving us their mobile phones so that we</i>	A Concern that it is effective.

use them to learn. (FGD with pupil, July 16, 2022)

2	<i>'I think it works but not much. ..You know this disease has come very suddenly. What do you do now? You use the weapon which is at your disposal, and you know how to use it. Now, we have decided to use WhatsApp because the platform seems to be easy and known to all parties: teachers, children, and parents. (Interview with a Secondary School Teacher, July 10-15, 2020)</i>	A concern of increasing parents' engagement/Involvement in their Children's Learning -A Concern of a little effectiveness but used because is easy to use/Well-Known
3	<i>'WhatsApp lacks security, it is very easy for these children to find them looking at or sharing bad pictures like those of people being naked'. (Interview with a Parent of a Secondary school student July 10-15, 2020)</i>	-A Concern of lack of security
	<i>'I think the main challenges of using WhatsApp for learning are four: no privacy, lacks security, distracts students and bundles are costly'. (Interview with Primary school teacher July 10-15, 2020)</i>	-A Concern of lack of confidentiality, destructing and being costly

Also, as indicated in **Table 4: Parents, Pupils, Students, and Teachers' Qualitative Information**, the participants considered the main disadvantages or limitations of using WhatsApp as an alternative platform for learning including a lack of security, internet bundles being costly, a possibility for the students /children looking for phonographs or sharing bade images and pictures with other people or within the group. Other participants who had a negative viewpoint on the use of WhatsApp said that WhatsApp was used not because it is effective; it was used by coincidence that the pandemic has come abruptly and when a situation like this happens human beings tend to use any weapon at their disposal. Thus, they see it being used (see category 2 quotes in **Table 4: Parents, Pupils, Students, and Teachers' Qualitative Information**,) because it was at their disposal, and it is the platform that is easy to use and known to all parties involved in the learning group. Also, to some parents the WhatsApp group seemed not effective because it made them busy or fully engaged with their children's

class activities. This seemed negative to some parents. However, this does not make the platform not effective, as how some parents looked at it. In essence, parents need to understand that the process of teaching and learning their children needs a joint effort of the teachers and the parents. This is why, in many schools, teachers give students or pupils homework and direct them that their parents should assist them in how to answer the questions.

The majority (65%) of the participants in this study considered the WhatsApp platform effective as an alternative to traditional classrooms or as a remedy for Covid-19 classroom restrictions. This finding supports Nsabayezu et al., (2020) who realized also that WhatsApp was effective for teaching chemistry and supporting students learning during Covid-19 since it promoted students' motivation, engagement, collaboration, interaction, and ubiquitous learning outside the normal classroom. Also, as earlier noted, the few participants(35%), who considered WhatsApp

not effective in this current study, had views such as the platform keeps parents busy with students' activities, has a danger for students start looking at pornography or sharing bad pictures, can distract students, has no privacy, and bundles are charged highly. These are the challenges of its use. However, there are always ways of overcoming them. First, set clear rules for the group and communicate them to all members. These rules should include a ban on sharing or watching pornographic material, guidelines for respectful communication, and a reminder to use the group only for educational purposes. Make sure that everyone in the group understands the consequences of breaking these rules. Second, monitor the group by assigning a teacher or a parent (if the group involves parents) to monitor the group and ensure that the rules are being followed. The person should be able to remove any inappropriate content, moderate discussions, and address any issues that arise in the group. Third, use WhatsApp privacy settings to protect the privacy of the group. Set the group to *'invite only'* and ensure that only authorized members can join. Additionally, you may need to educate students on the risks associated with watching phonographs and the importance of being responsible online. Encourage them to report any inappropriate behavior immediately to teachers or parents. Also, about bundles being costly, there is a possibility of instructions and

the government discussing with telephone companies to see if prices for internet bundles can be reduced or subsidized. Furthermore, if cases of addiction arise consult counselors and therapists.

Furthermore, as indicated in Table 5: Teachers and Parents' Perspectives on WhatsApp Use Before and After Covid-19 the majority of parents and teachers(55.0%) indicated that before the outbreak of Covid-19, they frequently used the WhatsApp platform for chatting with friends or connecting with friends (55.0%), for advertising their business (27.5%), for collecting wedding contributions(10.0%), and very few (7.5%) used it for teaching. On the contrary, during Covid-19, the majority (45.0%) said they used the platform mainly for sending and receiving information about covid-19 particularly about the number of infected and deaths, followed by 32.5% for teaching and learning, and 22.5% for chatting or connecting with friends or relatives. The findings indicate that the number of people who were using the platform for learning increased during Covid-19 than before it.

Also, after the outbreak of Covid-19, the findings indicate that none of these participants used the platform either for sending-receiving pledges for weddings or advertising their products; very few used it for connecting with businessmen or advertising their products (4%).

After the outbreak of the pandemic, the findings indicated that the uses were almost the same, but the number of users had to change. The majority had to use the platform mainly for sending and receiving information about Covid-19, followed by using it for students' teaching and learning, and a few for chatting or

connecting with friends or relatives. This shows that the occurrence pandemic brought changes to the use of the platform with more use being inclined on using it for sending information about Covid-19 and facilitating the teaching and learning process while schools were closed.

Table 5: Teachers and Parents' Perspectives on WhatsApp Use Before and After Covid-19

S/N	What mainly have you been using WhatsApp for?[n=40]	Before Covid-19 (%)	After Covid-19 (%)
1	Chatting with friends/Connecting with friends/relatives	22(55.0)	9(22.5)
2	In facilitating teaching(sending reading materials, lectures, notes & receiving students' responses)	3(7.5)	13(32.5)
3	Advertising products/ Connecting with businessmen	11(27.5)	0(0.0)
4	Collecting pledges or Wedding contributions	4(10.0)	0(0.0)
5	Sending and receiving information about covid-19	0(0.0)	18(45.0)

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The use of WhatsApp as an alternative platform for regular classroom learning in schools during the covid-19 pandemic has been found to be an effective tool. WhatsApp was found to be an effective platform for communication, collaboration, and engagement between students, teachers, and parents. The use of WhatsApp was also found to be an effective tool for the delivery of lessons, assignments, and assessments. With WhatsApp, teachers were able to provide students with a sense of connection to their normal classroom while they were at home. Also, it provided them a support that they could not find in normal classroom settings. This is especially important for students who may be struggling with the

changes brought about by the pandemic. Generally, the use of WhatsApp as an alternative platform for normal classroom learning during the covid-19 pandemic was effective in several ways, including increasing parents' participation in their children's learning, improving students' inquiry skills, searching and Internet application, and mastering the subject matter. However, some potential risks need to be addressed, such as students watching phonographs or sharing bad pictures, students being addicted, and a lack of security and confidentiality.

Based on the findings and conclusion, we recommend that schools consider using WhatsApp as a viable alternative platform for

classroom learning during and after the global pandemic. WhatsApp has proven to be an effective tool for facilitating remote learning due to its ease of use and wide availability. Also, its ability to provide real-time communication and collaboration between students, parents, and teachers enabled the schools to transition to a digital environment with minimal disruption. We would also 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 students have access to all the necessary resources, while also providing them with the support they need to stay engaged with their studies. WhatsApp can be a useful tool for facilitating teaching and learning. Thus, it is important to consider the potential risks associated with its use. As such, teachers are urged to use strategies to ensure that students use WhatsApp responsibly and in an appropriate manner. Finally, we recommend 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. We recommend further research on the use of WhatsApp in educational contexts, especially on how to utilize its features to support teaching and

learning effectively, and how to ensure users' safety and security on the platform.

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