

## PERCEPTION OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS ON THE APPLICATION OF WHATSAPP IN THE TEACHING OF SOCIAL STUDIES

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### Abstract

*The introduction of smartphones has initiated growing use of whatsapp as a communication platform for various students groups and more recently for groups of teachers and has served as medium for enhancing teaching and learning. This paper examined the perception of pre-service teachers on the application of whatsapp in the teaching of Social Studies. Three research questions were raised to guide the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted to carry out the study and two hundred and fourteen (214) pre-service Social Studies teachers from the two state owned universities in Ogun state were selected to form the sample for the study using stratified sampling technique. A four item likert scale questionnaire titled "Students Attitude towards WhatsApp usage Questionnaire" ( $r=.73$ ) was used to obtain data from the respondents. The data collected were analysed using simple percentage for socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and mean and standard deviation were also used to analyse the data obtained from the respondents. Finding shows positive perception of whatsapp as a medium of academic interaction among the students; male has slight usage of whatsapp than the female and whatsapp usage was found to be beneficial to the pre-service teachers. Based on the findings, it was recommended that lecturers of Social Studies should continue to use whatsapp as a medium of promoting active and interactive learning among the students and that government can supply students with android phones with whatsapp application install on it, this should be seen as a priority to promote effective learning among the students.*

**Keywords:** *WhatsApp application, pre-service teachers, Social Studies.*

### Introduction

The rapid change and incredible development in the information and telecommunications technologies has affected all fields of life. Learning environments has tried to make use of all these technologies. As a result of this change, most of learning institutions try to adapt their systems to involve these technologies in their programs (Abdul-Fattah, 2015). Digital media such as social media and newer instant messaging applications are rapidly changing the communications landscape, their emergence has impacted significant how students learn and the way instructors teach (Griesemer, 2014). Digital communication between groups of students and between students and teachers has become popular during the last decade through various channels: Email, SMS, Facebook groups,

Twitter, and recently WhatsApp, etc. Each one of these tools has different characteristics that influence its suitability for learning purposes (Calvo, Arbiol & Iglesias, 2014).

The use of social media has become popular among the students in recent time in everyday communication. This has made mobile learning to be the toast of young and old, male and female. This was more emphasized by Khubyari, (2016) when he stated that mobile learning is considered as a future trend which facilitates lifelong education where learning can be anywhere and everywhere. Through the application of technology knowledge can be found everywhere, anytime and in various formats. It is easy to get and share within communities. Besides, it could also create the possibility of learning at any time and any place. In addition, educational mobile tools

have emerged and show great potential to help students construct and share information and knowledge for learning through computers or mobile devices (Pence, 2007). The use of technology and social media in education, is a positive response to the development of the information and communication technology in the third millennium (Hartoyo, 2009).

The most recent popular social network is WhatsApp application. WhatsApp is a smartphone application that operates on nearly all current types of devices and operating systems used by all tertiary institutions students and improve their achievement, performance and the amount of information learned and the motivation of preparation with the big or smaller groups (Sayan, 2016). WhatsApp Messenger is a proprietary, cross platform instant messaging application for smart phones. WhatsApp is part of a smartphone's application and it is the most popular communication platform in the 21st century learning as it sends real-time messages and faster knowledge resources (Fogg, 2010). WhatsApp is popular instant massaging applicable for various devices and gadgets. It was invented by Jan Koum and Brian Acton in 2009, starts booming since 2010 (Cohavi, 2013). WhatsApp is used for sending and receiving messages, video and audio messages. It has spread mostly among young people who are students and use it as an entertainment and funny tool. They largely depend on it to know a lot of news around the world. Besides, they may help them in their learning through exchanging information needed in learning different subjects since it is used by most of the students. It provides access to learning resources when teachers and students are separated by time and distance (Honeyman & Miller, 1993).

Recently, educational mobile technology is frequently used in online instruction in tertiary institutions in the advanced countries of the world (Jimoyiannis, Tsiotakis, Roussinos, & Siorenta, 2013). WhatsApp offers students increased choices and opportunities in the context of online instruction. Online courses that incorporate mobile technologies are becoming a more frequent component in universities, and the number of web-based mobile courses has increased (Inan, Flores, &

Grant, 2010). WhatsApp have features which allow for texting messages, and apart from this users can send each other images, video, and audio media messages (Wikipedia, 2013). WhatsApp allows its users to use their Internet connection to send messages to each other. WhatsApp is like a chat program for mobile phones. Smart phones are becoming increasingly popular and WhatsApp is available for almost all Smartphone, one of the unique features of the application is its ability to enhance communication within a group. WhatsApp groups are used for four main purposes: communicating with students; nurturing the social atmosphere; creating dialogue and encouraging sharing among students; and as a learning platform (Abdul Fattah, 2015).

Church and de Oliveira (2013) stressed that people adopted WhatsApp as their main communication channel rather than alternatives (such as SMS or other social networks) because of the low cost of the application combined with the ability to send an unlimited number of messages, im-mediacy of the messages sent, the desire to feel a part of the trend since their acquaintances have already adopted the application, the capacity to conduct an on-going conversation with many friends simultaneously and the knitting together of a community of friends or family, and a sense of privacy relative to other social networks. This new application therefore has the potentials of creating learning without border. WhatsApp allows people to access a great deal of information rapidly (Sayan, 2016); provides faster and easier communication among students and develops their sharing ideas; all students from the class can have their discussion on certain topics via this application as it provides immediate response within the group members to join the conversation thus making the communication effective; WhatsApp help the students to deliver their responses freely and the teacher responds to students' inquiries and comments, starts new issues, or posts queries (Dunlap, 2006). It helps to creates pleasant environment and an in-depth acquaintance with fellow students, which had a positive influence upon the manner of conversation. WhatsApp, has simple operation, low cost, availability, and

immediacy and its easy for the accessibility of learning materials, teacher availability, and the continuation of learning beyond class hours.

WhatsApp usage is not without its own challenges. There is the technical difficulty that not all tertiary institutions students possess a Smartphone besides the energy to charge the smartphone may not be available in most cases in the developing country like Nigeria. Also, teachers are apt to be annoyed by the flood of irrelevant messages posted by members of the group repeatedly (Church & de Oliveira, 2013). Also, educational difficulties may arise, such as incompatibility of language between students and the students' assumptions that their teachers should be available online all the time (Bouchnik & Deshen, 2014).

The theoretical foundation upon which this work is situated is found in connectivism and activity theory. Connectivism is the theory that acknowledges that learning is no longer an individual activity, but rather a process that allows for students to flourish in the digital era (Siemens, 2005). Message Applications can reinforce class material and positively influence discussions, collaborative work, and authoring. Activity theory is a framework that researchers use to design and analyze interactions between members of a group and discover factors influencing their participation in online discussion. Activity theory helped the researcher find factors that influence students' participation in online discussion. Researchers frequently use activity theory to analyze human-computer interactions (Nardi, 1996). The theories are relevant to this study because this study examined the perception of the students on the interactive application of WhatsApp on the teaching and learning of Social Studies which have implication on the attitude of the students to the usage of WhatsApp application.

Echheverria, Calderon, Nussbaum, Infante and Bravo (2011) found out that many universities and higher institutions have recently used WhatsApp via their smartphones in order to develop their communication through forums, discussions and information sharing, for instance, text messaging, mobile social network and web based learning. Mar (2013) concluded

that through WhatsApp majority of the students were highly satisfied and agreed with this application, not only could it increase their willingness to read in English but also it gave positive impacts on their reading habits, thus resulting in more regularity and confidence. Amry (2014) explored the impact of using WhatsApp mobile learning activities on the achievement and attitudes of online students using mobile devices at the university. The findings showed differences in the achievements and attitudes of the experimental group compared with the control group in favour of experimental group. Susanti and Tarmuji (2016) conducted a study where he compared three techniques of writing activities to help adolescent learners develop their text types writing ability using WhatsApp. Studies reported that WhatsApps is effective to enhance the students' language skills, motivation and rapport especially to adolescent learners. The typical characteristics of adolescent learners challenge teachers to find strategies to engage them. One of the strategies is through mobile learning. The recent studies on Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) report that mobile instruction is effective to improve the high school students' motivation to learn English (Danesh & Amiri, 2015), to build rapport between students and teachers (Khubyari, 2016), and to develop students' language skills (Abdul-Fattah, 2015; Hazaea & Alzubi, 2016; Mistar & Embi, 2016). Sayan (2016) studied the effects of students' usage of WhatsApp Instant Messaging for learning and improve students' achievement and found out that WhatsApp instant message enhance students performance in their examination. Malecela (2016) examined students' perceptions of the use of WhatsApp as a learning tool in a university in Malaysia. The results showed that the students believed that WhatsApp could be helpful in their learning by facilitating: communication with other students and with the instructor, collaborative learning, and access to and sharing of educational information. Levent (2017) explored the effects of WhatsApp use for education and determine the opinion of students towards the process, he found out that both learning environment have

effects on the success of students and support the traditional environment by using whatsapp is more effective for increased the success also the results shows that the students developed positive opinion towards the use of whatsapp in their course. Also, Kant (2018) worked on whatsapp: usage and perception of college students, the findings indicated that the students of both colleges have a mixed variety of level of attitudes and perception towards Whatsapp usage. Female students were on high level of attitude in comparison to male student. Both genders had same perceptions towards using Whatsapp. Age has nothing to play in both attitude and perception of college student. But student of below 23 age were more inquisitive towards usage of Whatsapp in their study.

Using social networks as a tools to improve academic achievement has been studies quite in different subject on our school curriculum. In addition, mobile messaging applications have also been utilized to improve students' progress in learning different subjects, transform the quality of instruction—to achieve a more student-centered learning environment, have more differentiated instruction, and develop problem- or project-based learning, and demand higher order thinking skills. Different mobile messaging applications have been examined to be implemented on students, but the implications of the applications of WhatsApp on attitude of pre-service teachers of Social Studies has not been examined a lot. Also, the relative newness of this application in teaching and learning processes, calls for more researches to examine the perception of the students towards the application of whatsapp in teaching and learning of Social Studies.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study examined the perception of pre-service teachers on the application of whatsapp in the teaching of Social Studies. This study in a specific term set to:

- i. identify students perception on the use of whatsapp;

- ii. assess difference in the perception of male and female in the application of whatsapp in Social Studies classroom; and
- iii. determine the benefits of whatsApps to the students.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guides the study:

- i. How do the pre-service teachers perceive the usage of whatsapp in Social Studies teaching?
- ii. What are the perception of pre-service teachers on the application of whatsapp in Social Studies classroom based on gender?
- iii. What are the benefits of whatsapp to the Social Studies pre-service teachers?

### **Methodology**

The study employed the descriptive survey design. The population for the study comprises of pre-service Social Studies teachers of the two state owned universities in Ogun State. The two institutions were purposefully selected for the study. Two hundred and fourteen (214) pre-service Social Studies teachers were selected using stratified random sampling procedure. 107 students were selected from each of the colleges used for the study. The instrument used for this study was a questionnaire titled "Students Attitude towards WhatsApp usage Questionnaire". To establish the content and face validity of this instrument copies were also presented to two experts in test and measurement for further scrutiny and modification. This was to ascertain the suitability of the instrument in terms of language, presentation, clarity and applicability. Based on their comments necessary modifications were made. Also, a field trial of the instruments was carried on students from a university from another state in south west The reliability index was calculated using split half the value was achieved at the ( $r=.73$ ) reliability level. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics.

**Results**

**Socio Demographic Factors of the Respondents**

**Table 1: Demographic Distributions of Respondents**

Respondents	Demography	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>	Male	79	36.9
	Female	135	63.1
	Total	214	100
<b>Age</b>	16-20yrs	32	15.4
	21 – 25yrs	142	66.4
	26 – 30yrs	39	18.2
<b>Total</b>		214	100

The table 1 shows the demographic distributions of the respondents. 79 representing (36.9%) of the respondents are male while 135 representing (63.1%) were female. This shows that most of the respondents are female. In addition, 32 (15.4%) of the

respondents are within the age bracket of 16-20yrs, 142 (66.4%) are within 21-25yrs while 39 (18.2%) are within 26-30yrs. The implication of this is that majority of the respondents are within the age range of 21-25yrs.

**Table 2: Pre-service Teachers Perception on the usage of WhatsApp in Social Studies**

S/N	Student Perception on the use of WhatsApp	N	Mean	SD
1.	Learning social issues via WhatsApp is a pleasant idea.	214	3.03	.847
2.	Learning Social Studies via WhatsApp is unlike real classroom teaching.	214	2.73	.924
3.	Learning how to use WhatsApp messaging was easy.	213	3.20	.814
4.	WhatsApp was easy to be used.	214	3.45	.772
5.	WhatsApp favoured faster knowledge sharing.	207	3.19	.852
6.	Using WhatsApp, helps me to pass any information discussed easily.	214	3.19	.942
7.	My interaction in WhatsApp messaging was clear.	213	3.11	.787
8.	WhatsApp medium allow students to interact with their lecturer without fear.	214	3.01	1.064
9.	Issues are more discussed and every students bears their mind when whatsapp application is used.	210	2.98	.943
10.	My interaction in WhatsApp messaging was Understandable.	210	2.97	.907
11.	It was easy for me to become skillful in discovering information via WhatsApp.	211	2.98	.915
12.	Learning Social Studies using WhatsApp is convenient for me.	213	2.70	.978
13.	WhatsApp is convenient for academic engagement purposes	210	2.83	.971
14.	WhatsApp allows me to academically engage with peers and lecturers at any time and any place.	212	3.08	.958
	<b>Total</b>	214	3.01	7.904

Table 2 showed pre-service Social Studies perception on the use of whatsapp in their academic interactions. Responses to item 4 which stated that “WhatsApp was easy to be used’ has the highest mean score of 3.45(SD=.772), this is followed by “learning how to use whatsapp messaging was easy with mean score of 3.20(SD=.814). However, item 12 which stated that learning Social Studies via whatsapp is convenient has the lowest mean score of 2.70 (SD=.978) followed by item 2

‘learning Social Studies via whatsapp is unlike real classroom teaching with the mean score of 2.73 (SD=.924). On average the mean score of all items is 3.01 (SD=.7904), all the items showed that the students agreed to all the items and indicated that whatsapp is an interactive medium which allows for more issues to be discussed and allows the students to interact with their lecturers freely.

**Table 3: Differences in the Perception of Male and Female on use of WhatsApp**

Sex	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Female	79	66.20	12.325	1.38668
Male	135	64.36	11.692	1.00637

Table 3 showed the perceptions of pre-service Social Studies teachers on the use of whatsapp in their Social Studies learning based on gender. The table shows that male has the higher usage of whatsapp in their Social Studies learning with mean score of 66.20(SD=12.325) followed closely by the female with mean score of 64.36

(SD=11.693) with a merging of 1.84 between them. This shows that both the male and female were familiar in their usage of whatsapp application for the Social Studies learning, although the male has higher usage of whatsapp than female.

**Table 4: Benefits of WhatsApp to the Pre-service Social Studies teachers**

S/N	Benefits of WhatsApp to the student	N	Mean	SD
1.	I found that WhatsApp is useful in my Social Studies learning.	212	3.12	.854
2.	The use of WhatsApp increased my awareness on social issues.	207	3.08	.929
3.	Using WhatsApp has effectively improved my skills of critical thinking and inquiry.	210	2.80	.957
4.	My performance in Social Studies was improved by the use WhatsApp	214	2.62	.955
5.	Interaction via WhatsApp helped me to become active in discussing issues with my mates.	214	3.06	.867
6.	Interaction via WhatsApp helped me to increase my confidence level in interacting with others.	214	2.95	.897
7.	In future, I will use WhatsApp in learning Social Studies	212	2.67	.945
8.	I will not stop using WhatsApp in my future Civic Education	214	2.85	1.077
	Total	214	2.87	5.147

The results of table 4 above shows the pre-service perception on the benefits of WhatsApp application in Social Studies teaching. Responses to item 1 which stated that 'I found that WhatsApp is useful in my Social Studies learning recorded the highest mean score of 3.12 (SD=.854), followed by item 2 which stated that 'the use of WhatsApp increased my awareness on social issues' with the mean score 8.08 (SD=.929). However, item 4 which stated that 'my performance in Social Studies was improved by the use of WhatsApp' had the lowest mean score of 2.62 (SD=.955) followed by item 7 which stated that 'in future I will use WhatsApp in learning Social Studies with mean score of 2.67 (SD=.945). The standard deviation shows closeness of all the item tested. The respondents also agreed to item 3,5,6,8 in the benefits of WhatsApp to Social Studies teaching and learning. On the average the means scores of the respondents is 2.87 (SD=5.147) this shows that the respondents agreed that WhatsApp has enhanced their learning of Social Studies.

### Discussion

The result of the research question one revealed that respondents engaged in the use of WhatsApp as a medium of learning Social Studies and they find WhatsApp very pleasant to use, as it is very easy for messaging and interacting with their colleagues. This supported the findings of Levent (2017) who found out that WhatsApp is more effective for increased the success learning environment and that students develop positive opinions towards the use of WhatsApp in their courses. This finding might be due to the fact that lecturers now use the medium to interact with the students which encourage them to interact with their lecturers freely. The result of the research questions 2 shows that both male and female has slight difference in the usage and their perception of WhatsApp as a tool that increases students' participation and interaction on issues related to class discussion. This submission is supported by the findings of Kant (2018) who found out that Female students were on high level of attitude in comparison to male student

and that both genders had same perceptions towards using Whatsapp. The slight difference in the perception of the students base on gender can be as a result of the fact that male students like to express their views when they are under disguise such as using WhatsApp platform. The result of research questions 3 shows that the respondents were of the opinion that WhatsApp application in their courses encourages interactions and helped them to increase confidence in interacting with others. This finding is supported by Malecela (2016) who found out that WhatsApp could be helpful in facilitating learning and aid students communication with others; instructor, thus encouraging collaborative learning and access to and sharing of educational information.

### Conclusion

The findings from this study showed that pre-service Social Studies teachers have found WhatsApp very pleasant to use as it can aid their interactions with their colleagues and lecturers. Female students recorded slightly higher level of attitude in comparison to male student, however, both genders had same perceptions towards using Whatsapp and it has helped the pre-service Social Studies teachers in building self confidence in interacting with others. The researchers can therefore conclude that Social Studies pre-service teachers have positive perceptions towards the applications of WhatsApp in the teaching and learning of Social Studies.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings drawn from this study, it is recommended that

1. Lecturers should engaged the students more in the teaching and learning of Social Studies using WhatsApp platform.
2. In reducing the time that the students use WhatsApp for un-necessary things, lecturers should from time to time engaged them on current issues and give assignment on WhatsApp platform. This will enable the lecturers to give feedback on students activities from time to time.

3. Government can encourage the students by them with android phones that will have whatsapp install on it, this will help to promote active and interactive learning among the students.

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