

# Effectiveness of WhatsApp: A Social Media Tool for Student's Activities in Saudi Arabia

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to propose a method which is to use the WhatsApp social media tool, as one of the teaching and learning strategies for the purpose of active, engaging and interaction among students and teachers in a course in the Hail University (UoH), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The scope of this article is not only limited to enhance interaction with students in a classroom, but also to discover the effectiveness of this new technique outside the classroom as an additional guide. This article also finds that the method has two types of direct impacts both in classroom engagement and utilization outside the classroom, among students and instructor. The proposed method is initially implemented with 13 closed end survey questionnaires among 75 Computer Science & Engineering students based on the view of students use and availability of social media usage. T-test sample-based methods are used to measure the performance of the proposed hypothesis and the result indicates that WhatsApp is one the best possible effective tools for enhancing interaction among students and teachers.

## KEYWORDS

Facilitator Learning, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Social Media Usage, Teaching and Learning, University of Hail, WhatsApp in Education

## INTRODUCTION

With the recent trend, the use of WhatsApp as a social communication in school, college and universities in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia is tremendously growing (Alabdulkareem, 2015, Al-Khalifa, 2013). The WhatsApp has been invented as an alternative solution to SMS by its inventor Jan Koum, meanwhile, more than 1 Billion people in over 180 countries use WhatsApp as a social media tool for transmitting documents (WhatsApp, 2016). Due to the reason of ubiquitous, simplicity and less costly, this tool is becoming more popular and an effective educational tool in teaching and learning in many universities in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This paper, aims to propose WhatsApp social media tool as an additional method of teaching & learning at the UoH. One of the main findings of this paper is that the usage of WhatsApp social network can be applied in two ways: in the classroom and outside the classroom. In a blended learning course, the use of social media will be benefited as a discussion room and enhancing interaction in the classroom. On the other hand, the

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use of social media outside of the class will be able to increase more engagement between students and instructors as well as among students themselves. This will grow the interest and positiveness of the course subject. It may also benefit to enhance the comprehensive of the course. Besides those, the collaboration between the groups will be encouraged. This proposed method of using WhatsApp social media technology is useful due to instant connection between the groups. Eventually, this technology can be act as an alternative solution in support of limited access of e-learning media. The rests the paper is organized as follows.

The next section presents a brief literature review of the current development of use and effectiveness of WhatsApp in the universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). After that, this article explores some new ideas and explains various aspect of the proposed method. Then this article discussed the methods to validate the proposed idea and show results based on the student's view at the University of Hail. Lastly, the article concludes with future enhancement and the limitation of the proposed method.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Facebook, an online social networking media become popular after it's launched on February 4, 2004, by Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook, 2017). From the past decade, Facebook gain popularity in educational institute worldwide and been applied as an additional teaching and learning method. In a study of Ontario, Canada, Fewkes (2014) reported that 75% of a school student of 63 populations engaged with Facebook for educational purpose. In another research, Wang (2012) stated that teacher used Facebook for various purposes such as announcement, sharing resources and weekly session organization with students. Moreover, they also reported that the student themselves used Facebook for their group assignment. Numerous research of using Facebook for supporting student's and teacher's interaction had seen during the past decades such as (Al-Mashaqbeh, 2016, Ha, 2014, Wang, 2013). A detail literature review on the usefulness of Facebook for education application has been seen in Wang (2012).

In the recent literature, It is found that WhatsApp is replacing Facebook (WhatsApp 1 billion users, 2017) and there are few trending research found for the application of WhatsApp in educational purpose worldwide such as (Fawareh, Priyono, 2016, Aifan, Alabdulkareem, 2015, Yeboah, Bouhnik, Amry, 2014, Al-Khalifa, 2013). This research is more focusing to explore the effectiveness of WhatsApp in KSA and following sub-section presents the discussion on the existing literature.

Middle East country, especially in KSA is motivating people in the nation towards the development of education in teaching and learning method of the Vision 2030. Recent trend using the social media application such as Whatsapp is increasing for the method of teaching and learning in the Colleges and in the Universities and even in the schools. In KSA, students (mostly female) are prone to seek knowledge and resource through online may be due to the social barrier for acquiring knowledge from outsource in physically. In the recent literature, Barhoumi (2015) explored his idea to use Whatsapp as a tool for supporting a blended learning course in Taibah University, KSA. The author discovered that the blended method which involves "70% face-to-face course work+ 30% WhatsApp discussion..." provides more positive attitude results rather than the "...100% face-face-discussion..." based method. However, his approach will be very useful in blended courses whereas in 100% traditional classroom based courses "30% WhatsApp discussion" can be applied as an additional facilitator method. On the other hand, Alabdulkareem (2015) showed details result on 46 questionnaire samples which were experimented based on the opinion of 664 numbers of students and 57 numbers of teachers in the first semester of the school year 1435/1436H (2014/2015). In his paper, it is found that the students are 'strongly agreed' of the Q37: enhancement of interaction between the student and the teacher with a mean value of 3.89 whereas 2.21 mean value indicated from the instructors. The difference of mean value was 1.68 between the opinion of students and teachers. In another study, Fawareh (2016) stated that the students are more motivated and participated using social media tools in the

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