



The role of Whatsapp as a communication media for indkos students

Muhamad Ardan Anuggerah*, Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, Indonesia

Farida Nurfalih, Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, Indonesia

*Email for Correspondence: arddelonge16@gmail.com farida.nurfalih@ugj.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

boarding house students

communication

information

interaction

WhatsApp

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of WhatsApp as a communication medium for boarding house students. Data collection involved observations, interviews, and documentation with three students living in boarding houses in Cirebon City who regularly use WhatsApp in their daily activities. The results of the research show that WhatsApp has an important role in facilitating the dissemination of information among boarding school students. The frequency, tone, and content of interactions on WhatsApp have an impact on social bonds, social cohesion, sense of belonging, and conflict resolution. In addition, the negative aspects of WhatsApp use, such as miscommunication, digital conflict, or issues of privacy and trust, and how these impact interpersonal relationships among a group living group. Furthermore, it lays the groundwork for future research on the integration of digital tools in improving the quality of life and communication efficiency in residential educational settings, contributing to the broader discourse on technology's impact on education and student well-being.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.

INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, communication technology has developed rapidly in disseminating information digitally to a wide audience. These developments provide a lot of convenience in conveying information from one party to another, allowing for the smooth and fast dissemination of information without many obstacles. In addition, advances in communication technology in the modern era can now be felt anywhere and anytime.

New media as a communication technology that involves computers (either mainframes, PCs, or notebooks) that allow users to interact with fellow users or with desired information. New media includes technologies that enable digital interactivity, such as graphics with web links (Cheung et al., 2022; Jarzyna, 2021; Wang, 2021). New media also created a new form of communication known as online communication. The term is used to describe the state of affairs between computerized and networked digital communication technologies (Wiriany & Pratami, 2019).

Meanwhile, McQuail classified new media into four categories. First, the medium of interpersonal communication, which includes telephone, mobile phone, and email. Second, interactive play media such as computers, video games, and online games. Third, information search media that includes portals or search engines. Fourth, a media of collective participation that allows the use of the internet to share and exchange information, opinions, and experiences. The medium also allows users to build relationships through computers, where its use is not only a tool, but can also evoke feelings and emotions (Kurmia, 2005).

Social Media, as a product of new media today has a very important role in Indonesia, because many Indonesian people use Social Media, this is in line with the data published by DataReportal in February 2023 that social media users in Indonesia were 167.0 million users in January 2023 (Kemp, 2023). If you look at the data, social media has become an important thing in society because 167.0 million Indonesians use social media. Thus, many Indonesian people are connected and interact with each other through social media. This is in line with the conclusion that social media is a platform on the internet that allows users to present themselves, interact, collaborate, share information, communicate with other users, and form social bonds virtually (Nasrullah, 2015).

The existence of social media is very important in the eyes of the public. There are various types of social media that are widely used in Indonesia, based on research conducted by Simon Kemp in 2023, users of

several applications such as Facebook are used by 119.9 million people, then Instagram is used by 89.15 million users, Youtube with 139.0 million users, Tiktok with 109.0 million people. In addition, of the many social media that exist, there is one social media, namely Whatsapp, based on data created by Demandstage In its research in 2024, the number of users Whatsapp in Indonesia to reach 112 million people in January 2024. (Shewale, 2024) Based on this data, it proves that there are a lot of users Whatsapp in Indonesia.

Whatsapp, which is a new media product, is an application for exchanging messages through smartphones based on internet data, in addition to exchanging messages individually, WhatsApp can also exchange messages in groups or groups, besides that WhatsApp also provides face-to-face phone services one or with several people (Suryani et al., 2022). Zakirman & Rahayu (2018) revealed that the most popular chat application among students today is WhatsApp. Some of the main reasons why many students use WhatsApp include its ease of use, practicality, efficiency, and ease of use.

Based on the official Whatsapp website, there are various features that support communication for students living in boarding houses. These features include: free messaging, audio and video calls with friends and family; the existence of WhatsApp groups that allow gathering friends or family in one place of the same interaction; sharing images, videos, and voice messages that can be viewed once or repeatedly; send the required documents; and a location sharing feature that is useful for notifying fellow residents of boarding houses.

Research conducted by Hartatik & Lestari (2021) shows that the use of WhatsApp in the learning process can effectively support the needs of learning communication between lecturers and students, students and lecturers, and between students. Then, a study by Sitingjak (2017) shows that Social and Political Science students at USU prefer and feel comfortable using Line Group Chat as a communication medium to disseminate lecture information. In addition, research conducted by Sari (2018) shows that WhatsApp plays a very important role as an information media in providing and disseminating information to others. Thus, there is a difference from the previous research with the research conducted by the author, namely that social media, including WhatsApp, has a very important role in society. However, in context, the focus is on the role of WhatsApp for students living in boarding houses. The author emphasizes the role of WhatsApp as a communication medium for boarding school students.

Based on the results of observations, the researcher found several problems experienced by boarding school students, such as financial problems, health, and boarding school facilities. These three problems are often faced by boarding house residents and can be overcome by asking for help from others through online communication. In the past, communicating online was very difficult due to technological limitations. However, nowadays, online communication is very easy to do, one of which is through WhatsApp. From this explanation, the researcher is interested in knowing how the role of WhatsApp as a communication medium for boarding school students.

The research contributes to understanding the role of digital communication platforms, specifically WhatsApp, in addressing common challenges faced by boarding school students, such as financial issues, health concerns, and inadequate facilities. It highlights the transition from traditional to modern communication methods, showcasing how advancements in technology have facilitated easier and more efficient online interactions. This study provides valuable insights into the practical applications of WhatsApp as a medium for seeking assistance and resolving problems within the boarding school context, contributing to the broader discourse on technology's impact on education and student well-being. Additionally, it lays the groundwork for future research on the integration of digital tools in improving the quality of life and communication efficiency in residential educational settings.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method to explore the role of WhatsApp as a communication medium for boarding house students. Data collection involved observations, interviews, and documentation with three students living in boarding houses in the Cirebon area. The researcher also conducted a review of relevant books and journals to support the study, incorporating insights from previous research. Triangulation was utilized to ensure data validity, combining observations and interviews with fellow boarding house residents.

The research focused on students residing in boarding houses in Cirebon City who regularly use WhatsApp in their daily activities. These boarding houses, typically inhabited by students or workers away from their homes, provided a contextual backdrop for analyzing how WhatsApp facilitates communication and problem-solving in this unique living environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

New media as a communication technology that involves computers (either mainframes, PCs, or notebooks) that allow users to interact with fellow users or with desired information (Wiryany & Pratami,

2019). WhatsApp, as a new media product, allows its users to interact with fellow WhatsApp users and receive information with the support of the available internet network.

The Role of Whatsapp as a Media for Interaction with Indekos Students

According to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, interaction is a matter of taking action, relating, influencing each other; between relationships. Interaction is an activity that allows the creation of relationships between individuals and each other, which is realized through the practice of communication (Ahmad, 2014). In the context of WhatsApp, interaction is a relationship between two people who send messages to each other.

The following are the results of interviews with resource persons regarding the role of WhatsApp as a medium of interaction for boarding school students.

Resource person 1, Shella Nurazizah: "The interaction that occurred using WhatsApp between me and my roommates, such as an invitation to go to campus together, this is just when my friend and I want to go to college. I chatted with my friends via private message on WhatsApp to leave together. In my opinion, the positive role of interaction through WhatsApp is like the convenience of chatting with other people, continuing to send photos and videos, and making phone and video calls. This can also be used to overcome the problem of boarding school students, this convenience can be used when boarding school students are in distress and need help from other parties. For example, if I am sick, this convenience can make me quickly ask for help from others via WhatsApp. The negative side of interaction through WhatsApp is that the most, like a long reply from the person I am chatting with, or it can also be when the call or video call is not answered with the person I call. The problem, in my opinion, is that it is important to interact with others. To overcome the problem of boarding school students, this is a big loss because it results in being late when I am in a hurry to do something"



Figure 1. Interaction of Resource Person 1
Source: Shella Nurazizah, 2024

The first speaker explained that WhatsApp plays an important role as a means of interaction for boarding school students. Through WhatsApp, resource persons can easily arrange a meeting to go to campus together. The resource person also mentioned various benefits of using WhatsApp, such as the ease of sending messages, as well as sharing photos and videos between boarding house residents. These advantages can be used to overcome various problems faced by boarding school students, for example when they need help while sick. With the existing facilities, boarding house residents can quickly ask for help from boarding house friends. However, there are also downsides to interacting via WhatsApp, such as messages that take a long time to be answered by other boarders, as well as audio and video calls that take a long time to answer or even not answered at all. This is considered detrimental because it causes delays when the resource person is in need of something.

Resource person 2, Achmad Rizqon: "If my interaction is through whatsapp, the richest person asks for help from a boarding house friend to ask for a package when I am outside with a food package for me to eat, the same as joking with a boarding house friend who asks for such news, besides that, yes, it's normal at most, asking if the boarding house gate is locked, it's not that rich. The positive side of interaction through WhatsApp is that it's easy to chat with other people, and the features are simple, many people may understand the same features. The downside is, I've been blocked by my roommates, the reason is that until now I've been angry, but now thank God the block has been opened"



Figure 2. Interaction of Resource Person 2
Source: Achmad Rizqon, 2024

The second resource person explained that WhatsApp acts as an interaction medium to ask for help, such as asking for help to temporarily store packages left outside the room when the resource person returns home, WhatsApp is also useful for asking for help buying food needed by the resource person. In addition, WhatsApp also functions as a medium for interaction with resource persons to joke with other boarding house residents. The resource person also explained the positive side when interacting through WhatsApp, such as WhatsApp is easy to use and has features that are easy to understand. The negative side when interacting via WhatsApp is that the resource person has been blocked for no reason by other boarding house residents.

Resource person 3, Sindi Solihatun Adha: "The whatsapp interaction that I do with other boarding house children that I know the most, when fasting is to tell each other suhoor, like an appointment to wake each other up, the same promise to buy suhoor together, and then I have also asked for medicine when I am sick with other boarding house residents. On the positive side, my interaction through whatsapp is that whatsapp is easy to use as a place of communication, it's not complicated, there are many features. The downside is, before I saw the messages sent by other people, they were pulled in a hurry, so I haven't seen the messages, sometimes it makes me curious about the content of the chats."



Figure 3. Interaction of Resource Person 3
Source: Sindi Solihatun Adha, 2024

The third resource person explained that the role of WhatsApp as a medium of interaction includes making promises to wake up during suhoor and jointly purchase suhoor meals. In addition, the resource person used WhatsApp to ask for medicine from a roommate when he was sick. The resource person also highlighted the positive side of using WhatsApp as an interaction medium, namely its ease of communication, uncomplicated, and has many supporting features. The downside of interacting through WhatsApp is when receiving an unread message but has been recalled. This made the resource person curious and disrupted communication.

Based on the results of the three interviews, WhatsApp as a communication technology that allows users to interact with each other shows an important role in facilitating interaction between students living in boarding houses. For example, when a student is sick, WhatsApp is used to ask for medicine from other boarding house residents. In addition, WhatsApp is also used to ask for help saving temporary packages left

outside when one of the speakers returns home, also to ask about the fact that the main gate at the boarding house has not been locked, as a medium of interaction WhatsApp also plays a role in going to college together. But behind the positive side based on the results of the interview which is found from interacting via WhatsApp, there are also negative sides such as:

- 1) Slow response: Other users often take a long time to reply to messages.
- 2) Message recall: Other users can pull unread messages, disrupting communication.
- 3) Block without reason: Other users can block for no apparent reason, thus cutting off communication.
- 4) Difficulty in calls: Audio or video calls often take a long time to answer, or even not answered at all.

As for the results of the researcher's search through the whatsapp.com site, whatsapp offers various features that can help improve interaction and communication between boarding house residents, including:

- 1) Unlimited Communication: Users can exchange text messages, photos, videos, and voice messages for free and easily, anytime and anywhere.
- 2) Free Calls: Make free voice and video calls, both individually and in groups, for more personalized and warm communication.
- 3) Stickers and Gifs: in addition to words, you can also express using stickers or gifs.
- 4) One-Look Feature: Share special moments by sending photos and videos that can only be viewed once by the recipient, adding privacy.
- 5) WhatsApp Web: Access WhatsApp on a computer through WhatsApp Web, allowing users to stay connected even if the phone is off.

These features can help boarding house residents to get to know each other by strengthening interactions, building community by forming groups to discuss with each other, increasing a sense of security and helping each other by providing support in emergency situations.

By making optimal use of WhatsApp features, boarding house residents can build closer relationships, increase a sense of family, and create a comfortable and pleasant boarding house environment.

The Role of Whatsapp as Information Media for Indekos Students

Information is data that has been processed so that it has meaning for the recipient, and can be in the form of useful facts or values (Maulana et al., 2018). Information can be called a message, which occurs because there is a delivery and reception of a message. The existence of information creates a relationship between the message bearer and the message recipient. When discussing the relationship between the sender and the recipient of the message, the level of relationship formed between the two parties can be identified (Sari, 2018).

The following are the results of interviews with resource persons about WhatsApp as an information medium for boarding school students.

Resource person 1, Shella Nurazizah: "The information I received from whatsapp is mostly through a group from the boarding house, such as being careful if you store the motorbike, the motorbike is locked for fear that someone will steal it and give info for those who have not paid the boarding house to pay the boarding house quickly. The boarding house mother has also given information about the place of the package from online shopping in the same place as the boarding house, so in my boarding house, if the courier sends the package, there is a special place, now with the boarding house mother the place is saved to her house during Eid, because the boarding house is quiet for fear of being lost. That's the same as giving information that there are empty rooms, all offer to the boarding house residents maybe there are friends who want to stay. The positive thing about the dissemination of information through whatsapp is that the richest person is easy to see important announcements at the boarding house, so because there is a group provided by whatsapp, I just need to open a whatsapp group to see the information in my boarding group. It was also easy to continue to enter the group, just ask the boarding house mother to be included, but I was immediately admitted to the boarding house. Also, this group is free, so it doesn't burden me too much as a boarding house. Also, this group is very useful for disseminating information in my boarding house, especially those on the same campus as me, even though they are different faculties."



Figure 4. Resource Person Information 1

Source: Shella Nurazizah, 2024

The first resource person stated that WhatsApp functions as a communication medium to receive information from boarding house owners through WhatsApp groups. The information received includes things such as maintaining the vehicle, package storage by the boarding house owner, and the availability of vacant rooms for rent as well as information regarding the payment of room rent. The resource person also emphasized that there is a positive aspect in receiving information through WhatsApp, namely the ease of viewing information available in WhatsApp groups.

Resource person 2, Achmad Rizqon: "If at my boarding house, the most if there is information about the boarding house, the boarding house owner sends a broadcast message, like at that time there was a loss of a motorbike near the boarding house, the boarding house owner immediately informed all boarding house residents through a broadcast message to always be careful when storing the motorbike. The same other information most boarding house friends told me that there was a lost motorbike near the boarding house. The positive side of receiving information via whatsapp for me is that it's just as fast as it spreads, just like interaction, no hassle either"

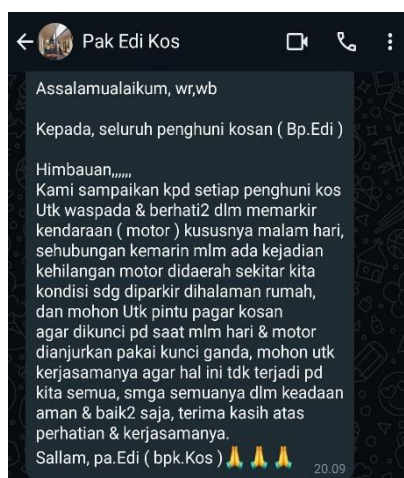


Figure 5. Resource Person Information 2

Source: Achmad Rizqon, 2024

The second resource person stated that WhatsApp plays an important role as an information medium by providing notifications about vehicle safety at boarding houses. This was caused by the loss of vehicles in the area. The advantage of spreading information through WhatsApp is the speed of dissemination and the ease of uncomplicated communication.

Resource person 3, Sindi Solihatun Adha: "If the information I received via whatsapp is rich for boarding school students who return home to put sandals and shoes so that they are stolen, besides that there has been a wallet left on the motorbike, now someone gives information if there is a wallet left behind, it is enough to help the rich like that, especially now that theft is rampant in boarding houses. The positive side is that it makes people know, even though I'm outside the boarding house or I'm in a dormitory, so I know the same information, and also for those who spread the information, just open whatsapp and keep in touch with the person, we don't have to find out."



Figure 6. Resource Person Information 3
Source: Sindi Solihatun Adha, 2024

The third resource person stated that WhatsApp has an important role as an information medium by providing notifications and reminders for boarding house residents to take care of their belongings. The resource person also emphasized that WhatsApp plays a very important role in disseminating information because it allows the dissemination of information anywhere and anytime.

Based on the results of the three interviews, WhatsApp as a communication technology that allows users to interact with the desired information shows an important role in facilitating the dissemination of information among students living in boarding houses. For example, WhatsApp is used as a medium of information between boarding house owners and residents, such as reminding residents to pay rent, reminding residents to take care of valuables such as motorcycles and shoes, and providing information about the availability of vacant rooms. This is possible if there are students who want to move rooms or have friends who want to rent a boarding house. Some of the positive things in disseminating information through WhatsApp include the speed of dissemination, ease of use, and the ability to disseminate information anywhere and anytime.

Based on the results of the observations made, there are several factors why WhatsApp acts as an information medium for boarding school students, because WhatsApp provides features that facilitate the dissemination of information, as traced through the [whatsapp.com](https://www.whatsapp.com) website:

- 1) WhatsApp groups can gather friends or family in the same communication platform. In the context of boarding houses, WhatsApp groups are used to disseminate information between boarding house owners and residents, as well as between fellow boarding house residents.
- 2) Community, a community feature that helps users organize related groups as well as make announcements in one place and open each group easily.
- 3) Broadcast messages, users can use broadcast lists to send messages and provide information to multiple contacts at the same time.
- 4) WhatsApp status, used to send messages, photos, and videos that automatically disappear after 24 hours. In the context of boarding houses, residents or owners can send notifications through WhatsApp Status, which can be seen by other residents as long as they have kept each other's contacts.

Based on the results of the observations made, the author noted several advantages in communicating via WhatsApp. The WhatsApp application makes it easier for users to share photos and videos with each other and make audio and video calls, thus facilitating communication between boarding school students. WhatsApp is also free and easy to use for students living in boarding houses. In addition, the use of quota by WhatsApp is relatively small. WhatsApp also serves as a medium for disseminating information between boarding school students, whether between boarding school students, or between boarding house owners and boarding house residents. However, behind the advantages, there are also disadvantages, such as notifications that sometimes do not come in and problems that can occur during audio or video calls, such as disconnected calls or having to reconnect.

CONCLUSION

WhatsApp plays a vital role in facilitating communication among boarding house residents, offering tools for arranging meetings, seeking help, sharing media, and maintaining social bonds. Its features, such as free messaging, voice and video calls, and creative elements like stickers and GIFs, enable users to address daily challenges and foster a sense of community. Despite its benefits, drawbacks such as slow responses, message recalls, and technical difficulties in calls can hinder communication. Additionally, WhatsApp is an effective platform for disseminating important information, including rent reminders and security updates, through its group and broadcast features. To optimize its role, future research could explore comparisons with other platforms, the impact on social dynamics, challenges in digital communication, and its influence on

mental well-being. Investigating demographic variations, advanced feature integration, and emergency communication capabilities could further enhance its functionality and effectiveness in shared living contexts.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, N. (2014). Komunikasi Sebagai Proses Interaksi Dan Perubahan Sosial Dalam Dakwah. *Jurnal Komunikasi Penyiaran Islam*, 2(2), 17–34.
- Cheung, M. L., Leung, W. K. S., Aw, E. C. X., & Koay, K. Y. (2022). “I follow what you post!”: The role of social media influencers’ content characteristics in consumers’ online brand-related activities (COBRAs). *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 66. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2022.102940>
- Hartatik, S. F., & Lestari, H. D. (2021). Penggunaan WhatsApp sebagai Media Komunikasi Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris. *Jurnal Nomosleca*, 7(1), 45–56. <https://doi.org/10.26905/nomosleca.v7i1.5535>
- Jarzyna, C. L. (2021). Parasocial Interaction, the COVID-19 Quarantine, and Digital Age Media. *Human Arenas*, 4(3). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-020-00156-0>
- Kemp, S. (2023). *DIGITAL 2023: INDONESIA*. [https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-indonesia?rq=internet use indonesia](https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-indonesia?rq=internet%20use%20indonesia)
- Kurmia, N. (2005). Perkembangan Teknologi Komunikasi dan Media Baru: Implikasi terhadap Teori Komunikasi. *Mediator: Jurnal Komunikasi*, 6(2), 291–296. <https://doi.org/10.29313/mediator.v6i2.1197>
- Maulana, A., Sadikin, M., & Izzuddin, A. (2018). Implementasi Sistem Informasi Manajemen Inventaris Berbasis Web Di Pusat Teknologi Informasi Dan Komunikasi – BPPT. *Setrum : Sistem Kendali-Tenaga-Elektronika-Telekomunikasi-Komputer*, 7(1), 182. <https://doi.org/10.36055/setrum.v7i1.3727>
- Nasrullah, R. (2015). *MEDIA SOSIAL* (N. Nurbaya Siti, Ed.). Simbiosis Rekatama Media.
- Sari, S. (2018). Kegunaan Whatapps Sebagai Media Iinformasi dan Media Pembelajaran Pada Mahasiswa Ilmu Komunikasi STISIP Persada Bunda. *Medium*, 6(2), 16–26. [https://doi.org/10.25299/medium.2018.vol6\(2\).2408](https://doi.org/10.25299/medium.2018.vol6(2).2408)
- Shewale, R. (2024). *WhatsApp Statistics In 2024 (User Demographics & Revenue)*. <https://www.demandsage.com/whatsapp-statistics/>
- Sitinjak, E. (2017). LINE Group Chat sebagai Media Komunikasi. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi FLOW*, 4, 1–11.
- Suryani, Y., Istianingrum, R., & Fatin, I. (2022). Tindak Tutur Kebencian dalam Status Whatsapp. *Suar Betang*, 17(1), 113–122. <https://doi.org/10.26499/surbet.v17i1.330>
- Wang, C. L. (2021). New frontiers and future directions in interactive marketing: Inaugural Editorial. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 15(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-03-2021-270>
- Wiryany, D., & Pratami, T. V. (2019). Kekuatan Media Baru Youtube Dalam Membentuk Budaya Populer. *ArtComm : Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Desain*, 2(02), 25–30. <https://doi.org/10.37278/artcomm.v2i02.199>
- Zakirman, Z., & Rahayu, C. (2018). Popularitas WhatsApp sebagai media komunikasi dan berbagi informasi akademik mahasiswa. *Shaut Al-Maktabah Jurnal Perpustakaan, Arsip Dan Dokumentasi*, 10(1).