Business Studies Teachers' Utilization of WhatsApp For Instructional Purposes In Selected Schools In South Africa

*Nduduzo Brian Gcabashe & **Oyinlola Omolara Adebola
*University of South Africa, RSA
**University of the Free State, South Africa
Corresponding author: gcababn@unisa.ac.za

ABSTRACT

Social media continues to infiltrate different sectors, including the education sector. As a result, teachers employ various social media tools, such as WhatsApp in their instructional practices. This study investigated the integration of WhatsApp by Business Studies teachers from selected rural-based schools in South Africa. This qualitative study is located within interpretive paradigm. Diffusion of Innovation Theory was used as the theoretical lens of the study. Purposive sampling was adopted to select three Business Studies teachers to participate in the study. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data, and the data was analyzed thematically. The study found that Business Studies teachers utilize WhatsApp in their instructional practices. However, not all learners have full access to smartphones. The study also revealed that teachers believe that using WhatsApp contributes to learners' learning. The study recommended that the utilization of WhatsApp in Business Studies classrooms be strengthened to enhance learners' learning. The study concluded that Business Studies teachers embrace WhatsApp in their instructional practices as a tool to enhance their teaching. Therefore, the study recommends that the Department of Basic Education formulate a framework that would guide teachers when integrating social media into their instructional practices.

Keywords: Business Studies, Teacher, WhatsApp, Rural-based, Teaching, Learning.

1 INTRODUCTION

Social media continues to infiltrate different sectors and aspects of life. Social media sites such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram enable people to collaborate, create communities and participate in different conversations and discussions (Mazana, 2018). The infiltration of social media is not limited to our daily lives, but it continuously changes the way knowledge is digested and taught in classrooms by providing teachers and learners with new avenues for communication, curriculum delivery and learning (Van Doorn & Eklund, 2013). Nowadays, teachers from both affluent and low-resourced schools face the challenge of utilizing technology resources, including social media, to enrich learners' learning. Most under-resourced schools are in rural areas, and they lack sophisticated educational technologies that can be used to improve learners' learning (Mahaye, 2020). The easily accessible and affordable technological resource for both teachers and learners in rural-based schools is WhatsApp. WhatsApp enables teachers to easily share teaching and learning materials (Budianto & Arifani, 2021). The utilization of WhatsApp in rural-based schools for instructional purposes was also heightened by the outbreak of COVID-19 (Nsabayezu et al., 2020). Currently, most teachers in rural-based schools, including Business Studies teachers, continue to use WhatsApp to support their pedagogical practices (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021).

2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do Business Studies teachers utilize WhatsApp in their instructional practices in rural-based secondary schools?
- What challenges do Business Studies teachers encounter when using WhatsApp for instructional purposes?
- How does the integration of WhatsApp enhance teachers' instructional practices?

3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Scholars regard the integration of ICT in teaching and learning process as the vehicle for quality education (Makgato & Awolisi, 2019; Tariq Zafari, 2019). In other words, meaningful ICT integration in teaching and learning has the potential to ensure that learners access quality education. Despite this critical role of ICT tools in teaching and learning, rural-based schools in South Africa are still struggling to fully integrate ICT tools for instructional purposes. This is due to a lack of adequate devices such as computers, a lack of ICT infrastructure such as computer laboratories, poor connectivity, and the high cost of installing ICT tools in the classrooms (Alice et al., 2016; Mathevula & Uwizeyimana, 2014). This results in a digital divide between schools in affluent areas and those in rural areas because the level of ICT integration is not the same (Soomro et al., 2020). To mitigate the low level of ICT integration in rural-based schools, some teachers resort to the utilization of WhatsApp to enhance learners' learning experiences. Although some teachers do not fully embrace the utilization of WhatsApp for instructional purposes, studies suggest that WhatsApp plays an important role in facilitating learners' learning (Vadachalam & Chimbo, 2017). Therefore, researchers deemed it necessary to investigate how Business Studies teachers utilize WhatsApp to enhance the teaching and learning process in rural-based schools.

4 LITERATURE REVIEW

Previously, WhatsApp has been seen as a mere social network platform mainly used for socialization (Nsabayezu et al., 2020). However, in recent years teachers have adopted it to strengthen their teaching practices. This is because WhatsApp empowers learners to connect with their teachers and peers by sharing audio, videos, text messages and documents (La Hanisi et al., 2018). WhatsApp enables teachers to maintain interactions with their learners even beyond school hours. Nsabayezu et al. (2020) assert that WhatsApp plays a vital role in promoting a noble learner-teacher relationship and a good virtual learning environment. For subjects such as Business Studies that necessitate ongoing collaboration between the teacher and learners, WhatsApp may provide an appropriate platform for discussions. Business Studies teachers can create a WhatsApp group to conduct discussions. For instance, as Business Studies teachers prepare for the next lesson, they can share key concepts and questions to learners via the subject's WhatsApp group, allowing each learner to go through the concepts and questions before class time. The class time can be used for active discussions and interactive activities in the classroom while the teacher facilitates learners' knowledge sharing and construction (Panopto, 2021).

Furthermore, the integration of WhatsApp in teaching and learning encourages teachers to adopt learner-centred teaching methods, where learners are at the centre of their own learning. Therefore, it encourages active learners' involvement (Mistar & Embi, 2016). This suggests that integrating WhatsApp in education enables learners to be fully engaged in their learning activities. If WhatsApp is integrated, learning may happen at learners' pace, and learners can

be able to decide how and what to learn (Khan & Kumar, 2022). For instance, Business Studies teachers can disseminate content to be learned in the classroom using the subject's WhatsApp group. All learners can have access to the content and independently learn the content without teachers' intervention. WhatsApp group enables all learners to participate in a discussion and provide or receive immediate response to or from their peers (Zarei, 2020). Business Studies learners can participate in a discussion over a WhatsApp group and discuss the content provided to them by the teacher. In the following day, during Business Studies session, learners can make oral presentations based on the content learned over a WhatsApp group. The teachers' role will be to facilitate learning as learners do oral presentations.

Conversely, some teachers are still skeptical of integrating WhatsApp into their classrooms. Those teachers believe that WhatsApp interferes with study time (Irfan & Dhimmar, 2019). The researchers argue that when teachers integrate WhatsApp, they should guide learners on the utilization of WhatsApp during teaching and learning. For instance, the teacher can develop the rules of a subject's WhatsApp group and emphasize to learners the role that WhatsApp can play in advancing and enriching their learning experiences. Nevertheless, guiding learners on the utilization of WhatsApp for learning can be difficult for some teachers because they might be unaware of the learning activities that can be supported by the integration of WhatsApp (Agustrianita, 2021). Furthermore, other teachers may have a negative perception towards using WhatsApp in their classrooms, which can dissuade them from applying it in their classroom practices.

Based on the literature reviewed above, most studies that have been conducted do not focus on the integration of WhatsApp in the teaching of Business Studies. For instance, Naidoo and Kopung

(2016) explored the use of WhatsApp in Mathematics learning. Furthermore, Nel and Marais (2020) investigated the use of WhatsApp by preservice teachers to explain the subject content to children during the Covid -19 pandemic. Nel and Marais (2020) were not specific to any particular subject. Lastly, Rwodzi, de Jager and Mpofu (2019) explored the innovative use of social media for teaching English in South African schools. Because of this existing gap in the literature, the researchers decided to conduct a study that investigates the use of WhatsApp by Business Studies teachers in selected rural-based secondary schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa.

4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted Everett Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory (Sahin, 2006) as its theoretical lens. This theory was originally designed as an explanatory structure for adopting technology in education and in the educational environment (Sarfo et al., 2016; Medlin, 2001). Rogers states that the diffusion process is seen when innovation is communicated via certain channel over time among a particular population across different geographical areas (Gyamfi & Gyaase, 2017). Within the context of this study, the innovation is WhatsApp used in the Business Studies teaching and learning process, while the channel is the school(s) where WhatsApp is adopted in the teaching and learning of Business Studies. The population comprises Business Studies teachers who adopt WhatsApp to enhance their instructional practices. This theory explains how an innovation, which may be about an idea, behaviour, or object, is adopted among the population (Mustafa & Al-Mothana, 2013). In other words, the adoption of the theory attempts to explain how Business Studies teachers adopt WhatsApp in their instructional practices.

Furthermore, the Diffusion of Innovation Theory proposes a five-stage decision process. These stage processes are

knowledge stage which is defined as an individual's awareness of innovation (technology) and having an idea of how such innovation (technology) works (Arkorful et al., 2021). For example, for Business Studies teachers to integrate WhatsApp in their instructional practices, they need to be aware of the innovation (WhatsApp) and know how WhatsApp works in education. The second stage is **persuasion**, where an individual can positively or negatively perceive innovation or technology (Hajara & Bukari, 2017). After being aware of WhatsApp and knowledgeable about how it works in the education context, Business Studies teachers may develop positive or negative attitudes toward WhatsApp integration in their instructional practices.

The third stage is the **decision stage,** where an individual chooses to adopt or reject the innovation based on the social perspective of individual (Rogers, 2003). In other words, Business Studies teachers who perceive WhatsApp as a useful tool in their instructional practices may adopt it, while those who have negative perceptions towards WhatsApp may reject it. The fourth stage is the **implementation stage,** where the innovation or technology is used (Arkorful et al., 2021). The implementation refers to the teachers' actual integration of WhatsApp in Business Studies teaching. Lastly, **the confirmation stage** is the final stage, where an individual evaluates his/her decision to adopt an innovation (Sherry, 2011). This may result in the individual continuing or rejecting the adoption of a particular innovation. At this stage, Business Studies teachers may evaluate their decision to adopt WhatsApp as a tool to enhance their instructional practices. After the evaluation, they may continue with integrating WhatsApp if they are convinced that it contributes positively to their instructional practices or reject it if it does not work for them.

4 METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the research methodology that was adopted in this study.

Research paradigm

This study is located within the interpretive paradigm. According to Christiansen et al. (2010), the interpretive paradigm aims to understand the world through the lens of the participants. In other words, when adopting interpretive paradigm, the researchers want to see the phenomenon under investigation through the eyes of the participants. Therefore, under the interpretive paradigm the participants take center stage as they are the ones who provide meaning to the phenomenon. In this study, the researchers got a chance to listen to the participants. The participants recounted their experiences of utilizing WhatsApp when teaching Business Studies. Furthermore, the participants gave an account of their challenges when using WhatsApp in their instructional practices. Lastly, since the study is located within the interpretive paradigm, the participants were afforded an opportunity to express their views on the influence of WhatsApp in their instructional practices.

Research Approach

Qualitative research approach was deemed suitable for this study because it describes and analyzes people's individual and collective social actions, thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Since the study investigates the utilization of WhatsApp by Business Studies teachers in rural-based secondary schools, the qualitative research approach enabled the researchers to gauge the views of the participants on the phenomenon. Mukhari (2016) asserts that the qualitative research approach allows the researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences. The qualitative research approach afforded researchers the

opportunity to understand how Business Studies teachers in the rural-based schools utilize WhatsApp in their instructional practices.

Research design

Since the study adopted interpretive paradigm and qualitative research approach, phenomenology research design was considered suitable for this study. Howe (1998) believes that phenomenology research design is compatible with pure qualitative research. Phenomenology research design is more concerned with studying experiences from the perspectives of individuals (Lester, 2004). The assertion by Lester (2004) corresponds with the aim of this study which investigates how Business Studies teachers in rural-based secondary schools utilize WhatsApp in their instructional practices. The researchers depended on the participants' experiences to understand the phenomenon. Employing phenomenology research design in the study was also backed by the view that phenomenology research design allows participants to recount their experiences regarding their utilization of WhatsApp in their instructional practices.

Sample and sampling technique

The study adopted a purposive sampling method. According to Cohen et al. (2011), purposive sampling is when the researcher chooses a sample based on their appropriateness for the study. For this study, three Business Studies teachers from three rural-based secondary schools in uMkhanyakude district were purposefully selected. The participants were selected because they are teaching Business Studies, in schools located in a rural based district (uMkhanyakude) and they utilize WhatsApp in their Business Studies classrooms. In other words, the selected three teachers met the inclusion criterion.

Data collection method(s)

The study adopted face-to-face individual semi-structured interviews to collect data. Creswell (2012) defines individual interviews as a data collection method in which the researcher asks questions and records responses from only one participant at a time. Cohen et al. (2011) have found the individual face-to-face interview method as the suitable data generation method for a qualitative study because it enables the participant to provide in-depth information on the phenomenon of interest. In this study, the face-to-face individual interview method was chosen because it allowed the researchers to ask probing questions to get rich data from the participants. Furthermore, face-to-face individual semi-structured interviews enabled Business Studies teachers (participants) to provide concrete examples of how they utilize WhatsApp in their instructional practices.

Data analysis technique

The study employed thematic analysis to analyze data collected through individual face-to-face interviews as guided by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that involves recognizing, isolating, examining, and reporting themes, patterns, and categories as they emerge from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During data analysis, the researchers started by familiarizing themselves with the raw data by listening to the recordings. After listening to the tapes, the transcription process started. Researchers made use of verbatim quotations to avoid distortion and loss of meaning. After the transcription process, the researchers read the transcripts alongside with interview audio (recordings) to ensure the accuracy of transcripts. After confirming the accuracy of the transcribed data, the researchers engaged on assigning codes to the raw data. Alhojailan (2012) indicates that assigning codes to the data set helps make connections between different

parts of data generated from the participants' responses. After coding, themes were formulated, and those themes were used to analyze data.

Research ethics

Researchers maintained ethics throughout the study. To ensure adherence to the ethical requirements, the researchers applied and obtained ethical clearance from the University of the Free State, where one author is working. The participants were informed about the study, and that allowed them to decide whether to participate in the study or not. The principles of anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent were upheld.

5 FINDINGS

During data analysis, the following themes emerged: Utilization of WhatsApp by Business Studies teachers, challenges encountered by teachers when utilizing WhatsApp and the role of WhatsApp in enhancing teachers' instructional practices.

Utilization of WhatsApp by Business Studies teachers

Under this theme, teachers were asked to recount how they utilize WhatsApp for Business Studies instructional purposes in their rural school context. Various sub-themes emerged, and they are discussed below.

COVID-19 outbreak strengthened WhatsApp utilization.

During interviews with identified participants, it was discovered that at the start of COVID-19, they used WhatsApp more frequently. For example, Teacher B stated that he started utilizing WhatsApp during the lockdown period caused by the outbreak of Covid-19.

"I *started using WhatsApp since the beginning of the lockdown caused by Covid-19*".

Other participants indicated that even though Covid-19 strengthened the rate at which they used WhatsApp in their pedagogical practices, they actually started using WhatsApp before the outbreak of Covid-19. Teacher C mentioned that:

"*I started using WhatsApp in my early years of being a teacher, it was around 2014/15 when I started using WhatsApp to support my teaching, however, I used it mostly during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020*".

It can be inferred from the teachers' responses that the outbreak of COVID-19 encouraged them to utilize WhatsApp in their classrooms. It can be deduced from their responses that WhatsApp became an integral tool to support their instructional practices.

Utilization of WhatsApp application post-Covid-19 lockdowns

Despite the lifting of lockdown restrictions and COVID-19 regulations in South Africa, the participants still use WhatsApp when teaching Business Studies. The participants stated that although learners are back in their classrooms fully, they still find using WhatsApp to support their instruction useful. Teacher B mentioned that he uses WhatsApp during after school hours and over the weekends. Teacher B said:

"*I use WhatsApp to give learners more work so that they can practice after hours and during weekends*".

Teacher A mentioned that she makes use of WhatsApp to provide supplemental learning materials to enhance learners' learning.

Teacher A mentioned that:

"*I use WhatsApp to share notes, examination timetables, and*

scope if there are upcoming class tests".

Figure 1 below displays a WhatsApp message sent by Teacher A giving learners the scope of the class test that learners were going to write the following day. It is clear from the WhatsApp screenshot depicted in Figure 1 that Teacher A continues to support learners after hours, as mentioned in the excerpt.

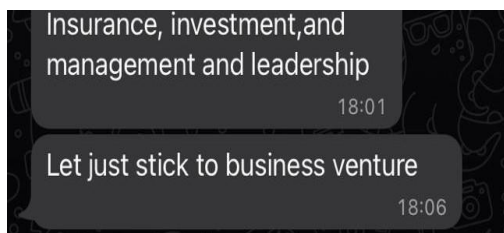**Figure 1**: **Teacher A giving learners scope for the assessment.**

Figure 2 below shows a teacher guiding learners on what they should study in preparation for the upcoming examination.

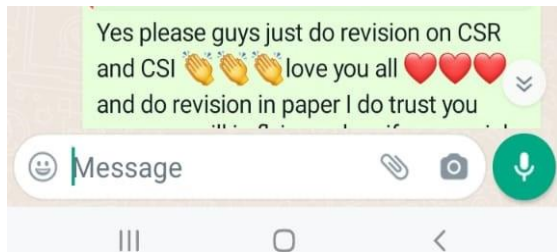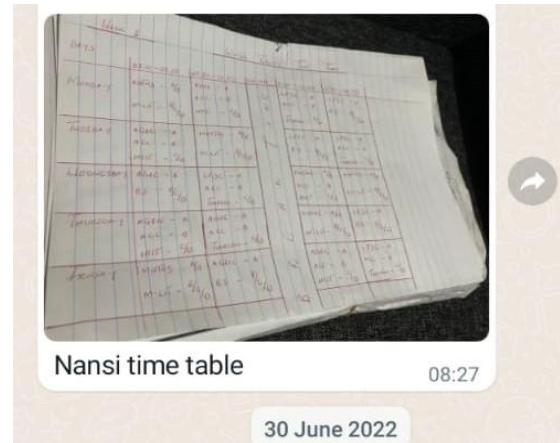**Figure 2: Teacher gives a clarity of focus for the upcoming examination.**

Figure 3 shows a teacher sharing a timetable for extra classes to learners over WhatsApp.

Figure 3: **Teacher sharing a timetable for extra classes.**

Teacher C added that she uses WhatsApp to answer questions asked by the learners because the time allocated for the Business Studies period each day is limited, and this results in her not being able to answer all the questions that learners have about a particular topic or concept taught. Teacher C had this to say:

"Learners ask questions of the content talk in the class via WhatsApp, and I am unable to respond because time is limited in the classroom so I cannot answer all questions during the lesson".

WhatsApp Application is easy to use.

Business Studies teachers also reflected on their preference for WhatsApp over other communication tools. The participants stated that they integrate WhatsApp into their pedagogical practices because it is easy to use and appeals to learners. The participants also indicated that WhatsApp is better to use, and it works well in rural areas. Teacher C said:

"I chose WhatsApp because I am living in rural area, and most learners are using it. So, it is easy for me to communicate with them whenever I need them. It is also a simple and the easiest platform to communicate with learners".

It transpired from this theme that Business Studies teachers mainly utilized WhatsApp to support learners after school hours. It transpired that some teachers utilize WhatsApp to complement their classroom-based instruction. Given the

time constraints they experience in the classroom, they then utilize WhatsApp to provide more support to learners. Furthermore, some teachers indicated that they prefer to utilize WhatsApp because it is the easiest tool that learners can access in their rural context. However, despite having easy access to the tool, teachers mentioned some challenges associated with utilizing WhatsApp.

Challenges associated with WhatsApp utilization in rural schools.

The participants expressed that they encounter several challenges when utilizing WhatsApp to support their instructional practices. Some teachers revealed that poor connections and lack of discipline among learners are among the challenges they face when utilizing WhatsApp in their instructional practices. For example, Teacher A reported that:

"The most challenge that I encounter when using WhatsApp is the poor connectivity because we are in rural areas. Also, these days, load shedding exacerbates our connectivity challenges because when there are no networks, sometimes you cannot communicate with learners in real-time to give them work to complete at home".

Teacher C indicated that learners tend to be ill-disciplined when interacting with the teacher and their fellow learners when interacting through WhatsApp. Teacher C stated thus:

"Some of the learners are not disciplined; they use WhatsApp in a wrong way. They bully other learners during discussions on WhatsApp group".

Another challenge that emerged during interviews, teachers indicated that not all learners had access to WhatsApp all the time. This is because they use their parents' cell phones and sometimes run out of data. Teacher B asserted thus:

"It is sometimes tough to use WhatsApp with learners since not all my learners had access to WhatsApp, some of them did not have access smart phones all the time, they relied on their parents' cellphones, and some ran out of data."

Interestingly, teachers indicated that they have devised different strategies to deal with the challenges associated with the integration of WhatsApp in rural school contexts. Teacher A explained how she deals with the challenge of learners that display a lack of discipline on the WhatsApp platform. The participant said:

"Normally, I identify a learner or learners that are problematic in the subject's WhatsApp group and call them privately when we arrive at school and talk with them face to face as a way of disciplining them".

Teacher C indicated that she maintains learner discipline by controlling the group and discussions that take place in the subject group. Teacher C stated as follows:

"I am the one who is the group administrator, so I am able to allow learners to participate in discussions in an acceptable manner. I remove learners that are ill-disciplined for a particular period and bring them back in the group once they promise they will behave."

On the challenge of learners who do not have access to smartphones or WhatsApp due to the reasons outlined above, Teacher C stated that she makes sure that learning resources sent via WhatsApp are also available in print for those learners who did not access it on WhatsApp. She stated that:

"I make learning resources available to learners in print to ensure that they are not left behind or excluded from learning".

WhatsApp application enhances instructional practices.

The participants agreed that WhatsApp plays a significant role in enhancing their instructional practices. They indicated that the utilization of WhatsApp to support instructional practices ensures that learners are engaged in learning for a longer period. Teacher B said:

"WhatsApp keep learners engaged in learning because I send them activities even after school hours, and they do those activities at home and during the class they become active because they are familiar with the content".

Figure 4 depicts a message sent by the teacher to learners indicating activities they should cover before coming to class.

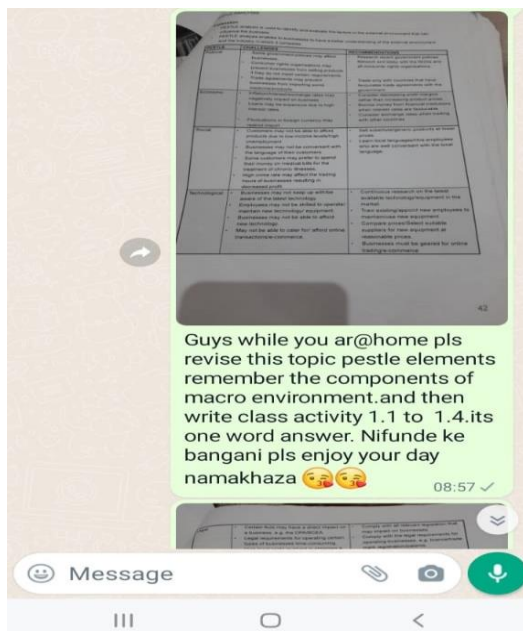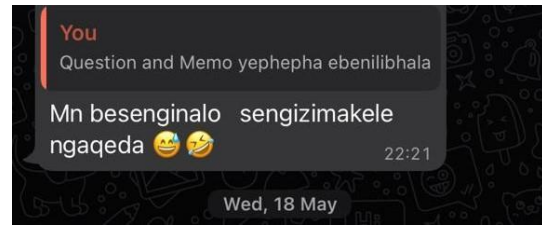**Figure 4**: **Teacher C give learners activities to do at home**.

Figure 5 depicts a message from one of the learners communicating in the WhatsApp group at 22h21 PM using their home language (IsiZulu), indicating that he/she has finished the activity given to them by the teacher and he/she has even marked the activity on her own.

Figure 5: A message posted by a learner on the WhatsApp group.

In overall, figures 1-5 show the level of engagement between teachers and learners. From the engagement captured in WhatsApp screenshots shown above, it appears that most of the engagements happen after hours, where teachers provide continuous support to learners. It also transpired from the data that learners actively engage in learning over WhatsApp.

The WhatsApp screenshots confirm Teacher C's assertion that WhatsApp promotes active learning among learners because some prefer to participate in WhatsApp discussions, but not face-to-face discussions. Teacher C mentioned thus:

"WhatsApp encourage learners to participate because some learners are shy, so they choose to participate in WhatsApp discussions than in contact class discussion. They ask questions and respond to their peers' questions."

The participants also indicated that using WhatsApp in Business Studies instructional practices helps teachers and learners to access learning resources they could not have access to without the use of technology. Teachers acquire resources from well-resourced schools and share with the learners through WhatsApp. The participants indicated that this had relieved them from overreliance on textbooks, which sometimes may contain outdated information. Teacher A said:

"As teachers, we are able to get resources from well-resourced schools and share them with our learners. This means now we do not

only depend on textbooks, but we also use other resources."

Divergent views on WhatsApp integration inside the classroom

Despite the positive views of the participants on the role of WhatsApp in enhancing the teaching and learning process, it transpired that teachers have divergent views on making use of WhatsApp inside the classroom. Factors such as school rules that prohibit the use of cellphones within school premises by learners and ill-discipline among learners were cited as the reasons that dissuade teachers from utilizing WhatsApp inside the classrooms. Teacher B said:

"You know the kind of kids we teach today, they are unruly somewhere, somehow so using WhatsApp inside the classroom can worsen learner misbehavior."

Teacher A concurred with this view, stating that:

"In *my view, I don't think the utilization of WhatsApp can be normalized within the classroom because learners are not disciplined, and this can distract them from their studies. This can only work in schools that have disciplined learners. With us, we can only use it as an additional tool*".

On the other hand, Teacher C believes that the utilization of WhatsApp inside the classroom should be formal and normalized. She is of the view that learners spend a lot of time on their cellphones, and utilizing WhatsApp to support teaching and learning inside the classroom can enhance learners' learning.

She said:

"I think the utilization of WhatsApp in the classroom can enhance learners' learning because learners spend a lot of time on

WhatsApp and using it inside the classroom can make learners learn while enjoying their gadgets".

6 DISCUSSIONS

The study explored the utilization of WhatsApp by Business Studies teachers in rural-based secondary schools in South Africa. This study found that the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic strengthened Business Studies teachers' utilization of WhatsApp in their teaching. This finding is in line with that of the study that was conducted by Susilawati and Supriyatno (2020) which found that the lockdowns caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 increased teachers' use of WhatsApp in their classrooms. Furthermore, the current study revealed that Business Studies teachers perceive WhatsApp as the easiest tool to utilize compared to other technological platforms. In their study, Jafre et al. (2018) found that teaching using WhatsApp is easy for both teachers and learners because learners are accustomed to WhatsApp. Findings from the study also revealed that WhatsApp keeps learners engaged in learning for a longer period of time. WhatsApp ensures the continuation of learning beyond class hours (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014). It was also unearthed from this study that WhatsApp serves as a platform where learners and teachers can share learning materials such as notes, previous question papers and scopes. In the same vein, the study by Mazana (2018) indicated that WhatsApp helps teachers and learners share links, notes, and assignments.

Despite several benefits of utilizing WhatsApp in Business Studies teaching, the study also revealed several challenges associated with utilizing WhatsApp in teaching Business Studies, especially in rural-based secondary schools. The study found that utilizing WhatsApp can be a challenge due to a lack of discipline among learners. Similarly, Mazana (2018) found that learners can misuse WhatsApp if they

lack proper discipline. Also, another challenge revealed in this study is that not all learners have access to smartphones and WhatsApp. In their study, Indiran et al. (2022) found that some learners do not have access to WhatsApp, especially schools that are in rural areas. Connectivity issues were also found to be a serious challenge for the utilization of WhatsApp for teaching and learning purposes. Nsabayezu et al. (2020) also revealed that a lack of internet connection hinders the effective utilization of WhatsApp in the teaching and learning process.

Interestingly, besides the challenges reported, this study found that Business Studies teachers believe that WhatsApp enhances their instructional practices. This finding is against the results of the study by Abualrob and Nazzal (2019) which reported that teachers and learners mainly use WhatsApp for non-instructional purposes. Finally, the study revealed that Business Studies teachers have divergent views on the utilization of WhatsApp inside the classroom. This is against the findings of the study by Budianto and Arifani (2021) which found that WhatsApp can be used in the classroom as the primary tool for teaching and learning.

Based on the findings above, it can be suggested that all participants have adopted the innovation, which is WhatsApp, as the proponents of Diffusion Theory suggest. The adoption of WhatsApp by Business Studies teachers indicates that they are all aware of the innovation (WhatsApp) and how it can be utilized in teaching and learning. It also transpired from the study that the participants hold positive perceptions towards the role of WhatsApp in the teaching and learning process. For this reason, the participants decided to adopt WhatsApp in their teaching practices. Finally, the study gave teachers a chance to confirm or evaluate the innovation (WhatsApp), and teachers explicitly stated the challenges associated with utilizing WhatsApp in teaching

Business Studies in the rural context. However, they reiterated to continue utilizing WhatsApp in their instructional practices.

7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, we conclude that Business Studies teachers view WhatsApp as a tool that is useful in supporting their instructional practices. Teachers indicated that utilizing WhatsApp helps them to provide continuous support to learners by providing extra learning materials. The utilization of WhatsApp in Business Studies instructional practices enables teachers to provide immediate feedback to learners and continuously interact with them. The study also revealed that teachers encounter several challenges when utilizing WhatsApp in a rural context. However, they devise strategies to overcome those challenges. Based on these findings, the study recommends that Business Studies teachers strengthen the use of WhatsApp to support learning because in most rural schools, this is the only technological tool that some learners can easily access after school. Furthermore, the Department of Basic Education should consider developing a framework that would guide teachers on utilizing social media tools, including WhatsApp, in their classrooms. For future research, this study recommends that a study of a similar nature that would involve learners be conducted.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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