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# The Role of Social Media's in Enhancing Parental Involvement in Education and Learners' Engagement: Case of WhatsApp in Douala III

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**Abstract:** Technological evolution has significantly transformed all sectors of society, including education. The emergence of social networking platforms such as Facebook [1] and WhatsApp [2] has redefined communication patterns worldwide. In the educational context, platforms like WhatsApp are increasingly used by school administrators, teachers, and parents to share information and support teaching and learning processes. This study investigated the effect of WhatsApp communication with parents on nursery and primary school learners' engagement, with a particular focus on parental involvement. The research was underpinned by Epstein's Parent Involvement Theory, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, and Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory. A quantitative survey design was adopted, and data were collected using a 10-item questionnaire administered via face-to-face mode to 125 randomly selected basic education teachers in Douala III Subdivision. Findings revealed that WhatsApp facilitates effective communication between teachers and parents, contributing positively to learners' engagement through increased parental involvement. However, barriers such as the quality of communication, accessibility, and the availability of parents were identified as limiting factors. The study concluded that while WhatsApp is a valuable tool for enhancing school-home collaboration, more structured approaches are needed to overcome communication barriers and maximize its impact on learner engagement.

**Keywords:** Learners' Engagement, Social Media, WhatsApp Communication, Parental Involvement.



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## 1. Introduction

With the advent of smartphones and the fourth generation mobile technologies (4.0), the effect of social media on society has stirred up some debate and researchers across various disciplines have drawn different conclusions on its impact in the education community [3]. According to [4], social media is a network of websites and applications which enable individuals converse with each other, generate, exchange and discuss the content available in the worldwide web. WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, snapchat, Google Plus, Wikis, Blogs and Forums, Impartus lecture capture and

Twitter were cited as the widely used social media platforms. Social media has become one of the most significant communication instruments in recent years. Go [5] found out that social media as a learning tool has a positive outcome in students' academic performances. Social media for collaborating on projects is growing into pertinent and useful technology. Video presentation platforms, such as zoom, google meet, Skype, Google Hangouts, or Web video conferencing such as Cisco WebEx, have allowed instructions to be delivered across great distances,[6] During the COVID- 19 pandemic when almost all schools were short down, social media served as the main medium that could link students to students, teachers to students and to parents. According to[7], Ashraf MA, Seinen D, khan NU and Laar (2021) social media provides a learning platform that enables students to easily communicate with peers and subject specialists, and conducive to students' collaborative learning. This was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic when social media provided the opportunities for students collaborative learning and communication among stakeholders.

On the other hand, some researchers have found social media to have a negative impact on the academic performances of students. In recent years, the WhatsApp application has been found to connect education stakeholder throughout the world. Platforms for sharing scientific discoveries, academic discussion, sharing information on educational matters have been created all-round the globe. According to many researchers in education, WhatsApp remains the most practical and highly solicited medium of communication in school communities. During the pandemic, mobile phones and WhatsApp among the tools recommended to ensure the continuity of teaching in Cameroonian universities. WhatsApp application was the most widely used platform for exchanging files and educational interactions, which were often drowned in private conversations and everyday life[8],

Parents are very much concerned with the progress and performances of their children in school. This concern is manifested in the various forms of Parental involvement in their children's education. This involvement becomes almost fundamentally compulsory for early childhood learners. This category of learners range from 4 to 12 years are easily be distracted by passing events or peers. [9] defines parental involvement as those behaviours displayed by parents in both home and school settings that are intended to support the development of their children's social/emotional skills and promote their academic success. The South African School act (Act 84 of 1996), defines a learner's parent as the biological parent or guardian of a learner; the person granted custody of a learner, or the person who agrees to carry out a parent's responsibilities for the learner's education at school. According to research, children whose parents are involved in their education perform better academically, are more motivated, behave better, and have a higher feeling of self-worth[10],

Social media is increasingly used today for communication all over the world and over long distances. This study focuses on WhatsApp which has become very prominent in the Cameroon school system. WhatsApp has been found to have easy accessibility, and speed of communication[11], According to[12], WhatsApp is an American social media that was launched in 2009 for instant messaging. It allows for users to send text, voice and video messages, make voice and video calls, share images, documents, user locations and other content. WhatsApp client application runs on mobile devices and can be accessed from computers. The service requires a cellular mobile phone number to sign up. From this description, we can see that WhatsApp is easily accessible and use by parents. During the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting school lock down in Cameroon, the Ministry of Basic Education encouraged regional and Divisional delegates, unions and parents to harmonise lessons and engineer a model course to support "School on TV", He also invited teachers to provide distance learning using such tools as WhatsApp, Zoom10 and mobile phones. Parents were asked to explore the database of Avicenna Virtual Campus. This initiative by the government demonstrated the importance of parental involvement in children's education,

### **Problem statement**

Parental involvement has over the years gain a wider recognition through research. There is significant evidence that parental involvement greatly affects learners' academic performance. Due

the increasing recognition of the importance of parental involvement in nursery and primary education, many parents and educators struggle to maintain consistent, meaningful communication. Parental involvement in children's education is still a challenge as most parents do not participate as expected do to communication lapses and time, Traditional methods such as meetings and printed letters are often limited by time constraints and accessibility. With the ubiquitous technology, the availability of smartphones, platforms like WhatsApp offer an accessible and cost-effective means to bridge communication gaps between parents and teachers. However, limited research exists on how effectively WhatsApp is used to foster parental involvement and promote learner engagement in early childhood settings. This study seeks to investigate the extent to which WhatsApp enhances parental involvement and supports learner engagement, addressing a critical gap in digital communication in nursery and primary education.

### **Research Question**

This study is guided by the following questions;

#### **General research question**

How does the use of WhatsApp communication groups influence parental involvement and learners' engagement in nursery and primary schools?

#### **Specific questions**

1. Do teachers use WhatsApp to communicate with parents and for what purpose.
2. In what ways does parental involvement through WhatsApp affects learner's academic and behavioural engagement?
3. What are the challenges faced by parents and teachers in using WhatsApp for school communication?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Parental involvement**

According to [13], parental involvement has varied definitions by different researchers. However, all the definitions focus on the child as the beneficiary. For example, [14], defined parental involvement as the dedication of resources by the parent to the child While [15] explained parental involvement as parents' or caregivers' investment in the education of their children. In yet another definition, [16] saw parental participation as the pursuit between the parents and kids at home that may contribute to the children's outcomes and development, thus parents' involvement is also seen as numerous activities including at home assisting with homework, reading with the child, providing a conducive learning environment, the communication between the parents and teachers, participation in school meetings and supporting the school through the Parent- Teachers Association (PTA) contributions. [17] saw parental involvement in early childhood education as; sharing information between parents and teachers through various communications media, parental volunteering, home learning assistance, involvement in decision making, and participation in field activities. Through a variety of activities involving parents, making it more empowered to build a family force that can be beneficial to the child's success. From these examples, parental involvement can be at different levels and places, for example, [18] and [19] distinguished between two specific types of parental involvement: home-based strategies, such as providing structure and support with regard to learning and education at home, and school-based strategies, such as communicating with the teacher or attending school events. Parental involvement can also take many forms, each plays a significant role in the academic success, personal development and motivations of the child, [20]

Epstein 2011 cited in [21] proposed; parenting, communicating, learning at home, volunteering, decision making and collaborating with the community as the main components of parental involvement. This type of involvement influences a child's learning and development at home, it includes all that parents engage in to raise healthy, happy children who become capable at school [22][23]. Accordingly, parents should strive to offer positive and secure home environments. Furthermore, [24] opines that parenting involves nurturing and instilling positive attributes and

values in learners. Schools may offer support and assistance to parents to ensure that they create positive home environments that enable students to thrive and grow. This would eventually result in enhanced school outcomes for the children

#### **Home-Based involvement**

This is support that parents give at home through assisting in homework, providing a learning rich environment, providing study routines, meal, reading to children, educational conversations to enhance children's learning. [25], believes that teachers can find ways of involving families with children in academic learning at home, including homework, setting goals and other curriculum-related activities. Teachers should equally be encouraged to design homework that enables learners to share and discuss interesting task with parents that are fun activities, and all can be done at home or in the community.

#### **School-Based Involvement**

These are parents' direct participation in school activities. These include attending PTA meeting, meeting the teachers or the school administration to find out about the child's progress and challenges in the school, attending open door days, sporting events and volunteering.

#### **Communication with Teachers**

Communication with the teachers and the school administration is one of the fundamental aspects of parental involvement. When parents communicate effectively with the school, the parents get to understand what is expected of the learners and how to help and support their social and academic development at home. Through phone calls; emails, WhatsApp messages, class WhatsApp groups and Short Message Service (SMS) parents get significantly involved in their children's education. Today, WhatsApp has become one of the widely used medium of communication between the school and parents. [26], opines that a two-way communication between the school and the home is vital to learners' success.

#### **Decision-Making Participation**

Parents also get involved in their children's education by choosing the school, places where the child can visit to learn, guiding the child in choosing a career. Parents believe and are aware that they play a very important role in their children's learning process and also development. In line with this assertion, [27] affirmed that there is a correlation between parental engagement and motivation enhancement, favourable views towards language acquisition, and improved self-control in children.

Parental involvement aligns with Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism. Communication with the teacher, the parents and the learners creates a learning environment that enables the learners to be psychologically and emotionally secured to build a positive self-esteem that is necessary for greater learning engagement. Collaboration between teachers and the parents of learners is mostly through communication. Parental involvement in way of providing school materials, food, paying school fees on time, communication through phone calls, PTA meetings, guiding children at home by supervising assignments and providing a conducive learning environment positively affects children academic performance. The diagram below.

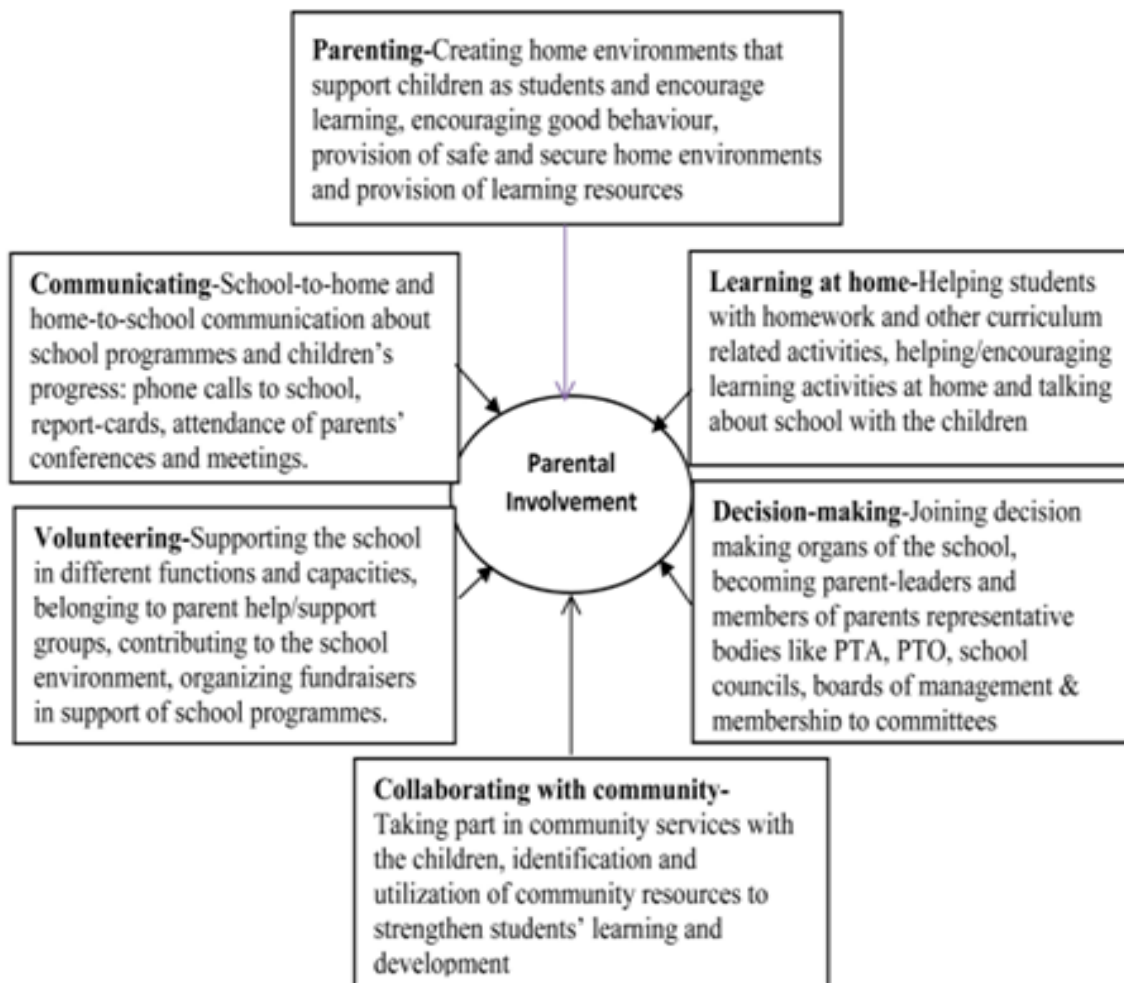


Figure 1. Epstein's framework of parental involvement.

### Parental involvement and Learners Engagement

Engagement is commonly considered one type of manifestation of motivation, expressed in a particular moment through active involvement in the learning process. Learners' engagements from teachers' perception is demonstrated by active participation and focus during task performance in the class. Parental involvement greatly affects learners' academic achievement, especially young learners, [28] Examining the relationship between parental involvement and students' academic achievement, [29] found that parental involvement affects academic achievement. This effect is mediated by learners' engagements, which is seen in many components as described by some researchers. Learners' engagement consists of three components; cognitive, (alertness, focused attention), affective (positive attitude), and social (meaningful interaction). In the same light, [30] stated that previous studies have recognized four types of engagements:

*Behavioural Engagement*- This is expressed through participation in class activities, attending class regularly, asking or answering questions, paying attention completing assignments and so on. Behavioural engagement is the most visible type of engagement and closely linked to academic performance.

*Cognitive Engagement*- It refers to the extent to which learners are alert, apply learning strategies, and concentrate. Cognitive engagement is believed to mean meaningful learning and retention

*Emotional Engagement*- It considers whether learners interact with others and feel a sense of connection with belonging to the class and the broader educational community. They express their excitement or interest in topic, frustration or anxiety over assignments. Positive emotional

engagement supports motivation, persistence and well-being.

*Social Engagement-* Social engagement is about learners' ability to listen to each other, participate in peer mentoring, supporting classmate in learning tasks, collaborate and provide feedback to each other. According to the article, it will be fair to say that without engagement, little learning may likely occur and encouraging teachers to develop skills for raising engagement could therefore be considered a priority. However, Reeves and [31] added another dimension of engagement, which is *agentic engagement*, it describes a proactive process where students constructively contribute to their own instructions by offering input, expressing preferences, or making suggestions to enhance their learning experiences, motivation, and overall learning environment.

According to [32], children do better in school when parents are involved in their academic lives, Parental involvement has a big influence on the academic performance of learners. They found that this involvement does not only focus on the learners' academy but also on proper behaviour at home and school, learners' safety and social life, parents and schools, parent-child communication and even school- community involvement.

In the digital era where parents can be reached easily, it is important to explore the benefits of the WhatsApp group for communication with parents to raise learners' engagement.

Several studies have been carried out on parental involvement and learners' engagement, nearly all the studies are of the opinion that parental involvement is very significant to learners' engagement and subsequently academic performances. In their study found that learners with parental supervision demonstrated an increased engagement and superior language skills. The study further suggests that engaging parental involvement in young learners' language brings beneficial effects for optimum child language acquisition. On the other hand, [33] found that lack of parental support is one of the factors affecting learners' achievement in Mathematics. Looking at the social and emotional aspects of engagement, opined that the benefits of parental involvement are: fewer behavioural problems amongst learners, better school attendance, better acquisition and demonstration of social skills, development of a strong feeling of self-worth, the development of lifelong love for learning and academic achievement indirectly through the influence of other proximal student's outcomes, such as motivation, attitude and learning strategies. [34] found a significant positive directional effects from academic achievement to parental involvement among total sample but not vice versa, while investigating the reciprocal relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement as well as mediating role of adolescents.

According to learning at home and communicating, the more intense the participation of parents, the greater the positive impact on academic performance of their children. The parental involvement in learning at home, decision making, and communicating has significant relationship with the academic performance of the learners. Most parents assist their children by providing the necessary materials for their education, food, clothing and other basic needs for their development. In addition to these, they are regularly in contacts with the teachers and this greatly improved pupils' academic achievements, [35]

Analysing Epstein's framework of parental involvement, [36] found that although parental involvement helps to improve learners' educational achievement, the types of involvement contributed at different levels; parental communication and parental home based involvement significantly propelled pupils' achievement while parental decision making did not contribute significantly to their achievement.

This proximity is explained by Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System theory, in which three elements of the microsystem where the learner interacts; role, relationship and activities. In order to develop intellectually emotionally, socially, and morally, a child requires: participation in progressively more complex activities, on a regular basis over an extended period of time in the child's life, with one or more persons with whom the child develops a strong, mutual emotional attachment, and who are committed to the child's well-being and development, preferably for life

[37]. This assertion aligns with Vygotsky's Zone of Social Constructivism. According to [38], social influence is very important to learners especially in instructions of children's development which is reflected in the concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

However, parental involvement has increasing challenges due to environmental, technological and social mutations. Parents find it difficult to allocate enough time for their children who are struggling distractible influence from the bio-ecological system. According parental involvement in children's education is still challenging as most parents do not participate as expected, even though it appears that there are signs of positivity among teachers regarding parental involvement. Therefore, additional support is needed to ensure effective parental involvement to help children succeed academically.

### **Social Media Mediated Parental Involvement**

Despite the challenges faced by parents in fully participating in their children's education due to communication and time constraints, social media has come to mitigate these challenges. With the ubiquitous nature of technology, many researchers have developed interest in parental involvement through home-school and school-home communication according to [39]. Social media has brought positive changes in how parents engage in the development of their children. [40] found that through participation in class WhatsApp groups, parents gained access to a constant flow of information concerning what happens in the class, including regular updates and exposure to troubling issues within the class. Furthermore, such social media approach seems to facilitate the development of a collective rather than individual approach to parental involvement, connecting the parents themselves and the parents of the school. Through WhatsApp, parents may develop a sense of community based concerns. They are not left alone to cope with their children's education on their own, rather they engage with others to attain greater power and support in addressing their particular concerns.

In many of the studies carried out, communication with schools through parental WhatsApp groups helps the parents to be up to date in the school programmes and the activities carried out in the schools. Studying the educational use of WhatsApp, [41], found that WhatsApp application has numerous benefits to students : it opens the possibility of knowledge construction, helps develop competence, develop oral and written communication skills, helps find solutions to difficulties that arise during lessons, facilitate problem solving, improves student motivation, autonomy, self-efficacy, and confidence, generates cohesion and sense of belonging with the class group, promotes collaboration and cooperative learning, enable knowledge sharing and access to resources, improve teacher accessibility, promotes learning beyond the classroom. However, this study is more interested in the WhatsApp application for parental involvement and student engagement. The parental involvement types where teachers most often used digital technologies were for parenting and communication. This communication enhances learners' engagement significantly especially for young learners. By harnessing the power of technology, rural schools can strengthen the teacher-parent relationship, promote educational equity, and contribute to improve performance for their children [42],

A study to investigate kindergarten teachers use of the WhatsApp application in their communication with parents, teachers felt that the WhatsApp application was especially advantageous because of its easy accessibility and speed of communication, they testified to more sharing and involvement of parents in the life of their children in the kindergarten for many hours each day. This application was extremely significant for kindergarten teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic as it maintains interpersonal communication between staff and parents. During the COVID-19 lockdown in Nigeria, parental involvement played a significant and positive role in the commitment of adolescent learners towards online learning, [43], Parental involvement was also displayed in Cameroon during the pandemic when learning was switch my school on TV to avoid a blank academic year. Parents had to assist their kids, making sure that they do not miss the lessons programmed on the Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) Channels.

According to communication channels with parents operate synergistically, enabling the timely exchange of information, strengthening emotional bonds and enhancing parental involvement in the learning process. Effective communication was characterized by openness, message clarity. Prompt feedback, and consistency, which contributed to increased learner motivation, as indicated by improved participation, discipline, confidence, and active engagement in class

In a similar way, [44], Cino, believe that Parenting WhatsApp Group (PWG) provide parents with new ways to be involved in the academic life of the offspring, allowing them to get information from peers and overcome time and physical boundaries, while fostering a collective democratic approach to parental involvement.

Despite the effectiveness of WhatsApp communication in enhancing parental involvement in children's education, the process is affected by challenges that need to be considered. found, limited parental time due to work commitments, slow responses to teachers' messages particularly among parents less active in digital communication and technical issues such as poor internet connectivity or limited access to communication devices.

Although Many teachers affirm that parental communication through WhatsApp is very beneficial to the learners, parents needed training in order to develop appropriate knowledge, relevant experiences, positive beliefs and self-efficacy beliefs to be able to assist their kids [45], Supporting the proposal by [46], found mobile parenting learning programmes to enhance parenting quality have been to be highly relevant and should be instituted by school authorities and governments.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The study employed a quantitative survey approach, with the use of a semi structured questionnaire designed for teachers. A 10 item questionnaire was issued to 125 teachers in the Douala III subdivision. Questions in the questionnaire was related to the teachers' background, their use of WhatsApp to communicate with parents, the observable changes in their children and challenges faced. Some items also seek their opinion on the way forward. The questionnaire was checked for reliability through a peer appraisal by course mates. The questionnaire was personally administered by the researcher and collected a day after.

### Sample

The participants in this study were 125 teachers from both nursery and primary schools teaching in lay private schools, private religious schools and government schools. 32% of the teachers were from lay private schools, 32% from government schools and 36% from private religious schools. Their qualification was General Certificate of Education Ordinary level (O/L),10.4%, General certificate of Education Advance (A/L) 25.6% the teachers Grade One Certificate (CAPIEMP) 60% and a few with Bachelor's Degree, 4%. A stratified random sampling technique was used to get a heterogeneous representation of the sample. The sample was distributed as seen in the table below.

**Table 1.** Demographic and background data.

	Range	Number	percentage
Gender	Male	60	48%
	Female	65	52%
Age	25 years	15	12%
	26 -34	30	24%
	35-44	45	36%
	45 and above	35	28%
Experience	0 to 5 years	20	16%

	6 to 11 years	75	60%
	12 years and above	30	24%
Level	Nursery	65	52%
	Primary	60	48%
Level of Education	O/L	13	10.4%
	A/L	32	25.6%
	CAPIEMP	75	60%
	Degree	5	4%

The demographic and background data collected from the questionnaire on nursery and primary school teachers regarding their gender, age, teaching experience, type of school and level of education is distributed as seen in the table above.

### 3. Results and Discussion

This research work was conducted to find out whether communication between teachers of basic education with parents improves parental involvement in children's education, which in turn increases learners' engagement in the classroom. Analysis of the 125 completed questionnaire provided answers to the three specific questions:

1. Do teachers use WhatsApp to communicate with parents and for what purpose.
2. In what ways does parental involvement through WhatsApp affects learner's academic and behavioural engagement?
3. What are the challenges faced by parents and teachers in using WhatsApp for school communication?

Analysis of the 125 completed questionnaires provided answers to the three specific research questions.

#### Question 1: Do teachers use WhatsApp to communicate with parents and for what purpose

The data overwhelmingly confirmed that WhatsApp is a primary tool for communication between teachers and parents. A significant majority of teachers (97.6, n=122) reported using WhatsApp, either through class groups or direct messages, to communicate with parents. The purposes of this communication were varied but centered on enhancing the educational process. The most frequently cited purposes were:

- **Homework and Assignments (96%):** Teachers used WhatsApp to send homework details, clarify instructions, and remind parents about deadlines. This ensured that parents were aware of their child's daily tasks.
- **School Announcements (92%):** Important information regarding school events, holidays, PTA meetings, and unexpected closures was disseminated quickly and efficiently.
- **Individual Learner Feedback (24%):** Teachers communicated directly with parents about a child's specific progress, behavioural issues, or achievements, provided personalized and timely feedback.
- **Sharing Learning Materials (88%):** Supplementary resources, such as photos of class activities, educational links, and summaries of lessons, were shared to keep parents informed and involved in the curriculum.

These findings corroborated, who found that through participation in class WhatsApp groups, parents gained access to a constant flow of information concerning what happens in the class, including regular updates and exposure to troubling issues within the class. Parents also communicate with other parents to develop a collective approach to parental involvement, connecting the parents themselves and the parents of the school. This indicates that WhatsApp serves as a vital, multi-functional bridge between the school and home environments, primarily facilitating the flow of crucial academic and administrative information.

**Table 2.** Use and Purpose of WhatsApp for Parent-Teacher Communication.

<b>Do you have a WhatsApp group with the parents of your class?</b>		
	N	%
Yes	122	97.6
No	3	2.6
<b>How often do you use WhatsApp to communicate with parents?</b>		
Daily	10	8
Weekly	110	88
Occasionally	2	1.6
Never	3	2.6
<b>What type of information do you typically share via WhatsApp</b>		
Timetables/ learning materials	110	88
Homework and assignments	120	96
Learners' behavior reports/ feedback	30	24
School announcements	115	92

### **Question 2: In what ways does parental involvement through WhatsApp affect learners' academic and behavioral engagement?**

Teachers perceived a strong positive correlation between parental involvement facilitated by WhatsApp and the engagement levels of learners which were observable during whole class activities. The observed effects were categorized according to the types of engagement identified in the literature review:

**Behavioral Engagement:** A majority of teachers (81%) noted that learners whose parents were active in WhatsApp groups demonstrated improved behavioral engagement. This was manifested through higher rates of homework completion, better preparedness for class, and increased punctuality. Teachers attributed this to parents being better informed and able to provide necessary support and structure at home.

**Social and Emotional Engagement:** Approximately 70% of respondents reported that learners showed enhanced emotional engagement. They observed that children felt more secured and motivated, knowing their parents were connected to their school life. This connection fostered a more positive attitude towards school and learning, reducing anxiety related to academic tasks. This confirms this when they found that parental involvement leads to fewer behavioral problems amongst learners, better school attendance, better acquisition and demonstration of social skills, development of a strong feeling of self-worth, the development of lifelong love for learning and academic achievement indirectly through the influence of other proximal students' outcomes, such as motivation, attitude and learning strategies

**Cognitive Engagement:** While harder to quantify, about 55% of teachers suggested an indirect positive effect on cognitive engagement. When parents used information from WhatsApp to discuss school topics at home, learners came to class with more background knowledge and were more willing to participate in discussions (cognitive).

**Agentic engagement:** Although many researchers consider it to be the most important engagement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, only 25% of teachers testified to the fact that their learners exhibit agentic engagement in their classrooms. When parents get immediate feedback from teachers about their children and their behavior, they look for ways to motivate them to be more constructive and proactive. However, [47], found that agentic engagement showed a negative effect on learning outcomes. [48] also affirmed that learners with parental supervision demonstrated an increased engagement and superior language skills which enhances their academic performances.

In conclusion these findings suggest that the real-time communication enabled by WhatsApp empowers parents to become more effective co-educators, which directly and positively influences their children's motivation and active participation in learning.

**Table 3.** Effects of WhatsApp-Mediated Parental Involvement on Learner Engagement.

In your opinion, has WhatsApp communication increased parental involvement in your class activities?		
	N	%
Strongly agree	35	28
Agree	80	64
Neutral	3	2.4
Disagree	2	1.6
Strongly disagree	5	4
<b>Has increased parental involvement improved learner engagement in your class</b>		
yes	94	75.2
No	16	12.8
Not sure	15	12
<b>What type of engagement do you observe prominent in the learners?</b>		
Behavioral engagement	101	80.8
Social and Emotional Engagement	88	70.4
Cognitive Engagement	69	55.2
Agentic engagement	32	25.6

**Question 3: What challenges do you face when using WhatsApp to communicate with parents?**

Despite the clear benefits, teachers identified significant challenges that hinder the effectiveness of WhatsApp communication. These setbacks fall into three main categories as highlighted in the abstract:

- **Availability and Boundaries (75%):** Many teachers felt pressured to be available 24/7, with parents sending messages at late hours or during weekends. This "always-on" expectation leads to teacher burnout and blurs the professional boundaries between work and personal time.
- **Accessibility and Digital Divide (66%):** This was the most cited challenge. Not all parents own smartphones or can afford consistent internet data. Some parents, particularly in lower-income brackets or with lower digital literacy, are excluded from this communication channel, creating an equity gap.
- **Quality of Communication (45%):** Teachers reported issues with "communication overload," where important messages get lost in a flood of irrelevant chats, greetings, and off-topic discussions in large groups. Furthermore, the lack of non-verbal cues sometimes leads to misunderstandings or conflicts between parents or with the teacher.
- **Language Barrier (30%):** A good number of teachers complain that children whose parents are French speaking have difficulties communicating with them and even assisting the children with their homework or assignment. This situation often leads to misconceptions and understanding of instructions. These finding align with [49], who found, limited parental time due to work commitments, slow responses to teachers' messages particularly among parents less active in digital communication and technical issues such as poor internet connectivity or limited access to communication devices as challenges to WhatsApp communication between teachers and parents.

These challenges indicated that while WhatsApp is a powerful tool, its implementation

requires clear guidelines and a mindful approach to ensure it remains a productive and equitable means of communication. These challenges could be mitigated through mobile learning programmes to enhance parenting quality and parental involvement.

**Table 4.** Challenges in Using WhatsApp for School Communication.

	N	%
Availability and Boundaries (time /privacy)	93	74.4
Accessibility and Digital Divide	80	66
Quality of Communication	55	44
Language Barrier	35	28

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that WhatsApp communication significantly enhances parental involvement, which in turn boosts learner engagement in the nursery and primary schools of Douala III Sub Division. These results can be interpreted through the lens of the study's theoretical framework.

In the context of **Epstein's Framework of Parental Involvement**, the study shows that WhatsApp is a powerful facilitator, particularly for the "Communicating" and "Learning at Home" types of involvement. The constant flow of information on homework, school events, and learner progress directly addresses the need for effective school-to-home and home-to-school communication. This enhanced communication empowers parents to actively participate in "Learning at Home" by supervising homework and discussing school activities, as reported by the teachers. The platform acts as a digital extension of the school, bringing parental involvement into the 21st century.

From the perspective of **Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory**, WhatsApp strengthens the 'mesosystem'—the connection between the different microsystems in a child's life, primarily the home and the school. A strong, positive link between these two environments is crucial for healthy development. By providing a real-time, interactive channel, WhatsApp fosters a more cohesive and collaborative relationship between teachers and parents. This fortified mesosystem creates a more stable and supportive world for the learner, where expectations are aligned and support is consistent, leading to the observed increases in emotional and behavioral engagement.

Furthermore, the findings align with **Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory**. Vygotsky emphasized the role of social interaction in learning and the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). When teachers use WhatsApp to communicate learning objectives and challenges, they are essentially equipping parents to act as a 'More Knowledgeable Other' (MKO) at home. The parent, now better informed, can provide scaffolding and guidance that helps the child master tasks they could not complete alone. This parent-teacher collaboration, mediated by technology, effectively extends the ZPD from the classroom to the home, creating a richer learning ecosystem for the child.

However, the study also illuminates the practical barriers to this digital utopia. The challenges of accessibility, communication quality, and boundary-setting are significant. The digital divide highlighted by teachers means that the benefits of WhatsApp-mediated involvement are not distributed equally. This can inadvertently widen the achievement gap between learners from digitally-connected families and those who are not. This issue relates to the 'exosystem' and 'macrosystem' in Bronfenbrenner's model, where socioeconomic factors and technological infrastructure impact the child's immediate environment. Similarly, the issues of information overload and blurred boundaries underscore the need for what, described as training and the development of positive beliefs and practices for using these tools effectively.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the role of WhatsApp in enhancing parental involvement and learner engagement in nursery and primary education in Douala III. The results confirm that WhatsApp is a widely adopted and largely effective tool for this purpose. It facilitates a dynamic communication channel that keeps parents informed, involved, and empowered to support their children's education. This increased parental involvement translates into observable improvements in learners' behavioural and emotional engagement, fostering a more positive and productive learning environment. The academic performances of learners as a result of parental involvement is of great importance to both parents and the schools. Promoting the use of WhatsApp application to enhance parental involvement will benefit the entire educational system and the state in general.

#### Recommendations

The implications for educational practice are clear.

- Schools and administrators should formally recognize and support the use of digital communication tools like WhatsApp, but not without structure.
- It is imperative to develop clear policies and "netiquette" guidelines for these groups to manage communication quality and respect professional boundaries.
- Furthermore, schools must address the equity issue by exploring alternative, low-tech communication methods to ensure that all parents, regardless of their socioeconomic status or digital literacy, can remain involved.

From the findings of this study, it will be beneficial to the parents, teachers, school

#### Limitations and Future Research

This study has limitations, its findings are based on a quantitative survey of teachers in a specific Geographical area, and therefore may not be generalized. Further research conducted on a larger sample over a larger area using a mixed survey design will be more suitable.

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