Understanding Communication Among Parents and Teachers in WhatsApp. Case Study in Bandung, Indonesia

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Abstract
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WhatsApp is a popular smartphone application for instant messaging which enhances communication within a group. In education, WhatsApp is used as a direct communication media among parents and teachers which has function as a complement of conventional media. In this study, two parents' WhatsApp groups of elementary school were observed in one month. The first group is general private school while the second group is Islamic based private school. With netnography method, 266 chats of general private school and 237 chats of Islamic based school are observed by two coders. Reliability score using Hostly test in categories is ranged from 0.8 to 1.0. It is found that some topics that discussed in both groups can be classified as student's permit, greeting, class activity, news and article, educational event and selling product. Other finding is differences of communication style in the group. The parents from general school used more emoticon during their chats, put the link source of news and article however the teachers only participate in chats which related to school activity. While parents and teachers in the Islamic school mostly use Islamic greeting and Islamic words in the chats, less emoticon and did not place the link source of the news or article. Moreover, both groups use informal language in their chats.

Key words: WhatsApp, parents, general school, Islamic school
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Introduction

Education has role to improve quality of human resources in a country. A well-established educational system can bring prosperity of a nation in future. In many countries, education stakeholders such as parents, teachers, government has built networks and organization to stand side by side to create future generation. Education stakeholders have to work together to set up best education. Parents should become school's partners therefore parent's involvement has positive impact upon students' performance (Khan, 2006).

The usage of WhatsApp is to maintain communication among parents and teachers and to build mutual relationship to participate in education system. Parents enjoy using WhatsApp because the application gives opportunity for parents to interact anytime with teacher and other parents with attractive features such as feature text, video, photo, picture and emoticon and it cost low, only for the internet package.

While through their chats parents can build relationship with other parents and teachers and support learning process at school.

The usage of parents group WhatsApp drives positive and negative effect. In positive effect, it provides knowledge leverage for member of the groups. Through WhatsApp, member not only discuss about internal school program but also can share information about global education. Information sharing from active teachers or parents who like to read news related to education and share it to their community will nourish others who considered passive people in gathering information. After the knowledge is shared, member of group may discuss it and further they may apply it in their school for better quality of education.

However, some parents who have low media literacy may share hoax. Many information on social media is shared without news value consideration. Unbalance information, lack of credibility of informant may distract readers. A case of people share hoax information from online news, it can cause chaos among readers.

Therefore, this study has an objective to compare two WhatsApp groups to explore about topic of chats and their communication style.

Literature Review

The era of computer mediated communication (CMC) drives people to communicate using social networking service (SNS) such as Facebook, Twitter, Path, Instagram and WhatsApp and to build social relations. CMC is a communication interaction between two people or more using computer. Riva (1998) explains CMC as human interaction through computer technology, interconnected process with many objectives however people cannot see the responds, feedback or gestures.

CMC through WhatsApp used by people in many fields. In education, the usage of WhatsApp has emerging as many studies show that it increases participation among stakeholders to build good education system. Shaeffer (2004) shows that parents should become an entity in education system. School provides open system that enable participation from parents to give new ideas, to change with flexibility and adaptablity as required. School invites stakeholders to analyze the strength and weakness of the school. Further, the parent-teacher communication can support good education for the next generation (Ekayani, 2016).

Several purposes of using WhatsApp for students can be classified as communicating with the students, nurturing the social atmosphere, creating dialogue and encouraging sharing among students and as a learning platform. WhatsApp has technical advantages, educational advantages, academic advantages however it also results problems such as irrelevant and nonsensical messages and incompatibility language between teacher and students (Bouhnik, Deshen, & Gan, 2014). Many parents use a WhatsApp through their cell phone as a primary internet source because it allows them to receive text, picture and video at no cost (Allen, Jolly, & Barnes, 2016).

Methodology

Netnography defined by Kozinets as "online interactions are valued as a cultural reflection that yields deep human understanding. Like in-person ethnography, netnography is naturalistic, immersive, descriptive, multi-method, adaptable, and focused on context. Used to inform consumer insight, netnography is less intrusive than ethnography or focus groups, and more naturalistic than surveys, quantitative models, and focus groups". This study is particularly interested in use Netnography which Kozinets (2009) defines as "a form of ethnography adapted to the social world mediated by computers". In short, netnography is a method for studying cybernetics space (cyberspace). And lately it has been promoted as the only method specifically designed to study cultures and online communities. Then observation is used by doing a data collection in social media as a tool for analyze

the media behavior of parents and teachers. There are two private groups that being observed, the first is multicultural school while the second is multicultural school.

To analyze chats content, two coders examined chats and classified them to 11 topics. Using Hostly test for reliability which is inter coder reliability = 2M / (N1+N2). M is number of same coding from both coders, N1 is number of coding by coder 1 while N2 is number of coding from coder 2 (Eriyanto, 2011). Reliability in content analysis ranged from 0 to 1, with 1 is perfect agreement of coders while 0 means no agreement of coders. In Holsty, the lower accepted reliability score is 0.7.

Result

Observation was held in one month. Using netnography, two coders observed and classified the chats into 10 categories. After tested the categories using Hostly reliability test, the score is ranged between 0.82 to 1.00. Categories of article, selling product, additional information and Ramadhan received 1.00 for reliability score while permission to teacher has 0.91, class learning activities, education event, school support and birthday greeting obtain around 0.8 for the reliability.

Further, topics categories in this observation will describe below. The first group WhatsApp that being observed is a parents group of private school in north Bandung city. This group consists of 2 teachers and 31 people (mother and father) from 20 students and two teachers in kindergarten class. For 1 month observation, there were 266 chats. Chats is happened from 7 am to 10 pm while chat's responses ranging from 0 to 11 responses. It means, the highest respond is 35% from members. Several topics have no response from member such as information related to school regulation, information and news link only. While the highest response is condolences from other parents when a student get sick. This group also have a few members who like to share articles and news related to education. They shared news and provided links therefore the credibility of information can be checked. Nevertheless, for the response, it is mostly just an opinion. The majority of parents use informal language (Bahasa), abbreviated and using emoticons. Teachers also use semi-formal language (Bahasa), abbreviate words, use some local language words and use emoticons. Sometimes they use English word such as happy birthday, GBU (God bless you) and GWS (get well soon).

While second observation is in first grade class in Islamic schools based which is located in southern Bandung city. The group members are 2 class teachers and 26 mothers of students. There were 237 chats in a month. Those chats using informal language style with Indonesian and local language Sundanese are dominated. Further, parents and teachers usually use Islamic greeting in their chats and sometimes respond the chats using Arabic words. Most of their chats are occurred in 4 am to 7 pm while number of responses ranged between 1 to 13 responses. It means the highest responds from member is 46%. The biggest respond is a farewell comment to students who is going to move to other school. Teachers at this school are very active to reply.

Both groups have four same topics which are class learning activities, permission to teacher, article and selling product. Class learning activities topic consists of reminder from teacher to parents about student' materials which should bring from home and parent's question about homework instruction. Then, permission to teacher topic is parent's permission if student cannot go to school because of sick or other reason and information to teacher if someone will replace parent to pick up student. In this topic, if one student get sick, other parents will give condolences with words and emoticon. Meanwhile, articles in general private school are shared by parents which are warning of pornography in youtube with frozen title, reason why boys are easy get stress from id.theasianparent.com, pornography in a kids story book from http://makassar.tribunnews.com and negative effects of competition for young children from ttp://temantakita.com. In Islamic school, the articles are mostly shared by teacher. The articles are character building for friendship, mother distrust personality and power of pray. One article which is shared by parent is kid's death because of mobile phone radiation on his brain. However, the articles' sources are not mentioned. The last is selling product chat. In general school, parent offers honey products in the group while in Islamic school, the teacher advertises her cookies in the group.

Other chats' in general school are topic are additional information, education event, photo activities, school support activities and birthday greeting while in Islamic school are Ramadhan and farewell permission. Additional information chat example is home assistant offering. Ramadhan topic example is prayer and forgiveness moment before celebrate Ramadhan period.

Table 1 : Comparative table

	General private school	Islamic private school
Total chats	266 (4% teachers – 96% parents)	237 (40% teachers – 60% parents)
Emoticon type	21 positive 7 negative	6 positive 1 negative
Language	Bahasa with some expression word in English	Bahasa and local language with some expression in Arabic
Teacher	Only respond to chats related to class activity	Always respond chats from parent
Chat proportion of topics	Class learning activities (18.9%) Permission to teacher (51.5%) Article (10.5%) Selling Product (0.3%) Additional information (4.9%) Education Event (1.5%) Class activities Photo (2.7%) School support (1.9%) Birthday greeting for students and parents (8.7%)	Class learning activities (56.4%) Permission to teacher (29.5%) Article (6%) Selling product (0.5%) Ramadhan (7.6%)

Discussion

Every school starts to use WhatsApp as a communication media among parents and teachers. Rogers defines communication technology is hard tools, organization structure and social value where people collecting, processing and exchanging information within people. Communication technology has an important role in the life of nation and state, because it can be a unifying tool of the nation and into the various realms of life. The impact of communication technology is the occurrence of changes in individual behavior that include knowledge, attitudes, or actions that occur as a result of the delivery of communication messages (Rogers, 1986). WhatsApp media communication that generates the message synchronously and can be understood can be achieved because it allows interaction between members.

The function of high-tech communication media is as follows (Burgon & Huffner, 2002) efficiency of information dissemination, strengthening the existence of information, educate, persuasion, entertain and social control. In this study, the majority of parents use WhatsApp as a tool to disseminate information and to educate. Nothing is leading to social control and does not contain entertainment content. Based on the theory of diffusion of innovation, Paul Lazarfeld, Bernard Barelson and H. Gaudet, something new will cause public curiosity. Someone who finds new things tends to socialize and disseminate to others. In this research is seen, when there is new information shared by a member, others will respond because members feel interested and want to spread to others.

Miftah Thoha (1993: 187), put forward his views on the effectiveness of communication in the description of openness, empathy, supportive behavior, positivity and similarity. It appears that members of this group have these characteristics. They are open to questions and answers, empathize with the conditions of giving, helping to answer, think positively and equally paying attention to information concerning the education of their child. According to highest participation of members to respond which are 35% and 46%, it seems that majority of members are not active people. Topics, time and invitation to participate in the chats should be examined further.

Result show that teachers in both group were not active to invite parents' participation in improving education quality. They just informed about homework, exercise and administrative field. To build good education system, parents should participate not only in students' learning process but also evaluate school management. This participation could be start by invitation from professional teacher to invite parents to discuss and evaluate learning process and school management. Teacher who has leadership personality can lead this. They have good personality, mindset, teaching skill and communication (Ishar & Jabor, 2016)

WhatsApp tends to be used to form social relationships with people it wants, as well as to find friends who are equally using the application to socialize. If it is associated with the theory of social penetration (Mongeau & Henningsen, 2015), it is explained how in the process of relating to others, there are various gradual processes, where there is a kind of adaptation process between them. In interpersonal communication there are three supporting aspects. First, interpersonal communication will work if there is positive attention to one's self. Second, interpersonal communication will be well preserved if a positive feeling toward others is communicated. Third, a positive feeling in the general communications situation, is very useful to make cooperation effective. In general private school, some parents who have high passion of parenting always participate in this issue. This is a fact that parenting issue could build relationship within parents.

According to information that shared in social media, parents from both school were sharing information about education event though the frequency is still limited. Further reports about Saudi middle school science stakeholders (Alabdulkareem, 2015) implies that scholar found that all stakeholders education have Internet access at home. They use social media in education, and they believe it will enhance their information, but the practice is significantly low.

Conclusions

WhatsApp has successfully support communication among parents and teachers at school. Their engagement not only for formal information but also for informal respond. In this study, two private schools are general approach school and the other Islamic based approach school. Members of the general school are teachers and both mother and father from the students even though not all fathers join this group. Meanwhile, in Islamic school, is consist of teachers and mothers only.

According the result, we can understand their activity using social media in term of greeting member, permission to teacher, selling product, class learning activities, additional information, article, event, photo sharing and school support. Moreover, they use semi-informal language with emoticon as additional expression.

Conversation from all groups happened in almost every day. Weekend is recorded as days with lower conversation and sometimes with no conversation at all. From the time of conversation, it seems all groups held conversation mostly in the morning.

From general school, the highest percentage of topics are permission to teacher, class learning activities and parenting article. While in Islamic school, the highest proportion are in class learning activities, permission to teacher and farewell permission.

Overall, it can be concluded that WhatsApp had successfully become interactive conversation among parents and teachers and can support to increase the school's quality.

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