



UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

Reflections of undergraduate student nurses on the use of WhatsApp Messenger to improve their learning in Primary Health Care



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ABSTRACT

Background: The global use of mobile devices with their connectivity capacity, and integrated with the affordances of social media networks, provides a resource-rich platform for innovative student-directed learning experiences.

Objective: The objective of this study was to review the experiences of undergraduate nurses on the improvement of primary health care education at a School of Nursing at a University in the Western Cape, South Africa, through the incorporation of a social media application, WhatsApp.

Method: A qualitative, exploratory, descriptive, and contextual design was used to explore and describe data collected from a purposive sample of twenty-one undergraduate nursing students.

The study population engaged in a WhatsApp discussion group to enhance their integration of theory and clinical practice of the health assessment competency of the Primary Health Care Module.

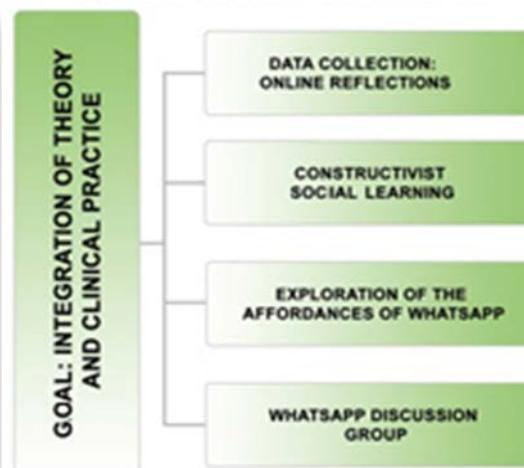
Participants submitted electronic reflections on their experiences to the WhatsApp discussion group via email on completion of the study. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data collected was done according to Tesch's (1990) steps of descriptive data analysis in order to identify the major themes in the study.

The electronic reflections were analysed to explore their rich, reflective data.

Results: Seven themes were identified that included: positive experiences using the WhatsApp group; the usefulness of WhatsApp for integrating theory and clinical practice; the availability of resources for test preparation; opportunity for clarification; anonymity; exclusion of students as a result of the lack of an appropriate device, and the application caused the battery of the device to run flat quickly.

Conclusion: The results of the experiences of students in the WhatsApp discussion group could be used to inform the use of social media applications in teaching and learning, with the purpose of enhancing the integration of the theory and clinical practice.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



FINDINGS: MAIN THEMES IDENTIFIED

Theme 1	Positive experiences using the WhatsApp group
Theme 2	Usefulness of WhatsApp for integrating theory and clinical practice
Theme 3	Availability of resources for test preparation
Theme 4	Opportunity for clarification
Theme 5	Anonymity: Feeling comfortable about being anonymous
Theme 6	Exclusion due to lack of an appropriate device or application
Theme 7	Application caused the battery of the device to run flat quickly

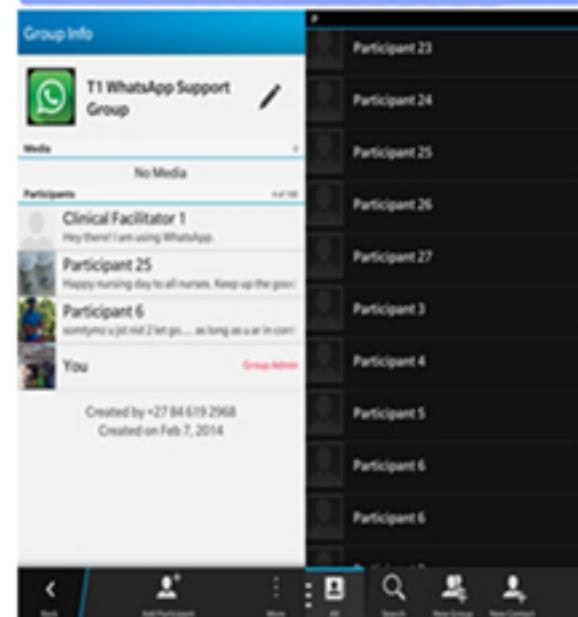


Classification of affordances (adapted from Bower, 2008:4)



Anonymity within the WhatsApp group

The screenshot from the WhatsApp group information indicate how anonymity of participants was ensured during the study



CONCLUSION

The use of WhatsApp, a social media application, provides students with a support structure to enhance the integration of their theory and clinical practice of the health assessment competency in the Primary Health Care Module. The reflections of students highlight their positive experiences of the enhancement of their learning as a result of the intervention.

The intervention provided a virtual space for collaborative practice, sharing of course related information, and maintains academic support to enhance the teaching and learning process.

The findings of this study are a contribution towards the usage of social media applications in teaching and learning, with the purpose of enhancing the integration of theory and clinical practice.

It could also guide the implementation of an original intervention which incorporates mobile devices and M-learning into a programme to enhance learning within health education.

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