

Sharol Thandi Magwai

Student Number: 16012086

PATHWAY: RESM8419p

BA COMMUNICATION (HONOURS)

Supervisor: Lizelle van der Walt

24 August 2020

[Word count:12 138]

Role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples

THE ROLE OF WHATSAPP IN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION DURING MINOR DISAGREEMENTS AMONGST MARRIED COUPLES

I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the Bachelor of Arts Honours in Communication Sciences degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGES
ABSTRACT	6
1. INTRODUCTION	7
1.1 Contextualisation	7-8
2. RATIONALE	9
3. PROBLEM STATEMENT	9-10
4. RESEARCH GOAL AND RESEARCH QUESTION	10
4.1. Research goal	10
4.2. Research Objective	10
5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	10
6. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION	11
6.1 Symbolic Interactionism	11-13
7. LITERATURE REVIEW	13-23
7.1. Online Platforms	13-14
7.2. WhatsApp	14-15
7.3. Disagreements in Interpersonal communication	15-17
7.4. The effects of social media on relationship	18
7.4.1 Disadvantages of online platforms on relationships	18-19
7.4.2. Advantages of online platforms on relationships	19-21
7.5. Skills required to deal with minor disagreements	21
7.5.1 Constructive communication skills	21
7.5.2. Destructive communication skills	21-22
7.6. Interpersonal communication	22-23
8. CONCEPTUALISATION	23-24
9. RESEARCH PARADIGM	24
9.1. Interpretivism	24
10. RESEARCH DESIGN	25
11. POPULATION	25
11.1. Target population	25
11.2. Accessible population	26

11.3. Population parameters	26
12. SAMPLING	26
12.1 Snowball sampling	26-27
12.2 Unit of analysis	27
13. DATA COLLECTION METHOD	27-31
14. DATA ANALYSIS METHOD	31-32
15. TRUSTWORTHINESS	32-33
16. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS	33-35
17. INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS	35-40
18. RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED	40-41
19. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION, LIMITATION AND HEURISTIC VALUE	40
19.1 ethical consideration	40
19.1.1 Ethical issues related to the participants	42-42
19.1.2 Ethical issues related to the researcher	42-43
19.2 Limitation	44-45
19.3 Heuristic value	45
20. CONCLUSION	45-46
REFERENCE LIST	47-48
TABLES AND FIGURES	
Figure 1: Knapp's Relationship model	20
Figure 2: Diane's 'Mickey Mouse' Theory of Interpersonal communication	16
Table 1: interview questions	28-30
Table 2: Sub-themes mentioned from most to least for MCTP1	33
Table 3: Sub-themes mentioned from most to least for MCTP2	33
Table 3: Sub-themes mentioned from most to least for MCTP3	34
Table 4: Sub-themes mentioned from most to least for overall respondents	34

APPENDICES	
Appendix A- Final Research Report Summary Document	47
Appendix B- Interview Schedule	48
Appendix C- Honours Ethical Clearance letter	49
Ethics checklist	50-51
Appendix D- Participants Consent form	52-53
Consent form for audio or video recording	

ABSTRACT

In this study the researcher set out to explore the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples. Studies of Louw and du Plooy-Cilliers (2014), Gutzmann (2018) and Brimhall, Miller, Maxwell and Alotaiby (2017) are the foundation that the researcher built the study on.

The researcher used a qualitative study to conduct semi-structured interviews with married couples who fit the population parameters of the study to gain an in-depth understanding of the interpretation and perceptions of married couples about the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreement.

The responses were transcribed by QDA Miner Lite which shows results that WhatsApp has both advantages and disadvantages towards minor disagreement. Interpretation and misunderstandings were mentioned quite often as main themes. The respondents value understanding in their communication with their partner and show that if there is a misunderstanding in the messages being sent on WhatsApp then direct or face-to-face communication is preferred. Communication styles and Perception were identified as the themes that improve with the number of years a couple has been married, as the more years couples have been married the better their understanding of how their partner communicates and the viewpoints thereof. Destructive communication skills were evident by subthemes of withdrawal and avoidance amongst respondent's communication on WhatsApp when a message is misunderstood or sarcastic. The overall results of this study show that WhatsApp as a communicative tool is useful when communicating about minor disagreement and when there is an understanding of communication styles within the marriage. But, due to the lack of expression on WhatsApp couples, if one does not understand the message then face-to-face communication is preferred.

Keywords: Minor disagreements, interpersonal communication, married couples, WhatsApp, understanding, online platforms.

Role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples

1. INTRODUCTION

This research report aimed to explore the study of the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples. Gutzmann (2018) argues that today's society has utilized mobile and web-based technologies in a variety of social and communicative realms to connect with others. Gutzmann (2018) further stipulates that with the progressive emergence of online platforms, self-presentation takes place beyond face-to-face encounters.

To develop this report, the researcher firstly addressed contextualisation, rationale, problem statement and research question to guide this study. Secondly, the report discussed Symbolic Interactionism as a chosen theory for the study at hand to help understand the phenomenon. Thirdly, the researcher engaged in previous literature done that is related to the study to help back up the study, develop concepts for the study and fill in the necessary gaps within the online communication field of study and add to the body of knowledge.

The research report continued with the research paradigm, design, population and sampling methods that the researcher applied to build a sound argument. Then, the researcher stipulated how the study is be trustworthy based on the presentation and interpretation of findings derived from the data collected from participants. Finally, the researcher underlined the relevant ethical consideration, limitations, and heuristic values to provide a research report that is trustworthy. The researcher ended the research report with a comprehensive conclusion of the study to answer the research question and objectives proposed.

1.1. Contextualisation

The research report on exploring the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples. According to Gutzmann (2018) communication amongst relationships is a vital aspect to be able to reach an agreement that builds the relationship atmosphere. Due to the increase of online platform use as a communicative tool amongst relationships, disagreements might arise due to misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the message intended (Gutzmann, 2018). The study is of importance to interpersonal

relationships because it will educate married couples using WhatsApp as a communicative tool to better utilize the tool and add knowledge to interpersonal communication as a field of study. The researcher engaged on countless research on the study of interpersonal communication on WhatsApp and minor disagreement amongst married couples across online and manual platforms. The researcher found studies that looked at interpersonal communication within relationships amongst university students, the disadvantages of WhatsApp communication in families and the advantages of WhatsApp on couples. With limited results that the researcher got access to, the researcher saw a gap in the literature about online communication platforms and its role in minor disagreements amongst married couples.

The limited knowledge about online communication would be a disadvantage to marriage counsellors since they will not be able to provide the necessary assistance with managing minor disagreements on WhatsApp or related online platform. According to Littlejohn, Foss and Oetzel (2017) a primary driver in selecting a communication medium for a message is to reduce the equivocality (when the message is unclear and more difficult for the receiver to decode), or possible misinterpretations of a message. This is known as Media Richness. Face-to-face communication is recommended as a better way to communicate a detailed message and online communication is more useful when communicating simple messages (Littlejohn, et al, 2017).

Online communication lacks aspects of nonverbal communication in the message and as such, lies a great deal of misinterpretation of the intended message. According to Louw and du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) Nonverbal communication refers to any message that one conveys by means other than words which include messages sent through facial expression, eyes, body, touch, and vocal variations. Louw and du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) notes that people convey most of the social meaning of a face-to-face message through nonverbal communication. The ability to read people's nonverbal communication gives an access to a vast amount of information about what they are really thinking and feeling without having to say a word (Louw & du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

Apart from the disadvantages of online communication, there exist some development. For example, WhatsApp has introduced video calls where people can communicate by visual presence, and non-verbal message is present to some extent. The participants can clarify their message better, so the other person understand the intended message.

2. RATIONALE

The researcher conducted a research study to benefit interpersonal communication as a body of knowledge by addressing the roles that WhatsApp as a communicative tool during minor disagreements amongst married couples play. This is to help both the studied population and counsellors to better utilize the tool to improve the communication of WhatsApp participants during minor disagreements. Interpersonal communication is vital to form meaningful relationship with others (Louw & du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). According to Louw and du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) to form meaningful interpersonal relationship, people need to learn the interpersonal skills to get to know and trust other people, communicate effectively, listen effectively and learn how to resolve conflict constructively. The research report achieved this by studying previous literature on the related study as well as address a relevant theory to better understand WhatsApp as an online communication tool and the participants that use the tool during minor disagreement in their marriages. This was done by looking at the understanding of WhatsApp as an application, the perception of participants on the use of WhatsApp in their marriage and the advantages and disadvantages thereof. The researcher intends to build a study that will help pupils use it as a foundation to further build on and develop.

The researcher aimed to provide a research study to educate the married couple population (as well as those in intimate relationship) about understanding the advantages and disadvantages of WhatsApp as a communicative tool to solve minor disagreements in their respective relationships.

3. RESEARCH PROBLEM

People use online platforms within their existing relationship to develop, manage, and grow their interpersonal relationship with friends and family (Louw & du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). The types of online platforms have advantages for interpersonal relationships, but the effects thereof are not always positive. The use of online platforms to communicate can cause misunderstanding by active participants due to various meanings attached to the messages being sent. Online platforms such as WhatsApp lacks nonverbal communication within the message being sent. The lack of nonverbal cues can cause misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the intended messages. With the limited research been conducted on online platforms especially WhatsApp and minor disagreements in relationships, married couples undergo minor disagreements in their

marriage due to the misunderstanding or misinterpretation on the intended messages being sent to the other partner. As a result, misinterpretation of the intended message can lead to major disagreements within marriages, which in turn might lead to communication breakdown between couples. Interpersonal communication is important in relationships; therefore, it is the responsibility of all active participants on online platforms to make sure that the intended message is sent and that there is an understanding thereof, bearing in mind the different contexts that the participants are within during the communication. This study investigated the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements between married couples.

4. RESEARCH GOAL AND RESEARCH QUESTION

4.1. Research Goal

The goal of this study is to discover whether the use of WhatsApp as a communicative tool amongst married couples during minor disagreements is effective. This including the end goal of contributing to the body of knowledge relating to interpersonal communication in a digital sphere.

4.2. Research Question

What is the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements between couples married for two or more years?

5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To determine the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples.
- To establish whether WhatsApp is an effective online platform to communicate about minor disagreements.
- To explore whether the number of years being married contributes to the communication styles during minor disagreements amongst married couples.
- To determine the perception of married couples about the use of WhatsApp during minor disagreement.

6. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

6.1. Symbolic Interactionism

According to Mead (cited in Littlejohn, et al. 2017), Symbolic Interactionism refers to a way of thinking that relates to mind, self and society. It holds the idea that as people interact with one another over time, they come to share meaning for certain terms and actions and come to understand events in a similar way. This is summarised as follows:

- People respond to things based on the meaning those things have for them. For example, people greet each other on WhatsApp before a conversation takes place. This is seen as a sign of respect and good manners, as perceived by society.
- People get these meanings through social interaction and change them through interaction. For example, the gesture of greeting before continuing with a conversation was or is created by people within whom people interact with amongst society.

According to Littlejohn, et al (2017) reality is symbolically constructed through a process that utilises words, gestures, clothing, equipment, etc., where meaning is never fixed but shifting and ambiguous.

As the world is moving into a digital space, things will change, this includes words, gestures, and communication. For example, saying “Ok” to someone when you are talking to them face-to-face may be deemed acceptable. However, on an application such as WhatsApp, it might be considered rude or that the person you are interacting with is not interested in the conversation. This is what society has attached meaning to the word ‘ok’ on social platforms such as WhatsApp.

According to Louw and du Plooy-Cilliers (2014), Interactionists are interested in how people create meaning (especially about themselves) and how they make sense of their circumstances through interaction with others.

Symbolic Interactionism involves cognitive processing (thinking and reflecting) this means people must interpret other’s behaviour and respond based on these interpretations (Louw & du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

According to Littlejohn, et al (2017) people do not respond directly to others' behaviour, but rather to the meaning they attach to the behaviour. Louw and du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) states that Interactionists note that the 'self' consists of an 'I' and 'me':

- The 'I' is an immediate, spontaneous response to other people; often unorganized, unpredictable, undirected and impulsive. For example, in the study of the role of WhatsApp on minor disagreements amongst married couples, might be that a wife left a WhatsApp message to the husband to defrost the meat, so she can prepare dinner after work, but the husband forgets to do so and is out and about on the streets. The wife's 'I' might send an aggressive message on WhatsApp to the husband to show anger and frustrations thereof.
- The 'me' is sometimes referred to as the 'socialised other', the results of how people have learned to adapt their behaviour based on other's expectations and responses. The 'me' from the previous scenario, might be the wife calmly trying to find reasons from her husband on why he did not defrost the meat.

Interactionists argue that 'me' is not present at birth but is formed through continuous symbolic interaction with people. People learn to behave in certain ways that will be socially acceptable and rewarding their behaviour.

Littlejohn et al (2017) states that society affects behaviour through norms and values, where some behaviour are rewarded with prestige and respect, while others are condemned or punished. Societal norms change over time.

The researcher perceives the theory of Symbolic Interactionism to be applicable to the study. As the theory states that people construct realities through symbolic processes, the researcher understand that societies are different, so as marriages. People have different values, believes, and norms which are constructed as symbols used to interact with others. According to the theory of Symbolic interactionism, married couple learn to understand each other better due to the interactions that took place over time. When couples interact with each other over time, they form symbols to ensure that there is a shared meaning amongst each other. The shared meaning aids in better understanding of the individuals intended messages and communication styles for a cohesive communication within the marriage.

According to Symbolic interaction, the components “I” and “me” develops amongst married couple. The “I” develops over continuous interaction with each other from an immediate response to the “me” which is a socialized response. The minor disagreements in the early stage of the marriage might be of the immediate response, where partners are still learning aspects of each other’s behaviour and would respond with an instant thought that comes to mind. The “me” response is evident where the couples show deep understanding of each other’s behaviour and have established a preferred communication style. This is evident where partner’s respond in a “socially” acceptable manner.

The implementation of Symbolic Interactionism theory can help understand the roles of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreement, and to understanding how married couples interpret and form symbols in the intended messages during interaction with their partners during a minor disagreement.

7. LITERATURE REVIEW

7.1. Online platforms

Online platforms known as social media is defined as, ‘a specific set of online offering that have emerged over the past three decades-including blogs, social networking sites and microblogging (Gutzmann, 2018). Treem (2016) states that social media is connected to Web 2.0, which refers to web-based application that allows users to post online content and accessed through multiple devices. According to Gutzmann (2018) studies have found that communicative use of social media increase bonding capital and reduce loneliness among college students. It has also, been essential in the building of intimate relationships among individuals despite geographical distance.

According to Gutzmann (2018) by 2000, nearly 100 million people had access to the internet and utilised chatrooms for making friends and discussing topics. In 2003, MySpace became the popular website to post photos, connect with friends and family and share music (Gutzmann, 2018). LinkedIn also launched that year, creating a space for professionals in the working field to socialize, find jobs and connect with each other to network. In 2005, Mark Zuckerberg launched The Facebook.com for Harvard students to converse, but eventually saw its potential and released it to the world as facebook.com (Gutzmann, 2018).

According to Gutzmann (2018) In 2006, the popularity of text messaging and social media sites inspired the creation of Twitter, a site that allows users to send “tweets” across the platform to network with people. By 2009, Facebook, Inc. created a cross-platform messaging and voice over IP service called WhatsApp. WhatsApp allows users to send text messages and voice messages, make voice calls and video calls, and share images, videos, user location and documents (an in-depth discussion of WhatsApp available below).

Campbell and Murray (2015) found that about 75% of individuals in the United States are connected to the Internet, and an estimated 83% of individuals online between the ages of 18 and 29 have at least one social networking account.

7.2. WhatsApp

According to WhatsApp, Inc (2020), WhatsApp Messenger is an American freeware, cross-platform instant messaging and voice over IP service owned by Facebook, Inc. It allows users to send text messages and voice messages, make voice and video calls, and share images, documents, user location and other media.

Chan, Yong and Harmizi (2020) conducted a study in Dubai aimed to investigate the effectiveness of WhatsApp as a medium of interpersonal communication among Abu Dhabi university students. The participants suggested that WhatsApp is an effective communicative tool in their relationship as it is a fast and convenient way to communicate with the partner when they are not together. The students also mentioned that as they are students, WhatsApp is a cost-effective online communication tool than phone calls and other platforms. Lastly, the students preferred WhatsApp as a communicative in interpersonal communication because of various features such as ‘emojis’ to help emphasize the message better, affordable video calls which helps them see the person they communicating with and fill the gap of their absence. The results found a positive impact of WhatsApp as an effective medium of interpersonal communication.

Gjylbegaj and Jararaa (2018) examined the impact of WhatsApp on interpersonal communication of youth in United Arab Emirates. However, their findings indicated that WhatsApp bring negative effects and does not help to improve interpersonal communication. The participants mentioned that WhatsApp as a communicative tool affects badly how people

communicate with each other and make people to be socially exclusive. The participants mentioned the lack of nonverbal cues and its ability of forming different interpretation of the intended message affecting their interpersonal communication with their relationship partners.

Their findings were consistent with the findings of Chris (2016), who found that social networking engagement has negative influences on the family's interpersonal communication, which badly affects the interrelationship of the family.

7.3. Disagreements in Interpersonal Communication

According to Grant (2018), a disagreement refers to a situation where people have different opinions about something and often argue. These can be classified as minor disagreements and major disagreements. According to Grant (2018) Minor disagreements are minimal and can be resolved by the partners themselves. For example, arguments about house chores, which may turn to major disagreement if not dealt with and it happens on a continuous spectrum. Major disagreements are ones that take time to solve and usually need an external intervention to aid with solving the problem at hand (Grant, 2018).

According to Louw and du Plooy-Cilliers (2014), minor disagreements can include the following:

- Household chores (when one partner does not help with house chores and expects the other partner to do everything on their own).
- Forgetting instructions (when a partner forgets to carry out instructions given by the other partner)
- Misunderstanding (interpreting the tone of the intended message as rude while the other partner was making a joke)

The researcher chooses to do a study on minor disagreements to avoid information that might be sensitive and make the participants uncomfortable to share their honest experience. The researcher acknowledges that she is not yet qualified to deal with major disagreements as that might require participants to get psychological help thereafter and cannot afford to offer such interventions to the participants.

According to du Plooy-Cilliers (2010) differences between partners in an intimate relationship should be expected, as the relationship was formed by two unique individuals, each with his or her own needs, desires and expectations. Du Plooy-Cilliers (2010) continues to state that conflict could be a natural, unavoidable phenomenon that is caused by such differences. Conflict is a normal feature of all relationships and often reflects a lack of consensus about relationship and individual goals and expectations or other internal and/or external relational problems (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2010).

Windingland (2016) proposed a simplified model of interpersonal communication in which she named Diane's Mickey Mouse Theory of Interpersonal communication. The theory answers questions about why people have conflict and misunderstanding. Figure 2 illustrates the graphical representation of the theory.

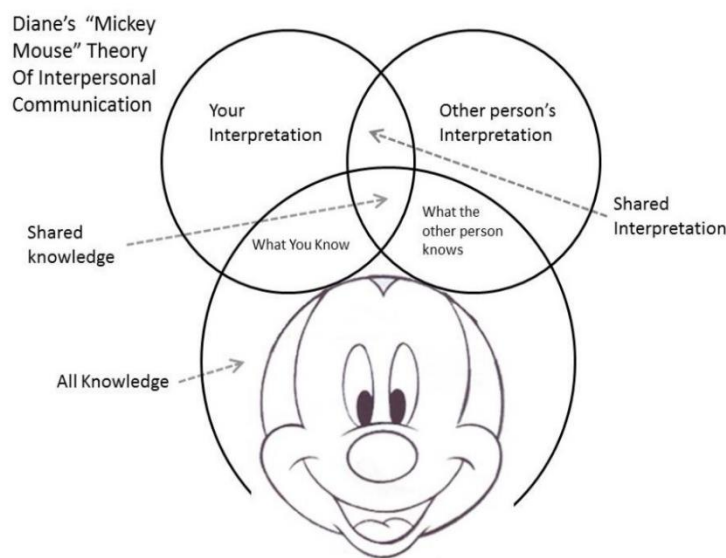


Figure 2: Diane's "Mickey Mouse" Theory of Interpersonal Communication

According to Windingland (2017) the theory has given more visual weight to people's interpretation of knowledge than the actual knowledge they possess. The reason for this is that most of people's misunderstanding stem from different interpretations, especially interpretation of intent (Windingland, 2017).

Windingland (2017) notes that people misjudge other people's intent because the other person has interpreted the message intended through his or her own filters based on experience,

personality, age, etc. People view the world through their own filters, or framework of understanding.

In the study of the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couple, couples might interpret the intended message from their viewpoint than what the actual intended message is. This might be the cause of minor disagreement between the couple.

7.4. The effects of online platforms on relationships

According to Louw and du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) technology allows people to form and maintain relationships with people who may, but need not be, in the same geographical area. These types of technologies certainly have advantages for interpersonal relationship, but the effects of technology on relationships are not all positive (Louw & du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Technology give rise to Media richness where a great deal of message can be misinterpreted or misunderstood by participants. Nonetheless, people use technology within their existing relationships to develop, manage and grow their interpersonal relationships with friends and family (Louw & du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

Gutzmann (2018) states that individuals who are in relationship tend to opt for communicating with their partners through WhatsApp when they argue, to avoid each other. Gutzmann (2018) concluded that couples must utilize WhatsApp to communicate with their partners and not use it to replace face to face communication when arguing. This notion suggests that the reason married couples engage on WhatsApp about their minor disagreements is because they might be avoiding each other.

7.4.1 Disadvantages of online platforms on relationships

Before technological devices were available, a person was limited in their ability to contact their partner during working hours and was often unable to communicate while commuting, in a meeting, or an area without a landline or computer (Brimhall, Miller,

Maxwell & Alotaiby, 2017). Now, smartphones have fostered the expectation that one's partner should be constantly accessible even during important work functions.

➤ Attachments in relationships

From an attachment perspective, connected presence may be the digital equivalent of an attachment-based model, where couples utilize text messages and other forms of communication to establish secure connections that clearly and consistently communicate each partner's accessibility, responsiveness and engagement (Brimhall, et al. 2017). According to Brimhall et al (2017) Accessibility, responsiveness and engagement are the components of attachments within relationships. Accessibility which refers to the ability to reach a partner on online platforms (WhatsApp) when needed. Responsiveness refers to paying attention and reacting to a suitable way to something said or done by the other partner (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2010). Engagement refers to the ability to be able to cohesively agree with the other partner on certain matters.

➤ Relationship Expectations

Humans have a multiplicity of expectations, which are always in the background of daily experiences. Du Plooy-Cilliers (2010) defined Expectations as prior beliefs that govern social situations, that are specific to particular societies and groups and entail ways of thinking about the future, involving anticipations of the probability of an occurrence. Expectations are therefore normative in that they reflect what people believe probably will or ought to happen, although they also tend to reflect people's preferences and desires (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2010).

Du Plooy-Cilliers (2010) proposed two types of relationship expectations. First, are universal and general expectations that people will apply to any relationship or interaction. For example, most people expect their partners to be loving and caring and not overly critic and negative. In this study, married couple might expect their partner to always communicate their whereabouts and inform when they are running late and not assume the partner is aware.

The second type of expectation develops over time out of the relationship itself, often based on specific patterns of experiences that occur within the relationship (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2010). For example, a spouse may return home from work every evening at five o'clock, creating the expectation that s/he will always arrive home at that hour.

Furthermore, if a couple had a minor disagreement on WhatsApp between them in the past and they have reached a certain compromise to ensure that the event does not reoccur, an expectation is created in terms of how a partner should behave if a similar event occurred (Du Plooy-Cilliers,

2010). According to du Plooy-Cilliers (2010) over time, these types of expectation become relationship rules.

Brimhall et al. (2017) found that increased expectations are the foundation behind what is known as “connected presence”. Connected presence occurs in a relationship as partners rely on a variety of digital communication technologies to sustain a continuous source of connection that helps create a feeling of stability and safety (Brimhall, et al. 2017). According to Brimhall, et al (2017) different expectations can increase misunderstanding and cause potential ruptures in the primary relationship; technology provides increased opportunities to develop and nurture connections outside of the primary relationship that can lead to infidelity.

7.4.2 Advantages of online platforms on relationships

➤ Social Media Enhancing Social Capital

According to Kim and Kim (2017) Social capital is described as the “features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination for mutual benefit. Researchers consistently found that using social network sites is related to higher social capital. Kim and Kim (2017) found most studies have confirmed that interpersonal interaction on social media, time spent, and frequency of social media use are positively connected with bridging and bonding social capital.

Chen and Li (2017) noted that a survey sample of college students found that their continuous Facebook use is positively related to bridging and bounding relationship. Texas students showed similar results that Facebook use was positively associated with characteristics of social capital.

➤ Social Media and Intimate Relationship development

Social media websites have become a fundamental avenue for communication within and about interpersonal relationships (Gutzmann, 2018). Despite the growing power of online social interaction, research has yet to catch up with the potential implications for how romantic relationships unfold both online and off-line (Gutzmann, 2018).

According to Gutzmann (2018) understanding how traditional models of relationship formation play out in online environments is fundamental to understanding the function of computer mediation in modern interpersonal communication. According to Gutzmann

(2018) Knapp's stage model of relationships was examined through the lens of Facebook, which explores the escalation stages of intimate relationships (i.e. initiating, experimenting, intensifying, integrating and bonding). Knapp's relationship model explains how relationships grow and last and how they end. According to Gutzmann (2018) the model is categorized into ten different stages which come under two interrelating stages, firstly, Knapp's relationship escalation and secondly, Knapp's relationship termination model. Diverse levels of speed and altered time between each step can be seen and experienced when a relationship grow as well as the steps can be skipped out during the progression or deterioration of a relationship (Gutzmann, 2018). Figure 1 illustrates Knapp's stage model of relationships.

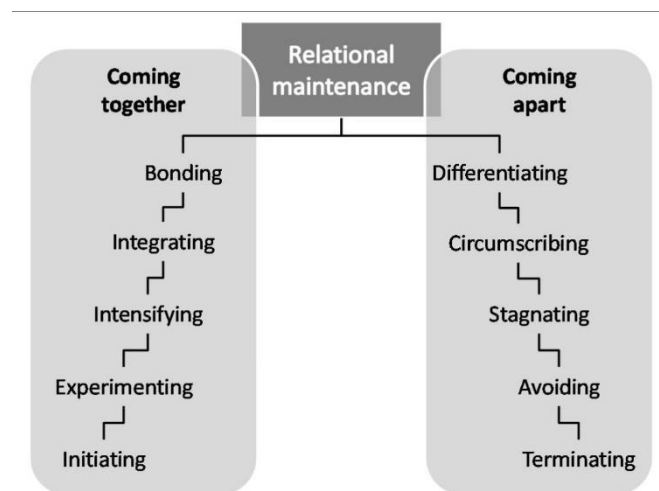


Figure 1: Knapp's Relationship Model

According to Knapp's relationship model, married couples can undergo escalation and termination stage in their marriage. During escalation, the couples are interested in each other by getting to know each other better, doing activities that intensifies their relationship such as going on vacation and building a strong bond by sharing their experiences. Secondly, the termination stage happens at a later stage during the relationship where the level of misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the intended messages from partners is greater. Couples start to avoid each other's messages or withdraw from the topic and see a great deal of differences in interests and values. Minor disagreement can take part in any stage during the relationship with a greater degree during the termination stage.

According to Gutzmann (2018) Facebook participants stated Facebook as their primary tool for interaction early in the experimenting stage of romantic relationship development and how Facebook had replaced the role of phone calls. This is mainly because Facebook users can avoid the pressure of directly expressing relational interest in the first encounter which might help them avoid rejection in a face-to-face situation; and that an individual can show interest by liking their shared contents

7.5. Skills required to deal with minor disagreements

It is the interaction patterns displayed by intimate partners during conflict that determines whether conflict will have constructive or destructive.

7.5.1. Constructive communication skills

According to du Plooy-Cilliers (2010) partners equipped with the skills to manage conflict more constructively, and who engage in more positive and less negative interactions, create an environment that allows for deeper levels of self-disclosure and acceptance of vulnerabilities, all which are central aspects of intimacy and relationship quality. According to du Plooy-Cilliers (2010) these findings concur that couples with high-quality relationships were:

- more likely to manage interpersonal conflicts in a positive way,
- more willing to listen to the other partner and apologies,
- less likely to say hurtful things to each other,
- respond appropriately to negative messages,
- engage more in an idea opposition rather than personal attacks or insulting each other.

7.5.2. Destructive communication skills

According to du Plooy-Cilliers (2010) unfulfilled expectations are one of the foremost contributors to conflict in intimate relationships. As a result, it can be posited that partners should communicate and repeatedly negotiate the expectations that they have of each other and the relationship. Du Plooy-Cilliers (2010) notes that partners must not only clarify expectations, but must also accept or reject the responsibility to comply with these expectations. In this way, disappointment and hurt can be minimized. The results found by du Plooy-Cilliers (2010) supports the notion that the ways in which a couple engage with each other during conflict

situations are more important than the actual content of the argument. The following are some of destructive communication skills:

- Withdrawal- this behaviour takes place when one partner shuts the other out when s/he raises a concern, it is usually a negative form of interaction, and is strongly associated with negative relationship outcomes (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2010). Du Plooy-Cilliers (2010) compared relationships in which neither partner tends to withdraw with relationships in which either or both partners have a tendency to withdraw, and found that individuals in the later kind of relationships were more likely to report greater levels of negative interaction and that they judged their relationships as being of a lower quality and less satisfying than did their counterparts.
- Defensiveness, invalidation, and stubbornness also predict a reduction in relationship which serves as means to protect an individual's security and self-confidence in threatening conflict situation (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2010).

7.6. Interpersonal Communication

According to Bajracharya (2018), Interpersonal Communication is the process of exchange of information, ideas, feelings, and meaning between two or more people through verbal and/or nonverbal methods. It often includes face-to-face exchange of messages, which may take the form of a certain tone of voice, facial expression, body language and gestures (Bajracharya, 2018). However, with the growing space for technology, Interpersonal communication also take place on online platforms. Bajracharya (2018) continues to note that communication may be subtle or unintended and does not necessarily need to be verbal.

Interpersonal communication involves interdependent people (Bajracharya, 2018). This means people are connected in some way, for example, a husband and wife. According to Bajracharya (2018), the actions of one person influences the other person. For example, if the husband forgets to fetch the kids from school, then the wife might be angry and shout at the husband.

According to Louw and du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) communication process in its most basic form involves participants who take on the roles of both the sender and receiver. This happens when participants try to share meaning by encoding and decoding messages, by

creating and interpreting messages, following certain communication grammatical rules. Louw and du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) state that the message is sent through a channel (face-to-face or online messaging platforms) and when a participant replies a message, this response is called feedback. All this communication takes place within a certain context.

The purpose of interpersonal communication is to create and share meaning (Louw & du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). There is also a mutual responsibility for making sure that the meanings that are created are shared. According to Louw and du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) this implies that the sender and receiver must make sure that they understand each other's messages.

According to the study at hand, communication on WhatsApp must be used to create and share meaning amongst participants. This means that when one partner sends a message, s/he must make sure that the other partner understands the intended message and vice versa.

8. CONCEPTUALISATION

- WhatsApp Messenger - According to WhatsApp, Inc (2020) WhatsApp Messenger is an American freeware, cross-platform instant messaging and voice over IP service owned by Facebook, Inc. It allows users to send text messages and voice messages, make voice and video calls, and share images, documents, user location and other media.
- Relationship expectation- Prior beliefs that govern social situations, that are specific to particular societies and groups and entails ways of thinking about the future, involving anticipations of the probability of an occurrence within intimate relationships (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2010).
- Interpersonal communication in intimate relationships- the process of exchange of information, ideas, feelings and meaning between intimate partners through verbal and/or non-verbal cues (Bajracharya, 2018).
- Marital disagreement- an infringement, act that disregards or breaches an agreement, right, duty or rule that causes substantial damage to the marriage (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2010).

- Minor disagreements in marriages- minimal arguments resulting from different opinions, values and expectations between couples which can be resolved by the couples themselves without the help of an external intervention (Grant, 2018).

9. RESEARCH PARADIGM

9.1 Interpretivism

According to du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014), Interpretivism rests in the idea that people are fundamentally different from objects. It asserts that, in social sciences, researchers should study and describe meaningful socials where social actions can be weddings, parties or any other interaction that takes places amongst people daily.

The aim of Interpretivism is to gain in-depth understanding. It often requires the researcher to immerse themselves within an environment of those being studied (du Plooy-Cilliers, et al, 2014). In the study of the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples, the researcher conducted a study to understand how WhatsApp as a communicative online tool impacts minor disagreements amongst married couples.

Operating within the Positivism paradigm would not align with the study, as the paradigm aims on finding observable, objective and verifiable facts to generalise the findings to a larger population. The researcher is indeed aware that marriages are different, and that people behave differently to circumstances. Owing to this, the researcher intends not on generalising findings to larger groups.

Unlike Positivists who plan on discovering and explaining causal relationships in attempts to predict and control nature and the behavior of humans, Interpretivists merely want to understand human behavior. For example, in this study, Positivists would want to find the relationship between WhatsApp and minor disagreements and apply it to marriage couples across populations, whereas Interpretivism aims at understanding the role WhatsApp plays amongst married couples during minor disagreements within a given context.

10. RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher used qualitative methodology to obtain a richness and depth of data obtained from complex and multi-faceted phenomena within a social context.

Qualitative research deals with the underlying qualities of subjective experiences and the meaning associated with the phenomena (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al, 2014). According to du Plooy-Cilliers, et al (2014) Qualitative researchers often refer to a 'whole-world experience', because they are interested in the depth of human experience, including all the personal and subjective peculiarities that are characteristic of individual experience and meanings associated with the particular phenomenon. This was done by conducting in-depth interviews.

The researcher used an Exploratory research design to obtain key concepts, stakeholders, social needs of the study. This is due to the nature of the study of the role WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couple being a study of an unknown area. As the social, economic, and technological systems evolve, new areas of research emerge continuously.

The researcher used a cross-sectional design for this study. Cross-sectional is used to create an overall picture of phenomenon at one point in time (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al, 2014). This means the researcher only collects data from participants once. This is because there is a limited time granted to further explore this phenomenon in hoping to resolve the phenomenon.

11. POPULATION

11.1. Target population

According to STATS SA (2018) there were a total of 135 458 Civil marriages in South Africa in 2017. The figure above puts Limpopo province at second last of other provinces with 9 894 marriages. However, not all married couples engage with each other on WhatsApp. The target population for this study is 18 married couple in Thabazimbi who use WhatsApp to engage about minor disagreements. The number is obtained from Thabazimbi Magistrate court on the records that shows that 24 marriages took place in Thabazimbi in the year 2017. The 16 couples were between the ages of 24-32 years old and 8 couples were over the age of 35 years. The researcher used the 18 couples who fit the population parameters of the study.

11.2. Accessible Population

The researcher had an accessible population of 9 marriages at Thabazimbi, a small town in Limpopo. The researcher interviewed four married couples for this study. One out of the four the interviews was used as a backup interview in case where participants might decide to withdraw from the study or any challenge that might occur within the interviews (this is to avoid spoilt interviews).

11.3. Population parameters

For the study of the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples, the researcher only used the population that fell under the following parameters:

- Married couples
- Both partners using WhatsApp to engage about minor disagreements
- Married for two or more years
- Between the ages of 25-32 years
- Stay in Thabazimbi, in Limpopo province

12. SAMPLING

The researcher used non-probability sampling method to collect data for the study. According to du Plooy-Cilliers, et al (2014) non-probability sampling is used when it is nearly impossible to determine who the entire population is or when it is difficult to gain access to the entire population. That is, any inclusion in the sample will be based on coincidence or researcher's ability to make contact to participants and not necessarily on a random or systematic selection (du Plooy-Cilliers, et al, 2014). The researcher used Snowball sampling method to reach out to the participants.

12.1. Snowball Sampling

The Snowball Sampling was best suited for the study at hand. Snowball sampling makes use of referrals to increase the sample size (du Plooy-Cilliers, et al, 2014). This happens when participants in the study provide suggestions of others who fit the population parameters of the study, and who could and want to participate in the research.

The researcher identified two married couples who fit the population parameters and were willing to participate in the study. The researcher asked the participants to refer others who might be interested to participate hoping to end up with four married couples to interview and collect data from.

12.2 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis for this study is married couples in Thabazimbi who use WhatsApp to engage in minor disagreements and transcripts of the interview results.

13. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

The researcher used a semi-structured interview schedule to collect data from participants. According to du Plooy-Cilliers, et al (2014) semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection method which allows the researcher to pose questions to participants with the aim of learning more about their views, opinions and beliefs about a specific phenomenon.

The researcher used a standardised, open-ended interviews which focuses on asking the same set of open-ended questions to all the participants. The interviews took place on a Zoom Application.

This is due to the Covid-19 pandemic which enforces certain measures such as staying at home. The government has enforced certain measures that restrict movement unless one is an essential worker or going to buy essential. The restrictions affected the nature of the interpretivism to conduct an interview where the researcher deeply immersed in the participants environment to better understand their experiences. However, that did not stop the researcher to conduct interviews that are insightful and offer understanding of the study at hand. The researcher asked the participants to be in a space they feel most comfortable to interact and made the participants feel at ease during the interview for optimum results of the study.

The researcher arranged a Zoom meeting with the first two participants to get to know them better and explain the research study to the participant. This happened in the third week of July after ethical clearance was granted to the researcher. In this meeting, the researcher asked the participants friendly questions about their lives to create a warm and friendly environment, explain the research study and the concept form, ask if they would be interested to participate

and plan further if interested. Lastly, the researcher asked if the participants know someone else who fall under population parameters and would be interested to participate (snowball sampling).

The researcher then sent the informed consent to all the interested participant, followed by the interview schedules (days and time). The interviews ran for four consecutive days were each interview was conducted per day for all four couples (according to availability of all participants and special arrangement/s).

The following main themes (MV) were assessed which were derived from the literature review:

- Interpretation
- Disagreements
- Constructive communication
- Destructive communication
- Perception

The researcher designed a table (Table 1) to help generate interview questions for the study with the aid of the research question and objectives mentioned above. The researcher asked approximately 11 questions. The interviews lasted 20 minutes to offer every participants chance to understand the question clear and give sufficient responses.

Table 1: Interview questions

Research Question	Research Objectives	Main Themes	Subthemes	Research Question
What is the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements between couples married for two or more years?	➤ To determine the role of WhatsApp as an effective online platform to communicate about minor disagreements. ➤ To establish whether WhatsApp is an effective communication tool.	➤ Constructive communication ➤ Destructive communication ➤ Disagreements ➤ Interpretation ➤ Perception	➤ Good listening skill ➤ Withdrawal ➤ Misunderstanding ➤ Understanding ➤ Preference	1. Couples Disagree often and that is normal. Sometimes it is huge disagreements and sometimes it is just minor or small. What do you consider as minor disagreement with your partner?

	➤ To explore whether married couples prefer WhatsApp as a communicative tool during minor disagreements. ➤ The perception of married couples about the use of WhatsApp during minor disagreement. ➤ The level of understanding of messages during minor disagreements on WhatsApp.			2. When you disagree on small things, what is your preferred communication tool with your partner to sort it out? Why? 3. How often do you engage with your partner on WhatsApp when you want to talk about those minor disagreement? 4. What kinds of disagreement with your partner can be settled on WhatsApp? 5. If your partner is annoyed by the disagreement and he/she uses a sarcastic tone in his/her message, how do you respond to the sarcasm? 6. Do you understand your partner's point of view when he/she sends messages on WhatsApp during small disagreement? 7. What would you like your partner to say on WhatsApp
--	--	--	--	---

				during small disagreements that is not currently happening? 8. How do you emphasize your message to your partner on WhatsApp? 9. Do you think that WhatsApp as communication tool during small disagreements with your partner is suitable? 10. How do you feel about face-to-face communication with your partner during minor disagreement in comparison to WhatsApp? 11. What would you like to change about WhatsApp as an application to enhance your communication with your partner during minor disagreements?
--	--	--	--	---

Table 1 above designed for this study, represented the research question that guided the study, the research objectives, main and sub-themes identified for the study and the interview questions

that participants were asked. The research objectives, main-and sub-themes have been established from the literature review provided by the researcher.

14. DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

The researcher used QDA Miner Lite to analyse the data collected from the participant. The research used the following eight stage process to analyse data on QDA Miner Lite.

- Step 1: the preparation of data- the process of organizing and transcribing data from the interviews. The transcription of the overall interviews on Microsoft Word software were uploaded to QDA Miner Lite to analyse the data and identify themes.
- Step 2: define the coding scheme- the researcher has developed a coding schemes for all participants. This will ensure the identity of all participants is protected. The researcher used MCTP1, MCTP2 and MCTP3 to identify the participants data on the software. MC- Married couple, T- Thabazimbi and P- Participant 1, 2 and 3
- Step 3: development of coding schemes- a coding schemes will be created, assuring that every code is exhaustive in nature, mutually exclusive and specific. The researcher formed groups of the questions to make sure every objective is addressed
- Step 4: testing the coding scheme- this stage ensures that the code created by the researcher is trustworthy and clear. The researcher made sure that every participant answered the same set of question to ensure trustworthiness for the research study.
- Step 5: coding the text- this will help to identify relevant themes within the data collected. The researcher made use of different colour highlighter from the software to indicate the themes mentioned on the data collected from participants.
- Step 6: Consistency of the coding schemes- the coding schemes must be clear and aligned throughout the text. The transcriptions were uploaded twice on the software to ensure that the data was coded clearly for all uploaded transcriptions.
- Step 7: Drawing conclusion: these stages involves the interpretation of the codes developed within the text. an interpretation of the codes was done drawing back from the previous literature review identified in the study.
- Step 8: Reporting on the findings: documenting the findings.

The researcher used a nominal scale to account for every response from the participants and identifying the themes and sub-themes from most to least. The use of QDA Miner Lite

software helped the researcher to transcript data, form coding schemes, labelling data, and retrieving of data. A coding scheme was developed accordingly to assist with organising which themes are important from most to least mentioned by the participants.

QDA Miner Lite was chosen to analyse the data due to its nature to code quicker and significantly enhance the accuracy of the results throughout the analysis process. The software has various tools that make it easy to extract important information from the data that aids to identify themes and sub-themes for the study.

15. TRUSTWORTHINESS

- Credibility

According to Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al* (2014), credibility is the accuracy that the researcher has interpreted the data provided by participants. Credibility is increased when the researcher spends long periods of time with the participants to understand them better and gain insight into their lives (du Plooy-Cilliers, *et al*, 2014). The researcher arranged a Zoom meeting with the participants before the actual interview to get to know them better and gain their trust. In this meeting the researcher got to ask about the couple's marriages, their family, knowledge of online platform (with the focus on WhatsApp) to create a friendly and warm environment between the researcher and the participants.

- Transferability

Transferability is the ability of the findings to be applied to a similar situation and delivering similar results (du Plooy-Cilliers, *et al*, 2014). According to Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al* (2014) it is the degree to which the result and analysis can be applied beyond a specific research project. The researcher intends on conducting a trustworthy research that will help participants to utilize WhatsApp within their marriage to better manage minor disagreements by communicating effectively. The researcher also hopes to provide findings that other researchers can further build on and develop within the digital communication space and interpersonal relation to explain the phenomenon.

- Dependability

According to du Plooy-Cilliers *et al* (2014) dependability refers to the quality of the process of integration that takes place between the data collection method, data analysis and the

theory generated from the data. Dependability is influenced by the method that the researcher used for selecting participants for the study and the interview questions that align with the Research questions and Research objectives developed for this study.

Dependability is insured by carefully aligning the research methodology of the study and making sure that participants are within parameters of the study. The researcher used QDA Miner as a software program to ensure the dependability of the results produced. This will avoid errors that can be made by human measuring the results.

16. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Table 2: Number of Sub-themes mentioned from most to least for Interview MCTP1

Main Themes	Sub-themes	Sub-themes mentioned from most to last for MCTP1
Interpretation	Understanding	5
Destructive communication	Withdrawal	4
Disagreements	Misunderstanding	3
Constructive communication	Good listening skills	2
Perception	Preference	2

Table 2 above shows that Interpretation as a theme is most valued from the participants responses where understanding the intended message was the importance of using WhatsApp during minor disagreement. Participant 1 showed level of withdrawal from the conversation whenever the message was misunderstood, or a disagreement was about to start. Lastly, the perception and constructive communication was mentioned the least from MCTP1.

Table 3: Number of Sub-themes mentioned from most to least for Interview MCTP2

Main Themes	Sub-themes	Sub-themes mentioned from most to least for MCTP2
Constructive communication	Good listening skills	6
Disagreements	Misunderstandings	4
Perception	Preference	4
Interpretation	Understanding	3
Destructive communication	Withdrawal	2

From table 3 above, the participants valued Constructive communication as the most important theme while using WhatsApp to engage in minor disagreements. The participant noted that with good listening skills and handling the conflict in a positive manner then WhatsApp is an effective tool. Destructive communication with sub-themes of withdrawal was mention the least for MCTP2 who preferred to deal with minor disagreement face-to-face.

Table 4: Number of Sub-themes mentioned from most to least for Interview MCTP3

Main Themes	Sub-themes	Sub-themes mentioned from most to last for MCTP3
Interpretation	Understanding	5
Disagreement	Misunderstanding	5
Destructive communication	Withdrawal	4
Constructive communication	Good listening skills	3
Perception	Preference	3

Table 4 above shows Interpretation as the most mentioned theme. The participant preferred to withdraw from the conversation whenever the is a misunderstanding of the intended message from the partner. The perception of the participants about the partner's understanding of his/her viewpoint on the intended message was mentioned the least.

Table 5: Number of Sub-themes mentioned from most to least for overall interviews

Main Themes	Sub-themes	Sub-themes mentioned from most to least for overall interviews
Interpretation	Understanding	13
Disagreements	Misunderstanding	12
Constructive communication	Good listening skills	11
Destructive communication	Withdrawal	10
Perception	Preference	9

Table 5 above shows an overall mention of the main and sub-themes from the participant's interviews. The ability to interpret the intended message from partner's on WhatsApp appeared to be the most important. The participants used WhatsApp more often when they understood each other during disagreements and withdraw from the conversation when there was misunderstanding of the intended message. Good listening skills was valued moderate amongst

the participant as it is a sub-theme that must be evident in an engagement to be able to solve the minor disagreement effectively. The perception of participants was mentioned the least as the participants seem to understand their partners viewpoint quite well as they have been married for 10 years or more.

17. INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Based on the analysis and presentation of the findings. It appeared that the following main and sub-themes related to the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements as perceived by the participants. The main and sub-themes are interpreted from the most to the least mentioned from the participants' responses.

17.1 Interpretation (main theme)

Throughout the conduct of this research study, Interpretation has been the most important theme from previous literature and mentioned thirteen times in the interviews by the respondents.

Within this theme the sub-themes of understanding and representation appeared to be the most valued. This can be seen in the following quotes by respondent MCTP2 and MCTP3

MCTP2 "I just send him a question mark (?) to show I don't understand what his trying to say"

MCTP3 "[thinking] I would just read the message and not reply and wait to go home and ask him to clarify for me the message intended [laughs] I made my WhatsApp not to show that I have read the message so he won't think I'm avoiding him [laughs]."

According to Windingland (2017) Diane's Mickey Mouse theory of interpersonal communication has given more visual weight to people's interpretation of what they perceive is the intended message than what the sender intends by his/her message. The reason for this is that most of people's misunderstanding stem from different interpretations, especially interpretation of intent (Windingland, 2017). The use of WhatsApp might be advantageous to many participants during minor disagreement, but the absence of nonverbal message results in different interpretation of the intended message.

Previous literature supports the notion that the purpose of interpersonal communication is to create and share meaning (Louw & du Plooy-Cilliers. 2014). There is also a mutual responsibility for making sure that the meanings that are created are shared. According to Louw

and du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) this implies that the sender and receiver must make sure that they understand each other's messages.

17.2 Disagreement (main theme)

Disagreement as a main theme was the second most mentioned within participant's responses. The disagreement addressed within the research study is those the couples consider minor within their respected marriages. The theme was evident in all three respondents who participated in the study. The respondents had the following to say about disagreement during the interview:

MCTP1 "[mmm] minor disagreement would be something like me and my husband arguing about him forgetting to fetch the kids from school, [eh] him leaving the bathroom untidy or me not wanting to watch a soccer match with him [laughs]"

MCTP2 "My husband forgetting to buy something I asked him to buy or coming home late"

MCTP3 "Mmmh like deciding where and what to eat"

According to du Plooy-Cilliers (2010) differences between partners in an intimate relationship should be expected, as the relationship was/is formed by two unique individuals, each with his or her own needs, desires, and expectations. Du Plooy-Cilliers (2010) continues to state that conflict could be a natural, unavoidable phenomenon that is caused by such differences.

According to Brimhall, et al (2017) different expectations can increase misunderstanding and cause potential ruptures in the primary relationship; technology provides increased opportunities to develop and nurture connections outside of the primary relationship that can lead to infidelity.

From the responses of the participants, WhatsApp appeared to be used only when discussing something small like communicating the partner's whereabouts and minor disagreements about why a partner is not back on a specific time agreed or expected to.

17.3 Constructive communication (main theme)

Constructive communication as a theme was rated moderate by respondents. Sub-theme of good listening skill and less likely to say hurtful things were identified. According to du Plooy-Cilliers (2010) couples with high-quality relationship were:

- more likely to manage interpersonal conflicts in a positive way.

- more willing to listen to the other partner and apologies.
- less likely to say hurtful things to each other
- respond appropriate to negative messages.

Respondent MCTP1 had the following to say about her communication with her partner during a minor disagreement.

MCTP1 “The use of ‘emojis’ really helps us...[laughs], at this point we can communicate by just using emojis and we totally understand what each one is saying.

The response from participant MC1 shows that in a high-quality relationship the communication is more coherent and there is a better understanding of each other. According to du Plooy-Cilliers (2010) partners equipped with the skills to manage conflict more constructively, and who engage in more positive and less negative interactions, create an environment that allows for deeper levels of self-disclosure and acceptance of vulnerabilities, all which are central aspects of intimacy and relationship quality.

Respondent MCTP2 and MCTP3 however had a different viewpoint, saying the following about understanding their partner’s message during a minor disagreement on WhatsApp.

MCTP2 “Currently those emojis do not represent all of us and our expressions well [laughs] I want an emoji with my face so I can control the expression and my husband understand them.”

MCTP3: “[mmmh] sometimes, because the emojis are not easy to understand and it is easy to misunderstand the intended messages. Ah, I’m not really keen about communicating on WhatsApp and I prefer to iron things face-to-face”

According to Littlejohn, et al (2017) a primary driver in selecting a communication medium for a message is to reduce the equivocality (when the message is unclear and more difficult for the receiver to decode), or possible misinterpretations of a message. Face-to-face communication is recommended as a better way to communicate a detailed message and online communication useful when communicating simple messages (Littlejohn, et al, 2017).

WhatsApp was viewed as a convenient online communication tool to address only minor disagreements on, although when there was misunderstanding in the intended message couples tend to use face-to-face communication to solve the disagreement.

17.3 Destructive communication (main theme)

Destructive communication within the study helped to better understand the role that WhatsApp plays within married couples and their interpersonal communication. As a theme it had ten mentions with Withdrawal and ignorance as a sub-theme. This was evident from respondent MCTP1 and MCTP3 as the quotes below show.

MCTP1 “I just laugh and not reply him. Then, I would wait for him to come home and I keep myself busy in the kitchen make sure I make him nice dinner so he can spark a conversation.”

MCTP3 “[thinking] I would just read the message and not reply and wait to go home and ask him to clarify for me the message intended [laughs] I made my WhatsApp not to show that I read the message so he won’t think I’m avoiding him [laughs].”

According to du Plooy-Cilliers (2010) Withdrawal is a behaviour which takes place when one partner shuts the other out when s/he raises a concern. It is usually a negative form of interaction and is strongly associated with negative relationship outcomes (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2010). Du Plooy-Cilliers (2010) compared relationships in which neither partner tends to withdraw with relationships in which either or both partners have a tendency to withdraw, and found that individuals in the later kind of relationships were more likely to report greater levels of negative interaction and that they judged their relationships as being of a lower quality and less satisfying than did their counterparts.

Participants showed the behaviour of withdrawal from the conversation on WhatsApp when there was a great deal of misunderstanding of the intended message. According to the participants, this behaviour was the best form of behaviour to portray on WhatsApp and only wait for both partners to be home so to settle the minor disagreement face-to-face.

17.4 Perception (main theme)

Perception is a theme that was least mentioned (9 times) in the overall participants’ responses. The sub-themes were viewpoint and preference of couples about their communication on WhatsApp about the minor disagreements. The following quotes show how the respondents answered the question about perception of their partner’s WhatsApp message.

MCTP1 “By now, yes I do understand my husband’s point of view in his messages. We have been married for about 15 years now, so I understand what his trying to say and how he feels by just reading his text”

MCTP2 “I prefer my partner to text me when his running late and not assume that I know the reasons and his whereabouts”

MCTP3 “Ah I’m not really keen about communicating on WhatsApp and I prefer to iron things face-to-face”.

Windingland (2017) notes that people misjudge other people’s intent because the other person has interpreted the message intended through his or her own filters based on experience, personality, age, etc. People view the world through their own filters, or framework of understanding.

According to the participants, the number of years people married helps to understand the other partner’s viewpoints and preference as they might be outlined during the relationship. This helps with understanding the partner’s intended message on WhatsApp better. Although, MCTP2 prefers that the partner should always be open and communicate on WhatsApp his whereabouts instead of assuming that she knows because they have been married for more than ten years.

Brimhall et al. (2017) found that increased expectations are the foundation behind what is known as “connected presence”. Connected presence occurs in a relationship as partners rely on a variety of digital communication technologies to sustain a continuous source of connection that helps create a feeling of stability and safety (Brimhall, et al. 2017).

According to the participant’s responses, WhatsApp is a effective communication tool during minor disagreements. It is fast, cheap, and convenient tool to send message to other people including their marriage partner. The participants acknowledge that although WhatsApp is an effective tool to communicate during minor disagreement, there is a great deal of improvement to be done. The lack of nonverbal communication, ability to misinterpret the intended message are of great concern to the participants and the reason that face-to-face communication weighs more than online communication platforms in their respected marriages.

18. RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED

This study outlined the research question and relevant objectives to help conduct the research study at hand. This section discussed the research objectives and the extend each objective was addressed within the study.

Objective 1: To determine the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples.

Through interpretation of findings and support of relevant literature, it shows that the use of WhatsApp amongst married couple is convenient and easier form of online communication within married couples for minor disagreement for all three respondents. The couples use WhatsApp as it is a fast and interactive tool for some minor disagreement. Although, a direct communication seems to be the priority in communication during minor disagreements.

Objective 2: To establish whether WhatsApp is an effective online platform to communicate about minor disagreements.

The respondents acknowledge that WhatsApp as a communicative tool has been helpful especially in situation where an individual cannot talk. Although, WhatsApp is a platform that might offer arrays of interpretation of the intended message and as such can cause misunderstanding. Two out of three respondents prefer to talk face-to-face during minor disagreements with their couples.

Objective 3: To explore whether the number of years being married contributes to the communication styles during minor disagreements amongst married couples.

Two out of three respondents showed that they understand the communication styles by their partner because they have been married for more than 10 years. The one responded who has been married for three years show that there is a bit of misunderstanding within the communication and a lot of unfulfilled expectations thereof. This confirms the notions that the number of years being married contributes to the communication styles within the marriage during minor disagreements.

Objective 4: Perceptions of married couples about the use of WhatsApp during minor disagreement.

Respondents have a positive view of the use of WhatsApp during their minor disagreement and suggest that participants should not rely on WhatsApp entirely as it lacks expects of representation and verbal cues of message such as the tone of a message. All three participants prefer face-to-face communication with their partner during minor disagreements.

With the discussion above showing that each research objective set for this study had been addressed, it can be deducted that the research question: What is the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during a minor disagreement amongst married couples? Has been answered.

19. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND HEURISTIC VALUE

19.1 Ethical consideration

Ethics are moral or professional code of conduct that sets a standard for one's attitude and behavior. According to du Plooy-Cilliers et al (2014) in research, ethics are crucial, because they potentially affect all the stakeholders. The researcher adhered to necessary ethical considerations to avoid any harm to both the participant and the researcher. The researcher considered the following ethics while conducting the study.

19.1.1 Ethical issues related to the participants

➤ Informed consent

According to du Plooy-Cilliers et al (2014) informed consent makes sure that participants know that they are taking part in the research study and give their consent. The researcher provided all participants with the informed consent letter that explains what will be required from the participants and where the participants can sign to agree to take part in the study after understanding what is required of them. The researcher also made participants aware that they can withdraw from the study at any stage of the research study.

➤ Dealing with sensitive information

The researcher tried by all to avoid asking questions that will make participants give their personal and sensitive information. The researcher made sure that no participant is harmed in anyway during the research study and after.

➤ Confidentiality versus anonymity

The researcher made sure that information will be known only by the researcher and supervisor. This is to ensure the confidentiality of the participants during the research study and protect the information provided.

Anonymity was assured by the researcher by not giving names of any participants and saving the interview schedule with a designed code. This made sure that every participant's identity is protected throughout the research study.

19.1.2. Ethical issues related to the researcher

➤ Falsifying information

According to du Plooy-Cilliers et al (2014) falsifying information is deliberately fabricating or changing data hoping to save the researcher's reputation, keep their funding, avoiding difficulty during data collection and analysis. The researcher ensured trustworthiness throughout the research study whether it is for or against claims made.

➤ Bias

Bias refers to the desire or expectation of achieving a result. Being bias may influence the research results in the sense of how and where the researcher collects their data and interpretation thereof. In the study of the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples, the researcher ensured objectivity throughout the study in hoping to understand the phenomenon from the participant's experiences and behaviour.

➤ Distorting results

The researcher avoided emphasizing certain aspects over other aspects of equal significance and quoting numbers out of context which might distort interpretation. The researcher is aware that distorting results is an unethical behaviour.

The study of the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreement adhered to all listed ethical principles (as well as other ethics that might arise during the study) and a professional standard by the researcher to conduct research that is trustworthy and respectful to all stakeholders.

19.2 Limitations

Limitations refer to constraints or limits in a research study that is out of the researcher's control such as time, financial resources, access to information (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al. 2014). This may cause the scope of the research study to be redefined.

The researcher experienced a few limitations during the research study but made it a point to work within those limitation to provide a sound proposal.

➤ Time

The researcher had a limited time to conduct the research study. This affected the amount of data that can be collected and analysed as the researcher is working within a time frame. However, the researcher put in extra effort to collect data that will be efficient to conduct the study at hand and conduct a trustworthy research.

➤ Covid-19

On 31 December 2019, the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported a cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan City, China. Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2' (Covid-19) was confirmed as the causative agent. Since then, the virus has spread to more than 100 countries, including South Africa.

Covid-19 serves as a limitation for the study at hand in that it has affected how the interview schedule took place. The researcher was forced to change the interview to be on online platform (Zoom Application) instead of face-to-face interaction with the participants. This takes away the nature of interpretivism paradigm of the researcher being immersed in the context of the participant to insure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. However, the researcher prepared a Zoom meeting with each participant before the actual interview schedule to create a warm environment and learn more about the participant's experiences and behaviour.

The researcher is aware that a great deal of message will be lost due to the absence of non-verbal communication being made on the Zoom interview schedule. This made the researcher more vigilant about the verbal communication made as well as any sounds made during the interview to be able to transcript the data accurately.

19.3 Heuristic Value

The study of the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreement amongst couples contributes to the Interpersonal communication field (especially to digital communication). This is done by adding knowledge into the necessary gaps that exist within the Interpersonal communication and Research space about how participants perceive WhatsApp as a communicative tool during minor disagreements. This research report can help Marriage counselors to understand the experience and behavior of married couples within online platforms to provide necessary interventions.

The research report helps respondents to utilise the Application best possible to benefit their marriages and maintain a healthy environment in their marriages. This was done by educating the respondents about the advantages and disadvantages of using WhatsApp as a communicative tool during minor disagreements.

20. CONCLUSION

The researcher introduced the research study aiming to explore the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples. The researcher achieved the aim of the study by conducting the methodology of the study. The researcher conducted interviews to participants within the population parameters to find an in-depth understanding of how married couple perceive WhatsApp as an effective communication tool during minor disagreement. The participants suggest that WhatsApp is a convenient way to communicate minor disagreements with their partners, although prefer to use face-to-face communication to deal with disagreements to get a better understanding and viewpoints of their partner's intended message.

According to Windingland (2017) Dienes' "Mickey Mouse" theory on Interpersonal communication suggests that people misjudge other people's intent because the other person has interpreted the message intended through his or her own filters based on experience, personality,

age, etc. People view the world through their own filters, or framework of understanding. This theory underpins the main theory of the study Symbolic Interactions. The Symbolic Interactions theory focuses on the development of the 'I' as an unorganized response to that of "me" which is a socialised society response. In the context of married couples, the partners might respond unorganized at the early stage of the relationship and as a socialized response when the couple have better understanding of each other. The findings of the research study contrast the literature of Gjybegaj and Jararaa (2018), Louw and du Plooy-Cilliers (2014), Gutzmann (2018) and Brimhall et al (2017).

Furthermore, based on the research question and objectives the researcher identified relevant themes for the study. The data was collected using a semi-structured interview and analysis thereof by QDA Miner, a qualitative data analysis software program. That is, the research question was addressed. The research study addressed related ethics linked to both the participant and the researcher to ensure that research is trustworthy. This was followed by limitation of Covid-19 pandemic, time, and finances that the researcher worked around to continue with the study and produce a sound research study. Finally, the research study contributed to interpersonal communication as a field, school of research and married couples using WhatsApp during minor disagreements.

REFERNCE LIST

Bajracharya, S. 2018. Interpersonal communication. [Online]. Available at:

<https://www.businesstopia.net/communication/interpersonal-communication-examples>

[Accessed 16 April 2020].

Brimhall, H. Miller, B. Maxwell, K. and Alotaiby, A. 2017. Does it help or hinder? Technology and its Role in healing post affair. *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy*. 16(1). iOS: 1080/15332691.2016.1142408.

Chan, T. Yong, W. and Harmizi, A. 2020. Usage of WhatsApp and Interpersonal communication skills among Private university students. *Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 3(2) 16.

Chris, L. 2016. Social media networking and its influence on interpersonal face-to-face oral communication at family level: A qualitative study on selected families in Eldoret Town. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*. 2 (1) 33.

Du Plooy-Cilliers, F. 2010. An exploratory descriptive study of the construction of relationship quality in intimate relationships through the process of symbolic interaction with specific reference to rule and expectation violation. University of South Africa.

Du Plooy-Cilliers, F. Davis, C. and Bezuidenhout, R. 2014. *Research Matters*. Cape Town: Juta.

Gjylbegaj, A and Jararaa, P .2018. cited in: Social media networking and its influence on interpersonal face-to-face oral communication at family level: A qualitative study on selected families in Eldoret Town. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*. 2 (1) 33.

Grant, E. 2018. Disagreements that aren't deal breakers in relationship, According to couple's therapists. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.bustle.org/disagreements-thatarent-dealbreakers-in-relationship-according-to-couples-therapists> [Accessed 12 April 2020].

Gutzmann, L. 2018. Utilization of Social Media in Strengthening Communication in long Distance Relationships. *Journal of Clinical Research*. 5. 9-10.

Hung, C. 2017. The contribution of mobile social media to social capital and psychological well-being: Examining the role of communication use, friends and self disclosure. *Computers in Human Behaviour Journal* 14(3).

Kim, B. and Kim, Y. 2017. College students' social media use and communication network heterogeneity: Implications for social capital and subjective well-being. *Computers in Human Behaviour*. 10(3).

Louw, M and du Plooy-Cilliers, F. 2014. *Symbolic Interactionism*. Cited in: *Let's talk interpersonal communication*. 4th edition. Cape Town: Juta.

Littlejohn, S. Foss, K. and Oetzel, J. 2017. *Symbolic Interaction*. Cited in: *Theories of Human Communication*. 11th edition. United States of America: Waveland Press, Inc.

STATS SA. 2017. Marriages and divorces in Limpopo, Thabazimbi. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.statssa.gov.za> [Accessed on 07 May 2020].

WhatsApp, Inc. 2020. The era of WhatsApp. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.whatsapp.com/the-era-of-whatsapp> [Accessed 14 April 2020].

Windingland, D. 2016. Diane's "mickey mouse" theory of interpersonal communication. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.psychologytoday.co.za/dianes-mickey-mouse-theory-of-interpersonal-communication>.

APPENDIX A- FINAL RESEARCH REPORT SUMMARY DOCUMENT

Research Purpose	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Sources	Literature Review	Paradigm	Approach	Data collection method	Ethics	Anticipated findings	Reference List
The study aims to find an understanding of the role that WhatsApp has on interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couple.	What is the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples?	To inform married couple about the use of WhatsApp during minor disagreements and to add knowledge to interpersonal studies in relation to digital communication	Let's talk interpersonal communication	Interpersonal communication, Disagreements in interpersonal communication, the effects of social media on relationships and WhatsApp.	Interpretivism to gain in-depth understanding within the given phenomenon.	Qualitative method Population Parameters: married for two or more years, engage in WhatsApp, Stay in Thabazimbi.	Interview schedule on Zoom Application.	Protect the participant identity and assure that information will be used for the study only.	To understand how detrimental/benefiting WhatsApp is to minor disagreements amongst married couples.	Louw, M. and du Plooy-Cilliers, F. 2014. Let's talk Interpersonal Communication. 4 th edition. Cape Town: Pearson.
Research Problem	Secondary Research Question	Key Concepts	Key Theory			Sampling	Data Analysis method	Limitations	Anticipated contribution	
WhatsApp might be a detrimental communicative tool during minor disagreements	What is the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples	Rule-and-expectation, Attachment Online platform, minor disagreements	Symbolic Interactionism			Non-probability sampling using a snowball technique	QDA Miner to analyze responses, measure themes	Covid-19 pandemic, limited time to conduct thorough research, insufficient funds	To fill in the gaps that exist within the related field of communication and digital space about online platform and minor disagreements	

APPENDIX B- INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Couples Disagree often and that is normal. Sometimes it is huge disagreements and sometimes it is just minor or small. What do you consider as minor disagreement with your partner?
2. When you disagree on small things, what is your preferred communication tool with your partner to sort it out? Why?
3. How often do you engage with your partner on WhatsApp when you want to talk about those minor disagreement?
4. What kinds of disagreement with your partner can be settled on WhatsApp?
5. If your partner is annoyed by the disagreement and he/she uses a sarcastic tone in his/her message, how do you respond to the sarcasm?
6. Do you understand your partner's point of view when he/she sends messages on WhatsApp during small disagreement?
7. What would you like your partner to say on WhatsApp during small disagreements that is not currently happening?
8. How do you emphasize your message to your partner on WhatsApp?
9. Do you think that WhatsApp as communication tool during small disagreements with your partner is suitable?
10. How do you feel about face-to-face communication with your partner during minor disagreement in comparison to WhatsApp?
11. What would you like to change about WhatsApp as an application to enhance your communication with your partner during minor disagreements?

APPENDIX C- Honours Ethical Clearance



Date: 3 July 2020

Student name: Sharol Magwai
Student number: 16012086
Campus: Varsity College, Waterfall



Re: Approval of RESM8419p (BA Honours) Proposal and Ethics Clearance



Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.



Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and we hereby provide you with ethical clearance to proceed with your data collection.

There may be some aspects that you still need to address in your proposal. If this is the case, feedback will be provided to you in writing. You will need to address these aspects in consultation with your supervisor.

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure that all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued in such instances.

We wish you all the best with your research!

Yours sincerely,

Dr. EA van der Walt

Supervisor
Campus Postgraduate Coordinator

Xandie Thompson
Programme Manager
School of Psychology and
Communication

ADTECH HOUSE

Impresso Gardens
64 Woods Rd West
Standa Valley 2195
WV 15 Blue 1940
Randburg 2195

T: 011 010 978 8821
F: 011 010 760 2074
E: info@adtech.co.za
www.adtech.co.za



Directors: RJ Douglas (CEO), JDR Oorsch (Non-Executive), MD Aileen (Non-Executive) Company Secretary: DM Dickson

The Independent Institute of Education (Pty) Ltd is registered with the Department of Higher Education and Training as a private higher education institution under the Higher Education Act, 1997 (reg. no. 2007/HE07/002). Company registration number: 1987/004754/07.



Ethics checklist



Student name: Sharol Magwai

Title of the research: Role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during a minor disagreement amongst married couples.

	Yes	No	Comment: supervisor/ navigator/lecturer
I am using human subjects: i.e. I use visual artefacts or visual observation	X		I will use Zoom Application on married couples.
I intend to use human subjects			the researcher agrees
- I understand that I will not conduct research with human subjects under the age of 18 and other vulnerable groups. - I understand I can only proceed once I receive an ethical clearance letters.	X		
Interviews/ Focus groups An example of the <i>written consent form</i> I intend to use is attached.			Standardised, open-ended interview
I will record the interview/focus groups and the sample of the letter where I ask for permission to do so is attached.	X		To assure trustworthy on the results found
I plan to use an interview schedule: The example of my research instrument is attached.	X		The researcher created a table with research questions
I plan to use a questionnaire: The example of my research instrument is attached.		X	The researcher is doing a qualitative study
I plan to use a gate-keepers letter: The example of my letter is attached.		X	The researcher is not doing research on any company
I plan to do research on an IIE site/with IIE students/staff/artefacts and I filled in the application for permission to do so. The application is attached. I understand I can only proceed once I receive IIE Approval for this.		X	

Signed: student



GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.
3. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research, informed consent was obtained, and even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published on any online platforms.
4. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
5. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
6. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.

Supervisor: **Dr EA van der Walt**

Campus Postgraduate Programme Coordinator (CPPC): **Dr EA van der Walt**

APPENDIX D- Participant Consent form

Consent form for audio or video recording



CONSENT FORM TEMPLATE TO BE EXPLAINED TO PARTICIPANTS

Explanatory information sheet and consent form for participants
To whom it may concern, My name is Sharol Thandi Magwai and I am a student at Varsity College Waterfall. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of (Lizelle van der Walt) about the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of the use of online platforms (such as WhatsApp as a communicative tool to effectively manage minor disagreements amongst married couples to reduce misunderstanding and misinterpretation of messages on WhatsApp. I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.
What will I be doing if I participate in your study?
I would like to invite you to participate in this research because (insert reason). If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to (explain exactly what participation will involve). You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.
Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?
Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your (insert what you are examining). If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.
Do I have to participate in the study?
• Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary; • If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so; • Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at Varsity College Waterfall, will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my Bachelor of Arts Honours in Communication Sciences. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:

Sharol Magwai

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Dr EA van der Walt

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING

PARTICIPANTS

I, [redacted] agree to allow Sharol Thandi [redacted] to use my name and voice in her research and to record our WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

- My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
- The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer.
- Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.

[redacted]

[redacted] 31/07/2020
Date

will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I interview you, but will not use any identifiable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my Communication Sciences. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me at any time. I will answer any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:
Sharol Thandi Mayowa

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:
Dr EA van der Walt

[redacted]

THE INDEPENDENT INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS

PARTICIPANTS

I, [redacted] agree to participate in the research conducted by Sharol Thandi [redacted] to use my name and voice in her research and to record our WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

- I agree to be interviewed for this research.
- My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
- My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
- I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
- I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

[redacted]

[redacted] 31/07/2020
Date

[redacted] Signature

THE INDEPENDENT INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at IIE Varsity College Waterfall will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my Bachelor of Arts Honours in Communication Sciences. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

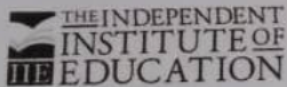
What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:
Sharol Thandi Magwai

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:
Dr EA van der Walt



CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS

PARTICIPANTS

I, [REDACTED] agree to participate in the research conducted by Sharol Thandi Magwai about the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

- I agree to be interviewed for this research.
- My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
- My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
- I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
- I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

01/08/2020
Date

CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING

I, [REDACTED], agree to allow Sharol Thandi Magwai to audio record my interviews as part of the research about the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

- My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
- The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer.
- Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.

[REDACTED]
Date

01/08/2020

CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS

PARTICIPANTS	
I, [REDACTED], agree to participate in the research conducted by Sharol Thandi Magwai about the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples.	
This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:	
- I agree to be interviewed for this research. - My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private. - My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research. - I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview. - I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.	
Signature [REDACTED]	30/07/2020
Signature	Date

CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING

PARTICIPANTS	
I, [REDACTED], agree to allow Sharol Thandi Magwai to audio record my interviews as part of the research about the role of WhatsApp in interpersonal communication during minor disagreements amongst married couples.	
This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:	
- My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private. - The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer. - Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.	
Signature [REDACTED]	30/07/2020
Signature	Date