

**Papuan EFL Students' Perception in Using Deactivate Read Receipts of WhatsApp during Students and Lecturer's Communication**

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**Abstract** The use of the *deactivate read receipts* feature has become increasingly common among various groups, including students. However, its use has sparked both positive and negative responses. This study aims to investigate students' perceptions of this feature within the context of academic communication, particularly in interactions with lecturers. Moreover, it explores the implications arising from deactivating read receipts in such communication. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the study involved twelve EFL students and four lecturers as participants. Data were collected through online observation and semi-structured interviews. Online observation involved gathering screenshots of chat interactions between students and lecturers, while interviews were conducted using an interview guide and audio recordings. The collected data were analyzed using discourse

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analysis, comprising four stages: data recording, transcription, selection, and interpretation. The findings reveal three dimensions of student perception. First, the cognitive dimension reflects that the feature is perceived as impolite in academic contexts but considered normal in non-academic contexts. Second, the affective dimension shows that it can evoke both emotional discomfort and neutrality. Third, the conative dimension includes tendencies toward message resending and communication uncertainty. Additionally, the deactivation of read receipts has been found to lead to miscommunication and foster negative assumptions on the part of the message recipient toward the sender. Consequently, further research is recommended to explore this phenomenon in greater depth.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the current digital era, instant messaging applications have become an integral medium of academic communication, particularly in higher education settings where interactions between lecturers and students increasingly take place online. WhatsApp is widely used due to its accessibility, immediacy, and multifunctional features that support both formal and informal communication (Nasrullah, 2022; Suriani et al., 2021). As academic communication shifts to digital platforms, scholars have emphasized that communication effectiveness is no longer determined solely by language use, but also by how technological features shape expectations of responsiveness, politeness, and accountability (Lynden & Rasmussen, 2017; Vorderer et al., 2016).

One such feature is *read receipts*, which function as a social cue indicating message reception and implicitly regulating response behavior. While deactivating read receipts may offer users greater privacy and reduce pressure to respond immediately, previous studies suggest that the absence of read confirmation can also generate ambiguity, misinterpretation, and negative assumptions, particularly

in formal or hierarchical communication contexts where timely acknowledgment is valued (Sahib et al., 2023; Wenerda, 2020).

In academic settings, especially those characterized by power asymmetry between lecturers and students, digital behaviors such as disabling read receipts may therefore be interpreted not merely as technical choices, but as socially meaningful actions that reflect attitudes toward respect, responsibility, and academic etiquette. This phenomenon is also observed among students at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua, where some students deactivate the read receipts feature when communicating with lecturers, prompting differing interpretations between students and lecturers regarding politeness, privacy, and appropriate academic conduct. If left unexamined, differing interpretations of such digital practices may gradually undermine communication clarity, relational trust, and academic etiquette between students and lecturers. As digital communication becomes increasingly dominant in higher education, understanding how platform-specific features are perceived and negotiated is therefore crucial to maintaining effective and respectful academic interactions.

So far, studies on WhatsApp-mediated academic communication have been conducted from various perspectives and can generally be classified into three main strands. The first strand focuses on the analysis of politeness strategies in different WhatsApp communication contexts (Kholilah, 2025; Lina & Ardi, n.d.; Maysaroh, 2025; Pasaribu et al., 2021; Purnomo & Widarwati, 2025; Selepe & Mehlahe, 2023). The second strand examines factors influencing politeness in WhatsApp-based interactions, including personal, relational, and situational variables (Adya, 2022; Pasaribu et al., 2021). The third strand explores the stages of politeness in the communication process through WhatsApp across diverse academic settings (Kholilah, 2025; Maharani et al., 2022; Wenerda, 2020). Although these studies have provided valuable insights into linguistic politeness and interactional patterns, they largely emphasize language use and communicative strategies, while paying limited attention to the social and psychological roles of platform-specific features. As a result, the read receipts feature of WhatsApp, particularly its deactivation and its implications for

perception, emotional response, and communication behavior in hierarchical academic interactions, has not been sufficiently examined. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by focusing on Papuan EFL students' perceptions of deactivating the read receipts feature in academic communication with lecturers via WhatsApp, offering a novel contribution by situating read receipts as a meaningful communicative affordance rather than a purely technical function, and by examining its significance within the socio-cultural context of higher education in Eastern Indonesia.

This study is based on an argument that the perspective of students in deactivated read receipts in communication between students and lecturers is derived from several factors. First, the students that deactivating read receipts on WhatsApp usually leads to a perception that it is considered impolite and disrespectful to the lecturers. Secondly, deactivated the read receipt has several implications, one of which is causing unclear message status that can prolong response time and allow for miscommunication. However, the ideal read receipt is not to be deactivated when students communicate with lecturers on WhatsApp. Thus, students can show appreciation for the lecturers' time and attention in communication on WhatsApp.

According to Baron and Branscombe (2009) social perception refers to an individual's effort to understand others in order to gain insight into their personality, intentions, and motivations. Supporting this, other studies define social perception as a cognitive process that involves recognizing, interpreting, and conveying information about others based on how they are perceived. This includes understanding a person's characteristics, behavior, and situational context (Kalsum & M, 2014). From both perspectives, social perception can be summarized as the mental process of observing and interpreting others' actions to better understand who they are, their intentions, emotional state, and goals. In the context of this study, social perception is particularly relevant in understanding how students interpret the behavior of their lecturers especially in digital communication when certain features like read receipts are deactivated.

Perception consists of three main aspects: cognitive, affective, and conative. According to Baron and Branscombe (2009), the cognitive aspect relates to an individual's knowledge, beliefs, and views about a particular object, reflecting how a person understands or interprets it. The affective aspect involves emotional responses, such as feelings of like or dislike, which indicate whether a person has a positive or negative emotional reaction toward the object. Meanwhile, the conative aspect refers to a person's behavioral tendency or intention to act in response to the object, highlighting the strength or intensity of their attitude. These three components understanding, feeling, and action are interconnected in forming an individual's overall perception. In the context of communication, especially digital interaction, these aspects help explain how someone interprets messages, reacts emotionally, and chooses to respond, which ultimately shapes the quality and effectiveness of interpersonal interactions (Baron & Branscombe, 2009).

According to Van Dijk in Nasrullah (2022), social media is a multimedia platform that emphasizes user activity and collaboration. Another opinion states that social media is an online medium that allows people to easily create, share, and participate in various activities (Liedfray et al., 2022). From these perspectives, it can be concluded that social media serves as a tool for accessing information, exchanging ideas, sharing content, and interacting through one or more applications. Social media includes various platforms, one of which is WhatsApp. WhatsApp is the main focus of this study, as it is widely used in digital communication, especially within academic contexts.

WhatsApp is a widely used communication app known for its simplicity and various features that support user interaction. It allows users to share information and content easily (Koten et al., 2022). Some features, like hiding the last seen, profile photo, or read receipts, can reflect a user's personality, especially those who prefer privacy. The read receipts feature shows message status: one grey check means sent, two grey checks mean received, and two blue checks mean read (Alhddad, 2015). However, this feature can be deactivated, which creates both advantages and disadvantages providing privacy but potentially causing misunderstandings in communication due to lack of message status transparency.

A study found that 85% of participants would respond faster when read receipts are enabled, as they feel it is impolite to keep the sender waiting after reading a message. This shows that the feature encourages a sense of responsibility and promptness in digital communication. On the other hand, only 32% said their response time would not change, suggesting that for most people, read receipts influence communication behavior (Vorderer et al., 2016). These findings indicate that the presence of read receipts affects how users manage politeness and response expectations, especially in situations that require quick feedback and respectful communication.

Besides influencing behavior, read receipts are also linked to emotional responses. Other studies show that deactivating this feature can lead to anxiety, especially for individuals sensitive to delays or ambiguity in digital interactions (Lynden & Rasmussen, 2017). Without confirmation that a message has been read, the sender may feel uncertain, leading to misinterpretation or negative assumptions. This lack of clarity can cause stress and disrupt the flow of communication. While turning off read receipts may protect privacy, it can unintentionally affect emotional comfort and communication quality, highlighting the feature's important role in digital social interaction.

The objective of this study is to examine the perceptions of Papuan EFL students regarding the deactivation of the read receipts feature on WhatsApp, particularly within the context of communication between students and lecturers. This research seeks to explore how students interpret and justify the decision to turn off read receipts, and whether this behavior is influenced by factors such as privacy concerns, communication anxiety, or cultural and academic norms. Furthermore, the study aims to investigate the implications of this practice on the quality and effectiveness of academic communication. This includes analyzing how the absence of read receipts affects lecturers' interpretations of message reception, the timeliness of responses, and the overall perception of politeness and respect in hierarchical academic relationships. Through this investigation, the study aspires to contribute to a deeper understanding of digital communication

behavior among EFL students in Eastern Indonesia, and to provide insights that may inform better communication practices in academic settings.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative research design, which is appropriate for exploring and understanding students' and lecturers' perceptions of digital communication practices. Qualitative research enables researchers to examine how individuals interpret and assign meaning to social phenomena within specific contexts (Creswell, 2013). Accordingly, this study focuses on Papuan EFL students' perceptions of deactivating the read receipts feature on WhatsApp and the implications of this practice for academic communication with lecturers, particularly during online consultation processes. The data collected consisted of descriptive information reflecting participants' experiences, perceptions, and responses related to the use of deactivated read receipts in academic interactions.

Primary data in this study were obtained through online observation and semi-structured interviews focusing on academic communication via WhatsApp. The online observation involved collecting screenshots of chat interactions between students and lecturers during academic consultations, while the interviews were conducted to explore participants' perceptions and the implications of using the read receipts feature. In addition, secondary data were collected from relevant academic journals, websites, and other credible online sources to support and complement the primary data in addressing the research objectives.

The participants of this study consisted of twelve EFL students and four EFL lecturers from the Tadris English Study Program, Faculty of Tarbiyah, at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on criteria aligned with the focus of the study, namely active involvement in academic communication via WhatsApp and experience in deactivating the read receipts feature. This purposive selection was intended to ensure that the data collected were both relevant and in-depth, particularly for exploring students' perceptions and the communication effects resulting from the deactivation of read receipts in academic contexts.

In this study, data were collected through two main techniques, namely online observation and interviews. The online observation involved analyzing WhatsApp screenshots of student-lecturer communication to identify Papuan EFL students' perceptions of deactivating read receipts. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve EFL students and four EFL lecturers at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua to explore the implications of using the deactivated read receipts feature in academic communication.

The data from observations and interviews were analyzed qualitatively using discourse analysis, which involves understanding language in its functional context. The data analysis was conducted through four main stages, including data collection involving screenshots and audio recordings, data transcription by converting the recordings into written text, data selection through categorizing the transcripts based on the research objectives, and data interpretation to present findings that address the research questions concerning Papuan EFL students' perceptions of using the read receipts feature in WhatsApp communication with lecturers.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study applied triangulation by combining online observations with semi-structured interviews. The use of multiple sources allowed the researchers to cross-validate emerging themes and reduce potential researcher bias. Member checking was also conducted by asking several participants to confirm the accuracy of the interview transcripts and interpretations, thereby strengthening the credibility of the findings. Ethical considerations were observed by obtaining informed consent from both students and lecturers prior to participation, with assurances that anonymity and confidentiality would be maintained throughout the study. In addition, pseudonyms were used in reporting to protect participants' identities. While the purposive sampling approach provided in-depth insights into the phenomenon, it may limit the generalizability of the results to other contexts. Nevertheless, the methodological rigor employed in this research enhances the reliability of the findings and provides a solid basis for further inquiry.



## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### FINDINGS

#### 1. *The Papuan EFL students' perceptions in deactivate read receipts of WhatsApp during students and lecturer communication.*

In this section, the findings are presented based on three aspects of students' perceptions, namely cognitive (students' understanding and beliefs), affective (emotional responses), and conative (behavioral tendencies), as well as the implications of deactivating the read receipts feature in WhatsApp communication between students and lecturers.

##### a. Cognitive aspect

##### **Deactivating read receipts is impoliteness**

In first findings, some students of the read receipts off feature consider it inappropriate to use when communicating with lecturers in an academic context.

Extract I

*"If I turn off the feature, it will be less appropriate/polite and there might be problems such as miscommunication." (AB)*

In line with AB's statement, other EFL Students (AM) also made similar statements related to impoliteness in using deactivate read receipts on communication with EFL lecturers.

Extract II

*"In my opinion, it is somewhat unethical to communicate via social media. The use of read receipts is so that we know whether the message has been read or not." (AM)*

Information from the above participants confirms that deactivating the read receipts feature is considered an impolite action. Based on AB's statement, deactivating this feature is seen as impolite because it can lead to miscommunication. This is in line with AM's statements, which say that deactivating the read receipts feature when communicating with professors is considered unethical.

### Deactivating read receipts is considered normal

In the second finding, deactivating the read receipts feature on WhatsApp when communicating with professors is considered normal.

#### Extract III

*“In my opinion, if the thing addressed to the lecturer is only a chat about sick leave or not being able to attend class, then deactivating the feature is still considered polite.” (AZ)*

AZ's statement are in line with the statement made by the HP lecturer regarding the deactivation of the read receipts feature.

#### Extract IV

*“As long as it's not deactivated specifically for me, it's fine. So, mam feels okay, if the information mam shares is important, mam will chat with other friends.” (HP)*

Based on the information provided by AZ and HP above, it indicates that deactivating the read receipts feature is not an issue if used in the appropriate context. The use of the feature only when requesting permission to be absent from class and not specifying certain lecturers is still understandable by WhatsApp users, both students and lecturers.



Figure1. Online Observation, January 16, 2025

In addition to the interview data, the online observation supports this finding. The observed WhatsApp interaction shows that a student sent an academic reminder message to a lecturer while the read receipts feature was deactivated. Despite the absence of read confirmation, the lecturer responded by providing clear instructions regarding the task without indicating any objection or negative reaction to the deactivated feature. This interaction suggests that, in certain academic contexts, particularly when the message content is informational and non-urgent, the deactivation of read receipts is treated as a normal and acceptable practice.

**b. Affective aspect**

**Deactivating read receipts can be emotionally disruptive.**

In the next finding, deactivating the read receipts feature from the perspective of students when communicating with lecturers via WhatsApp disrupts the students' feelings.

Extract V

*“I feel more anxious waiting for a reply because I don't know if it has been read or not and have to wait a long time.” (HS)*

Similar findings were also obtained from participant (YS) as follows:

Extract VI

*“I felt anxious because I didn't know whether he had read my message or not.” (YS)*

Based on the statements made by HS and YS, it can be confirmed that when using the deactivate read receipts feature, students tend to feel anxious because by deactivating this feature, they cannot see the read receipts of their communication partner either. This gives them a feeling of anxiety, and the waiting period for a response from the lecturer also affects the students' feelings.

### **Deactivating read receipts is not emotionally disruptive.**

In this finding, some students who deactivated read receipts and communicated with their lecturers felt more relaxed while waiting for a response from the lecturer.

#### **Extract VII**

*“I feel comfortable, because replying to messages is the lecturer's right.” (MY)*

MY's statement is in line with the statement made by AZ during the interview session.

#### **Extract VIII**

*“I felt fine, I didn't want to worry too much because the lecturer had other things to do so I waited a few minutes.” (AZ)*

From the information above, it can be concluded that some students with good emotional control tend to feel relaxed when communicating with their professors. As stated by MY, whether to reply to messages or not is the professor's prerogative, so MY does not think too negatively about it. Just like AZ in the statement saying that there is no need to feel anxious because he understands that the lecturer might have other commitments, so they haven't responded to the message sent.

### **c. Conative Aspect**

#### **Deactivating read receipts triggers re – sending of messages.**

In this finding, the researchers asked participants to explain what actions they would take if they could not see the status of messages sent to the lecturer due to deactivate read receipts.

#### **Extract IX**

*“I wait for a while or a few hours, then I resend the message to the lecturer.” (HS)*

Besides HS's statement, YS's statement is also in line with the above statement.

## Extract X

*“I changed the features then I reconfirmed my order.” (YS)*

Based on the information above, it can be concluded that students who do not receive a response from the lecturer will resend their messages with the aim of getting the lecturer to see the messages they sent. However, participant HS chose to wait for a while for a response from the lecturer. Participant YS used the method of changing the read receipts feature from inactive to active.



Figure 2. Online Observation, May 14–15, 2025

The online observation further supports this finding. The observed WhatsApp interaction shows that a student sent an academic consultation request to a lecturer and, after receiving no immediate response and without read receipt confirmation, resent a similar message on the following day. The repeated message contained the same intention, namely requesting permission for academic consultation. This pattern indicates that the deactivation of the read receipts feature prompted the student to resend the message as a

behavioral strategy to ensure that the message was noticed by the lecturer.

### **Deactivating read receipts causes uncertainty**

In this finding, several participants experienced the same thing, which is uncertainty. They have to wait for a response from the lecturer within a period of a few hours to 24 hours.

Extract XI

*“I waited for the lecturer to reply to my message.” (MY)*

MY’s statements align with the statement made by AM regarding the deactivation of the read receipts feature.

Extract XII

*“I will wait, then I will ask a friend. And I will wait for 1x24 hours.”  
(AM)*

From the statement above, it is confirmed that deactivating the read receipts feature causes uncertainty regarding the status of the sent messages. So, students have to make an effort to understand the current situation and wait longer for a response from the lecturer. For MY, waiting for a response from the lecturer is a fairly good action, but participant AM will not only wait for a response from the lecturer; AM will also ask friends about the online status of the lecturer's WhatsApp contact.

## ***2. The implications of deactivate read receipts of WhatsApp by EFL students on communication to the lecturers***

### **a. Communication is less effective**

In an academic context good communication quality is needed, such as quick and clear responses. However, if the quality of communication is poor, what happens is ineffective communication.

## Extract XIII

*“Yes, it could be that there was a miscommunication, so there was a misunderstanding, maybe another lecturer who was a bit sensitive thought that the students didn't respect him.” (HP)*

In line with HP's statement, other EFL Students YS also made similar statements related to communication is less effective in using deactivate read receipts on communication with EFL lecturers.

## Extract XIV

*“It's impolite, sis, if we turn it off, it gives the impression that we don't really need the lecturer. if it's already been replied to and we just read it, the lecturer gets confused whether it has been conveyed or not, and the communication becomes less effective.” (YS)*

Based on the information obtained from the above statement, it can be concluded that by deactivating the read receipts feature, the quality of communication becomes less effective. Like HP's statement which says that if a lecturer has sensitive emotions, they might think that the student does not respect them. Moreover, YS's statement clearly indicates that this causes miscommunication between students and lecturers.

## **b. Causing bad impressions**

Some lecturers with a formal or rigid personality might consider deactivate the read receipts feature to be impolite. Because it is considered impolite, this can affect the character assessment of the students.

## Extract XV

*“So if asked whether I agree or not with the deactivated read receivers feature, I don't agree because it can make people think negatively (considered impolite) even though that's not necessarily what they are like.” (SH)*

Besides SH's statement, FY's statement is also in line with the above statement.

Extract XVI

*“But during a class in semester 2 our lecturer once told us that deactivating the read feature is considered impolite, especially if we don't use a profile photo.” (FY)*

From the statement above, it indicates that deactivating the read receipts feature can have long-term implications if there is no clarification. From the above participant's statement, it is stated that by using this feature, others may misunderstand the user of this feature. The message recipient may draw negative conclusions such as a lack of etiquette, disrespect, and so on. Even FY explained that there are some professors who consider this impolite.

## DISCUSSIONS

### ***1. The Papuan EFL students' perceptions in deactivate read receipts of WhatsApp during students and lecturer communication***

In this study, the perceptions of EFL students regarding the deactivation of read receipts are understood through three aspects: cognitive, affective, and conative. Cognitively, this feature is perceived in two ways either as impolite behavior, as it may be seen as ignoring the sender's message, or as a reasonable act to maintain privacy and comfort. Similar dual perceptions have also been reported in studies on WhatsApp use in educational contexts, where students interpret digital communication features differently depending on situational demands and interpersonal expectations (Muthmainnah & Azmina, 2020). From the affective aspect, some students feel emotionally disturbed due to the uncertainty of their message status, while others remain calm, demonstrating good emotional control. This finding aligns with previous studies indicating that WhatsApp-mediated academic communication can elicit mixed emotional responses, ranging from comfort to anxiety, depending on how communication features are perceived and used (Rabbianty et al., 2021). Conatively, this feature



leads to two types of responses: repeatedly sending messages to ensure they are received, or patiently waiting for a reply. Such behavioral responses are consistent with earlier findings suggesting that students' engagement and communicative behavior in WhatsApp-based learning environments are shaped by their perceptions and attitudes toward the platform (Fauzi, 2021). In the context of academic communication between students and lecturers, the feature has a significant impact, not only technically but also psychologically and socially. Its use can influence how students interpret messages, manage emotions, and behave in digital communication especially in building social relationships with their lecturers.

In addition, the findings of this study should also be understood from a cross-cultural communication perspective. Within the Papuan context, social relations between students and lecturers are often characterized by respect, politeness, and strong academic hierarchy. Consequently, the use of the *deactivate read receipts* feature is more likely to be interpreted as impolite compared to other contexts where communication norms are more egalitarian. This result aligns with cross-cultural studies which indicate that perceptions of digital politeness are significantly shaped by local norms and communicative practices (Pasaribu et al., 2021; Selepe & Mehlahe, 2023). Therefore, this study emphasizes that technological features in social media cannot be separated from the socio-cultural frameworks in which they are embedded. The implication is that both lecturers and students should develop greater awareness of these differences and work toward building mutual understanding that prioritizes academic etiquette in digital communication.

The deactivation of read receipts in academic digital communication has complex implications across cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions. Cognitively, this practice may be perceived as neglectful or ambiguous, particularly in academic contexts where clarity, responsiveness, and acknowledgment are considered important components of effective communication (Vorderer et al., 2016; Wenerda, 2020). The absence of read confirmation can lead message senders to question whether their messages have

been received or ignored, thereby shaping negative interpretations of the communication intent. Affectively, previous studies have shown that uncertainty in digital communication can trigger emotional discomfort, anxiety, or feelings of being unappreciated, especially among individuals who are sensitive to delayed responses or who associate silence with indifference (Lynden & Rasmussen, 2017; Sahib et al., 2023). These emotional reactions are particularly salient in hierarchical relationships, such as those between students and lecturers, where power distance and expectations of politeness are more pronounced. Conatively, the lack of read receipt confirmation often encourages compensatory behaviors, including repeated messaging or prolonged waiting, which may disrupt the natural flow of communication and increase the potential for misunderstanding (Syahrul et al., 2023; Vorderer et al., 2016). Although the read receipts feature is technically designed to enhance user comfort and privacy, its deactivation can paradoxically generate negative social responses when applied in academic contexts that demand transparency and timely interaction. As a result, deactivating read receipts may hinder message interpretation, obscure communicative intentions, and gradually weaken interpersonal trust between students and lecturers. Overall, this study supports existing research suggesting that seemingly simple technological features in digital communication platforms carry significant psychological and social consequences, particularly within formal and hierarchical academic environments (Nasrullah, 2022; Pasaribu et al., 2021).

This research explores perception in communication, specifically how users interpret the read receipts feature on WhatsApp when it is deactivate. Based on the framework by Baron & Branscombe(2009), which includes the cognitive, affective, and conative aspects of perception as seen through knowledge, emotional responses, and user actions (Baron & Branscombe, 2009). This study shows that students' perceptions are formed from their experiences in using this feature, including the feelings that arise and the actions taken. Previous research supports this, showing that WhatsApp enhances communication and learning due to its accessibility (Suriani et al.,

2021). Additionally, other research reveals that deactivating the read receipts feature can also lead to miscommunication due to language or technical barriers (Syahrul et al., 2023). This study aligns with those findings, where the deactivation of read receipts is viewed negatively as impolite but is still used by students. Unlike previous studies that emphasized language changes when students send messages to lecturers (Selepe & Mehlahe, 2023). This study places greater emphasis on how students interpret the entire communication process, not just their choice of language. This indicates that interpretation, rather than language adjustment, is the main focus in students' communication behavior.

## **2. The implications of deactivate read receipts of WhatsApp by EFL students on communication to the lecturers**

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the deactivation of the *read receipts* feature by students has several implications from the perspective of the message recipient. These implications are categorized into two main aspects. First, turning off the feature can lead to less effective communication, as the message sender may feel that their message has not been properly received or understood, resulting in miscommunication. Similar concerns have been raised in previous studies on WhatsApp-based learning, which highlight how unclear message status can disrupt interaction and engagement (Fauzi, 2021). Second, it can lead to negative assumptions about the recipient, especially among individuals who are emotionally sensitive or have rigid personalities. They may feel unappreciated or disrespected if their messages do not receive a clear response. In formal relationships, such as between students and lecturers, this can be perceived as impolite and potentially cause emotional tension. Therefore, the presence of an active *read receipts* feature is considered essential in supporting clear, effective, and respectful communication in the current digital communication era.

In today's era of widespread digital communication, the read receipts feature on WhatsApp plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions and maintaining trust between individuals. Deactivating this feature not only affects

the technical flow of message delivery but also has psychological implications, often triggering feelings of uncertainty and neglect. As short message communication becomes increasingly dominant in daily life, the expectation for quick and transparent responses grows stronger, with read receipts serving as a key indicator of such transparency. When this feature is turned off, it can lead to miscommunication, disrupt trust, and reduce the overall quality of communication especially in contexts that demand clarity, such as academic, personal, or professional relationships. The findings of this study underscore how a simple feature can significantly influence social interactions and emotional responses. Therefore, individuals should carefully consider the potential consequences of deactivating read receipts, as it can unintentionally impact relationships and communication effectiveness in meaningful ways.

WhatsApp as a digital communication platform, provides various features designed to support and facilitate interactions among users. According to Van Dijk's in Nasrullah (2014) view that social media is a space for activities and collaboration, this study highlights how these features, particularly read receipts, affect communication dynamics (Nasrullah, 2022). Other findings indicate that many respondents tend to respond to messages more quickly when the read receipts feature is enabled because they feel uncomfortable making the sender wait after the message has been read (Vorderer et al., 2016). However, there are also those who state that the presence of this feature does not affect their communication habits. Previous research also discusses similar matters, such as the interpretation of emojis, which generally have a low risk of miscommunication, although there are emojis like the thumbs up that can cause anxiety or be considered impolite (Cahyani et al., 2025). Subsequent research revealed that deactivating read receipts is also associated with feelings of discomfort and being unappreciated, especially in formal or emotional interactions (Sahib et al., 2023). Therefore, the use of read receipts significantly affects the quality of digital communication. So, this study highlights the potential implications of deactivating the read receipts feature and emphasizes

the need for communicators to use it wisely, especially in academic settings that value politeness and respect.

The findings may also be compared with the use of other digital features on WhatsApp, such as *last seen* and *online status*. Several students noted that even when the *read receipts* function is deactivated, they still felt observed or judged through these alternative indicators. This suggests that digital communication is complex, with each feature carrying its own psychological and social implications. Thus, turning off *read receipts* does not entirely eliminate perceptions of openness or politeness, since other indicators continue to influence communicative evaluations. Such comparisons highlight the need for further research to examine how the interplay of different WhatsApp features shapes perceptions of academic communication between students and lecturers. While respecting individual privacy, users are encouraged to consider the communication context and the character of their interlocutors to avoid misunderstandings or conflicts.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

This study highlights that the deactivation of the read receipts feature on WhatsApp constitutes a socially meaningful practice rather than a purely technical choice in academic communication. The most distinctive finding of this research lies in the way Papuan EFL students' perceptions are shaped through cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions within a hierarchical academic context. Although many students cognitively perceive the deactivation of read receipts as impolite and potentially disrespectful toward lecturers, they continue to use the feature for personal reasons such as privacy and emotional comfort, particularly outside formal academic matters. Affectively, students display varied emotional responses, ranging from anxiety caused by uncertainty to emotional calmness supported by self-regulation. Conatively, students develop adaptive strategies, such as delaying or resending messages, to maintain politeness and communication effectiveness. These findings demonstrate that read receipts significantly influence

not only message exchange but also emotional regulation, behavioral adjustment, and the maintenance of social relationships in academic digital communication.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research focuses solely on students' perceptions and behaviors, without deeply examining lecturers' perspectives or institutional communication policies, which may also shape digital interaction norms. Second, the study is context-specific, involving EFL students and lecturers from the Tadris English Study Program at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua, where strong cultural values of politeness and academic hierarchy prevail. Consequently, the findings may not be directly generalizable to institutions with more egalitarian communication cultures or different technological practices. In addition, the study concentrates on a single WhatsApp feature, namely read receipts, without systematically examining how other features such as *last seen* or *online status* interact to influence communication perceptions.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be proposed. Higher education institutions are encouraged to provide clearer guidance on digital communication ethics by incorporating discussions of messaging features, including read receipts, into student orientation programs or academic skills courses. Such initiatives may help students better understand how digital behaviors are interpreted within academic hierarchies. At the same time, lecturers are encouraged to adopt a flexible and empathetic approach by considering students' psychological and personal reasons for managing privacy in digital communication. For future research, it is recommended to involve a broader range of participants, including lecturers and administrators, as well as to explore the combined effects of multiple WhatsApp features on academic communication. Further studies may also investigate similar phenomena in different cultural and institutional contexts to deepen understanding of how digital communication technologies shape academic etiquette, professionalism, and interpersonal trust.

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