

INFLUENCE OF WHATSAPP ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF UNDERGRADUATES IN KWARA STATE

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Abstract

WhatsApp is a smartphone application for instant messaging. It is an amazing application, which has helped students and teachers to connect to the society and the world at large. The question many people asked was how WhatsApp motivates students to learn thereby influencing their academic performance. This study examined the influence of WhatsApp on academic performance of undergraduates from selected universities in Kwara State, Nigeria. The design for the study was a descriptive research using cross-sectional survey. The population comprised 200 undergraduates selected from 3 universities in Kwara State using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. An adapted questionnaire from Michael (2016) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated and reliability coefficient of 0.87 was obtained. Mean, frequency counts and percentage were used to answer the research questions, while t-test statistics was used to test the research hypothesis. The findings of the study showed that undergraduates in Kwara State used WhatsApp to chat with friends. The findings also revealed that 78% of undergraduates find WhatsApp helpful in getting relevant information to their learning. The study recommended that undergraduates should create a balance between chit-chatting and academic activities; educational stakeholders should organize guidance and counselling session for the undergraduates on the use of social media, and mobile learning should be encouraged among the undergraduates.

Key Words: Social Media for Learning, WhatsApp, Students' Academic Performance

Introduction

Information and communication technology (ICT) plays a vital role in learner's achievement at all educational levels and its significance in education cannot be overemphasized. ICT has penetrated all areas of human endeavour and it has helped people to become better informed, enlightened, and kept them abreast with world developments. The technology exposes mankind to better ways of doing things and makes life better (Kent & Facer, 2004). It has broadened and improved communication systems using diverse tools like social media and Internet. These new technologies which are electronic in nature and cost effective have changed the process of communication and enhanced teaching and learning.

The Internet expands access to learning, strengthens and raises educational quality by making teaching and learning more engaging and active process connected to real life. Social networking is characterized by the trend of online chat tools also known as communication tools or social media. Kimberly (2009) reported that chat tools are used to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and transverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. Chat tools as electronic learning platforms are indispensable in quality education. Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007) defined chat tools as web-based services that allow individuals to construct profiles, display user connections, search, traverse within that list of connections. Examples of common chat tools include: Facebook, WhatsApp, Marketplace, Google Plus, Twitter, 2go, YouTube, MySpace, Flickr, LinkedIn, among others. WhatsApp as a part of social media forms an essential part of the instant chat tools, which is quite popular in Nigerian society and amidst youths which form most of the Nigerian undergraduates. WhatsApp has recently become the most popular messenger with more

than 1 billion people as its user-base, and is the first messenger app to hit this milestone (Tole, Lina, Deris, Munawar & Imam, 2016).

Also, the role of WhatsApp in the socio-economic life of individuals cannot be over-emphasized. Michael (2016) opined that through two ways communication between senders and receivers, WhatsApp creates an enabling platform for engagement and networking. In its initial years, it charged the user as much as USD 0.99 per year (the first 12 months was a free trial period). Later, subscription charge was completely cancelled since 18th January, 2016. This platform provides services for text and audio messaging, free voice calls and exchanging photos or videos and even for sharing of limited types of documents. The main advantage of WhatsApp is the extensive engagement between users in user-created group known as WhatsApp group, which serves as a learning platform. It is user friendly to all users, both the old and young ones.

Integrating technology into education has gone beyond human thinking. Part of this integration is the formal introduction of WhatsApp into teaching and learning. WhatsApp is a relatively new tool in education, though it has similar positive characteristics as previous technological tools that are implemented, but it seems that WhatsApp has more updated features that encourage teachers and students to use it to enhance instruction (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014).

Yeboah and Ewur (2010) conducted a research on the impact of WhatsApp messenger usage on students' performance in tertiary institutions in Ghana. The study revealed that WhatsApp instead of making communication easier and faster thereby enhancing flow of information and idea sharing among students rather has impacted negatively on the performance of tertiary students. Fawzi (2015) investigated usage WhatsApp for e-learning and its impact on academic performance in Irbid National University in Jordan. The sample size was 364 students from Irbid National University in Jordan. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between the use of WhatsApp and academic performance of students.

Hamiyet (2016) examined the effect of students' usage of WhatsApp Instant Messaging for learning and improve students' achievement. The sample composed of 92 higher students (teacher candidates) attending Biruni University. It was revealed that WhatsApp use for learning in higher education needs to be understood of better learning with technology especially in teacher education, because they will be the future educators to have the learning and communication skills.

Given this insight, it infers that WhatsApp is reshaping the way students communicate and function in school. It is obvious that the prevailing interest of the Nigerian undergraduate in the shared world keeps increasing. It has been noted by many scholars that social media is of great effect on the performance of the students in their undergraduate programmes.

Research Questions

This study answered the following research questions:

1. How do undergraduates perceive the usefulness of WhatsApp for learning?
2. How often do undergraduates use WhatsApp for learning?
3. What is the influence of WhatsApp on academic performance of undergraduates?

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive research type of a cross-sectional survey design. This type of research design is a non-experimental descriptive research method that is used when a researcher wants to collect data on phenomena that cannot be directly observed (Creswell, 2014). This research method was considered appropriate in this study, because it focused on students and their views, opinions, perceptions and knowledge of how WhatsApp influences their academic performance.

The population for this study were undergraduates of universities in Kwara State. A total of two hundred (200) undergraduates from three (3) universities in Kwara State were purposively chosen to participate in the study, taking 50 undergraduates each from Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Kwara State University, Malete and 100 undergraduates from University of Ilorin based on accessibility and convenience. Then, random sampling technique was used to select respondents from each university.

An adapted questionnaire from Michael (2016) was used for data collection in the study. The original questionnaire was modified giving a total of 15 items in four sections that answered the research questions posed. The instrument was validated by the researchers. Mean, frequency count and percentage were used to answer the research questions.

Results

Table 1: Demographic Information of Respondents

DEMOGRAPHICS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE%
GENDER		
Male	87	43.5%
Female	113	56.5%
Total	200	100.0
INSTITUTION		
University of Ilorin	100	50.0%
Al-hikmah University	50	25.0%
Kwara state University	50	25.0%
Total	200	100%
STUDY AREA		
Physical Science	36	18.0%
Environmental Science	50	25.0%
Arts	48	24.0%
Basic Medical Science	49	24.5%
Law	17	8.5%
Total	200	100%
AGE		
16-20 years	59	29.5%
21-25 years	102	51.0%
26-30 years	5	2.5%
31 and above	34	17.0%
Total	200	100%

Table 1 revealed the demographic information of respondents who took part in the study. The table revealed that 87 (43.5%) respondents were male while 113 (56.5%) respondents were female. This indicates that more female than male took part in the study. Based on demographic institution factor, the table revealed that 100 respondents representing 50% were from University of Ilorin, 50 (25%) were from Al-hikmah University, while the remaining 50 representing 25% were from Kwara state university. In terms of study area, 36 representing (18%) respondents were from Physical Science, followed by Environmental Science with 50 (25%) respondents, 48 representing (24%) respondents were from Arts, 49 representing (24.5%) respondents were from Basic Medical Science, while 17 respondents representing (8.5%) were from Law. This shows that the majority of the respondents were from faculty of Environmental science. The age distribution, of the respondents revealed that 59 representing (29.5%) respondents falls within the age range of 16-20 years, 102 representing (51.0%) respondents were in range of 21-25, 5 respondents (2.5%)

respondents fall within the age range 26-30, while 34 respondents representing 17% falls within the age range of 31 and above. This inferred that majority of respondents are between the ages 21-25years.

Research Question 1: How do undergraduates perceive the usefulness of WhatsApp for learning?

Table 2: Usefulness of WhatsApp in Learning

S/N	Item	Strongly Agreed (%)	Agreed (%)	Disagreed (%)	Strongly Disagreed (%)
1	WhatsApp facilitates my research work	46 (23.0%)	81 (40.5%)	55 (27.5%)	18 (9.0%)
2	WhatsApp facilitates networking with other students	86 (43.0%)	104 (52.0%)	8 (4.0%)	2 (1.0%)
3	WhatsApp aids collaboration with other students	79 (39.5%)	108 (54.0%)	12 (6.0%)	1 (0.5%)
4	Using WhatsApp facilitates better relationship with my lecturers	8 (4.0%)	36 (18.0%)	108 (54.0%)	48 (24.0%)
5	WhatsApp makes me an active learner	14 (7.0%)	71 (35.5%)	82 (41.0%)	33 (16.5%)
6	I get information on class schedule and assignments through WhatsApp	47 (23.5%)	109 (54.5%)	30 (15.0%)	14 (7.0%)
7	The use of WhatsApp affects my academic performance positively	44 (22.0%)	110 (55.0%)	32 (16.0%)	14 (7.0%)
8	I find WhatsApp very useful	54 (27.0%)	116 (58.0%)	25 (12.5%)	5 (2.5%)

Table 2 revealed the usefulness of WhatsApp in learning by undergraduates. It showed that 81(40.5%) respondents agreed that WhatsApp facilitates students work, while 55 (27.5%) disagreed with this opinion. Second item on the table reveals that 104 respondents representing 52.0% agreed that WhatsApp facilitates their networking with other students, while 8 (4.0%) disagreed with the statement. 108 (54.0%) respondents agreed that the use of WhatsApp aids collaboration with other students, while 12 (6.0%) students disagreed. It is evident that WhatsApp does not facilitate better relationship between students and lecturers. Item 4 reveals that 36 (18%) respondents agreed that WhatsApp facilitates better relationship between students and lecturers, while 108 (54%) disagreed with the opinion. This means that very few students have contact with their lecturers via WhatsApp. Item 5 shows that 71(35.5%) out of the entire respondents agreed that WhatsApp makes them an active learner, while 82 (41.0%) disagreed with the statement. From the responses as interpreted, it is evident that WhatsApp is useful in learning.

Research Question 2: How often do the undergraduates make use of WhatsApp?

Table 3: Undergraduates’ Use of WhatsApp

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very often	50	25.0%
Often	75	37.5%
Sometimes	45	22.5%
Rarely	30	15.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Table 3 revealed how often undergraduates make use of WhatsApp. The table showed that 50 (25%) use WhatsApp very often, 75 (37.5%) use WhatsApp Often, 45 (22.5%) Sometimes use WhatsApp while 30 (15%) rarely make use of WhatsApp. It can therefore be concluded that majority of undergraduates make use of WhatsApp often.

Research Question 3: What is the influence of WhatsApp on academic performance of undergraduates?

Table 4: Influence of WhatsApp on Learning

S/N	Item	Strongly Agreed (%)	Agreed (%)	Disagreed (%)	Strongly Disagreed (%)
1	WhatsApp distracts me from carrying out academic assignments	11 (5.5%)	56 (28.0%)	92 (46.0%)	41 (20.5%)
2	WhatsApp distracts my concentration and participation during lectures	8 (4.0%)	33 (16.5%)	105 (52.5%)	54 (27.0%)
3	Using WhatsApp for learning enables me to accomplish tasks easily	23 (11.5%)	85 (42.5%)	68 (34.0%)	24 (12.0%)
4	WhatsApp increases my academic performance and productivity	11 (5.5%)	62 (31.0%)	97 (48.5%)	30 (15.0%)
5	I use WhatsApp to perform academic activities	18 (9.0%)	80 (40.0%)	74 (37.0%)	28 (14.0%)
6	I get information on relevant educational groups on WhatsApp	20 (10.0%)	73 (36.5%)	79 (39.5%)	28 (14.0%)

Table 4 showed that 56 (28%) respondents are of the opinion that WhatsApp distracts them from carrying out academic activities, while 92 (46.0%) submitted that WhatsApp does not distract them from carrying out their academic activities. Item 2 reveals that 33 respondents 16.5% agreed that WhatsApp distracts their concentration and participation during lectures, 105 (52.5%) however disagreed. Based on the findings, it can be deduced that undergraduates do not agree to the fact that WhatsApp distracts their private study, concentration and participation during lectures and their overall academic performance. 85 (42.5%) respondents agreed that the use of WhatsApp has helped to accomplish learning tasks, while 68 (34.0%) disagreed to the fact that using WhatsApp for learning enables tasks to be accomplished easily. 62 (31.0%) agreed that WhatsApp increased their academic performance and productivity. 97 (48.5%) disagreed, in their opinion WhatsApp does not increase their academic performance and productivity. 80 (40.0%) agreed that they use WhatsApp to perform academic activities, while 74 (37.0%) disagreed that they use WhatsApp to perform academic activities. 73 (36.5%) agreed that they get information on relevant educational groups on WhatsApp, while 79 (39.5%) disagreed that they get information on relevant educational groups on WhatsApp. It can be deduced that WhatsApp does not have any influence on undergraduates' academic performance.

Discussion of Findings

The data analysed in research question one showed that WhatsApp is perceived to be a useful tool for learning which improves active participation among students, facilitates research work, encourages networking, and facilitates better relationship with lecturers. More so, through WhatsApp, information can easily be disseminated among students which positively affects their academic performance. This result means that students generally perceive WhatsApp to be an effective educational platform besides from its social function. The finding of this study is in agreement with Amry (2014) who opined that WhatsApp instant messaging is very easy to use as majority of students use this mobile system for academic purposes.

Also, its usage fosters community level interaction and social presence among students. From the result of research question two and three, WhatsApp is used often among undergraduates. Using WhatsApp for learning enables students to accomplish tasks easily and get information on relevant educational groups. However, the use of WhatsApp if not regulated, can serve as source of distraction to students. This supports the findings of Tuurosong and Faisal (2014) who asserted that social moderately affect students that that the frequency of use is averagely once per day. More so, this finding corroborates the findings of Kufre and Abe (2017) who found that WhatsApp application increases retention ability as students who use WhatsApp for learning exhibits a higher retention ability than their counterpart.

Conclusion

The study investigated the influence of WhatsApp on academic performance of undergraduates in selected universities in Kwara State. This study concludes that WhatsApp is an effective collaborative tool which is very useful in teaching and learning process by both students and instructors. WhatsApp is an educational tool with the potential of making learning interesting. Despite all these potentials, WhatsApp must be carefully integrated into teaching and learning as its abuse by students can negatively affects their academic performance. Also, this study had revealed that, WhatsApp is a useful tool for learning as it facilities networking and aids collaboration with other students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Students should create a balance between chit-chatting and academic activities. More attention should be directed to research.
2. Educational stakeholders should arrange guidance and counseling sessions in learning institutions on the use of social media platforms.
3. The National Universities Commission should consider introducing training programmes for less-experienced lecturers primarily for embracing and inculcating the 21st century learning skills in classroom situation.
4. Mobile learning should be encouraged among the students.

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