
USAGE OF WHATSAPP FOR OPEN DISTANCE LEARNERS

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Introduction

Whatsapp messenger is a smart phone messenger available for android and the smart phones. Whatsapp uses your 3G or Wifi (when available) to message with friend and family. Switch from SMS to whatsapp to send and receive message, pictures, audio notes and video messages. Whatsapp is on a path to connect one billion people. The services that reach that milestone are all incredibly valuable, "FB- CEO MARK ZUCKBERG said in a statement.

There are following special features in whatsapp:

- No hidden cost
- Multimedia
- Group chat
- No international charges
- Say no to pins and user names
- No need to login/out
- No need to add buddies (contacts automatically connect)
- Offline messages
- And much more : share location, exchange contacts, custom wall paper, landscape mode, email chat history, broadcast messages and MMS to many contacts at once and much more.

Significance of the Study

Choosing a mobile phone today is an intricate process that involves researching about mobile devices in terms of manufactures and their credibility, available features and style. It seems to be a herculean process. It requires updated information through internet. Change may come at any fraction of time in the mobile market. Almost everyone makes a smart and informed decision on their next device. There are many different types' style and models of mobile phones available in the market today. The most attractive user group next to face book is whatsapp. The reach it extends everyday is millions and millions of people into its gamut of activities. Right now it is free of cost. The students are using it for sending audio, video and images files to friends and relatives. The application makes it possible to send any text, image, video and audio within a few minutes to others in the opposite end. The investigators thought that this wonderful application can be used for Open and Distance Learning (ODL). Hence, the investigators made an attempt to find out the opinion of students in distance mode of TNOU to use it for their various learning purposes and connectivity to the TNOU centre. The mobile which is having android application is very much useful in Open Distance Learning (ODL). The learners can easily gather the information through the whatsapp. This research mainly focuses the ODL students in Rajapalayam Taluk in Virudhunagar District. The investigators developed and validated a questionnaire for this study. The questionnaires were supplied to distance learners of TNOU centers in Rajapalayam. The findings reveal that the students are in favour of using whatsapp for their academic excellence.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to find out the knowledge level of using whatsapp in open distance learning in terms of background variables.

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Hypotheses

1. To find out the knowledge level of open distance learning students utilizing the whatsapp in open distance learning programme in terms of gender.
2. To find out the knowledge level of open distance learning students utilizing the whatsapp in open distance learning programme in terms of employability.
3. To find out the knowledge level of open distance learning students utilizing the whatsapp in open distance learning programme in terms of monthly income.

Methodology

Survey method was adopted by the investigator to study the usage of whatsapp in open distance learning.

Population and Sample

For the present study the investigator selected the open distance learning students through the TNOU university centers in Virudhunagar District in Tamilnadu. Among the 305 learners were selected by random sampling technique.

Establishing the Reliability of the Tool

The prepared tool was given to sample open distance learning students of 50 to find out the reliability. After few days time the same tool was given to them. The correlation coefficient found out was 0.76. it is very high correlation. Hence the tool is considered to be having reliability.

Establishing Validity of the Tool

According to Garret, H.E.(1967, p365), the index of reliability is sometimes taken as a measure of validity. The tool constructed and validated by Dr.N.Ramakrishnan Professor and Head, Department of Educational Technology, Tamilnadu Teachers Education University, Chennai and the investigator to measure the knowledge level of the Open Distance Learners.

Statistics Used

The data was analyzed by using percentage analysis.

Analysis of Data

Table 1

The following tables shows the knowledge level of open distance learning students utilizing the whatsapp in open distance learning programme in terms of their personal variables:

S.No	Personal variables	Description	Yes	%	No	%	Total
1.	Overall	Overall	158	158	147	147	305
2.	Gender	Male	53	38.68	84	61.31	305
		Female	105	62.5	63	37.5	
3.	Employment status	Employed	123	77.84	99	67.34	305
		Unemployed	35	22.15	48	32.65	
4.	Monthly income	Below Rs.10,000	50	37.03	35	40.22	222
		Rs.10,000-Rs.25,000	51	37.77	23	26.43	
		Above Rs.25,000	34	25.18	29	33.33	

It is inferred from the table that the knowledge level of open distance learning students utilizing the whatsapp in open distance learning programme in terms of their gender female students is high (62.5%) whereas, the level of male students in total is low (38.68%). Based on their employment status the employed students were utilizing the whatsapp for open distance learning in high level (77.84%) but the unemployed students utilization were low (22.15%). According to their income those who are earning above Rs.25,000 were utilizing the whatsapp for open distance learning in low (25.18%) whereas, the

students earning Rs.10,000 to Rs.25,000 were utilized the whatsapp in high level for open distance learning process.

Table 2

Percentage analysis of open distance learners' usages of whatsapp

S.No	Criteria	Yes	%	No	%	Total
1.	Having smart phone	255	83	50	16	305
2.	Presence of whatsapp in their smart phone	232	76.06	73	23.93	305
3.	Usages of whatsapp	232	76.06	73	23.93	305
4.	Whatsapp can be used for open distance learning programme	228	74.75	77	25.24	305

The above tables shows that the open distance learning students having smart phone in high level (83%) and they are utilizing the whatsapp in their phone among 76.06% where as 74.75% of learners learning their open distance Learning Programme through their whatsapp only.

Findings

From the findings it is clear that the knowledge level of open distance learning programme leads success through the whatsapp technology. This may be due to the fact that most of the learners are utilizing the whatsapp technology. Now a day everybody is having the smart phone and its application too. The female learners are more interested in learning the open distance learning programme through whatsapp than the male. The person who are all employed and earning Rs.10,000-Rs.25,000 are having more interest in utilizing the whatsapp for their academic excellence.

Conclusion

Lack of enough knowledge in smart phone also may be the reason for low level of usage of whatsapp among the unemployed. Young students utilizes the whatsapp more for chatting among the friends but not very much interested in open distance learning programme.

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