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Extent of Utilization of Whatsapp for Enhancing Academic Learning by Business Education Students in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract:

The study determined the extent of utilization of WhatsApp by business education students for enhancing academic learning in Anambra State. One research question guided the study and one null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted and the population of 330 2018/2019 final year business education students in the four public tertiary institutions was studied without sampling. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire containing 6 items and validated by two experts in the field of business education and measurement and evaluation. Trial testing was used to establish the reliability of the instrument and data analysis with Cronbach Alpha yielded coefficient of 0.98. Three hundred and twenty (320) duly completed copies of the instrument were retrieved and used for the study. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question and determined the homogeneity of the respondents' ratings while the t-test was used to test the hypothesis. Findings revealed that WhatsApp is utilized by business education students at great extent for enhancing academic learning. Gender significantly influenced respondents' mean ratings on the extent they utilize WhatsApp for enhancing academic learning. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that business education students recognize the importance of WhatsApp in enhancing their academic learning and therefore utilize it for academic purposes. It was therefore recommended among others that; Business education departments and administrators of tertiary institutions should continue to enlighten students through seminars and workshops on how to utilize WhatsApp for academic purposes to a very great extent

Keywords: WhatsApp, academic learning, business education, business education students

1. Introduction

If one invention has influenced the world the most over the past few decades, it is arguably WhatsApp. WhatsApp has improved modern interactive channels through which individuals and groups connect one another, share ideas, experiences, and information of interest. WhatsApp is a social network platform that operates on nearly all current types of device and operating systems. As a means of sending and receiving messages to and from individuals or groups, WhatsApp includes a variety of functions such as text messages, attached images, audio files, video files and link to web addresses (Cohavi, 2013).

The utilization of WhatsApp in the field of education has greatly impacted on the quality of teaching and learning globally. WhatsApp platform provides online students opportunities to collaborate and corporate together to construct knowledge. It also encourages learners to learn by anticipating needs, make collaborative learning efficient and effective, build relationship that stimulates learner-to-learner for consistent and progressive learning. In support, Oghenetega, Oyenike and Ugeh (2014) posited that WhatsApp platform provides online students opportunities to collaborate and corporate together to learn. Similarly, WhatsApp provides new opportunities for innovating and evolving modern system of education and learning institutions, and for preparing learners for the 21st century. Vervaart (2014) stressed that social networking (WhatsApp inclusive) has increased students' participation in academic group discussion, sharing of homework, projects, team work and ideas. The use of WhatsApp in business education classrooms facilitates students' delivery of homework and assignments.

Business education lectures can utilize WhatsApp in improve their instructional processes and avail multiple benefits for collaborative professional development. Fischer (2013) stated that lecturers (business education lecturers inclusive) can create a group for their students to constitute a type of 'simple social network' for the class. WhatsApp enhance peer networking, reflection and sharing of classroom assignments, knowledge sharing, posting of conferences, workshops and training discussion. It can also help business education students to share links, answer questions from the

instructor and even post questions and comments to fellow students. This will help them meet the goals of education generally and that of business education in particular.

Business education refers to an aspect of vocational education that equip students with skills and competencies for gainful employment or self-reliance. Osuala (2009) viewed business education as the sum total of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are required for successful promotion and administering of business enterprise. This definition means that business education is expected to expose students to diversity curricula, and inculcate in them attitudes, knowledge, skills, values required to become a healthy, literate, and self-reliant citizen. The teaching and learning in business education have evolved over the last two decades as a result of interactive networks which ICTs bequeath to the field of education. There is now more emphasis on student-centered instructional strategy as well as increased expectation placed on the role that WhatsApp can play in students' learning.

In Nigeria, many business education students in the tertiary institutions are believed to be utilizing WhatsApp for pursuit of academic goals; however, many seem not to be able to acquaint themselves with the use of WhatsApp for learning. Rousseau and Puttaraju (2017) acknowledge the need for students to utilize SNSs for improving their learning, by stating that social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp among others support sociological constructivism, which claims that social interactions combined with learner experiences, help to construct new knowledge. Through WhatsApp, students are able to provide feedback on course content and lectures, and they can build on their own understanding through peers' comments and questions.

Despite the potentials of WhatsApp in enhancing academic learning among business education students, it seems students do not use WhatsApp for academic purposes. Rather, they appear to now divert their search towards non-educational, on-line activities such as useless chatting for sake of enjoyment instead of doing their assignments. Though earlier studies have demonstrated that WhatsApp are widely embraced by the younger generation (students), the exposure and use of WhatsApp tend to have negative implications on the students (Long, 2012). This is as a result of more time being dedicated to the use of WhatsApp for non-academic usage and less time to academic usage by students. In view of this, there is a national discourse among education stakeholders concerning the use of WhatsApp in learning. Some stakeholders see it as distraction to learning for the students as it involves multitasking, while others attest to the potentials of WhatsApp for enhancing learning. There are also those arguing that young adult learners view and use WhatsApp as a platform for socializing more than learning. In most cases, students have their WhatsApp constantly running in the background while they are carrying out their academic engagements. These create distractions and reduce the time for focusing on their studies.

The utilization of WhatsApp for academic learning could be put to variety of uses depending on the gender of the students and the motive behind it. This means that the gender of business education students could play a significant role on the extent they utilize WhatsApp for academic purposes. Enang (2014) and Ajisafe (2014) reported that gender of the students can influence the utilization of SNSs (WhatsApp inclusive) for learning. Based on this background, this study ascertained the extent WhatsApp is utilized for enhancing academic learning of business education students in Anambra State.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

With the emergence of ICT, WhatsApp is available for business education students to utilize in enhancing their academic learning. However, the researcher is worried that these students seem not to be harnessing the huge educational potentials of WhatsApp as they are constantly busy with their mobile phones taking pictures, chatting, updating profiles even when lectures are going on. Similarly, it seems that business education students have abandoned the use of WhatsApp for assignments and team work in preference to chatting with friends even at lesson time. This takes much of students' study time, distract them from completing assignments, and resulting to their poor academic performance. This study therefore ascertained the extent business education students in Anambra State utilize WhatsApp for enhancing academic learning. Specifically, the study extent business education students utilize WhatsApp for enhancing academic learning in Anambra State.

1.2. Research Question

The following research question guided this study:

To what extent do business education students utilize WhatsApp for enhancing academic learning in Anambra State?

1.3. Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Male and female business education students do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent WhatsApp is utilized for enhancing their academic learning in Anambra State.

2. Review of Related Literature

Literature for the study was reviewed underutilization of WhatsApp for enhancing students' academic learning. WhatsApp is a Smartphone application that operates on nearly all current types of devices and operating systems. The application has been on the market since 2010. The purpose of the developers was to replace the existing SMS platform for a system that is free of charge in an ad-free environment (Cohavi, 2013). As a means of sending and receiving messages to and from individuals or groups, Cohavi states that WhatsApp includes a variety of functions, such as text messages, attached images, audio files, video files, and links to web addresses. Over the last two years, the application has become

very popular, gaining over 350 million users and is rated the most downloaded application in 27 countries. One of the unique applications features is the option to create a group and to communicate within its boundaries. The creator of the group becomes its manager, a position that includes the privilege of adding and removing participants without the need for approval from the group members.

Fischer (2013) observed that the high infiltration of Smartphones into the market has initiated growing use of WhatsApp as a communication platform for various student groups, and more recently for groups of teachers and their students as well. Teachers can create a group for their students to constitute a type of 'simple social network' for the class. A number of reasons why students adopt WhatsApp as their main communication channel rather than alternatives (such as SMS or other social networks) is listed by Church and De Oliveira (2013). They include:

The low cost of the application combined with the ability to send an unlimited number of messages, immediacy, the desire to feel a part of the trend since their acquaintances have already adopted the application, the capacity to conduct an on-going conversation with many friends simultaneously, the knitting together of a community of friends or family, and a sense of privacy relative to other social networks.

Bere (2013) registered positive feedback from students who claimed that WhatsApp platform was easier way of communicating with their teachers and the rest of the class. It was also productive of fruitful discourse on relevant issues in an informal environment where students could learn intimately and authentically, and that it was also fun. Such cooperation was felt by the students to bridge gaps in knowledge and physical distance. Overall, WhatsApp has become a shared platform that enhances accessibility, encourages cooperation, and intensifies motivation to take an active part in academic assignments.

Chan (2005) also highlighted the educational benefits of WhatsApp platform as: Providing online students with the ability to exchange text messages, images, videos and voice notes to their social network or group and contacts.

Providing students or instructors with the ability to create a group (social network group) that supports the social interactions up to 11 group members. Members can engage in discussion groups.

WhatsApp messenger provides the ability for students to send messages without limits. The application uses a 3G/EDGE internet data plan or Wi-Fi to ensure continued data transmission across the WhatsApp mobile system.

Students using WhatsApp through a variety of mobile devices, such as Smartphones, galaxy tablets, and so on can message one another through texts, images, videos among others.

WhatsApp platform provides online students opportunities to collaborate and cooperate together to construct knowledge.

Encourage learners to learn by anticipating needs, make collaborative learning efficient and effective, build a relationship that stimulates learner-to-learner for consistent and progressive learning (Yalcinap&Gulbahar, 2010).

3. Method

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The study was conducted in four public tertiary institutions that offer business education programme in Anambra State. The population of this study consisted of 330 2018/2019 final year business education students in the four tertiary institutions chosen for this study. The respondents include 11 final year business education students from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Igbaram, 145 final year business education students from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, 68 final year business education students from Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe and 106 final year business education students from Federal College of Education.

Structured questionnaire titled 'Utilization of Facebook for Enhancing Academic Learning by Business Education Students Questionnaire (USNSEAL-BBEQ) was used for data collection. The instrument contains 6 items structured on a five-point rating scale of Very Great Extent (VGE) - 5, Great Extent (GE) - 4, Moderate Extent (ME) - 3, Small Extent (SE) - 2 and Very Small Extent (VSE) - 1. The face and content validity of the instrument was established using the opinions of two experts in the field of Business Education and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation Unit. The reliability of the instrument was established using pilot-test and data analyzed using Cronbach Alpha method yielded correlation coefficient of 0.98. The researcher administered 330 copies of the questionnaire to the respondents with the help of four research assistants while 320 copies were returned and found usable. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and determine the homogeneity of the respondents' opinions. Each item was interpreted based on the real limit of the mean corresponding to each item categories. T-test was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. A hypothesis was rejected where the p-value is less than the alpha value but accepted where the p-value is greater or equal to the alpha value. All the analyses were done using SPSS version 23.

4. Results

4.1. Research Question

To what extent do business education students utilize WhatsApp for enhancing academic learning in Anambra State?

S/N	Items on WhatsApp	X	SD	Remark
	To what extent:			
1	Do you increase the level of communication between fellow students and create another venue for learning with WhatsApp	4.50	0.75	Very Great Extent
2	Do you create audio lessons that can send directly to other students with WhatsApp	4.50	0.61	Very Great Extent
3	Do you use WhatsApp to enhance critical thinking	4.32	0.78	Great Extent
4	Do you stay in contact with other students outside the classroom and remind them of upcoming assignment with WhatsApp	4.17	1.04	Great Extent
5	Do you send out assignment to fellow students even when they are not in class with WhatsApp	4.24	0.92	Great Extent
6	Do you create video lessons using solutions such as YouTube fellow students can share via WhatsApp	3.24	0.25	Moderate Extent
	Grand Mean	4.16		Great Extent

Table 1: Respondents' Mean Ratings on the Extent They Utilize Whatsapp for Enhancing Academic Learning
N = 320

Data in Table 1 show that one of the items is utilized by business education students for enhancing academic learning at a moderate extent. Out of the six WhatsApp items listed, business education students utilized three at a great extent and the rest at a very great extent. The grand mean score of 4.16 shows that on the whole, business education students in Anambra State utilize WhatsApp platform for enhancing academic learning at a great extent. The standard deviations for all the items are within the same range showing that the respondents are not wide apart in their ratings.

4.2. Hypothesis

Male and female business education students do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent WhatsApp is utilized for enhancing their academic learning in Anambra State.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	P-value	Decision
Male	98	5.42	0.82	318	0.04	0.02	Rejected
Female	222	3.40	0.83				

Table 2: Summary of T-Test Analysis of Significant Difference between Male and Female Respondents on the Extent They Utilize Whatsapp for Enhancing Academic Learning

Table 2 shows that t-value of 0.04 at 318 degree of freedom with a p-value of 0.02 is less than the criterion value of 0.05 ($0.02 < 0.05$). This means that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of business education students on the extent they utilize WhatsApp for enhancing academic learning in Anambra State based on gender. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

5. Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study revealed that business education students Anambra State utilize WhatsApp for enhancing their academic learning at great extent. The findings of the study are in accordance with the opinion of Susilo (2014), which found that students in developing countries (Nigeria inclusive) utilize WhatsApp to a great extent. The reasons according to the author could be the fact that utilizing WhatsApp in learning supports multiple accesses to learning resources which impacts students' ability to engage with peers and the tutor synchronously.

In line with the above, Rambe and Bere (2013) indicated that WhatsApp affordance for asynchronous communication directly impact students' active participation in learning. The retrievability of messages posted when students are offline, outside network coverage or when their devices are switched off means that they could participate any time irrespective of context. Multiple interaction modes and diverse temporal times widened opportunities for student involvement without missing conversation flows. The author stated that Students believe that WhatsApp discussion forums allowed them to reflect 'deeply' on questions and queries before giving their opinions.

Furthermore, the finding indicates that there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business education students on the extent they utilize WhatsApp for enhancing academic learning. This is in line with the findings of Berrett (2012) which indicated that female students are more attracted by WhatsApp-web activities and more likely to use it in learning compared with male counterparts. Agreeing with this, Barnett's (2012) study revealed that gender differences is a major factor on the extent WhatsApp is utilized in academic activities.

6. Conclusion

From the findings of this study, one can see that some of the WhatsApp which could help in enhancing students' learning and academic performance and widen student's knowledge in business courses, are utilized by students for academic purposes at great extent in view of its educational benefits. Based on the findings of this study, the researchers concluded that business education students recognized the educational benefits of WhatsApp and are utilizing it for enhancing their academic learning.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Federal and State governments should provide free internet services to tertiary Institutions in Anambra State. This will motivate students to utilize WhatsApp in academic learning to a very great extent.
- Business Education Departments and Administrators of tertiary institutions should continue to enlighten students through seminars and workshops on how to utilize WhatsApp for academic purposes to a very great extent.
- Business education lecturers should ensure that they utilize WhatsApp more in their teaching and academic interaction with students. This will make students to utilize WhatsApp for academic purposes to a very great extent.

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