

Uses and Gratification of WhatsApp among Vikram Dev University Students of Jeypore, Odisha

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Abstract

The research paper titled Uses and Gratification of WhatsApp among Vikram Dev University Students of Jeypore, Odisha investigates the usage patterns and gratifications of WhatsApp among students at Vikram Dev University in Jeypore, Odisha, India. The research aims to understand the factors influencing WhatsApp use, the intensity of its usage, and its impact on students' academic performance and social interactions.

Through a survey and qualitative data collection methods, the study found that WhatsApp has become an essential communication tool for students, offering convenience, ease of use, and cost-saving benefits. While it enhances communication and facilitates information sharing, it also presents challenges such as addiction, reduced face-to-face communication, and potential distractions.

The study concludes that WhatsApp, despite its benefits, can negatively impact students' academic performance if not managed properly. Educators need to be aware of these challenges and develop strategies to help students use WhatsApp effectively while minimizing its drawbacks.

Keywords: WhatsApp, social media, students, usage patterns, gratifications, academic performance, communication, addiction, technology, India.

Introduction

This research paper focuses on the WhatsApp application, aiming to explore its uses and gratifications among students of Vikram Dev University in Jeypore, Odisha. The study examines the users, the types of individuals who utilize this service, and the preferred communication methods through the WhatsApp application. WhatsApp is particularly noted for its interactivity, a key characteristic of online journalism and other related fields such as online advertising. The increasing prevalence of information sharing within virtual communities, including social networks, underscores the importance of understanding user interactions.

Despite the growing body of research on social networks, there remains a limited exploration of interactivity and socio-technical relationships. WhatsApp exemplifies interactivity in online

journalism, preparing students to engage with interactive digital and social media. Interactivity can be categorized into three types: functional interactivity, navigational interactivity, and adaptive interactivity. These categories provide insights into how users perceive and process digital messages.

Social networking sites serve as prime examples of interactive media, allowing users to share photos and information while engaging in various activities such as chatting and gaming. WhatsApp functions as an instant messaging and calling application for smartphones, enabling users to send text messages, videos, images, audio files, and more.

WhatsApp was created by Brian Acton and Jan Koum in 2009 to facilitate faster communication and multimedia messaging. Over time, updates have enhanced its functionality significantly. The application supports various communication types within group chats, where users frequently share videos, audio clips, text messages, emoticons, images, photographs, and URLs. Its user-friendly interface has made WhatsApp a popular choice among young people for creating, sharing, and exchanging information.

With its tagline "Simple, Personal, Real-time messaging," WhatsApp has effectively positioned itself as a leading communication tool among youth. The acquisition of WhatsApp by Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg highlights its extensive use and popularity among younger demographics. Additionally, WhatsApp serves as a valuable tool for libraries to engage with patrons by providing updates on events and facilitating discussions through image tagging and comments.

The primary purpose of WhatsApp was to replace traditional SMS with a cross-platform mobile messenger that operates on an internet data plan. This feature is especially beneficial for users who wish to avoid international fees typically charged by carriers. Its widespread availability on smartphones contributes to its popularity since messaging friends and family incurs no additional costs beyond existing data plans.

In India, WhatsApp users span various demographics—from middle-aged individuals to domestic workers—who frequently share jokes, political content, and motivational quotes within their networks. The application serves multiple purposes including entertainment, academic communication, leisure activities, chatting, and information dissemination. However, while it offers convenience and speed in communication, its usage patterns reveal significant cultural variations across societies.

The fundamental purpose of using WhatsApp is interaction; this varies according to users' cognitive levels. Observing youth usage patterns reveals that they increasingly rely on the application for personal updates, community or group interaction, event planning, notes sharing, and information exchange. Nonetheless, excessive use can lead to addiction-like behaviors that are challenging to manage.

This paper aims to address both the positive and negative impacts of WhatsApp on youth behavior and interactions. The element of interactivity combined with the diverse applications available contributes significantly to its appeal among young users. Other popular smartphone

applications include games, navigation tools, e-book readers, news services, weather feeds, Facebook, YouTube, and more; however, WhatsApp stands out as particularly favored among youth.

The current study focuses specifically on students at the Vikram Dev University at Jeypore in the tribally dominated Koraput district of Odisha. It aims to analyze various aspects of WhatsApp usage patterns among this demographic.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework: Uses and Gratifications Approach

The theoretical foundation of this research paper is the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), also known as Needs and Gratifications Theory. This model emphasizes the reasons why individuals choose specific media rather than focusing solely on the content itself. Developed by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch in 1974, UGT posits that audience members possess certain needs or drives that are satisfied through both media and non-media sources.

According to Daniel (2010), this approach prioritizes what people do with media instead of what media does to people. Okunna (2002) further elaborates that the theory is concerned with the social and psychological origins of these needs, which generate expectations from mass media or other sources. These expectations lead to varied patterns of media exposure or engagement in other activities, resulting in gratification and often unintended consequences.

Severin and Tankard (2001) highlight a significant shift in focus from the communicator's purposes to the receiver's purposes, allowing researchers to determine what functions mass communication serves for audience members. This perspective marks a departure from earlier models, such as the magic bullet theory, which viewed audiences as passive recipients of media messages. One of the core tenets of UGT is that audiences are active participants who seek out mass media that fulfills their gratifications. The advent of the Internet has further empowered audiences, providing them with numerous options to select websites and web pages that cater to their specific needs.

Ruggiero (2000) notes that the deregulation of media and the convergence of mass media with digital technology have transformed how often and in what ways individuals engage with media. New media platforms offer users greater choice and opportunities for enjoyment. While utilizing these new forms of media, individuals often combine multiple motives to satisfy their desires and aspirations—collectively referred to as gratifications. This phenomenon is especially evident in social networking sites, which provide a broad array of information materials that users can access to meet diverse needs.

From a uses and gratifications perspective, social networking sites serve as valuable resources for fulfilling various user requirements. The theory thus provides a robust framework for analyzing the motivations and satisfaction levels of youth in urban settings like Uyo metropolis. By understanding these dynamics, researchers can gain insights into how social networking services fulfill users' diverse needs and contribute to their overall media experience.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) effectively illustrates that audiences are active participants who utilize media to fulfill their needs. This theory posits that individuals may choose to use WhatsApp for personal motives, even when such actions may have negative implications. Unlike traditional mass media theories that emphasize the influence of media on audiences, UGT focuses on the motives behind why recipients engage with media and the gratifications they obtain from it. While older theories, such as the Magic Bullet and Hypodermic Needle theories, suggested that audiences are passive and easily manipulated, UGT highlights the positive motivations and active engagement of users with media content that satisfies their individual needs.

The use of WhatsApp can be viewed as a form of social media consumption, where every user has specific needs that they expect to be met or satisfied. The Uses and Gratifications approach categorizes the parameters for using WhatsApp into several sections: Sharing, Information, Entertainment, and Relaxation. Each of these categories reflects different motivations for users, demonstrating how WhatsApp serves as a versatile tool for fulfilling various social, cognitive, and emotional needs. By understanding these motivations, researchers can better analyze the complex relationship between users and their media consumption behaviors.

Communication through mobile phones has been significantly transformed by WhatsApp Messenger, making it easier, faster, and more cost-effective. Compared to traditional SMS messaging, WhatsApp allows individuals to chat with friends and family overseas without incurring global SMS charges, thus reducing communication costs. Additionally, the app provides access to learning materials anytime and anywhere in various formats, enhancing students' deep learning capabilities. In higher education, WhatsApp is increasingly utilized to facilitate discussions and share information among students and lecturers.

Yalcinalp and Gulbahar (2010) emphasize the value of applications like WhatsApp by stating that they encourage learners to anticipate their needs, enhance collaborative learning, and foster relationships that stimulate peer-to-peer learning for consistent academic progress. Despite these academic advantages, there is limited research examining the comparative benefits and drawbacks of using WhatsApp and its impact on student performance at the Vikram Dev University in Jeypore, Koraput district of Odisha. This gap highlights the need for further investigation into how such technologies influence educational outcomes and student engagement in academic settings.

WhatsApp, as a form of social media and part of new media, aligns with Frost's four pillars of online journalism: Multimediality, Hypertextuality, Interactivity, and Immediacy. Primarily, WhatsApp is utilized for interactivity, facilitating communication among users for various purposes.

Research by Johnson Yeboah et al. reveals that WhatsApp significantly impacts students' study time, leading to procrastination, deteriorating spelling and grammatical skills, and causing a lack of concentration during lectures. Additionally, it creates challenges in balancing online activities with academic responsibilities and distracts students from completing assignments and adhering to their study schedules.

Tuckman (1975) defines performance as the demonstration of understanding concepts, skills, ideas, and knowledge, suggesting that grades reflect a student's performance. Therefore, it is essential to manage academic performance effectively, considering all factors that can positively or negatively influence educational outcomes. Tuckman also argues that the Internet can be advantageous for both students and teachers when used as a tool for knowledge creation and dissemination.

Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2008) highlighted the rapid evolution of mobile learning, noting that while early approaches were educator-driven, learners are increasingly motivated by personal needs for mobility and frequent travel. They emphasized that mobile devices are particularly suited for supporting social contacts and collaborative learning—essential aspects for language acquisition.

Riyanto (2013) asserted that WhatsApp can be utilized not only for socializing but also for educational purposes, such as language learning. He noted that non-English-speaking students could learn English more effectively by participating in WhatsApp groups with peers and teachers who assign small tasks via the app. This approach encourages students to read and respond in English, thereby improving their language skills.

Rambe and Chipunza (2013) found that WhatsApp provided students with a platform to express themselves freely in a less restrictive environment compared to traditional lectures. Their research indicated that students learned technical skills by sharing information on WhatsApp, which they could then apply on other educational platforms like Blackboard.

This study seeks to fill the gap in empirical research regarding the comparative advantages and disadvantages of WhatsApp usage on student performance at the Vikram Dev University. By exploring these dynamics, the research will contribute to a better understanding of how WhatsApp affects academic engagement and outcomes among students.

A meta-analysis conducted by Coyle and Vaughn (2008) aimed to ascertain how college students in Texas utilized social networking websites. Their findings revealed that 41% of respondents used these platforms to keep in touch with friends, 17% found them entertaining, and 12% engaged with them to look for and post photos. Notably, among the 35,000 subjects surveyed, no participants reported using social networking sites for educational purposes.

Collectively, these studies highlight the multifaceted role of social networking sites in students' lives, illustrating both their potential benefits for maintaining relationships and their limitations regarding educational use. Further investigation is warranted to explore how these platforms can be leveraged more effectively for academic purposes while mitigating distractions that may detract from students' educational experiences.

Social media has become an integral part of modern life, enabling individuals to share daily activities, access markets or communities otherwise unreachable, follow breaking news, maintain connections with friends or colleagues, engage in online debates, and learn from others (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010). Some experts predict that social media will evolve into the Internet's primary search function, leading users to rely less on independent navigation and more

on recommendations from friends (ITU, 2010). This shift is changing users' expectations regarding privacy and online behavior.

In summary, social media technology encompasses web-based and mobile applications that allow individuals and organizations to create, engage with, and share user-generated or existing content through multi-way communication (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Davis et al., 2014).

It fosters interaction through design elements that create virtual social spaces while promoting transitions between online engagement and face-to-face interactions. Examples of popular social networking sites include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Wikis, Skype, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Pinterest.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study on WhatsApp usage among students are as follows:

1. **Examine the Usage of WhatsApp Mobile Application:** The primary aim is to investigate how students utilize the WhatsApp application for communication and collaboration.
2. **Identify Factors Influencing WhatsApp Use:** This objective focuses on understanding the various factors that encourage or discourage students from using WhatsApp, including social, educational, and technological influences.
3. **Investigate the Intensity of WhatsApp Use Among Youth:** This involves assessing how frequently and extensively students engage with WhatsApp, including the duration and context of their usage.
4. **Determine the Relationship Between WhatsApp Use and Academic Performance:** The study seeks to explore how the use of WhatsApp impacts students' academic outcomes, whether positively or negatively.

Supporting literature highlights various aspects of social media's impact on education and student engagement. For instance, Tien (2000) emphasized that online communication allows students to participate in discussions at their convenience and articulate their thoughts more clearly. Similarly, Deng and Tavares (2013) noted that online interactions can enhance critical thinking skills and encourage students to express their opinions more freely compared to face-to-face settings.

Research Methodology

A descriptive survey method was employed, targeting a selected sample size of 100 respondents of Vikram Dev University, Jeypore to assess various criteria and gratifications related to their use of WhatsApp. The self-administered questionnaire method was employed due to its cost-effective nature, allowing for efficient data collection. A strong methodology is crucial for the integrity of the research, providing a solid foundation for the study.

This research adopts a qualitative approach complemented by quantitative analysis to explore how WhatsApp affects the psychology, daily routines, and family interactions of youth.

The survey was conducted among randomly selected WhatsApp users in Jeypore, specifically targeting university students aged 20 to 30 years—an age group known for being heavy users of social media and early adopters of technological applications. The questionnaire utilized a Likert scale with both open-ended and closed-ended questions, distributed across university colleges. In addition to the questionnaire, some data were gathered through personal interviews to gain deeper insights into the research topic. Direct observation methods were also employed, involving family members, peers, and friends to collect relevant information.

The research utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was collected through self-administered questionnaires tailored to meet the research objectives. This method allowed for the involvement of a large number of participants in a cost-effective manner, facilitating quick data collection. Secondary data was gathered from various sources, including textbooks, articles, and online resources.

The primary research focused on collecting raw data that serves as the main basis for achieving the study's objectives. This included unpublished documents and firsthand accounts from participants. The self-administered questionnaire method was particularly advantageous as it enabled researchers to gather substantial data in a relatively short timeframe and at a lower cost compared to interviews.

Overall, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the uses and gratifications of WhatsApp among students at Vikram Dev University, Jeypore. By understanding how WhatsApp impacts students' academic performance and social interactions, educators can better integrate technology into learning environments, maximizing its benefits while addressing potential challenges.

Overall, this research method has frequently been used to source information from individuals or groups, ensuring that the data collected is relevant and reliable. The combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches allows for an in-depth understanding of how WhatsApp affects students' psychology, daily routines, and family life. This section aims to clarify the rationale behind the chosen research methodology and outline the strategies adopted for data collection.

Data Tabulation and Analysis:

1. Do you have access to Whatsapp messenger?

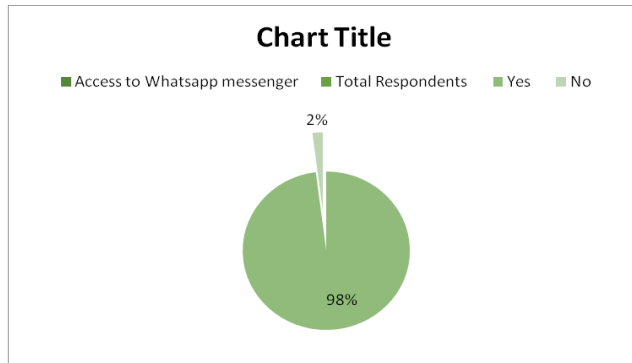


Fig no:01

Data survey

The total survey of 100 respondents in percentage. The percentage represents the access of whatsapp in Vikram Dev University, Jeypore that the questionnaires were administered to. In university the percentage shows that 98% of students have access to the Whatsapp messenger. Only 2% of students don't have access to Whatsapp.

2. Are you part of any group in Whatsapp?

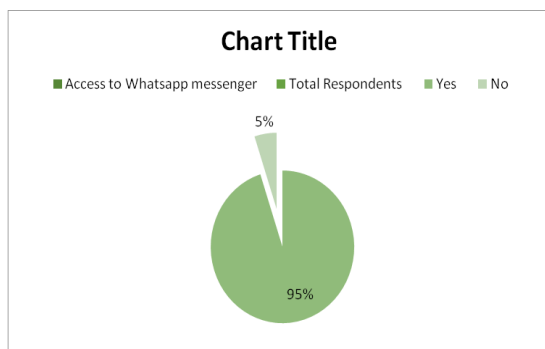


Fig no: 02

Through this survey we got the result that 95% of students is added with a group on Whatsapp messenger and only 5% of student is not added to any group. It shows the involvement to the whatsapp messenger.

3. For what purpose do you use Whatsapp

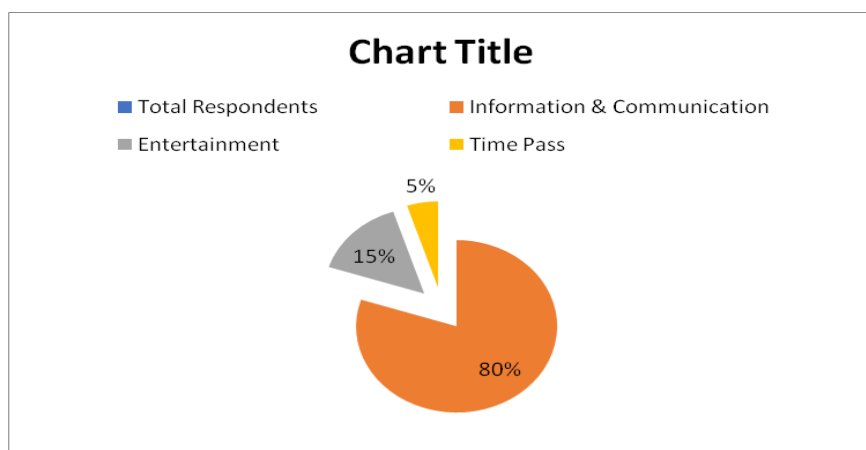


Fig no:03

According to the research objective researcher found that the purpose of using Whatsapp is Information & Communication, i.e, 80%, Time pass is 5% and 15% for Entertainment.

4. What kind of messages do you post in group?

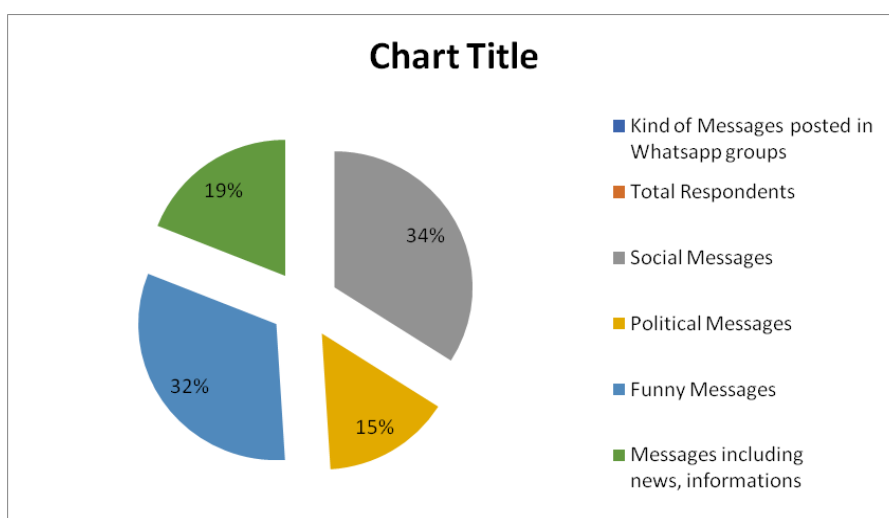


Fig no:04

Frequencies and percentage of posting message in group 34% of student posting social message, 15% of political message, 32% are posting funny message in group, and only 19% of message including news.

5. I use whatsapp because it is economical?

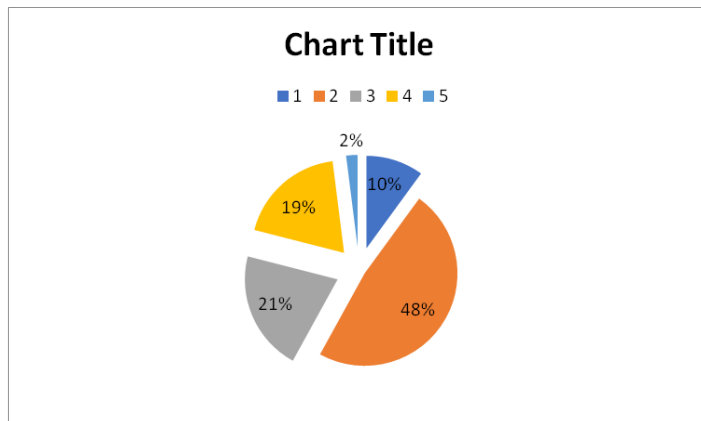


Fig no:05

Survey showed according to the student 48% of Whatsapp is economical.

6. Using Whatsapp messenger reduce the stress?

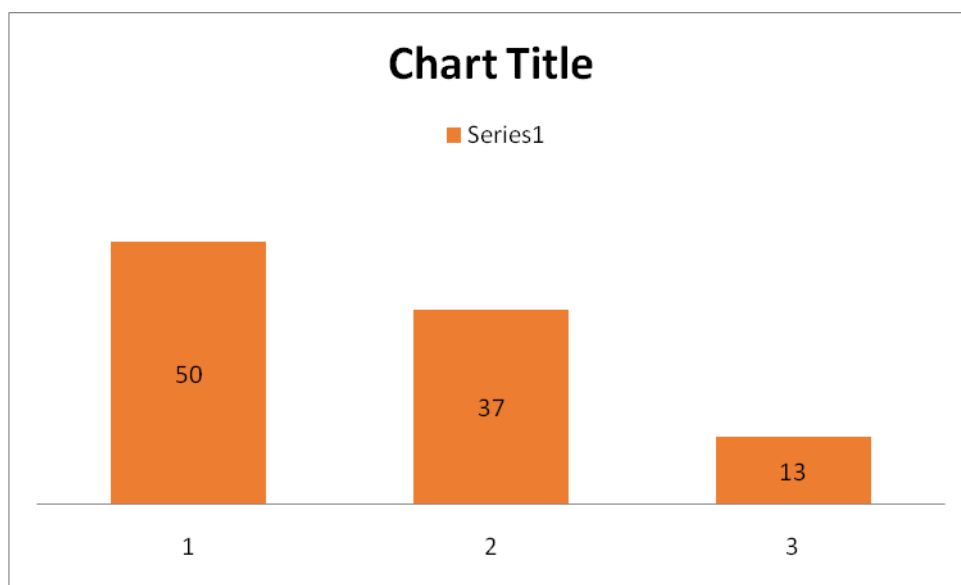


Fig no: 06

According to the student 50% believe that Whatsapp messenger reduce the stress and 37% of student believe that it won't reduce the stress.

7. I use Whatsapp because it helps me in my academic work?

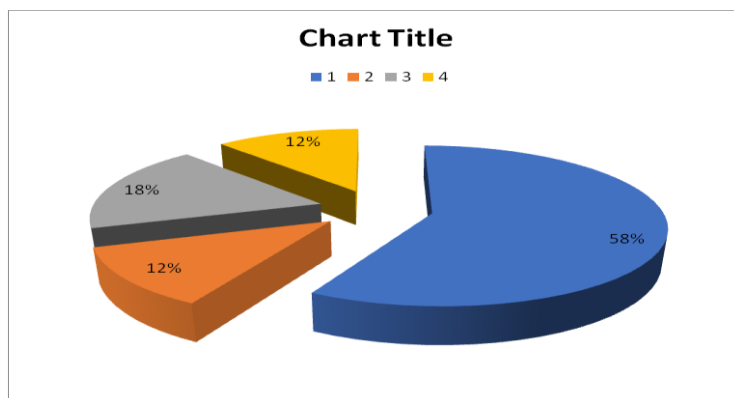


Fig no:07

According to 58% student whatsapp helps them in their academic work and 18% shows neutral with this line, 12% shows disagreement with the above question.

8. I use Whatsapp because now family and friends have less time for face to face communication.

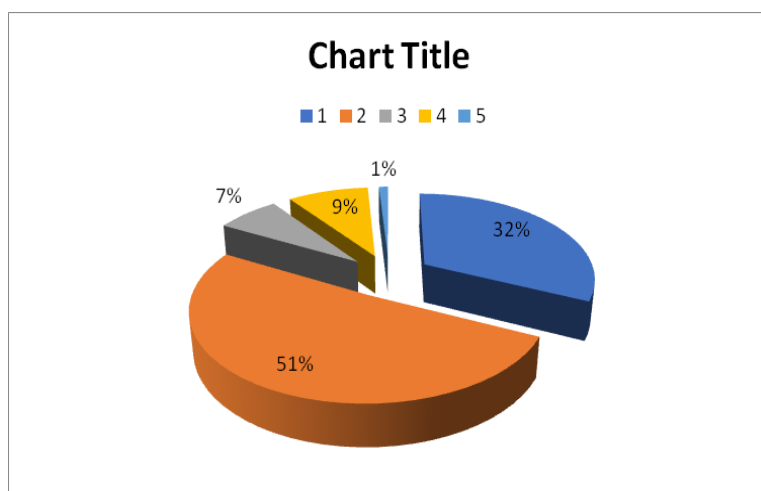


Fig no:08

Reason for using the whatsapp messenger by students is increased because family and friends don't have time for face to face communication. So on this question 51% is agreed to the statement and 32% is against the statement.

9. What is the average time spent by you on Whatsapp?

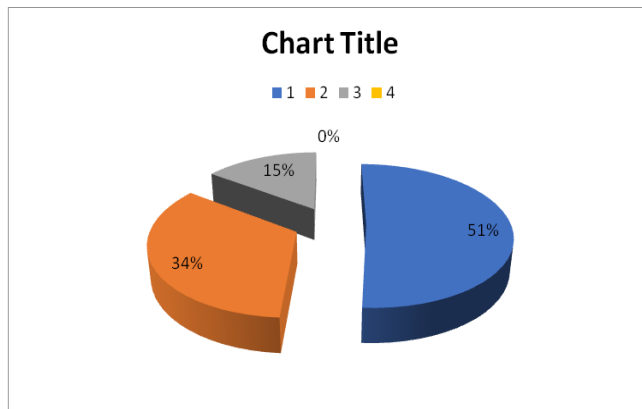


Fig no:09

Through the study researcher tries to find the average time spent on whatsapp by student. The response given by them is 51% use it about 1 to 2 hours and 34% use it about 3 to 5 hours and the rest shows the time of using whatsapp is about 6 to 7 or more than 7 hours.

10.I feel anxious without Whatsapp messenger

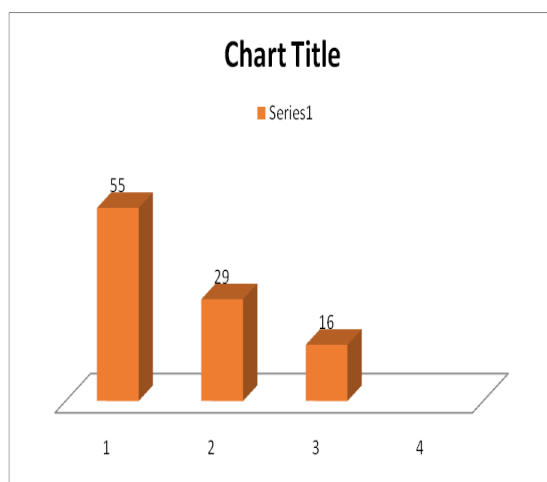


Fig no:10

The study shows that 55% of students feel anxious without using Whatsapp messenger while it also shows that 29% of student doesn't feel anxious without whatsapp.

11.What perception do you have on Whatsapp

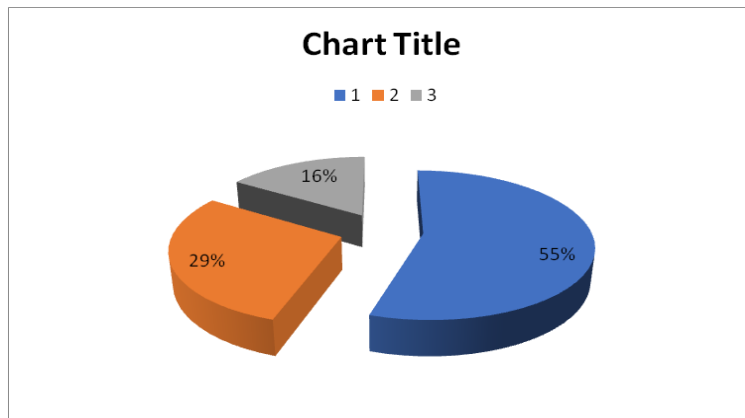


Fig no:11

In this study researcher wants to know the perception of student on Whatsapp . Results shows that it is basically used anywhere that's why it is used mostly and another perception is the flexibility of time, Free of Charge. 55% of students agreed that it can be used anywhere while 29% is with the Flexibility of time.

12.DoesWhatsapp affects your resting time?

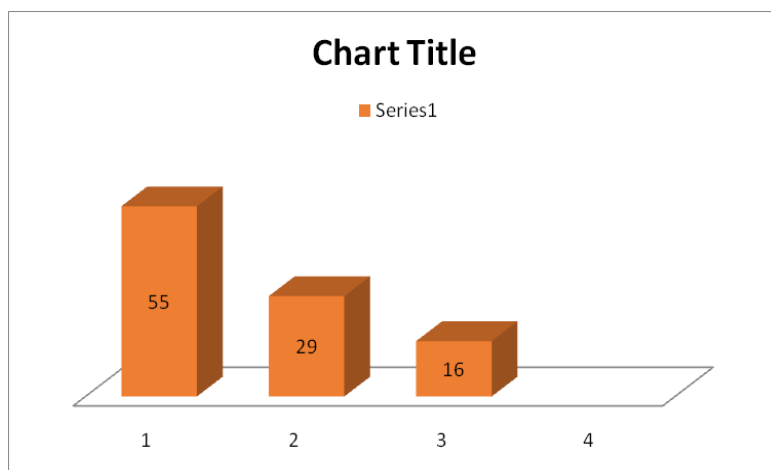


Fig no: 12

To know the percentage of disturbance caused by Whatsapp in the resting time. In this study 55% results thinks that it affects in the resting time and 29% affected sometimes.

13.Whatsapp groups help in academic purposes.

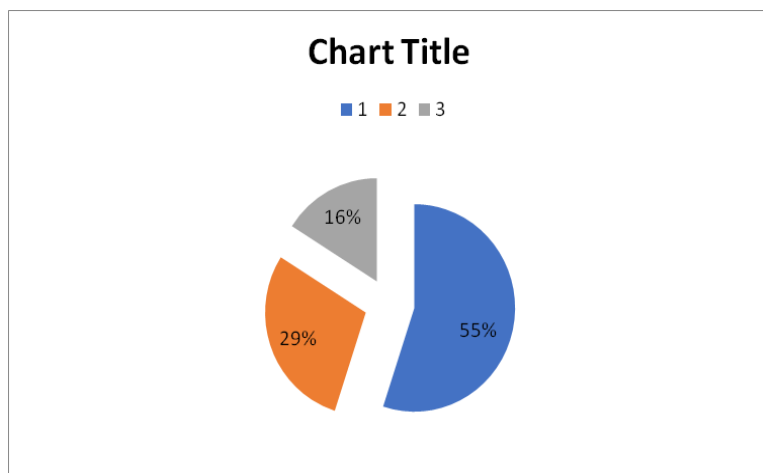


Fig no: 13

Percentage of whatsapp help in academic use is 55% and 29% are not in the favour of the statement.

14.Information shared in groups help in completing projects and assignments in following ways

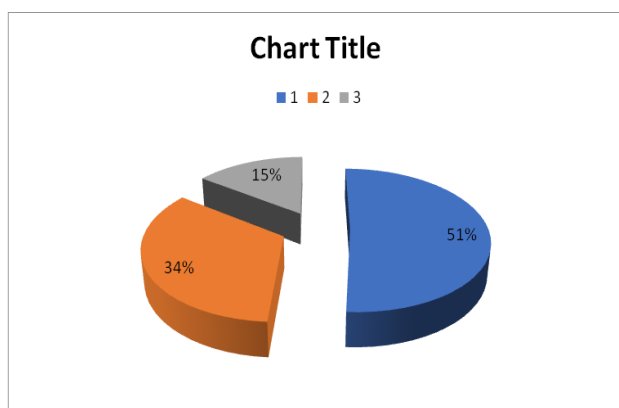


Fig no:14

Information shared in groups to help in completing projects and assignments in following ways percentage shows that more student (51%) share text notes and 34% share clipping information of images.

15.More than helping in studies Whatsapp kills time and effects studies negatively

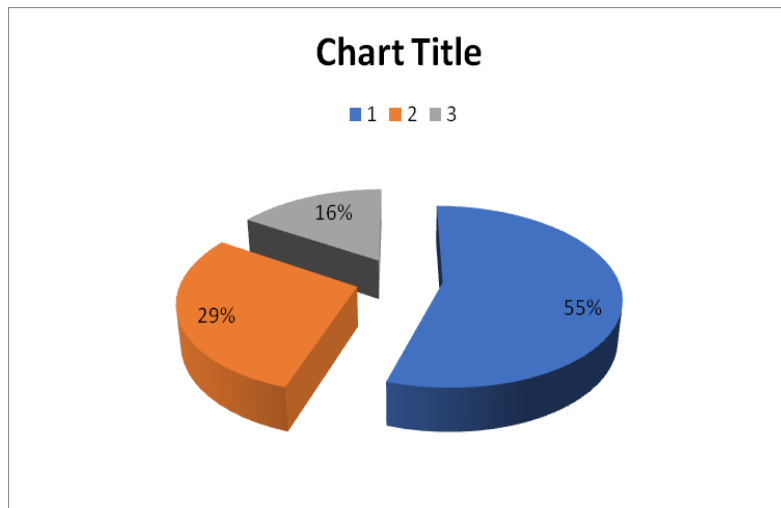


Fig no: 15

Negative impact of Whatsapp on studies is 55% and 29% is not affected.

16. Whatsapp is used for other purposes rather than learning.

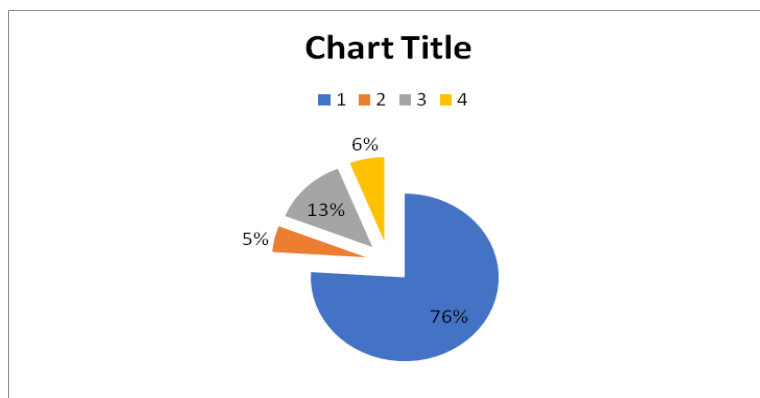


Fig no: 16

76 % of student believes that whatsapp is used in other purposes rather than learning.

Findings

The study reveals that youth in the Jeypore region have embraced WhatsApp as an alternative to traditional text messaging and other social networking sites. They consider it an ideal tool for enhancing communication, allowing them to update their status and images instantly while exchanging text notes, clips, and audio at a rapid pace.

Respondents also view WhatsApp as a means of relaxation and stress relief.

Factors Influencing WhatsApp Usage

According to the second objective, the research indicates that many users spend 1 to 5 hours daily on WhatsApp, reflecting the intensity of its use. Approximately 34% of respondents reported that their favorite activities on WhatsApp include sharing social and humorous messages.

Intensity of Use

The findings satisfy the third objective, showing that the intensity of WhatsApp usage is significant among students at Vikram Dev University, Jeypore, with 85% indicating they are part of various groups. The survey revealed that 51% of respondents use WhatsApp due to reduced face-to-face communication with family and friends. Additionally, about 35% admitted to feeling addicted to WhatsApp, expressing anxiety in its absence, which negatively impacts their psychology.

Advantages of Using WhatsApp

Respondents identified several advantages of using WhatsApp:

Free of Cost: Users can download the application and use it for free for one year to send unlimited messages, audio files, video files, and images with an internet connection.

Accessibility: WhatsApp facilitates easy communication with friends and relatives without needing invitations; if contacts are already on WhatsApp, they are automatically added.

Flexibility of Time: The app reduces the time required for logging in and out, providing access whenever the internet is available with just a click.

Instant Multimedia Messaging: Users can send images, audio files, and videos almost instantaneously.

Group Chat Facility: WhatsApp allows users to engage in group chats with friends and relatives. Many young users expressed a reluctance to be away from WhatsApp for too long to avoid missing important conversations.

Negative Impacts of WhatsApp

Lack of Communication with Family: The constant online nature of WhatsApp has resulted in diminished face-to-face communication with family members at home. Youngsters often prioritize WhatsApp interactions over family discussions.

Relationship with Academic Performance

The fourth objective examined the relationship between WhatsApp usage and academic performance. About 68% of students strongly stated that WhatsApp groups assist them academically, while 8.55% felt that it detracted from their study time.

In summary, this research indicates that WhatsApp has become essential for students in graduate and postgraduate programs at Vikram Dev University. While it enhances communication efficiency and facilitates information sharing among students, it also poses challenges such as consuming study time and creating anxiety when not in use. Future research could explore student gratification regarding WhatsApp usage more comprehensively.

Conclusion

Overall, this paper aimed to identify the uses and gratifications of WhatsApp on student performance at Vikram Dev University in Jeypore. The study concluded that although WhatsApp facilitates easier communication and effective message flow among students, it has also negatively impacted their academic performance.

WhatsApp has gained immense popularity among youth, functioning as a highly addictive application that significantly impacts regular users. The study established that young people are well-acquainted with WhatsApp Messenger, which is preferred by students for its convenience, ease of use, effectiveness, reliability, and cost-saving features. Students utilize WhatsApp for both personal communication and educational purposes. The findings indicate that a large majority of postgraduate students access the internet regularly and are aware of various mobile messaging applications, with WhatsApp being particularly popular. They remain online 24/7 for various reasons, including educational group discussions.

The research highlights that WhatsApp serves as a vital tool for enhancing communication. However, it also presents challenges, particularly for minors who find it difficult to disconnect from an app that facilitates simple, immediate, and almost free communication. The study identified that users spend significant time on WhatsApp—averaging between 1 to 4 hours daily—which reflects its high intensity of use. Students at Vikram Dev University, Jeypore, expressed satisfaction with their usage patterns of WhatsApp.

Despite some negative aspects, the research found that WhatsApp is an effective communication tool that fosters connectivity among students. It creates a sense of belongingness and intimacy with friends and relatives, although it has led to decreased face-to-face communication. This psychological experience of closeness is significant among users.

The study concluded that while WhatsApp facilitates easier and faster communication, enhancing the flow of messages and ideas among students, it also has negative implications for their academic performance. The findings suggest that although WhatsApp is widely used and popular among youth in India, it can create hurdles in their academic work if not managed properly.

Ultimately, individuals should prioritize their lives outside of social media platforms like WhatsApp. While the survey indicated that WhatsApp does not significantly impact university students negatively overall, it still poses challenges that can interfere with their academic pursuits.

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