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Pramod Sadanand Kerkar

Ganpat Parsekar College of Education Harmal, Pernem Goa, ppkerkarr@gmail.com

Keshav Ramesh Dhuri

Sant Sohrobanath Ambiyee Govt. College of Arts & Commerce, Pernem Goa (India), dhuri.keshav@gmail.com

Jovita Lobo

St. Xavier's High School, Moira Bardez Goa (India), jovita0056@gmail.com

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Analyzing the Use of WhatsApp Services by the College Library Professionals to Connect With the Patrons during Covid-19 Pandemic

Mr. Pramod Kerkar

Librarian, Ganpat Parsekar College of Education Harnal, Pernem Goa.

ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7003-7085>

ppkerkarr@gmail.com

Dr. Keshav Ramesh Dhuri

Librarian, Sant Sohirobanath Ambiyee Govt. College of Arts & Commerce, Pernem Goa (India)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2013-6090>

dhuri.keshav@gmail.com

Ms. Jovita Lobo

Librarian, St. Xavier's High School, Moira Bardez Goa (India)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8768-1475>

jovita0056@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

WhatsApp is a MIM application which connects people in real time. It has no additional cost to message and exchange the data between the mobile devices. Libraries can use it as an efficient tool for providing enhanced user services over the Smartphone. Exchange of messages, images, files, audio and video clips has been made much easier and faster thereby aiding in providing effective library services. The research study aims at analyzing the use and application of WhatsApp in the college libraries, its major advantages during pandemic period, its various benefits and difficulties faced by the library professionals while delivering services to the patrons. Considering the views of 112 college librarians, the study revealed that the aim of the utilizing WhatsApp media is to create a flexible platform that helps all users to build their professional skills. The study has revealed that 100% Library professionals are using WhatsApp in their respective libraries and are very comfortable in delivering quality library services through it. The research paper throws light on how a college librarian can make the utmost use of the WhatsApp to provide quick and efficient services to the patrons.

KEYWORDS: WhatsApp, College Libraries, Library Services, Marketing Services, Information Communication technology, Pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic phase has transformed the world into technology savvy thereby enhancing the use of social networking sites to communicate and bridge up the gap in teaching and learning process. It acts as a major boon in facilitating timely delivery of information. The social media networking is considered as a power of 21st century and the usage ratio among students, academicians, research scholars is increasing with high voltage with rapid pace. The social media is creating a flexible environment of information delivery with distance learners. The various social media platforms have made communication a much easier process. One such important social media application is "WhatsApp". It was founded in 2009 by Brian Acton and Jan Koum. WhatsApp is very fruitful application for sharing qualitative information and research products. WhatsApp can be installed easily from the Play Store App on ones Smartphone. It is one of the powerful gadget which is easily affordable with low price compare to other communication devices, it is portable and can be used to communicate via WhatsApp at anytime from anyplace with good internet connection. That people use in their day to day life it has many features to communicate with the others since it is very easy to carry at any place what's app feature is chosen by the researcher to market the library services by using its features. WhatsApp is very popular as it has unique features like instant text messaging, broadcast messaging, voice calling, video calling, sending voice messages, audio files, video files, and documents to a single person or to multiple people in a WhatsApp group, along with integrated mapping features. It is completely safe as it ensures security by providing end-to-end encryption for the conversations. Currently WhatsApp is used throughout the world in almost all industries. WhatsApp facilitates collaboration and promotes effective communication between library professionals, staff and their patrons, increases the engagement and interactions among library staff and their users as well as acts as an effective feedback tool for library services and resources. Librarians' knowledge of the use of WhatsApp will determine the extent of adoption and usage, if librarians have extensive knowledge of WhatsApp they will adopt and use it for the enhancement of their services, if they have little or no knowledge of it, they will continue in the traditional mode of service delivery to their users which may not be effective to reach out to more users at once. It is very important to develop the technical skills and knowledge to provide effective library services especially during this crucial pandemic era. It is very important to consider the information seeking behavior of the patrons and try to fulfill their information needs by providing the

required information and other library services. The patron's perception and knowledge of the use of WhatsApp for the enhancement of Services is of utmost importance in today's period.

USE OF WHATSAPP: MAJOR ADVANTAGES

- ❖ **Cost effective and easy to use:** As compared to other devices used for communication, a smartphone with WhatsApp installed on it is very convenient to use at anytime as the smartphone is a portable device. One can use WhatsApp application easily taking the utmost benefit of its various features. It is very easy to use WhatsApp for effective communication.
- ❖ **Efficient communication tool:** Sharing of text, audio message, videos files, documents, video calling is possible via WhatsApp. It has helped in bridging the gap between the library professional and his/her clientele to communicate from any place at any time during this crucial pandemic phase. The broadcast feature of WhatsApp allows you to communicate with multiple users at once which save a lot of time.
- ❖ **Awareness Tool:** WhatsApp is an efficient tool that has helped the libraries to communicate and provide effective library services to its patrons. A librarian can make the patrons aware about different service and provide current awareness service through the App by sending unlimited messages, video clips, charts, images, etc to an individual person or to many in a WhatsApp group.
- ❖ **Delivery Status:** It's one of the biggest benefits of WhatsApp to have the delivery status feature. With delivery status, the librarian can be sure that his/her message is sent to the recipient and confirm whether they have read it or not.
- ❖ **End-to-End Encryption:** All the conversations you have on WhatsApp are end-to-end encrypted. This means that your messages are secure and no one can read or access them apart from you and the person you are communicating with. Even WhatsApp cannot look at your chats. This is a very important feature that ensures security while sending important documents through WhatsApp.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dharmalingam & Sugumar (2021) in their research article mentioned about Social Networking Sites becoming all pervasive, interactive and participatory resources in recent times. With The

application of Social Networking Sites the educational institutions has got new way of life in this technological world. . SNS has not only left its marks in social life but also in education as well in the form of blended learning. The research paper has investigated and understood the requirements of students and faculties on the inclusion of SNS as a pedagogy tool into Higher Education Institutes and its impact on Higher Education

Chakraborty (2020) in her research paper entitled ‘Activities and reasons for using Social Networking Sites by the research scholars in NEHU: A study on Facebook and Research Gate’ has attempted to study the different activities and reasons for using Social Networking Sites by the research community of North Eastern Hill University. The major findings of the research study mentions that most of the users from social science background used SNSs for their education needs and research point of view.

Singh & Kumar (2019) mentioned in their findings that most of the respondents were aware and making use of SNS in their research work. This study also revealed that Facebook is the most popular SNSs by all categories of researchers.

Purkayastha & Chanda (2018) in their research study examined the extent to which Library and information science professionals presently have access to WhatsApp and whether they are using this social networking application to provide information to its users. This research study has shown a vast majority of Library and information science professionals are engaged in WhatsApp, it has created a very positive impact on the mind of LIS professionals who are using WhatsApp.

Ansari and Tripathi (2017) in their research paper entitled “Use of WhatsApp for Effective Delivery of Library and Information Services”examined the librarians and the users' approach towards getting WhatsApp as a tool for providing library information services and suggested Libraries can use WhatsApp for delivering quality library services The research paper conducted online survey to measure usage of WhatsApp for service delivery in the libraries. Findings pointed out that respondents confirmed a positive attitude towards getting quality services over WhatsApp. Most of the respondents believed that the use and usage of WhatsApp can develop many services which can benefit them.

Bajpai (2016) in his research article said socially aware computing is breaking the bricks of information communication and smart phones are helping in this cause. The smart phones are the perfect gift of the technological transformation and development to the current age group. WhatsApp is one of the accepted social networking tools among the professionals, students, and all of us. LIS professionals are taking the help of WhatsApp in delivering quality services to its users. The author of this paper has studied to what extent the librarians are using WhatsApp messenger. The research paper made it very clear about the impact of the WhatsApp messenger on LIS community.

Terpstra (2013) in his research paper titled “WhatsApp & privacy.” investigated the privacy security features of WhatsApp. How users can secure their privacy on WhatsApp. This research study also made a concise analysis of WhatsApp such as the permissions that one has to give while installing the WhatsApp, capabilities of WhatsApp, what information WhatsApp uses from our phone, etc. Lastly, the study mentioned some important tools to look into the inner working of WhatsApp.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyse the use of WhatsApp for providing quality library services.
- To identify the purpose of using Whatsapp in libraries.
- To ascertain the hindrances faced by the librarians while using WhatsApp.
- To understand the usefulness and practicality of WhatsApp during the covid-19 pandemic period.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The research study is focused on the use of WhatsApp in the academic college libraries only. The present study is confined to library and information science professionals. The main aim of this study is to check the knowledge of the library professionals in providing adequate library services to the patrons through WhatsApp social media application. The study also covers issues relating to librarians opinion on the use of WhatsApp, the extent of librarians’ knowledge, the services rendered by the librarian through WhatsApp and the problems faced while delivering services.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The population of the study comprises of the librarians working in academic college libraries. A structured online questionnaire was prepared using Google Forms to collect the data from the library professionals. The online questionnaire was sent to Academic College Librarians through WhatsApp in the month of June 2021. A total of 112 college librarians have responded to the survey. The data received was analyzed using frequency tables and percentages for easy interpretation and understanding of the results.

DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

Table No. 1: Use of WhatsApp to connect with Patrons

Use of WhatsApp	Response	Percentage
Yes	112	100
No	0	0

WhatsApp has become the integral part of our life and is popular among user community of different ages specially the young generation. Table no 1 reveals 100% Library professionals are using WhatsApp in their respective libraries to communicate with the patrons, provide them with useful library services and fulfill their information needs. This is a positive sign that the LIS professionals are using WhatsApp, which has helped them immensely in providing library services in this pandemic period.

Table No. 2: Expertise level of using WhatsApp

ExpertiseLevel	Response	Percentage
Beginner	26	23.21
Intermediate	52	46.43
Expert	34	30.36

A question was raised to know the expertise level of using WhatsApp by the respondents. Table 2 indicates that majority i.e. 46.43% of the respondents are at intermediate level, 30.36% are

expert in using WhatsApp and only 23.21% are at the beginner level in using WhatsApp. The data clearly indicates that the LIS community is aware of the features and services of WhatsApp and is making the utmost use of it to communicate and deliver library services to the clientele.

Table No. 3: Awareness of latest features of WhatsApp

Opinion	Response	Percentage
Yes	90	80.36
No	22	19.64

The respondents were questioned on whether they are aware of the latest features of WhatsApp. In response to the question, 80.36 % of the respondents said that they are aware about the latest features available and only 19.64% are not aware about the same. It is clear from the above that majority of the LIS professionals are aware about the latest developments happening in WhatsApp application and making the best use of it.

Table No. 4: Frequency of using of WhatsApp

Frequency	Response	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	24	21.42
More than 1 hour	44	39.29
2 to 3 hours	30	26.79
More than 3 hours	14	12.50

In response to the question on time spent on using WhatsApp, 39.29% of the respondents have said that they are spending more than one hour per day on WhatsApp, followed by 26.79 % respondents who are spending two to three hours. 21.42 % of respondents are using WhatsApp for less than one hour and only 12.5 % are using WhatsApp for more than three hours. The above usage suggests that WhatsApp has made a positive impact on Library and Information Science Professionals.

Table No. 5: Level of difficulty in using WhatsApp

Level of Difficulty	Response	Percentage
Very easy	46	41.07
Easy	50	44.65
Neutral	14	12.50
Difficult	2	1.78
Very difficult	0	0

Table 5 indicates the level of difficulty in using WhatsApp. From the study it is learnt that most of the respondent's i.e. 44.65% say that it is easy to use and provide services through WhatsApp application followed by 41.07% mentioned that WhatsApp is very easy to operate. 12.50% is neutral and only 1.78% finding it difficult to operate. The data from above table clearly states that LIS professionals find it easy to handle the WhatsApp application.

Table No. 6: Reasons for using WhatsApp (Multiple options)

Reason(s)	Response	Percentage
WhatsApp can be used for daily communication	100	89.28
Messages reach faster as compared to other social networking sites/applications	86	76.78
Providing information services/delivering required information easily	94	83.92
One message can be sent to many at once in a class WhatsApp group	88	78.57
Helps to inform about programmes/Activities	16	14.28
App is more secured and comfortable	2	1.78
User friendly features, it's simple, easy to use and convenient	6	5.35
Real Time Communication between Library and Users	4	3.57
WhatsApp is very cost effective	4	3.57
Others	0	0

In above table 6 an effort was made to know the respondents purpose for using WhatsApp application. Majority i.e 89.28% of the respondents has mentioned that WhatsApp can be used for daily communication followed by 83.92% who mentioned that they can deliver information with ease. 78.57% said they can send messages to multiple people at once in a class WhatsApp group, 76.78% said that messages reach faster as compared to other social networking sites/applications, 14.28% were in support of the statement that WhatsApp helps to inform the students about programmes, activities, webinars, etc. The other as option had a very low response.

Table No. 7: Will WhatsApp enable librarians to perform better than earlier in the Covid-19 pandemic digital era?

Opinion	Response	Percentage
Yes	102	91.08
No	10	8.92

A question was asked to the respondents whether WhatsApp will enable the librarians to perform better than earlier in the Covid-19 pandemic digital era. Table No. 7 clearly shows that majority i.e 91.08% of the respondents have responded positively to the question, WhatsApp has enabled them to perform better during the Covid -19 pandemic era. Since it was work from home situation across globe, WhatsApp has immensely come to the rescue of the Library professionals in delivering services to its users when nothing was functioning. The librarians have taken the uttermost advantage of WhatsApp application to connect and communicate with the users during the pandemic. Only 8.92% users say whatsapp services has not made any difference during this era.

Table No. 8: WhatsApp helps to provide quick reference service

Opinion	Response	Percentage
Strongly agree	40	35.71
Agree	68	60.72
Neutral	4	3.57
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0

Table No. 8 expresses the respondent's opinion on the statement "WhatsApp helps to provide quick reference service." As per information gathered, it is seen in table 8 that majority of the respondents i.e. 60.72% agree on the statement. 35.71% have strongly agreed and only 3.57% are neutral. The data clearly indicates that WhatsApp is very helpful in providing quick reference service to its users.

Table No. 9: WhatsApp enables to provide current awareness service and user education easily

Opinion	Response	Percentage
Strongly agree	38	33.94
Agree	70	62.5
Neutral	2	1.78
Disagree	2	1.78
Strongly disagree	0	0

Current awareness service is the most vital service given to students and research community which makes them aware about the latest developments in their field. WhatsApp can be of real help to the librarians while delivering CAS to its patrons as it is real time service. Majority of the respondents i.e. 70 (62.5 %) agree on the statement that WhatsApp enables to provide current awareness service and user education easily followed by 38 (33.94 %) who strongly agree. Only 1.78 % respondents neutral with their opinion and 1.78% disagree on the statement.

Table No. 10: WhatsApp aids in communicating with the patrons about-(Multiple options)

Classification	Response	Percentage
Library new arrivals	108	96.42
Library Activities /Programmes	108	96.42
Webinars	92	82.14
College Notices /Circulars	102	91.07
Academic matters	90	80.35
Others	0	0

The above table 10 indicates the various purposes for using WhatsApp by the respondents. It is seen that 96.42% of the respondents use WhatsApp for updating users about the new arrivals in the library and Library activities/programmes respectively. 91.07% of the respondents said that WhatsApp is a very efficient tool for communicating about the important college notices, 82.14% said that WhatsApp has helped them a lot to inform the patrons about the various webinars and share the link and details of the webinar to large mass of patrons very easily and quickly. 80.35% of the respondents use WhatsApp to share information, documents, images, etc. related to academic matters. The above information throws light on the importance of WhatsApp and how it has helped the library professionals to communicate and provide services during the pandemic in timely manner very easily.

Table No. 11: Library services offered via WhatsApp (Multiple options)

Library Services	Response	Percentage
Online database/journals	64	57.14
Indexing Services	14	12.5
Newspaper Clipping Services	80	71.42
Scanning pages of the reference books/Text book	64	57.14
Old question papers	86	76.78
Syllabus	72	64.28
Current Awareness Service	74	66.07

Reference Service	74	66.07
Updated General Knowledge	50	44.64
Support for research work	48	42.85
User orientation	56	50
Announcements	74	66.07
Inter-library loan service	10	8.92
Document Reservation:	12	10.71
Others	0	0

Table No 11 has listed out various services provided through WhatsApp by the librarians. The service provided by majority (76.78%) of the respondents via WhatsApp is sending a scanned copy of the old question papers in the form of an image or PDF file to the clientele followed by newspaper clipping service (71.42%). CAS, Reference service and announcements share an equal ratio of 66.07% response. 64.28% said that Syllabus is shared to the users through WhatsApp. Providing information regarding Online Journals for benefit of the users during the pandemic & scanning and delivering the required information by the users has received 57.14% respectively. Around 44.64% share information regarding current affairs to update the general knowledge of the patrons, 42.85% respondents help the users by providing services via WhatsApp for research work, 50% respondents prefer it for user orientation, only few LIS professionals use WhatsApp service for providing indexing services (12.5%), inter library loan (8.92%) and 10.71% for document reservation. One respondent in others category has mentioned that WhatsApp is used to provide link for online resources.

Table No. 12: Challenges faced while using WhatsApp (Multiple options)

Difficulties Faced	Response	Percentage
Bulk forwarded messages	72	64.28
Information overloaded	58	51.78
Internet service issues	62	55.35
File Size Limitation	72	64.28
Lack of confidence in encrypted Security and private messages	34	30.35
Sometimes device isn't supporting	40	35.71
Others		

Findings from table no. 12 revealed that majority (64.28%) of the respondents face the problem of receiving bulk forwarded messages and file size limitation respectively while sending files or videos to the patrons. 55.35% face difficulties due to Internet connection which is a major obstacle for providing timely services, 51.78% respondents face the hindrance of overloaded information while 35.71% say that sometimes device isn't supporting. Lack of confidence in encrypted Security and private messages is the problem faced by 30.35% of the respondents.

Table No. 13: Knowledge upgradation on the use of WhatsApp

Opinion	Response	Percentage
Yes	108	96.43
No	4	3.57

Table No. 13 indicates the opinion of the respondents on whether they would like to update their knowledge on the use of WhatsApp to enhance library services. Majority i.e 96.43% of the respondents have showed a positive response which is a very good sign showing the interest of the respondents in developing their digital skills and knowledge about the WhatsApp application, its newest features, functions and uses which are very helpful for communicating and providing effective services specially during the pandemic period. It is very important to learn and remain updated.

Table No. 14: Awareness workshop on WhatsApp

Opinion	Response	Percentage
Yes	16	14.28
No	96	85.72

The respondents were questioned on whether they have conducted any workshop for the patrons to make them aware and expand their knowledge about the use of WhatsApp. Data from Table 14 clearly reveals that only 14.28% respondents have conducted a workshop on WhatsApp awareness and majority i.e 85.72% have not conducted such a workshop. It is the duty of Library professionals to conduct awareness program for the users on different features of WhatsApp so that they can effectively use it and get the utmost benefit from library services provided through WhatsApp.

SUGGESTIONS

There are some suggestions for librarians while delivering services over WhatsApp:

- LIS professionals can boost their professional skills by using WhatsApp in delivering Library services to its user community.
- Library staff should be motivated to use WhatsApp for the enhancement of their services.
- Librarians should provide regular training programs on various features of WhatsApp to its user community.
- Uninterrupted and fast speed internet access should be made available to libraries so that they can promote use of WhatsApp in the academic libraries and deliver the required information with much ease in a timely manner.
- WhatsApp should be used to interact with users, but LIS professionals should take care about privacy, copyright, authority, etc.
- Use of WhatsApp should be fair as this will help LIS community in delivering better services to the end users.
- If librarians use WhatsApp for providing library services then it will be very useful and very easy to provide information to the user community effectively and efficiently.

CONCLUSION

The research study has shown an overwhelming response from majority of the library professionals who are engaged in using WhatsApp for connecting and providing useful library services to the patrons during the Covid-19 pandemic era. It has created a very positive impact on the mind of LIS community who are using WhatsApp in the libraries. The Covid ravaged world has made it difficult for the patrons to procure adequate library services physically as the doors of the academic institutions are shut, at this crucial point of time WhatsApp has played a significant role in the dissemination of information to its user community hereby satisfying their information needs. The main aim of the using of WhatsApp social media application is to create a flexible platform that helps all users to build their professionals skills and obtain uttermost benefit of it. This research study has revealed that 100% Library professionals are using WhatsApp in their respective libraries and are very comfortable in delivering quality library services through it. Majority of the respondents have mentioned that they can use WhatsApp with much ease. WhatsApp is proving its worth among Librarians for their professional growth and speedy form of communication tool. The efficiency and effectiveness of WhatsApp in providing library services is a great advantage for the LIS community in providing relevant and timely information to patrons of the library.

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