

Business Educators' Attitude towards the Use of Whatsapp in Teaching during COVID-19 Pandemic in Colleges of Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the attitude of business educators in the colleges of education in the South-East Nigeria towards the use of WhatsApp in teaching business education courses during the Covid-19 pandemic. The sudden outbreak of Covid-19 in Wuhan China which later turned into a pandemic necessitated the adoption of e-learning as a way of keeping students engaged in academic activities during the lockdown. This compelled many institutions to adopt one form of e-learning or the other. A descriptive survey design was employed in the study. The sample comprised all 159 business educators in the seven public colleges of education in the zone. One research question guided the study and two research hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance. A 13 items instrument titled Business Educators' Attitude towards the use of WhatsApp in Teaching Questionnaire (BEATUWTQ) was used to collect data for the study. Data collected for the study were analysed using mean scores and standard deviations to answer the research question whereas independent samples t-test was used to test the hypotheses. Findings revealed that business educators have positive attitude towards the use of WhatsApp in teaching. Furthermore, there was significant difference in attitude towards use of WhatsApp in teaching based on gender and ownership of institution. Females have more positive attitude than males and business educators teaching in federal colleges of education displayed more positive attitude than their counterparts the state colleges of education. It was recommended among others that regular workshops and seminars be organized periodically to acquaint the Business Educators with the development and emergence of new e-learning technologies.

Keywords: *Business educator; attitude; WhatsApp; Covid-19 pandemic*

Introduction

Information and communication technology (ICT) has drastically changed the way systems are organized and run globally. The education systems of the world are not left unchanged whether in developed or developing nations. The outbreak of Covid-19 in Wuhan China which later turned into a pandemic necessitated the adoption of e-learning as a way of curbing the spread of the virus causing the disease (Indiran et al. 2022). Many institutions of learning were compelled to adopt one form of e-learning or the other. Most institutions in developing countries like Nigeria whose education system have no deep e-learning engagement adopted the use of WhatsApp Messenger. This was feasible because many students and teachers were users and do not require any intensive financial input from the schools to use it in teaching during the pandemic. Iqbal, (2023) reported that WhatsApp users globally hit 2.4 billion mark in 2022 with India and Brazil being the leading nations using WhatsApp messenger. Nigeria is in 10th position among the countries with a large WhatsApp penetration with over 40 million users. Adoption and use of any technology depends largely on the attitude of the user. Positive attitude towards a technology leads to greater use while negative attitude may lead to rejection of the technology. In the light of the foregoing, there is need to evaluate the attitude of business educators towards the use of communication application in the learning environment.

To ensure that business educators adopt and use the e-learning innovation in teaching, they should have a favourable attitude towards its use in the learning environment (Hun & Shimizu, 2022). Similarly, evidence from research as pointed out in Onwuagboke and Singh (2016) also shows that successful implementation of innovative technologies in the classroom depends largely on the attitude of teachers towards technology. Attitude is seen in psychology as an expression of favour or disfavour towards an object, an event, person, place or thing. Attitude can be defined as the way in which a person views and evaluates something or someone, a predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person, or situation (Vargas-Sanchez et. al. 2016). Cherry (2020) maintained that an attitude refers to a set of emotions, beliefs, and behaviours an individual has toward a particular object, person, thing, or event. Business educators teaching Business Education programmes are expected to show positive attitude towards the use of e-learning in the achievement of the objectives of the programme. Another variable apart from attitude which is capable of affecting adoption of e-learning in the teaching and learning environment is gender.

According to WHO (n.d.) gender is a socially constructed definition of women and men determined by the conception of tasks functions and roles attributed to women and men in society and in public and private life. Gender has been attributed as a significant variable in explaining the technology acceptance and use behaviour of humans (Goswami & Dutta, 2016). Although gender differences have attracted attention in today's educational research and practice, however, a small number of studies have explored the gender differences in the use of technology in higher education (Zhou & Xu, 2007). Researchers have found differences in ICT utilization according to gender (van Deursen & van Dijk 2015; Harreiter, et al. 2011) while others report no significant difference according to gender (Ganiyu, 2019; Ameen, Adeniji & Abdulahi, 2019; Olafare, Adeyanju & Fakorede, 2017; Nwankwoala, 2015; Suri & Sharma, 2013). Furthermore, Chiaha, et al. (2013) discovered that gender does not affect the utilization of e-learning facilities in tertiary institutions in South-East Nigeria. They argued that all the Lecturers were exposed to the same environmental learning conditions when they were students regardless of gender. Another variable that can affect the attitude of business educators towards the use of WhatsApp in teaching Business courses is the ownership of the institution.

Ownership of institution is yet another factor which has the likelihood of affecting the attitude of individual teachers towards the adoption and use of any innovative technology in teaching. The Colleges of Education in Nigeria are owned by two different proprietors. They include: The Federal Government that runs the Federal Colleges of Education and the State Governments that run the State Colleges of Education. The disparity in funds available to run these institutions are most likely to affect ICT policies of these institutions and invariably affect the attitude of the business educators in these institutions towards e-learning adoption and use in teaching and learning. For the fact that the variables mentioned and discussed above have the likelihood of affecting the attitude of business educators towards the use of e-learning in teaching business courses in any learning environment, these variables are worthy of investigation.

In the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, a simple and low-tech approach to delivering remote learning can be through the use of a free calling and chatting application like WhatsApp. WhatsApp is smartphone application that allows for instant message sending to either an individuals or groups. Although there is a computer desktop version of the application, its

popularity cannot be compared to the smartphone application. Pictures, audio, audio-visual files attachment and websites links can be sent through it (Ujakpa et al., 2018). According to Albergotti et al. (2014) WhatsApp was invented in 2009 by Jan Koum and Brian Acton and first became available on the market in 2010. Although, the use of this social network platform for remote learning has its own cost implications and constraints, despite the aforementioned, the uniqueness in using the platform for remote learning is premised on the fact that it's a very low-data consuming technology which gives room for both synchronous and asynchronous discussions among users in a close group environment. Setting up a WhatsApp group can easily be accomplished within seconds as it does not require much soft skill. Similarly, the platform offers a lot of features that make it an ideal low cost tool to provide remote learning to learners from digitally disadvantaged families or communities.

WhatsApp provides an equal learning opportunity to learners of all types, genders, ethnicities, and other demographic subgroups (Durgungoz & Durgungoz, 2021). In the view of Ngalomba (2020) one of the advantages of integrating WhatsApp with Learning Management System (LMS) in online teaching environment is that it will allow content in jpeg and pdf formats to be shared easily. Large video files of 20 megabytes can be split into smaller multiple videos and shared to a WhatsApp group. Prior to the integration of WhatsApp into classroom, the schools and teachers will have to make key decisions and take important steps in advance in order to make the WhatsApp classroom to be successful. According to Bouhnik and Deshen (2014) additional features have been added to WhatsApp to make it suitable for supporting interaction between teachers and learners in the teaching and learning situation.

WhatsApp is capable of allowing voice calls, so that one can talk to other users i.e. friends and family for free, even if they're in another country. The free video calls, allows for face-to-face conversations for when voice or text just isn't enough. Both calls use phone's Internet connection, instead of cell airtime; consequently, cuts expensive calling charges (Ahmad, 2020). There are many advantages of using WhatsApp messenger in the learning environment which stems from the affordances of the application. Bere (2016) mentioned in Ahmad (2020) listed four of them which include:

- **Multimedia:** It allows the user to exchange videos, text messages, images and voice notes.
- **Group Chat:** It supports the interaction of up to 50 group members.
- **Unlimited Messaging:** The number of messages you can share on WhatsApp is unlimited. The application uses 3G/EDGE internet data plan or Wi-Fi to ensure continuous data transmission across platforms.
- **Cross Platform Engagements:** Users interact with different devices (personal digital assistants, Smart phones, Galaxy tablets) to message one another through various media (text messages, pictures, videos, voice notes)

Research Question

What is the attitude of business educators towards the use of WhatsApp in teaching Business Education courses in Colleges of Education in South-East Nigeria during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in mean rating of male and female Business educators on their attitude towards the use of WhatsApp for teaching business education courses in colleges of education in South-East Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference in mean rating of experience and less experienced Business educators on their attitude towards the use of WhatsApp for teaching business education courses in colleges of education in South-East Nigeria.

Methods

The researchers employed analytic descriptive survey design to find answers to the research problem. This research design was selected because it fits the purpose of the study as the purpose of the study was to investigate the attitude of Business Educators towards the use of WhatsApp in teaching business education courses. The sample for this study consists of 159 business educators in the business education departments in all the public Colleges of Education in the South-East Nigeria. The entire population was used. A 13 item questionnaire titled Business Educators Attitude of Towards use of WhatsApp in Teaching Questionnaire (BEATUWTQ) was used to collect data for the study. The instrument is a four-point scale which requires respondents to select from Strongly Agree - 4; Agree - 3; Disagree - 2 and Strongly Disagree - 1 to express their opinion on the items contained therein. To ensure validity of the instruments the items in the instrument were developed by the researchers and given to three business educators to ensure face validity and content validity. The instrument was field-tested in a college of education in the South-South Nigeria and a reliability coefficient of .83 Cronbach's alpha was yielded. The researchers personally administered the research instruments on the respondents with the help of a research assistant. The researchers and the research assistants travelled to each of the Colleges of Education used for the study for this purpose and administered the instruments and collected responses on the spot. Subsequent visits were paid to those who could not complete theirs on the spot. In all, 148 copies of the instrument were returned and well filled out giving 93.1% return rate. Data collected were analysed using Mean scores and standard deviations to answer the research question while independent samples t-test was used to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question

What is the attitudes of business educators towards the use of WhatsApp in teaching business education courses in Colleges of Education in South-East Nigeria during Covid-19 pandemic?

Table 1

Business educators' mean rating on their attitudes towards the use of WhatsApp in teaching business education courses

S/n	Items on attitudes towards WhatsApp	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	I am aware of WhatsApp as a potential e-learning technology	2.82	.67	Positive
2	I think using WhatsApp in teaching will improve the quality of my work.	2.87	.73	Positive
3	I think that presenting course materials on WhatsApp platforms makes learning more efficient.	2.59	.62	Positive
4	I think it is easier to revise electronic educational materials on WhatsApp than printed material	2.91	.79	Positive
5	I believe that delivering a lecture through WhatsApp platform is not difficult.	2.83	.79	Positive
6	I feel that WhatsApp platform does not require expensive technical support for use in teaching.	3.05	.55	Positive
7	I would prefer to teach courses using WhatsApp platform rather than in the classroom or face-to-face.	3.01	.60	Positive
8	I feel that using WhatsApp will allow me to accomplish more work than would otherwise be possible.	2.75	.71	Positive
9	I feel that supporting learners in WhatsApp environment is not very difficult	2.92	.67	Positive
10	I feel that it will not be difficult for me to become skillful in the use WhatsApp platform.	2.91	.73	Positive
11	I intend to spend more time learning how to use WhatsApp in teaching my subject	3.12	.70	Positive
12	I intend to use more of e-learning technologies in teaching my courses if available	3.03	.66	Positive
13	I intend to improve my students' competence in the use of WhatsApp platform for learning	3.21	.67	Positive
	Cumulative Mean	2.93		Positive

Table 1 show that the 13 items on attitude towards WhatsApp received mean ratings ranging from 2.59 to 3.21 with a cumulative mean rating of 2.93. This indicates that all the items received mean ratings indicating a positive attitude of the respondents. The computed standard deviation of the scores from the mean ranged from .55 to .73.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in mean rating of male and female Business educators on their attitude towards the use of WhatsApp for teaching Business education courses in colleges of education in South-East Nigeria. The result of the test is presented in table 2.

Table 2

Summary of t-test of significant mean difference on attitude towards WhatsApp based on gender

Attitude towards use of WhatsApp	N	Mean	SD	Df	p-value	Decision
Male	62	37.18	3.56	146	.031	Significant
Female	86	38.62	4.49			

Data presented in table 2 show that there was significant difference in mean scores for male business educators teaching in Colleges of Education ($M = 37.18$, $SD = 3.56$) and female business educators ($F = 38.62$, $SD = 4.49$; $t(146) = -2.17$, $p = .03$, two-tailed) in their attitude towards the use of WhatsApp in teaching Business Education courses during Covid-19 pandemic. The inference was based on the p-value of .03 which is less than the significant level of .05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in mean rating of business educators in state owned and federal owned colleges of education on their attitude towards the use of WhatsApp for teaching Business education courses in colleges of education in South-East Nigeria.

Table3

Summary of t-test of significant mean difference on attitude towards WhatsApp based on ownership of institution

Attitude towards use of WhatsApp	N	Mean	SD	Df	P-value	Decision
State	31	35.97	4.90	146	.009	Significant
Federal	117	38.56	3.80			

Data presented in table 3 show that there was significant difference in mean scores for business educators teaching in state Colleges of Education ($S = 35.97$, $SD = 4.90$) and business educators teaching in federal colleges of education ($F = 38.56$, $SD = 3.80$; $t(146) = -2.75$, $p = .009$, two-tailed) in their attitude towards the use of WhatsApp in teaching Business Education courses during Covid-19 pandemic. The inference was based on the p-value of .009 which is less than the significant level of .05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion

Business educators' overall attitude towards the use of WhatsApp in teaching business education courses was positive. This implies that integrating WhatsApp into teaching may be seamless and as such requires motivation of the business educators to achieve it. Attitude plays a very crucial role in adopting any technology as a veritable tool for change especially in the instructional system. This result was in agreement with the finding of Rezaei and Meshkatian (2017) who reported that teachers showed positive attitude towards the use of Social Media especially WhatsApp in teaching. Similarly, the result also finds support in Saratu et al. (2020) who found out that students have positive attitudes towards WhatsApp use for learning Biology. The

positive attitude of Business educator stems from the fact that they displayed high level of knowledge about WhatsApp Messenger as shown in their response to items on cognitive attitude towards the technology (items 1-5 in table 1).

There was significant difference in mean rating of male and female business educators on their attitude towards the use of WhatsApp for teaching Business education courses. Female business educators were more favourably disposed to using WhatsApp than male business educators. Thus they are more likely to adopt it in teaching compared to the male business educators. Therefore, female business educators should be part of any college committee in charge of e-learning policy formulation and implementation. This result is similar to the finding of Kant, (2018) who reported that female students had high level of positive attitude towards WhatsApp than their male colleagues.

There was also significant difference in mean ratings of business educators in federal and state colleges of education in attitude towards the use of WhatsApp for teaching business education courses. This result is at variance with Serin and Bozdag (2020) who found no significant difference in attitude towards technology use according to school type. This difference in attitude may not be unconnected to the fact that tetfund supplied laptops which were distributed to lecturers in federal colleges of education unlike in the state owned colleges. This no doubt can be a source of motivation to the business educators in these colleges to show positive attitude towards the use of e-learning applications in teaching.

Conclusion

This study investigated the attitude of business educators in the Colleges of Education in the South-East Nigeria towards the use of WhatsApp in teaching business education courses during the Covid-19 pandemic. From the findings of this study, it can be seen that Business educators have a positive attitude towards the use of WhatsApp Messenger in teaching Business education courses during the Covid-19 period. Female Business educators showed a more positive attitude towards the use of WhatsApp than males. Similarly, business educators teaching in federal institutions showed more positive attitude than those in the state colleges. In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic which social distancing is one of the ways of reducing the spread of the virus, this positive attitude is a welcome development. The use of e-learning technologies especially WhatsApp Messenger remains sacrosanct for the learning environment to safeguard the health of the teachers and the learners.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made among others:

1. With the business educators displaying a positive attitude towards the use of WhatsApp in learning, there is the need to motivate them in order to sustain this positive attitude. Providing free institutional Wi-Fi can go a long way to sustain this positive attitude and even engender them to try to make use of WhatsApp in more innovative ways.
2. Training and retraining of business educators on pedagogical strategies adopt in integrating e-learning tools especially social media tools in teaching business education courses in colleges of education in the country.

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