Medical teachers becoming technosavy – perception of using Whatsapp as a teaching method.

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Abstract

Introduction: Communication has become easier, faster and cheaper with Whatsapp messenger. It is less pricey as compared to the normal phone messaging. Some researchers have articulated the value of mobile applications as follows: encourage learners to learn by anticipating needs, make collaborative learning efficient and effective. Objective of our study was to know the perception of medical teachers in using Whatsapp as a teaching mode.

Methodology:[52] Faculty members from various medical colleges responded to the questionnaire. We took feedback from teachers regarding their experience about using Whatsapp and its relavence in teaching students. The questionnaire was sent through groups of staff created by Whatsapp. Teachers who did not reply through it were asked to fill up the questionnaire hard copy by personal meetings.

Results: 96.87 % of staff who use it for communication think that WhatsApp helps students work as a team and help each other while 65% of staff who do not use it for communicating with students think the same. 90.65% of staff who use it for communication think that WhatsApp can be used as a learning platform to improve performance of learning activities in students.

Conclusions: WhatsApp in communicating with students is slightly more advantageous; it cannot replace the traditional way of learning by attending classes, reading text books. It can only supplement the learning process to be faster and help students learn things easily.

Keywords: WhatsApp, Medical teachers, Percerption.

Introduction:

Nowadays it seems hard to escape the presence of technology. Most of us are praising the technological gadgets that we use in our everyday life. Many of us depend on it to get us through the day, to do our job, to get around and to find certain things. Technology is evolving at a very speedy pace.

Since the smartphones became popular, many messaging services are launched but the most famed one being Whatsapp.[1] This Application is very addictive and can create a great impact on regular users. Communication has become easier, faster and cheaper with Whatsapp messenger. It is less pricey as compared to the normal phone messaging. One of the application's unique features is the option to create a group and to communicate within its boundaries. All of the participants in the group enjoy equal rights[2].

The internet has had a more dramatic influence on education than any previous technological innovation because it has allowed individuals of all ages to access education and training programs[3]. The provision and access to learning material anywhere, anytime and in various formats has potential to enhance deep student learning capabilities.

Some researchers have articulated the value of mobile applications as follows: encourage learners to learn by anticipating needs, make collaborative learning efficient and effective, and build a relationship that stimulates learner-to-learner for consistent and progressive learning[4].

Despite the aforementioned academic incentives offered by these technologies, limited research has been conducted to determine the usage in medical field. As a beginning we wanted to first know the perception of medical teachers in using Whatsapp as a teaching mode.

Methodology:

Study participants were from faculty of various medical colleges. 52 faculty members responded to the questionnaire. In the present research, we worked towards a better understanding of the function of WhatsApp groups constructed for students and teachers, relevant activities and the way that they affect both educational and academic processes was considered. We took feedback from teachers regarding their experience about using Whatsapp and its relavence in teaching students. The questionnaire was sent through groups of

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Fig 1: Purpose of usage of Whatsapp for communicating with students (n = 32)

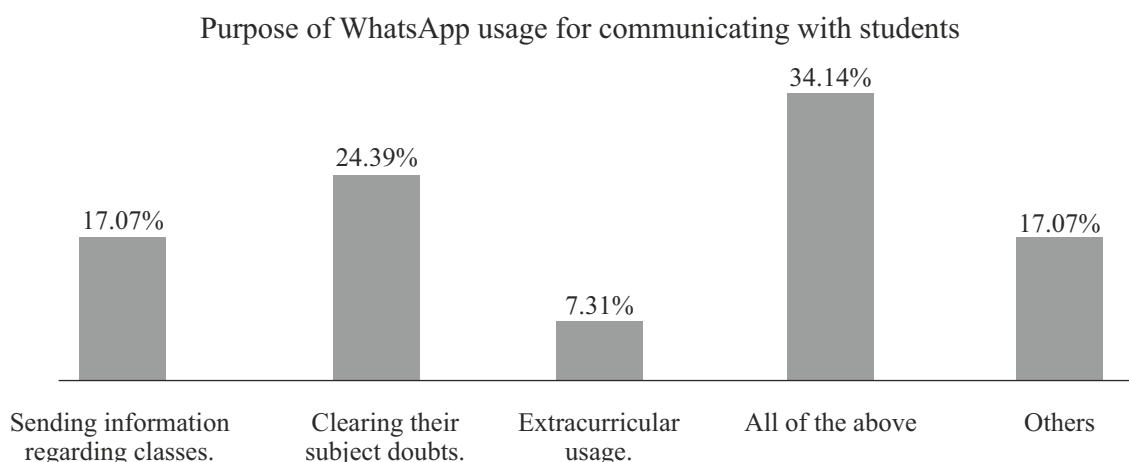Purpose of WhatsApp usage for communicating with students

Fig 1 shows the purpose of usage of WhatsApp, with 32 faculty members who used it for communicating with students. 17.07% used for sending information regarding classes, 24.39% used for clearing subject doubts, 7.31% of staff used it for communicating for extracurricular usage. 34.14% of the staff used for all the reasons mentioned, while 17.07% of them used for other reasons mentioned.

The other reasons for using WhatsApp as communication tool with students were – Mentorship, organising workshop, to get information regarding patients, for undergraduate projects and to send educative videos. 96.87 % of staff who use it for communication think that WhatsApp helps students work as a team and help each other while 65% of staff who do not use it for communicating with students think the same. 90.65% of staff who use it for communication think that WhatsApp can be used as a learning platform to improve performance of learning activities in students, whereas 45% of staff who do not use it for communicating with students feel the same.

Seventy five percentage of staff who use it for communication think that WhatsApp can help in improving the quality of expression among students, while 25% of staff who do not use it for communicating with students feel the same.
75% of staff who use it for communication think that WhatsApp helps students learn anytime anywhere, while 50% of staff who do not use it for communicating with students feels the same

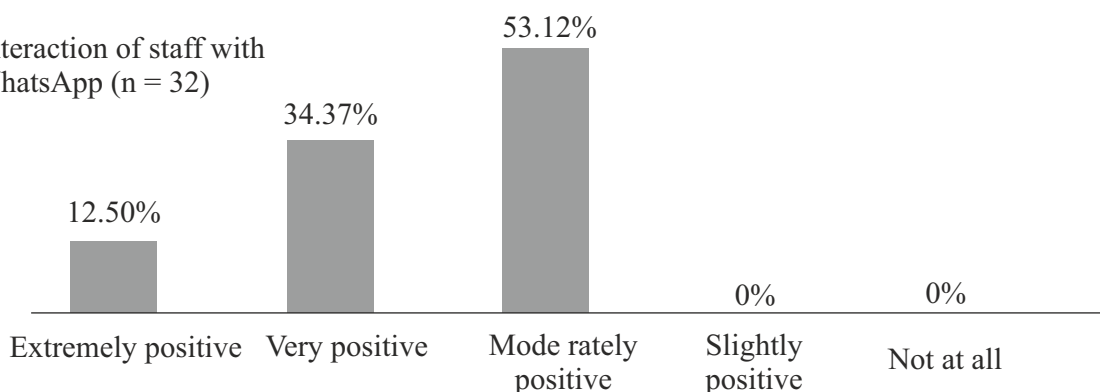Fig 2: Positive interaction of staff with students using WhatsApp (n = 32)

Fig 2: Shows the positive interaction of staff with students using WhatsApp, with 32 faculty members who used it for communicating with students. 12.5% of faculty members said it was extremely positive, 34.37% their interaction was very positive. 53.12% of the medical teachers felt their interaction was moderately positive with students.

Table 1: Advantages and disadvantages of Whatsapp usage as one of the teaching learning media in medical education quoted by medical teachers who use it for communicating with students

Advantages	Disadvantages
1. Helpful in two way interaction and for non hesitant students to express without hindrance – 43. 75% 2. Discussion about classes – 12.5% 3. Fast, better communication with students – 12.5 % 4. Can teach out of classroom, can teach whenever staff is free – 9.37% 5. Available anytime, can learn anytime anywhere – 6.25% 6. Keeps updated – 6.25% 7. Take opinion regarding differential diagnosis and diagnosing the case can be easy - 6.25% 8. Can solve other student related problems like hostel, health - 3.12%	1. Misuse, addiction, distraction – 25% 2. Sometimes takes time to upload images & typing – 21.87% 3. No personal interaction & reduced emotional contact – 12.5% 4. Psychomotor component of learning cannot be involved – 6.25% 5. Not taken seriously by students, classrooms & libraries are better - 6.25% 6. Short forms are used, so no good discussion - 12.5% 7. Time consuming, nothing is equal to books, teachers, patients - 9.37% 8. Students may use in classes & mobiles are banned in most of the colleges -3.12% 9. Financial constraints - 3.12%

Table 2: Advantages and disadvantages of Whatsapp usage as one of the teaching learning media in medical education quoted by medical teachers who do not use it for communicating with students

Advantages	Disadvantages
1. Any time communication, convenient – 40% 2. Sharing recent advances, X ray images & clinical case in medicine – 25% 3. Immediate answering of questions and answers can be effective - 10% 4. Ready to use, fast learning, helps to prepare for university exams - 10% 5. User friendly, easy access - *5%* 6. Students can be unlimited & everyone reached at same time - 5% 7. *No advantages, as per recent survey - 47% of Indians waste their time in social media – 5%*	1. Unable to develop student teacher relationship as personal interaction is reduced - 35% 2. Cant quote references & information may not be authentic – 15% 3. Technically unsound, finer details can't be covered - 10% 4. Everybody is not interested, drop outs can be high - 10% 5. Motivation for gathering information will be lost – 10% 6. Wastage of valuable time - 10% 7. Teaching loses charm - 5% 8. Technology unavailable to rural sectors, attendance can't be monitored - 5%

Discussion:

The in depth interviews conducted in this research with medical teachers about usage of WhatsApp to communicate with their classes as a part of their teaching process has shown a varied response.

The open style discussion enables the teachers to get to know their students in depth and to create a positive atmosphere as well as a sense of belonging. But, challenges like the demand for constant availability, foul language and behaviour and the witnessing the students personal world, may cause adults to feel uncomfortable. It is also worth taking into account that operating such a group requires the teachers to invest time beyond their regular work hours, in addition to being swamped with messages. These issues require attention and special tools to help teachers cope, to feel more comfortable, and to become more efficient and less burdened.

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Many teachers felt that using WhatsApp had a positive effect like making students work like team, improves quality of expression among students and students can learn any learn anytime anywhere.

Studies have shown that there are two benefits of Whatsapp for distance learning: mobile learning and context free accessto learning resources[5]. Many researchers have been done in technological profession. Very less data is available in the usage of WhatsApp as a teaching media in medical colleges. More work needs to be done to explore in detail the advantages and disadvantages of WhatsApp.

Educating adults on the usage of WhatsApp will continue to produce challenges for teachers. The challenges should be viewed as opportunities to learn and to help students move forward in a constantly changing society. This also has its own disadvantages as quoted by many medical faculty who use and also teachers who do not use for communicating with students.

Conclusion:

Learning is becoming more personal. Learning is also becoming ubiquitous, durable and increasingly at odds with formal education. Increasingly, different types of learning happen outside of the classroom through social cooperation and collaboration between students to improve construction and knowledge sharing.

To conclude, though using WhatsApp in communicating with students has slightly more advantages, it cannot replace the traditional way of learning by attending classes, reading text books. It can only supplement the learning process to be fun, faster and help students learn things easily.

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