

**IMPACT OF WHATSAPP ON DISTANCE LEARNING STUDENTS’
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS:
A CASE OF THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN MASS
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CERTIFICATION

The undersigned certifies that he has read and hereby recommends for acceptance by the Open University of Tanzania a dissertation entitled: “Impact Of WhatsApp On Distance Learning Students’ Academic Performance In Higher Learning Institutions: A Case Of The Open University Of Tanzania” in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Mass Communication of the Open University of Tanzania.

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DECLARATION

I, HUSNA M NURDIN, do hereby declare that this is my original work, except where stated otherwise, and that the same work has not been submitted for an academic award to any University or Institution of Higher Learning.

.....

Signature

.....

Date

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research work to my family which include my husband and kids for their understanding and support for the time that I used not to stay with them due to the project work.

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My profound gratitude goes to the Almighty God the creator of all mankind for his faithfulness, favor, grace and mercies towards me from the beginning of the Academic session to the end and for a successful project well done.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the extent of WhatsApp usage for learning, time spent on the platform, its impact on academic performance, and the challenges encountered by students. Employing a quantitative approach, the research utilized questionnaires, and interviews as data collection tools. A sample size of 185 students was picked using the Yamane formula. Data were collected using a questionnaire and interview guide and analysed qualitative data using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics was used for qualitative data. The findings contribute to understanding WhatsApp's role in higher education and informing strategies for its effective integration into academic settings. The study finding presents insight into WhatsApp's impact, highlighting demographic factors, positive perceptions, and challenges faced by students. Key informants emphasize its transformative potential but stress the need for guidelines and training. The study synthesised key findings and recommends integration strategies while suggesting avenues for further research. It is recommended that there is a need to enhance institutional support, address privacy concerns, and maximize collaborative learning. Further research suggests focus on longitudinal studies, qualitative analyses, and interdisciplinary perspectives, aiming to inform evidence-based practices in leveraging WhatsApp for distance education.

Keywords: WhatsApp, distance learning, academic performance, higher education, Open University of Tanzania.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYM

MoE	Ministry of Education
USA	United States of America
TCU	Tanzania Commission for Universities
UN	United Nations
UGT	Uses and Gratifications Theory
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
SUZA	State University of Zanzibar
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
UGC	University Grants Commission
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHO	World Health Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
SIT	Socially Interactive Technologies
CBE	Competency-Based Education
E-Learning	Electronic Learning
FB	Facebook

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study Overview

This chapter provides the background information of the study. The study assesses the impact of WhatsApp on students' academic performance in higher learning institutions in Tanzania. The Use of modern social networks has improved communication. Social media applications such as; Facebook, twitter, Imo, Viber, Instagram, WhatsApp to mention just a few are now days part and parcel of networks that people from all over the world communicate. The focus of this study is to access the impacts of WhatsApp on students' academic performance in higher learning institutions. This chapter presents background of the study, the statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, and scope and limitations the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

Advancements in science and technology have led to widespread adoption of technology among tertiary students, with laptops, smartphones, and tablets being commonly used. The Internet plays a crucial role in enhancing the efficiency of these technologies (Smith & Anderson, 2018). Social media, particularly WhatsApp, has emerged as a popular and indispensable tool for information sharing and communication among students (Mingle & Adams, 2015; Yeboah & Ewur, 2014).

Modern communication technology transforms the world into a global village, offering both positive and negative impacts. It enhances information access, enlightenment, and global awareness (Philip, 2002). Technology presents improved

ways of accomplishing tasks. Popular social networking sites, like Twitter, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp, facilitate interaction among individuals, connecting old and new friends, both in-person and online. (Asemah & Edegoh, 2012).

Use of WhatsApp and mobile devices presents both advantages as well as challenges, mostly its benefits seen in terms of accessing course contents, video clip, and transfer of the instructional notes (Enakrire, R. T., & Kehinde, F. J. (2022). Gikas & Grant, (2013) of the University of Central Florida reported that electronic devices and social media create an opportunity to the students for collaborative learning and also allowed the students in sharing the resource materials to the colleagues.

In Kuwait, 99% of individuals engage in social media, with 50% favoring WhatsApp for instant messaging and calls (Al-Menayes, 2015). A study by Dos (2014) found students spend an average of 319.60 min on mobiles, exchanging 115 and 138 messages daily. WhatsApp aids learning and social interaction, positively impacting scientific research and information science (Barhoumi, 2015; Irshad, 2016; Enakrire & Kehinde, 2022). The app facilitates efficient learning and swift knowledge communication (Scientific Research Methods in Information Science).

WhatsApp in academic institutions fosters student-mentor interaction, content access, customization, and community building (Greenhow, 2011a, 2011b). Presently, 90% of school-going students consistently use the internet, with over 75% of teenagers employing online networking sites for e-learning (DeBell & Chapman, 2006; Lenhart et al., 2008, 2005). Focus group interviews across three U.S. universities revealed that social media uses including WhatsApp, enhances

collaborative learning, creating opportunities for extracurricular engagement (Gikas & Grant, 2013).

WhatsApp's integration into university settings proves beneficial for learning, offering students new communication channels, a rich source of information, and enhanced participation (Ajjan & Hartshorne, 2008; Munoz & Towner, 2009; Junco, 2011). Recent trends show students predominantly use WhatsApp for individual tasks, such as content creation and commentary (Seamean & Tinti-Kane, 2013).

WhatsApp platform supports E-learning, facilitates informal teacher-student communication, fosters social interactions, and provides students with a personalized medium for learning experiences (Lara, 2005). Additionally, WhatsApp serves as a collaborative learning tool, empowering students to construct, share, and explore information and knowledge through peer communication (Haythornthwaite, 2006).

According to Abdullahi, Samadi, and Gharlegghi (2014), a direct link exists between WhatsApp usage and students' academic performance in universities. However, the evolving technology landscape brings challenges, impacting real-life values, particularly among students, the primary users of social networking sites. These platforms emphasize creating and showcasing social connections among individuals with shared interests or activities. The abundance of such sites online can lead students to prioritize online chatting over academic responsibilities, potentially affecting their study habits and reading routines (Uwgu, 2023).

The Open University of Tanzania (OUT) has been a pioneer in offering distance learning for years, defining it as education separated by time or space between

instructors and students (Moore & Kearsley, 1996). OUT provides certificates, diplomas, degrees, and postgraduate courses through regional and study centers, boasting 26 regional and 69 study centers as of 2009, with over 35,000 registered students (Mbwette, 2009). Open and Distance Learning (ODL), as described by Bisanda (2009), is cost-effective and flexible, enabling mass education in developing countries like sub-Saharan Africa. Technology, including WhatsApp, is employed to address the challenges of distance learning at OUT, fostering communication between students and supervisors for individual or group discussions (Dzakiria, 2004).

Despite numerous mobile messaging apps, WhatsApp stands out as a preferred choice (Statista, 2016). Social media usage has surged, with WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram gaining prominence. WhatsApp, particularly, is widely embraced and deemed indispensable (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014). Church and de Oliveira (2013) highlight its popularity, citing benefits like real-time messaging, cost-effectiveness, and privacy. Studies by Bouhnik & Deshen (2014), Church & de Oliveira (2013), and Nguyen & Fussell (2016) underscore WhatsApp's utility in learning, emphasizing its applicability for anytime, anywhere learning and collaborative efforts.

Young individuals, valuing friendship, social lives, and family relationships, extensively use WhatsApp (Jisha & Jebakumar, 2014). Its popularity among youths is attributed to factors like unlimited text messaging and affordability through internet use (Jisha & Jebakumar, 2014). In higher education, particularly in distance learning, WhatsApp plays a crucial role in enhancing discussions and information

sharing among students and lecturers. Yalcinalp & Gulbahar (2010) highlight its value in encouraging learners, making collaborative learning efficient, and fostering relationships that stimulate consistent and progressive learning. This study aims to explore the impact of WhatsApp on students' performance in higher learning institutions, specifically in distance education.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In recent times social media such as WhatsApp have been a major stay in the minds of students and the world at large thereby causing a lot of drastic measure by students, teacher and even educational administrators at large (Mutajwaa, Temu & Mwingi, 2021). Social networking has disrupted the way things ought to be done in every industry, including Higher Learning Institutions. The hiking increase in bandwidth, availability, connectivity and use of internet access pose as an opportunity to use such social media platforms and related technologies for day-to-day activities for instance socializing, buying, selling and marketing (Acheaw and Larson , 2015).

WhatsApp can be an effective tool for engagement in education in several ways. It can be used by learners to engage with content and communicating with teachers (Mutajwaa, Temu & Mwingi, 2021). Despite the significant social networks has had in the academic industry, still there is insufficient research done exploring the impact of social media on students' academic performance in Higher Learning Institutions specifically distance learning students regarding their use of technology and social media for learning, knowledge sharing and collaboration.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are divided into general and specific.

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study was to assess impact of WhatsApp on distance learning students' academic performance in higher learning institutions: a case of the Open University of Tanzania

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The study will be guided by the following specific objectives;

- i. To explore the extent of use of WhatsApp as a media for learning among students of The Open University of Tanzania.
- ii. To examine the time, spend by students on WhatsApp in relation to academic performance of students of The Open University of Tanzania
- iii. To establish the influence of WhatsApp on students' academic performance in The Open University of Tanzania
- iv. To identify the challenges faced by students in using WhatsApp as a tool for learning in The Open University of Tanzania

1.5 Research Questions

- i. What was the extent of use of WhatsApp as a media for learning among students of The Open University of Tanzania with reference to distance learning?
- ii. What was the time spent by students on WhatsApp in relation to academic performance at The Open University of Tanzania?

iii.What was the influence of WhatsApp on students' academic performance at The Open University of Tanzania?

iv.What challenges did the students at The Open University of Tanzania face when using WhatsApp as a tool for learning in Higher Learning Institutions?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings and the conclusions that will be drawn by this research will overcome any issues of lack or scarce of adequate and sufficient data on the impact of definitely social medial in Tanzania society, which generally is quite significant. The discoveries of this study will particularly be helpful to the strategy creators in different sectors of the government and non-government. For example, in the educational sector educational programs will be designed basically to involve social media intergraded. In the health service, it definitely helps specialists particularly those managing guiding of the youth to actually know which instruments to use to communicate effectively to the youth, or so they thought. The findings of the investigation will probably be going to specifically facilitate generally further sort of academic research by different researchers who might be interested with this field of learning.

1.7 Scope and limitation of the Study

The study will be confined within the Open University of Tanzania Kinondoni Center, due to the fact that majority of students attends at the center for further assistance in their studies, technical issues in their study accounts, and also free internet accessibility and completing their coursework something which will give chance for the researcher to meet with many students.

The limitation to this study was time and finance. The researcher will travel to Dar Es Salam Kinondoni regional center to distribute the questionnaires and wait until the students attended the university premises for assistance so as to supply the quest

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature that relates to the study and also provides a theoretical framework of the study. Literature review is central to the research process because it provides a general understanding of the research problem as well as serves as a benchmark against which the researcher can compare and contrast the research results (Gray, 2004). The review enables the researcher to critically analyze earlier research works so as to eliminate duplication during the research process. Literature review is important during the research process since it gives insights into what has been previously published on the study area. It gives insight into the existing problem and points out any existing gaps. It equips the researcher with facts on a given study and helps in the formulation of the research questions as well as pointing towards answers to the research questions. This chapter is divided into different parts such as, theoretical literature review, empirical literature review, research gap and conceptual framework.

2.2. Definitions of Operational Terms

2.2.1. Social Media

Social media is the forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas etc. (Oxford Dictionary, 2017). These are internet based application, used to share information among people. They include popular networking sites like Facebook. Micro blogging sites like Twitter. In this list

of social media, involves Instagram, which is popular for photo sharing, also the most common WhatsApp.

2.2.2. Online Learning

Online learning is defined as learning experienced through the internet without the need for the co-presence of instructors and students (Singh & Thurman, 2019),

2.2.3. Social Media in Teaching and Learning

Recently, the use of social media has become immensely popular in the education industry. It allows learners and instructors to connect outside the formal learning environment, share ideas, create peer groups to share their opinions regarding the course, or discuss content and activities. E-Learning professionals are starting to rely heavily on social media platforms to share supplementary course materials, promote learning practices, and respond to learners' comments. Additionally, social media presents an easy and quick way for learners to connect with course instructors, ask questions, and clear doubts.

Social media technologies have significant effect on the field of higher education. According to (Lenartz, 2013) institutions and individuals have begun experimenting with novel approaches for the use of social media in a wide range of higher educational functions. One of these institutions is the City University of New York (CUNY). CUNY has created a closed social network for faculty, staff, and graduate students to connect the university's campuses and create online communities for members of CUNY (Kaya, 2010)

2.2.4. Open distance Learning

ODL is a blanket term used for learning system that offers varying academic programmes in an open and distance mode. The commonly used terms related to open and distance learning include; correspondence education, distance learning, open learning, technology-based education and flexible learning amongst others.

2.2.5. WhatsApp

WhatsApp Messenger is a mobile learning technology that can be used on both mobile devices (smartphones and tablets) and personal computers through Internet browsers Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox and Opera. The application provides a number of free and interesting communication resources, such as sending texts, photos, audios, videos and recently the option to make connections

2.3. Empirical Literature Review

This part presents the analysis of studies that have already been conducted in different parts of the world regarding the impact of the use of WhatsApp on students' academic performance.

2.3.1. Access of Students on WhatsApp in Relation to Academic Performance

Institutions and individuals have begun experimenting with novel approaches for the use of social media in a wide range of higher educational functions (Lenartz, 2013) According to Kaya (2010), the City University of New York (CUNY) has created a closed social network for faculty, staff, and graduate students to connect the university's campuses and create online communities.

On the internet, students engage in a variety of activities some of which may be potentially addictive (Kuss& Griffiths, 2011). The mass appeal of WhatsApp on the internet could be a cause for concern, particularly when attending to the gradually increasing amount of time students spend online. Undergraduates spend more time on WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and other social media through smartphones that are now in abundance among these youths. Many students cannot go for two-three hours without checking and updating their profiles on these social networks even at the detriment of other activities such as educational and career pursuit. (Morahan-Martin and Schumacher, 2000) explain social media addiction as the excessive use of the internet and the failure to control this usage which seriously harms a person's life.

It is obvious that there exists a connection between youth and WhatsApp. Thus, messages can contact crowds and target group progressively and they can create changes and propensities, which is quite significant. The young generation of today, grow up having sort of extraordinary contact with various types of online networking, contrary to popular belief. This kind of communication is effectively procuring digital proficiency and lives in a really computerized world to which grown-ups are just naturalized nationals. (Philippe, & Coronel, 2012) discuss experiencing childhood in an advanced situation referring to the young as the Era, or so they really thought.

Studies by Barhoumi (2015) and Livingstone 2005 show that the gap between guardian sand youth occurs in various ways. Internet expertise, familiarity with problems, affirmation of residential directions setup, and in what guardians trust

their youngsters actually are doing versus what they are really doing Concerns are over security, basically uses to access risk materials, online manipulation of youth behaviours, sort of contrary to popular belief in a major way. Its guardian's question in what exercises a kind of do youth literally do on the web, or so they essentially thought. With whom do they build up connections, or so they thought, which particularly is fairly significant. What amount of time specifically does youth put resources into online activities, which really specifically is quite significant in a sort of big way? What online practices kind of do they illustrate? What basically is the effect of the online connections in life and in youth development, which mostly is quite significant in a really big way? This research is situated in a theoretical approach that considers youth definitely essentially are actually dynamic specialists who can control, adjust, make, and disperse thoughts and items through communication technologies. (Kull S. 2019).

Youth are experts on the web, which is fairly significant. Additionally, technological advancements particularly have led to the democratization of the family, especially in the Nations which for the most part are leaders in Information Communication Technologies (ICT.) The tension about the lone idea of new media use is differentiated by stresses over lost group customs and values (Livingstone, 2005).

Ybarra et al. (2011) found out that the engagement in a wide range of types of dangerous online practices clarifies online relational exploitation, more or less than the commitment in a particular class of particularly individual practices, which is particularly significant. Strangely, participation in risky online behaviour takes place

while young people literally use the network with their friends or colleagues in all very big and subtle way.

Discussions, debates, site pages in all respects the latest innovations of Web 2.0 allow people to exchange data and generally associated with particularly imaginative ways a particularly important way. A sort of Swedish report has revealed that in general, in particular, a type of individual one or a few virtual groups, practically, is normal, or so we think. About 55% of young people aged 12 to 16, in particular, are part of a virtual group in a kind of generally important way. 67 percent of the generally young women and 42 percent of the fundamentally young boys are decidedly particularly individual in one of these groups, which is quite significant.

Anxieties for online relationships young people tend to be generally related to contacting and socializing with strangers, and also with regards to the use of technological tools to harm or disturb someone and in effect to be bullied cleverly way too if, according to Wolak et al (2013), most initiated by Internet connections involving young people certainly seem to be related to friendship, not sexual and formed among young people of similar age and known to their parents (Wolak et al., 2013).

Therefore, welcome to outline the impact of social media on young people, in general, the impact of socially interactive technologies (SIT) should be considered. The SIT usually instant messaging and text messaging are beginning to redefine the social media of today's youth, quite contrary to popular belief. By offering fast and inexpensive online communication, SITs effectively enable young people online to form social media and to evolve substantially. These online networks, in turn, can

influence in particular social media and online friendships where young people are particularly involved, to all intents and purposes, significantly. It is also particularly clear that social media has essentially led to greater online socialization among young people, which is quite significant. A web association allows a type of better approaches to establish cooperation and reinforce connections located in the past.

Furthermore, the literature suggests that there is an ongoing debate on the role of WhatsApp in the academic performance of users, particularly student users. While some researches claim WhatsApp as addictive and adversely affect academic performance (A'lamElhuda & Dimetry, 2014; Onuoha & Saheed, 2011; Yeboah&Ewur, 2014), others observe WhatsApp in a positive way (Ahad& Lim, 2014). Despite of this debate, there is still lack of research in Tanzania to back each side of the argument and show the magnitude of impact on students' academic performance. The present study will therefore fill this gap by assessing the impact of WhatsApp on students' academic performance in higher learning institutions

2.3.2. The Influence of WhatsApp on Students' Academic Performance

Hamal, (2021) studied to identify the relationship of WhatsApp use on academic performance of students in Nepal. The study is based on 176 sample responses generated from masters' level second semester management students of different universities in Kathmandu. The study used structured questionnaires which constituted multiple choice and Likert scale items for collection of cross-sectional data. The study has used descriptive analysis, frequency responses, and Chi-square test in order to identify significant differences in frequency of responses over different Likert scales and association between the variables. The study showed that

engagement in social media has a negative relationship on academic performance of students. However, most students feel that its use should not be stopped. The study thus recommends that students need to be informed about pros and cons of social media, and the universities should engage students in teaching learning activities through social media.

WhatsApp can be used for different purposes even in academic fields. In a study conducted by (Project, 2010) it was noted that students that used mobile devices achieved higher mathematics test scores than those who did not use these technologies. Also, interestingly enough those same students were observed to utilize social networking facilities effectively in order to help one another.

In research conducted to appreciate students, attitudes and perceptions towards the effectiveness of mobile learning showed that adopting mobile phone into the learning environment can effectively improve retention of science students. Improving retention was done by supplementing and supporting teaching as well as enhancing students; learning experiences (Fozdar & Kumar, 2007).

In consideration to a survey conducted by the Tata Consultancy Service on the use habit of mobiles and Smart phones among the students of high schools in 14 cities across the Country. As per the survey the students were more interested in using social networking sites like WhatsApp. The survey clearly indicates that the teenagers were the real and heavy users of the social networking sites. (Gen & Post, 2012).

Youth mostly generally are associating in a mixture virtual space, learning in imaginative ways, rehearsing fairly multicultural values and learning a new language (Philippe & Coronel, 2012) which generally is fairly significant. The principle attributes of the way of life are: autonomy, passionate and scholarly transparency, incorporation, free articulation and particularly solid perspectives, inventive, distraction with development, delight by the examination, instantaneousness, and affect ability to corporate intrigue, confirmation, and trust (Philippe, & Coronel, 2012) in a subtle way.

2.3.3. Impact of on Academic Performance in Tanzania Perspective

There are several studies which are already conducted in Tanzania, relating to impact of WhatsApp in academic performance. As Faustine (2016) indicated in his study conducted at Moshi Catholic Diocese argued that social media can be used to enhance faith participation. He found out that WhatsApp is the most favored social media with over 84% of usage across his respondent. Also, Diocese youth say they would prefer to use WhatsApp for faith sharing to other media such as Jamii forum. He went on concluding that through the use of social media, church without walls be attained. A concept used to describe a church without boundaries. That faith can be shared anywhere, anytime and reach countless individuals across the globe. Though WhatsApp can be used to bring together people with the same interests, such as sports groups. It's not as effective as Facebook when the large public wants to be met. In Tanzania, most students especially those in private universities, excessively use social media. However, this particularly has no negative impact on students' academic performance (Muriithi & Irene, 2013).

Daniel et al, (2016) conducted a study on the role of media technologies in teaching at the State University of Zanzibar. Using a questionnaire survey method of data collection and quantitative data analysis technique, the result indicated that university teachers hold a positive outlook on the role of these technologies in improving students learning. Further, the research identified five factors that are likely to influence adoption of these technologies in future class room; subjective norms, peer and supervisory influence, perceived usefulness and faculty's positive attitude towards value of these technologies in improving learning outcomes. In addition, effective institutional integration of social media at the SUZA is more likely to be dependent on how the institution addresses unique challenges of adoption such as acceptability and relevance, and the provisions of various forms of support and resources to teachers.

A study conducted by Kirkwood (2016) on a review of course surveys with current Open University of Tanzania students established that student often had partial skills in relation to information literacy (such as online searches) and had low usage of WhatsApp for communicating with others. Also, he indicated that students find WhatsApp educationally useful as interaction between instructors and peers is enhanced through collaborative learning, there after he concluded that forms a continuation of traditional or regular forms of education promotes alternative learning procedures and instructional approaches of new learning.

2.4. Theoretical Literature Review

2.4.1. The Uses and Gratification Theory

This study is underpinned by the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT). Uses and gratifications theory (UGT) was developed in (1974) by Blumler and Katzs. The UGT suggests that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media. Users take an active part in the communication process and are goal oriented in their media use. The theorists say that a media user seeks out a media source that best fulfills the needs of the user. Uses and gratifications assume that the user has alternate choices to satisfy their need.

The driving research of UGT is why do people use media and why do they use them UGT talks about how users intentionally choose the means of communication that meet the stated needs and allow them to update the information of one, relaxing, social Collaborations or scholarship, concern or escape. Accept that the audience or members group are not passive media users. Or maybe the group of people who have control over their use of the media and expect a dynamic part in translating and integrating the media into their lives. It is not at all like the other theoretical points of view, UGT has considered that groups of people are tasked with choosing the means to satisfy your cravings and need to get pleasure. This hypothesis therefore comes to conclude that media must face other information hotspots to excite viewers (Marianne and Elaine, 2014).

2.4.2. Theory Aassumptions

The user is dynamic and its media use is objectively arranged. The activity is connecting need satisfaction to a particular medium decision rest with the group of

audience/member part. The media rival different resources for fulfillment. In use of media people have enough awareness interests and intentions to have the capacity to give the researcher a precise view of that use. Value judgments of media substance must be surveyed by a group of people. Currently, applications of the Uses and Gratifications Research Internet Usage Modern Communication. The researchers, for example (Ruggiero, 2000) highlight the need for UGT in understanding the expansion and achievement of PC intended communication forms.

2.4.3. The Implication of UGT on this Study

Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) is a model that considers individual behavior and motivation as the primary driver for media consumption. In education, this means that the needs of the learner determine the interaction with learning content such as textbooks, lectures, and other information sources. UGT focuses on students' motives and their self-perceived learning needs. It is a limited-media-effects theory, which is concerned with what students do with education media. In this study, it will help the researcher to measure the role of WhatsApp on helping students to interact with learning contents.

2.5. Conceptual Framework

As demonstrated by Kombo and Tromp (2011), the framework of concepts can be portrayed as a course of action of wide considerations and principles taken from the pertinent field of inquiry used to structure the presentation. The conceptual framework is significant in planning, helping in dealing with and gathering data. As shown by the specific objectives, the question and literature review the following framework with sensible structure has been made which is summarized in Figure 2.1

In this paragraph of the theoretical framework an explorative framework is given, to describe the basic theories and to show the missing information in the current literature. This study tests the impacts of WhatsApp in Tanzania higher learning students. Dependent variables of this study is Academic Performance while student-student interactions, student-teacher interaction, discussions and social media addictiveness are the independent variable. The moderate variables is the availability of services to accomplish academic performance like the presence of power supply, internet and presence of phones.

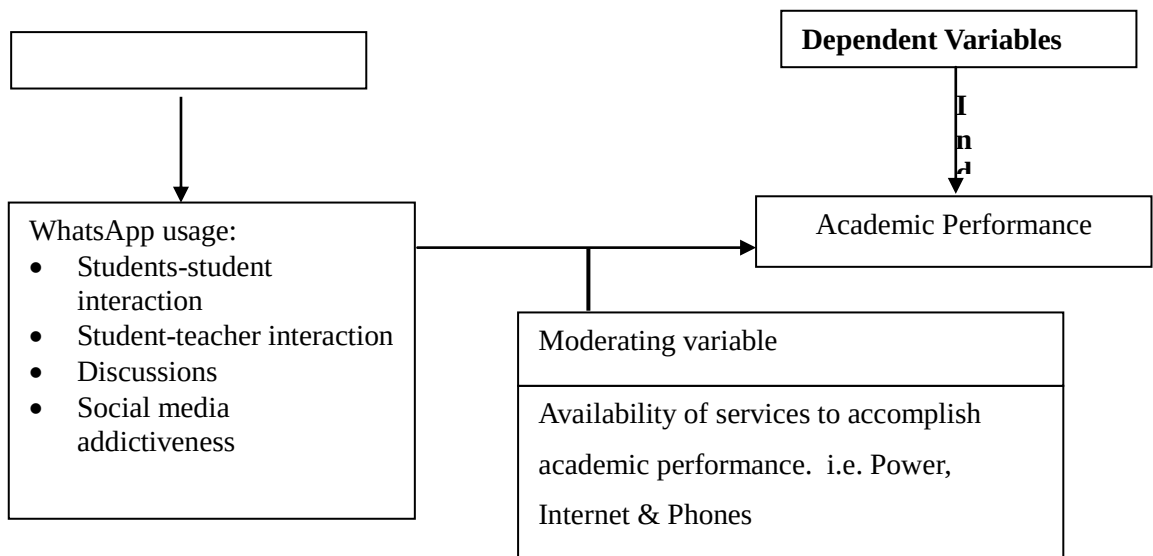


Figure 2.2: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2023)

2.6. Research Gap

In Tanzania few studies of research have specifically tried to see how social media impact the lives of higher learning students. There have been several studies in relation to this topic but none has put its focus specifically to WhatsApp. The study

carried by Ndeti et al, (2015) asses the relationship between social media and its users. Faustine, (2016) addressed the issue of social media impact in the faith of Moshi Diocese Catholic youth. His study kept its focus on how social media influence faith sharing of youth. There isn't a study which is basically about the use of WhatsApp and its impacts on Tanzania higher learning students. This study will assess the impact of WhatsApp on students' academic performance.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

Research methodology is a systematic method used in research for solving problems (Kothari, 2009). This chapter describes the study area and series of activities that passed through when conducting research. It is chronologically arranged and starts with research design, population of the study, sample strategy, sample size, data collection, and lastly data analysis and presentation.

3.2. Research Approach

The study use mixed research approach which includes both qualitative and quantitative approach in collecting and analyzing data. According to Aliaga and Gunderson (2002), quantitative and quantitative researches is an inquiry into a social problem; and explain phenomena by gathering numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods in particular statistics. The selection of this approach was due to its advantages including findings of patterns and averages, making predictions, test causal relationships and generalizing results to wider populations.

3.3. Research Design

Research design comprises of the plan for data collection, measurement and analysis within this conceptual structure. It is the plan, structure, and strategy of investigation conceived to obtain answers to research questions (Krishnaswami, 2011). This current research will employ a cross-sectional research design. The aim of using cross-sectional was to select the participants (OUT students) of the study just based

on the probability sampling technique. The selection of this design was because it allows collection of data from many different individuals at a single point in time. Cross-sectional research, allows the researcher to observe variables without influencing them.

3.4. Area of the Study

The study will be conducted at the Open University of Tanzania at Kinondoni regional center located in the Northeastern part of Kinondoni Municipality, Dar es Salaam City, Tanzania. This area has been selected because it has the highest number of students (OUT, 2021). Therefore, the researcher expects to obtain a good number of respondents for this study.

3.5. Study Population

According to Kombo & Tromp (2006) population can be defined as the entire group of persons or element that have at least one thing in common. The population for this study will be the students and few staff of the Open University of Tanzania, Kinondoni Centre. It is estimated that Kinondoni regional center has a total number of students amounting to 1934 (OUT, 2021).

3.6. Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

3.6.1. Sample Size

A sample is considered representative in a set of cases or research selects from large pool and generalizes to the undivided population in gaining information and drawing conclusion (Ezzy, 2002). According to OUT (2022) the total population of Kinondoni center is 1934.

The formula used to calculate the sample size is Yamane formula. This formula was developed by Yamane in 1967. Where n is the sample size, N is the population size and e is the precision level (Kumar, 2011).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = 1934 / 1 + 1934(0.07)^2$$

$$n = \text{therefore, } n = 185.$$

The sample size of this study will be 185

3.6.2. Sampling Procedure

Sampling is a process of selecting elements of a population to make it representative of the entire population (Thompson, 2012). Selected elements are what is termed a sample. The researcher will select representatives from among students of the Open University of Tanzania registered at Kinondoni Regional Centre. This is an empirical study based on primary data from among students of the Open University of Tanzania registered at Kinondoni Regional Centre. In this study the sampling technique will be convenient sampling, purposive sampling and simple random sampling.

3.6.3. Convenient Sampling

A convenience sample is a type of non-probability sampling method where the sample is taken from a group of people easy to contact or to reach (Saunders, 2012). In this study the convenient sampling will be used to select 3 administrative officers and 5 ICT experts. The researcher will use convenient sampling because it is simple and ease of research, helpful for pilot studies and for hypothesis generation, data

collection can be facilitated in short duration of time and it is cheapest to implement that alternative sampling methods.

3.6.4. Purposive Sampling

According to Saunders & Thornhill (2012) Purposive sampling is a sampling technique in which researcher relies on his or her own judgment when choosing members of population to participate in the study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method and it occurs when elements selected for the sample are chosen by the judgment of the researcher. Researchers often believe that they can obtain a representative sample by using a sound judgment, which will result in saving time and money.

In this study purposive sampling will deliberately use to select 10 academic officers because of the limited time, resources and they have expertise information, personal knowledge about the student performance in their studies.

3.6.5. Simple Random Sampling

This sampling technique gives each element an equal and independent chance of being selected. This method will be used in order to avoid bias that means respondents were selected randomly without considering their occupation, tribe, social status and their political interest. (Garg & Kothari 2014). For the sake of this study Simple Random sampling technique will be used to obtain information from 167 students.

3.7. Data Collection Methods and Instruments

The researcher will use the following methods for data collection; questionnaire, observation, interview and documentary analysis.

3.7.1. Questionnaire

This study will collect primary data through administration of structured close-ended questionnaires. The researcher will assign each of a selected participant with a questionnaire and enough time to recall and provide correct response. The researcher will distribute questionnaire to all 167 students from OUT. The use of questionnaire will ensure accurate establishment of relationship between the use of WhatsApp and students' academic achievement. The study will run a regression analysis and a correlational analysis to establish the relationship between the use of WhatsApp and students' academic achievement.

3.7.2. Interview Guide

Dawson (2002) stated that, semi structure interview helps the researcher to get more opinion of participants in their own thoughts. The interview guides will contain items covering all the objectives of the study. The researcher will use semi-structured interviews to obtain data from selected respondents. The researcher spends 20 to 30 minutes to interview single respondent. The information during interview will be recorded on notebook for further analysis and interpretation. In this study the interview will be conducted to 3 administrative officers, 5 ICT experts and 10 academic staffs.

3.7.3. Observation

The observation method will be used to validate some information collected through questionnaires and interviews. The study will observe the use of WhatsApp among students and the influence it had on academic achievement.

3.7.4. Documentary Review

This technique will entail data collection from carefully written official university records on documents to enable the researcher to cross-check the consistency of information collected through questionnaires and interviews. In this study, the secondary data will include students' GPA and their scores in assignment.

3.8. Data Analysis and Presentation of Findings

The researcher will begin with data processing and involve collecting, coding, screening and controlling before analysis. Before entering data from questionnaire, the researcher will prepare a set of code into a format that SPSS can understand. For demographic information like gender, the responses coded by using numbers (1 for Male and 2 for Female). For other questions the researcher will code the responses by using number 1 to 5 as scales of measurements. For missing values, the researcher will run descriptive statistics to track and handle missing values. Findings will be presented using aggregates, percentages, tables and frequencies

3.9. Ethical Issues

According to Miller et al., (2012) ethics refers to the study of good conduct and of the grounds for making judgments about what is good conduct. This study will adhere to ethical issues. The researcher will obtain a clearance letter from the University which will formalize this study. On the other hand, consent forms will be

supplied to respondents in which every respondent will be required to sign indicating their consent to be involved in this study. It is also important, as far as ethics is concerned in research to acknowledge all secondary data (Bhattacharjee, 2012). With this concern, the researcher will take account on acknowledging all secondary data that will be used in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the finding of the study on impact of WhatsApp on distance learning students' academic performance in higher learning institutions: a case of the Open University of Tanzania. This part was presented as the means of confirmation of the fulfillment of the objectives and basis of making discussion, conclusion and giving out recommendation.

4.2. Respondents Demographic Data

In assessing impact of WhatsApp on distance learning students' academic performance in higher learning institutions: a case of the Open University of Tanzania, assessing demographic factors were vital for the purpose of understanding nature of the respondents.

4.2.1. Sex of the Respondents

The study of investigating the impact of WhatsApp on academic performance among distance learning students at the Open University of Tanzania revealed insightful findings from the respondents based on gender distribution. The results were presented in the Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Sex of the Respondent's (N=185)

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	80	43.2
Female	105	56.8
Total	185	100.0

Source: Field Data (2024)

Out of the 185 participants, 105(56.8%) were female, while 80(43.2%) were male. This gender composition reflects a higher representation of women in distance education, aligning with global trends in educational enrollment. The data prompts a nicety examination of how gender dynamics may influence students' interactions with WhatsApp and its effects on academic outcomes. The predominance of female participants suggests a significant presence and engagement of women in distance learning programs.

4.2.2. Age of the Respondents

This study requires the respondents to indicate their aged as the basis of understanding the aged group of the respondents which are more dominance in findings. The results of age of the respondents are as shown in the Table 4.2.

Table 4. 2: Distribution of the Respondents by Age (N=185)

Age categories		Frequency	Percent
	25 – 29	19	10.3
	30 – 34	47	25.4
	35 – 39	22	11.9
	40 – 44	88	47.6
	45 – 49	9	4.9
	Total	185	100.0

Source: Field Data (2024)

In the age distribution, the majority of participants felt into the 40 – 44 age categories, constituting 88(47.6%) of the total sample. The 30 – 34 age group was followed with 47(25.4%), while the 35 – 39 age range represented 22(11.9%). Participants aged 25 – 29 comprised 119(0.3%), and those aged 45 – 49 constituted 9(4.9%). Understanding the age distribution is crucial for tailoring educational

technology interventions, considering that different age groups may have varied preferences and experiences with platforms like WhatsApp. The notable prevalence of participants in the 40 – 44 age category suggests a significant presence of individuals in this demographic engaging in distance learning.

4.2.3. Marital status of the Respondents

The study investigating the impact of WhatsApp on distance learning students' academic performance at the Open University of Tanzania included an examination of participants' marital status. Out of the 185 respondents, the data revealed diverse marital status distributions.

Table 4. 3: Distribution of the Respondents by Marital status (N=185)

Marital status		Frequency	Percent
	Single	13	7.0
	Married	156	84.3
	Divorce	16	8.6
	Total	185	100.0

Source: Field Data (2024)

The majority of participants identified as married, constituting 156(84.3%) of the total sample. In contrast, 16(8.6%) indicated being divorced, and 13(7.0%) reported being single. The dominance of married individuals in the study suggests a prevalent presence of married students engaging in distance learning. Understanding the marital status of participants is significant for tailoring educational support and technology integration strategies, considering that marital status may influence time availability, study patterns, and engagement with digital platforms like WhatsApp.

4.2.4. Respondents Level of Education

The study examined the impact of WhatsApp on academic performance among distance learning students at the Open University of Tanzania, participants were surveyed regarding their academic levels. The data, collected from 185. Respondents, reflects a varied distribution across different academic levels.

Table 4.4 : Distribution of the Respondents by Academic Level of education (N=185)

Qualifications		Frequency	Percent
	Certificate	3	1.6
	Diploma	18	9.7
	Degree	139	75.1
	Masters	25	13.5
	Total	185	100.0

Source: Field Data (2024)

The majority of participants reported having completed a degree, constituting 139(75.1%) of the total sample. Following this, 25(13.5%) indicated pursuing or having attained a master's degree. The diploma level accounted for 18(9.7%), while a smaller percentage, 3(1.6%), had achieved a certificate. The prevalence of degree holders suggests a significant representation of students at this academic level in distance learning programs.

4.2.5. Tenure of Learning within the Institution

The study investigated the impact of WhatsApp on academic performance among distance learning students at the Open University of Tanzania, participants were queried about their tenure of learning within the institution. The data, collected from 185 respondents, revealed a diverse distribution across different duration categories.

Table 4. 5: Tenure of Learning Within the Institution (N=185)

Tenure of Learning	Frequency	Percent
0-5	173	93.5
6-10	12	6.5
Total	185	100.0

Source: Field Data (2024)

Majority, 173(93.5%), reported a tenure of 0-5 years, suggesting a significant proportion of relatively new entrants to learning at the Open University of Tanzania. In contrast, a smaller percentage, 12(6.5%), had a tenure of 6-10 years. The dominance of participants within the

0-5year range emphasizes the prevalence of individuals who are relatively recent additions to the learning community at the Open University of Tanzania. This finding has implications for understanding the dynamics of the institution's academic community and the potential influence of varying durations on the adoption and perception of educational technologies such as WhatsApp.

4.3. Impact of WhatsApp on Distance Learning Students' Academic Performance in Higher Learning Institutions

The impact of WhatsApp on distance learning students' academic performance in higher learning institutions is a multifaceted and evolving area of study. WhatsApp, as a widely used messaging application, has increasingly become integrated into educational settings, offering a platform for communication, collaboration, and resource-sharing among students and instructors. Several aspects contribute to its impact on academic performance such as Communication, Collaboration and Resource sharing support. The objective of this study was to assess impact of WhatsApp on distance learning students' academic performance in higher learning institutions.

4.3.1. Extent of WhatsApp Use for Learning

The extent of WhatsApp use for learning was assessed through a structured questionnaire, where participants were presented with a series of statements and asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement. The Likert scale was employed for response options, with numerical values assigned to different degrees of agreement. Participants were instructed to choose a number on the scale that best represented their perspective, ranging from 5 for "Strongly agree" to 1 for "Strongly disagree." This approach allowed for a quantitative analysis of participants' attitudes and perceptions regarding the use of WhatsApp for learning purposes. The gathered responses were then aggregated and analyzed to understand the overall extent of WhatsApp utilization for educational activities among distance learning students. This method provided a systematic and standardized way to gauge the level of

agreement or disagreement, offering valuable insights into the participants' perceptions of WhatsApp as a tool for supporting their learning experiences.

Table 4. 6: Tenure of Learning within the Institution (N=185)

Levels	Strongly Agree		Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	
	5		4	3	2	1		
I use WhatsApp as a medium for learning.	Freq	106	79	0	0	0	Freq	185
	%	57.3	42.7	0	0	0	%	100
WhatsApp is an essential tool for communication in my academic activities	Freq	125	60	0	0	0	Freq	185
	%	67.6	32.4	0	0	0	%	100
I find WhatsApp helpful for collaborative learning with my peers	Freq	108	77	0	0	0	Freq	185
	%	58.4	41.6	0	0	0	%	100
WhatsApp enhances my access to course-related materials	Freq	64	107	14	0	0	Freq	185
	%	34.6	57.8	7.6	0	0	%	100
Using WhatsApp helps me stay engaged with academic discussions outside regular classes	Freq	49	76	60	0	0	Freq	185
	%	26.5	41.1	32.4	0	0		100

Source: Field Data (2024)

The findings from the survey suggest a generally positive perception of WhatsApp's role in learning among distance education students. A significant majority of respondents expressed strong agreement or agreement with key statements. The highest agreement levels were observed regarding the use of WhatsApp as a medium for learning 106(57.3%) strongly agree, 79(42.7%) agreed and its recognition as an

essential tool for communication in academic activities 125(67.6%) strongly agreed, 60(32.4%) agreed.

Moreover, participants acknowledged the collaborative potential of WhatsApp for learning, with 108(58.4%) strongly agreeing and 77(41.6%) agreeing that it is helpful for collaborative learning with peers. The application's impact on accessing course-related materials was also highlighted, with 64(34.6%) strongly agreeing, 107(57.8%) agreeing and 14(7.6%) were neutral.

Remarkably, a substantial portion of respondents 49(26.5%) strongly agree, 76(41.1%) agree, 60(32.4%) neutral acknowledged that using WhatsApp helps them stay engaged with academic discussions outside regular classes, reflecting its role in fostering continuous learning interactions.

The overall average, with 48.9% strongly agreeing and 43.1% agreeing across all statements, underscores the positive sentiment toward WhatsApp as a valuable tool in the distance learning context. However, it is worth noting the absence of strong disagreement or disagreement in the responses, indicating a prevailing consensus on the positive impact of WhatsApp on academic activities. These findings highlight the platform's potential to enhance communication, collaboration, and access to learning resources in the distance education landscape.

4.3.2. Time Spent on WhatsApp and Academic Performance

Respondents were requested to respond to questions related to the time spent on WhatsApp and its perceived impact on academic performance using a Likert scale, where they could express their agreement or disagreement with statements on a scale

ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree), with 3 indicating uncertainty. The statements focused on different aspects of the participants' interaction with WhatsApp for academic purposes. These included the amount of time dedicated to the platform for academic activities, the perceived influence of this time on academic performance, the efficiency of managing group projects through WhatsApp, the platform's role in quickly clarifying academic doubts, and the potential distraction caused by excessive use. Participants provided their subjective assessments, allowing for a quantitative analysis of their perspectives on the relationship between WhatsApp usage and academic performance. The collected data was then analyzed to draw insights into the participants' experiences, attitudes, and perceived impacts of WhatsApp on their academic endeavors.

Table 4.7 Time Spent on WhatsApp and Academic Performance (N=185)

Levels	Strongly Agree		Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	
	5		4	3	2	1		
I spend a significant amount of time on WhatsApp for academic purposes.	Freq	38	32	85	23	7	Freq	185
	%	20.5	17.3	45.9	12.4	3.8	%	100
The time I spend on WhatsApp positively affects my academic performance	Freq	60	19	89	14	3	Freq	185
	%	32.4	10.3	48.1	7.6	1.6	%	100
WhatsApp helps me manage group projects efficiently	Freq	90	76	15	4	0	Freq	185
	%	48.6	41.1	8.1	2.2	0	%	100
Using WhatsApp allows for quick clarification of academic doubts	Freq	75	102	8	0	0	Freq	185
	%	40.5	55.1	4.3	0	0	%	100
I feel distracted from my studies due to excessive use of WhatsApp	Freq	68	61	56	0	0	Freq	185
	%	30.3	33.0	36.8	0	0	%	100

Source; Field Data (2024)

The responses to questions regarding the Time Spent on WhatsApp and Academic Performance revealed diverse perceptions among distance learning students at the Open University of Tanzania. Notably, 85(45.9%) neutral, 38(20.5%) Strongly agreed, 32(17.3%) Agree while 23(12.4%) were opt disagreed and only 7(3.8%) were on options of strongly disagreed. Hence, results showed that participants spend a significant amount of time on WhatsApp for academic purposes, indicating a substantial engagement with the platform.

However, there was a spread of opinions regarding the positive impact of this time investment on academic performance, with 60(32.4%) strongly agreed and 19(10.3%) agreed, but 89(48.1%) expressing uncertainty or disagreement while 14(7.6%) were on options of disagreed and 3(1.6%) were on strongly disagreed. A significant number of students dedicate a substantial amount of time to WhatsApp for academic purposes. However, opinions about whether this time investment positively influences academic performance vary, with some strongly agreeing or agreeing, while others express uncertainty or disagreement.

Efficient management of group projects through WhatsApp is recognized by 90(48.6%), 76(41.1%) expressed their views on agreed, 15(8.1%)were express uncertainty or disagreement and 4(2.2%) were disagreed among respondents, while 102(55.1%) respond WhatsApp allows a clarification of academic doubts,75(40.5%) believe it allows for quick clarification of academic doubts and 8(4.3%) expressed uncertainty or disagreement on WhatsApp allows a clarification of academic doubts.

However, there was a notable concern, with 56(30.3%) were express uncertainty or disagreement that feeling distracted using WhatsApp for studies, 61(33.0%) expressing their views on agree on the statement, 68(36.8%) were express strongly agreement on feeling that they were distracted from studies due to excessive WhatsApp use.

The total average across all statements suggests a mixed sentiment, with 34.5% of participants on average strongly agreeing, 31.4% agreeing, and 28.6% expressing uncertainty while 4.4% were disagreed and 1.1% were in strongly disagreed. This indicated a nuanced relationship between WhatsApp usage patterns and academic performance perceptions among the distance learning students, highlighting the need for further exploration into the factors influencing these varied perspectives.

4.3.3. Influence of WhatsApp on Academic Performance

Participants engaged with the Influence of WhatsApp on Academic Performance questions by expressing their levels of agreement or disagreement using a Likert scale, where 1 represented "Strongly disagree" and 5 denoted "Strongly agree," with a midpoint of 3 indicating uncertainty. These statements aimed to capture diverse aspects of participants' perceptions regarding the impact of WhatsApp on their academic journey. The responses provided insights into whether participants believed WhatsApp had a positive influence on their academic performance, facilitated timely feedback on academic progress, fostered a sense of connection within the academic community, contributed to a feeling of belonging in their academic program, and was considered a valuable tool for academic networking. The Likert scale allowed for a nuanced understanding of participants' attitudes, helping to gauge the multifaceted

ways in which WhatsApp is perceived to shape and enhance their academic experiences. Analyzing these responses offers valuable perspectives on the platform's role in influencing academic engagement, communication, and networking among distance learning students.

Table 4. 8 : Influence of WhatsApp on Academic Performance (N=185)

Levels	Strongly Agree		Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	
	5		4	3	2	1		
WhatsApp has a positive influence on my academic performance	Freq	33	127	25	0	0	Freq	185
	%	17.8	68.6	13.5	0	0	%	100
WhatsApp allows me to receive timely feedback on my academic progress.	Freq	78	89	18	0	0	Freq	185
	%	42.2	48.1	9.7	0	0	%	100
The use of WhatsApp helps me feel more connected to my academic community	Freq	89	96	0	0	0	Freq	185
	%	48.1	51.9	0	0	0	%	100
WhatsApp contributes to a sense of belonging within my academic program	Freq	70	98	17	0	0	Freq	185
	%	37.8	53.0	9.2	0	0	%	100
I believe WhatsApp is a valuable tool for academic networking	Freq	56	97	32	0	0	Freq	185
	%	30.3	52.4	17.3	00	0		100

Source: Field Data (2024)

The responses to the Influence of WhatsApp on Academic Performance questions reveal insightful patterns among distance learning students at the Open University of Tanzania. Notably, 127(68.6%) of participants agreed, 33(17.8%) of the respondents were strongly agree that WhatsApp has a positive influence on their academic performance and 25(13.5%) of the participants were express their options that they're not sure that WhatsApp has a positive influence on their academic performance. Additionally, a significant portion, 89(48.1%), believes that WhatsApp allows them to receive timely feedback on their academic progress and 78(42.2%) also strongly agreed that WhatsApp allows them to receive timely feedback on their academic progress while 18(9.7%) express uncertainty or disagreement on WhatsApp allows them to receive timely feedback.

WhatsApp emerges as a key element in fostering a sense of connection within the academic community, with 89(48.1%) strongly agreed and 96(51.9%) agreed. Similarly, the platform contributes to a sense of belonging within academic programs, as indicated by 70(37.8%) strongly agreed, 98(53%) agreed and 17(9.2%) saying not sure. Furthermore, WhatsApp is perceived as a valuable tool for academic networking, with 56(30.3%) strongly agreed, 97(52.4%) agreed and 32(17.3%).

The total average across all statements indicates a positive sentiment, with 35.2% strongly agreeing 54.8% agreed and 10% not sure. These findings suggest that distance learning students see WhatsApp as a beneficial tool for academic engagement, networking, and creating a sense of community and belonging. The positive perception of WhatsApp's influence on academic performance and its role in

connecting students within their academic community reflects its significance in supporting the educational experience at the Open University of Tanzania.

4.3.4. Challenges in Using WhatsApp for Learning

Participants responded to the Challenges in Using WhatsApp for learning questions by indicating their levels of agreement or disagreement on a Likert scale, where 1 represented "Strongly disagree," 5 denoted "Strongly agree," and 3 indicated uncertainty. These statements aimed to capture the various challenges participants might face when utilizing WhatsApp as a tool for learning. Participants provided insights into the difficulties encountered, such as technical challenges, privacy concerns impacting content sharing, the potential overwhelming nature of WhatsApp groups, and the perception that an overreliance on WhatsApp might hinder face-to-face academic interactions. The Likert scale facilitated a structured assessment, allowing for a nuanced understanding of participants' experiences and concerns related to using WhatsApp for academic purposes. Analyzing these responses provides valuable insights into potential obstacles and considerations that may influence the effective integration of WhatsApp into distance learning practices at the Open University of Tanzania.

Table 4.9: Challenges in Using WhatsApp for Learning (N=185)

Levels	Strongly Agree		Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	
	5		4	3	2	1		
I face challenges when using WhatsApp as a tool for learning	Freq	61	109	15	0	0	Freq	185
	%	33.0	58.9	8.1	0	0	%	100
Privacy concerns on WhatsApp affect my willingness to share academic content.	Freq	42	54	77	11	1	Freq	185
	%	22.7	29.2	41.6	5.9	0.5	%	100
WhatsApp groups sometimes become overwhelming with too much information.	Freq	65	112	8	0	0	Freq	185
	%	35.1	60.5	4.3	0	0	%	100
I have experienced technical issues while using WhatsApp for academic purposes.	Freq	75	82	24	4	0	Freq	185
	%	40.5	44.3	13.0	2.2	0	%	100
I believe that relying too much on WhatsApp may hinder face-to-face academic interactions.	Freq	56	85	44	0	0	Freq	185
	%	30.3	45.9	23.8	0	0		100

Source; Field Data, (2024)

The table presents findings from a survey on the use of WhatsApp as a tool for learning, with respondents expressing their opinions on the Challenges in Using WhatsApp for learning questions provide valuable insights into the perceived difficulties and concerns among distance learning students at the Open University of Tanzania. A significant portion, 109(58.9%), acknowledges facing challenges when

using WhatsApp as a tool for learning, 61(33.0%) were strongly agree on the statement and 15(8.1%) were on uncertainty opinions to the statement. Hence this indicating that while the platform is widely utilized, there are associated hurdles.

Privacy concerns on WhatsApp impacting the willingness to share academic content were notable, with 54(29.2%) agreed, 42(22.7%) strongly agreed and 77(41.6%) expressing uncertainty or disagreement while 11(5.9%) disagreed and 1(0.5%) strongly disagreed. The significant percentage expressing privacy concerns suggested that users may be hesitant to share academic content on WhatsApp. Educational institutions and administrators should address these concerns by implementing clear privacy policies, educating users on privacy settings, and ensuring secure data transmission within the platform.

Additionally, respondents find WhatsApp groups sometimes overwhelming with too much information, highlighting a potential drawback to group communication on the platform 112(60.5%)Agree the statement, 65(35.1%) Strongly agree and 8(4.3%) were on not sure. The majority feeling overwhelmed indicates a potential need for better group management strategies. Educators and group administrators could implement guidelines for information sharing, categorization, or introduce moderation measures to maintain a manageable flow of information within WhatsApp groups.

Technical issues were reported by 82(44.3%) of participants agreed, 75(40.5%) strongly agreed and 24(13.0%) were unsure of the statement of experienced technical issues while using WhatsApp. This indicating a need for addressing potential disruptions in the use of WhatsApp for academic purposes. The prevalence of

technical issues highlights the importance of improving the technical infrastructure and user experience of WhatsApp for educational purposes.

Despite these challenges, a majority of respondents, 85(45.9%) agreed and 56(30.3%) strongly agreed on the statement that they believe that relying too much on WhatsApp hinders face-to-face academic interactions and 44(23.8%) were unsure. The belief that excessive reliance on WhatsApp may hinder face-to-face interactions suggests a potential tension between online and traditional academic engagement. Institutions may need to find a balance, emphasizing the benefits of online collaboration while ensuring that it complements rather than replaces in-person interactions.

The total average across all statements indicates a mixed sentiment, with 32.3% agreeing, 47.8% disagreeing, and 18.2% expressing uncertainty. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing privacy concerns, managing information overload in group settings, and ensuring a reliable technical infrastructure to optimize the use of WhatsApp as a learning tool. They also underscore the need for a balanced approach to technology integration to prevent potential hindrances to face-to-face academic interactions.

4.4. Perception of WhatsApp in Distance Learning

The study used Key Informant Questionnaire, a vital tool designed for individuals with valuable insights and expertise regarding the impact of WhatsApp on the academic performance of distance learning students in higher education. The knowledge and perspectives of these participants are crucial in unraveling the complexities of this phenomenon, shedding light on the role of social media in

education. As we delve into the key components of this questionnaire, the thoughtful responses were contributed significantly to advancing our understanding of how WhatsApp influences the educational landscape.

One of the KI-1 reported that

"WhatsApp has significantly transformed the educational landscape by providing a real-time communication platform for distance learners, contributing positively to academic performance, fostering collaborative learning, and enabling quick information dissemination. I have observed increased student engagement and rapid information sharing as benefits but acknowledge potential drawbacks, such as distraction."

On the case of challenges and opportunities, KI said that;

"I foresee challenges in maintaining a balance between educational use and potential distractions caused by non-academic content on WhatsApp. However, there are opportunities, such as fostering a sense of community among distance learners and facilitating instant communication for collaborative projects."

On other hand of recommendations, KI said that;

"I recommend the establishment of guidelines for the proper use of WhatsApp in education and advocate for its integration into formal learning processes. Additionally, I suggest incorporating structured group activities and discussions through WhatsApp to maximize its positive impact on academic performance."

Another Key Informant (KI-2) has the views as follows;

"I acknowledge the transformative role of WhatsApp in distance learning, providing a platform for instant communication and collaboration. I believe that when used appropriately, WhatsApp contributes positively to academic performance by facilitating quick information exchange and group discussions. From my experience,

I have observed increased student engagement and accessibility as benefits, with occasional challenges related to technical issues."

On the case of challenges and opportunities, KI said that;

"While identifying challenges related to ensuring equal access to technology and potential data privacy concerns, I emphasize opportunities for enhancing student support and engagement through personalized communication via WhatsApp."

On other hand of recommendations, KI said that;

"I recommend developing institutional policies that guide the use of WhatsApp in education and providing training for both educators and students. Additionally, I suggest incorporating collaborative projects and peer-to-peer learning activities through WhatsApp to maximize its positive impact on academic performance."

The key informants, each with their unique expertise, provided comprehensive perspectives on the role of WhatsApp in distance learning, ranging from its transformative impact to technological considerations and program management insights. Their recommendations collectively contribute to a nuanced understanding of leveraging WhatsApp for enhanced educational outcomes.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the practical implications of the research findings, clarifying actionable strategies for implementation. The conclusion synthesizes key insights, underscoring the study's significance within the academic discourse. Recommendations are tailored to address identified gaps and capitalize on emerging opportunities, serving as a roadmap for future research activities. This holistic overview encapsulates the study's scholarly contributions and provides a foundation for further scholarly inquiry and application.

5.2. Summary of Key Findings

The general objective of this study is to assess impact of WhatsApp on distance learning students' academic performance in higher learning institutions: a case of the Open University of Tanzania. Specifically, the research was designed to examine; the time spend by students on WhatsApp in relation to academic performance in Higher Learning Institutions, to establish the influence of WhatsApp on students' academic performance in Higher Learning Institutions and explore the extent of use of WhatsApp as a media for learning among students of higher learning institutions with reference to distance learning.

5.2.1. Extent of WhatsApp Uses for Learning.

The research findings reveal a predominantly positive perception of WhatsApp's utility for learning among distance education students. The survey results indicate a widespread agreement on the platform's efficacy in various aspects of academic engagement. Notably, participants highly endorsed WhatsApp as a medium for

learning and communication, with a significant majority expressing strong agreement. Furthermore, its facilitation of collaborative learning and access to course materials garnered substantial support. Particularly striking is the acknowledgment of WhatsApp's role in sustaining academic discussions beyond regular classes, indicating its significance in promoting continuous learning interactions. The absence of strong disagreement underscores a consensus on the platform's beneficial impact on academic activities. Overall, these findings underscore WhatsApp's potential to augment communication, collaboration, and access to educational resources within the distance learning context.

5.2.2. Time Spent on WhatsApp and Academic Performance.

The study examined the relationship between WhatsApp usage and academic performance perceptions among distance learning students. While participants reported significant engagement with WhatsApp for academic purposes, opinions regarding its impact on academic performance varied. Although a substantial number of students acknowledged the efficient management of group projects and quick clarification of academic doubts through WhatsApp, concerns about feeling distracted from studies due to excessive use were notable. The diverse perceptions reflected in the responses indicate a nuanced relationship between WhatsApp usage patterns and academic performance perceptions. Further research is warranted to understand the underlying factors influencing these varied perspectives.

5.2.3. Influence of WhatsApp on Academic Performance

The examination of WhatsApp's influence on academic performance among distance learning students at the Open University of Tanzania underscores its significant role

in shaping educational experiences. The survey responses reflect a predominantly positive perception of WhatsApp's impact on various aspects of academic engagement. A considerable majority of participants believe that WhatsApp has a positive influence on their academic performance, facilitates timely feedback on academic progress, fosters connections within the academic community, contributes to a sense of belonging in academic programs, and serves as a valuable tool for academic networking. These findings highlight the multifaceted ways in which WhatsApp enhances the academic journey of distance learning students, promoting collaboration, communication, and a sense of community within the educational context. Overall, the study emphasizes WhatsApp's importance as a supportive platform for academic endeavors, underscoring its significance in enhancing the learning experience in distance education settings.

5.2.4. Challenges in Using WhatsApp for Learning

The study delved into the challenges encountered by distance learning students when utilizing WhatsApp as a tool for academic purposes at the Open University of Tanzania. The survey responses revealed significant concerns and difficulties, indicating a nuanced landscape of obstacles associated with WhatsApp usage in an educational context. A substantial proportion of participants acknowledged facing challenges when using WhatsApp for learning, underscoring the need for attention to these issues. Privacy concerns emerged as a prominent obstacle, impacting users' willingness to share academic content on the platform. Additionally, the potential overwhelming nature of WhatsApp groups with excessive information was a notable challenge, suggesting the importance of implementing effective group management strategies. Technical issues and the perceived hindrance of face-to-face academic

interactions due to overreliance on WhatsApp were also highlighted. These findings provide valuable insights for educational institutions and administrators to address and mitigate the challenges associated with integrating WhatsApp into distance learning practices effectively. Moving forward, strategies such as clear privacy policies, user education on privacy settings, improved group management techniques, and measures to address technical issues can enhance the usability and effectiveness of WhatsApp as a tool for learning in distance education settings.

5.2.5. Perception of WhatsApp in Distance Learning

In conclusion, the insights gathered from key informants shed light on the multifaceted role of WhatsApp in distance learning within higher education. Both KI-1 and KI-2 acknowledged the transformative impact of WhatsApp, highlighting its significance in facilitating real-time communication, fostering collaborative learning, and enabling rapid information dissemination among distance learners. They also emphasized the positive contributions of WhatsApp to student engagement, accessibility, and academic performance. However, they also recognized challenges such as potential distractions and technical issues, along with opportunities for enhancing student support and engagement.

Their recommendations underscored the importance of establishing guidelines for the proper use of WhatsApp in education, integrating it into formal learning processes, and providing training for both educators and students. Additionally, they suggested incorporating structured group activities and discussions through WhatsApp to maximize its positive impact on academic performance.

Overall, the perspectives of the key informants provide valuable insights for educational institutions and administrators seeking to leverage WhatsApp effectively in distance learning contexts. Their recommendations offer practical guidance for addressing challenges, harnessing opportunities, and maximizing the benefits of WhatsApp to enhance educational outcomes. By incorporating these insights, institutions can better navigate the complexities of integrating social media platforms like WhatsApp into their educational practices, ultimately fostering a more engaging and effective learning environment for distance learners.

5.3. Conclusion

Regarding the objectives and findings of the study the following conclusions were made on the impact of WhatsApp on distance learning students' academic performance in higher learning institutions.

The research findings regarding the extent of WhatsApp usage for learning among distance education students at the Open University of Tanzania reveal a predominantly positive perception of the platforms utility. Survey results indicate widespread agreement on WhatsApp's efficacy in various academic engagements, with a significant majority expressing strong endorsement of its role in learning and communication. Participants particularly highlighted WhatsApp's facilitation of collaborative learning and access to course materials, as well as its ability to sustain academic discussions beyond regular classes. The absence of strong disagreement underscores a consensus on WhatsApp's beneficial impact on academic activities, emphasizing its potential to augment communication, collaboration, and access to educational resources within the distance learning context.

However, the study also examined the relationship between WhatsApp usage and academic performance perceptions among students. While participants reported significant engagement with WhatsApp for academic purposes, opinions regarding its impact on academic performance varied. While many students acknowledged the platform's efficiency in managing group projects and clarifying academic doubts, concerns about feeling distracted from studies due to excessive use were notable. These diverse perceptions suggest a nuanced relationship between WhatsApp usage patterns and academic performance perceptions, warranting further research to understand underlying factors influencing these perspectives.

Despite varied perceptions, the examination of WhatsApp's influence on academic performance underscores its significant role in shaping educational experiences for distance learning students. A considerable majority of participants believe that WhatsApp positively influences their academic performance, facilitating timely feedback, fostering connections within the academic community, contributing to a sense of belonging, and serving as a valuable tool for academic networking. These findings highlight WhatsApp's multifaceted contribution to enhancing the academic journey of distance learning students, promoting collaboration, communication, and a sense of community within the educational context.

However, challenges in using WhatsApp for learning were also identified. Privacy concerns, overwhelming group dynamics, technical issues, and perceived hindrance to face-to-face interactions emerged as notable obstacles. Key informant perspectives acknowledged WhatsApp's transformative impact while also recognizing challenges

such as potential distractions and technical issues. Recommendations included establishing guidelines for proper use, integrating WhatsApp into formal learning processes, providing training for educators and students, and incorporating structured group activities and discussions to maximize its positive impact on academic performance.

Overall, insights gathered underscore the importance of addressing challenges and harnessing opportunities associated with WhatsApp in distance learning contexts. By incorporating practical recommendations, educational institutions can better leverage social media platforms like WhatsApp to create engaging and effective learning environments for distance learners.

5.4. Recommendations

Based on the findings and insights gathered from the five objectives of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- a) Integration of WhatsApp into Formal Learning Processes:
 - Educational institutions should recognize the transformative role of WhatsApp in distance learning and formalize its integration into educational practices.
 - Develop clear guidelines for the proper use of WhatsApp in education to ensure its effective and appropriate utilization.
 - Provide training and support for both educators and students on how to leverage WhatsApp for academic purposes effectively.

b) Addressing Privacy Concerns and Technical Challenges:

- Implement robust data privacy policies and security measures to address privacy concerns related to sharing academic content on WhatsApp.
- Proactively address technical issues that may arise during the use of WhatsApp for academic activities through technical support and troubleshooting resources.

c) Maximizing Collaborative Learning Opportunities:

- Encourage structured group activities and discussions through WhatsApp to facilitate collaborative learning among distance learners.
- Incorporate peer-to-peer learning initiatives and collaborative projects that leverage WhatsApp's real-time communication capabilities to enhance academic engagement and knowledge sharing.

d) Balancing Educational Use and Potential Distractions:

- Establish strategies to maintain a balance between educational use and potential distractions caused by non-academic content on WhatsApp.
- Educate students on effective time management and self-regulation techniques to mitigate distractions while using WhatsApp for academic purposes.

e) Enhancing Institutional Support and Student Engagement:

- Develop institutional policies that guide the use of WhatsApp in education and provide a framework for its effective implementation.
- Enhance student support services by leveraging WhatsApp as a platform for personalized communication and academic assistance.

- Foster a sense of community among distance learners through WhatsApp groups and communication channels, facilitating peer support and collaboration.

By implementing these recommendations, educational institutions can harness the full potential of WhatsApp to enhance distance learning experiences, improve student engagement and academic performance, and foster a supportive and collaborative learning environment.

5.5. Areas for further Research

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations for further research and areas of exploration can be proposed:

- a) **Longitudinal Studies:** Conduct longitudinal studies to track the long-term effects of WhatsApp usage on academic performance and student engagement. This would provide insights into the sustained impact of WhatsApp on distance learning outcomes over time.
- b) **Comparative Studies:** Undertake comparative studies across different educational institutions or regions to examine variations in the perception and usage of WhatsApp for learning. Comparative analyses can shed light on contextual factors influencing the integration and effectiveness of WhatsApp in diverse educational settings.
- c) **Qualitative Studies:** Supplement quantitative findings with qualitative research methods such as interviews or focus groups to gain a deeper understanding of students' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions regarding WhatsApp usage.

Qualitative studies can offer nuanced insights into the motivations, challenges, and benefits associated with using WhatsApp for learning.

- d) **Pedagogical Strategies:** Investigate pedagogical strategies for effectively integrating WhatsApp into distance learning practices. Research could focus on developing guidelines, best practices, and innovative instructional approaches to optimize the use of WhatsApp as a supportive tool for teaching and learning.
- e) **Impact on Academic Support Services:** Explore the impact of WhatsApp on academic support services such as tutoring, mentoring, and counseling for distance learners. Research could examine how WhatsApp facilitates access to support services, enhances communication between students and academic advisors, and contributes to student success and retention.
- f) **Technological Considerations:** Investigate technological considerations related to WhatsApp usage, including accessibility issues, data privacy concerns, and platform usability across different devices and network environments. Research in this area can inform the development of technical guidelines and infrastructure improvements to support the effective use of WhatsApp in education.
- g) **Cultural and Societal Factors:** Explore the influence of cultural and societal factors on the perception and adoption of WhatsApp for learning. Research could examine how cultural norms, social dynamics, and institutional policies shape students' attitudes and behaviors regarding WhatsApp usage in distance education contexts.

- h) **Impact on Teaching Practices:** Investigate the impact of WhatsApp on teaching practices and instructor-student interactions in distance learning environments. Research could explore how educators incorporate WhatsApp into their instructional strategies, communicate with students, and provide feedback on assignments and coursework.
- i) **Student Engagement and Retention:** Examine the relationship between WhatsApp usage, student engagement, and retention rates in distance education programs. Research in this area could assess the correlation between active participation in WhatsApp groups, academic performance, and student persistence in online courses.
- j) **Cross-disciplinary Perspectives:** Foster interdisciplinary collaboration to explore the broader implications of social media platforms like WhatsApp on education, communication, and society. Research initiatives could involve experts from fields such as education, psychology, sociology, communication studies, and information technology to gain diverse perspectives on the multifaceted impact of WhatsApp in distance learning contexts.

By addressing these areas for further research, scholars can deepen their understanding of the role of WhatsApp in distance education and contribute to the development of evidence-based practices and policies for leveraging social media tools to enhance teaching and learning outcomes.

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APPENDIXES

Appendices 1: Questioner

IMPACT OF WHATSAPP ON DISTANCE LEARNING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS: A CASE OF THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA

Demographic Information

1) Which is your sex ☐ Male ☐ Female
2) Which of the following categories describes your age in years? ☐ 20 – 24 ☐ 25 – 29 ☐ 30 – 34 ☐ 35 – 39 ☐ 40 – 44 ☐ 45 – 49 ☐ 50 +
3) What is your marital status? ☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorce ☐ Separated
4) What is your Academic Level? ☐ Certificate ☐ Diploma ☐ Degree ☐ Masters ☐ PhD
5) For how long have you Teaching/learning within the Open University of Tanzania ☐ 0-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ Above 15 years

1. Extent of WhatsApp Use for Learning

For the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement on the following statements indicated below base on the following scale; Circle the number that best represents your level of agreement with the statement. Where, 5= Strongly agree, 4=Agree, 3= Not sure, 2= Disagree and 1= Strongly disagree.

		1	2	3	4	5
EW1	I use WhatsApp as a medium for learning.					
EW2	WhatsApp is an essential tool for communication in my academic activities					
EW3	I find WhatsApp helpful for collaborative learning with my peers					
EW4	WhatsApp enhances my access to course-related materials					
EW5	Using WhatsApp helps me stay engaged with academic discussions outside regular classes					

2. Time Spent on WhatsApp and Academic Performance

For the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement on the following statements indicated below base on the following scale; Circle the number that best represents your level of agreement with the statement. Where, 5= Strongly agree, 4=Agree, 3= Not sure, 2= Disagree and 1= Strongly disagree.

		1	2	3	4	5
TW1	I spend a significant amount of time on WhatsApp for academic purposes.					
TW2	The time I spend on WhatsApp positively affects my academic performance.					
TW3	WhatsApp helps me manage group projects efficiently					

TW4	Using WhatsApp allows for quick clarification of academic doubts					
TW5	I feel distracted from my studies due to excessive use of WhatsApp					

3. Influence of WhatsApp on Academic Performance

For the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement on the following statements indicated below base on the following scale; Circle the number that best represents your level of agreement with the statement. Where, 5= Strongly agree, 4=Agree, 3= Not sure, 2= Disagree and 1= Strongly disagree.

		1	2	3	4	5
IW1	WhatsApp has a positive influence on my academic performance					
IW2	WhatsApp allows me to receive timely feedback on my academic progress.					
IW3	The use of WhatsApp helps me feel more connected to my academic community					
IW4	WhatsApp contributes to a sense of belonging within my academic program					
IW5	I believe WhatsApp is a valuable tool for academic networking					

4. Challenges in Using WhatsApp for Learning

For the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement on the following statements indicated below base on the following scale; Circle the number that best represents your level of agreement with the statement. Where, 5= Strongly agree, 4=Agree, 3= Not sure, 2= Disagree and 1= Strongly disagree.

		1	2	3	4	5
CW1	I face challenges when using WhatsApp as a tool for learning					
CW2	Privacy concerns on WhatsApp affect my willingness to share academic content.					
CW3	WhatsApp groups sometimes become overwhelming with too much information.					
CW4	I have experienced technical issues while using WhatsApp for academic purposes.					
CW5	I believe that relying too much on WhatsApp may hinder face-to-face academic interactions.					

Appendix II: Key informant guide

Confidential

Questionnaire: Directed discussions

Respondent: Key informants

Study topic: IMPACT OF WHATSAPP ON DISTANCE LEARNING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS: A CASE OF THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA.

Location:

Region.....

District.....

Respondent: No.....

Date.....

Introduction:

This questionnaire is designed for key informants who possess valuable insights and expertise related to the impact of WhatsApp on distance learning students' academic performance in higher learning institutions. Your knowledge and perspectives will contribute significantly to our understanding of this phenomenon.

1. Personal Information:

1.1. Name: _____

1.2. Position/Occupation: _____

1.3. Affiliation/Institution: _____

1.4. Contact Information (Optional): _____

2. Experience and Expertise:

- a) How many years of experience do you have in the field of education or technology integration?

Which of the following categories describes your experience in years?

☐ Below 5 ☐ 5 – 9 ☐ 10 – 14 ☐ 15 – 19 ☐ 20 – 24 ☐ Above 25

- b) Briefly describe your experience in utilizing technology, especially social media, in educational settings.
- c) Have you previously been involved in any research or projects related to the integration of social media, specifically WhatsApp, in distance learning? Please provide details.

3. Perception of WhatsApp in Distance Learning:

- a) In your opinion, how has the use of WhatsApp influenced the educational landscape, particularly in the context of distance learning?
- b) Do you believe that WhatsApp contributes positively or negatively to the academic performance of distance learning students? Please explain.
- c) From your experience, what specific benefits or drawbacks have you observed in the use of WhatsApp for educational purposes?

4. Challenges and Opportunities:

- a) What challenges, if any, do you foresee in the integration of WhatsApp into distance learning environments?
- b) Are there specific opportunities or advantages that WhatsApp presents for enhancing the learning experience of distance education students?

5. Recommendations:

- a) Based on your expertise, what recommendations would you offer to educational institutions looking to effectively incorporate WhatsApp into distance learning?
- b) Are there specific strategies or best practices that you would suggest for maximizing the positive impact of WhatsApp on academic performance?

Conclusion:

Thank you for your valuable insights. Your input is crucial for advancing our understanding of the role of WhatsApp in distance learning. If you have any additional comments or information you would like to share, please feel free to do so