

## Impact of WhatsApp on LIS Professionals

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### ABSTRACT

Socially aware computing is breaking the bricks of information communication. The emergence of mobile phone/smartphone is helping to do so. Mobile phone/smartphone is like a magical tool which allows one to do anything like surfing to chatting to messaging to entertainment. The mobile phones are the genuine gift of the technological transformation and development to the present generation. WhatsApp messenger is one of the popular social networking tool among the students, professionals, and households. Almost everyone is using to promote their business, products and services and even using it to manage their team. Library and information professionals are not much far away with its acceptance. To know LIS professional's viewpoint, online survey method is adopted. This paper, analysis at what extent LIS professionals are using WhatsApp messenger, and activities in which they have involved. An effort is made to understand the impact of the WhatsApp messenger on LIS professionals.

**Keywords:** Whatsapp messenger, social networking tools, chatting, mobile applications, LIS groups

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Technology and its continuous advancements are making life better. The communication is now too easy to manage and exchange ideas in quick successions. Seamless internet speed is wonderfully shifting entirely paradigm of access to technology. Now people are talking about the speed of bandwidth rather internet access which is commendable. By the end of 2015, there were 3.17 billion internet users worldwide<sup>1</sup>. In India, the expected mobile internet users will be 371 million by June 2016<sup>2</sup>. The reason that acceptance of mobile is reaching to the rural areas which shows the adaptability of the internet technology and communication among Indians. Cheaper cost and easy access to technology are helping in its acceptance. Everyone wants to communicate and respond in the compatible much faster way but at the same time, the cost is needed in segments. SNS made life easy in communication. Sometimes, it is said that social networking tools are the revolution in human communication. They smashed almost every barrier of communication. They are available free on Internet only one needs to have the internet connection.

Personalise messaging is again the need of the society. Various messengers have been launched with attractive features but the most user-friendly messenger is WhatsApp. Whatsapp is widely accepted by almost every sections of the society worldwide, especially, in India. Library and information science (LIS) professionals are also enjoying these services. The impact of the Whatsapp messenger on LIS professions is needed to be investigated because LIS professionals are in the business of information communication and dissemination.

#### 1.1 Social Networking Tools

The social networking sites (SNS) are very popular among Indians, especially among young generation. Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, YouTube, MySpace etc are some very common and trendy SNS to use as the tool for communication. Share, Tag, Comment, Like, Smiley, etc., are such a wonderful and attractive features of the SNS which make it acceptable to almost all age groups. The SNS are the web-based services which enable users to maintain their professional and public profile within a network. In such a network, they can share their views and resources among the members of the network. The SNS give freedom to inter-connect with all members within the network too. The classification and character of the SNS may be differing from one site to another<sup>3</sup>.

There is various mobile messenger application are available in the market viz. AIM (AOL Instant Messenger), aMSN, BuzzIM, Cubie Messenger, eBuddy XMS Messenger, Facebook Messenger, Go SMS Pro, Handcent SMS, Hangouts, Hike, iCall, Invi Messenger, Kakao Talk, Line, ManyCam, Miranda IM, Nimbuzz Messenger, OrSiSo, Palringo, Skype, SnapChat, Social Lite, Talk.to, Tango, Trillian, Twitter, Vbuzzer Messenger, Viber, WeChat, Wempey, and Yahoo Messenger etc. but Whatsapp is the most popular among all these.

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media is one of the very useful platforms where people may discuss issues of their interest or general issues sitting in the virtual environment. In fact, it gives an opportunity to restore their relationships remotely too. Englander<sup>4</sup> observed in his study that students are

sparing their time on SNSs for other purposes apart from their academic activities which affect their study too. According to Mazer<sup>5</sup>, SNS have shown the positive impact on students as for as easy learning climate among them. Instant Messaging tool helps to communicate instantly between a teacher and students which enables to help an individual student for a particular problem<sup>6</sup>.

Team man is the demand of the 21st century, which skills is not possible to be developed in the conventional classroom but such skills are developed in students while working in Whatsapp due to sharing and co-operation among each other. The Discussions made by students on the particular problem, issues and challenges under the direct or indirect supervision of teachers inculcate harmony and teamwork among them<sup>7</sup>. In last 10 years, various channels of digital communication have been accepted by the groups of teachers and students in communicating each other. Facebook groups, Orkut, Google+, Twitter, Short Messaging Service (SMS) and E-mails etc. are some of the tools which are very popular and the latest one is Whatsapp messenger of this family. Students and teachers find them appropriate for study and learning purpose due to their uniqueness and diverse features<sup>8</sup>.

From these it is observed that the use of SNS is assessed in schools and academic environment. It has the positive and negative effect on teachers and students too. But at the same time, none of the studies has been done so far to analyse the impact of the use of WhatsApp messenger on LIS professionals. This study will give new ideas and experience in understanding the approach of LIS professionals towards SNS, especially of WhatsApp Messenger.

### 3. SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

The study is confined to only library and information science professionals, particularly of Indian region. The LIS professionals who are using WhatsApp messenger tool on their mobile phones are only included in this study. It is also taken care of that such LIS professionals shall be deemed to be participants in this research who are the member of any group addressing to the library and information science area.

The study was undertaken to analyse the impact of WhatsApp messenger on library and information science professionals of India. The main objectives of the study were to:

- (a) Study the time consumed by the LIS professionals on WhatsApp messenger.
- (b) Purpose of using WhatsApp Messenger by the LIS professionals
- (c) Views of LIS professionals towards the information shared on WhatsApp Messenger such as personal information, duplication of information and authenticity of information.
- (d) Expectation of LIS professionals from WhatsApp Messenger.

### 4. METHODOLOGY

The primary and secondary data have been collected from diverse sources including journals, internet sources, books, etc. The data has been collected to achieve the goals of the research through survey method. Receiving answers to the questions on particular problems from the group of people on the basis of their opinion and experience by is the course of a survey<sup>9</sup>. The collected data and its interpretation shall be used to get findings of the research. A well designed pre-tested questionnaire comprising of 11 questions have been developed. SNS are very much popular among the LIS professionals and assuming that they are quite familiar with the use of computer devices. Therefore, online survey method is being adopted. The online survey method helps to reduce the paper use and time saving too.

The questionnaire has been developed on Google Forms and link of the same has been shared with various LIS groups available on WhatsApp and also displayed on the Facebook wall of the researcher for 15 days. The actual responses have been recorded without any human intervention.

### 5. DATA ANALYSIS

The online survey was made during 10-25 May 2016. Total 203 WhatsApp members participated in this survey. 75.4 % LIS professionals have participated followed by 14.30 % faculty members. Only 10.30 % LIS students have participated in the event. LIS professionals from technical, academic, higher and school library system have participated in this survey. Their representation is also almost all cadre of library system from top to lower level.

#### 5.1 WhatsApp Messenger's Membership

It was observed from the study (Fig. 1) that 30 % LIS professionals are the member of WhatsApp Messenger since more than three years whereas 51.70 % members are in the last one to two years. Only 18.20 % LIS professionals joined WhatsApp Messenger from less than one year. This shows that LIS professionals are quite active on such social networking platforms.

#### 5.2 Involvement in WhatsApp Messenger Groups

Figure 2 reveals that 44.30 % LIS professionals are active in >3 LIS groups which are quite impressive. 26.10 % LIS professionals have joined only one group followed by 16.30 % where members have joined 3 groups whereas only 13.30 % are the member of only two LIS groups. Library professionals, LIS Professionals, Library Dot Com, LIS Forum and LIS Link groups are most popular among the LIS professionals. LIS Question Bank 2016, LIS Rockstars Linux for librarians and UGC Net 2016 Lib.Sc. groups are been prepared with attractive titles. Some LIS groups are dedicated to a very specialised activity. The data is quite impressive in the context of the participation of LIS professionals in such SNS.

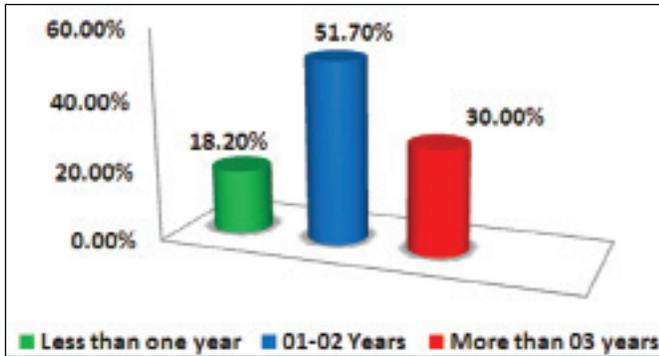


Figure 1. Social networking platforms on whatsapp.

**5.3 Frequency of Use of Group to Discuss LIS-related Issues**

WhatsApp Messenger is a very good tool used often for discussions. Figure 3 shows that 73.40 % LIS professionals are using five times a day for discussions followed by ten times (13.30 %) in a day whereas 9.90 % professionals used it for the same purpose 20 times a day. Only 3 % professionals are using it 15 times a day. The study reflects that LIS professionals are using this platform for discussions regularly in a day.

**5.4 Time Spent in WhatsApp Messenger Every Day**

In response to the question how much time you spent on WhatsApp messenger, 40.90 % said that they spent less than 30 minutes per day on it followed by 35 % (31-60 min. per day). Surprisingly 16.70 % LIS professionals are dedicating > 90 min per day on Whatsapp messenger.

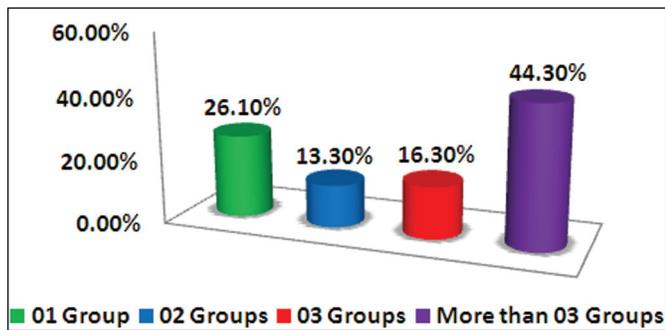


Figure 2. Involvement in whatsapp messenger groups.

The study reveals that Whatsapp messenger has succeeded to attract to the LIS professionals immensely.

**5.5 Use of WhatsApp for Casual Communication**

Figure 5 shows that only 20.20 % LIS professionals are using WhatsApp messenger for discussion on LIS-related issues. But a large number of LIS professionals (47.30 %) are using it for casual communication, like, wishing, etc. followed by 15.80 % to share images whereas only 5 % are using it for sharing voice chatting and only 11.80 % are using it to share videos. Therefore, it can be seen from the study that Whatsapp messenger is mostly used for casual communication.

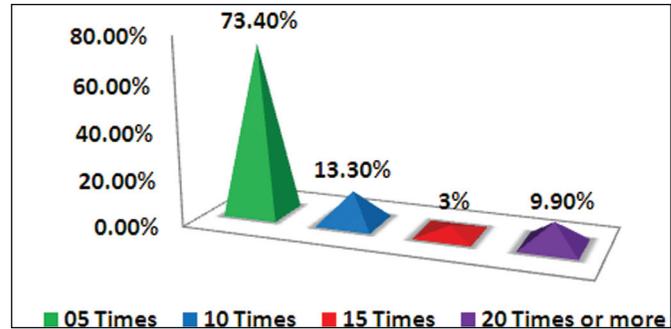


Figure 3. Frequency of use of group to discuss LIS related issues.

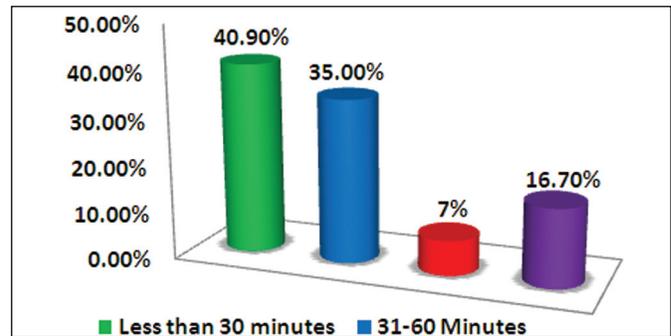


Figure 4. Time spent in WhatsApp messenger every day.

**5.6 Duplication of Information Shared on LIS Group in a Day**

When the issue related to sharing duplicate information on LIS group was discussed, a large number of respondents agreed that duplicate information is shared 2-5 times per day whereas 7% agree that 11-15 times duplicate information is shared. 11% were of view that more than 20 times per day same information is being shared. It shows that LIS professionals are very casual in sharing information on LIS groups.

**5.7 Reading of Each Post on LIS Group**

A large number of LIS professionals (45.80 %) read each and every post on LIS group followed by 24.6 % who read often the same. 3.6 % never read each and every post on LIS group whereas 26.10 % do it sometime. The study depicts that LIS professionals are very particular in reading information shared on LIS groups.

**5.8 Sharing Information on LIS Group After Checking Authenticity**

In the issue of checking the authenticity of the information while sharing, 40.90 % said that they first check the authenticity of the posts and then share the information, followed by 26.10 % (often). 29.10 % responded that they casually and check sometimes whereas 3.90 % responded that they never check authenticity of the information while sharing it. The study reveals that most of the users are quite aware of the fact that authentic information should be shared.

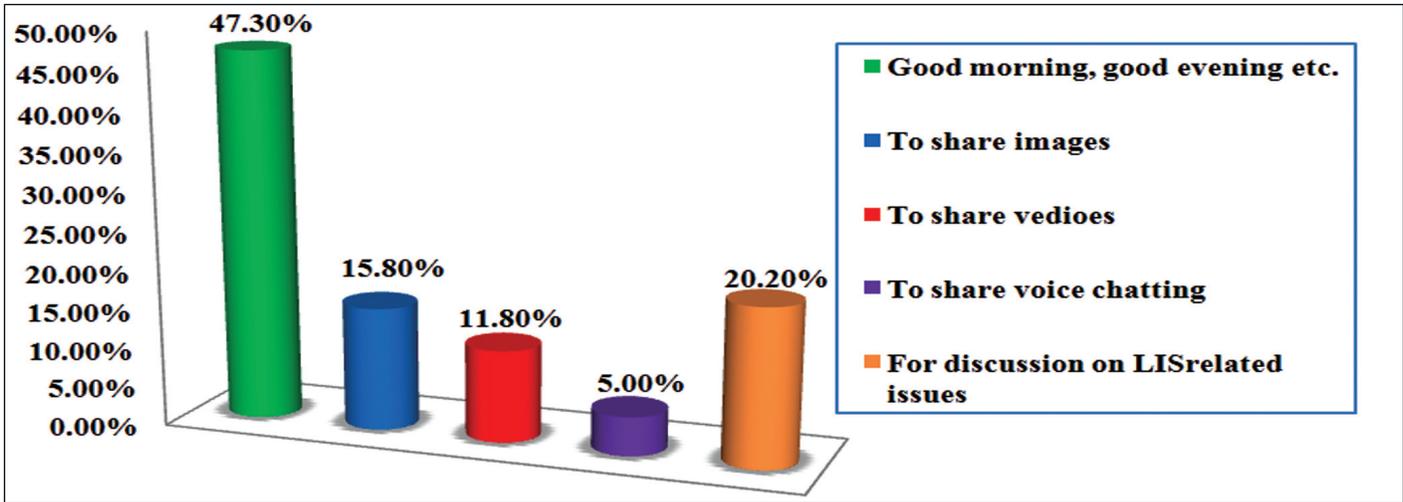


Figure 5. Use of whatsapp for casual communication.

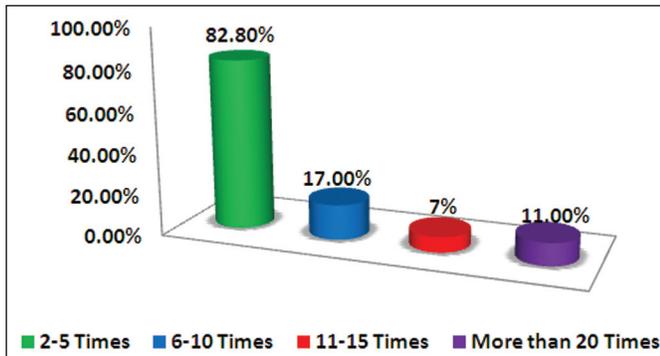


Figure 6. Duplicate information is shared on LIS group in a day.

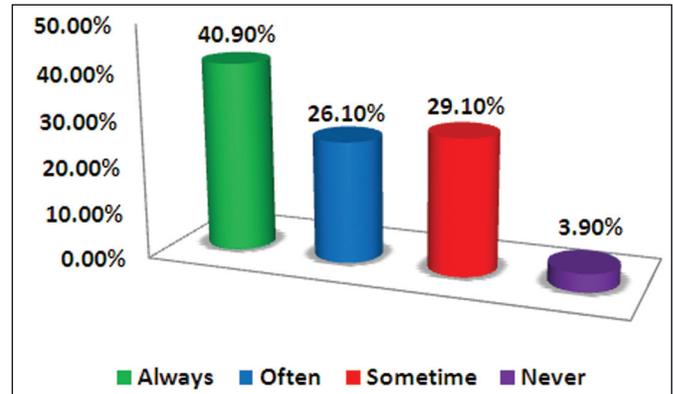


Figure 8. Sharing information after checking of authenticity.

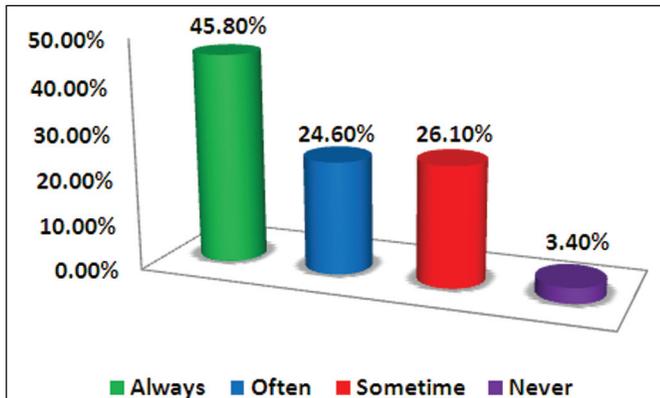


Figure 7. Read each post on the LIS group.

### 5.9 Features of WhatsApp Used

Figure 9 shows that 32.5 % used all the features of WhatsApp Messenger whereas 45.5 % used some features of it. 14.3 % used some features of WhatsApp whereas only 7.9 % are not aware of it. From the study, it can be understood that LIS professionals are using features of WhatsApp messenger comprehensively.

### 5.10 Sharing Personal Information Shared on LIS Group

In response to the question on ‘whether personal information should be shared on LIS group’, 64 % respondents answered ‘no’ whereas 22.7 % are in favor of it. 13.3 % are not sure about it. The study shows that LIS professionals understand the integrity of the LIS

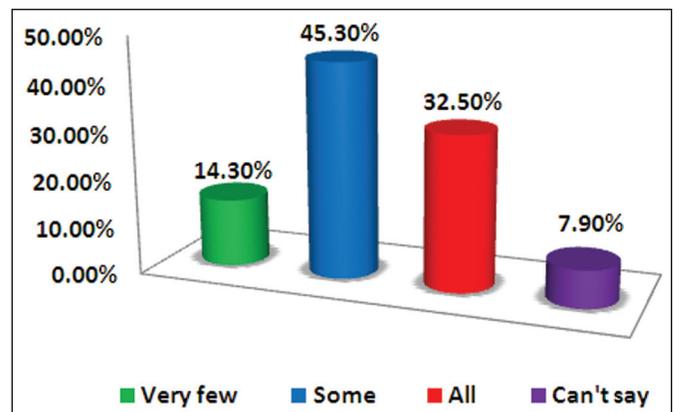


Figure 9. Features of Whatsapp used.

group on WhatsApp messenger. Therefore, they do not want to share personal information on such professional groups other than professional information.

**5.11 Action for Posting Other Than LIS Information**

From Fig. 11 it can be seen that the huge number (64.5 %) of support has been shown in favour that admin should take strict action against the LIS group members who are sharing information other than LIS whereas 18.70 % said no action should be taken. As usual, 16.7 % are not sure about the idea. The study reveals that LIS members are very focused and realising

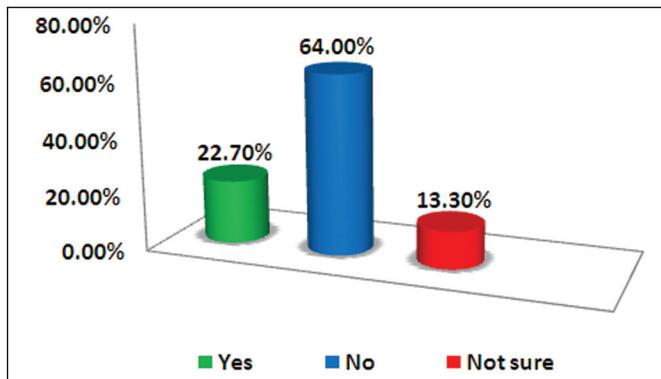


Figure 10. Personal information shared on LIS group.

the importance of the LIS group.

**5.12 LIS Groups on WhatsApp as Opinion About Vital Sources of Communication**

It was asked whether LIS groups on WhatsApp are one of the vital sources of communication to the same fraternity. A large number of LIS professionals (82.8 %) were of the opinion that LIS groups are the vital source of communication for the professionals of the same group whereas very few think that it is not so. However 9.9 % answered as ‘Can’t say’. Fig. 12 the study prompts

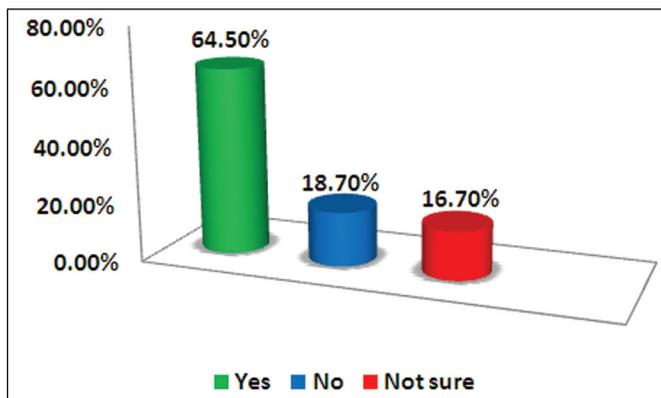


Figure 11. Action taken against members of LIS group.

that accessibility and adaptability of SNS are increasing among LIS professionals.

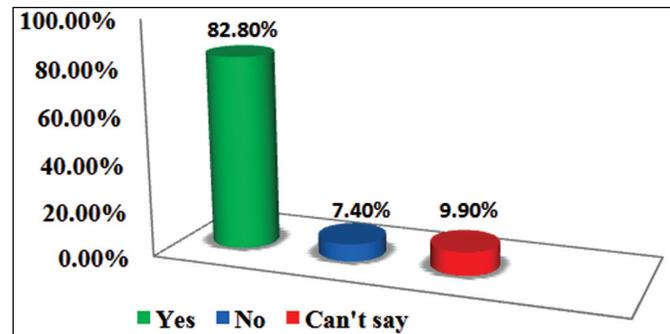


Figure 12. Vital sources of communication.

**5.13 Boosting LIS Profession by LIS Groups on WhatsApp**

It was observed that majority of the respondents (78.3 %) agreed that such LIS groups on WhatsApp will boost the LIS profession but at the same time, 8.9 % disagree with the statement. 12.80 % have responded ‘Can’t say’ which gives an impression that such members of the LIS group are not sure that it will help to boost LIS profession. The study reflects the positive impact of SNS especially WhatsApp messenger on LIS professionals.

**5.14 Features Required on WhatsApp**

In response to the question ‘Any feature do you want to suggest that WhatsApp must have’, the LIS professionals have given followings suggestions to improve WhatsApp Messenger:

- (a) There should be request sending system to add any member in any group like on Facebook.
- (b) Admin should have the authority of deletion of any irrelevant post from the group shared by others.
- (c) The calling facility should be improved and video calling like SYPE should be added.
- (d) All comments on the particular topic should be listed at one place.
- (e) Current news and feed services should be incorporated.
- (f) Discussion forums and chat room should be developed.
- (g) Video conferencing among group members should be integrated.
- (h) Facility to search other members other than the group should be incorporated
- (i) A feature that could stop duplication in post sharing should be introduced.
- (j) Sharing of large files in various file formats should be included.
- (k) Information is shared must be reviewed by WhatsApp community before making it public.
- (l) Offline feature should be developed.

- (m) WhatsApp should have the feature to rate the posts shared on it.
- (n) Auto-clearance of cache memory, data reduction, inbuilt explorer and standard news feed should be extended.
- (o) WhatsApp messenger should be available in multi-languages especially in regional languages.
- (p) Restrictions on use of WhatsApp messenger per day feature should be used (N hour/minute per day).
- (q) Privacy and security features should be improved which can be configured offline.
- (r) There should be a feature to mute voice chats on the group.

### 13. MAJOR FINDINGS

The findings based on the study are:

- (a) The popularity of WhatsApp Messenger among LIS professionals of almost all cadres are quite audacious.
- (b) LIS professionals are using social media such as WhatsApp Messenger since last 2-3 years which reflects LIS professionals' awareness and enthusiasm to use new tools.
- (c) LIS professionals are seriously involved in WhatsApp LIS group activities because the majority of participants are the member of more than 3 LIS groups.
- (d) LIS professionals are using LIS groups on WhatsApp messenger to discuss LIS related issues which give an edge to improve skills and to establish cohesiveness among LIS professionals.
- (e) LIS professionals are sparing quite good time on WhatsApp LIS groups which is again a striking phenomenon as far as the acceptability of WhatsApp messenger.
- (f) The majority of LIS professionals have chosen WhatsApp for casual communication rather for discussion of LIS-related issues, which is not a fair aspect of it.
- (g) Most of the LIS professionals agreed that sharing of duplication of information is done in great extent.
- (h) Most of the LIS professionals are sensibly using WhatsApp Messenger. They read every post and share such information after checking its authenticity.
- (i) One-third of the LIS professional's generation is using all features of the WhatsApp messenger and at the same time majority of the LIS professionals are in favour of not to share personal information on LIS groups.
- (j) They prefer also think that if other than LIS information is shared on LIS groups by the members, the admin may take strict action against such members.

- (k) LIS professionals are using WhatsApp messenger as the vital tool of communication among them. They are also quite optimistic that WhatsApp messenger may help them to boost their professional skills by using it as a discussion platform on LIS.

### 14. CONCLUSIONS

The study has shown some positive impact on LIS professionals who are using WhatsApp messenger. Social networking sites are the revolution in public communication. They are adopted by almost every age group due to its availability at the rate of internet access cost and user-friendly platforms. The LIS professionals are spending quality time in various LIS groups on WhatsApp Messenger to discuss LIS-related issues. Surprisingly teachers, students, and professionals of LIS are available in the same LIS group which is very promising to enhance skills and knowledge too. The LIS WhatsApp Messenger users are anticipating more features in the same like review the authenticity of the information shared on it, privacy and security of higher standard, discussion chat rooms and they also need the option to rate the posts shared by the members. There are very positive notes shown by LIS professionals. WhatsApp Messenger is proving its worth among LIS professionals for their professional growth and speedy way of communication tool.

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