



A STUDY ON USERS' AWARENESS OF ONLINE BILL PAYMENT PLATFORMS IN SALEM DISTRICT

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Abstract:

In the modern digital era, online bill payment platforms have become an essential part of financial transactions, offering convenience, security, and time efficiency. This study aims to analyze the level of awareness among users and identify the key factors influencing their knowledge and usage of these platforms. The research followed a descriptive design and collected data from 100 respondents in Salem District using a structured questionnaire. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis, chi-square test and ranking method were used to interpret the data. The results revealed that awareness of online bill payment platforms is higher among young and urban users. Factors such as social media advertisements, cash back offers, and peer influence play a major role in spreading awareness. The study suggests that improving app features, ensuring security, and conducting awareness programs can further enhance user participation and trust in online payment systems.

Key Words: Online Bill Payment, User Awareness, Digital Payment Platforms, Factors, Consumer Behavior, etc.,

Introduction:

In the modern digital age, technology has revolutionized the way people conduct their daily financial transactions. Among the various innovations, online bill payment platforms have emerged as one of the most convenient and time-saving methods for managing payments. These platforms allow users to pay electricity, water, mobile, gas, insurance, and other utility bills instantly through digital modes, reducing the dependence on cash transactions and eliminating the need to visit physical payment counters. The increasing use of smart phones, the availability of affordable internet services, and government initiatives promoting Digital India have contributed to the rapid adoption of online payment systems. Platforms such as Google Pay, PhonePe, Paytm, Amazon Pay, and banking apps have made bill payments easier, more secure, and accessible to people from different walks of life. Despite these developments, the level of awareness and adoption of online bill payment platforms still varies among users, especially between urban and semi-urban populations. Factors such as age, education, income level, and digital literacy play an important role in influencing people's willingness to adopt such platforms. Salem District in Tamil Nadu has experienced significant progress in digital infrastructure and internet access in recent years. However, it is observed that not all users are fully aware of the benefits, safety measures, and various features offered by online bill payment platforms. Some users still prefer traditional methods due to a lack of trust, technical knowledge, or fear of online fraud. Therefore, it becomes important to study the level of awareness among users and understand the barriers preventing full adoption of these digital services.

Review of Literature:

Kumar, A. (2024) studied users' perception and awareness of online payment applications in Tamil Nadu. The study revealed that though most respondents were familiar with platforms like Google Pay and PhonePe, only a moderate number used them for bill payments. Factors such as age, education, and income significantly influenced awareness levels. The author concluded that digital literacy programs and local-language support could improve awareness among semi-urban users.

Reddy, S. and Thomas, M. (2023) conducted research on consumer awareness of digital payment systems in South India. They found that trust and security were the key factors determining user participation. While awareness was high among youth, older adults still preferred traditional payment methods due to fear of online fraud and lack of confidence in technology.

Gupta, N. and Bansal, R. (2023) examined the role of awareness campaigns in increasing the adoption of online bill payment platforms. Their findings showed that government initiatives such as Digital India and BHIM UPI advertisements helped improve public knowledge about digital payments, but the actual usage rate depended on users' confidence in security measures and ease of use.

Meena, L. (2022) carried out a study on the level of awareness of mobile payment apps in Tamil Nadu. The study revealed that users in urban areas had higher awareness compared to those in semi-urban and rural areas. Lack of proper guidance, technical knowledge, and fear of transaction failure were cited as major obstacles to adoption.

Sharma, R. and Kaur, J. (2021) investigated the impact of demographic factors on awareness and use of online payment systems in India. Their research concluded that younger, well-educated, and tech-savvy individuals were more aware and more likely to use digital bill payment apps than those with lower education levels.

Statement of the Problem:

In the present digital era, online bill payment platforms have made it easy for people to pay their utility bills quickly and conveniently. However, many users, especially in semi-urban areas like Salem District, are still not fully aware of the features, benefits, and safety measures of these platforms. Some continue to rely on traditional payment methods due to lack of awareness, fear of online fraud, or limited digital knowledge. Hence, it is important to study the level of users' awareness towards online bill payment platforms in Salem District and to understand the factors that influence their awareness and usage.

Need for the Study:

- Growing Digitalization: With the rise of digital technology, online bill payment platforms have become an essential part of everyday life, making it important to assess how well users are aware of these services.
- Promoting Cashless Transactions: Understanding users' awareness can help promote the government's initiative toward a cashless and digital economy.
- Bridging the Awareness Gap: Many people, especially in semi-urban areas like Salem District, still lack proper knowledge about using online payment platforms. Studying this gap will help in developing awareness programs.
- Ensuring Safe Usage: Awareness about safety measures and fraud prevention is necessary to build users' trust in digital payment systems.
- Encouraging Wider Adoption: Identifying the factors that influence or hinder the use of online bill payment platforms can help improve user experience and encourage more people to adopt digital payments.

Objectives of the Study:

- To assess the level of users' awareness of online bill payment platforms in Salem District.
- To identify the factors influencing users' awareness and usage of online bill payment platforms.

Research Methodology:

The present study titled "A Study on Users' Awareness of Online Bill Payment Platforms in Salem District" follows a descriptive research design to understand the awareness level of users towards online bill payment platforms.

- Research Design: The study is descriptive in nature, focusing on collecting factual information from users about their awareness and usage of online bill payment platforms.
- Area of the Study: The research was conducted in Salem District, Tamil Nadu.
- Sampling Method: A convenient sampling method was adopted to collect data from respondents who use or are aware of online bill payment platforms.
- Sample Size: A total of 100 respondents were selected for the study.

Data Collection:

Both primary and secondary data were used.

- Primary Data: Collected through a well-structured questionnaire distributed among users.
- Secondary Data: Gathered from journals, research papers, articles, websites, and reports related to online payment systems.

Tools for Analysis:

The collected data were analyzed using simple percentage analysis, ranking method and chi-square tests to identify relationships between demographic factors and awareness levels.

Limitations of the Study:

- The study was limited to 100 respondents, which may not fully represent the entire population of Salem District.
- The data were collected only from users who had internet access and some familiarity with online payment platforms.
- Responses were based on self-reported information, which may involve personal bias.
- The study covered only selected online bill payment platforms and did not include all available apps or services.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 100)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Group	18-24 years	40	40%
	25-34 years	30	30%
	35-44 years	15	15%
	45-54 years	10	10%
	55 years and above	5	5%
Gender	Male	60	60%
	Female	40	40%
Educational Qualification	High School	18	18%
	Diploma	20	20%
	Under Graduate Degree	40	40%
	Post Graduate Degree	18	18%
	Professional Degree	4	4%
Occupation	Student	25	25%
	Agriculture	35	35%
	Employee	15	15%
	Business	20	20%
	Others	5	5%
Monthly Income	Below ₹10,000	20	20%
	₹10,001-₹20,000	25	25%
	₹20,001-₹30,000	30	30%
	Above ₹30,000	25	25%
Geographical Location	Urban	65	65%
	Semi-urban	20	20%
	Rural	15	15%

The majority of the respondents (40%) belong to the 18-24 age group, followed by 30% in the 25-34 age category, indicating that most users are young and tech-savvy. The gender distribution shows that 60% of respondents are male and 40% are female. Most respondents hold at least a bachelor's degree (40%), suggesting that educated users are more likely to adopt online bill payment platforms. A significant proportion (35%) are agriculture with moderate income levels, and 65% reside in urban areas, highlighting that digital adoption is higher in cities.

Table 2: Relationship between Demographic Profile and Awareness Level of Online Bill Payment Platforms

Demographic Variable	Category	Awareness Level			χ^2 Value	Table Value
		Low	Moderate	High		
Age Group	18-24 years	5	15	20	40	10.56
	25-34 years	4	12	14	30	
	35-44 years	3	7	5	15	
	45-54 years	2	5	3	10	
	55 years and above	2	2	1	5	
Gender	Male	10	25	25	60	7.68
	Female	6	15	19	40	
Educational Qualification	High School	5	7	6	18	8.92
	Diploma	4	8	8	20	
	Under Graduate Degree	3	17	20	40	
	Post Graduate Degree	2	10	6	18	
	Professional Degree	1	2	1	4	
Occupation	Student	4	10	11	25	12.04
	Agriculture	5	12	18	35	
	Government Employee	2	6	7	15	
	Business	3	8	9	20	
	Others	1	3	1	5	
Geographical Location	Urban	7	26	32	65	10.89
	Semi-urban	4	8	8	20	
	Rural	5	5	5	15	

The chi-square test was conducted to find the relationship between the demographic profile of respondents and their awareness level of online bill payment platforms.

- Age Group: The calculated χ^2 value of 10.56 is less than the table value, indicating that there is no significant relationship between age group and awareness level.
- Gender: The χ^2 value of 7.68 is below the table value, showing no significant association between gender and awareness level. Both male and female respondents demonstrate a similar level of awareness.
- Educational Qualification: The χ^2 value of 8.92 is less than the table value, indicating no significant relationship between education and awareness. However, respondents with a Bachelor's degree show relatively higher awareness compared to others.
- Occupation: The χ^2 value of 12.04 is less than the table value, meaning there is no significant relationship between occupation and awareness. Nevertheless, private employees and students show slightly higher awareness levels.
- Geographical Location: The χ^2 value of 10.89 is below the table value, suggesting no significant relationship between geographical location and awareness. However, respondents from urban areas exhibit greater awareness of online bill payment platforms compared to those from rural or semi-urban areas.

Table 3: Factors Influencing Awareness of Online Bill Payment Platforms

Factors (Statements)	Mean Score	Rank
Attractive cash back and reward offers increase my awareness of online payment apps.	4.38	II
Social media advertisements make me more aware of online bill payment platforms.	4.52	I
Friends and family recommendations influence my awareness of payment platforms.	4.29	III
Notifications and promotional messages from banks or service providers are useful.	4.01	V
Easy user interface and simple app design make me more aware and likely to use them.	3.88	VII
Educational campaigns or awareness drives by the government are informative.	3.75	VIII
Online reviews and ratings of apps influence my awareness.	3.97	VI
Television, radio, and newspaper advertisements spread awareness effectively.	4.11	IV
Peer influence (colleagues and neighbours) helps me know about these platforms.	3.64	IX
Demonstration programs or training sessions help in understanding online payments.	3.45	X
Availability of multilingual options in apps enhances awareness among users.	3.59	XI
The presence of customer support and grievance redressal builds awareness.	3.51	XII

The ranking analysis of factors influencing awareness of online bill payment platforms shows that social media advertisements hold the top position (Rank I) with the highest mean score of 4.52, indicating that digital promotions play a major role in increasing user awareness. This is followed by cash back and reward offers (Rank II) and friends and family recommendations (Rank III), suggesting that promotional benefits and word-of-mouth communication strongly influence awareness. Traditional media such as television, radio, and newspapers (Rank IV) and notifications from banks and service providers (Rank V) also contribute to spreading awareness among users. However, factors such as training programs (Rank X),

multilingual options (Rank XI), and customer support or grievance redressal (Rank XII) have lower mean scores, showing that formal education and support services are less effective in creating awareness compared to online advertisements and promotions.

Suggestions for the Study:

- Awareness programs should be conducted by banks and digital platforms to educate users about the benefits and safety of online bill payments.
- Service providers can improve app design and make it more user-friendly for all age groups.
- Banks and payment platforms should ensure strong security features to build users' trust.
- Collaboration between government agencies and service providers can help in promoting digital payment literacy.
- Regular feedback should be collected from users to improve the services continuously.

Conclusion:

The rapid growth of digital technology has changed the way people make payments and manage their bills. The study found that most users are aware of online bill payment platforms, especially those who are young and live in urban areas. Promotions, advertisements, and cash back offers are the main reasons behind their growing awareness. It was also observed that factors like age, occupation, and location influence awareness levels, while education and gender have a lesser impact. Overall, the study concludes that by improving user-friendly features, ensuring secure transactions, and organizing awareness campaigns, more users can be encouraged to adopt online bill payment platforms effectively.

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