
INFLUENCE OF WHATSAPP ON STUDY HABIT OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN GHANA

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Abstract

The advent of whatsapp is gradually eluding student's engagement with other social media platforms notably Facebook. The objective of this study is to contribute to general body of knowledge in Information and Communication Technology by assessing the influence of whatsapp on the study habit of University students in the Kumasi metropolis of Ghana. Using a descriptive research design and a quota sampling approach 200 respondents were selected from four universities comprising two each from public and private for the study. Data for the study emanated from both primary and secondary sources. Structured questionnaire was the main instrument used in gathering primary data. The field data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for windows and MS Excel. The findings revealed that 46.7% of the students frequently use whatsapp ten or more times per day. 40% spend between 15 to 30 minutes on each visit, 20% spend between 30 to 45 minutes during each visit. 40% use whatsapp on campus and during lectures, 33.3% use whatsapp in their hostels. The reasons for whatsapp uses include; studying, for group discussion, networking, sharing contents (news, videos and photos), experience or insight, killing loneliness, for politics, doing business and establishing romantic relationship. Majority (60%) admitted further that surfing whatsapp has affected their academic studies incalculably. Health wise 33.3% do feel back pain, 26.7% do feel shoulder pains. Vast majority (66.7%) indicated that they sometimes feel headache, 60% claimed that they experience eye irritation. 66.7% of the respondents claimed that sometimes they do experience financial restrictions and hardships. The plight of these students warrant national policy on cyber regulation from Ghana's Minister of Communication, National Media Commission and National Communication Authority including Council for Tertiary Education to avert Social Media scourge. Moreover, Parents, Guardians, Lectures and Students Councilors have a role in this.

Keywords:Whatsapp, Social Media, Study Habit, Influence, University Students

Introduction

The world is witnessing continues upsurge and massive improvement in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) today and this age. This development has brought about era of networking and digital communications regardless of geographical boundaries. The internet provides variety of digital communication tools. Billions of people use facilities like Search engines, Facebook, Intagram, Sme, Twiter Web pages, E-mails, Really Simple syndication (RSS), E-journals, E- newspapers, Internet Banking, Internet Telephony, Conferencing, Multi-Media Sharing, Online News Rooms, Social Networking etc. to express opinions, experience and insights.

According to Facebook statistics (2011), as cited in Tuurosong and Faisal, (2014) Facebook alone controlled over 800 million active users sharing more than 30 billion pieces of content each month. These come in various forms notably; news, stories, blog post, notes, photo albums and many more. Twitter which comes in the form of micro – blogging is another preferred social networking platform. It also hosted about 140 million tweets per day. And as many as 460,600 new twitter accounts were opened every year (Twitter statistics, 2011)

Bouhnik, & Deshen (2014) asserted that role of whatsapp in the socio-economic life of ordinary people cannot be over emphasized. Whatsapp create an enabling platform for engagement

and networking through two way communication, thus between senders and receivers. These could be between individuals as well as between groups at a relatively very low cost. Averagely it cost \$1to enjoy the service for a year. As a result addicted social media users are shifting gear towards whatsapp. These notwithstanding, whatsapp continues to create the opportunity for individuals and groups to share insights, experience, contents of news, videos, and photos any time all the time every time subject to internet availability and reliability

Moreover, whatsapp enables politicians and political party supporters to disseminate messages without struggle. Typically, it is mentioned of President Barak Obama that his 2008 political message wouldn't have gone far without deploying social media platforms including whatsapp. In Nigeria, formal President Good-Luck Jonathan is equally noted for using same medium for political campaign messages. In Ghana the impact is tremendous. Religious sense, most people use whatsapp to send and receive messages across board. In Ghana, the term whatsapp has become a street credibility with very high usability rate especially among students (Tuurosong and Faisal, 2014).

Studies relating to social media and students', socio-economic life, Health, psychology and academic performance have been great. The following authors are particularly notable: (Bouhnik, & Deshen, 2014); Tuurosong and Faisal, 2014;Tawia et al., 2014;Langat, 2015; Sosilu, 2014;Angadi, 2016). The gap in literature is however that social media have been over researched but little is known about how each social media channel such as whatsapp significantly influence the behaviour of individual subscribers notably students who devote much time on the whatsapp platform. To this end, study aiming to fill the gap on how whatsapp is influencing student's behaviour is therefore imperative.

Statement of the Problem

This study was aimed at assessing the influence of whatsapp on the study habit of university students in the Kumasi metropolis of Ghana. Apropos, the following issues remained paramount throughout the life cycle of the study. These include; frequency of whatsapping, the average time spend on whatsapp, the motives for whatsapping, the academic effects of whatsapping and finally the socio-economic effect.

Objectives of the study

To assess the frequency of use and time spend on whatsapping

To assess the reasons behind students whatsapping

To assess the effects of whatsapping on students' academic life

Theory and Empirical Review

Uses and Gratifications Theory of New Media

This study deployed the uses and gratification theory of new media to explain the study habit of university students regarding their engagement with whatsapp. This theory stipulates that media audience determines what they do with media and not the vice versa. This audience centric theory further explains how audiences carefully choose their media from competing sources for diverse reasons. Audiences can for instance consider type of media that enhance their knowledge, social interaction, relaxation, companionship, and diversion (Tuurosong and Faisal, 2014). Audiences focus on their choice of media information whiles the media competes with other sources of information for the audience's gratification. The theory further explains that in some cases it is possible for the audience to become so much addicted to their favorite media and eventually develop a habit for them. This theory was adopted to explain how and why undergraduate students in most Ghanaian universities develop so much habit for their choice of

media such as whatsapp to the very extent that extrication becomes quite impossible (Langat, 2015)

Tuurosong and Faisal (2014) conducted a related study in a public university in Ghana and concluded as summarized below: They asserted that social media moderately affect students and that the frequency of use was averagely one per a day. Moreover they admitted in their study that social media negatively affect students' performance. It was also found in their study that student use the social media social for non-academic related purposes which do not have any positive trickling down effects on them aside entertainment. They concluded that social deviant behaviour such as crime, drugs, kidnapping were never priority of the student hence authority should not be over concerned apropos students social media usage. This study relates to the present study in that they are both addressing student concerns from different angles.

Tawia et al. (2014) have conducted a relating study in Ghana. However, they focused on student's preference on voice calls versus whatsapp calls. The authors postulated that those students who have enjoyed the two services (voice call and whatsapp) will definitely prefer to be on whatsapp since it cost less, convenience, for meeting purposes, establishing network among related others. On the contrary those who have not tried whatsapp were skeptical about the unknown which were given as privacy, technical literacy among others. They concluded that education through familiarity is imperative.

Langat (2015) studied a group of students in Kenya and reported his interesting findings as follows. The respondents admitted that they are addicted to social media to the extent that extrication would be very difficult. Moreover, it was further concluded that most of the students were engaging in social media during midnight this notwithstanding gender. They further attributed their abysmal academic performance to their engagement with social media. This study confirms the previous review presentation above which suggested that social media has detrimental effects on performance. But differ in focus from the current study.

Sosilu (2014) focused her study on whatsapp as a learning tool to facilitate distance education. The author further posited that students were having issues on the smart phone availability and reliable access to information and network this notwithstanding the cost. The author suggested that an effective whatsapping among distance learners required improved telecommunication networks, portable mobile as well as affordable devices. Furthermore the author lamented educating adults of net-generation education will continue to pose challenge for teachers. This challenges according to the author must be seen as opportunity in the long run. Educators need to be empowered themselves in the areas of technological education, providing active learning change, development and new method for learning. Finally the author conclude by saying Facebook can be improved for use why standardizing whatsapp.

Methodology

This study was aimed to assess the influence of whatsapp on study habit of university student in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. The target population included all regularly students from level 100 to 400. All part-time students were excluded from this study. This is because of the limited time they spend on campus. This makes it difficult to observe their behaviour. Overall, 200 questionnaires were distributed. It took approximate 3-weeks to gather all the data. Twenty of these questionnaires were later rejected resulting in 90% response rate. This according to Cooper & Schindler (2006) is considered sufficient for statistical inferences and conclusions. The criteria for the rejections of questionnaires included: Non-completeness, multiple response and lack of

legibility. These were done to ensure validity, reliability, completeness and clarity. The questionnaires were adopted from Angadi (2016) who recently published a related article on the subject in India focusing on face book. These were modified to serve the intended purpose. By re-wording and assigning new constructs. Four universities were chosen comprising of two private and two public. Each selected university was given a quota of 50 students. This was followed by conveniently distributing the questionnaires till each 50 quota was attained. The field data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version-21) and Microsoft excel for drawing of charts.

Analysis and Finding

The study was aimed to assess incidence of whats App usability among first year university students in the Kumasi metropolis of Ghana. Albeit, the survey achieved a response rate of 90% out of the overall 200 questionnaires distributed. This is considered sufficient for statistical inferences and conclusions (Cooper & Schindler, 2006).

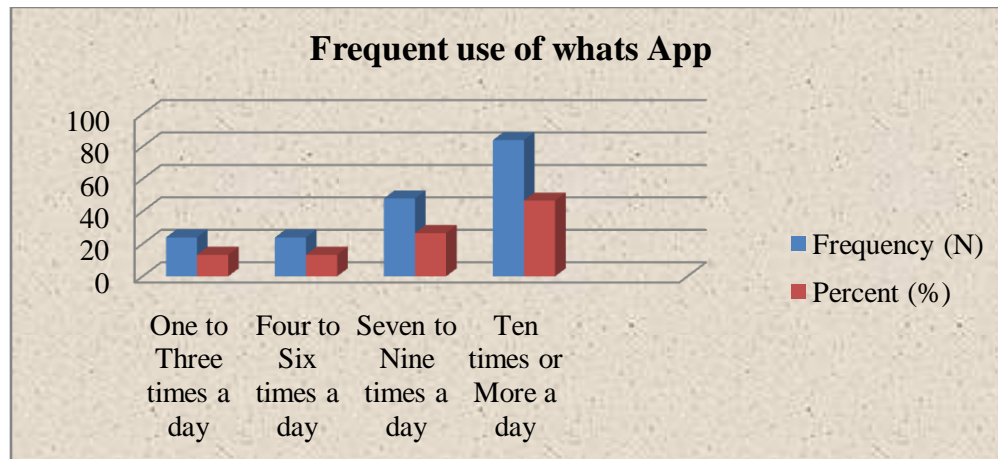
From Table 1, the average age of the respondents was obtained as 21.5 years. This belong to the majority (53.3%) age bracket 20-23, 26.7% were aged below 20 years, 13.3% were aged between 24-25 years, finally those aged between 26- 29 years constitute the least group. This implies that the whatsapp population is youth centric. The gender of the respondents was explored, majority (60%) were females and the rest were males. this implies that female surf the whatsApp more often than their male counterpart. Religiously, Christians were the most dominants group (66.7%), 20% were Muslim and the remaining 13% were other believers. This implies that Christians are the majority whats App users. This could be attributed to the fact that Christians are the majority in Ashanti region (GSS, 2010; Adarkwa, 2011). Apropos the respondent program of study, majority (33.3%) were offering Management, 20% were offering Accountancy, 13.3% each were respectively studying Entrepreneurship, Engineering Science and Computer Engineering Science. The remaining 6.7% were offering other programs. These may include Information Studies, Legal Studies, Marketing, Graphic design among others.

Table 1: Demographics

| Variables | No. of Respondents (N=180) | Percent (%=100) |
|---------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Age | (N=180) | (%=100) |
| Below 20 | 48 | 26.7 |
| 20-23 | 96 | 53.3 |
| 24-25 | 24 | 13.3 |
| 26-29 | 12 | 6.7 |
| Gender | (N=180) | (%=100) |
| Male | 72 | 40.0 |
| Female | 108 | 60.0 |
| Religion | (N=180) | (%=100) |
| Christian | 120 | 66.7 |
| Muslim | 36 | 20.0 |
| Other | 24 | 13.3 |
| Study area | (N=180) | (%=100) |
| Accounting | 36 | 20.0 |
| Management | 60 | 33.3 |
| Engineering science | 24 | 13.3 |
| Supply chain | 12 | 6.7 |
| Entrepreneurship | 24 | 13.3 |
| Computing science | 24 | 13.3 |

Source: Field survey, 2016

From Figure 1, most of the respondents (46.7%) frequently use the whats App application ten or more times per day, 26.7% use the whats App seven to nine times a day, 13.3% respectively use the whats App one to three times and four to six times a day. This implies that the whats App application use ability among is very high among undergraduate students in the Kumasi metropolis. This finding supported the work of Akbulut *et al.* (2008) who asserted that the internet has so much to offer that users get are indifferent as to which combination to use. E.g. videos, music, movies, photos, new among others.



Source: Field survey, 2016

Figure 1: Frequency using of whats App

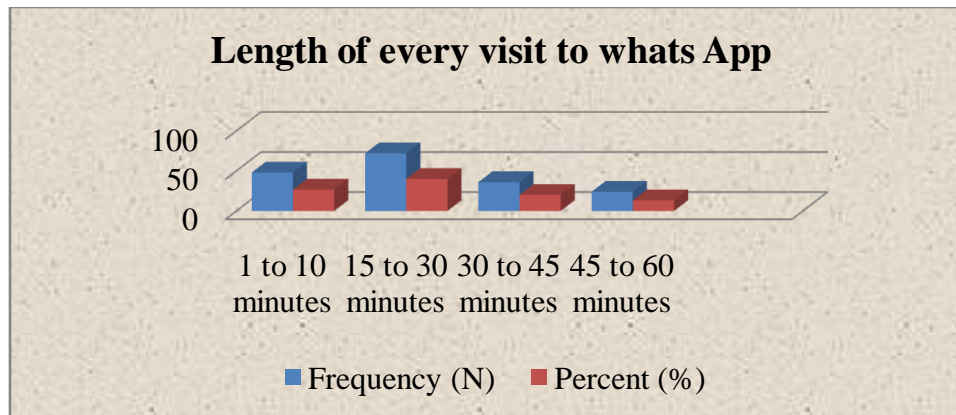
From Table 2, interestingly more than half (53.3%) of the respondent reported that indeed they do sometimes use other social media platforms such as Facebook and twitter. While 6.7% will never use other social media platforms, 40% will frequently use other platforms. This implies that social media really consumes precious time of the youth. This result corroborate the finding of ATL survey, (2008) that the advent of the internet which postulates that the advent of internet, activities such as searching the web, accessing journals, sharing information through video, audios, documents, has become easy and its available at all times, anywhere and everywhere as well as when a person is commuting etc. The availability of different social media apps make visitors easily addicted.

Table 2: Use of other social media Apps

| Variables | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Sometimes | 96 | 53.3 |
| Never | 12 | 6.7 |
| Frequently | 72 | 40.0 |
| Total | 180 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey, 2016

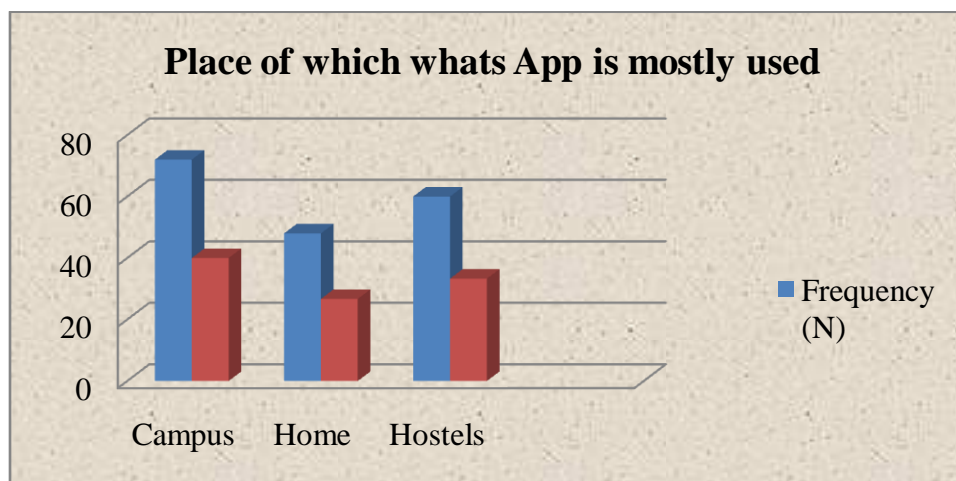
From Figure 2, majority (40%) spend between 15 to 30 minutes on each visit, 26.7% spends between 1 to 10 minute on each whats App visit, 20% spend between 30 to 45 minutes on each visit finally, minority (13.3) spend between 45 to 60 minutes anytime they surf whatsApp.



Source: *Field survey, 2016*

Figure 2: Length of every visit to whats App

The Figure 3 shows where the whatsapp service is mostly used by the respondent, majority (40%) asserted that they use it mostly on campus, 33.3% use whatsapp in their hostels, the least group (26.7%) use whats App in their homes.



Source: *Field survey, 2016*

Figure 3: Place of which whats App is mostly used

Table 3 indicated that majority 46.4% use whatsapp for self-studying or the aid in same, 40% sometimes use the whats App for academic purpose and 13.3% will not use whats App for studies. In similar situation, vast majority (60%) use whats App platforms for group meetings, 26.7% sometimes use whats App for group meetings and 13.3% do not use whats App for meeting purposes. In related situation, majority (60%) uses the media to chat with friends, 26.7% sometime do this and 13.3% do not do this at all. Accordingly, majority (53.3%) sometimes use whats App medium to tell others about them self, 20% consciously do this and 26.7% do not use the medium to market themselves. Majority (26.7%) sometimes use the whats App medium to uploads and shares image contents, 33.3% knowingly do this and 40% do not use whats App to upload image content. A whopping majority (53.3%) sometimes use whats App in sharing news contents, 47% full engage in the act of news sharing using whats App. A gargantuan 73.3% use whats App to kill loneliness whiles 26.7% sometimes use the platform to do same. Political wise, majority (46.7%) do not use whats App for politics, 26.7% sometime do and another 26.7% do engage in politics using whats App platforms. Relating to romantic affairs, 40% sometimes establish relationships through

whats App, 20% do not do this whiles another 20% do engage people romantically through whats App. Business wise majority (60%) do not use whats App for business purposes, but 26.7% sometimes do. Finally, 13.3% do conduct businesses on whats App platform.

Table 3: Purpose of using whats App

| Items | Scale | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-----------|
| | Yes | No | sometimes |
| self-studying | 46.4% | 13.3% | 40.0% |
| group meeting/studies | 60.0% | 13.3% | 26.7% |
| chatting with friends | 60.0% | 13.3% | 26.7% |
| telling others about myself | 20.0% | 53.3% | 26.7% |
| uploading and following photos | 33.3% | 40.0% | 26.7% |
| getting news | 46.7% | 0% | 53.3% |
| to kill loneliness | 73.3% | 0% | 26.7% |
| Politics | 26.7% | 46.7% | 26.7% |
| For romantic relationship | 20.0% | 40.0% | 40.0% |
| for doing campus business | 13.3% | 60.0% | 26.7% |

Source: Field survey, 2016

From Table 4 most of the respondents (53.3%) admitted using whatsApp sometimes whiles speaking with others, although 6.7% will not do this, a whopping 40% will frequently do this. The passion for the whatsApp is like a maniac since respondents will surf and simultaneously speak with others.

Table 4: Using whatsApp while speaking with people

| Items | Frequency (N) | Percent (%) |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| Sometimes | 96 | 53.3 |
| Never | 12 | 6.7 |
| Frequently | 72 | 40.0 |
| Total | 180 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey, 2016

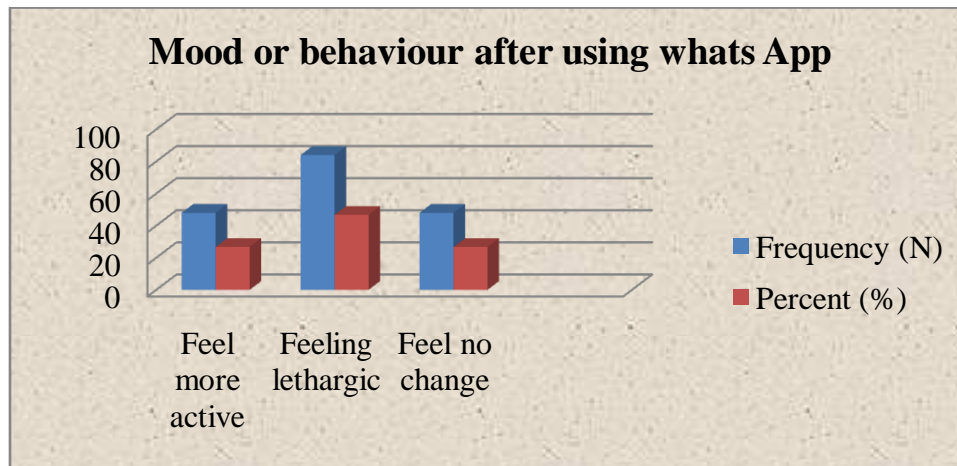
From Table 5 the result reveals that majority 40% will never surf till mid-night, 33.3% will sometimes to this and 26.7% will frequently do this.

Table 5: Using whatsApp until midnight

| Variables | Frequency (N) | Percent (%) |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| Sometimes | 60 | 33.3 |
| Never | 72 | 40.0 |
| Frequently | 48 | 26.7 |
| Total | 180 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey, 2016

From the figure 4 Majority 46.7% feel lethargic after surfing whats App. Whiles 26.7 % feel no change, some percentage will rather feel more active. This implies that the experience after surfing whats App varies from group to group and perhaps from individual to individual.



Source: Field survey, 2016

Figure 4: Mood or behaviour after using whats App

Table 6, shows majority 40% will never forget about their meal, 33.3% will sometimes skip their meal when using whats App. Finally, 26.7% frequently forget or skip their meals. This implies that whats App surfing affect people eating behaviour as 33.3% and 26.7% respectively sometimes skip meal and frequently do it.

Table 6: Forgetting and skipping meal when using whats App

| Items | Frequency (N) | Percent (%) |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| Sometimes | 60 | 33.3 |
| Never | 72 | 40.0 |
| Frequently | 48 | 26.7 |
| Total | 180 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey, 2016

From Table 7 moving on the survey reveals that majority (66.7%) were frequently discontents and depressed after checking profile of other people, 26.7% sometimes get discontent or depressed when they peruse others profile or wall papers. 6.7% never get discontent or depressed. These discontentments could be attributed to the fact that mostly unwholesome and spicy images are used in social media. Perhaps the major reason why countries such as Canada and USA are finding ways to present their high school kids from using social media platforms.

Table 7: Feeling discontent and depress after checking profile of other people

| Variables | Frequency (N) | Percent (%) |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| Sometimes | 48 | 26.7 |
| Never | 12 | 6.7 |
| Frequently | 120 | 66.7 |
| Total | 180 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey, 2016

From Table 8, a gargantuan majority (60%) admitted that surfing whats App has affected their academic studies incalculably. However a diminutive minority (40%) claimed their studies have not been affected adversely their engagement with whats App.

Table 8: Impact of using whats App on your study

| Items | Frequency (N) | Percent (%) |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| Disturbance | 108 | 60.0 |
| No effect | 72 | 40.0 |
| Total | 180 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey, 2016

From Table 9 habit is difficult to change when is developed over time; in relation to this study vast majority (53.3%) affirmed that they feel something is missing without surfing whats App. Although 13.1% feel no change without surfing, 33.3% find it very uneasy to spend a day without it.

Table 9: Experience without surfing whats App

| Variables | Frequency (N) | Percent (%) |
|---------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Feel no change | 24 | 13.3 |
| Feel something is missing | 96 | 53.3 |
| Difficult to spend day | 60 | 33.3 |
| Total | 180 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey, 2016

From Table 10, the health impacts of surfing whats App were explored, the survey discovered that, 33.3% do feel back pain, 26.7% do sometimes feel back pains. Majority (40%) do not feel any change. Again, 47% do not feel shoulder pains but 26.7% do and equally 26.7% sometimes do feel shoulder pains. Moreover, while 40% do not feel any form of wrist pain 33.3% do and 26.7% some time do feel wrist pains. A vast majority (66.7%) indicated that they sometimes feel headache, 26.7% do really feel headache after apron long whats App chat. Majority (60%) claimed that they experience eye irritation after prolong chat, 40% disagree to this. Finally, majority (46%) sometimes feel like vomiting after a prolong chat, 40% do not feel anything like that, while 13.3% do feel seriously nauseous after a prolong chat.

Table 10: Effects after surfing whats App

| Items | Scale | | |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-----------|
| | Yes | No | sometimes |
| Feel back pain | 33.3% | 40.0% | 26.7% |
| feel shoulder pain | 26.7% | 46.7% | 26.7% |
| feel wrist pain | 33.3% | 40.0% | 26.7% |
| feel headache | 26.7% | 6.7% | 66.7% |
| feel eye irritation | 60.0% | 40.0% | 100.0% |
| feel nauseous | 13.3% | 40.0% | 46.7% |

Source: Field survey, 2016

From Table 11, respondent's finances were explored to ascertain the overall effects. According to the report leading majority (66.7%) claimed that sometimes they do experience financial restrictions and hardships following their engagement with whats App, 6.7% do not experience this. Meanwhile, 26.7% frequently experience financial hardship in their dealings with whatsApp.

Table 11: Experiencing any form of financial restrictions as a result of whats App surfing

| Variables | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Sometimes | 120 | 66.7 |
| Never | 12 | 6.7 |
| Frequently | 48 | 26.7 |
| Total | 180 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey, 2016

Discussions and Conclusions

The study was aimed to assess influence of whatsapp on the study habit of undergraduate students in the Kumasi metropolis of Ghana. The discussions and conclusions were organized according to the established objectives of the study. Notably; frequency of whatsapp use, reasons for use and its impact on the academic and sociocultural development of the students.

Most of the respondent frequently use the Whats App application at least ten or more times per day, 26.7% use the Whats App seven to nine times a day. Majority spends averagely 17.5 minutes on each visit, Majority asserted that they use it mostly on campus, others use Whats App in their hostels and the homes. This corroborates the works Angadi (2016) who posited similar results in his study involving Facebook and pre-university students others authors in this respect include Tuurosong and Faisal (2014). Regarding student's purpose of using whatsApp, there indicated among the following as; studying, networking, sharing contents on music, video and news, for doing business, politics, religious purpose, kilning loneliness etc.

In terms of Social and lifestyle effects of whatsapp majority admitted using WhatsApp sometimes whiles speaking with others, although 6.7% will not do this, 40% will frequently do this. 40% will never surf till mid-night, 33.3% will sometimes do this and 26.7% will frequently do this. Majority feel lethargic after surfing Whats App. Whiles 26.7 % feel no change same percentage will rather feel more active. Regarding chat and skipping meal majority will never forget about their meal others will sometimes skip their meal when using whats App. Finally, 26.7% frequently forget or skip their meals. Majority admitted that surfing whatsApp has affected their academic studies incalculably. This claim reaffirms works done by the following authors on social media and students' academic performance (DeGroot, 2011; Tuurosong and Faisal, 2014; Tawia et al., 2014; Langat, 2015; Sosilu, 2014; Angadi, 2016). Students, health and finances are equally effected in this regards are reported earlier.

Conclusions

The study was aimed to assess incidence of whatsapp use among first year university students in the Kumasi metropolis of Ghana. To start with, this study concludes social media is platform of real gold mix with fake platinum. It will only take the wise to enjoy the gold but the platinum looks very attractive at first glance. This study found that most undergraduate's students frequently use whatsapp applications to the very extent that majority of them do this whiles on campus and perhaps during lectures. Moreover, time average time spend is high and most of them visit whatsapp more than 10 times a day.

The study further concludes that, the purpose of whatsapping varies from person to person and in some cases from group to group. The purpose depend on the user and his/her intentions. Most frequent uses include; studying, group for discussion, networking, reading contents (news, videos and photos), to kill loneliness, for politics, doing business and establishing romantic relationship.

Moreover, this study had revealed that, students social life are changed as through content reading, frequently skipping meal and surfing till mid night. They end up risking themselves. Most affirmed that they feel something is missing without surfing whatsapp. As indicated others find it very uneasy to spend a day without. As a result most of them feel lethargic after surfing for so long. These have resulted in affected their academic studies incalculably.

Health wise, the study discovered that, students are developing health related symptoms including wrist pains, shoulder pains, headache, eye irritation and nauseous. Financial sense, the study unearthed that sometimes most of the students do experience financial restrictions and hardships following their gross engagement with whatsapp with slightly below average frequently experience financial hardship in their dealings with whatsapp.

From the discussions and the conclusions herein the study proposes as follows: parent, lecturers and university council must device a policy to regulate student usage of social media platforms. Although there are good things associated with such engagement, the evil ones however supersede the good.

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