

Chapter 42

Does Whatsapp Use by Female Students Ruin Their Morality? The Case of Junior High School Students in Cape Coast Metropolitan, Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Many different social media platforms exist today. Some are, but not limited to Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, Instagram, Badoo, Skype, and Whatsapp. Of these applications, research has proven that majority of the world's population patronise the Whatsapp messenger more than the other apps. Secondly, students are noted to be the main patronisers. Nonetheless, since research has proven that students are the main subscribers to Whatsapp use globally, there is the need to examine the effects associated with its use. In this regard, the question the paper raises is, does Whatsapp use by JHS female students ruin their morality or moral life? The findings of the paper inform its conclusion that the use of Whatsapp by Junior High School female students negatively affects their morality/moral foundations. This is because the paper revealed that about 90% of the Junior High School female students who use Whatsapp mostly exchange pornographic materials, abusive contents and engage in unhealthy acts (e.g. phone sex) with their peers who are online. The consumption of these contents has introduced them to the practice of some social vices of which they were naïve about before their contact with the app.

INTRODUCTION

Old folks in the Ghanaian society say, in the past, it was uneasy for one to access communities that were far. This is because, there were no road networks linking the various settlements. Generally, in one's attempt to access far away communities, one sometimes gets lost in the midst of the forests. The lucky ones were coincidentally helped to reach their destination by a wandering hunter. Another problem to be grappled with was communication. By communication, I mean the media through which messages were easily disseminated to people who were close-by and those that were afar. In fact there was no such

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effective and advanced communication machinery to enhance proper dissemination of information to everyone. In this regard, there were times people missed certain vital information and events. In situations where there was the need to disseminate information to other settlements, one had to walk for a number of days to reach the particular destination. At certain instances, the messenger(s) became prey to wild animals.

Inferring from the past, today, one observes a change and a build-up in what existed in the past. The change and the build-up have been brought about by “Technology”. Nevertheless, I must be quick to posit that the paper is not of the position that in the past, technology never existed. Technology was, however, technology existed in a crude state. In this regard, Kottak (1982) and Ntreh (2008, pp. 9-11) remind us of how the primitive folks lived in the past. The two scholars maintain that the old folks used drums and the gong to disseminate information. Again, wooden clubs were the hunting and protecting instruments used against one’s prey. Moreover, sticks and barks of trees were used to prepare shelter. In fact, such mechanisms were technological in nature. Nonetheless, one of the areas that technology has affected immensely which is of this paper’s interest is ‘communication’.

In recent times, many and different avenues exist for people to communicate. The different avenues are the social media platforms. Some examples are, but not limited to Facebook, Tango, Flickr, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Tango, Vonage, Badoo, Skype, and Whatsapp. Of these applications, research has proven that majority of the world’s population patronise the Whatsapp messenger more than the other apps. Secondly, students are noted to be the main patronisers. Nonetheless, since research has proven that students are the main subscribers to Whatsapp use globally, there is the need to examine the effects associated to its use. In this regard, this chapter sets out to investigate into the effects Whatsapp use has on Junior High School (henceforth, JHS) female students using the Cape Coast Metropolitan as a study area. In doing so, the chapter focuses on how the use of Whatsapp affects the morality/moral foundations of the female students. Aside this main focal interest, the chapter briefly touches on how the app’s use affects the students’ academic performances.

METHODOLOGY

The study falls under quantitative research. Muji (2004) says quantitative research methodology aims at explaining phenomena by investigating what are the factors that drive a certain outcome. The specificity of the quantitative methods thus, lies in the assumption that social phenomena can be expressed numerically and subsequently be quantified and analysed. The study uses this methodology because of the following reasons. First, the quantitative research methodology allows the researcher to project a clearer representation of numerical data to the reader for better comprehension. On the second note, the methodology enables the reader to further grasp what exists on the field as far as the numbers that are shown on the tables/graphs are concerned. The research design the study adopted is survey. Leedy and Omrod (2005) maintain that a survey “involves acquiring information about one or more groups of people-perhaps about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes or previous experience by asking them questions and tabulating their answers” (p. 183).

The study used the purposive random sampling procedure in selecting respondents. According to Newell and Burnard (2006, p. 52), purposive random sampling involves selecting people on the basis that such people are likely to have things to say which are relevant to the research aim. The study used this sampling procedure because the researcher wanted to collect data from specific respondents who

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