

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

**INFLUENCE OF THE USE OF WHATSAPP MESSNEGER ON
ADOLESCENT LANGUAGE AND RELATIONSHIP TIES IN GHANA: A
CASE OF ADOLESCENTS IN EJISU-JUABEN MUNICIPALITY**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE
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PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN MEDIA MANAGEMENT**

OCTOBER, 2015

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my original research, and no part of it has been presented for another degree in this institute or elsewhere. I am solely responsible for any shortcoming



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(Student)

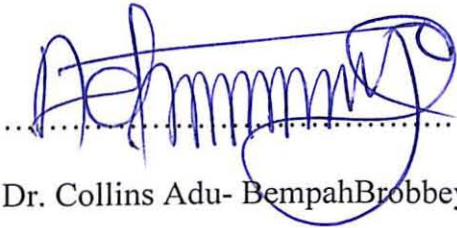


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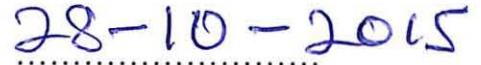
SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the preparation and presentation of this dissertation were supervised by me in accordance with the guidelines of supervision of dissertation laid down by Ghana Institute of Journalism.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Collins Adu-Bempah Brobbey', written over a horizontal dotted line.

Dr. Collins Adu- Bempah Brobbey

(Supervisor)

A handwritten date '28-10-2015' in blue ink, written above a horizontal dotted line.

Date

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to God Almighty for His grace, provision, support and guidance. I also dedicate this research work to my entire family. Their support and prayers have brought me this far.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

While taking full responsibility for everything written in this dissertation, I cannot fail to recognize my enormous indebtedness to all those who, in diverse ways, contributed to the writing of this dissertation. The support and encouragement of many people were instrumental in getting this study completed. Unlimited thanks go to our Heavenly Father that, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; I have been seen through these trying moments. Also, multiple thanks go to Dr. Collins Adu-Bempah Brobbey, a senior lecturer and my dissertation supervisor and advisor, on whose inspirations, advice and mentorship I have come this far in the academia. I offer my sincere gratitude and thanks to him for shaping my path towards the goal. The co-operation and assistantship of my supervisor, which in many cases involved extensively reorganizing and rewriting portions of the work in response to his comments helped to produce this work.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

B.E.C.E-	Basic Education Certificate Examination
BBM-	Blackberry Messaging
J.H.S-	Junior High School
SMS-	Short Message Service
SNS-	Social Networking Sites

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to determine the influence of the use of WhatsApp messenger on adolescent language and relationship ties in Ghana using adolescents in Ejisu-Juaben municipality as a case study. The study employed the dominant-less dominant approach of the mixed method to seek opinions on the influence of WhatsApp messenger. Purposive and simple random sampling were used to select the sample. Ten junior high schools and 300 respondents were chosen and used for the study. Questionnaires and interviews were used for the study. The study found that there was a weak negative correlation between WhatsApp usage and the everyday language of adolescents be it in school or at home. This indicates a weak correlation in their learning. It further showed that WhatsApp messenger was just an addition to help keep adolescents social circles well bonded. Adolescents still preferred face-to-face interactions. The study further succeeded in drawing a linkage between adolescent development (language and building relationship ties) to the uses and gratifications theory with the intention to understand WhatsApp messenger as a medium among other new media networks for seeking cognitive and social integrative needs. The study suggests that teachers and guardians be abreast with the technology and skill that comes with using of the mobile messaging app to enable them guide adolescents as it could harm them.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This study explores the influence of the use of WhatsApp messenger application on adolescent language and relationship ties in Ghana using adolescents in Ejisu-Juaben municipality as a case study. Although social media are to enhance the communication and socialization process, several studies have revealed both positive and negative influences on different demographics (Ahn, 2011; Carroll and Kirkpatrick, 2011; Gazzar, 2011; McFarlane, 2010; O'keeffe and Clarke-Pearson, 2011).

As it is to be expected, communication globally, is ever changing due to the advancement in the realm of science and technology. Accordingly, it is increasingly becoming hard to escape the presence of technology. Most people turn to praise the many technological gadgets that they use in their everyday lives. Many of us depend on it to get us through the day, to do our job, to get around, and to find certain things. Technology is evolving at a very fast rate, and what most people did not even think could be real a few years ago, is now becoming a reality (Yeboah and Ewur, 2014: 157).

New media as part of the new forms of communication is transforming drastically the way communication and socialization takes place among people (Ellison, Lampe and Steinfield, 2009: 6). With regards to demographics, the most users of the new media are adolescents who are strongly attached to social media which includes social networking sites, blogging, instant messaging, emailing amongst others. Born into a world of technology, adolescents' lives are embedded in social media usage. It tends to create a new form of socialization for adolescents (O'keeffe and Clarke-Pearson, 2011:800).

Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, WeChat, Viber, Snap Chat, Tango, Bebo, Hi5, Google +, which are networking sites have created a huge buzz among adolescents in Ghana. This has resulted in a strong edge to engage in them without being left behind. As a matter of fact, Livingstone (2002: 2) agrees that it is a form of pressure on individuals to be seen to be responding, a fear of not 'keeping up'.

Most researchers have stated emphatically that Facebook is the most popular social media used amongst the youth worldwide(Griffith and Kuss, 2011: 23; Lenhart, 2015). Although this fact is true, WhatsApp Messenger based on observation is fast catching up. In my opinion, WhatsApp use among adolescents seem to be on the rise because of its easily accessible nature.

WhatsApp is a cross-platform mobile messaging app which allows one to exchange messages without having to pay for SMS (WhatsApp, 2015). This mobile messaging application was created by Brian Acton and Jan Koum in 2009. WhatsApp messenger has given the exchange of messages a new phase. Users have the opportunity of creating groups, sending various images and videos across the platform. It also includes the tool for updating one's status and profile picture to show how one is feeling at a particular time. According to the statistics of monthly active WhatsApp users worldwide, the mobile messaging app recorded 600 million users as of August 2014, which meant an increase of 200million users as compared to the 400 million monthly active users in December, 2013. The 2015 statistics as of January 2015 saw an increase of 100million users which has resulted in 700 million users of the mobile messaging app (The statistics portal, 2015). 'Teen usage varies significantly by region. In the Middle East and Africa, around 69 percent of teen mobile audience are using WhatsApp, a figure which compares to just 4 percent in North America' (Digital market asia, 2013).

Downloading the app comes with no age limits unlike Facebook where people who want to register and create a profile page have to be 13 and above. WhatsApp messenger allows users to feed in their number to the app which in turn scans one's phone to make known to the user other WhatsApp contacts. Although one can create a profile on WhatsApp, it is limited to a profile picture and a name which were visible to one's WhatsApp contacts as well as status updates where a user communicates his/her emotions either with words or by using a 'smiley'/'

'emoji' unlike Facebook where one has the opportunity of exhibiting their likes and dislikes in terms of books, movies, sports, hobbies; relationship status, religion and educational background. With further upgrades, WhatsApp gives the user a lot to play around with; archive chats, delete chats, email chat, change of one's number and blocking of contacts. Additional services that the mobile messaging app provides include contact ability to see when a friend is online and typing. To indicate that a message has been sent to a receiver, there are two blue ticks which indicate where one is chatting with a contact in his list and a single tick where one is chatting in a group.

Communication and socialization over the past years was done mostly through face-to face interaction but with the emergence of social media, it has taken a new dimension. Instead of meeting up with friends after school and during leisure hours to play games and interact on personal grounds, adolescents prefer to stay glued to smart phones, I-pads and laptops or computers whilst engaging in online communities (Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe, 2009:6-7).

This has somewhat changed the communication landscape as adolescents now seek information from both parents and social media platforms depending on the issue at hand (Gazzar, 2011:2). But also social media has thus, shifted the acquisition of information on various topics. There are no limits. Information ranging from health, education, creative skills, and relationships are easily accessible on social media platforms. To decipher the influence of online

communication among adolescents merits the understanding of their social and emotional development at this stage in their lives.

In carving an image for themselves, adolescents are more positive that social media will enable them form lasting relationships with friends far and near as well as contacts they cannot have face-to-face communication with. Over the years, parents and educators have become concerned with the buzz and craze surrounding social media and its usage by adolescents hence the importance for parents to be conscious of these sites and how they operate knowing too well that some of them are not healthy environments for adolescents. Ahn (2011:1438) agrees and states that ‘not surprisingly, the apprehensions of parents and educators about SNS are also comparable to past questions about how youth spend their time. SNS represent a new environment through which to examine adolescent development and learning’.

In Africa, technology is fast growing and more research needs to be conducted to examine the influence of social media on various demographics especially adolescents who are technologically savvy. Similarly, in Ghana, adolescents have acquired an account or two on different social media platforms. These platforms are mainly to keep up with the world, build networks with existing friends, and make new friends, for educational purposes or to learn creative skills. Though quite a number of studies have examined the impact, effects, influence of social media, focus was mainly on Western countries. Very few studies have examined

the influence of social media platforms in the development of adolescents lives with regards to education, health and relationships among adolescents in Africa, precisely Ghana(Tuurosong and Faisal, 2014; Yeboah and Ewur, 2014).

It has been observed that emphasis has been placed on the impact of specific social media usage like Facebook and Myspace among college students (in Western countries) on their academic performance with other aspects of their lives in mind. Unlike the past, in recent years, pediatrics have equally become concerned about the effects of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Myspace on the development of the adolescent. According to O'keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2011: 800), 'children and adolescents are at some risk as they navigate and experiment with social media because of the limited capacity for self-regulation and susceptibility to peer pressure. Recent research indicates that there are frequent online expressions of offline behaviors, such as bullying, clique-forming, and sexual experimentation'.

This study seeks to describe how WhatsApp is influencing adolescent development with regards to language and relationship ties. With the increase in the number of social media users worldwide, it were paramount to ascertain how adolescents in Ghana are using social media specifically WhatsApp to communicate. This forms part of the motivation for this study which is to find out the usage patterns of WhatsApp in enhancing learning and relationship ties among adolescents in Ghana likewise their motivations for engaging in its usage.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Since its inception in 2009, WhatsApp has registered a growing number of users. By the end of December 2013, it registered a total of 400 million users worldwide which was increased by 200 million by August 2014 which brought the number of users to 600 million. Currently, the statistics show an increase of a 100 million users resulting in 700 million users worldwide by January 2015 (The statistics portal, 2015). Clearly this indicates how fast the mobile messaging app is growing and every indication of it remaining a part of our lives.

Due to its increasing popularity, scholars have stated that social media has both positive and negative influence. A major role of social media is to help the communication process and that is exactly what WhatsApp Messenger seeks to do with tools that make it more interesting. One however wonders if adolescents' in Ghana have been making good use of this new online communication to connect with others. It has been observed that the app is easily accessible on smart phones.

The 2010 Population and Housing Census which gathered data on mobile phone ownership among household members aged 12yrs and above in Ghana in rural and urban areas recognized that the percentage distribution of adolescents 12-14 years and 15-19 years was 14.1% in the Greater Accra region with the Ashanti region following closely with 9.0% (Ghana: Statistical Service, 2013:109-110). Followed closely was the district analytical report on Ejisu- Juaben municipality. Per the results, cellular phones is the most widely used telecommunication tool in

the municipality. More than half (52.2%) of the population aged 12 years and older own mobile phones in the municipality. It is however observed that 5.5 % of the population representing adolescents with age of 12 years and older used internet (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014: 37). Even though the percentage is not high, it is very critical to examine how adolescents use their smart phones since WhatsApp is mostly accessed through it.

Interestingly, communication and socialization over the past years was done mostly through face-to face interaction but with the emergence of social media, it has taken a new dimension. Instead of meeting up with friends after school and during leisure hours to play games and interact on personal grounds, adolescents prefer to stay glued to smart phones, I-pads and laptops or computers whilst engaging in online communities (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe, 2009:6-7).

This has somewhat changed the communication landscape as adolescents now seek information from both parents and social media platforms depending on a particular issue (Gazzar, 2011:2). But also social media has thus, shifted the acquisition of information on various topics. There are no limits. Information ranging from health, education, creative skills, and relationships are easily accessible on social media platforms. To decipher the influence of online communication among adolescents merits the understanding of their social and emotional development at this stage in their lives.

In carving an image for themselves, adolescents are more positive that social media will enable them form lasting relationships with friends far and near as well as contacts they cannot have face-to-face communication with. Over the years, parents and educators have become concerned with the buzz and craze surrounding social media and its usage by adolescents hence the importance for parents to be conscious of these sites and how they operate knowing too well that some of them are not healthy environments for adolescents. Not surprisingly, the apprehensions of parents and educators about SNS are also comparable to past questions about how youth spend their time. SNS represent a new environment through which to examine adolescent development and learning (Ahn, 2011: 1438).

In Africa, technology is fast growing and more research needs to be conducted to examine the influence of social media on various demographics especially adolescents who are technologically savvy. Similarly, in Ghana, adolescents have acquired an account or two on different social media platforms. These platforms are mainly to keep up with the world, build networks with existing friends, make new friends, for educational purposes or learn creative skills. Though quite a number of studies have examined the impact, effects, influence of social media, focus was mainly on Western countries. Very few studies have examined the influence of social media platforms in the development of adolescents' lives with regards to education, health and relationships among adolescents in Africa precisely in Ghana(Tuurosong and Faisal, 2014;Yeboah and Ewur, 2014).

It has been observed that emphasis has been placed on the impact of specific social media usage like Facebook and Myspace among college students (in Western countries) on their studies with other aspects of their lives in mind. Unlike the past, in recent years, pediatrics have equally become concerned about the effects of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Myspace on the development of the adolescent. According to O'keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2011:800), children and adolescents are at some risk as they navigate and experiment with social media because of the limited capacity for self-regulation and susceptibility to peer pressure. Recent research indicates that there are frequent online expressions of offline behaviors, such as bullying, clique-forming, and sexual experimentation. It is evident that a lot of studies have been conducted on social media with reference to different aspects of youthful life. Based on available literature, focus has mainly been on Facebook, Twitter, and Myspace with little attention being paid to the fast evolving mobile messaging app (Charmaraman and Grossman, 2011; Gazzar, 2011; Lenhart, 2015).

This study therefore attempts at exploring how adolescents' in Ghana are using WhatsApp messenger in their language and relationship ties; likewise their motivation for engaging in its usage. Furthermore, it attempts at interrogating whether or not adolescents make the most of the benefits of WhatsApp messenger by using it as a channel of communication.

This study therefore argues that there is a weak negative correlation between WhatsApp usage and the everyday language of adolescents both in school and at home. It thus hypothesizes that WhatsApp messenger is just an addition to help keep adolescents social circles well bonded. However, adolescents still prefer face-to-face interactions.

1.3 Research Questions

- What are the usage patterns of WhatsApp messenger among adolescents in the Ejisu-Juaben municipality?
- Is there any motivation for engaging in WhatsApp messenger among adolescents in the Ejisu-Juaben municipality and why?
- How does WhatsApp messenger affect communication and socialization habits among adolescents in the Ejisu-Juaben municipality?

1.4 Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study are two-fold, namely, broad and specific. Broadly speaking, this study explores the linkage between influence of social media (WhatsApp) on adolescents' development (language and relationship ties) in the Ejisu-Juaben municipality. However, specifically, it;

- Explores and explains the usage patterns of WhatsApp messenger among adolescent in the Ejisu-Juaben municipality,
- Ascertains and examines the motivation for engaging in WhatsApp messenger usage among adolescents in the Ejisu-Juaben municipality,

- Explores and analyzes whether or not WhatsApp messenger affect communication and socialization habits among adolescents in the Ejisu-Juaben municipality.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Most researches conducted on social media effects dwell on Western countries with very scanty literature on such researches in Africa precisely Ghana. Some of the literature the researcher came across were blog posts, student assignments, articles both published and unpublished on the topic but focus was on Western countries. Attention, however was giving to the popular social networking sites like Facebook and Myspace. It is essential to understand the current usage and behavior patterns of social media specifically WhatsApp among adolescents as their lives are built around these online communities. This research will add to existing literature on social media influence especially WhatsApp Messenger on adolescent development in terms of learning (language use) and relationship ties in Ghana. Furthermore, this research will advance the frontiers of knowledge. As adolescents are surrounded by online communities, this research will serve as a guide to help educators give the necessary help required of them to assist adolescents benefit more from the mobile messaging app. Findings from the study should also create a platform for further research whilst assisting educators find creative ways to use social media for networking with their students.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study is limited to the Ejisu- Juaben Municipality because aside it been nominated as the best among 216 metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies in Ghana for 2014 by the West Africa International Magazine, 80% attained education up to Junior High school (JHS level).Ejisu-Juaben municipal is one of the 30 administrative and political districts in the Ashanti region of Ghana. The municipal stretches over an area of 637.2 km² constituting about 10% of the entire Ashanti region and with Ejisu as its capital (Ejisujuabenghanadistricts.gov.gh). The interest were on adolescents (JHS 1, 2) simply because they will have the requisite knowledge and understanding of the questionnaires which were administered. JHS 3 is not inclusive because at the time of the research they were sitting for the Basic Education Certificate Exams (BECE).

1.7 Chapter Organization

Chapter One deals with the general overview and the background to the study including; introduction, background, statement of problem,objectives of the study, research questions/ hypotheses, significance of the study, scope of the study, and chapter organization. Chapter Twoprovides the review of related and relevant literature and the theoretical framework, importance of the study, limitations, and operational definitions. Chapter Three focuses on description of the study area and the methodology employed, research design, ethical issues. Chapter Four, the penultimate chapter provides empirical analysis and discussions of the key findings while Chapter Five summarizes the key findings, draws

conclusions and makes some suggestions for take home or for future research and praxis.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In what follows, this study examines the theory used in the entire process of the research. It also includes the review of relevant and related literatures in the same field of social network influence on adolescent language and relationship ties.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This research employed the theoretical framework called the Uses and Gratifications theory. This theory constitutes the foundation upon which the research objectives and questions are framed or constructed to ascertain the gratifications acquired and sought from the use of social media (WhatsApp Messenger).

According to Ruggiero (2000:3), 'uses and gratifications has always provided a cutting edge theoretical approach in the initial stages of each new mass communications medium: newspapers, radio and television and now the internet. The theory was first developed in research on the effectiveness of the radio in the 1940s. Mainly, it focuses on the explanations for audience members' motivations and associated behaviors'.

‘The next step in the development of this research began during the late 1950s and continued into the 1960s. In this phase, the emphasis was on identifying and operationalizing the many social and psychological variables that were presumed to be the antecedents of different patterns of consumption and gratification. In the last several years, the uses and gratifications approach has been used to explore the impact of new technologies on the audience’ (Wimmer and Dominick, 2009:13-14).

McQuail (2005: 424) posits that ‘the basic assumptions of the approach when it was rediscovered and elaborated twenty years later (in the 1960’s and 1970’s) were as follows;

- Media and content choice is generally rational and directed towards certain specific goals and satisfactions (thus the audience is active and audience formation can be logically explained).
- Audience members are conscious of the media-related needs which arise in personal (individual) and social (shared) circumstances and can voice these in terms of motivations.
- Broadly speaking, personal utility is a more significant determinant of audience formation than aesthetic or cultural factors.
- All or most of the relevant factors for audience formation (motives, perceived or obtained satisfactions , media choices, background variables) can, in principle, be measured’.

‘Interest in the gratifications that media provide their audiences goes back to the beginning of empirical mass communication research (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1974:509). The uses and gratifications perspective takes the view of the media consumer. It examines how people use the media and the gratifications they seek and receive from their media behaviors. Uses and gratifications researchers assume that audience members are aware of and can articulate their reasons for consuming various media content’ (Wimmer and Dominick, 2009: 12).

This research is using the uses and gratifications theory because of the motivations of adolescents to use social media specifically WhatsApp messenger. It will help to understand the reasons why adolescents choose to use WhatsApp messenger as a means of communication and how it satisfies their needs.

Blumler and Katz believe that ‘there are many reasons for using the media, as there are media users. According to the theory, media consumers have a free will to decide how they will use the media and how it will affect them. Blumler and Katz’s values are clearly seen by the fact that they believe that media consumers can choose the influence media has on them as well as the idea that users choose media alternatives merely as a means to an end. The theorist say that a media user seeks out a media source that best fulfills the needs of the user’ (Palmgreen et al, 2001). ‘Methodologically speaking, many of the goals of mass media use can be derived from data supplied by individual audience members themselves- that is

people are sufficiently self-aware to be able to report their interests and motives in particular cases, or at least to recognize them when confronted with them in an intelligible and familiar verbal formulation' (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1974:511).

In addition, the theory of the uses and gratifications suggests that people watch, read, and listen to the media to meet certain social and psychological needs. From a uses and gratifications perspective, one might expect new media technology like WhatsApp messenger to help people satisfy a range of social and psychological needs. For example, much of the development and use of new media technologies for erotic communications may drive sexual instinct of the adolescents. As Pavlik (1996: 343) puts it, 'one might similarly explain the use of electronic mail and online communications in terms of the need to maintain social ties over great distances and political boundaries'. However, this study found that there was a minor correlation between WhatsApp usage and the everyday language of adolescents be it in school or at home. It further showed that WhatsApp messenger was just an addition to help keep their social circles well bonded. Adolescents' still preferred face-to-face interactions.

To justify the social and psychological needs as indicated above, a research conducted by McQuail et al in 1972 in Britain after studying a number of different radio and television programmes proposed a scheme of 'media-person

interactions' (a term which reflects the dual origin of the media gratification concept) which capture the most important media satisfactions;

- **Diversion** - escape from the routine and problems; emotional release.
- **Personal relationships** – social utility of information in conversations; substitute of the media for companionship.
- **Personal Identity or Individual psychology** – value reinforcement or reassurance; self- understanding; reality exploration, and so on.
- **Surveillance** – information about things that might affect one or will help one do or accomplish something' (McQuail, 2005: 425).

Similarly, Katz et al (in Severin and Tankard, 2001) see 'the mass media as a means used by individuals to connect themselves with others (or disconnect). They listed 35 needs taken "from the (largely speculations) literature on the social and psychological functions of the mass media" and put them into four categories:

- **Cognitive needs** - acquiring information, knowledge, and understanding.
- **Affective needs** - emotional, pleasurable, or aesthetic experience.
- **Personal needs** - strengthening credibility, confidence, stability, and status.
- **Social integrative needs** - strengthening contacts with the family, friends, and so on'.

'Previous research suggests that the gratifications sought from social media could be anything from a place for information distribution to a venue for feedback to a

platform to promote organizations or even an opportunity to participate in a community of connected individuals' (Stassen, in Karimi et al, 2014:56).

Sundar and Limperos (2013:505) postulate that 'while previously the notion of "media" referred to a handful of mass communication tools such as newspapers, radio, television, and film, the current academic conception of media is broader, reflecting the proliferation of new communication technologies in recent times. They continue in their assertion that the media today range from a plethora of devices (smart phones, robots) to channels (Internet, cable) to venues on those channels (social networking sites, home shopping network) and/or devices (smartphone apps), affording users the ability to not only interact with these "media" (human-computer interaction) but also interact through them to communicate with other users (computer mediated communication)'.

2.2.1 Criticisms

Following the many advances made in the theory as a result of adhering to criticisms, Severin and Tankard (1997:335) admit further weaknesses; 'It makes it difficult to explain or predict beyond the people studied or to consider societal implications of media use. Second, some studies are too compartmentalized, producing separate typologies of motives. This hinders conceptual development because separate research findings are not synthesized. Third, there still exists a lack of clarity among central concepts such as social and psychological backgrounds, needs, motives, behavior, and consequences. Fourth, U&G

researchers attach different meanings to concepts such as motives, uses, gratifications, and functional alternatives, contributing to fuzzy thinking and inquiry. Fifth, the cornerstones of U&G theory, the notion of an active audience and the validity of self-report data to determine motives, are assumed by researchers, and that assumption may be “a little simplistic or naive”.

In as much as Ruggiero (2000:5) stands as a strong advocate for the theory, he admits to the theory having its flaws. He mentions that ‘the earliest researches for the most part did not attempt to explore the links between the gratifications detected and the psychological or sociological origins of the needs satisfied. He further adds that they often failed to search for the various media functions, either quantitatively or conceptually in a manner that might have led to the detection of the latent structure of media gratifications’.

He further advances that ‘early U&G research focus on the fact that it (a) relied heavily on self-reports, (b) was unsophisticated about the social origin of the needs that audiences bring to the media, (c) was too uncritical of the possible dysfunction both for self and society of certain kinds of audience satisfaction, and (d) was too captivated by the inventive diversity of audiences used to pay attention to the constraints of the text’ (Katz, in Ruggiero, 2000:5).

There is no doubt that the uses and gratifications theory has been very critical to media effects studies, even with its flaws. In 1984, McQuail made it known that’

the uses and gratifications theory was criticized in its own time as too behaviorists and functionalist. He maintains that it also failed to provide much successful prediction on causal explanation of media choice and use' (McQuail, in McQuail, 2005: 426).

2.2.2 Uses and Gratifications and the new media

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2009:14), 'the uses and gratifications approach continued to be popular throughout the first decade of the new century as investigators applied the technique to study emerging media. For example, researchers used the approach to study:

- Motives for viewing You Tube (Haridakis and Hanson,2009)
- Gratifications from user- generated media (Guosong, 2009)
- Uses and Gratifications of social media (Raacke and Bonds-Raacke, 2008)
- Gratifications associated with e-mail, cell phones and instant messages (Ramirez et al, 2008)'

By and large, 'U&G has always provided a cutting-edge theoretical approach in the initial stages of each new mass communications medium: newspapers, radio, television, and now the Internet. It may be argued that the timely emergence of computer-mediated communication has only bolstered the theoretical potency of U&G by allowing it to stimulate productive research into a proliferating telecommunications medium' (Ruggerio 2000: 27).

‘It has come to be known that the uses and gratifications approach is not strictly ‘behavioral’ since its main emphasis is on the social origin of media gratification and on the wider social functions of media, for instance in facilitating social contact and interaction or reducing tension and anxiety’ (McQuail 2005: 403).

Uses and gratifications theory has its basis; which is ‘the ways consumers actively choose and use media to meet their needs. Uses and gratifications research does not regard consumers as passive creatures whose behaviors are controlled by the media industry. Instead it views them as decision makers who choose deliberately and sometimes less consciously which media to use and how to use them’ (Rodman 2012:45).

Questions posed by researchers of uses and gratifications theory continue to be why people become involved in a particular media and the gratifications sought from it (Ruggerio 2000:29) even in the era of the new media and its advancing technology. In the mass communication process much initiative in linking need gratification and the media choice lies with the audience member. This places a strong limitation on theorizing about any form of straight-line effect of media content on attitudes and behavior’ (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1974:511).

In the reviewed literature on the uses and gratifications theory, motivations and needs are classified in conflicting ways which makes deciphering of the theory and audience motivations a challenge. This research seeks to further throw light

on motivations and gratifications sought and its consequence in this case on learning (language use) and relationship ties. The research further seeks to find out how social class affects adolescents use of social media.

2.3 Related Literature

2.3.1 Social media and the adolescent

Social media which includes social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp keeps creating a frenzy and has drawn the attention of researches to the phenomenon as they try to find out how people engage with it. ‘Over the past few years, there has been a significant increase in the number of media stories about social networking. Of particular interest is their use by children and adolescents, and to what extent their use is seen as problematic’ (Griffiths and Kuss, 2011: 23).

‘Since their introduction, social network sites (SNSs) such as MySpace, Facebook, Cyworld, and Bebo have attracted millions of users, many of whom have integrated these sites into their daily practices. As of this writing, there are hundreds of SNSs, with various technological affordances, supporting a wide range of interests and practices. While their key technological features are fairly consistent, the cultures that emerge around SNSs are varied. Most sites support the maintenance of pre-existing social networks, but others help strangers connect based on shared interests, political views, or activities. Some sites cater to diverse audiences, while others attract people based on common language or shared

racial, sexual, religious, or nationality-based identities. Sites also vary in the extent to which they incorporate new information and communication tools, such as mobile connectivity, blogging, and photo/video-sharing' (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

Lenhart et al (in Ahn, 2011:1435) agree that 'teenage youth are a unique population of SNS users. They are among the first to have grown up entirely surrounded by communication technologies. Citing an example, a national survey in 2009 finds that 73% of online teenagers use SNS, which is an increase from 55% 3 years earlier'. Teenagers are also in a period of rapid development, growth, and maturation. Subsequently, questions and controversies emerge about the effects SNS have on adolescent development.

Adolescence is a stage in life where social, psychological, emotional, physical framework of the mind and body are developed. During this stage, adolescents want to feel a sense of belonging as well as create their own acceptable identity. Throughout this adolescent development process, adolescents become more concerned about acquiring information on various issues some of which include academic work, sexual relations, health matters. However most adolescents turn to wrong places for such information they may require about such issues. Opinion from peers seems to be the best option and this tends to be detrimental to the lives of these adolescents. In light of this, adolescents in their own way do explore what

the society expects from them through information provided by mass and social media. (Banaag et al, 2014:8).

Subsequently, 'adolescence is often characterized as a time of challenge and turbulence, as teens are faced with increased independence and growing self-discovery. One of the main features of this age is the great challenge a teen faces to form an identity. There is a growing evidence that adolescents use the internet to experiment with their identities. Adolescents are also characterized of increased independence and having more time away from their parents. A third feature of adolescence is that they are risk takers, they face tough decisions regarding activities and experiences they go through such as smoking and sexual activities, and they are willing to experiment such activities in a reckless way as a form of asserting independence from parents. A fourth feature of adolescence is the importance of peers for them, as they spend a great deal of time with friends and place a high value on these relationships' (Strasburger et al, in Gazzar, 2011:2).

'Many of the controversial questions concerning SNS ask what kinds of effects these technologies have on youth development. Given this focus, the media effects paradigm is a natural area to begin conceptualizing theories of SNS effects. Media effects scholars examine the outcomes that arise when people use new technologies. Talking about effects engenders important theoretical discussions that must be laid clear when examining studies. Most significantly, the term implies a focus on causality' (Ahn, 2011:1436-1440). She further

advances that ‘a social informatics approach to understanding youth safety would compel researchers to consider two interrelated aspects of SNS: technical features and youth behavior. The features of a technology tool may influence the likelihood of contacting strangers on the Internet. The key point is that technical and social elements of a respective SNS community may facilitate or inhibit behavior, and this question requires further examination’. Young people apply many forms of technology to communicate with one another, mobile text messaging, BBM messaging, emails. Adoption of such socially interactive technology is the highest among children and adolescents, when compared to adoption rates of adults (Gazzar, 2011:3).

WhatsApp is one of the changes in technology that is commonly used on specific mobile phones and computers. Since smartphones became popular, many messaging services were launched but WhatsApp has become very popular among them (Yeboah and Ewur, 2014:157). With overall teen user numbers up by 160 percent across the last year for WhatsApp, it’s likely that one of Facebook’s reasons for acquiring the messaging app is to boost its coverage among the teen demographic (<http://www.digitalmarket.asia/data-pick-of-the-day-teen-usage-of-whatsapp-up-160-in-2013/>). What makes this mobile messaging app popular is the idea behind it being free and based on one’s internet data plans. Downloading the app allows for free usage for a year after which a very minimal amount is charged as compared to charges for SMS.

This makes the mobile messaging app very convenient to use. As a result, it has become addictive making people engulfed in the use of their smart phones and other portable gadgets that can access the mobile messaging app. In the meantime, the mobile messaging app is available for iPhone, Android, Windows Phone, Nokia and Blackberry. Although this app has made communication easier for all, Yeboah and Ewur (2014:163) state that, 'WhatsApp has been a necessary evil for students in tertiary institutions in Ghana. This stems from the fact that it can enhance the performance of tertiary students if used positively'. Can the same be said in the scenario of adolescent usage of the same mobile messaging app?

2.3.2 The drive to use social media

Social networking sites are communication tools for members. These kinds of platforms are designed as a way for friends, family, or strangers to have discussions and interaction or be in contact with each other. It allows members to explore new opportunities and experiences. Social networking sites allow students to express themselves, communicate, and collect profiles that highlight their talents and experience (Yeboah and Ewur, 2014:159; Gazzar, 2011:3). Fritz (2014) posits that 'it is better understanding how and why adolescents interact with social media, as well as the associated risks and benefits can help parents and caregivers engage in productive conversation and create strategies for responsible use'.

Notwithstanding, emerging studies find that youth spend a considerable portion of their daily life interacting through social media (Ahn, 2011:1435). A correlation analyses revealed that youth who were older reported going online for communication, information seeking, and social networking more frequently than youth who were younger ($p < .001$), while younger youth reported going online for entertainment more frequently than older youth ($p < .001$). There are some differences in the preferences of both male and female youth. Female youth reported going online for social networking more frequently than male youth ($p < .05$); male youth reported going online for entertainment and participation more frequently than female youth (Rudi and Dworkin, 2014:64).

2.3.3 Usage Patterns of Social Media

‘There is substantial evidence revealing youth as active users of media, particularly online media. However, little is understood from empirical viewpoint about the intensity, of usage (for communication, for entertainment, etc.) and how this engagement differs by youth’s characteristics, such as age, gender and race’ (Ahn, 2011:1435 ; Rudi and Dworkin, 2014:60; Yeboah and Ewur, 2014:157). In the Middle East and Africa, around 69 percent of the teen mobile audience are using WhatsApp, a figure which compares to just 4 percent in North America (Digital Market asia, 2013).

‘As youth online media use continues to grow and diversify and new technologies are developed and disseminated, understanding use is essential to effectively

engage and work with growth. For instance older youth were more likely to be engaged with social networking, such that it may be an effective medium for reaching older youth, but perhaps gaming or more entertainment oriented media is more appropriate for reaching younger youth' (Rudi and Dworkin, 2014:68).

The use of Facebook and Myspace are usually known. Most teens in a study conducted by Charmaraman and Grossman (2014:93) used Facebook for keeping in constant communication with their peer networks and for getting inside information on dating relationship from friends. They talked about using Facebook to keep in touch with their known social circle and were not as preoccupied with adding people they did not know or wanting to meet strangers online. That cannot be said in Ghana as it has been observed that adolescents add just about anyone who sends a friend request without knowing the person's background. This is consistent with a study which showed that Facebook not only allows users to meet other people who they do not know, but it also allows users to shape and make their social networks visible to others , thus providing the opportunity to establish contact with strangers and expand their network (Gazzar,2011:3). However, the intensity of WhatsApp messenger usage on academic performance of tertiary students is less understood (Yeboah and Ewur, 2014:157) particularly in Ghana which is very worrisome because WhatsApp has been observed to be a major part of the lives of the youth.

The current tools of teenage communication go by a peculiar set of names. Wall Posts, Status Updates, Activity Feeds, Thumbs Ups, and Profiles are some of the ways that youth today communicate with one another. These tools are features of social network sites (SNS), such as Facebook and Myspace (Ahn, 2011:1435) and WhatsApp inclusive. In my observation, these tools have made the pattern of communication and information seeking rather interesting pushing most people to use it for all sorts of engagements with the gratifications to be obtained at the back of their minds.

Yeboah and Ewur (2014:162) in their study record a majority of the students using the application (WhatsApp Messenger) for chatting with friends on different issues rather than academic work on campus, and this is represented by 72% of the total number of respondents. This also indicated the link between usage of the application and poor academic performance among the majority of the students. The more friends a student had on WhatsApp, the more time he/she spent on the application. A student who has a lot of friends on WhatsApp is most likely going to be responding to more people and thus spending more time chatting. The study also indicated that a total of 21% used the application for other activities which included seeking general information and family issues.

A qualitative interview research by Livingstone (2008:406) investigated adolescents' use of social networking sites in determining online opportunity and risk. Interviews were conducted with adolescents aged 13 to 16 years. The results

indicated that adolescents used social networking sites for self-actualization which is a social process in which they express and actualize their identities (that is through a highly decorated, stylistically elaborate identity) either via self-display of personal information (which was typical of younger participants). Older teenagers on the other hand preferred to express a notion of identity lived through by authentic relationships with others. Another study by the Pew Research Center revealed that teenage girls use social media sites and platforms particularly visually-oriented ones – for sharing more than their male counterparts (Lenhart, 2015).

2.3.4 Socialization and Communication

Benneh (in Ardayio- Schnadorf, 1994:8) describes how socialization takes place among families in the past in comparison with what is happening currently with the emergence of the internet which has brought about social media; ‘Socialization of the younger members is one of the functions of the family. The family internalizes the folkways, mores and norms in the child which are indispensable to social functioning. Through socialization, the culture of the society is transmitted from one generation to another’.

As a result of social media use, communication and socialization patterns have changed drastically. ‘Parents and caregivers need to educate themselves about social media and the way their teens may use it as well as the common risks, to help them understand and navigate the technologies’ (Fritz, 2014). For Ahn

(2011:1439), 'youth enter these online communities with existing traits (gender, self-esteem, shyness, etc). They also have varying motivations for using SNS. Such factors influence with whom youth interact, how they behave, and ultimately how they develop through their participation in SNS communities'.

There is no doubt in the changing pattern of communication and socialization in our world today. 'Social network sites (SNSs) have the potential to fundamentally change the character of our social lives, both on an interpersonal and a community level. Changes in interaction patterns and social connections are already evident among young people, who are the heaviest users of these sites' (Ellison, Lampe and Steinfield, 2009:6). However, 'prior research on media effects consistently shows that technology alone cannot be hypothesized to affect human outcomes' (Ahn, 2011:1435). I believe otherwise. The use of social network sites has created a division among adolescents in school. For example, if one does not own a smart gadget like a laptop or phone, he or she is not given the necessary attention as students form cliques simply to associate with others who form part of their social circle.

'Communication in our modern technologically fast-paced society suffers from "social myopia" because individuals now desire fast and brief communication with less emphasis placed on appropriateness in linguistic forms, respectful and orderly expressions, and quality effectiveness which is a time-consuming venture. Time spent in social interaction which is part of the communication process has

decreased dramatically in all familiar settings and social institutions; from the family to the school' (McFarlane, 2010).

On the other hand, Stæhr (2014:5-6) thinks that 'due to the new technological developments such as the internet and social media, social encounters are added non-physical and highly mobile dimensions. The combination of smart phones, tablets etc. and the enhanced availability of the internet makes it possible for people to be online wherever and whenever they want to. Yet, the non-physical and mobile characteristics do not make such social encounters less "real".

2.3.5 Learning and Relationship Ties

Yeboah and Ewur (2014:157) emphasize that 'the perceived high level of usage of social networking applications amongst students of tertiary institutions in Ghana is inevitable. That youth are connected to these global online communities is both a frightening prospect for parents and educators and an intriguing area for social science research. She further states that research about social media effects on youth promises to contribute significantly to the concerns of adults who mediate access to these online communities' (Ahn, 2011:1435).

'Education researchers now firmly conclude that a media tool itself does not affect student learning' (Clark, in Ahn, 2011:1436). Considering the date (1983, 1991) cited by Ahn, a lot of changes have taken place. The stance taken by educational researches cannot be used to associate with media effects on student

learning specifically with social media because of the important role it plays in their lives.

‘Past Internet applications such as chat rooms and forums were designed to facilitate conversation between strangers. The situation now is starkly different as teenagers and parents, youth and adults, all find themselves connected in SNS. Adolescents typically do not join Facebook to meet strangers. Instead, they join because their friends are already members and have invited them to participate. The Internet is no longer isolating, but connecting people (Ahn,2011:1441-1442).She also stresses that research on social networking sites and learning achievement is particularly slight when compared to studies of privacy, safety, social capital, and psychological well-being’.

Ahn (2011:1442) justifies that ‘literacy practices outside of school may serve very disparate functions than expected in the classroom. In the context of new technologies, youth today communicate and learn very different practices outside of school. Engaging in social networking interactions is a different literacy practice than successfully completing a multiple-choice test’.

Yalcinalp and Gulbahar(in Yeboah and Ewur, 2014:158) ‘articulate the value of these applications as follows: encourage learners to learn by anticipating needs, make collaborative learning efficient and effective, and build a relationship that stimulates learner-to-learner for consistent and progressive learning. Despite the aforementioned academic incentives offered by these technologies, limited

research has been conducted to determine the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the use of the application and students performance at the tertiary education in Ghana’.

Karpinski, (in Ahn, 2011:1442; Yeboah and Ewur, 2014:159) in his study discovers that SNSs users had lower grade rankings than students who never engage in social interactions. Although following researches proved this accession to be wrong, other researchers proved it right. A further study by Yeboah and Ewur (2014:157) revealed that ‘WhatsApp instead of making communication easier and faster thereby enhancing effective flow of information and idea sharing among students, rather has impacted negatively on the performance of tertiary students in Ghana .The study among other things unveiled the following: WhatsApp takes much of students study time, results in procrastination related problems, destroys students’ spellings and grammatical construction of sentences, leads to lack of concentration during lectures, results in difficulty in balancing online activities (WhatsApp) and academic preparation and distracts students from completing their assignments and adhering to their private studies time table’. Consideration of demographics is very key which makes this study redundant since one cannot justify the same results for adolescents.

Learning in this context refers to the language (written or verbal) used by adolescents. It is necessary to consider language and literacy skills as language on social media is gradually changing. Watt (2010:142) believes that

‘communication technology has effects on children’s language and literacy development’.

Language on social media platforms have taken a different dimension as users have resorted to the writing in shorthand. ‘Weblish, netlingo, e-talk, tech-speak, wired-style, geek-speak and netspeak are all common terms which people have used to describe language in cyberspace. Although labels like these seem fairly amusing and harmless, they make potentially problematic assumptions about how language is changing on the Internet’ (Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic, 2004:118). Students resort to writing in school exactly the way they communicate on social media platforms and this has made educators concerned. Writing of most words have changed through online communities; ‘the’ is now spelt ‘de’; ‘you’ has changed to ‘u’; ‘goodnight’ has changed to ‘gudnyt’; ‘Thank you Lord’ has changed to ‘TYL’ amongst others. Interestingly, Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic (2004:119) believe that researchers are more interested in what people actually do with the language in their everyday encounters, the way they use language to form relationships and to communicate their identities

2.4 Importance of the Study

The rationale for undertaking a study into the influence of social media specifically WhatsApp Messenger on adolescent language and relationship ties in Ghana includes a suggestion that most users of social media are adolescents and also the fact that usage affects several aspects of their lives. A study by Ahn

(2011:1435) argues that ‘teenagers are among the most prolific users of social network sites and as a result questions and controversies emerge about the effect social media has on adolescent development’. This study was significant in the sense that although it was most likely to establish existing findings on the uses and gratifications theory, it also provided findings exclusive to the Ejisu- Juaben municipality.

WhatsApp messenger was selected as a topic of study because it is a relatively new medium of mass communication. The mobile messaging app is significantly different from other forms of new media.

With several information and materials available on social media usage by different demographics and the fact that WhatsApp messenger usage is growing at a fast rate, the submission here is that it may be worth understanding why and how adolescents’ use WhatsApp messenger and also how it affects their communication and socialization habits both in school and at home. ‘This is necessary giving the assertion that due to its limited capacity for self-regulation and susceptibility adolescents’ are at some risk as they navigate and experiment with social media’ (O’keeffe and Clarke-Pearson, 2011:800).

2.5 Limitations of the Study

Since new media is a new area of study, it was difficult to get books on the topic. The researcher had to rely on research conducted by other people, mostly western researchers. Due to time constraints, a relatively smaller sample was selected

although a larger one could have been used considering the size of the Ejisu-Juaben municipality.

Furthermore, most of the students were scared of been discovered to be users of the mobile messaging app, as they thought the information gathered by the researcher would be shared with their teachers. As a result, most of them refused to partake in the exercise. This brought down the number of the sample from 500 to 300. Finally, a comparative study would have been appropriate to ascertain the differences in both Junior High schools and Senior High schools on the influence of WhatsApp messenger but due to time constraints, it was not possible.

2.6 Operational Definitions

Social Media

Social media are Internet sites where people interact freely, sharing and discussing information about each other and their lives, using a multimedia mix of personal words, pictures, videos and audio.

Adolescent Development

The process which ensures changes, growth and advancement in teens learning (language used- written/verbal) and relationship ties (with family and friends)

Literacy

The ability to read and write.

Language

A system of communication consisting of sounds, words, and grammar, or the system of communication used by people in a particular country or type of work to express thoughts and feelings to each other.

Adolescent

A young person who is developing into an adult.

Sexting

It is referred to as the sending, receiving and forwarding of sexually explicit messages or pictures over smart phones.

Socialization

The process by which a person comes to understand the beliefs, conventions, etc. of a society by living in it.

Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites are web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

2.7 Conclusion

Following a critical review of various literatures on social media and its influence, the researcher identifies gaps in knowledge in the benefits or otherwise of WhatsApp usage as far as the adolescent in Ghana is concerned, and that merits a keen investigation. Some literature reviewed also indicates that the researchers delved into theories without tackling the controversies they raised. Although most of the researches discussed social media impact on students', much attention was given to students in tertiary institutions.

Furthermore, issues on adolescent development deliberated were on self-identity, body image, sexual health, privacy, social capital with a little attention on relationship ties and learning. In terms of demographics focus was mostly on college students with regards to Facebook and Myspace, two of the most popular social media platforms used by the youth. In this case, this study looks at the link between social media specifically WhatsApp messenger and adolescents development (language and relationship ties). The research will seek to demonstrate the improvement in this area in some way, filling in gaps and adding to knowledge in and understanding of this particular field.

Although social networking sites are to enhance the communication and socialization process, several studies have revealed both positive and negative influences on different demographics. On methodology, opinions on the influence

of WhatsApp messenger were collected from ten (10) selected schools which were chosen randomly from the ten circuits of the Ejisu-Juaben municipality.

This study has revealed that there was a weak negative correlation between WhatsApp usage and the everyday language of adolescents be it in school or at home. This indicates a weak correlation in their learning. It further showed that WhatsApp messenger was just an addition to help keep their social circles well bonded. Adolescents still preferred face-to-face interactions. These represent the knowledge gaps which this study has identified. It has also succeeded in drawing a linkage between adolescent development (learning and building relationships) to the uses and gratifications theory with the intension to elucidate the comprehensibility of WhatsApp messaging as a medium of communication among other new media networks for seeking cognitive and social integrative needs. As already indicated, this study has succeeded in bridging the existing gaps in the literature by showing clearly that there is a negative correlation between WhatsApp usage and the everyday language of adolescents.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In the meantime, this chapter explains salient subsections which indicate clearly how this study was conducted. It involves a thorough description of the population to be studied, research design used, approach used in collecting necessary data, sampling techniques adopted, and data analysis tools and procedures which were deployed. It is also important to state here that the kind of research method suitable for any particular study is contingent upon the nature of the study. In this case, this study mirrors an exploratory research and hence the use of multiple approaches.

3.2 Research Approach

The study employed the mixed method; quantitative and qualitative research methods. The dominant-less dominant design which is a style in the mixed method or triangulation approach was used. According to Creswell (1994:184), 'in the dominant –less dominant design, the methods and results relate to the dominant paradigm in use, with a small segment for methods and results for the less –dominant paradigm. He further states that in the illustration in which a major quantitative study is undertaken, supplemented by a few qualitative interviews,

the researcher may hope to elaborate, enhance, or illustrate the results from one method by using another method’.

3.2.1 Quantitative and Qualitative Research Designs

Neuman (2007: 85-88) states that ‘quantitative researchers rely on a positivist approach to social science. They follow a linear research path, speak language of “variables and hypothesis”, and emphasize precisely measuring variables and testing hypotheses that are linked to general causal explanations. He advances by indicating some characteristics; test hypothesis that the researcher begins with, concepts are in the form of distinct variables, analysis proceeds by using statistics, tables, or charts, and discussion’.

‘Qualitative descriptions plays an important role of suggesting possible relationships, causes, affects and even dynamic processes. Qualitative methods helped to highlight subtleties in pupil behavior and response, illuminate reasons for action and provide in-depth information’ (Osuala, 2007:174-175).Neuman (2007: 88) further states ‘that qualitative research is to capture and discover meaning once the researcher becomes immersed in the data. He believes that concepts are in the form of themes, motifs, generalizations, and taxonomies. Data are in the form of words and images from documents, observation, and transcripts’.

3.2.2 Survey

According to Neuman (2007: 167), 'survey research developed within the positivist approach to social sciences. The survey asks questions, many people (called respondents) about their beliefs, opinions, characteristics, and past or present behavior'. Surveys are appropriate for research questions about self-reported beliefs of behaviors. He states that survey research is often called correlational.

3.3 Study Area

The study were conducted within the Ejisu-Juaben municipality in the Ashanti region of Ghana. Ejisu-Juaben municipal is one of the 30 administrative and political districts in the Ashanti region of Ghana. The municipal stretches over an area of 637.2 km² constituting about 10% of the entire Ashanti region and with Ejisu as its capital¹.

¹ Ejisujuabenghanadistricts.gov.gh

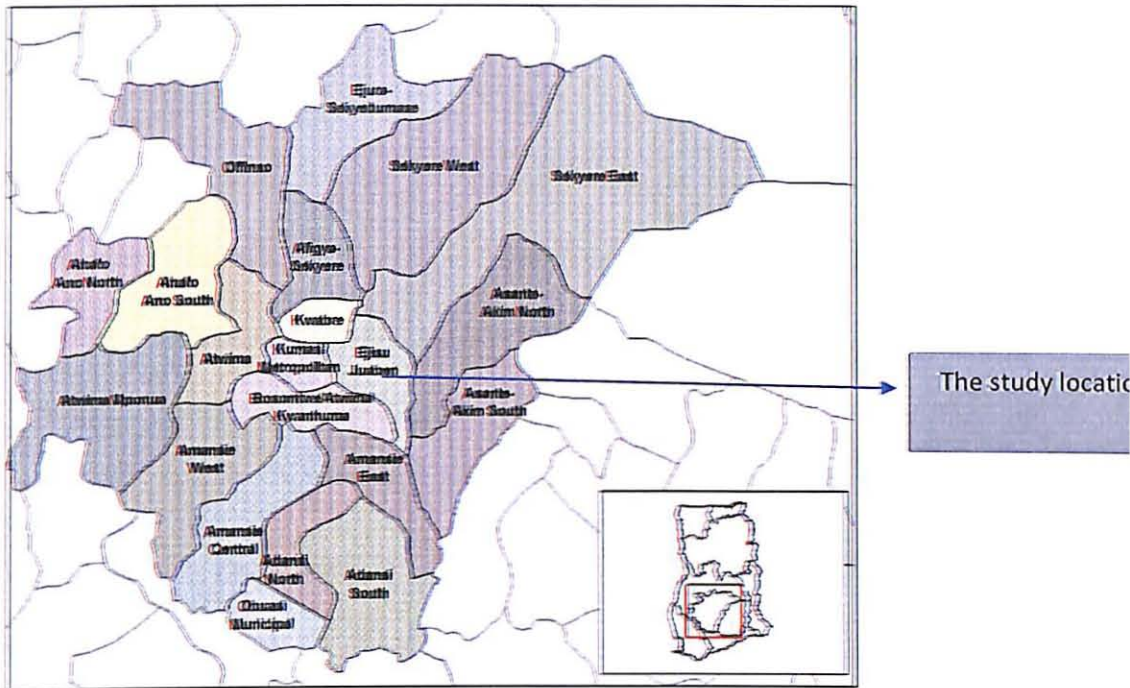


Figure 3.1 Map of study area (Ejisu- Juaben municipality)

3.4 Population

Population is the total number of unit of analysis such as individuals, institutions and organizations. It considers the total number of units in the study area from which a sample is taken. The total number of junior high schools both public and private in the Ejisu-Juaben municipality is One hundred and fifteen (115); specifically seventy-seven (77) representing public schools and thirty- eight (38) representing private schools.

3.5 Sampling and Sampling Technique

Description of the population is key to scientific research. A sample, one which would give a fair representation of the study area and study population is

requested since the whole population which is adolescents (JHS 1 and JHS 2 students) in the Ejisu- Juaben municipality cannot be examined as a result of time constraint and resources.

In this research, a sample were chosen by using purposive sampling method. Wimmer and Dominick (2003: 94) state that 'purposive samples includes respondents, subjects, or elements selected for specific characteristics or qualities and eliminates those who fail to meet these criteria. They further add that purposive samples are used frequently in mass communication studies when researchers select respondents who use a specific medium and are asked specific questions about the medium'. In this case only junior high students who are users of WhatsApp Messenger were applicable. Ten schools were selected by simple random sampling('where each subject or element in the population has an equal chance of being selected', Wimmer and Dominick, 2003: 95) from the ten circuits in the municipality. Numbers were put in a container and mixed for each circuit. The number that was picked from the container represented the school chosen for that particular circuit. The same procedure was repeated for the ten circuits. This gave every school the eligibility of being chosen. Thirty students were randomly selected from each chosen school.

3.6 Research Instrument

Self-administered questionnaires were used to solicit for information from students (that is JHS 1, JHS 2) on their usage of social media (WhatsApp Messenger). The

questions were presented in open (to express views that the researcher may not be aware of) and closed ended forms to allow for qualitative and quantitative analysis of results. During the administering of the questionnaires, questions not represented in the questionnaires but relevant to the course of study were asked. The target source included a few teachers and head teachers who are passionate about social media usage among students and how they can contribute to its usefulness in children's lives.

3.7 Sources of data

This research employed the two sources of acquiring data; primary and secondary source. Primary data provided information collected through the use of questionnaires. Literary forms (journals, book, articles, reports, and online sources) represent the secondary data used basically for literature review which forms the foundation for the research. Secondary data was also obtained from the Ejisu-Juaben Municipal Education office on the total number of public and private junior high schools in the various circuits as well as any relevant information.

3.8 Pre-test

A pre-test which was conducted helped to formulate the final draft of the questionnaire. It revealed that the majority of the respondents understood the questions except a few who sought clarification on the question which asked respondents to indicate 'rationale' for using WhatsApp. As already indicated, the

pre-test was conducted with 10 students who had the same characteristics as the population being studied.

3.9 Data Analysis

Data compilation and analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 21. Descriptive analysis such as frequencies and percentages were carried out using the data obtained. Comparisons were made between and within groups. Graphs were drawn using Microsoft excel.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues arise from the kinds of problems social scientists investigate and the methods used to obtain valid and reliable data.

Acting ethically requires that a researcher balance the value of advancing knowledge against the value of noninterference in the lives of others. The law and codes of ethics recognize some clear prohibitions: never cause unnecessary or irreversible harm to subjects; secure prior voluntary consent when possible; and never unnecessarily humiliate, degrade, or release harmful information about specific individuals that was collected for research purposes (Neuman, 2007: 50-57). Three issues have to be considered;

- Privacy: Invading a person's privacy when they probe into beliefs, background and behaviors.
- Anonymity: Not disclosing participants' identity.

- Confidentiality: protecting the confidentiality of a participant.

Permission was sought from the Ejisu- Juaben municipal education directorate, as well as from the various head teachers of the selected schools. Respondents were not coerced to answer the questionnaire. It was a voluntary act. All academic works used in the research have been sourced to prevent plagiarism.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF INFLUENCE OF THE USE OF WHATSAPP MESSENGER ON ADOLESCENT LANGUAGE AND RELATIONSHIP TIES IN GHANA USING ADOLESCENTS IN EJISU-JUABEN MUNICIPALITY AS A CASE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

The core emphasis of this chapter is to analyze statistically, the experiential data and discuss key findings to see whether or not they support previous studies on the influence of social media similar to WhatsApp messenger on adolescent development. It is significant to note that in the previous chapters i.e. chapter one to two, this study examined notions from the theoretical perspective about the perception of both positive and negative influence of social media usage on adolescent development and of the gratifications acquired in the use of social media. What this chapter strives to ensure is to provide a pragmatic analysis of the linkage between the influence of social media (WhatsApp) on adolescent's development (language and relationship ties). In detail, it discusses experiential viewpoints on the rationale guiding usage of WhatsApp, usage patterns, socialization and communication on WhatsApp and the effect of WhatsApp on learning (language used-written/verbal) and relationship ties which have been outlined in the preceding chapters precisely chapter two.

It is however pertinent to note that from the review of several materials, there was some scantiness/ shortfalls in the description of social media influence on adolescent with reference to WhatsApp messenger's influence on adolescent language and relationship ties. In view of the shortfalls, this chapter analyzes whether or not the findings from the survey explain the linkage between the influence of social media (WhatsApp) and adolescents' development (language and relationship ties). This chapter interprets findings of the survey to establish their assimilation with the research questions and objectives, their relationship to the notions raised in earlier researches. This chapter further analyzes and interprets data obtained from the survey conducted with a span of one month. The rationale for this study was to discover findings to support the line of argument of this dissertation.

4.2 General characteristics of respondents

Consequently as stated in chapter 1, this study was conducted to investigate the influence of WhatsApp Messenger on adolescents' language and relationship ties in Ghana. This chapter analyzes and discusses the results/responses obtained from the questionnaire administered to some selected adolescents (Junior High School students) within the Ejisu-Juaben municipality in the Ashanti Region, Ghana. Students were selected from 10 different schools (both public and private). Selection of schools was done randomly but students were sampled through purposive sampling method where only students who have used and/or been familiar with WhatsApp were eligible for the interviews.

The questionnaire administered was in five main sections which are as follows: bio data, usage patterns of WhatsApp, the drive to use WhatsApp, socialization and communication and finally the effect of WhatsApp on language and relationship ties. Out of the 300 respondents selected from the various schools to provide answers to the set of questions in the questionnaire, only 237 were completed and retrieved. The 237 pupils had a representation of classes (JHS 1 and JHS 2). The JHS 3 had written their final exams and left school and so were not included in the exercise.

4.3 Bio data

Bio data considered in this study were gender, age, class and school. The results revealed that out of the 237 respondents who completed the questionnaire, 119 representing 50.2% happened to be males with the remaining 118 representing 49.8% been females (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1
Distribution of respondent’s population by gender, age and school (n=237)

Gender	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)	Age Range		School (Private and Public)	
			12-15	16-18	Private	Public
Male	119	50.2	90	29	40	79
Female	118	49.8	110	8	52	66
TOTAL	237	100			92	145

Source: Survey questionnaire, 2015

Although the survey ensured that there was gender balance, however, the male respondents were slightly more than their female counterparts by just 1(0.4%) out of the 237 respondents. Indeed, this may not suggest that the male counterpart dominates the use of WhatsApp, perhaps, because the student population have male being the dominant element. As it is to be expected, 145 respondents (male and female) representing 61% were from the public schools whereas 92 respondents representing 39% were selected from the private schools. This was because most of the private schools had not been in the education system for long and were working with just a few students at present. In the case of age distribution, most of the students were within 12-15 years of age for both males and females respectively (Table 4.1). With the exception of the age range of 12-15 years where the females dominated, their male counterparts dominated with respect to the other items put across (Table 4.1).

4.4 Usage patterns of WhatsApp

This section of the questionnaire sought to address the first objective of this study which was to (identify the usage patterns of WhatsApp Messenger among adolescents in the Ejisu-Juaben municipality). Three questions were addressed under this section: determining the activities that respondents engaged in on WhatsApp, how often they engaged in these activities and why they chose to spend time on the various activities.

Table 4.2 summarizes the various responses obtained from the various activities engaged on WhatsApp by these adolescents.

Table 4.2
Activities engaged in on WhatsApp (n=237)

Activity	No. of Respondents		Total
	Yes	No	
Meet new people	126 (53.2%)	111 (46.8%)	237
Upload and receive videos	98 (41.4%)	139 (58.6%)	237
Read messages	131(55.3%)	106 (44.7%)	237
Chat	151(63.7%)	86 (36.3%)	237
Get information on health issues	86 (36.3%)	151(63.7%)	237
Do school work	93 (39.2%)	144 (60.8%)	237
Update profile and status	67 (28.3%)	170 (71.7%)	237

Source: Survey questionnaire, 2015

Responses obtained from the question, “what activities do you engage in on WhatsApp?” revealed overwhelming majority of the adolescents (both males and females) engage WhatsApp for chatting (151 respondents representing 63.7%). This was followed by reading of messages with 131 respondents(representing 55.3%) and meeting of new people (126 respondents) representing 53.2% (See Table 4.2). With reference to school work, it was observed that only 93(39.2%) respondents used WhatsApp for academic purposes (Table 4.2). This gives a clear indication that the benefits of WhatsApp for academic purposes were less utilized by the respondents. This is indeed, inconsistent with the theoretical evidence that WhatsApp is utilized largely for educational purposes. Indeed, the hypothesis of

this study which states that WhatsApp has less influence on the adolescents learning behavior is thus verified. Nonetheless, this finding could probably stem from the fact that the municipality has a relatively low level of education (Ghana Statistical Service 2014:37) hence the low usage of the mobile messaging app for learning.

4.4.1 Assessment of the frequency of WhatsApp usage

Frequent visitation to a particular place gives one an idea as to how often and to some extent, how much time one spends with respect to the entity under observation. This idea brought about a follow up question on how often the respondents were engaged on WhatsApp with respect to the various activities mentioned in the first question.

Response from the students showed that they do not frequently use WhatsApp and this could stem from the fact that most head teachers are against the use of the mobile messaging app either in school whilst probably most parents also prevent the use of mobile phones at hometoo.

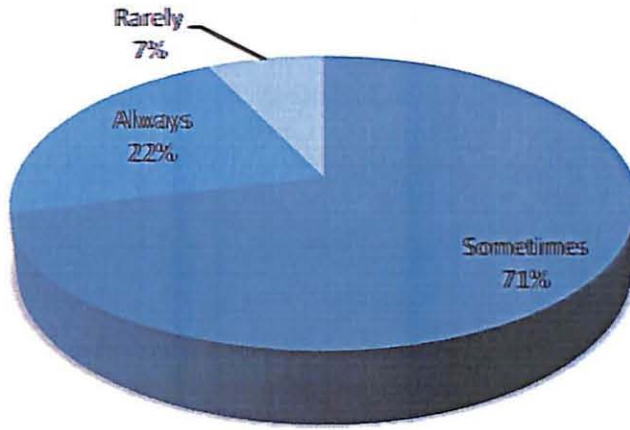


Figure 4.1 Frequency of engaged activities on WhatsApp

Figure 4.1 shows the rate at which respondents engaged in the activities they mentioned earlier in the first question as to “what activities does one engage in on WhatsApp” . The data indicates that 169 representing (71%) out of the 237 respondents, sometimes used the mobile messaging app. This could be explained from the angle where some of the respondents admitted to the fact that they make use of smart phones belonging to their relatives, be it their parents or older siblings. In an interview conducted, a respondent said “some parents are not so inclined with the technology and skills required to use their smart phones therefore giving respondents the opportunity to have access to these gadgets.” 51 respondents representing 22% admitted to using WhatsApp always which could be as a result of their ownership of personal gadgets that make it possible for them to use the app.

4.4.2 Reasons for spending time on WhatsApp

The study investigated the reasons as to why respondents spend time on various activities on WhatsApp. A “Yes” and “No” option was provided for each of the listed activities and the results are represented by Figure 4.2.

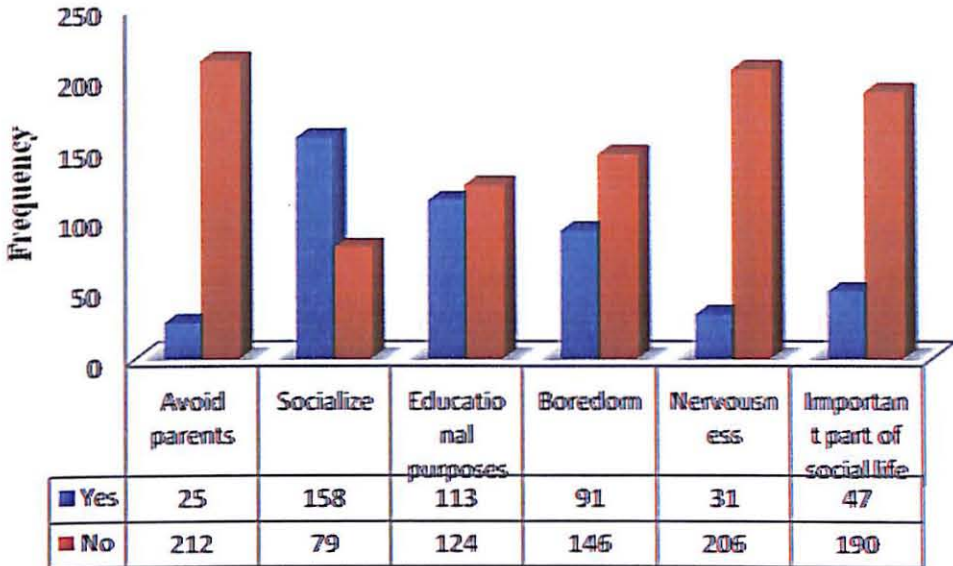


Figure 4.2 Reasons for spending time on WhatsApp

The results showed that 158 respondents chose to be on WhatsApp (that is chose the option “Yes”) basically for socialization with 113 respondents using the app for educational purposes (Figure 4.2). Interestingly, a little over 91 respondents used the mobile messaging app as a result of boredom. This agrees with the notion that adolescents do get bored especially when they are engaged in the same activities all the time and thus may use WhatsApp as a way of releasing their boredom.

Although some of the respondents interviewed stated that “we use the app because our parents are meddlesome,” (JU 22-07-2015)(a student) it was quite interesting to know that a majority (212) of respondents in the Ejisu- Juaben municipality did not see avoiding parents as a reason to use the mobile messaging app. Other respondents forty seven (47) stated that WhatsApp is an important part for their social life and this was confirmed by an interview with some respondents who indicated that “ a day without visiting the app makes our day incomplete”(JU 22-07-2015)(a student).

4.5 Motivation for the usage of WhatsApp

This section of the survey also sought to address the second objective of this study, which was, to assess the motivations for using WhatsApp, the means by which respondents access the app, how satisfactory its use is and the reasons for being motivated to use the mobile messaging app. In line with the uses and gratifications theory, it emerged that respondents used WhatsApp to satisfy numerous needs. Table 4.3 gives a summary of the response obtained from the respondents with respect to the question “what motivated you to use WhatsApp Messenger”?

Table 4.3**Motivations for using WhatsApp Messenger (n=237)**

Motivations	No. & Percentage of Respondents		Total
	Yes	No	
Socialize	127 (53.6%)	110 (46.4%)	237
Get general information	110 (46.4%)	127 (53.6%)	237
Keep in touch with parents/family	75 (31.6%)	162 (68.4%)	237
Meet new people	68 (28.7%)	169 (71.3%)	237
Helps me to communicate better	55 (23.2%)	182 (76.8%)	237
I do not enjoy face-to-face communication	22 (9.3%)	215 (90.7%)	237
Learn from new people	48 (20.3%)	189 (79.7%)	237

Source: Survey questionnaire, 2015

With regards to the various motivations stated above (Table 4.3), socialization ranked first with 127 respondents representing 53.6%. 46.4% (110) of the respondents replied that they used the app to get general information, thus ranking second as seen from Table 4.3. It was however surprising that many respondents chose the option “No” in all the motivations stated. All indications showed that only 22(9.3%) of the respondents did not enjoy face to face communication meaning they enjoyed to hide behind WhatsApp to express themselves.

4.5.1 Medium used for accessing WhatsApp Messenger

One means of accessing WhatsApp messenger that received a lot of response from respondents was through the use of a phone (smart phones). According to the Pew Research Center, much of this frenzy of access is facilitated by mobile devices. Nearly three-quarters of teens have or have access to a smart phone and 30% have a basic phone. These phones and other mobile devices have become a primary driver of teen internet use (Lenhart, 2015). From Figure 4.3, it could be noticed that most respondents that is 234 stated the use of smart phones. This response gives the impression that respondents either have their personal samrt phones or have access to their relatives’.

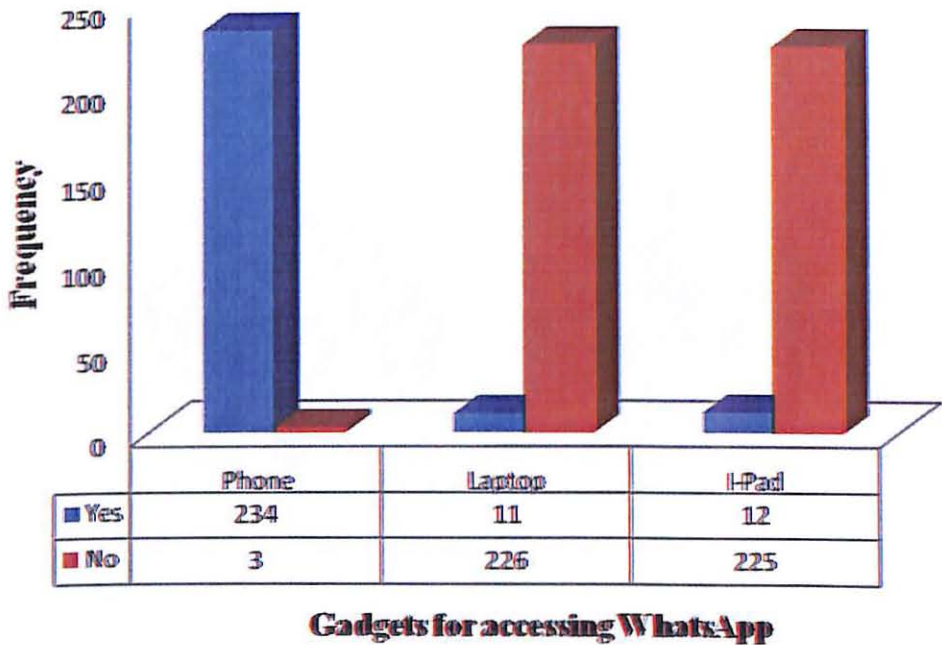


Figure 4.3 Medium used for accessing WhatsApp Messenger

There were some respondents who indicated that they used either one or two of the gadgets stated in the question . None of the respondents had access to all three gadgets at the same time. Based on the location of the study area, it was evident that most parents could not afford the gadgets for their wards. The few that responded to using a laptop or an I-pad gives the impression that they are from media- rich homes.

4.5.2 Satisfactory level of WhatsApp Usage

In addressing the gratifications attained by respondents, the Likert-type scale was used as a tool to rank the contentment level of the use of WhatsApp messenger. Interestingly, more than 50% of the respondents indicated they were satisfied with the mobile messaging app (Figure 4.5).

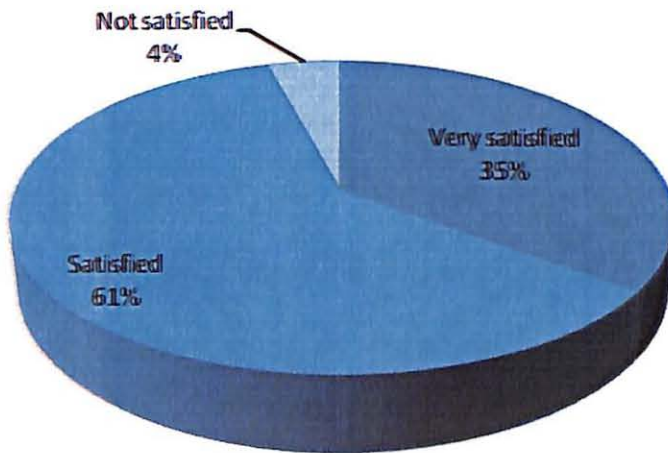


Figure 4.4 How satisfactory the use of WhatsApp is

This is a clear indication of an absence in the socialization process. No matter how much time one spends on WhatsApp, they still look elsewhere for further information which shows a lack of fulfillment in the use of the app. Respondents

who were very satisfied with the app represented 35%. As little as 4% indicated that they were not satisfied with the mobile messaging app. This to some extent agrees with a statement made by Gamble and Gamble (1996: 212), ‘as our society placed more and more emphasis on technology, it was feared that we would place less and less emphasis on personal relationship. That fear proved false. Theorists reason that in order to compensate for the alienation fostered by machine-made barriers, we in fact feel a greater need to develop warm, personal relationship’. Other empirical evidence gathered at the interview are enumerated below.

4.5.3 Reasons for motivations

Some respondents are of the view that “The usage of a system, software and other day-to-day applications for example either for the first time or continuously usually come with a reason or cause to which gives one the desire to use that particular entity”(FU 15-07-2015)(a student).This was corroborated by the responses gathered in the survey conducted. As part of the survey, respondents’ reasons for being motivated to use WhatsApp was assessed.

Table 4.4 gives the various responses stated by the respondents.

Table 4.4**Reasons for students' motivation to use WhatsApp Messenger (n=237)**

Reasons	No. of Respondents		Total
	Yes	No	
It is interesting	86	151	237
Everybody uses it	93	144	237
Coollest way to communicate	74	163	237
Share information with specific people	127	110	237

Source: Survey questionnaire, 2015

Respondents' topmost reason for the usage of WhatsApp was the fact that they could share information with specific people. This was represented by 127 respondents (Table 4.4). Some who were interviewed for giving such a reason stated that and I quote 'there are times when one wants to discuss a particular issue with a specific person where the same information cannot be discussed with another'(EJ 10-07-2015)(a student). A typical example is the discussion of relationship matters where adolescents prefer to talk to certain friends and not their parents or siblings.

The second highest ranked reason was the fact that everybody uses WhatsApp and this to some extent pushes them (that is the respondents) to equally make use of the mobile messaging app (Table 4.4). Although WhatsApp seems to be a 'cool' and interesting way of communicating in today's world, more than a hundred respondents thought otherwise. This could stem from the fact that quiet a huge

number of junior high students in the municipality were handicapped or knew nothing about social media specifically WhatsApp.

One thing that makes WhatsApp look “cool” is the fact that an individual can get access to share information about themselves and the things they are involved in at any point in time within a twinkle of an eye. In the case where most of the students lack knowledge about WhatsApp, the mobile messaging app loses its coolness and interesting nature because users will have to go through the normal process of engaging in conversations with colleagues in school.

4.6 Socialization and Communication

This section of the questionnaire sought to address the third objective of this study, which was to assess the “groups” of people respondents liked to communicate/socialize with, the approach through which they communicated with the group mentioned, and why respondents choose to communicate with the groups they mentioned.

Table 4.5
Group of people adolescent’s communicate with on WhatsApp (n = 237)

Groups of people	No. and Percentage of Respondents		Total
	Yes	No	
Parents	46 (19.4%)	191 (80.6%)	237
Friends	215 (90.7%)	22 (9.3%)	237
Teachers	23 (9.7%)	214 (90.3%)	237
Other family members	67 (28.3%)	170 (71.7%)	237

Source: Survey questionnaire, 2015

From the Table 4.5 above, respondents indicated they communicated/socialized more with friends than any of the other groups mentioned. This was represented by 90.7% from 215 respondents. It was however interesting to note that respondents chose to communicate with other family members (28.3%) rather than their own parents (19.4%). A few of the respondents twenty-three (23) which represented 9.7% communicated/socialized with their teachers. In my opinion, this is very bad since students could actually use this mobile messaging app to communicate and get extra assistance and other information which could help them comprehend subjects/courses they find difficult in school.

4.6.1 Means of communicating/ socializing with group individuals on

WhatsApp

In order to assess the full impact of WhatsApp on adolescents', respondents were asked how they communicated with their peers, teachers, parents or family members when using the application with some of the means being either through short hand texting, texting using good English, by uploading pictures or by changing of status. Respondents numbering 144 (40%) stated that they used short hand texting whilst communicating on WhatsApp (Figure 4.5). A fair number of respondents 115 (32%) indicated that they communicated on WhatsApp using good English. The gap which is not too wide gives the impression that depending on "who" respondents' are communicating with, the means of information dissemination changes.

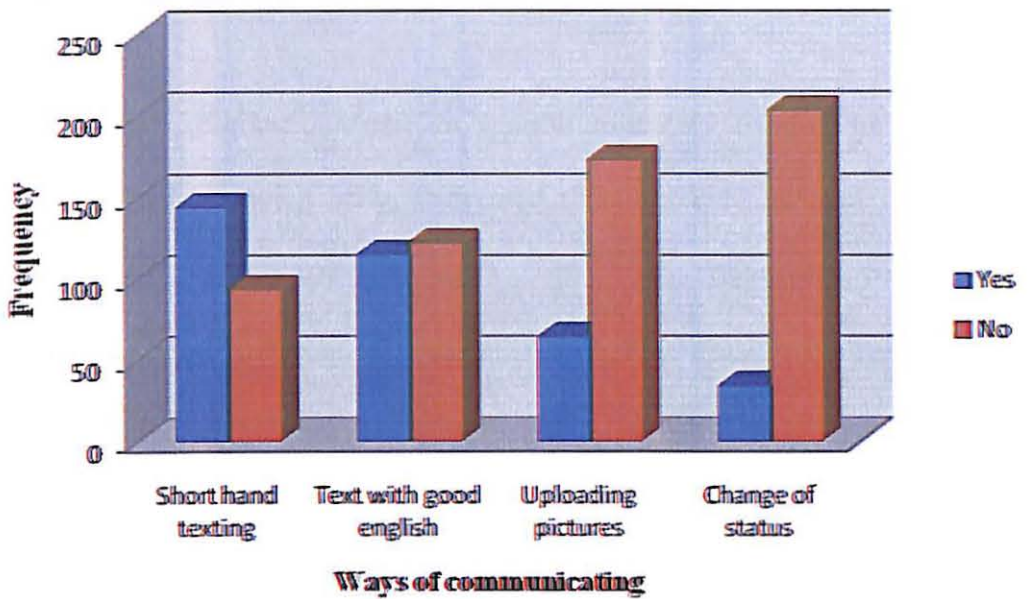


Figure 4.5 Various means of communicating on WhatsApp

WhatsApp messenger which is a mobile messaging app though good and helps in making communication easier also comes with its negative side effects. One of such obvious negative effect is that this app has brought about the use of very bad English in our educational institutions. Teachers have expressed their frustrations as to how students use ‘short hand’ in school and eventually use them in their final examinations which mostly result in their failure.

One of the English teacher’s at Fumesua Anglican JHS said and I quote “ WhatsApp messenger has impacted negatively on students’ language in school. She said students lacked the capability of constructing grammar”. She also recalled how students had failed gravely in their final examinations due to the use of ‘short hand’ (FU 20-07-2015)(a teacher).

4.6.2 Reason for communicating/socializing on WhatsApp

Response from the question “why do you communicate/socialize on WhatsApp with the group mentioned above” revealed that less than 50% of respondents (28%) rated WhatsApp “easier” as the topmost reason for communicating/socializing on WhatsApp (Figure 4.6). This was followed closely by 23% which represented respondents who indicated that their reason for socializing was to get the needed information.

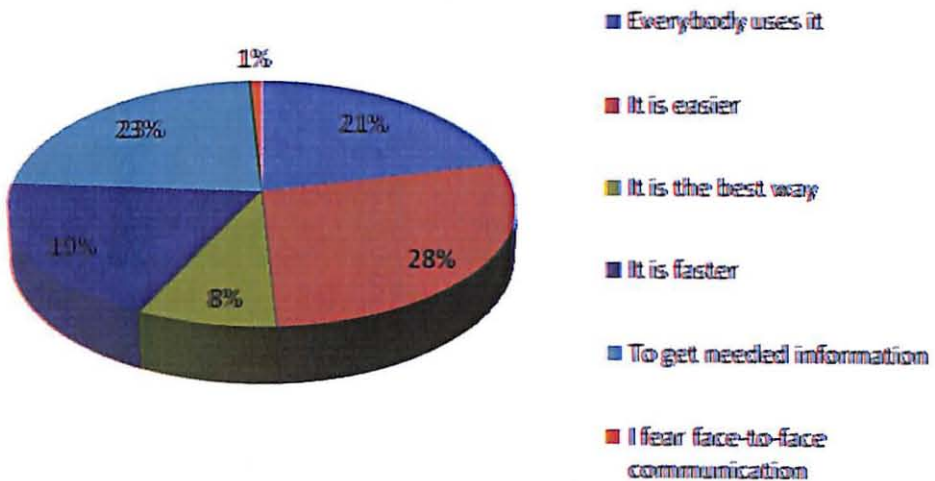


Figure 4.6 Reasons adolescents communicate/socialize on WhatsApp

It would be interesting to know that some of the respondents though only 1% (Figure 4.6) stated that they fear face-to-face communication thus saw WhatsApp as a means of easily expressing themselves without having to face anyone.

4.7 Effect of WhatsApp on language(written/verbal) and Relationship Ties

4.7.1 Effect of WhatsApp on language (written/verbal)

Assessing the effect of WhatsApp on adolescents was based on two areas, language (written/verbal) and relationship ties. Generally, observations have made it clear that WhatsApp affects the writing and verbal skills of students. Teachers and head teachers interviewed shared their frustrations about how the mobile messaging app has had a great impact in the various essays that students presented during examinations. The use of ‘short hand’ was so evident and this always resulted in lower grades. Interestingly, respondents’ reply concerning whether WhatsApp has affected their language indicated they were not entirely affected by the mobile messaging app. This represented 71% of the entire population (Figure 4.7) below. The remaining 29% stated “Yes” which meant the usage of the app has had an effect on their language (that is both written and verbal) and in a way affected their learning.

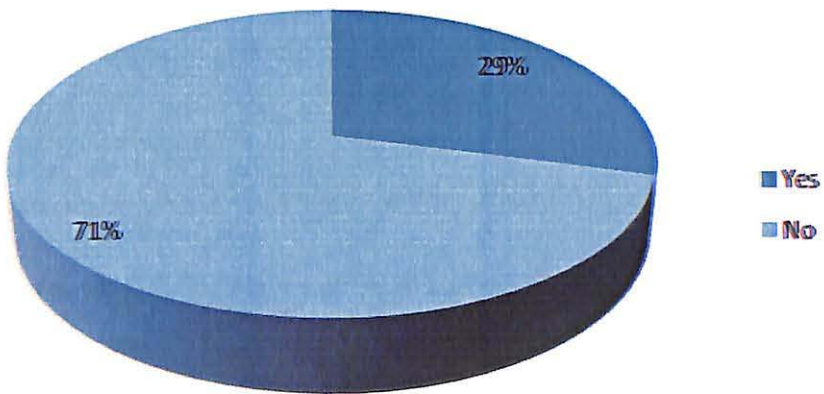


Figure 4.7 Impact of WhatsApp on adolescents' language

The two main reasons stated by the 29% respondents who answered 'Yes' to how WhatsApp has affected their language were:

- The use of short hand unknowingly in school either in examinations, writing of notes or class exercises. This can be attributed to the fact that the words become so common to them, getting stuck in their memories.
- The change in some aspects of speech in school.

It is however obvious that 'short hand' has become the order of the day. Whilst some respondents wrote 'short hand' unknowingly, other students felt lazy writing words in full.

Other reasons given by respondents aside the two major ones stated above included:

- Interference with correct spellings. Respondents indicated they forgot the spellings of common words used every day like 'the', 'this' and 'you' among others.
- Speaking of pidgin in school.

Everything around us does have negative and positive effects. This applies also to the mobile messaging app been discussed. Influence of the mobile messaging app is measured in two- fold; positive and negative. With the positives, some respondents stated that WhatsApp has helped them to learn more as well as increase their vocabulary. On the other hand, a few thought it did not make them serious in school.

4.7.2 Effect of WhatsApp on Relationship ties

The two main characteristics considered with regards to adolescent development in this study were adolescent language and relationship ties. This section talks about the latter development and observations made during the survey. The study sought to find out how the use of WhatsApp has affected the relationship ties of adolescents in the Ejisu-Juaben municipality in terms of the bonds they shared with their friends and families after using the mobile messaging app. The question, “has WhatsApp use affected the way you communicate/ socialize with your parents and friends?” was merely to find out if respondents had the same bond with the friends and families after using the mobile messaging app. 195 respondents representing 82% (Figure 4.8) stated clearly that the mobile messaging app has not had any effect on the way they communicate/socialize with parents and friends. The remaining 18% stated that the app has affected their communication and socializing patterns.

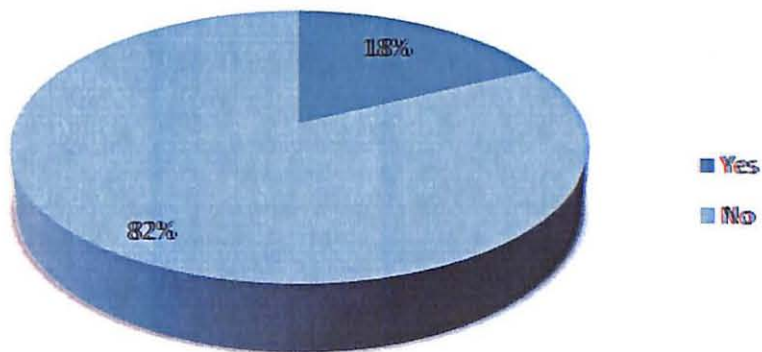


Figure 4.8 Impact of WhatsApp on relationship ties

The two main reasons which were pointed out by respondents with respect to how WhatsApp has affected the way they communicated/ socialized with parents and friends were:

- Preference of friends over siblings in terms of chatting.
- Finding it boring talking to parents.

Other reasons stated included:

- Chatting with friends and parents any how regardless of their age.
- Not having time to chat with parents and siblings because of the eagerness to respond to chats on WhatsApp.
- Not spending time with parents and siblings to offer them help when they need it.

Some of the respondents stated that instead of making calls or writing letters, WhatsApp has made communication more fun, easier and interesting. Most importantly, others indicated that they got the necessary information from friends and parents at the time they need help as well as keeping themselves updated.

Note: The 'Yes' or 'No' options were used during analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences since respondents were asked to tick all that apply with respect to the answers that were given to some question.

4.8 Discussions

In the previous chapters, so far, we have been doing an analysis based on the argument that there is a weak negative correlation between WhatsApp usage and the everyday language of adolescents' both in school and at home. The analysis was carried out by exploring the usage patterns of WhatsApp, the rationale behind its usage, socialization and communication habits on the one hand and the effects of the mobile messaging app on language (written/ verbal) and relationship ties. As indicated before, this study sets out to achieve one broad objective. Broadly speaking, it explores the linkage between the influence of social media (WhatsApp on adolescents' development (language and relationship ties) in the Ejisu- Juaben municipality. Specifically, the main concerns of this study has been;

- To explore and explain the usage patterns of WhatsApp messenger among adolescents' in the Ejisu- Juaben municipality,
- To ascertain and examine the motivation for engaging in WhatsApp messenger usage among adolescents' in the Ejisu- Juaben municipality,
- To explore and analyze whether or not WhatsApp messenger affect communication and socialization habits among adolescents' in the Ejisu- Juaben municipality.

In this chapter, it is only right to do some prognosis in light of the thesis argument, objectives and key findings. Ascribing the influence (positive or negative) of WhatsApp messenger on adolescent development to one reason or cause is risky. Despite proof at hand, there is likely to be a certain degree of

inaccuracy in this diagnosis. However, the conclusions arrived at in this study were based on hard data and although it may not be valid, it must be beneficial to practitioners precisely educators, communication researchers and the general public. With this in mind, it is hoped that the notions communicated in this work will not be ignored. It is advisable to note that the conclusions arrived at in this study were based on hard data and may not be valid. To begin with, the data used are based on an assumption which may be wrong. This study only seeks to provide a background for further research in social media (WhatsApp) usage by adolescents' in several aspects of their lives. A number of issues stood out quite strongly in the study and are summarized below.

4.8.1 Usage Patterns of WhatsApp

First, the data analysis revealed that an overwhelming majority (63.7%) of the respondents admitted that 'chatting' was their main activity engaged in on WhatsApp, whilst 55.3% and 53.2% stated they engaged in reading messages and meeting new people respectively on the mobile messaging app. Majority (60.8%) of the respondents are not aware of the beneficial role the mobile messaging app can play in their education resulting in its less usage. The findings also revealed that frequency of usage was limited. More than 50% (71%) of respondents sometimes used the mobile messaging app as a result of their parents lack of skills in utilising the application with a little over 20% (22%) using it always resulting from the fact that they owned their personal smart gadgets. The findings reveal that the reason for spending time on WhatsApp was to socialize and this was

represented by 158 respondents whilst 113 respondents claim to spend time using the app for educational purposes which was contrary to 93 respondents (representing 39.2%) who stated earlier that they engage in school work on WhatsApp. It was pertinent to note that although some respondents used the app because they felt their parents were meddlesome, 212 respondents did not think they needed to spend time on the app to avoid their parents. Other respondents stated that “a day without visiting the app makes our day incomplete” and they were represented by 47 respondents.

4.8.2 The drive to use WhatsApp

In seeking the rationale behind the usage of WhatsApp, the study found that respondents' motivation was basically a means of socializing. This was represented with an overwhelming majority (53.6%) of respondents. 110 respondents (representing 46.4%) were motivated to use the app in order to get general information. It was however pertinent to note that more respondents chose the option 'No' and this could result from the fact that respondents were not entirely aware of their motivations for using the app. The findings further reveal that the means of accessing WhatsApp was basically through the use of smart phones and this was represented by 234 respondents out of the 237 respondents. Laptops and I-Pad's were less used and this could be as a result of the fact that parents could not afford such gadgets. To assess how gratified respondents were with the use of the app, 61% of respondents stated they were simply satisfied which showed a lack of actual satisfaction in the communication process. Respondents were of

the view that their reason for being motivated to use the app was because they could share information with specific people and this was represented by 127 respondents out of the 237 respondents.

4.8.3 Socialization and Communication Habits

The analysis revealed that 90.7% of respondents were moved to socialize/communicate with friends on WhatsApp. Interestingly, respondents preferred to communicate/socialize with other family members than their parents. A small minority (9.7%) preferred to chat with their teachers as this shows a lack in the benefits teachers could offer their students using this platform. The findings reveal that 144 respondents (representing 40%) use 'short hand' texting whilst communicating whereas 115 respondents (32%) used good English. Although less than 50% for both means, it will be pertinent to note that the means of communication differ in terms of 'who' a respondent is communicating with. Reasons for communicating using the app was because 'it is easier' and this was represented by 28% of respondents. This was followed closely by 23% of respondents who claim their reason being as a result of 'everybody using it'. Although, it is a fast and cheaper way of communicating, 81% of respondents thought otherwise leaving 19% of respondents stating the app being fast.

4.8.4 Effect of WhatsApp on Language (written/ verbal) and Relationship

Ties

Although school authorities state that WhatsApp usage is affecting student learning in terms of the language used in school, the analysis reveals that 71% of respondents claim not to have been affected by the use of the mobile messaging app which is contrary to the assertion made by the authorities. This indicates clearly that their learning is no way affected by WhatsApp messenger. The remaining 29% who stated that usage of the app has affected them gave some reasons as 'using short hand in school', speaking of pidgin in school and forgetting the correct spellings of some words. There are some respondents who praised WhatsApp for 'helping them learn more and new things each day' and 'increasing their vocabulary'.

With respect to how respondents interact with family and friends, the data reveal an overwhelming majority not affected by the mobile messaging app. This was represented by 82% of respondents. This shows that socialization and communication patterns are not affected even though respondents use WhatsApp messenger. This study has revealed that there was a minor correlation between WhatsApp usage and the everyday language of adolescents be it in school or at home. It further showed that WhatsApp messenger was just an addition to help keep their social circles well bonded. That notwithstanding, Adolescents' still preferred face-to-face interactions.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of key findings, conclusion and recommendations for further study. The study was intended to find out the influence of WhatsApp messenger on adolescent language and relationship ties in Ghana with Ejisu-Juaben municipality as a case study. In order to achieve this, the study was planned in five chapters.

Chapter One dealt with the background of the study where argument for the reasoning behind this study was discussed. Research questions were posed and objectives were raised. The assumption on which the study was based was presented as well as the significance of the study and scope of the study.

Chapter Two discusses the theoretical framework guiding the study which was the Uses and Gratifications theory by Katz and Blumler. The review of related literature where several materials were considered formed part of this chapter. Issues including social media and the adolescent, the drive to use social media, usage patterns of social media, socialization and communication and the effect of WhatsApp on language (written/verbal) and relationship ties were reviewed. The

importance of the study, operational definitions and a conclusion which summarized the reviewed material identifying knowledge gaps were inclusive in this chapter.

Chapter Three of the study presents the methodology used in conducting this research. The dominant-less dominant style of the mixed method was used. Survey questionnaires were used to gather data from 300 respondents who were chosen by the purposive sampling method from ten schools in the Ejisu-Juaben municipality selected by using the simple random sampling. A pre-test was conducted to help formulate the final draft of the questionnaire as well as ethical considerations on the research field was addressed in chapter three.

Chapter Four presents analysis of the influence of WhatsApp messenger on adolescent language and relationship ties and discussion of findings. Data collected was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science software version 21. A descriptive analysis was carried out to achieve frequencies and percentages. Data was analyzed and presented in tabular forms, graphs and pie charts. Discussions of the various issues were also presented.

Lastly, chapter five presents a summary of what went into all the respective chapters, the key findings, conclusion, which is presented based on the findings of the study and recommendations which are made for parents, students, educators who are interested in the use of WhatsApp messenger by adolescents’.

Recommendations are made for communication researchers who are concerned about conducting further studies on different angles of this research area.

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

Less than 30% of respondents indicated that WhatsApp has had an effect on their language where they wrote in 'short hand' and spoke 'pidgin' in school. It was however good to know that WhatsApp did not affect relationship ties since less than 20% said it had affected them. This is a clear indication that WhatsApp messenger has a weak effect on adolescent's language and relationship ties.

This study has revealed that there was a weak negative correlation between WhatsApp usage and the everyday language of adolescents be it in school or at home. It further showed that WhatsApp messenger was just an addition to help keep their social circles well bonded. That notwithstanding, adolescents' still preferred face-to-face interactions. These represent the knowledge gaps which this study has identified. It has also succeeded in drawing a linkage between adolescent development (language and building relationship ties) to the uses and gratifications theory with the intension to elucidate the comprehensibility of WhatsApp messaging as a medium of communication among other new media networks. As already indicated, this study has succeeded in bridging the existing gaps in the literature by showing clearly that there is a negative correlation between WhatsApp usage and the everyday language of adolescents.

5.3 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are arrived at;

- Adolescents' in the Ejisu-Juaben municipality have been partially affected by the use of WhatsApp Messenger. This is as a result of the fact that they do not use the app frequently.
- Most of the students' chose to socialize with their friends rather than their teachers which can actually help them in their studies.
- Students had access to their parents or siblings phones as most of them were not in possession of their own smart phones. This resulting from the fact that parents' economic status could not afford them the luxury of acquiring such smart gadgets for their wards.
- Both male and female students engaged in the same activities.
- Although adolescents indicated that they used the app for educational purposes, it is assumed they preferred to communicate with their friends rather than teachers.
- Although adolescents in Ejisu-Juaben municipality use WhatsApp, it has not altered the way they socialize/communicate with family and friends. Adolescents still want to spend quality time with their friends by interacting on a face-to-face basis.
- In as much as a huge percentage of adolescents indicated that WhatsApp has not affected their language (written/ verbal), it was rather contrary to what their teachers indicated as they expressed their frustrations on

students' failure in their examinations due to the use of 'short hand' writing.

The results of the study provided support of the social and psychological functions of the uses and gratifications theory in the sense that adolescents showed that WhatsApp met their cognitive (acquiring information, knowledge and understanding) and social integrative needs which is to strengthen contact with the family and friends. Furthermore, the research objectives were achieved. Notwithstanding, with respondents different views, there was sharp contrast between students view on the effects of WhatsApp messenger to their teachers.

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the results obtained;

- Parents must be aware of what activities their children engage in on WhatsApp. They have to learn the skill that comes with the technology.
- Teachers should create platforms on which issues which were not understood in class can be elaborated for all to share ideas whilst giving a platform to students' who are shy in class to communicate.
- Head teachers should not scare their students about the usage of WhatsApp but rather with the help of their teachers guide them in the right usage of the mobile messaging app.
- Educators must endeavor to inculcate the habit of good English writing among students by conducting dictations and essay writing. This will motivate students to construct good grammar whilst writing words in full

even when their friends use 'short hand' texting to communicate with them.

- Since WhatsApp messenger has not affected relationship ties, socialization among families must be encouraged. Parents must be more involved in the lives of their children.

5.5 Suggestion for further studies

- A further study can be conducted to know the effect of WhatsApp on students' in Senior High Schools to ascertain the level of impact in their lives.

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APPENDICES

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a final year Master of Arts' student at Ghana Institute of Journalism, Accra, I am conducting a survey on the subject: **“WhatsApp Messenger influence on adolescent language and relationship ties in Ghana.”** This questionnaire is intended to provide information regarding the adolescents' motivations for using WhatsApp Messenger. Please endeavor to fill by ticking the corresponding responses. Thank you.

Bio data

1. Gender Male () Female ()
2. Age: 12- 15 () 16-18 ()
3. Class ()
4. School :

Usage patterns of WhatsApp

5. What activities do you engage in on WhatsApp? Tick all that apply
Meet new people () Upload and receive videos () Read messages ()
Chat () Get information on health issues () Do school work ()
Update profile and status ()
6. How often do you engage in the activities mentioned above on WhatsApp?
Always () Sometimes () Rarely ()

7. Why do you spend the time mentioned above on WhatsApp? Tick all that apply

To avoid parents () To socialize () For educational purposes () Because I get bored () Because I get nervous with face-to face socialization () It is an important part of my social life ()

The drive to use WhatsApp

8. What motivated you to use WhatsApp Messenger?

To socialize () To get general information () To keep in touch with parents/family () To meet new people () It helps me communicate better () I do not enjoy face-to face communication () To learn from new people () Other.....

9. How do you access WhatsApp Messenger?

On phone () On a laptop () On an I-pad () Other.....

10. How satisfactory is the use of WhatsApp?

Very Satisfied () Satisfied () Not satisfied ()

11. Why were you motivated to use WhatsApp?

Because it is interesting () Because everybody uses it () Because it is the coolest way to communicate () Because I can share information with specific people ()

Socialization and Communication

12. What group of people do you communicate/socialize with on WhatsApp?

Parents () Friends () Teachers () Other family members ()

13. How do you communicate/ socialize with the group mentioned above on WhatsApp?

Through short hand texting () Texting using good English () By uploading pictures () Changing my status () Other.....

14. Why do you communicate/socialize on WhatsApp with the group mentioned above?

Because everybody does it () It is the easier () It is the best way () It is faster () It helps me get the needed information () Because I fear face-to face communication

Effect of WhatsApp on language and Relationship ties

15. Has WhatsApp use affected your language (writing/ verbal) in school?

Yes () No ()

If yes, how?.....
.....

16. Has WhatsApp affected the way you communicate/socialize with your parents and friends? Yes () No ()

If yes, how?.....
.....

CASE STUDIES

(Teachers)

Case Study (Madam Lily)

Madam Lily is an English teacher who has been teaching at Fumesua Anglican JHS for the past 17 years. She mentioned that WhatsApp messenger has impacted negatively on students' language in school. Students' lacked the capability of constructing grammar. It saddened her that the media who are to be role models are the ones who use 'short hand' mostly whilst communicating. She recalled how students had failed gravely in their final examinations (Basic Education Certificate Examinations) some years back and continue to fail as a result of students' writing the same way they do on the mobile messaging app. She thinks that things might get back to normal if the media starts communicating the right way and stop using the 'short hand' which the young ones also pick up without thinking twice about it.

Case Study (Mr. Ebo)

Mr. Ebo is the head teacher of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) basic school. Expressing his thoughts on WhatsApp usage, he felt it was a new way of socializing which was the new trend. As an old man, he indicated how he was now trying to keep up with the fast growing technological world in which the young ones have been born into. Although, he shared his joy on how technology has advanced and how eager he was to learn more about WhatsApp, he expressed his frustrations. He stated that students' spoke to them as if they were communicating with their peers. For example, if a student is asked to

respond to a question, he says 'yeah' instead of 'yes'; 'nah' instead of 'no'. Furthermore, he indicated that students' performed poorly in their examinations as a result of the use of 'short hand'. He stated that students have been warned about the usage of cell phones, one medium through which they can access the app in school and the usage of the mobile messaging app even at home. Rather, they should spend time on their books.

Case Study (Mr. Agyeman)

Mr. Agyeman is a science teacher in one of the private schools used for the research. He indicated that although the head teacher had warned students not to use WhatsApp messenger either in school or home, some of the students made it a habit. This is evident in their language be it verbal or written. Although he does not teach English, he expressed his frustrations of marking 'short hand' either in class exercises or examinations. Even though he shares his frustrations about the mobile messaging app, he indicated that he would like to use the app to enhance education; a situation where students can come to him with questions on topics they did not understand in class. This will give the students the opportunity of expressing themselves.

CASE STUDIES (STUDENTS)

Case Study (Ama)

Ama (anonymous) is young girl between the ages of 12 and 15 years. She attends one of the private schools in the Ejisu- Juaben municipality. Ama mentioned that she owned a smart phone which was bought as present for one of her birthdays. Although she is not always on WhatsApp, she finds it disturbing her studies. She shared her frustrations on how she writes 'short hand' and even sometimes 'pidgin' when she is doing class exercises. As a result, she loses marks and is not happy with that. She feels the mobile messaging app is disturbing her studies although it is cool and helps her share information with specific people. She mentioned that overuse of the mobile messaging app had affected the way she communicated to her teacher and brother. She said, "When I talk to my brother and teacher, I sometimes mistakenly speak pidgin". Although she indicated that she will not stop using the app, she said she was going to focus on writing good English even when her friends send her texts in 'short hand'.

Case Study (Kwame)

Kwame (anonymous) is a young boy between the ages of 12-15 years, a student of a private school. Kwame said he was moved to use the mobile messaging app because almost everybody used it and he thinks that makes the app look cool. Although he does not owe a personal smart phone because his dad thinks he is not old enough, he gets access to his mother's phone which he sometimes uses to chat with his friends and get needed information. He stated that his mother did not really know much about the phone which gives him the liberty to use it when she

is not making calls. Aside using 'short hand' texting, he said he enjoyed the WhatsApp call. Feeling very satisfied after using the app, he indicated that it affected the way he wrote in school as he resorted to writing in 'short hand'. He further stated that when he gets home from school, he is so busy texting with his friends that he does not help out in the house. Also, when friends come around, he refuses to go and hang out with them.

TABLE OF SCHOOLS USED FOR STUDY

NAME OF SCHOOL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	VALID PERCENT	CUMULATIVE PERCENT
ACHIASE M/A JHS	26	11.0	11.0	11.0
ACHINAKROM METHODIST JHS	25	10.5	10.5	21.5
FUMESUA ANGLICAN JHS	18	7.6	7.6	29.1
EJISU PRESBY JHS	25	10.5	10.5	39.7
WEWESO M/A JHS	21	8.9	8.9	48.5
JUABENG SDAA JHS	30	12.7	12.7	61.2
CSIR JHS	20	8.4	8.4	69.6
PHOENIX PREP. SCHOOL	17	7.2	7.2	76.8
OASIS CHRISTIAN ACADEMY	25	10.5	10.5	87.3
RIDGE SCHOOL	30	12.7	12.7	100.0
TOTAL	237	100.0	100.0	

FEATURES OF WHATSAPP MESSENGER

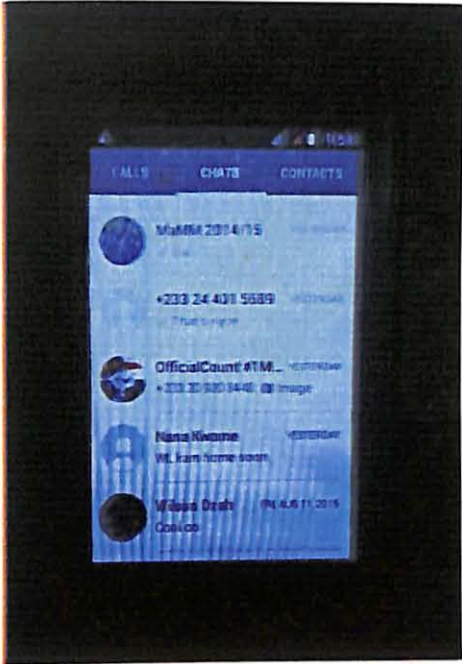


Plate 7.1 Pictures of some features of WhatsApp.