This paper explores the use of internet technology throughout urban and preurban ghana and examines attitudes toward security to gauge the extent to which to which this new population of technology users may be vulnerable to attacks. They find that, like in North America and Europe, the prevalent mental threat model indicates a lac if understanding of how internet technologies operate. As a result people rely heavily on upon passwords for a variety of ad hoc practices learned by word of mouth.

A total of 193 surveys and 178 interviews were conducted. The survey and interviews explored the several aspects of the use and attitudes towards internet security. They also probed for specific instances of hacking or security indications in their interactions. Respondents generally accessed internet from their personal mobile phones (72%) followed by computers at home (50%), internet cafes (40%) and schools (36%). Internet in generally used for social networking, searching, email, news, education and entertainment. The self-reported computer skills of the respondents was 3.2 on average, less than mobile phone skills (mean = 4.1). Their self-reported fear about security was 4.0 on average and the fear of getting hacked was 3.6 on average. This shows that despite increasing confidence in skill with technology and overall education level, worries about security and being attacked also increase. Respondents judged the safety of a site usually by how fast it loaded or ”looked mischievous”, the way it looked and the number of false information on a site. Respondents would also only often go to well-known sites such as Facebook or google. But for research purposes a majority of respondents believed that the sites provided by the search engines such as Yahoo or Google were safe. A majority of respondents cared about Facebook privacy settings compared to email or texts which was surprising given its complexity. Respondents were also fearful about history and would often clear their history and log out while in public cafes or schools. Passwords were the gold standard for security among interviewees but passwords were often shared between sites and were rarely updated. Experience with hacking included hacking bank accounts or emails and sending spam information to friends and family. Past experiences affect internet usage, as someone who has been hacked from online transactions will refrain from making such transactions in the future.

Overall the Study is important as it provided an insight into the perceived mental model of security and threats amongst people of Ghana. It is also a study that to some extent can be replicated in other third world countries like Pakistan as their methodology overcomes lac of prior research quite well.