How WhatsApp users behave towards shared URLs

# **Abstract**

Mobile instant messaging (MIM) applications (apps) such as WhatsApp are now amongst the dominant means through which internet users communicate. Such apps allow their users to send seamless real-time text and media messages to each other. However, there are fears that the functionalities they provide, such as the ability to share or forward URLs to others, may expose users to online security threats such as phishing. Therefore, in this study, we conducted an online survey with 157 WhatsApp users to understand their behaviours towards URLs that are shared by others on the platform. We selected WhatsApp because it is currently the most used MIM app. We found that majority of the users we surveyed click URLs without paying attention to them, forward URLs without following them. We also found that level of education differentiates users in terms of their frequency of forwarding URLs.