
A Study on Effects of Mobile Phone Use Practice among College Students

Sowmya H, Prasanna Kumar C*, Jyothi P S

Department of Social Work, G.F.G.C. Vittal, Bantwal Taluk, Dakshina
Kannada District, Karnataka State, India, 574 243

Email: *cpkmsw@gmail.com

Abstract: *In today's technically advanced society, mobile phones have become indispensable communication devices especially among youth. In two or so decades of its presence, mobile phone culture has been developed in which mobile phones are used for starting and maintaining relationships, exhibiting individual identity and belongingness, claiming membership of a social group and thus emphasizing personal status. The impact of cell phones on today's youth is enormous. In this regard an attempt has been made to examine the effects of mobile phone use practice among college going students of Bantwal Taluk, Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka State. The objective of this study was mainly to address the effects of mobile phone on the academic performance, social relationship and health of the respondents. A descriptive research design was considered keeping in view of the objectives of the study. The findings of the study reveal that mobiles have become an important social technology for youth. Mobiles are becoming a crucial element being part of their life and mobile users become agitated when they are away from mobile phones. Mobile phone makes them secure at their place and thus reduces stress level as they can communicate with others instantaneously. But surely sleep is disturbed as they keep on checking for messages / calls which can be hazardous to their health. The study recommend to sensitize students on adverse effects of over use of mobiles and providing right knowledge on appropriate and wise ways of using mobile in their academic development. It also suggests that appropriate regulations to be laid down in educational institutions in fostering right behaviour among students on college campus in using mobiles.*

Key Words: *Mobile Phone, Youth, Communication, Technology*

1. Introduction

Cell phones or mobile phones have become inherent part of our day to day life. Human beings need for communication in terms of belongingness is facilitated with the use of cellular phones. Cellular phones have had a major impact on our lives and the way that we perform everyday tasks.

In 1940s Motorola developed a backpacked two-way radio, walkie-talkie and a large hand held two-way radio for the US military. The same technology developed further and produced the mobile phone that we know today. Dr. Martin Cooper of Motorola is considered to be the inventor of first practical mobile phone. At present mobile phone is changing the norms, etiquette, proforma, conventionalities and rules of communication. Cell phones are the way to stay connected with family and friends, access the internet sources, online shopping, and navigate the route and so on.

Students use this hand held device for initiating and maintaining relationships as a facility of easy communication with the world. It provides endless opportunity for entertainment, exhibiting their identity and belongingness, claiming membership of a social group and also emphasizing their status without interruption of their movements and distances. The cell phone plays a role in students' identity formation - fostering a sense of self-esteem, showing social connectedness, and providing a teen with an independent means of communication. The impact of cell phones on today's youth is immense. Cell phones are becoming a common sight in educational institutions. Mobile phone turned from technological tool into a social tool.

College authorities are more concerned with the use of mobile phones on college campus because mobile phones are source of disruption and peer pressure. Colleges in different states of India have responded to this trend in different ways. Many of them have banned the use of mobile phone inside the campus whereas some colleges asked the students to use their cell phone only in canteen or the common room. Some colleges have provided individual lockers to students for nominal fee charge. But if teachers find them using cell phone during class hours, phones are being confiscated, parents are informed and fine is also imposed. Most academicians strongly agree that cell phone usage in college disrupt the teaching process. Whatsoever, it can also be observed from our routine that mobile phones have become a basic necessity for college students that they cannot be without it.

2. Positive Effects of Use of Cell Phones by Students

Mobile phones function as tiny computers, with internet capabilities, games, pictures, videos, texting and email etc. along with oral communication. Cell phones for youth are mobile communication devices that they can use in a

wide variety of ways. There are many concerns about the impact of cell phones on youth, at the same time there are many advantages as well.

2.1 Communication

The most obvious benefit of cell phones for students is their ability to help students communicate. It connects students with their peer group so that they can share information which assists them in the process of learning. Many applications have been developed so that students stay connected with their class mates and peer group frequently and also with their family members when they are outside.

2.2 Improved Personal Security

Cell phones provide security for students. The parents who by and large worry about their children would often keep in touch when they are away from them. Indeed, many parents argue that cell phones keep students at safer circumstances. The presence of a cell phone with student ensures that he/she can call parents or emergency personnel in the case of an unforeseen emergency. For the parents, knowing that their child can easily communicate with them at any time offers peace of mind. They have also used cell phones with video and phone capability to record criminal events, making them into reporters and helping police identify criminals and observe exact events in a crime.

2.3 Assisting Teachers

It is a device which connects students with their teachers whereby teachers can deal various issues pertaining to their students and provide them timely help. Other aspects such as attendance issues, sharing information in time of emergencies, coordinating teaching learning activities are also possible these days.

2.4 Education

On some college campuses, students can organize their schedules and take quizzes through their phones. In doing projects or during times of uncertainties, they can easily call their classmates or teachers to consult them and solve any questions that they may have. Students can browse e-resources, which may be used in the preparation of assignments, notes, projects etc. More often students try to solve problems themselves by searching online when they have a difficulty with their course studies. They are easily connected to teacher through mobile for consultation beyond class hours. They can have more discussion on the concerned topic and also can exchange course

content instantly. Educators can also teach students how to use their phones as research tools, which may encourage students to take more initiative in their own learning.

2.5 Youth Engagement

Cell phones have also been leveraged as an important tool for youth engagement in developing country like India. Nowadays, even in remote places network is available and cell phones are becoming a way even for students to connect with the global world and give their opinions on issues that affect them.

2.6 Socialization

Young people's ability to communicate is extended. Now students can reach classmates, friends, peer group and the family members on a daily basis with cell phone.

2.7 Capture Memories

The college experience is one of the most memorable in most students' lives. Students can capture pictures and preserve them and also upload to social networking sites.

2.8 Social Networking

Making social connections is an important aspect of college life. Cell phones allow college students to have an always on connection to their social network. They can send images, messages, documents, and access websites such as Facebook and so on with their friends at any time.

3. Negative Effects of Mobile Phones on Students

Along with the positive effects of the mobile use there are several negative repercussions associated with it. As the technology of cell phones is increasing rapidly, the negative effect on students is growing fast as well.

3.1 Classroom Distraction

The biggest lament of teachers with regard to cell phones is that they lead to student distraction and off task behavior. If students bring cell phone to the class and if it is not silenced, cell phone can ring during class, drawing everyone's attention away from the lesson and disrupting the flow of learning. There are also chances that the students may use the cell phone for inappropriate purpose in the class. Many teachers worry that this added distraction negatively impact on students' school performance as it stops them from dedicating their full attention to their studies.

3.2 Negative Impact on Studies

It is true that mobile phones can help students in studies but only if students use them wisely. Most of the students become addictive to mobile phones and do not focus on study. They are found playing games, chatting with their friends and watching movies and involved in other unimportant stuff. If students are busy keeping their eyes on their mobile phones at all times, they won't get time for study which would lead to poor grades. Texting in short, spontaneous conversation limits the development of ability to converse in complete thoughts and form complete sentences. Excessive use of texting language leads to change in the language even in writing such as - eg, dat, c, wat, u, der, and so on.

3.3 Engage in Inappropriate Behaviour

Cell phone while useful, many of its features can also be used to engage in inappropriate behaviours. Because of cell phone's portability and discrete nature of camera there is a danger that students may take inappropriate pictures quickly without the knowledge of the person being photographed and use them inappropriately. This stuff may get uploaded into social media, later this may be used for unethical purposes. Students are dragged into violent games such as blue whale challenge which may also pose their life in danger.

3.4 Reduce Cognitive Ability

Students may develop short attention span attitude by weakening their focus which may affects their awareness eventually may lead to passive mind. They may forget things easily and create dependency on mobile for quick fix (e.g. even for simple arithmetic calculation mobile calculator application is used)

3.5 Sexting

Sexting is sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, photographs, or images, between mobile phones of oneself to others is a new teen trend. At later stage if this stuff is uploaded to social networking sites, they may have to face the bad consequences. Teens often fail to recognize the long-term implications of such inappropriate behaviors and they engage in the behavior without considering the future consequences.

3.6 Accidents

Mobile phones lead to a lot of accidents. As some students may exhibit risk taking behaviour there is all possibility of accident if they are talking on the mobile phone while driving because they are having half attention on the road. It may also happen when they concentrate over mobile phone when walking on roads. Even students may risk their life while taking selfies by staying at dangerous sites.

3.7 Health Risks

The mobile phones have a negative impact on health of an individual.

3.7.1 Mental Health: By measuring the link between cell phones and mental health, it is found that teens who have used cell phones the most were more likely to be anxious and depressed.

3.7.2 Strain on Eyes and Ears: This results from focusing continually on a small screen and talking over phone for long hours. The habit of watching mobile in dark (putting lights off) may initially cause dry eyes and lead to extensive strain to eyes.

3.7.3 Bacteria: Owing to the close proximity to the mouth where germs can be passed from breathing, coughing and sneezing, most cell phones are crawling with bacteria. Additionally, many people use their phone everywhere, even in the bathrooms, washrooms.

3.7.4 Disturbance in Sleep: Some students use cell phone till late night. This behaviour not only takes away their sound sleeping need but also they are more likely to be tired and will be less able to focus throughout the day.

3.7.5 Psychological Effects: Switching off phone might cause anxiety, irritability or sleeplessness to those who have been addicted to it. It can change in the sleep cycle due to late night usage of mobile phone. They may feel the loneliness or emptiness when there are no calls or messages even for a short while.

3.7.6 Other Issues: Excessive use of cell phones may result in fatigue, difficulty in concentration, headache, pain in neck, back pain, pain in fingers, infertility, brain tumors and low sperm counts. Chances of Alzheimer's disease, leukaemia, ear defects, and blurring of vision too are noticed to be higher in cell phone users.

3.8 Over Expenditure

Mobile phones have become status symbol in college campuses. Now a days, cellular manufacturing companies are also constantly coming up with new models, software and many more features in order to attract more buyers. Due to peer pressure students may get tempted to buy newest mobile phones even if their old ones are still functioning sufficiently well. This leads to incur unnecessary expenses without consideration. They install new features and keep their handsets up to date, spending more money and time lavishly.

3.9 Addiction

In today's world our youths are exposed to technology. In a time where instant gratification is the norm and the cell phone is an item that no youth can possibly do without, they are suffering more and more from "cell phone addiction". K.S. Young (1998) categorized mobile addiction to five specific subtypes such as Cyber-sexual addiction (use of adult chat rooms or cyber-porn); Cyber-relationship addiction (over involvement in online relationship); Net compulsions (online gambling, online shopping, online trading) Information overload (compulsive web surfing or searches) and Computer addiction (obsessive computer game). It is also evident in contemporary society that college students are getting hooked to pornography, internet gambling, games, online shopping, searching for unimportant information and chatting for long hours.

4. Research Methods

The present study intends to address the effects of mobile phone on the academic performance, social relationship and health of the respondents. A descriptive research design was considered keeping in view of the objectives of the study. The sample comprises of 80 college going undergraduate students from four Government First Grade colleges of Bantwal Taluk of Karnataka state. 20 students from each college were selected by using simple random sampling technique for the study. Questionnaire and an interview schedule were framed for data collection. The respondents were contacted personally to elicit the required information. Responses were recorded on the basis of interview schedule as well as observation. Data were tabulated and results were given in numbers and percentages.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Personal Profile and Attitude towards Mobile Phone Usage of the Respondents

It is clear from the study that, as many as 78% respondents are females and remaining 22% respondents are males. It is obvious that the influence of technology is increasing in rural areas as 96% of the respondents are from rural background, who own mobile phone during their educational phase of life.

Table: Attitude of Respondents towards Mobile Phone

Attitude	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Total
Indispensable part of life	57.5%	26.25	16.25	100%
Life could not go on as normal	65%	16.25%	18.75%	100%
Feel more secure and reduces stress level	48%	30%	22%	100%

Above table makes it clear that majority 57.5% of respondents agreed that mobile phone is an indispensable part of their life and 26.25% of them have undecided with the statement made and 16.25% of the respondents disagree with it. Again 65% of the respondents opine that their life could not go on as normal without mobile phones and 16.25% of the respondents selected undecided option and remaining 18.75% of the respondents disagree with this statement. It is explicit from the above data that mobiles have become an important social networking technology for youth and mobiles are becoming a crucial element and indispensable part of their life. Today it has become a basic necessity for college students that without which they cannot lead normal life. The study also indicates that as many as 48% of the respondents feel that while carrying a mobile phone makes them more secure and it reduces their stress level. 30% of the respondents undecided about the statement and remaining 22% of the respondents do not feel that carrying a mobile phone keeps them secure and reduces stress level. In a cohort study done by Sara Thomee et al, 50% of the men and 65% of the women confirm that they lost interest in things and/or felt depressed or hopeless, due to mobile devices.

5.2 Pattern of Mobile Phone Usage on College Campus

It is found from the study that 22.5% of respondents do not use mobile phone during class hours. This may be because of the prevalence of strict rules in most of the colleges, whereas 77.5% of the respondents do use mobile phone in class. The same result can be seen in other literature which indicates that many students use their mobile phones, while in class, to send or receive text messages and post/respond to SMS content. Some studies (e.g., Lenhart, 2010) show that over 60% of teens with mobile phones have texted while in class.

The study further shows the intensity of addiction to their mobile phone. It can also be assumed that students who use mobile phone during class will be disturbed most of the times as they would keep checking their mobile phones now and then to make sure that they have not missed any message or calls. This will have severe impact on their academic concentration and performance as well. This finding is consistent with other studies conducted by Burns and Lohenry (2010) and Campbell (2006) found that both students and instructors identified mobile phone use as a distraction in class. Although texting is considerably more covert than actual telephone conversations, a growing body of literature suggests that it is equally problematic.

5.3 Academic Performance of Respondents Subsequent to the Start of Mobile Phone Using

It is revealed from the study that 74% of the respondents' academic performance has been declined after they started using mobile phone. Remaining 26% of the respondents' academic performance has not come down after getting mobile phone. It is undeniable that majority of the respondents' academic performance has been lowered after getting mobile phones which might have negatively affected on their academics. A similar finding on lack in "performance" has been documented in the study by Jennifer Meckles (2012) and also her study reports that "attention" gets affected due to increase in mobile phone usage.

5.4 Respondents' Feeling during Absence of Mobile Phone

As per the opinion shared on the feeling of respondents in the absence of their mobile phones it is found that 40% respondents feel disappointed, 22.5% of the respondents get irritated and 28.75% are become anxious if they forget to take their mobile phone to college. Even though 8.75% say that

they are not bothered, another 91% shows symptoms of irritated, disappointed and sadness during the absence of mobile. This again shows that mobile phone is slowly becoming a part of their life which may lead to addiction if not used wisely. They become agitated when mobile phones are away from them.

5.5 Annoyance on Undesirable Messages

The present study shows that 76.25% of respondents have opined that they are annoyed by the undesirable messages received from a known or unknown source. Remaining 23.75% of the respondents opined that they were not annoyed by unhealthy messages. So there is the chance of students getting influenced by such messages as their ability of self-control is not so strongly developed yet.

5.6 Health Status of Respondents after Using Mobile Phone

It is evident from the study that as many as 71.25% of the respondents are facing health problems such as headache, ear ache, memory loss etc. after they started using the mobile phones. Remaining 28.75% of the respondents did not report on having such health problems. It shows that there is a definite hazard to health for those people who use mobile exceedingly. It is also evident from the study that 72% of the respondents opined that their sleep has been disturbed as they keep on checking for messages / calls which can be hazardous to their health state. Similar result was found in a study conducted by Massimini and Peterson (2009), where majority of students indicated that they had lost sleep at least one time within the previous seven days due to interference of mobile phone use.

5.7 Perception of Respondents Regarding Advantages of Mobile Phone

The study highlights that as many as 54% of the respondents have agreed on the fact that mobile keep connected to their friends and family. 34% of the respondents strongly agree with this statement and remaining 12% of respondents do not agree with this statement. 66% of the respondents agree that mobile phone is an important medium for maintaining kinship ties and 20% of respondents do not agree with this statement. Thus, it indicates that the role of mobile phone is also crucial in the process of socialization which helps to stay connected with beloved ones. As many as 30% of the respondents opined that owning a mobile definitely helps during the times of emergency

and 20% of respondents opined it is useful for having access to information and thus useful in enhancing their knowledge. 20% of respondents opined that it helps to maintain relationship with friends and 10% of respondents opined that it is useful to get rid of loneliness and remaining 20% of respondents opined that the advantages of mobile phone are: for knowledge/information, to maintain relationship with friends, helps during emergency, for entertainment, for quick information sends and also it removes loneliness.

6 Recommendations and Suggestions

The following suggestions and recommendations have been made based on the findings of the study and also in the best interest of youth development of India in general:

6.1 Appropriate regulations to be laid down in educational institutions in fostering right behaviour on college campus in using mobiles (enforcing do's and don'ts).

6.2 Strictly discouraging the use of mobile phones in class, during study hours. Classroom policy must be clearly stated in the student handbook to include wise ways of using mobiles and also on penalties for misuse/ initiation of disciplinary action. It is better that the instructor be very specific on what exceptions will be allowed.

6.3 Sensitizing students on ill effects of over use of mobiles and providing right knowledge on appropriate and sensible ways of using mobile in their academic development.

6.4 Diverting their attention by encouraging habits such as reading, sports and arts etc. rather than allowing them to hook on to mobile device all the time.

6.5 Share with care—using good intelligence while sharing/posting pictures, documents etc. with social media

6.6 Parents need to talk to their children about the dangers. They need to be convinced in limiting their cell phone usage at their early ages bringing into a system of practice among them. Parents can monitor their teens' text messages, pictures etc. to keep them monitored.

6.7 If one is unable to get rid of mental anxiety due to mobile phone, they should seek a professional help.

6.8 Universities can review and continually update their honour code or conduct guidelines to include current technology.

6.9 Some Self Regulation Suggestions for Students on Mobile Usage

1. Using the cell phone only when necessary
2. Keeping talk/messaging brief – not extending calls for hours.
3. Avoiding mobile while spending valuable time with fiends/ family
4. Self rules – no mobile use while eating, studying and during such other important activities.
5. In case of addiction seek the help of Counselor/Therapist/Mental health professional

Conclusion

Though it is hard to say whether the influence of mobile phones has made our life good or otherwise, we are following the trends of time unconsciously. Although as, new high - tech invention, the mobile phone really has brought about great changes and convenience in communication but without exception it also brings a lot of social problems. The emergence of mobile phone technology not only gives bad impact among youths particularly students' community, but it has affected the economy too. The mobiles have become an important social technology for youth. Mobile devices are becoming a crucial element and it is slowly becoming a part of their life and they become agitated when it is not with them. Sleep has been disturbed as they keep on checking for messages / calls which can be hazardous to their health though mobile phones make them secure and reduces their stress level. As a suggestion, the youth should avoid putting too much prominence on the use of mobile phones, and instead try to engage themselves in other ways, like reading, sports, arts etc. Educational institutions should make necessary rules and regulations so that students use mobiles in a conditioned environment and use it wisely.

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