

## Interference of Mobile Addiction Among Vulnerable Under Graduate Final-Years and Implications on The Respondent's Academics

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### Abstract

Addiction to mobile among undergraduate students is an alarming phenomenon for educational institutions, families, and societies at the macro level. The final year students both girls and boys, have entered higher education with many dreams and aspirations and are on the verge of accomplishing their educational goals. These young adults prepare for assessments, placement opportunities, student exchange programmes abroad, and are in the process of becoming a responsible citizen and choosing a better career space.

Thus, there is a pressure mounted on them leading to high academic performances, peer pressure and emotional vulnerability. This study examines the relative usage of mobile and dysfunctional behaviour. Even though, usage of mobiles has become part and parcel of their studies, it interferes with the academic, psychological and career development of vulnerable undergraduates pursuing their final year. Under Mixed methods research approach 70 students of both boys and girls were identified as vulnerable due to low socioeconomic status, emotional instability, peer influence and personal factors. Quantitatively, there were disruptions in attendance, academic performance, and career preparedness among those with mobile addiction. On the other hand, qualitative findings pinpointed that respondents experienced anxiety, low motivation, social withdrawal, and poor concentration paving the path to stagnant derailed career junctions. This study concluded that career progress during the peak of their development is stunted due to the diversion of mobile usage and highlighted the need for comprehensive psychosocial interventions at every institution and families.

**Keywords:** Mobile Addiction, Undergraduate students, Vulnerability, Career Progress, Psychosocial Factors, Academic Performance.

### Introduction

Usage of mobile phones or smartphones among young adults has become a devastating social and physical health issue globally. Earlier in universities and colleges, professors and their intriguing interaction was one of the highlights for intellectual development and disciplined learning. But, now, smartphones have become more attractive and user friendly for almost all queries and doubts. This still serves as the irreplaceable machine for many youngsters between the ages of 18 and 22. This is the developmental phase characterised by exploration, risk-taking, emotional instability, and psychological susceptibility. College students seem to be extremely curious and they experiment with dating apps, and other irresponsible social behaviour. Scrolling and viewing has become the order of the day affecting students' mental, emotional, academic, and social well-being.

Among the final year students, girls and boys equally are risk prone due to the usage of mobile. This year marks an academic year with responsible career perspectives. Usually, final year students engage in final projects, seminars, internships, entrance examinations, curriculum vitae preparation, skill acquisition and campus placements. With the interference of smartphone addiction, their academic performance deteriorates, irregular attendance, decline in motivation and concentration about their future is impaired. Invariably, they report feelings of confusion, anxiety, self-doubt, hopelessness, leading to poor career decision making and missed opportunities.

Studies across the globe identified that smartphone addiction diminishes cognitive abilities including memory, attention, learning capacity and its application in the appropriate field. Final year undergraduate students pose

problems with academic and career related activities being dependent on the gadgets for a longer time and lack the capacity to think and process information on their own.

In India and other countries, smart phone usage is normalised and the risk of it's over usage has been always under-estimated among young adults.

This study took efforts to bridge the gap by identifying the mobile users and their ratio towards attendance regularity physically, presence of mind during class hours and the results after assessments.

It also aims to offer insights into preventive measures and social work interventions that may help students overcome addiction over the phone and achieve positive developmental outcomes.

### **Review of Literature**

Bianchi and Phillips reveal that the highest level of problematic mobile phone use is most found among younger users, from which it can be argued that this kind of addiction is most likely to occur among this group.

Hong et al. argue that mobile phones are popular among students because they increase their social communication and expand their opportunities for establishing social relationships.

Javid et al. emphasized a number of drawbacks and negative impacts of the technology on students' achievement.

James and Drennan carried out research on Australian university students' mobile phone use and discovered a large use rate of 1.5-5 hours a day. Their findings showed a range of characteristics associated with addictive use. These were: impulsiveness, mounting tension prior to using the device, failure of control strategies and withdrawal symptoms. The results also identified some factors that correlated with consumer engagement in addictive or compulsive behavior. Situational factors affecting excessive use included special events, alcohol abuse and depressive circumstances. A wide range of other negative consequences from mobile phone addiction among consumers included financial issues, damaged relationships, emotional stress and falling literacy.

Walsh et al. carried out a qualitative research to examine activities of university students regarding mobile phone usage. They also sought to establish addictive facts by using [27] behavioral addiction criteria. Symptoms of behavioral and cognitive salience, conflict with other activities, euphoria, tolerance, withdrawal and relapse and reinstatement emerged at varying levels amongst participants' descriptions of their mobile phone use. The study concluded that university students were addictive to using mobile phone to an extent that they revealed the indication of behavioral obsession.

Chóliz designed a questionnaire which consisted of three factors: Lack of Control/Problems, Tolerance/Interference, and Abstinence to evaluate mobile phone dependence in adolescents. This was based on criteria from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders-Fourth Edition-Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR). These criteria included excessive use, problems with parents, difficulty in controlling use, interference with other activities and emotional discomfort when the mobile phone could not be used. The results showed that with regard to gender and the age of the participants, girls had a higher degree of dependence on mobile phones than boys. Likewise, girls scored higher than boys on each of the factors in the questionnaire. They had higher levels of tolerance and experienced more interference with other activities. They were more likely to use mobile phones to avoid uncomfortable mood states and they felt bad if they could not use their phones. They also had greater economic and family problems as a result of costs associated with mobile phone use.

The onset of independence, increased socialisation, academic stress, and exposure to new environments create a conducive environment for smartphone use and subsequently addiction. This is associated with academic decline as a result of frequently skipping classes, submitting incomplete assignments and poor performance in examinations. Cognitive functions such as attention, memory, concentration, problem solving, decision making become compromised due to repeated usage of smartphones. Socio-cultural factors, urbanization, westernisation, exposure to media and peer influence also contribute to the phase of smartphone addiction. There are other factors like students socio-economic condition, emotional difficulties , peer pressure, trauma or chronic stress.

This study aims to draw knowledge from the existing research and take effort to integrate the understanding and handling techniques of mobile addiction to mitigate the hindrance towards career prospects.

**Objectives of the study**

The study was tracked through the following specific objectives:

1. To know the socio-demographic profile of the respondents
2. To identify the pattern of mobile usage among the respondents
3. To determine the interference caused by mobile addiction among the respondents in academic performance
4. To evaluate the implications of smartphone addiction on career progress and future prospects
5. To assess the challenges faced by the respondents pertaining to personal space
6. To propose Social Work interventions for prevention and rehabilitation

**Methodology**

**a. Research Design**

The study adopted a mixed-method research approach. It has a combination of both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Descriptive design was used to understand the prevalence and pattern of smart phone usage. Simultaneously, an exploratory design was used to understand the respondent's backlog and the implications on their prospective career plans.

**b. Population and Sampling**

The population consisted of undergraduate final year students from arts and commerce programmes in a private college. Stratified random sampling was used to identify the pattern of smart phone usage for quantitative purposes. Purposive sampling strategy was used to assess qualitative criteria such as vulnerability, socio-economic status and emotional imbalance.

**c. Tools of Data Collection**

**1. Questionnaire**

A structured questionnaire was administered to gather demographic information, patterns of usage of mobile phones, study habits and career plans.

**2. Smartphone Compulsion Test**

This tool was implemented to identify the severity of mobile phone and risk factors involved in the physical and psychological aspects.

**3. In-depth interviews**

An indepth interview was conducted and served as a guide to explore the respondent's motivation and compulsion of smartphone usage despite the vulnerable social factors.

**Ethical considerations**

The principle of confidentiality, informed consent, anonymity, willingness to respond and non-judgemental engagement were followed by the researcher and the respondents. With reference to the severity of the issue, the respondents were referred to counselling services.

**Findings**

1. Demographic details of the respondents
  - a. Majority of the respondents belong to the age group of 20 to 23 years
  - b. Approximately 40 percent of the respondents are female and the remaining are male
  - c. Majority of the respondents are from lower to middle class families

d. Nearly 50 percent of the respondents reported a history of family conflict

2. Mobile phones usage pattern

e. 73 percent of the respondents are into severe smartphone addiction

f. Peer influence is an attributing factor for smartphone addiction

3. Interference in academic performance

g. Considerable percentage of respondents had coping problems to academics, emotional imbalance, family issues and financial concerns

h. Respondents had difficulties in attending regular classes, incompleteness of work, postponement and poor preparation for assessments.

4. Implications of career progress

i. Majority of respondents lack career goals, scarce knowledge about campus placements and its process

**Qualitative criteria**

a. Emotional imbalance

Respondents lacking self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills are categorised under emotional imbalance due to excess usage of mobile..

b. Diversion from direction

The focus and concentration of respondents during their final year undergraduate towards their academics and skill development is deviated due to smart phone addiction, and subsequently their quality towards career progress shall fall short of expectation.

c. Fear of career placements

Excessive usage of mobile has led the respondents to fear and unpreparedness towards their career placements in their local market. They fear competition and withdraw from reality.

d. Social Isolation

Respondents prone to mobile addiction are easily susceptible to loneliness. They avoid socialisation and prefer isolation. They tend to physically and mentally become weak as a strain over their eyes and brain.

e. Low self-esteem

Low self-esteem is a serious concern among young adults because of mobile usage. Rather than the fact that the consumer uses the product, it is the product that addicted the consumer. Thus, there is loss of self worth and less confidence to face the actual world than the virtual world.

**Discussions**

The majority of the respondents are uncomfortable and hooked towards the usage of smart phones. It is evident that seeking help to get relief from the severe dependence on its usage is considered as unusual. The majority of the respondents are unaware of the fact that they are addicted to mobile phones. Therefore, it is important to assess the use of mobile phones either by self or by their mentors at regular intervals.

**Suggestions and Recommendations**

1. Regular counselling services in the campus

2. Peer support groups

3. Family intervention

4. Life skills

5. Personality Enrichment

Conclusion

Mobile addiction has significant implications and interferes with the most important career plans of vulnerable final year students. Early identification, prevention and considerable professional help by social workers are vital.

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