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## **An Examination of Cellphone Usage and Its Impact on Students: A Social Work Approach**

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### **Abstract**

A growing number of students are becoming increasingly dependent on their mobile phones, which has led to an increasing worry over the influence that this dependence has on their academic performance, social relationships, and mental health. In this research, we investigate how students are affected by using cell phones, concentrating on this phenomenon's good and bad elements. The research takes a social work approach to address the socio-psychological elements that contribute to mobile reliance, analyze its effect on student behavior, and suggest intervention techniques to reduce harm. To provide suggestions to educators, parents, and policymakers, the research uses empirical data, qualitative interviews, and theoretical frameworks within the field of social work.



**Keywords:** Cell phone usage, students, academic performance, mental health, social work, intervention strategies.

## Introduction

Over the last twenty years, mobile phones have evolved from straightforward communication mediums to multipurpose, intelligent gadgets that have become an indispensable component of everyday life, particularly for younger generations. Students have seen substantial shifts in their ways of interacting with one another, learning, and navigating their social and academic contexts due to the fast adoption of smartphones among students. According to the Pew Research Center's 2023 report, it is anticipated that more than 95% of adolescents in industrialized nations will own a smartphone by the year 2024. Furthermore, this number is expected to continue to climb around the globe.

Discussions have been raised among educators, parents, lawmakers, and mental health specialists on the influence of cell phones on kids' well-being and academic performance due to their widespread use in educational settings. Concerns have been expressed regarding the potential for smartphones to cause distractions, alter sleep patterns, and impact mental health (American Psychological Association, 2022). This happens despite cell phones providing unparalleled access to information and communication capabilities.

When seen from the standpoint of social work, the increasing usage of cell phones among students provides some obstacles and possibilities. It is becoming increasingly common for social workers to be asked to address concerns regarding the use of technology in their professional practice, mainly when dealing with young people and in educational environments. To establish effective interventions and policies that promote student well-being while also capitalizing on the potential advantages of these devices, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of the nuances of the effects caused by cellphone use.



## Problem Statement

An increasing body of data shows that excessive dependence on mobile devices harms students, including academic performance, attention span, and interpersonal relationships. This is because the use of cell phones has many benefits. From the point of view of social work, it is necessary to understand how the use of cell phones interacts with students' lives and identify the underlying variables that contribute to both the positive and negative effects of this interaction. The objective of this study article is to conduct an in-depth analysis of these implications and to provide methods for efficiently managing the usage of cell phones.

## Research Objectives

### The objectives of this research are:

- To investigate the degree of students' use of cell phones and the patterns under which they do so.
- This study investigates the positive and negative consequences of using a mobile device on academic performance, social encounters, and mental health.
- This study aims to assess social work's role in treating the effects of mobile addiction and promoting balanced use among students.

The purpose of providing intervention measures is to mitigate the negative impact of using a mobile device.

## Research Questions

- What are the most frequent tendencies among students regarding using their cell phones?
- How does using cell phones affect students' academic achievement and social well-being?
- What part may social work play in reducing the harmful impacts that coming into contact with a mobile can have?



- To promote healthy behaviors regarding the use of cell phones, what interventions may be recommended?

## Literature Review

Gayle R. Jesse, 2016 “Smartphone and app usage among college students: Using smartphones effectively for social And educational needs” The use of smartphones is investigated in this study to see how it affects the social lives, educational experiences, and levels of physical activity of college students. Data from 395 students attending two different academic institutions were compared. The data showed that college students have an Android operating system, around 25 applications installed on their devices, utilize apps related to travel and utilities, and that their principal app is social networking. Students access their primary app six times a day, with Facebook being their central social media app. The information systems community and educators may benefit from this research since it contributes to a better understanding of how to interact with students, which helps engage them in the classroom. Smartphones and the applications that run on them may have a significant influence on a student’s educational experience and mental health.

Joanne Gikas, Michael M. Grant, “Mobile computing devices in higher education: Student perspectives on learning with cellphones, smartphones & social media.” This study aimed to investigate how mobile computing devices, including smartphones and cell phones, affect teaching and learning in higher education. A section of the research on students’ opinions about using mobile computers for learning and the effects of social media is presented in this article. The participants in this qualitative research study were undergraduates from three US institutions. For at least two semesters, the students’ instructors included mobile computing devices, like smartphones and cell phones, in their classes. Focus groups with students were used to gather data. The interview results revealed two main themes: (a) the benefits of mobile computers for student learning and (b) the challenges associated with using mobile computers for learning. With continual connectivity, mobile computing devices and social media usage gave rise to chances for engagement, collaboration, and content production and communication among students utilizing Web 2.0 technologies and social media.



Jeffrey H. Kuznekoff & Scott Titsworth, “The Impact of Mobile Phone Usage on Student Learning” In this study, we looked at how students’ learning was impacted when they used their phones during class lectures. After watching a video lecture and taking notes, participants in three distinct research groups took two learning assessments: control, low-distraction, and high-distraction. In comparison to students who were actively using their phones, those who were not using them took more thorough notes, wrote down 62% more information, were able to recall more specific information from the lecture, and performed better on a multiple-choice test, earning an entire letter grade. Implications for theory and pedagogy are examined.

Paul B. Tchounwou “The Relationship between Cellphone Usage on the Physical and Mental Well-being of University Students: A Cross-Sectional Study” (1) Background: The study is to investigate how university students’ usage of cell phones affects their mental and physical health as well as their personality. (2) Approaches: A semistructured questionnaire was used in a cross-sectional investigation. Using Pearson’s correlation and the  $\chi^2$ -test, the relationship between the demographic factors and the variables related to physical and mental health was investigated. The binary logistic regression model also predicted the likelihood that excessive mobile phone use will have a detrimental effect on personality. (3) Findings: There were 400 participants, and their average age was  $24.45 \pm 3.45$  years. High cell phone users (HCPU) had higher average eye strain than low cell phone users (LCPU), with a significant difference ( $p = 0.000$ ). Higher cell phone users (HCPU) reported higher neck discomfort on average than Low cell phone users (LCPU), and there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups ( $p = 0.006$ ). HCPU saw a more significant average weight gain than LCPU, which was statistically significant ( $p = 0.000$ ). There was a statistically significant difference ( $p = 0.027$ ) between HCPU and LCPU regarding the prevalence of back pain. The use of cell phones was shown to be substantially connected with the following: weight increase ( $r = 0.423$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), sadness ( $r = 0.430$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), loneliness ( $r = -0.276$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), eye strain ( $r = 0.577$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), neck discomfort ( $r = 0.543$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), and mood disorder ( $r = 0.608$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). There were more fabulous reports of eye strain, neck pain, and back pain in HCPU than in LCPU. HCPU believed they had put on more weight than



those in the LCPU group. When compared to the LCPU, the HCPU experienced more significant mood swings and poor feelings. In contrast, the LCPU group experienced more loneliness. (4) Final Thoughts: According to the study, excessive cell phone use directly impacts one's physical and emotional well-being. It is advised that more physical activities and alternatives to reduce mobile phone usage be arranged for the pupils in light of the findings. Stakeholders and public health policymakers must address the negative impacts of excessive mobile phone usage by developing innovative regulations, particularly for young students, and providing alternatives to reduce cell phone use.

Andrew Lepp, Jacob E. Barkley, Aryn C. Karpinski, "The relationship between cell phone use, academic performance, anxiety, and Satisfaction with Life in college students." Even while the practical distinctions between modern mobile phones and desktop computers are becoming less evident, one distinction still stands out: cell phones enable users to connect to various services and networks virtually anywhere, at any time. According to the Pew Center's Internet and American Life Project, college students adopt mobile phones the quickest. New research indicates frequent cell phone usage may negatively affect students' behavior and health. Therefore, we looked at the effects of texting (N = 490) and overall mobile phone use (N = 496) on Satisfaction with Life (SWL) in a sizable sample of college students. It was predicted that anxiety and academic performance (GPA) would act as mediators in the connection. According to two different route models, there was a robust overall match between the texting and mobile phone use models. Texting and using a cell phone were strongly correlated with anxiety and negatively correlated with GPA; conversely, GPA and SWL were favorably and negatively correlated with anxiety and SWL, respectively. The research furthered the discussion around student mobile phone use and its potential detrimental effects on academic achievement, mental health, and subjective well-being or happiness.



Stephanie Cosner Berzin, Jonathan Singer, Chitai Chan, “Practice Innovation through Technology in the Digital Age: A Grand Challenge for Social Work.” In the upcoming ten years, information and communication technology (ICT) has the potential to change and improve social work practice significantly. ICT-driven practice innovations and technology integration into social work can achieve transformative social change. Technology integration can result in a practice offering personalized, individualized, on-demand, and flexible services. There is much room for practice benefits when particular technologies are integrated, such as wearables, robotics, social media, mobile, gamification, robotics, and the quantified self. Beyond specific technologies, the social work profession has the chance to change in such a way that it can adapt to and take advantage of any available technology. This article outlines these options and the precise objectives for meeting this problem.

## **The Concept Of Social Media**

Social media has completely changed how students communicate and study in the digital age. These platforms foster a collaborative learning ecosystem beyond traditional classrooms’ walls by offering students a dynamic environment to interact with their classmates, exchange ideas, and get prompt feedback. Peer-to-peer contact exposes students to various viewpoints and approaches to problem-solving while inspiring them to take an active role in their education.

Social media’s influence on education has increased dramatically due to mobile devices’ widespread use. Students may now interact and study anywhere at any time by using smartphones and tablets, which have evolved into practical tools for accessing social media networks. The learning process has changed due to accessibility, becoming more flexible and accommodating to different requirements and schedules.

The capacity of contemporary social media to include contextual elements that improve user experience distinguishes it from more conventional forms of social media. For example, many platforms these days use location-based services, which let users exchange and receive information related to where they are right now. This tool may be helpful when studying, accessing local educational resources, or taking part in location-specific learning activities.





Furthermore, with social media, the idea of time delay has changed. Although asynchronous communication was standard in previous social media, several contemporary platforms allow for real-time participation. This immediacy makes it easier to collaborate immediately, solve problems quickly, and provide feedback on time all of which are important in fast-paced learning settings.

Furthermore, social networking sites have started incorporating cutting-edge technology like machine learning and artificial intelligence. By recommending pertinent educational materials, matching students with comparable interests or academic objectives, and even offering automated tutoring support, these advances contribute to personalizing the user experience.

Social media can educate users of all learning preferences and types. These platforms include interactive quizzes and instructional games that kinaesthetic learners may use, auditory learners can interact with podcasts and voice notes, and visual learners can benefit from picture and video sharing tools.

It's crucial to remember, too, that there are drawbacks to using social media in the classroom, including the requirement for computer literacy, privacy issues, and other diversions. Teachers and educational institutions are always trying to develop the best ways to use social media's advantages while minimizing any adverse effects on the learning process.

In summary, social media as a concept in education offers a potent instrument for instantaneous communication, group learning, and customized learning experiences. Social media platforms are anticipated to significantly impact education as technology develops, fusing formal and informal learning in previously unheard-of ways.

### **Effects Of Social Media On Students' Academic Life**

Through social network sites, social media acts as an online directory that enables users to locate friends, family, and coworkers. According to Nicole, kids have become particularly aware of these websites since they allow them to connect with friends, exchange information, change who they are, and present their social life. The websites are used for various purposes,





such as blogging, speaking, and urban area development. Concerning Pardo, he thinks that this technology provides a forum for creativity and gives consumers the ability to voice their feelings regarding the content that is released. Students' acquisition of new knowledge depends critically on these kinds of interactions.

Additionally, it serves as a forum for communication between students, teachers, and other students in similar educational settings. Given that 46% of the younger generation uses the internet to assist with school tasks, it is assumed that social media is helpful. According to the teachers Rideout spoke with for her research, the use of entertainment media by students positively impacts their reading, math, science, and writing skills, which have all improved 46%, 54%, 39%, and 51%, respectively. Sixty-three percent of instructors cite their capacity to search for information and locate it as one of the entertainment media's benefits. Thirty-four percent say it has enhanced their ability to "multi-task effectively."

Nowadays, Social networking sites offer solutions to the global causes of flexible studying. According to research by Jain et al., kids can learn more by conversing with professors, other students, and outside sources. When social networking sites are utilized as teaching tools, they enhance the learning process by allowing instructors and students to interact in novel and fascinating ways, promoting a flexible approach to learning. It accommodates many learning modalities, such as e-learning, and is widely used worldwide.

## Screen Time and Digital Devices

First, excessive mobile use might take priority over other activities that could be healthier and better for cognitive development, such as physical exercise (Mutz et al., 1993; Zhang et al., 2022; Alblas et al., 2021). Second, Ahn et al. (2013) state that mobile use might exacerbate social isolation or strained relationships. According to recent studies, adolescents with a healthy weight use telephones, such as smartphones, more frequently than those who don't typically consume more energy and eat less fruits and vegetables (Epstein et al., 2008; Utter et al., 2006). Eating while utilizing a phone may be a significant factor in pupils consuming more energy. According to research, students increasingly eat while using their phones more



often up to a third of their daily calorie intake and half of their meals are taken this way (Robinson et al., 2017).

The use of cell phones may impact many facets of a student's lifestyle, which complicates the processes behind any relationships between cellphone use and sleep. By taking the place of other activities, mobile use can impact students' sleep. One way to look at students' smartphone use is as a way to replace other activities in their daily schedule. It has been shown that students' use of digital media devices and the material they contain such as movies, video games, messaging apps, social media, etc. affect their sleep patterns, both by reducing the amount of time they spend sleeping and by degrading the quality of their sleep (Cheung et al., 2017). Research on pupils from lower-income parents revealed that other sociodemographic characteristics might exacerbate this association (Magee et al., 2014). According to reports, kids from lower-class households slept for shorter periods. They used cell phones more frequently than students from higher-class houses (Magee et al., 2014). As mentioned earlier, the evidence was obtained despite pupils from wealthier households having greater access to digital devices such as computers, cell phones, and tablets. Thus, findings similar to those of other researchers (Hale et al., 2015) suggest that owning a device does not directly correlate with using a mobile or the quality of one's sleep. Students from various socioeconomic backgrounds may have different sleep patterns and mobile use due to multiple factors, including parental influences, neighborhood situations, socioeconomic disparities, and resource accessibility (Hoffmann et al., 2022).

## **Positive Impacts of Cellphone Usage**

### **Enhanced Access to Educational Resources**

With their revolutionary impact on how students access information and learning materials, cell phones have created previously unheard-of avenues for academic advancement. Through applications like Google Scholar, which makes academic publications and research papers that were previously hard to access, students may access a plethora of materials with just a few taps. Free or inexpensive classes on almost any subject are available on platforms like Coursera and Khan Academy. This enables students to learn new skills or study subjects



beyond their curriculum. These platforms facilitate students' mastery of complicated ideas at their speed by offering interactive evaluations, practice activities, and video lessons.

Besides these instruments for individual learning, smartphones have improved the quality of group learning. Students may organize study groups using messaging services like WhatsApp to exchange notes, ask questions, and work together on assignments across borders. Google Meet and Zoom provide convenient possibilities for virtual group discussions, presentations, or study sessions, guaranteeing that learning continues even in remote places. By combining peer-to-peer and self-directed learning, students may take charge of their education and gain from the experience and advice of their peers, creating a more comprehensive educational environment.

Additionally, because smartphones are portable, students may study anywhere at any time, transforming ordinary situations into worthwhile educational opportunities. With a wealth of knowledge at their fingertips, students may access it during their commute, in between courses, or even during breaks, which makes the mobile an effective teaching tool in the current day.

### **Improved Communication**

Increased mobile communication has dramatically influenced students' capacity to stay in regular contact with their academic and social groups. Cell phones offer a quick and dependable means of communication, bridging the gaps in time and space, whether one is keeping in touch with friends, family, or educators. This connection becomes even more critical for students who originate from under-represented areas or live far away from home. These students frequently deal with issues that might make them feel alone or cut off from their support networks. With the help of their cell phones, people may stay in intimate connections and overcome geographical distances, which is crucial for mental stability and resilience.



In educational contexts, having the capacity to contact professors outside of class facilitates students' ability to ask questions, get clarification, and keep informed about academic matters all of which can improve their performance in general. This accessibility may be a game-changer for students with limited access to in-person educational resources since it allows them to interact with peer groups, mentors, and tutors who can offer moral and intellectual support. Students may also stay involved in extracurricular activities, work on group projects, and stay connected with their communities through social media, messaging apps, and video chats, all of which contribute to a well-rounded academic experience.

Beyond education and social life benefits, telephones are essential for fostering mental health. Swiftly connecting with loved ones while under stress or overburdened may considerably lessen feelings of isolation and worry. Students' mental health and general development greatly depend on their sense of belonging, which this sense of connectivity fosters. This communication technology gives students from different backgrounds including those who live in distant areas a sense of empowerment and inclusion that helps them succeed in and out of the classroom. In summary, cell phones allow kids to grow in many facets of their lives by keeping them connected and promoting their emotional and psychological well-being.

## **Negative Impacts of Cellphone Usage**

### **Academic Distraction**

While mobile use has many benefits for students, there are also some drawbacks, especially in terms of mental and academic health and performance. The possibility of academic distraction is one of the most significant drawbacks. Even with the availability of educational resources and technologies, students' focus on their studies might be readily taken off by their cell phones. Students spend three hours a day on average on non-academic activities, including social media surfing, video viewing, and gaming, according to Anderson and Rainie (2021). Spending too much time on entertainment applications might cause procrastination and reduce concentration during study or class periods. Students may find it challenging to focus and become distracted by the incessant notifications and social media



updates. As a result of their inability to strike a balance between their digital habits and their academic obligations, many students may experience reduced academic accomplishment.

## **Social Isolation and Cyberbullying**

Another unexpected consequence of excessive mobile use is social isolation. Although these gadgets facilitate virtual interactions, they may weaken interpersonal communication abilities. Excessive dependence on texting, social media, and video calls can impair students' capacity for meaningful face-to-face relationships and result in alienation from the outside world. Furthermore, the emotional cost of using a mobile has increased due to the growth in cyberbullying. Online platforms' anonymity can encourage people to act in dangerous ways, and victims of cyberbullying frequently go unreported. Cyberbullying has significant psychological repercussions, such as elevated anxiety, sadness, and low self-esteem. These problems can have a severe negative effect on a student's mental health, which may cause them to retreat from social situations and become less involved in their studies.

## **Mental Health Issues**

Excessive cellphone use raises issues with cyberbullying in addition to its adverse effects on mental health. Excessive mobile usage has been directly linked to the emergence of stress, anxiety, and sleep disruption symptoms, according to research like that done by Drouin et al. (2018). Social media expectations, constant notifications, and the need to be "always connected" might all contribute to students' heavy mental loads. Because they are pressured to stay up to date with social trends or respond to messages promptly, students who feel obligated to manage their digital lives on top of their academic and personal responsibilities may feel more anxious than usual. Furthermore, using mobile devices excessively late at night can throw off regular sleep patterns. A considerable proportion of students use their gadgets right before bed to browse social media or respond to messages. They not only stay up longer than they usually would but also diminish the quality of their sleep.



Conversely, lack of sleep negatively affects emotional regulation, cognitive function, and overall academic success. Lack of restorative sleep harms children's ability to focus, retain knowledge, and do well in school. The youngsters experience a vicious cycle of poor mental and physical health as a result.

Abuse and overuse of cell phones can have serious adverse effects, including social isolation, academic disruption, cyberbullying, and mental health issues. In conclusion, even though cell phones are helpful tools for communication and learning, using them can have serious detrimental effects. Students must develop responsible usage habits and patterns to maximize mobile technology's positive aspects while avoiding negative ones.

## Discussion

This study's results align with an increasing amount of research that indicates that using a mobile excessively might negatively impact kids' social-emotional and academic performance. Although cell phones are excellent teaching instruments, they can be significant sources of distraction. Therefore, there is a complicated trade-off between their advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, they provide never-before-seen access to academic help, peer cooperation, and learning tools. However, the propensity to partake in extracurricular activities like social networking, gaming, and internet entertainment might interfere with concentration, productivity, and academic success.

Due to its dual purpose, telephones should be used responsibly so that students may benefit from education without developing bad habits of overusing or being distracted. School counselors, social workers, and teachers are uniquely positioned to address the issues raised by students using cell phones. Particularly when developing and implementing treatments that address mobile use's psychological and educational components, social workers may be pretty important. Workshops on digital literacy, where kids learn how to set healthy limits with their gadgets and manage their screen time responsibly, might be one of these therapies. Additionally, by offering counselling and putting students in touch with the right mental health services, social workers may help students who might be experiencing the emotional fallout from excessive mobile usage, such as anxiety, social isolation, and cyberbullying.



In addition, encouraging students to have good mobile habits is essential to reducing the detrimental effects on their mental and academic health. Educators and institutions should use preemptive measures to promote focused learning settings, including clearly defining the parameters for smartphone usage during school hours and establishing cellphone-free zones in classrooms. Students may recover control over their screen time and prioritize their academic goals with the support of policies that promote mindfulness and good digital behavior. This might involve encouraging “digital detox” intervals or pushing students to socialize with friends during breaks to strengthen interpersonal ties and lessen dependency on digital communication.

## Conclusion

This study emphasizes how using a mobile has a substantial and varied influence on pupils, especially when it comes to their academic achievement and social and emotional health. The association between excessive mobile usage and poor academic performance highlights the need for initiatives promoting healthy behaviors. Students may learn how to use smartphones in a way that benefits their academic path rather than hinders it with the correct assistance. Together, social workers, educators, and mental health specialists can make sure that children acquire the abilities necessary to manage their digital lives properly. We can assist kids in developing a better connection with technology by encouraging moderate mobile use and addressing the emotional difficulties brought on by excessive use. This will pave the path for both academic achievement and emotional well-being.





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