



# The Influence of Smartphone Usage on the Health of the Youth

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## Abstract

This paper is theoretical in nature and explores the growing influence of smartphone usage among young individuals, a topic that has gathered significant attention in recent years. As the technological revolution advances, it brings with it both remarkable benefits and notable challenges. The younger generation proficient at adopting new technologies, has seen a rapid increase in smartphone usage, particularly for information sharing and communication. Smartphones have become essential tools across all age groups, but they hold particular importance for youth, who often view them as indispensable. These devices offer instant access to vast amounts of information and facilitate seamless communication through social networking platforms. However, like any form of technology, smartphones present both advantages and drawbacks. While they provide convenience and connectivity, they are also linked to various health concerns, especially among children and adolescents. Reported issues include eye strain, neck and back pain, hypertension and other physical and mental health challenges. In conclusion, although smartphones have transformed communication and information access, it is vital to recognize and address their potential negative impact on the well-being of the younger generation.

**Key words:** Smartphone usage, Youth, Health effects, Technology and well-being

## I. Introduction

Human beings are inherently social creatures, and the importance of maintaining friendships and connections is widely recognized for promoting mental well-being. The advent of the first smartphone, pioneered by IBM in 1992 and known as the Simon Smartphone, marked a groundbreaking moment in technology, catering to the evolving needs of individuals. Smartphones, aptly named for their

exceptional capabilities, offer a seamless, rapid, and cost-effective access to a wealth of information resources. These electronic devices amalgamate hardware and software components to perform a myriad of functions comparable to a computer, encompassing communication, photography, video sharing, business transactions, entertainment, and more. The distinctive touch screen feature further sets smartphones apart from conventional phones.

Among the younger generation, smartphones have evolved into indispensable and remarkable communicative tools. The absence of a smartphone can leave one feeling incomplete, signifying a revolution across various aspects of human development, including education, business, health, sports, and entertainment. Notably, smartphone usage has seen a significant upswing over the years, with individuals remaining tethered to their devices in various settings, be it public places, workplaces, or family gatherings.

Research indicates that the majority of people, particularly the younger demographic, are consistently engaged in activities such as making calls, checking messages, watching or sending videos, updating status, and chatting. The smartphone has become an integral and unavoidable part of daily life, seemingly indispensable for the smooth functioning of youth. With internet access, information spreads rapidly, transcending geographical boundaries and reaching individuals worldwide in a matter of seconds.

Despite its undeniable benefits, the extensive use of smartphones has brought about notable impacts on social, psychological, and physical aspects of people's lives, particularly among the youth. Acknowledging both positive and negative aspects, smartphones can serve as instructors, reminders, educational tools, and sources of entertainment. Conversely, they also act as distractions, interrupting important tasks with



irrelevant notifications and disrupting social interactions. Additionally, there have been instances of smartphones causing disturbances in places of worship.

In light of these considerations, the present paper explores and examines the multifaceted impact of smartphones on the lives of the younger generation, delving into the intricate dynamics of their role in shaping social connections, psychological well-being, and overall lifestyle choices.

## **II. Impact on Mental health**

Mental health encompasses how individuals perceive themselves, manage daily tasks, perform in their professional roles, and engage with others. The use of smartphones, being a vital tool for staying connected, raises questions about its impact on mental well-being. The nature and depth of our social connections play a crucial role in influencing not only our mental health but also our health behaviors, physical well-being, and susceptibility to health-related challenges.

Research by Nesi J (2018) underscores the significant impact that adolescents' experiences with their peers, especially in the realm of social media, can have on the initiation and persistence of psychopathological issues. Peer relationships in the online space can be more frequent, intense, and immediate compared to real-life interactions. Previous studies have identified specific online peer interactions that may pose potential risks to mental health. Cyberbullying, also known as cyber victimization, has been linked to elevated rates of self-harm, suicidal thoughts, and various internalizing and externalizing problems.

In evaluating the relationship between smartphones and mental health, it becomes apparent that these devices, while essential for connectivity, also introduce complex dynamics. The quantity and quality of social interactions facilitated by smartphones can have profound effects on an individual's mental well-being, health habits, and physical health. As we navigate the evolving landscape of technology and social connectivity, it is essential to consider both the positive aspects of staying connected and the potential risks associated with certain online interactions, such as cyberbullying, that may impact mental health negatively.

## **III. Impact on Communication skills**

The use of smartphone can provide short-term happiness but has been linked to serious issues for young people. Excessive time spent on these

platforms, including playing games, can lead to addiction and various negative consequences such as anxiety, depression, decreased social skills, and impaired concentration. It is crucial for parents to be aware of these potential problems and to take measures to ensure a balanced and healthy approach to smartphone use among youth, including prioritizing online safety and safeguarding personal information from potential risks such as cyberbullying and exposure to unsuitable material.

Excessive use of smartphone can lead to addiction and various negative consequences for young people. This addiction is often linked to low self-esteem, personal dissatisfaction, depression, and anxiety. It can result in decreased interest in real-life relationships and important activities, leading to sadness and other mental health issues. Many young people, often referred to as "digital natives," are particularly at risk of developing smartphone addiction.

In today's digital age, young people increasingly prefer to communicate through their phones or social media platforms rather than meeting in person. While using mobile phones, benefits such as sharing information and discussing important topics, experts warn that excessive use can lead to isolation from real-life society. To ensure a balanced approach, parents should be aware of the potential risks associated with smartphone use and take measures to safeguard their children's well-being.

## **Impact on Gestures**

The way we express emotions has traditionally involved gestures like pointing, raising eyebrows, smiling, or shaking heads. However, the prevalent use of smartphones is transforming the way we convey emotions. In contemporary communication, text and images take precedence, leading to a diminishing emphasis on traditional body language. The overreliance on smartphones poses a challenge to the meaningfulness of non-verbal communication.

While smartphones enable global discussions on crucial topics and keep us abreast of daily events and innovations, they come with their drawbacks. Students, even those in school, tend to share everything on social media, eroding privacy. When young individuals share their thoughts and activities online, the digital footprint remains. Messages, photos, and videos circulated among youth become potentially accessible to colleges or employers, risking harm to their career prospects. While it is beneficial for young people to engage with social media, it should not overshadow other crucial aspects of life. Striking a balance between



smartphone use and other activities is imperative for realizing the true purpose of technological innovation.

#### **Digital lives**

Spreading negative or false information about others through digital media is a common online risk faced by youth, leading to anxiety, loneliness, and even depression. Unfortunately, some individuals may tragically resort to suicide due to the distress caused by such actions. Engaging in the exchange of explicit content, including sex messages, videos, and photos, is another prevalent online activity for youth. This communication often occurs through cell phones, computers, or other digital devices. Many youth spend their time receiving and sending messages to strangers online. Rejection or receiving disturbing messages during this process can contribute to feelings of depression.

It has been observed by researchers that young individuals have a tendency to conceal their negative experiences and only display positive aspects on the internet. For example, a teenager may send amusing messages to everyone while privately coping with severe depression. This illustrates the use of humour to mask underlying feelings of distress

#### **IV. Precautions to be taken by parents**

Parents, while not opposed to smartphones, are committed to protecting their children from potential adverse effects and risks associated with these devices. It is crucial for parents to actively monitor their children's online activities and implement measures to prevent them from falling prey to online purchases and offers. Providing awareness about the potential hazards of social media, including its impact on emotional, mental, and physical well-being, is essential.

Instead of excessive online engagement, parents are encouraged to promote outdoor activities, reading books, having meaningful conversations, participating in sports, or playing games. In cases where going out is not feasible, alternative ways to keep children engaged at home should be explored. Actively fostering real-life friendships, such as inviting friends over and encouraging social interactions, is important. Establishing boundaries, such as ensuring that children do not stay up late chatting online, is crucial. Highlighting the positive aspects of social media, such as sharing ideas and strengthening relationships, is also emphasized.

Children should be cautioned against sharing personal information like addresses, phone numbers, and financial details online. Parents should diligently monitor the sites their children use, check

personal settings, and provide appropriate guidance. The act of sharing photos and videos online should be approached with caution, considering their potential permanence. Instructing children to use clear and respectful language when engaging in social media through mobile phones is advised.

#### **V. Conclusion**

Smartphones serve as exceptional navigational tools, providing access to a world of information at one's fingertips. However, their impact on the mental health and well-being of young people is multifaceted, encompassing both positive and negative aspects. While smartphones offer avenues for communication, networking, and information sharing, they also present potential risks to mental health. The addictive nature of smartphones may contribute to diminished social skills, impaired concentration, and other mental health issues.

Parents play a crucial role in navigating these challenges, promoting a balanced and healthy approach to smartphone use among youth. This includes prioritizing online safety, safeguarding personal information to mitigate risks like cyberbullying, and fostering a mindful approach to digital engagement. Teenagers, in particular, exhibit a heightened susceptibility to smartphone addiction, leading to health problems such as eye strain, neck and back pain, alienation, and even concerns like brain tumors. The prevalent phenomenon of nomophobia, or the fear of being without a phone, is increasingly common among teenagers and can exacerbate health and financial issues.

Serious health complications, including nerve problems, anxiety, and depression, can arise from the overuse of smartphones, impacting both psychological and physiological well-being. Nevertheless, moderation and restricted usage hours can significantly contribute to the well-being of young individuals. It is essential to instill good behavioral habits, moral values, and a focus on education to ensure a balanced and healthy approach to smartphone use, mitigating potential negative consequences.

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