

# *The Impact of Mobile Phone Use on Students' Mental Health*

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**Abstract:** The use of mobile phones is becoming more and more widespread, and the time for students to contact mobile phones for the first time is getting earlier and earlier, so it has become necessary and urgent to pay attention to the psychological problems caused by mobile phones for students. This article analyzes the impact of smartphone apps on students' mental health. This paper argues that overuse or incorrect use can cause students to have psychological problems such as anxiety and depression. This may be due to factors such as lack of communication, family influences, etc. Based on this, this article suggests that society should increase the relevant publicity for the correct use of mobile phones. Schools should pay attention to the different psychological problems of different students and provide targeted counseling. Families should communicate more and guide students to take the initiative to express themselves. Students should learn self-control and at the same time, develop good living habits to avoid psychological problems.

**Keywords:** Mobile phone, students' mental health, family education

## 1. Introduction

The smartphone become widely used in the modern day and is a crucial part of life. According to Statista, the current number of smartphone users in the world today is 6.92 billion, meaning 85.82% of the world's population owns a smartphone [1]. The popularizing rate of the phone is significant in 5 five years. Global smartphone users increased by 49.89% (2017-2022) [1]. The boom of smartphones reshape people in various ways. Although the development of smartphones has made people more convenient, it also brings problematic smartphone use to children and adolescents. The impact of problematic smartphone use has been taken seriously in the current digital era. Therefore, understanding the consequences of problematic smartphone use (PSU) on adolescents is critical. One of the existing papers has shed light on the relationship between cell phone and wireless device use and mental health outcomes in adolescents. The results of the review suggest that increased cell phone and wireless device use, especially at bedtime, appears to be associated with poorer mental health outcomes in adolescents [2]. The causes and behaviors of problematic smartphone use in mainland China have huge differences because of the Chinese cultural perspective and the educational system. The exploration of problematic smartphone use (PSU) holds paramount importance due to its widespread prevalence and profound repercussions, particularly among children and adolescents. Remarkably, one out of every four youngsters grapples with PSU, exhibiting characteristics akin to behavioral addiction [3]. This compels us to delve deeper into the consequential aftermath. PSU intertwines with mental well-being, yielding ramifications such as depression, anxiety, heightened

perceived stress levels, and disrupted sleep patterns, underscoring the pressing necessity for a comprehensive understanding of its implications. PSU possesses the potential to shape the emergence of psychopathological conditions within younger demographics and instill detrimental behavioral patterns that persist into adulthood, highlighting its pertinence as a public health concern.

As smartphones assume an indispensable role in our daily lives, the recognition and rectification of PSU stand as pivotal safeguards for the mental well-being and future trajectories of our youth. By conducting thorough research and implementing targeted interventions, one can glean insights into the causal nexus between PSU and mental health, while also formulating strategies to alleviate its adverse impact on an individual's overall mental well-being and life prospects. This paper seeks to understand how problematic smartphone use impacts children and adolescents and provides suggestions to prevent this from happening.

## **2. Features and Problems of Chinese Children's Mobile Phone Use**

### **2.1. Features**

The main characteristics of Chinese smartphones are wide coverage and great influence. The researcher pointed out that the goals of using a phone are conducting interpersonal communication, obtaining entertainment, diversion, and relaxation, and receiving monetary compensation for such things [4]. This research shows the basic targets of using smartphones and represents the outline of the Chinese smartphone situation. Smartphones in the Chinese market has changed and reshaped many parts of people's daily life. Precisely, the smartphone is critical because of super apps and the development of E-commerce. Super apps refer to the biggest and the most influential applications in mainland China, such as Douyin(TikTok), WeChat, and Alibaba. These apps on phones are important in daily life and do more than basically function. They promote mobile shopping, payment, delivery services, and online streaming. They help people in China stay close to others far away through messaging and video calls, even getting stuff.

In addition, the use of mobile phones in China is full of entertainment, and at the same time, the development of mobile phones has led to the development of the entertainment industry. There are many games, social media, and videos to enjoy on them. You can easily play games, check social media, and watch shows all on your phone. Not just that, Through the use of mobile phones, people can quickly understand the latest information, greatly increase their information transmission speed, improve their information acquisition ability, and enrich the content of information. Smartphones in China give you the latest news. People use apps and websites to know what's happening in the world. It's super convenient to get news and updates in real-time on your smartphone. The most interesting fact is that the Chinese are not likely to use Email. According the Statista, Tencent's instant messenger service WeChat remained the most popular mobile app in China with around 1.07 billion monthly active users [1]. Its older sibling QQ was the second placeholder with about 776 million MAUs. Messaging, e-commerce, utility, and video streaming apps occupied the most spots in the top 20 list. In addition, educational software in China is forced to be created, because of the policies and circumstances during the time of COVID-19. The Chinese government and technological companies have to innovate the platforms for students and workers to remotely working. This expands the use value of mobile phones to another level.

### **2.2. Problems**

While mobile phones bring convenience to life, they will also cause some problems. Especially for mentally immature students, improper use of mobile phones will cause a series of student learning and psychological problems. The research created by Serra G. et al indicates problematic smartphone use habits can significantly impact mental health in various ways, such as superficial approach to

learning, distraction, mood modification, loss of interest, isolation, and sleep disturbances [5]. There may be diverse reasons for problematic smartphone use, such as excessive screen time, addiction, and a decline in social interaction.

Concentrating on the phone makes it easy to ignore the time, which contributes to excessive screen time. Excessive screen time may lead to stress out, sleep disturbances, and symptoms of depression [6]. These negative behaviors may result in big psychological issues and affect the rest of your life. The progress of the delivery industry and online shopping may also affect children and adolescents by overmuch consuming desires. Problematic usage patterns like addiction behaviors can lead to financial problems, harm to relationships with friends and family, and emotional issues [7]. Sometimes, these reactions give rise to bad values and weird personalities.

Online entertainment and social media also can damage intelligence by keeping away from real life. Reduced face-to-face social interactions due to heavy smartphone use, especially WeChat, which results in a lack of attention, reduced test scores and memory, and illiterate [8].

### **3. Suggestions**

Understanding the potential problem to causes problematic smartphone use is critical to suggest to eliminate this. This section is going to discuss how to prevent problematic smartphone use, and how to help children suffering from problematic smartphone use. To reach this goal, Schools, parents, and society should work together to help students build a healthy psychological growth environment.

#### **3.1. Expand Advocacy**

To begin with, propaganda about the adverse impact of problematic smartphone use is essential for everyone. Having a great ability to identify the symptoms of problematic smartphone use may assist children and adolescents especially when undergoing this period. Therefore, the state and the government should increase relevant publicity to raise students' awareness of the correct and appropriate use of mobile phones. Given the current situation of students' addiction to mobile phones, publicity can be carried out through the commonly used apps of students to expand the scope of publicity.

#### **3.2. Targeted Counseling**

As an important place for students' education, schools must pay attention to students' mental health problems and take appropriate measures to solve students' psychological problems. According to Baylor University, the lecture is one of the effective methods to acquire knowledge, terms, basic facts, and simple concepts, which means education plays an important role. Therefore, having classes or workshops at school or in the community for children and adolescents is critical to enhancing understanding of smartphones, and emphasizing responsible usage. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen psychological counseling in a targeted manner and provide special counseling for students of different ages and their psychological characteristics. Teachers should encourage students to express themselves bravely, guide students to speak out, and actively listen, to give more suitable psychological counseling.

#### **3.3. Value Family Influence**

Parents also can be a factor to affects the children's smartphone use pattern. According to Doo, E. Y. and Kim, J. H., they found that parenting altitude is related to the addiction to cell phones, which means a good parenting attitude may lead to positive smartphone usage patterns [9]. Therefore, a good attitude toward parenting does influence children and adolescents. It is better to have rules

among parents and children, such as the times of video games, the times of family activities, and no phones allowed period. These rules can help the family be more cohesive. At the same time, it can also help children avoid psychological problems through a good family atmosphere.

### 3.4. strengthen self-control

For students themselves, it is necessary to learn and strengthen self-control. According to Shahram H., self-control can improve your management, such as addiction, resilience, and insistence [10]. The children and adolescents that had self-control can use the function called time limit for better arrangement. Setting a limit time is a good way to remind, especially at night when bedtime is coming. By doing these things, the children and parents can reap many benefits from these actions. It can let the family absorb all the advantages of the phone and prevent a bad impact.

Another excellent suggestion is to balance life. Exercising 30 minutes five times a week is going to be healthy. Thus, balancing the time between real life and virtual life refers to the phone. Hanging out, exercising, meeting friends, and having hobbies like playing a musical instrument, are the most common activities in real life. A regular and healthy life can prevent or alleviate students' psychological problems to a certain extent.

## 4. Conclusions

The mobile phone has quickly blossomed in today's world and with the high rate of people owning phones, the phone brings uncountable benefits to humans and is convenient. Although the advantages of the phone are incredibly excellent, the adverse impact on children and adolescents is unneglectable. It is necessary to understand the positive and negative impact of the smartphone, especially on adolescents and children. This research has highlighted the significant prevalence of problematic smartphone use and the potential problems and consequences of it and also emphasizes the need for measurement.

Firstly, education plays a crucial role in promoting responsible smartphone use. Schools and communities should offer workshops and lectures to raise awareness and teach effective smartphone management. Knowing how to face problematic smartphone use is an important skill.

Parents are also a key to the problematic smartphone use. Parents must be actively involved, maintaining open communication and setting clear rules for smartphone use within the family. A good negotiation between children and parents can solve many issues. Balancing the time between real-life and virtual activities is essential for overall well-being, especially sports. Exercising, face-to-face interactions, and hobbies may promote a good condition of physical health and maintain mental health.

Lastly, fostering self-control is paramount. Empowering individuals, especially children and adolescents, with the ability to limit their screen time and make conscious choices about smartphone use can mitigate the adverse effects of problematic smartphone use.

In sum, the convenience of phones cannot be ignored, but the adverse of problematic smartphone use is an upcoming issue. Addressing the challenges caused by problematic smartphone use requires various approaches involving educational institutions, parents, and society as a whole. This research hopes to retain the positive function of phones and ensure children and adolescents are not going to be affected by taking action.

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