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Short Communication

Cell phone uses among students: Two aspects of coin

Imran Ahmed Khan ^{1,*}

¹Dept. of Community Medicine, BRD Medical College, Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, India



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ABSTRACT

Mobile phones and similar gadgets are increasingly being used owing to the massive growth in internet and advancement in digital device technology. Learning via mobile phones and similar gadgets has become one of the most popular and useful teaching tools used by different class of students across the world. But any new technology has some drawbacks also which should be addressed in timely and efficiently to reduce its ill effects. A multipronged approach may be utilised to curtail the ill effects of mobile phones and similar gadgets.

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1. Introduction

Mobile phones and similar gadgets are an indispensable part approximately among all classes of people say for example students, businessman, teachers and labourers and even vendors. The technology of mobile phones however, kept on evolving, until these became a portable computer that are able to connect people across the globe through voice and video calls and conferencing, virtually transporting people from one corner of the world to anywhere. The use of these tools has grown in recent times owing to the massive growth in internet and advancement in digital device technology. Learning via mobile phones and similar gadgets has become one of the most popular and useful teaching tools used by different class of students across the world.

2. Necessity of Electronic Gadgets and Internet

We are living in the era of emerging technologies where information is transferred from one place to other in no time. Being tech savvy is need of the hour. During the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic the use of internet and such devices

has grown up and increased unprecedentedly. Office people were compelled to do work from home, schools were closed and on-line classes were used by students of all standards. Different seminars and meetings were also being conducted on various virtual platforms due to lockdown. Foods and necessary items were ordered on-line. These gadgets and internet helped survival of lonely people particularly elderly.

3. Harmful Effects

But any new technology has some drawbacks also which should be addressed in timely and efficiently to reduce its ill effects. Their unchecked and extended use are resulting in various physical, mental and social ill health. Some study indicates an increase in screen time during the pandemic especially in the students attending online classes.¹ The extended screen time particularly among students results in different short term and long-term adverse effects leading to digital eye strain, sleep disturbance, changing spectacles power, blurring of vision and double vision are among some common eye ailments. Continuous digital device usage causes the blinking rate to fall significantly leading to insufficient lubrication and dry eye symptoms.² In study it was concluded that even

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: ikhan0046@gmail.com (I. A. Khan).

two hours of uninterrupted digital device usage per day is enough to cause digital eye strain (American Optometric Association).³ Dependency on mobile phones may also give rise to some psychological condition where people have a fear of being detached from mobile phone connectivity known as Nomophobia (NO MOBILE PHOne PhoBIA).⁴ Clinical presentation of Nomophobia may be a combination of different symptoms and signs including but not limited to Anxiety, Agitation, Disorientation, Tachycardia, respiratory alterations, increased perspiration and distraction. In one study the participants reportedly checked their phones about 34 times a day. Mobile phone dependency may also adversely influence interpersonal relations.⁵ Phubbing is a term which stands for “phone snubbing”. It is described as an act of snubbing someone in a common place or social gathering by looking at your phone instead of paying attention to them.⁶ The misuse of these gadgets is increasingly becoming responsible for impaired social interactions among its users. Even many of the adults and older individuals have developed the unfortunate tendency to behave like children as for these gadgets are concerned by regular checking and pondering their gadgets neglecting the presence of anyone and everything else. These devices pose problem particularly when they are indiscriminately used in learning environment leading to distractions. These portable device uses have become increasingly common for non-academic purposes while in class, studying, or doing homework. Students were found using these gadgets inside classrooms even during lectures⁷ which may cause significant distraction leading to poor school performances. A study conducted at a tertiary institute shown that more than 50% students had more than one phone and respondents also reported that they browse more on social sites than academic sites.⁸

4. Addressing the Problem

To deal with the burden of this problem effective solutions should be sought urgently. A multipronged approach may be utilised to curtail the ill effects of mobile phones and similar gadgets usage. There is a need to educate people that it is actually a real problem. Proper etiquettes should be taught to students regarding use of mobiles and computers in the form of adequate distance from screen, right posture and timely breaks from screen and regular eye check-ups. They should also be informed about the hazard of long-term slow radiation of these devices. Parents and teachers should encourage children to participate in outdoor activities and social interaction after removal of restrictions. It will provide them more opportunity for face-to-face interaction as well as boost their general health and social interaction. Guardians and caretakers must have awareness regarding such psychological problems like Nomophobia so that they can be noticed early for effective management. School authorities should arrange facility of counsellors for managing with such incidences

and provide rehabilitation. Standard follow-up should also be ensured for such students. In many schools/colleges mobile phone restriction is strictly enforced but at times it seems very difficult to prevent them to use it altogether. Alternatively, prohibition at certain specific times and/or a few minutes break schedule may help students who use their mobile phones for non-educational purposes. Some policy/ laws may be constructed to deal with the problem by responsible authorities addressing minimum age for using mobile phones, restricting number of gadgets among students and using it in stipulated time only. Designated faculty must enforce the policy strictly for it to be effective and monitor the use of electronic gadgets in their premises. Finally, parents and teachers should also accept the positive aspect of these gadgets and try to inculcate responsible and controlled usage among their children so that they can avoid harmful effects and get due advantage of this brilliant technology.

5. Conclusion

Every new change has certain challenges associated with it. We cannot negate the importance of electronic gadgets and internet in present world. It is essential for obtaining and dissipating information from one another. A system should be designed to get most of its advantages and escaping its most ill effects. This needs collaboration of multitude of personalities including Guardians, teachers and policy makers so that indiscriminate use of electronic gadgets and internet are controlled.

6. Source of Funding

Nil.

7. Conflict of Interest

Nil.


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Author biography

Imran Ahmed Khan, Senior Resident  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0460-0754>