

THE IMPACT OF EXCESSIVE PHONE AND SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON STUDENTS IN UZBEKISTAN

Mizomova Bahora Ziyadulla kizi

4th Course Student of Navoi State University

Khasanova Yulduz Mukhtor kizi

Scientific Supervisor, NSU Teacher,

E-mail: yulduzhasanova025@gmail.com

Abstract:

This paper explores habitual behaviors of high school students related to their smartphone usage, and analyzes the influence of these habits on their personal and professional lives. The main issue of this gradually advancing technological era is that the very devices, made to ease the lives of the citizens, are actually causing distractions among them. Speaking of students, being preoccupied with their phones for the most part of the day is preventing them from disciplined study and meaningful time with their families. This article seeks to clarify the extent to which this problem is prevalent among Uzbek students. To delve deeper into the issue, 40 students from groups 401 & 402 were selected as the experiment subjects. The survey was conducted with them and the results showed that if the time spent on their phones was reduced, students have claimed that they would complete their homework on time and spend more quality time with their families and children.

The potential dangers of excessive phone usage on humans' physical, mental and behavioral well-being are being overlooked in Uzbekistan, and the lack of attention given to the problem is allowing it to grow bigger. The survey was carried out with a small number of people, therefore considering the results as representative of nationwide statistics is not appropriate. To get the exact scale of the issue across the country, it is suggested to conduct similar studies in all parts of the state.

Keywords: Comparative and Quantitative Analysis, Excessive Phone Usage among Uzbek Students, Physical, Mental, and Behavioral Aspects, Survey.

Introduction

In the developed countries the brain scientists have been conducting numerous studies to identify the correlation between excessive phone and social media usage and the human body and brain, and these studies are still ongoing. However, in developing countries like Uzbekistan, the advanced technologies are welcomed as a positive innovative change while leaving their side effects hidden from the attention of the public.

Cal Newport dedicates his book called “Deep Work” to explore the causes and of this problem and offers effective solutions. He emphasizes that when trying to learn a complicated topic or information, leaving applications like Telegram, Instagram, or Facebook open near to us may look harmless, in fact, the mere presence of these applications distracts the brain, weakening the ability of memorizing and focusing effectively. It is a fact that if the brain is fully engaged with the complex task, it strengthens the neurons, elevating our current knowledge to new heights (Newport, 2020).

The brain that is constantly distracted and fed with irrelevant and trash content eventually loses its capacity for focused attention, deep thinking, and effective work. If not prevented, this loss may be permanent (Newport, 2020).

During their research Wacks and Weinstein have identified several medical issues, all linked to excessive phone use. These include sleep problems, reduced physical fitness, unhealthy eating habits, pain and migraines, reduced cognitive control, and changes in the brain’s grey matter volume. According to these two scientists, physical problems (listed above) are not the only issue brought by unbalanced phone usage, disruption in healthy emotional regulation is also triggered due to this habit. Specifically, they found that: “Excessive smartphone use is associated with difficulties in cognitive-emotion regulation, impulsivity, impaired cognitive function, addiction to social networking, shyness, and low self-esteem” (Wacks & Weinstein, 2021, p. 1).

The lack of interest and the sources written in Uzbek language are the two main causes of widespread public unawareness and a lack of full comprehension in terms of negative affects of phone use. This situation gives a room for additional negative habits to develop. For instance, today spending average 7-8 hours on a phone daily has become a normal thing among students. Consequently, it has been observed that there is a decline in an active participation of students during lectures and their abilities of paying attention to the information explained by

teachers are diminished. Furthermore, students who stay virtually active even during lectures are now facing strong disapproval of their lecturers.

The aim of this article is to bridge the gap in public understanding within Uzbekistan regarding this issue. It also seeks to encourage students to give their full attention not to the unproductive smartphone activities, but to their personal development and social lives.

METHODOLOGY

The students of groups 401&402 were asked to answer 10 questions of the survey. They were separated into two different groups consisting of 20 students for each. The main reason why university students were chosen as the study subjects was due to the fact that the close connection and relationship between excessive phone use and its affects on academic aspect is clearly evident in students' lives and experiences.

Before starting the experiment, the goal of the study and the clear instructions on how to approach the questions correctly were explained to the participants. They were asked to answer the questions anonymously with the hope of getting open and honest responses from each subject. As not all the students have similar language proficiency, the questions were presented in Uzbek language. When writing the article the questions were translated from Uzbek into English.

As research tools survey questions were used. It was primarily due to the fact that the experiment was conducted during the lesson and through Survey necessary data from a large number of participants can be gathered within a short period of time. The format of the survey was Multiple-Choice Questions and they can be categorized into three aspects based on their contents:

- 1) **Physical Aspect:** questions designed to determine the impact of prolonged phone use on the body and sleep patterns;
- 2) **Mental Aspect:** questions designed to determine the impact of phone and social media usage on learning process;
- 3) **Behavioral Aspect:** questions designed to determine phone usage habits and the impact of these habits on students' interpersonal relationships.

The Data Collection Method was used to gather information from the test subjects. The data taken from the groups were analyzed using Quantitative and Comparative Analysis methods, and the results were determined.

RESULTS

The following are the results of the survey conducted. In the Table 1, the percentages of responses to the questions from two groups are compared. To keep the length of the article at a minimum, 6 main questions are selected from the survey.

Table 1.

Aspects	Questions	401		402	
Answers - %		Yes	No	Yes	No
Physical	1. Has excessive phone use caused you physical pain (headaches, eye strain, etc.)	70%	30%	60%	40%
	2. Have you experienced disruptions in your sleep patterns due to the phone use?	60%	40%	55%	45%
Mental	3. If you receive a SMS message while needing to concentrate fully on an important task, would you check who sent it?	40%	60%	50%	50%
	4. Do you think it is important to study the correlation between phone use and the brain?	35%	65%	25%	75%
Behavioral	5. Has it become a habit to check your phone even when you do not receive any notifications?	40%	60%	50%	50%
	6. If you didn't have to spend time on your phone, would you spend more of that time with your family?	35%	65%	40%	60%

The question asked from the students regarding how would they spend their one day if they were required to spend it without their phones. This question was an open-ended question making students to write their own responses. Based on these responses, the most mentioned activities were identified and will be given in the Table 2.

Table 2.

Activities to engage with		401	402
1.	Reading books, and learning new skills	50%	65%
2.	Spending time with family and children	35%	40%
3.	Doing household chores	15%	40%
4.	Taking walks in the nature or meeting with friends	30%	35%
5.	Trying different dessert recipes and tasting new types of food	15%	30%
6.	Self-care and sport activities	25%	10%
7.	Resting and sleeping	10%	15%
8.	Working	10%	15%

DISCUSSION

In the discussion section, the results of the survey are analyzed and a possible solution of the stated problem is given.

Owing to the Internet, the notion of acquiring new knowledge has become quite different. Today when learning a skill or information, students are mostly opting for Google or other online resources rather than the “old way” of using books and written textbooks. The key factor here is that through googling wanted data can be found more easily and quickly. But the side effect of this method is that it makes the students impatient, and eventually leads to a decreased number of book-users. Here the Internet is not being seen as a negative trend altogether, let’s clear it out, in fact, when used with care and caution, it can help enormously. However shrinking the broad process of learning a topic into only watching reels or short videos about it is not enough to really master it. Consider this example: the fifth question of the survey asks the students whether it was a necessary skill for them to learn about the connection between the human brains and phones, 12 out of 40 students selected the response, “Yes, I am interested in this topic, and I watch YouTube and Instagram reels about it”.

In this case, it is a mistake to think that the mastery can be achieved by only watching short reels. The effective learning takes place through intense neural activity by absorption and retention of the new information. Conversely, reels not only distract, but being overexposed to this type of content might foster impatience. For deep work, the learner must concentrate on the topic sustainably,

and prolonged, patient engagement with a single topic is an essentially required tool in acquiring new skills.

When it comes to social interactions, Thomée (2018) claims that a huge disruption took place in our daily routines due to the introduction of smartphones. From this disturbance, especially, the young are affected the most. The previous generations are more likely to prioritize human interaction, such as communication with family, friends, and loved ones, it is completely opposite with the younger ones, who choose to spend most of their time aimlessly in front of screens (Thomée, 2018).

Additionally, in several studies it has been discovered that the prolonged exposure to screen rises the likelihood of experiencing mental health issues (Stiglic & Viner, 2019).

The solution to this problem is within ourselves. If we take the control back from our phones and stop our mindless scrolling, we can clearly realize how much time and energy they were stealing from us. It is recommended to learn the brain-phone correlation, since when we know about the long-term consequences of our wrong choices today, we can make conscious decisions to avoid them.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the best way to address the problem is to recognize and identify it. Once identified, it can be considered as halfway solved. The timely recognition of the issue is one of the first and the most significant steps towards its resolution. Therefore, we should acknowledge excessive phone use as a serious problem and make an effort to solve it.

As Cal Newport consistently states in his book “Deep Work”, if we do not reduce the time spent on shallow tasks, we might permanently lose our ability to engage in deep work (Newport, 2020).

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