

MOBILE ADDICTION AND STRESS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS: A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY

* *Prof. Vasant Macchindra Gophane,*

** Head, Department of Clinical Psychology, Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil Mahavidyalya Pandharpur,
Dist- Solapur*

Introduction:

Over the last two decades, the rapid advancement of science and technology has transformed the mobile phone from a simple communication device into an inseparable part of human life. Initially invented for basic telecommunication, the mobile phone has now evolved into a multifunctional tool that facilitates education, business, entertainment, healthcare services, banking, shopping, and instant global connectivity through social media platforms.

For college students, mobile phones can serve as a valuable educational aid. However, their usage is not always restricted to academic purposes. The engaging nature of social media, online gaming, video streaming, and continuous messaging leads many students to spend an excessive amount of time on their devices, often at the cost of their studies. Such uncontrolled and persistent usage results in symptoms of mobile addiction. Addiction refers to a behavioural pattern wherein a person loses control over their actions, continues the behaviour despite negative consequences, and experiences discomfort when attempting to stop.

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Mobile addiction affects not only physical health but also psychological well-being. Lack of concentration, reduced sleep quality, laziness, social withdrawal, and declining academic performance are commonly observed outcomes. One of the most significant psychological consequences associated with excessive mobile use is stress.

Stress is a physical and psychological reaction experienced in situations perceived as challenging, threatening, or overwhelming. Among college students, stress often arises due to academic pressure, career uncertainties, complex interpersonal relationships, high expectations from parents and teachers, and the competitive environment in educational institutions. Stress manifests through physical symptoms (e.g., headaches, insomnia, fatigue), psychological symptoms (e.g., irritability, depression, reduced self-confidence), and social difficulties (e.g., withdrawal from relationships, reduced interaction).

Students already face multiple academic and emotional challenges, and the excessive use of mobile phones intensifies their stress. Mobile usage interferes with sleep, reduces concentration, disrupts emotional balance, and contributes to chronic stress patterns.

Against this backdrop, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between mobile phone addiction and stress among college students, focusing particularly on gender differences and the severity of these psychological variables

Review of Literature:

Psychological research has consistently highlighted mobile addiction as a growing concern across the world. Young (1996), in one of the earliest studies on internet addiction, observed that behavioural addictions resemble substance-related addictions in symptoms such as increased tolerance, lack of control, and withdrawal discomfort. These foundational findings laid the groundwork for understanding mobile addiction as a comparable behavioural disorder.

Thomé (2011), through a prospective study, reported that excessive mobile use among young adults contributes to sleep disturbances, heightened stress levels, and symptoms of depression. These findings emphasize the significant influence of digital habits on mental health, especially among youth.

Kuss and Griffiths (2015) found that addictive use of social networking sites such as Facebook and Instagram adversely impacts emotional well-being. Their study highlighted how constant engagement, validation-seeking, and fear of missing out (FOMO) contribute to psychological distress.

Prasad (2017) examined medical students and documented a strong correlation between mobile phone addiction and increased stress. This study is particularly relevant in the Indian context, where academic competition is intense and mobile usage is rapidly increasing among youth.

Furthermore, recent global research has shown that mobile addiction is strongly associated with poor academic outcomes, emotional instability, impaired decision-making, and disruptions in daily routines. Several studies also highlight gender variations, suggesting that emotional sensitivity, social role expectations, and coping styles influence stress and addiction patterns differently among males and females.

Overall, the literature indicates that mobile addiction has emerged as a significant global mental health concern, and that it is closely linked to stress. The present study builds upon these findings to examine this relationship specifically among Indian college students.

Research Methodology:

Statement of the Problem:

To study mobile phone addiction and stress among college students.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To measure the level of mobile addiction among college students.
2. To study the gender differences in mobile addiction.
3. To measure the stress levels among college students.
4. To study gender differences in stress.

Hypotheses:

1. College students will show a high level of mobile addiction.
2. Girls will show lower levels of mobile addiction compared to boys.

3. College students will show a high level of stress.
4. Boys will show lower levels of stress compared to girls.

Sample:

The sample consisted of 200 students (100 boys and 100 girls) aged between 18 and 21 years, selected from colleges of Pandharpur city. Purposive sampling technique was used.

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Students between 18 and 21 years of age
2. Minimum two years of mobile phone usage
3. Regular attendance in college

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Students suffering from severe physical or psychological disorders
2. Students who do not use a mobile phone

Data Collection Procedure:

Two standardized tools were administered through Google Forms after providing the participants with necessary instructions. All students completed the questionnaires individually in a controlled environment.

Tools of the Study:

Mobile Phone Addiction Scale (MPAS):

The MPAS, developed by Dr. Velayudhan and Srividya (2012), consists of 37 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale. It measures symptoms of mobile phone addiction such as compulsive use, loss of control, and withdrawal. The scale shows high reliability, with Cronbach’s alpha = 0.80–0.90.

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10)

The PSS-10, developed by Cohen et al. (1983), includes 10 items rated on a 5-point response format. It assesses the degree to which individuals perceive life situations as stressful. The scale has strong reliability, with Cronbach’s alpha = 0.78–0.91 and test–retest reliability = 0.55–0.85.

Statistical Analysis:

Mobile Addiction:

Group	Mean	SD	t
Boys	139.01	9.48	1.74 (ns)
Girls	136.52	10.78	

Boys have a slightly higher average mobile addiction score (139.01) with SD 9.48 than girls with SD 10.78 (136.52). This means boys show a bit more mobile addiction compared to girls. The t-test checks whether the difference between boys and girls is statistically significant. “ns” means not significant. This indicates that even though boys scored slightly higher, the difference is not statistically meaningful. In other words, boys and girls have similar levels of mobile addiction.

Stress:

Group	Mean	SD	t
Boys	30.11	3.72	-3.28 (p = 0.001)
Girls	32.18	32.18	

The findings indicate that girls (Mean = 32.18) scored higher than boys (Mean = 30.11) on the assessed variable, showing that girls tend to exhibit a stronger level of this characteristic compared to boys. The obtained t-value of -3.28 and the highly significant p-value of 0.001 clearly demonstrate that this difference is statistically meaningful and not due to random variation. This suggests a consistent pattern in which girls outperform boys on this measure, and the results provide strong evidence of a genuine gender-based difference in the sample.

Conclusion:

1. Mobile addiction among college students was found to be above average and at a high level.
2. No significant gender difference was observed in mobile addiction.
3. Stress levels among students were found to be high.
4. A significant gender difference in stress was observed, with girls showing higher stress levels than boys.

Implications:

1. **Mental Health Awareness:** Conduct workshops on mobile addiction and stress management.
2. **Counselling Services:** Establish counselling centres in colleges to support affected students.
3. **Regulated Mobile Usage:** Encourage academic use and reduce unnecessary screen time.
4. **Social and Emotional Support:** Parents and teachers should reduce pressure and provide emotional encouragement.
5. **Special Programs for Girls:** Considering their higher stress levels, creative and physical activities should be promoted among female students.

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