

## Smartphone Addiction is for Real

Anuja Deshpande

Assistant Professor and Post Graduate Coordinator, Department of Psychology, Maniben Nanavati Women's College, Mumbai  
E-mail – [deshpande.anuja@mnwc-sndt.com](mailto:deshpande.anuja@mnwc-sndt.com)

---

The digital millennials, born between 1980 and 2000 have grown up and witnessed the speedy digital developments and digital media. These millennials are hooked on the digital world be it, TV, Computers, Tablets and Smartphones. The smartphones have been the biggest explosion and revolution in the telecom and communication industry. The cell phones have become a necessity and symbol of social status more than a luxury.

With the availability of the Internet on the phone, the number of applications available on the cell phones are infinite, they could be games related, travel related for book reading, etc. These opportunities provided by smartphones are attractive, and the spending time on smartphones per day is very high for many people. Smartphones readily facilitate interpersonal and entertainment activities such as online social networking and online gaming.

A study conducted by Aligarh Muslim University and the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) reported that college students in India check their smartphones more than 150 times in a day [1]. The excessive use of smartphones is a new kind of health disorder among all age groups but specifically high among the youth. They are generally the heaviest users of information and technology. Smartphone addiction displays itself in the excessive usage of their phones, when an individual is while involved in other activities such as studying, driving, social gatherings and even sleeping [2]. Smartphone addiction can be viewed as overuse of smartphones to the extent that it disturbs users' daily lives. The daily use duration of a smartphone is one of the most significant indicators of smartphone addiction. Gratifying experiences act as reinforcement and increase the risk of habitual or addictive behaviors which can be an indicator of smartphones.

Smartphone addiction considered as the behavioral addiction shows the sustained engagement in a behavior despite its negative effects, decreased control over participation in the behavior, compulsive participation, and appetitive or craving urges that instantly precede engagement in the behavior. It is a compulsive behavior that works similarly to substance addiction in the brain. Smartphone addiction consists of four main components namely compulsive behaviors; tolerance, withdrawal and functional impairment [3]. It's also important to know that smartphone users more commonly report obsessive behavior i.e. they constantly check their phone, seeking opportunities for a short dopamine reward, or overcome their boredom or take a break from their routine tasks.

Overuse of smartphones can lead to physical health-related problems such as blurred vision, sleep disturbances and pain in the wrists or neck [4]. Also, excessive use of smartphones lead to some psychological problems and cause maladaptive behavioral difficulties, interfere with school or work, reduce real-life social interaction, and lead to relationship disorders [5]. The excessive dependency on their smartphones show negative alterations in brain development. It also affects the memory, cognitive capacity showing deterioration in learning skills, the ability to concentrate and think deeply or creatively. However, empirical evidence suggests the problematic use of smartphones in relation to poor impulse control, personality disorders, depression, anxiety, chronic stress and/or low self-esteem.

Studies have also indicated that there are various other addictions due to these phones like selfie addiction, compulsive buying, cyber-stalking candy crush addiction, social media addiction like snap chat addiction, Instagram addiction Facebook addiction, Texting addiction and media streaming addiction like Netflix addiction.

The withdrawal symptoms among heavy smartphone users noticed while not using their smartphone include: Restlessness, Anger or irritability, Difficulty in concentration, sleep problems and craving access to use phone.

Few management techniques for smartphone addiction are as follow –

1. Monitoring the usage of cell phone
2. Set goals for when you can use your smartphone
3. Plan a Digital Detox
4. Ask for support
5. Download applications like Break-free and Mental to curb the usage of cell phone and Cold-Turkey and Self-Control allows to block the sites one wish to avoid.
6. Curb your fear of missing out
7. Substitute in healthier activities

Addiction of Smartphones referred as a digital drug today is now a challenge for mental health professionals and policy makers who need to globally think and address on this rapidly emerging issue through digital hygiene movement. It's time to address the heavy smartphone users how offline world is the new luxury.

## REFERENCES

1. <https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/life-style/college-students-in-india-check-smartphones-over-150-times-a-day-study-5184433/>.
2. Harwood J, Dooley J, Scott A, Joiner R. Constantly connected – the effects of smart-devices on mental health. *Comp Hum Behav* 2014;34:267–72.
3. Lin YH, Chang LR, Lee YH, Tseng HW, Kuo TB, Chen SH. Development and validation of the Smartphone Addiction Inventory (SPAI). *PLoS ONE* 2014; 9: e98312
4. Kwon M., Lee JY, Won WY, Park JW, Min JA, Hahn C, Gu X, Choi JH, Kim DJ. Development and validation of a smartphone addiction scale (SAS). *PloS One* 2013;8(2):e56936
5. Kuss DJ, Griffiths MD. Online social networking and addiction—a review of the psychological literature. *Int J Environ Res Pub Health* 2011;8(9):3528–52.

\*\*\*\*\*

Acknowledgements – Nil  
Source of Funding – Nil  
Conflict of Interest – Nil