



Effects of Cell Phone Addiction in Teenagers

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Abstract : *Technological revolution has provided the world with luxurious inventions. Communication channels have been upgraded. Mobile phones have redefined wireless communication and connectivity for millions of users. It has emerged as the primary communication device. Remarkable growth can be seen in its users especially among the young people. The youth of today are the first new generation to have an 'anytime, anyplace, anywhere mobile communications culture.' The amalgamation of gadgets has*

resulted in the multi-dimensional use of cell phones, hence creating problems. This study was an attempt to find out the effects of cell phone addiction in teenagers. A sample of 100 teenagers, 50 boys and 50 girls, were selected from various coaching centres in Patna town. The study revealed that excessive use of mobile phones leads to health problems, relationship problems in the family and poor academic performance among teenagers. Besides, it also adds to financial burden on the family.

Keywords: *Teenager, Communication, Addiction, Nomo phobia.*

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Introduction :

The new digital environment has presented an exceptional array of possibilities for communication, interaction and information retrieval at the fingertips that was never before available. But every technological advance that provides such dramatic benefits has consequential costs. Today's younger generation has become intolerably addicted to cellular phones. They make seamless efforts to always be in touch with their family and friends and up to date with the latest trends. Cellular phones are degrading the childhood life. Four out of five teens carry a cell

phone (a 40% increase since 2004) according to CTIA.

Teenagers and young adults are in a growing world where technology dominates their lives and parents must be aware that this may be the root of many of their children's problem. While cell phones are excellent means of communication they are also becoming the foundation for the downfall of teenage life.

There are a growing number of children who are constantly neglecting basic tasks such as homework, household chores, sleeping or even going to school because they are engrossed with their phones. A teen becomes enraged when a cell phone is taken away and the consequences are fights, temper tantrums and heated arguments (<http://www.raisingchildren.net.au/articles/mobile-phone>).

The age of 15-18 years is the formative age of children and over use of cell phone may create disturbance in it. Excessive use of cell phones causes disturbance in sleep patterns leading to diseases like stress, headache etc. Mobile phone radiation has also become a concern and poses serious health risk (<http://www.news.medical.net>).

Teenagers build pressure on their parents for the purchase of cell phones and its maintenance. This creates an economical pressure on the parents. The huge peer pressure to have a mobile phone with latest technology and designs leads to this kind of behavior. This kind of behavior may create tensions between the parent and the child. Aggressive behavior in children can cause disturbance in their relationship with their family and society (<http://www.indiparenting.com>).

Mobile phone technology has experienced a tremendous growth. In 1983, Motorola presented the first truly portable cell phone. According to a researcher it took 20 years to strap up one billion

mobile phone users, 40 months to harness 2 billion and just 2 years to reach the mark of 3.5 billion. The number of cell phone subscribers in India rose to 903.73 million in January. According to Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), the wireless user base grew 1.117 with an addition of 9.88 million subscribers, from 893.84 million.

Idea cellular added 1.75 million subscribers to take its subscriber count to over 108 million. Bharti Airtel added 1.3 million customers, taking its subscriber base to 176.95 million while Reliance communications added 949,271 users. State owned BSNL added 874,756 subscribers to go up to 97.64 million users while Vodafone added 855,349 customers to take its user base to 148.6 million.

In Bihar – Jharkhand circle Airtel has 1.5 crores users. BSNL has 90.09 million customers.

The numbers of subscribers in India are:-

<i>Idea</i>	<i>–</i>	<i>108 million</i>
<i>Bharti Airtel</i>	<i>–</i>	<i>176.95 million</i>
<i>BSNL</i>	<i>–</i>	<i>97.64 million</i>
<i>Vodafone</i>	<i>–</i>	<i>148.6 million</i>

Remarkable growth can be seen in its users especially among young people. They are the most vivid users of this technology. Mobile phones facilitate teens with practical device for organizing things, right from waking one up to wrapping up the day. The positive purposes of mobile phones have added tremendous comforts and conveniences to the lives of teenagers.

Teenage is the transitional stage of physical and psychological human development. Teenager means a young person who has undergone puberty but who has not reached full maturity.

Addiction is the continued use of mood altering substance or behaviors despite adverse dependence consequences. People with an addiction do not have control over what they are

doing, taking or using. Addiction may reach a point where it is harmful.

Nomo phobia is an abbreviation for “no-mobile-phone- phobia”. Some teenagers reach a stage of developing Nomo phobia which is the ‘fear of being out of mobile phone contact’, when mobile addiction in them reaches its peak.

Addiction of cell phones can lead to variety of negative outcomes in a student’s life. Cell phones are the main cause of distraction from studies these days. It can unbalance the parent-child understanding. The aim of the study is to understand the various aspects leading to the problems a teenager faces and the measures to reduce those problems.

Objectives of the Study :

1. *To examine the behavioural changes in the child due to the use of cell phones.*
2. *To find out the effect of cell phone on study of children.*
3. *To assess parent- child relationship which may be estranged due to cell phone usage.*
4. *To examine the economic pressure on parents.*

Hypotheses :

- (i) *Excessive use of cell phone causes disturbance in sleep pattern.*
- (ii) *Use of cell phone causes isolation of children from the family and society.*
- (iii) *Use of cell phone leads to disturbance in study.*
- (iv) *Use of cell phone by teenager leads to economic pressure on family.*

Methodology :

(a) Sampling Technology - An incidental sample consisting of 100 school going students, 50 boys and 50 girls, of age 15 to 18 years from various schools of Patna town were selected for the study.

(b) Research Tools - For Primary data a questionnaire was prepared for collecting specific information about the effect of cell phone in teenagers. Secondary data was collected from internet, magazines etc.

(c) Data Analysis - The obtained data were analysed by using simple statistical techniques like Frequency distribution, Bar Diagram.

Result and Discussion :

Today, a cell phone isn’t just a rich man’s fashion accessory in India. Across the country people with low incomes are now adopting cellular phones. The new digital environment presents an exceptional array of possibilities for communication, interaction and information retrieval at the fingertips that was never before available.

Companies have practically created a youth market by launching in items like cool ring tones, games, screensavers and e-mail alerts.

Teenagers build pressure on their parents for the purchase of cell phones and its maintenance. This creates an economical pressure on the parents. The huge peer pressure to have a mobile phone with latest technology and designs leads to this kind of behaviour. This kind of behaviour may create tensions between the parent and the child relationship. Aggressive behaviour in children can cause disturbance in their relationship with their family and society.

For teenagers, owning a mobile phone is the first step of gaining independence. It is used as a planning device for teenagers to connect with their friends and family. SMS through cell phone is pervading like a ‘wild-fire’. Teens depend on this practical device for organizing things, right from making one up to wrapping up the day. Mobile phones contain an amalgamation of gadgets that have resulted in its multi-dimensional use:-

Mobile Phone and its Uses :

FEATURES	USES
i. Phone-Voice communication	• Stay in contact with parents & peers
ii. SMS-Text Messaging	• Safety and Emergencies • Caste Vote (TV shows) • Schedule / Re-schedule affairs • Gossip • For building romantic relationships • Health advice during teenage pregnancies.
iii. Clock	• Time and Alarm Clock
iv. PDA	• To know the location
v. Games	• Play • Pass Time
vi. Camera	• Take still and video pictures
vii. Music Player	• Listen to Music
viii. Internet	• Browse the net • Download music • Add flexibility to shopping and purchasing • Stay regular at social networking sites

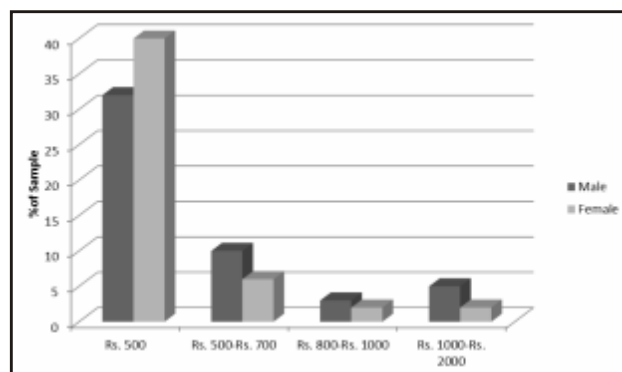
It is evident that the positive purposes of mobile phones have added tremendous comforts and conveniences to the lives of teenagers. With several advantages there are also some disadvantages too that accompany the usage of mobile phones that are explored in this study.

The basic purpose of mobile phones is to communicate and interact. They are achieving a faster response rate especially among the teens. Some teenagers develop Nomo phobia which is the fear of being out of mobile phone contact. Text messaging is a great service provided in the mobile phones, which has its own advantages and disadvantages. Text messaging is being used for voting on TV shows or taking part in quizzes related to various subjects and events. Teenagers also prefer SMS to a phone call. Sending messages to friends such as 'good morning' or 'good night' promotes social binding. Because of the discrete nature of text messages, teenagers find it easy and fascinating to send messages without the knowledge of parents, such as sending messages late night.

The present study throws a light on the fact that cell phones can make children both social and unsocial. It not only disrupts their study but also their family and social life.

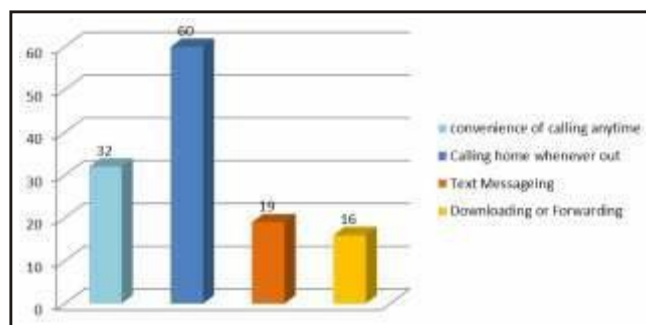
It was noted that 62 % of the respondents came from families where single parent were working while 38 % of the respondents came from families in which both the parents were working. It was also found that irrespective of the economic groups they belonged to 92% of the respondents owned a mobile phone.

Figure – 1: Average Billing Per month



Along with the necessities of teenagers cell phone has made a primary place. As shown in figure. 1, 32% of the male and 40% of the female respondents (taken together 36% of the total sample) spent Rs. 500/month on the bills of their phones, while just 5% of the male and 2% of the female spend between Rs.1000–2000/-.

Figure No. – 2: Different Uses of Mobile Phone



According to the teenagers cell phone gives then the convenience of calling anytime. Besides

this, text messaging, MMS, Playing games, downloading or forwarding are common among all of them. The study revealed (Figure.2) that 60% of the respondents use cell phones as it gives them the convenience of calling home or anyone at any time while 32% of them feel the necessity to own a mobile phone as it helps them to keep in touch with their parents when they are out. A good number of respondents use their cell phone for text messaging and for downloading or forwarding messages or pictures etc.

Figure – 3 : Awareness about the latest cell phone in market.

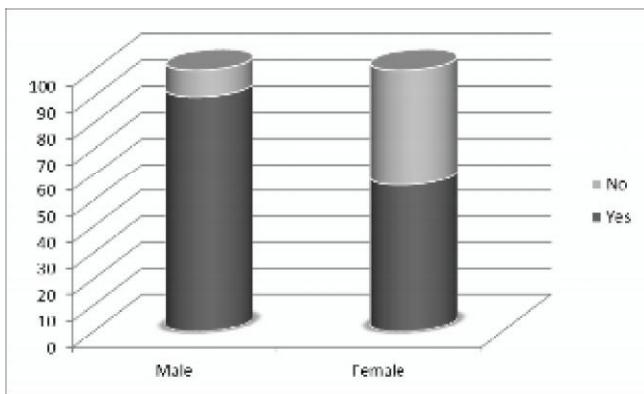


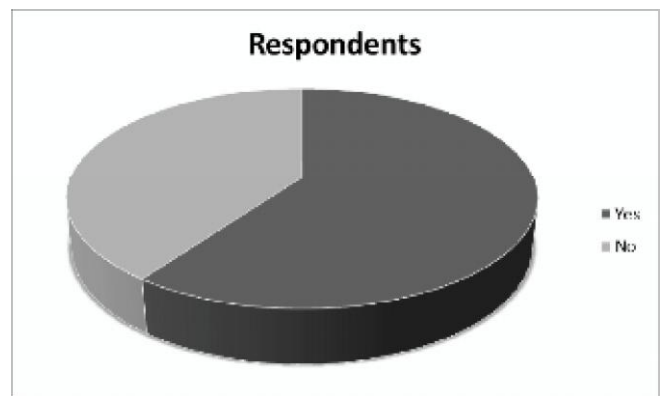
Figure-3 reveals that 90% of the male respondents were aware of the latest models of mobile phones available in the market while only 56% of the female respondents were aware of the latest models in the market. This may be due the difference in the exposure they get at home and outside.

With regard to the time of receiving calls was also odd. Receiving calls during study hours hampers the academic performance. Phone calls during sleeping hours results in inadequate sleep which could further lead to many diseases. Relationship in the family circle is affected by receiving phone calls and having hours of conversations while spending time with family gathering etc.

Carrying a cell phone to school :

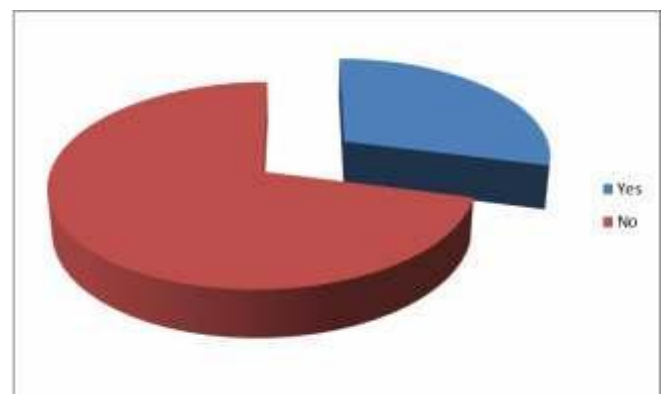
Dependence on cell phone is such that they even carry it to schools/tuition. Parents allow them to carry a mobile phone especially when they go for their tuitions. Most of the schools do not permit the use of mobile phones during the class hours. In spite of the restrictions the study revealed that 60% of the respondents carried a cell phone to their schools.

Figure – 4 : Carrying cell phones to school/tuition centres



According to them, the main purpose of carrying cell phones to school/ tuition is to stay in touch with the parents. However , for a few of them it is a status symbol, whereas a few of them use it to chat with their friends.

Figure No. - 5 : Economic Pressure on Parents



Economic Pressure on Parents :

The study revealed that there is certain amount of economic pressure on the parents for the maintenance of cell phones. Altogether 29% of

the respondents (20% males and 38% females) (Figure.5) confirmed the fact that they laid economic pressure on the parents.

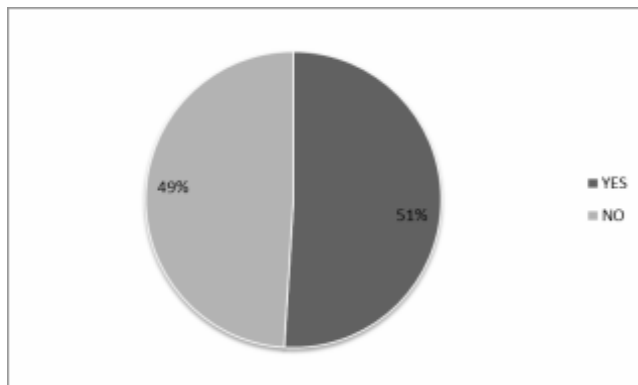
Excessive use of cell phone by children led to certain amount of tension between parents and their wards. 57% of the respondents said that their parents show displeasure when they continuously use a cell phone for calling or text messaging to their friends.

Awareness regarding the side effects of cell phone :

Today's generation is highly exposed to media or internet. They are aware of the harmful effects on their health and behaviour. Living without a cell phone is almost impossible for today's teenagers. It was found that 64% respondents of our survey were aware of the side effects of using a cell phone.

The present study also revealed that 47% of the respondents check their cell phone in the middle of sleep for messages or calls. This addictive behavior is not accepted by the elders in the family. Inadequate sleep thus leads to lack of concentration in study and other academic performances, besides creating negative impact on health.

Figure No.-6: Mood changes felt while attempting to cut down calls



The respondents agreed that there is anxiety, feeling of depression, guilt, anger etc. when they try to cut down on calls. 51% of our respondents (Figure:6) confirm that cutting down the calls can affect behavioral changes in them while they tried

to cut down their calls. Many teenagers also use cell phone as a way to escape from the feeling of loneliness, helplessness or guilt. 59% of the respondents said they use cell phones to escape from loneliness or when they feel helpless. Thus, feeling of loneliness, helplessness or guilt can lead to addiction of cell phone use.

Conclusion :

Despite the numerous advantages a cell phone has, there are also some disadvantages that accompany the usage of mobile phones. The excessive use of cell phone may lead to addiction, which could be made clear with the following addictive behaviors:-

- Keeping the Cell phone switched on always.
- Constant use of the cell phone.
- Checking the phone frequently for messages.
- Checking the cell phone in the middle of sleep.
- Anxiety.
- Absence from the school.

It can thus be concluded that addictive behavior can have effects on academic performance, family relationships as well as on health.

Academic Performance :

Along with their books and school supplies, many students make their daily trip to school with their trusty mobile phones. These pocket sized tools can do anything from make a standard call to surf the web. Mobile phones can be helpful academic tool or a hurtful academic disruption depending upon the attitude and use pattern of the student owner.

Cell phones are a disturbance in school. Students can use text messages for cheating in tests. Students are not able to give full attention to

the lesson being taught as they would be indulging with their phones. If a student's cell phone rings in a class it totally disrupts the class for a considerable period of time. The study revealed the following effects with regard to their study:-

- *Deviation from study*
- *Using text messages for cheating in Exams*
- *Ringling of cell phones can disrupt the whole class for considerable period*
- *Lack of concentration*
- *Poor academic performance*

Family Relationship :

Mobile phones have engulfed the adolescent phase of a teenager which, in turn, is bringing about a change in the family life of the teenager. The dilution of control is experienced by parents through teenagers' mobile phones because connection through a mobile phone is 'direct' and no more a 'via' media.

Cell phone usage may be a good indicator of the quality of the relationship between parent and the children. Teenagers use cell phones for seeking out social support and guidance from parents. On the other hand parents call frequently to monitor their children's whereabouts, track their home works etc.

But frequent calls from the parents can be negative, especially if they are anxious and worried, and call frequently to monitor and discipline rather to communicate. This can lead to disturbance in parent – child relationship.. If the relationship of a child and parents is strained, it can also affect their social lives. Children may not want to mix up with the other family members or relatives. The attachment to this device is gradually on an increasing trend that is resulting in the dilution of the family relationships. The present study revealed the following effects on family relationships:-

- *Negative Impact of frequent calls from parents.*
- *Rejection of family members.*
- *Less participation in family matters.*
- *Unnecessary economical pressure on the parents.*

Economic Pressure on Parents :

Use of cell phones by teenagers also creates an economic pressure on the parents. Every household has a limited source of income; cell phone is not only possessed by the higher income group but also by the middle and lower income groups. Unnecessary demand of possession of cell phones by children may create an economic pressure on the parents. Teenage is the period where children don't want to lack in any materialistic need and also do not understand the family's economic condition. After the purchase of a cell phone, its maintenance or billing may create extra economic pressure on the parents.

Health :

Radiation from mobile phones delays and reduces sleep and causes headaches. According to clinical psychologist Seema Hingorrany, "an overwhelming number of people are addicted to this cell phones and are in denial over it causing restlessness, insomnia, anxiety & even depression." (<http://www.accenthealth.com>) They are so anxious to keep checking their phones for messages or alerts that they end up sleeping very late or losing it. The findings suggest:-

- *Less participation in family matters.*
- *Use of phones late at night can lead to mood and personality changes like depression, lack of concentration and poor academic performance.*
- *Anything that disrupts the integrity of the sleep will potentially have adverse consequences in functioning during the day.*

- Extreme use of cell phones may be linked to stress, sleep disorders and depressive symptoms. Using mobile phones for longer hours can also cause eye problem. A new study finds that reading text, watching movies or playing games on small hand held screens could cause problems with the eyesight.
- Talking on mobile phones for longer duration is not safe at all. It causes disease called Tinnitus. Tinnitus is a ringing, swishing or other type of noise that seems to originate in the ear or head.

The present study revealed that most of the teenagers use cell phones to stay connected to their parents. Besides this, calling friends, text messaging, MMS, music download, playing games were also seen among the respondents.

Carrying cell phones to school leads to lack of concentration leading to poor academic performance. Use of phone at night or constant texting can lead to disturbance in sleep. The parent-child relationship also seemed to be affected. Cell phones hindered children from taking part in family matters. There was also a certain amount of economic pressure on the parents on account of purchasing and maintaining the cell phones. Teenagers also have headache, eye problems or ear problems due to the excessive use of cell phone. Our study shows that teens are aware of the side effects of cell phone use but still have no control over its usage. Dependence on cell phone is such that one cannot live without a cell phone for a day.

Suggestions :

- (i) Awareness programmes in schools should take place informing the students about the alarming health effects of using a cell phone.
- (ii) Parents / teachers should educate their children on the proper use of cell phone.

- (iii) Parents should keep a check on their children to see, if the child is going on the wrong path via cell phone usage.
- (iv) Parents should be aware of obsessional characteristics in their child, so they have a hold on their children
- (v) Cell phones should be switched off at night so that one can have a sound sleep.
- (vi) Educational Institutions should prohibit the use of cell phones in the premises.
- (vii) Parents should set limit on the expenditure of mobile phone by the teenagers.
- (viii) Schools / Family members should create an atmosphere of warm and friendly relationship with the teenagers so that they feel free and emotionally secure which will help them to avoid misuse of phones in order to escape loneliness, anxiety and so on.

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