

A SURVEY-BASED STUDY ON PROBLEMATIC SMARTPHONE USE IN YOUTH TODAY

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Abstract

The mobile phone is one of the best inventions of the 20th century. However, today people, especially kids, are getting addicted to using the mobile phone. They can't keep their eyes off from their phones, even for a moment. Perhaps, due to the advantages of mobile phones, the majority often ignore the adverse effects. The smartphones of today have numerous features that the owners of them can hardly seem to place them down just for a second. These smartphones not only offer the same features that a personal computer would, but they also provide a high level of entertainment. Even with all the capabilities that smartphones offer they still require a good level of understanding and responsibility. On surveying addictions in general, we found that over 50% were addicted to smartphones, followed by caffeine. This paper aims to assist others in understanding the direction of smartphone technology, the ways smartphone technology changes society, ways to manage this addiction, and how smartphones could potentially create hazardous situations.

Keywords: *nomophobia, addiction disorder, cell phone addiction*



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Introduction

Mobile phones are powerful communication devices. They're considered to be one of the best inventions in this millennium. Mobile phones were first demonstrated by Motorola in 1973 and were made commercially available from 1984. In the last few years, handphones became an integral part of our lives. Mobile phones have developed to smartphones, which basically controls all our activities. Smartphones have taken an essential place in this world such that it even controls our sleep.

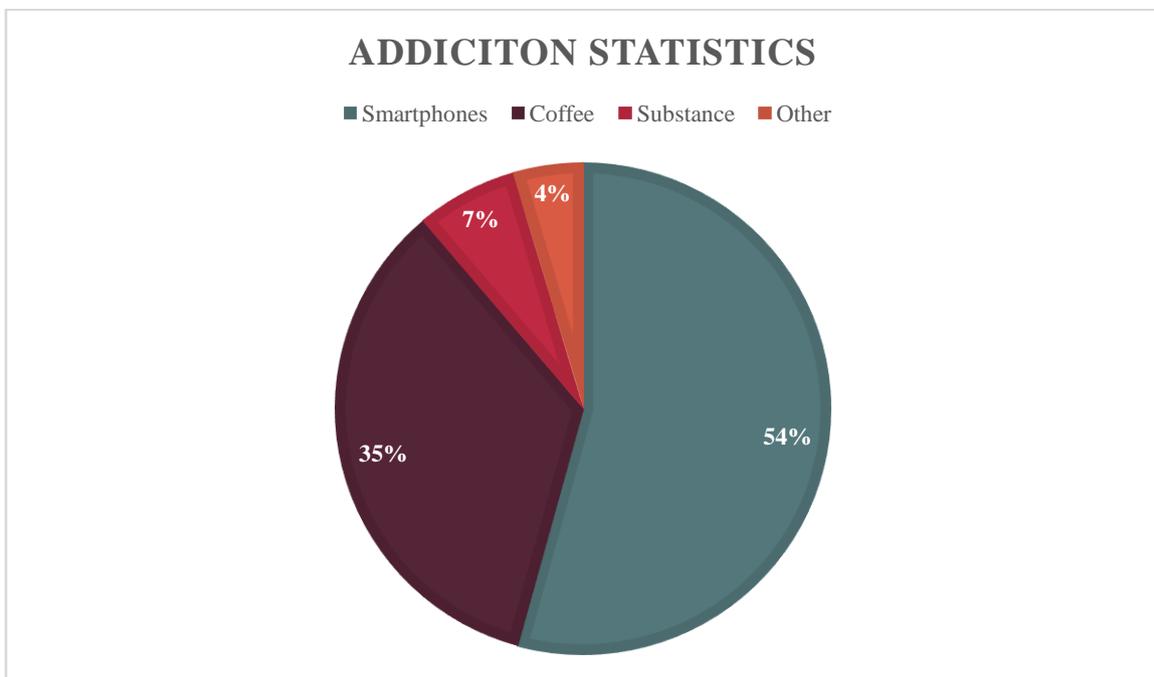
Around 206 published survey reports suggest that 50% of teens and 27% of fogeys feel that they're obsessed with mobiles. On surveying different addictions among different age groups, it had been concluded that electronic gadgets topped the list. In recent years, most of the world populations (especially college and university students), use smartphones, thanks to its wide selection of applications. While beneficial in numerous ways, smartphones have disadvantages like a reduction in work efficacy, personal attention, social nuisance, and

psychological addiction. Currently, the addiction to smartphones among students is exceptionally high, and it is progressively increasing every year.

A mental impairment resulting from modern technology has come to the eye of sociologists, psychologists, and scholars of education on mobile addiction. Mobile phone addiction and withdrawal from the cellular network may increase anger, tension, depression, irritability, and restlessness, which can alter the physiological behaviours and reduce work efficacy. Hence, this study was planned to review the addiction behaviour of mobile phone usage using an internet survey.

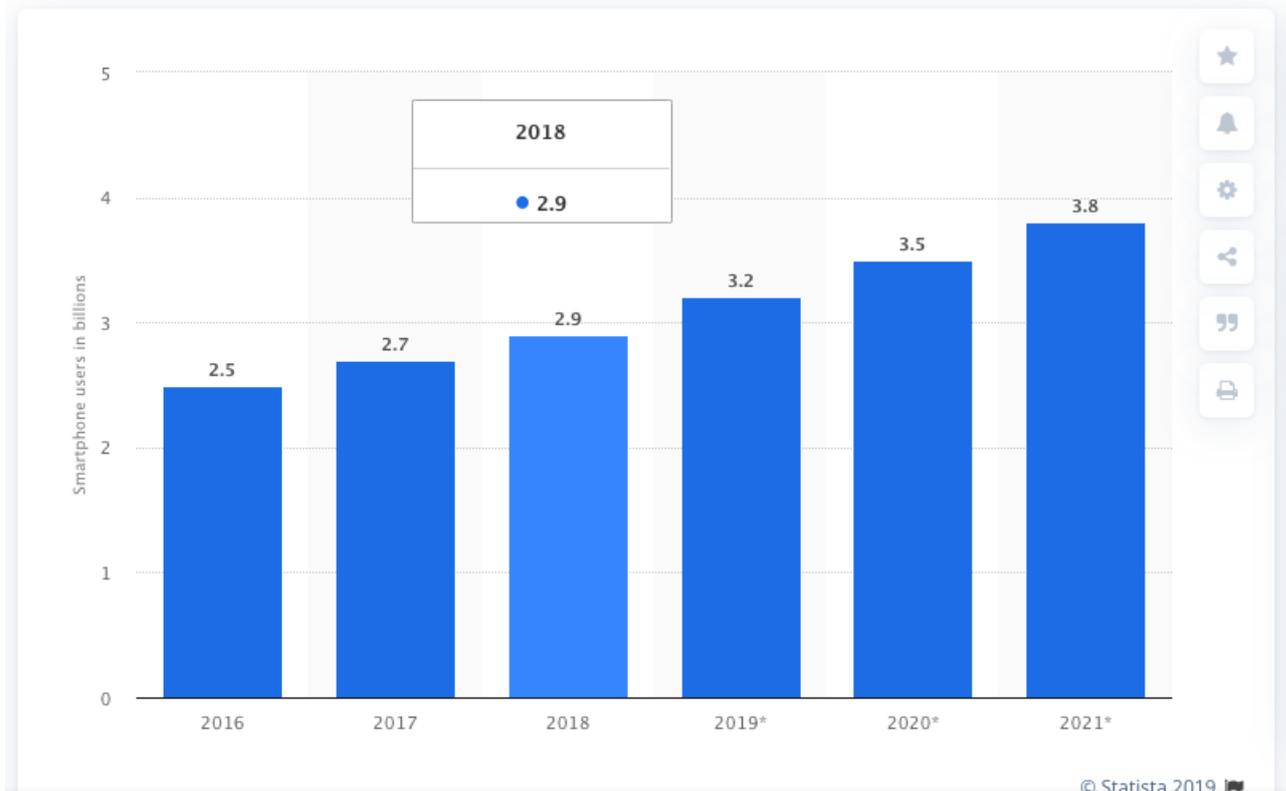
'Nomophobia' is a phobia of being out of cellular phone contact. The term is an abbreviation for 'no-mobile-phone' phobia. It was coined during a 2010 study by the UK Post Office.

Survey statistics



We surveyed the age group of 15-21years to find the most relevant addiction, and it was found that 54% of the surveyed admitted to being addicted to mobile phones. Although smartphone addiction was expected to be in a list of dependencies, it was not expected to top the list. Not many consider excessive use of smartphones an addiction. But this is a serious threat to the human body both mentally and physically.

Number of smartphone users worldwide from 2016 to 2021 (in billions)



The graph above shows the increase in the number of smartphone users around the globe in the past 4 years. There is a steep rise from 2016 to 2020. In 2021 nearly 4 billion around the globe are expected to have a smartphone. A study in 2019 reveals that an average smartphone user checks their device 63 times a day (i.e., 23,058 times a year) and that 86% of smartphone users check their device while spending time with family and friends. Another reported that 87% of smartphone users check their phones within 1 hour of waking up or going to sleep.

Reasons for increase in nomophobia

Most studies show that the reasons behind mobile phone addiction among youth are mainly due to psychological and emotional issues. These issues can be depression, loneliness, anxiety, and so on. Smartphone addiction is also increasing due to the increasing addiction of people towards new technologies and applications. People always wish to live a comfortable life; online technologies offer a smooth and comfortable living for people. Due to these reasons, search terms such as 'digital wellness' and 'cell phone addiction' have gained

increasing popularity in recent years. One of the main reasons why youth are addicted to mobile phones is due to the rise of social media and the importance the younger generations place on social networks. According to a survey conducted in 2019, it was found that a normal man spends 8 to 10 hours on his smartphone, which is a substantial increase from 2015, and it is also found out that a mobile addict launches an app more than 40 times a day. Nowadays, our dependence on mobile phones has increased in such a way that now we have developed a fear of being separated from it, and this fear has developed in such a way that now people carry their phones even to their shower room to stay close to connectivity.

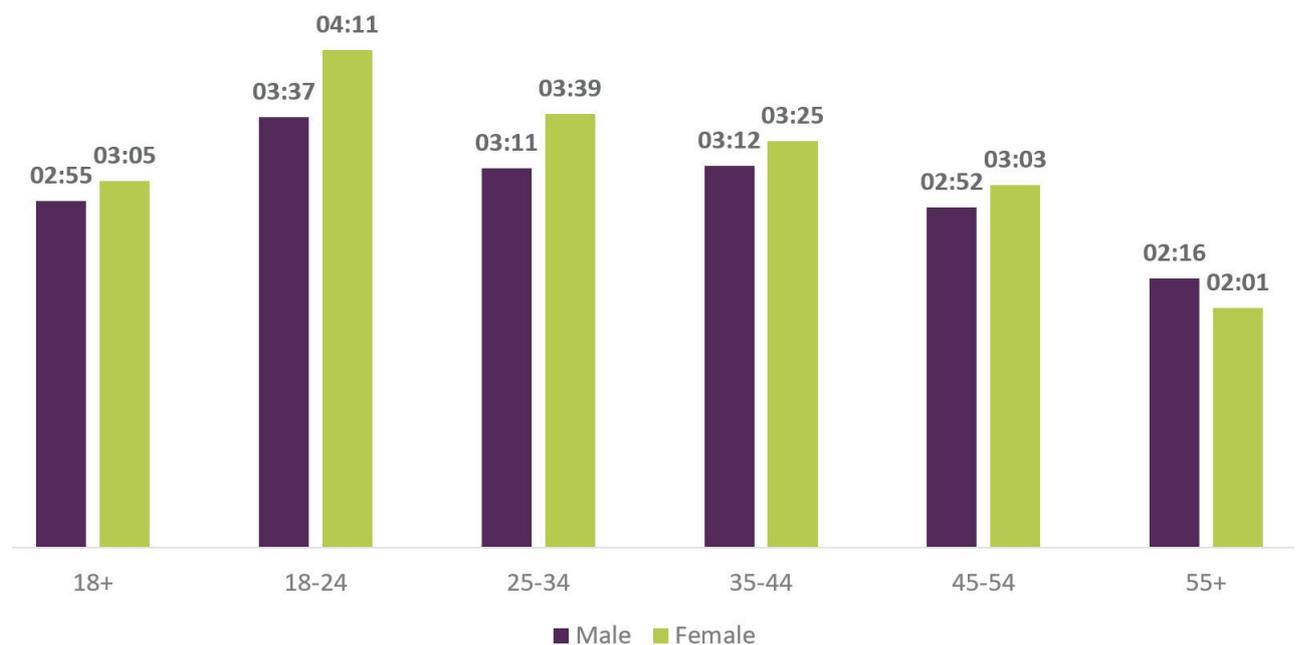


FIG: Smartphone usage among males and females of different age groups

It is found that in the total number of mobile addicts in the world, women are more addicted due to the fashion-conscious and beauty tips that social media presents. Men are not exempt from this addiction. Indeed, a recent study found that people touch their phones 2,617 times per day on average. A study of pedestrians found that 40% of those who crossed the road despite the "Don't Walk" signal flashing were talking on their phones.

Mobile phones make our lives easier, but on the other hand, it ties us. Addiction to social networking, dating apps, texting, and messaging can extend to the point where virtual relationships become more important than real-life relations. Most people use this online friendship to come out of their loneliness. But online relationships are not a healthy substitute for real-life interactions and are not a long-term relationship.

Based on mobile phone addiction, we surveyed university students. According to this survey, about 50% of the people said that they use mobile phones for stress relief. This shows the drastic increase in stress among the youth. This stress can be due to family pressure or can be due to educational-stress. Nowadays, youth are being overloaded with stress, which can lead to anxiety, depression, loneliness, etc. To overcome this stress, smartphones are used to get away from reality. They play games, chat online, etc. on their smartphones.

Popular impulse-driven triggers:

Social media networks and relationship-driven content.

Overexposure to information and data, e.g., games, surfing, apps.

Internet pornography, cybersex, and dating apps.

Shopping, gambling, stock trading, and auctions.

Effects of nomophobia

Technology is growing at an exponential rate. Besides, as its development increases, so does the speed with which it influences society.

For about a decade, the extensive use of smartphones has changed our lifestyles in a way that is much more significant than what we could have imagined 10 or 15 years ago.

For many, mobile phones are not just essential tools in their daily lives, but rather, these smartphones have taken control of their lives to such an extent that they have become a severe problem.

Like any other phobia, nomophobia can be perceived through common symptoms like fear, nervousness, or anxiety, but it could also involve tachycardia, headaches, stomachache, etc. or obsessive thoughts. However, we should not only think that nomophobia is the result of said smartphone addiction. Instead, it might conceal other problems, such as low self-esteem and difficulties in interacting with others, other than interacting online. Some people even wake upon countless occasions during the night to check the updates on social networks etc. As we all know, heavy use of smartphones mostly in cases of students, have adverse effects on development and health.

Smartphone dependency can have the following effects on our lives:

Anxiety – One tends to check one's smartphone when simply kept in plain eyesight. Many admitted to having an urge to check their phones for any notifications many times, even if the phone does not vibrate.

Stress – Greater stress levels were found in business-orientated roles where work life is connected to electronic devices. e.g.,Emails

Narcissism – People on their phones who get addicted to social media will begin to display self-absorption traits derived from continually posting about their lives or selfies.

Depression and loneliness – Mainly stemming from people on their phones with high social media use (higher numbers in teens).

Attention deficit disorder – The flow of information can impact the brain's ability to stay dedicated to one task.

Sleep deficiency – Impacting your sleep can have long-term issues in mental health, memory, and learning skills.

People of every age group suffer from mobile addiction. However, teenagers are most likely to develop this addiction. Teenagers are at that stage of their life where they are searching for new things. A mobile phone with an internet connection can answer almost any questions. These young adults are at a stage of their lives where they will have many things to discuss. But they don't get to spend time with their parents because most of the time, parents are more absorbed in their work.

Secondly, they would be very embarrassed to talk about their queries to their parents. Their mobile phones can connect them with many people around the world. They make friends online and comfortably share their emotions with them. Teenagers prefer to boast about any new development in their lives on social media. This is a way to gain popularity in schools and colleges and win more friends. Their mobile phones enable them to do this through social media platforms. Adolescents addicted to mobile phones are the worst. They may not focus on their studies. Mobile phone addiction reduces their ability to focus and reduces their ability to understand things. People with mobile phones are more at risk of developing habits such as smoking, drinking, and taking drugs. They become socially awkward as they are always on their mobile phones. Therefore their future will be at stake.

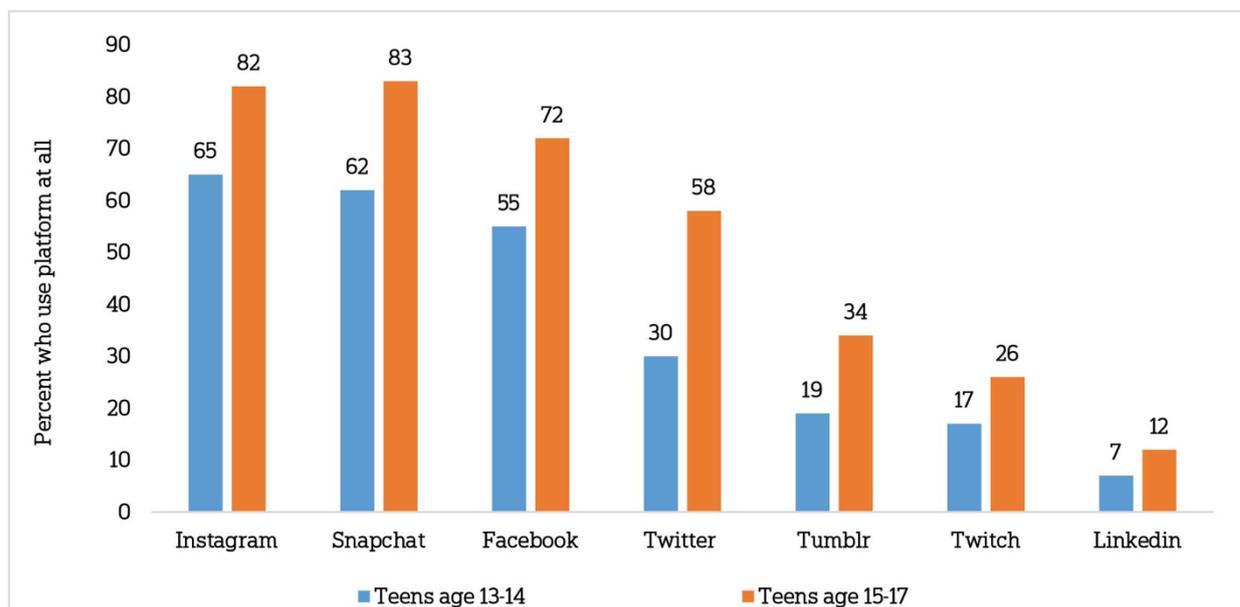
How to recognize social media addiction:

- ❖ Having difficulty leaving the computer or phone for a meal. Food may be taken when chatting or scrolling through social media pages.
- ❖ Daily life, such as social contacts, work, or study, all have to make way for being online.
- ❖ Daily tasks and activities are rushed because the youngster wants to sit at the computer or phone as soon as possible.

- ❖ Ultimately, sleep will give way to be online.
- ❖ Sometimes young people don't recognize their addiction, simply because these repress it.
- ❖ Care and personal hygiene can (sharply) decline or even be exaggerated (modelling to peers)

One of the reasons why teenagers today obsess over social media is because their profiles dictate how they appear to others. That is, the more likes and followers they have, the more popular and envious they come off as to others. Some teens may always be on social media platforms to hunt for more followers, make their posts the best that they can be, or find a way to get more likes on their posts.

Older teens are more active on social media, using each of these platforms more than their younger counterparts.



Question: How often do you use the following, if at all?

Source: AP-NORC Teen Survey December 2016. n=790 with teenagers age 13-17 nationwide

An additional reason why teens may be addicted to social media is because of how quickly and easily they can communicate with their friends, no matter where either of them is. With a click of just a couple of buttons, teenagers can send pictures to each other on Snapchat, as well as gossip and converse through DMs or IMs. Teenagers can appear as if they are addicted to social media, even if they are not because they devote a lot of their time to talking to their friends online through these social media platforms.

For teens, it's quite understandable and obvious why they spend so much time on social media. Whether it's to stay up-to-date with events or just to pass the time because they have nothing else to do, social media is undoubtedly a large part of a teen's lifestyle.

Controlling nomophobia

When we have reached this 21st century, the era of modernization, a life we have built up where we refuse to live without modern gadgets like smartphones, iPads, laptops, etc. For the sake of socialization, we dwell on networking sites for hours. We can't blame people for using Twitter, or Instagram cause it's up to them to live their life, we have seen the merits of these applications as in a world where life is a racing ground, and it is good for the mind to connect with people and talk about their problems with someone.

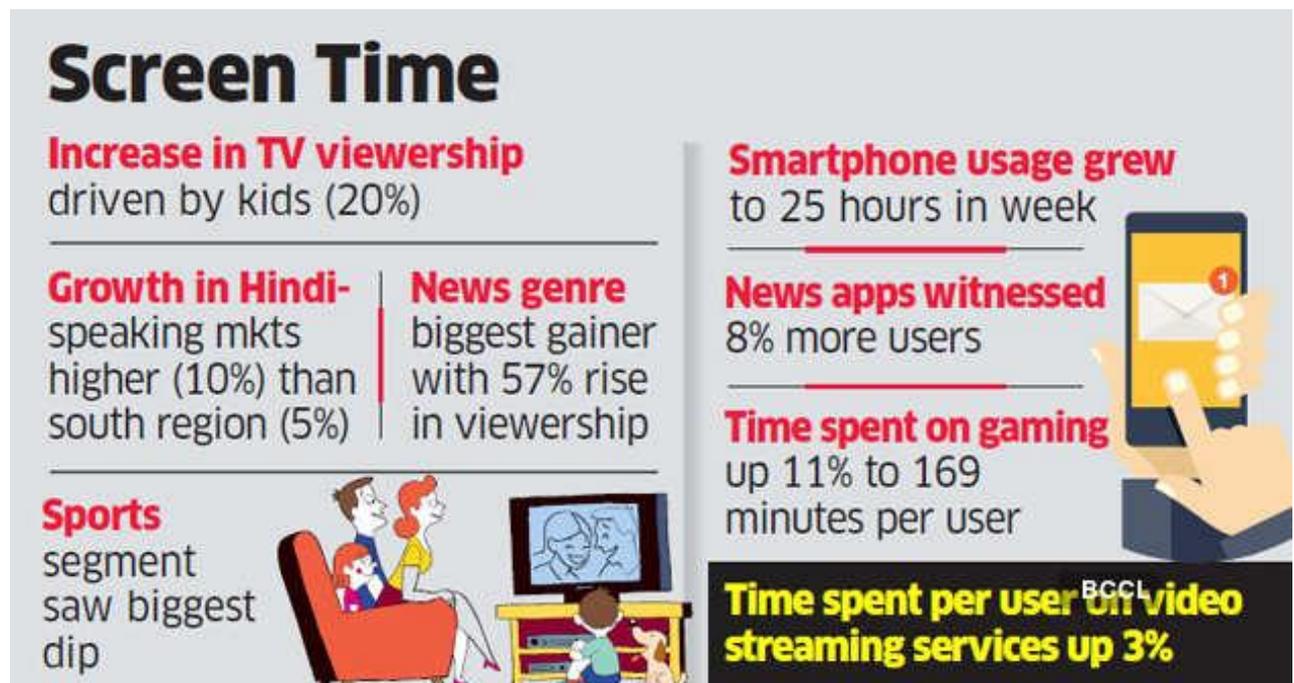


FIG: Increase in smartphone usage after COVID-19 lockdown (Source: The Economic Times)

These smartphones have applications for everything ranging from books to read, online shopping sites, apps that help in overcoming boredom like Netflix, and when the world is facing such a huge risk of life threats like COVID -19, the world has to continue its routine. People have started doing their jobs sitting in their homes. Teachers have started taking classes online with the help of video calling apps like Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, Zoom, etc.

Smartphones have become an integral part of man's life. We keep on checking for messages or to see if we have any notifications, tagging people on various posts, etc. These days the idea of fun differs from the people of old genera. The reality is that we need our smartphones more than good relations; it has become a personal drug having more control over the human body.

When we conducted our survey across the age group of 13 to 21 years, we have been able to know that smartphones have become a source of stress relief, an escape from the harsh realities of this world. An hour on the phone is like a hot cup of coffee for many.

Even though the uses and merits of smartphones are plenty, as for every boon, there is a bane, as, for every blossom, there is a thorn; the same applies to smartphones too. With ethical hackers, our bank accounts and personal details are at risk, innocent minds are misled, pictures of people are misused, and the list goes on.

As human beings are going through the peak of development, everybody loves to ignore the dark side. On analyzing smartphone users of all age groups, we have listed a few ways to control nomophobia.

- ❖ Don't take your phones to bed before sleeping as it will end in less sleep and red eyes.
 - ❖ Turn off notifications
 - ❖ Delete unnecessary apps
 - ❖ Rather than texting, have conversations with people around you.
 - ❖ To overcome your boredom and to manage stress levels, do something you love may be something that you stopped doing as you grew up older.
 - ❖ Do exercises which may be useful to us.
 - ❖ Monitor your cell phone use
 - ❖ Create a plan for cell phone use like specific hours.
 - ❖ Don't use your phone as an alarm clock
 - ❖ Pause to think before picking up your phone.
 - ❖ If the dependency has gone up to an uncontrollable level, talk to digital wellness coaches
- Smartphones today have come up with many applications to control the hours one spends on their devices. These applications have been proved to work efficiently. But he/she has to first admit that their addiction is relevant and should be controlled. 58% of smartphone users have attempted to limit their usage in the past. 41% of which felt they were successful.

Conclusion

Cellphones have evolved rapidly since handheld mobile phones first appeared in the 1970s. Today, a 1990 mobile phone or even one from later in the 1990s looks laughably primitive to people who are used to seeing a smartphone running iOS or Android. Generally, phones have

evolved to become more compact, to have longer battery life, and to allow the addition of features beyond making calls, like running apps and sending text messages.

Apart from alcohol addiction, drug addiction, now we are facing another addiction in this new generation that is mobile addiction. Smartphone addiction is sometimes also known as nomophobia (fear of being without a mobile phone). Let's look at the effects of mobile addiction - back and neck problem, anxiety, stress, depression, health issues, sleep deprivation and disruption, becoming less productive, eyesight and hearing problems, and so on. Look at how this addiction affects our lives. Reaching out to one's cell phone the first thing right after waking up, using smartphones whenever bored or have nothing to do, become anxious when the device is out of sight - all these actions show that one has nomophobia. Unlike substance addictions, nomophobia can be controlled without any effort if one has the determination. Smartphone addiction is a habitual syndrome that can be removed and replaced, but first, you must make the decision to stop and commit to doing it. Smartphones are invented to make our lives easier. However, do not let your phone become your master and you, the slave.

Acknowledgment

We cannot express enough gratitude to our valued faculty Miss Teena V for giving us the opportunity to do this research and providing invaluable guidance throughout this study.

We are also thankful to the editor of **Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science and English Language** for accepting our paper.

We thank our parents and our friends for their unending support throughout this research.

Above all, we would like to offer this endeavor to God Almighty for the wisdom bestowed upon us, the strength, peace of mind and good health in order to finish this research.