

THE IMPACT OF MOBILE PHONE USAGE ON STUDENTS: POSITIVE, NEGATIVE, AND BEHAVIORAL ISSUES WITH PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

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Abstract: This study examines the growing use of mobile phones among middle and high school students, focusing on their impact on classroom learning and interaction. The research, conducted in one of the school located in dist. G'ijduvon, Bukhara, analyses students' often of phones during class, mainly for social media, gaming, and messaging, which interferes with learning and shortens their attention spans. The study gathers insights from students, teachers, and parents through surveys, interviews, and observations. Findings reveal mixed opinions like, banning phones to minimize distractions, or use them responsibly for academic purposes. The research underscores the importance of balanced policies to ensure mobile phones enhance, rather than hinder, education.

Key Words: Mobile phones, education, classroom challenges, distractions, responsible use, digital learning, school policies, student engagement, academic performance

Introduction.

In the highly competitive era of today advanced technology, almost everyone relies on various electronic devices in their daily lives. Sarker and colleagues, in 2019, approximately 96.8% of the global population had access to mobile devices, with the coverage rate reaching 100% in various developed countries. Looi and co-workers claim that smartphones are perceived as convenient, easy-to-use tools that promote interaction and multitasking, and facilitate both formal and informal learning. These devices are used for a wide range of purposes, such as learning new information, staying in touch with loved ones, making phone calls, or even studying at foreign universities online. Over the past four years, mobile phone usage among schoolchildren, especially in middle and high school grades, has increased significantly, particularly on school premises and during lessons. There are many reasons behind this growing trend.

“Mobile technology represents a profound evolution in the way people connect to information, services, culture, and community,” said Harvard President Drew Faust. However, the constant exposure to social media, games, and other tech products has

raised concerns. Susan Linn, author of *Who's Raising the Kids? Big Tech, Big Business, and the Lives of Children* and a lecturer in psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, points out that this exposure is not only distracting but can also be harmful to students.

According to a report by the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project, the number of people using mobile devices to access the Internet rose by 52 percent last year. While this trend has long been prevalent among young adults, it has also gained popularity among individuals aged 30 to 49. The study found that 43 percent of people in that age group used mobile devices to access the Internet last year, marking a 39 percent increase from the previous year. During the COVID-19 pandemic, mobile phones became essential tools for remote learning. Students learned to use mobile technologies independently, which contributed to their reliance on these devices.

Some Harvard experts suggest that instructors and administrators should learn how to teach with technology rather than against it, especially considering the academic and social disruptions many students are still dealing with due to the pandemic. During remote learning, many students had the freedom to use their phones as they saw fit. Now, as they return to in-person classes, they face a school environment that seeks to restrict their main source of connection. Victor Pereira said that "Returning to in-person learning, I think it was hard to break the habit," a lecturer on education and co-chair of the Teaching and Leadership Program at the Graduate School of Education.

The increasing use of mobile phones among schoolchildren is driven by their potential to support learning and personal development. These devices help students build responsible digital habits, enhance collaboration during group work, and foster creativity through tools like video editing and photography. When used effectively, mobile phones can become valuable assets in modern education.

1. **Responsible Digital Citizenship:** Allowing phones in the classroom helps students learn to set limits on their digital use and promotes healthy screen time habits. This teaches them to use their phones as tools without depending on them too much, both at school and at home.

2. **Group Work:** Cell phones should be allowed on high school campuses because they support group work in the classroom. They help students collaborate more easily, especially when different groups are working on separate tasks.

3. **Creativity:** Fostering creativity is an important goal for teachers. With tools like video editing and cameras, students can explore their creative sides and become more involved in topics by expressing themselves artistically.

Expert Perspectives on Mobile Phone Use in Education

The integration of mobile phones in education has been a topic of considerable debate among researchers and educators, with opinions ranging from their potential to enhance learning to concerns about their disruptive effects.

Karikoski and Soikkeli (2013) stated that smartphones help foster human-to-human interaction, both verbally and through the exchange of written and visual information, thereby encouraging the development and strengthening of social networks.

Firmansyah et al. (2020) emphasized that smartphones are a valuable tool for student-centered learning, benefiting various disciplines and education levels. They also highlighted the wide array of smartphone applications available to support different learning needs.

Clayton and Murphy (2016) advocated for integrating smartphones into classroom teaching, suggesting that instead of allowing them to be distractions, educators should help students recognize how smartphones can enhance learning and promote civic involvement.

Michael Rich, an associate professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School and an associate professor of social and behavioral sciences at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, argued that phones and schools don't mix well. He explained that students struggle to absorb information meaningfully when multitasking with texting, scrolling, or watching videos. "The human brain can't focus on more than one thing at a time," he explained. He said that "What we think of as multitasking is actually just switching between tasks rapidly. This rapid task-switching can cover many topics but fails to allow deep engagement with any one of them."

Rich also suggested designing more engaging learning activities that cater to students' individual interests and needs. He added that allowing phones could enrich lessons and offer new opportunities to use technology for academic purposes.

Mesfin Awoke Bekalu, a research scientist at the Lee Kum Sheung Center for Health and Happiness at the Chan School, argued for more flexible classroom policies that could promote the development of tech-literacy and self-regulation. He pointed out that social media platforms offer critical resources, particularly for marginalized groups like students of color and LGBTQ students. However, he cautioned against an unrestricted approach, stressing the need for balanced policies that don't allow excessive freedom.

Methods

The research was conducted in school A (name withheld) in Gijduvan district, Bukhara. For about a month, 8th, 9th, and 10th grade classes were observed, and common problems during lessons, actions of students and teachers, as well as conversations between students, were analyzed. Based on the observations, it was found that the use of phones during class is one of the biggest and most serious problems among students.

The use of phones during class created disruptions in multiple ways. For students, engaging in activities like texting, playing games, or browsing social networks took their attention away from the lesson, causing them to miss important content. This lack of focus could spread to their peers, as students who were distracted by phone use might engage in side conversations or actions that disrupted the flow of the lesson. Teachers, in turn, faced difficulties in maintaining the attention and discipline of the class, leading to a less structured learning environment. Ultimately, the influence of phones led to students neglecting the lesson, negatively affecting both their individual learning and the overall classroom atmosphere.

This problem also created a challenge for the teachers as they found it difficult to keep the attention of the students and to conduct the lesson effectively. Some teachers had to remind students to hide or turn off their phones, which disrupted the coherence and effectiveness of the lesson.

In addition, conversations between students were often about phone-related topics, such as social media updates, games, and other lighthearted topics. This further reduced students' academic attention and limited effective cooperation in group work. Some students were more interested in their phones and less interested in class or interacting with their peers.

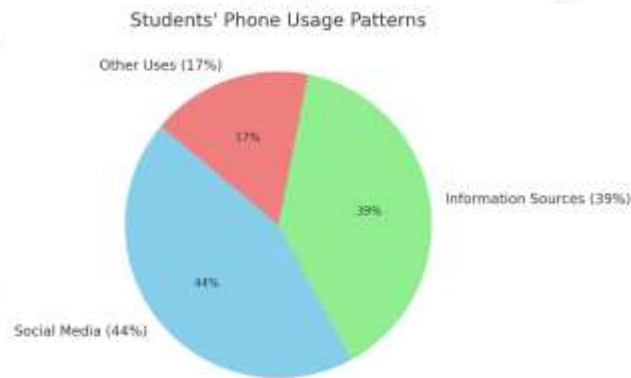
To gather students' opinions, surveys, interviews, and closed tests were organized. It was found that most upper-grade students preferred to actively participate in surveys created on online platforms rather than giving interviews or having verbal conversations. However, the majority of 8th-grade students were not interested in participating in the study, and it is believed that they did not answer the questions correctly.

To understand the views of the teachers, face-to-face conversations were preferred, as they, for various reasons, do not spend much time on the internet. About 30 teachers actively participated in the research. Approximately 60 students were involved in the study. Parents were also asked to participate, but most of them, due to work or daily responsibilities, requested online surveys instead. Specific questions were prepared for them and shared in Telegram chat groups to ensure that all interested parents could participate.

RESULT

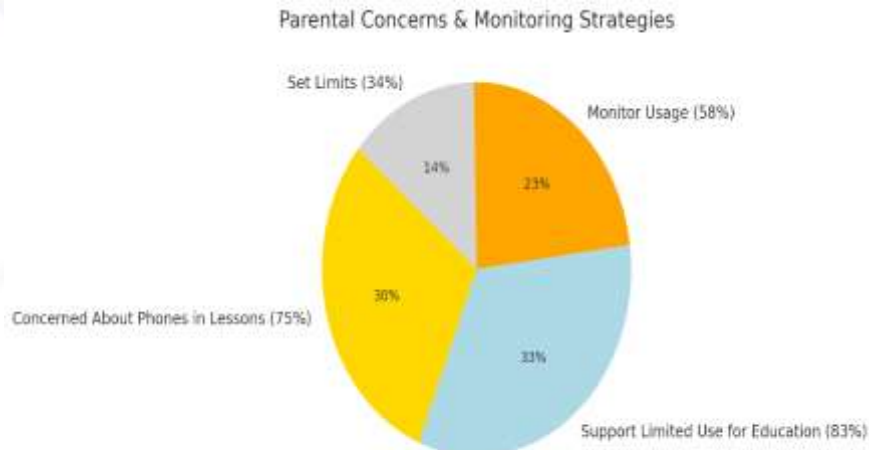
Key Findings

A. Student Perspectives



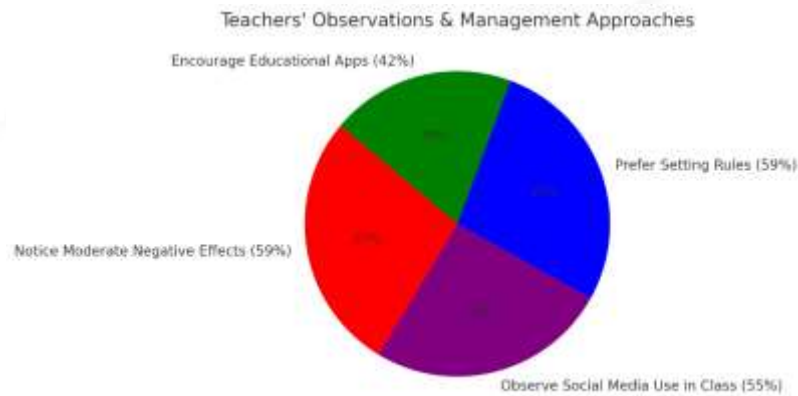
- **Distraction vs. Learning:** 56% of students reported being distracted by phones, while only 11% believed they helped in learning.
- **Primary Usage:** 44% used phones for social media, and 39% used them for information.
- **Phone Use During School:** 50% used phones during breaks, while 30% used them in lessons.
- **Daily Screen Time:** 72% used phones for 3-5 hours, while 17% exceeded 6 hours.
- **Reasons for Usage:** Boredom (47%) and repetitive lessons (21%) were key triggers.

B. Parental Attitudes



- **Concerns & Support:** 83% supported phone use for education, but 75% were concerned about use in lessons.
- **Monitoring & Control:** 58% monitored their child's phone use, while only 34% imposed limits.
- **Perceived Negative Impact:** 62% believed phones harmed their child's focus.

C. Teachers' Observations & Strategies



- **Impact on Learning:** 59% of teachers noticed moderate negative effects.
- **Observed Phone Usage in Class:** Social media (55%) and entertainment (20%) were common.
- **Management Methods:** 59% of teachers preferred setting clear rules, while 63% encouraged phones for educational use.
- **Suggestions for Improvement:** 42% recommended encouraging educational apps, and 21% wanted stronger school-parent collaboration.

3. Insights & Recommendations

1. Reduce Distraction in Classrooms

- Since 56% of students feel distracted, stricter phone policies should be considered.
- Schools could implement **designated phone-free times** to balance necessary use with minimizing distractions.

2. Make Lessons More Engaging

- 47% of students use phones due to boredom, so making lessons **more interactive and engaging** (e.g., through digital tools or group activities) could reduce distractions.

3. Encourage Educational Apps & Digital Learning

- While **44% use phones for social media**, **39% use them for information**, showing potential for educational use.

- Schools should promote structured use of **educational apps and platforms**.

4. Improve Parent Involvement & Awareness

- While **58% of parents monitor phone use**, only **34% set limits**.
- Schools should provide **workshops for parents** on managing phone use effectively.

5. Clear School-Wide Phone Policies

- **63% of teachers** want phones to be used only for education, meaning clear guidelines on phone use can help.
- Schools could **introduce tech-friendly policies**, allowing phone use for research but restricting social media in lessons.

6. Teacher Training on Tech Integration

- Since **50% of teachers see value in educational apps**, more **teacher training on integrating digital tools into lessons** could help balance engagement and focus.

DISCUSSION

According to the results, students use their phones during class to access social networks, rarely to search for information. They say that they spend more than 6 hours a day, mostly communicating with relatives and friends. As a result, they quickly get distracted from the lesson, attract the attention of other children, do not understand some topics. Some teachers have different opinions about using the phone. For example, The teachers of “A” school gave several suggestions for students sitting on the phone in class. These are the following:

1. An open box for special telephones should be made in each room. This method removes distractions from the lesson and increases the quality of the lesson. Or be completely banned by the school. There are teachers who have a different opinion about this. For example: Joan Orlando, Researcher: Digital Literacy and Digital Wellbeing, University of Western Sydney said we shouldn't ban mobile phones in schools because it's important to teach children how to live well as they grow up. A good education for students today said that they know how to use technology to learn, communicate, and work with ideas, and important research (including mine) shows that selective, qualitative, and expansive use of technology is new learning. Opportunities and demonstrates that it provides students with the ability to develop the skills they need for their careers. The ability to transfer work from a whiteboard to an exercise book is not a skill that today's employers are looking for. Banning students from using smartphones is the 1950s answer to the 2018 state of play. Cell phone use is a complex social activity, and confiscating phones is likely to lead to covert and covert use by adolescents. It has argued that it will exacerbate the problems (such as cyberbullying) that the call to ban phones is trying to address.

According to a study released by the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), smartphone use in the classroom is associated with decreased student reading ability and decreased attention span. Creating an environment that minimizes distractions and encourages focused learning is essential.

Michael Rich, MD, an associate professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School, says students aren't able to learn or process information effectively when they're engaged in activities like texting, scrolling or watching videos on their phones. He explains that the brain is not designed to multitask, and trying to focus on multiple tasks at once can impair both comprehension and memory retention.

2. An official platform or program of “A” school should be created, in which it will be determined whether students attended classes or not, whether they used

unnecessary programs or not. This new program helps students to spend their time on useful things.

Some believe that organizing interactive lessons is essential. They argue that such lessons can help students develop communication skills, gather information effectively, think creatively, and enhance critical thinking abilities. Additionally, they pointed out that incorporating online platforms and modern teaching methods during lessons could increase student engagement. For example, an English teacher at “School A” used the “Quizzes” platform to conduct a lesson. In an interview, the teacher mentioned that the results were outstanding, with student performance improving twice as much compared to previous lessons.

Parents said that they allow their children to use mobile phones for safety reasons. Because with the help of phones, students can always be in touch with their parents and communicate with their friends during the break, they feel safer. The phones also offer features like digital hall passes and student ID cards that improve security.

Conclusion

Today, technology has become an integral part of our lives. We use it to acquire new knowledge, make online income, communicate with close people, friends, colleagues, and even to get acquainted with news happening all over the world. Although it helps us to save time and create fast and comfortable conditions, it causes some problems. For example, using the phone during class is one of the biggest and most serious problems for children’s lives. It distracts attention, reduces the quality of learning, and watching unnecessary short videos causes a decrease in human memory. This study highlights the importance of managing the use of telephones. While some educators suggest banning phones altogether, others support their inclusion in the learning process. Solutions such as special cases for phones, school applications and interactive lessons can be the answer to these problems. A balanced approach is needed to ensure the responsible use of phones and their effective use in education.

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