

# Self-reported Smartphone Addiction: Strategies to Counter the Same

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## ABSTRACT

Smartphones have become an inseparable part of the life of today's kids. Smartphones have simplified our lives in a variety of ways. As a result of the coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the usage of smartphones has expanded significantly in a variety of professions, including medical education. While many institutions have recognized the potential and benefits of smartphone use, such as learning at one's own pace, bridging geographic distances, easy access to a variety of learning resources, hands-on demonstrations, and assessment, we must also be aware of the negative consequences of smartphone use, the most concerning of which is smartphone addiction. Increased smartphone or mobile phone usage has been linked to headaches, dizziness, memory and focus impairments, weariness, and sleep disorders.

**Keywords:** Addiction, COVID-19, Smartphone.

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## INTRODUCTION

A smartphone is a handheld electronic device that connects to the Internet and a cellular network. In 1994, IBM released the world's first smartphone, dubbed Simon. In the last two decades, smartphone usage has skyrocketed. Because it contains practically all of the other elements of personal digital assistance, such as Internet surfing, email access, desktop synchronization, and third-party software, usually referred to as "apps," the smartphone has emerged as a portable computer. The usage of a cell phone is a common tool among healthcare workers, and it can lead to addiction. As per the World Health Organization, addiction refers to a kind of dependence occurring due to the continuous use of something either for the sake of relief or stimulation, which often manifests in the form of craving, if not given.<sup>1</sup>

Cell phones with built-in applications and Internet connection, such as the Blackberry and iPhone, are known as smartphones. Smartphone usage has skyrocketed, making them an indispensable element of business, trade, and society. They make it simple to communicate with others. However, their widespread use has created concerns that exposure to radiation from cell phones could be harmful to one's health. Because of their intensive usage of smartphones for study and work, medical college students may be especially exposed.

The coronavirus disease-2019 pandemic has resulted in major changes in adolescent lifestyles and the adoption of health-risk behaviors such as increased smartphone usage.<sup>2</sup> An approach used to control the disease's transmissibility, domestic quarantine, has had such results. Adolescents used smartphones for educational, amusing, and affective purposes during periods of distant and physical isolation since they were unable to attend medical schools, colleges, or socialize freely with their peers in recreational locations.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the convenience that smartphones provide in a pandemic situation, their dysfunctional use can have a severe impact on psychosocial functioning and lead to addiction, impacting routines, habits, social behaviors, family connections, and social interactions.

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## STRATEGIES TO COUNTER SMARTPHONE ADDICTION AT OUR INSTITUTE

A number of steps have been done by Shri Sathya Sai Medical College and Research Institute, a constituent unit of Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth, Puducherry, to implement effective e-learning for the benefit of both students and health professionals. These include the implementation of a learning management system, the use of e-learning as a teaching–learning–evaluation approach, and the use of e-portfolios as a learning and assessment tool for postgraduates, among other things.<sup>4</sup> Keeping the mental health of students in mind, the institute has taken numerous steps to engage them in various recreational activities such as conducting yoga classes at regular intervals (medical, nursing, and allied health sciences students), musical therapy, sports activities, and so on, all of which have shown a significant improvement in student academic performance.

## CONCLUSION

Smartphones allow us to communicate with family and friends, but there is growing evidence that their misuse causes an increase in subjective symptoms. There should be a better awareness of the increased incidence of cell phone addiction among medical

students as well as the general public. There is an immense need for planning and implementing strategies to wean them off their electronic addictions during their spare time as a public health expert, such as involving them in sports, dance theatre, library reading, and so on.

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