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The Psychosocial Effects Of Mobile Phone Usage Among The Youth: The Case Of A Selected Christian University

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Abstract
This study's aim was to investigate the psychosocial effects of mobile phone among the youth. This is because the mobile phone has become 'a must have' technological tool among many youths in Kenya and beyond. It has ended up bringing different effects in the lives of many users and of great concern to the negative ones. Through the findings of this research, it was found that some negative psychological and social effects amongst the students can be attributed to their mobile phone usage. The study was carried out in a Christian University among the students aged between 18 and 25 years. 120 respondents were selected in a stratified manner from the various programmes and years of study. All of them had used mobile phone with majority (98%), for a period between 2 – 10 years. The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The findings revealed that majority of the students (83.8%) were aware of the negative effects that might result from the continued use of mobile phone. The following were some of the negative psychosocial effects found among the respondents: financial challenges, cheating, stealing, stress, anxiety, and mobile phone addiction.

Keywords: *psychosocial, mobile phone, youth, effects, stress, anxiety, addiction*

Introduction

There are many effects emanating from ownership and use of cell phones amongst the students. A study by Walsh (2009) reported that while there are positive benefits from the mobile phone use, there are also widespread negative outcomes. Studies carried out in Thailand (Kawsaki et al, 2006), Korea (Jee Hyun, Doo-Hem, Seung-Ho & Jaehak, 2008), and Norway (Ling, 2005) as quoted by

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Zulkefly and Baharudin (2009) indicated that students' preoccupation with mobile phone results in psychological disturbances. This could be the same when it comes to students in the various universities of the world. In a research carried out amongst students in a university in Malaysia, it was found that those who spent more time on their mobile phones were vulnerable to psychological disturbances. The psychological problems that were discovered by this research included anxiety, depression, problematic mobile phone behavior – addiction, and lack of sleep resulting to stress due to interference of the overall psychological functioning of an individual (Zulkefly & Baharudin, 2009).

A research carried out in Australia revealed that some youth are experiencing financial challenges as a result of their use of mobile phones and spending more time than necessary on their phones (James & Drennan, 2005). Other studies on the effects of mobile phone showed that financial challenges resulting from mobile phones' usage could lead some young people to resort to stealing money (Ray, 2010) and mobile phones from each other (Campbell, 2005). It has also been shown that mobile phones bring about disruption that is likely to be reflected in some students' academic performance in the universities (Walsh & White, 2007), which might lead to exam cheating to avoid poor academic performance (Campbell, 2005). This study sought to find out whether students in a Kenyan Christian university experience the same psychosocial effects from the mobile phone usage like others in different parts of the world.

Methodology

The research approach in this study was descriptive with both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. The design was appropriate because the study aimed to determine the likely behaviors, values, attitudes and other effects that might have resulted in the lives of the students due to their mobile phone usage (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The population for this study was the undergraduate students in St. Paul's University, Limuru and Nairobi campuses who were 1,203.

A total of 120 students were recruited into the study using stratified random sampling techniques. The representative sample size of 120 was around 10% of undergraduate student population. The population was divided into homogenous, mutually exclusive subgroups, called strata, and a sample selected from each stratum. The population in this study was divided into two, namely: Nairobi and Limuru campus; then sub-divided further into the following strata: 1st year; 2nd year; 3rd year; and, 4th year students.

In this study, ethical conduct was observed to ensure that the research process did not cause physical, emotional, mental and psychological or any other harm to respondents (Babbie, 2008). The students were given an opportunity to consent to the study, and none of them was coerced or

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lured in participating against their wish. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, both verbally and in writing. Data collected was stored in safe and secure locations. Institutional approval was obtained from the St. Paul's University administration and also permit from the Kenyan government through National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) was obtained. A researcher-generated questionnaire and interview guide were used to collect data from the respondents. The Statistical Package for Social and Sciences (SPSS) version 21 was used to analyses quantitative data while thematic content analysis was done on qualitative data.

Results

In Table 1 below, the socio-demographic characteristics of the 120 respondents are presented. The females was relatively high (59%) and those aged 21-22 years were more (50%). Most of the respondents were in first (36%), second (27.5%) and third (27.5%) years of university education. Almost all the respondents (96%) were undertaking their undergraduate degree while most of the respondents (98%) had been using their phones for 2 years and above. Having used mobile phone for more than two years could make it possible for them to have experienced some of the negative effects of the mobile phone use in their lives.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	n=120	%
Gender		
Male	49	41%
Female	71	**59%**
Age in year		
18-19	8	7.0%
20-21	60	**50.0%**
22-23	32	27.0%
24-25	13	11.0%
No response	7	6.0%
Year of study		
1st year	43	**36.0%**
2nd year	33	**27.5%**
3rd year	33	**27.5%**
4th year	11	9.0%
Program enrolled in		

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Certificate	26	2.0%
Diploma	62	2.0%
Undergraduate	52	**96.0%**
Length of mobile phone use		
Less than 2 years	2	2.0%
2-5 years	76	**63.0%**
6 years and above	42	**35.0%**

In relation to the use of mobile phone in a day, 26.5% of the respondents' used them for calling, texting and chatting friends, parents and family members while 21.5% used them for internet services. In addition, 19.3% of the respondents' used their phones for listening to music whereas 11.3% used them for playing games. Additionally, 10.8% of the respondents' used their phones for downloading ringtones while 9.7% used them for doing business. An additional 0.8% of the respondents' uses the phone for watching TV. Additionally, during the interview respondents reported that students use their mobile phones to take photos and videos, listening to music, status symbol, watching pornography, chatting, and watching movies. It is evident that the respondents use the various services on their mobile phone. Depending on the activity one may be involved in, it is likely that some could end up spending more time than necessary on their mobile phones.

On whether the respondents know that there are negative effects that may result from continued use of mobile phone, 83.8% responded they were aware while 15.2% responded they were not aware. In addition, 1.0% of the respondents never responded to this question. It is evident from the respondents that majority of them are aware of negative effects that may result in the continued use of mobile phone.

Table 2 presents the negative effects that may result from continued use of mobile phone by students. A high number of the respondents, 40.8% believed that the continued use of mobile phone by students encourage antisocial behavior like lying, lack of trust, cheating in relationships, cheating in exams, reduction of interpersonal relationships, stealing and immorality. Another 18.5% of the respondents reported that the continued use of mobile phones by students' results to lack of concentration in class, wastage of time, affects their academic performance and encourages laziness among students. Additionally, 16.7% of the respondents reported that continued use of mobile phone by students result to addiction to social sites and to the mobile phones. This was followed by 15% of the respondents who reported that continued use of mobile phones by students promote wastage of financial resources. In addition, 6.0% of the respondents reported that the continued use of mobile phones by the students result to health related risks such as cancer and ear problems. Finally, 3.0% of the respondents reported that the continued use of mobile phones by students result to stress and depression.

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Table 2: Negative effects that may result from continued use of mobile phone by students

Continued use of mobile phone	Frequency	Percent
Encourages antisocial behavior such as lying, lack of trust and dishonesty	35	15.0
Promotes wastage of financial resources	35	15.0
Lack of concentration in class	24	10.3
Addiction to social network sites such as Facebook	21	9.0
Addiction to the mobile phone	18	7.7
Cheating in relationships	17	7.3
Break or reduction in interpersonal relationships	16	6.8
Health related risks such as cancer and ear problems	14	6.0
Increases crime among students such as stealing	10	4.3
Wastage of time	10	4.3
Encourages immorality among students such as pornography	9	4.0
Cheating in Examinations	8	3.4
Stress and depression	7	3.0
Affects students' academic performance	5	2.1
Encourages laziness among students	4	1.8
Total	233	100.0

Some of the negative effects highlighted during the interviews as a result of mobile phone use by students included: cheating others and also in exams, stress and anxiety, mobile phone addiction, stealing, financial challenges, and easy access to pornography making some to struggle with masturbation.

Regarding experiencing financial difficulties related to mobile phone use, 45.4% of the respondents agreed to have experienced financial difficulties because of the high cost of operating their mobile phones. Half of the respondents, 50% agreed that most student steal money or credit from their relatives, parents or friends to operate their mobile phones. In relation to financial

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challenges, 73.7% of the respondents reported that there are students who steal mobile phones from other students.

Table 3 highlights the motive of stealing by students where 76.3% of them believed that those who steal other students' phones go and sell them to get money for either personal need, for buying better and advanced phones, for drinking and drugs or for leisure. In addition, 9.3% of the respondents believed that some students are driven by jealousy to steal phones from others while 4.1% believed they steal to fit in the crowd. Another 4.1% of the respondents believed they steal to be stylish whereas 3.1% believed some students are not morally upright. There were also 2.1% of the respondents who believed students steal to go and use the phones while 1.0% believed some steal as a hobby.

Table 3: Motive of stealing mobile phones among students

Students steal mobile phone	Frequency	Percent
To resell and get money for their personal needs	50	51.5
To buy better and advanced phones for themselves	12	12.4
Because of jealousy	9	9.3
To get money for drinking and drugs	6	6.2
To get money for leisure	6	6.2
To fit in the crowd/peer pressure	4	4.1
To be stylish	4	4.1
Some students are not morally upright	3	3.1
To go and use the phones themselves	2	2.1
Some do it as hobby	1	1.0
Total	97	100.0

On mobile phone addiction tendencies among respondents due to their use of mobile phones, 62.7% of the respondents agreed to have felt lonely when they could not use their mobile phone. In addition, 69.7% of the respondents agreed to have felt as if apart of them was missing when they are without their mobile phone while 52.5% of the respondents agreed to feeling lost without their mobile phones. Additionally, all the respondents during the interview (100%) agreed that it was possible for students to get addicted to their mobile phones.

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Concerning psychological disturbance, 49.5% of the respondents agreed to have experienced psychological disturbance when they were unable to use their mobile phones while 40.4% reported to have experienced stress related to their mobile phone usage. Pertaining to whether the respondents get worried because of not having a mobile phone, 62.6% of the respondents agreed to have been worried with the thought of being without their mobile phone. Moreover, 68.7% of the respondents agreed that they have felt uneasy when they are not able to use their mobile phones. Feelings of worry and uneasiness are indicators that respondents experience anxiety related to their mobile phone use.

Table 4 presents the issue of having come across students cheating using the mobile phone in exams, 59.6% responded they have while 36.4% responded they have not. In addition, 4.0% of the respondents never responded to this question. The 59.6% of respondents reported to have come across students cheating during exams by the use of mobile phones. This was a serious effect in relation to the Christian background of the respondents who participated in this study.

Table 4: Respondents having come across students cheating by the use of the mobile phone during exams

	Number	Percent
No response	4	4.0
Yes	59	59.6
No	36	36.4
Total	99	100.0

In addition, 94.9% were aware of students cheating by the use of mobile phones of their whereabouts and 93.9% were aware of students cheating by the use of mobile phones about their relationships.

Discussion

This study set out to determine the psychosocial effects of mobile phone use among the youth. The findings from this study indicated that there are several negative effects that are associated with students' use of mobile phones.

The study found out that 83.8% of the respondents were aware of negative effects that may result from the continued use of mobile phones by the students. The study found out that 45.4% of the respondents agreed to have experienced financial difficulties because of the high cost of operating

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their mobile phones. During the interviews, students also expressed to have experienced financial challenges related to their mobile phone use. This can be due to the use of too much of the mobile phone paid up services (Walsh & White 2007).

The study found out that 73.7% of the respondents reported to know that some students steal mobile phones from their colleagues and also 77.8% reported to be aware of mobile phone theft among the students. This concurs with a research by Partier (2005), who argued that the increased demand by the youth to have current phones increases the rate of cell phones stealing. This was supported by the interview findings where about 50% of the respondents were of the opinion that most students steal money, mobile phones or credit from their parents, relatives or friends to operate their mobile phones. This is an indicator that the mobile phones might have been influencing the young people to develop behaviours like stealing (Campbell, 2005).

The study found out that 36.5% of the respondents reported that the continued use of mobile phones by the students results to antisocial behaviours like lying, lack of trust, cheating in relationships and in exams, reduction of interpersonal relationships, and immorality. The study also found that 59.6%, 94.9% and 93.9% of the respondents had come across students cheating by the use of mobile phones in exams, about their whereabouts and relationships respectively. Additionally, majority of the respondents during interview confirmed that some students cheat or lie to their parents to get money to use on their phones and they felt that cheating in exams is the major negative effect of mobile phone use among students. It is possible that mobile phones have made it easier for people to cheat both in examinations and of their whereabouts (Campbell 2005), which end up affecting their interpersonal relationships (James & Drennan, 2005). Once an individual gets used to such actions, the person keeps reinforcing it by repeating it and finally it ends up becoming a negative behaviour (Powell, Sybaluk & Honey, 2009).

The study found out that 62.6% of the respondents agreed to have been worried with the thought of being without their mobile phone. In addition, 68.7% of the respondents agreed that they have felt uneasy when they are not able to use their mobile phones. Thus, it is possible that some of the youth end up getting affected psychologically by experiencing anxiety related to their mobile phone usage as proven by Zulkefly and Baharudin (2009).

The study found out that 49.5% of the respondents agreed to have experienced psychological disturbance when they were unable to use their mobile phones. During the interview, most respondents indicated that many students have experienced stress a result of the mobile phones usage. Stress sets in when they realize it is not possible to use mobile phones due to various reasons like lack of money to top up, regulations at home, in school, or in other places. This was similar with what James and Drennan (2005) found out that the use of mobile phone by students might end up bringing stress in their lives.

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The study found out that 69.7% of the respondents agreed to have felt as if part of them was missing when they are without their mobile phone, 62.7% agreed that they felt lonely when they could not use their mobile phone and 52.5% agreed to feel lost without their mobile phones. During the interview, all the respondents (100%) agreed that it is possible that many students are addicted to their mobile phones. This supports the research by Walsh (2009) which reported that young people develop over-involvement with their phones and it might result to addiction. As a young person continues using the mobile phone, one may get attached to it due to the satisfaction he might be receiving that end up resulting to over-involvement with the phone. The gratifications from the use of mobile phone by youth end up bringing about such consequences like mobile phone addiction tendencies making them to feel as if part of them is missing, lonely or lost when without the phones (James & Drennan, 2005).

In conclusion, as students continue using their mobile phones, they may end up with negative psychological and social effects like addiction, stress, anxiety, financial challenges, cheating and stealing. These therefore validate the argument by Srivastava (2004) that every technological development brings about some effects to the society.

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