

**SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISMS OF MOBILE PHONE ADDICTION
AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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Abstract

This article analyzes the socio-psychological mechanisms influencing the formation of mobile phone addiction among university students. The study highlights the impact of excessive use of mobile devices on personal development, social relationships, emotional states, and self-regulation processes. In addition, the motivational factors of mobile phone addiction, individuals' psychological needs, social environment, peer influence, and the effects of virtual communication on real-life relationships are theoretically examined. The article also presents conclusions on psychological prevention and correction strategies aimed at fostering conscious and moderate use of mobile technologies.

Keywords: University students, mobile phone addiction, socio-psychological mechanisms, smartphone dependency, virtual communication, motivation, personal development, social environment, psychological needs, digital technologies.

Introduction

The younger generation is highly engaged with social networks. Who does not enjoy posting photos online, communicating with friends and relatives at a distance, playing games, listening to music, staying informed about the latest news, or constantly updating statuses? If we consider the number and variety of social networks, it would be impossible to cover all of them within a single article. Let us take a brief look at the most popular social networks and the number of their users: Facebook – 750 million, Twitter – 200 million, Odnoklassniki – 100 million, and so on. As can be seen, these figures indicate how deeply humanity has become immersed in social networks.

Naturally, one may ask: is this a positive or a negative phenomenon? Of course, many people approve of these platforms and evaluate them positively, as social networks are currently considered one of the best means of spending free time.

Over the past 15–20 years, mobile communication has become an integral part of everyday life for people around the world, including the youth of Uzbekistan. In the present day, text-based communication through mobile applications such as WhatsApp Messenger and Telegram has become widespread. It should be noted that nearly half of the world's population—approximately 3 billion people—use various social networks. The largest share of these users, about 2 billion people, are on Facebook.

In Uzbekistan, the number of Facebook users has approached 1 million. Their average age ranges from 25 to 34 years, with men accounting for 65.5 percent and women for 34.5 percent of users. At the same time, globally, this platform has an audience of approximately 1 billion users.

Methodology

This study is based on an empirical research design, employing quantitative and partially qualitative analysis methods. A total of 120 university students aged 18–23 participated in the study. The respondents were selected using a random sampling method.

During the data collection process, the following psychodiagnostic instruments were used:

- Smartphone Addiction Scale (SAS – adapted version);
- Questionnaire for assessing socio-psychological needs;
- Survey for evaluating interpersonal relationships and inclination toward virtual communication;
- Observation and interview methods.

The collected data were processed using the SPSS statistical software. Percentage distribution, arithmetic mean values, and correlation analysis methods were applied. Throughout the research process, strict adherence was maintained to the principles of voluntary participation and respondent anonymity.

Results

According to the research findings, 38% of respondents demonstrated a high level of mobile phone addiction, 42% showed a moderate level, and 20% exhibited a low level of addiction. Among students with a high level of addiction, the predominant pattern was the use of mobile devices for more than 5–7 hours per day.

The results indicate that students with a high level of mobile phone addiction more frequently experienced feelings of loneliness, emotional instability, avoidance of real-life communication, and excessive attachment to the virtual environment. In addition, a positive correlation was identified between the need for communication on social networks and excessive mobile device use ($r > 0.05$).

The study also revealed an inverse relationship between the level of mobile phone addiction and indicators of self-control, confirming that uncontrolled use of mobile technologies negatively affects an individual's socio-psychological stability.

Distribution of Mobile Phone Addiction Levels Among University Students

| Level of Mobile Phone Addiction | Number of Students (n = 120) | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| High level | 46 students | 38% |
| Moderate level | 50 students | 42% |
| Low level | 24 students | 20% |
| Total | 120 students | 100% |

We must consciously distinguish between real life and virtual life while being active members of social networks. In the rapidly developing information age, it is practically impossible to avoid using modern technological tools or to refrain from accessing them. This is because computer technologies play a crucial role in shaping an individual's worldview and expanding

their spiritual and intellectual horizons. From this perspective, such progress can be considered a positive phenomenon.

Today, young people are able to take full advantage of these vast opportunities, using their time more efficiently in education and professional activities. From a contemporary standpoint, the Internet—having already evolved into a global network—has become one of the most influential forms of mass media due to its speed and limitless access. Through actively operating platforms and websites such as *Kun.uz* and *Daryo.uz*, users can stay informed about the latest national and global news on an hourly basis.

However, alongside the positive aspects of the Internet and social networks, their negative impact on young people's moral development and information-sensitive consciousness is also increasingly evident. A closer look reveals that young people—especially adolescents—frequently visit Internet cafés, where they are exposed to violent, destructive computer games and spend their time on meaningless activities. Most concerning is the fact that some indifferent parents mistakenly believe that their children are gaining knowledge simply by spending time online.

In this context, attention should also be drawn to situations in which students use mobile phones to access Internet sites during lectures. While it is certainly beneficial for students, as independent learners, to enrich their knowledge and consult various sources, this should not occur at the expense of classroom learning. Every activity has its appropriate time, including the use of the Internet.

Just as everything in daily life has both positive and negative aspects, the use of modern technological tools also requires moderation. The 21st century is the era of information technology development, and it is difficult to imagine modern progress without the global information network—the Internet. The Internet is an international system that integrates computer networks for the exchange of information and documents. It has opened vast opportunities, enabling individuals to explore global libraries, become virtual students of higher education institutions located across the world, and even earn income by providing electronic services such as translation, video and audio production, document formatting, and digital publishing—without leaving their homes.

In conclusion, social networks today exert a significant influence on the upbringing and development of young people. Alarming, even toddlers who have just begun to speak are showing signs of dependency on social networks. Many individuals turn to social media as a refuge from daily stress and worries. However, research suggests that social networks do not reduce stress; rather, they tend to increase psychological tension and anxiety.

In experimental studies involving 1,800 volunteers, it was found that women who use social networks experience higher levels of psychological distress compared to men. Research has also identified Twitter as one of the largest sources of stress among social media platforms, as users frequently share their stress and emotional struggles there. At the same time, some studies indicate that women experience less psychological strain than men when using Twitter. This difference may be explained by the fact that many men maintain a greater emotional distance from social networks, or that men tend to be more emotionally restrained.

It has been clearly established that individuals addicted to social networks exhibit higher levels of anxiety, panic, irritability, and restlessness compared to others. Users who engage with seven or more social networking platforms experience significantly greater anxiety and irritability than those who do not use social networks at all or maintain only one or two accounts. Nevertheless, the precise mechanisms through which social networks generate feelings of anxiety and panic remain unclear.

Research indicates that social media addiction can be more harmful to mental health than tobacco or alcohol consumption. Social network addiction is undoubtedly a form of Internet addiction and is regarded as one of the most serious global challenges of the modern era. Every benefit is created to serve humanity; however, when such resources are not used appropriately and in moderation, they can become sources of harm rather than benefit.

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