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WHY DO I ADDICT WITH MOBILE PHONE: THE TRUE STORY OF YOUTH

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Abstract

The mobile phone helps us carry on with everyday life without the need for many separate devices. The current evolution of mobile phone technology has benefited various groups within communities. Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission annual report 2017 stated that 75.9% of the Malaysian population is smartphone users. Universities students are one of the groups rely on mobile phones. However, several studies showed that excessive mobile phone usage would affect their psychological aspects. This has driven the current study to determine the relationship between psychological factors and mobile phone addiction among Malaysian university students. Using the quantitative approach, this study had distributed questionnaires to 400 respondents, chosen at multi-stage cluster random sampling from four universities. The universities are grouped according to four zones; Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) for northern, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) for central, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) for southern, and Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA) for the east coast. The results of the study found that mobile phone addiction among Malaysian university students is at a moderate level. Simultaneously, the result of the Pearson's correlation test shows a significant correlation between mobile phone addiction with three psychological factors among university students in Malaysia.

Keywords: : Mobile Phone, Mobile Phone Addiction, Psychological Factor, Social problem, Youth, Youth Development

1. Introduction

In era of cutting-edge advances in science and technology, mobile phones or smartphones must be owned by the community and are not something strange to our everyday lives. Wherever we are, the phone will always be with us, especially for the younger generation today. The use of mobile phones also has implications that range for each user. As we know, the smartphone is considered a lifestyle trend, especially for adolescents, regardless of whether the upper or middle class. There is no doubt that the smartphone has affected the way people handle their everyday affairs. For example, the smartphone may make it easier for someone to get in touch with the family or with others, and thus, it can enhance and strengthen the ties between family members. The smartphone can also help us learn and know something related to education and so forth.

1.1. Mobile phone usage

Before we can identify the addiction to mobile phones, we need to know the pattern of cell phone ownership and usage among Malaysian as a general overview and university students as our primary focus. Handphone user survey made by the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (2018) shows that the percentage of smartphone ownership in Malaysia has increased by 2.4% from 74.0% in 2017 to 76.4% in 2018. From that number, the higher adoption rate (about 87%) of smartphone users are among younger people aged 20-34 years old. Furthermore, studies have been done by Khalid et al. (2016) shows that majority of students are smartphones user and have more than ten mobile applications (most of them not only download applications for use but also make comparisons which application is the best). The highest application usage is in the category for socialization purposes (WhatsApp, Telegram, and WeChat). This messaging application facilitates the sharing of information between users, and saves because users only need an Internet connection to connect to overhead calls (Khalid et al., 2015).

Besides, the messaging service allows users to create groups for discussion within a specific community group. This kind of social interaction has been encouraging not only among students but also for most smartphone users. This study also identifies smartphone use paterns for learning purposes that are more likely to be used in communication and interaction between students. In line with developments in the 21st Century, much learning has been developed through discussion, and sharing of ideas and this may signal the degree to which students are prepared for the use of mobile materials for knowledge sharing and no longer rely entirely on lectures and lectures from lecturers (Daud & Khalid, 2014; Khalid, 2014). This situation corresponds to the definition of Dependency Theory, which explains that the influence of media is determined by the relationship between the broader social system, the role of media in the system, and the relationship of the audience with the media. Saodah et al. (2003) give an idea of how society needs this mass media as if their daily tasks are incomplete if they do not get input from this media. In this study, it is clear that the mass media in question is the use of mobile phones.

1.2. Mobile Phone Addiction and Psychological Effect

The rapid advancement in technology has made many gadgets, a smartphone is one of them (Nishad & Rana, 2016), and we are using a smartphone for many reasons. For example, people spend their time more likely on social media, do business emails, academic search, finding answers to questions, and playing games. All these activities are doing by people through a smartphone. In relations, statistical shows the smartphone usage increased day by day. Around the world, smartphones were used by 1.85 billion people in 2014, which is expected to be 2.32 billion in 2017 and 2.87 billion in 2020 (Cha & Seo, 2018). As mentioned before, smartphone usage among Malaysian has increase year by year. However, excessive use of mobile phone usage will cause users to become addicted, and it will have a negative impact on their physiological health. Alavi et al. (2012) states that it becomes an addiction whenever a habit is converted into an obligation. According to Cha and Seo (2018), adolescents are at high risk of being smartphone addicts.

Furthermore, other research shows that excessive use of smartphone paired with a negative attitude and negative psychological effect such as a feeling of anxiety and if we increase the dependency on gadgets may increase the risk of anxiety and depression (Jones, 2014; Rosen et al., 2013; Thomée et al., 2011). In the current situation, mobile phone usage during night hours was common among youngsters and reported that poor perceived health was shown due to staying up all night (Schoeni et al., 2015). According to De-Sola Gutiérrez et al. (2016), sleep deficit, anxiety, stress, and depression, which are all associated with internet abuse, are the symptom of excessive mobile phone usage. When a person uses their cell phone most of the time, unable to cut back on cell phone usage, using cell phones as a solution to boredom, feeling anxiety or depression when your phone is out of your range, and make you losing your relationships.

Reinecke et al. (2017) investigated psychological health effects and stimulators of digital stress. Communication load was positively related to perceived stress and had an indirect impact on depression and anxiety too. Boumosleh and Jaalouk (2017) investigated whether anxiety and depression independently contributed to smartphone addiction. Their cross-sectional study proposed that depression and anxiety were also a positive predictor of smartphone addiction. Depression scores were a more powerful predictor as compared to anxiety. Researchers found an intensive increase in cell phone usage among teenagers and the symptoms of depression, suicide risk factors, and the suicide rate in 2012. Cell phone addiction is negatively correlated with academic performance (Boumosleh and Jaalouk, 2018; Baert et al., 2020; Lepp et al., 2015; Ng et al., 2017).

Several studies conducted in Malaysia also show that addiction to mobile phones harms university students' psychology. Results of a study conducted by Zulkefly and Baharudin (2009) about mobile phone addiction towards psychological health were significantly stated that any student who is addicted to the use of mobile phones would have lower self-esteem. Another study conducted by Ithnain et al. (2018) says that university students in Malaysia now tend to get addicted to mobile phones and are exposed to anxiety and depression. Furthermore, Ching et al. (2015) showed that 46.9% of Malaysian university students were addicted to mobile phones and began to rely on mobile phones in their daily activities. Although studies on the use and addiction of mobile phones are widely conducted globally, in Malaysia,

studies related to mobile phone addiction needs to be further enhanced, especially the impact on user psychology.

2.   Problem Statement

Regardless of age and gender, technology is overtaking our daily lives. Mobile phones, tablets, and computers are becoming our best friends. Without our mobile phone, we feel anxious and worried. We rely on our mobile phones for example; we can get directions using GPS navigation, get instant information over the internet, and take instant pictures that can be shared to social sites instantly, communicate and much more with smartphones' power. Smartphone or mobile phone addiction is not a real illness. It is referring to the overusing of a smartphone. Some find it difficult to function without their phones by their side all time and every day. However, without us even realizing it, excessive consumption of mobile phones will affect the productivity of our daily lives and also their behavior. Thus, this artickes' writing is intended to identify the relationship between psychological factors and mobile phone addiction among Malaysian university students.

3.   Research Questions

- Are university students in Malaysia excessively to the mobile phones?
- Which psychological factors are able to influence by mobile phone usage among university students in Malaysia?

4.   Purpose of the Study

- To know the level of mobile phone addiction among university students in Malaysia.
- To know the relationship between psychological factors and mobile phone addiction among university students in Malaysia.

5.   Research Methods

This is a quantitative study whereby a developed questionnaire was employed to gain the required data. The questionnaire was developed based on the literature review and past studies. There are six sections in this questionnaire; smartphone usage, smartphone usage addiction scale, loneliness, shyness, perceived stress, and respondents' background. The completed questionnaire was then pre-tested among 30 selected students from selected faculty in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). The population of the study was the undergraduate students of 18 public universities in peninsular Malaysia. A multi-stage cluster random sampling was employed at the first stage, which is all the university (only the main campus) will be grouped according to four zones (northern, southern, central, and east coast). The southern zone comprises of states such as Johor, Malacca, and Negeri Sembilan (UTHM, USIM, UTeM, UTM). The central zone comprises states such as Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, and Perak (UPM, UKM, UIA, UPNM, UPSI). For east coast zone comprises states such as Pahang, Terengganu, and Kelantan (UMT, UnisZA, UMK, UMP). While northern zone comprises states such as Pulau Pinang, Kedah and Perlis

(UUM, UNIMAP, USM). Then, for each zone, only one university was selected to represent that zone. Next, a faculty were randomly selected from each of the university, and at the last stage of sampling, a total of 100 students of each faculty were selected as the respondents. It makes 400 undergraduate students selected as the respondents for the actual data collection for this study. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents and self-administer method were employed. The process of data collection is monitored by the research team to ensure that the data required can be gathered. After completing all collection activities, the data obtained will be analyzed using SPSS.

6. Findings

In table 01 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. From the table, four universities were involved in these studies with sum of 400 respondents. 65.5% of that number were male. The respondents are divided into 2 age category; students aged 20 years old and below, and students aged 21 years old and above. We can see that 66% of them fall into the category aged 21 years old and above. Furthermore, most of the respondents are Malay (79.3%), and the rest are Chinese, Indian, Sarawakian, Sabahan, and others. Besides, 59.8% of the respondents still in year 1 of their studies.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents

Variable	Frequency (n=400)	Percentage	Mean	SD
University				
UPSI	100	25.0		
UUM	100	25.0		
USIM	100	25.0		
UNISZA	100	25.0		
Gender				
Male	262	65.5		
female	138	34.5		
Age			20.772	1.609
≤20	136	34.0		
≥21	264	66.0		
Races				
Malay	317	79.3		
Chinese	45	11.3		
Indian	12	3.0		
Sarawakian	12	3.0		
Sabahan	11	2.8		
Others	3	0.8		
Years of studies			1.677	0.981
Year 1	239	59.8		
Year 2	88	22.0		
Year 3	36	9.0		
Year 4	37	9.3		

Next, table 02 below shows the level of mobile phone usage and mobile phone addiction among university students in Malaysia. For mobile phone usage, most of the respondents fall into moderate category with 63.8%, M= 3.465 and SD = 0.54899. Meanwhile, for mobile phone addiction, 46.8% of the respondents are at a moderate level. However, 36.8% of them is at a high level of mobile phone addiction.

Table 2. Mobile Usage and Mobile Addiction

Variable	Frequency (n=400)	Percentage	Mean	SD
Mobile Usage			3.465	0.54899
Low (1.00-2.33)	10	2.5		
Moderate (2.34-3.67)	255	63.8		
High (3.68-5.00)	135	33.8		
Mobile Addiction			3.3385	0.9558
Low (1.00-2.33)	66	16.5		
Moderate (2.34-3.67)	187	46.8		
High (3.68-5.00)	147	36.8		

A Pearson product-moment correlation was employed to investigate any relationship between mobile phone addiction and psychological factors. The psychological factors that had been selected were loneliness, shyness, and perceived stress. The summary table below shows a positive and significant relationship between mobile phone addiction and all psychological factors (loneliness, p=0.000 and r=0.204; shyness, p=0.000 and r=0.207; and perceived stress, p=0.000 and r=0.288). As shown in table 03 below, the results of this study are in line with the findings from previous studies stating that addiction to mobile phones negatively impact user psychology.

Table 3. Correlation between Mobile Phone Addiction and Psychological Factors

Psychological Factors	r	p
Loneliness	0.204	0.00
Shyness	0.207	0.00
Perceived Stress	0.288	0.00

A Pearson product-moment correlation again was employed to investigate any relationship between mobile phone usage and psychological factors. The psychological factors that had been selected were also loneliness, shyness, and perceived stress. The summary in table 04 below shows that only one psychological factor has a significant relationship between mobile phone usage (which is perceived stress p=0.034 and r=0.091). However, the other two psychological factors (loneliness and shyness) do not have a significant relationship with mobile phone usage among universities student in Malaysia.

Table 4. Correlation between Mobile Phone Usage and Psychological Factors

Psychological Factors	r	p
Loneliness	-0.035	0.242
Shyness	-0.050	0.160
Perceived Stress	0.091*	0.034

7. Conclusion

There is no denying that mobile phones now provide many benefits and simplify daily affairs, however, if we are too engrossed in this mobile phone, it will actually 'haunt' us. In fact, many of us may not be aware that this mobile phone is now one of the causes of its users' psychological health problems. Moreover, from the findings, mobile phone usage and mobile phone addiction among university students in Malaysia are at a moderate level. However, this trend is beginning to show a shift to higher and more severe levels. Which is this situation can eventually have a negative impact while further affecting their level of psychological health. Furthermore, more in-depth studies on the impact on mobile phone users' psychological well-being of should be conducted to identify other effects that users may experience. Another recommendation is to implement health education and interventions related to mobile phone that are appropriate to deal with addiction and improve their mental well-being that can empower students to practice healthy behaviors.

Acknowledgments

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