

## Review Article Problematic Mobile Phone Use and Mental Health: A Review of Current Evidence

Om Prakash Swami<sup>1</sup>, Anil Kumar Gurjar<sup>2</sup>, Sonali Panwar<sup>3</sup>, J. Sathya Shenbega Priya<sup>4</sup>, Gunjan Sharma<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Mahatma Gandhi Nursing College, Jaipur

<sup>2</sup>Vice Principal, Mental Health Nursing (Psychiatric Nursing), College of Nursing Govt Medical College, Budaun(UP)

<sup>3</sup>(M.Sc. Nursing) Nursing Tutor, Ras Bihari Bose Subharti University

<sup>4</sup>Principal, College of Nursing, Kannur medical College, Anjarakandy, Kannur, Kerala

<sup>5</sup>Associate Professor (HOD Mental Health Nursing), Mb College of Nursing, Dungarpur

**Corresponding Author:** Dr. Om Prakash Swami,  
Associate Professor, Mahatma Gandhi Nursing College, Jaipur

E-mail:  
[omprakash2030@yahoo.in](mailto:omprakash2030@yahoo.in)

GFNPSS-International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research is a journal of open access. In this journal, we allow all types of articles to be distributed freely and accessible under the terms of the creative common attribution- non-commercial-share. This allows the authors, readers and scholars and general public to read, use and to develop non-commercially work, as long as appropriate credit is given and the newly developed work are licensed with similar terms.

**How to cite this article:** Swami OP, Gurjar AK, Panwar S, Priya JS, Sharma G. Problematic Mobile Phone Use and Mental Health: A Review of Current Evidence. GFNPSS-IJMR 2026; 7:3: 3311-3313

**Submitted:** 07 March 2026: **Accepted:** 17 March 2026: **Published:** 31 March 2026

### Abstract

Smartphone addiction, also known as problematic mobile phone use (PMPU), has become a major global public health concern. Due to the quick rise in smartphone availability, excessive and unrestrained use has been connected to a number of detrimental effects on mental health. With an emphasis on depression, anxiety, stress, sleep difficulties, and general psychological well-being, this review attempts to compile the most recent data on the connection between poor mobile phone use and mental health. Although causality is still unknown, current research indicates a high correlation between excessive mobile phone use and poor mental health outcomes. In order to better understand and address this issue, the study emphasizes the need for awareness, preventive measures, and additional longitudinal research.

**Keywords:** Problematic mobile phone use, Smartphone addiction, Mental health, Depression, Anxiety, Stress

### Introduction

Smartphones' ubiquitous use has revolutionized modern life by making communication, education, and entertainment more convenient. However, problematic mobile phone usage (PMPU), which is becoming more widely acknowledged as a behavioral addiction, has emerged as a result of excessive and uncontrolled use.<sup>1</sup> Compulsive checking, an inability to restrict usage, and interruption with everyday tasks are characteristics of PMPU.

Concerns regarding PMPU's possible effects on mental health have been raised by its increasing prevalence. Problematic smartphone use has been linked to psychological distress, decreased wellbeing, and impaired functioning, according to studies.<sup>2</sup>

Developing successful therapies and public health measures requires an understanding of this link.

### Concept of Problematic Mobile Phone Use

Excessive or maladaptive mobile device use that has detrimental effects on day-to-day living is referred to as problematic mobile phone use.<sup>3</sup> It encompasses actions like compulsive use, withdrawal symptoms, tolerance, and disregard for obligations.

In contrast to typical usage, PMPU is based on how much time is spent on the phone as well as how much it interferes with social and psychological functioning.<sup>4</sup> The development of PMPU is largely influenced by personality features, emotional regulation issues, and environmental circumstances.

## **Prevalence of Problematic Mobile Phone Use**

PMPU has become much more common in all age groups. According to studies, one in four people may engage in problematic smartphone use.<sup>5</sup>

This trend has been aided by the increasing accessibility of social media, smartphones, and online entertainment. Due to their increased exposure to and reliance on digital technologies, young adults and adolescents are especially vulnerable.<sup>6</sup>

## **Association with Mental Health Outcomes**

### **Depression**

There is a clear correlation between depression and inappropriate cell phone use, according to numerous research. Higher levels of smartphone addiction are typically associated with more depressive symptoms.<sup>7</sup>

This relationship may be explained by factors such as social isolation, reduced face-to-face interactions, and negative social comparisons on digital platforms.

### **Anxiety and Stress**

Anxiety and stress are also strongly linked to problematic cell phone use. Overuse can result in psychological reliance, FOMO (fear of missing out), and constant connectivity pressure.<sup>8</sup>

Research indicates that individuals with PMPU experience higher levels of perceived stress and anxiety compared to non-problematic users.<sup>9</sup>

### **Sleep Disturbances**

Mobile phone use, especially during nighttime, has been linked to poor sleep quality and sleep disturbances<sup>9</sup>. Exposure to blue light and frequent notifications disrupt sleep patterns and reduce sleep efficiency.

Sleep deprivation further contributes to mental health problems, creating a vicious cycle between PMPU and psychological distress.

### **Other Psychological Effects**

Problematic mobile phone use has also been associated with low self-esteem, reduced cognitive performance, and impaired social relationships<sup>10</sup>.

Furthermore, an over-reliance on smartphones may make it more difficult to control emotions and make people more susceptible to mental health issues.

### **Mechanisms Linking PMPU and Mental Health**

The connection between PMPU and mental health can be explained by a number of factors. According to

behavioral addiction theories, using a smartphone triggers reward systems in the brain, which results in obsessive behavior.<sup>11</sup>

People frequently use smartphones excessively as a coping mechanism due to psychological issues like stress, boredom, and loneliness.<sup>12</sup> However, this temporary relief may ultimately worsen mental health outcomes.

## **Implications for Nursing and Healthcare Practice**

Identification and management of inappropriate cell phone use are critical tasks for healthcare professionals, especially nurses. Educational activities can raise awareness of the dangers of excessive smartphone use and assist people in forming good digital habits.<sup>13</sup>

Incorporating digital well-being programs into health promotion strategies can contribute to better mental health outcomes. Counseling and behavioral interventions may also be effective in reducing PMPU.

## **Conclusion**

An important and expanding issue that has a big impact on mental health is problematic cell phone use. Research continuously shows links between PMPU and stress, anxiety, sadness, and sleep problems.

Even though this problem is becoming more widely recognized, additional long-term research is required to prove causation and create focused treatments. Improving mental health requires encouraging safe smartphone use and incorporating digital health education into medical procedures.

**Financial support and sponsorship:** Nil

**Conflicts of interests:** There is no conflict of interest

## **References**

1. Elhai JD, Dvorak RD, Levine JC, Hall BJ. Problematic smartphone use: A conceptual overview. *J Affect Disord.* 2017;207:251–9.
2. Thomée S. Mobile phone use and mental health. *BMC Public Health.* 2018;18:1–8.
3. Amiri M, Dowran B, Salimi H, Zarghami MH. Problematic use of mobile phone and mental health. *J Educ Health Promot.* 2020;9:290.
4. Billieux J. Problematic mobile phone use: A literature review. *Curr Psychiatry Rev.* 2012;8(4):299–307.
5. Sohn SY, Rees P, Wildridge B, Kalk NJ, Carter B. Prevalence of problematic smartphone use and mental health outcomes. *BMC Psychiatry.* 2019;19:356.

6. Kuss DJ, Griffiths MD. Social networking addiction. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2017;14(3):311.
7. Elhai JD, Levine JC, Dvorak RD, Hall BJ. Depression and problematic smartphone use. *J Affect Disord*. 2017;207:251–9.
8. Elhai JD, Hall BJ, Levine JC, Dvorak RD. Anxiety and smartphone addiction. *Comput Human Behav*. 2017;63:509–16.
9. Thomée S, Härenstam A, Hagberg M. Mobile phone use and sleep disturbance. *Sleep Med*. 2011;12(1):66–71.
10. Samaha M, Hawi NS. Relationships among smartphone addiction and psychological distress. *Comput Human Behav*. 2016;57:321–5.
11. Montag C, Walla P. Carpe diem instead of losing your social mind. *Cogent Psychol*. 2016;3:1157281.
12. Panova T, Carbonell X. Is smartphone addiction really an addiction? *J Behav Addict*. 2018;7(2):252–9.
13. Kim H. Exercise rehabilitation for smartphone addiction. *J Exerc Rehabil*. 2013;9(6):500–5.

