

Friend or Foe – Are mobile phones helping or hindering romantic relationships?

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Abstract

• Mobile phone usage is, according to Madrid a compulsive and addictive disorder which looks set to become one of the biggest non-drug addictions of the 21st century (Madrid, 2003). With levels of internet usage increasing every year it is important to address the effects this increase in usage is having on romantic relationships.

Introduction

Mobile phones have significantly altered society since their introduction forty years ago (Rashedul, Rofiqul and Tahidul, 2010). Research is important as Tsitsika et al's (2014) study of Internet Addictive Behaviour identifies that addictive behaviours associated to online gambling,, gaming and internet addictions were more highly associated with adolescents who first use the internet at an earlier age (Tsitsika et al, 2014). Research is also important in order to understand the impact of excessive mobile phone usage has or will have on younger generations such as our children. According to Bandora's social learning theory, children learn their behaviours through observational learning (Bandura, 1977). Hypothesis of the study were (1) Hypothesis one predicted that 'males would be more addicted to their mobile phones (2) Hypothesis two predicted that mobile phones would be the cause of conflict in romantic relationships. (3) Hypothesis three predicted that individuals experience high levels of emotional responses when separated from their mobile phones (4) Hypothesis four predicted that more woman than men find mobile phones assist largely in the maintenance of their relationships (5) Hypothesis five predicted that couples use their mobile phones to express affection every day are more satisfied in their relationships.



Method

The sampling technique undertaken was 'opportunistic sampling' and the participants were reached through the sharing of an online link which connected them direct to the survey. In order to complete the survey, certain criteria were required and the survey had adequate supports in place to ensure this criterion was met by each participant before proceeding with the survey. A total of 307 participants took part in the study, Of the 307 participants, 199 (64.8%) were woman and 108 (35.3%) were men. Out of the 307 participants, only 5 of the participants had never been in a relationship and 5 participants also advised that they or their partner/past partner did not own a mobile phone. A seventeen item questionnaire was developed by the researcher for the purpose of the present study. The survey began by asking some demographic questions around age and gender. A definition of what a romantic relationship is was then given to ensure the participant fully understood what a romantic relationship was considered to be in terms of this specific research. All questions asked were carefully chosen to ensure that adequate responses could be obtained and analysed in order to successfully test the hypothesis of the current study.

Results

• The key results of this current study were overall more women signalled that they could not imagine their lives without a mobile phone, which would therefore signal higher levels of addiction in woman towards the mobile phone device in comparison to men. Mobile phones were also reported to be the cause of past arguments for couples and 59.3% of couples agreed that mobile phones had caused an argument in the past. Woman also experienced higher levels of emotional responses when separated from their devices; however men do experience higher feelings of separation than woman. There was also a non-correlation between affection and satisfaction therefore meaning that it could not be confirmed that people who are more satisfied in their relationships use their mobile phones to express affection.

Discussion

Hypothesis one was rejected on the basis that the woman who participated in the survey scored higher overall in the majority of the addictive behavioural questions asked. The results of this study indicated that 59.3% of people surveyed have had an argument with their partner that was caused by a mobile phone. These results therefore validated hypothesis two. Hypothesis three was strongly supported. Over one third of the men and woman surveyed noted that they have experienced feelings of frustration when separated from their mobile phones. Hypothesis four and five were also both not supported. More men than woman found that mobile phones help their partner and them stay in better contact and also there was a non correlation between expressing affection and relationship satisfaction.

References

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