



WHATSAPP ADDICTION: PATTERN AND IMPACT OF WHATSAPP USE ON MEDICAL STUDENTS AT NHL MUNICIPAL MEDICAL COLLEGE, AHMEDABAD, GUJARAT, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Background: The introduction of smartphone is a revolutionary invention in mobile history, but its increasing use has started showing the negative consequences. Smartphone overuse can be a sign of Smartphone addiction and can affect both social and health aspects of users' lives. WhatsApp application is utilized by almost everyone using smartphone. Its free facility to exchange text, photos, videos, forward jokes, and other information has resulted in excessive use. Medical students are also affected by this high level of engagement. **Methodology:** It was a cross sectional study which was conducted on MBBS students of NHL municipal medical college, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India. All the MBBS students willing to participate and present at the time of the study were included. The data was collected using a pre-designed structured questionnaire. The proforma included socio demographic profile, usage pattern and its impact. **Observations:** Many participants felt that their concentration has been reduced due to WhatsApp. Participants experienced strain/diminution of vision and perceived that their physical activity has been reduced due to WhatsApp. **Conclusion:** WhatsApp overuse is shown to affect concentration, study duration, physical activity and sleep among the MBBS students of NHL MMC.

KEYWORDS : WhatsApp usage, Mobile addiction, students

INTRODUCTION:

The introduction of smartphone is a revolutionary invention in mobile history, but its increasing use has started showing the negative consequences. Smartphone overuse can be a sign of smartphone addiction and can affect both social and health aspects of users' lives. WhatsApp application is utilized by almost everyone using smartphone. Its free facility to exchange text, photos, videos, forward jokes, and other information but has resulted in excessive use. Medical students are also affected by this high level of engagement. The impact of WhatsApp and other social media apps may cause users to lose real world interest, making their emotions restricted to one app¹. Most of college students, having a smart phone; are more prone to having disturbances due to social media apps. The most affected group is students that cannot function without accessing their online accounts every passing hour, giving rise to an alarming condition². Addiction is considered by WHO as dependence, as the continuous use of something for the sake of relief, comfort or stimulation which often causes cravings when it is absent³. The two major categories of addiction involve either substance addiction or behavioral addiction such as mobile phone addiction. A new kind of health disorder in this category among mobile phone users is "WhatsApp addiction". It has been observed that even during ongoing class lectures, students still find time to connect with friends online or respond to notifications at the cost of their academic pursuit⁴. Internet addiction shares certain degree of resemblance with substance addiction where addicts suffer mentally and physically. A large proportion of these users comprised of teenagers and young adults that use social sites on regular basis for different purposes⁵. The loss of control, serious interference in everyday life (at school or work) and a constant dependence are some of the symptoms to identify people with WhatsApp dependence. Feeling of emptiness, unstable self image, getting bored easily may increase the proneness of WhatsApp addiction as these people may use mobile more often to stay in touch with people. Studies have found that dependent internet users rank high in terms of the feeling of loneliness, low self esteem and impulsive behavior⁶. Extended use of social media has led to increased internet addiction, cyber bullying, sleep deprivation and decline of face to face interaction⁷.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

1. To know the WhatsApp usage pattern among medical students.

2. To find the impact of WhatsApp usage pattern among medical students.

METHODOLOGY:

Study design: Cross sectional study.

Study subjects: All undergraduate medical students of NHL municipal medical college.

Study duration: June 2022

Tool of the study: The data was collected using pre designed structured questionnaire.

Inclusion Criteria: Medical students with smartphones who use WhatsApp, the students present at the time of study and those students willing to give consent for the study.

Students were given the questionnaire in the lecture hall, which was to be filled after taking verbal consent and explaining the purpose of the study. Questionnaire contained Information about socio demographic profile, WhatsApp usage pattern and its impact.

The collected data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel and results were published.

RESULTS:

Usage Pattern:

- Total number of participants enrolled were 337. Out of which 106(31.5%) were males and 231(68.5%) were females.
- Among 337 participants, 85(25.2%) visit WhatsApp more than 15 times a day. 118(35%) participants visit WhatsApp 6-10 times daily.
- 168(49.9%) participants were members in 6-10 WhatsApp groups. Whereas 88(26.1%) are member in more than 10 groups.
- 49(14.5%) participants use WhatsApp for more than 40 minutes a day. 129(38.3%) use WhatsApp for 20-40 minutes everyday.
- 136(40.4%) participants change WhatsApp display picture on a monthly basis. Whereas 99(29.4%) change it on yearly basis.
- 86(25.5%) participants upload WhatsApp status on a monthly basis.
- Out of 337, 127(37.7%) use WhatsApp when surrounded by sleep.
- 64(19%) will use WhatsApp while having food or watching a movie.

- 49(14.5%) participants will use WhatsApp while walking/gym/physical activities.
- 157(46.6%) participants will keep internet active in their phone 24 hours a day.
- 109(32.3%) participants accepted of using WhatsApp during class/lecture.

Table 1: Pattern of WhatsApp use among medical students of NHL MMC.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage% |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 106 | 31.5 |
| Female | 231 | 68.5 |
| WhatsApp visits per day | | |
| 6 to 10 times | 118 | 35 |
| 11 to 15 times | 72 | 20.8 |
| More than 15 times | 85 | 25.2 |
| Duration spent per day | | |
| 10 to 20 minutes | 105 | 31.2 |
| 20 to 40 minutes | 129 | 38.3 |
| More than 40 minutes | 49 | 14.5 |

Impact:

- 97(28.8%) participants feel that their study is disturbed due to WhatsApp.
- 102(30.3%) feel that their concentration has been affected by overusing WhatsApp.
- 63(18.7%) feel that their social life has been impaired due to too much WhatsApp use.
- Only 34(10.1%) feel that their sleep is hampered due to WhatsApp overuse.
- A very high amount of 169(50.1%) participants would rather like to be solitary than in a group.
- 110(32.6%) participants can't resist themselves from viewing a WhatsApp message.
- 87(25.8%) participants have experienced strain in eye/diminution of vision due to WhatsApp screen time.

Table 2: Pattern of WhatsApp use among medical students of NHL MMC.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage% |
|--|-----------|-------------|
| No. of WhatsApp group | | |
| <5 groups | 81 | 24 |
| 6-10 groups | 168 | 49.9 |
| More than 10 groups | 88 | 26.1 |
| Frequency of change of display picture | | |
| Monthly | 136 | 40.4 |
| Yearly | 99 | 39.4 |
| Frequency of change of status | | |
| Monthly | 86 | 25.5 |
| Yearly | 67 | 19.9 |
| WhatsApp use when surrounded by sleep | | |
| Yes | 127 | 37.7 |
| No | 210 | 62.3 |
| Use WhatsApp while having food | | |
| Yes | 64 | 19 |
| No | 273 | 81 |
| Use WhatsApp during walking | | |
| Yes | 49 | 14.5 |
| No | 288 | 85.5 |
| Keeping internet on for 24 hours a day | | |
| Yes | 157 | 46.6 |
| No | 180 | 53.4 |
| WhatsApp use during class | | |
| Yes | 109 | 32.3 |
| No | 228 | 67.7 |

Table 3: Impact of WhatsApp on medical students of NHL

MMC.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage% |
|--|-----------|-------------|
| Disturbance in study | | |
| Yes | 97 | 28.8 |
| No | 240 | 71.2 |
| Reduction in concentration | | |
| Yes | 102 | 30.3 |
| No | 235 | 69.7 |
| Impairment of social life | | |
| Yes | 63 | 18.7 |
| No | 274 | 81.3 |
| Hampering of sleep | | |
| Yes | 34 | 10.1 |
| No | 303 | 89.9 |
| Prefer being solitary/in a group | | |
| Solitary | 169 | 50.1 |
| In a group | 168 | 49.9 |
| Can participant resist from viewing a message? | | |
| Yes | 227 | 67.4 |
| No | 110 | 32.6 |
| Experience of strain/diminution of vision | | |
| Yes | 87 | 25.8 |
| No | 250 | 74.2 |

DISCUSSION:

- 150(44.5%) participants feel need/urge to use WhatsApp regularly.
- 96(28.5%) participants will use WhatsApp to avoid being alone whenever possible.
- A very high number of 186(55.2%) feel bad when someone checks their message and doesn't reply immediately.
- 132(39.2%) participants don't send WhatsApp messages with proper spelling and grammar.
- 52(15.4%) feel nervous when they don't have access to WhatsApp.
- 117(34.7%) participants keep using WhatsApp when they are with friends/family/relatives.
- 85(25.2%) admitted to checking whether someone is online through WhatsApp.
- A study was conducted by Sarker in Bangladesh to know the impact of WhatsApp messenger on the university level students⁸.
- The study revealed that WhatsApp had adverse impact on the lifestyle and culture of the students. Students are spending time on WhatsApp rather than spending quality time with their family members. Many students are addicted to it and can't abstain themselves from constantly chatting, replying and sharing ideas or information. It also has negative impact on the study of students. It encourages grammatical mistakes, error in sentence formation, lecture bunking and annihilates lavish time of career building of students.

CONCLUSION:

- WhatsApp makes users nervous.
- It impairs their social life.
- Reduces concentration.
- WhatsApp overuse Hampers sleep of users.

Recommendations:

- Students should be encouraged to utilize the platform more productively by sending only educational information.
- College teachers should give orientation to students on the dangers of phone addiction.
- Students should be encouraged to utilize WhatsApp in a way that will promote their academic performance positively.

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