DOES MOBILE PHONE ADDICTION INFLUENCE COPING WITH EMOTIONS AND STRESS LIFE SKILLS IN COLLEGE STUDENTS?

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of mobile phone addiction on coping with emotions and stress life skills among college students. The sample comprised third-year undergraduate students from colleges in Jalandhar, Amritsar, and Gurdaspur, affiliated with Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. Data were collected using the Mobile Phone Addiction Scale (Singh and Mann, 2022) and the Life Skills Scale (Prawit, 2010). Descriptive analysis indicated that students with higher levels of mobile phone addiction reported greater self-perceived abilities in coping with emotions and stress compared to those with lower levels of addiction. MANOVA results demonstrated a significant effect of mobile phone addiction on both coping with emotions and coping with stress, and post-hoc analyses confirmed significant differences among high, average, and low addiction groups, following a consistent trend. These findings suggest that while higher mobile phone use is associated with enhanced perceived coping, this may reflect compensatory strategies mediated through devices rather than intrinsic emotional regulation or stress management skills. The study underscores the dual role of mobile phones as facilitators of short-term coping while highlighting potential risks of overreliance. Implications for promoting balanced mobile phone use and strengthening adaptive coping skills among college students, particularly in highly digitalized environments such as Punjab, are discussed.

Keywords: Mobile Phone Addiction, Coping with Emotions, Coping with Stress, Life Skills, College Students, Punjab

Mobile phones have become an inseparable part of students' daily routines, offering instant communication, social connectivity, entertainment, and access to learning resources. While they provide multiple benefits, excessive and uncontrolled use has resulted in mobile phone addiction, a behavioral dependence marked by loss of control, preoccupation, and withdrawal symptoms. This addiction has been linked to several negative outcomes such as decreased academic performance, poor sleep quality, social isolation, and impaired emotional regulation (Bisht and Sharma, 2018; Arpita and Gupta, 2020). At the same time, life skills—particularly *coping with emotions* and *coping with stress*—are vital for students' psychological well-being. Coping with emotions refers to the ability to recognize, regulate, and express feelings constructively, while coping with stress involves adopting adaptive strategies to manage pressures and challenges. Both skills are considered protective factors for maintaining mental health in young adults navigating academic and social demands (WHO, 1997).

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Several studies have examined the association between mobile phone addiction and life skills. Chakraborty, Roy, and Saha (2019) found that students with higher mobile dependency displayed lower emotional regulation and greater susceptibility to mood fluctuations. Similarly, Samaha and Hawi (2016) reported that excessive phone use was significantly associated with heightened stress and reduced academic productivity.

In the Indian context, Bisht and Sharma (2018) highlighted that undergraduate students addicted to mobile phones showed poorer coping strategies and greater emotional instability compared to their peers.

Moreover, a study by Arpita and Gupta (2020) demonstrated that mobile phone usage patterns directly impacted attention span and stress management in college students, suggesting that excessive engagement with digital devices disrupts the natural development of coping mechanisms. International evidence also supports this link. For instance, Elhai, Levine, Dvorak and Hall (2017) argued that mobile phone addiction is strongly tied to anxiety, depression, and maladaptive emotion regulation, making it a global concern.

Drawing from these insights, it becomes important to examine whether different levels of mobile phone addiction (high, average, low) significantly influence coping with emotions and coping with stress among college students.

Such an inquiry can provide deeper understanding of the psychological consequences of digital dependence and inform interventions aimed at promoting healthy mobile use and life skills development in young adults.

Related Literature

The increasing penetration of smartphones among youth has transformed academic and social life. While they provide multiple benefits, research shows that excessive use often leads to mobile phone addiction, which in turn influences coping with emotions and stress.

International Studies

Several global studies have highlighted the negative effects of mobile phone overuse. Billieux (2012) conceptualized problematic mobile phone use as a behavioral addiction linked to emotional dysregulation. Kuss and Griffiths (2015) reviewed literature on smartphone addiction and found associations with stress, anxiety, and poor coping strategies. Thomee, Harenstam and Hagberg (2011) in Sweden reported that high frequency mobile use predicted stress, sleep disturbances, and depressive symptoms among young adults. Similarly, Horwood and Anglim (2019) showed that problematic smartphone use was related to poor emotional stability and maladaptive stress responses.

Samaha and Hawi (2016) demonstrated that smartphone addiction was positively correlated with stress and negatively associated with academic performance and life satisfaction. Elhai, Levine, Dvorak and Hall (2017) further argued that problematic smartphone use is strongly associated with anxiety, depression, and emotion regulation difficulties. Augner and Hacker (2012) also established that excessive mobile use is associated with psychological stress markers, including disturbed sleep and reduced well-being.

Indian Context

In India, affordable smartphones and internet connectivity have increased the prevalence of

mobile phone use among college students, making this issue particularly pressing. Bisht and Sharma (2018) observed that undergraduate students with high mobile phone addiction displayed weaker coping mechanisms and more cognitive-emotional difficulties. Chakraborty, Roy, and Saha (2019) highlighted poor emotional regulation among students with greater dependency on mobile devices. Arpita and Gupta (2020) reported that excessive mobile use impaired attention and stress management among college students, ultimately affecting their academic success.

Kaur and Singh (2021) found that mobile phone addiction was positively associated with perceived stress and negatively correlated with life satisfaction among Punjab college students. Kumari and Sharma (2020) emphasized that students addicted to mobile phones struggled with emotional control and reported higher academic stress. Similarly, Meena, Mittal, and Solanki (2012) noted increasing cases of mobile dependency among adolescents, warning of its psychological consequences. Davey and Davey (2014) described mobile phone addiction as a growing public health issue in India, closely linked to stress, anxiety, and disrupted social functioning.

Punjab-Specific Observations

Within Punjab, researchers have also begun to document the problem. Sharma and Kaur (2021) studied college students in Punjab and found that mobile phone dependency was associated with emotional instability and higher stress levels. Anecdotal reports from educators in Punjab highlight that students addicted to mobile phones demonstrate irritability, distraction, and difficulty in handling stressful situations effectively. The competitive academic culture and high digital penetration in Punjab make its students especially vulnerable to these patterns.

Theoretical Support

The World Health Organization (1997) highlights coping with emotions and stress as essential life skills that help young people deal with challenges effectively. When compromised by behavioral addictions like excessive mobile phone use, students become more vulnerable to psychological distress. Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory further explains how overreliance on external tools such as smartphones reduces self-efficacy, weakening natural coping mechanisms.

Synthesis of Literature

Across both international and Indian contexts, findings converge on the conclusion that mobile phone addiction undermines coping with emotions and stress life skills among students. International researchers (Billieux, 2012; Kuss and Griffiths, 2015; Samaha and Hawi, 2016; Elhai, Levine, Dvorak and Hall 2017) provide global evidence of this pattern, while Indian scholars (Davey and Davey, 2014; Bisht and Sharma, 2018; Arpita and Gupta, 2020; Kaur and Singh, 2021) confirm its increasing relevance in the Indian educational setting, including Punjab. This literature forms the foundation for examining whether varying levels of mobile phone addiction significantly influence coping life skills among Punjab's college student

Objectives

To compare Coping with Emotions life skill on the basis of three levels of mobile phone addiction among college students. To compare Coping with Stress life skill on the basis of three levels of mobile phone addiction among college students

Delimitations

The study was delimited to 3rd year graduate student studying in colleges Situated in Jalandhar Amritsar and Gurdaspur affiliated to Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar**.**

Method

The current study utilized a descriptive survey research method to thoroughly examine and analyze the key variables.

Sample

This study was centered on the population comprising all 3rd-year graduate students enrolled in colleges located in Jalandhar, Amritsar, and Gurdaspur, affiliated with Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. In the initial phase, data were collected from a total of 866 students. However, upon tabulation, it was identified that the data for 36 students were incomplete. Consequently, these individuals were excluded from the analysis, leading to a final sample of 830 students. This cohort included 334 females and 496 males, representing the specified districts.

Tools

The Mobile Phone Addiction Scale, crafted by Singh and Mann in 2022, consists of 32 statements, each offering respondents 5 response categories. To affirm content validity, the study employed the Content Validity Ratio (CVR), which yielded a robust value of .83. Additionally, reliability was ascertained through Cronbach's alpha, with a commendable coefficient of .86. For the assessment of Coping with Emotions and stress, the Life Skills Scale, developed by Prawit in 2010, was utilized. This scale encompasses 27 statements, each presenting respondents with 5 response categories. Extensively employed in research within the realms of education and psychology, the author ensured construct validity and reliability through a high Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .92.

Data Collection

The data collection process for this study entailed in-person visits conducted by the investigator to institutions within the selected sample pool. After the administration of tests, both booklets and response sheets were systematically collected. The subsequent scoring process strictly adhered to the guidelines outlined in the respective manual. The gathered data underwent thorough tabulation and analysis, meticulously aligning with the predefined objectives of the study.

Analysis and Interpretation

Comparison of Coping with Emotions and stress Life Skills of College Students on the Basis of Mobile phone addiction

In order to find out the significance of difference in the Coping with Emotions and stress Life Skills of College Students in terms of high, average and low levels of Mobile phone addiction, Means and SDs were computed which are presented in table 1.

Table 1-Mean and Standard Deviation of Coping with Emotions and stress Life Skills of College Students at Different Levels of Mobile phone addiction

Dependent Variable	Mobile Phone Addiction	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Coping with Emotions	High	37.81	5.660	232
	Average	35.51	4.768	355
	Low	33.26	5.075	243
	Total	35.49	5.396	830
Coping with Stress	High	25.89	4.477	232
	Average	24.48	3.908	355
	Low	21.83	4.044	243
	Total	24.10	4.399	830

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 1 reveal the mean and standard deviation of coping with emotions and coping with stress life skills among college students across different levels of mobile phone addiction. Students with high mobile phone addiction reported the highest scores on both coping with emotions (M = 37.81, SD = 5.66) and coping with stress (M = 25.89, SD = 4.48). Those with average addiction had moderate scores on coping with emotions (M = 35.51, SD = 4.77) and coping with stress (M = 24.48, SD = 3.91), whereas the low addiction group demonstrated the lowest coping abilities in both domains (emotions: M = 33.26, SD = 5.08; stress: M = 21.83, SD = 4.04). The overall means for coping with emotions and stress were 35.49 and 24.10, respectively. These findings suggest a positive association between mobile phone addiction and coping life skills, indicating that students with higher levels of mobile phone use may rely on their devices as a means of emotional regulation or stress relief. While such usage might provide temporary relief and enhance perceived coping abilities, prior literature warns that dependence on mobile phones for managing emotions and stress could become maladaptive in the long term (Billieux, 2012; Samaha and Hawi, 2016; Kaur and Singh, 2021). In the context of Punjab, where students are highly engaged with digital devices for social and academic purposes, these patterns underline the dual role of mobile phones as both facilitators of short-term coping and potential sources of behavioral dependence.

Table 2-Summary of MANOVA for Coping with Emotions and stress Life Skills of College Students on the Basis of Mobile phone addiction

Source	Dependent Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Mobile Phone Addiction	Coping with Emotions	2453.938	2	1226.969	46.805	.001
	Coping with Stress	2049.407	2	1024.704	60.563	.001
Error	Coping with Emotions	1679.532	827	26.215		
	Coping with Stress	3992.492	827	16.920		
Total	Coping with Emotions	069786.000	830			
	Coping with Stress	98066.000	830			
Corrected Total	Coping with Emotions	4133.470	829			
	Coping with Stress	6041.899	829			

Interpretation of Coping with Emotions

The MANOVA results (table-2) indicate that mobile phone addiction has a significant effect on coping with emotions among college students, $F(2, 827) = 46.805$, $p < .001$. This suggests that students with high, average, and low levels of mobile phone addiction differ significantly in their ability to regulate and manage emotions. The high F-value indicates a strong association between mobile phone addiction and emotional coping skills. These findings imply that mobile phone usage may influence students' emotional regulation, potentially acting as a tool for managing or expressing emotions. However, while higher mobile phone use appears to correlate with higher self-reported emotional coping, prior research suggests that such coping may be externally mediated through devices rather than reflecting intrinsic emotional regulation skills (Billieux, 2012; Kaur and Singh, 2021).

Interpretation of Coping with Stress

Similarly, mobile phone addiction (table-2) significantly affects coping with stress, F (2, 827) = 60.563, p < .001. Students with varying levels of addiction—high, average, and low—show significant differences in their stress management abilities. The comparatively higher F-value for stress coping than for emotional coping indicates an even stronger association between mobile phone use and stress-related life skills. This pattern suggests that students with higher mobile phone addiction may perceive themselves as better able to manage stress, potentially by using their devices for distraction, social support, or entertainment. Nonetheless, as highlighted in the literature, such reliance may represent compensatory coping and could become maladaptive if it replaces active problem-solving or adaptive stress management strategies (Samaha and Hawi, 2016; Arpita and Gupta, 2020).

Table 3-Post-hoc Tests for Comparison of Coping with Emotions and stress Life Skills of College Students on the Basis of Three Levels of Mobile phone addiction

Table 3-*Post-hoc Tests for Comparison of Coping with Emotions and Stress Life Skills of College Students on the Basis of Three Levels of Mobile Phone Addiction (Scheffe Test)*

Dependent Variable	(I) Mobile Phone Addiction	(J) Mobile Phone Addiction	Mean Difference (I–J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Coping with Emotions	High	Average	2.30*	0.432	.001
	High	Low	4.55*	0.470	.001
	Average	High	-2.30*	0.432	.001
	Average	Low	2.24*	0.426	.001
Coping with Stress	High	Average	1.40*	0.347	.001
	High	Low	4.06*	0.378	.001
	Average	High	-1.40*	0.347	.001
	Average	Low	2.66*	0.342	.001

Note: The Mobile phone addiction were categorized into three levels i.e. High, Average and Low on the basis of ±1 QD*.*

Post-hoc Comparison: Coping with Emotions

The Scheffe post-hoc (table-3) analysis for coping with emotions indicates that students with high mobile phone addiction scored significantly higher than both the average (Mean Difference = 2.30, p < .001) and low addiction groups (Mean Difference = 4.55, p < .001). Similarly, the average addiction group scored significantly higher than the low addiction group (Mean Difference = 2.24, p < .001). These results demonstrate a clear linear trend: as the level of mobile phone addiction increases, self-reported coping with emotions also increases. This suggests that students may use mobile phones as a tool to manage or express emotions, such as through social interactions, entertainment, or online support networks. However, while higher scores indicate better perceived emotional coping, this reliance may reflect externalized coping strategies rather than intrinsic emotional regulation (Billieux, 2012; Kaur and Singh, 2021).

Post-hoc Comparison: Coping with Stress

For coping with stress, the Scheffe comparisons (table-3) reveal a similar pattern. Students with high mobile phone addiction scored significantly higher than both the average (Mean Difference = 1.40, p < .001) and low addiction groups (Mean Difference = 4.06, p < .001). Furthermore, the average addiction group scored significantly higher than the low addiction group (Mean Difference = 2.66, p < .001). This indicates that mobile phone usage is associated with higher self-reported stress coping abilities, possibly because students utilize their devices for distraction, relaxation, or social support during stressful situations. Nonetheless, prior research suggests that such coping may be compensatory and potentially maladaptive, as dependence on digital devices could reduce

the development of active or problem-focused stress management strategies (Samaha and Hawi, 2016; Arpita and Gupta, 2020).

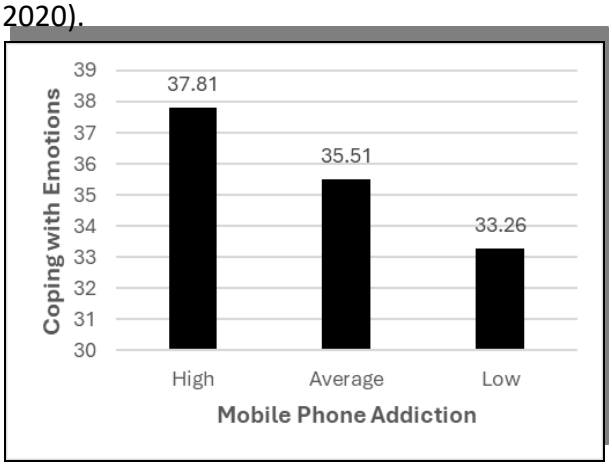

Figure 1: Comparison of Mean Scores of Coping with Emotions Life Skill of College Students on the Basis of Mobile Phone Addiction

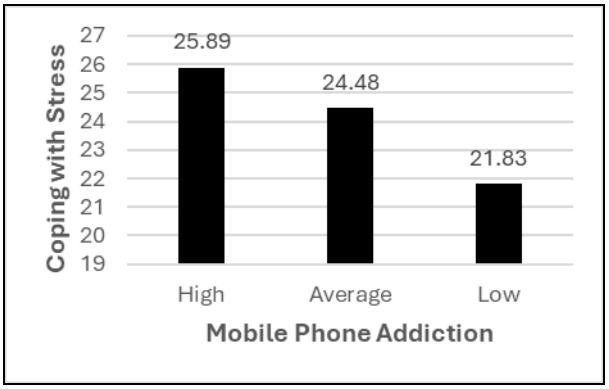

Figure 2: Comparison of Mean Scores of Coping with Stress of College Students on the Basis of Mobile Phone Addiction

Findings

1. College students' coping with emotions and coping with stress significantly varied according to their level of mobile phone addiction.
2. Students with high mobile phone addiction scored the highest on coping with emotions (M = 37.81) and coping with stress (M = 25.89).
3. Students with average mobile phone addiction scored moderately on coping with emotions (M = 35.51) and coping with stress (M = 24.48).
4. Students with low mobile phone addiction scored the lowest on coping with emotions (M = 33.26) and coping with stress (M = 21.83).
5. MANOVA results indicated a significant effect of mobile phone addiction on coping with emotions ($F(2, 827) = 46.805$, $p < .001$) and coping with stress ($F(2, 827) = 60.563$, $p < .001$).
6. Post-hoc Scheffé tests revealed significant differences between all groups for both coping with emotions and coping with stress, following the trend: high > average > low**.**

Discussion

The results can be interpreted through Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1997) and the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Bandura's theory emphasizes that perceived self-efficacy influences behavioral outcomes; mobile phones may enhance students' perceived efficacy in managing emotions and stress. Lazarus and Folkman's framework suggests that coping involves managing demands that exceed personal resources; mobile phones may act as an external resource to regulate stress and emotions.

International literature supports the dual role of mobile phone use in coping. Billieux (2012) highlighted that excessive mobile use is linked to compensatory coping strategies, while Samaha and Hawi (2016) and Elhai, Levine, Dvorak and Hall (2017) reported associations between smartphone addiction and short-term emotional relief. Augner and Hacker (2012) also demonstrated that mobile phone use affects stress perception and emotional adjustment among young adults.

In the Indian context, and particularly in Punjab, similar patterns are observed. Bisht and Sharma (2018) reported that Indian undergraduates with higher mobile phone addiction relied on devices for stress relief. Arpita and Gupta (2020) found that excessive mobile usage affected attention and stress management. Kaur and Singh (2021) observed that Punjab college students with high mobile phone use reported better perceived coping with stress and emotions, though this may reflect compensatory rather than intrinsic coping. Sharma and Kaur (2021) noted that digital engagement provides short-term emotional support but can increase dependence, consistent with behavioral addiction models (Davey and Davey, 2014; Kuss and Griffiths, 2015).

While higher mobile phone use is associated with better perceived coping, these strategies may be externally mediated and could limit the development of intrinsic problem-solving and self-regulatory skills. Therefore, mobile phones appear to serve a dual role: they facilitate short-term coping while posing risks for long-term reliance. These findings underscore the need for interventions promoting balanced mobile phone use and the development of adaptive coping skills among college students in digitalized environments like Punjab.

The study provides evidence that mobile phone addiction significantly influences coping with emotions and coping with stress life skills among college students. While high mobile phone users report better perceived coping, this may reflect compensatory reliance on devices rather than intrinsic life skills. Integrating theoretical frameworks and prior literature highlights the importance of promoting mindful and balanced mobile phone use alongside strategies to strengthen adaptive coping and stress management skills.

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