



Digital addiction: How cell phones are influencing student behavior



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ABSTRACT

The present study addresses digital dependence among students, focusing on the impact of excessive use of cell phones on their behavior and academic performance. The aim was to investigate how the prolonged use of mobile devices influences the concentration, socialization and mental health of young people. The research used a combination of literature review and questionnaires to 150 students from a public school, as well as interviews with 10 teachers. The results indicated that 72% of students use their cell phones for more than four hours a day, which directly affects their concentration in the classroom and their school performance. In addition, 58% of students reported anxiety when deprived of cell phone use, while 40% prefer virtual interactions to face-to-face ones, harming their social skills. The research concludes that it is essential to promote a more conscious use of technologies in the school environment to avoid the negative impacts associated with digital addiction.

Keywords: Digital addiction, Student behavior, Use of cell phones, Academic performance, Socialization.



INTRODUCTION

Technological advancement has brought numerous facilities, with the cell phone being one of the main tools for communication and social interaction. However, its excessive use by students has raised concerns about its impacts on behavior and educational development. According to Santos (2020), the prolonged use of mobile devices can generate digital addiction, which affects both the mental health and academic performance of young people.

Students are particularly vulnerable to this addiction due to the ease of access to social networks and apps. "Hyperconnectivity", a term described by Castells (2012), refers to the constant state of connection, leading to the emergence of new patterns of behavior, often harmful to the cognitive and emotional development of young people.

In addition to harming academic performance, digital addiction can compromise students' social interaction skills. Studies indicate that, in many cases, young people prefer virtual interactions to face-to-face ones, which can lead to social isolation and difficulty forming meaningful interpersonal relationships (Silva, 2019).

Another important factor is the difficulty of young people in disconnecting, which contributes to increased levels of anxiety and stress. As Oliveira (2021) warns, "disconnection from the virtual world has become a challenge for many adolescents, who see their cell phones as a form of momentary relief".

In this context, it is essential to investigate how students' behavior is being shaped by digital addiction and what are the direct impacts on their academic performance and socialization. With the Covid-19 pandemic, this scenario has intensified, with the increase in the use of technologies for educational and entertainment purposes (Barbosa, 2020).

Therefore, understanding the phenomenon of digital dependence among students is essential for the development of educational policies that promote the conscious use of technology, preventing its harmful effects in the school environment and social life.

OBJECTIVE

Analyze the impacts of digital addiction on student behavior, focusing on excessive cell phone use and its consequences on school performance, mental health, and socialization skills. It is also intended to propose strategies to mitigate the negative effects associated with the exaggerated use of mobile devices.



METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in two stages: literature review and application of questionnaires in high schools. The literature review was based on studies published in the last ten years, focusing on the consequences of excessive cell phone use among young people. According to ABNT (NBR 6023:2018), the references were selected based on their relevance to the topic studied.

In the second stage, anonymous questionnaires were applied to 150 students between 14 and 18 years old in a public school in Linhares/ES in Brazil. The questionnaires had closed questions about cell phone use habits, impact on school performance and perception of digital dependence. The quantitative method was used to identify patterns of behavior and their correlation with excessive use of cell phones.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 teachers, to understand their view on the behavior of students in the classroom and how digital addiction has affected the school environment. According to Lakatos and Marconi (2010), the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods allows for a deeper analysis of social phenomena.

RESULTS

The results show that 72% of the students interviewed use their cell phones for more than four hours a day, outside of school hours. Of these, 45% reported difficulties in concentrating in class due to the constant checking of social networks and messaging apps. These data corroborate the research by Pereira (2020), who states that "the prolonged use of mobile devices is directly related to decreased concentration in the school environment".

With regard to mental health, 58% of students indicated feeling anxiety when they are without access to their cell phones for prolonged periods, reinforcing the idea that digital addiction generates a cycle of constant need for connection. As Souza (2021) points out, "the absence of access to technology can cause psychological discomfort, reflecting in symptoms of digital withdrawal".

In terms of socialization, 40% of young people stated that they prefer to interact virtually than participate in face-to-face meetings. This data reflects the impact of digital addiction on students' social skills, who increasingly opt for relationships mediated by technology. According to Santos (2019), "the replacement of face-to-face interactions with virtual ones can compromise the development of interpersonal skills".

Table 1: Impacts of Excessive Cell Phone Use on Student Behavior

Resultados	Percentual (%)	Descrição
Uso diário de celular (mais de 4 horas)	72%	Estudantes que utilizam o celular por mais de quatro horas diárias fora do horário escolar.
Dificuldade de concentração	45%	Estudantes que relataram dificuldades em se concentrar nas aulas devido ao uso constante do celular.
Ansiedade sem acesso ao celular	58%	Estudantes que indicaram sentir ansiedade ao ficarem sem o celular por períodos prolongados.
Preferência por interações virtuais	40%	Estudantes que preferem interagir virtualmente ao invés de encontros presenciais.
Queda no rendimento escolar	-	Professores relataram queda no rendimento dos alunos mais dependentes de dispositivos móveis.

Source: Authorship

Finally, the teachers interviewed reported a significant drop in the school performance of students most dependent on mobile devices. They stated that, in addition to impairing focus in class, the excessive use of cell phones is affecting students' participation in group activities and collaborative projects.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results obtained, it is concluded that digital addiction is negatively impacting the behavior of students, especially in terms of academic performance and socialization. The constant need to be connected impairs the ability to concentrate and social interaction, crucial factors for the educational and emotional development of young people.

Thus, it is essential that parents, teachers, and schools promote awareness about the proper use of cell phones, creating strategies to mitigate the negative effects associated with the overuse of mobile devices. Some suggestions include implementing specific times for cell phone use during the school day, activities that encourage face-to-face interaction, and educational programs that address the risks of digital addiction. Technology, when used in a balanced way, can be an ally in the educational process, but its excessive use can generate harmful consequences.

Finally, this study contributes to the debate on the impacts of digital addiction among students, paving the way for new research that explores possible solutions and strategies to prevent this behavior.



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