



Volume 04, Issue 3, October-December 2020
 pISSN: 2663-7898, eISSN: 2663-7901
 Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36968/JPDC-V04-I03-11>
 Homepage: <https://pdfpk.net/pdf/>
 Email: se.jpdc@pdfpk.net

Article:	The Impact of Mobile Phone on Family Life: A Case Study of Lahore, Pakistan
Author(s):	Dr. Muhammad Shabbir Sarwar Assistant Professor, Institute of Communication Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore
	Humara Gulzar M. Phil, Media Studies, Islamia University Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan
	Muhammad Ahsan Bhatti Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Studies, Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, Punjab, Pakistan
Published:	30 th December 2020
Publisher Information:	Journal of Peace, Development and Communication (JPDC)
To Cite this Article:	Sarwar, Dr. Muhammad Shabbir, et al. "The Impact of Mobile Phone on Family Life: A Case Study of Lahore, Pakistan." <i>Journal of Peace, Development and Communication</i> , vol. Volume 4, no. Issue 3, 2020, pp. 191–206, https://doi.org/10.36968/JPDC-V04-I03-11 .
Author(s) Note:	Dr. Muhammad Shabbir Sarwar is serving as Assistant Professor at Institute of Communication Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore. Corresponding Author email: shabbir.ics@pu.edu.pk
	Humara Gulzar has done M. Phil in Media Studies from Islamia University Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan
	Muhammad Ahsan Bhatti is serving as Assistant Professor at Department of Communication Studies, Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, Punjab, Pakistan

Abstract

The purpose of this research paper is to explore the negative relationship between mobile phone and family life as well as negative impact of mobile phone usage on family life norms and traditions. The study is based on data collected through mixed method i.e. survey of a random sample of 1300 people and structured interviews conducted with a sub-sample of 13 people in Lahore, Pakistan. The study found that mobile phone is negatively affecting the family life due to its massive usage during family socialization time. The quantitative analysis found that over 85% of respondents use mobile phone for communication with the people other than their family members when they are with their family; over 50% make calls to others during their family time; 83% make SMS; 75 feel that they ignore their family due to cell phone; 86% thinks that mobile has influenced their family time face-to-face socialization negatively and 91% said that they exchanged harsh words with their family members for at least once or more due to using mobile phone during family time. The study reveals that male members of the traditional families are more responsible for using mobile phone during family time and damaging family traditions as compared to the female members. However, parents remain very concerned about the possibilities of misuse of mobile phone by female teenagers of the family. In most cases family elders were annoyed with the youth for adopting this change in their behaviors damaging the family traditions.

Keywords: *Negative Impact of Mobile Phone, Family Times (FT), Close Circle Socialization, Lahore youth, Family Life, Cell Phone*

1. Introduction

According to the Pakistan Census (2017), the total population of Pakistan was 207.77 million. Now in 2020 this population has further increased to 222 million (Worldometer, 2020). Being the world's fifth-most-populous country there are 169 million cellular phone users (79.65 per cent of the population) with 85 million 3G/4G Internet subscribers in the country (Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, 2020). As of 2017, the cellular subscription growth rate in Pakistan was 3.8 percent, ranking it in the middle field of Asia Pacific countries for this development (Statista, 2020).

Kiran and Sarwar (2011) found that 90 percent of Pakistanis live within areas that have cell phone coverage and more than half of all Pakistanis have access to a cell phone. Pakistan is the 6th most populated country where the number of mobile phone subscribers was only 5 million by the start of 2004; however, in the year 2011 it surpassed 100 million with an estimated amount of 134.4 million. They stated that Pakistan stood 9th of the mobile subscribers in the world and 5th in the Asia.

As per PTA data (2020), currently in Pakistan Mobilink-Warid is the largest mobile phones connections service provider with 63.5 million subscriptions followed by Telenor with 46 million, Zong 37 million and Ufone with 22.1 million connections.

During the first decade of the 21st century application of the distant linkage communication technology increased in Pakistan tremendously. This advancement included communication through internet chatting, voice chatting, internet emailing, mobile phone calls, SMS, MMS, voice SMS and again internet chatting and emailing through mobile phones. People of all age groups in general and the youth in particular adopted the technological advancement based on innovations showing their interest in the distant communication gadgets, especially cell phones (Kiran & Sarwar, 2011; Popalzai & Haque, 2013).

A large group of youth took interest in making/ receiving calls to/from unknown persons of opposite gender. Moreover, the youth participate in mobile phone discussions forums at various friendship search groups and socialization groups, established by the telecommunication companies on the pattern of the Internet chat rooms and interest social groups. Boys and girls introduce themselves in these groups with the help of a voice message and other members of the group may contact them after listening to their voices as per their interest areas. Although the telecommunication companies prohibit disclosing mobile phone numbers in these chat group, usually male and female participants disclose contact numbers. In this way from a particular social chat group many smaller groups emerged and often decreased their size up to four-member, three-member and two-member groups i.e. one male and one female. Long conversations of 15 min to 30 min, one hour, two hours or so are made between these groups usually during late night hours when calling charges are lowest and often youth use late night special discount packages offered by the mobile phone companies (Azeez et al, 2015; Khalid, 2017).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The mobile phone is being excessively and overly used during family interactive hours for making contacts with non-family members causing serious harm to family ties and traditions. Individuals care more for their distant linkage as compared to their close circle and family socialization, a change which may adversely affect the Eastern asset of family system. Two members of a family while sitting in the same room of their house face-to-face or side-by-side instead of talking to each other are now often seen having mobile phone sets in their hands and talking to some others living at a distant place, or in other city, other country or even some other continent. Due to spending a big part of their daily time in mobile phone communication or mobile phone related entertainment, the youth's relationship with mobile phones have become stronger and disturbing the family relationship and family traditions.

This newborn relationship has started influencing their decades old blood relationship with their family members. This is evident from the young people's cell phone using habit while being with their families on dining table or while sitting in common room. The family interaction or face-to-face discussion time has started to reduce considerably in even nuclear families.

2. Literature Review

Mairaj & El Hadi (2011) found that Internet and mobile phone enhance linkage with family, friends and people living away, besides reducing the direct face to face communication and interaction with family and friends. They surveyed the undergraduate and postgraduate students of University of the Punjab, Lahore, and concluded that Internet and mobile phones were developed to help people, however, the usage of phones may cause positive or negative effects on the family life.

Campbell (2005) explored the impact of mobile phone on youth peer relationships, on family relationships and on the institution of the school. The study found that mobile phone has led to changed dynamics in the family, with issues of safety and surveillance from a parental perspective leading to negotiated changing freedoms for young people. While functional coordination can be beneficial for the family, other problems can arise such as financial difficulties, non-custodial parent access, as well as over reliance on the mobile phone for safety issues and intrusion into young peoples' lives.

Nawaz and Ahmad (2012) stated that the mobile phone use by youth is a global phenomenon as it has become the part and parcel of youth's routine lives. They explored the impact of the mobile phone on youth peer relationships and family relationships. The survey study based on data collected from five colleges of Gujrat city, found negative impacts on youth's family and peer relationships. They discussed some commonly practiced family rules regarding youth's mobile phone use. Many young people (58%) said there were no rules set

by their parents about the mobile phone use, and only 12% stated that their parents used taking their mobile phones from them as a punishment (Matthews, 2004). Another study revealed that 26% of youth said their parents threatened them to confiscate their mobile phones as a tool of punishment in New Zealand (Netsafe, 2005). Another study found that as many as 10 percent of youth stated that their parents frequently asked them to avoid using mobile phone late at night with 12% said that this was the most common disagreement between them and their parents (Matthews, 2004).

However, Christensen (2009) found that mediated communication has acquired a strong role in the routine linkage of family members. The study conducted through qualitative interviews with families living in Denmark, investigated that how the parents and children used their mobile phones for information and liaison while creating a feeling of comeliness when they were not close to each other's. This practice of 'connected presence' was caused due to frequent mobile phone calls and text messages between children and their parents.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The Family Systems Theory and The Grounded Theory provided the base to conduct this study.

Dr. Murray Bowen (1950s) in The Family Systems Theory suggests that family is a system in which each member has a role to play and rules to respect. The family members are supposed to react to each other in a way as per their role determined by relationship agreements. Within the boundaries of the system, patterns develop as certain family member's behavior is caused by and causes other family member's behaviors in predictable ways. Maintaining the same pattern of behaviors within a system may lead to balance in the family system, but also to dysfunction (Michael, 2000). Since cell phone acts as a mediator or as a tool of disturbance in family relations, this theory is relevant for this study.

For the qualitative part The Grounded Theory was applied to formulate themes based on the facts on the collected data (Creswell, 2013). Through structured interviews, the authors investigated the role mobile phones impact on family life.

2.2 Research Objectives

There are following two key objectives of the study:

1. To study the effects of mobile phone on family life among the residents of the Lahore city, the capital of the largest populated Punjab province of Pakistan.
2. Another objective of the study is to suggest ways and means to reduce the negative relationship between mobile phone and family life.
3. The study also aims at sensitizing legislators, policymakers and Pakistan Telecommunication Authority on this issue.

2.3 Research Questions

Following research questions guided the study:

- Q.1: What type of impact mobile phone use is bringing upon the relationship of family members in Lahore, Pakistan?
- Q.2: Whether mobile phone has a negative impact on the family life in Lahore, Pakistan.
- Q.3: Whether people have become more careful towards their mobile phone based distant linkages as compared to their face-to-face communication and family socialization.

3. Research Method

The quantitative research method has been used to conduct this study. The data was collected through mixed method i.e. survey of a random sample of 1300 people and structured interviews conducted with a sub-sample of 13 people in Lahore, Pakistan.

According to the 2017 census (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics), Lahore's population was 11.12 million. Later in mid-2006 government estimates put the population at around 10 million, which makes it the second largest city in Pakistan, after Karachi. It is considered among the

30 largest cities of the world. The rationale for selecting youth for this study is because of the fact that youth comprises 60 to 62 % population of Pakistan.

The Lahore city comprised nine towns administratively. For this research a sample of 1300 respondents have been taken randomly from Lahore city while giving almost equal representation to all towns of the city, as survey queries were put before around 145 respondents in each town ($145 \times 9 = 1305$). Five incomplete questionnaires were not counted making the sample size to the exact figure $n=1300$. A purpose-built pretested questionnaire including 14 close-ended questions on five-point Likert scale (*1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree*) was used for quantitative data collection.

Furthermore, a sub-sample of 13 youth was selected from the main sample of the study i.e. from all nine towns of Lahore city. Separate interviews were arranged with them to collect data through the technique of structured interviews. Questions having two parts was asked from the respondents to get detailed information. A range of varied responses gathered during structured interviews was compiled while giving first preference to most frequent replies. Qualitative Grounded Theory Analysis was applied to formulate theme (Creswell, 2013). Later, the data was tabulated and results were gathered on the basis of calculating most common frequent answers of the respondents.

4. Results and Discussion

The results of the survey along with number of responses against each question and their percentage (%) are following:

1.1 Table 4.1: Responses on Likert Scale: Frequency and Percentage

Survey Questions	% of respondents				
	SDA	DA	Neutral	A	SA
1. I use cell phone when with family.	0.69	2.23	11.15	23.84	62.07
2. I receive calls when with family.	0.84	1.76	11.69	25.84	59.84
3. I make calls when with family.	1.53	8.07	39.8	32.30	18.23
4. I listen to music or play video games when with family members.	38.61	32.07	16.61	8.69	
5. I use Internet on phone when with family.	45.92	44.23	5.53	2.84	1.41
6. I start speaking /listening my family after using mobile phone.	12.38	24.38	31.69	21.00	10.53
7. I think I ignore family and I use mobile phone while I am with them.	1.92	3.15	19.76	42.15	33
8. My family mention their annoyance regarding ignoring them and use of phone.	15.38	0.38	7.46	44.76	47.23
9. I feel irritation when my family member use cell phone during the time of family's interaction.	1.61	3.00	8.69	44.92	47.76
10. I think talking/ giving response to others is important when I am with my family.	0.92	7.15	12.07	44.38	35.46
11. When with my family, I ever left home in case of any emergency call/ SMS received on my mobile phone.	0.00	0.00	5.23	20.69	74.07
12. I think mobile phone has influenced my family time socialization negatively.	2.92	3.15	7.15	41.61	45.15
13. My family member(s) try to stop me from using mobile phone during family time.	0.84	1.76	15.53	48.07	33.76
14. Due to use of cell phone I exchanged harsh words with family member(s).	0.92	1.15	5.92	44.92	47.07

1.2

The quantitative analysis found that over 85% of respondents use mobile phone for communication with the people other than their family members while being with their family; over 50% make calls to others during their family time; 83% make SMS; 75 feel that they ignore their family due to cell phone; 86% thinks that cell has influenced their family time face-to-face socialization negatively and 91% said that they exchanged harsh words with their family members for at least once due to using cell phone during family time. The study further reveals that male members of the traditional families are more responsible for damaging/ violating the family traditions as compared to the female members and family elders are annoyed (83%) with youth for adopting this change in their behaviors damaging the family traditions. However, parents are very much concerned about the cell phones using habits of female members of the family for interaction with their peer groups other than the family members and relatives.

The study also revealed that 94% people even go to office/ workplaces or out for other reasons in case of any emergency call from office or workplace etc, even during evening hours or weekends, adversely disturbing the feelings (78%) of other family members and causing an increase in complaints (35%) against one another.

1.2.1 4.1. Structured Interviews

Two questions were especially structured for the study for knowing varied range of responses for the respondents. Finally, all received responses were measured on a 6-point scale based on the majority number of responses. The two queries comprised:

Q.15. Why you use cell phone while being with your family?

Q.16. In your opinion, how cell phone negatively affects your family life?

Both the queries were measured in the following tables on six-point scales based on the majority responses. These responses received against Q15 were measured on the scale as: 1-

To respond/ direct office/workplace, 2-To respond/contact, friends 3-to respond/contact relatives, 4-for information, 5-for entertainment and 6-to respond unknown calls/messages.

While the responses received against Q16 were measured on the 6-point scale as: 1-exchanged harsh words with family, 2-parents annoyed, 3-increased family life disturbance, 4-decrease in face-to-face interaction, 5-feelings of family hurt and 6-family complaints increased.

Table 4.2: Q.15. Why you use cell phone when with your family?

1.3 % of gathered responses								
1.4	1	1.6	1.7	3	1.8	1.9	1.10	6
-To respond/ direct office/ workplace		-To respond/ contact Friends	-To respond/co ntact Relatives		-For Infor matio n	-For Ente rtainm ent	-To respond unknown calls/messag es	
1.11	4	1.12	1.13	1	1.14	1.15	1.16	1
7.00		4.52	4.92		.15	.92	3.00	

1.17

During interactive session with the respondents most of them said that “Some time it’s very important to attend a call from office, boss, clients or workplace subordinates to get directive or business updates. One can’t ignore such important call while sitting among family members. A majority of them also said that: “Sometime a relative or family friend calls you and of course you have no option but to receive the call or otherwise remain ready to face his/her anger.” For short-term planning and in case of change of any plan, seniors or juniors make a call to inform you. In personal business when your workers are doing overtime the night shift supervisor/ manager remains in constant contact with you in case of any urgency.

Some opined that they have to receive call from some unknown numbers also because sometime acquaintances change their cell number and they wanted to talk you something very important or they are in some emergency.

1.18 Table 4.3: *Q.15. How cell phone negatively influenced your family life?*

1.19		% of gathered responses (N=13 structured interviews)					
1.20	1	1.21	1.22	1.23	4	1.24	1.25
-Exchange		-	-	-Decrease		-	-Family
Harsh words		Parents	Increased	in Face-to-		Feelings	Complaints
with Family		Annoyed	Family	Face		of	increased
			Life	Interaction		Family	hurt
			Disturbance				
1.26	4	1.27	1.28	1.29	7	1.30	1.31
0%		3%	5%	6%		8%	5%

While replying to Question No. 16 during the intensive interview, a majority of the sub-sample of 13 youth narrated various incidents about how mobile phone usage during family time negatively affected the feelings of the other family members. Most the respondents (10 or 76%) expressed decrease in face-to-face interaction time between their family members owing to the increased usage of cell phone during their routine family meeting/sittings time.

Saba Ishtiaq, a 20-year-old MBBS student of Model Town area, said that her brother Ali Ahmed often uses his mobile phone while their family is gathered at the dinner. Saba said once her father was talking about an important family matter regarding the wedding of their elder sister when suddenly his brother’s mobile phone rang up and as a response he attended the call. At this his father admonished Ahmed severely and cursed him for being ill mannered and uncivilized. Getting infuriated, Ahmed left the dining table. Their mother in a bid to stop

him also left the dining table and the whole family spent a very unpleasant weekend. All this happened due to cell phone that promoting bad manners and damaging family traditions, Saba said.

Another respondent Hafiz Imran (20), who lives in Gulberg area, said that now everyone owns a mobile phone in his family. Earlier face-to-face interaction usually remained very focused and attentive between all family members in the evening and on weekends while sitting at the dining table or in the drawing room. But now the level of face-to-face interaction has been decreased considerably between our family members because of the mobile phone-related disturbance. Whenever we traditionally gather for having some informal talks, one member or the other suddenly start using or responding to mobile phone and this factor is badly influencing our family life, he said.

The 95% of respondents narrated stories of mobile phone caused disturbance in their family life and informed that average family socialization and face-to-face interaction level has been decreased among their family members due to frequent usage of mobile phones. Most respondents said that their family elders usually remained more annoyed with the male youngsters of the family for developing the mobile phone using habits while being with the family during evening hours and on weekends.

5. Conclusion

Since technology has been proving as a precursor to change, along with the positive aspect and positive influence of mobile phone on the family life there are many negative aspects also. This study finds that the mobile phone has negatively influenced the family traditions and norms of face-to-face interactions, besides considerable reduction in the family socialization time due to frequent usage of cell phone by family members, especially in the traditional nuclear families of Lahore, Pakistan. The technological development has increased the level and frequency of communication and distant communication is dominating over the

face-to-face close circle socialization. The family members hardly spare time to interact with each other as they are busy by the signal-based communication gadgets, which are influencing the family life negatively.

5.1. Recommendations

The study recommends controlled minimum possible use of mobile phone during family time interactive hours to save the Eastern culture of family socialization and strong relationship, which is under attack due to technological developments. The policy makers and Pakistan Telecommunication Authority must review the cell phone companies phone calls and SMS packages, which are a major cause of unnecessary use and misuse of mobile phone. Youngsters should be sensitized on the importance of close circle, face-to-face socialization and its positive impacts of the family life and social life thus making them realize to prefer face-to-face communication over the mobile phone based communication.

References

- Azeez, A., Dildar, S. M., Juni, M. S., Ashraf, C. A., & Kareem, J. (2014). Internet as Need or Addiction Amongst Pakistani Youth; Exploring The Use of Internet at University Level Students. *International Journal of Research*, 1(10), 1323-1334.
- Campbell, M. A. (2005). The impact of the mobile phone on young people's social life. In: Social Change in the 21st Century Conference, 28 October 2005, QUT Carseldine, Brisbane.
- Chelsey, Noelle (2006). Cell Phone Disrupt Family Life. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.
- Christensen, T. H. (2009). 'Connected presence' in distributed family life. *New Media & Society*, 11(3), 433-451.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Kiran, S. and Sarwar, M. S. (2011). *Negative Effect of Cell Phone Addiction among Youth*. Unpublished Masters Dissertation, Department of Media and Communication, University of Management and Technology, Lahore.
- Khalid, H. (2017). The effects of social networks on Pakistani students. *Journal of Information Technology & Software Engineering*, 7(3), 1-6.
- Mairaj, M. I., & El Hadi, W. M. (2011). The Impact of the Internet and mobile phones on family relations in Pakistan.
- Matthews, R. (2004). The psychosocial aspects of mobile phone use amongst adolescents. *Psych*, 26(6), 2004, 16-19
- Michael E. K. (2000). *One Family's Story: A Primer on Bowen Theory*. The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family. <http://www.thebowncenter.org>.

Netsafe. (2005). The text generation: Mobile phones and New Zealand youth: A report of result from the internet safety group's survey of teenage mobile phone use. 2005, January)

Nawaz, S., & Ahmad, Z. (2012). Statistical study of impact of mobile on student's life. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (JHSS)*, 2(1), 43-49.

Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2017). *Province wise provisional results of census* (Provisional census results - Punjab) - 2017. Population & Housing Census 2017.

http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/pakistan%20tehsil%20wise%20for%20web%20census_2017.pdf

Pakistan Telecom Authority. (2020). *Monthly cellular subscribers*. Retrieved on November 2, 2020 from: <https://www.pta.gov.pk/en/telecom-indicators/1>

Pakistan Telecom Authority. (2020). *Telecom indicators*. Retrieved on November 2, 2020 from: <https://www.pta.gov.pk/en/telecom-indicators>

1.32

Popalzai, S., & Haque, J. (2013: August 19). Pakistan Internet Use Survey 2013. *The Express Tribune*. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/591004/pakistan-internet-use-survey-2013>

1.33 Smartphone penetration rate as share of connections in Pakistan from 2014 to 2020.

Retrieved on November 2, 2020 from:

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/671542/smartphone-penetration-as-share-of-connections-in->

Steve, S., & Simakowicz, P. (2010). Do Cell Phones Help or Hinder Society? Retrieved in Nov 2010 from <http://www.oppapers.com/essays/Negative-Effects-Of-Cell-Phone-Of/418662>

Worldometer. (2020). *Pakistan Population*. <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/pakistan-population/>