



Cell Phones in Schools: Stakeholder Views and Policy Gaps in District Peshawar

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ABSTRACT

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The study was aimed at studying the opinion of principals/administrators, teachers, students and parents in relation to the use of cell phone by students of secondary schools. What is the number of social ills that have been caused by its use? The study population was comprised of school principals, school teachers, parents and students in the secondary schools in the Peshawar district. Twenty five (25) principals, teachers, parents and students were selected out of the group in stratified random sampling method in both the public and private sector. The data collection was conducted in a questionnaire. The information was gathered, tabulated, examined and clarified using plain percentage technique. Due to the outcome, it was determined that the use of cell phone is the key cause of several social issues in the secondary level and it is not a clear policy in school usage. The role of parents, teachers, print media as well as electronic media can be crucial in this matter.

Introduction

The escalating use of cell phones

Pakistan ranks 5th, in Asia, in terms of the usage of cellular telephone since over 100 million people are using cellular telephones as a constituent of the country, the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA). It was announced that a local authority issued approximately 10 million new associations a year ago through a news channel, which is privately owned. Cellular telephone customer numbers in Pakistan are up to 131 million as information released by PTA revealed. According to PTA, aggressive twisted and lower calling charges are the major reason why cellular telephone clients are increasing. The use of cell telephones is said to have brought an adjustment into the rise of expectation of the general population on everyday comforts that is the reason it is gaining more interest step by step. (PTA, 2011)

Mobile phone is one of the most rapidly emerging new inventions in the planet (Rebello, 2010). The number of mobile phone memberships globally in 2001 were by no means a billion with the majority of the memberships being made up of the developed countries. By the end of 2011, however, cell phone had five billion worldwide with the Subscriptions of developing countries overwhelming the developed countries (Kelly, 2009; Rebello 2010).

Cell telephones have become widely popular among the youngsters within a very short period as would be suggested by the majority of the latest details released by Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA). In a research conducted in Norway, for example, it was revealed that right at the 100 percent of 16 years age owned cell phone in the year 2001 and less than 20 percent of 16 years olds owned cell phones in 1997 (Ling, 2001). Cell phone ownership has become so significant just like wallets (International Telecommunication Union, 2004).

Bringing Technology into the Classroom in the Developing World

A juvenile girl in Hafizibad (a small country society in Pakistan in the region of Punjab is using her cell phone to send messages, in Urdu, to her teacher, and is receiving messages in return which she is copying by hand in her notebook to practice her writing. The girl belongs to a program of Mobilink-UNESCO to increase literacy skills of children in Pakistan among girls. The first signs are positive; in four months, the proportion of girls obtaining an A level in literacy tests, went up by 27 percent to 54 percent. In the same way, the proportion of girls who scored C in examinations, dropped to 15 percent against 52 percent. The effect of cell phone knack, which is quite uncontrolled in Pakistan, shows in this instance to aid impediment a number of education obstacles by finding a new method of continuing their learning throughout the summer holiday in Pakistan girls who often have narrow prospects of attending school and often fail to obtain the personalized consideration (Marshal S. Smith, 2012).

Influence of Cell Phones

The recent years have seen the rise of fame about the use of cell phones, and as such, they have become the target of research (Hussain et al., 2017). Various cell phone related research issues are use of cell phones while driving (Caird, Willness, Steel, and Scialfa, 2008, Horrey and Wickens, 2006, McCartt, Hellinga, and Braitman, 2006), cell phone etiquette (Campbell and Park, 2008, 2008 and Ling, 2004), text messaging (Pettigrew, 2009), health risks of cell phone radioactivity (Anna, Kari)

According to recent researches, cell phones have turned out to be more than a mere tool of communication acquiring its own roles in other areas of social interaction (Abbasi et al., 2015). As an example, a qualitative research study on adolescents in Australia has found that cell phones have become part of the lives of young Australians (Walsh, White, and Ross, 2008). There were among the study members that had very strong attachment towards their cell phone, to them it was like a part of themselves. Bond (2010), in another qualitative study, studied the cell phone use among the children and concluded that cell phones were basic devices on which the children preserve and manage their relationships that lead to strengthened peer bonds.

In the ardent associations of cell phone users, there were more voice calls that were associated with positive qualities of relationships (Jin and Peña, 2010). In other researches, it is stated that cell phones presence behaves as a greater refuge of possible dangerous circumstances. This has resulted in a rise in the domestic value of cell phones and consequently the recognition of cell phones by the cell phone users as a necessity (Nasar, Hecht, and Wener, 2007; Walsh et al., 2008).

Cell Phone addiction

Most individuals become addicted to new technological gadgets since they are becoming part and parcel of their everyday lives (e.g., Block, 2008; Pies, 2009; Cholz, 2010). As an illustration, there are opinions to introduce in DSM-V a behavioral addiction as unnecessary use of the Internet (as well as pathological gambling) (Block, 2008; O'brien, 2010; Pies, 2009). Similarly, unneeded use and reliance on the cell phone can also be classified as an addictive disorder (Cholz, 2010). Factors which are related to pathological cell phone dependency have also been discussed (e.g., Ezoe, Toda, Yoshimura, Naritomi, Den, and Morimoto, 2009; Bianchi and Phillips, 2005). Ezoe et al. (2009) determine that cell phone dependency was attributed to extraversion, neuroticism, and harmful lifestyle among the female Japanese nursing students. Bianchi and Phillips (2005) also conclude that high extraversion was linked to the difficult cell phone use but they could not determine neuroticism. Problematic cell phone use was also related to youth (Bianchi and Phillips, 2005) and low self-esteem (Bianchi and Phillips, 2005; Zulkerfly and Baharundin, 2009). The other varying predictors of problematic cell phone use include the number of social calls placed, the number of functional features on the handset as well as the cell phone usage interval (Zulkerfly & Baharundin, 2009). Moreover, there was a higher degree of cell phone use at an earlier age than was associated with more cell phone contact partners, more average amount of incoming and outgoing cell phone calls and text messages monthly, higher phone bills, and more poignant connection to cell phones (Geser, 2006).

Gender differences in the use of Cell Phones

The prior findings on the gender disparity in cell phone usages are varied (Junco, Merson, and Salter, 2010; Bianchi and Phillips, 2005; Wei and Lo, 2006). More time was dedicated by females to the cell phone conversations compared to men (Junco, Merson & Salter, 2010). Women too were more likely to make and also receive more family and social oriented calls

(Wei and Lo, 2006). Such a female social act of the cell phone usage is aligned with the past research concerning the use of traditional telephones (Bianchi and Phillips, 2005; Smoreda and Licoppe, 2000; Wei and Lo, 2006). Moreover, female over and over again were more attached to their cell phones (Geser, 2006). However, as to the total amount of time on the cell phone and problematic cell phone use, Bianchi and Phillips (2005) did not derive any significant gender affiliation and this finding led to the conclusion that the cell phone was a gender-neutral device.

Theoretical viewpoint

In his psychosocial presumption, Erikson (1968) defines the adolescence stage as a searching identity stage. The issues teenagers face involve finding a place that they belong to, their identity and conceiving who they aspire to become. In his theory of adolescent egocentrism, Elkind (1967) noted that the sensitive self-consciousness that occurs during adolescence.

The teens grow to be catastrophically conscious of themselves and give serious consideration to implications of what their contemporaries believe of them. Both Elkind and Erikson emphasized on enhanced peer power in regard to adolescent maturity (Hussain et al., 2025). An expedient examination also defined that teenagers are mostly susceptible to trends, fashions and modes, which render them more eager to advocate to new scientific apparatus and assured behavioral particularity (Ling, 2001).

Embedded within a subculture of language, music and clothing along with social values, peer influence can be foreseen to be involved in the knowledge, skills and devices gain of the domain of communication especially as it is freely accessible. Moreover, the tendency of the adolescents to appreciate the importance of belongingness to their peer groups will probably influence the choices made by the adolescents to get a cell phone and the deductions they make on cell phones as a source of maintenance of social relationships.

The theoretical views, as well as the previous realistic researches, indicate that the recent high growth in cell phones has impacted several areas in our everyday lives especially those of young adults. The research problem of the present paper is, accordingly, to identify the importance of cell phone possession to college students, the degree to which they use the cell phone, with whom they talk regularly, how serious the cell phone addiction is, and an overall cell phone usage (e.g. pervasiveness, purpose, cost, history). Gender variations have also been analyzed to give extra evidence that proves the existing controversial findings. An extensively unexplored topic, financial liability (who is responsible of the cell phone cost), was also discussed.

The hypothesis is that age, sex, and cell phone background (period of time one has had a cell phone) is correlated with observation of cell phone significance and cell phone addiction among the students. It is further believed that the older students will be more accountable of the cell phone subscription cost.

Policy viewpoint

Among the most hotly debated and often addressed topics the school administrators are forced to deal with in everyday operation is their position concerning the students and cell phones (Saqlain & Shahid, 2024). Apparently, there are two diametrically opposed positions in case of cell phones in school in practically all the schools. Whatever is the policy of your school, there is no escape to retain all the students, completely, to carrying their phones along with them the moment you introduced body searches of the students as a daily practice and that it is not realistic (Andleeb et al., 2025).

The thing is that an increasing number of people possess cell phone even students of different ages. 78 percent of all adolescents own a cell phone. They are technological natives and, therefore, techno savvy. 47% of teenagers can even text with their eyes shut. They are much more accomplished than the majority of their adult peers in the use of their cell phones.

It is more or less three main positions that most school districts have assumed with their cell phone policies. Such a policy is the basic prohibition of their cell phones among their students. In the event students are found with their cell phones, then they can be taken away or even fined or the suspension of the student placed. The other common cell phone policy permits students to carry with them their cell phones to school and it gives them the right to use the phone during non-instructional period like time in between classes and other free periods. On the incidence of them being found in the class then they are taken away by the student. The other policy by the cell phone is prone to a change in the thinking of the administrators. It is not just that students are allowed to own and utilize their cell phones, but they are also persuaded to use them during the learning sessions (Derrick Meador, 2012).

On April 26, the police officers of New York City deployed the mobile security scanners at the Acorn High School of Social Justice in Brooklyn. They seized 129 cell phones, 10 CD players, two iPods, a box cutter and a knife. This ban and such searches has led to a series of protests by the high school students in the city.

Mobile phone use has been banned in the city school system since time immemorial although principals in schools that did not have a metal detector system like ACORN High School seldom enforced the policy and the students were allowed to bring cell phones as long as they had them in silence in the classroom.

All students will now be required to adhere to the rules due to a new defense policy of such, by Department of Education. The police officers in the city have begun to show up arbitrarily at schools that lack metal detectors and make use of mobile scanners to ensure that arms are kept out of the schools, according to a department press release. However, cell phones, iPods, and other prohibited electronic equipment are also being seized by the police. In the event of a stoppage of cell phones during a scan in school, the school authority makes a decision of the time to give it back.

According to Alex Rich, a student of the Lab School, ages 16, cell phones are still necessary in communication. In case they attempt to seize my electronic supplies, I will simply fail to attend school (Ilya Arbit; David Schmutzer, 2006)

Cell Phones are allowed in most private schools

In any case the opinion in the schools that exist in the private sector is that cell phones are there to stay. The communication between anxiety-stricken busy parents and children is a critical line. This has made most of the private schools allow the use of the cell phone in their building knowing that they must have it off during classes and can only use it in exceptional situations and in specific locations (Kumar et al., 2024).

The majority of schools have a very specific strategy which is written in its handbooks and sufficient use policy manuals. Every student is willing to abide by the said rules not only when at the school premise but also when off campus where the jurisdiction of the school applies (Robert Kennedy, 2012).

School Cell phone Ban Violates Rights of Parents, Lawsuit Says, the parents say, in the papers submitted to our State Supreme Court in Manhattan that the ban is that extensive and drab that it infringes their legitimate right as parents to protect their kids and raise them as they choose best.

They claimed that the ban infringes their due process right to individual emancipation outlined in the state and federal constitutions because it interferes with the relationship between the parents and their children without a sufficient education purpose doing so. (ANEMONA HARTOCOLLIS, 2012)

A decree to ban the use of cell phones in schools and colleges unanimously passed by Punjab Assembly will have potential implications of banning cell phone devices in the campuses across the entire province. The resolution was initiated by an PML-N MPA of Lahore, Rahala Khadim Hussain and was unanimously passed in the House. Provincial Assembly urged Punjab Government to ensure stopping the use of mobile phones by girls and boys in schools and colleges.

Raheela Khadim Hussain continued with the cell phone as unpreventable yet students are too busy texting their friends in the classes and that is the reason they are not concentrating on their studies. Raheela Hussain informed the house that the country already has a law regarding the prohibition of cell phones in learning institutions, which is not being followed. She claimed that she shifted the bill so that already existing legislation is put into use at least in province of Punjab.

The cell phones are mainly used by students, especially in urban regions and they are most likely to use SMS and hourly call plans. Whether this dictate will be delivered to educational institutes of the province, is uncertain so far. We are not yet determined to fix the penalties (had any) to disobey this ban.

Parents will not be surprised by a mixed reaction whereas the students will obviously disapprove the verdict.

It can be remembered that to secure the bright future of the young people, Punjab and KPK Assemblies had requested the federal government to prohibit night packages, and federal government never heard them (Mehwish Khan, 2012)

Advantages of Allowing Cell Phones in School

The majority of the schools have regulations concerning cell phone use. Students are allowed to possess them but the rules regarding the usage of the item apply in terms of time and place. The final product is however that possession of a cell phone is a very good thing. Let's look at a few reasons why.

The Nightmare

Any parent will inform you that his worst nightmare does not have the slightest idea where his child is located. A thousand burns up wrenching situations pass through his head: Would my child be alright? Has she been kidnapped? Has come across an accident?

And it is even more bad with the parents in big cities. The variables grow exponentially to the stage whereby you become nervous and spoil. Subways, omnibuses, the climate, purse snatching, hanging about with the immoral ones - give me your own worries concerning your children. That is the reason why cell phones are such a marvelous thing. They can send a voice or a text message instantly with your child. Cell phones will be able to transform a mayhem into a pretty easily managed and controlled event. They are able to offer immediate tranquility of consciousness. Naturally, I suppose that your child himself is honest, and not elsewhere where he claims to be, when you call him (Robert Kennedy, 2012)

School Emergencies

It is the rising of school bullying that has prompted parents to allow their children to carry cell phones to school. Cell phones have efficiently been employed in school calling in threats and actions to the emergency officials. Such calls have in many cases helped save lives and the number of victims caused by such dangers has been minimized. The video and camera options which most cellular devices support have been utilized in supplying direct feed to the officials as these have helped the officials in counteracting bullying activity in a safe way.

Immediate Response

Liable children who have to get home on their own after the school day or are medically challenged stand to benefit a lot on the usage of cell phones. It is also possible to call its parents immediately, and inform them of their current location, which is the case with children who walk home after school. The children with medical issues can call in and seek medical care real-time through their phone as compared to attempting to get to the office in order to make their call. The waiting or lag time, which one is apprehensive about using a office or official school phone, is eradicated by cell phone usage (Charmayne Smith, 2012).

Disadvantages of Allowing Cell Phones in School

Reduced Emergency Response

Although these are positive gains that have contributed to distilling daunting activities, several school authorities and parents are opposed to cell phones at school. Numerous authorities oppose this application since cell phones possess the potential of making everything point into real bombs with their signals. These officials go on to say that the practice of students carrying cell phones can frustrate the student security response even faster than the parental response to the site since at times the officials may be trying to dump students on another site (Rasool et al., 2022).

Cell phones have been infamous in overloading calling systems in cases of calamities. Teachers and authorities agree that student cell phones may impede their efforts of giving crisis information, as well as, inhibit crisis response when they overwhelmed the systems with student calls. Cell phones commonly become important in sending messages to schools during emergency situations (School Emergency Teams, 2012).

Immoral Usage

Although cell phones have been known to ensure the students are inseparably accessible during disasters and even to parents, they are also associated with a negative use. To share their test and quiz answers, as well as, report false and foul information about other students and the school, many students have used their cell phones. Cell phones may serve as distractions in the school environment avoiding the classroom time and undermining the academic success of the student (Kumar et al., 2024).

Cell Phone Misuse

Cell phone abuse has become a victim to many children. The student commonly uses the cell phones to expand rumours and propaganda. This deception is thorny to the prey to digest and may be very burdensome to a young child to comprehend. This misinformation has led to the demise of a few children since their personal information and unproven information had been distributed using cell phones. The state and local governments have started developing legislation, which enshrines a severe punishment of the dissemination of personal data. Such effects include penalties, incarceration and potential sex offender label (Charmayne Smith, 2012).

Objectives of the study

- To examine the perception of school principals/administrators on regard to the use of cell phones in schools.
- To determine the school leadership view of schools heads regarding cell telephony in schools.
- In order to research the perception of parents with regard to cell phone use.

- To establish how the students are approaching the use of cell phones.

Significance of the study

- The research will expose the current school administration policy on the use of cell phones in schools.
- It will reflect the necessity of the similarity of policy on this matter.
- It will suggest the works of govt, school and community to make the solution of the issue.

Method

Population and Sampling

The population of the study was the principals/administrators of Secondary Schools of district Peshawar. One of the best stratified random samples was picked out of the total amount of school numbering twenty schools of district Peshawar comprising of both the public sector schools and the private sector.

Survey Instrument

A questionnaire with 15 questions, which addressed different facets of the use of cell phone such as school policy on using cell phone in school, parental response and student attitude was drawn. The questions were mostly dichotomous but there were some open ended questions that were posed to the respondents concerning their perceptions towards the positive and negative sides of owning a cell phone by school going students.

Data collection

It was done with the help of self administered questionnaire of the sample schools of district Peshawar.

Data Analysis

Simple percentage method was used to analyze and interpret the data collected and tabulate it.

Results

Table # 01: Students are allowed to bring cell phones to the school?

Description	Responses	percentage
Yes	03	15%
No	17	85%

Above table data suggest that most of the school administration (85% of them) does not allow students to carry cell phones to the school. In their admission requirements, they have clearly stated that they do not allow any electronic devices but those of calculators and electronic watches.

Table # 02: Some of your students bring cell phones to the school?

Description	Responses	percentage
Yes	15	75%
No	05	25%

Most of the interviewee of the school feels that majority of the students are carrying cell phone during the school hours.

Table # 03: Have you any policy of your own in the school regarding the use of cell phones?

Description	Responses	percentage
Yes	15	75%
No	05	25%

The cell phone holders are being dealt with like the school policy that most schools are implementing.

Table # 04: Have you ever informed the parents about school policy on cell phones?

Description	Responses	Percentage
Yes	20	100%
No	00	00%

All the respondents had disclosed that they had informed the parents about the policy regarding the use of cell phones.

Table # 05: The use of cell phones badly affects students learning?

Description	Responses	percentage
Yes	20	100%
No	00	00%

All of the respondents are of the view that cell phones are badly affecting the studies of the students

Table # 06: Have teachers ever complained to parents over this issue?

Description	Responses	percentage
Yes	16	80%
No	04	20%

The data from the table clearly indicates that majority of the teachers has complained to parents about the use of cell phones

Table # 07: You search students regularly for cell phones?

Description	Responses	percentage
Yes	04	20%
No	16	80%

As seen in the data provided in the table seven, most of the respondents indicate that there is no routine procedure of cell phone search in schools.

Table # 08: Do you take cell phones from students when they use it?

Description	Responses	Percentage
Yes	16	80%
No	04	20%

From the finding of the above table it is shown that cell phones are snatched when the students are using it inside the school.

Table # 09: Students misbehave when their cell phones are taken by teachers?

Description	Responses	percentage
Yes	02	10%
No	18	90%

Over here 80% of the respondents unfold themselves that students do not show anger when cell phones are taken from them.

Table # 10: You inform parents when cell phones are recovered from their wards?

Description	Responses	percentage
Yes	20	100%
No	00	00%

Majority of the respondents informed the parents when they recover cell phones from their childrens.

Table#11: Do parents cooperate in this regard?

Description	Responses	percentage
Yes	12	60%

No	08	40%
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Table eleven shows that sixty percent parents do not cooperate with school authorities to ban their wards from bringing cell phones to school.

Table#12: Have you displayed the school policy regarding cell phones at various points in the School premises?

Description	Responses	percentage
Yes	06	30%
No	14	70%

Majority of the school administrators responded that they have not displayed their policy regarding cell phones inside the school however it has been clearly mentioned in their admission prospectus.

Table # 13: Parents are requesting school authorities for allowing cell phones to their wards.

Description	Responses	percentage
Yes	10	50%
No	10	50%

Table # 13 shows that fifty percent parents are requesting school authorities for allowing cell phones to their children in the school.

Table # 14: You allow students to keep cell phones in schools when their parents request for it?

Description	Responses	percentage
Yes	06	30%
No	14	70%

Avoiding the entry of cell phones into the school by the students is allowed in 70 percent of the sample schools in some way. Nevertheless, the 30% enables them carry cell phones on bequest by parents.

Table # 15: You feel the need of uniform policy regarding the use of cell phones in secondary Schools?

Description	Responses	Percentage
Yes	20	100%
No	00	00%

All the respondents in the sample schools disclosed that they felt that there should be a unified policy regarding cell phones in the schools and the students should be handled effectively.

Conclusion

The conclusion made was that most schools administration do not allow students to carry their cell phones to school. Through their admission requirement, they have made it clear that they prohibit all electronic devices except calculators and electronic watches. It was also known how most of the students are in their possession of cell phone during the school hours. The cell phone holders are being treated accordingly and it is schools taking their own policy. The great majority of the sample schools in no way admit students with cell phones in the school. Parents are being told about the policy of use of cell phones, no regular procedure of cell phone search in schools being done, most of the teachers have already complained to parents about the use of cell phones but parents are not cooperating with school authorities of banning their wards usage of cell-phones in school instead parents are demanding school authorities to allow their children to carry cell phones to school. But best of all there are few schools which permit cell phone when their parents seek.

The cell phones are stolen when the students are in possession of the phone in the school. And learners do not make any angry reactions when cell phones are stolen. The majority of all the respondents hold that cell phones are adversely impacting on the studies of the students. Most of the respondents told the parents upon retrieving cell phones in their children.

All the sample schools had 100% of the respondents who affirmed their views that there should be a uniform policy on cell phones in schools and that the students should be treated. The use of cell phones has negative impact on the learning students

(Elder 2013) the researcher found out this and 100% of the respondents feel that cell phones are negatively influencing the performance of the students. Nathen and Zeitzer (2013) consider the use of cell phone to be sleepy making.

Recommendations

In order to eliminate this problem the researchers came up with the following recommendations on how to deal with it:

- The govt ought to give a clear and consistent policy to handle this problem through consultation of the parents, school administrators and teachers.
- The companies that provide SIMs should be put under control not to sell unregistered SIM.
- Through the print and electronic media, awareness should be created about the appropriate cell phone use.
- The school policy concerning the cell phones must also be distributed among the teachers and parents of the students on a regular basis.
- A teacher must keep his phone on mute or turn off in lecture.
- The policy can be enforced to the letter and those who committed the violation dealt with by an iron fist.

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