

## **SAFETY TREPIDATIONS OF PARENTS ON MOBILE PHONE USE OF YOUTH**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Mobile phones have become indispensable for young school and college-going boys and girls. The teens are so addictive, which is evident in many of the studies conducted all over the globe. It has become a phenomenon and addictions, to own a cell phone those adolescents find it to be essential in life. This type of youth mentality can lead to positive as well as negative effects on their culture. Further, the telecommunication companies in our country have been inclined towards introducing new and attractive packages to youth. The question arises why these companies are introducing a variety of packages without the social mobilization to check the mindset of the youth. Among youth, the majority is student community that is spell bounded by these packages. They are losing the essence of their profession/studies

**KEYWORDS:** Mobile Phones, Youth Behavior, Parental Attitude, Parental Control

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the greatest technologies to hit the 21st century is the cell phone. The advent of mobile phones has been one of the unique features of modern day information technologies. Mobile as a medium is growing fast with its easy accessibility and reach. It is not just telecom centric. From a communication tool, it has emerged as a device for all purposes. It has been so, for all sections of the people all over the world. It has set a new facet of personal communication for the people to be in touch with one another. Mobile phones, therefore, have become indispensable for young school and college-going boys and girls. The teens are so addictive, which is evident in many of the studies conducted all over the globe. It has become a phenomenon and an addiction, to own a cell phone that adolescents find it to be essential in life. This type of youth mentality can lead to positive as well as negative effects on their culture.

Further, the telecommunication companies in the country have been inclined towards introducing new and attractive packages to youth. The question arises why these companies are introducing a variety of packages without the social mobilization to check the mindset of the youth. Among youth, the majority is student community that is spell bounded by these packages. They are losing the essence of their profession/studies. They are darling and devoting themselves. They are getting away from their goals, destinies and motives. Their minds are becoming stagnant and static. Creativity and innovation is blocked by the consistent telephonic conversations spread over the whole of the night. They are losing their interest towards the interactions and sociality. Estrangement is increasing within small community or groups of people. By talking the whole night with the opposite sex, they are getting psychologically weak and pressured. There are many other physical distortions also rising due to spending the precious time which is needed with compulsory rest, relaxation, relief and mental health. Due to spending whole nights the absenteeism is raising steep in every profession.

They are going far and far away from the hold of families. They tell lies and have false communications with their parents. They are divulging the decisions, faith and expectations of their parents. Such kind of behavior is leading towards the social disintegration and awful deterioration of moral values in which respect is a core one. Their mental approach is rotating around sexual pleasure. Other emotions and sentiments are pushed into obscurity, there are forgetting that there are so many matters that need their kind consideration. They have obsessed barren of manners and healthy attitude to other requisites and needs. It is eradicating the mental capability and concentration of the youth. The mobile companies have every right to work out innovative packages offering greater value of money to their customers. But they should not make profits by conceding on the interests of the young generation.

Having these considerations in view, a critical research of attains significance to analyze the parental concerns about the mobile phone use of youth in Andhra Pradesh, a progressive state of India.

A mixed method approach was engaged to explore the research problem. Quantitative data are collected through questionnaire and qualitative data is collected through focus group discussions. A face-to-face survey using a structured questionnaire was conducted in three cities i.e., Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam and Tirupati in the State of Andhra Pradesh with young adults in the age group of 18-25 years to examine the mobile phone usage and effects. The survey was administered among 1200 young adults, with 400 from each city.

### Mobile Phone Use and Parental Control

As mobile phones have evolved into an alternative and more personal way to access online content and services, all of the risks associated with the internet can also be applied to mobile phones, particularly when used by children and young people. It is important that parents are aware of the risks of mobile phone ownership. These risks range from the financial risk of ownership through to that associated with personal safety and the release of personal information when communicating with others. It is equally important, obviously that parents educate children about these risks.

**Table 1: Rules Imposed By Parents on Mobile Phone Use**

| Weight   | 5   | 4   | 3   | 2   | 1   | Weighted Sum | Priority |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------------|----------|
| Rank   | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   |              |          |
| Do not talk on Mobile Phone late nights                  | 221 | 261 | 218 | 233 | 267 | 2653         | 4        |
| Do not spend too much time talking on Mobile Phone       | 240 | 205 | 231 | 271 | 253 | 2631         | 5        |
| Your Mobile bill should not go over a certain limit      | 262 | 243 | 245 | 229 | 221 | 2770         | 1        |
| Do not talk on Mobile phone while with parents/relatives | 233 | 245 | 247 | 229 | 245 | 2694         | 2        |
| Do not use Mobile phones while studying for exams        | 212 | 256 | 256 | 231 | 245 | 2669         | 3        |

The respondents of the study accepted that they have certain rules insisted by their parents in mobile phone usage. They revealed that parents insist them that their mobile bill should not go over a certain limit in the top order of priority. They should not talk on mobile while with parents and relatives in the second place of order of priority of rules by parents. The parents also restrict them using mobile phones while studying for exams and should not use late nights and do not spend too much time talking on in the third, fourth and fifth places of priority.

**Table 2: Issues of Conflicts with Parents on Mobile Use**

| Variables   | No   | Yes  | Total |
|---|------|------|-------|
| Talking long hours on Mobile Phone                | 639  | 561  | 1200  |
|   | 53.2 | 46.8 | 100.0 |
| Buying a new Mobile Phone                         | 757  | 443  | 1200  |
|   | 63.1 | 36.9 | 100.0 |
| Because parents blame Mobile for poor performance | 617  | 583  | 1200  |
|   | 51.4 | 48.6 | 100.0 |
| Over Mobile phone bill                            | 632  | 568  | 1200  |
|   | 52.7 | 47.3 | 100.0 |

The majority of respondents (53.2%) said they do not have any conflicts or fights talking long hours on mobile phones as such, but 46.8% said they have. 63.1% of respondents said they don't have fights with parents in buying a new mobile phone. 51.4% said that their parents do not blame mobile for their poor performance, whereas 48.6% said that they are blamed for. 52.7% said that they do not have conflicts with parents for excess mobile phone bill and 47.3% said that they have.

**Table 3: Agreement for Parental Rules on Mobile Phone Usage**

| Variables  | Disagree | Agree | Total |
|--|----------|-------|-------|
| Parents should monitor Mobile Phone usage among youth to avoid wrongdoing                                | 215      | 985   | 1200  |
|  | 17.9     | 82.1  | 100.0 |
| Parents should monitor Mobile Phone usage because young people use them to pursue romantic relationships | 273      | 927   | 1200  |
|  | 22.8     | 77.2  | 100.0 |
| Parents should monitor Mobile Phone usage because they know what is right or what is wrong               | 299      | 901   | 1200  |
|  | 24.9     | 75.1  | 100.0 |
| Parents should not monitor Mobile Phone usage because it is intruding into privacy of us                 | 536      | 664   | 1200  |
|  | 44.7     | 55.3  | 100.0 |
| It is alright for my parents to ask for change of wallpapers for my mobile phone                         | 371      | 829   | 1200  |
|  | 30.9     | 69.1  | 100.0 |
| Parents should look at contents of messages  | 437      | 763   | 1200  |
|  | 36.4     | 63.6  | 100.0 |
| Parents should take away the mobile phone as punishment  | 643      | 557   | 1200  |
|  | 53.6     | 46.4  | 100.0 |

The majority (82.1%) agreed that parents should monitor their mobile phone usage to avoid wrongdoing. 77.2% agreed that parents should monitor their mobile phone use because they use them to pursue romantic relationships. 75.1% agreed that parents should monitor because they know what is right or what is wrong. 55.3% agreed that parents should not monitor mobile phone because it is intruding into their privacy. 69.1% agreed that it is alright for their parents to ask for change of wallpapers for mobile phones. 63.6% agreed that parents should look at contents of messages. 53.6% disagreed the parents taking away the mobile phone as punishment.

**Table 4: Influence of Gender on level of Restriction by Parents**

| Chi square value | P-value | Level of restriction by Parents on Mobile usage |          |       | Total  |        |
|------------------|---------|---|----------|-------|--------|--------|
|                  |         | Low   | Moderate | High  |        |        |
| 11.662**         | 0.003   | 225   | 151      | 237   | 613    |        |
|                  |         | 36.7%   | 24.6%    | 38.7% | 100.0% |        |
|                  | Gender  | Female  | 255      | 168   | 164    | 587    |
|                  |         |   | 43.4%    | 28.6% | 28.0%  | 100.0% |
| Total            |         | 480   | 319      | 401   | 1200   |        |
|                  |         | 40.0%   | 26.6%    | 33.4% | 100.0% |        |

There is a significant relationship between gender and the level of restriction by parents on mobile phone usage. It is higher among male respondents (38.7%) and is lower among female respondents (43.4%).

**Table 5: Influence of age on level of Restriction by Parents**

| Chi square value      | P-value       | Level of restriction by Parents on Mobile usage |          |       | Total  |
|-----------------------|---------------|---|----------|-------|--------|
|                       |               | Low   | Moderate | High  |        |
| 4.698                 | 0.320         |   |          |       |        |
| Age of the respondent | 17 - 20 Years | 228   | 156      | 223   | 607    |
|                       |               | 37.6%   | 25.7%    | 36.7% | 100.0% |
|                       | 21 - 24 years | 212   | 139      | 153   | 504    |
|                       |               | 42.1%   | 27.5%    | 30.4% | 100.0% |
|                       | 25 - 28 years | 40  | 24       | 25    | 89     |
|                       |               | 44.8%   | 26.9%    | 28.4% | 100.0% |
| Total                 |               | 480   | 319      | 401   | 1200   |
|                       |               | 40.0%   | 26.6%    | 33.4% | 100.0% |

According to the data presented in the above table, there is no significant relationship between age group of respondents and level of restriction by parents on mobile phone usage. It is higher among those respondents in the age group of 17-20 years and is low among respondents of age group 25-28 years.

**Table 6: Influence of Education on level of Restriction by Parents**

| Chi square value | P-value              | Level of restriction by Parents on Mobile usage |          |       | Total  |
|------------------|----------------------|---|----------|-------|--------|
|                  |                      | Low   | Moderate | High  |        |
| 35.65**          | 0.000                |   |          |       |        |
| Education        | SSC/HSC              | 20  | 16       | 18    | 54     |
|                  |                      | 36.6%   | 29.3%    | 34.1% | 100.0% |
|                  | Intermediate         | 43  | 57       | 59    | 159    |
|                  |                      | 26.9%   | 36.1%    | 37.0% | 100.0% |
|                  | Bachelor Degree      | 244   | 104      | 167   | 515    |
|                  |                      | 47.4%   | 20.2%    | 32.4% | 100.0% |
|                  | Master Degree        | 76  | 65       | 51    | 192    |
|                  |                      | 39.6%   | 34.0%    | 26.4% | 100.0% |
|                  | Professional degrees | 69  | 51       | 56    | 176    |
|                  |                      | 39.4%   | 28.8%    | 31.8% | 100.0% |
|                  | Others               | 28  | 25       | 51    | 104    |
|                  |                      | 26.9%   | 24.4%    | 48.7% | 100.0% |
| Total            |                      | 480   | 319      | 402   | 1200   |
|                  |                      | 40.0%   | 26.6%    | 33.4% | 100.0% |

The data reveals that there is a significant relationship between education and the level of parental control on mobile phone usage. The restriction is agreed to be high among those (48.7%) who have degrees other than professional qualifications followed by Intermediate student respondents (37%). It is lower among those (47.4%) who are graduates.

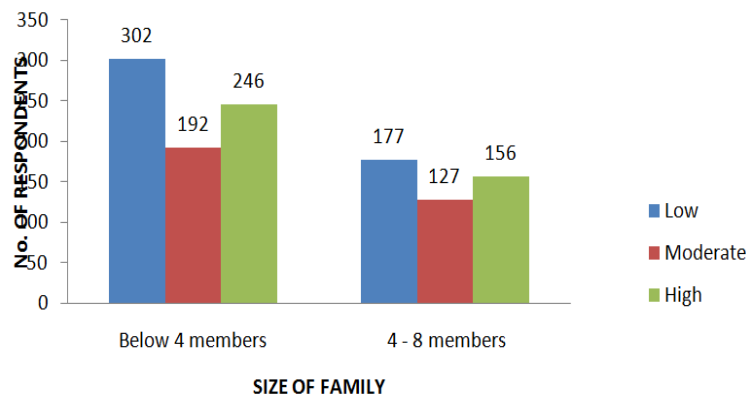
**Table 7: Influence of Relationship status on level of restriction by parents**

| Chi square value | P-value         | Level of restriction by Parents on Mobile usage |          |       | Total  |
|------------------|-----------------|---|----------|-------|--------|
|                  |                 | Low   | Moderate | High  |        |
| 11.68*           | 0.020           |   |          |       |        |
| Relationship     | Single          | 421   | 263      | 334   | 1018   |
|                  |                 | 41.4%   | 25.8%    | 32.8% | 100.0% |
|                  | Married         | 34  | 40       | 31    | 105    |
|                  |                 | 32.9%   | 38.0%    | 29.1% | 100.0% |
|                  | In-relationship | 24  | 16       | 37    | 77     |
|                  |                 | 31.0%   | 20.7%    | 48.3% | 100.0% |
| Total            |                 | 479   | 319      | 402   | 1200   |
|                  |                 | 40.0%   | 26.6%    | 33.4% | 100.0% |

There is a significant impact of relationship status on the level of restriction, by parents of respondents on mobile phone usage. There is a high level of restrictions, on those respondents who are in relationship (48.3%) and low level of restrictions, by parents on those respondents who are single.

**Table 8: Influence of Family Size on level of Restriction by Parents**

| Chi square value | P-value | Level of restriction by Parents on Mobile usage |          |       | Total  |        |
|------------------|---------|---|----------|-------|--------|--------|
|                  |         | Low   | Moderate | High  |        |        |
| 0.533            | 0.766   | Below 4 members                                 | 302      | 192   | 246    | 740    |
|                  |         |   | 40.9%    | 25.9% | 33.2%  |        |
|                  |         | 4 - 8 members                                   | 177      | 127   | 156    | 460    |
|                  |         |   | 38.6%    | 27.5% | 33.9%  | 100.0% |
| Total            |         | 479   | 319      | 402   | 1200   |        |
|                  |         | 40.0%   | 26.6%    | 33.4% | 100.0% |        |



**Figure: 1**

The above table indicates that, family size has no bearing on the level of restrictions by parents, on mobile phone use.

**Table 9: Influence of Monthly Income on level of Restriction by Parents**

| Chi square value | P-value | Level of restriction by Parents on Mobile usage |          |       | Total  |        |
|------------------|---------|---|----------|-------|--------|--------|
|                  |         | Low   | Moderate | High  |        |        |
| 19.60**          | 0.003   | Below Rs.10000                                  | 174      | 126   | 183    | 483    |
|                  |         |   | 36.2%    | 26.0% | 37.8%  | 100.0% |
|                  |         | Rs.10000 - Rs.30000                             | 220      | 148   | 140    | 508    |
|                  |         |   | 43.3%    | 29.1% | 27.6%  | 100.0% |
|                  |         | Rs.30000 - Rs.50000                             | 72       | 27    | 53     | 152    |
|                  |         |   | 47.4%    | 17.5% | 35.1%  | 100.0% |
|                  |         | Above Rs.50000                                  | 13       | 19    | 25     | 57     |
|                  |         |   | 23.3%    | 32.6% | 44.2%  | 100.0% |
| Total            |         | 479   | 320      | 401   | 1200   |        |
|                  |         | 40.0%   | 26.6%    | 33.4% | 100.0% |        |

There is a significant influence of monthly income of respondents, on the restrictions by parents on mobile phone use. These restrictions are high among those respondents, who have monthly incomes above Rs.50000 & Rs.30000-50000.

**Table 10: Influence of Living Status on level of Restriction by Parents**

| Chi square value | P-value      | Level of restriction by Parents on Mobile usage |          |        | Total  |
|------------------|--------------|---|----------|--------|--------|
|                  |              | Low   | Moderate | High   |        |
| 3.357            | 0.763        | 270   | 165      | 232    | 667    |
|                  |              | 40.4%   | 24.8%    | 34.8%  | 100.0% |
|                  | With Parents | 125   | 87       | 97     | 309    |
|                  |              | 40.5%   | 28.0%    | 31.5%  | 100.0% |
|                  | In Hostels   | 58  | 47       | 44     | 149    |
|                  |              | 39.3%   | 31.3%    | 29.5%  | 100.0% |
|                  | With friends | 27  | 20       | 28     | 75     |
|                  |              | 35.7%   | 26.8%    | 37.5%  | 100.0% |
| Alone            | 480          | 319   | 401      | 1200   |        |
|                  | 40.0%        | 26.6%   | 33.4%    | 100.0% |        |

### Mobile Phone Use and Parental Control

Mobile phones now offer much of the functionality of a desktop computer meaning that, full access to the internet is readily available. Therefore, the same risks exist – that children and young people may access inappropriate content. The issues are heightened by the fact that, mobile phones are such personal and private devices, and so, it may be difficult for parents to monitor online activity in the same way, as they might on the home PC. In this angle, the study indicated that, there is a significant relationship between gender and the level of restriction by parents on mobile phone usage. It is higher among male respondents (38.7%) and is lower among female respondents (43.4%). There is no significant relationship between age group of respondents and level of restriction by parents on mobile phone usage. It is higher among those respondents, in the age group of 17-20 years and is low among respondents of age group 25-28 years. There is a significant relationship between education and the level of parental control, on mobile phone usage. The restriction is agreed to be high, among those (48.7%) who have degrees other than professional qualifications, followed by Intermediate student respondents (37%). It is lower among those (47.4%) who are graduates. There is a significant impact of relationship status on the level of restriction by parents of respondents on mobile phone usage. There is a high level of restrictions on those respondents who are in relationship (48.3%) and low level of restrictions by parents on those respondents who are single. Family size and living status have no bearing on the level of restrictions by parents on mobile phone use. There is a significant influence of monthly income of respondents on the restrictions by parents on mobile phone use. These restrictions are high among those respondents who have monthly incomes above Rs.50000 & Rs.30000-50000.

The respondents of the study accepted that, they have certain rules insisted by their parents in mobile phone usage. They revealed that, parents insist them that their mobile bill should not go over a certain limit, in the top order of priority. They should not talk on mobile, while with parents and relatives in the second place of order of priority of rules by parents. The parents also restrict them using mobile phones, while studying for exams and should not use late nights and do not spend too much time talking on in the third, fourth and fifth places of priority. The majority of respondents (53.2%) said, they do not have any conflicts or fights talking long hours on mobile phones as such, but 46.8% said they have .63.1% of respondents said, they don't have fights with parents in buying a new mobile phone. 51.4% said that, their parents do not blame mobile for their poor performance, whereas 48.6% said that, they are blamed for .52.7% said that, they do not have conflicts with parents for excess mobile phone bill and 47.3% said that, they have the majority (82.1%) agreed that, parents should monitor their mobile phone usage, to avoid wrongdoing. 77.2% agreed that, parents should monitor their mobile phone use because, they use them to pursue romantic relationships. 75.1% agreed that, parents should monitor because,

they know what is right or what is wrong. 55.3% agreed that, parents should not monitor mobile phone because, it is intruding into their privacy. 63.6% agreed that, parents should look at contents of messages. 53.6% disagreed the parents, taking away the mobile phone as punishment.

- The study indicated that, there is a significant relationship between gender and the level of restriction, by parents on mobile phone usage. It is higher among male respondents and is lower among female respondents.
- Parental restriction is high among those respondents in the age group of 17-20 years and those who have degrees other than professional qualifications, followed by Intermediate students.
- There are high levels of restrictions on those respondents, who are in a relationship and who have a monthly income above Rs.50000.
- The respondents of the study accepted that, they have certain rules insisted by their parents in mobile phone usage. They revealed that, parents insist them that their mobile bill should not go over a certain limit and should not talk, when they are with parents and relatives.
- The parents also restrict them using mobile phones, while studying for exams and should not use late nights and do not spend too much time talking. Majority does not have conflicts, as such with parents on talking long hours on mobile phones.
- Majority revealed that, they are not blamed for poor performance by parents, for heavy use of mobile phone and have no conflicts with parents for excess bills.
- The majority agreed that, parents should monitor their mobile phone usage, to avoid wrongdoing, monitor their mobile phone use because, they use them to pursue romantic relationships as parents know what is right or what is wrong. Some agreed that, parents should not monitor mobile phone, because it is intruding into their privacy.

### Focus Group Outcomes

The focus group discussion with parents revealed that, they feel safer for their children to use mobile phones, as they can keep in touch with them always. Personal safety is a significant factor, among many of the parents. Mrs. Swapna of 44 years is of the opinion, "A major reason my child has a cell phone is so we can be in touch no matter where he/she is. Yet, I feel worried about the heavy use of cell phone because, we as parents may not continuously monitor". Mr. Damodar, a father (52 years) of 3 teenage children, says "In my opinion, cell phones are responsible for the decreased academic performance of children, deviated social relationships. I sometimes take away the mobile phone as punishment". Mr. Balaji of 36 years old says "According to me, today's girl students go from place to place, in pursuance of their academic and sports career. Once they leave home early in the morning, they go to the college, then to their tutorials, computer classes, music classes and even in the playground and swimming pools or shuttle badminton courts. They arrive home, late in the evening. As colleges don't allow cell phones inside their campus, girl students are out of touch with their families, for at least 10-11 hours everyday of the week, except Sundays". Mr. Suresh Rao, an academician by profession of 43 years of age reveals, "I advise parents think carefully the pros and cons of mobile phones before presenting them to their children. It's easy to think that giving the child a device will be beneficial to the child – they can learn better and more using apps, save time going to the library for research and that they will not interrupt the parents' busy lifestyles. But later when children become addicted to these devices, it gives us a harsh warning about the psychological problems these children will face in their adulthood". Mrs. Padma of 39 years tells, "I have seen my son is all around hooked to mobile phone without

any awareness of his surroundings. This is the current picture around the world; children and parents are spending more time on gadgets rather than with their friends and families". Mrs. Radhika of 33 years suggests, "Like any technological invention, the mobile phone has its uses and misuses. No one can deny the fact that a mobile phone is exactly what the doctor ordered on an emergency. The ability to connect with anyone anywhere with a cell phone 24x7 is remarkable. Of late, the mobile phone has come into the limelight and it is being put to use for illegal operations — terrorist attacks, extortions, kidnapping and sex and drug rackets". Mr. Sathyanarayana Reddy of 46 years, says "Mobile phone is no longer a status symbol. The ubiquitous shiny device has been lapped up by practically every member of our society, cutting across religion, caste, gender and income groups — domestic help, hawkers, plumbers, doctors, homemakers, teachers, students, journalists, engineers, lawyers etc."

In summary, parents have consistent and relatively high level concerns, about a variety of problems their children face with mobile phones. It is also evident from the views of some of the parents that, cell phone is a safety gadget for contacting family, in emergency situations. They are also of the opinion that, heavy use of cell phone might make them land into troubles and hence, parental monitoring is essential. Cell phone definitely, is a gadget of distortion of academic pursuits and family interaction. The cell phone plays a role in youth identity formation - fostering a sense of self-esteem, showing social connectedness and providing a teen, with an independent means of communication. But, a parent is of the view that, it is no more a status symbol, as it is used by everyone in the society. Youth with mobiles are usually, or learn quickly to become, technically competent in their use of their cell phones features, such as SMS messaging, picture messaging, or using mobile chat services. In addition, their model of cell phone, ringtone or wallpaper, all offer youth a way of showing off their social status or fashion consciousness, in the digital age. A parent of a female student appraised the benefits of mobile phone.

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