

Frequent cell phone use linked to anxiety, lower grades and reduced happiness in students

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A Kent State University student texts a friend while studying on campus. Credit: Kent State University

Today, smartphones are central to college students' lives, keeping them constantly connected with friends, family and the Internet. Students' cell phones are rarely out of reach whether the setting is a college classroom, library, recreational center, cafeteria or dorm room. As cell phone use continues to increase, it is worth considering whether use of the device is related to measurable outcomes important for student success, such as academic performance, anxiety and happiness.

Kent State University researchers Andrew Lepp, Ph.D., Jacob Barkley, Ph.D., and Aryn Karpinski, Ph.D., all faculty members in the university's College of Education, Health and Human Services, surveyed more than 500 university students. Daily cell phone use was recorded along with a clinical measure of [anxiety](#) and each student's level of satisfaction with their own life, or in other words happiness. Finally, all participants allowed the researchers to access their official university records in order to retrieve their actual, cumulative college grade point average (GPA). All students surveyed were undergraduate students and were equally distributed by class (freshman, sophomore, junior and senior). In addition, 82 different, self-reported majors were represented.

Results of the analysis showed that cell phone use was negatively related to GPA and positively related to anxiety. Following this, GPA was positively related to happiness while anxiety was negatively related to happiness. Thus, for the population studied, high frequency [cell phone users](#) tended to have lower GPA, higher anxiety, and lower satisfaction with life (happiness) relative to their peers who used the cell phone less often. The statistical model illustrating these relationships was highly significant.

Earlier this year, a team led by Lepp and Barkley also identified a negative relationship between cell phone use and cardiorespiratory fitness. Taken as a whole, these results suggest that students should be encouraged to monitor their [cell phone](#) use and reflect upon it critically so that it is not detrimental to their [academic performance](#), mental and physical health, and overall well-being or happiness.

More information: The study reported upon here is published in the journal Computers in Human Behavior (2014), pages 343-350, [DOI: 10.1016/j.chb.2013.10.049](#) and can be accessed at [www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../ii/S0747563213003993](#)

Provided by Kent State University

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