

## The Impact of Parental Technoference Towards Emotional Behavioural Adjustment among Malaysian Adolescents

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### ABSTRACT

In an increasingly digitalised world, parental technoference the disruption of parent-child interactions due to parental use of technology, has emerged as a growing concern. This study explores the impact of parental technoference on the emotional and behavioural adjustment of Malaysian adolescents. As parents become more engrossed in digital devices, their responsiveness to children's emotional and social needs may decline, potentially leading to adverse psychological outcomes. Drawing from Attachment Theory, this research investigates how parental distraction affects adolescent emotional regulation, behavioural tendencies, and overall well-being. Existing studies suggest that excessive parental screen time can lead to increased teenage anxiety, depressive symptoms, and externalising behaviours such as aggression and defiance. This study employs a qualitative method approach, involving semi-structured focus group interviews with Malaysian adolescents aged 13–18, to assess their perceptions of parental technoference and its effects on their emotional adjustment. Findings are expected to highlight a significant correlation between high levels of parental technoference and negative emotional-behavioural outcomes among adolescents. The results could inform parenting strategies, promoting mindful digital usage and emphasising the importance of quality parent-child interactions. By understanding the implications of technoference, policymakers, educators, and parents can work together to foster healthier familial relationships and support adolescent psychological well-being in the digital era.

**Keywords:** *Parental technoference, emotional behavioural adjustment, adolescent, technology, attachment theory.*

### INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, an additional 1.74 million smartphone users are predicted to join the estimated 29 million smartphone users by 2025 due to the country's expanding population (Muller, 2021). Malaysians use social media for 2.45 hours and the internet for 7.5 hours each day on average (Muller, 2021). Today's parents spend significant amounts of time on technological devices. Children are exposed to mobile devices when their parents use them in their daily lives.

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Even though using technology can have many positive effects on people's lives, like better social support (McDaniel, Coyne, & Holmes, 2012) and the flexibility to work from home (Chesley, Slibak, & Wajcman, 2013), sociological and psychological studies have shown that using mobile and digital technologies can also have negative effects on in-person social dynamics (Mohamad Salleh et al., 2024; Victor, Yusuf & Abdul Kadir 2024).

Recently, the term "technoference" has been used to describe regular disruptions in social connections or quality time spent together caused by digital and mobile technological devices (Fusha et al., 2025; McDaniel, 2015; McDaniel & Coyne, 2016). These disruptions can happen during in-person interactions, daily activities like playing or eating, or when someone feels like they are being invaded when someone else uses digital technology while they are spending time together. Families with children now frequently engage in technoference and studies are starting to show that prolonged parental use of technology can have detrimental effects on parent-child interactions, as well as the health and developmental results of the kids (Fusha et al., 2025)

Several studies have looked at the relationship between parent digital technology usage and the frequency and quality of parent-child interactions in an effort to define what "problematic" media use for parents could be (Selak, Merkaš & Ivankovi, 2025). Research has indicated that parent use of mobile technology around children is linked to fewer parent-child interactions and lower responsiveness to child bids (Hiniker et al., 2015). Children expressed that parents shouldn't use digital devices during family activities because they expect their parents to be there and to set an example of responsible use of technology (Hiniker, Shoenebeck & Kientz, 2016; Janssens, Meeus & Beullens, 2025). When using digital technology around their children, parents also feel uneasy about their "absent presence." They characterise it as "multitasking," which diminishes their sense of effectiveness as parents.

Parent device usage style and the quality of parent-child interactions have been shown to have a significant impact on a child's development (Fay-Stammbach et al., 2014; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2017). Parent-child interactions marked by high parental sensitivity, contribute to emotional behavioural adjustment (Kildare & Middlemiss, 2017). While some studies suggested that using devices may indirectly harm children's development and secure attachment relationships, a much more thorough study that looks into the overall predictors of adolescents' emotional and behavioural adjustment has not yet been investigated (Kushlev, 2015; Radesky & Christakis, 2016; Mohamad Salleh et al., 2024).

There hasn't been much research done on how parental technoference affects kids' and teens' socioemotional adjustment. Most of the current literature on parental technoference has been conducted mostly in the United States and has concentrated on younger children that less than 12 years old (Janssens et al., 2025). Nevertheless, no assessments have looked at the results for teenagers in this situation as of yet. The literature on this subject is still scarce in the Malaysian setting despite the fact that the country's smartphone population is growing and has an impact on family relationships and interactions (Arshat, 2013; Baharudin et al., 2011; Habidin & Mohamad Salleh, 2025).

Children are the most affected and must adapt to the changes in the family environment, even though previous research on emotional behavioural adjustment was primarily done in the fields of medicine, mental health, and clinical psychology (Fusha et al., 2025; Janssens, Meeus & Beullens, 2025). In the current scenario, where reliance on technology has become the new norm, children must also adjust (Kılıman et al., 2025). Thus,

the study aims to investigate the impact of parents' "technoference," or the use of mobile devices towards emotional behavioural adjustment from the perspectives of the children.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Attachment Theory*

Attachment, as defined by Bretherton (2005), is a deep emotional connection that transcends time and space. This concept is supported by various theories, including Attachment Theory itself. The theory, initially developed by John Bowlby and further refined by Ainsworth (1964), focuses on understanding this emotional bond. In the article Bowlby proposed two primary attachment styles: secure and insecure. Insecure attachment is further categorized into three types: avoidant, anxious-preoccupied, and disorganized. These classifications are assessed using the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) developed by Armsden and Greenberg (1987), and also Guarnieri et al. (2010). The IPPA measures attachment across three dimensions – trust, communication, and isolation – for bonds with mothers, fathers, and friends.

A study by Ahmad Shazilia et al. (2020) found a positive link between secure attachment styles and life satisfaction in teenagers, while insecure attachment styles showed a negative correlation (Peng et al., 2025). Their findings revealed moderate levels of both bonding and life satisfaction among the studied teenagers. The research highlights the importance of considering student life satisfaction to prevent future mental and psychological health issues. Similar studies, like Azahar Che Latiff et al. (2017), have explored the connection between parental and peer closeness with teenage drug abuse. Looking beyond the adolescent sample, Hodge and Gebler-Wolfe (2022) suggest a two-pronged approach for social workers regarding technology use. Social workers can directly work with families to establish healthy smartphone habits for children. Additionally, they can advocate for broader policies that protect children from technologies designed to exploit their developmental, psychological, and neurological vulnerabilities.

### *Emotional Behavioural Adjustment*

Childhood behavioural and emotional adjustment is a time when children developed in many ways, including fundamentally important social and emotional growth (Snyder, Taylor, & Cingel, 2025). Emotion serves as their initial learning window in this instance (Guan et al., 2016). Emotion includes basic feelings that children experience, such as comfort, fear, and anxiety. Children will always want what they feel comfortable with if they feel that way about everything.

According to Suhana (2017), children who use gadgets and spend a lot of time in front of screens may become less interested in interacting with others and their surroundings, which may have an adverse effect on their emotional and behavioural development (Vahidi et al., 2016). Parents must adapt to their children's exposure to mobile devices by supervising, guiding, and carrying out strategies to control their usage of smartphones and the Internet (Hsieh et al., 2019). The degree to which parents influence their children's media habits can impact the socioemotional development of their offspring (Nikken & Schols, 2015).

The best emotional stimulation for brain development is called attunement, and it involves parents or other adults who know how to appropriately handle their children's emotional needs (Snyder, Taylor, & Cingel, 2025). There will be severe consequences for children's moral, social, and emotional development if face-to-face engagement in real time

is not provided. This is especially true if attunement is not met. It is the responsibility of parents to recognise the significance of this emotional growth. Mood, temperament, personality, disposition, and motivation are all related to emotion (Elliot & Pekron, 2007; Richards et al., 2025).

The ability of children to control their emotions has also been connected to warm response, independence, encouragement, and mentoring. In addition to helping children better regulate their negative emotions and have lower levels of anger, warm and responsive parenting can eventually lessen the harmful emotional effects of bullying (Lunkenheimer et al., 2020; Hajal & Paley, 2020). Another risk factor for violent and disruptive behaviour issues in children is a lack of warmth from their parents (Knitter & Zemp, 2020; Ling & Kai Yee, 2021). Numerous studies have shown that treating behavioural issues in children by combining warm, responsive parent-child interactions with calm, consistent behaviour regulation is effective (Kim et al., 2018; Kong et al., 2025).

The absence of interactions between parents and children in the age of family technoference has undoubtedly had an impact on the connection between them (Zhang et al., 2025). Using self- and parental reports, McDaniel and Radesky (2018) investigated parents' technoference with their three-year-old children. The findings discovered that parents' technoference was linked to an increase in internalising behaviours, such as whining, sulking, and easily getting their feelings hurt, as well as externalising behaviours, such as hyperactivity, easily frustrated, and throwing tantrums. This shows that young children's acting out and internalisation of emotions may be connected to technoference in the parent-child interaction.

Conversely, internalising behaviours in early childhood were linked to anxiety and depression (Karevold et al., 2009). It has been demonstrated that parenting styles and the nature of parent-child relationships can affect how anxiety and depression develop in children and adolescents (Kong et al., 2025).

Physical aggression typically peaks in young toddlers and decreases throughout development (Alink et al., 2006). Physical aggression is less common in adolescents than early toddlerhood and is associated with difficulty in social relationships (Brame et al., 2001), peer rejection (Vaillancourt & Hymel, 2006), and poorer academic performance (Kokko et al., 2006). In contrast to physical aggression, cyberbullying peaks in adolescence (Pabian & Vandebosch, 2016) and is more prevalent in adolescence than physical aggression (Cappadocia et al., 2013).

### *Parental Technoference*

Globally, mobile gadgets are starting to permeate modern society. A transition from traditional face-to-face interactions to technology-based interactions has emerged from parents' constant virtual connection (Knitter & Zemp, 2020; Stern & Messer, 2009), which unavoidably affects regular family relationships. In a similar vein, teenagers' general evaluation of the quality of their relationship with their parents decreased the more they used their smartphones (Kildare & Middlemiss, 2017). Therefore, using smartphones among family members may have an impact on each other. Everyday family life appears to be dominated by cellphones for both parents and kids, which probably has an impact on family dynamics (Xie et al., 2025).

"Technoference" is the term used in to describe the phenomenon of disruptions and interferences of regular face-to-face contacts caused by technology, such as cellphones (Zhang, et al., 2025). It has to do with parents using technology on a regular basis to disrupt face-to-face interactions, real-time communications, or family time (McDaniel & Coyne, 2016; Qiao & Liu, 2020). This includes times when a parent checks a tech gadget when the family is together, which gives rise to emotions of invasion (McDaniel & Coyne, 2016). Families with children now frequently engage in technoference (McDaniel, 2019), and studies are starting to show that prolonged parental use of technology can negatively impact parent-child relationships, children's health, and developmental outcomes (Stockdale et al., 2020).

Parents use electronics devices for extended periods of time these days. According to Ali et al. (2020), mother of young children used cellphones for three hours a day on average; sixteen percent of the mothers said they used their smartphones for five to fifteen hours a day, and six percent said they were addicted to them. Besides, research discovered a link between moms' excessive screen usage and their children's behavioural issues, signs of hyperactivity/inattention, and emotional issues (Poulin et al., 2019). Since parents are using their devices for extended periods of time each day, it raises the question of whether this excessive use of technology affects the health and development of their children by interfering with normal parenting behaviours and keeping them from interacting with their children in the best possible way (Xie et al., 2025)

The use of smartphones by parents and the effects it has on parent-child relationships have garnered attention recently (Kildare & Middlemiss, 2017; Zhang, et al., 2025). Throughout the day, parents use screens for personal and professional purposes. As a result, it is possible that they may use smart devices during parent-child interactions (e.g., texting while playing with their children; Beamish, et al., 2019). Because parents' attention is diverted from their children's needs and instead is focused on their device, the presence of digital media devices during family quality time—such as meals, playtime, and bedtime—may harm children's social-emotional development (McDaniel & Radesky, 2018). It shows that preadolescents who perceived higher levels of parent technoference also rated their relationship with their parents significantly lower in terms of perceived companionship and higher in terms of conflict (Meeus, Coenen & Eggermont ,2021). Additionally, there was a strong connection found between mobile device distraction and lower emotional support.

The impact of these multimodal technologies on interpersonal relationships and interactions remains largely unexamined, particularly in Malaysia. This area of research is still relatively new. However, recent research has shown that children's behaviour can be negatively impacted by excessive smartphone use (McDaniel, 2019; Peng, Mao, Cui & Yang, 2025).

### *Teenagers*

Research on the use and effects of emerging mobile and digital technologies, such as wearables, smartphones, tablets, and other mobile devices, is trailing behind the rate of adoption of these devices, which are now ingrained in the daily lives of young children and their families (Radesky et al., 2015). These multimodal gadgets have completely changed how individuals engage with digital technology and with one another. They provide users with limitless access to social media, work-related tasks, information, and personal data (Campbell, Ling & Bayer, 2014).

## METHODOLOGY

The study involved semi-structured focus group interviews (qualitative), that include adolescents of the different races in Malaysia. The respondents are from randomly selected secondary schools in Malaysia. The process of obtaining informants in this study is to first request permission from the Ministry of Education Malaysia. The Ministry of Education Malaysia reviewed the survey questions and several survey questions were dropped because they contained sensitive questions. After approval by the Ministry of Education Malaysia, the application was forwarded to the State Education Department. The researcher contacted the school to obtain informants after the State Education Department approved to collect data in the designated schools. From there, we selected and divided them into 8 focus groups that were representations of the three major ethnics in Malaysia (i.e. Malay, Chinese and Indian). Out of the 8 groups, we managed to interview 39 Malays, 19 Chinese, 9 Indians, and 3 Siamese. Each of the group consisted of six to nine participants, in which they openly discussed their opinions on their family technoference, family environment, family relationship, and their emotions and attitude towards their parent's smartphone habit. Prior to the interviews, participants were given a demographic sheet and an explanation of the purpose of the research and the concepts that would be discussed to ensure they fully understood what the research hoped to achieve. Each interview lasted between 60 and 75 minutes. All focus group discussions were audio-recorded and some were video-recorded. Each focus group was facilitated by one or two researchers with the help of a research assistant. Researchers who acted as facilitators had vast experience in group process facilitations and each of them used the questions prepared. This study is looking at how parents use their smartphones when interacting with their children, which is defined as any time they spend together (eating, playing, or just being in the same room). In order to investigate the impacts of parents' smartphone use varies depending on the age of their children, we choose teenagers aged 14 to 19 to represent the early phases of a child's development.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Emotional and Behavioural Adjustment*

Emotional Behavioural Adjustment is the period of aspects development including their social and emotional development which is very fundamental. The findings identified four major themes associated with emotional and behavioural adjustment; children personality, parents' social media use, smartphone effects on emotions, and problem solving.

This study looked at the connections between parental device use and behavioural outcomes in children. Parent technology interference, also known as "technoference," defined as regular disruptions in interpersonal interactions or time spent together caused by digital and mobile technology devices. It leads to higher levels of internalising (such as anxiety, withdrawal) and externalising (such as tantrums, emotional reactivity) behaviour problems in children. The findings found that less responsive parents or interrupted parent-child play could be a factor in behavioural issues in children, such as emotional and behavioural changes.

The findings show that while persistent perceptions of parental technoference were linked to worse mental health outcomes and an increase in deviant behaviour, infrequent levels of perceived parental technoference may have little effect on young people's internalising or externalising behaviours.

Use of Mobile Devices by Parents. Modern mobile devices are used more often during family activities like meals and playtime because of their portability and accessibility. This has led to an increase in "technoferece," which is the term for disruptions in interpersonal interactions caused by digital and mobile technology devices (Zhang et al., 2025). There is a growing body of evidence indicating that parents who are engrossed in using their mobile devices are less able to read their children's cues (Kildare & Middlemiss, 2017; McDaniel, 2019). Children may react by becoming more dramatic in their emotions of unhappiness in an attempt to get their carers' attention again (McDaniel & Radesky, 2018). Studies looking at the immediate impact of parents using mobile devices on kids' behaviour reveal that young kids show less involvement with toys, more negative affect, and less good affect when their moms use their phones.

*i. Children Personality*

All informants give their opinions when asked about their personalities. Five informants claimed that they were introverts and shy. However, when they were with someone they loved or familiar, they talked a lot:

I'm not a shy person actually, but when new people want to get to know me, I'm shy. A little. If friends are ok. Get angry easily. (Informant #47, M28)

I'm someone who tends to enjoy being alone, especially with new friends. But if I'm with good friends, I can chat and hang out together. But when it comes to new people, I feel a bit uncomfortable because we don't know each other, right? (Informant #42, M25)

I'm a quiet person, I don't talk much unless I really have to. But with my friends, I can talk. With people I've just met, not so much. (Informant #44, M27)

I'm a bit shy. But when I'm with friends I've known for a long time, I feel more comfortable. I can joke around. But with new people, it's still not okay. I need to adjust first before I can open up. (Informant #43, M25)

I'm an introvert. I'm quite quiet. It's hard for me to talk to other people. But with my friends, it's normal. But with others, I've never really done that. It's more like, we'd call it socializing. (Informant #49, C12)

Whereas, two informants said they were extrovert, sometimes hyper especially when they are with friends:

I'm a hyper person. When I'm with my friends, I'm just as hyper as they are. Their personalities can be pretty hyper too, sometimes. It's okay being with them. We can say anything to each other without getting offended, because we all prefer to say things openly rather than behind each other's backs. But with people I don't know well, I'm not as open. (Informant #56, M33)

I'm friendly, a social butterfly. I'm easy to get along with. I also tend to feel sorry for people quickly. But I often feel down with my own family. With my friends, I'm fine. I'm sensitive though, but I just keep it to myself. (Informant #58, M35)

Meanwhile, two informants claimed that they are have laid back personality. They do not care much about what people say and enjoy their life as it is:

I'm not someone who gets angry easily. I'm pretty relaxed. (Informant #51, C14)

I'm happy-go-lucky. If I have a problem, I don't want others to see it because I don't like that. Even if I have a problem, I don't want to show it. I just try to stay happy, even if I'm feeling down or sad. (Informant #29, M19)

One informant said he seldomly talked to people because he's lack of confident:

I'm a quiet person. Not very confident. When communicating with others, I usually don't feel sure of myself, unless I'm close to the person. (Informant #45, C10)

While another said he was not afraid to socialize but feels nervous when in crowded places. He feels more comfortable to socialize with strangers compare to people he knows:

I'm not a quiet person, and I'm not really hot-tempered either. I feel shy when I'm with people I know, especially in a big group. But if I'm in a crowded place with people I don't know, I'm okay, not as shy. (Informant #41, M24)

One informant said he is an obedient son. He follows their words even when he was a small child:

I'm a good person. I've been like this since I was little. (Informant #53, M30)

On the other hands, one informant said he was an introvert, so he often expresses his feelings through drawing:

Ahh... I'm really not someone who likes to socialize much. When I do socialize, I don't really know what to say. I'm not very social with others. So, to pass the time, I just draw. (Informant #52, M29)

In the midst of interview, one informant said she is shy around people but talks a lot when with family:

I'm a quiet person. When I'm around a lot of people, I feel shy and don't really want to chat with them. But with my family, I'm friendly. It's just when I'm with a big group of friends, I get shy. (Informant #57, M34)

There were also informants who admitted that they love to copy other's personality. One of them said he copy someone's handwriting because he felt that they are better than his:

I prefer to, like, imitate others. [...] [...] Like their style, their personality. Just like other people. I feel like they're good, so I try to imitate them a bit. I'm not sure how to explain it. For example, like their handwriting. (Informant #55, M32)

One informant confessed that she behaves differently when online than real life. She was direct when posting a comment on social media, but became socially awkward when met them face-to-face:

It's different from reality. Like, with strangers. You know when you scroll on TikTok? There are strangers who are attractive, and we compliment them. It feels less awkward, right? But if it's face-to-face, we feel shy. So, on social media, we're more friendly even with strangers, but in person, it feels awkward. (Informant #35, M21)

To summarize, most informants exhibit reserved characters. They need time to warm up to people. But once, close they became talkative and expressive. For those who unable to warm up to other, they express their feeling trough hobbies like drawing. There was a case whereby the don't feel comfortable around people yet happy with family. Some informants change their personality depends on situation, some warm to stranger than friends, while other loves to copy other's personality, and there are also people who have different personality in online setting than real life. With this, it is clear that personality can change when we are in different surroundings.

This can be explained by the Attachment Theory, the results suggested that the quality of the family environment may increase new forms of aggression in the digital age such as cyberbullying. Subsequently, considering that parental technofence has the potential to interrupt the attachment between parent and adolescent, which is a protective factor in deviant peer affiliation, it is possible that associating with deviant peers is an attempt by adolescents to gain emotional support they are lacking from their parents. Studies herein also identify parental technofence as a potential risk factor to deviant peer affiliation. During adolescence, peer influence is extremely important and young people are highly likely to adhere to the attitudes and pressures of deviant peers.

#### *ii. Parents' Social Media Use*

On the other hand, parents who use their phones during parent-child interactions seem to have a poorer comprehension of their kids' goals and mental states. Research on adolescents indicates that the use of screens replaces in-person interactions makes it harder to detect nonverbal social cues from others. Additionally, children who are limited in their access to digital media become more adept at discerning the emotional states of others around them.

Therefore, according to the children, it has been difficult their parents to read and react contingently to their children's behavioural and emotional indicators because of the "always-on" work or social demands of their mobile device.

The teens express annoyance at their parents' technology use interfering with their precious family time, believe that parents are less receptive when using their gadgets, and express expectations that parents will abstain from using digital devices during family time. Only eight informants give answers when asked about their parents' social media use. Most informants said they don't follow their parents' social media account. But for those who does, they claimed that their parents rarely post anything, they only used it uploading family photos. One respondent said:

My mom uploads photos on Facebook. Pictures she takes, like during Raya. When the family gathers, we take photos. Sometimes, this side of the family isn't around, but now everyone wants to appreciate it. Like how their moms or grandparents would. So, they all gather, everyone's complete, and we take pictures and upload them. (Informant #35, M21)

Informant #36, M22 also agreed and said that his mother also uploaded their Eid celebration photos on Facebook. 2 informants claimed that their parents used social media for entertainment:

My dad and mom are different. My dad likes to watch live personal streams, like gaming. He's into things like Malaysia PUBG. My mom is on Facebook, just scrolling through, looking at her friends or checking out recipes and things like that. (Informant #14, M11)

I watch the news. I watch the news, and then I know what's going on in social media—trends, current trends, and politics. So, uhh... it's easy. You can use your phone to transfer money, make payments, message people, or even call your kids quickly. (Informant #38, C8)

Whereas one informant said that her mother uses social media for part time job to gain side incomes, selling golds:

My mom has a side income. She sells gold, for example, to support her friends' businesses. She uses social media to get people interested in the products. That way, she can make money from it. (Informant #33, I6)

Another informant said his father use smartphone to contact his long-lost friend that he found on Facebook:

I contact old friends, like school friends from way back, check their Facebook, look them up, and reconnect with them. (Informant #41, M24)

On contrary, 2 informants said that their parents used social media for online shopping like buying hijab or diet coffee:

My mom buys household items, like scarves and things. It's easy. (Informant #36, M22)

While another said, "She buys diet coffee, for people with diabetes." (Informant #20, M14)

All in all, it can conclude that most parents prefer to use social media for posting family photos and entertainment such as watching videos and news compared to socializing and part time job or online purchasing.

*iii. Smartphone Effects on Emotions*

According to the response on family mobile device use patterns, 34% of the informants are frequently irritated when parents abruptly stop paying attention to them when they answer a notice on a phone, especially when it's not apparent why the device is being used.

It's like, even eating becomes hard because they're always distracted by their phone, so they end up throwing tantrums. They just suddenly get upset. (Informant #58, M35)

I feel like I want to get angry. Sometimes, everything's fine and then suddenly, I just feel angry. It's like, sometimes, I feel like getting angry over small things. I used to get angry quickly. Yeah. Like, when I'm on the phone, or when I'm doing something, and it's not done right, I just get mad. Like, "Ugh," you know? (Informant #12, M9)

I can't control my emotions. Umm... even before I had a phone, and after I got one, I still can't control it. I just get angry over anything, even if it's a small issue. Even if it's something minor, I just want to get angry. (Informant #15, M12)

One informant said his personality change after using smartphone. He became awkward in real life and unsure of his own identity:

Yeah, when I started using TikTok and Instagram, I became an awkward person. I have multiple identities and I also tend to imitate others. (Informant #20, M14)

While another said that she never experiences any, but she noticed that her sister changed after spending too much on online gaming:

My sister, she's really influenced by her online friends. She's changed a lot now. She curses a lot, swears a lot. She's not like she used to be. It's because she plays online games and uses Discord with people from other countries. She stays up late playing games with them. After playing, she gets angry and seems really annoyed. (Informant #42, M25)

To conclude, smartphone indeed bring forth negative effects as most respondents testified that they have been experiencing emotional turmoil after indulging themselves with online activities, some feels irritate all the time, while another became socially awkward and unsure of their own personality. This is a serious issue as the withdrawal symptoms keep on accumulating with more time spent on online activities.

*iv. Problem Solving*

There is not much information extracted from informants' interviews because only five informants provide their solutions to smartphone addiction problem. Three informants said:

It depends. If I feel like I don't need to, then I won't play. (Informant #66, M37)

I sleep sometimes. Sometimes, I put my phone aside and watch TV instead. That's why, if my dad sees me putting my phone down and not using it, he knows the battery's probably dead. (Informant #20, M14)

Sometimes, she just sleeps. When she sleeps, it means she's not playing. (Informant #19, M13)

Henceforth, it can sum up that informants much prefer to sleep as a way to cope with smartphone addiction. This option is more popular compared to self-discipline.

*v. Feeling*

For this section, informants were given chances to share their feeling. 45 out of 70 informants took this chance to express their feelings about their parents. Five informants said parents need to be attentive of their children's emotions and needs and family should be responsible:

...Parents need to care about their children because they also have their own problems. They need to understand. Let the kids express their feelings. Because if they bottle it up for too long, it will hurt. (Informant #52, M29)

Parents need to pay attention to their children. They need to give attention, spend time with them. Encourage spending time together. [...] I feel like family should be a fun organization. When the family is happy, the kids won't have other problems. It's like the fun things we talked about earlier. For example, if you buy a gift for your brother, the younger sibling will also get something. But if only the brother gets it, the younger one might feel left out. It's like they try to rebel or something. When they go off and do things with their friends. (Informant #29, M19)

I feel like, family has to take responsibility. Like, sometimes, when the kids help out, they need to be praised. (Informant #62, I8)

It's like, parents need to support their children. Like, whatever they want to be. (Informant #59, C15)

Parents always think, "You're just a kid, you don't have mature thoughts."  
(Informant #61, C16)

Whereas, one informant claimed that her parent did not understand her feeling and forced her to do bad things:

Parents need to understand that their children work hard to make them proud, but sometimes, the parents aren't proud in the way they expect. They need to understand their children's feelings. Like, as mentioned earlier, if you don't like something, you can't force it. Sometimes, they ask us to do things that aren't right, things that are really wrong. And sometimes, they get angry when we don't do it. For us, it's wrong, but for them, it's right. So, we don't want to do it, but they force us. (Informant #60, M36)

To sum up, few informants took chance to express their opinion about their family. Some said that they need attention, love, and space from their parents. While some just want permission to speak out their mind. Hence, this session is vital as it helps us understand how family communication can influence their emotions and behaviour.

#### CONCLUSION

Studies have found that the use of mobile phones among family members has an impact on interaction, communication and relationship between family members. Xie et al. (2025) mention using of cell phones will impact on family dynamics. Therefore, this study suggests a link between family communication, social media use, and emotional well-being in young people. For family communication, many respondents desired more attention, love, and open communication from parents. This finding is in line with studies conducted by Poulin et al. (2019) and Jain (2025). This implies a potential gap in family communication that could be impacting their emotional state. Otherwise, for social media use, parents primarily use social media for entertainment, and their children experience negative emotions like irritation and social awkwardness after excessive online activity. This suggests a need for guidance and boundaries around social media use. The study highlights the diverse ways personalities can manifest in different settings. It emphasizes the possibility that reserved behaviour might stem from a lack of social confidence or difficulty connecting with others. Overall, the study implies that healthy family communication and responsible social media habits could be crucial for young people's emotional well-being and social development.

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