Childrens perception of caregivers smartphone use: effect on relationships, self-esteem and emotional wellbeing

Lisa Madden 10035370, Dr. Pauline Hyland
Department of Psychology, Dublin Business School

ABSTRACT

Using a quantitative and qualitative design, this study aimed to build upon previous research examining:

- Children's perception of their caregiver's smartphone use during caregiver-child interactions and its impact on children socially, psychologically and emotionally.

While, also investigating a new line of research:

- Children's psychological presence or absence while using a smartphone.

INTRODUCTION

- 43% of Irish consumers owned a smartphone in 2012, by 2016 this figure had risen to 78% with 100% of each age group 25-34, 35-44 and 45-54 year olds owning a smartphone (Consumer Barometer, n.d.).
- Deloitte (2016) found that smartphone adoption by UK adults rose from 52% in 2012 to 81% in 2016 with 91% of 18-44 year olds owning a smartphone.

- Children learn to build relationships in their home environment (Hosogi, Okada, Fujii, Noguchi and Watanabe, 2012).
- Current research has investigated the impact smartphone use has on children finding that caregivers using mobile devices exhibited higher degrees of absorption with the device than with the child (Hiniker, Schoenebeck & Kientz, 2016; Hiniker et al, 2015; Radesky et al., 2014; Radesky et al., 2015).
- AVG Technologies (Anscombe, 2015) conducted a survey on children aged between eight and thirteen. Over 50% of the children felt that mobile devices were intruding upon family life and 36% felt unimportant when parents prioritized a device over them during conversations.

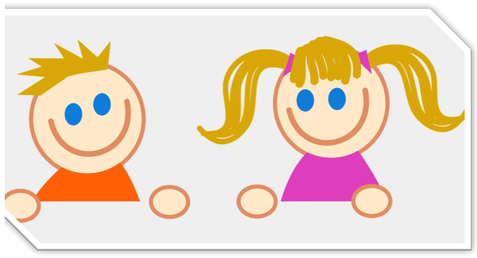
HYPOTHESES

- H_1: Higher levels of children's perceptions of caregiver's present absence while using a smartphone during caregiver-child interactions will predict lower levels of children's emotional well-being.
- H_2: Higher levels of caregiver's present absence while using a smartphone during caregiver-child interactions will predict lower scores on the family and friend relationship scale.
- H_3: Age will predict higher levels of children's present absence while using a smartphone.

METHODS

Participants

- One hundred and fifty eight children, 56% boys, 44% girls (Mean= 10.6 years, S.D.=1.36) were recruited from two primary schools in Dublin.



Design

- A mixed-method quantitative and qualitative correlational cross-sectional survey design with one open-ended qualitative question. Purposive sampling was employed.

Materials

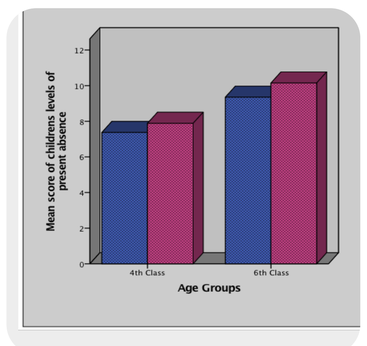
- The Kid-KINDL measures overall health-related quality of life (Ravens-Sieberer & Bullinger, 1998).
- The Present Absence scale (Casey, 2012) measures how psychologically present a person is during social interactions, while using a smartphone.

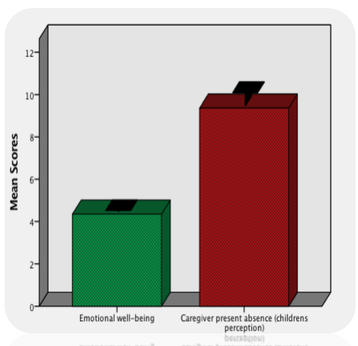
Procedure

- Parental consent was obtained before the children completed a self-reported questionnaire with a qualitative element. Girls and boys completed the questionnaires on separate days during school in their classroom.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

- Higher caregiver present absence while using a smartphone = lower emotional well-being.
- Higher caregiver present absence while using a smartphone = lower family and friend relationships.
- Older children = higher levels of present absence while using a smartphone.

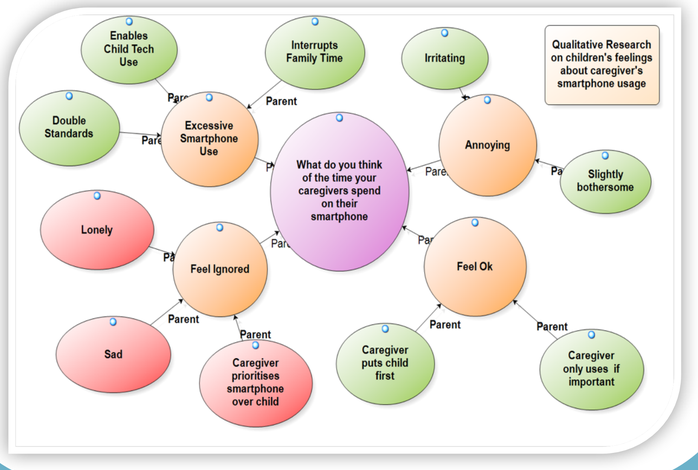




- Higher children present absence = higher caregiver present absence.
- Boys exhibiting higher present absence = lower emotional well-being.
- Higher self-esteem = better friend relationships.
- Higher emotional well-being = better family & friend relationships.

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

- Thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) was used to examine the children's responses to the question "What do you think of the time your caregivers spend on their smartphone?".
- Four themes were identified: Excessive Smartphone Use, Annoying, Feel Ignored and Feel Ok.



FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Future studies could conduct a naturalistic observational study or experiment possibly employing deception involving caregivers and children. This may show stronger results and capture children's immediate reactions to caregiver's smartphone use.
- This line of research may have opened a door for further studies to examine the psychological effects of caregiver's smartphone use on children.
- Measuring loneliness (subtheme qualitative analysis) rather than self-esteem may be of benefit as this has shown to have a reciprocal link with self-esteem (Vanhalst, Luyckx, Scholte, Engels & Goossens, 2013).
- Investigating generational differences between older and younger parents and their children.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

- Results supported the prediction that children who exhibited lower levels of emotional well-being felt their caregiver was more psychologically absent during caregiver-child interactions remaining consistent with previous research (Wagner, 2015).
- Older children had higher levels of present absence. Observational learning from early childhood could contribute to this finding (Bandura, 1977).
- Fifty per cent of participant's responses to the qualitative question were captured within the theme 'Feel ok", however, to 'feel ok' is defined as "acceptable, passable, or good. Something that is OK is positive, but not as positive as it could be" (http://grammarist.com/spelling/ok-okay/).
- Results indicate that caregivers smartphone use during caregiver-child interactions does appear to affect children depending on how psychologically present or absent the caregiver is.

REFERENCES

Anscombe, T (n.d.). The AVG 2015 Digital Diaries Executive Summary. *AVG*. Retrieved March 16, 2016, from http://now.avg.com/wpcontent/uploads/2015/06/updated_17.07.15_dd_2015_executive_summary.pdf..
Bandura, A. (1977). *Social Learning Theory*. New York (NY): General Learning Press.
Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.
Consumer Barometer. (n.d.). Retrieved February 16, 2017, from Google website: https://www.consumerbarometer.com/en/trending/?countryCode=UK&category=TRN-NOFILTER-ALL.
Deloitte (2016). *There's no place like phone. Consumer usage patterns in the era of peak smartphone. Global Mobile Consumer Survey 2016: UK Cut*. Retrieved February 18, 2017, from https://www.deloitte.co.uk/mobileuk/assets/pdf/Deloitte-Mobile-Consumer-2016-There-is-no-place-like-phone.pdf.
Hiniker, A., Schoenebeck, S. Y., & Kientz, J. A. (2016). Not at the Dinner Table: Parents' and Children's Perspectives on Family Technology Rules. In *Proceedings of the 19th ACM Conference on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing* (1374-1387). San Francisco, CA: ACM. doi:10.1145/2818048.2819940.
Hiniker, A., Sobel, K., Suh, H., Sung, Y. C., Lee, C. P., & Kientz, J. A. (2015). Texting while Parenting: How Adults Use Mobile Phones while Caring for Children at the Playground. In *Proceedings of the 33rd Annual ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (727-736). Seoul, Republic of Korea: ACM. doi: 10.1145/2702123.2702199.
Hosogi, M., Okada, A., Fujii, C., Noguchi, K., & Watanabe, K. (2012). Importance and usefulness of evaluating self-esteem in children. *BioPsychoSocial Medicine*, *6*(9), 1-6. doi: 10.1186/1751-0759-6-9.
Radesky, J. S., Kistin, C. J., Zuckerman, B., Nitzberg, K., Gross, J., Kaplan-Sanoff, M., ... & Silverstein, M. (2014). Patterns of mobile device use by caregivers and children during meals in fast food restaurants. *Pediatrics*, *133*(4), 843-849. doi: 10.1542/peds.2013-3703.
Radesky, J., Miller, A. L., Rosenblum, K. L., Appugliese, D., Kaciroti, N., & Lumeng, J. C. (2015). Maternal mobile device use during a structured parent–child interaction task. *Academic Pediatrics*, *15*(2), 238-244. doi: 10.1016/j.acap.2014.10.001.
Ravens-Sieberer, U. & Bullinger, M. (1998). Assessing health related quality of life in chronically ill children with the German KINDL: first psychometric and content-analytical results. *Quality of life research*, 7(5), 399-407. doi:10.1023/a:1008853819715.
Steiner-Adair, C., & Barker, T. H. (2013). *The big disconnect: Protecting childhood and family relationships in the digital age*. New York (NY): Harper Business.
Vanhalst, J., Luyckx, K., Scholte, R. H., Engels, R. C., & Goossens, L. (2013). Low self-esteem as a risk factor for loneliness in adolescence: Perceived-but not actual-social acceptance as an underlying mechanism. *Journal of abnormal child psychology*, *41*(7), 1067-1081. doi:10.1007/s10802-013-9751-y.
Wagner, L. A. (2015). When Your Smartphone Is Too Smart for Your Own Good: How Social Media Alters Human Relationships. *The Journal of Individual Psychology*, *71*(2), 114-121. doi: 10.1353/jip.2015.0009.