Comments on "A Study of Magnitude and Psychological Correlates of Smartphone Use in Medical Students: A Pilot Study with a Novel Telemetric Approach"

Sir,

The telemetric approach carried out by Prasad *et al*. needs to be commended.[1] The literature has shown that self-reported Internet or mobile phone use gives a lot of subjectivity and is often unreliable. Using phone-based apps, it is possible to record the total mobile phone use and to ascertain individual app usage.[2,3] This method can provide a lot of objectivity and can be a useful tool to correlate such usage with psychological measures.

Although the use of a novel telemetric approach for getting objective measures on mobile phone use is appreciated, we are critical of the study methodology for certain reasons. One of our reservations is the selection of tracker applications (Callistics, App Usage Tracker, and Instant) for various phone use measurements. Google app stores consist of millions of applications; while most of them are verified, many of them are from questionable sources and highly unreliable. The study by Prasad *et al*. Does not clarify the criteria used to choose these particular applications. It must be kept in mind that these applications were not designed for research, and unless the developers were contacted and discussions done regarding specific outcomes, the correlation of the results with various outcomes is questionable.[4] Therefore, it would have been better had the authors clarified more details about these applications and contacted the developers with their research question and confirmed whether there were any validity and reliability issues with the applications. Besides, a pilot testing could have been carried out to ensure that there are no glitches with the applications which could hamper the results.

Second, the duration of 1 week of using these applications to assess mobile use pattern is not sufficient. Such a small period is likely to introduce bias because of multiple reasons. Awareness that such applications have been installed may have tempted students to modify their use. On the other hand, daily feedback from these tracker applications might have made students more conscious of their use, and hence it is quite likely that use patterns would have been changed over this small period of assessment. We suggest that longer periods, maybe a month or 3 months, would be more useful to assess regular use, minimizing the bias introduced due to app feedback.

However, it must be highlighted that this study has taken up an interesting approach, and telemetric applications can be a useful addendum in smartphone use research.

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Conflicts of interest
There are no conflicts of interest.

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