

Phantom Vibration Syndrome: An Emerging Phenomenon

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Despite what some may think, smart phone addiction is a very real phenomenon. It has been found that female college students spend an average of ten hours a day on their cell phones, surfing the internet and sending 100+ messages. That's more time than spent with friends. Another survey found that three out of five US Smartphone users cannot go more than 60 minutes without checking their phones. So what makes us so eager to play with our phones instead of engaging in real life?

Experts say our brains get a hit of dopamine and serotonin – the chemicals linked to happiness – when our phones beep or ring. These are the same chemicals that give drug users their 'high'.

We are not oblivious to our very real problem either. A recent opinion poll shows that 82 percent of the American public believe that smartphone addiction exists. In fact, nomophobia (the fear of being without your mobile device) is now recognised as a serious issue – with rehabilitation facilities available to help you deal with your problem.

Mobile phones have brought a new revolution in the field of communication. In today's life, mobile phones are commonly used for interactions and in leisure time. The first mobile phone was made by Motorola in 1973 at world level. Since then, mobile phones users are increasing drastically. The figure of mobile phone users at global level had crossed 5 billion by middle of this year. Nearly 66 percent of the global population is using mobile phone. In India, at present 1.16 billion people are using mobile phones. This handy device has lots of charismatic features which impart the global information in fraction of seconds.

Mobile phone has lots of positive things for human beings but there are some negative impacts of it on life style. People generally use ringing and vibration mode for call and messages alerts. Mobile phone ringing is prohibited in many offices and areas, so now-a-days people generally use vibration mode for alerts. Phantom vibration syndrome (PVS) is also a part of mobile phone-induced disorder. In

2003, Robert D Jones described the term Phantom vibration syndrome which according to him, is a psychological phenomenon. PVS refers to a condition when a mobile phone user perceives that mobile phone is vibrating when in reality it is not. According to Dr Rothberg, PVS is not a syndrome. It is a tactile hallucination, in which the brain perceives a stimulation that is not actually present. PVS is a common phenomenon at global level and also an emerging disorder due to over use of mobile phones. It is associated with psychological diseases.

Prevalence of Phantom Vibration Syndrome

PVS is a disorder of emerging technology; 90 percent of phone users suffer from 'phantom vibration syndrome'. Many studies have been conducted to assess the prevalence of PVS. In 2010, Rothberg et al conducted a study on PVS among medical staff. Nearly 70 percent people experience PVS during activity of daily living. Goyal (2015) conducted a survey on PVS among 300 postgraduate students belonging to different fields of specialisation at Kurukshetra University; 74 percent of students were found to have both phantom vibrations and ringing syndrome, whereas 17 percent felt phantom vibration exclusively and 4 percent faced only phantom ringing syndrome.

PVS was common among mobile phone and pagers users. Michelle & Kaiser (2013) conducted a study among 290 undergraduate students and revealed that PVS was experienced by the 89 percent respondents.

Lin YH et al (2013) reported that 78 percent subjects had perceived phantom vibration syndrome. Abolfazal et al (2017) noted that prevalence of PVS among medical students was 54.3 percent and it was higher in male students compared to female students. Several other studies have highlighted the higher prevalence rate of PVS around the world.

Signs and Symptoms of PVS

1. Psychological stress
2. Anxiety
3. Hallucinations
4. Depression
5. Attention deficit
6. Over vigilance

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7. Emotional disturbance

Causes of PVS

1. Frequent use of cell phone
2. Vibration mode of cell phone
3. Cell phone dependency
4. Post traumatic disorder
5. Emotional attachment for gadgets
6. Stress
7. Keeping cell phone in same pocket for long duration

Management of PVS: Phantom vibration syndrome has high prevalence rate and it is increasing with time so the managing PVS in early stage is very important. The suggested measures for managing PVS are:

- a. Time bound use of cell phones
- b. Decrease the possible dependency on cell phones
- c. Frequently change the alert modes like vibration to ringing
- d. Life style modifications
- e. Counselling and guidance regarding hallucinations and affective aspects
- f. Using different devices
- g. Carrying cell phone in different pockets or positions
- h. Avoid the vibration mode of cell phone.

Common Complications of PVS

1. Burnout syndrome
2. Psychological affective disorders
3. Depressive psychosis
4. Pathological stress

Implications of PVS and Nursing Practice: As per study in this field, results provide new insights into the occupational burnout associated with PVS. The independent association of occupational burnout and PVS suggests that PVS may be a harbinger of mental stress or a component of the clinical burnout syndrome in Nurses and it can infer Nursing Practice. A similar endeavour by Lin et al (2013) revealed that Nurses with severe PVS had higher subjective and somatic anxiety.

Little research has been done on prevention for phantom vibrations. Nurses carrying the cell phone in a different position reduces phantom vibrations for some people. Other methods include turning off the vibration, changing the ringtone or vibration tone,

or using a different device altogether while in working place that could not interfere with nursing practice and prevent Nurse from high subjective and somatic anxiety.

Conclusion

Mobile phones are integral part of modern lifestyle and its users are increasing day by day. It is useful in conversations, exchange of ideas, and utilisation of leisure time. Mobile phones have not only positive aspects but also negative effects on human being. Mostly people use vibration alert mode in their cell phones. The frequent use and dependency on cell phone lead towards PVS. People are affected with PVS at global level and its prevalence rate is too high. PVS is a tactile hallucination which occurs due to psychological or neurological damage. It is an emerging phenomenon, so we can minimise the PVS with small alterations in our lifestyle. Persistent PVS may lead to burnout syndrome. More research studies are needed to explore the existing causes and management of PVS.

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