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A SOCIOLOGICAL APPRAISAL OF SMARTPHONE USAGES PATTERNS AMONG PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS IN LUCKNOW

Abstract

The smartphone has registered its strong presence and impact in India, yet there are very few published academic studies from a sociological-foci. Available studies offer either a detailed portrayal of its effects in the rural context or demonstrate overly superficial attempts to draw on specific areas of social life. Little attention has been devoted to outlining its multidimensional social usage patterns among the group of professional students from a fast-paced metropolis, a group who supposed to have better skills and environment to utilize it. Considering both general and specific literature paucity, the present paper attempts to add within the knowledge repository of mobile communication studies by grounding itself on a quantitative frequency analysis of university students from Lucknow and render supportive excerpts from intensive case studies. By utilizing sociological reasoning and avoiding the simplistic framework of technological determinism, or its counterpart, social determinism, it explicates the process by which smartphone has become strategically and pragmatically integrated in the everyday life to maintain, initiate and co-ordinate relations. Ultimately, it establishes that instead of being an impediment or disruption, as expressed in moral panics, its usages have enhancing implications in the lives of students.

Keywords: *Lucknow, mobile communication studies, moral panics, professional students, technological determinism, usage patterns*

Introduction

The contemporary smartphone has emerged as one of the most important communication media of our time. An offshoot of its precursor medium, featured phone, yet far more powerful and rich in affordances, its increasing presence and reach from most public to most private spheres have created a buzz among the normal public and specialists alike. India, which was once lagged in mobile penetration rates, now has a second largest smartphone market base after China. As a result, it has recently become an object of curiosity and a subject for discussion. In communication scholarship, it is said that when a new medium is introduced in a society, it is usually seen with

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suspicious eyes, and this attitude may turn itself into *moral panics*. Cohen (1972) is the key influence behind this idea who defined it as “a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests.” (p. 1). The idea has been extended to traditional media, and very recently, new media systems have come under moral scrutiny. Mobile is no exception (Lim 2013). While referring to Indian context, it is said that a lot of anxieties revolve around smartphones regarding their potential disruptive implications for psychological and social well-being (Ravindran 2010; Rao and Lingam 2020). No wonder, overtly or covertly, the fear of the loss of sociability, embodied interactions, and cultural values is a growing concern. And the leading framework which guides these argumentations is grounded on the monocausality of technological determinism.

Unfortunately, in the middle of these panics and increasing suggestions of digital austerity in the form of disconnection, abstinence, detox, or time-out, we don't have enough research to dwell upon. It is somewhat ironic that instead of some handful works, we got very little detailed response from Indian sociologists on the questions such as those associated with its impacts on the micro level of everyday lives and intimate relationships, meso level of organizations, or macro level of society at large. They seem more interested in indulging in offering general and most often, superficial explanations of mobile communication within the process of globalization and overall ICT's transformations, without treating the mobile as an object, worthy of *specific and detailed attention*. In outside scholarship, pioneering studies such as those of Ling (2004; 2008) and Castells et al. (2007) have dealt with key sociological issues of 'cohesion and disruption', 'small and large-scale transformations' in a detailed manner, and unfolded some insightful processes related with mobile communication. Apart from some comprehensive and systematized contributions from anthropologists like Jeffrey and Doron (2015) and Tenhunen (2008; 2018), including few published papers on the emerging thematic issues of 'cultural reinforcement', 'disruption', or socio-cultural patterns of 'continuity' and 'change' (Chauhan 2020), little has been achieved in the Indian scholarship which could be called sociological in a strict sense. Following pattern is also in tune with the general reluctance of Indian sociologists to undertake new areas of research (Oommen 2023).

In the available literature, it is lamented that much is needed to form a cumulative body of knowledge. The present study is a work in this direction. As a part of my doctoral work, carried out among the group of professional students of Lucknow, the capital of the most populous state of India, it takes a multidimensional approach and utilizes more rounded framework to unfold mobile use patterns and their effects on the everyday life. By structuring the paper under substantive headings of maintaining, initiating and coordinating; autonomy, privatism and supervision; strategic choices, efficiency and coordination; and less politically mobile, it argues that, instead of resulting as a

socially disruptive device, the phone use patterns reveal enhancing implications for both relational and utilitarian spheres. On the perspective side, it argues that the smartphone does not determine its uses, as many media reductionists think, nor group, society and culture provide the sole trigger of mobile usage. Instead, a more complex interplay exists between technological attributes and student users as bearers of social structure and culture. Additionally, in everyday life, its usage resulted in increased efficiency and rapidity which have transformative implications on the ways these students manage, handle, and perform daily social affairs.

The Lacuna in Mobile Communication Studies

The temptation to understand the nature and consequences of new phenomenon is not novel to humanity. We have seen many efforts in mankind's history to demystify new things to whom we came into contact, mobile communication is just an addition. The arrival and growth of mobile communication systems have unleashed new processes which ignited scholarly curiosity among a bunch of scholars, which ultimately resulted in the formal establishment of *mobile communication studies*, a newly formed interdisciplinary branch of enquiry whose major concern is to understand the myriads of outcomes of the interplay between the features of mobile communication technologies and groups, societies, and cultures. As a corollary, not only many study centers have been formed such as Centre for Mobile Communication Studies, Bostan University College of Communication; Rutgers University, New Brunswick etc. but also new dedicated journals and specific book series on mobile communication by reputed publications, devoted to capture multidimensional consequences of mobile communication systems.

When the field was in its initial stage, the focus was to outline its supposed distinctiveness from non-mobile technologies such as the wireline telephony, while explicating its structural attributes, their implications on communicative processes, novel affordances, and ways of connecting people (Katz and Aakhus 2002; Ager 2003; Licoppe 2004). Additionally, researchers have also begun to specify the growth of mobile communication systems through a historical perspective by looking at its development trajectory (Ager 2003). Thematic areas such as microcoordination, ties of relationships and networked sociability (Ling 2004; 2008; Castells et al, 2007), surveillance, monitoring and control (Green 2001; Gonzalez, Hidalgo and Barabasi 2008; Green and Haddon 2009; Sekarasih 2016; Marciano 2021), the issue of work-home spillover and its opposite patterns (Chesley 2005; Higgins and Duxbury 2002; Wajcman et al. 2008; Bittman et al. 2009) have been explored.

Additionally, the potentiality of the mobile as a facilitator of development has also been identified (Bayes, Braun and Akhter 1999; Samuel, Shah and Hadingham 2005; Waverman, Meschi and Fuss 2005; Goggin and Clark 2009; Ilahiane and Sherry 2009; Veeraraghavan et al. 2007; Aker and

Mbiti 2010). However, the M4D (Mobile for development) theme is critically evaluated by more rounded and detailed studies, some of them are heavily backed by anthropological sensibilities (Wallis 2013; Horst and Miller 2006; Donner 2009; Sey 2011; Tawah 2013; Watson and Duffield 2016). Furthermore, its civic and political implications are also studied (Campbell and Kwak 2011; Jeffrey and Doron 2012; Castells 2015).

Very recently, given its increasing cultural encapsulation and emerging fears of potential side-effects, a whole new area of interrogation has emerged as digital well-being and digital detox studies (Buchi 2021; Abeele and Nguyen 2022; Radtke et al. 2022). The surveillance theme is also re-evaluated, while looking at its new dimensions such as imagined surveillance (Duffy and Chan 2019), and familial, normalized and even more participatory surveillance practices (Marciano 2022). Now wonder, the contribution in the field is increasing, even in the Asian context (Lim 2016), where much of the countries were said to be poorly studied (Lim and Goggin 2014).

In India, now the most populous country in the world, despite the massive mobile boom as demonstrated in the government statistical reports such as those provided by TRAI (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India) or DOT (Department of Telecommunications), including the buzz in popular discourses, scholarly efforts to document their outcomes have been seriously scant. The mere systematic display of diffusion statistics never explicates the intricacies of mobile related social transformations, except highlighting trends and variability of importance in given regions. Except for Jeffrey and Doron's (2013; 2015) publications "*The Great Indian Phone Book: How the Cheap Cell Phone Changes Business, Politics and Daily Life*" and "*Cell Phone Nation: How Mobile Phones Have Revolutionized Business, Politics and Ordinary Life in India*", no book provides a large-scale, multidimensional analysis of the state of mobile communication in India. A rather more focussed and detailed work came from Tenhunen's (2018) dichronic ethnographic research in the Janta village of West Bengal, titled "*A Village Goes Mobile: Telephony, Mediation and Social Change in Rural India*", where she uses the concept of *social logistics*, illustrating change and continuity dimensions in the Village's social, cultural, economic, and political lives by using methodological holism. Fortunately, some journal articles have drawn our attention towards a far broader issue that whether mobile usages have brought novel transformations or appropriated by the socio-cultural matrix of the group under question. Studies such as that of Johuki (2013) and Venkatraman (2017) note gendered reinforcing in the context of mobile usages in their research works. However, Tachi, Kitner and Crawford (2012) argue that, on the one hand, the device usages demonstrate informative and utilitarian values, on the other hand, they are also shaped by the local cultural contexts based on family, kinship, gender, and power relations. Studies conducted by Donner et al. (2008) and Doron (2012) found both patterns of change and continuities in their respective contexts. In the economic sphere,

the M4D theme also reflects in the studies such as that of Jensen (2007), Abraham (2006), and Veeraraghwan et al. (2007), highlighting the relationship between mobile communication and market efficiency and specific economic benefits. However, other studies doubted the theme of special economic activities (Souter et al. 2005). On politico-sphere, studies such as those of Jeffrey and Doron (2012a; 2012b), Narayanan and Pradhan (2016), Rao and Desai (2008) and Prasad (2012) have dealt with thematic areas such as political participation, political mobilization, m-governance and civil engagement etc.

Along with the quantitative lag, there is also a qualitative lacuna. So far, the philosophical framework of many studies is driven by an affinity to determinism, having the dichotomy of technology-society or artificial-real. These monocausalities often take the normative-binary shape of optimism-pessimism, which is already discussed in media studies. Moreover, flowing across the academia and common sense, these worldviews often translate themselves into polar sides of discourses such as *academic technological determinism and common sensical technological determinism, academic social determinism and common sensical social determinism*. No wonder, the intrusion of determinism into common parlance also resulted into domination of one-sided, partial, and often obsolete understanding of the implications of mobile usages, leaving us at the edge of narrow understanding of the interface between human and mobile technology. And there is no wonder that Indian mobile communication scholarship has done little in this direction. Thus, the present study has two major objectives. Firstly, to outline broader social patterns and sub-patterns of mobile usages. Secondly, to move away from monocausal explanations of multicausal, often rounded mobile usages. Through it, the study explains the process by which their usages are circumscribed by both techno-social variables. In the process, it disregards the outrageous moral panics, flowing across common imagination.

Methodology

The findings presented in this paper stem from a survey of 300 professional students from three universities of Lucknow (Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam Technical University, King George's Medical University and Ram Manohar Lohia National Law University) for the frequency of mobile usages, including in-depth case studies of student users. As a part of my PhD research work, I collected the data during the Covid19 pandemic period. For the safety of students and myself, I used mobile interviews of student participants, eliciting from the non-probabilistic method of snowball sampling which rolls from my personal contacts then continued. The study aims for extracting multidimensionality of forms or patterns of mobile usages by using formal sociological position of German sociologist George Simmel by the means of abstraction from empirical datum. Patterns and sub-patterns are obtained for relational, transactional-consumptional and civic-political domains. The study

also aims to find out gender variability of mobile usages.

In this study, within the range of 18–29 years age bracket, from which we found our respondents, 91.3 per cent students belong to 20–24 years age group, therefore, comprising young professional students. 74.3 per cent belong to middle income category, while 23.3 per cent belong to the higher income groups. 57.7 per cent respondents are male, while 42.3 are female students. Residentially speaking, 76 per cent students are from outside of the metropolis, coming from different regional areas and mostly (61.7 per cent) belong to urban backgrounds. For patterns, the study utilizes discursive consciousness of students, regarding their accounts of usages given the methodological problems in obtaining practical consciousness, given the private nature of the device handling. All the tables and charts of percentage based frequencies are mentioned in the thesis, and their output has been invoked to frame the arguments. Independent variables are socio-technological in nature, while dependent variables are mobile usages patterns measured by using activity metric of Lickert scale.

Maintaining, Initiating and Coordinating

For professional students of Lucknow, the mobile has appeared as an essential instrument to *maintain* already existing relational ties of both primary and secondary types, as 46.3 per cent of them use it to maintain social affairs with groups such as family, peers, including relational others. However, interestingly, 35.7 per cent of them primarily converse to friends alone. There are both locational and social reasons behind it. Whereas, locational co-habitation with family allows them for face-to-face, everyday co-ordination, social reason lies in the age structure where the growing adult detaches from the family as a prime socializing agency and moves toward the company of friends and peer groups as major influencers of social life. Interestingly, from a gendered point of view, a relatively large proportion of female converse to friends alone (49.6 per cent), while a big number of male respondents (56.6 per cent) mobile talk with a rather broader range of social relations, comprising friends, family, including known and anonymous others, which signifies that the networked capital of male participants is relatively higher than females. Additionally, our female cases reveal, they seem to be more careful in adding an unknown contact compared to male participants, indicating the gendered security reasons. The study also asks them about the question of mostly mobile talking, the idea is that the highest and recurrent frequency of communication is helpful in revealing the deeper attachment with the type of relations with whom they converse. A huge 78.3 per cent students mostly converse to friends on the mobile with much larger frequency than family (12.7 per cent). No wonder, the home as the locus of socialization has passed its central importance, so the pattern of communication, followed and perpetuated by mobile communication.

These findings illustrate that even within the broader and most general pattern of maintaining, a cross-societal, cross-cultural, elementary form of mobile usages, there are significant inner differences based on the configuration of actual life relations. The mobile reinforces these relations through its perpetual contatibility, offered by its techno-structure. Thus, the maintaining itself is a highly contextual matter, lies within the complex of techno-relational dynamics.

In the popular discourse and most moral panics, the loss of the physicality of communication is always lamented based upon the fear of the loss of co-present interactions. It is grounded on the generic conviction that the more people attach virtually, the more they detach physically. A somewhat negative correlation. However, the study found that 52 per cent of students very often mobile co-ordinate to arrange co-present meetings, while 26.3 per cent does sometime, and 17.3 per cent chose always category. These meetings are usually held to maintain social affairs, make gossip, primarily with friends, which happen in the various public spaces such as cafés, coffee houses and other pre-determined areas of the metropolis. However, for the time being, the mobile remains with them and pulls them off from the co-physicality, maintaining here, replying there. To summerize, we can say that mobile communication may displace students when they do texting, calling, or surfing online, however, it also reembeds them in the physical setting with their networks of relationships when they organize co-present meetings in the urban spaces through it. Detachment and reattachment are so frequent that it has become a part of mobile lives, a matter of taken-for-grantedness. Certainly, students have not become anti-social, anti-physical beings as panic may generalizes, but, in-fact, they are a part of the broader reconfiguration of relational modality under the techno-social trasformations, which is a co-constitution of contemporary society. More importantly, it shows that the virtual and the real are not mutually exclusive but often intertwined. Mobile communication scholarhip should also be cautious about the generally invoked binaries of virtual vs real.

Maintaining also involves a variety of actions. Mobile is generally seen as a device having utilitarian value based on instrumentality. However, in our study, 49.3 per cent students of both genders said that they use it for expressing care and affectional feelings for the 'sometimes' category, while 30 per cent express them 'very often'. It could be said that emotionality and expressivness are also a part of mobile communication as instrumentality. Interstingly, the texting as an only indicator of expressivness has lost its meaning since both male (54.9 per cent) and female (61.4 per cent) do more texting than calling, given the availability of smarphones with internet and instant messaging applications. Students also remain cautious in displaying emotional acts such as anger on the phone because they know that they do not share co-present contexts, they may be misunderstood by their relations, which may create

relational turbulances. And whenever misunderstanding arises, they privilege co-present method over mediated communication to sort it.

Society involves a system of social support, which is necessary for the reproduction of relational ties, and key to the whole process of maintaining. Having a smartphone means perpetual possibility of mediated support exchange. Our study shows that 64.3 per cent of students give both monetary and emotinal support via the device. However, interestingly, female students give more emotional support (38.6 per cent) than men (16.8 per cent). As far as both category (money and emotion) goes, male do more (72.3 per cent) then female (53. 5 per cent). The mediated social support pattern is also backed by our case studies where some students accepted to do online counselling and providing mobile support for social causes and medical emergencies such as Covid-19.

Besides maintaining, the students also use the mobile for the formulation of new relational ties. A total 69.7 per cent of students say that with the perpetual use of the device, they have become familiar with unknown others. The continuous posting activities on social media and exchange of messages disclose a lot about others' identities, habits, tastes and personalities. This mediated constant presence and identity display generates a sense of familiarity with individuals and forms the pathway for the identification of common grounds, therefore, laying the field for the initiation of new relationships, where less known persons become familiar and known. Firstly, by initial registering within the consciousness, later by minor to major social exchanges in the form of appreciation, likes, comments, talks etc., which help in solidifying social links and bonds.

Apart from formulating new relationships, everyday coordination has become a routinized mobile activity of students. It seems instrumental in the accomplishment of mundane tasks and helps in maintaining the organizational fabric of everyday social lives. It usually takes place in the form of group activities where each member coordinate tasks to accomplish larger group goals. 56 per cent of students accept their relational coordination with others and many students accept online group chatting, where the information is exchanged for task coordination, making the process more efficient, thereby less time consuming.

Autonomy, Privatism and Supervision

One of the key characteristics of mobile is that apart from group sociability, it is also a private instrument as well, which is, in-fact, quite opposite from adhering to the collectivism of the group. We interroagted about the use of the phone for dating and romantic purposes, which is considered as a highly intimate and private act of interaction, usually seen by general people of Indian society as inferior, and widely disregarded as an activity, which may destroy the fundamental order of our society, which is based upon the loyalty to the

social community, its normative and value framework grounded upon stratification systems like caste, legitimized by the religious traditions. In our study, 54 per cent students say that they use the device for it, while 37.7 per cent students don't have any partner as such. However, as far as the gender variable goes, 63.6 per cent males accept it, while a less 40.9 per cent females accept it. A little high female ratio of 47.2 per cent say that they don't have one. Overall, we may say that mobile communication to romantic partners is now a usual communicative practice among young professional students of Lucknow, where they exchange private information and perform mutual self-disclosure, outside of the constraints of the physical realm. They do romantic communication primarily through textual and verbal modalities and keep informing their partner about themselves, showing care and emotional intimacy, maintaining trust at distance, the fundamental feature of new intimacies.

Investigating the assertion of its socially shared patterns in certain studies, we asked the question about sharing the device with other people. A total 53 per cent students said they rarely do it, while 13.3 per cent never does it. Some students said that they don't even share the phone with their romantic partner, family and even friends. It is evident that this reluctance is due to the private nature of mobile communication. Given privacy issues, most often, they lock their devices with multiple security options such as fingerprint lock system, code-based lock or face recognition system based on the inbuilt technology of the device. This broader pattern is quite opposite from those studies who assert that the phone is just a socially shared device. It allows for social patterns, and shared sometimes, however, it should not be viewed through the only lens of it. Thus, it also has an individualistic and private dimension as well, the duality is quite apparent.

Curious about the power as a form of interaction, we asked about the remote or mobile control exercised by romantic relational partners. Only .3 per cent students chose always and very often, both categories. A little 7.7 per cent went for sometimes and 15 per cent opt rarely category. Rest opted for never and I don't have one category. Its apparent that students deny the partner's use of the device for control purposes. Additionally, when asked about whether their parents are ideologically in favor of such a pattern of communication. 30.7 per cent students said somewhat while only 8.7 per cent chose for a great extent. 22 per cent said very little and 11 per cent said not at all. However, 27.3 per cent said they don't have any idea about this. While looking at these data, we could say, many students are unclear about it. It is due to the socio-cultural contextuality of India, where romantic communication is usually discouraged by parents, given the overall rigid setup grounded on the traditions of caste, kinship, religion and its value framework. However, mobile does open an alternative channel of communication where students, at least secretly, can make romantic communication, defying the communicational boundaries.

The question of control and monitoring also applies in understanding the changing dynamics of parenting in the digital age. The arrival and massive diffusion of the device has caused anxiety among parents about their children, particularly those of teenagers. However, the anxiety is relatively less for young adults, but the concern persists. When asked about parental query to students about whom they talk. 40.3 per cent students say that it happens sometimes, while only 2.7 per cent students chose always. 35.7 per cent students go for rarely while 10.3 per cent say never. Almost same goes for gender crosstabulation. Furthermore, we asked question about parental advices and interventions on the phone. It was based on the idea that whether parents perform their institutionally allocated duties via phone to the students who are moving across social spaces. 30 per cent student said sometimes, while 32.7 per cent students say rarely. It is obvious that given their age and socialization stage, parents provide relatively a greater degree of freedom to them to handle their matters. Strict advices are given less frequently to them on various issues. Similar pattern goes for gender distribution. Based on the data, we can say that while doing mobile communication, students enjoy relatively greater autonomy, and mobile control from parents' side is relatively less except certain supervisory and monitoring usages.

Strategic Choices, Efficiency and Coordination

One of the widely shared viewpoints, which encapsulate common imagination as well as academic discourse (both frontstage and backstage types), is that mobile media is changing us. More specifically, it is considered as a force, which, if unchecked, may destroy the sanctity of our handed down cultural values and the overall order of the society. The fear is particularly raised by *traditionalists* who want to preserve the remnants of the older order from the force of modernity and its technological triumphs. This very view is combated with the *digital enthusiasts* who see the device as an instrument to bring greater freedom and anonymity to us. Our research shows somehow a *mixed* picture.

When asked about the time spent on the device, 46.3 per cent students use it throughout the day, which indicates its increasing hold over them. However, 49.7 per cent students use it when they have some genuine utility or requirement. Referring to its increasing hold, the Case 2, an affluent male student said "... *Bhaiyya jitni der jagte hain utni der hath me rahta hai...jab mai subah cycling karne jata hun utni der nahi rahta mere pas...baki har waqt rahta hai....*" ("I hold it on my hand for the time I'm awake...It's only when I go to cycling, I leave it...rest of the time, I keep it...") However, on the contrary, referring to strategic usages, the case 1, a study cautious female student said, "*It keeps changing, there is no fixed amount of time I spend on mobile phone, it depends on how much I am busy in the day in the real world. For example, yesterday as per the dashboard, I spent seven hours in the mobile, today, so*

far, I have used it for approximately two hours.”. Additionally, there is also a slight gendered layer into it, suggesting that male use mobile more throughout the day (51.4 per cent) while female use more when required (55.9 per cent). Overall, this very finding clearly suggests that the mobile does not simply determine its users through its some intrinsic characteristics, but its usages often show the duality, dependent on the complexes of needs, interests, and task requirements of the students, where they chose to use it or not. Here the real societal world and its dynamics play a key role.

The strategic choice and efficiency are also clearly highlighted in terms of economic and consumption related patterns of mobile usages. When asked about the frequency of purchasing, a total 53 per cent students do it very often, while 34.7 per cent does sometimes, and clothing, health and food products are mostly bought by them. Additionally, gender distributions shows where the highest percentage of men buy electronic items (31.2 per cent), while the highest per cent of females buy clothing (40.9 per cent). For purchasing, most students use Amazon (40.7 per cent) and Flipkart (22.7 per cent) apps. The same broad pattern goes for gender crosstabulation, however, females also shown their likelihood for Myntra app too (30.7 per cent), since they are well known cloth-oriented service providers, and we already saw that female students buy cloths more than men online. Overall, it could be said that the integrated nature of new media systems has restructured buying capacity of consumers in a most efficient ways. Students get their desired items without going away from their place by just on the tip of their fingers. However, this seamless activity involves a very complex algorithmic, retailing, distribution, and logistical system in delivering items, which mostly remains taken-for-granted to them. In Giddens' terms (1991a), it involves “the abstract systems” in a very complex manner. The choice of the product clearly shaped by their needs, interests and purchasing abilities; the technology has become a means of it.

The efficiency is also shown by the transactional activities, a simple process of sending and receiving money. Our study has revealed that it is shaped by both socio-technological variables. Although the ability to money exchange is given by the technology, particularly by the Unified Payment Interface (UPI) system, a revolutionary payment system developed in India, which allows for the instantized real-time payments. However, to whom, or the relational framework of exchange is a matter of social and economic contextuality. About asking money via the device. 35.3 per cent students say they do it sometimes, while 32.7 per cent students do very often. The students ask money because of their financial dependability and living a lifestyle as students, residing out of their natal homes. It is sure that mobile communication system has made transfer of money more efficient and fluid. These small activities may have definite consequences for the large-scale economic fluidity. The case no. 2 also confirms the economic pattern of

efficiency, who uses the mobile for cloth designing and coordination with a cloth factory in Kanpur.

Sociological studies have already established that transactional activities do not happen in vacuum but have their own social framework, in which, the money and resources flow through relational networks. Keeping in mind, we asked question about to whom students make most transactions on mobile. The largest number, a total 44 per cent mostly does it with others category. These others include shopkeepers, theatres, malls, online purchasing etc. After that, 39.3 per cent students mostly get money with family members since they are financially dependent and not complete professionals yet. However, as far as gender crosstabulation goes, surprisingly, female students do more transactions with family (51.2 per cent) than male students (30.6 per cent), while male do more with others (51.4 per cent) than female students (33.9 per cent). The more favorability of female students of transaction with family is due to their family relatedness and reluctance with engaging with others category, even within financial domain. While male students are more open to others than female. The sociological variable of gender is in work here, since female socialization is heavily family oriented, and their attachment seems to be far greater than men. It means, transaction, which is most often treated as a pure economic category, has a broader social framework within which it operates. On the question of making money online, 61 per cent students deny it, while 39 per cent does it. As far as gendered question goes, men make more money online (53.8 per cent) than women students (18.9 per cent). Overall, we can say that although most students don't make money via mobile, yet many make it for their daily expenses through various means such as money-making apps, finance markets, designing, trading, service offering etc. It shows that mobile has certain money generating prospects, however, they should not be exaggerated and overly generalized.

Less Politically Mobile

One of the objectives of the current research is about finding the political patterns of mobile usages. No wonder, there has been a rhetoric of the ability of the mobile, particularly the mobile internet, is that it allows its users for new forms of political activities online. The enthusiasts believe that it would heighten political participation of citizens and enable them to novel political activities. The coming of social networking sites (SNS) and platforms like YouTube have enabled the direct link between political parties, their figures and leaders, and the common masses, while bypassing physical and other strict hierarchical barriers. No wonder, the wall erected by temporal and spatial boundaries on communication between leaders and citizens has been reconfigured. However, our study among the group of professional students of Lucknow city has revealed a rather mixed picture than these overly generic, heavily ideological, often one-sided assumptions and claims, which are narrowly

held by popular media, commonsensical understanding, including certain research.

We interrogated the relationship between mobile communication and online political activities. These questions offer answers regarding students' political communication, political participation, and civic engagement. While asking for political discussions on the device, 49.3 per cent students agree that they do it sometimes, while a very little 4 per cent does it always. 21.3 per cent students say they do it rarely, while 8.3 per cent never does it. It is obvious that most students do initiate political discussions, but not as much, which could have any broader significance on the wider political discourse. They attach the meaning that it is merely a *bypassing* activity for them. Gender distribution tells the same. It shows the lack of interests from the part of professional students on political communication on the phone.

Given the relational framework of political discussion, the category of people with whom students discuss political matters on the mobile. The largest 73.3 per cent students discuss it with their friends, only 3 per cent does it exclusively with family, and 15.3 does it with all of them category. The similar pattern goes for the gender variable. The degree of communicative relatedness of students with 'friends' category is much higher, that's why the particularistic character of communication (political discussion) follows the same route. On the question of sharing political information online by using social networking or blogging platforms, 41.7 per cent students does it rarely, while 33 per cent students does it sometimes. However, 17.3 per cent students never does it at all. Similar pattern goes for gender difference. On the question of sharing of their own political opinions online. It shows much lesser frequency than sharing political information online. 46.7 per cent students does it rarely, while only 17.7 does it sometimes. It shows that students are not keen in sharing political news, or opinion, or any other political matter online, demonstrating their political disinterestedness in mobile communication or in virtual environment. They rather chose study and entertainment activity than engaging into online political activities. Our case studies also reveal a very light and broadly little political use of the mobile device, where many cases proudly pronounce them as apolitical, showing their lack of belief in politicians and political processes.

However, disinterestedness doesn't mean that that students are not active in civic spheres. In fact, our case studies reveal that the mobile has enabled students to do various forms of social services online such as helping others through counselling, community meeting etc. However, the number of students with such activities is very less.

Being less interested in politics exemplifies that the common sensical assertions of the ability of the device to open alternative politics, enhancement of democratic values and activities based on pluralist assumptions do not hold

true for every category of groups in the society. Therefore, it is necessary to be cautious about sweeping generalizing tendencies to attach mobile with political freedom and enhancement of political participation by stretching its purview to every social group found within the society. For many students, the meaning of the phone is highly parochial in nature and its usages depend on their structural position, own values, interests, and immediate goals. We may also interpret it a result of the increased agency of students that whether they chose or not chose to be a part of the broader structure of political discourse online.

Conclusion

The study concludes that although the technological structure of the mobile allows for various actions. However, it does not determine it. The mobile and social actions are duely implicated, based on the complexes of needs, interests, and orientations of social users, depending on the role of social structure, the technological affordance, and some sort of hardwired characteristics of the smartphone. The research, while considering the already existing empirical studies across societies and cultures, argues that usages patterns are often contextually bounded where one can devise some sort of patterns like sociability, autonomy, supervision, efficiency etc. But they have internal variations across many lines. It also suggests that scholars should be open and reflexive while studying the outcomes of social usages of technological media. The duality of sociability and privacy, freedom and control etc. requires deeper probing. It is only after that any generalizations could be developed. It also goes against moral panics and cautionary notes which are often based on normative lines, by suggesting that its usages are more mundane, grassrooted and based on the logic of practicality. Ultimately, it enhances professional students' ability to deal with their relations, conduct economic transactions, buying process and construct new relations.

Note

The current paper is a part of my doctoral work titled "New Media and Society: A Study of Patterns of Mobile Phone Uages among Professional students in Lucknow", submitted to the Department of Sociology, University of Lucknow in 2023. All the frequency tables and crosstabulations are given in the thesis, which can be accessed from Shodhganga. It has been presented in the 48th All Indian Sociological Conference held at VIT, Vellore in the Adhoc group01-Digital Sociology.

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