Consequences of Mobile Use among Corporate Professionals-
A Qualitative Study

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Abstract: This paper attempts to address the lack of Mobile studies in the Indian context despite India being one of the largest Mobile markets from the perspective of the most intensive user segment of Corporate Professionals. While Mobile Phone engagement has enabled a better balance of work, personal and home responsibilities among Corporate professionals, it has also resulted in various consequences and challenges. Using a qualitative dominant approach, the paper reveals a complex web of communication, task deliverance and relationship management that Corporate professionals navigate using Mobiles communication technologies. Using previous research themes of changing nature of communication, implicit culture and expectation of instant responsiveness, Enslavement by Mobile Phones, the paper explored newer areas in context to Corporate Professionals. Mobile Ethics, Infidelity, trend of Google it – use it - forget it, navigating social awkwardness with Mobile engagement, opening up of immense possibilities were some of the new themes that have emerged in this paper.

Implications of this study intersect multiple spheres of the Corporate Professionals lives - the navigation of everyday communications, relationship management both work and personal and impact on health. From a practical perspective, the analysis provides meaningful insights for organizations for reflection on the interconnections between Mobile Phone and work- life balance, the overall impact on health of employees and the important dimension of Mobile Ethics at the workplace. From a theoretical perspective, it indicates newer Mobile research areas such as clandestine and tight rope navigation between the real and virtual relationships, implications of the Enslavement to Mobiles, Mobile enabled surveillance and integration of Artificial intelligence and biotechnology within Mobile technologies. The preliminary synthesis provided in this study will be fruitful in developing a platform to explore more generalized theoretical hypotheses that can be empirically tested in the future.

Key Words: Corporate Professionals, Task deliverance, Relationship management, Nature of communication, Mobile Ethics at Workplace.

INTRODUCTION

Mobile Phones are small in size, potable and embody the convergence of multimedia with highly integrative functions besides being extremely affordable. They have become integral to the functioning of individuals and society at large and have transformed the way society functions. It has impacted a multitude of social practices and the manner in which everyday lives are being conducted.

The matter of fact, ubiquitous pervasion of Mobile Phone in the social and personal spheres has made the Mobile presence in everyday lives invisible yet omnipresent (Bagga, et. al.,2016). As observed by Bayer, 'The mobile phone is missing because we are no longer aware of its presence'(Bayer, 2013).Yet the Mobile Phone is so distinctive that 'it has become a central cultural technology in its own right' (Goggin, 2006), a view also shared by (Campbell & Park, 2008).

Townsend's prediction of 2000, 'Mobiles will undoubtedly lead to fundamental transformations in individuals' perceptions of self and the world, and consequently the way they collectively construct that world' (Townsend, 2000) has become a reality today.

Among some of the major consequences of the presence, adoption and use of Mobile Phones include the diffusion and acceptance of the Mobile technology across geographies, across socio- economic-educational - cultural categories in society. The mobile phone subscription numbers estimated at 7 billion in 2015 with a penetration rate of 97% (International Telecommunication Union, 2015), almost equal to the world population of 7.3 billion(United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs - Populations Department, 2015) is indicative of its large scale adoption in society.

From being an exclusive only for Men, for Work, for the elite, it has become a generalized mass adopted technological device. At one level it can be easily presumed that Mobile phones have become ubiquitous and homogeneous across all population segments, leveling the differences between the rich – poor, the urban- rural, the educated- illiterate, the privileged – marginalized, women- men, able- differently abled . It has in a manner removed the value of Mobile Phones as status symbols. But going beyond this homogeneity, there are multifaceted consequences on various fields of everyday life, various implications on different segments of society and on the society in entirety which requires a deeper exploration and analysis. This paper has used the Everyday Life discourse as an important starting point to this exploration using Corporate Professionals as the subject of this exploration. The aim is to study the Mobile phone as part of a specific socio-technical system of Corporate Professionals who are among the largest users and integrators of Mobile Phones in everyday life.

The Dictionary meaning of Consequence, a Noun implies 'a result of a particular action or situation, often one that is bad or not convenient ' (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus, n.d.)

However for the purpose of this research paper, a working definition of Consequences of Mobile Use that is being used is:

Implications on Everyday life facets – all encompassing and not specifically only towards the negative, unpleasant or unwelcome.

BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This paper aims to provide a better understanding of some of the key consequences of Mobile Use in Everyday Life among Corporate Professionals.

Everyday Life discourse has been used as the starting point to this exploration as it encompasses the familial, social, leisure and work. Corporate Professionals are the subjects of this exploration as they are one of the categories whose work demands extensive use of Mobile Technology for coordination, communication and organization besides also being one of the heaviest users of Mobile mediated technologies in every aspect of their everyday lives be it for managing relationships, coordinating personal life, travel, for leisure and entertainment and also for buying goods, services, financial transactions.

This paper is primarily premised on 4 seminal works: 'Sociological Theory of the Mobile Phone' by (Geser, 2004), 'Is the Cell Phone undermining the Social Order? Understanding Mobile technology in a Sociological Perspective' by (Geser, 2006), 'The Social Implications of Mobile Telephony: The Rise of Personal Communication Society' by (Campbell & Park, 2008), and Rich Ling's book, 'Taken for Grantedness-The Embedding of Mobile Communication into Society' by (Ling, 2012).

Geser's Sociological Theory of the Mobile Phone addressed the gap in existing research of that time by spotlighting the multifaceted impacts of Mobile Phone usage on various fields of social life. Until then there was no integrated theory that dealt with the specific functions and consequences of phone communication and the propensity of ignoring the routine and mundane called Everyday Life in Mobile Phone Research. As observed by (Geser, 2004).

'Seen in this very broad evolutionary perspective, the significance of the mobile phone lies in empowering people to engage in communication, which is at the same time free from the constraints of physical proximity and spatial immobility'.

Geser's second work 'Is the Cell Phone undermining the Social Order? Understanding Mobile technology in a Sociological Perspective' has focused on the 'determinate consequences of cell phone usage, i.e. its specific functional capacities to facilitate or inhibit various modes of social behavior, interactions and relationships, and to create new environmental conditions under which conventional social systems have to operate'. This work identified four regressive consequences of Mobile Phone use in society – 'the pervasiveness of primary social bonds, the decline of time-based scheduling and coordination, the deregulation of institutional boundary controls and the shift from location-based to person-based social systems and the re-establishment of anachronistic pervasive roles. Both papers of Geser's point out that capability and the outreach of the Mobile Phone has resulted in 'decentralized, informal systems based on inter individual interactions' and at the same time have far reaching implications on the societal trends that are now moving towards instability, large scale personalization of communication, informality, unpredictable, amorphous and diffused institutions.

Using Mobile enabled personalization of Communication highlighted by Geser, (Campbell & Park, 2008) in their paper, 'The Social Implications of Mobile Telephony: The Rise of Personal Communication Society', have reinforced that Mobile communication has contributed to a change in the social order by the emergence of 'personal communication society'. The visible and obvious changes brought by Mobile Phones in particular has resulted in a unique form of personalization in communication that manifests as the choice individuals exercise in terms of what communication means to them, the looks, feels, sounds and choice of type of operations they carry out with their Mobile Phones. Besides personalization, it also provides a reflection on the formation of communication networks that are more selective, personal, insular and restricted within a chosen few. Mobile Phones have even converted public common spaces to

become personalized for individual or small groups by its ability to block off all the other co –present others in the space by the simple action of plugging in to their Mobile devices.

Rich Ling's book, 'Taken for Grantedness- The Embedding of Mobile Communication into Society' has looked at the changing nature of the prevalent social structure that has been catalyzed by the Mobile Phone and the nature of communication that it has evolved. Delving into the role of Mobile Phone in everyday life, Ling has used the lens of macro- social processes and implications to look at the taken for granted aspect of Mobile Phone and communication in society. He is also of the strong view that Mobile technologies have integrated into the fundamental structure of society. From being innovations, Ling emphasizes the critical role of Mobiles as becoming integrators of communications systems and processes within the society. Using the unconscious yet obvious 'taken for grantedness' of Mobile Phone technology in everyday life, Ling has attempted to develop a theory of Mobile communication that goes through four stages : 'of diffusion, legitimization, social ecology and reciprocal expectations'. Ling also reflects on the counterview of the role of absence of Mobile Phone to highlight the deep embedding of Mobile Phones in today's society. The dependence the mobile communication is most felt actually in its absence.

Using these findings from the four papers, this paper has used Corporate Professionals as the subject of study to identify some of the key consequences in everyday life use of Mobile Phones. Keeping the breadth, intensity, variety in its adoption and uses and the embeddedness of this personal device called the Mobile Phone as the backdrop, this paper has attempted to provide an understanding on the individual as well as social consequences that come out of Mobile adoption and use.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This work has opted for a qualitative dominant approach, designed to answer the question: What are the consequences of Mobile Use among Corporate Professionals in their Everyday Life?

The paper argues that the role of Corporate Professionals in their everyday life as individuals in their personal life, within their organizations and in society is determinant by their mobile phone use.

For the purpose of this study, Corporate Professionals has been defined as:

Professionals who belong to the top 10 occupational group as per the quintile income classes in terms of share of employment in terms of highest Quintile income class in Delhi. (Institute of Human Development, 2013)*, are part of the Managerial cadre in the Corporate sector and belong to the upper most segment of the consuming class-A1,A2 and B1 of the socio-economic classification, and segments of urban India . These profiles are familiar with electronic gadgets, own Mobile Phones and extensively use them in their daily life.*

The qualitative data was drawn from twenty four in-depth interviews of Corporate Professionals from India. A purposive convenience sampling was followed to ensure uniformity along gender, age, level in Management hierarchy and Industry representation.

The format of the in depth interviews were a semi structured interview schedule that was based on the research question stated earlier. The structure of the interview format provided the flexibility to participants to delve deep and reflect on their individual Mobile Phone Use and their specific experiences around it.

A total of 12 Women and 12 Men Corporate Professionals working in NCR in the age group of 21 years to 61 years were interviewed between the period June to Aug 2016. The interviews were conducted

as one on one discussions either in their offices or their homes. Telephonic interviews were conducted in five instances due to the difficulty of scheduling face to face interviews.

ANALYSIS

Nature of communication

There is a perceptible change in the nature of communication both at the individual level and at the macro-social level. The interviews reveal that Mobile talks and messaging have replaced face to face communication to a large extent. The respondents pointed out that face to face communication had a better quality, depth, intimacy and meaningfulness besides having lesser chances of being misunderstood. However Mobile communication comes in handy more out of convenience. This has resonance to the study by (Drago, 2015) on the impact of Mobile Use on Quality and Quantity of Face to face communications . The study found that despite being aware of the negative impact on both the quality and quantity of face-to-face communication, people continue to prefer communicating with friends and family through technology at the cost of neglecting to engage personally even when actually in the presence of others.

Communication on the Mobile has a transactional nature and flavor – low on quality, high on contact times. Small talks and chats are replacing conversations. People prefer to message or text, keeping chats brief. Mobile communications are usually kept purposeful and useful among the respondent profiles of Corporate Professionals.

Ravi, 59 years Head of Exports with a leading FMCG Multinational said : *The nature of Communication seems to have changed. More transactional, short – not much depth and intimacy as compared to face to face conversations.*

Rama, 23 years, a data analyst also agrees : *It has reduced intimacy. Because we speak on phone, end up not meeting people – saves time and remain connected . On the phone, we often say I have to share something important but when we meet we forget or overlook sharing that important thing. So sharing has reduced and things are forever on hold. Conversations are just routine, mundane.*

Anand, 44 years, Head of HR for a diversified company felt that as a consequence of Mobile Phones, the quality of face to face communications have reduced: *On phone people talk and talk a lot. Normally on phone people talk about good things. But when it comes to sharing of pain points, or their feelings, or their emotions, people tend to avoid. Technology is drying feelings and emotions. I felt that these things can be done better one to one. Communication has also become very superficial – people talk at a very cursory level. Feelings, emotions are avoided and are best done face to face.*

Sid, 23 years working at a Start Up explained his difficulty of being misunderstood that crop up in short Mobile conversations :

For me I cannot convey exactly what I want to say on Phone. Many times misunderstood. My face to face conversations are more convincing even for work.

Leena, 45 years, Head of HR for a Global bank mentioned her preferences for texting: *I find Mobiles very intrusive. I find too much talking exhausting and irritating. Like to control the flow so keep the conversations short, much rather text- it gives me more time and space to decide how I want to take it forward. I am also much better at writing and expressing even intimate thoughts than speaking.*

Another consequence in the nature of communication is that people prefer to interact more with remote members than with people within the same physical space using their Mobile Phone.

In this process, one can choose to disengage from people around and form a zone of intimacy with someone not physically present.

Anand, 44 years, Head - HR for a diversified company said : *Boundaries have been broken, but new boundaries have been created and new meanings have been evolved. Eg: In a room all family members are sitting but everyone is on their phone somewhere other than in that room.*

Sumant, 39 years, a Senior Luxury Retail Professional mentions: *I have observed that families sitting in the same room are sending jokes, forwards to each other- they are smiling and responding on their Phones rather than talking to each other sitting in the same space.*

At the same time respondents agreed that Mobile Phone conversations are great ways to continue bonds especially when separated by Physical distances. Communication is kept alive with short, frequent communications on Mobiles, it also strengthens and maintains the bonds with important others, reassures and create trust among them, even connects to those other members of the family that were not known to have existed. But yet again, this communication reinforces the transactional connected mode that Mobile communication leads to.

Ravi, 59, Head of Exports with a leading Multinational FMCG company reflects : *I use Facetime to stay in touch with my sisters who are in the US. But the conversations are very transactional – there is no real feelings shared .*

Nishant, 49 years, Regional Director with a big IT MNC shares : *We take our son on Facetime during Diwali Pooja, or for selecting furniture, accessories for his room. 90% of the time the interactions are transactional but it's a great way to share what is happening around.*

Large networks made available by Mobile Phones are a resource for connecting and building relationships, mobilizing social support . At the same time the flip side was information overload, tiresome expectation to keep constantly in touch.

As explained by Seema, 51 years, VP- HR with a diversified FMCG group : *It is tiresome managing communication with so many people. It is almost obligatory to respond on time.*

Sid, 23 years working at a Start Up explains how he deals with this: *These days I find it painful and cumbersome to chat / concall with multiple people at the same time- my friends can manage but I avoid. I am reclusive and don't find the need to reach out to too many people.*

Fiona, 37 years, Account Director at a Wealth Management firm feels: *Too much information ruins relationships, creates envy and competitiveness amongst each other, raises expectations – pushes you to be more than what you are. It also results in creating unnecessary panic situations personal and professionally. It is detrimental and defocusing.*

Sanjay, 58 years, Vice President at a leading hospitality chain shares : *I have exited out of many WhatsApp groups. WhatsApp fatigue- novelty wearing off.*

According to Anand, 44 years, Head of HR for a diversified company: *Too many re-forwarded gyan being shared on WhatsApp- waste of time and effort.*

Implicit culture and expectation of instant responsiveness

Pervasiveness of Mobiles and its use has given rise to a culture which demands unlimited involvement anytime, anyplace, all times. The culture implies that - You are available and you are indispensible. Motives and intentions are ascribed if responsiveness is not as per expectations. Moreover with this instant response expectation, there is no luxury of digesting, processing and making an informed response.

Leena, 45 years said : *There is an expectation to always respond since people can track what and when you are on your Mobile. That is annoying because sometimes you get caught in the trap of matching others expectations and being with the crowd. For me this can be emotionally sapping* .

Sid, 23 years clarifies : *Mobile is a boon in some ways and also a necessary evil. It is a bane when it comes to the privacy. Can't unwind- too much expectation to respond. People attach too much significance to responsiveness. It is annoying that everyone assumes you to respond and take it personally and badly if you ignore their calls/ messages/ posts.*

Anand, 44 years mentions: *It is also intrusive – this anytime access and expected to take calls and respond. It has impacted the behavior and increased the level of impatience. Everybody expects a response at the click of a button. In relationships also you expect this click of the button response. When you send message you expect immediate response and vice-versa. You can't run away from it. In human relations and human behavior, we are not made like this. The dissonance comes when you want more time to think and respond but the pressure to respond immediately is very high. Social norms are so strong and powerful that they expect you to behave and respond in a particular manner immediately.*

Sumant, 39 years has provided an explanation to this phenomenon : *The convergence of so much technology into one device in such a short time span is making demands from users to continuously learn, adapt, overcome challenges, master and showcase on social media that you are always on top of things. Therefore tremendous pressure to instantly respond from anywhere at all times. People can track you, know when you have seen the message and begin to put all kinds of meanings if you don't respond quickly- they doubt your intentions, motives etc.*

The respondents while acknowledging and maximizing the flexibility of this anytime, anywhere convenience provided by Mobile technologies also seemed to have a flipside of being perpetually on work-mode.

Rajan, 22 years working in a Consultancy *said: Because of the Mobile, I get work related calls even late at night and I have to get the work done. It ends up in wasting lot of time in sundry things simply because the Phone is there waiting to be used.*

Nishant, 49 years shared : *Even when it can wait and is not required or expected, one tends to reply to messages, emails as a result of having the Mobile Use . I am working all the time especially since I work across an 18 hour Time zone.*

It appears that sometimes it is urgent but most times such Mobile engagements can be avoided. It is a combination of the constant availability of Mobile communication mode and the inherent culture of response expectation that is driving this trend among Corporate Professionals.

Mobile phone helps navigate Social awkwardness

Engaging with individuals in social spaces that are either new or unknown causes a level of anxiety. This in turn produces a reluctance to engage with the context and people among individuals. Mobile Engagement in such situations provides legitimacy by the physical presence of the individual in that space and also helps

to choose when to enter the space with a response based on comfort and convenience. Mobile help in avoiding talking to people around by either pretending to be busy when not, be anywhere virtually and having perpetual contact with someone or the other. As explained by (Plant, 2001), without being isolated or lonely, one can continue to be embedded in the current social setting.

While this consequence has been mentioned by a few respondents who were from the age groups of less than 30 years, the overall observations support that this is a practice that a lot of respondents engage in . It also reveals the manner in which individuals deal with their inherent social shyness and unwillingness to engage with the available reality. Mobile engagement in such situations provides them with an escape route of sorts.

As Rama, 23 years has shared : *Having a Mobile Phone handy in social settings is very useful since it helps deal with the awkwardness of being in a new place among not so known people. You can keep yourself occupied with your Mobile. For example - When we are going in the office lift, rather than staring blankly at the door or trying to have some polite interaction with other people in the lift, I and everyone I have observed prefers to engage with their Mobile Phone. Simply establishing eye contact with acquaintances or strangers in a social setting is much more awkward than being with your Phone.*

Rajan, 22 years adds*: It also helps removes awkwardness in unknown situations both at work and socially. Prefer to get busy on the Phone rather than start a conversation".*

Culture of Google it, Use it, forget it ….

Use of technology and internet is ever expanding (Bagga & Bhatt, 2013) and too much information access has reduced the reliance on memory and remembering how to do things. This is a significant trend that also may have far reaching implications on what happens in the absence of access to internet and communication technologies.

Amar, 36 years, a Solutions Architect with a leading IT Multinational mentions : *The access to any information, too much reliance on internet / google has led to us to not try and remember anything . The culture of Google it, Find it, Use it, Forget it. Repeat the same steps next time all over again.*

Sanjay, 58 years: *The easy access to any information that Mobile provides has reduced people's ability to go into depth. They rely on social media, forwards or google and form an opinion or attitude about something which is very superficial. May not even be authentic.*

This trend is slowly and deeply embedding the way information is sourced and information is used. The questions that are raised as a consequence of this trend are what happens to the individuals reliance on their own abilities and native intelligence, to be able to pull out information from other than internet sources, to innovation and new ways of thinking out solutions.

Navigating the tightrope between the real and virtual

Mobile Phone has enabled belonging to two spaces simultaneously- Physical space and Conversational Space. As (Geser, 2004) has explained, 'it has thus helped to create a nomadic intimacy and nomadic social participation'. The world is being visualized from the screen of the Mobile Phone. The connection to the real world is through the Mobile. The connection and interaction between virtual and real world is getting blurred.

Rajan, 22 years said : *Social media is very intrusive- I only use it to connect to people but people's entire life is on display on Facebook or Insta. It also gives people a lot of fun – they can be fake and very different from their real self in the virtual world.*

Sumant,39 years explains : *The impact of Mobile Phones in everyday Life has gone beyond the positives and is now entering the negatives.You see people coming to social settings (restaurants etc) to chat and spend time with each other but actually they are all engrossed with their Phones in their own worlds. I have seen waiters waiting to take orders because no one has lifted their eyes off their mobile. Everyone is lost in their own world – cut off from real world.*

Fiona, 37 years shares her pathos to this way of always being connected to the digital, virtual world: *It keeps me away from 'Me time'. Don't enjoy the current moment in a bid to capture it as pictures/ posting on social media. . Engaging with the Mobile takes away 'Me time' and 'Family Time' . It is actually not the fault of the technology. It is the Human dependency on Technology . Mobile Phone is very useful and good, the human dependence is the issue.*

Navigating this tightrope between the real and virtual and its implications were initiated during the interviews and we feel this area has the potential for deeper investigation.

Enslavement and Entrapment to Mobile

One of the significant consequences of Mobile adoption and use seems to be making the Corporate Professionals slaves to this device. From the perceived benefit of simplifying and making life easier and better, Mobile engagement seems to be in reality entrapping and controlling them. The device is deciding what they do, the manner of doing and also whom they interact with in their everyday lives. It is a compulsive need now to be continuously Mobile engaged that is beyond reasonableness and rationality.

Sumant, 39 years shares his strong views : *Mobiles are like Slow Poison- when you have become addicted – it is too late for any rehab measures. Who is the Slave? We are. From being a convenience to us as probably designed in the first place, mobiles now control us and decides how we are engaging with different activities in everyday life.*

Fiona, 37 years adds *: Technology in everyday life is not a bad thing, it is the way we use it that may be bad. The overdependence on technology has reduced our ability to use our minds, to rely on our judgements. Too much Usage has drifted us from personal and professional relationships.*

Uma, 55 years, Regional Finance Director with an International Hospitality Chain observed : *Honestly I think the Mobile Phone has to be used judiciously or else you can end up with your life becoming controlled by it.*

Seema, 51 years gives a word of caution: *Mobile is a good device to be used with caution against addiction and emotional attachment. It is meant for our convenience and not the other way round.*

The challenge therefore seems to be how much power and control the individuals give out to their Mobile Phones. It appears from the interviews that the Corporate Professionals seem to be virtually controlled by their Mobile Engagements. A tremendous pressure is in force to be engaged in the digital space that transcends individual discrimination to exercise self control.

Opens out Immense Possibilities …

With Mobile Phone use, a new fluid culture has emerged that requires little pre-planning. Schedules can be made or changed on the go, coordination and renegotiations of time and place occur on the fly. It also opens up possibilities to engage in activities and areas that erstwhile one would not venture or experiment

with such as new payment systems, shopping avenues, recipes, hunting out places, exploring hobbies and interests etc.

Varsha, 48 years, a Senior professional with a Development Bank shares : *I have become more of a shopper on my Mobile – than I would have done otherwise . Convenience, easy return policies. You-Tube- Cooking recipe, the Mobile Phone has opened immense possibilities. In the process of refurbishing of my house, my curtain rods, light fixtures have been finalized and bought using WhatsApp pictures sent by the Shop. A friend who is bedridden purchases gift items by sending his driver to the market who sends him pictures on WhatsApp.*

Sid adds : *Mobile is a stimulus- to open up new avenues and experiences.*

Health Issues

While some respondents did not observe any health related issues as a result of Mobile use, there were many who shared consequences such as disturbed sleep patterns, sleep deprivation, harmful impact on overall health with symptoms like headaches, memory loss, lack of concentration, fatigue, dizziness as some of the consequences that they directly attributed to their prolonged Mobile use.

Rama, 23 years shared : *It is so instinctive and addictive that even when I get up in the middle to drink water, or go to the washroom I check the phone and if something is interesting start responding!*

Varsha, 48 years observed : *Sometimes Mobile use at bedtime stimulates the mind and difficult to settle down to sleep. Mobile Use causes stiff shoulders, eye strain with continuous longish use.*

Amar, 36 years said : *A call comes and then I am unable to sleep- so begin to browse- become fully awake and then sleep only after 1.5- 2 hours. Disturbs my sleep pattern.*

Sumant shares : *I check the Mobile as a last thing before going to sleep, also do my reading on it. Instead of the brain slowing to get ready to sleep gets into hyperactive mode- chatting, surfing, Facebook etc. So miss the ideal sleep time- get up feeling dull and lethargic. I also experience Neck Pain, Eye Strain, tingling sensations in fingers especially Thumb.*

Infidelity

Mobile Phone being a personal, individual device can be used clandestinely and the information flow can be regulated to only those who need to be within a close network. The ability of the Mobile to give a virtual personality can also make it exciting to experiment with virtual romantic relationships. Based on their observations and experience, a number of respondents both women and men felt that Mobile Phone encourages and enables occurrence of Infidelity including at the workplace.

As Uma, 55 years observed: *Oh I see this all the time around me . It so easy to send messages and pictures to colleagues sitting across at work. It begins with harmless flirtations and then within no time leads to deeper engagements without anyone else in the know for a long time. Breaks up old relationships and even marriages.*

Anand mentions: *Intimacy ad Infidelity is happening and there are ample examples. I personally feel it is very important to explore this. You are and can become anything and be anywhere and anybody in the virtual world.*

Nishant 49 years has attempted to explain the emergence of this phenomenon as : *Earlier Societal Norms could check information flow as well who were in contact with but now information is available and even without being*

in the same physical city, it is so easy, convenient. It is also so private. Multiple forums, online, virtual. Being part of so many groups other than family – the exposure makes it tempting to succumb to extra marital affairs.

Ravi, 59 years has pointed out the inherent dangers of virtual online engagements : *Every kind of clandestine activities are possible on a personalized device like Mobile. The arena that used to be limited with few physical contact options have become limitless in the virtual world- the contact bases is so expansive and has endless possibilities. There is an inherent danger with so much access since it also make one extremely vulnerable to exploitation.*

It was interesting to note that only few of the younger respondents had given this aspect much thought. Among Women participants, apart from a few who shared their views, most other women were uncomfortable with engaging with this exploration wanting to quickly move on to other themes.

Organisational Context

Mobiles in organizational context can be a boon as it can facilitate the communication among members who may be separated by distance, time and movements. One of the consequence of Mobile technology and it engagement in the work context is the evolution of homogenous, uniform patterns of knowledge and norms. It enables better consultation and information sharing in real time enabling better decisions making, besides being of great advantage in emergency situations.

Permeable boundaries

Most of the respondents shared that they were better able to balance personal and home responsibilities with work responsibilities using Mobile Phones.

Amar, 36 years mentioned : *I schedule children's doctor appointment from office or bring something for home.*

Anand, Head- HR : *Blurring of work – non work is an advantage – relationship building and maintenance without physical presence. When I talk to them it is not only about work related. I am able to connect with them at a personal level.*

Mobile communication either calling or messaging gets information across in real time. In fact Hierarchy of work according to Anand, 44, Head HR has reduced substantially: *Earlier difficult to meet superiors and get appointment for meeting. Now just a call or even a message can resolve an issue. Distances, Time, locations not a challenge any more. You don't have to meet to resolve.*

An exception to this was Leena, who clearly demarcates personal from professional : *My personal mantra is to keep things simple. I have clear demarcation between work and home and really thank my 2 Mobile phones (Personal and work) for enabling this boundary management.*

Effects on Productivity

With respect to productivity, many respondents were of the view that they did not waste time at work on personal issues because of mobile activities.

Seema, 51 years said: *This flexibility is the beauty of a Mobile Phone. As long as people are aware that productivity at work should not suffer, Mobile Phone use helps manage both personal and professional.*

Amar observed: *I do not waste but people do this. It does not reduce productivity, and mostly done in spare time only.*

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Pragya, 34 years felt that: *Again this is personal. If there is a situation then there is no option. But people do use it when not necessary too.*

Varsha felt that personal use of Mobile at work cuts both ways : *Possibility to reach out to team members from anywhere and vice versa- productivity and efficiency delinked to physical presence at work. You can deliver remotely. The down turn is that the personal and work boundaries are blurred. There is no down time and people are constantly working.*

Sumant feels it negatively impacts the productivity: *Does effect efficiency and productivity – and yet everyone does it.*

Mobile Ethics at Workplace

The interviews indicate that Mobile Ethics at the workplace is a complex and multi dimensional issue. The issues brought out by respondents were wide ranging from distractive tendency of Mobile at workplace, doing personal work in official work hours, viewing inappropriate content, sexual harassment, taking out official and secret organization information on the Mobile, recording conversations without the knowledge of other party to the need for Mobile use courtesy and protocols and the need for self discipline.

Fiona mentioned: *Office / Work WhatsApp groups while sometimes lighten up the atmosphere can also be distractive and inappropriate content being shared. Many times information shared on these common platforms may not be meant for everyone in the group and should have been shared one on one. Personal opinions creep in and take away the objective and factual information sharing agenda of these groups.*

Lalita, 61 years, CEO- CSR of an Indian IT Company shared: *Mobile misuse and sexual harassment are prevalent in the workplace. A young vulnerable employee was being sent lewd sexual messages on WhatsApp by her boss. Fortunately she complained and we tracked the messages and the boss was terminated from services within 24 hours. I feel a protocol on Mobile Phone use should be maintained. I am very particular about returning calls and messages. Consider it rude of people don't extend this basic courtesy.*

Seema VP- HR said: *At work Mobile can be misused for taking pictures without permission, sending official data that is secret. In our organization very often people have been recording official conversations that gets used against the other party. So people have become very cautious of what they speak on their Mobiles. Also there have been cases of sexual harassment of employees- inappropriate pictures, messages being sent on WhatsApp.*

Pragya, an HR professional observed: *People post inappropriate content, pictures on Social media not realizing the consequences at work or with clients. Information can be shared with a click of the button. People should use discretion. There are instances when employees record conversations against their Bosses and bring it to us. These are ethical issues that have not been formally dealt with.*

Praveen, 37 years, a Branch Operations Manager at a Private Bank felt: *I feel Mobile Phone while creating a sense of freedom has also made people cautious. What you say can be recorded, levels of trust have reduced.*

Nishant summarized: *Data Safety, Inappropriate Content, Sexual Harassment, Sting Operations are darker realities due to the Mobile at work place .*

Other observations and suggestions on Mobile Ethics were :

Uma, 55 years, Regional Finance Director observed : *Our organizational policies on Technology use Ethics are very strong so inappropriate or misuse is not evident . Must be happening and also difficult to put too many restrictions since it would effect work. Advocacy and individual self discipline required to keep things in check.*

Sirish, 51 years, HR- Head with an Infrastructure Company shared : *I usually keep my Phone on Vibration mode so that it doesn't disturb others. I believe that Mobile etiquettes demand that the Phone should be picked up within a few rings or a quick message put. This is basic courtesy and respect that is not displayed by people. Meetings get disturbed when Phones ring. Sensitization on Mobile dos and dont's required especially in work contexts. Our company has blocked usage of certain internet sites so cannot be accessed even from the Mobile. But danger of clicking confidential documents on Mobile exists and is very real.*

The time has come that Mobile Ethics as an area needs in-depth exploration. The consequences of Mobile (mis)use opens up many dimensions of appropriateness, trust issues, of transgressing personal privacy, of espionage and malafide intents, of sexual harassment and the need for formalization of norms around Mobile usage. From organisational perspective, this indicates that a delicate balance needs to be evolved where employees do not feel threatened on their freedom, norms provide them flexibility and privacy in using Mobile Phones at the Workplace and at the same time get the feeling of personal and organizational power to maintain organizational norms, civility and decorum.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Mobile Phone usage have eroded time, space and people boundaries enabling a better balance of work, personal and home responsibilities among Corporate professionals. This has also resulted in various consequences and challenges.

Extending the seminal works that were used as a starting point, this paper has identified some key trends particular to Corporate professionals as a group. While (Ling, 2012) has thrown light on how 'technical systems become embedded in society and how they support social interaction within the closest sphere of friends and family', this paper extends it to the embeddedness in everyday life extending to work, health and the nature of communication. (Campbell & Park, 2008) has focused on the widespread diffusion and use of mobile telephony and commented on the key areas of social change that included 'symbolic meaning of Mobile technology, new forms of coordination and social networking, personalization of public spaces, and the mobile youth culture'. This paper has extended the consequences from the approach of (Campbell & Park, 2008) from the specific point of views of new forms of 'coordination and social networking'. The analysis indicates a complex web of communication, task deliverance and relationship management that the Corporate professional undertakes which is primarily navigated using their Mobiles and the related communication technologies. (Geser, 2006) had observed that Mobile phones have undermined the customary processes which had ensured that there were clear cut demarcation between different social systems. Our study indicates that individuals are now having to regulate and navigate boundaries between different social relationships, groupings, organizations or institutions simultaneously, instantly and continuously since Mobile engagement diffuses and redefines traditional boundaries and has converged a number of tasks and activities.

From a broader perspective, this study has implications that intersect multiple spheres of the Corporate Professionals lives - the manner in which they deal and navigate everyday communications, relationship management both work and personal, the impact on health . From a practical perspective, the analysis provides meaningful insights for organizations for reflection on the interconnections between Mobile Phone and work- life balance, the overall impact on health of employees and the important dimension of Mobile Ethics at the workplace. From a theoretical perspective, it indicates newer Mobile research areas

such as clandestine and tight rope navigation between the real and virtual relationships, implications of the Enslavement to Mobiles, the new emergent trend of Google it- use it – forget it, Mobile as a prop for navigating social awkwardness, novel possibilities and opportunities that get opened out with Mobile technologies. These need further qualitative and quantitative investigation in user groups apart from Corporate professionals as well.

The consequences of Mobile use discussed so far are not all exhausting. Future scope indicates two new areas that this study has been able to identify. One of them was the Mobile enabled surveillance. Security camera's becoming connected to Mobiles for tracking homes, children, pets, household help is an emerging dimension that would have far reaching consequences on the way personal security is getting conceptualized and new boundaries getting defined with respect to security. Another trend in the course of discussions envisaged by some respondents was the veering towards biotechnology even within Mobile technologies. With Mobile Phone and the extended ICTs becoming smaller, more personal, and more connected to the body, in the very near future, it was felt that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is likely to replace Mobiles. Micro chips in the body is likely to pro- actively manage activities and take decisions for individuals.

To conclude, as a part of undertaking any research there is a struggle to make a decision on what should be included and what can be excluded more so when the research is dominantly qualitative in nature. Using previous research themes of changing nature of communication, implicit culture and expectation of instant responsiveness, Enslavement by Mobile Phones, the paper moved to newer areas that have not been explored earlier with respect to Corporate Professionals. Mobile Ethics, Infidelity, trend of Google it – use it - forget it, navigating social awkwardness with Mobile engagement, opening up of immense possibilities were some of the new themes that have been explored in this paper. It would be relevant to undertake detailed quantitative analysis on each of these mentioned consequences either separately or as a sum total of Mobile Engagement in everyday life. We feel this preliminary synthesis of material will be fruitful in developing a platform for future researches to explore more generalized theoretical hypotheses that can be empirically tested.

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