ABSTRACT

Smartphones and Somatizing

by

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This project explores the relationship between smartphone use, somatizing, and mentalized affectivity. The sample consisted of 511 iPhone users who completed an online survey that included scales measuring somatizing, mentalized affectivity, and general symptoms, as well as measures of smartphone engagement and addiction. Participants also provided data from their screentime application, and information about game-playing tendencies. A series of regression models were used to analyze data.

Results showed that smartphone addiction and game playing predicted somatizing, and did not interact with mentalized affectivity. Game-players somatized more than non-game players, and within the game-playing subgroup, those who reported spending more time playing somatized more. Mentalized affectivity interacted with messaging motivations: For individuals low in processing affect, texting to escape feelings was negatively associated with somatizing; for those high in processing affect, texting to escape was positively associated with somatizing. Somatizing and depression and anxiety symptoms were highly correlated, and illuminated the difficulty in distinguishing between different underlying psychical processes associated with similar scores on instruments used in this study. Smartphone use was found to be a complex construct, as motivations behind objective measures remained cloaked. Clinical implications, theoretical nuances, and directions for future research are also discussed.