Reviewer’s report

Title: Over-connected? A qualitative exploration of smartphone addiction among working adults in China

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Reviewer: Morten Hesse

Reviewer's report:

The authors have conducted a qualitative study of a small convenience sample of young people who experience smartphones as problematic to themselves. The study is not without merit, and sheds some light over a specific phenomenon at the fringes of the field of psychopathology.

My main reservation against the manuscript is the use of language that goes across various disciplines without explicitly stating how the links are to be understood. For instance, the Big Five of personality psychology appear as a background or as a vocabulary to describe some of the people in the sample, but given that personality was not measured in any systematic way, this seems rather speculative. I would not rule out making such speculative links, but the way in which they are presented makes it difficult to say if this is the best way to conceive of these respondents. With a more careful wording, the authors may make the case that their respondents can be understood in light of the Big Five (e.g., as quite conscientious young workers), and that this stands in contrast to other work on behavioural addictions.

Similarly, the use of psychiatric terms such as withdrawal and hallucinations lacks some reflections on the appropriateness of these terms in this context. I am aware that withdrawal has been used in the behavioural addictions field for more than 20 years, but it is actually exactly the different nature of this sample that makes me want the authors to reflect more on this kind of language. As someone who works in Addictions, I don't see patients who would describe not being able to work or stay in contact with their family members as withdrawal - they may need substances to do these things, but it is a different (and potentially interesting) phenomenon that we have here. Similarly, the word "hallucinations" is used in a matter-of-fact manner, although what the respondents describe may be something similar to hallucination, but must be carefully compared with (and differentiated from) the kinds of experiences that patients with psychoses experience.

Some semi-quantitative statements are made (e.g., "Over half of them admitted heavy reliance on smartphones. Work and socialization are the main purposes of their smartphone usage."). However, the study does not appear to include a structured data collection instrument that would allow this kind of statements, and I suggest that they be removed (unless the "demographics" part of the interview covered this kind of statements).

Language issues:
Overall, I think the language is fine (but note that I am not a native speaker, and I may well have missed errors.

The authors do need to check the time (past or present) when describing their study (e.g., in the statement above, most "admitted" (past), but "Work and socialization are..." (present)).

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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