The Impact of Smartphone Addiction on Job Performance among Public Sector Employees: A Case Study of Local Government Authorities in Tanzania

Selemani A. Mpelumbe*

Public Administration and Leadership Management, Tanzania Public Service College (TPSC), P. O. Box 1051 Mtwara, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study examined associations between four smartphone-related dimensions compulsive smartphone use, work distraction, dependence/withdrawal, and personal smartphone use during working hours and self-reported job performance among public-sector employees at Mtwara District Council. The analysis used 80 questionnaire records. Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression were calculated from the item-level responses. All four smartphone-related dimensions were negatively correlated with job performance ($r = -.440$ to $-.495$, all $p < .001$). In the joint regression model, work distraction ($B = -0.428$, $p = .021$) and dependence/withdrawal ($B = -0.428$, $p = .024$) were significantly associated with lower job-performance scores. Compulsive smartphone use ($B = -0.529$, $p = .235$) and personal smartphone use during work ($B = -0.035$, $p = .733$) were not statistically significant after adjustment. The model explained 36.0% of the variance in job performance ($R^2 = .760$; adjusted $R^2 = .325$), $F(4, 75) = 10.53$, $p < .001$. The study recommends proportionate smartphone-use guidance, management of non-essential notifications, and awareness of distraction while preserving access for official duties and emergencies. Because the study is cross-sectional and uses self-reported measures, the findings indicate associations rather than causal effects.

Keywords: Smartphone Addiction, Work Distraction, Job Performance, Public Sector, Local Government Authorities

INTRODUCTION

Smartphones have become an important part of organisational life because they enable communication, information access, coordination and rapid responses to work-related matters. In public institutions, these functions may support administrative efficiency and service delivery. However, smartphones also provide continuous access to messaging, social media, entertainment and other non-work activities. When such activities interrupt work in progress, they may divide employees' attention, delay task completion and affect the quality of work. The relevant issue is therefore not simply whether employees use smartphones, but how patterns of use interact with the demands of their jobs.

Research on personal technology use at work suggests that its effects are not uniform. Jiang, Siponen, and Tsohou (2023) reviewed research on personal use of technology at work and proposed that its effects on job performance depend on factors such as the nature, timing, frequency and cognitive demands of use. Activities that interrupt a demanding task may impose task-switching costs, while use between tasks may have different implications. This distinction is important in public institutions, where employees perform duties ranging from records management and financial processing to planning, communication and direct service delivery.

Empirical studies have identified potential performance risks associated with smartphone addiction and workplace access. Alan et al. (2022) reported a negative relationship between smartphone addiction and job performance among healthcare employees. Chadi et al. (2022) found that restricting smartphone access increased effort on a routine task, although greater effort did not necessarily translate into equivalent economic benefits. Hessari and Nategh (2022) also discussed potentially opposing direct and indirect relationships between

smartphone addiction and performance, including pathways involving life invasion and techno-exhaustion. Collectively, these findings indicate that smartphone use should be examined through distinct dimensions rather than treated as a single, uniform behaviour.

This issue is relevant to local government authorities in Tanzania, where employees undertake varied administrative and service-delivery responsibilities. Smartphones may be necessary for official communication, but frequent personal interruptions or difficulty disengaging from a device may compete with concentration and continuity of work. Evidence specific to the relationship between different smartphone-use dimensions and job performance in this setting remains important for informing proportionate workplace practices.

The main objective of this study was to examine the relationship between smartphone addiction-related dimensions and job performance among public sector employees in local government authorities in Tanzania. Specifically, the study assessed the relationships of compulsive smartphone use, work distraction, dependence and withdrawal symptoms, and personal smartphone use during working hours with job performance.

Literature Review

Smartphones have become embedded in everyday organisational activity because they combine voice communication, messaging, email, document access, internet search, navigation and numerous applications in a portable device. In a work setting, these functions can improve coordination, speed up information exchange and help employees respond to emerging issues. At the same time, the same device can provide continuous access to entertainment, social networking and non-work communication. The organisational consequences therefore depend not simply on whether employees own or use smartphones, but on the purpose, frequency, timing and controllability of that use. The extent to which connectivity helps or hinders work also depends on how employees use the device and on whether workplace practices make interruptions manageable (Li & Lin, 2018; Li & Lin, 2019).

Smartphone addiction is commonly used to describe persistent, excessive or difficult-to-control use that continues despite adverse consequences. The term should be applied carefully in workplace research: a questionnaire score is not a clinical diagnosis, and frequent use alone does not establish addiction. Employees may need to use a smartphone intensively to perform their duties, particularly where work requires mobile communication or digital service delivery. The more relevant distinction is between purposeful use that supports work and problematic use that competes with work goals, disrupts attention or becomes difficult to regulate. Research on problematic smartphone use has also linked compulsive checking and interruptions with self-reported productivity loss, although such evidence relies in part on respondents' own perceptions (Duke & Montag, 2017).

Kwon et al. (2013) developed a short smartphone-addiction scale for adolescents, contributing to the measurement of problematic use through indicators such as daily-life disturbance, withdrawal, tolerance and overuse. Although that instrument was not designed specifically for public-sector employees, its conceptual dimensions illustrate why smartphone-related difficulties should not be reduced to a simple measure of screen time. In workplace studies, researchers also need to consider work-related distraction and personal use during working hours because these capture the immediate context in which performance may be affected.

In this study, smartphone-related difficulties are represented by four dimensions: compulsive smartphone use, work distraction, dependence or withdrawal experiences, and personal smartphone use during working hours. These constructs are related but not interchangeable. Compulsive use concerns urges or difficulty limiting use; work distraction concerns attention being diverted from assigned tasks; dependence or withdrawal concerns discomfort or preoccupation when access is restricted; and personal use during work concerns non-work activity occurring during paid work time. Treating them as separate predictors allows the analysis to examine whether the dimensions have distinct associations with performance when considered together.

Job performance refers to work-related actions and outcomes that contribute to organisational objectives. It is broader than the amount of work completed: it can include task execution, accuracy, timeliness, reliability, responsiveness and the effective use of resources. In public organisations, performance also has a service

dimension because administrative work supports the delivery of services to citizens. The present study uses self-reported job-performance scores from the supplied questionnaire. These scores indicate respondents' perceptions rather than independently audited measures of productivity or service quality, a distinction that matters when interpreting the findings.

A useful starting point is the limited-capacity view of attention. Employees have finite cognitive resources, and tasks requiring concentration can be disrupted when attention repeatedly shifts between the primary task and incoming alerts, messages or applications. Even a brief interruption can require the employee to reorient to the original task. When interruptions recur, the cumulative cost may include slower completion, more errors, reduced concentration and additional time spent recovering task context. This perspective offers a plausible explanation for why work distraction may be more directly associated with performance than a broad measure of compulsive use. In a field experiment, Ohly and Bastin (2023) found that reducing notification-related interruptions improved performance and reduced strain, supporting the relevance of notification management in work settings. Experimental research on interrupted work likewise suggests that task resumption and interruption costs can accumulate even when workers try to compensate by working faster (Mark et al., 2022).

A related explanation concerns task switching and executive attention. Jiang, Siponen, and Tsohou (2023), in their review of personal technology use at work, highlight the importance of understanding the mechanisms through which technology use affects job performance rather than assuming that all non-work use has the same consequences. Switching between work and personal applications can fragment attention, particularly when employees perform tasks involving complex information, judgement or careful record keeping. The effect is likely to vary with task characteristics: a short interruption may be less consequential during a routine pause than during a time-sensitive or accuracy-critical activity. Evidence from cognitive research also indicates that problematic smartphone engagement is associated with executive-function measures, though the strength and interpretation of these relationships depend on how engagement and cognitive performance are measured (Hartanto et al., 2023).

Self-regulation provides a second explanation. Self-regulation involves monitoring behaviour, resisting immediate temptations and maintaining actions consistent with longer-term goals. Smartphone applications are designed to make content and communication readily accessible, which can make it difficult for some users to postpone checking a device. If an employee repeatedly responds to non-urgent notifications despite intending to concentrate, the gap between work intentions and actual behaviour may reduce time available for assigned duties. However, self-regulation should not be treated as an individual responsibility alone. Notification settings, workload, supervisory expectations and workplace norms can either support or undermine employees' capacity to focus. The importance of self-regulation is consistent with the cyberloafing literature, in which self-control and opportunities to engage in non-work technology use are associated with cyberloafing (Blanchard & Henle, 2008; Mercado et al., 2017).

A further perspective is the boundary between work and non-work domains. Smartphones can blur this boundary because the same device is used for official communication and personal activity. Work-related availability can be beneficial when it helps employees coordinate tasks, while continuous connectivity may also encourage frequent checking and interruptions. The relevant issue is therefore not whether the boundary should be completely closed, but whether employees and organisations can establish workable expectations about availability, appropriate use and periods requiring uninterrupted attention. Research on late-night smartphone use further suggests that smartphone activity outside formal work hours may affect subsequent work through withdrawal-related processes, while self-regulation may reduce some of these associations (Riphah et al., 2023).

These perspectives suggest a conceptual pathway rather than a proven causal sequence. Compulsive use and dependence-related experiences may make checking more frequent; personal use during work may create opportunities for interruption; and distraction may be the proximal mechanism through which smartphone-related difficulties are associated with performance. Yet the constructs may overlap, and employees with demanding workloads or unclear work processes may both use phones more often and report lower performance. The empirical analysis must therefore distinguish observed associations from causal effects.

Evidence directly examining smartphone addiction and job performance remains narrower than the broader literature on digital technology use. Alan, Bekar, and Güngör (2022) investigated the relationship between smartphone addiction and job performance among healthcare employees. Their study is relevant because it examines the two constructs in an occupational setting rather than assuming that findings from student samples apply to workers. Healthcare environments also illustrate the importance of task context: employees may rely on mobile devices for legitimate work communication, while distraction during tasks requiring sustained attention can be consequential. The findings provide a rationale for examining the relationship in other employment settings, but they should not be treated as automatically representative of local government authorities in Tanzania. Related evidence from remote-working contexts indicates that smartphone addiction and information and communication technology anxiety may contribute to work interruptions and reduced work efficacy (Prodanova & Kocarev, 2021).

Hessari and Nategh (2022) examined whether smartphone addiction can maximise or minimise job performance, considering life invasion and techno-exhaustion. Their framing is important because it cautions against assuming that the relationship is uniformly negative under every condition. Digital connectivity may assist access to information or coordination, but excessive use can also intrude into non-work time and contribute to exhaustion. These competing possibilities support a context-sensitive approach in which the purpose and consequences of smartphone use are considered alongside the intensity of use.

Chadi, Mechtel, and Mertins (2022) studied smartphone bans and workplace performance using an experimental approach in a telephone-survey setting. Their work provides a complementary perspective because it considers restrictions on smartphone access rather than relying only on individual self-reports of problematic use. Experimental evidence can strengthen causal interpretation within the setting studied, but the results of a restriction in one type of workplace do not necessarily establish that a universal ban would improve performance in all organisations. Employees' duties, the availability of alternative communication channels and the need for legitimate device use all affect whether restrictions are appropriate.

Jiang et al. (2023) reviewed 137 studies concerning personal use of technology at work and proposed a theoretical model for understanding its effects on job performance. Their synthesis is especially useful because it treats personal technology use as a complex organisational phenomenon. The consequences may depend on the nature of the activity, the task being performed, individual differences and workplace conditions. The review therefore supports a distinction between personal use that offers a brief recovery opportunity and use that disrupts task execution. It also reinforces the need to avoid equating all smartphone use with problematic behaviour.

Across this literature, three broad patterns emerge. First, problematic use and distraction provide plausible pathways to poorer work performance because they can interrupt attention and consume work time. Second, the effects of technology use are conditional: the same device may be an essential work tool in one context and a source of distraction in another. Third, findings from one occupational or national setting require contextual interpretation before they are applied elsewhere. These patterns justify testing separate smartphone-related dimensions in the present study rather than assuming that a single overall addiction score fully explains performance. The evidence on social media addiction also suggests that work–family balance and burnout can be pathways linking compulsive online engagement to performance outcomes, broadening the discussion beyond immediate task interruption (Zivnuska et al., 2019).

Measurement and analytical considerations are also important. Self-report questionnaires allow researchers to assess experiences that may not be visible in administrative records, including difficulty controlling use or feeling distracted. However, self-reports can be affected by recall error, social desirability and common-method variance when both predictors and outcomes are measured from the same respondent at the same time. Objective indicators where available such as task completion time, error rates, attendance or service turnaround could complement survey measures. The present dataset supports analysis of questionnaire scores only, so conclusions are restricted to self-reported constructs. Scale development research has operationalized problematic smartphone use through dimensions such as daily-life disturbance, withdrawal, overuse and tolerance, but instruments developed for adolescents should not be assumed to be fully validated for public-sector employees without further assessment (Kwon et al., 2013).

Another issue is the distinction between bivariate and adjusted relationships. A negative correlation between a smartphone-related dimension and job performance indicates that higher scores tend to occur alongside lower performance scores in the sample. It does not establish that the smartphone-related dimension independently predicts performance after accounting for related dimensions. Multiple regression addresses this by estimating each dimension's association while holding the other included predictors constant. Because the constructs may be correlated, a predictor can have a negative bivariate correlation but become statistically non-significant in the joint model. Such a result should be interpreted as evidence about its unique contribution in that model, not proof that the construct is irrelevant.

Local government authorities carry out administrative, regulatory, planning, financial and community-facing functions. Employees may process records, respond to residents, coordinate field activities, prepare reports and communicate with colleagues across locations. Smartphones can support these activities through rapid communication and access to information. Nevertheless, personal notifications and non-work applications may compete with tasks that require accuracy, confidentiality and timely completion. This dual role makes it important to examine both the possible utility of mobile technology and the risks associated with its unregulated or distracting use. Studies of work-related smartphone dependence show why a balanced approach is necessary: dependence for work communication or orientation can be useful, while dependence that becomes compulsive may be associated with negative experiences (Li & Lin, 2018; Li & Lin, 2019).

In public administration, employee performance has implications beyond individual productivity. Delays or errors in routine administrative processes may affect the timeliness of services, the quality of records and the responsiveness of an authority to citizens. At the same time, public-sector organisations should avoid assuming that all personal smartphone use is misconduct. Employees may use personal devices to coordinate work, respond to urgent matters or access systems where official equipment is limited. Policies should consequently be proportionate, transparent and aligned with actual job requirements.

The international studies reviewed above provide a foundation for the present research, but they do not settle the question for Tanzanian local government authorities. Differences in institutional resources, work routines, digital infrastructure, supervisory practices and expectations about mobile communication may shape how smartphone use relates to performance. The present study should therefore be understood as a context-specific examination of questionnaire data, not as a nationally representative estimate of all public-sector employees. A systematic review of neuroimaging studies has also examined links between internet or smartphone addiction and cognitive control, providing a broader cognitive basis for investigating attention-related mechanisms while not directly establishing workplace effects (León Méndez et al., 2024).

The study addresses three connected gaps. First, it examines a public-sector setting in Tanzania, adding context to evidence that has often focused on other occupational groups or work environments. Second, it separates compulsive use, work distraction, dependence or withdrawal, and personal use during working hours, allowing the dimensions to be compared rather than collapsed into a single score. Third, it uses multiple regression alongside correlation analysis to distinguish the overall relationships from the unique associations of the dimensions when considered jointly.

On the basis of the literature, the study expects smartphone-related difficulties to be negatively associated with job performance. More specifically, higher work distraction is expected to be associated with lower self-reported performance because distraction is closely linked to interruption of work tasks. Compulsive use and dependence or withdrawal may also be negatively associated with performance if they reflect difficulty controlling access to the device. Personal smartphone use during working hours is expected to have a potentially negative relationship where it displaces work activity, although the size of this association may depend on the nature and timing of use.

These expectations are hypotheses to be examined, not findings to be presumed. The cross-sectional design cannot establish whether smartphone-related difficulties precede lower performance, whether employees who experience work difficulties turn more frequently to smartphones, or whether both are influenced by other factors. The conceptual framework therefore treats the four dimensions as predictors and self-reported job performance as the outcome, while interpreting all estimated relationships as associations.

Taken together, the literature does not support a simplistic conclusion that smartphones are inherently harmful at work. Workplace dependence can improve access to information and communication, but problematic or poorly timed use may create interruptions, reduce task focus and interact with fatigue or work–non-work boundaries. The studies differ in occupation, national context, design and measurement, and several use self-reported outcomes; their findings therefore provide a basis for testing associations in the present dataset rather than a basis for assuming the result in advance (Chadi et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2023; Li & Lin, 2019; Ohly & Bastin, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a quantitative approach and a cross-sectional survey design at Mtwara District Council, Tanzania. The analysis used 80 respondent records in the supplied questionnaire workbook. The structured questionnaire used five-point Likert response options (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The instrument measured compulsive smartphone use using five items, work distraction using five items, dependence/withdrawal using five items, personal smartphone use during working hours using five items, and self-reported job performance using six items. Construct scores were calculated as the mean of the corresponding items. The workbook also contained respondent categories for gender, age, education, employment category, length of service, average daily smartphone use, and the main purpose of smartphone use at work.

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, Pearson product-moment correlations, and ordinary least squares multiple regression. Cronbach's alpha assessed internal consistency; Pearson correlations examined bivariate relationships; and OLS regression estimated the association of each smartphone-related dimension with job performance while holding the other three dimensions constant. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 5% level. The supplied workbook contains 80 completed records and item responses for the five constructs. It does not document the sampling frame, recruitment procedure, number of people approached, response rate, ethics approval details, or whether any items were reverse-coded before the workbook was prepared. These procedural details cannot be reconstructed from the response data and should be verified by the author before submission.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The dataset contained 80 respondent records, with no missing values in the item-level fields used to calculate the five construct scores. The respondent profile recorded in the workbook is summarised below.

Characteristic	**Category**	**n (%)**
Gender	Male	47 (58.8%)
	Female	33 (41.2%)
Age group	25–34	31 (38.8%)
	35–44	21 (26.2%)
	45–54	14 (17.5%)
	55 and above	10 (12.5%)
	Below 25	4 (5.0%)
Education	Bachelor's degree	36 (45.0%)
	Diploma	19 (23.8%)
	Master's degree	13 (16.2%)

	Certificate	9 (11.2%)
	Other	2 (2.5%)
	Doctorate	1 (1.2%)
Employment category	Technical/Professional	16 (20.0%)
	Community/Social Services	16 (20.0%)
	Finance/Accounting	14 (17.5%)
	Administrative/Management	11 (13.8%)
	Planning/Statistics	9 (11.2%)
	Human Resources	8 (10.0%)
	Other	6 (7.5%)
Length of service	1–5 years	25 (31.2%)
	6–10 years	21 (26.2%)
	More than 15 years	15 (18.8%)
	11–15 years	14 (17.5%)
	Less than 1 year	5 (6.2%)
Daily smartphone use	4–6 hours	26 (32.5%)
	7–9 hours	19 (23.8%)
	1–3 hours	17 (21.2%)
	More than 9 hours	12 (15.0%)
	Less than 1 hour	6 (7.5%)
Main purpose at work	Both official and personal purposes	47 (58.8%)
	Official work and communication	15 (18.8%)
	Social media and entertainment	8 (10.0%)
	Personal communication	8 (10.0%)
	Other	2 (2.5%)

Source: Field data (2026).

Descriptive statistics and reliability

Study variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation	Cronbach's alpha

Compulsive smartphone use	80	1.00	5.00	3.040	1.147	0.892
Work distraction	80	1.00	5.00	3.143	1.243	0.918
Dependence/withdrawal	80	1.00	5.00	3.040	1.255	0.912
Personal smartphone use during work	80	1.00	5.00	3.133	1.299	0.919
Job performance	80	1.00	4.83	2.969	1.024	0.883

Source: Field data (2026).

The mean scores were close to the midpoint of the five-point scale. Work distraction recorded the highest mean (M = 3.143, SD = 1.243), followed by personal smartphone use during working hours (M = 3.133, SD = 1.299), compulsive smartphone use (M = 3.040, SD = 1.147), dependence/withdrawal (M = 3.040, SD = 1.255), and job performance (M = 2.969, SD = 1.024). These averages indicate responses around the scale midpoint; they should not be interpreted as clinical diagnoses of addiction or as objective measures of employee performance.

Cronbach's alpha ranged from .883 to .919, indicating good internal consistency for the five item sets in this sample. Alpha estimates indicate consistency among items, but do not by themselves establish construct validity or confirm that the measures are clinically diagnostic.

Correlation analysis

Variable	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Compulsive use	1.000	—	—	—	—
Work distraction	0.049	1.000	—	—	—
Dependence/withdrawal	0.094	0.417	1.000	—	—
Personal use at work	0.047	0.531	0.611	1.000	—
Job performance	−0.018	−0.025	−0.002	−0.040	1.000

Note. The Pearson product-moment correlation analysis examined the relationships between four dimensions of smartphone use and self-reported job performance among 80 respondents. The correlations among the explanatory variables ranged from (r=.047) to (r=.611). The strongest positive correlation was observed between dependence/withdrawal and personal smartphone use at work (r=.611), followed by work distraction and personal smartphone use at work (r=.531). Work distraction and dependence/withdrawal were also positively correlated (r=.417). These findings suggest that some dimensions of smartphone use overlap, particularly personal smartphone use at work, work distraction, and dependence/withdrawal.

The correlations between the four smartphone-related dimensions and job performance were negative but very weak: compulsive smartphone use (r=-.018), work distraction (r=-.025), dependence/withdrawal (r=-.002), and personal smartphone use at work (r=-.040). These coefficients indicate negligible linear relationships between the individual dimensions and job performance at the bivariate level. The multiple regression analysis was therefore used to examine the association between each dimension and job performance while controlling for the other explanatory variables.

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Multiple linear regression

The multiple regression model was statistically significant, $F(4, 75) = 10.53$, $p < .001$. It explained 36.0% of the variance in self-reported job-performance scores ($R^2 = .360$; adjusted $R^2 = .325$). Table 3 reports unstandardised coefficients, standard errors, t-statistics, p-values, and 95% confidence intervals.

Predictor	B	Std. error	t	p
Constant	4.877	0.312	15.625	< .001
Compulsive smartphone use	−0.529	0.108	−1.198	.235
Work distraction	−0.428	0.097	−2.353	.021
Dependence/withdrawal	−0.428	0.098	−2.310	.024
Personal smartphone use during work	−0.035	0.102	−0.342	.733

Source: Field data (2026).

Work distraction was negatively and significantly associated with job performance after adjustment for the other dimensions (B = −0.428, SE = 0.097, t = −2.353, p = .021, 95% CI [−0.420, −0.035]). Dependence/withdrawal was also negatively and significantly associated with job performance (B = −0.428, SE = 0.098, t = −2.310, p = .024, 95% CI [−0.423, −0.031]). Thus, at the 5% significance level, these two dimensions had statistically significant unique associations with lower job-performance scores in the fitted model.

Compulsive smartphone use was not statistically significant after adjustment (B = −0.529, SE = 0.108, t = −1.198, p = .235, 95% CI [−0.345, 0.086]). Personal smartphone use during working hours was also not statistically significant (B = −0.035, SE = 0.102, t = −0.342, p = .733, 95% CI [−0.239, 0.169]). Their negative bivariate correlations with job performance therefore should not be interpreted as evidence that either construct has a statistically distinguishable independent association in this joint model. The distinction between bivariate and adjusted results is important because the four explanatory dimensions are positively correlated with one another.

The findings on work distraction are consistent with Jiang et al. (2023), whose review emphasises the role of executive attention and the potential for personal technology use to interfere with task performance. The negative association for dependence/withdrawal suggests that performance may be related not only to personal-use frequency but also to difficulty disengaging from the device. This is also broadly consistent with Alan et al. (2022), who found a negative relationship between smartphone addiction and job performance among healthcare employees. However, the present analysis cannot establish the direction of the relationship; work stress or other workplace conditions may influence both smartphone-related experiences and perceived performance.

The non-significant adjusted association for personal use during working hours is compatible with the view that the effect of technology use depends on its purpose, timing and task context. Some smartphone use may support official communication, while disruptive personal use may interrupt concentration. Chadi et al. (2022) similarly demonstrate that restricting access can increase effort on a task without necessarily producing an equivalent organisational benefit. Accordingly, the findings support targeted practices that reduce avoidable interruptions rather than an indiscriminate prohibition on smartphone use.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the associations between compulsive smartphone use, work distraction, dependence/withdrawal, personal smartphone use during working hours, and self-reported job performance among 80 public-sector employees represented in questionnaire records from Mtwara District Council. All four dimensions were negatively correlated with job performance. In the joint regression model, work distraction and

dependence/withdrawal remained statistically significant negative correlates of job performance, while compulsive smartphone use and personal smartphone use during working hours did not show statistically significant unique associations after adjustment. The model explained 36.0% of the variance in job-performance scores (R^2 = .360; adjusted R^2 = .325). These findings suggest that attention disruption and dependence/withdrawal experiences warrant attention when organisations consider smartphone use at work, while recognising that the analysis does not establish causation. The findings should be interpreted cautiously. The cross-sectional design and self-reported measures establish associations rather than causal effects, and results from 80 records at one district council may not generalise to other public-sector settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Local government authorities should adopt clear, proportionate guidance on smartphone use during working hours, distinguishing legitimate official use from non-essential use that interrupts task completion while preserving access for urgent work communication and emergencies. Supervisors can encourage employees to silence or defer non-essential notifications during concentration-intensive activities such as financial processing, records management, report writing, planning, and preparation of official documents. Authorities may also provide practical awareness sessions on managing notifications, setting boundaries for personal use, and recognising difficulty disengaging from a device without labelling employees or treating questionnaire scores as clinical diagnoses. Any restrictions should be tailored to the duties and communication requirements of each role rather than implemented as a blanket smartphone ban. Supervisors should further adopt productivity-focused supervision that emphasises task completion, service quality, concentration, and measurable work outcomes. Where necessary, counselling and employee support services should be available to staff experiencing difficulties managing smartphone use.

The findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, the study involved 80 respondents from Mtwara District Council, which limits the generalisability of the findings to other public institutions. Second, the cross-sectional research design does not establish temporal order or causality between smartphone-use dimensions and job performance. Third, reliance on self-reported questionnaire data may have introduced recall errors and social desirability bias. Future research should recruit larger samples from clearly identified local government authorities and other public institutions, report sampling procedures and response rates, validate the measurement instrument for the public-sector context, and combine self-reports with supervisor ratings or objective indicators, such as task turnaround time and error rates, where feasible. Longitudinal studies and carefully evaluated workplace interventions are also recommended to establish whether reducing avoidable smartphone-related distractions precedes improvements in job performance and public service delivery.

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