

Personality Traits, Negative Affect and Smartphone Addiction Risk: The Moderating Role of Cognitive Flexibility

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Introduction: Studies on determining the underlying triggering mechanisms in the development of smartphone addiction may be important in guiding its prevention and early treatment. Therefore, this study aimed to draw attention to the moderating role of cognitive flexibility in the relationship between negative affect, agreeableness, and smartphone addiction risk.

Methods: The study was completed with 212 females and 108 males, a total of 320 university students (Mage = 22.18, SD = 1.72, range: 19-26). Data collection tools were Smartphone Addiction Scale, Cognitive Flexibility Scale, Big Five Personality Traits Scale, and Positive and Negative Affect Scale. Process Macro Model 1 analyses were conducted to understand whether cognitive flexibility moderates the impact of negative affect and agreeableness on smartphone addiction risk.

Results: The first moderation analysis indicated a positive and significant moderating impact of cognitive flexibility on the association between negative affect and smartphone addiction risk ($b = 0.024$, $t = 2.577$, $p < 0.01$, 95% CI [0.005, 0.043]). The second moderation analysis also demonstrated a negative and significant moderating effect of cognitive flexibility on the relationship between agreeableness and smartphone addiction risk ($b = -0.095$, $t = -2.02$, $p < 0.05$, 95% CI [-0.187, -0.003]).

Discussion: The positive impact of negative affect on smartphone addiction risk decreases in the high cognitive flexibility condition. Moreover, the negative effect of agreeableness on smartphone addiction risk increases in the high cognitive flexibility condition. Thus, it was concluded that cognitive flexibility may be an important cognitive function in reducing smartphone addiction. It is recommended that cognitive rehabilitation programs aimed at enhancing cognitive flexibility may be effective in reducing smartphone addiction.

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