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PHONE SEPARATION ANXIETY AND TEST PERFORMANCE

**Elinita Pollard, Blessing Adeyemo, Keylanni Hatfield,
Tadd Patton, and Michelle Johnson**

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Phone Separation Anxiety and Test Performance

Presenter(s): Elinita Pollard, Blessing Adeyemo, and Keylanni Hatfield

Author(s): Elinita Pollard, Blessing Adeyemo, Keylanni Hatfield, Tadd Patton, and Michelle Johnson

Faculty Sponsor(s): Tadd Patton, PhD and Michelle Johnson, PhD

Affiliation(s): Department of Biological Sciences (Augusta Univ.)

ABSTRACT

Approximately 96% of Americans aged 18 to 29 own smartphones (Pew Research, 2019). College students spend almost 10 hours per day on their phones (Roberts et al., 2014), and evidence suggests that they exhibit signs of cell phone dependency and commensurate anxiety when separated from their phones (e.g., Han et al., 2017). Considering students are exhibiting phone dependency, it is reasonable to assume that anxiety might increase when their phones are taken away. The study's objective was to assess whether confiscating smartphones prior to an exam affected academic performance. Anxiety was measured with the State-Trait Inventory for Cognitive and Somatic Anxiety (Ree et al., 2008) and autonomic arousal was measured by electrodermal activity (EDA). We expected higher self-reported state anxiety, higher EDA levels, and lower test performance among students who had their phones withheld than students who kept their phones. Eighty-four students participated in the study. There were three conditions: phones put into a box but left visible ($n = 28$), phones put into a box and placed into a filing cabinet (i.e., not visible; $n = 28$), and a control where students were not separated from their phones ($n = 28$). Data collection is completed and analysis is in progress.

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Correspondence: Elinita Pollard, Augusta University, 1120 15th St. Augusta, GA 30912, elpollard@augusta.edu