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Participant Information Sheet

Project title: Delay Discounting of Smartphone Use: Trait Moderators and the Effects of Episodic Future Thinking

Researcher: Krishnan Dass

Supervisor: Dr Sarah Cowie (Associate Professor, University of Auckland)

What is the purpose of this research?

This research aims to understand how people make decisions about smartphone use and whether a short imagination exercise, called *episodic future thinking (EFT)*, can help reduce the tendency to choose “phone-now” over “phone-later.” The study also explores whether smartphone-specific decision tasks are better predictors of real-world phone use than money-based tasks.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited because you are aged 16 or older and own a smartphone (iOS or Android) with *Screen Time* or *Digital Wellbeing* enabled for at least the past seven days.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to take part, you will:

- Provide informed consent using an electronic form.
- Share your weekly phone-use totals (using a screenshot or transcription from your device dashboard).
- Complete short questionnaires about your demographic, self-control, impulsivity, and smartphone habits.
- Perform decision-making tasks involving choices between smaller-sooner and larger-later rewards.
- Take part in either a **future-thinking exercise (EFT)** or a **neutral imagery exercise**, then repeat the decision-making tasks.

The entire session will last about **45–55 minutes**.

What are the possible risks, and how will they be managed?

This is a **minimal risk study**. You may feel mild discomfort reflecting on your phone use. You are free to skip questions or withdraw at any time without penalty. If you feel upset, please don't hesitate to reach out to the research team (Krishna Dass, Dr Sarah Cowie). Support services are also available through the **University of Auckland Student Counselling Services**.

What are the possible benefits?

You may gain a deeper understanding of your own smartphone use and decision-making habits. You will also help us test a simple, low-burden intervention that could support digital wellbeing for students and communities in New Zealand.

How will I be recognised for my participation?

Your contribution will be recognised through the value it adds to the research. By participating, you will be helping to develop a better understanding of smartphone use, decision-making, and strategies to support digital well-being. You may also gain insights into your own phone habits and be introduced to a brief “future-thinking” exercise, which some find helpful for considering long-term goals.

Your time and input are highly valued, and the research team appreciates your willingness to contribute to this study.

How will my data be kept confidential?

- Your responses will be recorded under a **random participant ID number**.
 - Consent forms will be stored separately and not linked to your answers.
 - Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the raw data.
 - Results will be presented in **group form only** so that no individual can be identified.
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How will my data be stored and for how long?

Data will be collected through **Qualtrics**, a secure University-approved survey platform, and then stored on the University's **secure, password-protected research servers**. All data will be kept for at least **five years**, after which it will be permanently deleted. No physical, audio, or video data will be collected.

What are my rights?

- Participation is **voluntary**.
 - You can withdraw at any time without penalty, and your data will be deleted if you request it.
 - You can ask questions before, during, or after the study.
 - You will receive a debriefing at the end of the session.
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Who do I contact for more information?

- **Researcher:** Krishnan Dass, Email: kdas026@aucklanduni.ac.nz
- **Supervisor:** Dr Sarah Cowie, Email: sarah.cowie@auckland.ac.nz

If you have concerns about your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee at Email: humanethics@auckland.ac.nz

This study has been approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (Reference: UAHPEC30189).