

FROM FOMO TO NOMOPHOBIA-THE MODERN ANXIETY OF STAYING CONNECTED

Shivranjini Deora^{*1}, Aditya Pant² and Dr. B. S. Sonigra³

¹B. Pharm Student (BNCP).

²Asst. Professor (Department of Pharmacology BNCP).

³Asst. Professor (Department of Chemistry BNCP).

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***Corresponding Author**

Shivranjini Deora

B. Pharm Student (BNCP).

ABSTRACT

Nomophobia has spread widely in recent years most commonly among university students according to studies nomophobia affecting students frequently in ASIA, Europe and America. Nomophobia has been affecting daily life style by reducing productivity that make every other individual procrastinate and do all chores later people avoid daily visual interactions or face to face conversation or meeting in real and causing sleep disturbance or breaking sleep patterns. Nomophobia affects people in different ways like from social, physiological and many physical symptoms. Nomophobia has impacts on academics due to social media; students have lack of concentration reducing attention span during ongoing lecture students have been dependent on digital sources for academics also leading to exam anxiety and forgetting

answers and constant urge to check their phones. Nomophobia has psychological effects: anxiety, mood swings and irritability, less attention spans, depression and loneliness. The overuse of mobile phones leading to threat or danger of mental, physical and social aspects of life.

KEYWORDS: Nomophobia, Mobilephone, Anxiety, Psychological, Students.

INTRODUCTION

Mobile phones are now a big part of our lives. We use them for talking, finding information, fun, and work. But relying on them so much can cause a new worry called "nomophobia." This is the fear and stress people feel when they can't use their phones.

This report explains what nomophobia is, why it happens, and what it does to people. It also talks about how common it is, how it affects people's lives, and how it can be treated or prevented. This is especially important for college students who use phones a lot and might be more likely to have this problem. Include physical loss of phone, being without wi-fi or without cellular data or dead battery or inability to have device in hands. At certain moments these devices may make them feel safer and more confident, thus reducing the nervousness. Patients report only leaving home if they had their mobile phone in hand^[1] While the term includes "phobia" many experts say that it is more of an anxiety disorder than a phobia this anxiety is worrying about being without mobile phone.

The term "nomophobia" is a straightforward abbreviation derived from the phrase "no mobile phobia."^[2] Its origin can be traced back to within 2008 in the United Kingdom, where the UK Post Office commissioned a study for investigating the anxieties experienced by mobile phone users.^[2] Research was conducted by You Gov, a UK-based research organization^[2], the obtained findings from this initial study revealed that a considerably meaningful portion of all the participants, over 50% of mobile phone users throughout the UK, reported an extreme stress level in comparison to visiting a dentist or even getting married. Whenever the individuals lost their phone as well as got disconnected, they feel anxious; among adults who own a smart phone, 83% are aged 18–29, 74% are aged 30–49, 49% are aged 50–64, and 19% are aged 65 or older. Thus, smartphones are particularly popular among young adults.^[3] The emergence of the term in 2008 directly reflects large social anxiety. That large anxiety is linked to dependence on mobile phone technology. The study's findings thereby highlighted the continuing high level of anxiety, thus equating it to common stress. A case was reported with a boy's obsession with online gaming, which seemed to be more important than all other priorities in his life. The boy played games for 12–16 h per day. In this case, the patient was diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).^[4]

factors, thus understanding the psychological impact that mobile phone unavailability can have on individuals. We are facing very various problems that are caused by rise of mobile technology in people's daily life for this reason this research explores scientific reasons with greatest impact.

It is important to study nomophobia it helps to understand growing situation of anxiety and dependence on mobiles which can lead to bad impacts on mental health, physical and social

face to face interaction and academic results day by day it is leading to personality disorder, mental disorder as well as self-esteem loneliness in youngsters as well as teenagers.

PREVALENCE OF NOMOPHOBIA

- **Geographical Variations in Nomophobia Prevalence:** The prevalence of nomophobia varies across different geographical regions. Studies conducted in India have reported high rates, with one study in Chennai finding that 68.6% of adults experienced nomophobia. Among students in rural India, prevalence as high as 97.6% has been reported. In the United States, approximately 66% of individuals are estimated to experience some level of nomophobia. The United Kingdom, where the term originated, has reported prevalence around 61.2%. Research in Turkey has shown a wide range of prevalence rates, with studies among university students reporting rates from 8.5% to as high as 99.7%.^[9] Saudi Arabia has also seen significant research on nomophobia, with studies indicating high prevalence among the general population and specific groups like respiratory therapy students. Variations can also exist within countries; for example, a study in Turkey found that adolescents living in urban areas had higher rates of nomophobia than those in rural areas, potentially due to greater access to mobile phones and the internet. Other countries like Indonesia and Pakistan have also been subjects of nomophobia prevalence studies.

• **STATISTICAL DATA: TABLE PREVALENCE OF NOMOPHOBIA ACROSS DIFFERENT STUDIES^[5]**

<i>Study (Year, First Author)</i>	<i>Region/Country</i>	<i>Sample group</i>	Over all Prevalence Rate (%)	Mild Prevalence (%)	Moderate Prevalence (%)	Severe Prevalence (%)	Assessment tool
<i>Bartwal and Nath (2020)</i>	India	Undergraduate (Medicine)	100	15.5	67.2	17.3	NMP-Q
<i>Celik Ince (2021)</i>	Turkey	Undergraduate (Nursing)	99.7	26	58	15.7	NMP-Q
<i>Schwaiger and Tahir</i>	Pakistan	Undergraduate	97.1	11.6	59.4	26.1	NMP-Q
<i>Guin et al.</i>	India	Undergraduate	100	21.5	57	21.5	NMP-Q
<i>Marthandappa et al. 2020</i>	India	Undergraduate (Medicine)	62.8	-	-	-	-
<i>Ismail et al. (2020)</i>	India	Undergraduate Postgraduate	100	18	68	14	NMP-Q
<i>Chethana et al. (2020)</i>	India	Undergraduate (Medicine)	100	35.1	53.5	11.4	NMP-Q
<i>Qutishat et al. (2020)</i>	Oman	Undergraduate/postgraduate	99.3	15.1	64.2	20	NMP-Q
<i>Torpil et al. (2021)</i>	Turkey	Undergraduate	100	30.9	52.5	16.6	NMP-Q
<i>Ahmed et al. (2021)</i>	India	Undergraduate	100	13.3	67.3	19.5	NMP-Q
<i>Jilisha et al. (2019)</i>	India	Undergraduate	98.8	20.8	54.5	23.5	NMP-Q
<i>Veerapu et al. (2019)</i>	India	Undergraduate (medicine)	100	17	64.3	18.7	NMP-Q
<i>Farooqui et al. (2018)</i>	India	Undergraduate (medicine)	100	17.9	60	22.1	NMP-Q
<i>Al-Balhan et al. (2018)</i>	Kuwait	Undergraduate/postgraduate	100	18	56.3	25.8	NMP-Q
<i>AYARETAL. 2018</i>	Turkey	Undergraduate	99.7	34.2	51.9	13.6	NMP-Q

CAUSE & RISK FACTORS

- ***Psychological Factors Contributing to Nomophobia***

There are several psychological factors believed to contribute in development of nomophobia. Individuals that have low self-esteem and lack confidence are more prone to nomophobia as they are dependent on external validation, reassurance that they receive through their social media interaction it is their coping mechanism to deal with anxiety so when the source of validation is unavailable. Moreover, it is to note that 1 in every 15 people use phones while driving. Even strangely, 1 in every 20 uses it during shower!^[11] They tend to isolate themselves due to loneliness as people use their phones to stay connected through social networking this dependency raises anxiety when they are not connected to their devices and feel cut off from their social support^[5], furthermore individuals that have preexisting anxiety disorder or social anxiety disorder are more likely to have nomophobia the constant urge to stay connected to social media is their only coping mechanism to deal with anxiety. Certain personality traits have also been linked to nomophobia, including impulsiveness, a sense of urgency, and sensation-seeking tendencies.^[2] All these traits contribute to more use of mobile phones and having fear of being without them.

- ***Social and Technological factors***

The current social and technological cause contributing to developing nomophobia is mobile phone that is now daily essential for normal life. It is common for most people in the present age to pass time by randomly scrolling down the contacts list or gallery just to avoid eye contact with others or worry about looking silly in a crowd. This may be the reason why more than half of the population use phones while waiting for someone or something or when on a public transport.^[11] The rise of smartphones as essential tools for communication, information access, and task management has normalized their presence in daily life.^[5] This integration has created a societal expectation of constant availability and responsiveness, both in social and professional contexts.^[6] The constant influence of social media creates fear of missing out on online trends and social interaction.^[4]

- ***Individual risk factor and predisposing***

Specific individual risk factors and predisposing conditions make nomophobia more likely to cause. For example, younger generations are more likely to develop nomophobia, such as teenagers and young adults.^[2] This could be their increased exposure and reliance upon mobile devices at younger ages. In addition, those addicted to their mobile phones show

symptoms of phone addiction or excessive smartphone use and are at greater risk for developing nomophobia. A negative experience from being without a mobile phone does predispose someone to develop nomophobia, such as being in an accident or emergency and needing help but finding it more difficult to obtain assistance without a phone. In addition, predisposition comes from social circles; when people have nomophobia affected friends or family or they have friends and family who suffer from anxiety disorders, it makes them at risk. Overall, these risk factors demonstrate how external factors within someone's life complicate the likelihood of developing such a disorder.

2 SYMPTOMS AND DIAGNOSIS

• Psychological and Emotional symptoms

Nomophobia is the emotional effect where one is scared to be without a mobile phone. Fear, Panic, and Anxiety are the primary symptoms of nomophobia. Individuals experience fear, anxiety, or even panic attacks when they are unable to get to their phone, view notifications, locate their device, or when the battery is drained or there is no network. The intensity can be on par with significant life stressors such as restlessness, agitation, and irritability.^[12] People of ten feel more rest less, stressed, or irritated when they cannot use their phones or when phone use is limited.

Experiencing insecurity, loneliness, and low self-esteem relying too much on the mobile phone to feel socially connected and accepted will result in loneliness, aloneness, rejection, insecurity, and low self-esteem when we are not online.

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) one of the main causes of anxiety is the intense fear of missing out on social relationships, news, messages, or other online events that appear vital. Checking their phone after awakening in the morning, checking their cell phones more than 35 times per day, and never switching off their mobile phones^[14] Anxiousness on the phone and fear of disconnection may cause it hard to focus, pay attention and concentrate on tasks in everyday life.

• Physical and Body Symptoms

The physiological distress of nomophobia typically presents itself as actual physical and health problems, illustrating how the body reacts to stress:

- Cardiovascular: Increased heart rate (tachycardia).
- Respiratory: Changes in breathing patterns, shortness of breath.

- Neurological/Muscular: Trembling or shaking, dizziness, light-headedness, headaches with severe reactions and fainting.
- Autonomic Nervous System: Sweating more, feeling upset.

- **General somatic complaints**

Disorientation, severe disruption of sleep habits (insomnia), usually connected with late-evening phone usage or worry about not being reached. Eyestrain, neck strain, and wrist/hand strain can also be caused by chronic usage patterns through the condition.

- **Behavioural Symptoms**

Nomophobia leads to some action to avoid disconnection and to reduce the related anxiety: Compulsive Checking: Excessive and frequent checking of the phone for messages, calls, or notifications, usually without purpose. Being near the phone.

All the time and having it on, even when in bed or the bathroom, keeps it readily available.

Excessive battery monitoring/charging excessive preoccupation with battery life and frequent charging of the device so it won't die.

Prioritizing phone use and giving up on real-life duties or social life to make a call possibly breaking rules (e.g., while driving or making a call somewhere where it is not allowed) to keep using it. No-Signal area avoidance i.e., willingly avoiding regions or environments where the utilization of the mobile phone or network Connectivity will probably be restricted or impossible. Phantom vibrations/ringtones perceiving your phone vibrating or believing you hear ringing when it is not (called “ringxiety”).^[13]

DIAGNOSIS

As nomophobia is not a clinical DSM- (diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorder) manual 5 diagnosis, measurement depends on determining the pattern and intensity of symptoms and their effect on functioning clinical interviews and observation: Collecting information About how a person uses their phone, their fears, how they feel when disconnected, and watching their related behaviours. Self-Report Questionnaires: Standardized questionnaires are the commonly used tools. One of the most widely known is the Nomophobia Questionnaire^[5] (NMP). It is intended to measure emotions like fear losing contact, difficulty communicating, and difficulty in accessing information.^[5]

Assessing functional impairment: Considering how these symptoms bring about severe difficulties or interfere with significant aspects of life, such as social functioning, work, school performance, and general health. Earlier, study suggested that for treatment it consists of a combination of psychotherapy and cognitive behavioural therapy^[12] for patient's fears, sensory sensations, and avoidance behaviours. Patient's fears, sensory sensations, and avoidance behaviours. The patients are then taught distraction strategies and are strongly encouraged to have face-to-face conversations and relationships, engage in a sport and breathe deeply.^[12]

Maintaining Specific phobia criteria in mind: While not an ideal fit, clinicians can casually cross-reference symptoms against the DSM-5 criteria for specific phobias.

Searching for prominent, excessive, persistent fear of being apart from the phone that results in significant distress or impairment.^[13]

Nomophobia should be distinguished from other disorders. These may be generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, panic disorder (particularly with agoraphobia, where the phobias experienced as a safety signal), obsessive-compulsive disorder, or internet/smartphone addiction^[13] Finally, the diagnosis of nomophobia requires observation of a pattern where the fear of not having mobile phone use leads to considerable emotional distress, physiological stress reactions, and behaviours that are detrimental to the person's life.

MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT

➤ Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Cognitive behavioural treatment intervention are known to be effective in the treatment of nomophobia.^[16]

Nomophobia can be associated with or share features with other psychological disorders like anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and panic disorder, which are commonly treated with CBT.^[17]

➤ Group Counselling with Self-Management Techniques

Group counselling with self-management techniques is effective in reducing nomophobia among adolescents as it helps adults or people to stay away from their phone and engage in other things or technique.

➤ Role of psychologist

Nomophobia affects physical health as well as mental health or psychological health. It increases stress and is related with depression and anxiety. This includes the role of a psychologist. Psychologists are involved in developing diagnostic criteria for nomophobia.^[17]

3 CONCLUSION

Nomophobia is used to describe the fear or anxiety of being without a mobile phone based on our increasingly being engaged with our phones. It's not just about losing the actual phone; it's about being disconnected from the activities and connections it enables.

The anxiety can present in different ways, including emotional symptoms such as discomfort, restlessness, and fear of missing out (FOMO); behavioural signs such as irresistible checking of the phone and being unable to stray too far away from the device; and even physical symptoms such as being short of breath and insomnia.

Nomophobia is also caused by psychological issues such as low self-esteem, fear of isolation, existing anxiety disorders, as well as social anxiety. Especially younger people, mostly students, are at risk of nomophobia. Treatment and management strategies often involve therapeutic techniques such as CBT and exposure therapy. Preventing nomophobia involves to set boundaries, take part in offline activities, practise balanced relationship with mobile phone. One ought to further study its long-term nomophobia and the effectiveness of different intervention strategies that can be performed in a safe and effective manner with appropriate management of this emerging phenomenon.

That's because, from the point of view of clinical psychology, nomophobia is a disorder worth studying for further research.

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