

Untethered Anxiety: Managing the Challenges Brought on by Nomophobia

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Abstract

All phones, computers, calculators, radios, televisions, recorders, cameras, video recorders, and notably libraries have been superseded by smartphones, making them unique. Finding the positive aspects of a smartphone for pupils is beneficial. These days, cell phones are a big element of techno culture, especially for younger people. Social media sites are widely used by college students in ways that could negatively impact several facets of their lives. The “overconnection syndrome” is the result of using a mobile phone less often than in person, which greatly interferes with social and familial interactions. Every day, new challenges emerge as technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace. A wealth of research conducted across different environments – ranging from homes and offices to businesses and educational institutions – highlights the pervasive and almost boundless nature of smartphone use. Despite their convenience and utility, smartphones often come with a downside. Notably, many students have reported a decline in their academic performance, attributing this trend to distractions and diminished focus caused by excessive smartphone use. Additionally, a common concern among students is the insufficient availability of academic resources in libraries and universities. This lack of access to relevant literature further exacerbates their difficulties in staying academically engaged and informed.

Keywords: Superseded, smartphone, unique, impact, technology, limitless

INTRODUCTION

When you know you’ll be without service for a few hours, do you find it difficult to put down your smartphone or do you get nervous? In recent years, mobile phone usage has dramatically increased, largely due to the proliferation of smart devices [1, 2]. Now-a-days, smartphones are almost always within reach, whether we’re at work, attending social events, or spending time with family. While these devices offer convenience and connectivity, their overuse can have negative effects. People may develop a dependence on their phones, experience heightened anxiety, and even struggle with addiction. This constant attachment can interfere with daily life and relationships, highlighting the need for a balanced approach to smartphone use [3–5].

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MEANING

The fear or anxiety that someone feels when they are unable to use their mobile phone is known as Nomo phobia, or “no mobile phone phobia” [6]. Most people classify nomophobia as a behavioral addiction, as it resembles drug addiction in many ways [7].

Numerous studies’ findings indicate that this phobia is spreading [8].

A multicentre cross-sectional survey was conducted among 1,626 nursing students, randomly selected from three different universities in Egypt.

Data collection was carried out through questionnaires, which aimed to assess the students' reliance on mobile devices. The findings revealed a concerning trend, with 40.3% of the nursing students exhibiting a significant dependence on their smartphones. This level of reliance suggests a high prevalence of nomophobia, a condition characterized by the fear of being without a mobile device or disconnected from digital communication. The results highlight the growing issue of mobile phone addiction among young adults, particularly within the context of their demanding nursing studies. Such dependency on smartphones could potentially affect both their academic performance and emotional well-being, raising the need for interventions to promote healthier usage habits [9].

The research was conducted in Kollam, Kerala, at four nursing institutions: Holy Cross College of Nursing, VNSS College of Nursing, Upasana College of Nursing, and Bishop Benziger College of Nursing. The study employed a quantitative approach, utilizing a descriptive cross-sectional design to gather insights. Data collection was conducted using purposive sampling, selecting participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research. Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were applied to analyze the data, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the patterns observed.

The participants, predominantly nursing students, had an average age of 21 years. One of the key findings was that nearly half of these students reported spending around five hours daily on their smartphones. This frequent smartphone usage raises concerns, especially considering the demanding nature of nursing education and the potential distractions that extended screen time could pose. The study provides valuable insights into the digital habits of nursing students and their potential impact on both academic performance and personal well-being. Additionally, 42% of the students mentioned checking their phones fewer than ten times a day [10].

NOMOPHOBIA CAUSES [11]

One of the reasons why people get nomophobia is because mobile phones are connected to the Internet. Overusing cell phones to feel more at ease in emotional connections is a problem for some people [4].

- *Technology dependence:* Smartphones are becoming an essential part of our everyday lives as we use them more and more for communication, information, and entertainment.
- *FOMO:* People's persistent need to be connected stems from their fear of missing out on significant occasions, breaking news, or social experiences.
- *Social pressure:* While away from one's phone, emotions of anxiousness might intensify due to peer pressure and cultural norms that highlight the value of keeping connected.
- *Attachment to devices:* Having a strong emotional bond with one's phone, which is frequently viewed as an extension of oneself, might make the fear of losing it worse.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

The following list of indicators and symptoms is observed in cases of nomophobia:

- *Avoidance of separation:* People will do all in their power to keep their phones close to hand and to steer clear of circumstances in which they might be left unattended [11].
- *Dependency:* Certain people could become overly dependent on their phones to feel validated, entertained, or socialized [12].

SOME EXAMPLES OF EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS ARE

- Feeling anxious, panicked, or worried at the thought of losing your phone or being unable to use it is common. When you're required to put your phone down or know you won't have access to it for some time, restlessness and anxiety can set in. If you briefly misplace your phone, you might even experience a sense of worry or panic.
- Fear of missing out on social interactions or news.
- Anxiety when the phone's battery runs low or is lost.
- Inability to focus on tasks when the phone is not nearby.

- Withdrawal symptoms like those encountered with substance abuse when the phone is not used [13].
- Phubbing is the practice of concentrating solely on your smartphone and disregarding in-person talks with others [14].
- Checking your phone when you wake up in the middle of the night.
- Even during lunch or supper, you check your phone.
- When your phone doesn't have a signal, you feel like you're missing out on life.
- Despite your busy schedule, you can't resist answering your phone.
- Even when using the restroom, you bring your phone.
- While perusing this piece, you have examined your phone twice [15].

Physical Symptoms That Include

- Heaviness in the chest.
- Difficulty breathing regularly.
- Shaky or quivering.
- Heightened perspiration.
- Feeling weak, lightheaded, or confused.
- Heart rate is too fast.

IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH

- *Increased stress:* Constantly needing to stay connected and check one's phone might lead to higher levels of tension and interfere with relaxation.
- *Disturbances in sleep:* Prolonged usage of smartphones, especially right before bed, can lead to poor sleep and even insomnia.
- *Social isolation:* Ironically, relying too much on cellphones for social connection can cause feelings of isolation and loneliness when out in public.
- *Decreased productivity:* Constant interruptions from notifications and apps can cause focus issues and reduce productivity, which can have an impact on performance at work and in school [16, 17].

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

Educating people about the possible effects of nomophobia and encouraging digital literacy and appropriate smartphone use in families, communities, and individuals are important steps towards preventing and treating it.

To address underlying anxiety or dependency issues, treatment may incorporate *cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), counseling, or mindfulness-based approaches*. As technology continues to evolve and becomes even more embedded in our daily lives, addressing nomophobia and similar concerns will remain a key focus. Promoting digital well-being, fostering healthy tech habits, and helping individuals establish a balanced relationship with their phones are essential to reducing the negative impacts of nomophobia and strengthening mental health in the digital age [17, 18].

COPING STRATEGIES [19]

Digital Detox

Reducing screen time and taking frequent breaks from devices can help lessen reliance and ease anxiety.

Boundaries

Determining precise hours and locations for phone usage helps foster a more harmonious equilibrium between digital and physical pursuits.

Mindfulness Techniques

Methods like mindfulness meditation can assist people in being more conscious of how they use their smartphones and in breaking obsessive behaviors.

Seeking Support

Consulting a mental health professional can offer coping mechanisms and emotional direction if nomophobia has a substantial negative influence on one's ability to function in everyday life or on one's mental health.

CONCLUSION

In the digital age, the complicated interaction between people and technology is reflected in nomophobia. Smartphones present risks to our mental health and general wellbeing even while they provide previously unheard-of connectivity and ease. Achieving a healthy and rewarding connection with technology requires identifying the warning signals of nomophobia and putting healthy coping mechanisms in place. Individuals may handle the digital realm with more resilience and self-awareness by practicing mindfulness and setting limits.

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